Developing new behaviour change tools to increase bus use:
An evaluation of the Greener Journeys Behaviour Change Lab

Executive Summary

April 2013

Headline conclusions

- It is possible to target car drivers: the techniques developed in Sheffield were especially effective

- Street teams, community ambassadors and community groups all hold potential

- The redemption rates for the free bus vouchers were high – 15% in Sheffield and 52% (!) in Leicester

- The community groups and community ambassadors were able to engage markets that are 'hard to reach' for bus operators

- Use of free bus vouchers seems to have more effect than solely providing information – it's the experience of using the bus that matters

- It is possible to collect bus users' email data, and this is valuable

- The experimental approach adopted by the GJ Lab was very valuable

transport for quality of life

## A high proportion of the free bus vouchers were used for trips that would otherwise have been by car
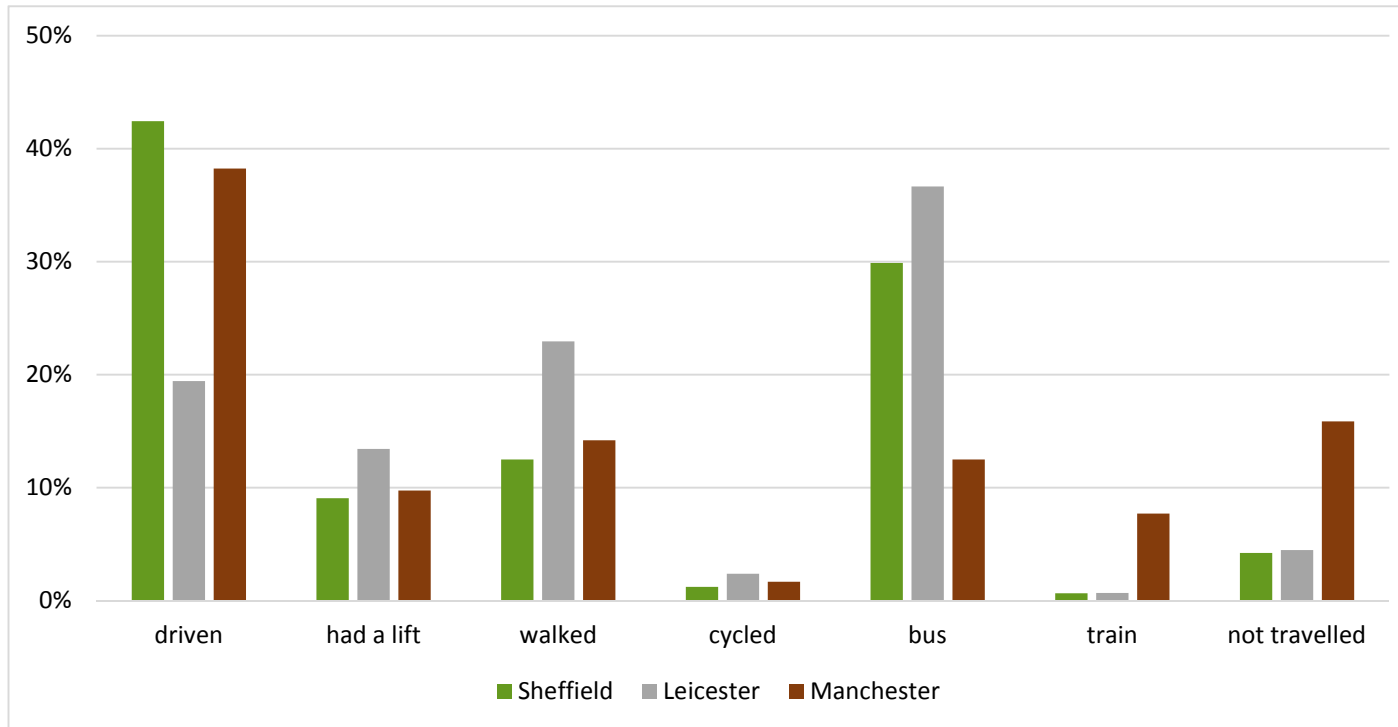
Base: all redeemed vouchers with completed question on how user would otherwise have travelled (Sheffield & Leicester); all eligible individuals requesting a free ticket via website (Manchester). N=2456 in Sheffield; 1127 in Manchester; 715 in Leicester. Data is for actual day of voucher redemption in Sheffield and Leicester, and for planned day of travel in Manchester. In Sheffield, the option 'taken the bus' was replaced by 'taken the bus or tram', because vouchers were valid on both buses and trams.

Bus journeys that would otherwise have been car journeys = **52%** **33%** **48%** (driven + had a lift)

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The promotion was effective in reaching regular car drivers
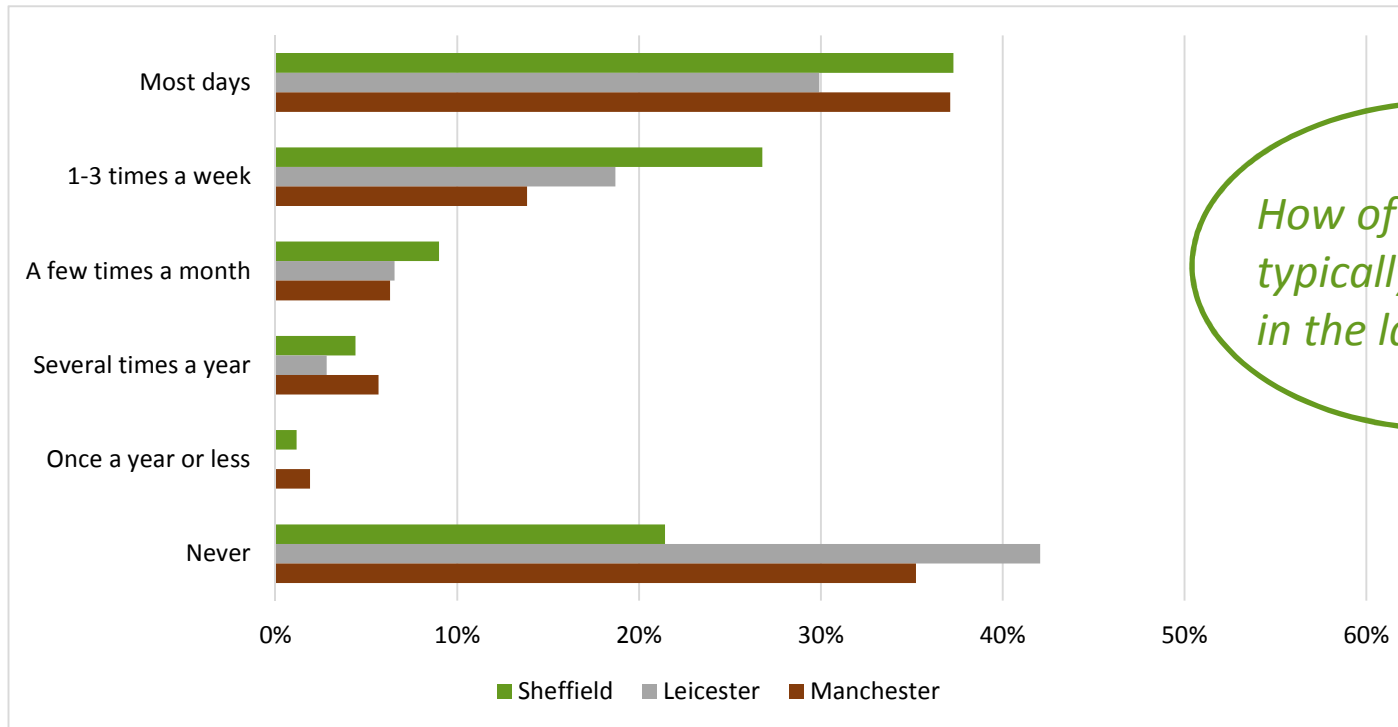
How often did you typically drive a car in the last year?
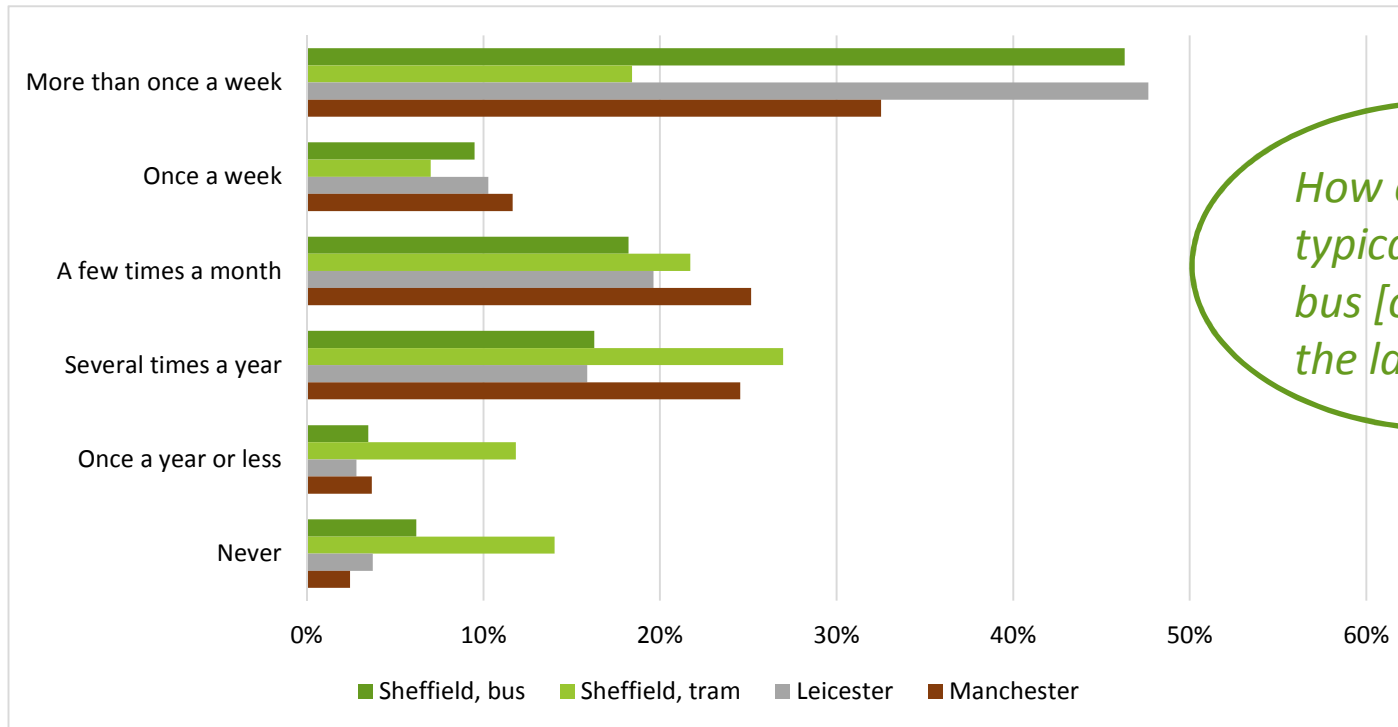
Sheffield ■ Leicester ■ Manchester

Base: all online survey respondents (Sheffield and Leicester); all survey respondents whose free tickets did actually arrive in the post (Manchester). N=523 in Sheffield; 159 in Manchester; 107 in Leicester. Note: the numbers include those people who gave their vouchers or tickets to other people to use.

Tickets/vouchers that reached regular car drivers = **64% 49% 51%** (but some gave theirs to others to use)

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The promotion reached beyond existing bus and tram users

How often did you typically travel by bus [or tram] in the last year?

Legend: Sheffield, bus | Sheffield, tram | Leicester | Manchester

Base: all online survey respondents (Sheffield and Leicester); all survey respondents whose free tickets had arrived in the post (Manchester). N= 516 in Sheffield (bus); 456 in Sheffield (tram); 163 in Manchester; 107 in Leicester. Note: the numbers include those people who gave their vouchers or tickets to other people to use. Sheffield bus users may also be tram users.

Survey respondents who already use buses more than once per week = **46%** **48%** **33%**

Sheffield survey respondents who already use trams more than once a week = **18%**

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## The trial free trips improved impressions of bus and tram travel
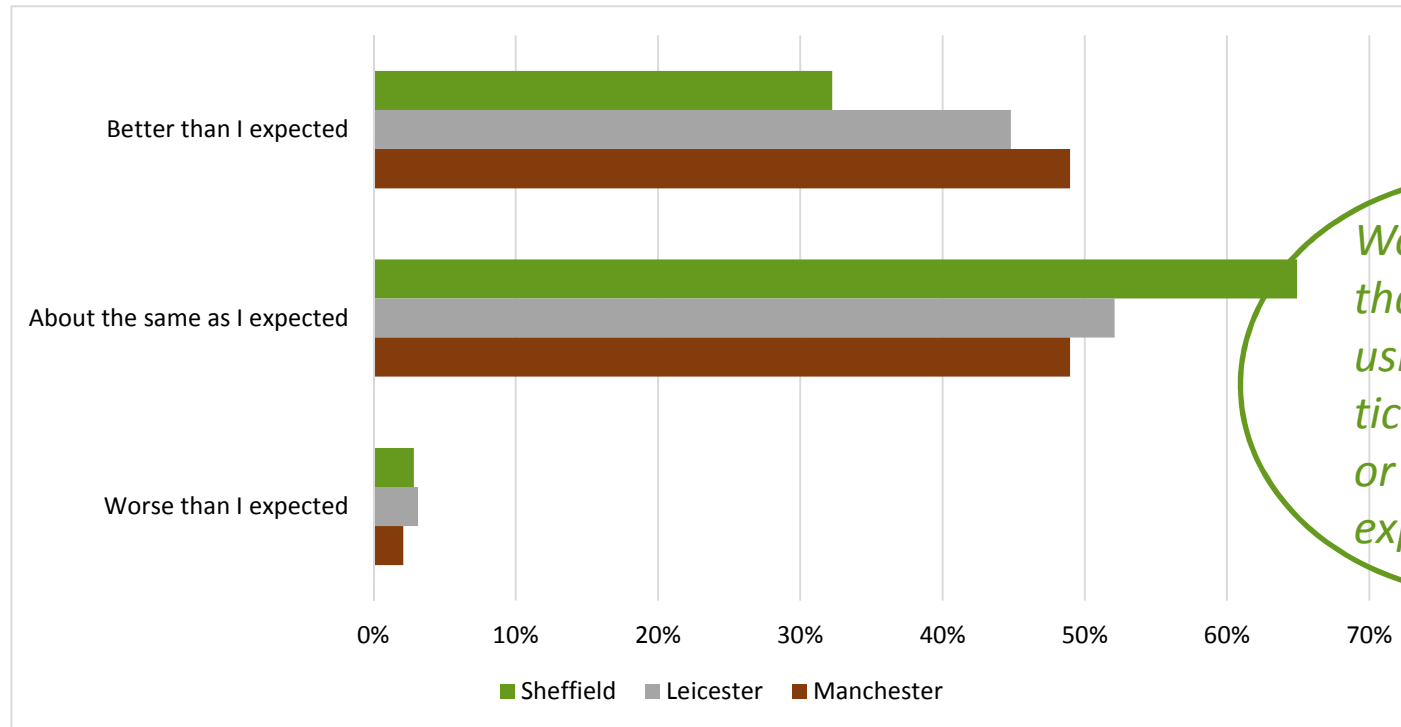
Base: all online survey respondents who had used a free ticket. N=493 in Sheffield; 96 in Manchester; 96 in Leicester

Proportions who found their trip better than anticipated = **32%** **45%** **49%**

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There is some evidence for short-term increased bus / tram use amongst very infrequent bus / tram users

Since using your free ticket, how many more times have you travelled as a paying passenger?
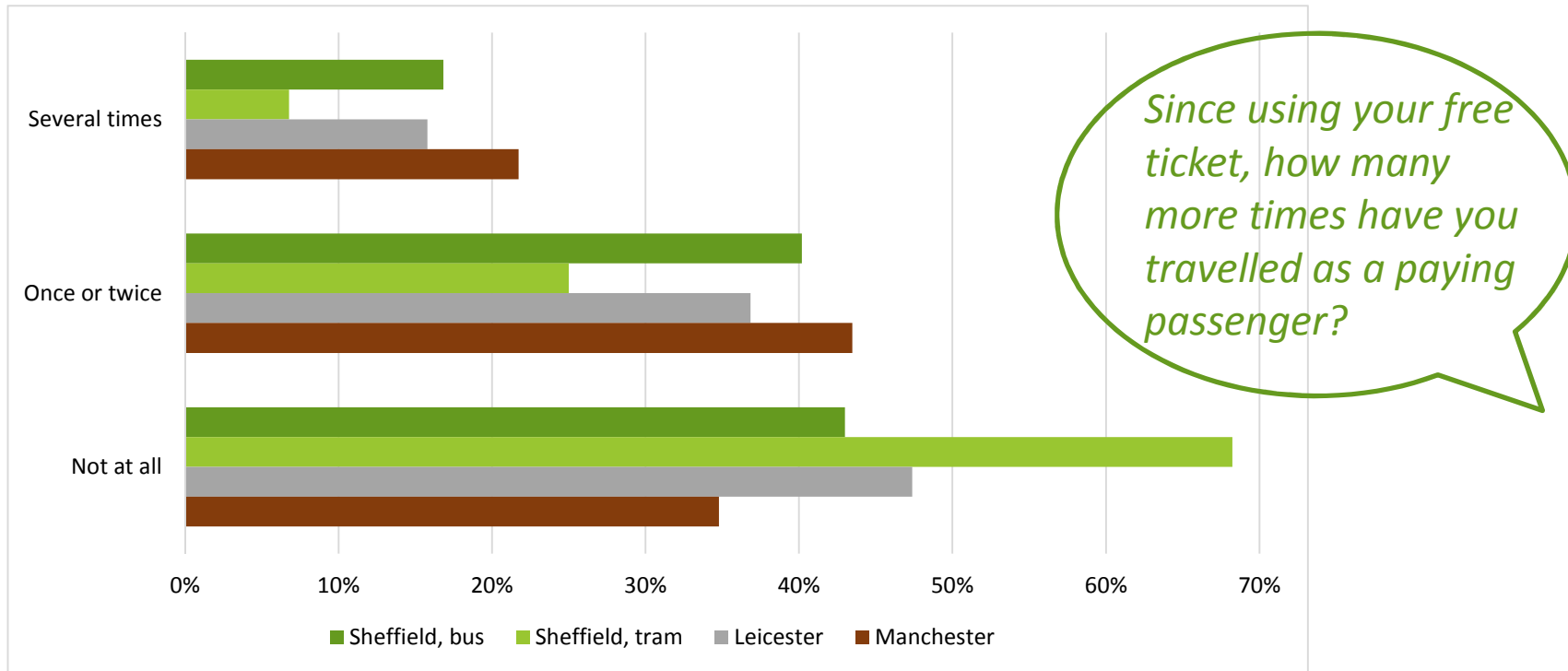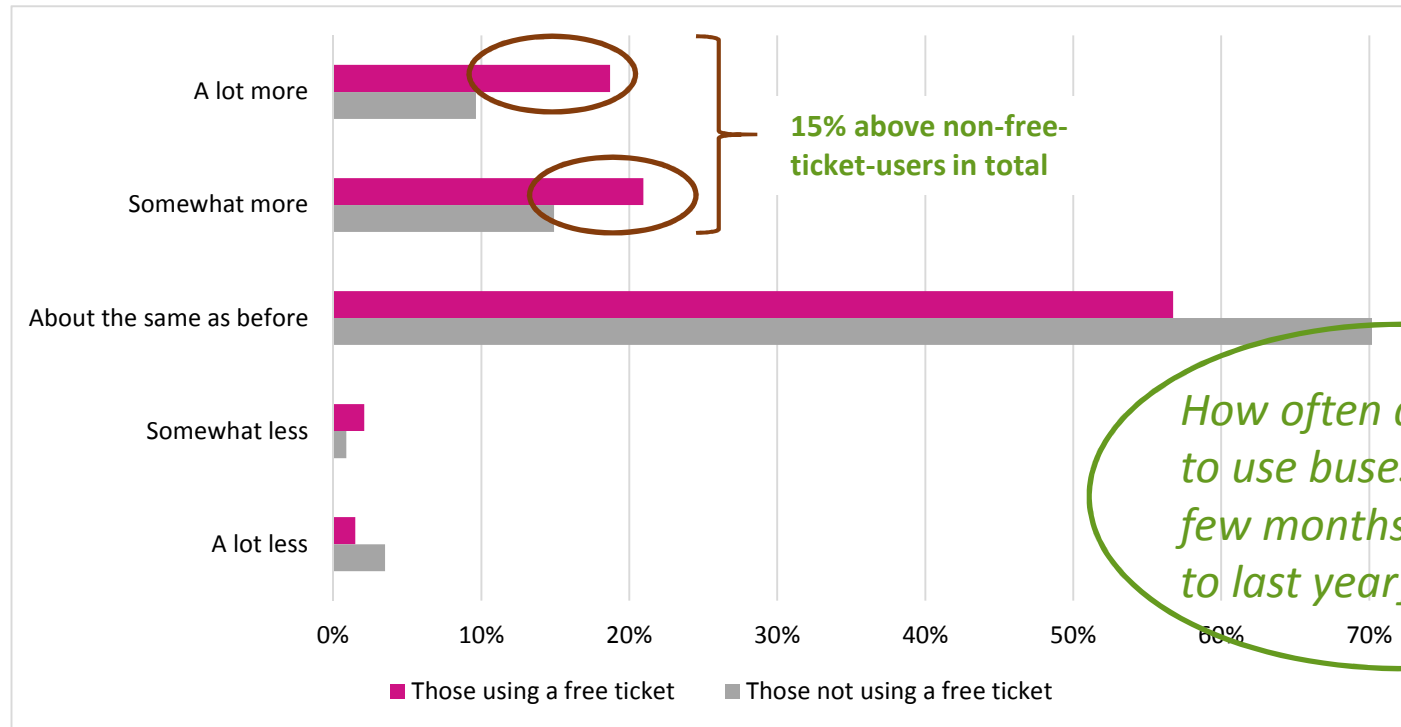
Base: online survey respondents who had used a free ticket, and who had been infrequent users of buses / trams in the previous year (using these modes 'several times a year', 'once a year or less' or 'never'). N=107 for Sheffield, bus; 192 for Sheffield, tram; 23 for Manchester; 19 for Leicester

Very infrequent passengers' subsequent bus journeys within a few weeks = 57% 53% 65%

Sheffield very infrequent tram users' subsequent journeys = 32%

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There are also indications that people who trialled a free bus trip expect to use buses more in future

15% above non-free-ticket-users in total

Chart categories: A lot more, Somewhat more, About the same as before, Somewhat less, A lot less

■ Those using a free ticket   ■ Those not using a free ticket

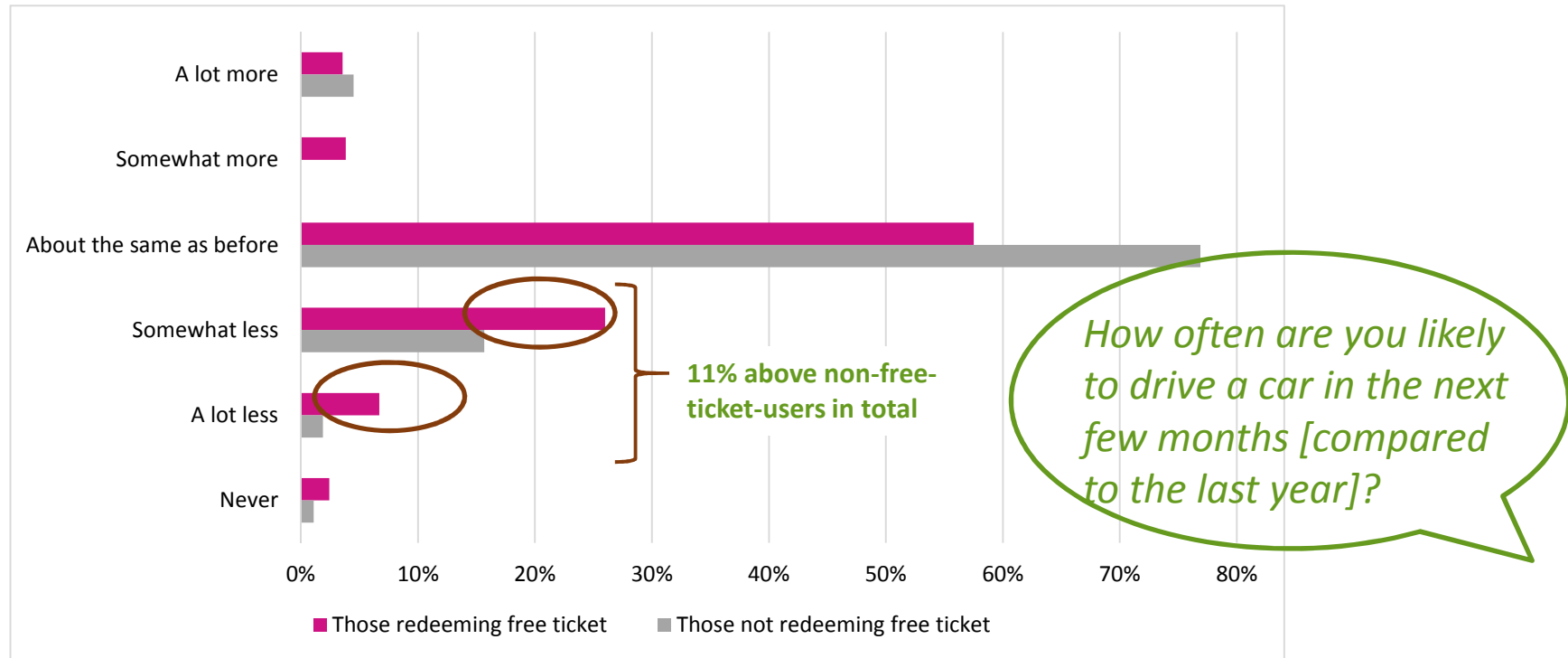*How often are you likely to use buses in the next few months [compared to last year]?*

Base: 'Those using a free ticket'= online survey respondents who had used a free ticket (N=668), in Sheffield (N= 476), Manchester (N=96) or Leicester (N=96). 'Those not using a free ticket' = online survey respondents who had received but not used a free ticket (N=114), in Sheffield (N= 36), Manchester (N=67) or Leicester (N=11). Graph shows aggregated data for the three cities for bus use (tram use in Sheffield was subject to a separate question).

Even those who did NOT use their free tickets say they will use buses more in future – an apparent 'desire to please' response bias – but free ticket users show higher self-prediction of future bus use

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…And indications that people who trialled a free bus trip expect to drive a car less in future

11% above non-free-ticket-users in total

How often are you likely to drive a car in the next few months [compared to the last year]?

Those redeeming free ticket   Those not redeeming free ticket

Base: 'Those using a free ticket'= online survey respondents who had used a free ticket and who previously drive at least a few times a month (N=450), in Sheffield (N= 351), Manchester (N=49) or Leicester (N=50). 'Those not using a free ticket' = online survey respondents who had received but not used a free ticket and who previously drove at least a few times a month (N=82), in Sheffield (N= 31), Manchester (N=42) or Leicester (N=9).

Even those who did NOT use their free tickets say they will drive less in the next few months – an apparent 'desire to please' response bias – but free ticket users show a greater self-prediction of lower car use

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There is some evidence that the key messages being communicated through the projects (convenience of bus use versus hassle of driving) resonated
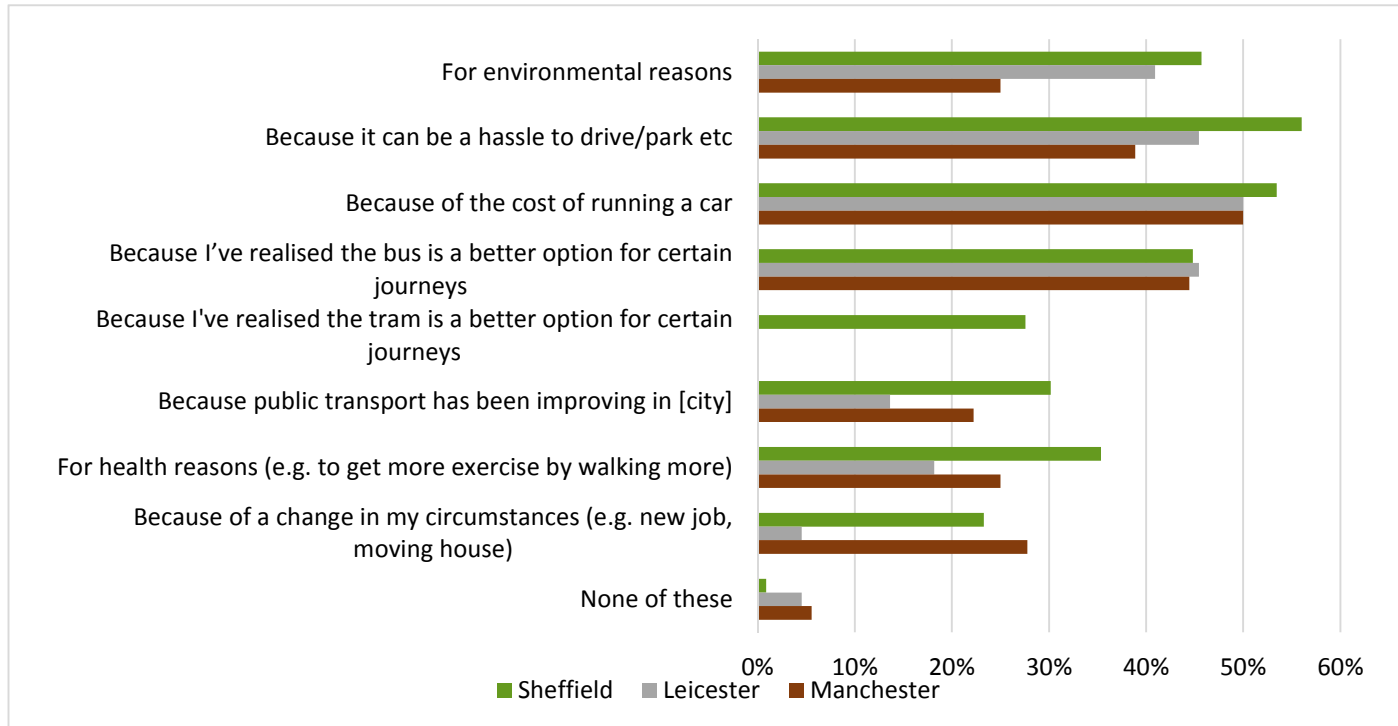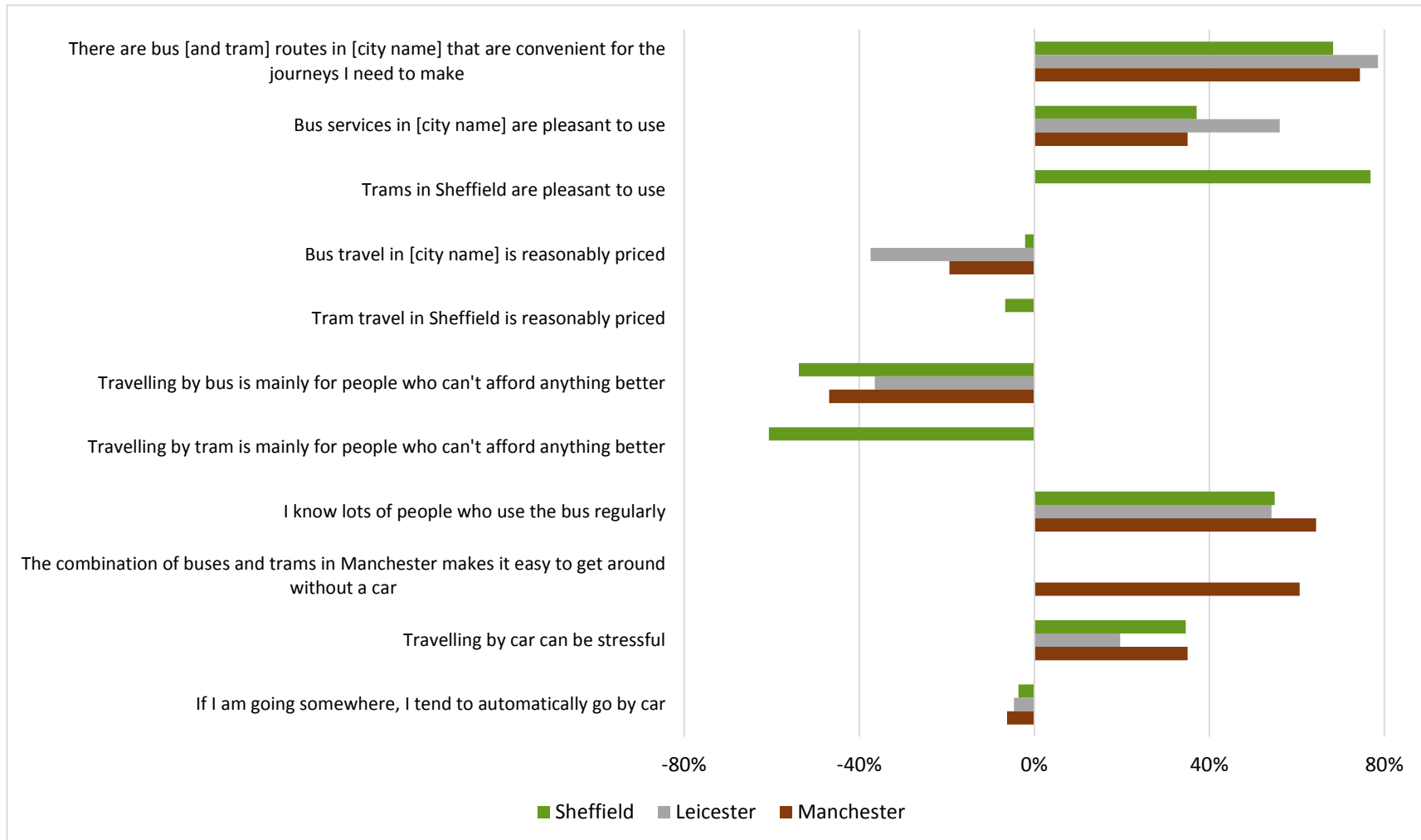

Base: Online survey respondents who expect to drive less in the next few months. N=116 Sheffield; 36 Manchester; 22 Leicester

The graph shows reported reasons for self-predicted reduction in future driving

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Impressions of public transport were positive (except for price)

Base: all online survey respondents (Sheffield and Leicester); all survey respondents whose free tickets had arrived in the post (Manchester). N=526 in Sheffield; 160 in Manchester; 107 in Leicester

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Sheffield street teams made a positive impression
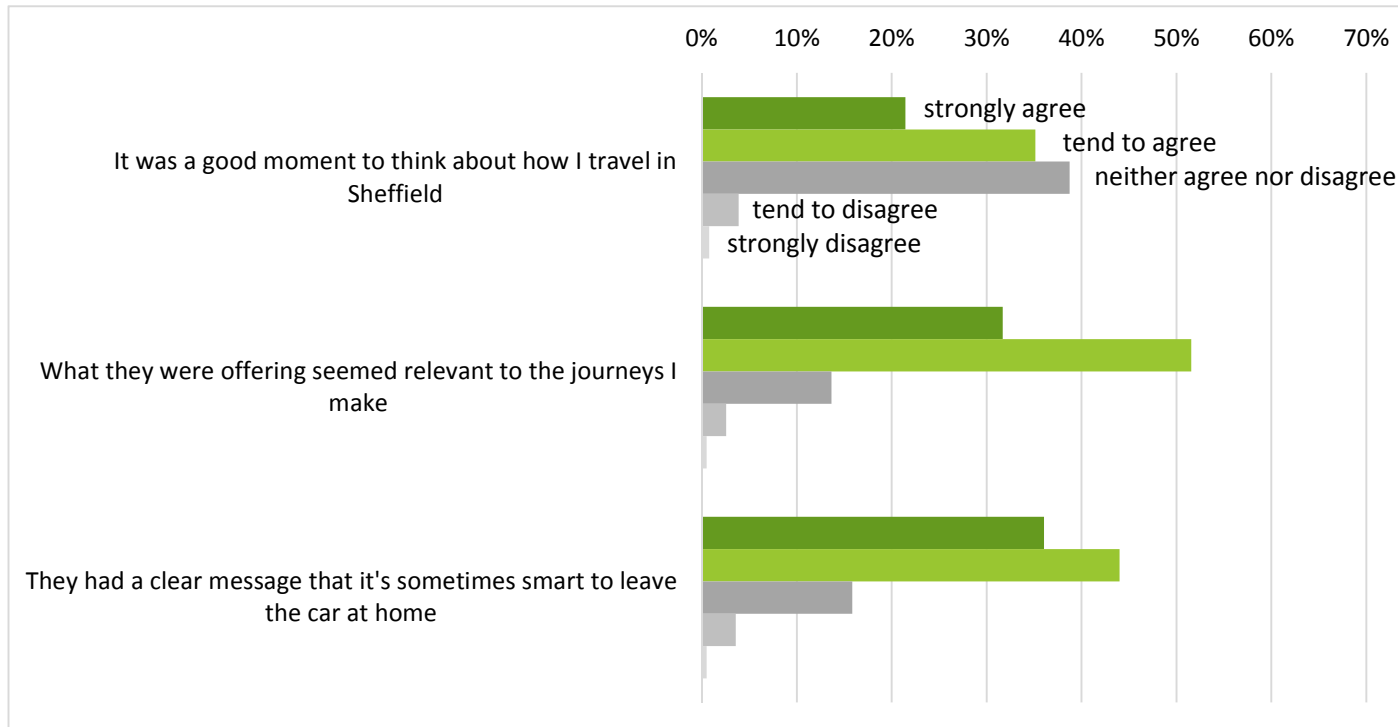
Question asked was: *'The 'Travel Free' street team tried to approach you at a moment when transport might have been on your mind, or your car journey might not have been feeling too good! How did this affect you?'*

Base: survey respondents who had direct contact with street team (N=387)

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Manchester community radio campaign went across well
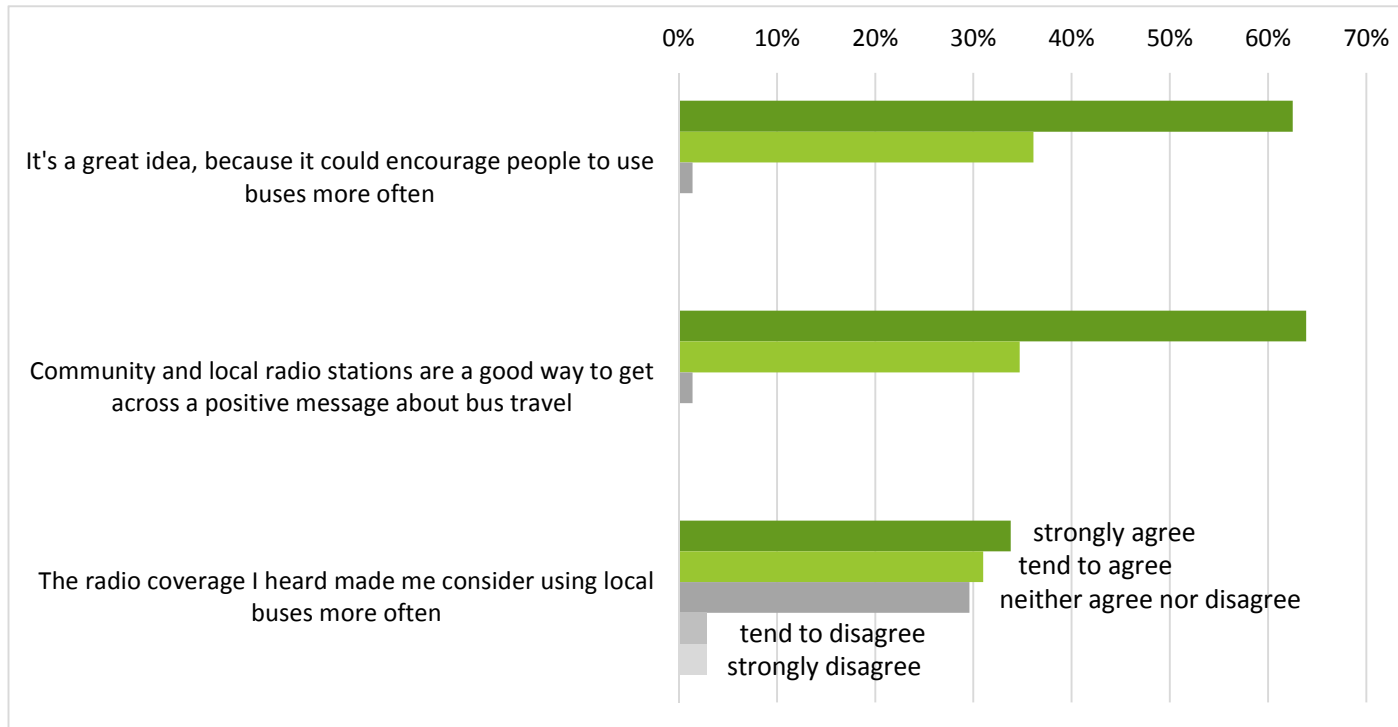
Question asked was: *'What do you think about the idea of local radio stations promoting a Free Bus Day to encourage people to travel by bus in Manchester?*

Base: survey respondents who heard about Free Bus Day on a radio station (N=159)

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Leicester community ambassadors were perceived as good champions
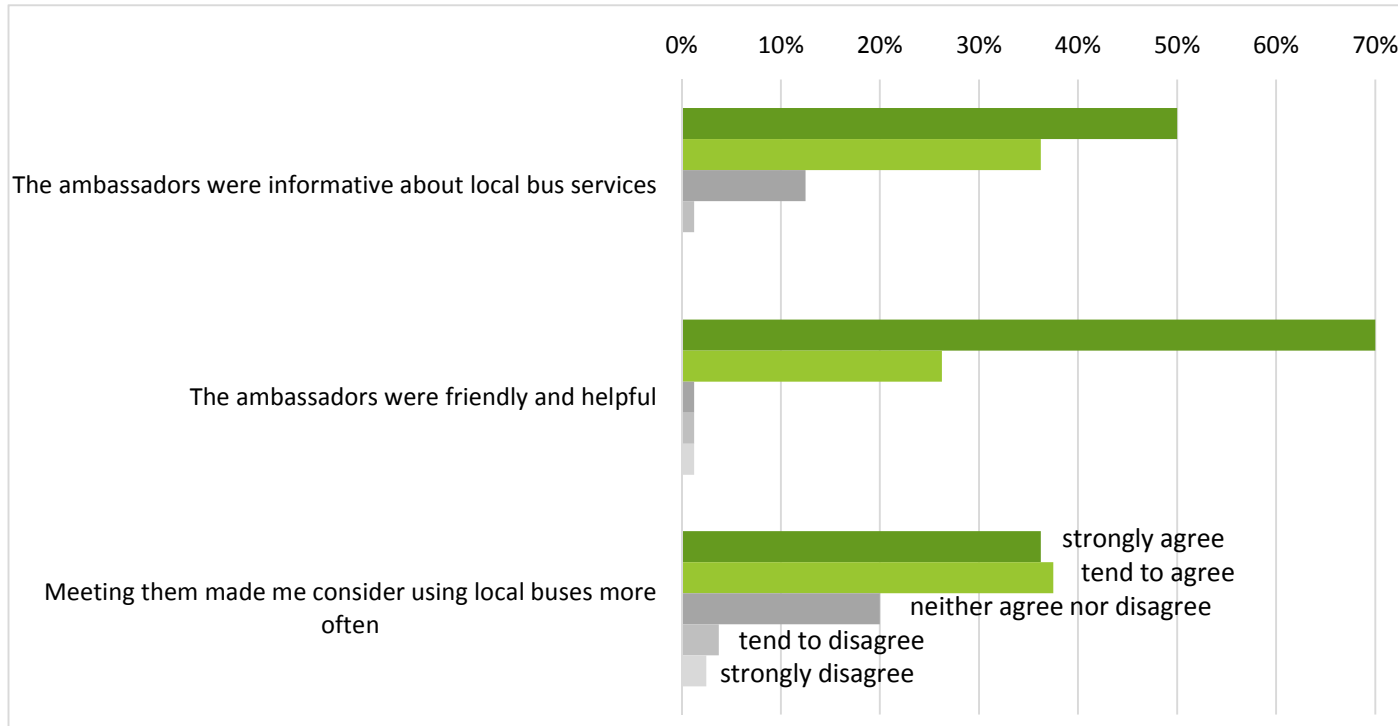
Question asked was: '*And what was your impression of the person at the stall / event who spoke to you about buses in Leicester?*'

Base: survey respondents who had direct contact with community ambassadors (N=80)

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The campaigns clearly had an influence on some people
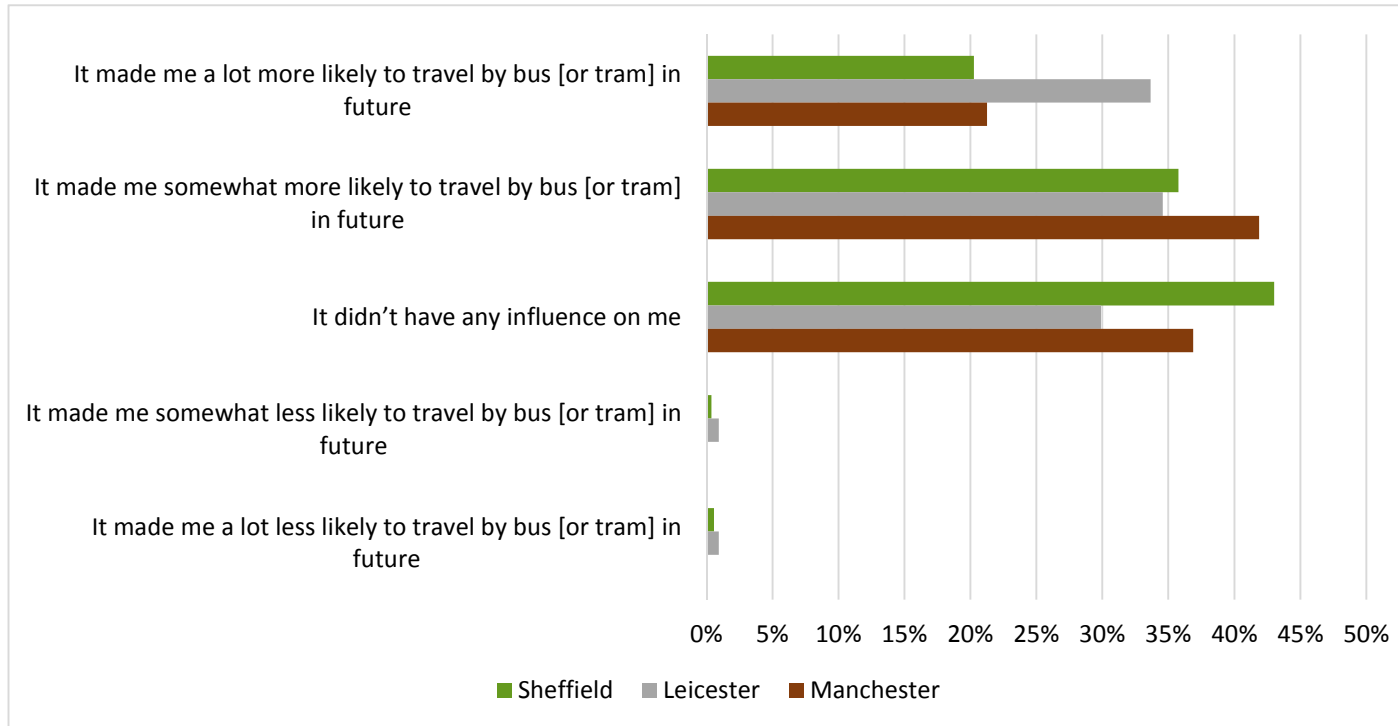
Question differed in the three cities as follows: Sheffield: *'How would you say the free CityWide Day ticket promotion and any contact you had with the 'Travel Free' street team has influenced you overall?'* Manchester: *'How would you say Free Bus Day and the free DaySaver ticket promotion has influenced you overall?'* Leicester: *'How would you say the contact you had with 'Greener Journeys Leicester' (including any stall or event where someone spoke to you about buses, and any information and / or free tickets you received) has influenced you?'* Base: all online survey respondents (Sheffield and Leicester); all survey respondents whose free tickets had arrived in the post (Manchester). N=523 in Sheffield; 160 in Manchester; 107 in Leicester

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Questions arising for a next stage

- **Could this type of project be cost-effective if rolled out on a large scale?**

  Experience from personal travel planning marketing programmes indicates that roll-out costs may be more than 70% lower than pilot costs per person reached

- **How might the targeting of drivers be 'honed'?**

  There is a balance to be struck between targeting drivers and achieving high numbers, that may require longer activity periods and careful monitoring of effectiveness of different activities in different locations

- **How might the recruitment of community ambassadors be 'honed'?**

  It may be valuable to find ways to recruit community ambassadors specifically from socio-demographic groups that match the profile of car drivers being targeted

- **How might the best aspects of the different pilot projects be 'mixed and matched'?**

  There are many ways it would be possible to run the different projects in parallel in the same city to 'bolster' each other or to 'blend' the delivery mechanism used in one type of project with activities used in another.

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Checklist for effective implementation of future projects

- Allow longer lead-in times than were available for the pilot projects. Ideally, develop long-term working relationships with community-based organisations.

- Implement any high profile 'blitz' campaigns in summer if possible.

- Take a city-wide, multi-operator approach.

- Plan activities to get a balance between 'quantity' and 'quality' (high % in the target audience of drivers).

- Invest in strong promotional materials and high visibility displays.

- If using professional street teams, it is worth making sure they are high quality (like Link).

- For any full-scale campaign, put in place security measures to minimise 'voucher hunting'.

- Continue to build in evaluation from the outset to gain data on car-use avoided and to learn what works.

- Build in a dedicated budget for incentives / prizes: the email contacts and monitoring data are worth it.

- Recognise that in order to recruit high calibre volunteers, campaigns must be in the context of buses providing a community service and a public good – so that volunteers feel that it is something they wish to promote. Volunteers giving their time need to feel they are working for a better public service (rather than for the benefit of a corporate brand).

- For ambassadors taking on 'public-facing' roles provide training and briefing similar to that provided by Link to its professional street teams in Sheffield.

- Continue to invest in support and back-up to make volunteers feel appreciated as part of the team (i.e. good volunteers don't come free).

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Key opportunities

- Street teams currently have access to high-grade employees (possibly because of the current economic climate), and it is worthwhile to use them.

- It is worthwhile for bus operators to invest in developing long-term relationships with community groups with shared agendas. There would be benefits in building on the relationships established through the pilot projects while they are still 'warm'.

- Established community groups may provide a route for recruitment of ambassadors with strong community links, who match the profile of target population groups that could be encouraged to use buses more.

- There is potential to experiment with bus drivers as ambassadors.

- Campaigns of this type could collect email addresses and customer information which could be used to develop ongoing relationship marketing.

- Some community radio stations may offer a gateway to relevant social groups (and a means to capture their contact details for long-term use).

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