



Trial of an updated approach to capturing passengers' feedback

Piloting face to face recruitment alongside various data collection methods for the future of our passenger experience measurement

January 2022

Outline of this report

1. Introduction

2. Methodology trial

- Headline findings: survey methodology
- Conclusions and further topics to explore

3. Passenger experiences

- Rail passengers
- Bus passengers

CAUTION:

Findings are not based on a nationally representative sample of journeys, and responses were given in a trial of data collection approaches



Introduction: why we ran this pilot

Background

Transport Focus champions the needs of transport users in Great Britain, with an emphasis on evidence-based campaigning, gathered in part via well-respected primary research. Key examples have been the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) and Bus Passenger Survey (BPS), measuring passenger satisfaction with representative samples of over 50,000 rail, and around 40,000 bus journeys annually.

While these surveys have been widely used across the rail and bus industries, they had some acknowledged limitations, including: 1) they provided feedback at points in time rather than year-round or more frequently; 2) findings took time to be released (due to the method, and publication process), delaying the industries' response to results. There have been comprehensive reviews of and enhancements to the surveys over the years; however – partly for data continuity, and partly because the reviews have not recommended major changes – the fundamentals of the surveys have largely remained.

In 2020, passenger numbers were severely affected by Covid-19; consequently the NRPS and BPS were cancelled altogether for Autumn 2020 and throughout 2021. During this time there have also been government-led changes to the way that rail and bus services are managed and evaluated, which may have implications for the way that passenger feedback is used in future, and therefore the way it is collected.

While all of this necessitated a break in the continuity of NRPS and BPS data, in the meantime Transport Focus has used 2020-21 to completely review and potentially update the way we measure passenger experience. We have reviewed possible future approaches to insight collection, including pilots of some options as in this study.

Our main objectives for this study

Having trialled some ways of recruiting passengers to a survey which did not involve any face-to-face interaction, including online and via a postal push-to-web exercise – and confirming their limitations for our purposes – and as public transport usage began to resume during 2021, we wished to:

- **Understand the (renewed) potential for intercepting passengers face-to-face and in the moment of making a journey**, to invite their feedback
- **Explore the potential for encouraging most respondents to take part online**, for the time, cost and flexibility (as well as likely environmental) benefits this would bring if successful

In addition, we wanted to run a number of other experiments on variations to the way we recruit and seek feedback from passengers.

How the pilot was conducted



Fieldwork
2 Aug – 26 Sep 2021



6,969 passengers
recruited overall

1,612 took part in the
surveys

(split approximately
50/50 for the rail and
bus surveys)



A mix of town and city
locations across GB

Fieldworkers initially
intercepted members of the
public, throughout the day on
all days of the week, at:

- Railway stations
- Bus stops / stations
- Town centres/ high footfall
outdoor public spaces

After two weeks, we
established that stations /
stops were sufficiently
productive sites for survey
recruitment, and so the other
(comparatively unproductive)
locations were dropped



People in the area screened
for recent rail or bus usage,
and invited to take the survey

Initially, people were eligible
if they had used either rail or
bus within the last 7 days, or
were about to do so

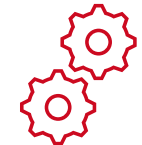
After two weeks, we
established that enough
people were making a
journey on the day itself; this
was adopted as the criteria
for the remainder of the pilot



Eligible passengers invited to
take part online or with a
paper self-completion
questionnaire

Some further experiments
were conducted within this
including:

- Testing the appeal and
efficacy of a telephone
interview (CATI) option
- Testing an online-only
scenario vs. a push
towards online completion
vs. offering a full choice of
online vs paper
- Testing different
questionnaire lengths



Those agreeing to take the
online survey were given the
choice to access it by:

- Scanning a QR code
- Providing an email
address or mobile number
in order to receive a link
by email / SMS
- Taking down a short url

Further experiments were
also conducted to test other,
more detailed and tactical
options and variations to the
approach; headline findings
from these experiments are
given in this report

Headline findings: survey methodology

Full data behind the following headlines is available in the separate, full agency report



Headlines: 1 / 11

People can (still) be recruited face to face for participation in a survey – in this case train / bus users, at railway stations / bus stops

While we expected and hoped that this would be the case, this reassurance is important in the context of a number of factors:

- Trends for lower responses rates to surveys across market research more widely
- Changes in the way the public interacts with organisations, generally and via surveys (i.e. with more interactions taking place online)
- ...and of course the added effect of Covid-19, which we were concerned may have reduced people's willingness to engage when intercepted face to face (by someone they don't know).

Key evidence from this pilot:

- Fieldworkers were able to stop and engage with plenty of people, and even in lower footfall locations or quieter times (within the relatively busy locations this survey covered) they did not “run out” of potential recruits
 - Anecdotally, and from our observations, most people were comfortable talking to fieldworkers in these (mainly open-air) locations
 - They were able to stop, engage and recruit a wide range of people across different demographics and bus / rail usage groups
- Rail and bus locations were substantially more productive than town centre and other high footfall public open spaces

Headlines: 2 / 11

Survey questions themselves can and should focus on evaluating the journey being made today, i.e. at point of recruitment. This is preferable over a broader journey definition.

Key evidence from this pilot:

→ The broader test of whether or not face to face recruitment is viable, in particular at railway stations and bus stops, confirmed that not only is this feasible, but that it is productive enough so as not to require a broader eligibility around journeys. That is, there are plenty of people making journeys at that point in time, and willing to feed back about that specific journey. (This was at a time when, although Covid was still present – some operators were still requiring face coverings, for example, and passenger numbers had not returned to pre-Covid levels – there were no official government restrictions on travel within the UK.)

(By contrast, in other exploratory work, we used other methods such as recruiting people online, or via postal push-to-web. These necessarily asked people about journeys which may have taken place some days – even weeks – earlier).

→ In this study we experimented with questions about a journey “today” versus in the last seven days. We found that the “today” version made for better recall of details (e.g. in open-ended responses) and more easily verifiable responses (e.g. with more accurate information about the times of trains / buses), for more useful overall feedback.

We also hypothesise that when people feed back about a journey some days (or longer) ago, they are more likely to pick a more memorable example – for good or bad – leading to less representative results.

Headlines: 3 / 11

The majority of potential respondents can be recruited into an online survey

Using an online survey (rather than mainly paper self-completion questionnaires as in the previous *Passenger Surveys*) can bring potential advantages in terms of cost, as well as time for setting up the survey, delivering fieldwork and processing data. It also has the potential to enable more flexibility in the questions being asked, and is likely to be better for the environment.

Key evidence from this pilot:

- **80% / 63%** (rail / bus) were recruited for the online survey (rather than paper or CATI) when passengers were able to use any of the methods
92% / 87% (rail / bus) were recruited to online when we restricted the paper option only to those who couldn't have taken part otherwise.
- Though there were other factors which also affected response, when we revised some aspects of the fieldwork after the first two weeks, the overall number of recruits and complete survey responses went up when we effectively steered people to the online option rather than allowing them a choice.
- Anecdotally we saw that, in some cases, potential respondents took a paper questionnaire because it was (perceived to be) quicker or easier than stopping to engage for longer with a fieldworker to scan a QR code or to provide contact details for the online survey link. We believe that these people were also less likely to actually go on to complete and return the paper questionnaire. In another variation experiment, some of these people were more effectively retained – as online respondents – by providing a postcard with the QR code and survey URL to enter the survey in their own time, rather than giving out (and often wasting) a paper questionnaire.

Headlines: 4 / 11

Having an emphasis on online survey completion helps to widen the respondent profile, to more effectively include groups who have historically been harder to engage

Key evidence from this pilot:

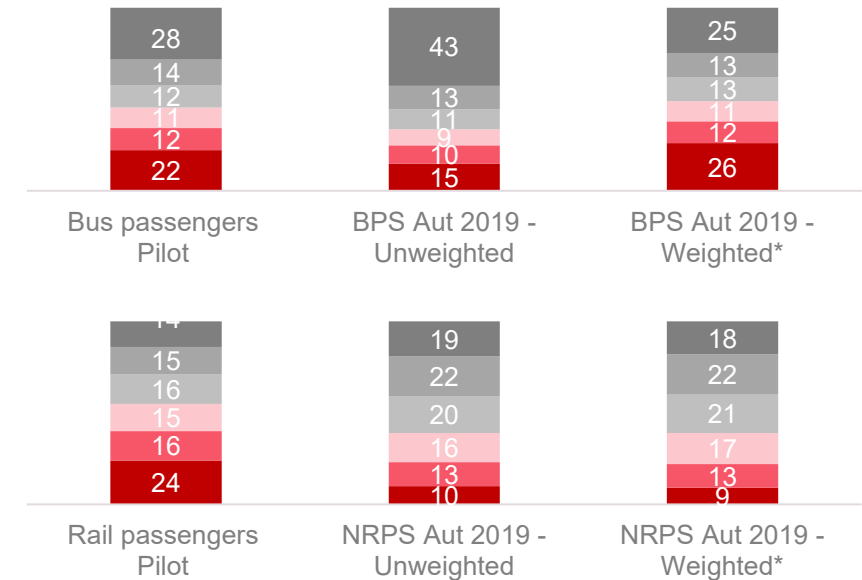


The overall (unweighted) age profile of bus passenger respondents in this pilot was in between the weighted and unweighted profiles for the BPS, where we had always needed to weight by age (among other variables) to achieve a representative sample. So while the sample generated in this updated approach may still need some weighting by demographics, this is likely to be significantly less than was required for the BPS – making for more robust data overall



This pilot also generated a much younger profile for the rail survey than NRPS had achieved previously. Although no demographic weights were applied in the NRPS, separate analysis had previously shown that younger people and males were typically under-represented, both at the point of recruitment, and again even further at response stage. As such, again, this updated approach appears to have advantages over the previously used method in terms of representing passenger groups.

Age profiles %
 ■ 25 or less ■ 26-34 ■ 35-44 ■ 45-54 ■ 55-64 ■ 65+



It could be argued that comparisons with NRPS and BPS are flawed, because the profile of actual rail and bus passengers is likely to have changed itself, as a result of Covid-19 and its impact on the way people live, work and travel. While this argument is justified, these findings also echo trends seen within the NRPS and BPS themselves, where younger people and males were better able to be included when an online option was introduced (on a smaller scale than here) in more recent years. We believe that the comparisons made here are fit for this purpose, i.e. in confirming that an online emphasis is valuable for our passenger experience measurement.

Headlines: 5 / 11

Providing different ways to access the online survey further helped to secure participation from different passenger types – especially those from typically harder to engage groups (such as younger males)

As well as being more inclusive, facilitating participation from a wide range of passengers is desirable to lessen the need for weighting, which can reduce the robustness of the final results.

Key evidence from this pilot:



The different access methods appealed to different groups. In particular the addition of the option to scan a QR code looks to have opened up the respondent profile successfully (compared to previous NRPS and BPS in which only the email option was offered):



Scan QR code

Share of take up: 39%
Response rate: 20%

Survey data shows this appealed to:

- Substantially younger set of passengers
- Somewhat higher socio-economic groups (B/C1s)
- Commuters

Anecdotally, QR codes also appealed to:

- People in a hurry, with less time to stop and provide contact details
- People who preferred not to share contact details



Link via email

Share of take up: 33%
Response rate: 22%



Link via SMS

Share of take up: 10%
Response rate: 24%

Survey data shows this appealed to:

- A mix of ages, though typically older than QR code users (a little younger on average for SMS)
- Lower socio-economic groups (especially Es)
- Those travelling for non-work reasons

Headlines: 6 / 11

The QR code access option brought some clear benefits, but also had some potential drawbacks
Further testing will be needed to refine this part of the approach in the next stage of our development work

Key evidence from this pilot:



As seen on the previous page, this option helped to open up the survey to more passenger groups, including for a wider demographic coverage, and to those in a hurry or with reservations about sharing their data



Almost all completed the survey on the same day as they were recruited (over 80% compared to around 50% for those accessing the survey by email and around 68% by SMS): benefiting from the best recall, and playing an important role in our aim to deliver feedback to the industry more quickly



By nature, those accessing the survey via QR code scan are anonymous, and cannot be sent reminders if they have not completed the questionnaire by a given time after recruitment (which we know aids response)



A large proportion (12%) of these respondents in the rail survey completed the questionnaire before their train was due to depart (this data was not captured in the bus survey). This does not necessarily mean these respondents' journey evaluations are unfounded, but it does raise questions for how accurately they describe some aspects – such as on-board cleanliness – for the specific journey.

Headlines: 7 / 11

Despite the benefits of the online survey, having a paper questionnaire option is necessary to enable inclusion of those passengers who are unable to take part online. This is especially true for the bus survey.

Key evidence from this pilot:



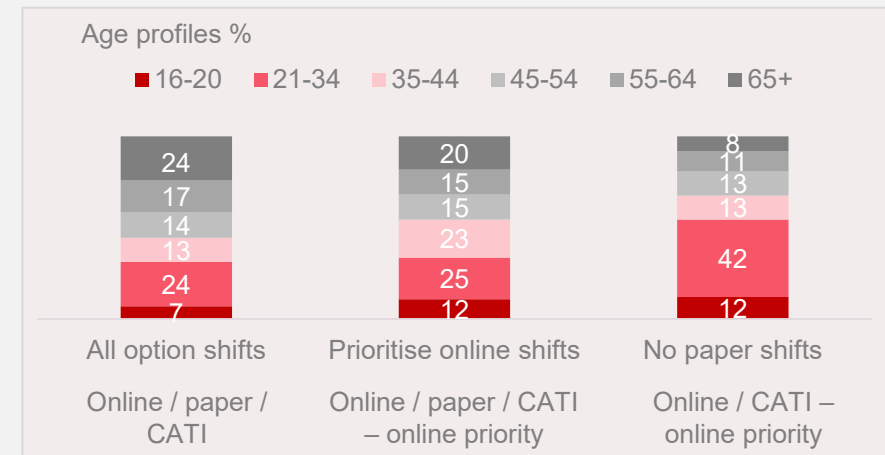
In the experiment where we removed the paper questionnaire option completely, older people and those in the lower socio-economic groups were less likely to be recruited, and also much less likely to go on and complete the survey. While it could be argued that this scenario was successful in engaging younger people and especially males (who had historically been underrepresented) and so consequently we should expect to see lower overall proportions of the other groups, it was felt that removing the paper option completely went too far in this direction, to the exclusion of some in these groups. Anecdotal feedback from fieldworkers also confirmed this.



(Of the possible offline options in this pilot – paper questionnaires or a call-back for a telephone interview (CATI) – paper questionnaires were more popular.

This method also has other comparative benefits over CATI, including cost efficiency – at this scale, where CATI saw very low take-up – and stronger similarity to the online survey as they are both self-completion methods.

We therefore concluded that CATI would not be part of our recommended approach for the future of passenger experience research).

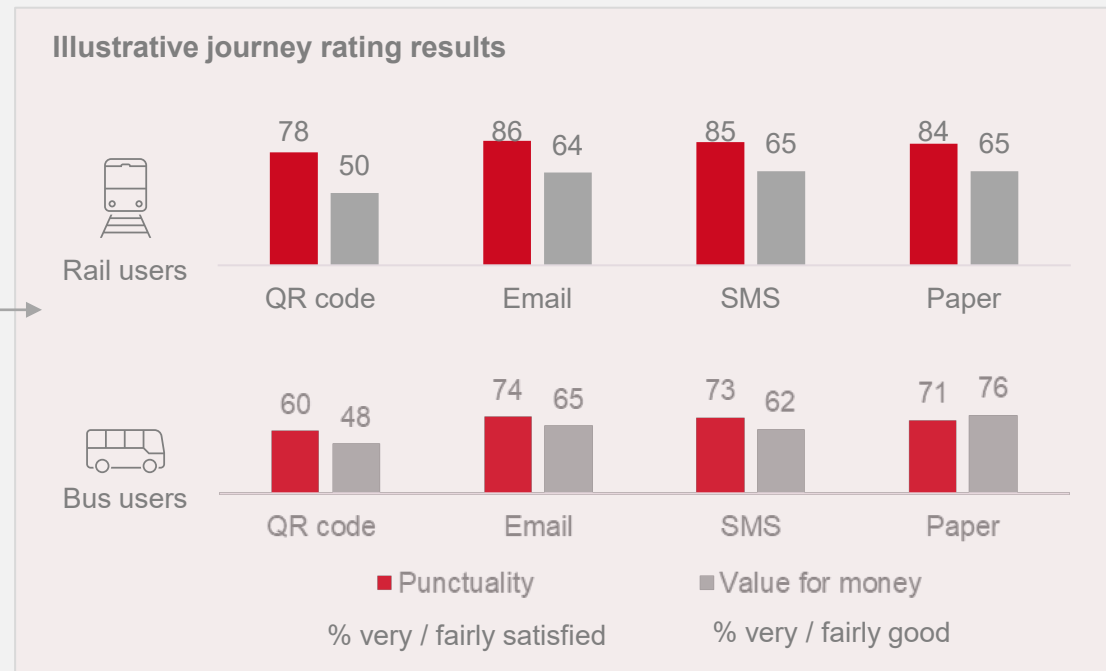


Headlines: 8 / 11

Respondents completing the survey via different methods – and accessing it in different ways – have different response patterns for satisfaction questions; this can be controlled for with weighting

Key evidence from this pilot:

- As we have seen on previous pages, the paper and online questionnaires appealed to different people, especially by age. This effect is further amplified by the different access methods to the online survey, with QR code entry in particular bringing in younger respondents.
- This also affects the way people answer key satisfaction questions, with people accessing the online survey via QR code typically reporting less positive experiences
- Further analysis* showed that these differences in response were primarily driven by the demographic differences behind the data collection methods, rather than being linked to the methods themselves. Providing that all of the methods shown here are used constantly, the demographic profiles they generate can be controlled with weighting, to create a consistent basis for experience evaluation over time.



Headlines: 9 / 11

Using a modular approach to the questionnaire will be valuable

Key evidence from this pilot:

- In this study, respondents were served either a shorter survey with optional extra questions, or a longer questionnaire with the full set of (the same) questions. Overall response rate and volume of responses for core questions was higher in the former.
- Most respondents (around three quarters) who were offered the optional questions were happy to continue with them, and so the full set of data was collected from most people even where they started with the shorter questionnaire – but in this scenario we had more “buy in” and willingness from respondents to do so.
- Outside of the benefits relating to response rate, this experiment indicates that it will be possible to work with a small number of different questionnaire modules. This brings the potential for flexibility in serving different modules to different groups (perhaps dependent on previous answers), or at different times.
- *Those opting in to an additional set of questions are likely to be somewhat different from the sample in the “core” dataset – demographically, attitudinally and in terms of rail / bus usage. Additional weighting may therefore be needed here to enable the results to be used in the same way.*

Headlines: 10 / 11

Our traditional “overall journey satisfaction” question, with its 5-point verbal response scale, still holds value as a headline measure of passenger journey experience

Key evidence from this pilot:



Three different ways of rating today's journey overall were tested:

“ *How satisfied were you with your journey overall?*

Very satisfied
Fairly satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Fairly dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied

”

“ *Please rate your journey overall*



”

“ *Please rate your journey overall*



”

- There was similarity between the versions, but responses were not directly equivalent (e.g. a 5 star rating did not perfectly equate to “very satisfied”)
- The two 5-point scales provided more detail and discrimination in passengers’ experience than the 3-point “faces” version
- In the context of this survey, the stars and faces versions did not appear to be better understood or easier for respondents to answer than the verbal response scale
- Outside of this study, we believe the verbal response version to be more meaningful, as well as more familiar, to Transport Focus’ stakeholders and users of our passenger experience research

While this experiment confirmed the value in using (at least) 5-point response scales, and verbal responses specifically, there is also appetite for other measures of experience beyond “satisfaction”, which we will continue to explore.

Headlines: 11 / 11

Attempting to squeeze more value from individual respondents by seeking multiple responses to the same survey does not look to be worthwhile

Key evidence from this pilot:



Two experiments were conducted for “recycling” individual respondents:

A

Rail survey respondents were asked at recruitment if they would also take the bus survey (where eligible), and vice versa

- 16% qualified for this when recruitment locations included sites away from stations / bus stops. However, having separately established that passengers should be recruited in-moment, and therefore having dropped non-transport sites, we would expect the numbers qualifying for both surveys to be lower
- Of those who initially agreed to complete a second survey, around 60% actually did so (i.e. less than 10% of the total). Although not covered in detail in our analysis, we also expect these people to be attitudinally and demographically different to the overall respondent profile.

B

After completing a survey, respondents were asked if they would be making another journey within the next two weeks, and if they would take the survey again. For those who agreed, a new survey link was sent on the day of the intended next journey

- 5% of all respondents went on to complete a second survey
- This group of re-contacted respondents were older on average than the “main” sample, and had different patterns of response (albeit based on small sample sizes). In the rail survey in particular these respondents were notably more satisfied with their journeys overall. As such we were concerned that these respondents were atypical and could skew overall results.

With the relatively small sample size increases that these options offer, along with the extra layers of complexity they bring to the survey set up and weighting requirements, we do not feel that they are a useful component in our approach going forward.

However, it is reassuring to see further willingness to engage with our research, and we will continue to invite all research participants to join our separate Transport User Panel, through which they can take part in other types of research, and engage with Transport Focus in other ways.

Conclusions and further topics to explore



Conclusions: key principles for our new approach

The findings from this pilot study, along with our wider review work, have informed some immediate and fundamental conclusions about the essentials of our future approach to measuring passenger experience:



Passengers feed back about a **single leg of a journey, made on the day of recruitment**



Online as the main method for survey completion – but paper option has a place



Pro-active recruitment of passengers, at point of usage



Concise questionnaire focusing on essential metrics – with optional, modular question sets



.... meaning **face to face** interception as passengers make journeys; this is verified and inclusive



Structured questions about overall journey experience, with core measures carried over from previous NRPS and BPS

Questions and topics for further exploration: Sample

1. What is a realistic expectation for fieldwork productivity?

In this trial, on average each 3-hour shift generated 9-13 completed surveys with rail passengers, and 6-9 with bus passengers. Although the sample generated here looks to be more representative than in the NRPS and BPS, the total volume is lower than we saw in the previous surveys. Some factors will have limited the productivity of fieldwork in this pilot, including:

- Fieldworkers deliberately did not aim for high numbers of recruits, instead spending time with passengers to understand the appeal of different data collection methods; in the NRPS and BPS fieldworkers were usually incentivised for generating high recruitment and high response rates
- Fieldwork took place relatively soon after Covid-19 restrictions were lifted; there may still have been real limitations on footfall, and many people may have still have been hesitant about interacting.

Given these points, we believe it is possible to increase fieldwork productivity using the approach in this pilot; but at this stage we do not know how far.

2. How will the approach work at lower footfall sites... or on board trains and buses?

Our future measurement of passenger experience must be representative of different types of passenger journeys. This pilot study was conducted in towns and cities, at mostly larger train stations and busier urban bus stop areas or bus stations; but in practice the survey must cover a wide range of services including on lower patronage routes, and will need to include people who do not travel to or from town and city centres.

This might involve recruiting at quieter stations and bus stops, and in some cases, where these sites are too quiet to justify the cost of fieldwork and / or would introduce an unacceptable level of sample clustering, it may be better for fieldworkers to travel and recruit on board to intercept a larger number and spread of passengers.

3. How representative is the generated sample of real passenger journeys?

This study has shown that a mixed data collection approach can facilitate a broad passenger sample, in terms of demographics, journey purpose, and other factors. Nevertheless we anticipate that some groups will still be under or over-represented, and weighting (or additional constraints on sampling) is very likely to be needed.

With the changing shape of public transport patronage over the last two years – and ongoing – it is difficult to know what the universe of bus and train passenger journeys should look like, and therefore how exactly we might design weighting or other sample controls. This will need to be developed alongside the future surveys as they are launched and run their first few months or waves, as passenger footfall continues to change and eventually settle.

Questions and topics for further exploration:

Tactical refinements

4. What role might a short URL play among the options for accessing an online survey?

In this study, the short URL was noted down by only 2% of all recruits, and was the poorest performing component for converting recruits into completed responses with only 6% of these going on to take the survey. It would therefore be easy to dismiss this outright.

However, because some people are reluctant to provide contact details for a survey link to be sent to them, the only other option currently is the QR code scan (or paper). This has been shown to appeal to younger people (so could be less appealing to others) and anecdotally we heard through this study that some people (albeit a minority) are not comfortable or able to use this technology, but would still be willing to do the survey online. We therefore feel that the short URL option should be explored a little further, as an alternative for those who are uncomfortable providing contact details but do not or cannot use the QR code. In this pilot, the URL may not have been easy enough to note down, or may have been too readily lost or forgotten about (where it was photographed for example). It would be worthwhile to revisit options for making this more effective before rejecting it completely.

5. How can we address pre-journey responses?

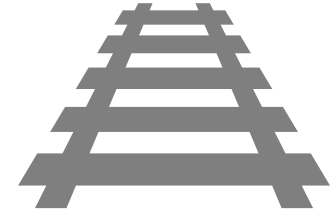
As outlined earlier some respondents completed their survey before their journey had begun (according to the scheduled departure time which they gave as part of their answers). The majority of these were people who entered the online survey via a QR code – i.e. where there was no delay at all between recruitment and access to the survey, compared to at least a few minutes for most people receiving an email or SMS.

We intend to explore options to encourage passengers to wait until their journey is underway or preferably complete – but without compromising response rate.

6. How can we maximise response from those not providing contact details?

In the pilot, respondents who entered the survey via the QR code or the short URL used an open version of the survey, which was not unique to them as individuals. By comparison, those entering via an email or SMS link would fill out a unique and trackable survey. This meant that if they dropped out of it for any reason, those in the email and SMS route could re-enter and continue where they left off with all previous answers saved, and if they didn't respond or only partially responded in a given time period they could be sent a reminder. Those in the QR code or URL route would not have these features. We believe that these features can help to boost response rate and prevent “wasted” recruitment – and wasted time for passengers – and so we intend to explore ways of extending them to more respondents.

Headline findings: Rail passenger experience



Full data behind the following headlines is available in the full agency reports which have been produced separately for the bus and rail passengers that we heard from during this study

IMPORTANT

The primary objective of this study was to test possible approaches to collecting passenger feedback, and not to provide a robust update on passenger experience.

The findings given here and in the separate full reports are based on passenger responses collected from a sample of 20 towns and cities across England rather than being nationally representative, and using experimental survey methods which were themselves adjusted during the course of the study.

Responses were collected partly during school summer holidays, and partly during term time; this may also have been a factor in passenger experiences on public transport, and therefore in the feedback given here.

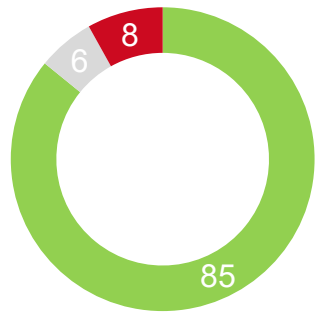
These headline findings are therefore intended as an indication of bus and rail passenger experiences at this point in time, from a sample of locations.



Snapshot of rail passenger experience in our methodology trial

CAUTION:
Findings are not based on a nationally representative sample of journeys, and responses were given in a trial of data collection approaches

Overall satisfaction (%)

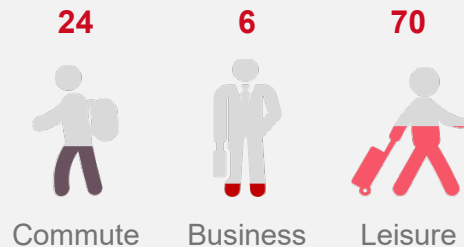


Overall journey satisfaction was high and fairly consistent across passenger groups

■ Satisfied ■ Neither ■ Dissatisfied

Respondents in this study were mixed but with mainly leisure, off-peak and infrequent journeys

Journey purpose (%)



- Timeliness**

Punctuality was rated well: 60% very satisfied
Mixed experience of how delays were handled, however
- Customer service**

Around three quarters were satisfied with information overall, and with the way TOCs kept passengers safe
Staff were generally found to be helpful, especially at stations, but not always available
- Value**

A quarter were dissatisfied with value for money
- On board environment**

The environment on board was rated well by most, though crowding is still a concern and ventilation looks to be an area for further improvement
- Station environment**

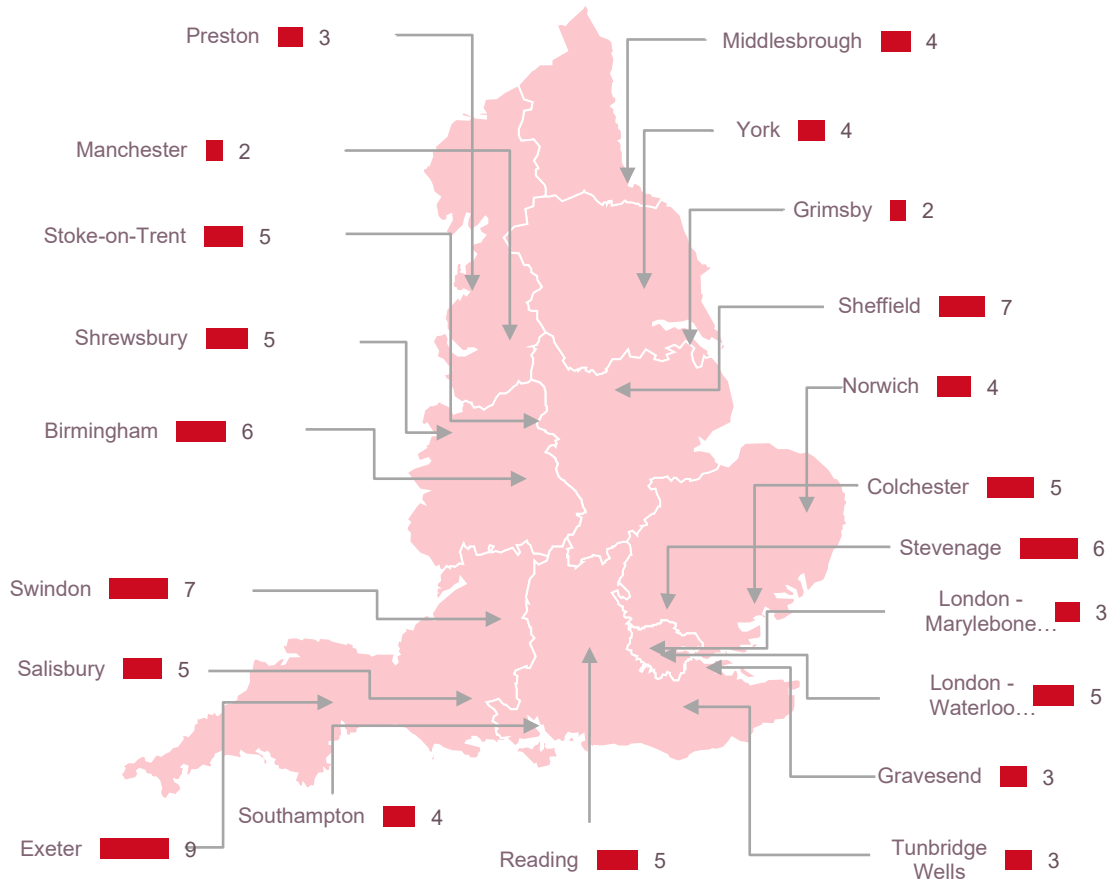
Departure stations were largely felt to be clean and safe with good information for passengers
- Facilities**

Ratings of specific facilities at stations and on board (toilets, catering, luggage etc.) were more varied. Notable high levels of dissatisfaction for wi-fi provision.

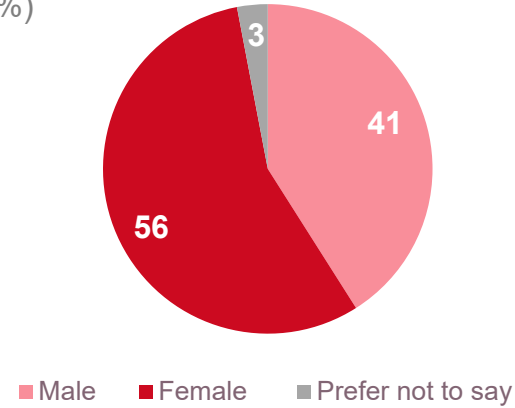
Context:

The train passengers responding in this pilot study (demographics)

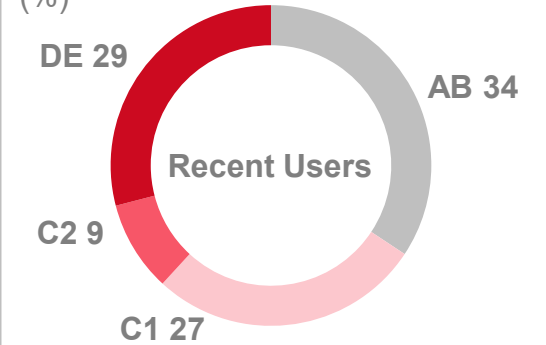
Passenger recruited in... (%)



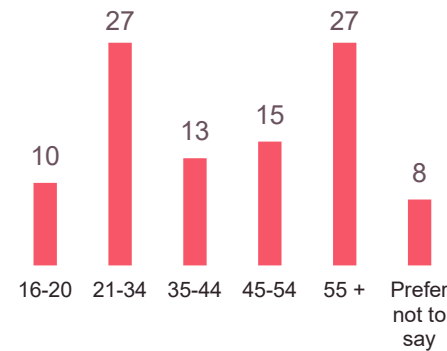
Gender (%)



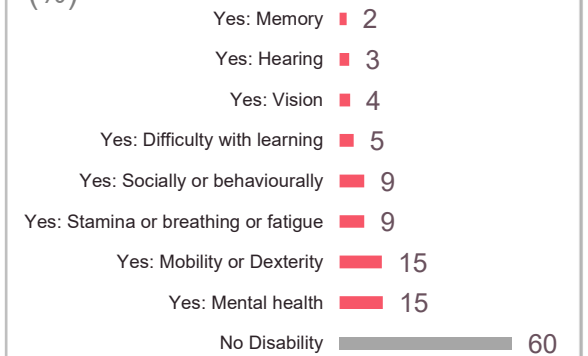
Socio-economic group (%)



Age (%)



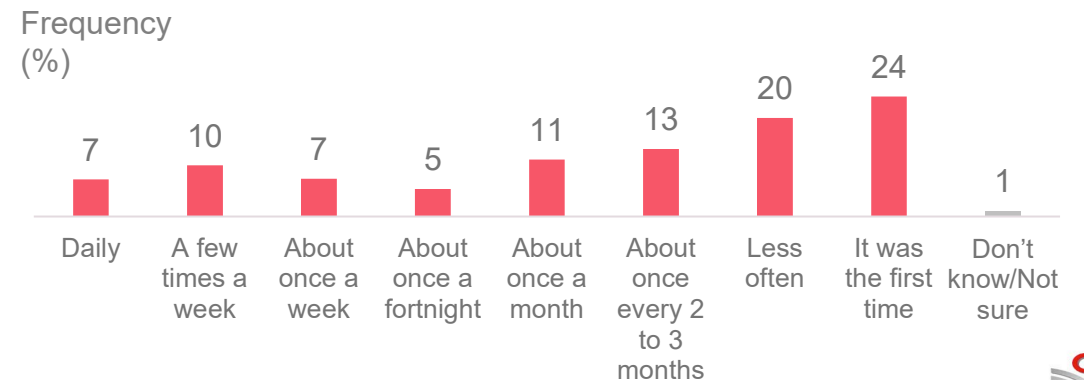
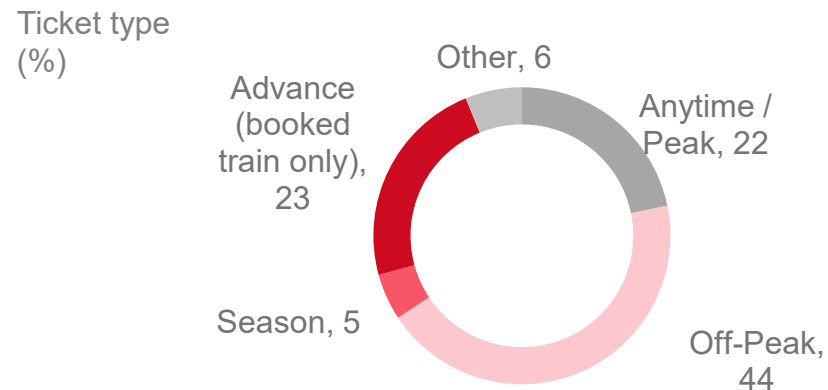
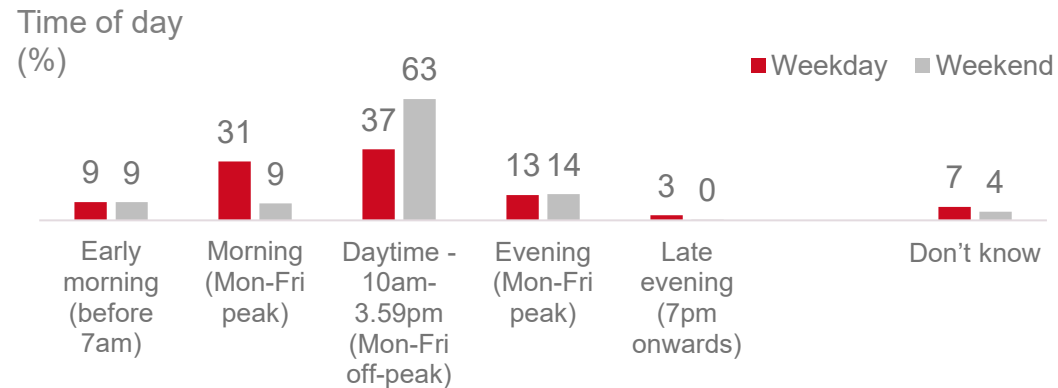
Disability (%)



Context:

The train passengers responding in this pilot study (travel patterns)

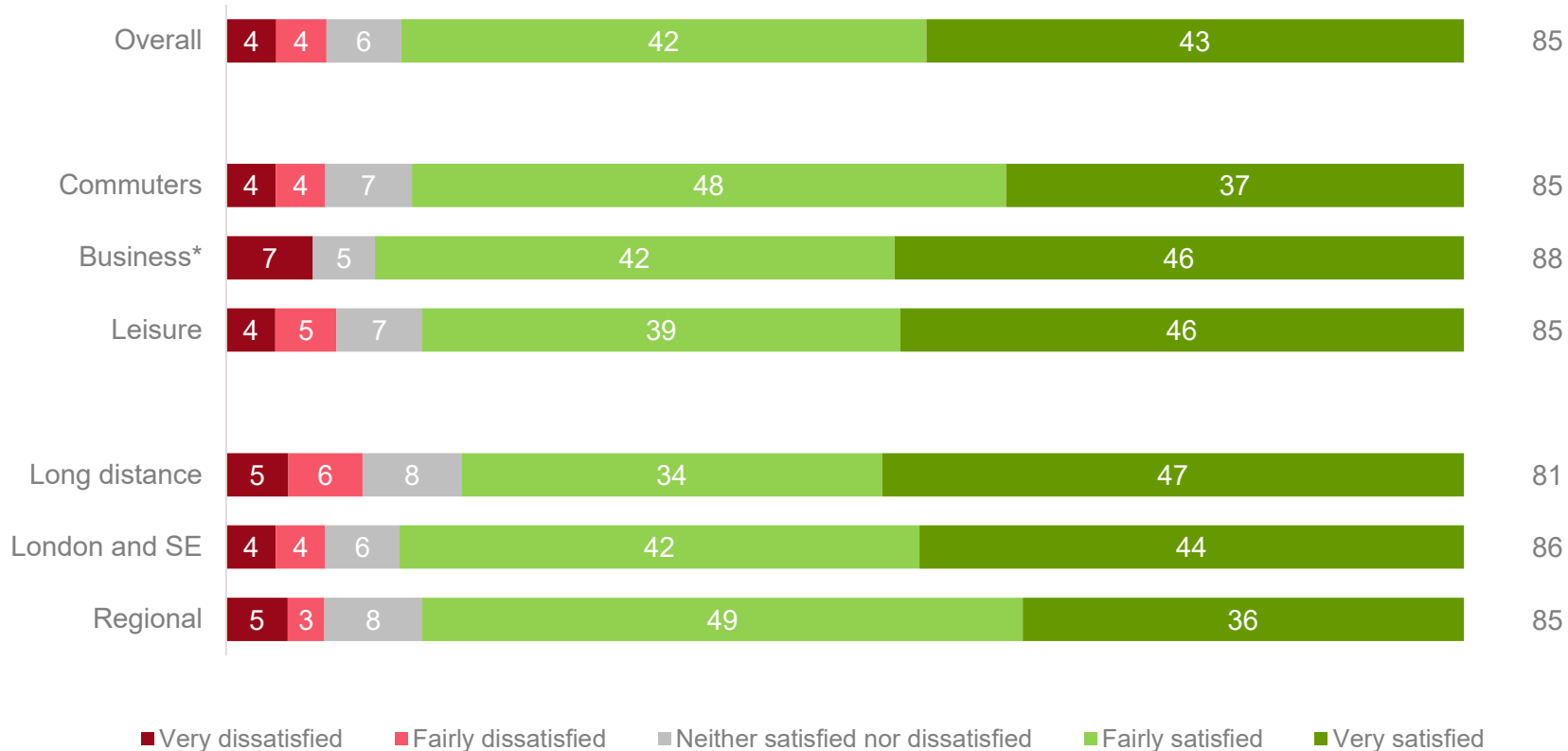
Most train journeys in this survey (conducted partly in school holidays) were for non-work reasons, with many during daytime off-peak, and most were infrequent (less than once a month)



Overall rail journey satisfaction

Just over four in five rail passengers were satisfied with their overall journey; this was fairly consistent across different reasons for travel and types of services used, although...

Overall journey satisfaction by passenger / service type (%) Net satisfied (%)



...as seen in previous research before the pandemic, commuters were less likely to have felt they had a really *good* experience

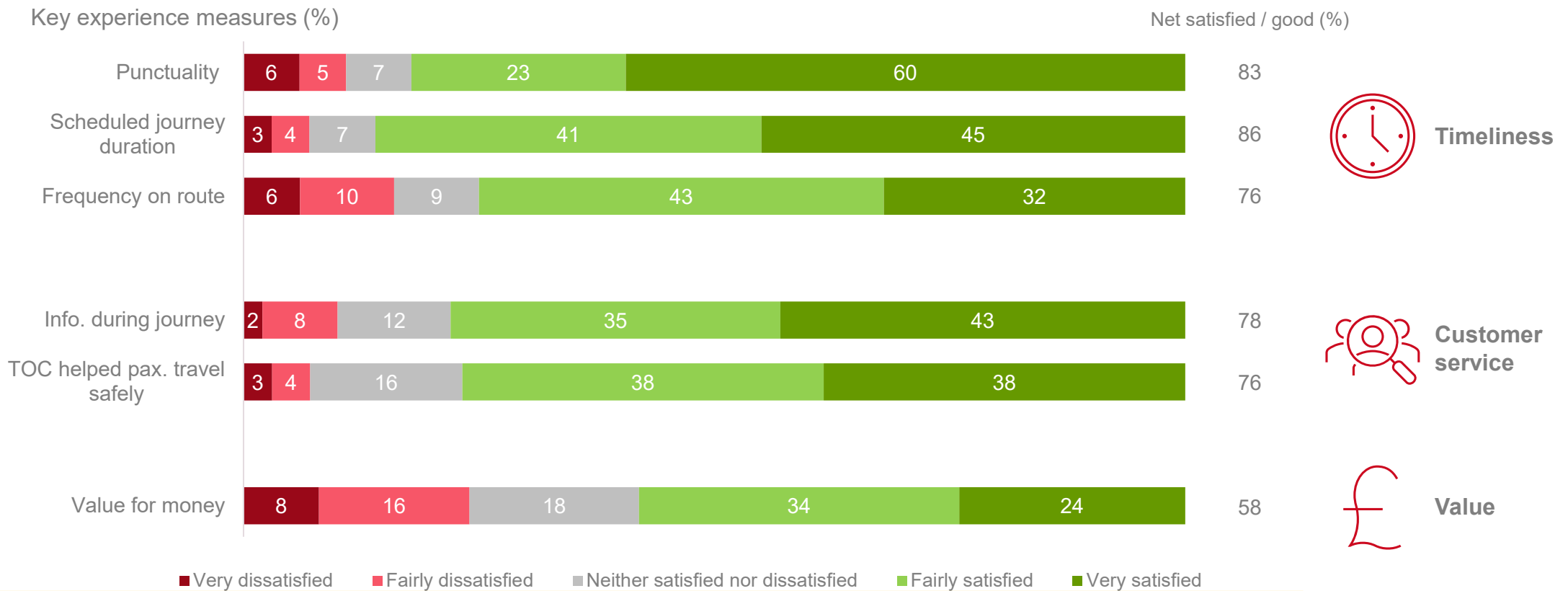
...those on longer distance trains were a little more likely to experience the extremes of better and poorer service



CAUTION: Findings are not based on a nationally representative sample of journeys, and responses were given in a trial of data collection approaches

Key aspects of rail journey experience

Punctuality – known to be a critical factor in a successful journey – was perceived well by these passengers
 Information and safety measures (at this time when Covid was still present, if not prohibiting travel) were less satisfactory
 Almost a quarter of passengers were dissatisfied with the value for money of their journey



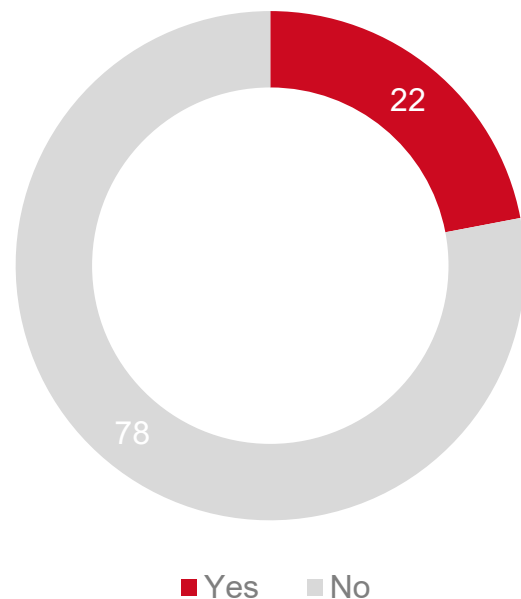
CAUTION: Findings are not based on a nationally representative sample of journeys, and responses were given in a trial of data collection approaches

Punctuality n=974, Journey duration n = 660, Frequency n = 617, The information provided during the journey n = 639, What the train company did to help passengers travel safely n = 590, Value for money n = 880

Experience of delay handling

While perceived punctuality was good on the whole, for those passengers who were delayed there was a mix of experience for how it was dealt with: a third felt their delay was dealt with poorly, and a similar proportion felt it was handled well

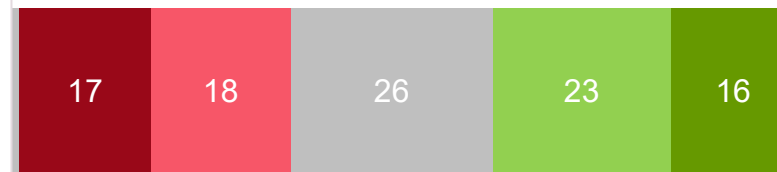
Did you experience a delay? (%)



Perception of how the delay was dealt with (%)

How would you rate the way the delay was dealt with by TOC?

- Very poor
- Fairly poor
- Neither good nor poor
- Fairly good
- Very good



Net poor (%)

Net good (%)

35

39

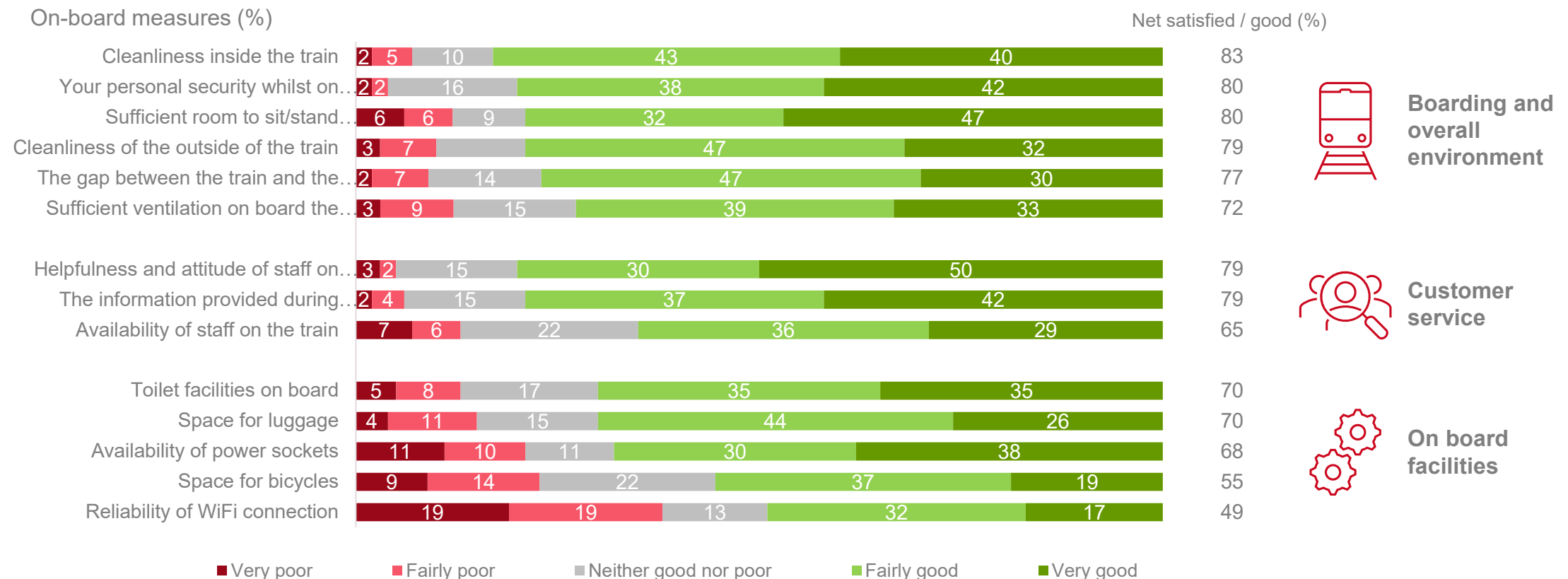


CAUTION: Findings are not based on a nationally representative sample of journeys, and responses were given in a trial of data collection approaches

Passengers' experiences on board

The environment on board – known to be important for overall journey experience – was rated well by most, though ventilation looks to be an area for further improvement

Passengers' experiences of staff being present, and the provision of specific facilities, were also more mixed



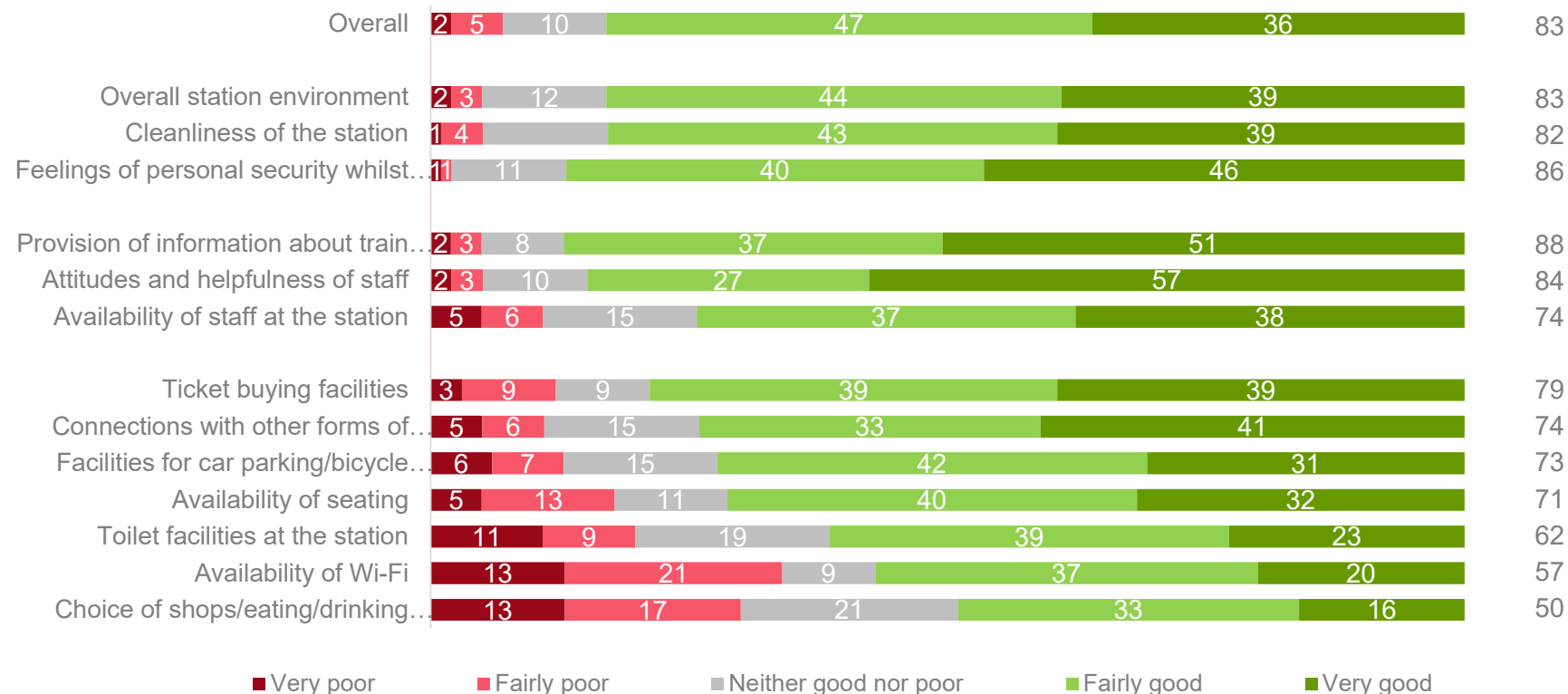
CAUTION: Findings are not based on a nationally representative sample of journeys, and responses were given in a trial of data collection approaches

...and at the departure station

Most passengers were satisfied with their station, with information and station environment factors mainly felt to be good. Opinion of specific facilities was very variable (and dependent on size and type of station)

Departure station measures (%)

Net satisfied / good (%)



Environment



Customer service



Station facilities

■ Very poor ■ Fairly poor ■ Neither good nor poor ■ Fairly good ■ Very good

CAUTION: Findings are not based on a nationally representative sample of journeys, and responses were given in a trial of data collection approaches

Journey experiences in passengers' own words

Timeliness, cleanliness and crowding (and related feelings of space and fresh air) continued to be important issues for passengers when they told us about their journeys in their own words

Passenger's free-text description of their journey: example comments

What was good

1. Fewer passengers (than pre-Covid), meaning more likely to get a seat
2. Services were on time, no delays
3. Trains are cleaner (and passengers actually see cleaning staff) but more could be done

"Excellent service for both trains. Punctual, clean, not too crowded, and helpful staff."

Business

"Train was on time and journey was quick. However it was rather overcrowded on the return journey in late afternoon."

Business

"Purchase of ticket was quick and easy, train was on time and staff were friendly."

Commuter

What was poor

1. Disruptions (delays and cancellations)
2. Crowded trains (due to reduced carriages and therefore seating space): a major frustration
3. Passengers not wearing face coverings

"Unpleasant, overcrowded. People not respecting reserved seats by others. Too many not wearing face coverings.."

Leisure

"Terrible journey. Lots of cancellations and delays. Also after the ...delays the ...website didn't give sensible options to get here."

Leisure

"It was 25 mins late. Which meant that I missed my next connections."

Business

Key areas for improvement

1. Seating availability to reduce crowded carriages
2. Punctuality
3. Cleanliness of toilets

"Fresh air as it felt quite stuffy on board"

Business

"...the train was crowded, most people were standing. Needed an extra carriage."

Commuter

"More carriages to allow for seating when demand is high, more space for cycles."

Leisure

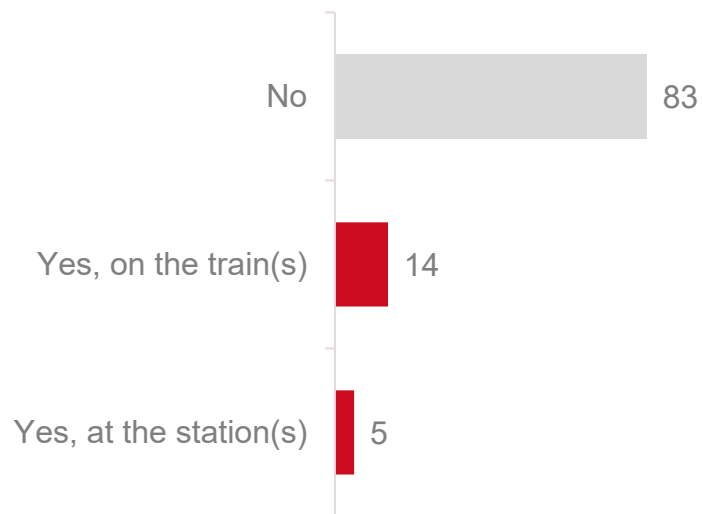


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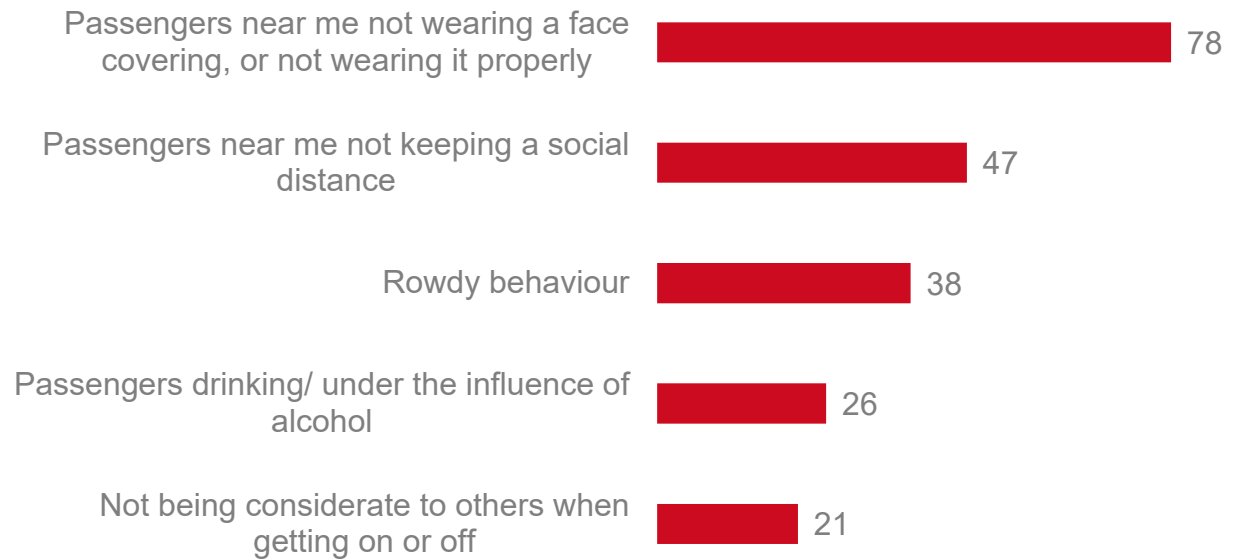
Other passengers' behaviour

Other passengers' behaviour also caused discomfort for a substantial proportion, with COVID-related concerns the most common

Other passengers' behaviour caused worry or discomfort (%)



Top five concerns on the train* %

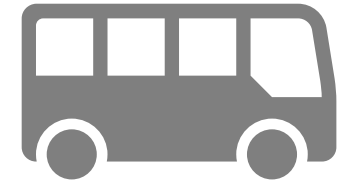


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Other passengers' behaviour gave concern during journey n = 666; Reason(s) for this (on the train) n = 94

*Base is too low to show this data for at the station (n = 34)

Headline findings: Bus passenger experience



Full data behind the following headlines is available in the full agency reports which have been produced separately for the bus and rail passengers that we heard from during this study

IMPORTANT

The primary objective of this study was to test possible approaches to collecting passenger feedback, and not to provide a robust update on passenger experience.

The findings given here and in the separate full reports are based on passenger responses collected from a sample of 19 towns and cities across England rather than being nationally representative, and using experimental survey methods which were themselves adjusted during the course of the study.

Responses were collected partly during school summer holidays, and partly during term time; this may also have been a factor in passenger experiences on public transport, and therefore in the feedback given here.

These headline findings are therefore intended as an indication of bus and rail passenger experiences at this point in time, from a sample of locations.

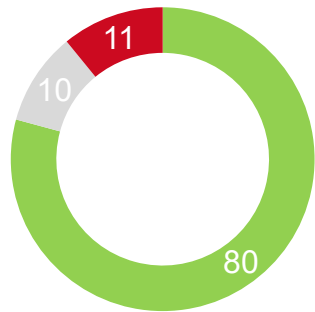


Snapshot of bus passenger experience in our methodology trial

CAUTION:

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Overall satisfaction (%)

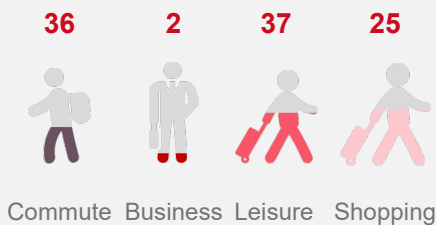


■ Satisfied ■ Neither ■ Dissatisfied

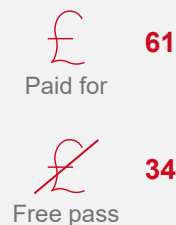
Overall journey satisfaction was fairly high, though commuters, fare payers and younger people were typically less satisfied

Respondents were mixed but with an emphasis on females aged 55+; journeys were made for a mix of reasons, but typically > once a week and paid for

Journey purpose (%)



Ticket (%)



Timeliness

Punctuality and waiting times were mixed, with around 70% satisfied but a fifth dissatisfied



Information

Information was an area of complaint from passengers, with many experiencing inconsistencies between timetables, RT info and reality; driver shortages were acknowledged but poor information to mitigate this was felt to be unacceptable



Value

Value for money perception was also varied, with a fifth feeling this was poor



On board environment

The environment on board was perceived as good by most, with space and cleanliness rated well



Bus stop environment

Though physical placement of stops was usually rated well, their environment – especially condition / maintenance – was mixed



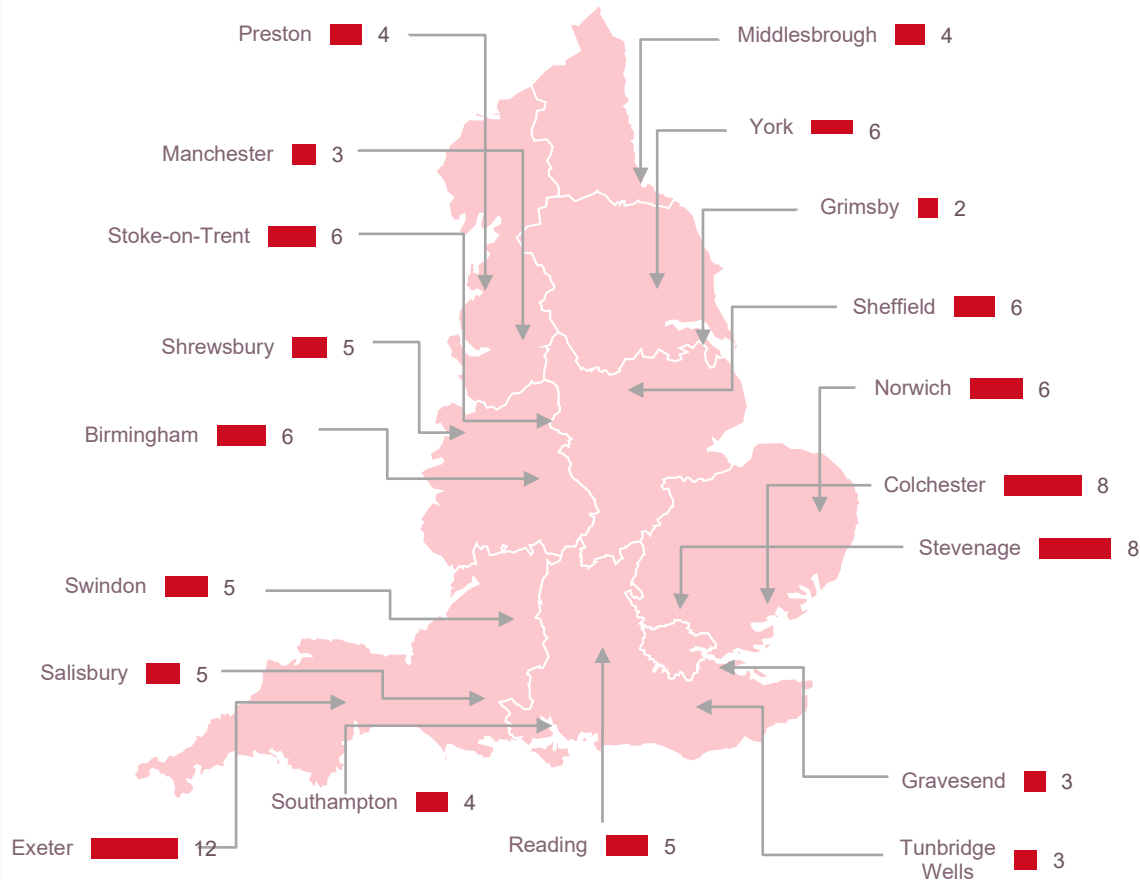
Drivers

Passengers were generally very positive about drivers, both in terms of driving quality and attitude

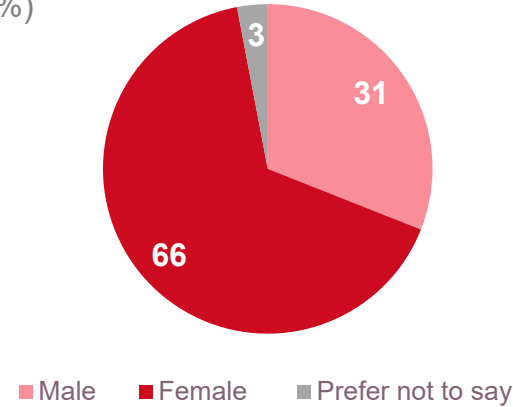
Context:

The bus passengers responding in this pilot study (demographics)

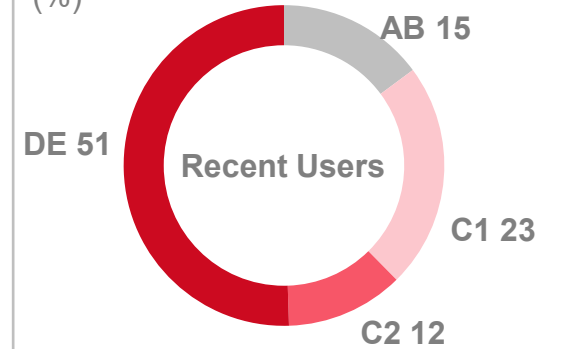
Passenger recruited in... (%)



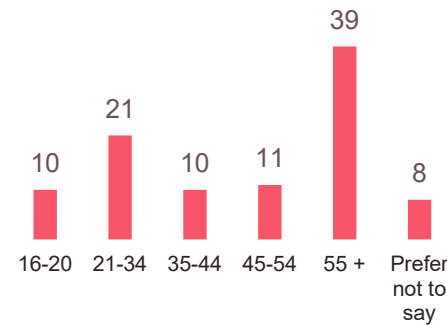
Gender (%)



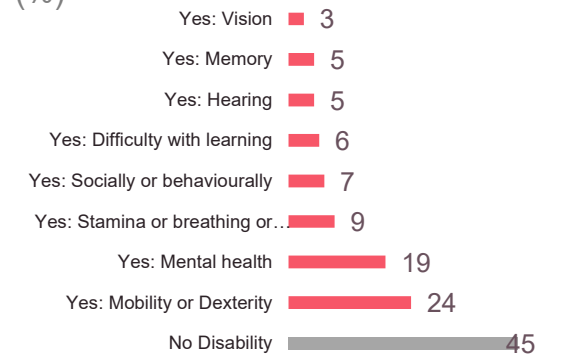
Socio-economic group (%)



Age (%)



Disability (%)

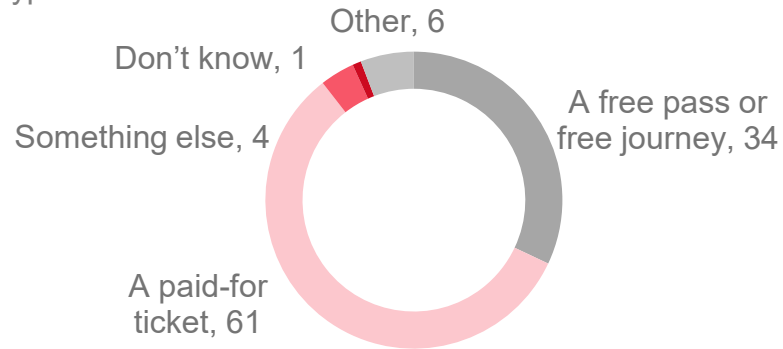


Context:

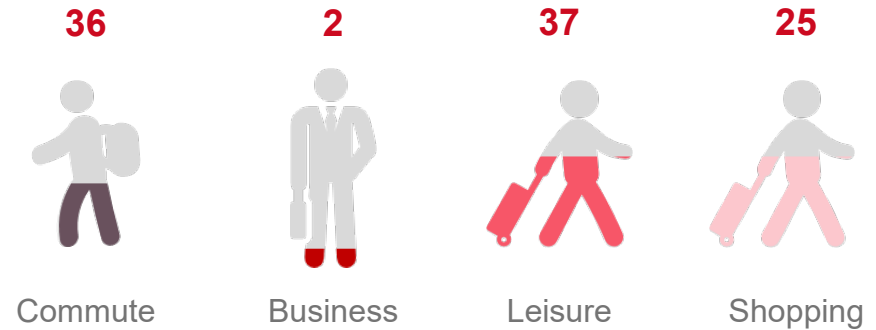
The bus passengers responding in this pilot study (travel patterns)

Respondents in this study had a mix of reasons for travel, though just over two thirds were journeys they made at least once a week, and a majority travelled with a paid-for ticket

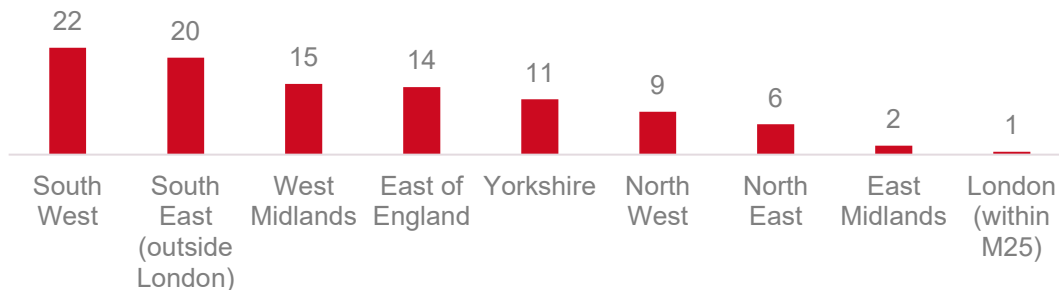
Ticket type (%)



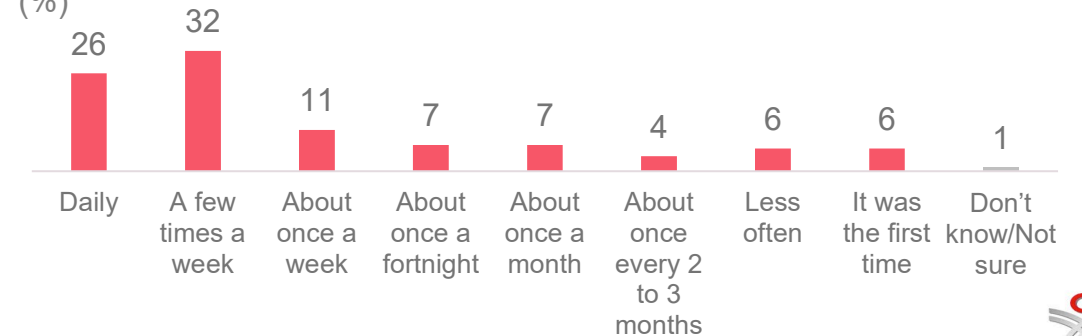
Purpose of trip (%)



Regions passengers in our study made their journey (%)



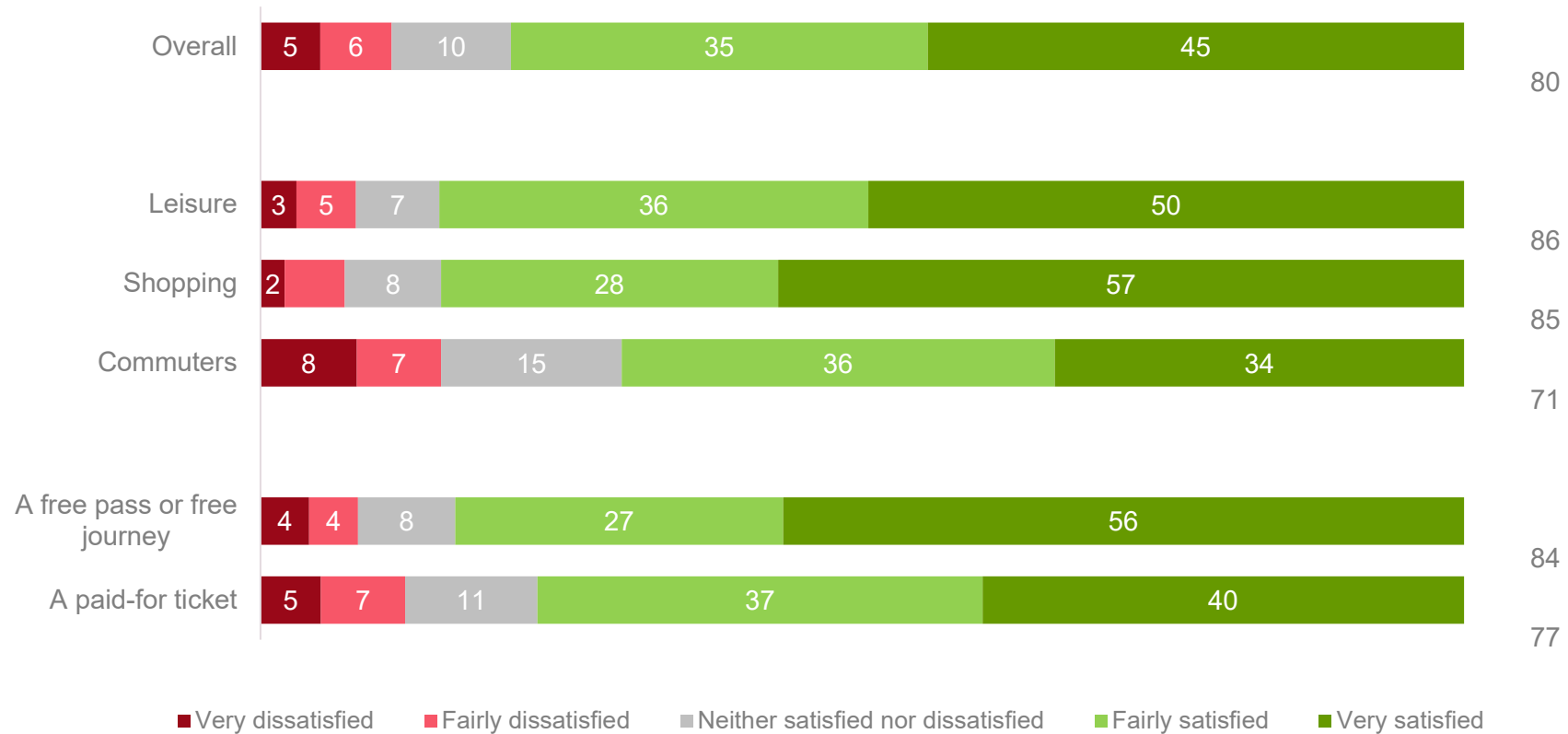
Frequency (%)



Overall bus journey satisfaction

4 in 5 passengers were satisfied with their journey; as we might expect, this was higher among those travelling for non-work reasons, and with a free ticket

Overall journey satisfaction by passenger / service type (%) Net satisfied (%)



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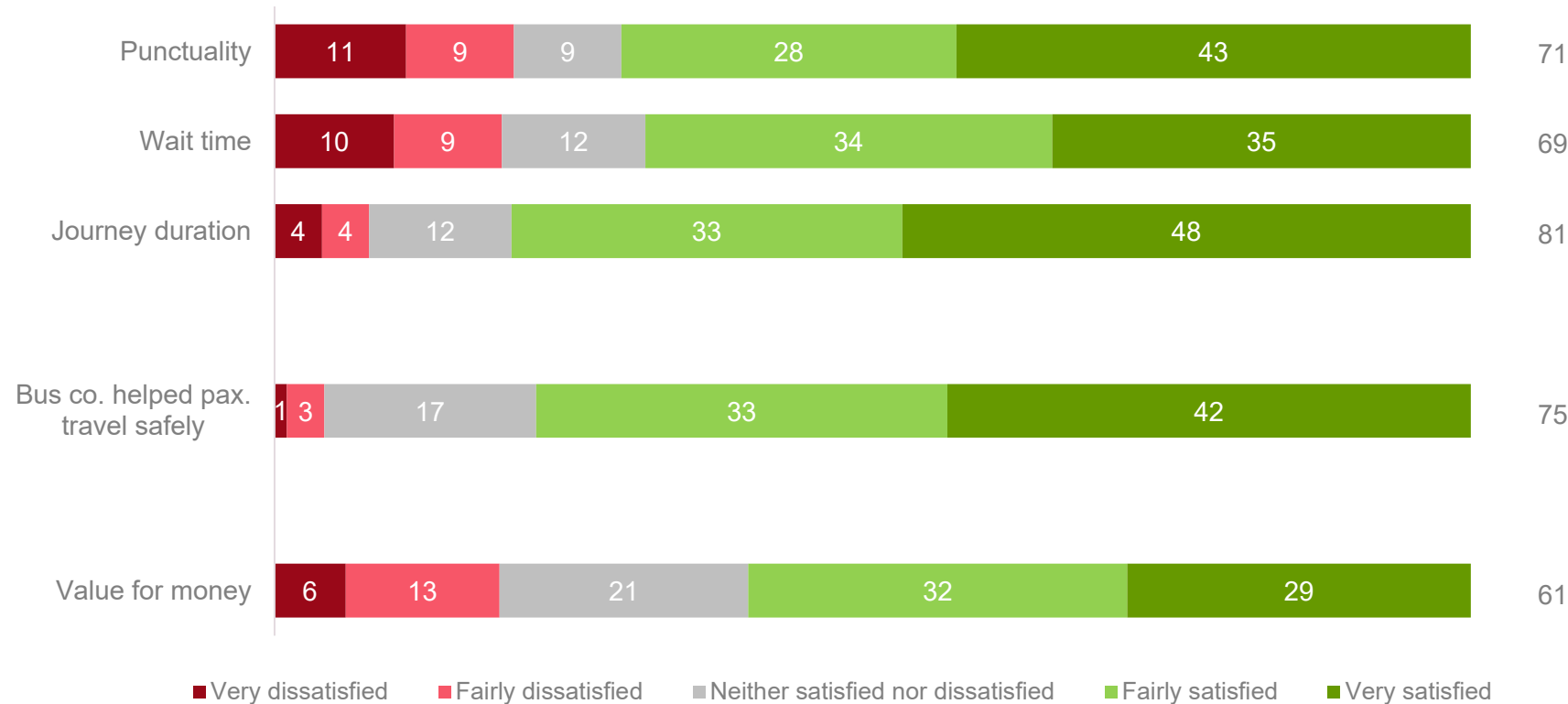
Overall, taking everything into account from the start to the end, how satisfied were you with your bus journey?
 Base n = 708, Commuters n = 289, Shopping n = 144, Leisure n = 261. Free pass/free journey n = 193, Paid-for ticket = 484

Key aspects of bus journey experience

Journey experiences were very mixed for passengers in this pilot study: perceptions of punctuality, wait time and value for money – all important measures in our previous large scale research – were good for many, but with relatively high levels of dissatisfaction elsewhere

Key experience measures (%)

Net satisfied / good (%)



Timeliness



Customer service



Value

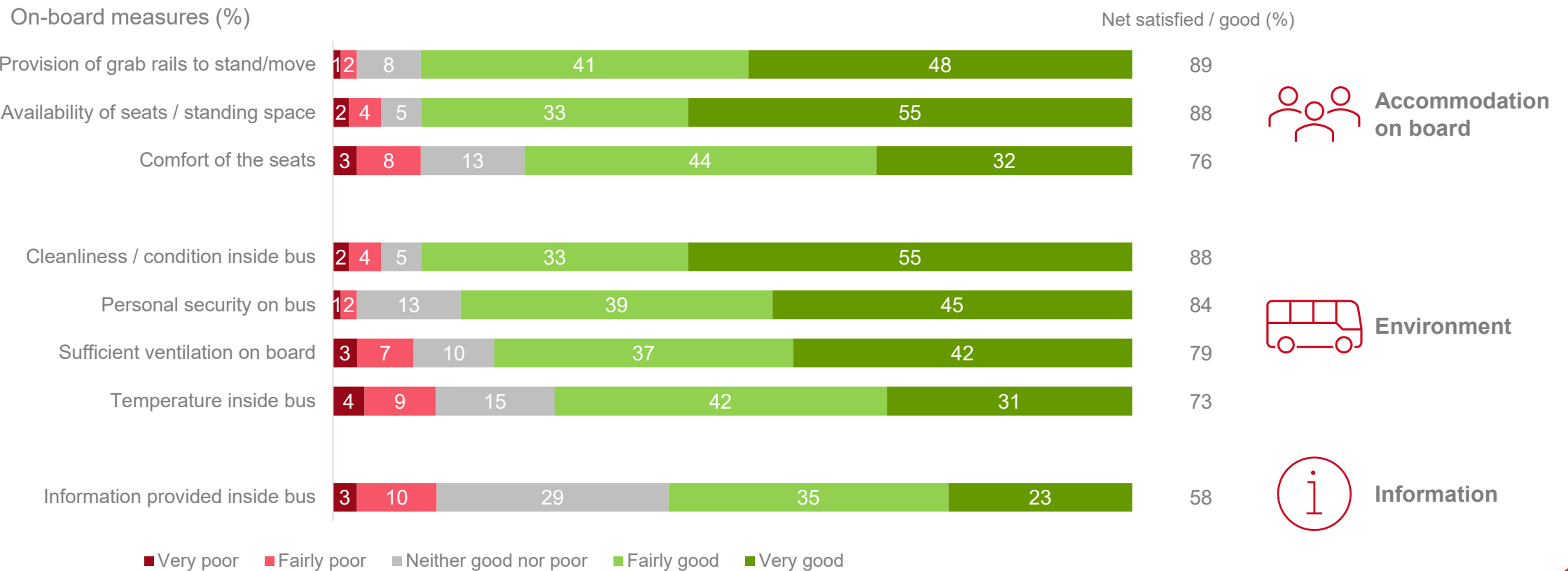
■ Very dissatisfied
 ■ Fairly dissatisfied
 ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 ■ Fairly satisfied
 ■ Very satisfied



CAUTION: Findings are not based on a nationally representative sample of journeys, and responses were given in a trial of data collection approaches

Passengers' experiences on board

Passengers were generally positive about their experience on board buses:
 Provision for standing, sitting and moving, as well as cleanliness, were perceived well
 However, on board information was less well rated, with only just over half rating this as good



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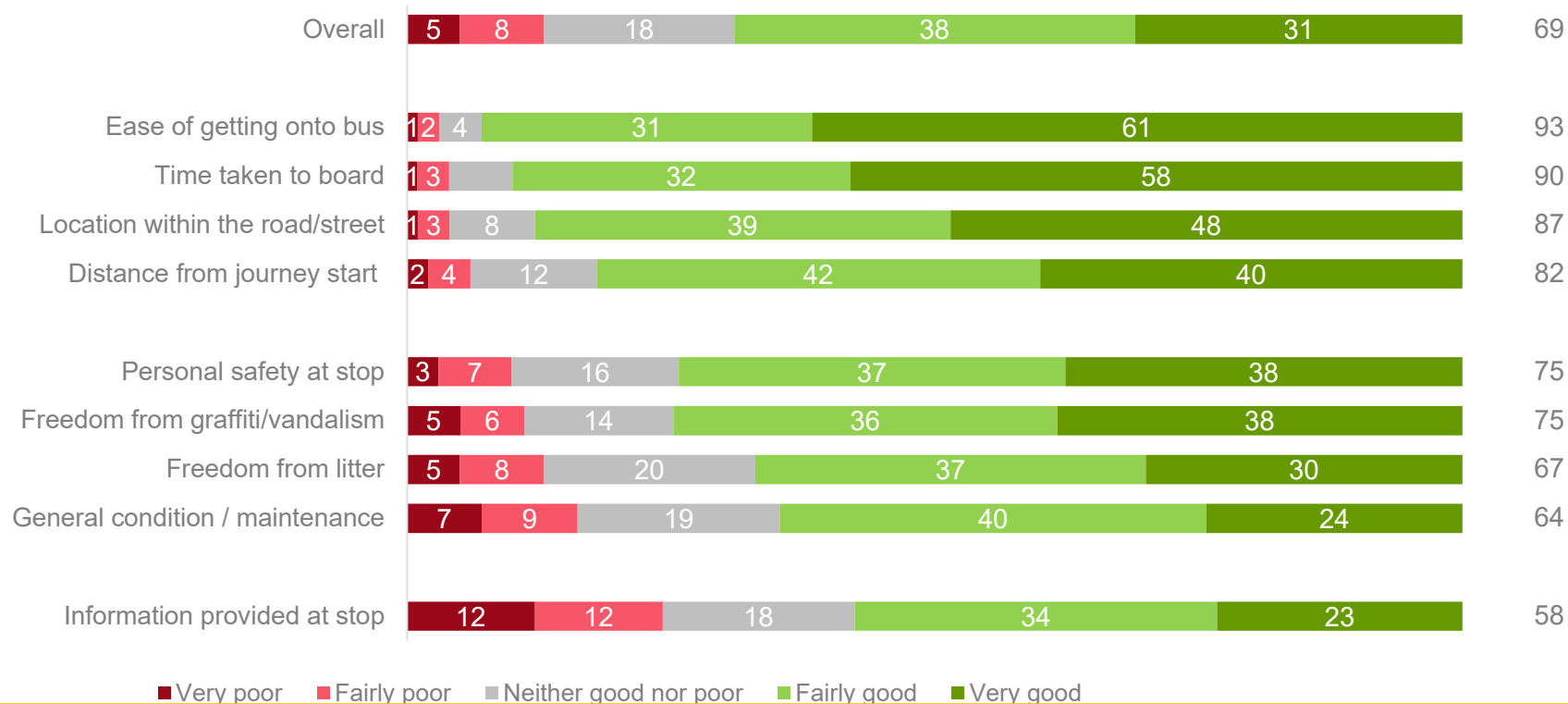
...and at the stop

Two thirds of bus passengers were satisfied with the bus stop:

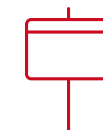
Boarding and access was felt to be good for most; the environment at bus stops was more mixed, and again information provided to passengers was perceived to be poorer

Bus stop measures (%)

Net satisfied / good (%)



Boarding and access



Environment



Information

Very poor Fairly poor Neither good nor poor Fairly good Very good



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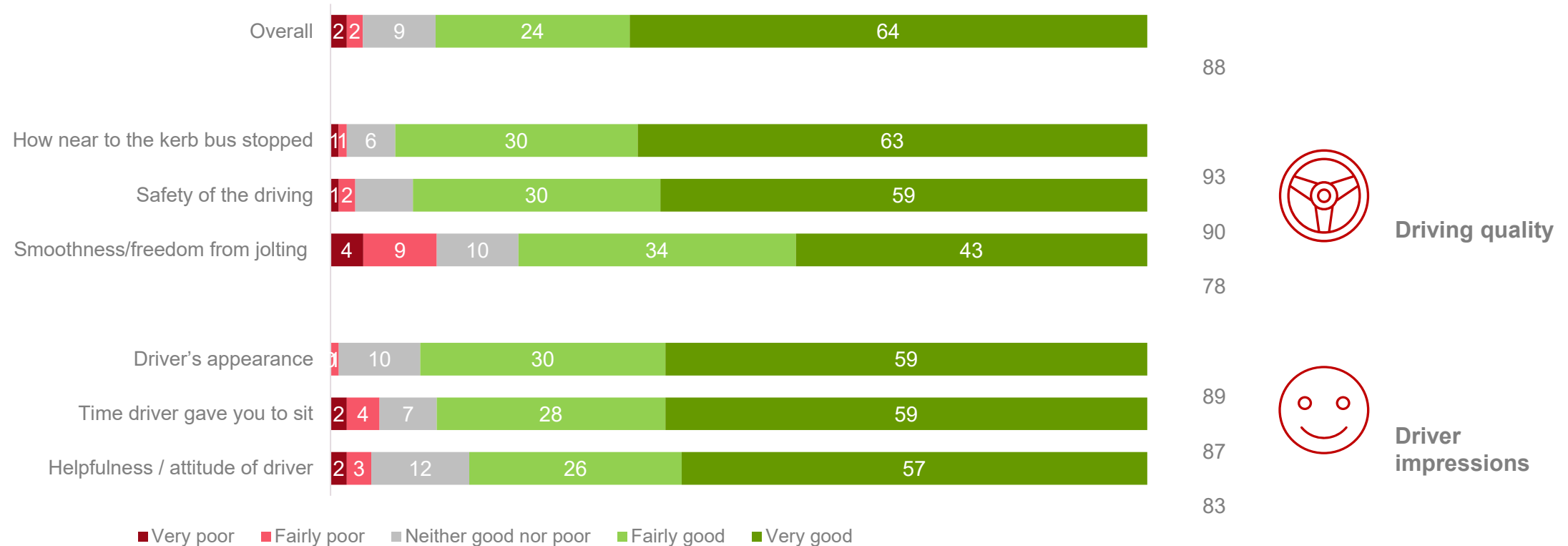
Experience with bus drivers

Generally bus passengers were very positive about their drivers

The one area with a more mixed reaction was on the smoothness/freedom from jolting during a journey

Bus driver measures (%)

Net satisfied / good (%)



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Journey experiences in passengers' own words

Punctuality, feeling of space on board, driver attitude and information were important when passengers told us about journeys in their own words. Others' use of face coverings (a hot topic in society but not mandated on transport outside London at this time) was also a common issue

Passenger's free-text description of their journey: example comments

What was good

1. Friendly bus drivers
2. Well-ventilated, not too over-crowded bus journeys

"Good - windows gave good ventilation. Bus not crowded. Traffic made it difficult ... and a broken down coach en route caused delays."

Leisure

"Good journey, bus on time, driver courteous. Most other passengers wearing face masks (as was I) which was reassuring, as this was my 1st time taking public transport in a while."

Leisure

"I like the signs reminding people to wear masks and open windows. Staff friendly and bus regular and on time."

Shopping

What was poor

1. Inconsistencies on wearing face-coverings on board
2. Infrequent or delayed bus services, particularly during busier time periods

"Was on time and not very busy. No masks worn by public which was quite off putting. No signs up asking for them to be worn either, all Social distancing signs removed"

Shopping

"Morning trip always on time. Evening return very hit and miss with some scheduled buses missing (supposed to be every 10 minutes) but often have to wait half an hour instead."

Commuter

Key areas for improvement

1. More buses at busier times
2. Sufficient staff for services to run as normal
3. Frequent, timely, detailed information on bus routes and particularly about delays
4. Clear rules on face coverings

"Knowing that the bus will turn up because the recent lack of drivers causes concern on if I should walk to save time."

Commuter

"More detail[ed] information on where buses have re-routed to If there is delay show it up on the board."

Leisure

"The buses actually running ...in line with the app! Also more frequent buses on such a busy route making ...more seating than available"

Leisure

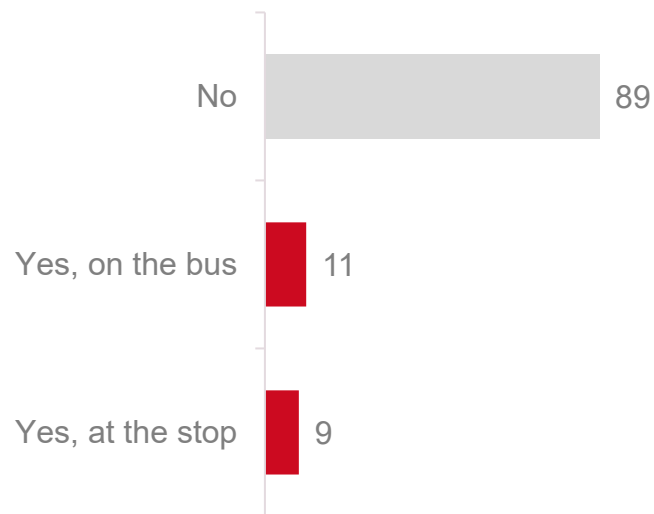


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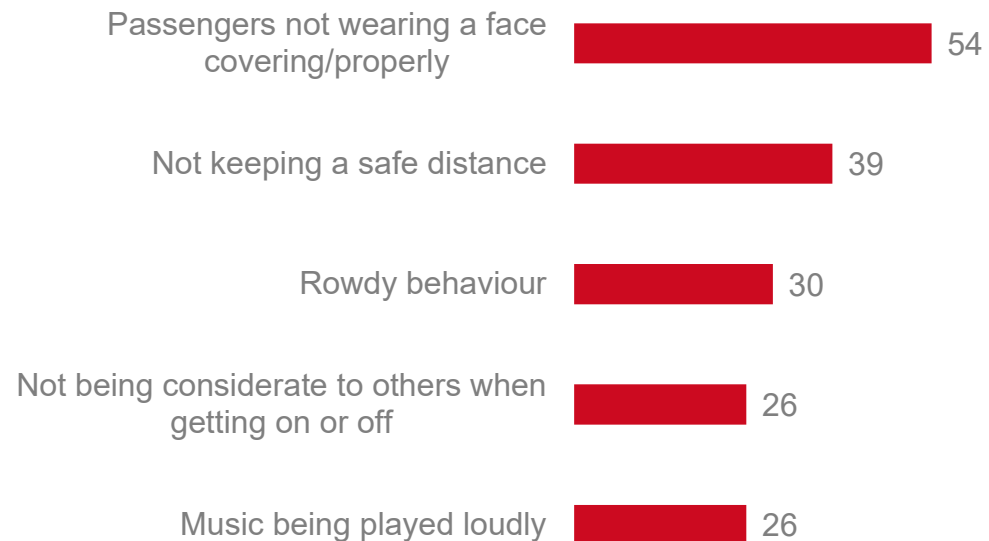
Other passengers' behaviour

Other passengers' behaviour caused discomfort for some, with COVID-related concerns the most common

Other passengers' behaviour caused worry or discomfort (%)



Top five concerns on the bus* %



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Contact Transport Focus

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Transport Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council

Transport Focus is the independent consumer organisation representing the interests of:

- bus, coach and tram users across England outside London
- rail passengers in Great Britain
- all users of England's motorways and major 'A' roads (the Strategic Road Network).

We work to make a difference for all transport users.