



# Merseyrail Wirral loop line survey

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# Background and aims

- In 2017 substantial, planned track renewal works will take place on Merseyrail's Wirral Loop Line as part of a £340 million investment in the region's railways<sup>1</sup>. The work will necessitate two periods of total (seven day) closure of the line east of Birkenhead and a further period where trains will be able to travel no further than James Street. Weekend closures will also occur at other times.
- Merseyrail, Merseytravel and Network Rail are jointly undertaking a substantial stakeholder awareness campaign.
- Transport Focus has gathered substantial experience of researching passengers' information needs and journey experiences during planned engineering works (Reading, Bath Spa, London Waterloo).
- Following discussions with Merseytravel and Merseyrail, Transport Focus has undertaken a benchmark survey to measure Wirral line passengers' awareness of the works and their planned travel behaviour at these times.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/travel-updates/Pages/Wirral-Loop-Line-Track-Renewal.aspx>

# Executive summary

- Immediately prior to the first wave of the Wirral loop line closure, awareness of the works is at 84% (and 100% amongst commuters).
- 26% of Wirral line passengers are 'very' and 42% 'fairly satisfied' (in total 68%) with information being provided about the works. Concerns centre on the 'mechanics' of the replacement bus services (timetables, stops, connections).
- Nearly half (48%) expect to use the rail replacement bus and one third (33%) a service bus; a quarter (27%) plan to drive (≠100% as passengers could give more than one answer).
- Two thirds (65%) of passengers support the works being undertaken.
- Results compare favourably with those surveyed in our previous Bath Spa research<sup>2</sup>.
- Results provide a potential benchmark to assess how passengers' experience of the works lives up to their expectations as the work progresses.

3 <sup>2</sup>Planned rail engineering work – the passenger perspective, December 2015, <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/planned-rail-engineering-work-passenger-perspective/>

# How we carried out this survey

- An online survey was carried out in December 2016 amongst Merseyrail users from Transport Focus' Transport User Panel and or who have previously completed the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS). See the appendix for more detail on the methodology.
- All survey participants were required to have travelled on a Merseyrail Wirral line train in the previous three months.
- The questionnaire used is based on those used in previous Transport Focus research on planned engineering works enabling broad comparisons to be made across projects.
- The questionnaire, and our 'standard' approach, anticipates a number of subsequent waves of research. This will enable us to track how awareness of, and attitudes towards, the works builds over time as well as ultimately measuring passenger satisfaction with the way the works are handled.
- The data was collected from members of Transport Focus's Transport User Panel and therefore should be seen as indicative, rather than statistically representative, of the view of passengers generally. As the NRPS is a sample of journeys, commuters are over-represented in the sample/panel and therefore in this research. Since commuters constitute a significant share of the market and will be most heavily impacted by the works this is not seen as a significant concern.

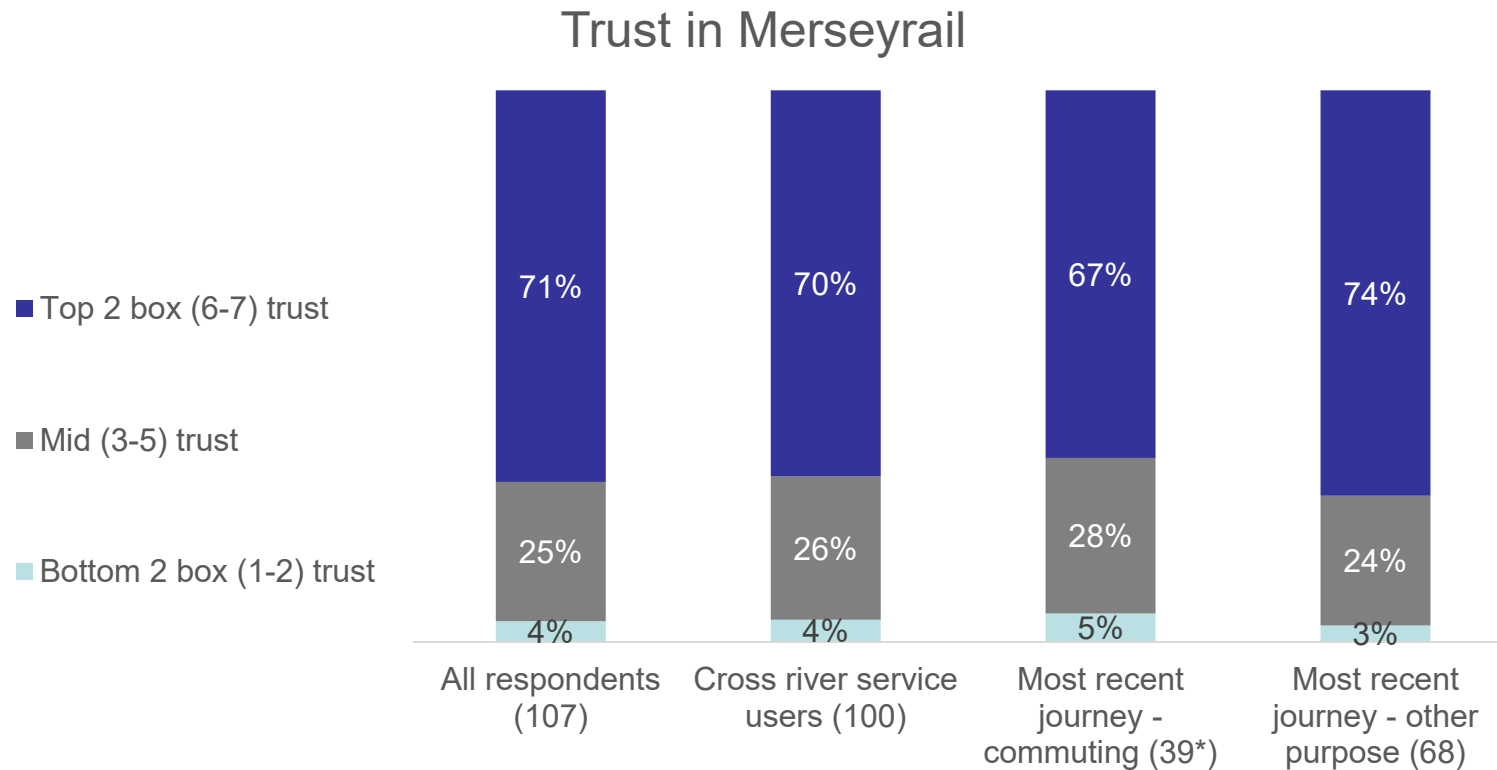


## Detailed findings




# Trust in Merseyrail

# Trust in Merseyrail is high, including among commuters



Top 2 box: trust in First Great Western was 31% immediately prior to the works at Bath Spa  
 Top 2 box: trust in Merseyrail was 52% (highest of all train operators) in our original passenger confidence survey.

7 Q5 All things considered and on balance, how much do you trust Merseyrail on a scale of 1-7, where 1 means 'do not trust them at all' and 7 means 'trust them a great deal'?

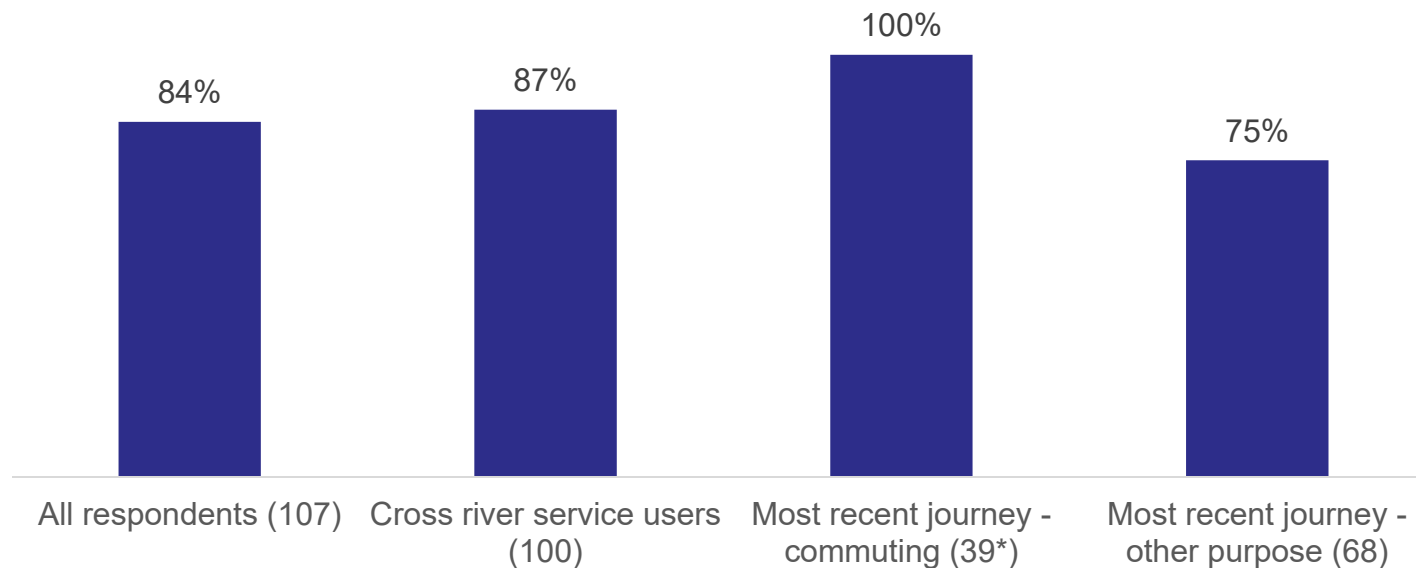


# Awareness and understanding of the planned works



# Awareness of the track renewal works is already high, especially among commuters

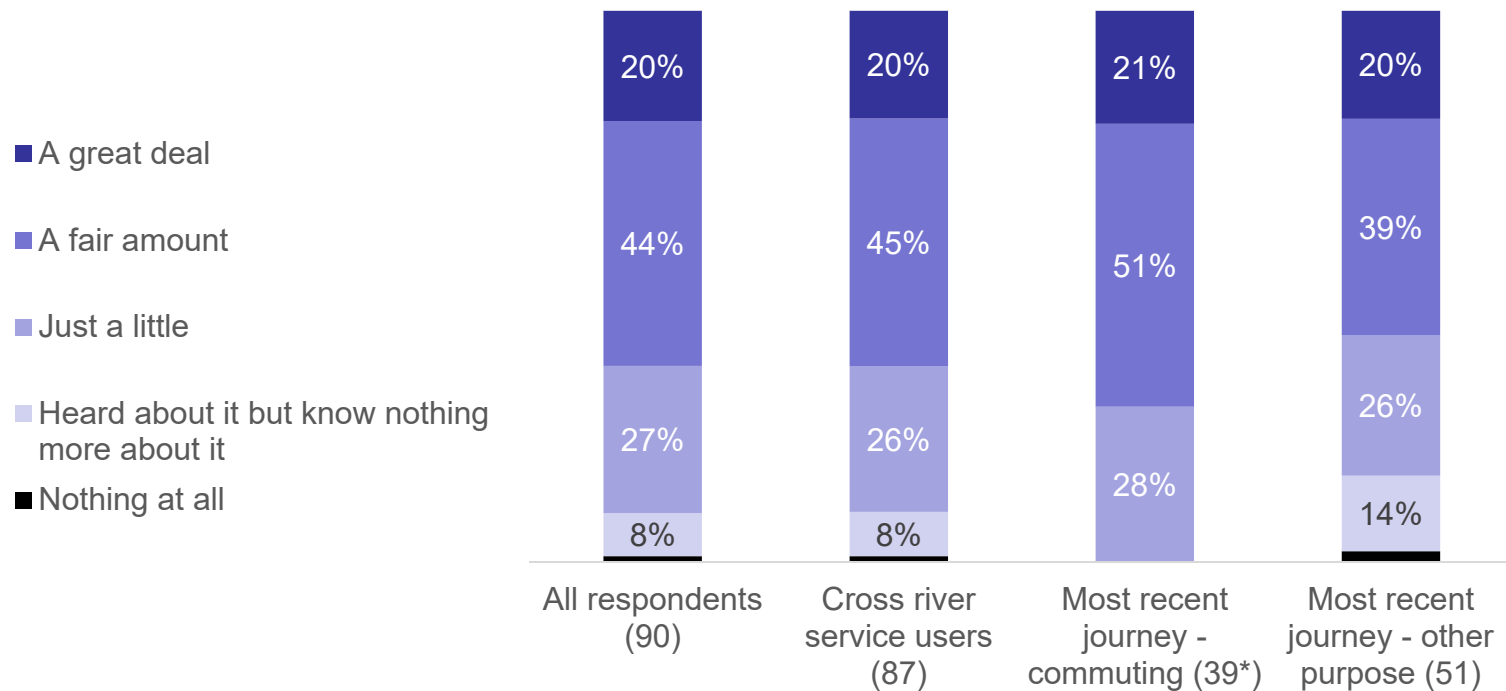
Awareness of track renewal works



Awareness of the works planned for Bath Spa was 67% immediately prior to the works at Bath Spa – this rose to 84% during the works

# Despite awareness being high, there is still room for improvement on knowledge about the works

Claimed level of knowledge about the planned works



# Requests for further information cover a variety of topics, mostly practical

- “How the extra road traffic will be managed including replacement buses.”
- “Replacement Bus timetables.”
- “I'd like a bit more detail about the replacement buses”
- “How many replacement buses will be provided given that a trainload of people won't fit on a bus?”
- “A little more about replacement buses and their routes and times.”

## Bus replacement



- “When it will be running again as normal.”
- “How long will it last? How will my journey to Liverpool be affected?”
- “Obviously just to be updated should there be any delays/problems with the upgrade.”
- “What dates does it start and finish please? Are we going to have trains to Hamilton Square and how will the loop work effect the frequency of service please?”

## Timings and updates



- “Timetables, connections between lines (for example I change at Hamilton square - will the replacement buses be synchronised with the trains?).”
- “How we are to get between stations.”
- “Organisation of replacement bus services that there are guaranteed connections between the trains and buses (so that a train doesn't leave 1 minute before a bus arrives leaving a half hour wait for a connection).”

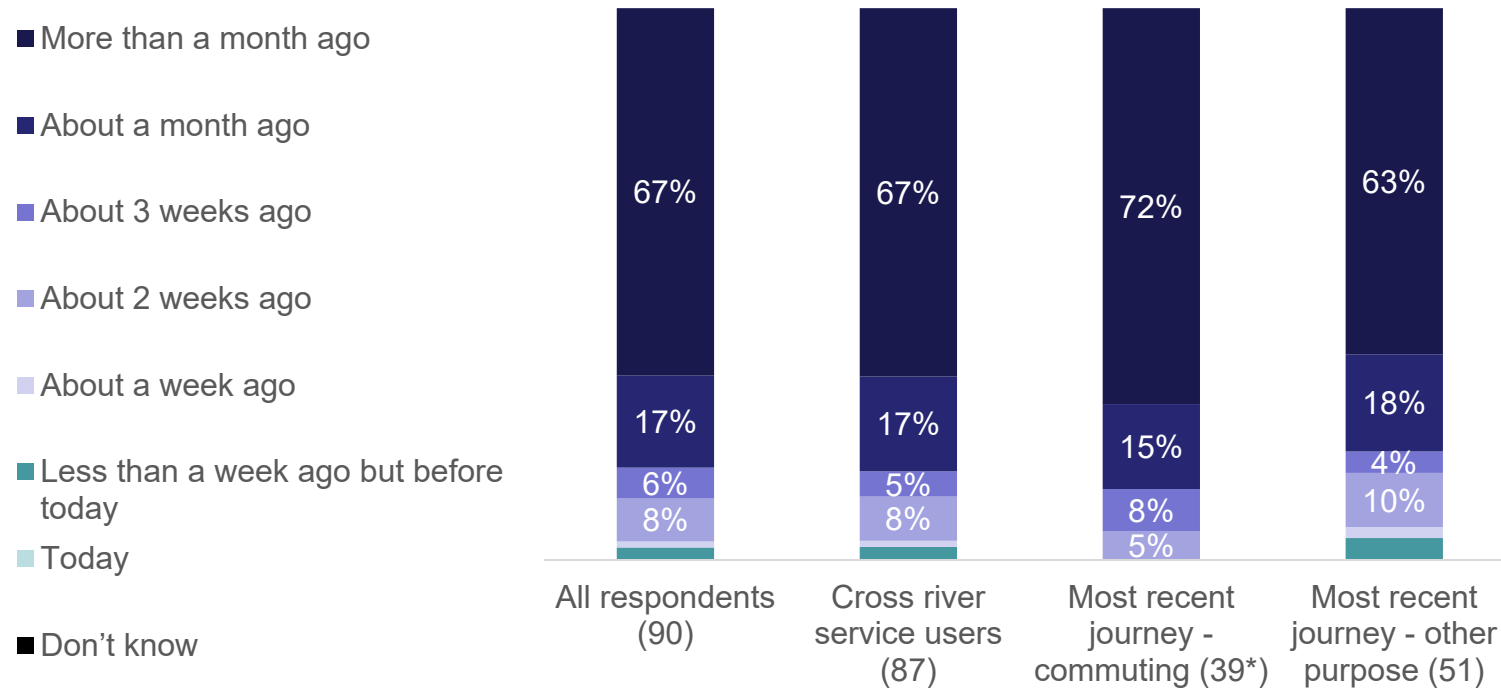
## Connections



At Bath Spa we saw similar concerns about the ‘mechanics’ of replacement services including timetables and connections.

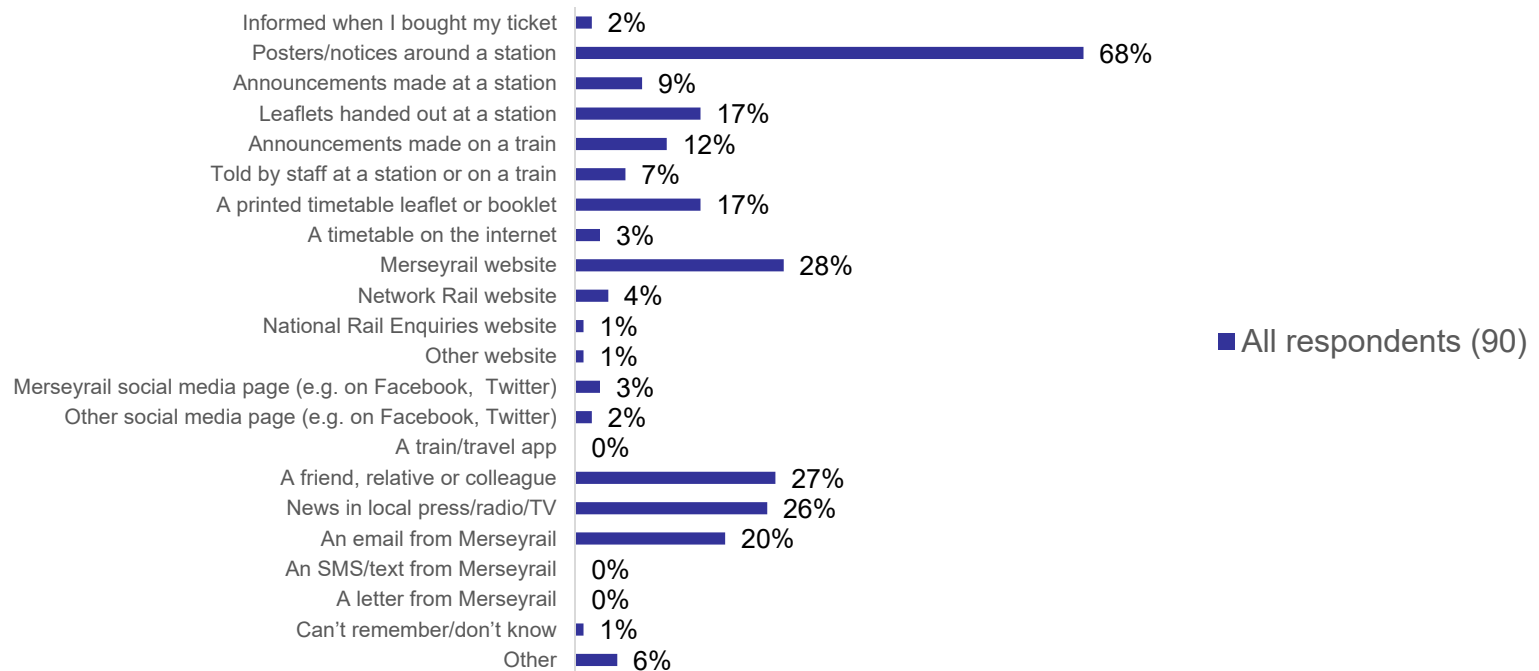
# Most first became aware of the works a month or longer ago

When first found out about the planned works



# While posters and notices at stations are the key sources of information, others are also having an impact

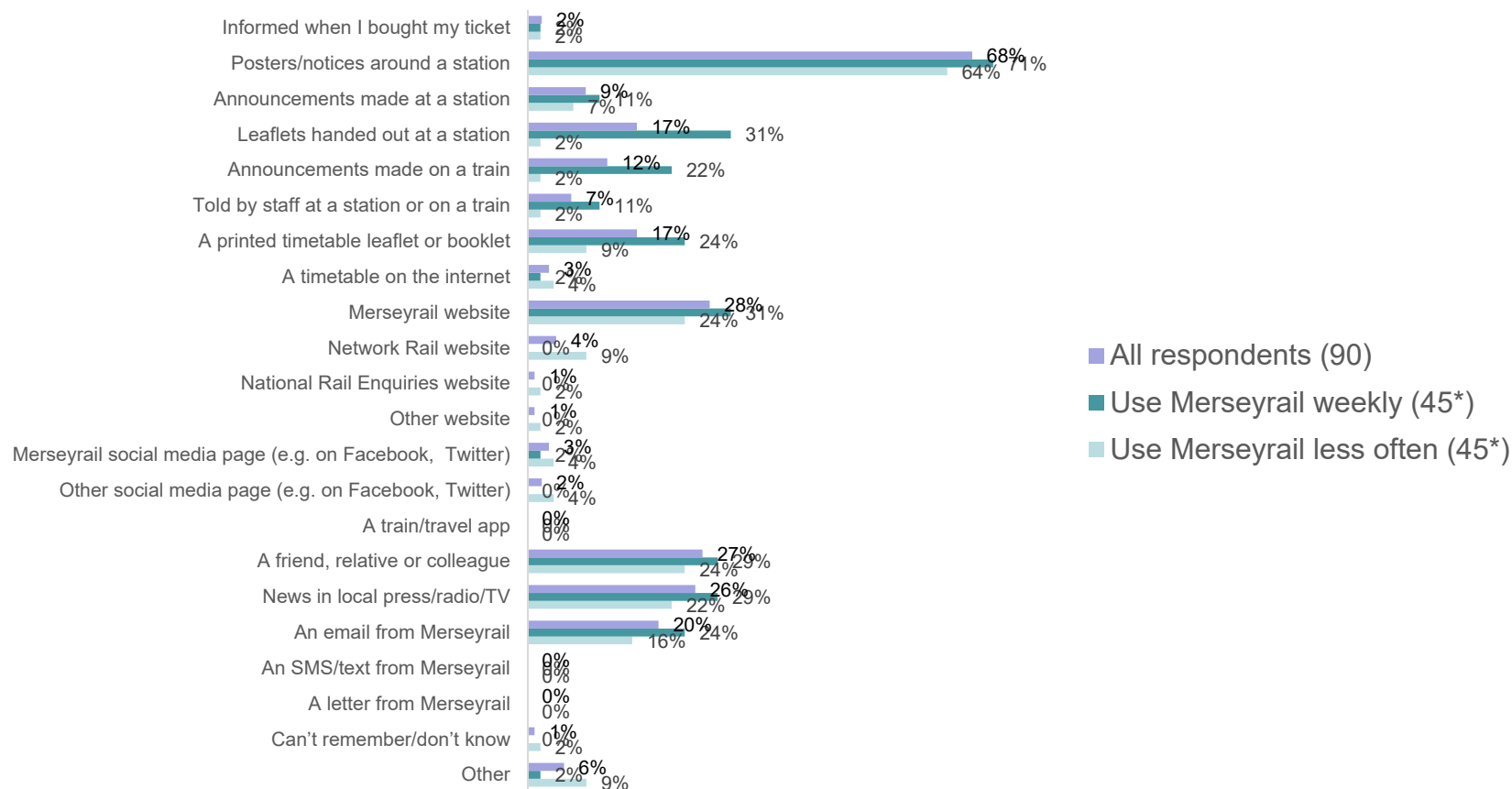
## How passengers found out about the planned works



Results strikingly similar to those for First Great Western at Bath Spa. Local press/radio/TV showing greater impact for Merseyrail.

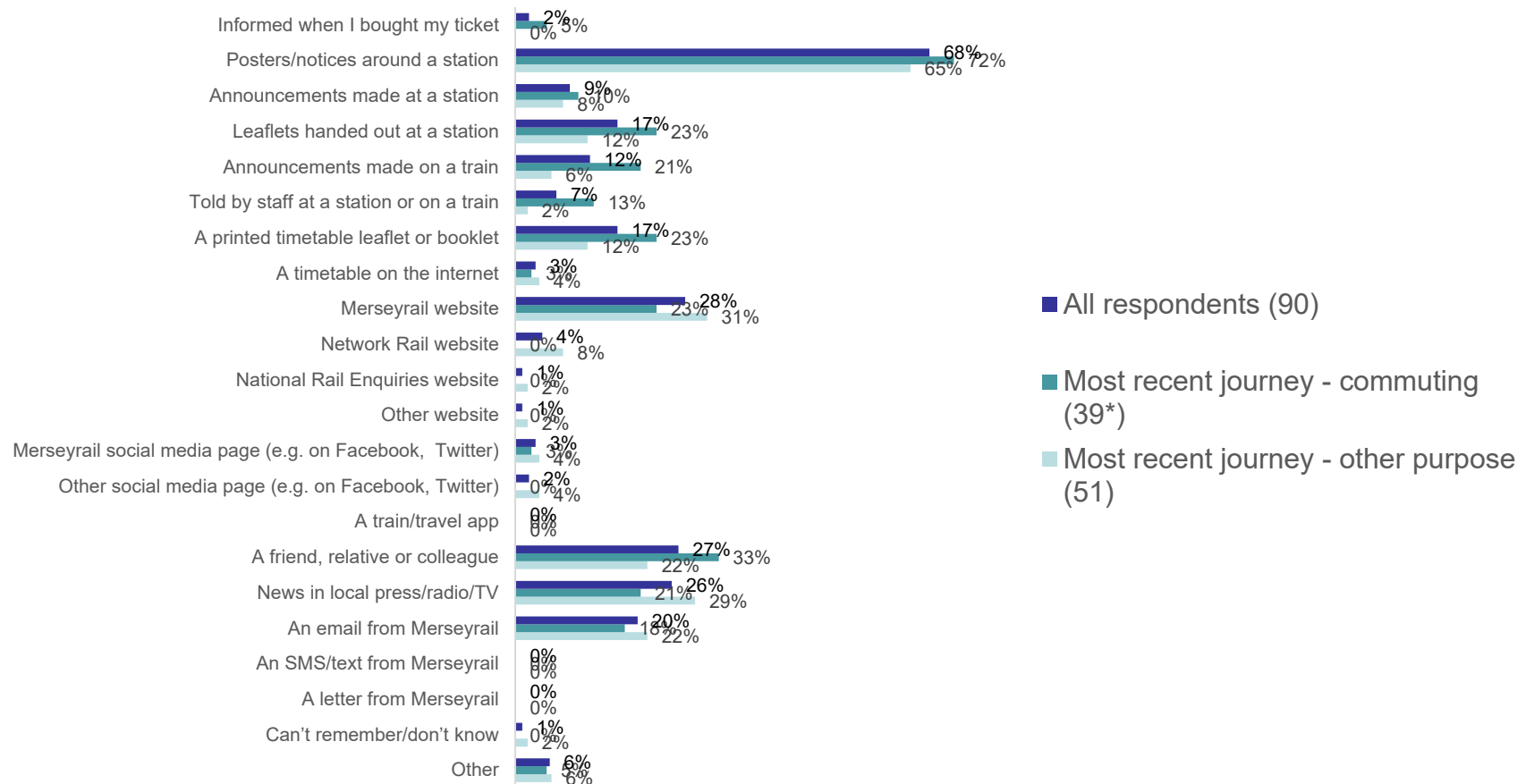
# The more frequent travellers on Merseyrail are being exposed to a wider range of information sources

## How passengers found out about the planned works



# Commuters on Merseyrail are being exposed to a wider range of information sources

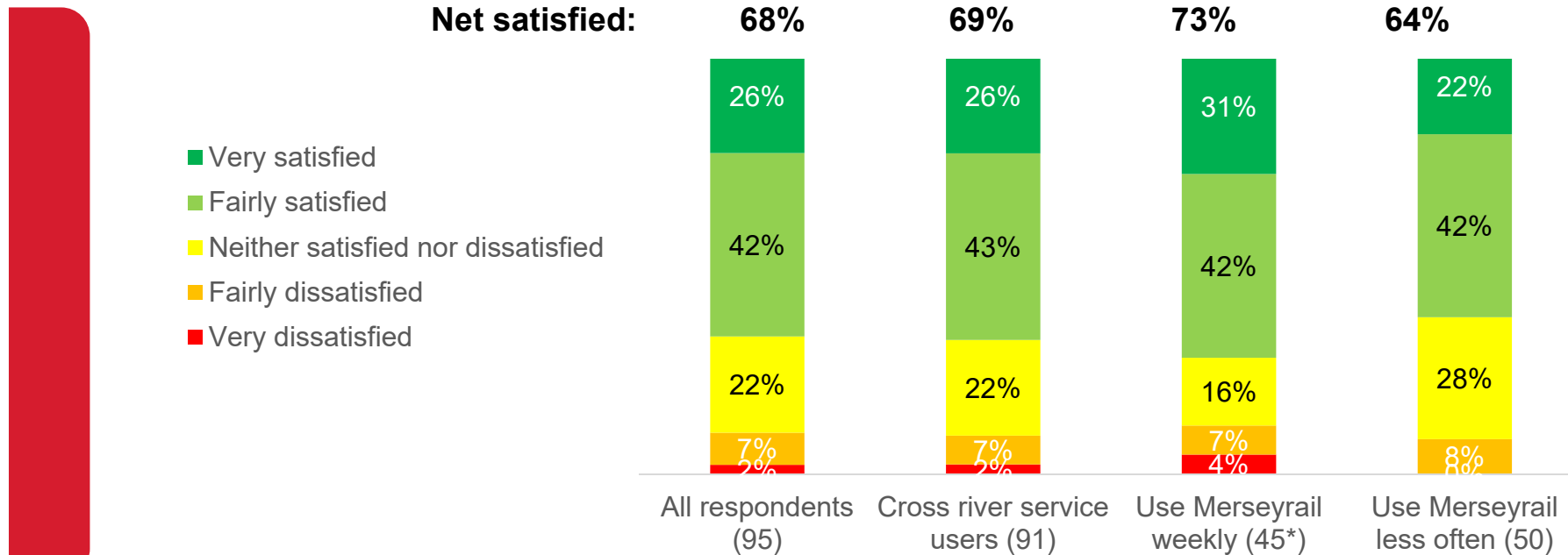
## How passengers found out about the planned works



15 Q10 How did you find out about the track renewal works planned for the Wirral Loop Line in 2017? Base: All respondents aware of the track renewal works.

# Passengers are broadly satisfied with the information being provided at this stage, but more could be done for less frequent travellers

Satisfaction with information provision



- Passengers who generally use stations on the West Kirby/New Brighton lines are more satisfied (82%) than those generally using stations on the Ellesmere Port or Chester lines (62%).
- Those passengers who are not aware of the track renewal works tend to have no opinion on the information being provided rather than being dissatisfied with it.
- Satisfaction was 35% immediately prior to the works at Bath Spa – this rose to 62% during the works.

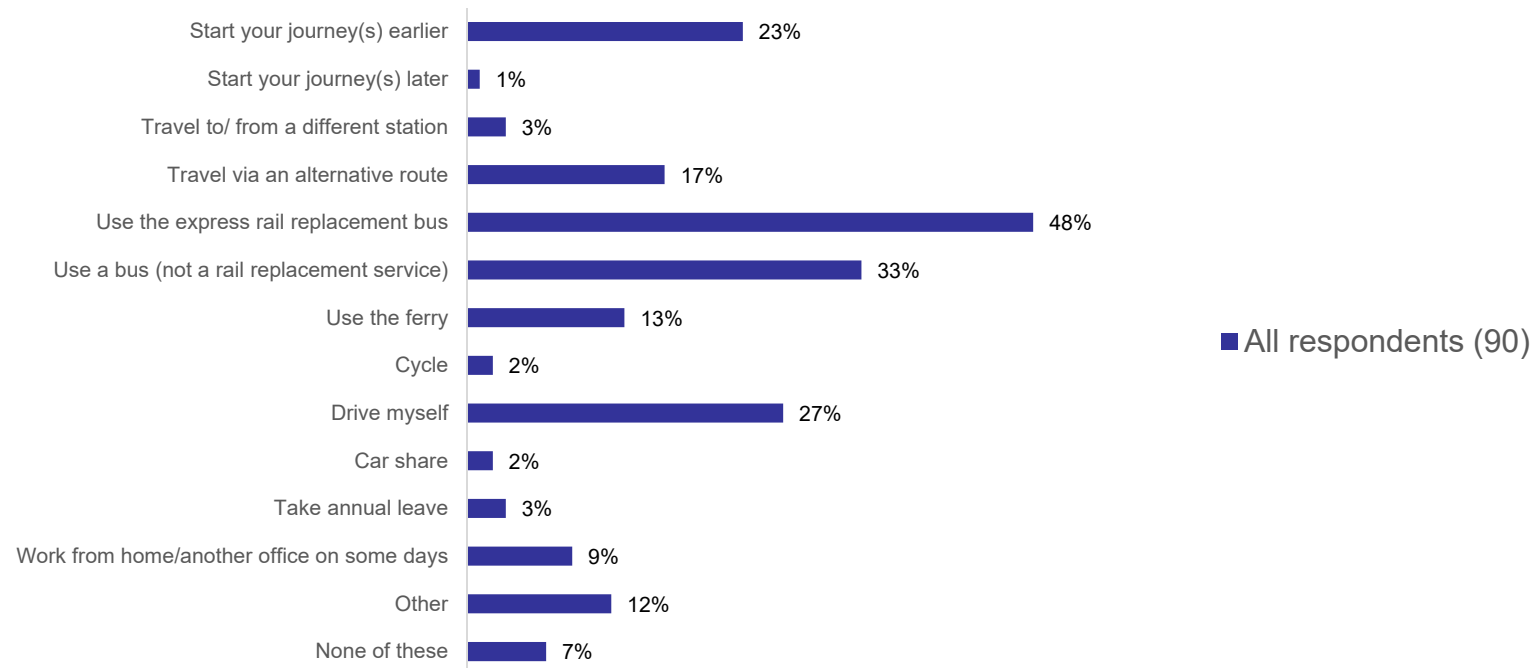




Actions that passengers will take  
ahead of or during the planned works

# The majority of passengers will take a bus in place of the train, although some will drive

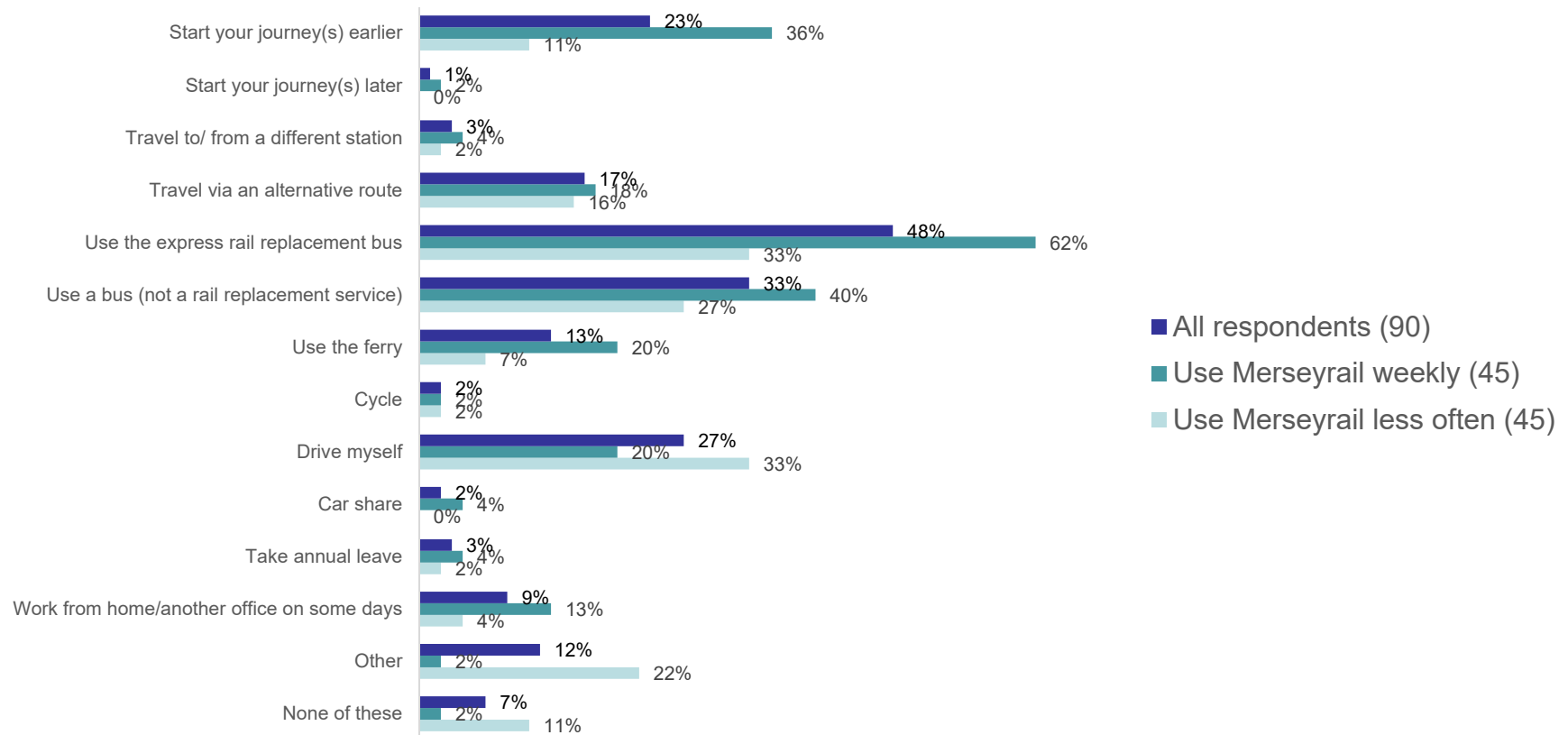
## Actions that passengers are considering taking



Results broadly similar to those for First Great Western at Bath Spa – although greater reliance on replacement and (particularly) service buses.

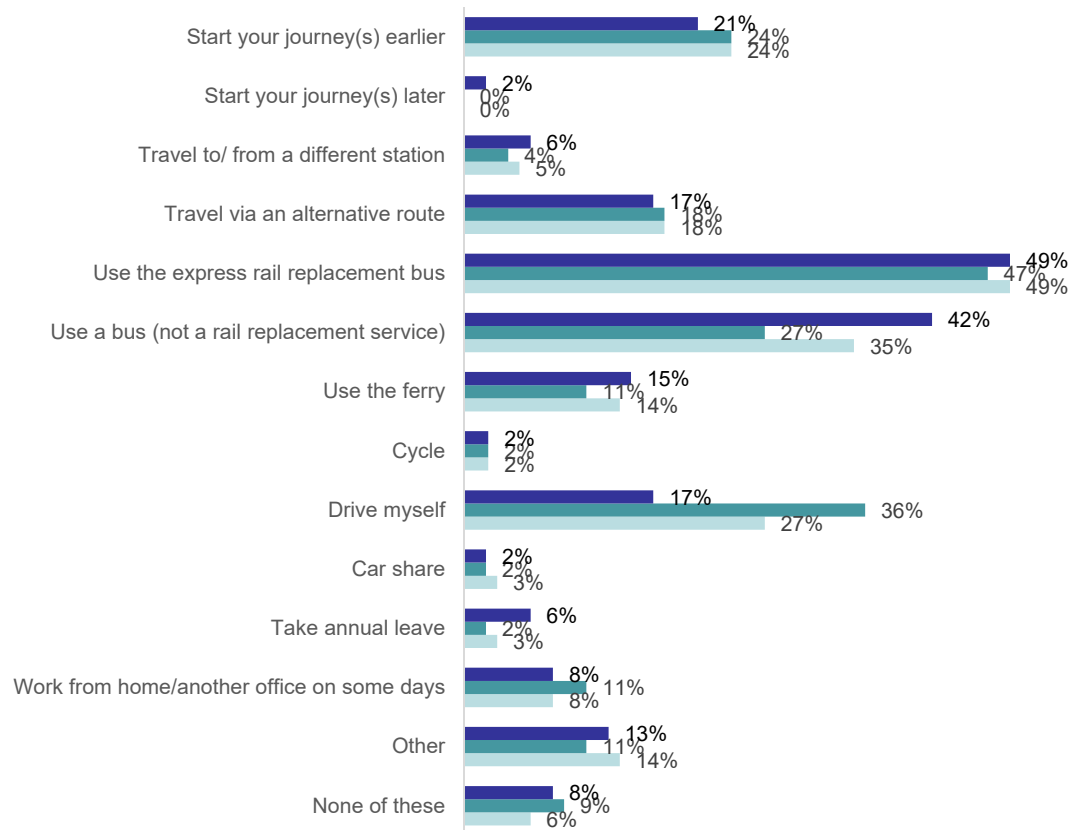
Demand for the rail replacement bus is likely to be higher amongst the more frequent travellers, a third of whom will be starting their journeys earlier

### Actions that passengers are considering taking



# Passengers using the Northern branches are more likely to use scheduled buses whereas those using the Southern branches are more likely to drive

## Actions that passengers are considering taking



- Generally use New Brighton/West Kirby line stations (58)
- Generally use Chester/Ellesmere Port line stations (62)
- Generally use Loop Line stations closed during works\* (71)

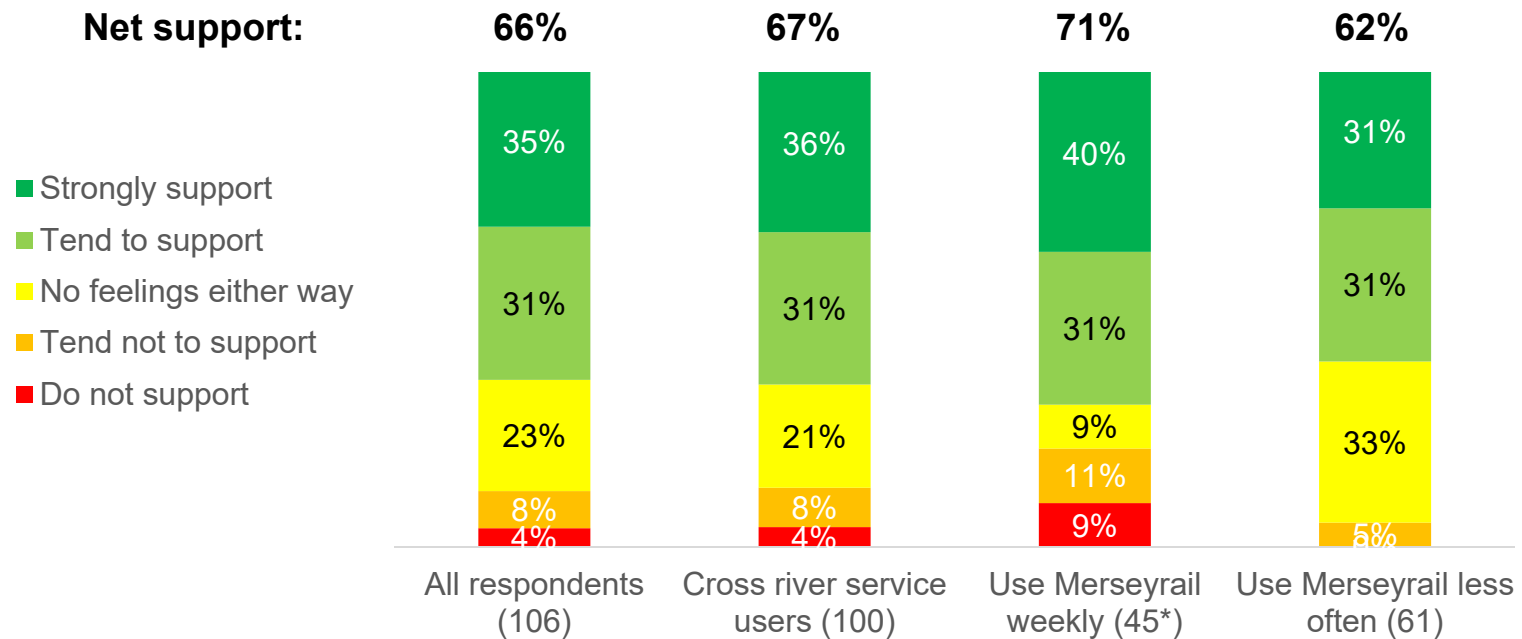
\*These passengers will generally also feature in one of the other two groups since each journey uses at least two stations.



# Support for the planned works

# Passengers are broadly in support of the renewal works at this stage, but the most frequent travellers are more polarised in their views

Level of support for the track renewal work



- Those passengers who are not aware of the track renewal works tend to have no feelings either way.
- Support was at 54% immediately prior to the works at Bath Spa – this rose to 58% during the works.



# Technical appendix

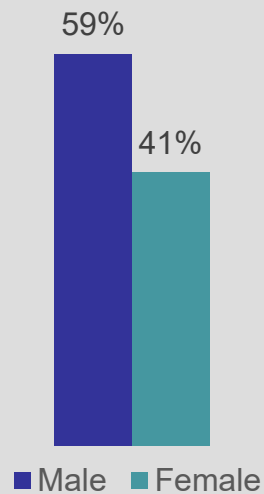
# Methodological overview

- On 12 December 2016 an online survey was sent to passengers who had previously been in contact with Transport Focus and had indicated that they had used Merseyrail train services in the last 12 months. These passengers had been in contact with Transport Focus in one of three ways:
  - those that had responded to an initial survey and had indicated that they would like to join the Transport Focus Transport Users' Panel
  - those that had completed the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) previously and had given permission to be re-contacted
  - those who had contacted Transport Focus via the website and had asked to join the Transport Users' Panel.
- In order to qualify to take part in this specific piece of research, passengers had to indicate at the beginning of the survey that they had used a Merseyrail train in the last three months to travel:
  - between the Wirral and Liverpool (James St, Moorfields, Lime St or Central stations); or
  - between stations on the Wirral but not to/from Liverpool.
- Fieldwork for the survey was undertaken between 12 and 19 December 2016, with a reminder email sent to non-responders on 15 December 2016.
- Note on interpretation of the data: data is representative of members of Transport Focus's Transport User Panel and therefore should be seen as indicative, rather than statistically representative, of the view of passengers generally. Data is unweighted.
- Where findings do not sum to 100% this is because respondents were asked to code more than one option, or because of data rounding.

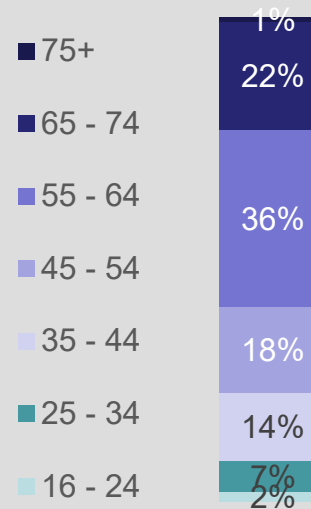


# Respondent profile - demographics

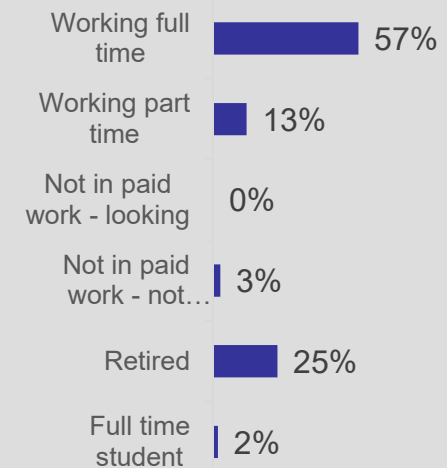
## Gender



## Age



## Working status



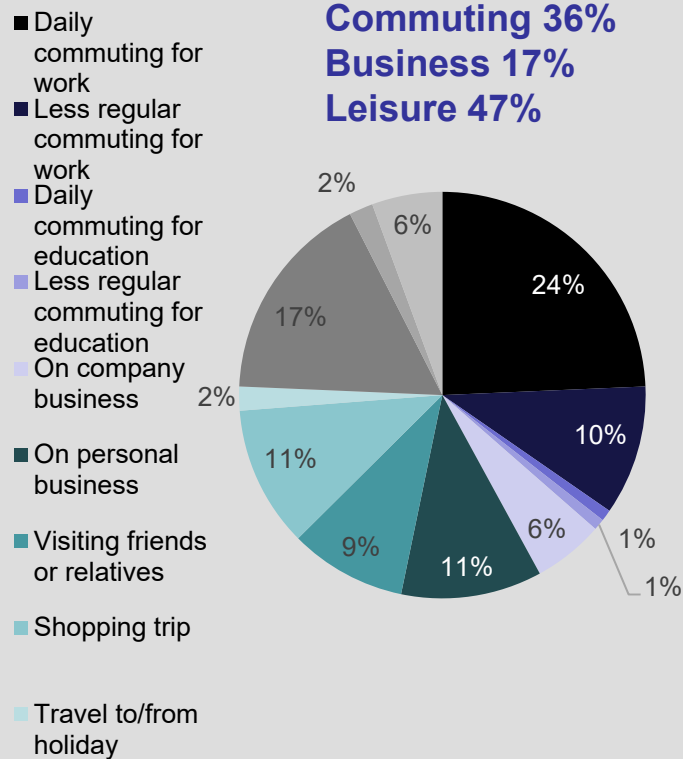
15% of respondents had some form of disability, mostly related to hearing, mobility, or stamina.

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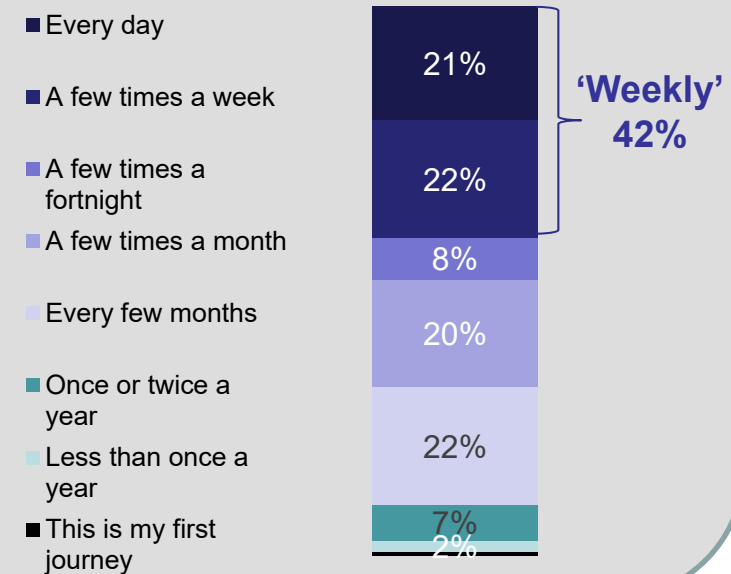
Q15 Are you? Male; Female: Prefer not to say; Q14 Which age group do you fall into?; Q16 Which of these best describes your employment status?; Q18 We recognize and acknowledge that the categories below do not cover the full range of disabilities, but are you affected by any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

# Respondent profile – travel on Merseyrail

## Most recent journey purpose



## Frequency of using Merseyrail



The most commonly used stations were: Lime Street, Liverpool Central, Chester, James Street, Hamilton Sq, Moorfields & West Kirby.