

The €2.30 question:

What Dublin's bus riders told us about a 15% fare rise and the one lever that matters most.

Insights on fare tolerance, the daily cap, and what wins over undecided riders.
Nov, 2026

Executive Summary

- A fare rise from €2.00 to €2.30 is achievable, provided the €6.00 daily cap holds.
- Price drives the decision. The single fare (46%) and the daily cap (29%) together account for three-quarters of rider choice.
- Up to €2.30, price increase is not the problem. Riders are relatively insensitive up to that point, and revenue peaks at around €2.24. Above €2.30, demand and revenue fall sharply.
- The daily cap is the hidden lever. 94% of riders who know about it call it good value, and 89% say it gives them spending certainty. Yet 30% of riders are unaware of it or unsure about it. If awareness rose to 80–90%, the cap's influence on rider choice would likely grow further.
- Reliability wins over the undecided. 44% are neutral on the fare increase, and 41% name punctuality as the most urgent improvement.

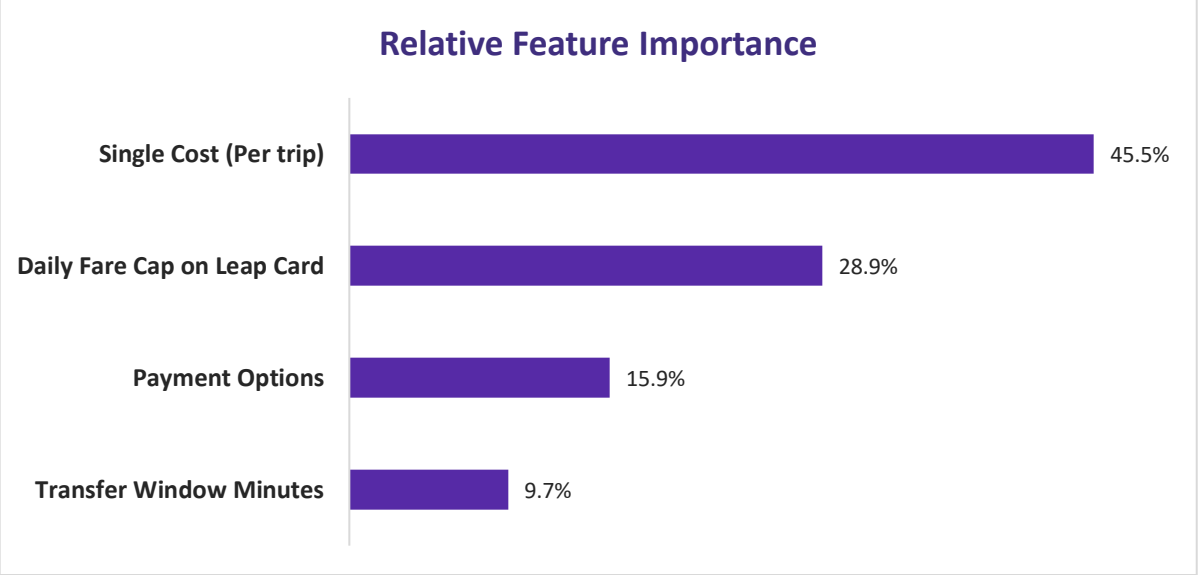
I. What Dublin Commuters Really Value?

Fare rises are rarely popular. But for a transport authority, the real question isn't whether riders like them; it's how they respond. Do they leave, ride less, or grumble and carry on? And what can be done to soften the blow?

To find out, we surveyed **300 Dublin adult Leap card commuters** who ride Dublin Bus at least twice a week and combined their stated views with a conjoint simulation that forces realistic trade-offs between fares, daily caps, payment options and transfer windows. Here's what we found, from our research.

Dublin's Leap card offers riders a simple deal: €2.00 for 90 minutes of travel, with spending capped at €6.00 a day. A 15% fare rise puts that deal to the test. **What do the commuters value most?**

Our research shows that **price drives almost three-quarters of rider choice**, split between the **single fare (46%) and the daily cap (29%)**. Riders will tolerate a fare of up to €2.30, but any rise in the €6.00 cap quickly erodes support. Yet almost **a third of riders don't know the cap exists**, and that is the biggest opportunity this research uncovered.



II. Does the daily cap matter?

Why your daily cap matters just as much as single fares

Pricing strategy isn't just about the single fare. Price drives three-quarters of how riders choose their transit option and daily caps carry massive weight:

- **Single Fare:** Drives **46%** of the decision.

- **Daily Cap:** Drives **29%** of the decision on its own.

Perceived Value: When we asked the riders about their thoughts on the capping system:

94% **of riders call daily caps good value**, and

89% **say caps provide spending certainty**.

What happens when you hold the single fare at €2.30 and only shift the cap?

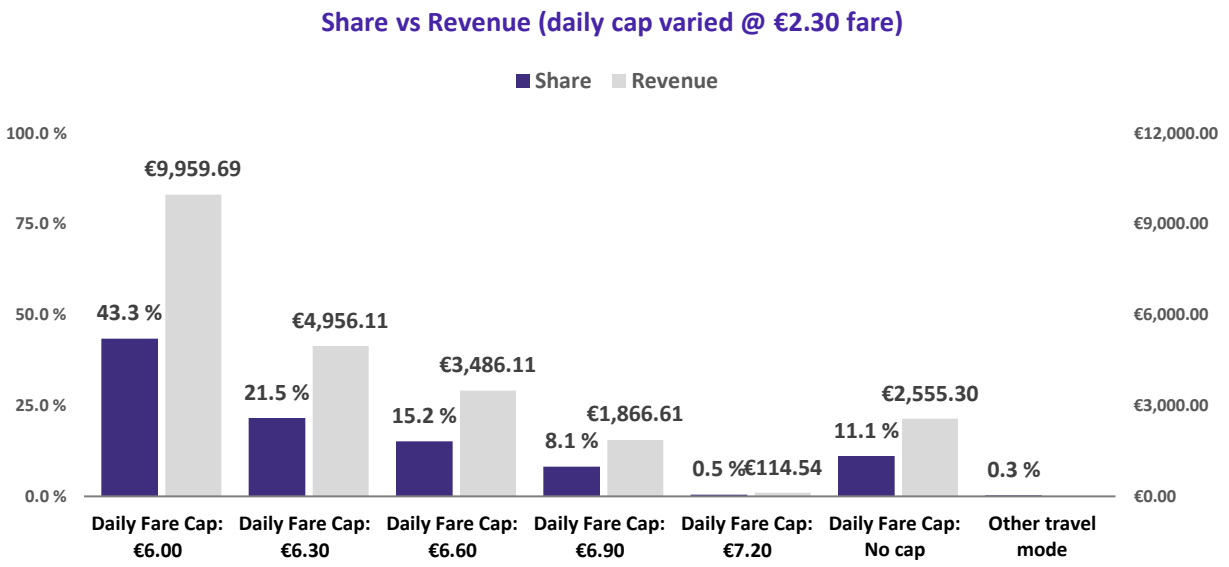
What we tested: *Scenario that holds the single fare at €2.30 and offers riders six daily-cap options side by side:* ***€6.00, €6.30, €6.60, €6.90, €7.20 and no cap.***

Holding the cap at €6.00 is by far the most preferred option, chosen by 43.3% of riders. Each step up in the cap costs a large share of that preference:

- **€6.30 cap:** preference halves to **21.5%.**
- **€6.60 cap: 15.2%,** about a third of the €6.00 level.
- **€6.90 cap: 8.1%,** about a fifth of the €6.00 level.
- **€7.20 cap: almost entirely rejected** (0.5%), a clear ceiling.
- **No cap:** 11.1%, more than either the €6.90 or €7.20 cap. A cap above €6.60 is less attractive to riders than having no cap at all.

Revenue follows the same pattern. At €2.30, the €6.00 cap generates around twice the revenue of the €6.30 cap and more than five times that of the €6.90 cap.

***Because the six options split a single 100% share, these figures show relative preference between caps. They are not directly comparable with the S01 shares in section II.*



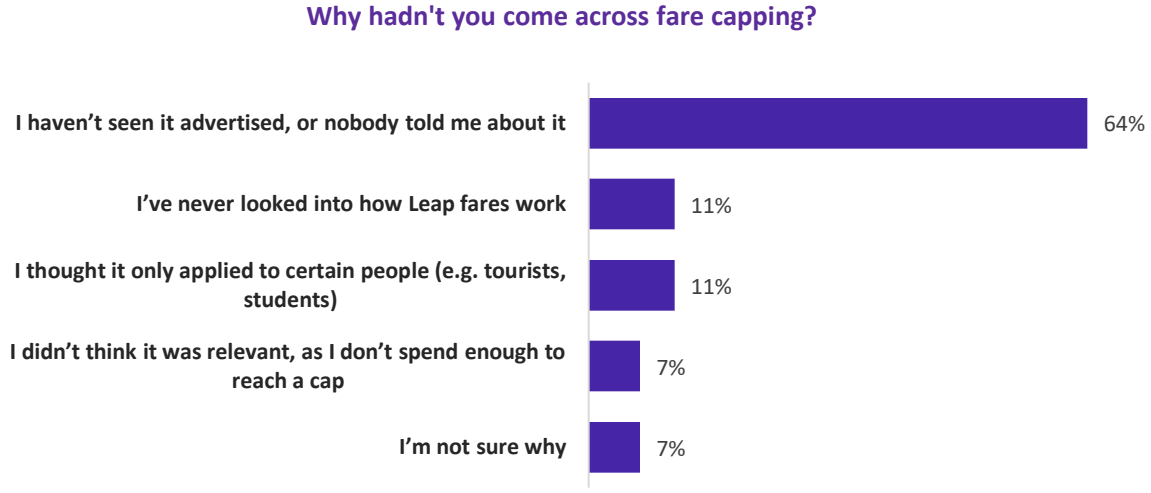
The takeaway: At a €2.30 fare, keep the daily cap at €6.00. Even a 30c rise to €6.30 halves preference, and caps of €6.90 or more are less attractive than no cap at all.

II. Source: Market simulator, Scenario S03 (Daily Cap Price @ €2.30), all respondents.

III. The cheapest win: tell people about the cap

30% of riders hadn't heard of fare capping or weren't sure and **64% of those simply never saw it advertised**.

The feature riders value most **is invisible to almost a third of them**.

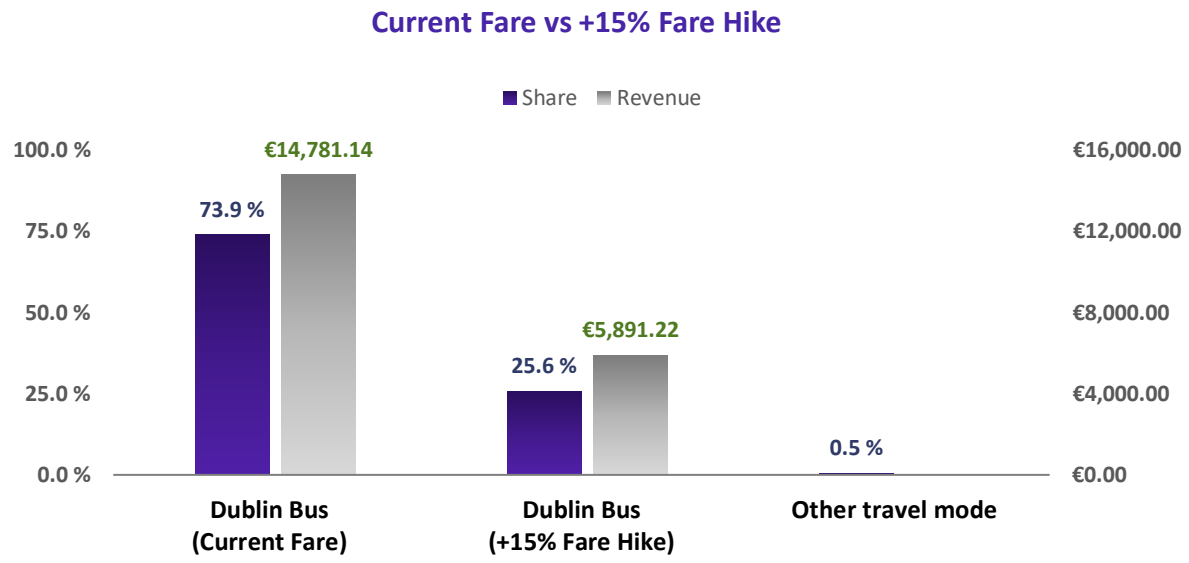


Takeaway: Advertise fare capping before any fare change. It costs little and strengthens the lever riders care about most.

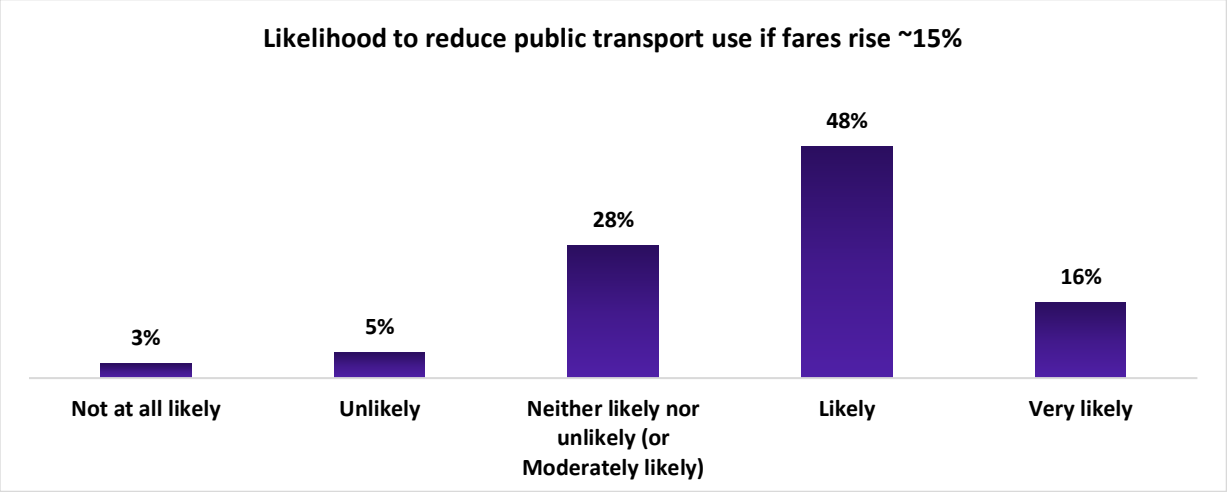
IV. Today's fares vs a 15% increase: Few will walk away but many will ride less

A 15% fare increase on public transport looks safe on paper until you dive into rider behaviour. **We tested** how riders react to **today's fares** (€2.00 / €6.00 daily cap) vs. a **15% increase** (€2.30 / €6.90 daily cap):

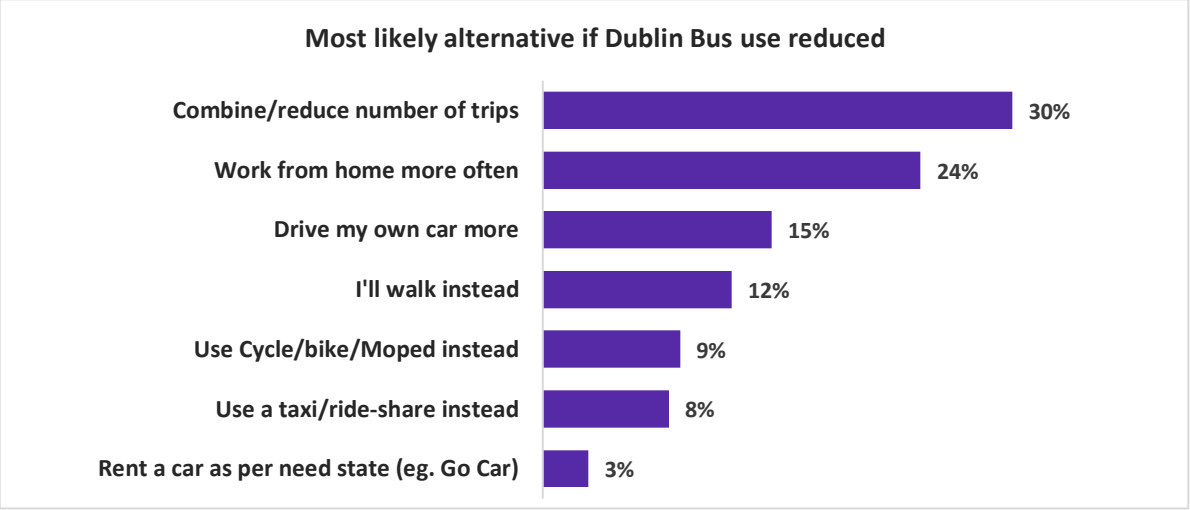
- 74% preferred current fares.
- 26% accepted the increase.
- Only 0.5% said they would stop using the bus entirely.



When we directly asked the survey participants before showing the choice cards: 64% of riders say they are likely to cut back on public transport if fares go up.



Rather than switching to cars or other modes, riders plan to **adapt by changing their habits**: **30%** will **Combine/reduce number of trips** while **24%** will **work from home** more often.



The takeaway: Churn isn't always about losing passengers entirely, it's about losing trip frequency. Pricing decisions need to account for hidden demand suppression, not just total abandonment.

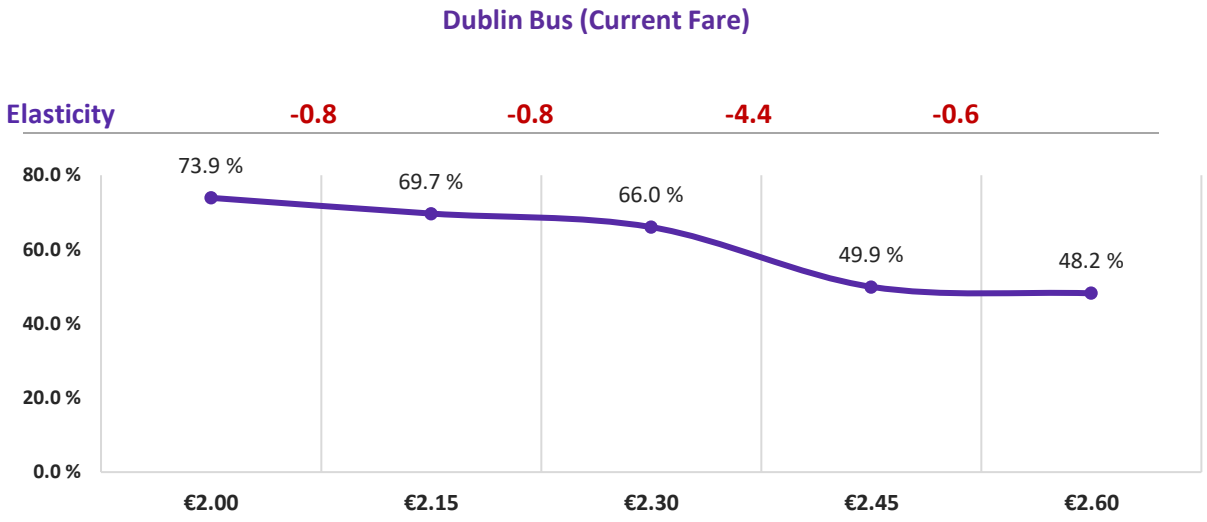
V. So, how high can the price per journey go?

Finding the price ceiling for transit fares.

What we tested: Scenario which puts two options head-to-head**: today's fare** (€2.00 single, €6.00 daily cap) **and a 15% increase** (€2.30 single, €6.90 cap).

With the €6.00 daily cap unchanged, riders are relatively insensitive to moderate fare increases.

- **Between €2.00 and €2.30**, price elasticity is around -0.8: each 1% rise in the single fare loses less than 1% of preference.
- **Preference slips** from **73.9% at today's €2.00** fare to **69.7% at €2.15** and **66.0% at €2.30**.



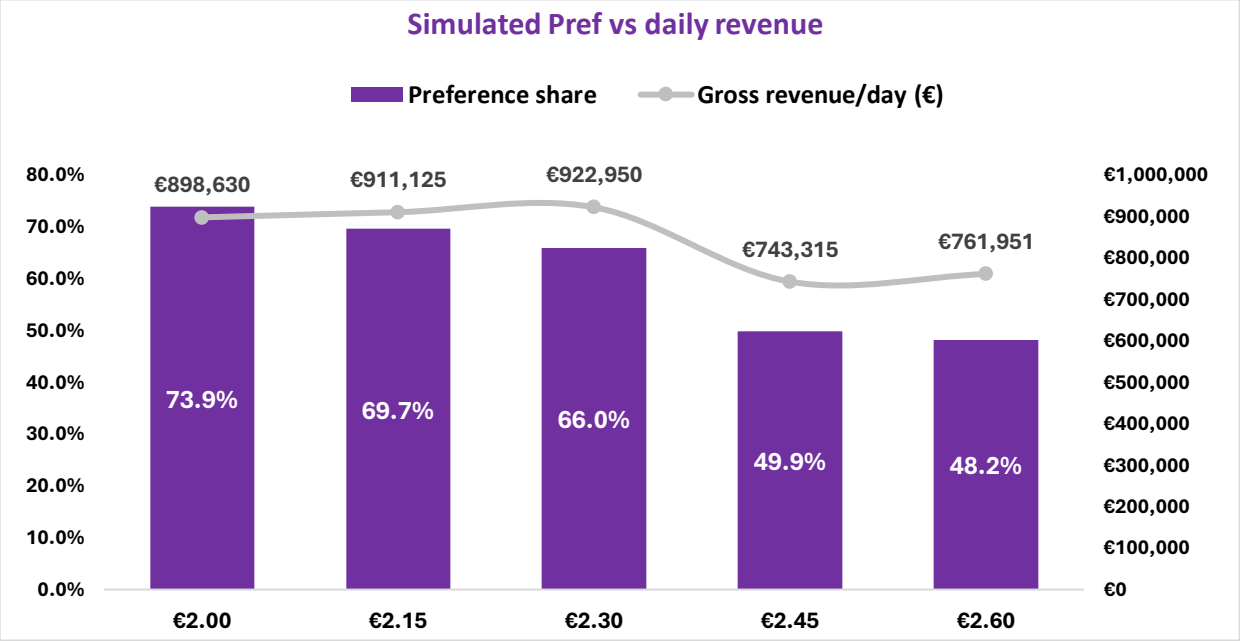
Price sensitivity increases sharply beyond €2.30:

- Between €2.30 and €2.45, elasticity jumps to -4.4. Each 1% fare rise now loses more than 4% of preference.
- At €2.45, the current-fare option's simulated preference falls to 49.9%., and revenue is around 17% below today.
- Beyond €2.45 demand stabilizes (elasticity -0.6), but at about 48% preference, revenue stays well below today's level.

What does this mean for journeys and revenue?

To illustrate the potential impact, we applied the changes in simulated preference to Dublin Bus's assumed average of 449,315 daily Adult Leap journeys, using today's €2.00 fare as the baseline.

- **At €2.15**, estimated daily journeys fall by 5.7%, but the higher fare could generate approximately **€12,500 more in gross daily revenue** (+1.4%).
- **At €2.30**, estimated journeys fall by 10.7%, while gross daily revenue increases by approximately **€24,300** (+2.7%).
- **At €2.45**, the sharper decline in preference translates into a **17.3% reduction in illustrative daily revenue** compared with today's fare.
- **At €2.60**, illustrative daily revenue remains **15.2% below today's level**.

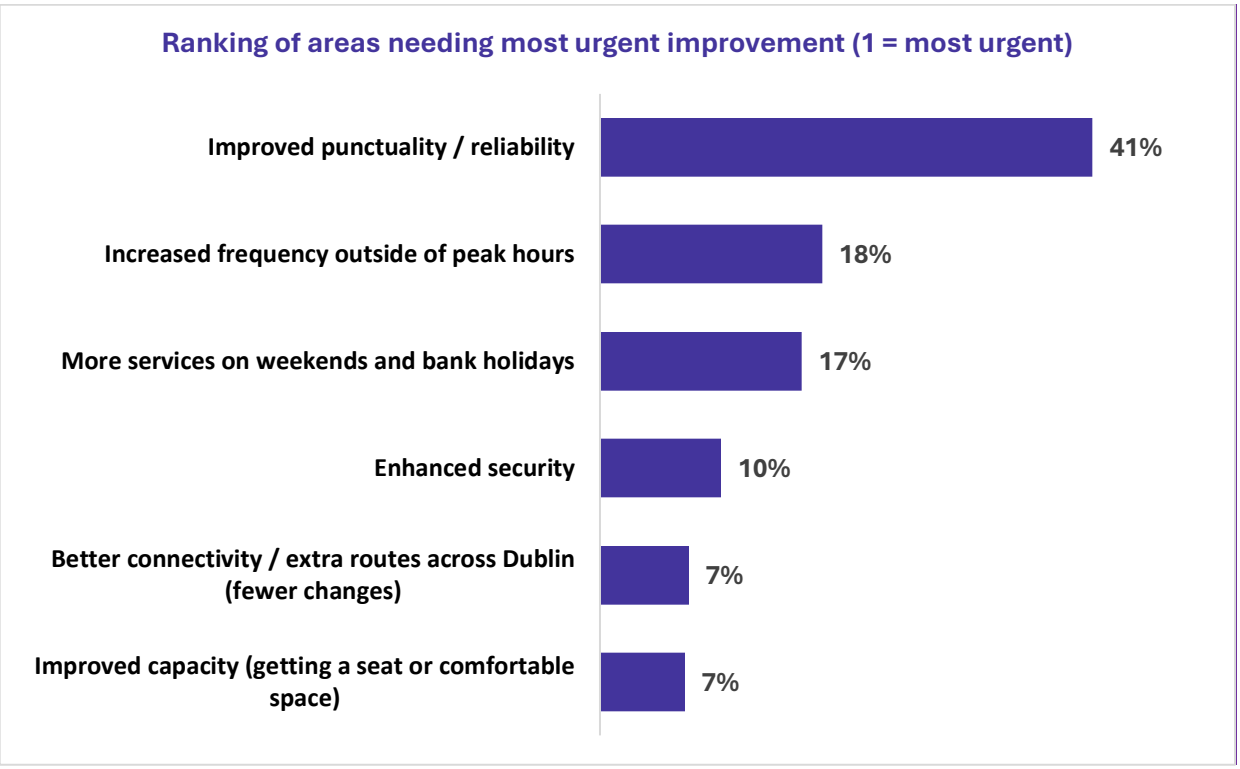


The takeaway: The analysis suggests that fare increases up to €2.30 may offer modest revenue gains, while higher fares carry greater risk. These figures are illustrative, not revenue forecasts, as they use relative preference changes to estimate journeys and do not account for the effects of daily caps or transfers.

Source: https://www.dublinbus.ie/press-releases/dublin-bus-smashes-records-in-2025-(despite-dublin-traffic-doing-its-best-to-stop-us)

VI. Earn the increase with reliability

54% think the increase is reasonable, 44% are neutral and only 2% disagree. That neutral middle can be won, and reliability is what wins it: 41% rank punctuality as the most urgent improvement.



> **Takeaway:** Pair any fare change with visible improvements in punctuality.

VII. The bottom line

1. Raise the price per journey to no more than €2.30.
2. Hold the daily cap at €6.00.
3. Advertise fare capping before the change.
4. Invest visibly in punctuality.