



What We Heard Report

POTENTIAL MANDATORY ENTRY LEVEL
TRAINING FOR CLASS 1 & 2 DRIVERS

Government of
Northwest Territories



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Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

In the Northwest Territories (NWT), a Class 1 driver's licence is required to operate semi-trailers and tractor trailers. A Class 2 licence is required for all buses, including school buses, with a seating capacity exceeding 24 passengers. Currently, in order to obtain a Class 1 or 2 licence, an applicant is not required to undergo any formal training. Instead, an applicant only needs to pass a practical and theoretical exam. MELT is currently compulsory in Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Manitoba will make MELT mandatory on September 1, 2019. Several other Canadian jurisdictions are also considering MELT.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is considering the introduction of mandatory entry level training (MELT) for Class 1 & 2 drivers. If adopted, MELT would consist of approximately 100 hours of pre-exam training. The curriculum would be approved by the GNWT and include topics such as an overview of vehicle components, driving techniques, regulatory requirements, vehicle inspection, and cargo securement, among other things. If adopted, MELT would be offered by approved training institutions such as colleges and private companies.

The GNWT recognizes that the trucking industry is integral to life in the NWT and decided to hold public engagement sessions to obtain feedback on whether MELT should be implemented in the NWT. This document is a summary of what we heard during the engagement process.

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The public engagement process included community “drop-in” events held in Inuvik, Yellowknife, Fort Simpson and Hay River. At these events, Department of Infrastructure personnel provided a brief presentation to attendees on the basics of MELT. These engagements provided residents of the NWT with the opportunity to speak to a GNWT representative about MELT and to voice any related concerns, questions, comments, or recommendations.

In addition, the GNWT solicited and received comments about MELT via comment cards, by email, social media, and an online survey.

What We Heard: Key Themes for MELT

- Almost universally, feedback was supportive of MELT. Many members of the public were surprised that training for Class 1 & 2 drivers is not already mandatory.
 - In addition to MELT, many members of the trucking industry suggested an apprenticeship-like training program that allows for on-the-job training.
 - Opinions were split on whether existing Class 1 & 2 drivers should be required to undergo training. Many participants felt that these drivers should be “grandfathered” in. Others believed that training would be beneficial for all drivers.
 - Some concerns were raised about the cost of mandatory training, its impact on an already ageing workforce, as well as language barriers associated with formalized training.
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History and Overview of MELT

In July 2017, Ontario was the first jurisdiction in Canada to adopt MELT. As a result, new Class A (the NWT equivalent of Class 1) drivers in Ontario are required to take 103.5 hours of approved training prior to obtaining a licence. Existing Class A drivers were “grandfathered” in. Drivers from other Canadian jurisdictions who are transferring into Ontario and who have held the equivalent of a Class A licence for less than 12 months are required to take MELT training. Those who have held the equivalent of a Class A licence for more than 12 months are not required to complete MELT.

In Ontario, MELT training is provided at institutions approved by the Province and costs approximately \$7000 per participant. Funding is available through a variety of Provincial/Federal/Indigenous programs, as applicable.

Following the Humboldt Broncos bus tragedy in Saskatchewan in the spring 2018, MELT was brought to the forefront across Canada. As such, there were renewed calls for mandatory training in all jurisdictions. Alberta and Saskatchewan adopted MELT in March 2019 and Manitoba is planning to introduce MELT in September 2019. Several other jurisdictions are considering implementing it.

The Canadian Trucking Alliance is in favour of MELT. Similarly, the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) is developing guidelines for standardized training across the country.

In the NWT, the Department of Infrastructure, which is responsible for the regulation of the trucking industry within the territory, believes that MELT, if adopted, will improve road safety. However, the Department of Infrastructure also recognizes that the NWT is a unique jurisdiction that is heavily reliant on trucking and wanted to obtain the public’s feedback before making a decision on MELT.

The Engagement Process

Engagement Method

The GNWT held in-person engagements as follows:

- Inuvik – January 10, 2019
- Yellowknife – January 14, 2019
- Fort Simpson – January 17, 2019
- Hay River – January 23, 2019

These locations were selected because they are the hubs of the NWT trucking industry, are connected to the national highway system, and are supplied primarily by road (as opposed to sea and/or air). Each of these engagements was offered in English and French and was attended by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, the Senior Legislative Advisor and the French Language Communications Officer.

These “drop in” sessions were advertised at GNWT buildings, on social media, and the Department of Infrastructure’s webpage. In addition, members of the trucking industry on the GNWT’s Commercial Carrier List were invited to attend the sessions.

At each engagement session, a 20-30 minute presentation was delivered describing the potential implementation of MELT, how it works in other jurisdictions, and the possible advantages of mandatory driver training as perceived by the GNWT. The presentation was divided into the following sections:

- **Background** – an overview of what MELT is, why the GNWT is considering it, and its history across Canada;
- **Consistent Approach** – a discussion of the need to develop a framework that is consistent with our neighboring jurisdictions;
- **Driver and Public Safety** – a summary of some of the potential benefits of MELT including fewer accidents, lower insurance premiums and better carrier safety ratings;
- **Partnerships** – a review of some the potential funding partnerships being considered by the GNWT to reduce the cost of MELT.

After the presentation, the floor was open to the audience to provide comments, questions and concerns regarding MELT.

In addition to the community sessions, the GNWT solicited and received comments by email, comment cards, social media, and an online survey. Opportunity to provide online feedback was advertised on the Department of Infrastructure’s web page and social media accounts.

Engagement Participation

The MELT “drop in” sessions were attended by 29 stakeholders (6 in Inuvik, 14 in Yellowknife, 3 in Fort Simpson and 6 in Hay River).

In attendance were:

- Interested members of the public;
- Truck drivers;
- Trucking companies and truck operators;
- Representatives of the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Commission;
- Representatives of Indigenous organizations;
- Members of the media;
- Driver training organizations;
- Members of other GNWT departments.

Comment cards were received from 12 stakeholders.

Email and social media engagement was as follows:

- 0 emails were received;
- 11 comments were registered on social media;
- The MELT Facebook post made 13,459 impressions, was clicked on 422 times, shared 43 times and liked by 56 individuals.
- The online survey was completed by 93 individuals. A copy of the survey results is attached as Appendix A.

Engagement vs. Consultation

It is important to note that public engagement, through the actions noted above and described in this report, differs from consultation. Consultation with Indigenous governments, as required by Section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, was not performed because MELT does not have the potential to adversely affect an existing or asserted Aboriginal claim or right.

What We Heard

1. MELT should be adopted

“You mean it isn’t already mandatory?”

“Great idea. With all the transport drivers driving in the NWT, you would think that there would already be laws in place. The time is certainly now. Better late than never.”

“Without training you put everyone on the road in danger.”

“Class 1 and Class 2 drivers are considered professional drivers - let’s make sure they have the proper training. We do it for doctors and lawyers, etc. so why not for an industry that delivers our freight.”

“I have held a class 1 licence for a large part of my life and driven with many inexperienced drivers that did not have the benefit of basic training. Their mistakes and lack of understanding of driving rules and limitations - log books etc - put themselves and everyone else at risk. At best, they created roadside hazards that were unnecessary. I recognize that the mistakes I made could have been avoided with better training as a young driver.”

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

- Several participants were surprised that mandatory training is not already required for Class 1 & 2 drivers.
- Feedback was almost universally supportive of MELT and many members of the public agree with efforts to increase road safety.
- Regarding class 1 drivers, 57 survey participants stated that they “strongly agree” with MELT. Twenty (20) stated that they “agree”. Only 2 stated that they “disagree” and 7 stated that “strongly disagree”.
- Regarding class 2 drivers, 56 survey participants stated that they “strongly agree” with MELT. Twenty-two (22) stated that they “agree”. Only 2 stated that they “disagree” and 5 stated that “strongly disagree”.

2. Public opinion is split on whether existing Class 1 & 2 drivers should be required to take MELT

“Existing drivers need to be grandfathered in.”

“As a driver, I support re-training every 3-5 years.”

“Truckers and bus drivers are considered professional drivers and so they should receive professional and regulated training. Also, drivers should be required to upgrade if they do not maintain a set number of driving hours per year.”

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

- Participants’ opinions were split on whether existing holders of Class 1 & 2 licences should be required to undergo mandatory training. Some members of the public were of the opinion that existing drivers should be “grandfathered”, as is the case in Ontario.
- Other participants suggested that training should be mandatory for existing Class 1 & 2 drivers who have not logged sufficient hours in the preceding months/years, or have poor safety records.

3. In addition to MELT, the GNWT should consider an apprenticeship program for truck drivers

“An apprenticeship program would be most successful.”

“My view is that GNWT should develop standards and create a train the trainer program to allow contractors to get their own staff trained to train their own drivers...Contractors should be given the tools to train in house.”

“I’d like to see a red-seal approach.”

“A mentorship program will increase my costs.”

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

- A common sentiment of those who employ truck drivers in the NWT is that MELT should have an apprenticeship option – i.e. a system of on-the-job training where the employer signs off on the employee’s progress. Participants felt that this model would result in better training standards, employee retention and economic growth.
- Many participants felt that a graduated approach to licensing is ideal– i.e. drivers should be required to operate smaller trucks with safer loads before graduating to larger configurations and/or dangerous cargo.
- Many employers indicated that they already have “in house” training programs for new drivers. Employers would like to see this training system formalized and recognized by the GNWT as valid training.

- Some employers were concerned about the increased costs associated with mandatory training. They were supportive of a subsidy program to hire and train new drivers.
- Some participants suggested that if MELT is implemented, then truck driving will become more of a career making it easier to attract and retain good talent.

4. MELT is not a replacement for good on-the-job training

“I really think training is necessary but 100 hours is not enough.”

“A 100 hour course does not make a driver ready for large loads.”

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

- Many stakeholders, especially those in the trucking industry, were of the view that approximately 100 hours of training is merely an introduction to driving a truck. In order for drivers to safely haul dangerous loads, more on-the-job training is necessary.
- Some concerns were raised that MELT will give truck operators a false sense of security. MELT is not a replacement for experience on the road and is an introduction only.
- Participants emphasized that MELT cannot be relied upon to replace good on-the-job training and work experience.

5. MELT, if adopted, should be accessible

“Training needs to be accessible for everyone who wants to take it.”

“\$7000 is a lot of money. Don’t close the door on northern workers.”

“Attracting drivers is already difficult. I fear that MELT will make it harder.”

“It is almost impossible to get class 1 drivers at this time. No one wants to enter our industry. Adding mandatory expensive training will make it harder to hire drivers.”

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

- Concerns were raised that the cost of MELT would deter individuals from entering the trucking industry. Accordingly, many participants felt that mandatory training needs to be paired with funding opportunities.
- Some participants also raised concerns that mandatory training would prejudice individuals with poor English skills.
- Stakeholders noted that if the standard of training is too high or expensive that it would deter residents of the NWT from entering the industry.
- Some employers were concerned that MELT would make it more difficult to attract drivers. The workforce is already aging in the NWT and employers do not want to have to turn away northern talent because individuals do not have adequate training. As such, training needs to be accessible.

Summary of Feedback

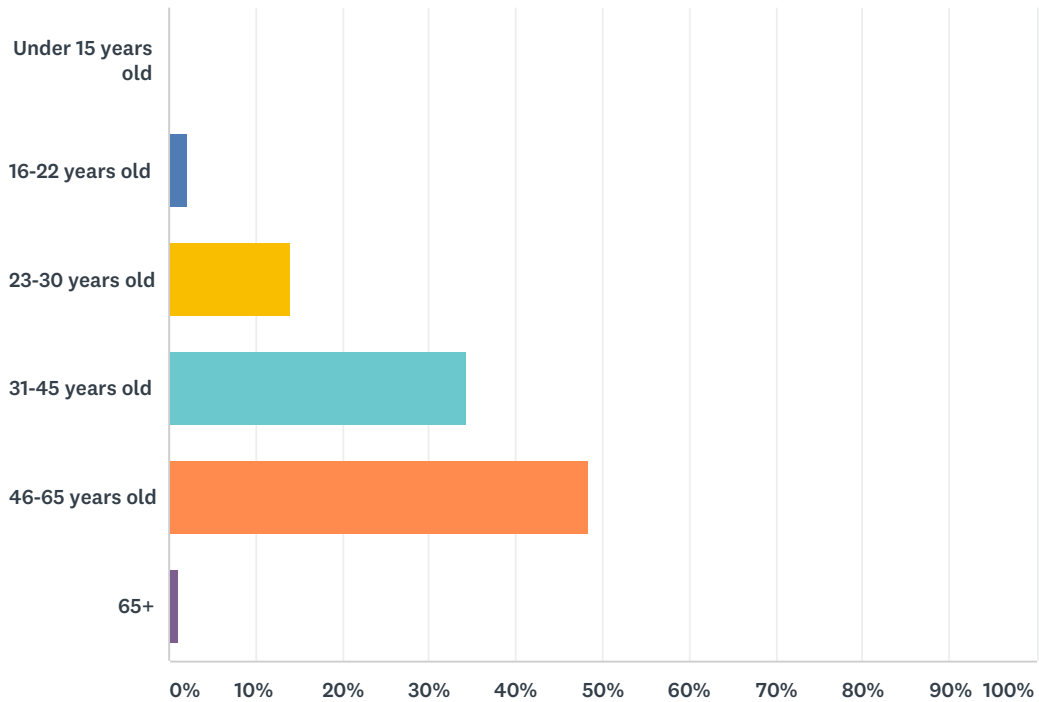
Having heard from a variety of stakeholders within the NWT, the public's feedback on MELT can be summarized as follows:

- MELT should be adopted within the NWT for Class 1 & 2 drivers.
- The GNWT should do additional research to determine whether existing Class 1 & 2 drivers should be required to take MELT. Relevant considerations include reciprocity with other jurisdictions, training capacity, road safety and cost.
- The GNWT should consider an apprenticeship model in addition to MELT. The GNWT should also consider allowing employers of truck drivers to become licensed training providers. The Department of Infrastructure should hold meetings with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to discuss this concept and opportunities for apprenticeships.
- The GNWT should work to ensure that MELT does not give operators a false sense that a graduate of MELT is capable of operating all types of vehicles in all conditions.
- A comprehensive communications and education program should be developed to share information on both the program benefits and limitations.
- Finally, MELT will create a cost barrier. To reduce that barrier, the GNWT should consider funding opportunities to offset the cost of MELT.

▪ Appendix A: Summary of Survey Results ▪

Q1 What is your age?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 0

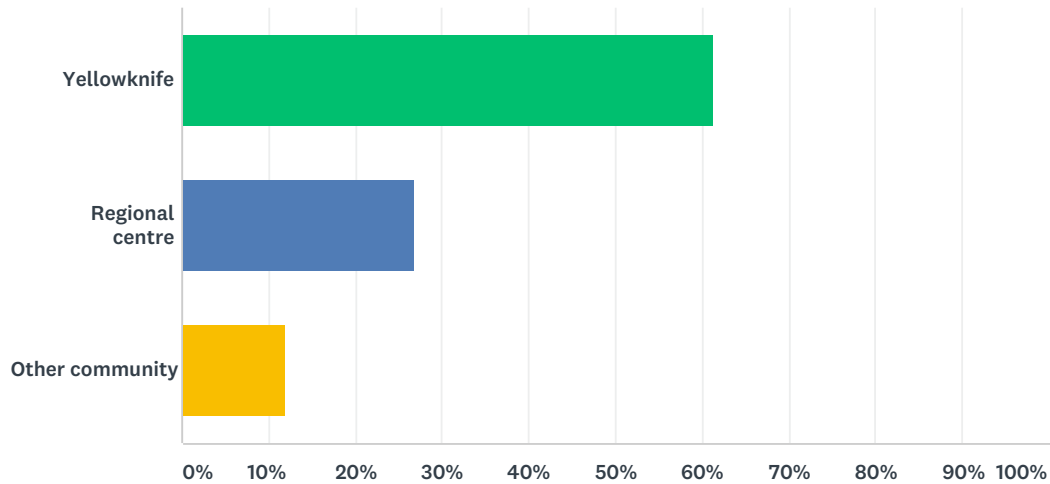


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 15 years old	0.00%	0
16-22 years old	2.13%	2
23-30 years old	13.83%	13
31-45 years old	35.11%	33
46-65 years old	47.87%	45
65+	1.06%	1
TOTAL		94

▪ Appendix A: Summary of Survey Results ▪

Q2 Where do you live?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 0

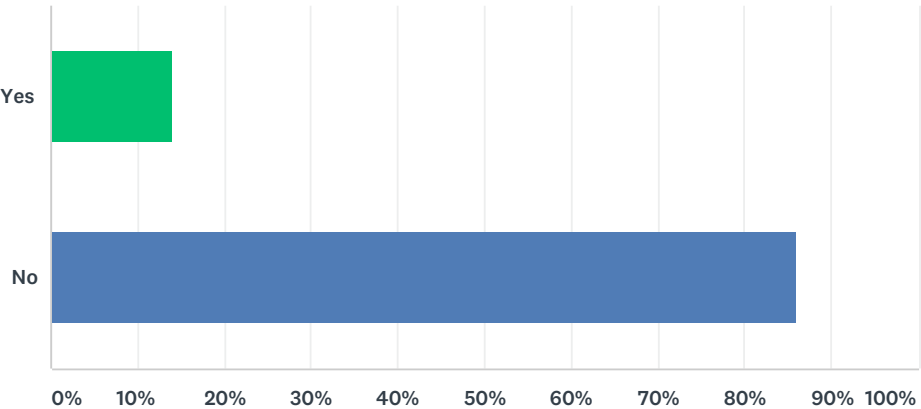


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yellowknife	61.70%	58
Regional centre (Fort Simpson, Fort Smith, Hay River, Inuvik or Norman Wells)	26.60%	25
Other community	11.70%	11
TOTAL		94

▪ Appendix A: Summary of Survey Results ▪

Q3 Do you currently hold a Class 1 licence?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 0

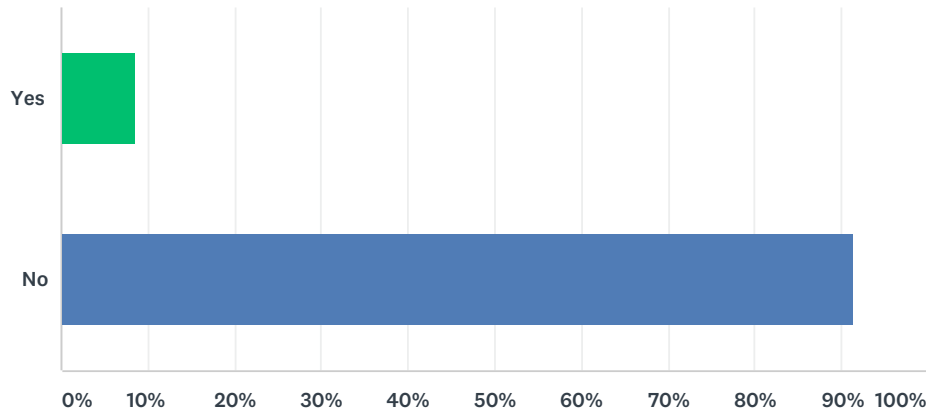


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	14.89%	14
No	85.11%	80
TOTAL		94

▪ Appendix A: Summary of Survey Results ▪

Q4 Do you currently hold a Class 2 licence?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 0

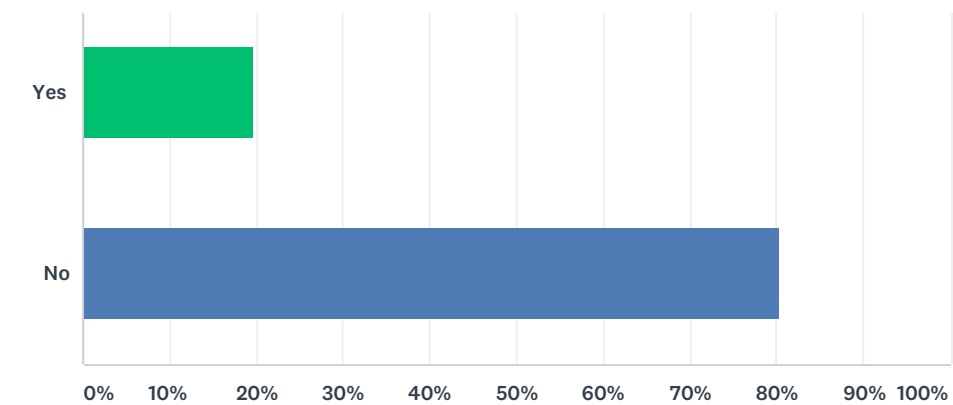


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	9.57%	9
No	90.43%	85
TOTAL		94

▪ Appendix A: Summary of Survey Results ▪

Q5 If no, do you intend to get a Class 1 or 2
licence in the future?

Answered: 93 Skipped: 1

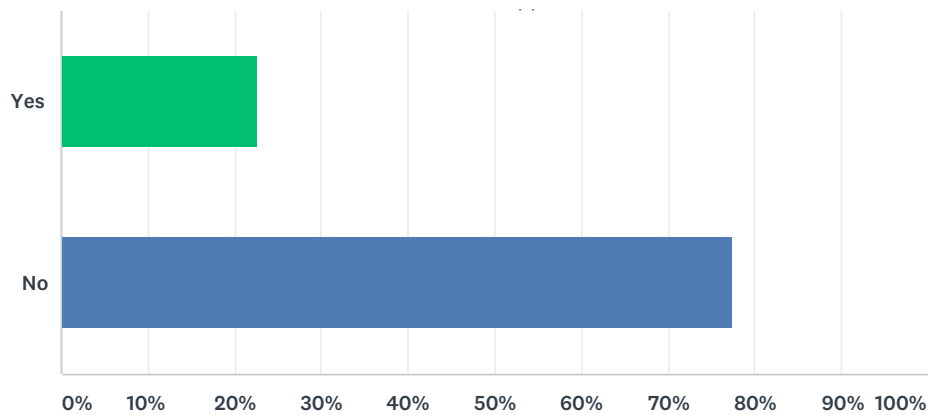


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	20.43%	19
No	79.57%	74
TOTAL		93

▪ Appendix A: Summary of Survey Results ▪

Q6 Are you involved with the Northwest Territories trucking industry?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 0

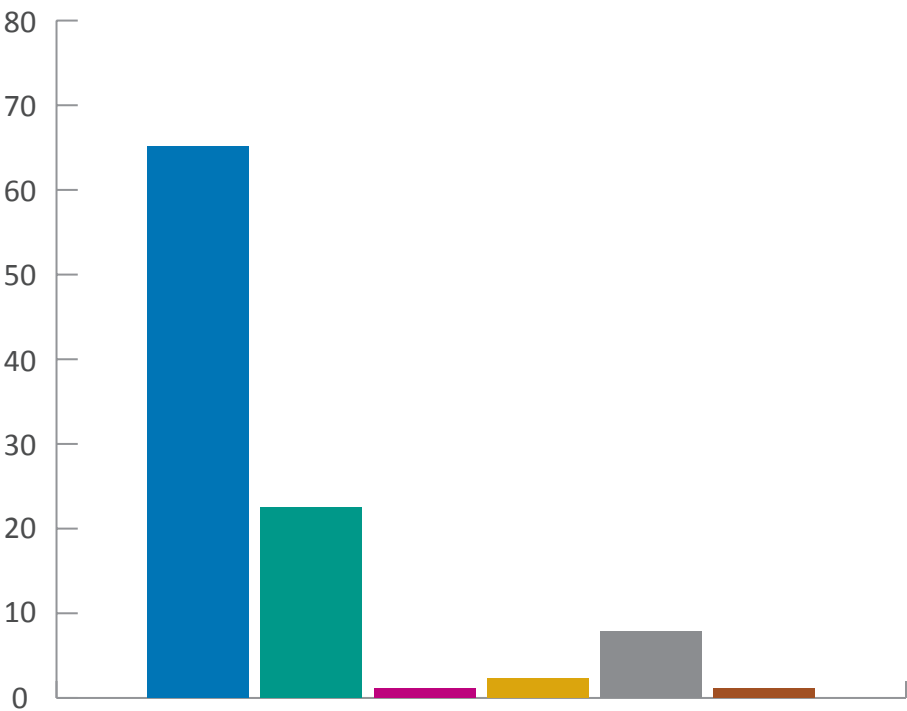


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	23.40%	22
No	76.60%	72
TOTAL		94

▪ Appendix A: Summary of Survey Results ▪

Q7 Do you support mandatory training for Class 1 drivers?

Answered: 89 Skipped: 5

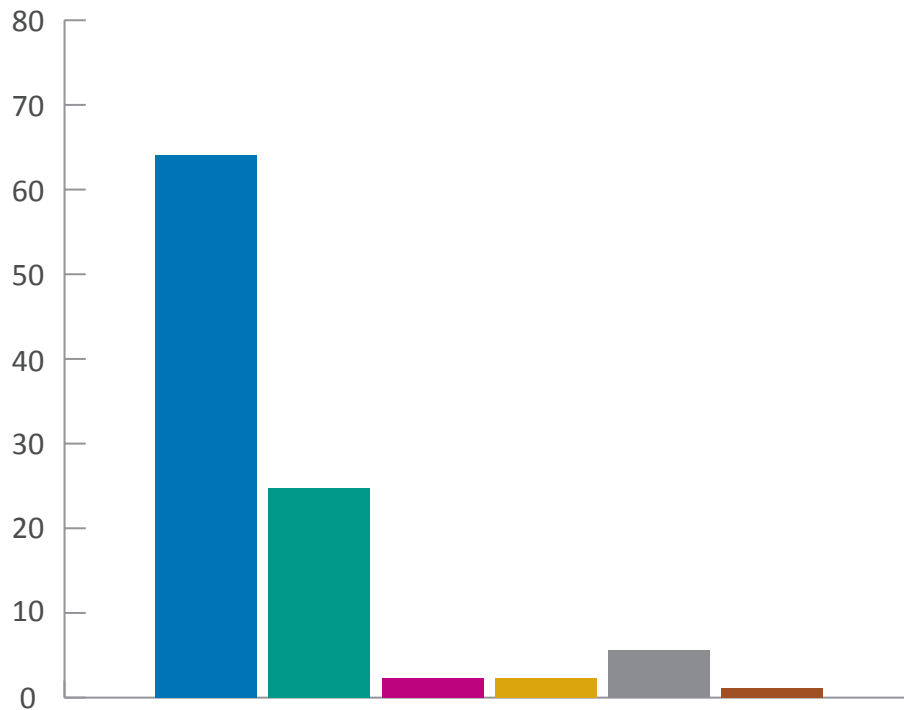


STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL
65.17%	22.47%	1.12%	2.25%	7.87%	1.12%	89
58	20	1	2	7	1	

▪ Appendix A: Summary of Survey Results ▪

Q8 Do you support mandatory training for Class 2 drivers?

Answered: 89 Skipped: 5



STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL
64.04%	24.72%	2.25%	2.25%	5.62%	1.12%	89
57	22	2	2	5	1	

