

# Councillor's opinions on road safety



# **Councillor's Opinions on Road Safety**

## **About the IAM**

The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) is the UK's largest independent road safety charity. The IAM is dedicated to improving standards and safety in driving, motorcycling and cycling. The IAM has more than 200 local volunteer groups and over 100,000 members in the UK and Ireland and is best known for the advanced driving test and the advanced driving, motorcycling and cycling courses.

We also offer driver training to businesses through our commercial arm IAM Drive & Survive and remedial training such as speed awareness, through our company Professional Driving Services, based in Wales. The IAM's policy and research division offers advice and expertise on road safety, and publishes original research on road safety issues.

## **Introduction**

Local councillors have a crucial role to play in shaping the UK's road network and improving road safety. Local authorities are responsible for 98 per cent of roads and have a legal duty to maintain roads and promote road safety. Councillors set local strategies and sign off transport budgets.

The IAM wanted to find out local councillors' views on a range of road safety topics including priorities for transport and road safety, plans for investment over the next year, views on 20 mph, road safety targets and central government's approach.

The IAM sent a survey to all councillors in the UK to find out their views; this received 1,117 responses. The survey measured opinions rather than giving an exact view of what each local authority is planning; it gives an overview of councillors' views and opens up opportunities for further research into councils' strategies.

Some key results from the survey are:

- The top priority for local councillors is improving road surfaces and reducing potholes.
- Improving road safety and increasing use of public transport are also major priorities for councillors.
- Councillors' priorities vary between parties; Conservative councillors are more likely to focus on road building, road surfaces and car parking.

- Labour councillors are more likely to select road safety and the use of public transport, while Liberal Democrats are more likely to focus on cycling and walking.
- Fifty per cent of local councillors said their transport budget would reduce over the next year, 14 per cent anticipated their transport budget reducing by more than 15 per cent.
- Forty per cent of councillors anticipated a reduction in their budget for road surfaces/conditions, despite this being one of their top priorities.
- Twenty-nine per cent of councillors anticipated a reduction in spending on road safety education
- Fifty-eight per cent of councillors agree that budget cuts are having a negative impact on roads and road safety, with one in four councillors strongly agreeing.
- Conservative councillors are more likely to agree that budgets cuts are having a negative impact on roads and road safety than they are to disagree.
- Seventy-five per cent of councillors support 20mph speed limits, with 15 per cent supporting 20mph for most urban roads (non-trunk, A roads etc).
- Sixty-five per cent of councillors either already have or are planning 20 mph zones.
- Only 23 per cent of councillors agree that the government was right to scrap local targets for road casualty reduction.
- Only 21 per cent of councillors agree that UK government policies have been good for road safety

## **The results**

The IAM conducted the survey throughout February 2013, it was sent directly to councillors' email addresses. We received 1,117 survey responses from local councillors, this included:

- 415 responses from Conservative councillors
- 303 responses from Labour councillors
- 197 responses from Liberal Democrat councillors
- 202 responses from other parties and independent councillors

Responses covered all English regions, Scotland and Wales. However, we did not receive enough responses from Scottish and Welsh councillors to do a full break downs for these countries (89 responses in total).

The survey covered seven areas, these are:

- Local transport priorities
- Local road safety priorities
- Changes in local transport funding
- The impact of budget cuts

- Support for 20mph and other reduced speed limits
- Support for casualty reduction targets
- Overall views on the UK government's approach

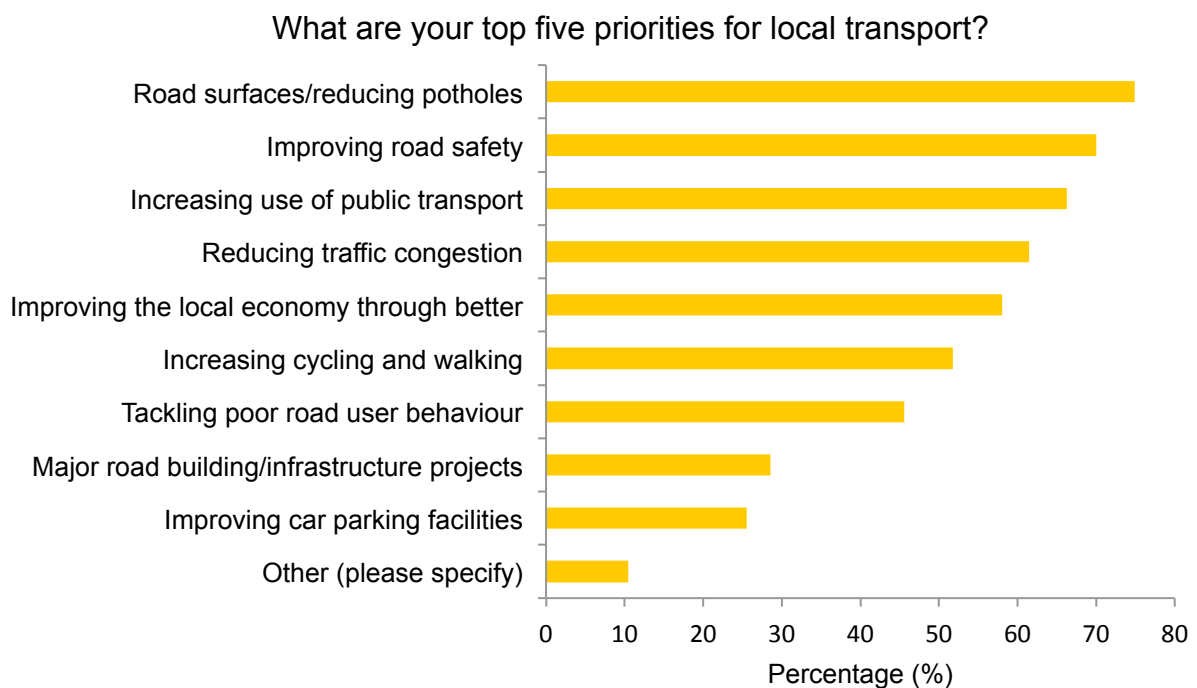
In some parts this report looks at the difference in views by party. 'Other' parties and independents are not included in these charts. There was significant variation in views from 'other' parties and independents making any appearance of overall trends misleading. However, results for 'other' parties and independents are included in tables.

For simplicity results are shown as percentages throughout the report.

### Local transport priorities

The survey asked councillors what their top five priorities were for local transport, there are some clear priorities shared by local councillors, these are:

- Road surfaces/reducing potholes - 74 per cent
- Improving road safety - 70 per cent
- Increasing use of public transport - 66 per cent
- Reducing traffic congestion- 61 per cent
- Improving the local economy through better transport use - 58 per cent



However, there were some significant differences in opinions between political parties. Conservatives were more likely to say that major road building/infrastructure projects were a top priority, 42 per cent of Conservatives said this compared to 20 per cent of Liberal Democrats and 18 per cent of Labour councillors.

Conservative councillors were also more likely to say improving car-parking facilities was a priority (44 per cent said this). Only 19 per cent of Labour councillors and 18 per cent of Liberal Democrat councillors selected car-parking facilities.

Liberal Democrats were most likely to say that increasing cycling and walking was a priority with 67 per cent of Liberal Democrat councillors selecting it. Fifty-nine per cent of Labour Councillors considered increasing walking and cycling to be a top priority, while only 37 per cent of Conservative selected it.

Labour councillors were more likely to say that improving road safety was a priority (74 per cent said this), closely followed by 71 per cent of Liberal Democrat councillors.

Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors were far more likely than Conservatives to say that increasing use of public transport was a top priority. Eighty-one per cent of Labour and 82 per cent of Liberal Democrats selected this, while only 48 per cent of Conservatives choose public transport.

Labour were most likely to choose improving the local economy through better transport use as a priority, 64 per cent of Labour councillors said this.

	All parties	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat	Other and independent
Road surfaces/reducing potholes	74.9	80.8	67.9	73.6	71.7
Improving road safety	70.0	66.6	74.0	70.6	71.7
Increasing use of public transport	66.2	47.6	80.8	81.6	68.5
Reducing traffic congestion	61.5	67.1	61.0	56.2	55.1
Improving the local economy through better transport use	58.0	57.6	63.6	53.2	53.5
Increasing cycling and walking	51.7	36.7	58.8	66.7	55.9
Tackling poor road user behaviour	45.6	49.5	39.0	42.8	48.8
Major road building/infrastructure projects	28.6	41.7	17.9	20.4	23.6
Improving car-parking facilities	25.5	33.9	19.2	17.9	21.3
Other (please specify)	10.5	10.9	6.2	12.4	14.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

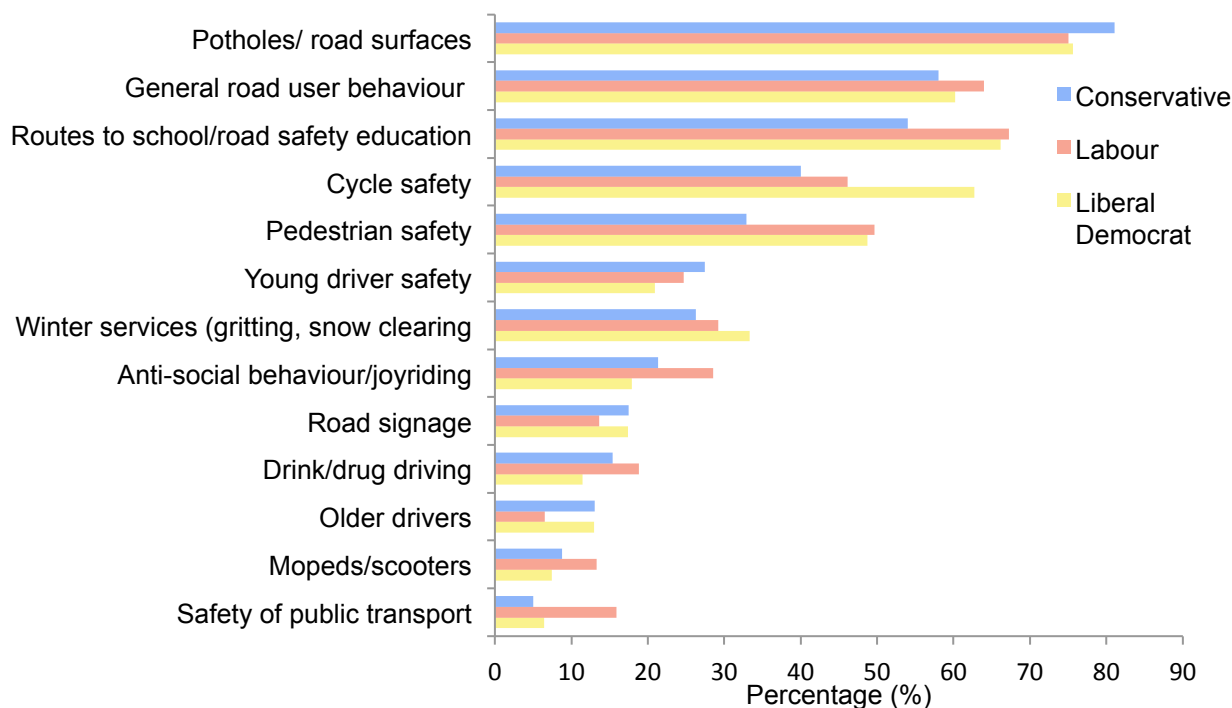
### Road safety priorities

The survey asked councillors what the significant road safety issues were in their areas. For this question, survey respondents could select as many choices that applied.

There is more consensus between political parties in terms of road safety issues than there are for general transport priorities. Potholes/road surfaces and general road user behaviour were significant issues for all parties.

Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors were more likely to say that routes to school, road safety education and pedestrian safety were significant issues. Cycle safety was most likely to be selected by Liberal Democrat councillors.

In terms of road safety, which of these is currently a significant issue in your area?



	All parties	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat	Other and independent
Cycle safety	47.4	40.0	46.1	62.7	48.8
Anti-social behaviour/joyriding	22.5	21.3	28.6	17.9	21.3
Mopeds/scooters	9.8	8.8	13.3	7.5	5.5
Young driver safety	25.2	27.5	24.7	20.9	26.8
Routes to school/road safety education	60.8	54.0	67.2	66.2	60.6
Older drivers	10.3	13.0	6.5	12.9	6.3
Drink/drug driving	16.2	15.4	18.8	11.4	17.3
Pedestrian safety	42.5	32.9	49.7	48.8	47.2
Safety of public transport	9.6	5.0	15.9	6.5	11.0
Potholes/ road surfaces	77.8	81.0	75.0	75.6	79.5
Road signage	16.7	17.5	13.6	17.4	14.2
General road user behaviour e.g. mobile phones, red light jumping.	60.0	58.1	64.0	60.2	54.3
Winter services (gritting, snow clearing etc)	29.7	26.3	29.2	33.3	31.5
Other (please specify)	14.6	13.5	8.1	18.4	20.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100

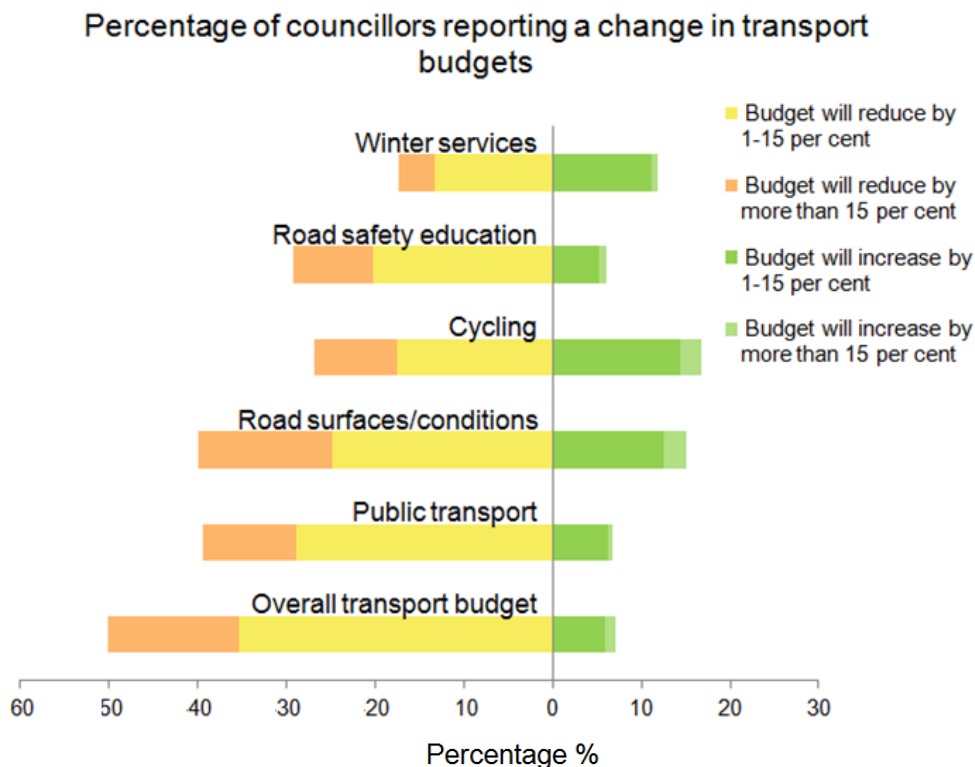
## Changes in transport funding

The IAM has previously researched council budgets for roads and road safety and found that road safety has been disproportionately affected by cuts in some areas; however, it has been difficult to find out the extent that cuts will affect road safety in the future.

The survey asked councillors how they anticipate spending will change in the next year under the following headings; these were:

- Overall transport budget
- Public transport
- Road surfaces/conditions
- Cycling (e.g. cycle lanes, facilities)
- Road safety education
- Winter services (gritting, snow clearing etc).

Councillors were more likely to report reductions than increases in all areas. Fifty per cent of councillors said they anticipated a reduction in their overall transport budget, only 7 per cent anticipated an increase. This chart shows the percentage of councillors reporting a change in their budgets for each area.



	Overall transport budget	Public transport	Road surfaces/conditions	Cycling (e.g. cycle lanes, facilities)	Road safety education	Winter services (gritting, snow clearing etc)
Reduce by more than 15 per cent	14.8	10.5	15.2	9.2	9.0	4.1
Reduce by 1-15 per cent	35.4	29.0	24.8	17.6	20.3	13.3
Stay the same	15.5	24.0	21.9	31.5	35.3	50.2
Increase by 1-15 per cent	6.0	6.3	12.6	14.3	5.2	11.1
Increase by more than 15 per cent	1.1	0.5	2.5	2.4	0.8	0.6
N/A we currently don't spend money in this area	13.6	15.0	13.1	10.6	11.8	9.7
Not sure/ don't know	13.7	14.8	9.9	14.3	17.6	11.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Councillors were most likely to say they would increase spending on cycling, with 17 per cent saying this. However, this is outweighed by the 27 per cent of councillors who anticipated a reduction in spending on cycling; with 9 per cent saying they thought the budget would be cut by more than 15 per cent.

For road safety education, only 6 per cent of councillors said they anticipated an increase in spending while twenty-nine per cent of councillors anticipated a reduction.

Forty per cent of councillors anticipated a reduction in their budget for road surfaces/conditions, with 15.2 per cent anticipating a reduction of more than 15 per cent of their budget. This is despite it being a top priority for most councillors.

Almost forty per cent of councillors anticipate a cut in public transport; only 7 per cent of councillors anticipate a rise in this area.

Councillors were most likely to say they would not change spending on winter services, with 50 per cent saying spending in this area would stay the same. A significant proportion of councillors also anticipate that their budgets for road safety and cycling will stay the same.



The survey was also open to district councillors who may not spend money on directly on transport, this may explain the proportion of respondents selecting 'N/A we currently don't spend money in this area'.

### Are budget cuts having a negative impact?

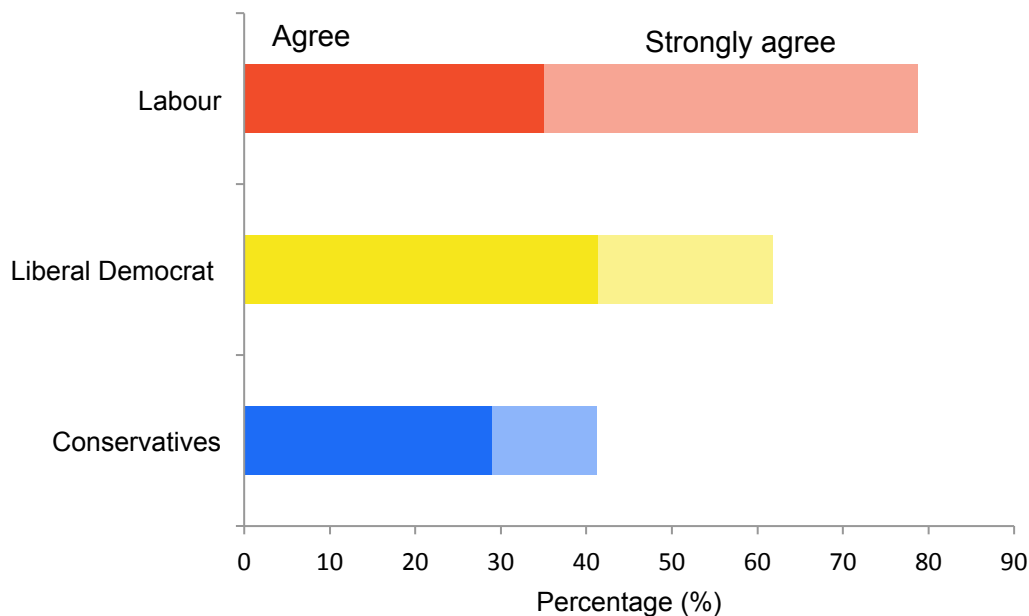
The survey asked local councillors whether UK government cuts are having a negative impact on roads and road safety, 58 per cent of councillors agreed, with one in four councillors strongly agreeing.

Unsurprisingly, the level of agreement varies between political parties, with the strongest level of agreement being among Labour councillors (79 per cent). However, there is also a strong level of agreement from the other parties.

Forty-one per cent of Conservatives agreed that 'UK government cuts are having a negative impact on roads and road safety', while only 28 per cent disagreed. Sixty-two per cent of liberal Democrat Councillors agreed with the statement.

This means all major parties are more likely to agree that UK government cuts are having a negative impact than they are to disagree.

UK government cuts are having a negative impact on roads and road safety



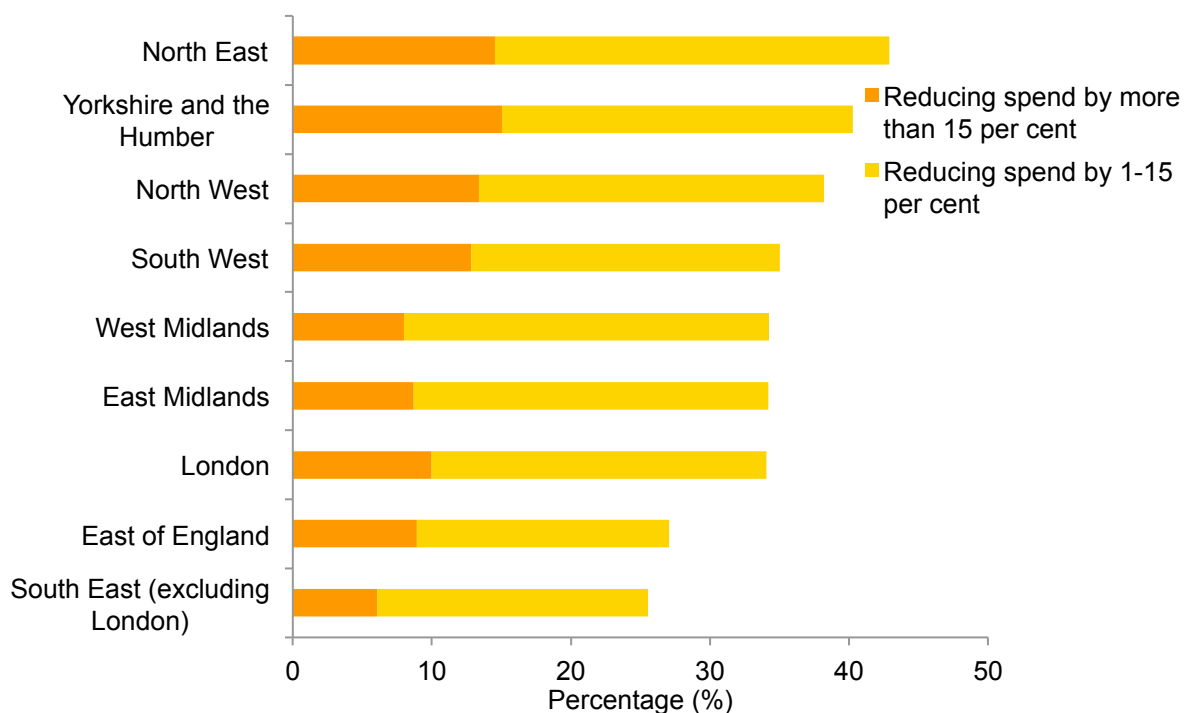
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure/don't know	Total
All parties	4.5	13.6	18.2	33.8	24.5	5.4	100
Conservatives	3.6	23.9	28.4	28.9	12.3	2.9	100
Labour	6.2	5.2	3.8	35.1	43.6	6.2	100
Liberal Democrat	2.6	7.1	21.9	41.3	20.4	6.6	100
Other and independent	3.7	11.1	12.0	38.9	27.8	6.5	100

### Which regions are most affected by budget cuts?

The survey looked at which councillors were most likely to report reductions in their budgets.

There is a clear pattern where councillors in the north of England are more likely to say they anticipate spending reductions, while councillors in the south and east of England are less likely to report reductions in their transport budgets.

Councillors anticipating a reduction in transport budgets by region



Reducing spend by more than 15 per cent	Reducing spend by 1-15 per cent	Total

North East	14.5	28.4	42.9
Yorkshire and the Humber	15.0	25.2	40.2
North West	13.4	24.8	38.2
South West	12.8	22.2	35.0
West Midlands	8.0	26.2	34.2
East Midlands	8.7	25.5	34.2
London	10.0	24.0	34.0
East of England	8.9	18.1	27.0
South East (excluding London)	6.1	19.5	25.5

Although thirty-four per cent of London councillors anticipated reductions, the direct funding from Transport for London will affect London councils' budgets, and potentially change this figure.

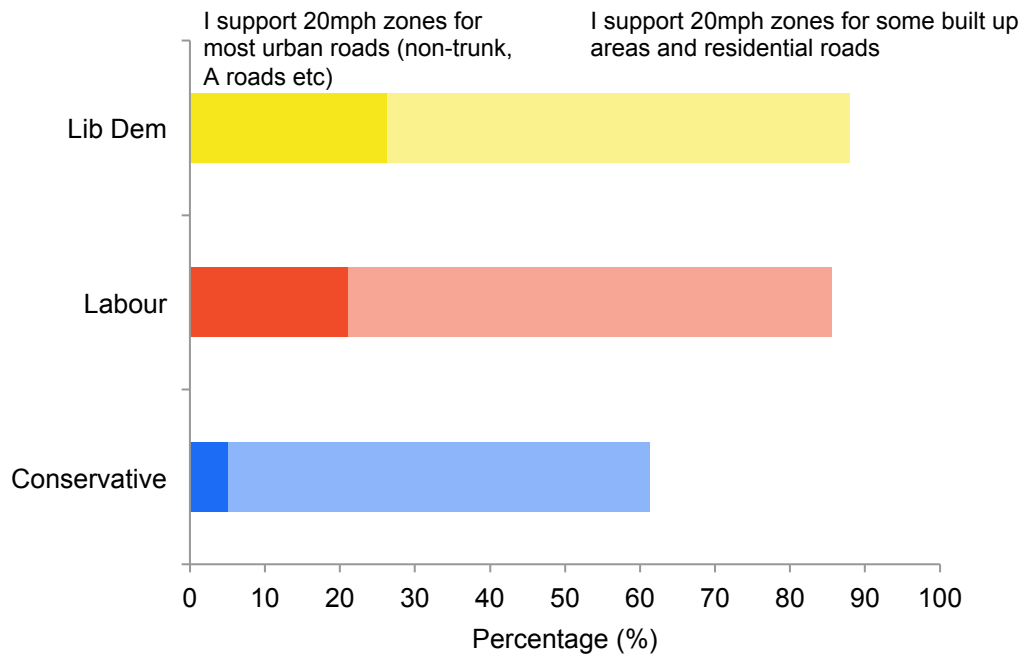
### **Support for 20mph zones**

There has recently been an increased focus on 20mph speed limits, with a growing campaign to reduce speed limits in urban areas. The IAM wanted to find out whether local councillors supported the introduction of 20mph in more parts of their area.

Seventy-five per cent of councillors support 20mph, with 15 per cent supporting 20mph for most urban roads (non-trunk, A roads etc). Support is highest among Liberal Democrats with 88 per cent indicating support and lowest among Conservative councillors with 61 per cent indicating support.

Nearly one in four Conservative councillors (24 per cent) said they disagreed with the introduction of 20mph zones. This is the highest of any party.

## Support for 20mph by party



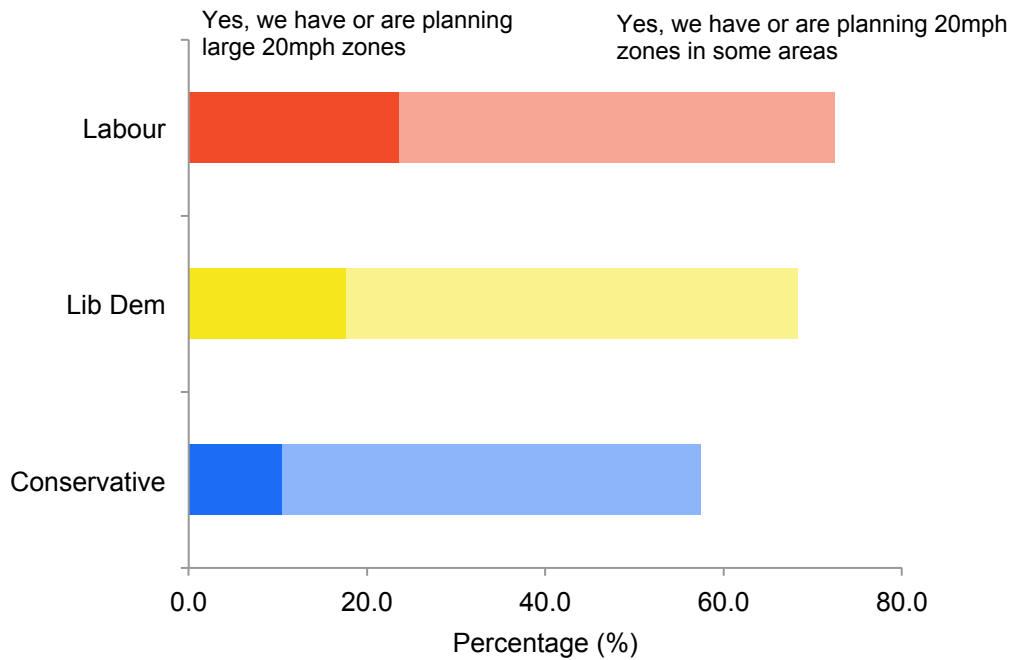
	I support 20mph zones for most urban roads (non-trunk, A roads etc)	I support 20mph zones for some built up areas and residential roads	Neither agree nor disagree with them	I disagree with the introduction of 20mph	Not sure/don't know and other
All parties	15.4	59.3	3.5	12.8	9.0
Conservative	5.0	56.3	3.6	23.6	11.5
Labour	21.0	64.6	3.3	6.2	4.9
Liberal Democrat	26.3	61.6	3.5	3.0	5.6
Other and independent	22.6	50.8	3.2	8.9	14.5

## Introduction of 20mph zones

The survey also asked councillors whether their authority had introduced or were planning to introduce 20 mph zones. Sixty-five per cent said they had or were planning 20 mph zones; 49-nine per cent said this was the case in some areas, while a further 16 per cent said they have or are planning large 20mph zones.

Labour were most likely to say they were introducing 20mph (72 per cent), and Conservatives were most likely to say they did not have plans to introduce 20mph zones (27 per cent).

## Is your council implementing 20mph zones?



	Yes, we have or are planning large 20mph zones	Yes, we have or are planning 20mph zones in some areas	We don't have plans to introduce 20mph	Not sure/don't know
All parties	16.0	48.5	20.1	15.5
Conservative	10.5	46.9	27.4	15.2
Lib Dem	17.6	50.8	21.1	10.6
Labour	23.6	48.8	12.6	15.0
Other and independent	17.4	49.6	14.9	18.2

Local councillors are split on whether speed limits should be reduced on rural roads. Around 40 per cent agree or strongly agree that they should be reduced, while 34 per cent of councillors disagree or strongly disagree.

This difference of opinion is present within all three major parties, although Liberal Democrats are more likely to say that speed limits should be reduced, while Conservatives are more likely to disagree.

### Views on casualty reduction targets

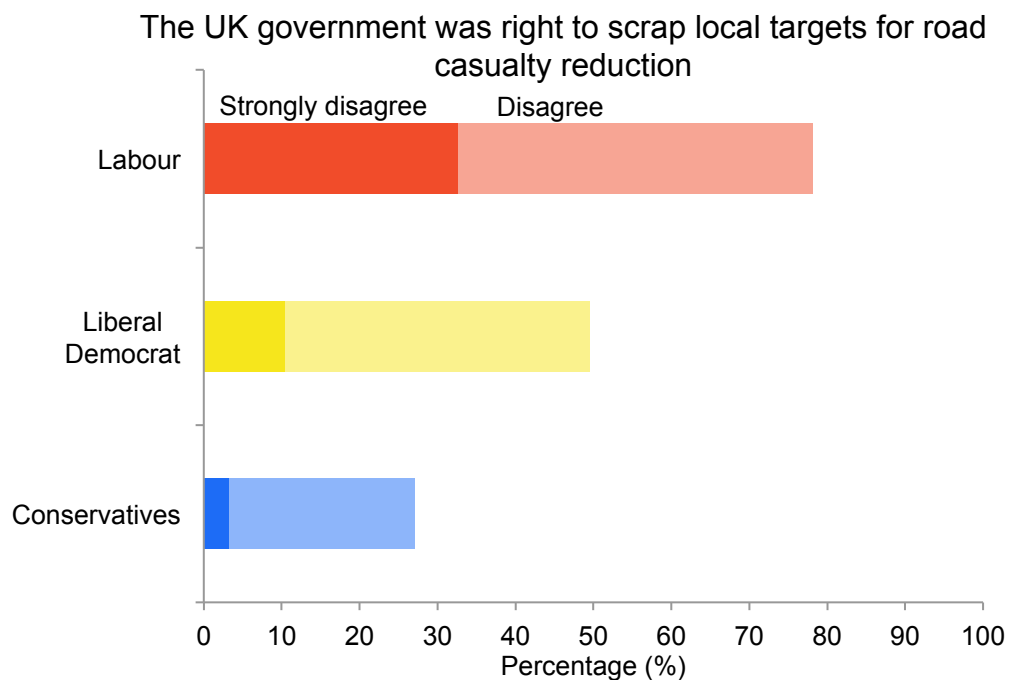
Under the previous government, local councils widely adopted the national targets set for reducing road casualties.

The current government abolished these targets when it was elected. Its view was that these targets were overly prescriptive and constraining to councils, preventing innovation.

The IAM wanted to find out whether councillors thought removing targets they could use locally had been a good idea. The survey asked councillors whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement ‘The UK government was right to scrap local targets for road casualty reduction’.

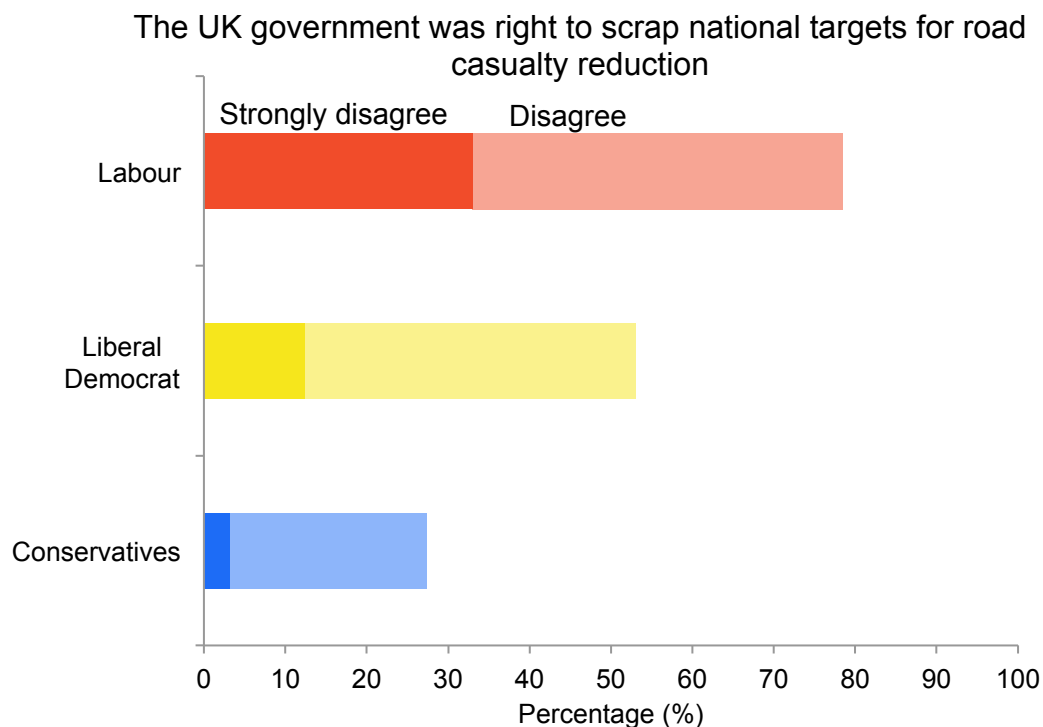
Only 23 per cent of councillors agreed that the government was right to scrap local targets for road casualty reduction, while 48 per cent of councillors disagreed.

Labour councillors are most likely to disagree; however, there is still a significant proportion of Liberal Democrats (50 per cent) and Conservatives (27 per cent) who disagree with the government on scrapping local targets for road casualty reduction.



	All parties	Conservatives	Liberal Democrat	Labour	Other
Strongly disagree	14.3	3.1	10.4	32.5	14.0
Disagree	33.3	23.9	39.1	45.7	31.8
Neither agree nor disagree	25.1	32.1	26.0	12.1	27.1
Agree	16.1	29.0	12.5	2.4	15.0
Strongly agree	4.7	7.2	3.6	2.1	3.7
Not sure/don't know	6.6	4.6	8.3	5.2	8.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100

The survey asked councillors whether the UK government was right to scrap national targets for road casualty reduction. This produced very similar results to those for local targets, with only 20 per cent of councillors agreeing that the UK government was right to scrap national targets for road casualty reduction.

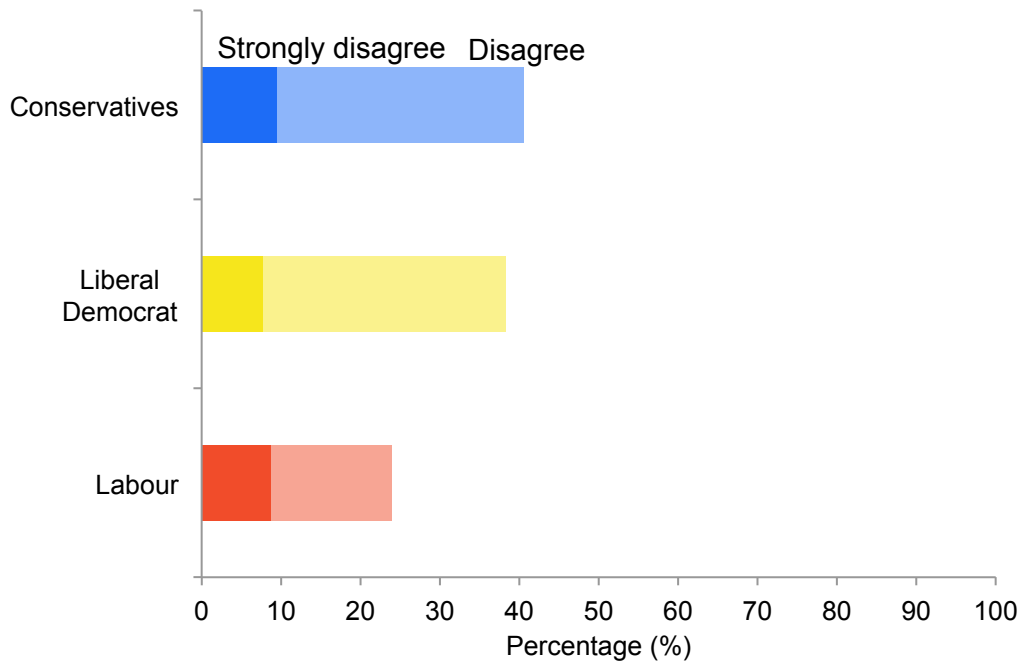


	All parties	Conservatives	Liberal Democrat	Labour	Other
Strongly disagree	14.9	3.2	12.4	33.0	14.8
Disagree	34.3	24.3	40.7	45.5	37.0
Neither agree nor disagree	24.1	32.8	22.7	12.2	22.2
Agree	15.6	28.6	11.9	2.8	13.0
Strongly agree	4.4	6.6	3.1	2.4	3.7
Not sure/don't know	6.7	4.6	9.3	4.2	9.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100

## Views on government priorities

Councillors are split on whether improving road safety is a priority for central government. Thirty-nine per cent of councillors agreed with the statement 'improving road safety is not a priority for the UK government', while 35 per cent disagreed.

### Improving road safety is not a priority for the UK government



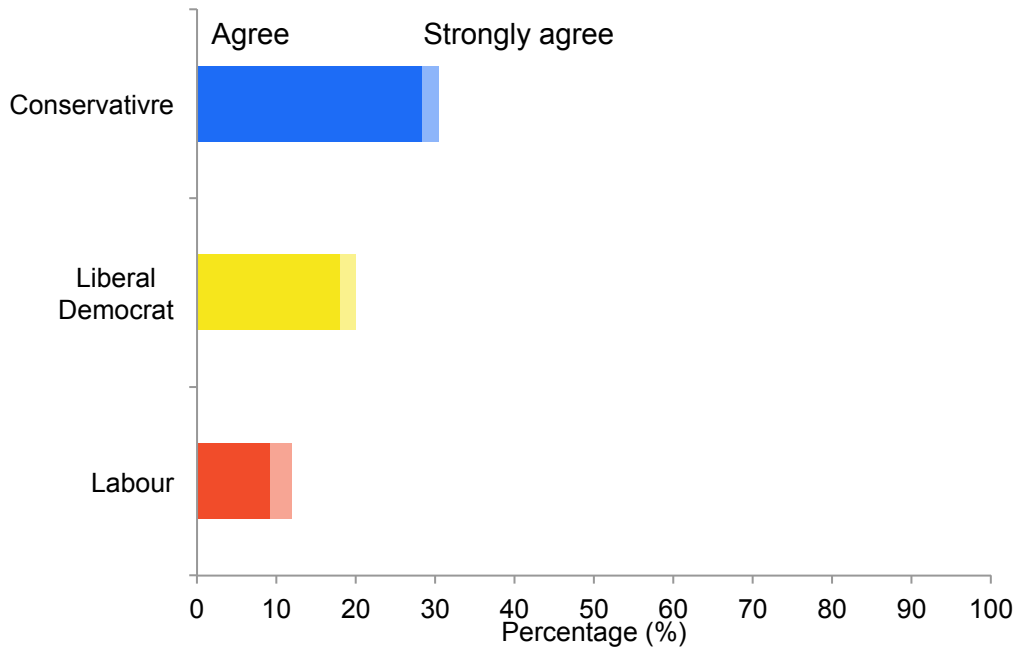
	All parties	Conservatives	Liberal Democrat	Labour	Other
Strongly disagree	9.7	9.4	7.7	8.7	14.8
Disagree	25.0	31.2	30.6	15.3	19.4
Neither agree nor disagree	23.7	28.3	22.4	18.1	23.1
Agree	28.7	23.4	26.5	36.1	32.4
Strongly agree	10.2	5.8	9.7	18.4	8.3
Not sure/don't know	2.7	1.9	3.1	3.5	1.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Only 21 per cent of councillors agree that UK government policies have been good for road safety, while 30 per cent of councillors disagreed.

While support was higher among Conservative councillors, there is still only minority agreement with 31 per cent of Conservative councils agreeing that UK government policies have been good for road safety.



## UK government policies have been good for road safety



	All parties	Conservative	Liberal Democrat	Labour	Other
Strongly disagree	4.4	1.4	1.0	8.7	8.3
Disagree	25.2	15.3	25.6	40.9	26.9
Neither agree nor disagree	44.7	49.4	46.7	34.3	47.2
Agree	18.9	28.3	17.9	9.1	15.7
Strongly agree	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.8	0.0
Not sure/don't know	4.6	3.4	6.7	4.2	1.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100

## Conclusion

These survey results provide a snapshot of local councillors' views of road safety in the UK. This insight opens up the opportunity for further research and debate.

The results show that different political parties offer the electorate real choice on their transport priorities. Conservative councillors are more likely to focus on road building, road surfaces and car parking, while Labour councillors appear to be more likely to prioritise road safety and the use of public transport. Liberal Democrats are more likely to focus on cycling and walking.

However, there are some significant pressures which appear to be having a negative impact on councils.

In the first years of government, the coalition put immense pressure on local councils through cuts to funding. These pressures will continue, in 2013/14 councils will see an overall reduction in spending power of 1.7 per cent, but some councils will lose up to 8.8 per cent on top of previous reductions.

This is clearly having an impact on transport budgets with 50 per cent of councillors anticipating a reduction in their budgets. Furthermore, 58 per cent of councillors believe that budget cuts are having a negative impact on roads and road safety.

The IAM recently reported that the government has reduced budgets for national road safety campaigns by nearly 80 per cent. This puts even more pressure on local authorities to deliver road safety education. It is concerning that just under a third of councillors anticipate a reduction in spending on road safety education.

The IAM is pleased to see that many councillors still view road safety as a priority. Road safety is a critical issue for many people and the coalition government's 'localism' agenda has clearly placed responsibility for it at the door of local elected members. However, by not providing dedicated resources road safety spending is under threat like never before. Across the world road safety targets have delivered coordinated and successful approaches that are driving down casualties. The survey shows that many councillors would support targets again and the IAM will continue to support the setting of smart new targets that focus on the highest risk groups in society.

Survey: May 2013

**IAM RoadSmart is the trading name of all businesses owned by The Institute of Advanced Motorists**

Charity number: 249002 (England and Wales)  
SC041201 (Scotland).

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