

# Petitions Committee: Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and accessibility

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## Introduction

The Petitions Committee ran an online survey to inform a debate on Monday 20 May 2024 on Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and accessibility. The survey asked people about their views on and experiences with LTNs.

The survey was shared on social media, with stakeholder organisations, and with signatories of the following petitions, which triggered the debate:

- [Carry out an independent review into Low Traffic Neighbourhoods \(LTNs\)](#)
- [Exempt Blue Badge drivers from Low Traffic Neighbourhoods](#)

The contents of this brief should be read as reflecting only the experiences of those who responded to the survey.

## Response

**7,349** survey responses.

## About the respondents

- **78%** considered themselves directly affected by LTNs.
- **68%** said they lived in or near an LTN.
- **25%** said they had physical or mental health issues that meant they were particularly affected by LTNs.
- **19%** said they had received a fine for driving through an LTN.<sup>1</sup>
- **12%** said they were a business owner directly affected by LTNs.
- **8%** said they had a Blue Badge for parking.

## Respondents' views on LTNs

- **78%** said LTNs had a 'negative' or 'very negative' effect on them.
- **17%** of respondents said LTNs had a 'positive' or 'very positive' effect on them.

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<sup>1</sup> This statistic has been corrected after a mistake in an earlier version of this document.

## Demographics

Of the respondents who answered the demographics questions:

- **47%** said they lived in London, **16%** in the South East of England and **10%** in the South West of England.
- **32%** said they were employed full time.
- **31%** said they were not economically active (e.g. retired, student, long-term illness, or disability, looking after family or home).
- **29%** said they had a physical or mental health condition expected to last for 12 months or more.
- **19%** said they would describe themselves as coming from a disadvantaged background.

## Disabled people and people with long-term health conditions

- **86%** of respondents who answered the question about the impact of LTNs said they thought they had a 'negative' or 'very negative' impact on disabled people.
- **60%** of respondents said they agreed that Blue Badge holders should be exempt from LTN fines.

Of the respondents who said they had physical or mental health issues that meant they were particularly affected by LTNs:

- **78%** said LTNs had a 'negative' or 'very negative' effect on them.
- **66%** said they agreed that Blue Badge holders should be exempt from LTN fines.
- **22%** said they had received a fine for driving through a Low Traffic Neighbourhood.
- **22%** said they have a Blue Badge for parking.

## **Longer car journeys**

**Some respondents said longer car journeys caused by LTNs had affected their health or the health of someone they know.**

### **Quotes**

- "My wife is 78 years old, seriously disabled, has a Blue Badge and needs regularly to use the toilet. Shopping has become a nightmare taking far longer than would be the case without our local LTN, and we have had to contest 2 speeding offences - so that she might reach home 'in time'."
- "I have MS, Diabetes and have hearing problems. The LTN has added to my journey times and costs and also my fatigue levels are increased due to the extra stress and travelling, added to this I suffer with anxiety as MS means I sometimes need access to a toilet quickly, with my journey time now increased threefold it makes it very difficult."

- "I have trouble getting in and out of cars, going over potholes and speed bumps cause me an awful lot of pain. The more I'm in a car, the more pain I am in. LTNs have made journeys longer for me, so it means I spend longer in cars, so I get more pain. Going through the LTNs will reduce the time I have to spend in cars, which will reduce my pain."

## **Access issues**

**Some respondents said that they or someone they know could no longer be dropped at their door or destination as a result of LTNs. Some said this caused problems for their mental or physical health.**

### **Quotes**

- "I am an electric wheelchair user who is reliant on door-to-door transport. Low traffic neighbourhoods mean I am unable to be dropped off by car or taxi at my destination if it is in a low traffic neighbourhood."

- “My late husband was reliant on a wheelchair to go anywhere, which I had to push, so it was vital for us to be able to park near where we needed to go and visit as being a slight person I could not push his wheelchair very far. If we had to pay fines we wouldn’t have been able to afford to go anywhere.”
- “Taxis and delivery vans dare not go into parts for fear of fines, even when they can (signage creating confusion). A close neighbour is very disabled (double amputee) yet taxis have refused to take her to her house repeatedly.”
- “It is a nightmare. So much displaced traffic in the neighbourhood. I can’t drop my son, who has severe mental health problems, at the station which makes it much harder for him to get to work.”

**A few disabled respondents said that LTNs made it easier to get around**

- “[I am a] wheelchair user. [It is] Easier to get around with less traffic.”

- “[My] wife is wheelchair user and LTNs help keep pavements clear.”

**Problems attending appointments**

**Some respondents said that LTNs made it more difficult to get to medical appointments.**

**Quotes**

- “Both my husband and I have disabilities, physical and mental health conditions that are affected by LTNs. We have to use our car to go anywhere, and we have a lot of hospital appointments in various hospitals which means we are often stuck in traffic. This means that we have to plan our journeys very carefully and leave home a lot earlier than we used to. It causes us a lot of stress and anxiety to leave.”

- “A person with a disability usually has more medical appointments and is more reliant on a car, especially for short journeys. They don’t have the choice to walk or cycle. To make them sit in traffic which takes them up to 4x as long is stressful.”
- “I cannot take my mother who has a blue badge to medical appointments as it would result in going through an LTN and getting a fine.”
- “My daughter has chronic fatigue syndrome and cannot cycle or walk to school. I have no choice but to drive her. The LTNs make the surrounding roads more busy meaning that sometimes our journey takes far longer than it should, which is a daily stress when we are trying to keep to school timings.”
- “I have an adult son with severe autism. LTNs cause longer journeys and cause him lots of stress and anxiety, which can lead to him being violent. In turn, this causes me more stress and anxiety.”

## **Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and long-term illnesses**

**Some respondents said they had children who were negatively affected by LTNs.**

### **Quotes**

- “Both my children have SEND. The stress of the traffic to get to school and appointments is awful for them. I feel anxious every time their school calls to collect one of them or I get an appointment letter.”
- “My daughter has hyper mobility and autism. She cannot walk long distances and is unaware of the dangers of the road. It is not possible for her to walk or cycle. The reduction in parking makes it difficult for her to get as close as possible to her destination. With the increased traffic she spends a longer time in stationary traffic, which causes her distress and anxiety.”

## **Improved health and wellbeing**

**Some respondents said that LTNs had improved their physical or mental health and wellbeing.**

### **Quotes**

- “Depression and autism make it difficult to get out the house, both due to motivation and sensory issues. Having nicer, quieter streets means it’s both easier to motivate myself, since the outside is nicer, and makes my sensory issues less of a problem.”
- “[I have] better mental health, it’s made me get back on a bike for commuting and helps give my children independence. Cycle journeys are consistent length and duration. Walking is safer with my disabled son.”

## **Women’s safety**

**Some respondents said they were worried for women’s safety at night due to quieter streets.**

### **Quotes**

- “LTN roads have become more deserted and lonely, that’s a safety concern for women on foot needing to get to a destination. Getting a lift from someone doesn’t help in an LTN if that car isn’t allowed in or through. It must have an effect on friends visiting an LTN too.”
- “They are a danger for young women coming home late as taxi drivers often drop you outside the LTN and you have to walk to your house in the dark.”
- “As a single woman, I find it intimidating to walk down the quiet LTN roads. Women have reported that cabs refuse to take them to their door to avoid getting fined, which is horrifying.”

## **Work and businesses**

- **91%** of people who said they were a business owner who has been directly affected by LTNs said they had had a 'negative' or 'very negative' effect on them.
- Of all the respondents who answered the question about the impact of LTNs, **92%** said they had a 'negative' or 'very negative' impact on local businesses.
- **32%** of respondents who said they were business owner who has been affected by LTNs said they had received a fine for driving through one.

**Some business owners said they had lost customers due to LTNs. Others said it was harder for their customers to travel to their premises.**

### **Quotes**

- "I am a destination shop & have been for almost 20 years. Since the inception of the LTNs (without consultation) a large proportion of my customers refuse to make the journey because of the ridiculous traffic and bad signage."

- "Customers have refused to visit and expressly stated that they cannot continue to get my business during opening hours, and would shop elsewhere more convenient. With parking or less traffic."
- "Queues of traffic from congested main roads [mean it] takes me longer to do my food business shopping. LTNs also impact on my customers due to frustrating congested journeys to dine at my restaurant."

**Some respondents said that LTNs made travelling for work difficult.**

### **Quotes**

- "I am a mobile hairdresser. I have to make lots of detours to reach my customers. I get stuck in traffic. It affects my business. I use more petrol. Lots of residents are in the same position. Carers, trades people, mobile workers."

- "I am worried about the future viability of my job as I need my car or motorcycle to visit my music students. This has caused me to have great anxiety."
- "My job is a driving instructor. I can't take many pupils now due to not being able to go to them. I'm at a loss of income."
- "My business depends on me being able to use my car to transport heavy/bulky packages, so I have felt an impact as a result of the LTN."
- "I needed to get to my customer who lives within LTN, an elderly man who can't walk to a barber shop by himself. As a mobile hairdresser I was serving him for years. Now he has lost my service and I lost a customer. And he is not the only one."
- "I am self employed and lost business, as it entails picking up multiple dogs, multiple times in the day [...] This meant long days, extra petrol, high stress levels."

**Taxi drivers and their families reported that LTNs had prevented them from providing the service they wanted to, especially for disabled people.**

**Quotes**

- "My husband is a taxi driver and specialises in transporting children with learning difficulties to and from school. Journeys have lengthened which means the children become agitated. Also, because of the extra miles, we're barely breaking even [...] This is a disaster for my husband's business."
- "As a London Taxi Driver it is a constant worry that an LTN will be on a route so a customer will wonder why I have to go such a longer route or I might accidentally go in to the LTN and receive a fine from the local council. It also very unfair for any disabled passengers that I have that need to travel into a LTN or a school street and I cannot get them to their destination."



## Cyclists and pedestrians

- Of the respondents who answered the question about the impact of LTNs, **23%** said they had a 'positive' or 'very positive' impact on cyclists. **35%** said they had neither a positive or negative effect on cyclists.
- Of the respondents who answered the question about the impact of LTNs, **15%** said they had a 'positive' or 'very positive' impact on pedestrians. **37%** said they had neither a positive or negative effect on pedestrians.

**Some respondents said that LTNs had improved cycle routes and neighbourhoods by making them safer and improving air quality.**

### Quotes

- "It has dramatically improved the quality of life for myself and other residents. Improved air quality, less noise, less danger from speeding cars (the area was a major rat-run between two arterial roads), safer for pedestrians and cyclists. It has also created an

attractive area for safe socialisation and leisure, leading to improved relations between residents."

- "The side streets are quiet which is great for cycling and the number of cyclists has increased dramatically."
- "For many years I suffered from depression, always stuck in traffic with horrible commute. In my LTN I feel safer cycling, and now my commute is shorter and healthier. My doctor wasn't lying when he said exercise was the first line of defence vs depression, becoming a cyclist massively improved my mental wellbeing and life satisfaction."
- "It's wonderful. Before drivers used to speed down out road at 40-50 mph. Now my children can cycle and play outside safely and breathe cleaner air."

## **Other respondents said that LTNs have a negative effect of cyclists and pedestrians.**

### **Quotes**

- "Not good, I have stopped riding my bicycle the traffic caused by the LTNs has made other roads busy."
- "Cyclists driving so fast everywhere [have] no consideration for pedestrians. Think they have right to go over red lights pedestrian crossings."
- "I lived in an LTN for almost 3 years and it still continues to negatively impact my family's lives every day. There is continued congestion on the boundary roads resulting in increased pollution and increased risks to pedestrians and cyclists. My husband was knocked off his bike in the traffic and suffered horrific injuries to his arm, almost losing functionality."

## **Pollution and the environment**

- Of the respondents who answered the question about the impact of LTNs, **74%** said they had a 'negative' or 'very negative' impact on the environment.
- **82%** said they had a 'negative' or 'very negative' impact on local traffic.

### **Many respondents said they thought that LTNs had increased pollution in certain areas.**

#### **Quotes**

- "When the traffic on the boundary road is at a standstill, the engines are idling. People, including children going to the local school have to walk by, breathing in the fumes."
- "The LTNs in the city where my daughter lives cause traffic congestion and a noticeable decrease in air quality."

- “The traffic was pushed out of [an] extremely wealthy [area] and onto the roads of the poor [...] The result was complete GRIDLOCK. The arterial roads remain highly congested to this day and it is horrible and stressful to be stuck in polluted traffic for hours on a journey that should take mere minutes.”

**Others said that they thought that LTNs had a positive effect in reducing pollution.**

#### **Quotes**

- “Less air and noise pollution, safer roads so neighbours interact more and children play out.”
- “I loved the LTN when it was active. The roads were much quieter and safer for my young children's journey to school, the entrance was not congested and pollution was noticeably reduced.”

## **People with asthma**

**Hundreds of respondents mentioned having asthma in their response to the survey. Many respondents said LTNs had worsened their condition, or the condition of someone they know.**

#### **Quotes**

- “I am asthmatic and if walking to/from work, have to walk the perimeter roads and [my] asthma [is] considerably impacted with all the fumes.”
- “We have to face idling traffic including buses on our doorstep every weekday morning which was never the case before the LTN was brought in. This is a particular concern for us as our youngest child is asthmatic and breathing in these increased exhaust fumes every day along with all the other children attending the 2 primary schools and 2 nurseries on this residential road.”

## **Other respondents said that living in or near an LTN had improved their asthma.**

### **Quotes**

- “My asthma has improved no end since our road has been reclaimed for us residents from the rat runners using it to come into / escape from inner London at speed. Pollution levels are seemingly far lower with significantly less personal impact - going from my own day to day existence of living with asthma.”
- “For me personally it has improved my environment. I live on what was a rat run to a main road. Since the LTN has come in, noise of traffic has significantly decreased. Crossing the road as a pedestrian is faster and much safer. It feels like air quality has improved- I am asthmatic and have had fewer symptoms. However I am not a driver and I believe my driver neighbours are less enthusiastic!”

## **Methodology**

Committee staff manually reviewed hundreds of individual comments and answers, using both subject searches and randomised selection. They also analysed survey questions which produced statistical results.