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Cowal and Rosneath Community Needs Assessment

Feedback Report

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Introduction

Following the publication of the independent Community Needs Assessment report for Cowal and Rosneath (Gourock-Dunoon and Gourock-Kilcreggan passenger ferry services), Transport Scotland (TS) commissioned a short survey for users of CalMac's Gourock-Dunoon passenger ferry service. The total number of respondents to the survey was 471. Drop-in public engagement sessions were also held in Kilcreggan on 1 October, Dunoon on 2 October, and Gourock on 3 October 2024. TS officials also met with the Gourock-Dunoon-Kilcreggan Vessels and Infrastructure Programme Reference Group and the Cowal Transport Forum.

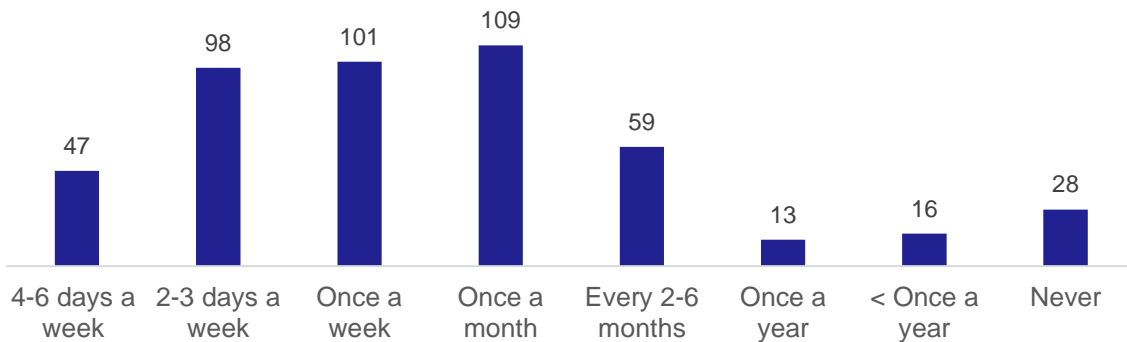
The user survey was launched on the 11th of September and ran until the 9th of October, with the [Community Needs Assessment report](#) available on Transport Scotland's website. It contained seven mandatory questions for users of the service, which were centred around ferry use and the [options](#) the report generated.

This report highlights the key themes from the feedback that was captured from the user survey, engagement events, and from other correspondence received.

User Survey Findings

Ferry Use

Q1: How often do you use CalMac ferry that links Gourock and Dunoon?

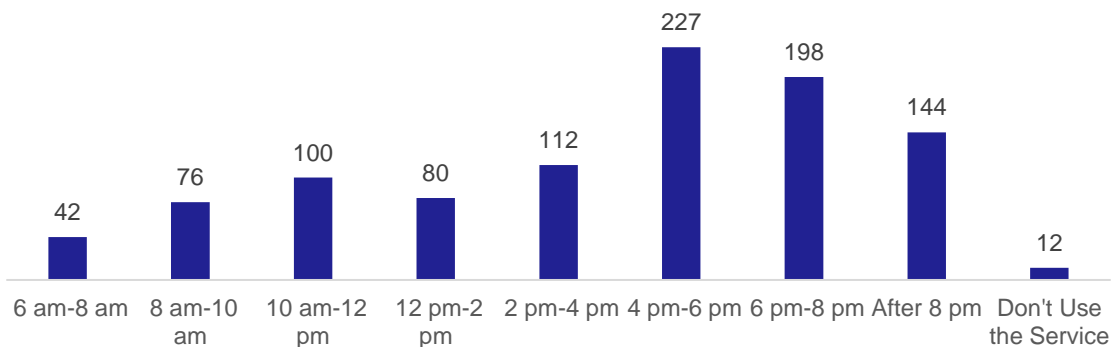


101 respondents used the CalMac passenger ferry service between Gourock and Dunoon at least once a week. 109 used the service to travel once a month. 98 respondents used the ferry 2-3 days a week, while 47 respondents said that they used the ferry service 4-6 days a week.

59 respondents used the ferry service every 2-6 months. 13 used the ferry once a year and 16 respondents used the ferry less than once every year.

28 respondents did not use the ferry service.

Q2: During what sailing times do you travel most on CalMac ferries when going from Gourock to Dunoon? Please select all that apply



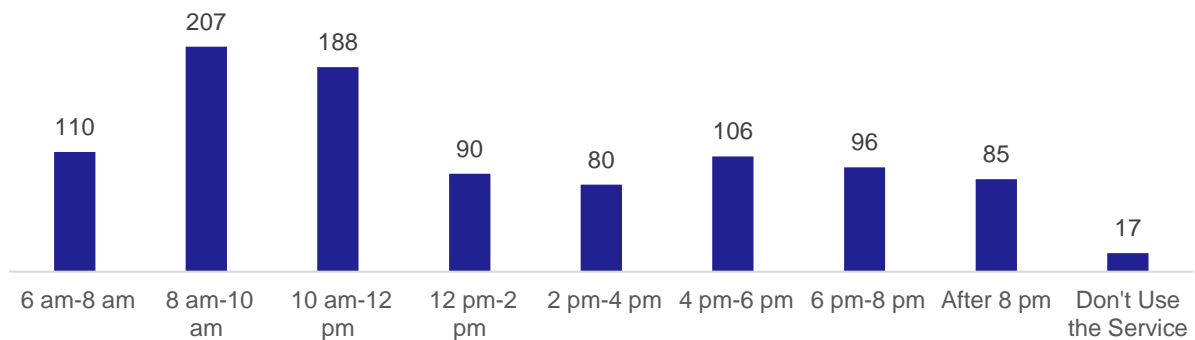
This question was a multiple-choice question, and respondents could choose more than one time window as the sailing time they travel most on CalMac ferries.

227 respondents travelled most between 4-6pm; 198 between 6-8 pm and 144 respondents travelled after 8 pm.

112 respondents said that they travelled most between 2-4pm, 100 between 10am-12 pm. 76 respondents travelled between 8-10am and 80 travelled between 12-2pm. 42 respondents travelled most frequently between 6-8am.

12 respondents did not use the service.

Q3: During what sailing times do you travel most on CalMac ferries when going from Dunoon to Gourock? Please select all that apply.



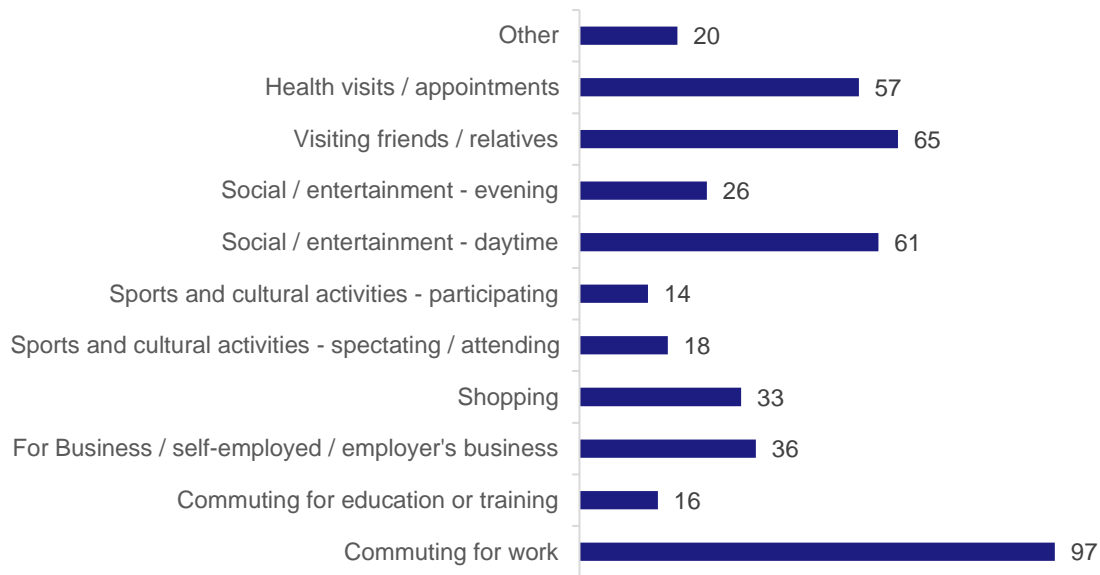
This question was a multiple-choice question, and respondents could choose more than one time window as the sailing time they travelled most on CalMac ferries.

207 respondents travelled most between 8-10am and 188 between 10am-12pm. 110 respondents travelled between 6-8am.

90 respondents travelled most during 12-2pm and 80 respondents travelled most between 2-4pm. 106 respondents travelled on CalMac ferry most frequently between 4-6pm, 96 between 6-8 pm and 85 travelled most after 8pm.

17 did not use the service.

Q4: What is your MAIN reason for using the CalMac Gourock-Dunoon ferry?



22% of users used CalMac ferry service to commute for work, 8% for self-employed and business travel and 4% for education and training purposes.

15% users used the ferry to visit friends and relatives, 14% used CalMac ferry for daytime entertainment and social engagements, and 6% for evening entertainments and social engagements.

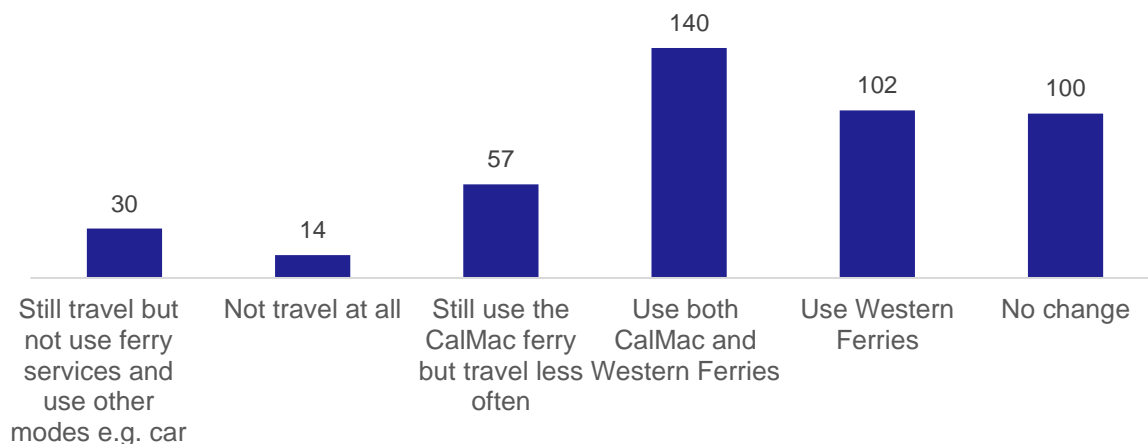
13% users used the ferry for healthcare appointments.

3% of users used the ferry to participate in sports and cultural activities and 4% travelled to attend sports and cultural activities. 7% of respondents used the ferry to shop and 5% travelled for other purposes.

Respondents noted that they used the ferry service for more than one of these purposes.

Q5: How would these possible changes to the CalMac Gourock-Dunoon ferry affect your travel? Please select one option for each.

Hourly sailings **ONLY** throughout the day (including during the morning and evening peaks.)

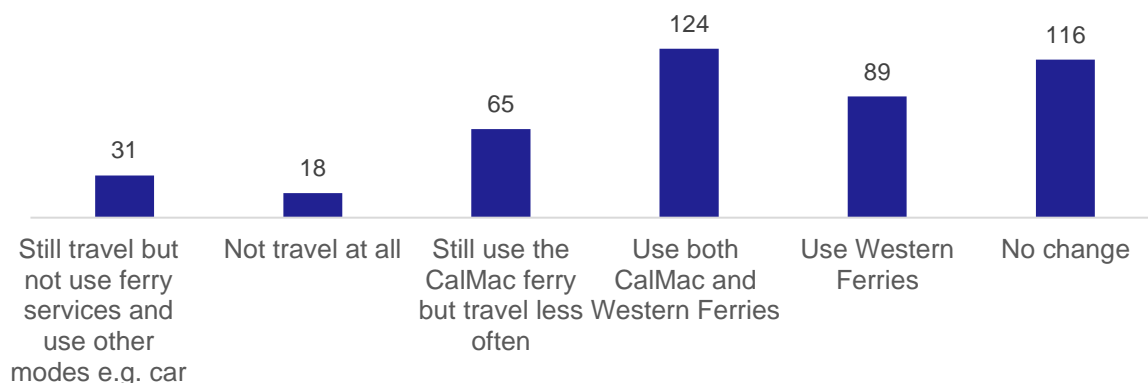


In an all-day hourly service scenario, 100 people would continue to use CalMac services as usual.

102 would switch to using Western Ferries for the journey they currently make with CalMac. 140 would use both CalMac and Western Ferries and 57 would still use the CalMac ferry but travel less often.

14 people would stop travelling completely. 30 people would still travel but not use ferry services and use other modes.

Hourly sailings **ONLY** during the off-peak (daytime) and evening

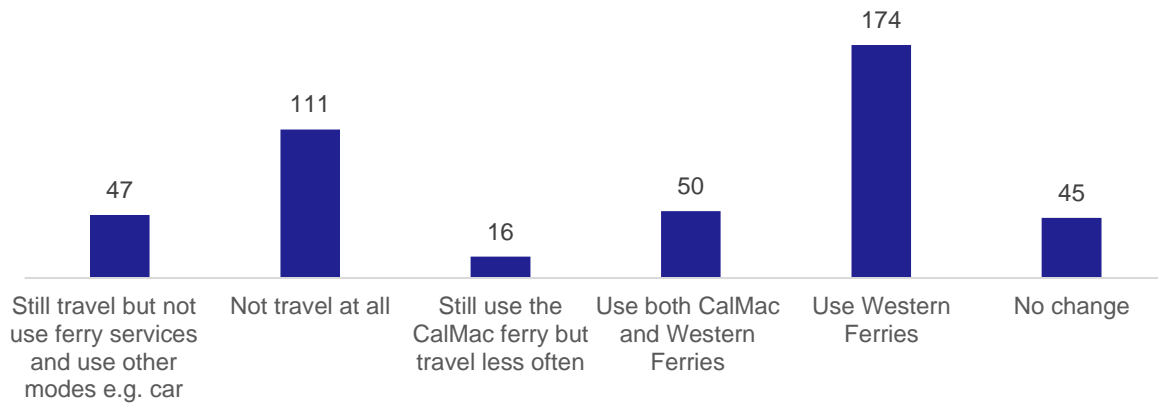


In this scenario, 116 people would continue to use CalMac services as usual.

89 people would switch to using Western Ferries for the journey they currently make with CalMac. 124 would use both CalMac and Western Ferries. 65 would still use the CalMac ferry but travel less often.

18 people would not travel at all. 31 people would still travel but not use ferry services and use other modes.

No sailings later in the evening e.g. after 8 p.m.

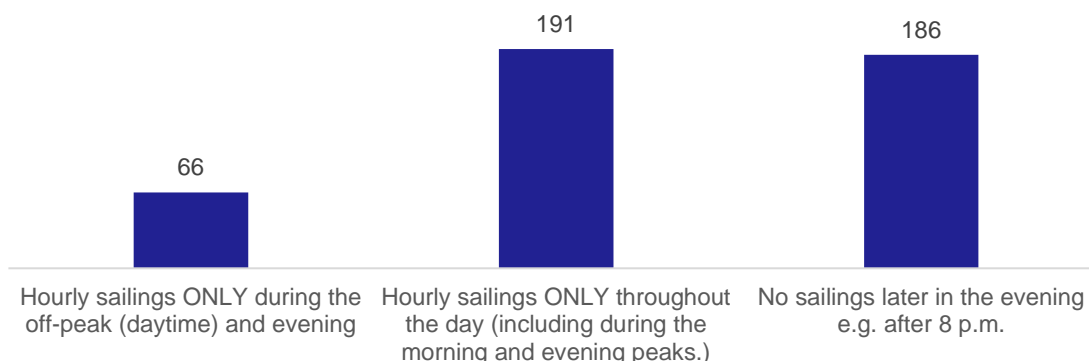


45 people would continue to use CalMac services as usual.

174 people would switch to using Western Ferries for the journey they currently make with CalMac. 50 would use both CalMac and Western Ferries while 16 people would still use CalMac ferry but travel less often

111 people would stop travelling completely, while 11% would still travel but use other modes such as cars.

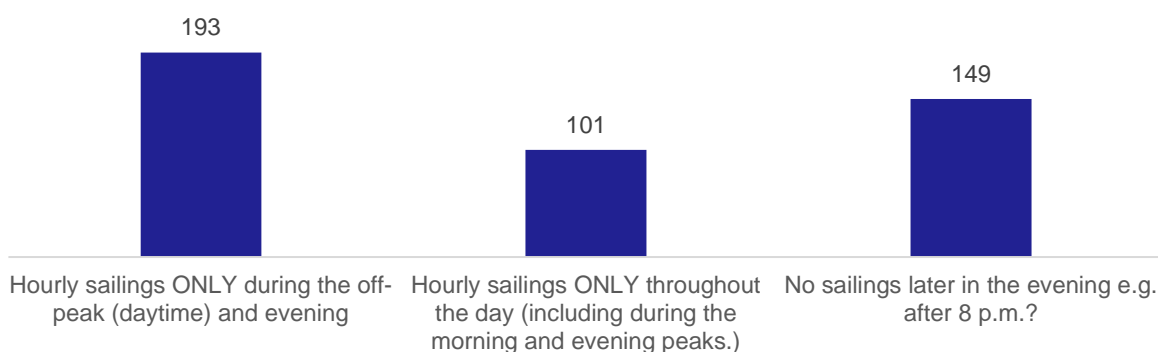
Q6: Given the reasons for your current use of the service, which of the following changes would have the MOST impact on your day-to-day activities?



191 people said that a change to hourly sailings throughout the day would have the most impact on their day-to-day activities.

186 said that no sailings later in the evening, e.g. after 8pm would have the most impact. 66 people said that hourly sailings only during the off-peak hours and evening would impact them the most.

Q7: Given the reasons for your current use of the service, which of the following changes would have the LEAST impact on your day-to-day activities?

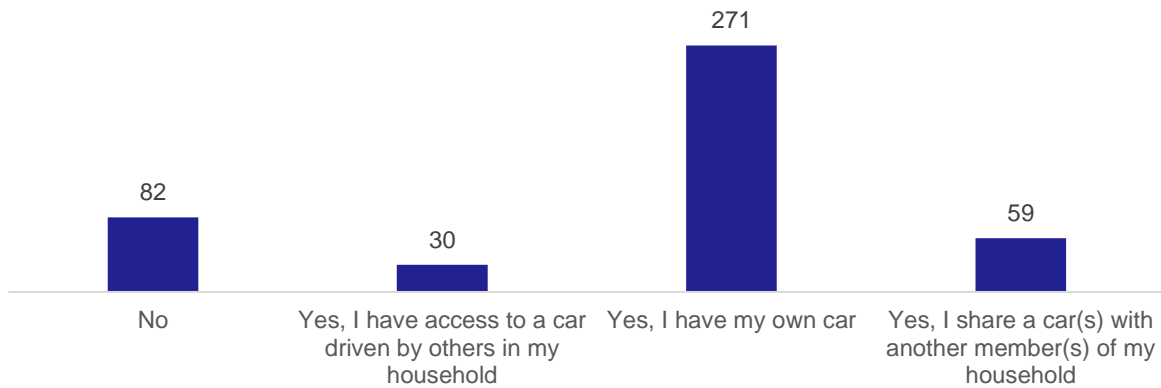


193 people said that hourly sailings only during the off-peak period would have the least impact on their day-to-day activities.

149 people said that no sailings later in the evening, e.g. after 8pm would have the least impact.

101 people said that hourly sailings throughout the day would impact them the least.

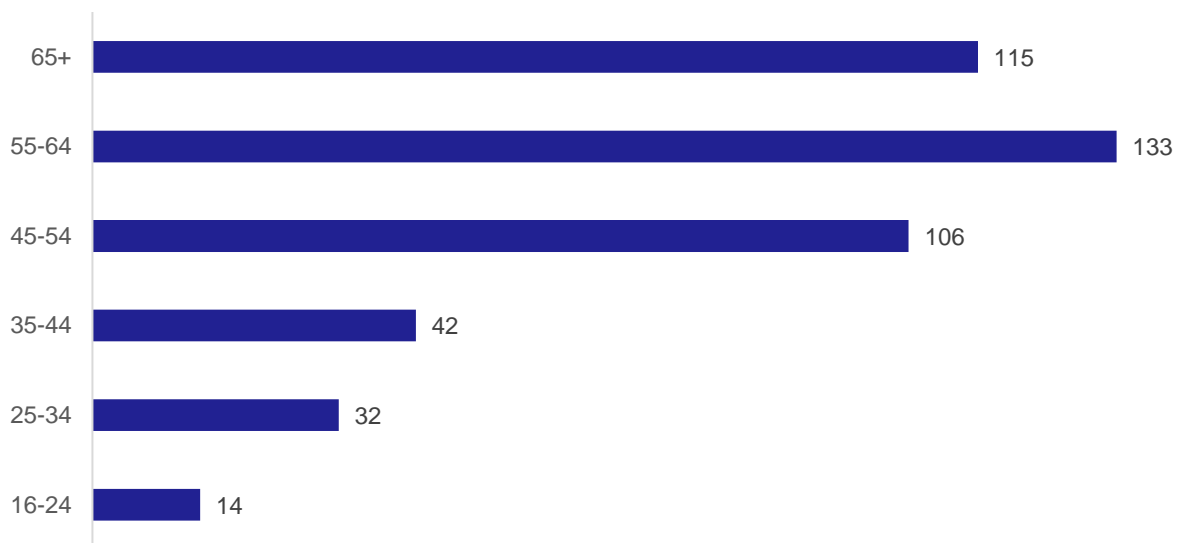
Q8: Do you own or have access to a car in your household?



82 respondents did not have access to a car.

271 respondents owned their car, 59 shared a car with someone else in their family and 30 had access to a car driven by others in the household.

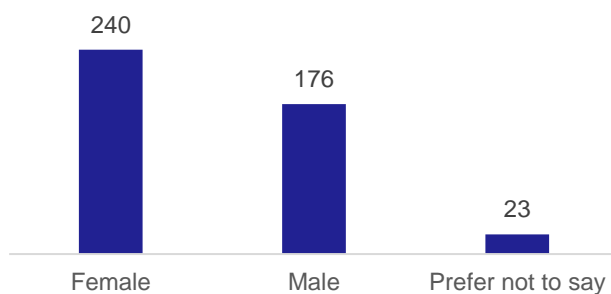
Q9: What is your age?



133 respondents were between the ages of 55 and 64, 115 over 65 years of age and 106 were between 45 and 54 years of age.

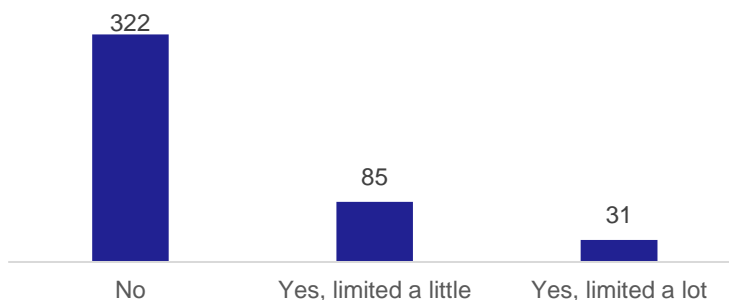
42 respondents were in the age range of 35-44 years. 32 respondents were in the age range of 25-34 years and 14 were between 16-24 years of age.

Q10: What is your sex?



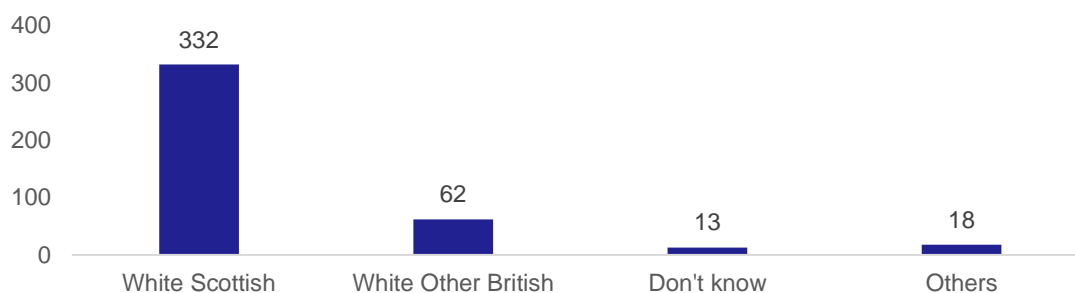
55% of the respondents were female, 40% respondents were male and 5% preferred not to answer.

Q11: Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?



322 respondents said their daily activities were not limited because of a health problem or disability. 85 said their day-to-day activities were limited a little and 31 said their day-to-day activities were limited a lot.

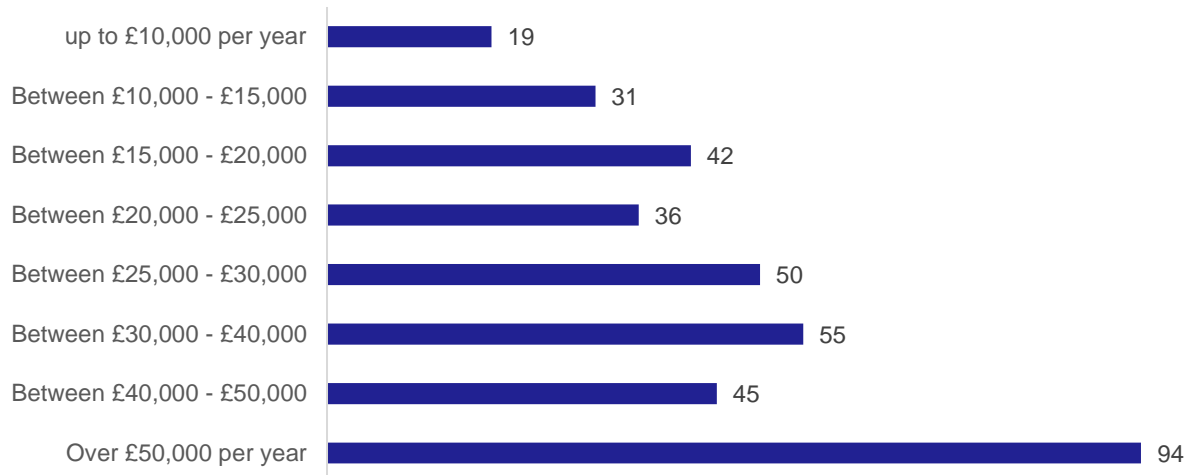
Q12: What is your ethnic group?



The majority (332) of respondents to the survey identified as White Scottish or White British (62), with a small number of respondents (18) indicating they were from other ethnic groups.

13 respondents indicated that they did not know their ethnic group.

Q13: What is your net household income?



94 respondents' net household income exceeded £50,000. 45 lived in households with income between £40,000 and £50,000 and 55 had income between £30,000 and £40,000.

50 respondents lived in households with net income between £25,000 and £30,000 and 36 had net household income between £20,000 and £25,000.

42 respondents had net household income between £15,000 and £20,000, 31 had net household income between £10,000-£15,000 and 19 respondents had net household income of under £10,000.

Community Engagement Feedback

Gourock - Kilcreggan

Officials from Transport Scotland, CalMac, Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) and Argyll and Bute Council held a drop-in style engagement session at Cove Burgh Hall on 1 October. The event was well attended and significant feedback was received. Feedback has been summarised below.

Key Themes

Accessibility

A key discussion point that came from the session in Kilcreggan was accessibility which was also witnessed by the officials who used the Gourock-Kilcreggan sailing to attend the event.

Embarking and disembarking MV Chieftain is restricted to the top deck, which is uncovered. A steep staircase leads to the sheltered seating area and toilet, making use of both difficult, if not impossible, during the sailing for wheelchair users or those with other mobility needs.

A steel, stepped, gangway is deployed from the vessel onto the pier. The ramp is narrow and does not allow easy access for wheelchairs and many prams/buggies to get on and off the vessel. Dependent on the tide, the ramp can be at a steep angle, making access difficult for some users.

The existing Victorian pier does not allow for easy access to the current vessel, and new infrastructure is required. It was noted that the local community do not particularly want to lose their existing pier, and suggestions were made for a new pier to be constructed at Fort Road.

Attendees also highlighted that the community council was working on a local development plan.

Sailing Times

The time of the last sailing of the day was another topic that was widely discussed at the event, with the last sailing leaving Gourock at 18:18 Monday-Saturday and leaving Kilcreggan at 18:36. This does not leave villagers with many options for

commuter travel to/from Glasgow or beyond, with the bus via Helensburgh a lengthy alternative.

This was also highlighted as a concern for healthcare appointments and leisure or social commitments that may run over time.

Sunday Sailings

There was a lot of enthusiasm among attendees around the option set out in the CNA report of bringing back a Sunday service, which was previously trialled but did not proceed. This was thought by the community to be something that would be worthwhile if the service was not too limited in time spread. However, it was advised that while this may be something that can be investigated, it may not be achievable or involve a restricted timetable due to crewing constraints.

“Triangular” Route and Helensburgh Service

Some attendees were keen to investigate the triangular route option further, and comments were made around this opening up communities to more growth, particularly if a Kilcreggan-Dunoon link could be established. This “triangular” option set out in the CNA report was also welcomed if it brought later sailings between the three points. Attendees also noted that a Kilcreggan-Helensburgh ferry service would be welcomed, with an idea also presented around linking further communities on both sides of the Clyde.

Parking Issues

Attendees raised concerns about the lack of parking in the village, particularly around the pier location, and how the car park would be filled for much of the day by ferry users.

Reliability

While reliability was not one of the major concerns in the village, there were some comments made about ferry cancellations due to adverse weather on one side or the other of the crossing. Although it was noted that this was likely inevitable until upgrades to pier facilities or replacement vessels came into force. It was noted that the service had improved since CalMac took over.

Gourock - Dunoon

Officials from Transport Scotland, CalMac, Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) and Argyll and Bute Council held a drop-in style engagement session at Queens Hall in Dunoon 2 October and Gamble Halls in Gourock on 3 October. The event in Dunoon was very well attended and significant feedback was received. The key concerns noted by the local community are covered below.

Key Themes

Reliability

Reliability on the Gourock-Dunoon route was one of the most heard concerns among attendees in both Dunoon and Gourock. The age of the ferries caused concern, as well as the fact that Western Ferries continued sailings in almost all weathers. A lot of attendees mentioned that reliability concerns, and confidence in the service, were the main barriers to more frequent use of the ferry. It was raised that reliable ferries were required to ensure success of the Dunoon Project, a project set up to revive tourism in the area.

Connecting Travel

The Dunoon-Gourock route is a town-centre to town-centre route, with connectivity being a key factor for users choosing the passenger ferry service. It was said numerous times at the events that the trains and buses no longer link up with the ferry times, and there are increasing wait times between connecting services. (Note that the engagement took place before the most recent change to ferry timetables to address rail connectivity; consultation by CalMac on this was being finalised at the time.) The ferry alternative to the CalMac service is a further out sailing via Western Ferries, and many people highlighted that it was not as easy to get to/from the Hunter's Quay and McInroy's Point ferry terminals via public transport. It was also noted that when certain CalMac sailings are cancelled due to the route being operated by a single vessel, it appears to be the "wrong" sailing cancelled for onward connecting bus travel in Dunoon. Suggestions were also made that updates/cancellations could be highlighted at rail stations or near bus stops.

Timetable Changes

It was highlighted that timetable changes are not communicated effectively, particularly for older ferry users who are not as confident online. Participants felt that

changes to timetables are not communicated with rail/bus services, thus leading to increased waiting and journey times for users.

Fares

Ticket prices for the Gourock-Dunoon route was a key issue for local ferry users, who were concerned that Road-Equivalent Tariff (RET) had not been introduced on to the route despite it being applied to most other CalMac services. The higher price of CalMac tickets compared to Western Ferries tickets was also noted following the withdrawal of certain multi-journey tickets.

Participants also highlighted that when 10 journey tickets were purchased, these would often expire due to not being checked when boarding the ferry. People also raised concerns that the passenger figures noted in the CNA report were not accurate because of tickets not being checked, however it was confirmed by CalMac that passenger figures recorded in the report are based on manual passenger headcounts carried out by crew. A shoreside ticketing service would be supported to ensure everyone was paying for their journeys.

Accessibility

Accessibility at both Gourock and Dunoon ports was raised as a concern by attendees. It was felt that both port and vessel improvements were required to bring a more reliable and accessible service.

Options presented and lack of trust

People attending the events felt that some of the options noted in the Community Needs Assessment report, while plausible, would not be the answer to a service they would consider using, and trust in, more until the infrastructure and vessels were replaced. They feel they have been promised improvements time and time again, yet continue to receive an unreliable, and expensive, service. Attendees at the event noted that a slightly reduced frequency of sailings would be acceptable, although not at peak times, if reliability in the service was significantly improved.

Updated Sailings and Carrying Charts

The Cowal and Rosneath Community Needs Assessment report, included charts depicting the sailings and carryings on each route. Following feedback from users and community representatives, these charts have been updated to show the more recent usage on both routes. Year-round sailing data has been used in the updated charts instead of only summer sailings as was the case in the report published in September 2024.

Gourock-Dunoon

Carryings by timetable period and day of week

All sailings (both directions) from October 2023 to September 2024 have been analysed based on the number of passengers carried per sailing. The figure below shows the number of times the ferry sailed with 0, 1, 2 passengers etc.

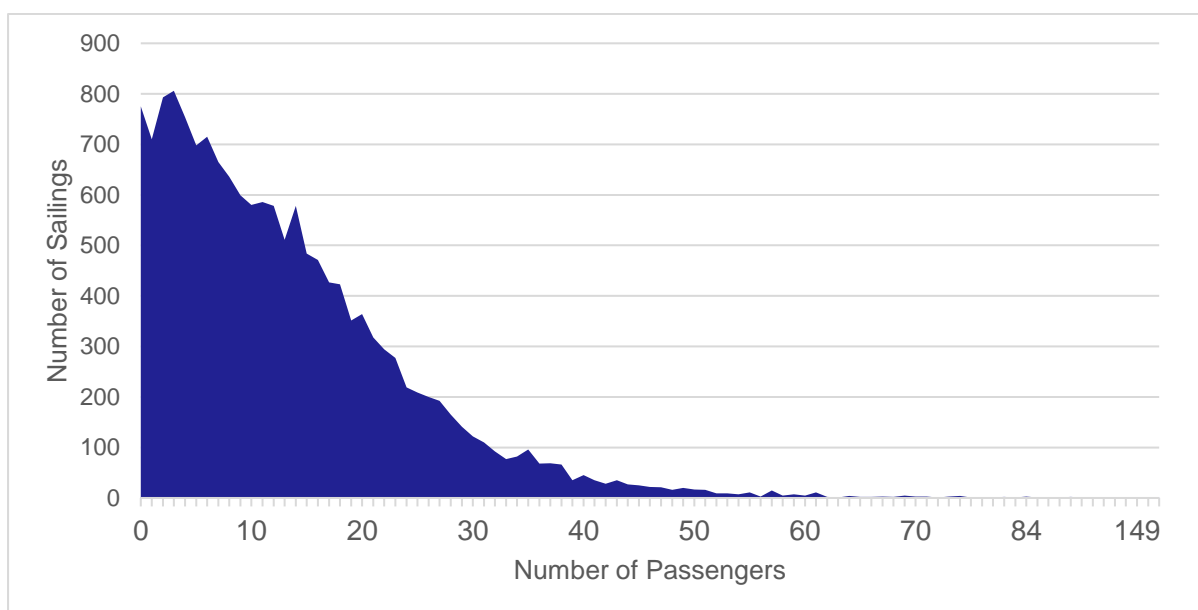


Figure 1: Gourock – Dunoon Route – number of sailings by passengers carried Oct 23- Sep 24 (source:CFL)

The latest sailing data implies that:

- **5%** of sailings carry **no passengers**
- **14%** of sailings carried **fewer than 3 passengers**
- **33%** of sailings carried **fewer than 7 passengers**
- **66%** of sailings carried **fewer than 16 passengers**
- **1%** of sailings carried **more than 50 passengers**

Figure 1 above is the updated Figure 3.3 (pg. 21) and the carrying data is the updated paragraph 3.3.7 (pg. 21) from CNA report.

Figure 2 below shows the number of passengers carried on each sailing from Dunoon to Gourock from October 2023 to September 2024.

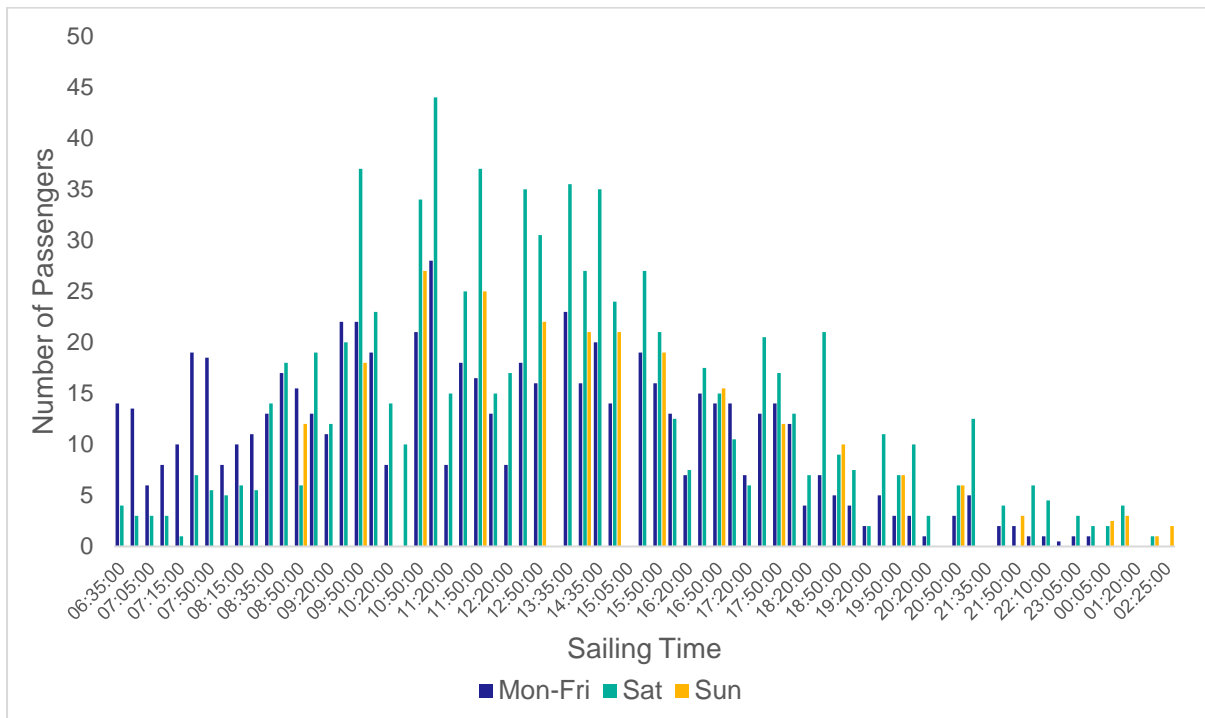


Figure 2: Dunoon – Gourock, passengers per sailing Sep 23- Oct24 (Source:CFL)
 (updated Figure 3.4, pg 22, [CNA Report](#))

- The main points of note from the above figure are as follows:
 - Of the **sailings that would facilitate an 09:00 arrival in Glasgow, the 07:35 sailing** is the busiest sailing Monday – Friday.
 - The **11:05** sailing from Dunoon to Gourock is the busiest sailing of the day.
 - Weekend demand is much more concentrated in the middle of the day, supporting leisure travel to Inverclyde and Glasgow.
 - It is notable from the chart that evening sailings are very lightly used on weekdays. Weekend evening sailings are used more intensively.

Figure 3 below shows the number of passengers carried on each sailing from Gourock to Dunoon from October 2023 to September 2024.

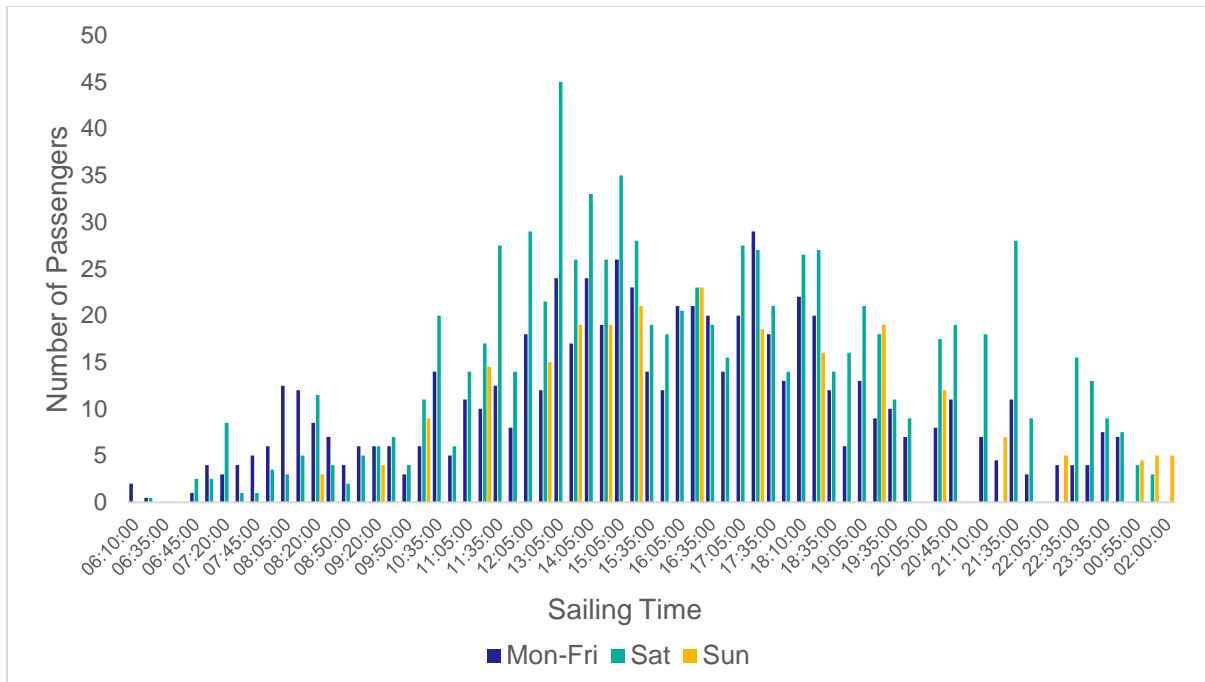


Figure 3: Gourock – Dunoon, passengers per sailing Oct 23-Sep 24 (source: CFL)

(updated figure 3.5, pg. 23, CNA report). The chart does not include three special sailings for Cowal Games in the interest of legibility, however, these are included in the overall passenger numbers considered.

- The main points of note from the above figure are as follows:
 - The Monday – Friday westbound flow is broadly the reverse of the Dunoon – Gourock direction in Figure 2, with the greatest demand being in mid-afternoon and early evening, as commuters and residents travelling for leisure / personal business return to Cowal. The peak weekday sailing in volume terms is the **17:20**.
 - The weekend pattern is broadly similar across the two directions, although weighted slightly more towards the later sailings from Gourock, with Cowal residents returning from e.g., leisure trips to Glasgow and Inverclyde.
 - The evening sailings are busier in the ‘to Cowal’ direction, particularly on a Saturday (and a Friday, although this is not shown independently in the figure).

Gourock-Kilcreggan

Figure 4 below breaks down the annual carryings by month for October 2023 to September 2024:

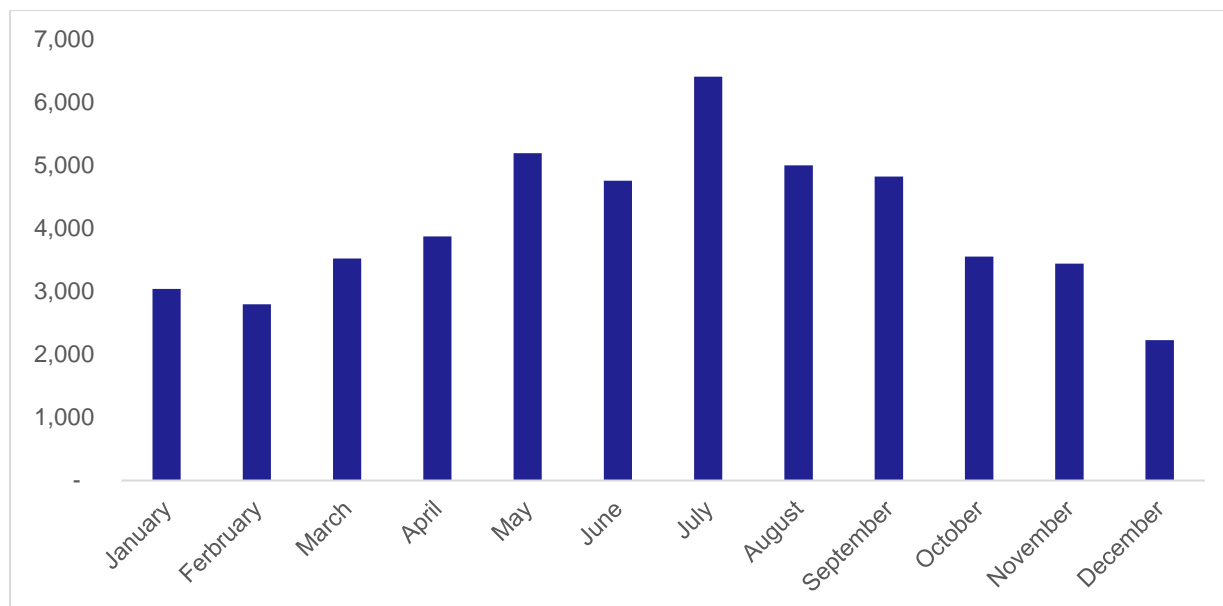


Figure 4: Kilcreggan – Gourock, carryings by month Oct 23-Sep 24 (source:CFL)

(Updated Figure 4.2, pg. 50, 2024 [CNA report](#))

- The main points of note from the above figure are as follows:
 - **July** is the peak month for carryings, likely driven by tourist / day-trippers and leisure travel from Rosneath. **May** is the second busiest month, with the two months enveloping the Scottish and English / Welsh school summer holidays and May public holidays respectively and collectively accounting for almost a quarter of annual route carryings.
 - Whilst summer is the peak period for the route, it is evident that there is a core year-round demand, with circa **2,200-3,500 passengers per month** carried over the period November – February.

Figure 5 below highlights total carryings by day of week between October 2023 to September 2024:

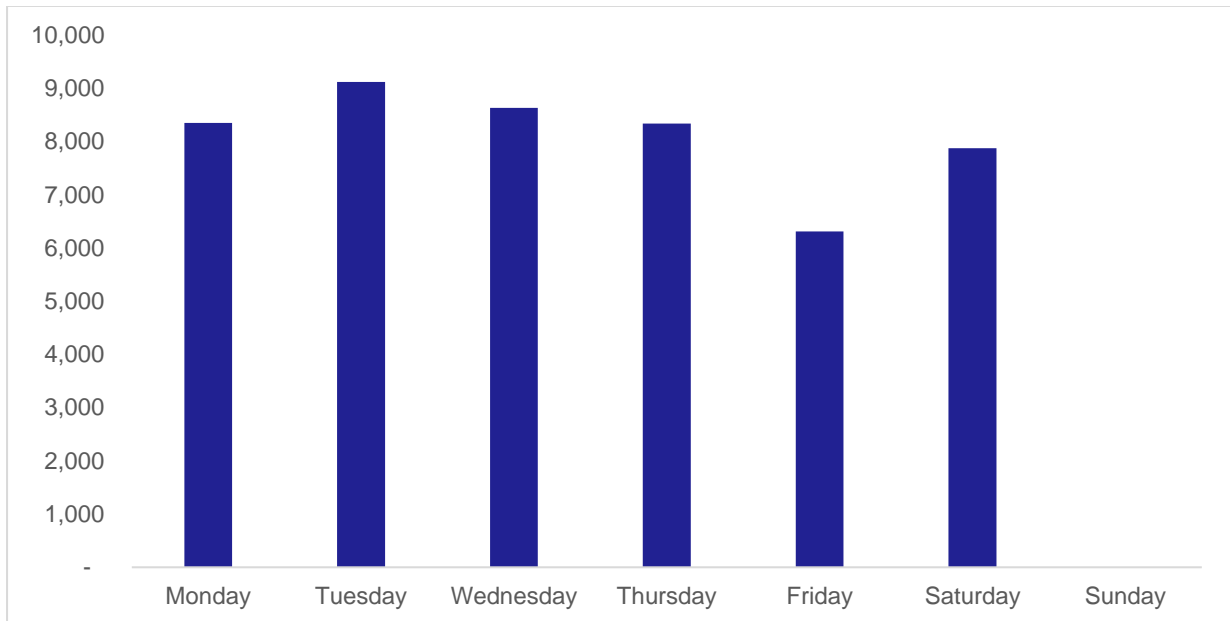


Figure 5: Kilcreggan – Gourock, carryings by day of the week Oct 23- Sep 24 (source: CFL)
(updated figure 4.3, pg.51, 2024 CNA report)

Carryings volumes are broadly similar across weekdays, although slightly reduced on a Friday. Saturday carryings are slightly lower than on a weekday on average. It should though be noted that the Saturday average is likely influenced by much higher carryings in summer and lower carryings in winter.

All sailings (both directions) from October 2023 to September 2024 have been analysed based on their passengers carried per sailing. Figure 6 below shows the number of times the ferry sailed with 0, 1, 2 etc up to the maximum of 100 passengers.

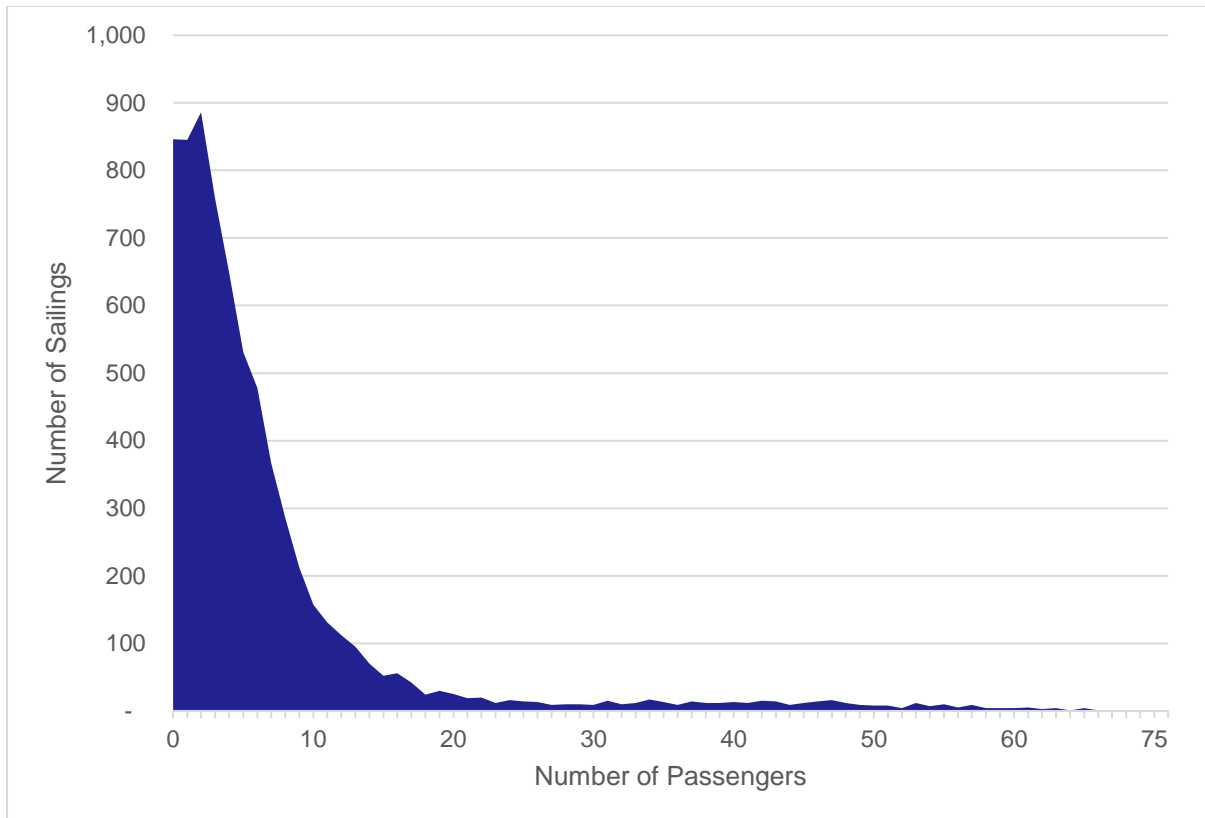


Figure 6: Gourock – Kilcreggan Route – number of sailings by passengers carried oct 24-Sep 23 (source: CFL) (updated Figure 4.4, pg. 52, 2024 CNA report)

Update of 4.3.10, pg.52, 2024 report is as below. The latest sailing data implies that:

- **12%** of sailings carry **no passengers**
- **36%** of sailings carried **fewer than 3 passengers**
- **75%** of sailings carried **fewer than 8 passengers**
- **91%** of sailings carried **fewer than 16 passengers**
- Over **1%** of sailings carried **more than 50 passengers**

Figure 7 below shows the average carryings by sailing on the Gourock – Kilcreggan route for September 2023 to October 2024:

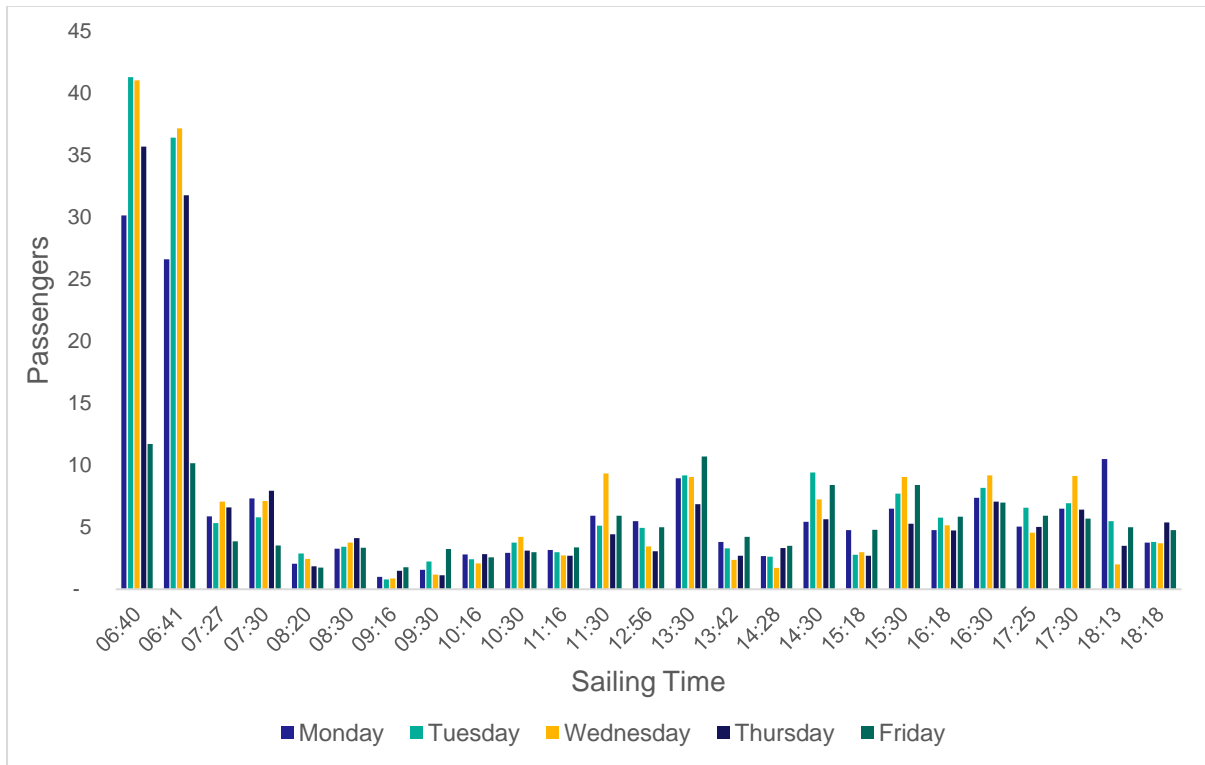


Figure 7:Gourock – Kilcreggan, average passengers per sailing by weekday Oct 23-Sep 24 (source: CFL) (updated Figure 4.5, pg. 53, 2024 CNA report)

- The main points of note from the above figure are as follows:
 - The first two departures of the day from Gourock, the **06:40** and **06:41 (reflecting a change in timetable)** are by some distance the busiest of the day. This likely reflects staff travelling to HMNB Clyde and, to a much lesser extent, RNAD Coulport.
 - Outwith these two departures, carryings are typically very low with fewer than 10 passengers on average carried on each sailing, with many sailings operating with fewer than five passengers. There is little variation in the pattern of carryings across the week.

Figure 8 below shows the equivalent data are presented for the reverse direction, Kilcreggan to Gourock:

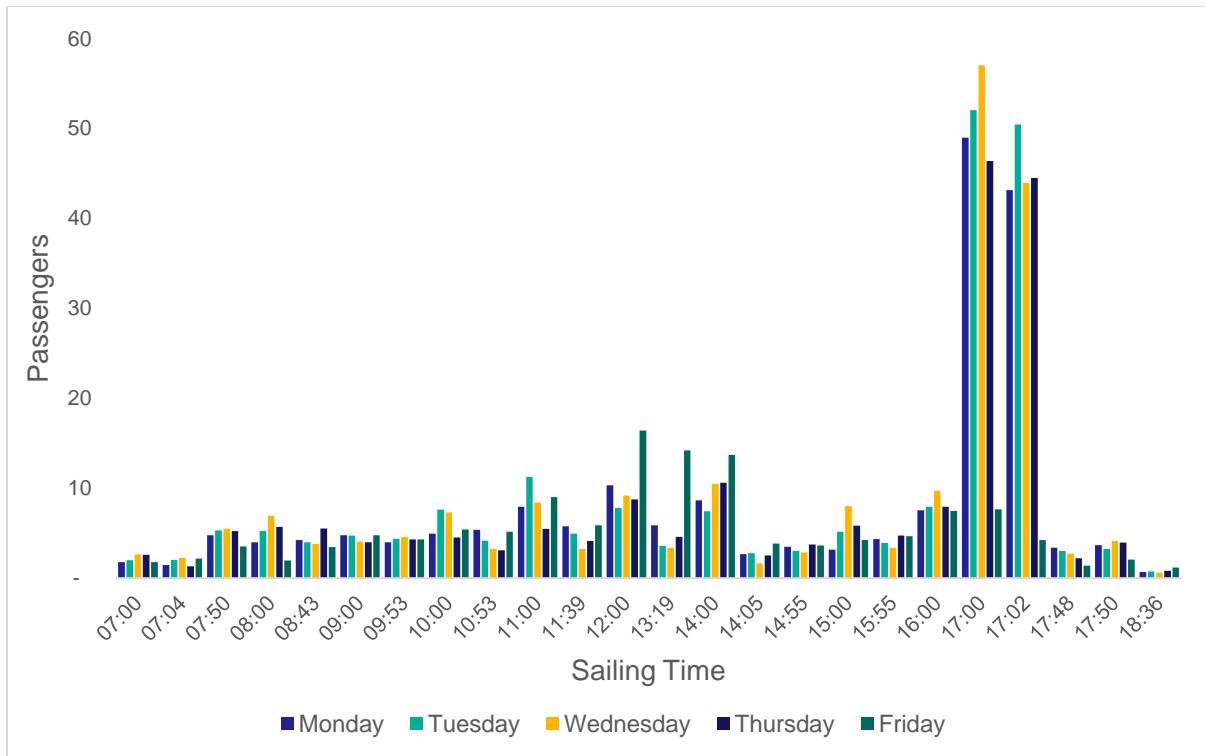


Figure 8: Kilcreggan - Gourock, average passengers per sailing by weekday Oct 23-Sep 24 (source: CFL) (updated Figure 4.6, pg. 54, 2024 CNA report)

The Kilcreggan – Gourock direction is broadly the reverse of the ‘to Kilcreggan’ direction, with commuters from HMNB Clyde and RNAD Coulpport returning to Inverclyde. Whilst in the morning ‘to Kilcreggan’ direction the demand is split across two sailings, almost all demand in the evening is carried on the 17:02 service.



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Published by Transport Scotland, March 2025

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