



# Strategic Roads User Survey

Findings for the South East: August 2022 – July 2023

December 2023

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# Introduction



## Strategic Roads User Survey

Transport Focus represents the interests of users of England's motorways and major A-roads, known as the Strategic Road Network (SRN). These are the roads managed by National Highways on behalf of the Government.

Through the Strategic Roads User Survey (SRUS), Transport Focus gathers journey experience feedback from a representative sample of SRN users.

SRUS is also used by the Office of Rail and Road to monitor National Highways' performance.



Results in this report cover 12 months:  
**August 2022 – July 2023**



## Push-to-web approach

Invitation letters are posted to a representative sample of households in England.

Instructions in the letter direct participants to an online survey, for which participants are incentivised.



## Participants answer about:

Their most recent journey on the SRN within the last four weeks at the time of completing the survey.

One specific motorway or major A road within this journey (defined using an interactive map). This ensures feedback is received for all regions and across a full range of roads within them.



**9,091** responses received in total over this period  
**1,719** for roads in the South East

# Key findings: SRN experience in the South East

**70%** of SRN journeys in the South East are felt to be satisfactory

*In line with the national average across this and most other key measures*



**Satisfaction has decreased a little in the South East since the end of 2022**, echoing the national picture, and linked to slightly worsening perceptions of journey times and road surface quality



**Indeed, key factors for dissatisfaction in the South East, when they occur, are perceived congestion, roadworks and the quality of road surfaces**

Other major factors in dissatisfactory journeys are:

- **Variable speed restrictions** – linked to disruption issues but often felt to be unnecessary, and changed too often (causing erratic driving)
- **Other, unexpected and unplanned disruption**, which while reported less frequently than roadworks or congestion, can be more impactful



**Safety perception also an area of concern in the South East**, rated below most other regions.



These trends and challenges are true across the region as a whole. However, **roads in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire are felt to serve motorists slightly better than in Kent, Sussex, Surrey**, where particular issues are:

- Roadworks, which, while reported no more often than elsewhere, are felt to be managed less well, especially in terms of information provision
- Road upkeep and presentation – road surface quality, lighting and cats' eyes

**Other trends, which are also common across the whole SRN network:**



Poor driving perceived as common – and while drivers are accountable, the way roads are managed can be felt to provoke poor driving behaviour.



Attitudes still mixed about smart motorways, with strong negative opinions and poorer experiences vs other motorways, for some motorists.

Bucking the trend somewhat, M3 and M4 in the South East are examples of where traffic control measures look to be working well in practice (albeit not always consistently).



Motorcyclists and HGV drivers less satisfied overall, experiencing the same issues as others when they occur, but to a sharper degree.

# Overall findings: key metrics



# 70% of journeys in the South East are satisfactory: in line with the national average across most key measures, with exception of safety

Key metrics  
Aug 2022 – Jul 2023



Overall satisfaction

**70%**

Very satisfied 30%  
Fairly satisfied 40%

Journey time

**70%**

Very satisfied 31%  
Fairly satisfied 38%

Management of roadworks

**47%**

Very satisfied 15%  
Fairly satisfied 32%

Feeling safe

**78%**

Very safe 28%  
Fairly safe 50%

England-wide

**71%**

Very satisfied 31%  
Fairly satisfied 41%

**70%**

Very satisfied 32%  
Fairly satisfied 37%

**47%**

Very satisfied 14%  
Fairly satisfied 32%

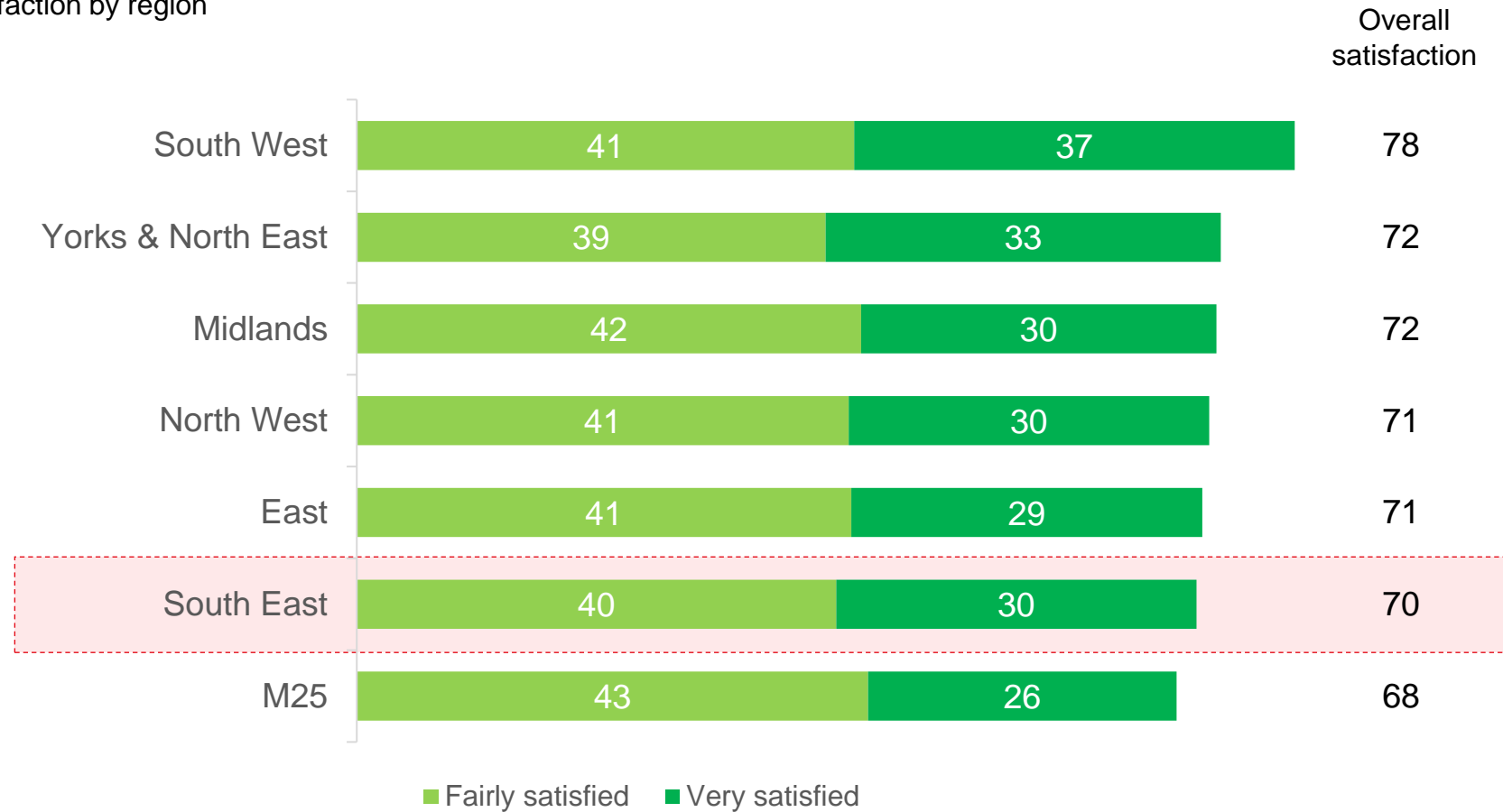
**82%**

Very safe 30%  
Fairly safe 52%

Base: all SRN users surveyed, Aug '22 – Jul '23  
All: overall satisfaction (9,055), journey time (9,056), roadworks management (2,137), feeling safe (9,054)  
South East: overall satisfaction (1,712), journey time (1,714), roadworks management (388), feeling safe (1,713)

Most regions performing similarly across this period as a whole, though South East is at the lower end. South West leads and M25 region is lowest

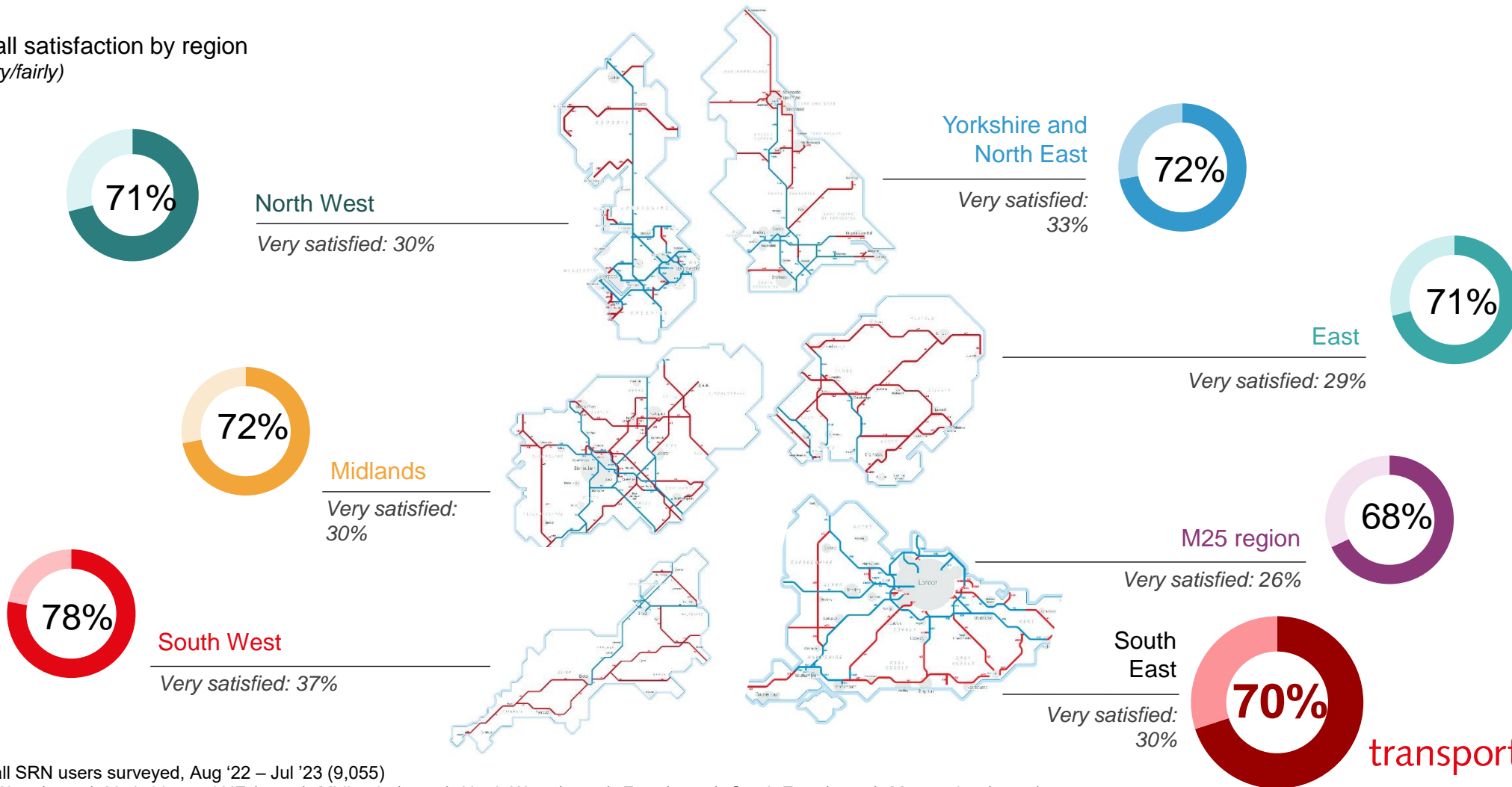
Overall satisfaction by region  
(% very/fairly)



Base: all SRN users surveyed, Aug '22 – Jul '23 (9,055)  
 South West (1,033), Yorkshire and NE (1,442), Midlands (1,985), North West (1,382), East (1,299), South East (1,712), M25 region (1,355)

# Most regions performing similarly across this period as a whole, though South East is at the lower end. South West leads and M25 region is lowest

Overall satisfaction by region  
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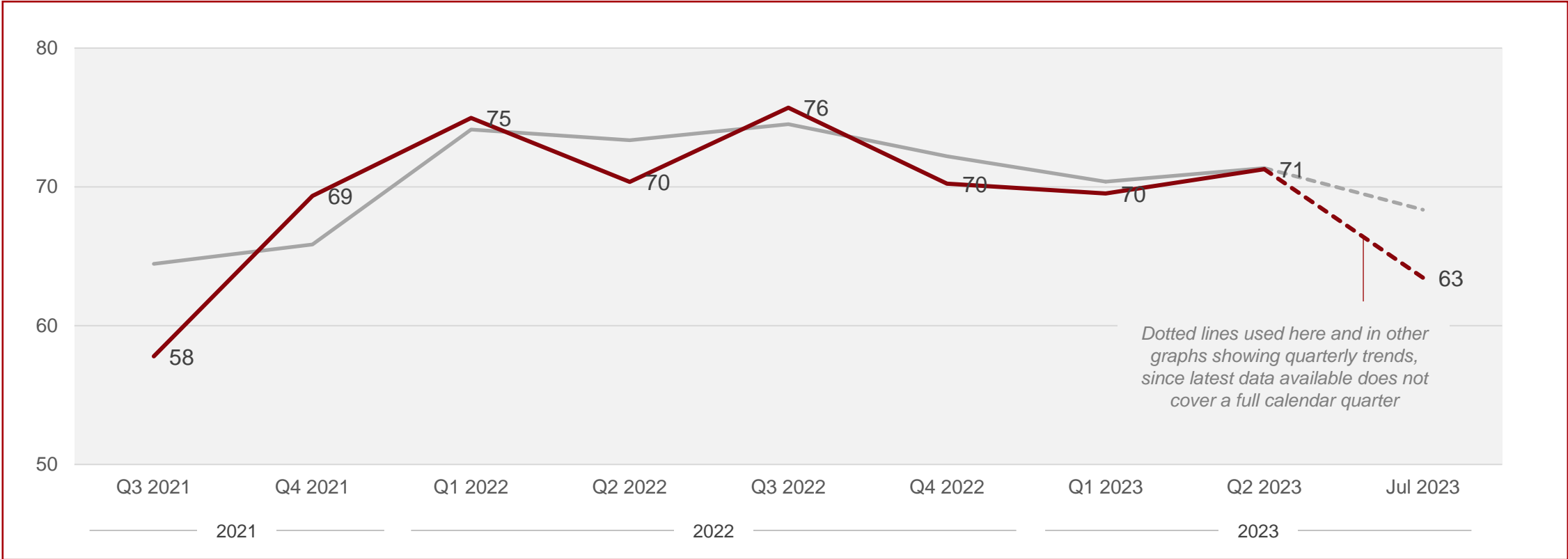


Base: all SRN users surveyed, Aug '22 – Jul '23 (9,055)  
South West (1,033), Yorkshire and NE (1,442), Midlands (1,985), North West (1,382), East (1,299), South East (1,712), M25 region (1,355)



# So far in 2023, South East journeys are slightly less satisfactory than through 2022; echoing the national trend

Overall satisfaction, over last two years (% very/fairly, quarterly)



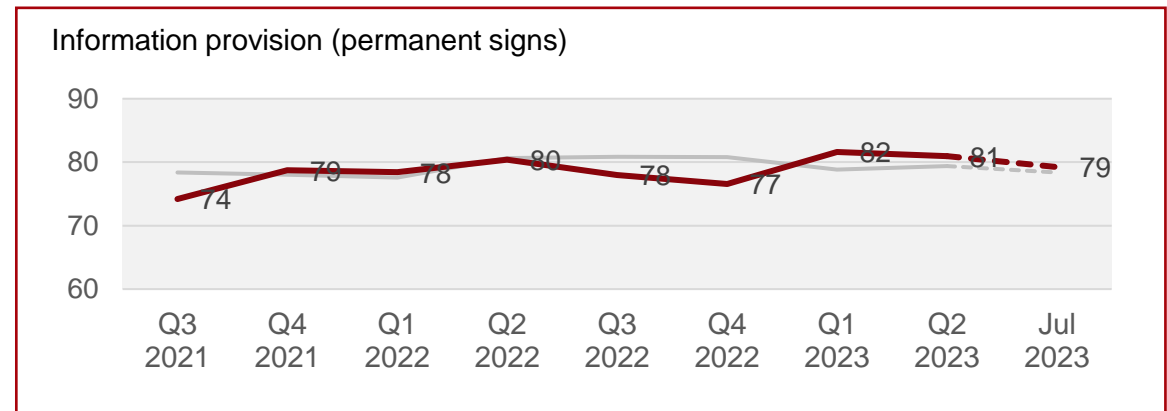
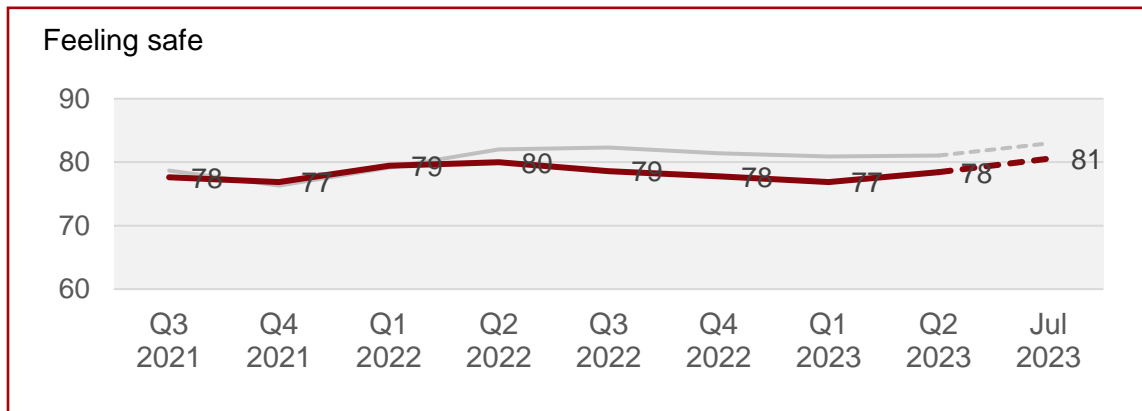
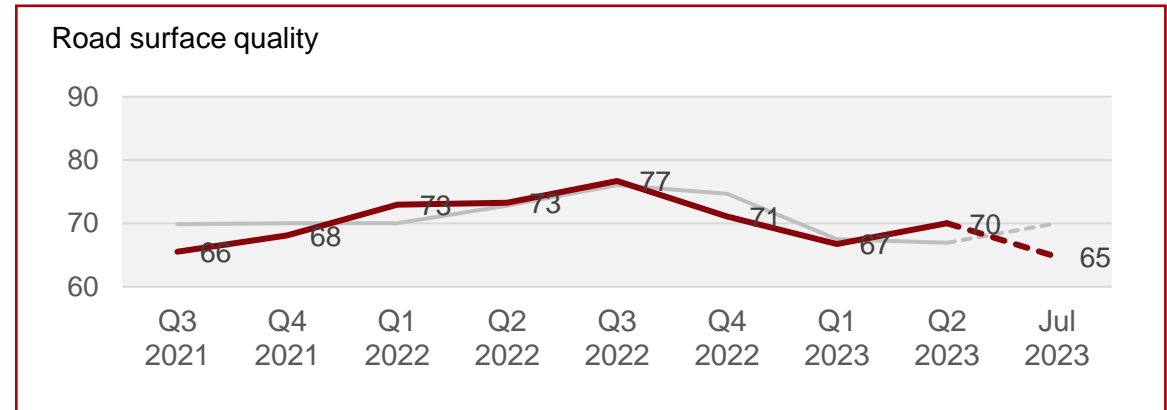
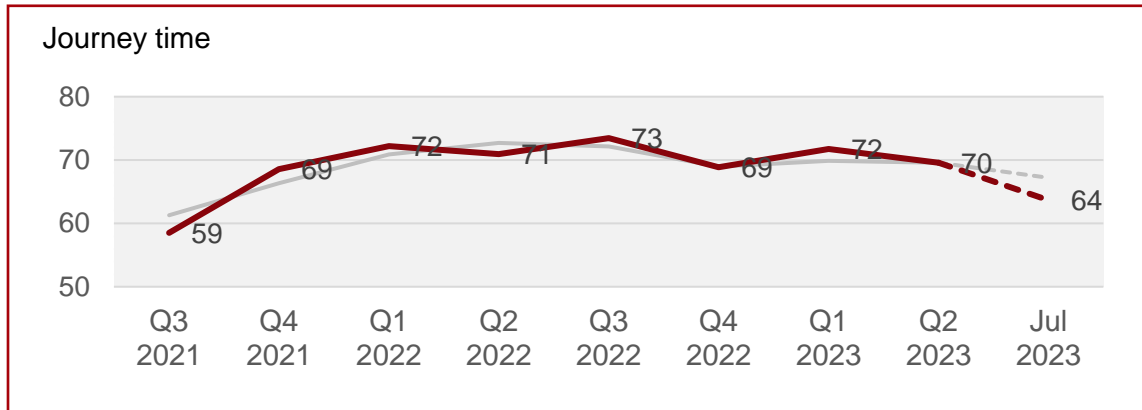
Dotted lines used here and in other graphs showing quarterly trends, since latest data available does not cover a full calendar quarter

— South East  
— All regions

Base: all SRN users surveyed, Jul '21 – Jul '23 (average 1,928 per quarter; 779 in Jul '23)  
South East: (average 385 per quarter; 151 in Jul '23)

# Satisfaction with **journey times and road surfaces** are key areas in which **South East SRN** experience has diminished over the last year (since Q4 2022); safety below average since early 2022

Key metrics over last two years (% very/fairly, quarterly; all key metrics which are answered by all survey respondents\*)



— South East  
— All regions

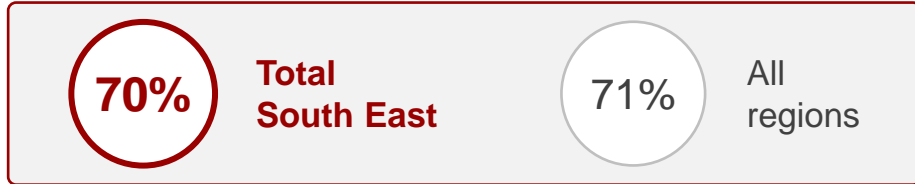
Base: all SRN users surveyed, Jul '21 – Jul '23 (average 1,825-1,926 per quarter; 742-782 in Jul '23)  
South East: (average 362-385 per quarter; 151 in Jul '23)

\*Other 'key metrics', which are relevant to a sub-set of the total survey sample, are covered in more detail later in this report. These are the ratings of roadworks management, and of information provision via electronic signs

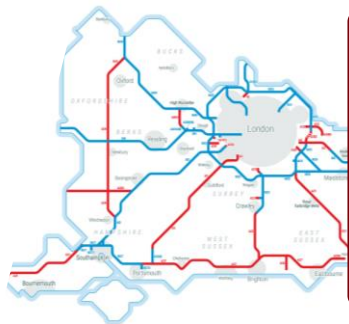


**Further patterns by  
area within the South  
East and some of  
its busier roads**

SRN journeys generally rated better in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire (where motorways make up a higher proportion of trips) than Kent, Sussex, Surrey – but individual roads deliver varied experiences



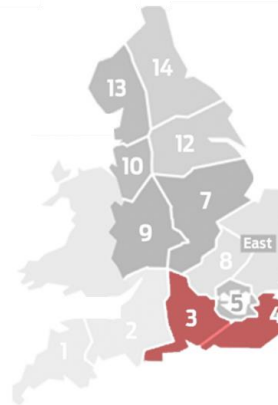
Overall satisfaction by road type/area/road: South East



<b>Motorways</b>	<b>72%</b>
(All regions)	71%
<b>Major A roads</b>	<b>68%</b>
(All regions)	71%



54% responses for the South East are for motorway journeys, vs 62% on average across all regions.



<b>Area 3</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire</b>	
<b>Area 4</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Kent, Sussex, Surrey</b>	



62% of responses for the South East relate to Area 3 (Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire)

Area 3:  
Oxfordshire,  
Berkshire, Hampshire

A31	74
A3	74
M3	73
M4	73
A303	69
A34	68
M27	68

Area 4:  
Kent, Sussex, Surrey

M23	84
A23	76
A21	75
M2	75
A2	71
M20	66
A27	61

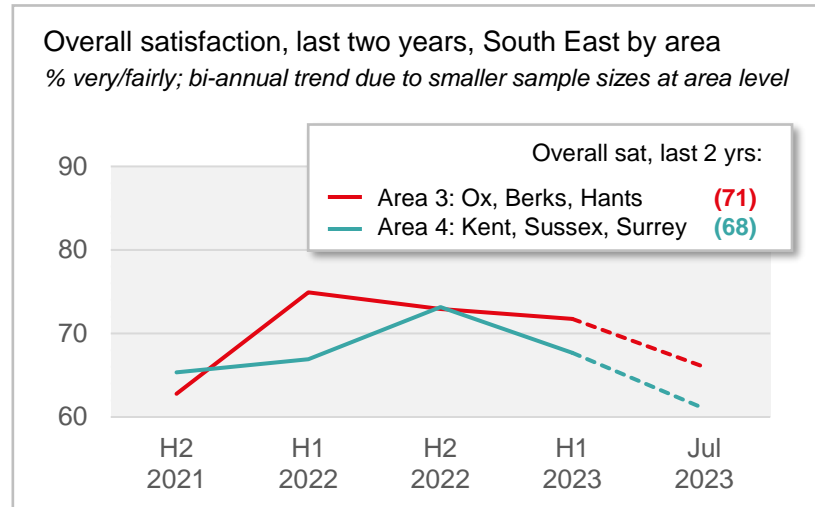
\*Results shown for individual roads where sample size is ≥75. All data at road level based on two years: Aug '21 – Jul '23.

All Motorways: All regions (4,846), South East (817). All major A Roads: All regions (4,209), South East (895).

Area 3 in South East (including both motorways and major A roads) (1,977), Area 4 (including both motorways and major A roads) (1,200)

# Satisfaction has dropped since late 2022 in both areas within the South East, and is lower overall in Kent, Sussex, Surrey; key reasons are poorer roadworks management, road surfaces and lighting

Brief reprieves from disruption helped raise satisfaction in each area at points through 2022, but disrupted and therefore poorer journeys resuming through 2023 so far



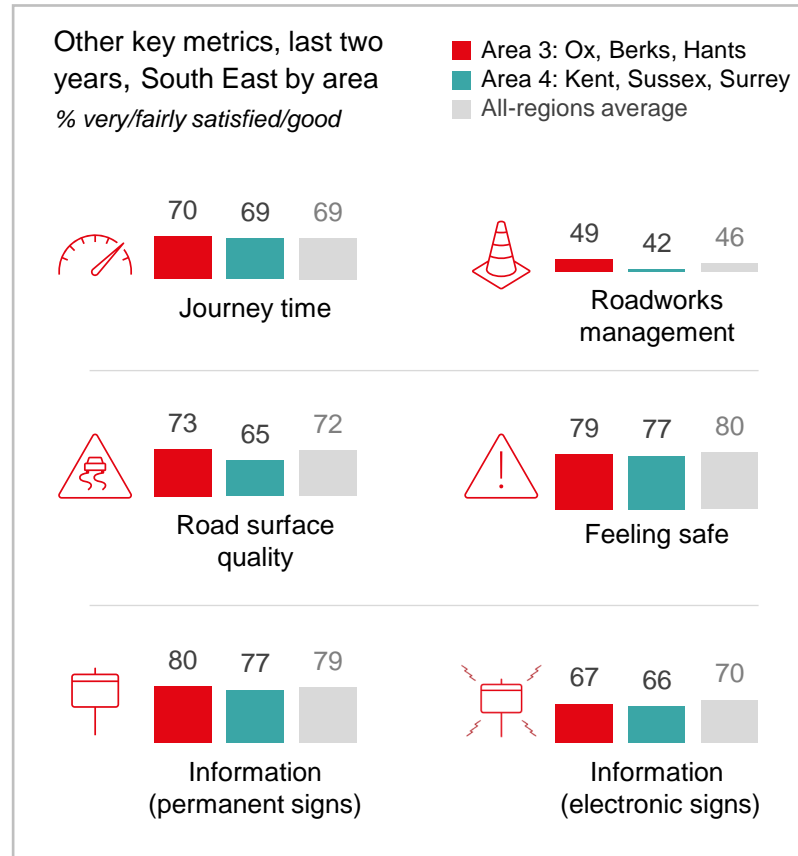
The 2022 high point in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire is linked with a brief reduction in perceived presence of roadworks, congestion and other delays, (despite Covid restrictions being largely lifted and travel resuming, with road usage at c. 90% of pre-Covid levels by this point\*), which has since resumed.

Similarly, improved satisfaction in the second half of 2022 in Kent, Sussex, Surrey corresponds with a reduction in perceived roadworks and congestion at this time.

Base: all SRN users surveyed, Jul '21 – Jul '23; South East Area 3 (average 486 per half year), Area 4 (average 295 per half year)

\*Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-use-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/domestic-transport-usage-by-mode>

Management of roadworks, when they happen, has also been below par in Kent, Sussex, Surrey. Road surfaces also less satisfactory in Kent, Sussex, Surrey



Base: all SRN users surveyed, Aug '21 – Jul '23; South East Area 3 (1,977), Area 4 (1,200)

Other contextual factors and drivers' free-text comments confirm the key challenges

The experience of roadworks and other disruption is similar to the national average in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, in terms of perceived frequency, impact and management. Roadworks and congestion are key reasons for dissatisfaction.

Frequency of disruption has been perceived as similar in both areas within the South East. But the impact and management of roadworks in particular – especially information provision – has been rated as noticeably poorer in Kent, Sussex, Surrey.

This may have been exacerbated by condition and presentation of roads in Kent, Sussex, Surrey, with lighting and cats eyes in particular rated as below average, and poor road surface a common reason for dissatisfaction (mentioned by a third of drivers in their free-text comments).

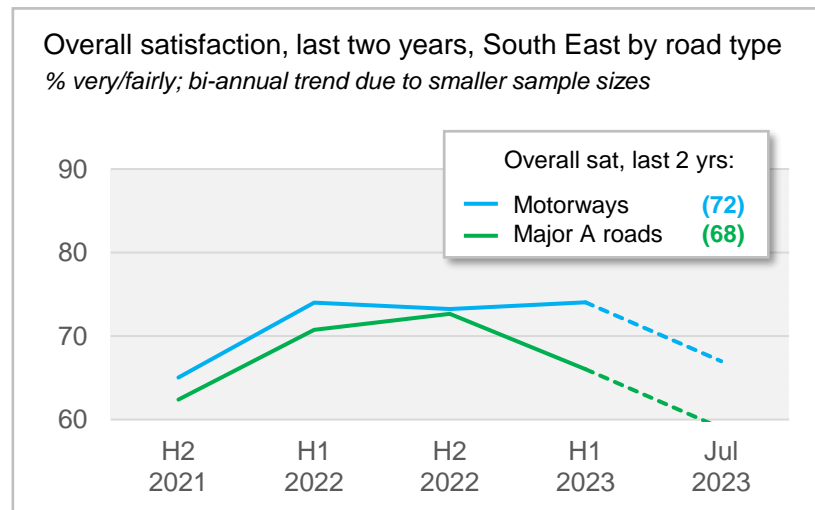
“ Lots of big potholes and worn, damaged road surface ”

Also note that, while motorway journeys are less common in area 4 than area 3, they typically include more smart sections, affecting 59% motorway journeys vs. 49% in area 3.

# More specifically, roadworks management and road surfaces are priorities for improving major A roads in the South East. Motorway performance generally good, apart from safety

## The overall downward trend in journey satisfaction into 2023 for the South East is driven by experience on its major A roads

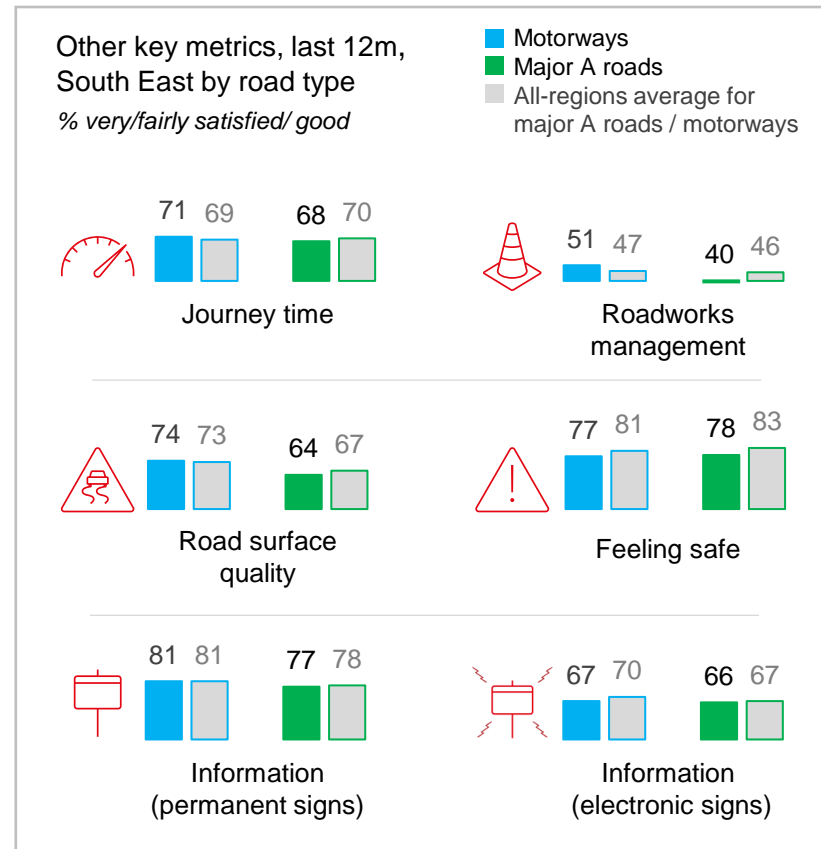
(particularly in Kent, Sussex, Surrey where major A roads account for two thirds of journeys in the survey)



The trend in the South East, for both motorways and major A roads, corresponds with the pattern in perceived prevalence of **roadworks** (less so for other types of delay and congestion).

Base: all SRN users surveyed, Jul '21 – Jul '23; South East Motorways (average 370 per half year), major A roads (average 400 per half year)

## ...and the management of roadworks on major A roads in the South East is contributing to this, along with road surface quality. Safety an area of concern on both road types.



Base: all SRN users, Aug '22–Jul '23; South East Motorways (823), major A roads (896)

## Other notable factors

As for all areas, roadworks and other types of disruption are key reasons for dissatisfaction with journeys on the SRN.

They are not reported any more frequently than in other regions, either on motorways or major A roads (with some individual roads as exceptions), but **a key issue is how roadworks are managed on South East major A roads**. Similar is true for (usually unplanned) delays caused by other factors.

When motorists describe their journeys in their own words, other key factors driving dissatisfaction in the South East are:

- **Perception of poor road condition on the region's major A roads** (reflecting the prevalence of this issue in Area 4 where major A roads dominate).
- 'Smart' features, especially **variable speed limits, for motorway journeys**.

Note that, while lighting and cats eyes are rated less well than the national average for Kent, Sussex Surrey, this is true across both motorways and major A roads in this area. Lighting is an issue for the area, and not inherently linked to either type of road more than the other, in general in the South East.

# M20 illustrating much of the feedback for Kent, Sussex Surrey, and typifying South East motorways with impactful disruption (even if reported frequency is not above average)

**Only two thirds of M20 journeys are satisfactory; safety, road condition and electronic signage the key issues**

Key metrics (Aug '21-Jul '23)	M20	All-region motorway average
Overall satisfaction	66%	71%
Journey time	68%	69%
M'gmt of roadworks	Sample size too small	47%
Feeling safe	67%	81%

Other aspects of experience\*\*

Road condition	Sign-age	Joining/leaving	M'gmt other delays
			Sample size too small
No issues with permanent signage, but electronic signs rated poorly			

**Delays and disruption are felt to be comparatively infrequent...**  
(reflecting that journey time satisfaction is not lower than average)

Impactful journey features	M20	All-region motorway average
Heavy/'cong' traffic	20%	28%
Roadworks	28%	26%
Other delays	11%	19%
J'ny inc. smart motorway	72%	30%

...but drivers' comments indicate that their impact is high when they hit, with particular frustration around (apparently unnecessary) long term 50 mph speed limits, and "BROCK"

*We are fed up with the speed restriction ...we were told that it takes only 24 hours to remove the concrete barriers, but they are never moved even when there are no problems with lorries...*

*The 50 mph limit we have to endure ...no work is going [on]... only two lanes ...if a car breaks down you can't get out of the vehicle safely*

**Safety concerns around smart sections and road condition are also mentioned** – often associated with journeys which are 'fairly' satisfactory or 'neither/nor' rather than dissatisfactory

*Conditions of the road and litter on the sides and hard shoulder*

*Too many damaged parts of the road surface - i.e. shallow potholes and ruts.*

*I miss the hard shoulder*

**Motorists using the M20 also do so relatively frequently: a further factor which may contribute to frustration**

- 40% survey respondents for M20 use this road at least once a week (vs. 29% motorway average)
- A relatively high proportion (11% vs 6% average) drove a van, suggesting work-related journeys perhaps with little choice of route and timing

SRN users in the South East on M20 (170), Aug '21 – Jul '23. \*Contraflow system to separate vehicles into different lanes to help keep traffic moving when there is disruption in the English channel.

\*\* "Traffic lights" indicate how these users rate the range of measures within each of these topics (e.g. "Road condition" covers surface, lighting, markings, cats eyes, litter), compared to the all-region motorway average. Some sample sizes are smaller on some of these measures individually (e.g. lighting is only rated by those driving after dark), so we are presenting an overview of experience (which also takes into account free-text comments.). See pg 53 for detail

# A27, the other major road in Kent, Sussex, Surrey\*, often perceived as congested, creating ongoing frustration for its users, many of whom are frequent users of it

## Fewer than two thirds of A27 journeys are satisfactory, with poor journey times

Key metrics (Aug '21-Jul '23)	<b>A27</b>	All-region major A road avg.
Overall satisfaction	<b>61%</b>	71%
Journey time	<b>64%</b>	70%
M'gmt of roadworks	<b>46%</b>	46%
Feeling safe	<b>79%</b>	83%

Other aspects of experience\*\*

Road condition	Sign-age	Joining/leaving	M'gmt other delays
			Sample size too small

## ...linked with frequently reported congestion and other delays

Impactful journey features	<b>A27</b>	All-region major A road avg.
Heavy/ cong' traffic	<b>30%</b>	21%
Roadworks	<b>26%</b>	23%
Other delays	<b>23%</b>	16%

## These issues are reflected in drivers' comments to explain their experiences, highlighting issues with:

- Congestion, especially problems around Chichester and Worthing
- Road surfaces, markings and lighting

*Cars also using the wrong lane at the Ford Road roundabout. Road markings are poor.*

*For the main coastal route between cities ...compared with ...A roads elsewhere, this a very slow road, riddled with speed limits and roadworks and a rough road surface. ...A bypass inland of Worthing is required to reduce congestion*

*Single track section across Worthing, traffic lights*

*The Chichester bypass is always badly congested... Some years ago a north bypass was proposed with money being allocated for it...?*

*Around Havant/Hayling island junctions, it's quite a frantic stretch of road. The junctions are too close together, combined with the narrow section of dual carriageway ...[and] towards Chichester there are some undulations in the road which appear to be subsidence*

**(And relatively high frequency of usage again likely exacerbating these experiences – with 45% using A27 at least once a week vs. 36% average for major A roads)**

SRN users in the South East on A27 (170), Aug '21 – Jul '23. \*28% of Area 4 responses, its highest volume road in the survey.

\*\* "Traffic lights" indicate how these users rate the range of measures within each of these topics (e.g. "Road condition" covers surface, lighting, markings, cats eyes, litter), compared to the all-region motorway average. Some sample sizes are smaller on some of these measures individually (e.g. lighting is only rated by those driving after dark), so we are presenting an overview of experience (which also takes into account free-text comments.). See pg 53 for detail



# Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Hampshire's two major motorways rated well overall, and while smart motorways can have poor safety perceptions, there are indications that the smart motorway measures are working well in practice on the M3 and M4 (albeit not always consistently)

## M3 Most aspects of journey experience in line with what is typical for motorways generally

Key metrics				Other aspects of experience*				
	Overall satisfaction	Journey time	M'gmt of roadworks	Feeling safe	Road condition	Sign-age	Joining/leaving	M'gmt other delays
M3	73%	71%	53%	80%				Small sample size
avg.	71%	69%	47%	81%				

Impactful journey features				
M3	22%	27%	13%	66%
avg.	28%	26%	19%	30%

Drivers' own comments reference **relatively free-flowing traffic** (sometimes despite roadworks and speed restrictions, indicating effective smart motorway operation on the M3 for most journeys).

...nevertheless many do also comment on delays caused by **roadworks and congestion, and frustration with variable speed limits** where there is no obvious and immediate reason for them.

## M4 Roadworks reported often, driving dissatisfaction for some, but traffic flow is kept under relatively good control, on a mostly good-condition road, for reasonable journey satisfaction overall

Key metrics				Other aspects of experience*				
	Overall satisfaction	Journey time	M'gmt of roadworks	Feeling safe	Road condition	Sign-age	Joining/leaving	M'gmt other delays
M4	73%	72%	53%	78%				Small sample size
avg.	71%	69%	47%	81%				

Impactful journey features				
M4	17%	35%	19%	80%
avg.	28%	26%	19%	30%

**Many appreciate modernisation of this motorway, including smart control of traffic flow**

But many others have **negative perceptions** of smart motorways generally (**based on safety** concerns – contributing to below-average safety rating for M4)

...and/or express frustration with the impact on their own momentum in practice: in particular **many dislike variable speeds, and that they appear to bring about middle- and inside-lane hogging**

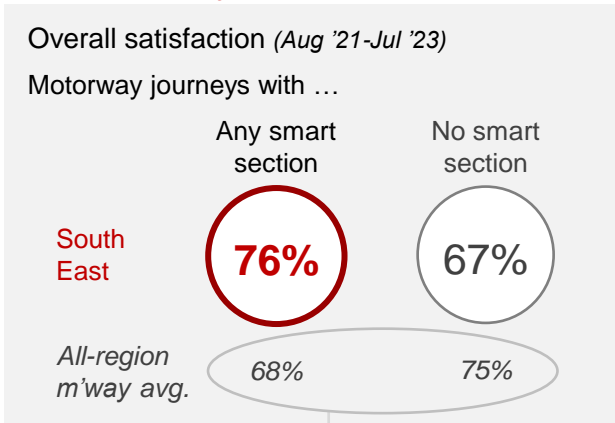
SRN users in the South East on M3 (390), M4 (260), Apr '21 – Sep '22. Averages shown are the all-region motorway average.

\* "Traffic lights" used here indicate how these users rate the range of measures within each of these topics (e.g. "Road condition" covers surface, lighting, markings, cats eyes, litter), compared to ratings for all motorways. Some sample sizes are smaller on some of these measures individually (e.g. lighting is only rated by those driving after dark), so we are presenting an overview of experience (which also takes into account free-text comments.). See pg 53 for detail

# A broader snapshot of smart motorway feedback: journeys are usually less positive, often **perceived as less safe**, and experienced as **congested in practice**

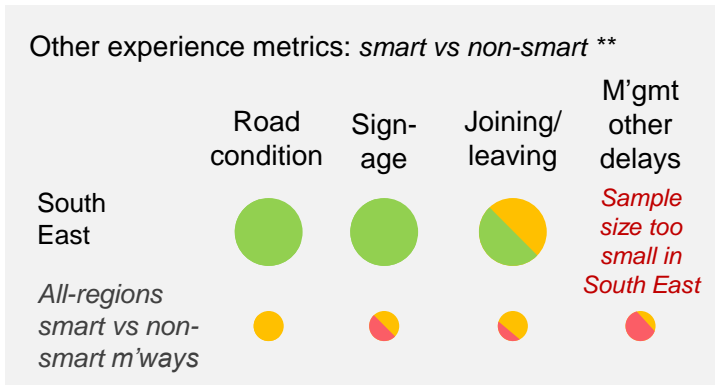
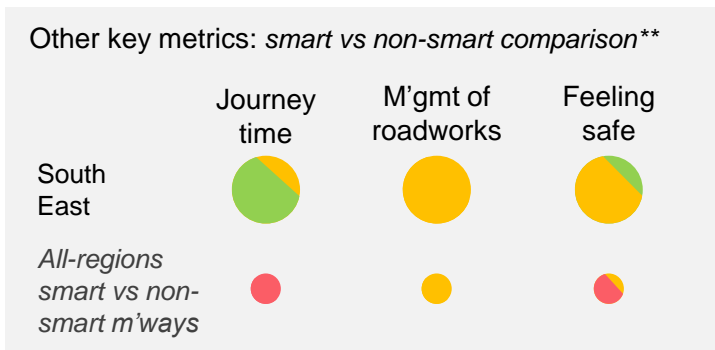
These trends are less evident in the South East, driven by good performance on M3, M4, M23, and conversely, below average performance of non-smart M27

## Unusually, smart motorway journeys in the South East are more satisfactory than on other motorways



## The key issue is usually journey time, and this is where South East smart motorways perform most significantly better than non-smart motorways

Exceptions are roadworks management and road conditions: two areas where smart motorways usually do no worse than elsewhere (and do well in South East).



Drivers' comments show that, as for all roads, journey **satisfaction on smart motorways occurs when there is free-flowing momentum** and little or no need to reduce speed.

Reasons for dissatisfaction also reflect what is typical for all roads, but **the impact of heavy traffic and temporary/variable speed limits are even more common on smart motorways.**

**40** Congestion may be inherent to these heavier-usage roads, rather than an effect of their management features (and it may of course be worse without them) – but some users comment that temporary speed limits are not removed quickly enough, or appear to be in place with no reason, slowing traffic unnecessarily in places.

Road surface condition and presentation is a little less common as a driver of dissatisfaction on smart motorways compared to other roads.

Of all comments from dissatisfied users of smart motorways, around **8% explicitly referenced 'smart' as being an issue, with safety and removal of hard shoulder the key concern.**

Base: random sample of all who used a smart motorway for any part of journey, Aug '22 – Jul '23, satisfied (104), dissatisfied (106)

*(Outside of South East and M25 region) smart motorways journeys also consistently rated lower than for other roads, over time: the quarterly trend follows at approx. 5% points behind the same pattern for all roads.*

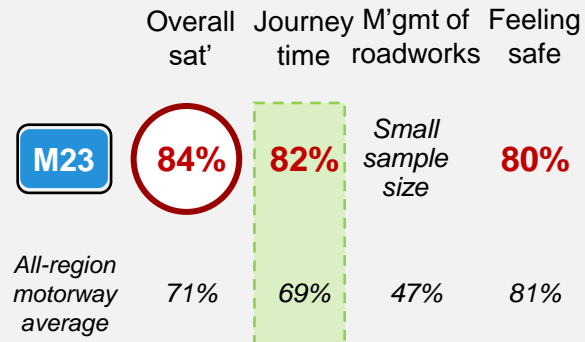
And journey satisfaction varies within this for the type of smart operation:

All lane running	70%
Controlled	66%
Dynamic hard shoulder	63%

# A different experience on the M23: among the best performing motorways across all regions during this period

## Users experiencing straightforward, free-flowing, uninterrupted journeys, helped by light traffic and little roadworks impact

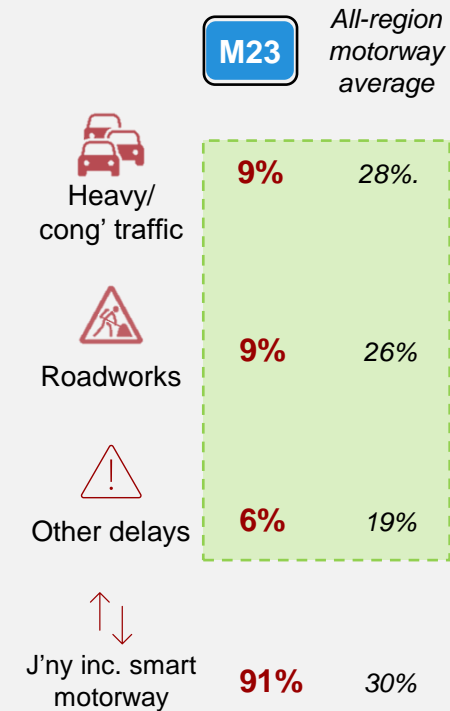
### Key metrics



### Other aspects of experience\*



### Impactful journey features



Where drivers were satisfied with M23 journeys, around half explained this was due to a lack of hold-ups (vs 38% avg. who gave this rationale for satisfaction)

*When driving on the M23 I have always found it a smooth road with very few major tailbacks or traffic jams*

*No hold ups with road works & traffic generally flowed very smoothly*

Several also appreciate resurfacing work

*The road has recently been resurfaced so smooth drive. Shame there aren't street lights for most of the journey between Gatwick and M25 though.*

*Not much traffic, road is decently paved.*

*The surface is not great in one of the lanes whereas the other two have been resurfaced recently*

Rare negative comments are almost all related to dislike of smart motorways, despite overall positive experiences on this road

*Anxiety about there being no hard shoulder on the new 'smart' motorway*

*I really don't approve of the new Smart motorways and get very anxious when there is no hard shoulder... hazardous and a dreadful waste of money.*

*No traffic problems but I hate that there is no hard shoulder on parts of the road.*

SRN users in the South East on M23 (134), Aug '21 – Jul '23.

\* "Traffic lights" indicate how these users rate the range of measures within each of these topics (e.g. "Road condition" covers surface, lighting, markings, cats eyes, litter), compared to the all-region motorway average. Some sample sizes are smaller on some of these measures individually (e.g. lighting is only rated by those driving after dark), so we are presenting an overview of experience, which also takes into account free-text comments. See pg 53 for detail

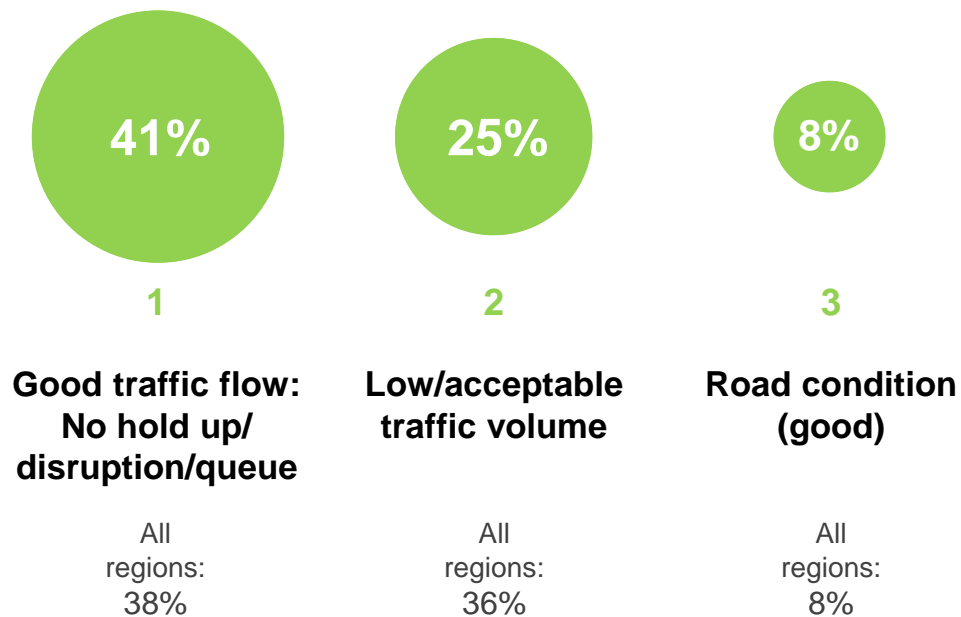


# Understanding overall satisfaction in more detail

# There are two main themes in the reasons users give for satisfactory journeys in the South East

Strategic road users in this region were asked **why** they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their journey, in their own words. We have quantified the key themes which arose using a random sample of responses.

**Satisfaction:** top reasons  
(very/fairly satisfied, South East)  
% mentioning topic



Other factors also impact on satisfaction for a minority, including:

Good flow 'despite' roadworks

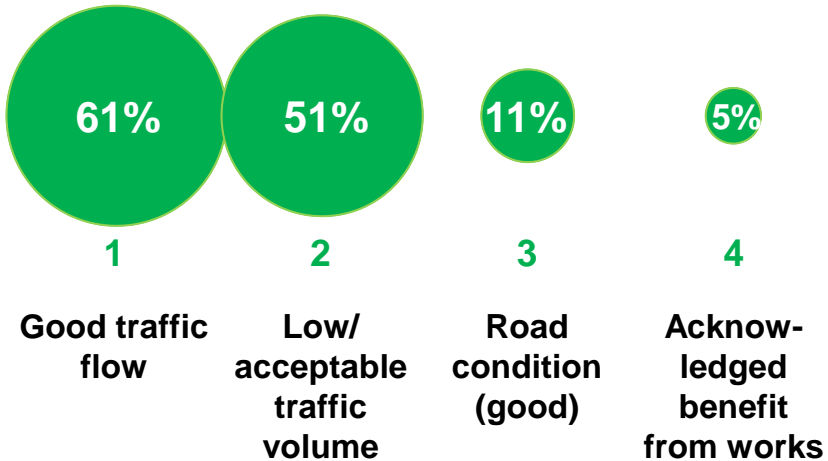
Good/effective lighting/road marking

Good weather/visibility

...and some also mention negative factors, which usually explain why they rated their journey as 'fairly' rather than 'very' satisfactory: see more on this on the next page.

# Ultimately the absence of disruptions, or allowing continuous momentum, makes for **fully satisfactory** rather than simply 'ok' journeys

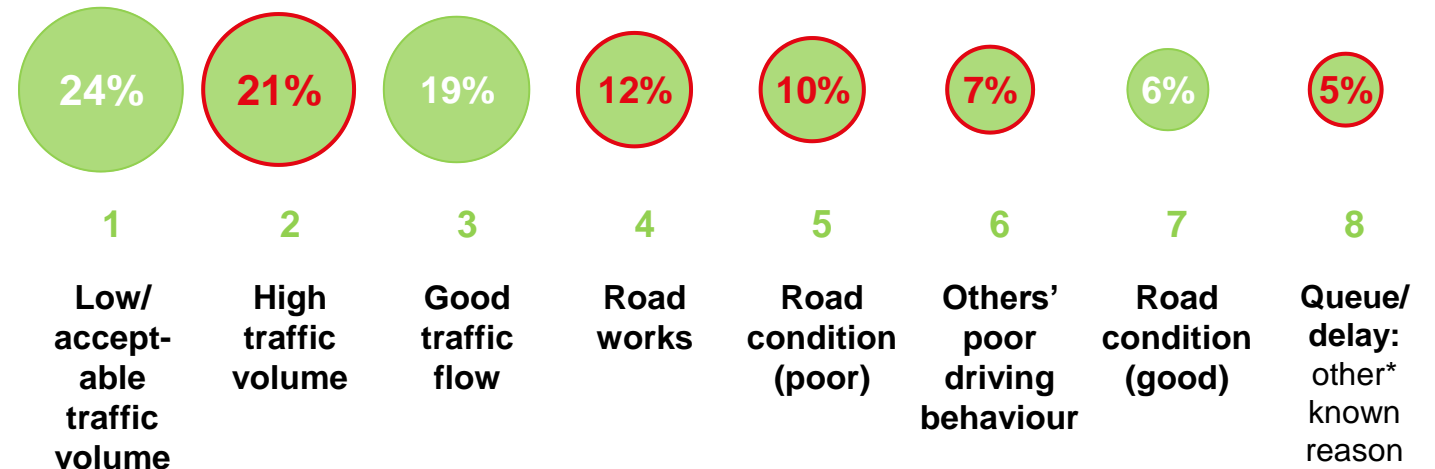
**Very satisfied:** top reasons  
% mentioning topic



Plus:


- ✓ a **range of other factors relating to good management and features** of roads
- ✓ a **near-total absence of reported issues** like roadworks, congestion, poor upkeep/markings/signage, etc.

**Fairly satisfied:** top reasons  
% mentioning topic



Plus a **range of other factors relating to poor management and features** of roads

It's worth acknowledging that those who are 'fairly satisfied' with SRN journeys often still experience some issues. So while most users are satisfied overall in the South East, could National Highways aim to increase the proportion who are very satisfied (currently around a third here, similar to most regions)?

Findings on this page are at national level 

Base: random sample of those giving a rationale for overall satisfaction rating Aug 22-Jul 23 – very satisfied (135), fairly satisfied (165)

\* i.e. not (only) roadworks, speed restrictions / traffic volume; includes accidents, stranded vehicles, debris, and traffic management infrastructure like roundabouts, traffic lights, etc., for example

In addition to absence of disruptions, very satisfactory journeys sometimes involve **multiple positives**; those who are only 'fairly' satisfied often have both **positive and negative aspects** to their journey

**Very satisfied:** Example comments (South East)

- “ Short journey between one set of junctions with traffic but good flow and no obstructions or problems ”
- “ No traffic on that particular day ”
- “ It was not too busy, traffic was calm and on the speed limit. There weren't any noticeable reckless or dangerous drivers. ”
- “ No holdups, light traffic, no roadworks that I remember. ”
- “ Traffic was sensible and no crashes/hold ups ”
- “ Traffic was free flowing with 3 lanes available ”
- “ Traffic was free flowing, road [was] dry, with not too many pot holes ”
- “ Smooth journey despite ongoing improvement works ”
- “ No queueing traffic; traffic flowing nicely. ”
- “ A27 was clear of obstacles/obstructions, well lit, well signposted and with clear road markings. ”
- “ First time travelling on M3 with a double decker but satisfied with signage and road conditions ”

**Fairly satisfied:** Example comments (South East)

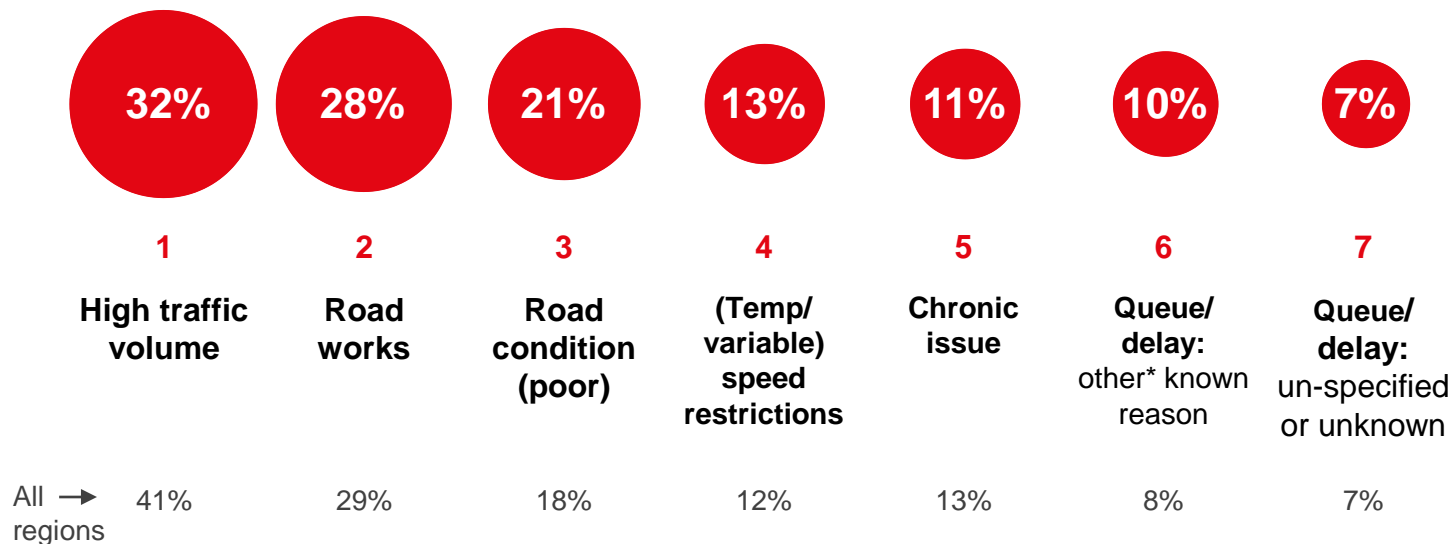
- “ Some traffic on the road, but able to drive safely ”
- “ Road works slowed us down a little but overall a good journey ”
- “ Despite roadworks traffic was flowing ”
- “ There were no major hold ups but the verges were spattered with litter! ”
- “ Traffic was fairly light, road had a few potholes but overall good ”
- “ Traffic moving well, although signage about the 4th lane not great, people were still trying to move into the other lane from the slip road ”
- “ The main problem is road users not using the lanes correctly - sitting in the middle lane ”
- “ The road was busy but that was to be expected at that time of day ”
- “ Although the A27 is very busy it passes through some beautiful places ”
- “ Not too many traffic jams on the route ”
- “ No issues, not too congested but some bad drivers ”

# Perception of heavy traffic and presence of roadworks are the most frequent reasons for dissatisfaction in the South East, with poor road upkeep a close third most common factor

Strategic road users were asked **why** they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their journey, in their own words. We have quantified the key themes which arose, from a random sample of their responses.

## Dissatisfaction: top reasons

(very/fairly dissatisfied, North West) % mentioning topic



## Dissatisfaction: other reasons

(very/fairly dissatisfied)

% mentioning topic

	South East	All regions
Poor/misleading signage or other information	6%	4%
Too few lanes/closures	6%	6%
Others' poor driving behaviour	5%	6%
Feel unsafe	5%	5%
Other	23%	21%

Base: random sample of those giving a rationale for overall satisfaction rating Aug 22-Jul 23 – dissatisfied, South East (100), all regions (303)

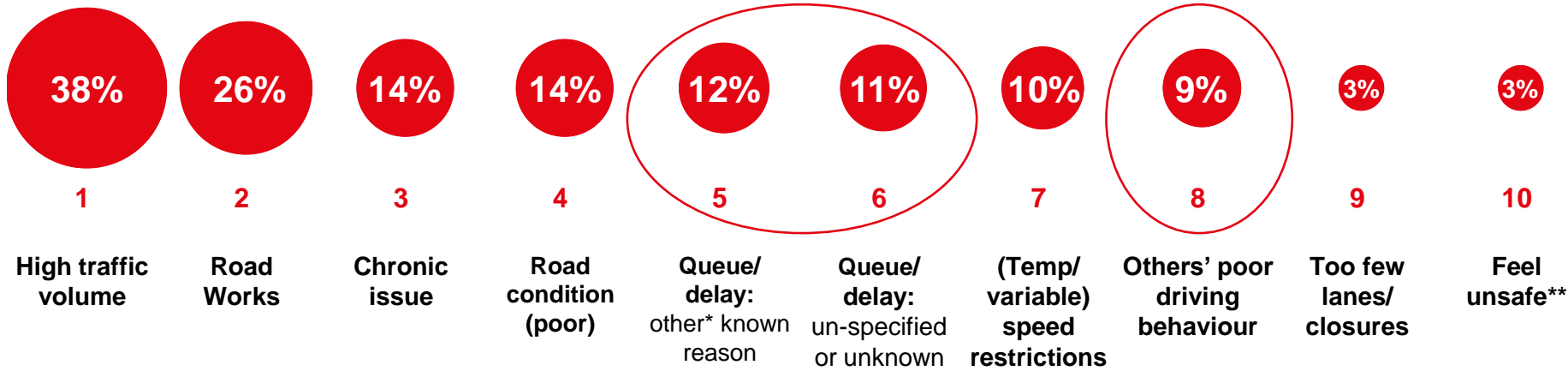
\* i.e. not (only) roadworks, speed restrictions / traffic volume; includes accidents, stranded vehicles, debris, and traffic management infrastructure like roundabouts, traffic lights, etc., for example



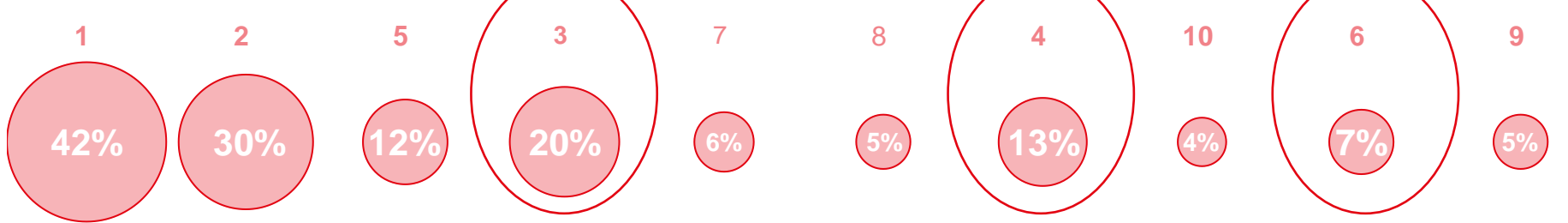
While perception of heavy traffic and roadworks are most common reasons for poor journeys, when other delays happen, they are associated with more pronounced dissatisfaction, along with some other differences between fairly and very poor journeys

Findings on this page are at national level 

**Very dissatisfied:** top reasons  
% mentioning topic



**Fairly dissatisfied:** top reasons  
% mentioning topic



Other measures within the survey confirm that disruption for other reasons, when they happen, can be more **impactful** than that caused by roadworks:

For journeys reported to be affected by roadworks, 24% are dissatisfactory, compared to 33% with congestion, and 34% delayed for other reasons – especially accidents and breakdowns.

All of this suggests that planned disruptions which can be managed and informed about (like roadworks) can be somewhat tolerated, but congestion and delays, including for unknown or (perceived) avoidable reasons, can feel unacceptable. Information doesn't solve, but can help to mitigate, these scenarios.

Base: random sample of those giving a rationale for overall satisfaction rating Aug 22-Jul 23, all regions – very dissatisfied (90), fairly dissatisfied (212)

\* i.e. not (only) roadworks, speed restrictions / traffic volume; includes accidents, stranded vehicles, debris, roundabouts, traffic lights, etc., for example  
 \*\* where feeling safe is explicitly mentioned; however, safety is also likely to be implied when dissatisfaction is caused by other factors

The strength of feeling evident in 'very' dissatisfied motorists' comments is likely indicative of the negative impact poor journeys can have on a person's day. Such experiences can also aggravate broader negative opinions about society and the way public services are run

**Very dissatisfied:** Example comments (South East)

- “ A27 Lions Farm junction was the usual nightmare ”
- “ Traffic queues absolutely horrendous ”
- “ Endless traffic and queues, unsure what the reason for this was ”
- “ The 50 mph limit we have to endure for no reason at all. There is no reason for the barriers to be there as no construction work is going [on]. London bound only has two lanes which is a safety hazard as if a car breaks down you can not get out of the vehicle safely ”
- “ Lane out before Ringwood, for at least two miles with no obvious signs of any works and no prior explanation as to the reason for the delay. We could have taken the A303 had we been advised while on the M3 ”
- “ Due to a police incident somewhere ... a journey of 25 minutes took 2 hours. Several things were disappointing about the journey besides from this. .... gave no warning of how bad the traffic was ...signage was misleading and, possibly, dangerous. ”
- “ The road surface is so cracked and bumpy. The 1-year-old in the car was woken up by how much the car was bouncing... ”
- “ The highways agency officers make the journey worse ...as there was an accident and instead of clearing the road they just stand there ...waiting for the police ... Ever since the highways agency has been involved the traffic has gotten worse ...needs ...overhaul as it is not working!! ”

**Fairly dissatisfied:** Example comments (South East)

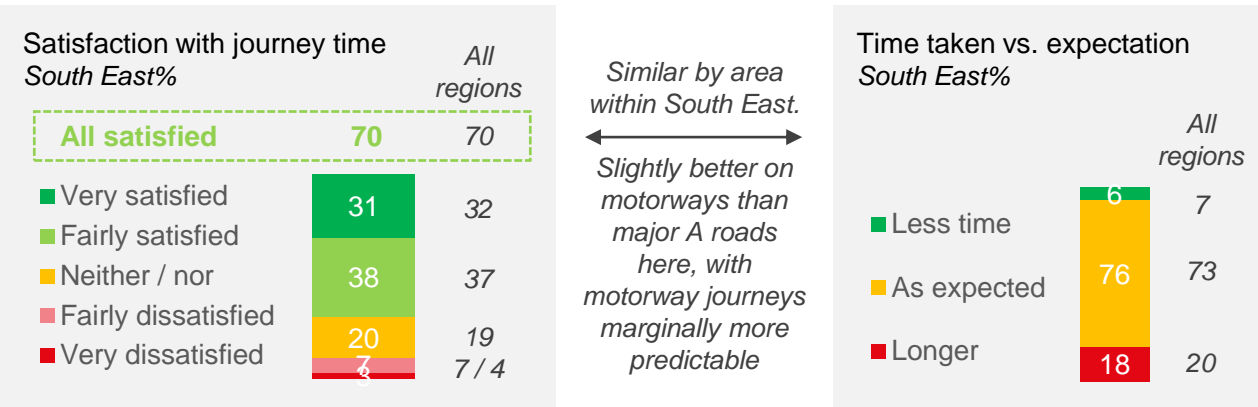
- “ It's over crowded with too many lorries (or not enough lanes), you can't cruise which means you are wasting fuel ”
- “ Potholes and amount of traffic ”
- “ There is a lot of road work which makes my needed exit difficult to follow ”
- “ Bad driving, people speeding and tailgating. Queues in various places. ”
- “ Potholes in road, having to swerve to miss them ”
- “ The road conditions as you get closer to Brighton are bad. The road surface is very coarse and that increases the road noise quite a bit ”
- “ ...The light stretch of road between Hedge End and Eastleigh is difficult to drive on due to dividing lines being less visible than on darker stretches. ”
- “ ...The light stretch of road between Hedge End and Eastleigh is difficult to drive on due to dividing lines being less visible than on darker stretches. ”
- “ Stockbury junction improvement works caused a 30minute delay ”
- “ Very heavy and slow moving traffic, lots of lorries ”
- “ Speed restricted to 40mph due to excessive surface water. The heavy rain had finished a while ago and there was very little surface water or rain. ”

# Journey time

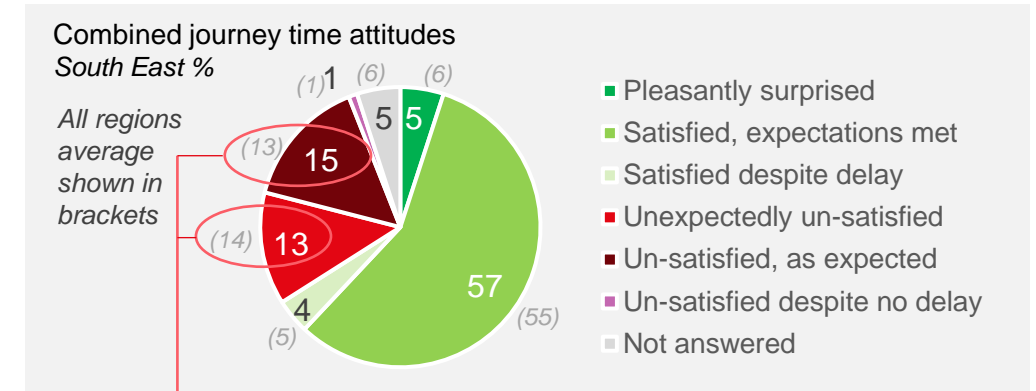


# Users' experience of journey times on the SRN in South East

Satisfaction with journey times in the South East is similar to average (reflecting the nationwide downward trend over the last year); a fifth of journeys taking longer than expected



Taking journey time satisfaction and expectation together highlights that not being satisfied is sometimes unexpected, but sometimes linked to longer term frustration with road provision or management



**!** Punctuality is overtly important for **56%** South East journeys (vs. 56% for all regions)

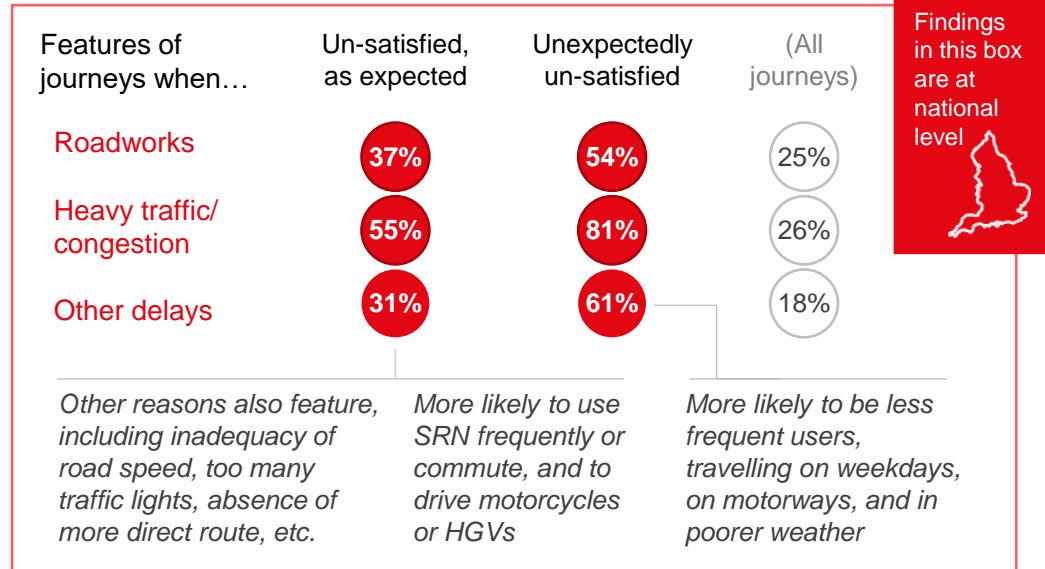
**🕒** **58%** set off early for these journeys (vs. 58% on average and higher than all other regions)

Where punctuality really matters, this is typically for work journeys, especially outward, morning peak journeys, and more so for professional drivers.

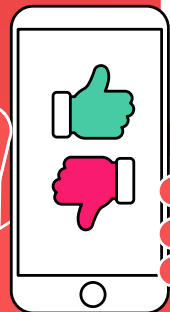
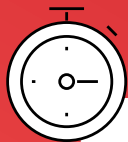
But while people typically set off early for morning peak commuting journeys, this isn't necessarily the case for professional drivers – perhaps where allowing contingency is less possible.

Advance information on delays is vital to empower those who can, to set off earlier. Additionally, work to improve and protect journey times – for both planned and unplanned disruption, and more systemic delays – will benefit all, including those who do not have this option.

Base: Journey time satisfaction: all answering, Aug '22 – Jul '23, South East, (1,719), all regions (9,056)  
 Time vs expectations: all answering, Aug '22 – Jul '23, South East, (1,640), all regions (8,530)  
 Combined attitudes: all SRN users surveyed, Aug '22 – Jul '23, South East, (1,719), all regions (9,091)

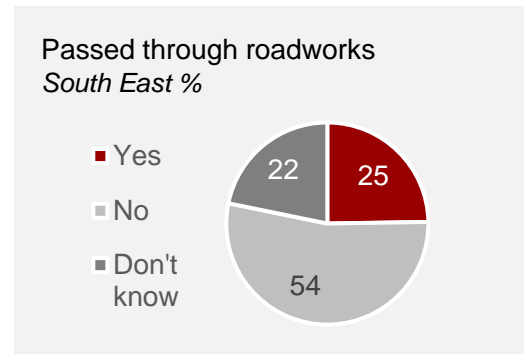


# Experience of roadworks



# SRN users' experience of roadworks in the South East

Roadworks are perceived to be common in the South East, with a third of journeys affected (though decreasing in early 2023 vs 2022)

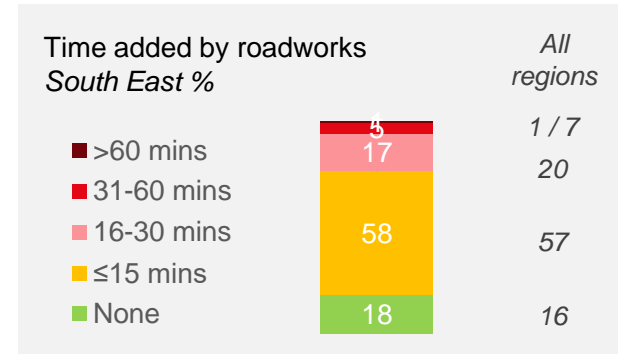


Compares to all-regions average of 25% that passed through roadworks

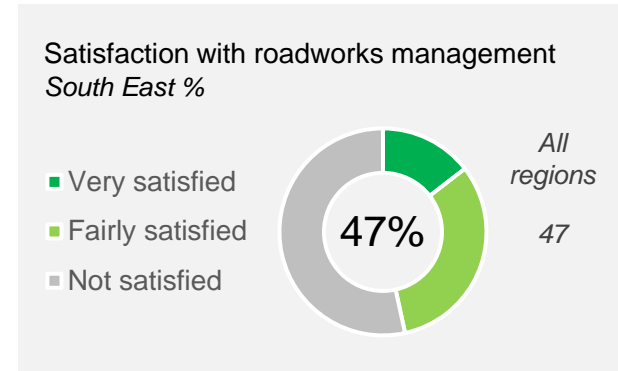
Overall across the South East, the perceived frequency and prevalence of roadworks are similar to the all-region averages regardless of area within the region, and regardless of road type.

However, management of roadworks is better in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire (49%) than in Kent, Sussex, Surrey (42%).

On average they typically add a similar extra time to journeys as in most other regions



Less than half of those affected are satisfied with roadworks management



Advance warning increases satisfaction with how roadworks are managed, and the earlier the better (though satisfaction is low overall despite this)



Satisfaction with roadworks management, among those who were.... (%)	Unaware	Aware after setting off (not before)	Aware before setting off
Satisfied	39	48	49
(Very satisfied)	(7)	(13)	(16)

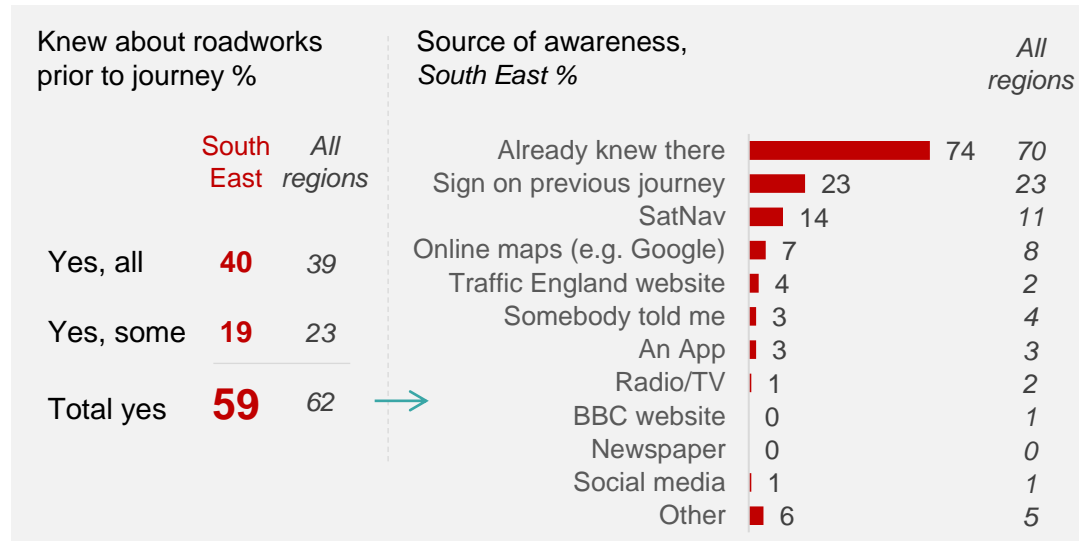
Inevitably it is difficult to truly satisfy users when their journey is disrupted, but other factors in the way works are managed can exacerbate this experience.

Comments from users who are dissatisfied with roadwork management highlight themes including:

- Perception of unreasonable impact:
  - Excessive number of encounters with works
  - Unnecessary length of road affected
  - Excessive duration
- Little evidence of work taking place in practice
- Unclear benefit (or explicit disagreement with purpose, especially relating to smart motorways)
- Speed restrictions, especially multiple variations and narrowed lanes
- Poor lighting or signage

# Finding out about roadworks in the South East

Two thirds of those affected were aware of roadworks in advance of the journey, with previous exposure the main source of awareness

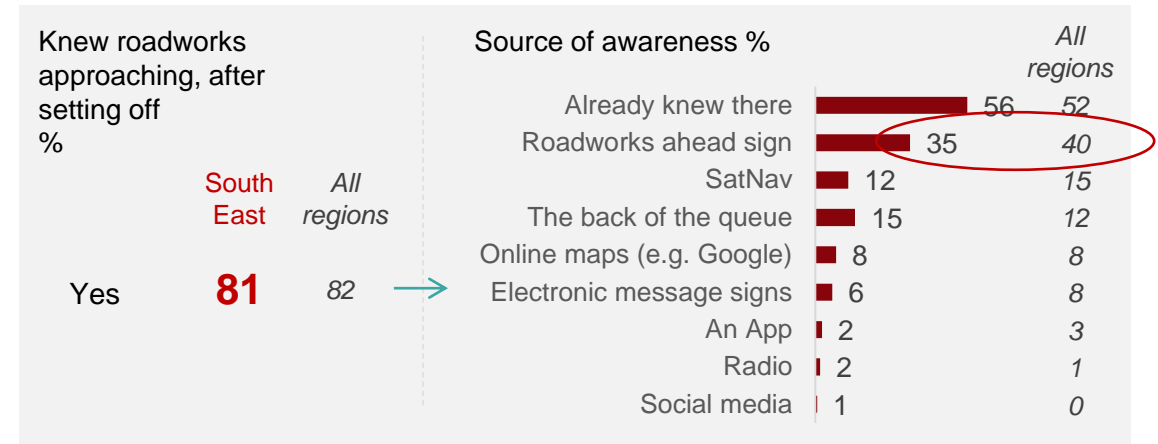


This differs by area within the South East: only 55% in Kent, Sussex, Surrey were aware in advance, vs 63% in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire.

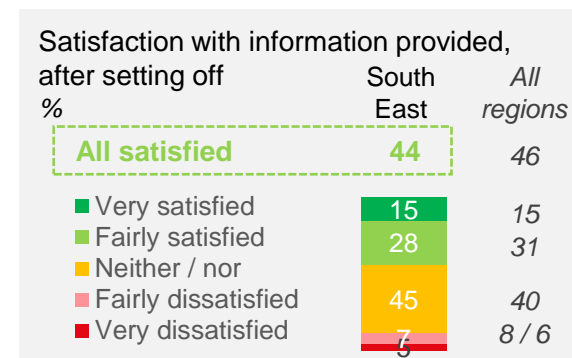
Reflecting reliance on previous exposure, advance knowledge of roadworks is associated with more frequent usage, with those making less frequent journeys, typically for leisure, are less informed. Linked to this, people are less informed if travelling off peak and at weekends, and in sunnier weather or, conversely, after dark.

With particular focus in Area 4, can more be done in periods of higher leisure travel to reach users less likely to know about the roadworks, and around road-side signage visibility, especially in the dark?

Most aware of roadworks as they approach: own experience important again, along with signage though this contributes less than elsewhere



And in this context, in-journey information is satisfactory to fewer than half of those who were aware of approaching roadworks



Again, this is lower in Kent, Surrey, Sussex (37%), where road signage is seen by even fewer (32%).

Information from any source – before reaching the back of the queue – aids satisfaction. Nevertheless, as highlighted on the previous page, experience of the roadworks themselves is only partly influenced by being informed; further reasons are given on the next page.

# When SRN users in the South East are satisfied with roadworks management, it's typically due to little material impact, and/or that they feel informed

Strategic road users were asked **why** they were satisfied or dissatisfied with roadworks management, in their own words. We have quantified the key themes which arose, from a random sample of their responses.

## Satisfaction with roadworks management: top reasons

(very/fairly satisfied)

South East, % mentioning topic



More negative features of roadworks management are typically associated with being fairly, rather than very, satisfied with it.

In particular South East drivers mention...

- That **signage and/or advance warning was insufficient or poor quality**
- Perception that **no/little work is taking place**

All → regions: 35% (No/little impact on journey), 30% (Effective signage/info), 8% (Good provision/management of/clearly marked lanes), 4% (Knew in advance), 8% (Well managed), 4% (Effective/fitting speed restrictions), 9% (Other (positive)), 29% (Other (negative))

Base: random sample of those giving a rationale for satisfaction with roadworks Aug '22 – Jul '23 South East (97), all regions (203)





# More on what makes roadworks communication effective

## Feeling informed certainly makes a difference

*I was able to factor the possible delay ...with the aid of Google maps. This allowed me set aside enough time ...By leaving early enough I was prepared for possible delays on route*

*They're taking longer than the completion date originally advertised, but I knew that so 'fairly satisfied'*

*Feeling informed is mentioned as a reason for good roadworks experience by about half of those who are very satisfied (and features for around a quarter of those who are fairly satisfied)*

## Key features of communications where drivers have felt effectively informed, include

*(in order of importance, based on the relative frequency at which they are mentioned):*



Timing

### Sufficient notice

*Well sign posted, plenty of time to change lanes*

*Given lots of notice roadwork were coming up [and] cars flowed well*

*By reducing the speeds a mile out it helped calm the traffic*



Content

### Detail and volume of information

*Lots of signs about the roadworks, what they are doing, and when they aim to be finished. ...[with] plenty of warning so everyone didn't slam on the brakes and create more traffic*

*There [were] start and finish dates on signs*

**...balanced with clarity** *[The roadworks] were easy to understand*

**...and accuracy**  
*(though note that several comments about accuracy are made with an implication that this isn't always the case)*

*Signage was clear and updated regularly*

*Delay time shown on electronic signs was pretty accurate*



Channel

### Multiple touchpoints/repeated notices can be useful

*Messages on gantries plus cones and signs*

*There was advanced warning on overhead signs on M4 before approaching and the speed reduction signals helped to prevent accidents.*

### Including via wrap-around comms via other channels (for example, local news)

*Clear signage and informed prior to work's beginning*

**...providing they are consistent**  
*(see following)*



# ...and some of the ways information can be improved further

Even among those who were satisfied overall with management of roadworks, several pointers were highlighted around how to communicate more effectively, more often:

## Detail of information/content

### Timings, duration, distance affected

<i>No indication how long the roadworks will continue for.</i>	<i>It would have been helpful to know the distance the roadworks lasted for</i>	<i>There were signs saying the A14 was closed, yet we were able to access the road. A time as to when the A14 is actually closed would be preferred.</i>
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### How to drive through the roadworks

*Where (lanes/exits), speed, etc.*

<i>Speed limit changes from 50mph to 40mph to 30mph in a short space of time/distance and no obvious information about why we were asked to reduce speed</i>	<i>The signs were a bit limited and the warning for the junction I wanted could have been clearer</i>
--	---

### Purpose/benefit

*Note that some drivers have a strong interest in and scrutinise road improvement initiatives – and they may or may not agree with them – information about the purpose of roadworks can alleviate frustration, but making information easily available about the rationale can also be useful to explain reasons fairly and clearly*

*...it should improve things longer term which is completely needed*

*...they also don't tell you what the roadworks are for*

## Sufficient notice and volume of information throughout and around journeys

*Would appreciate notification further back so could ...detour if they were a long delay*

*I didn't see enough warnings on the road. Google maps told me more*

*I joined from one of the roads so had no warning about how long they would last for / delays would take...*

*No radio coverage*

*Better / earlier signage – we could have avoided the roadworks*

## ...but need to balance detail and volume against potential for clutter and confusion

*Lots of signs and cones along with new road markings were a lot to take in at once*

*Road signs ...but bollards were still being put out so unclear as to what was happening.*

## ...positioning, size and lighting of signage could help more

*Signs not well lit and difficult to absorb all information*

*Text on boards could be larger*

## ...as can plain English

*Often roadworks state a junction number or name, and I would find it easier if they specified the city / town / village so I know where they are*

## → Consistency: of content, of provision of the information

*Heard on the radio that the road had been closed, but it was open on our side with just one lane running. It was a bit confusing throughout our journey if our side was closed or not.*

*...there is always room for improvement. I.e. electronic information signs – some give information then one or two don't.*

*Sometimes too many signs in one area. Then inconsistency.*

# Some other examples of how roadworks might be delivered most effectively for SRN users



## Consider communicating in a way that suggests dialogue and mutual understanding

Drivers are often rational and understand, rationally, that roadworks need to happen... can signage and other comms/information tap into this with appropriate language, and explanation of purpose?

*I understand roads need fixing or improving sometimes, this is inevitable.*

*...important work required, good to see it being done*

...while acknowledging the impact of disruption on drivers

*Understandably road works need to happen, I do feel however that they seem to take too long to finish.*

*...they are something that needs to be done but they seem to be taking too long - over 13 years...*

...and humanising the workers themselves

*...workers doing their best to finish on time*

*...they seem to be working efficiently out in all weather*

*...sensible speed reduction ... Gives a safe working environment.*



## Can more be done to improve compliance?

*Other drivers were the problem, not pulling into the correct lane when they were given notification, which there was adequate signage [for]*

*Lane jumpers who race down the wrong lane then barge their way in.*

Note that poor driver behaviour is often mentioned in context of restrictions being in place where roadworks are not visibly underway

*Because no one seems to be working and despite the speed limits lorries continually bully car drivers to go faster*



## As well as controlling information clutter for live roadworks, can unnecessary signage and road markings be minimised, wherever they exist?

*Old road markings still visible - difficulty ensuring we were in the up to date lane*

*Very congested area ...Used to the layout now but not very clear with the use of cones everywhere*



## Consider variation in the way restrictions are imposed

For example, rules for certain vehicles, variation in traffic control measures by time of day.

Given drivers are coming to expect variations on smart roads might it be reasonable that they should also expect more nuanced, reactive and conditions-based management of disruption more generally, including through roadworks?

*While no one is working on that side of the road, at the moment, all the lanes have been opened and the 50mph speed limit lifted.*

*Roadworks are just a fact of life, but they could restrict which vehicles use which lanes, particularly on the long climb up hill*

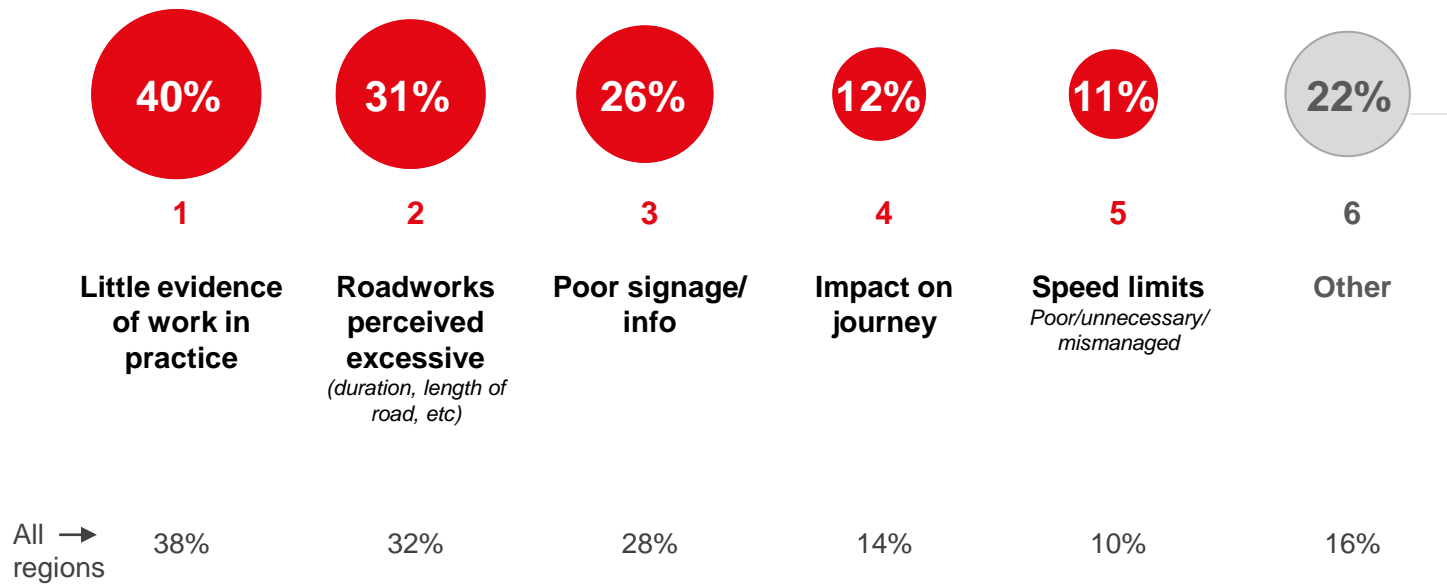
*Reduced speed limit at night for no reason to 40mph as there is not a lot of traffic*

# Dissatisfaction with roadworks management usually driven by apparent absence of actual work, signage issues, and a general perception of there being too much, for too long

Strategic road users were asked **why** they were satisfied or dissatisfied with roadworks management, in their own words. We have quantified the key themes which arose, from a random sample of their responses.

Findings in this box are at national level 

## Dissatisfaction with roadworks management: top reasons (very/fairly dissatisfied) % mentioning topic



Even greater perception of **excessiveness** and **'other' issues** are the key differentiators between being **very** rather than **fairly dissatisfied** with roadwork management

Including:

- Traffic management measures not fit for purpose given weather conditions
- Cones/signs knocked over, misplaced, obstructed
- Construction debris on road
- Navigation confusing
- Unhappy with strategic decision making
- Inappropriate timing/time of year
- Cynicism that restrictions are really about fine collection/traffic calming
- Poor value for tax-payer money

Base: random sample of those giving a rationale for dissatisfaction with roadworks, Aug '22-Jul '23  
 South East (65), all regions (213), all regions very dissatisfied (112), fairly dissatisfied (125)



# Some of the frustration of roadworks in motorists' own words:

## Works apparently not taking place

*There seem to be traffic lights being put up and left for days for no apparent reason, or for a mornings work*

*Roadworks for repairs that have been in place for more than 12 months with no progress made*

*Large sections of the A1 reduced to 40 mph. No visible work taking place, and replacing old crash barriers with the same new barriers, seems a complete waste.*

*Roadworks supposedly, although nothing to be seen.*

## Perception of excessiveness

*Takes an hour ...due to ...repairs going on on central reservation. Going on for 3 or 4 years now.*

*15 miles of lane closure for 200yds of actual working carried out.*

*...major works from last 4 years never finishes...*

*...poorly designed roadworks that trap drivers in endless cone restrictions - due for central barrier upgrades - that could be done with a 500m 'rolling - unit - with special equipment designed for the job.*

## Poor information provision

*Roadworks coming off A1(M) [did not have] clear signage and [I] nearly missed turn off. Also work entrances looked like a turn off*

*Some of the information signs were physically knocked over...*

*Didn't know for sure where it shut, or if it was shut. The signs are normally wrong anyway*

*The road works said there was to be closures between 9pm and 6am which was wrong*

*Road closures notified too late to take alternative route*

## Personal/unreasonable impact

*...frustrating with the number of ...traffic hold ups where you see work is not even actively being done - Highways control doesn't seem to care that drivers are inconvenienced with road blocks*

*Roadworks meant down to one lane for part of journey, it meant that I arrived later than wanted for work*

*...the bollards and lights are challenging. It makes me anxious...*

*Sometimes they don't even ...tell us road work is ongoing. ...you get to your exit and it's blocked so you have to drive all the way to the next exit and return back.*

## Frustration with speed limits

*60mph for no reason at Reading roadworks*

*Low speed limit (20mph) which elsewhere would have been 40-50mph instead for similar work*

*Too many speed restrictions for roadworks that seemed finished.*

*Roadworks limiting to one lane for no obvious reason and very slow speed limits which change regularly again with no reason*

*...there are still speed restrictions of 60mph. The roadworks have gone, yet we still have these restrictions*

## Other

*The works ...the lanes are extremely narrow, some vehicles drift in and out of the lanes next to them despite the 50mph restriction.*

*Badly planned roadworks, reducing the dual carriageway to a single track at the exact point that an exit backs on so that carriage[way] backs up...*

*Unsafe to drive through with the lanes being too narrow.*

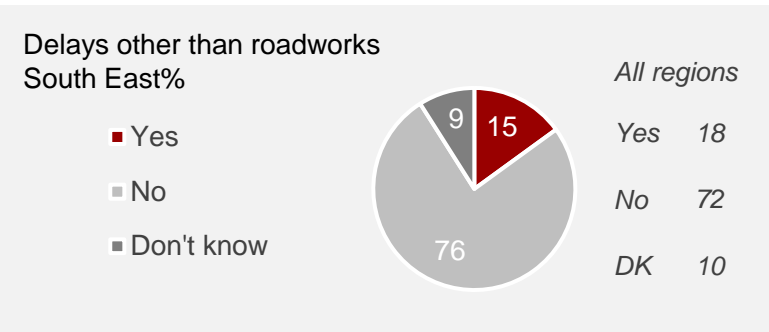
*Also rubbish from construction on road made a driver stop and caused congestion.*

# Experience of other journey delays



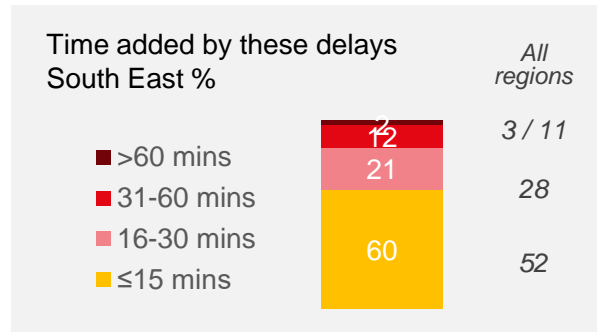
# Users' experience of other journey disruption in the South East

Fewer journeys reported as delayed for non-roadworks reasons, and a little below the all-regions average



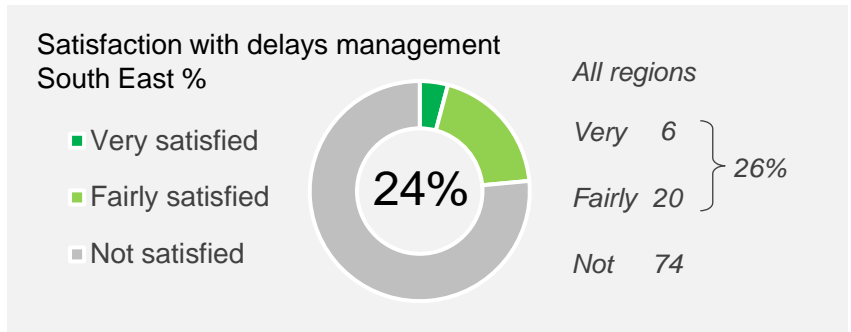
Similar pattern across sub-areas within the South East. However, **delays reported more often on South East major A roads (17%) than motorways (13%). Delays on South East motorways reported less often than the average of 19%.**

...and though longer than for roadworks, delays are shorter than the average

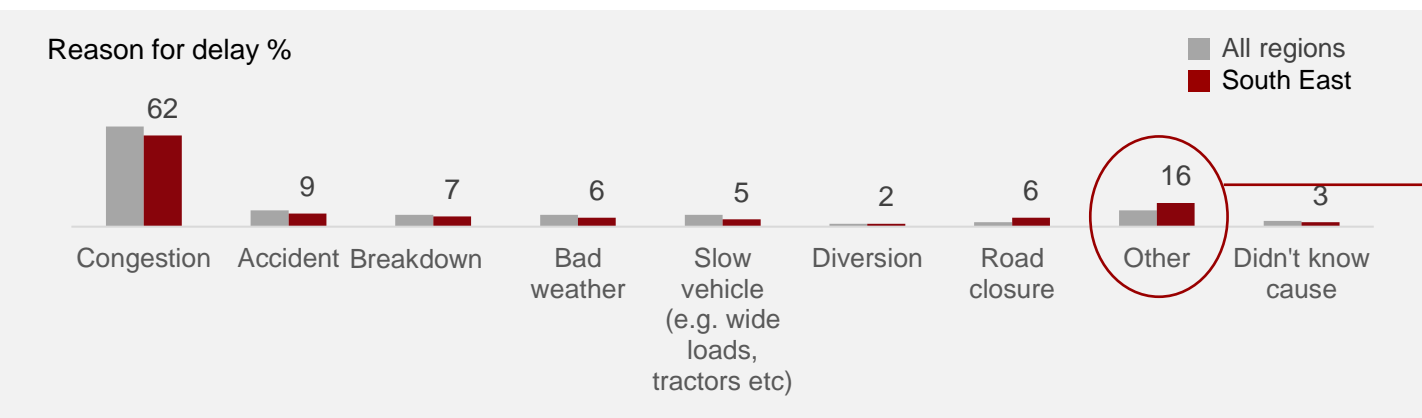


Delays on motorways felt to be a little longer than on major A roads, but this is typical for motorways generally, and again motorways in the South East perform above the all-regions motorway average.

Nevertheless, only a quarter of those affected are satisfied with their management



Satisfaction with delays management is only 20% for major A road journeys in the South East, and 27% on motorways. Correspondingly, management of delays is lower in Kent, Sussex, Surrey (21%) than Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire (24%).



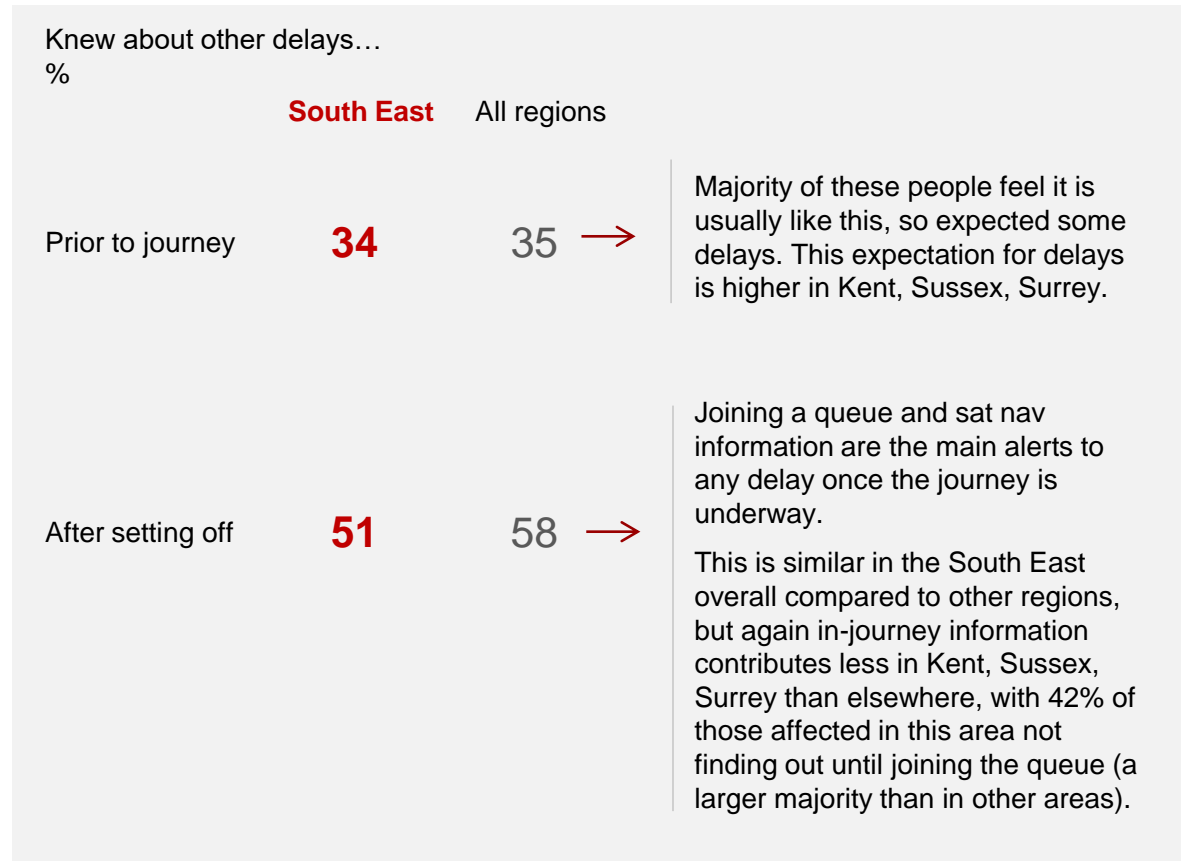
“ The highways agency officers make the journey worse than it needs to be as there was an accident and instead of clearing the road they just stand there doing nothing, waiting for the police... they should recovery vehicles and the authority to capture the accident so the police can manage better things... ”

“ Tree across road ”

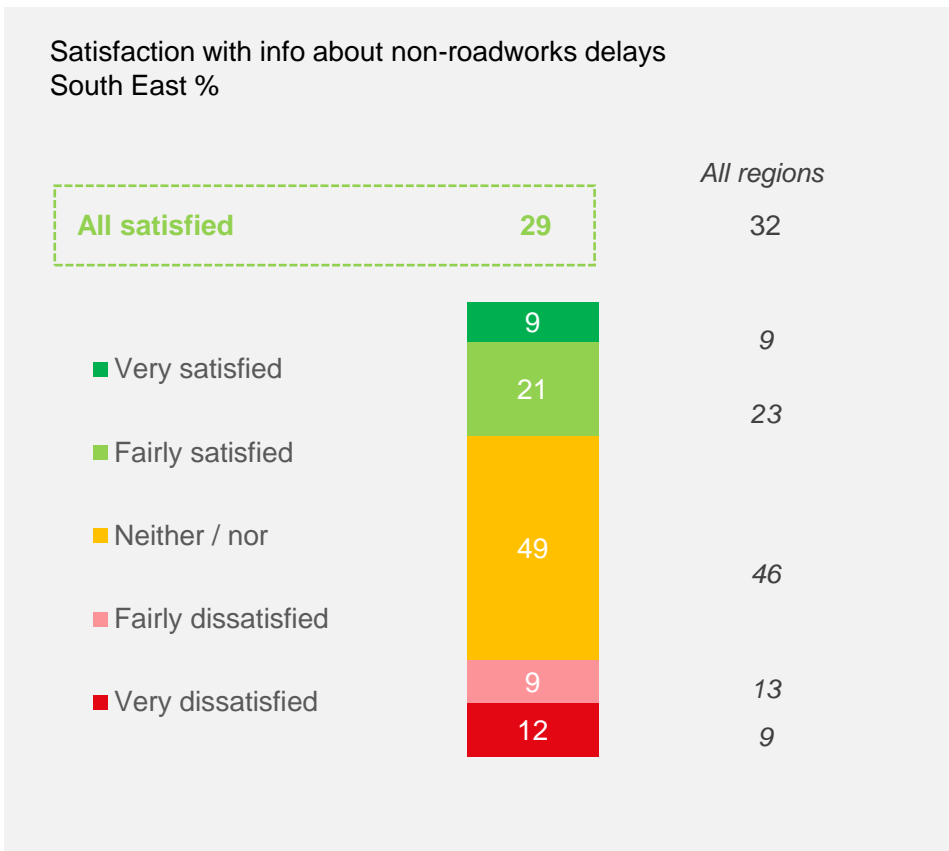
“ Scary road as lots of accidents and road very bumpy ”

# Finding out about other types of delay in the South East

Only a third of those affected by other types of (non-roadworks) delay were aware ahead of the journey, and half after setting off



...all leading to low levels of satisfaction with delay-related information, including more than a fifth being dissatisfied



Base: All affected by delays other than roadworks in the South East, Aug '22 – Jul '23 (246)



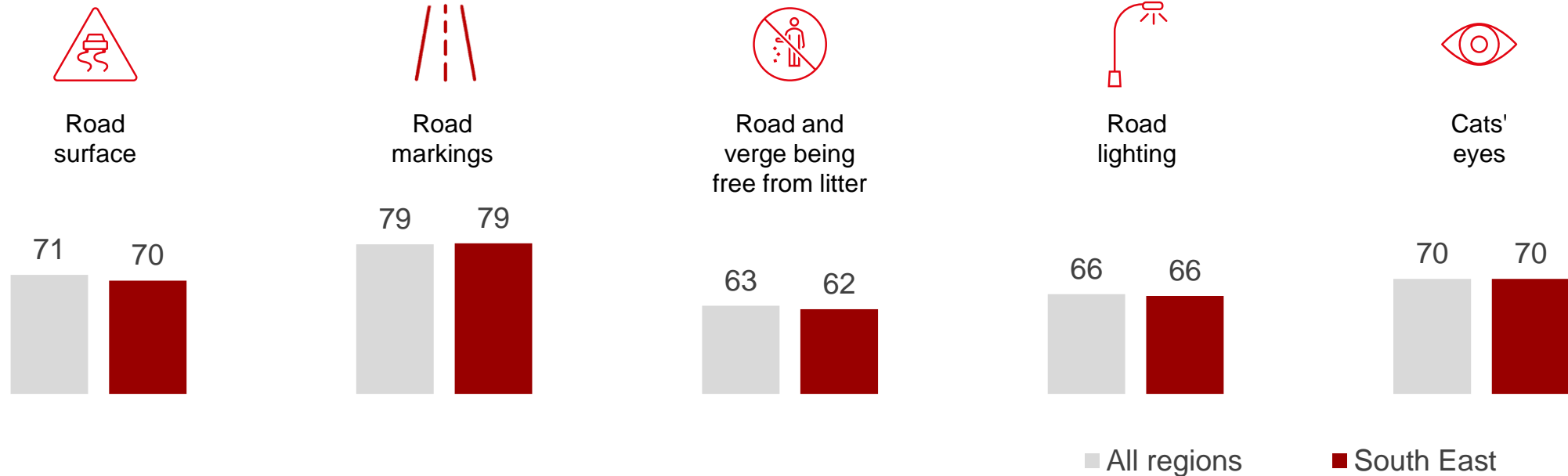
# Day to day functioning of SRN



On the whole, presentation and condition of South East roads is rated in line with average. Lighting and litter appear to need attention in all regions.

Rating of road condition

% very/fairly satisfied, South East vs all-region average



*As highlighted earlier in this report, all of these aspects of road provision are rated less well in Kent, Sussex, Surrey than in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire – partly, but not wholly, due to higher proportion of journeys being made on major A roads in the former, and A roads are typically rated less well than motorways for road condition and presentation.*

Base: Road surface/markings/litter, Aug '22 – Jul '23, all regions (7,694-8,967), South East (1,446-1,694)  
 Lighting/cats eyes, among those travelling after dark, Aug '22 – Jul '23, all regions (1,542-1,699), South East (292-317)

# What are the issues with lighting?

Findings on this page are at national level



Recap: when we asked for comments in users' own words,

**Lighting, cats' eyes and road markings were mentioned as a reason for dissatisfactory journeys, by 2% of those who were dissatisfied overall:**

**Not one of the bigger issues, but important to some**

At the very least, drivers often feel uneasy in these scenarios:

“ I don't like driving in the dark, especially at the end of the journey when I am not familiar with the roads ”

“ Lack of overhead lighting makes a very difficult drive ”

“ It was very dark and therefore a bit stressful in the rain ”

**Most common complaint is simply insufficient lighting**

“ The lack of lighting after dark on the A47 is dangerous as there are deep ditches either side of the road ”

“ Lighting poor. Road markings poor. Road drainage poor. Cats eyes non-existent ”

“ The roads were dark, street lights were there but the lights were not on after night... ”

“ The A3 goes from brightly lit at Wisley to no lighting at all further on. ”

“ Some sections unlit, would feel safer with lighting ”

“ ...motorway is very dark far away from international standards ”

**But some other themes also arise in users' comments:**

Poor lighting is **especially noticeable or impactful in context of roadworks** (including being too bright)

“ Traffic, narrow lanes, poor lighting, slow speed limit ”

“ Road work light blinding vision ”

“ ... there was a lot of spray, lorries, road works and some of the way was in darkness, no lights on motorway ”

**....or poor weather**

“ In the rain and dark it's difficult to see ”

“ Bad weather. Lighting could be more consistent ”

Lighting is often felt to be **important – and noticed as poor – when combined with other examples of poor maintenance or presentation**

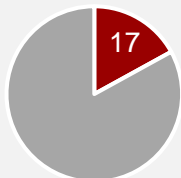
“ ...that section of road is appalling. It is unlit and there are hardly any lane markings ... It seems road repairs have been completed, but the safety features (cats eyes and dotted lines) have not been replaced, making driving in inclement weather dangerous. ”

“ Direction signs not always obvious and lighting not great ”



# Little spontaneous comment on litter from users, but it can affect broader impressions of safety and maintenance

**17%** were dissatisfied with litter along the road and verge in the South East



17% average across all regions



The majority of those commenting on litter/debris were **fairly** satisfied or dissatisfied with their journey overall – rather than having conviction either way.

**Comments from these people indicate key themes** in what the presence of litter means to users

**Unightly**, if not materially affecting journey time and therefore the overall journey

“ Mostly a good road, but with some potholes and far too much litter on roadsides and lay-bys ”

“ The road side edges are a bit of a mess now - sad as it is a relatively new road. ”

“ Road good but terrible litter ”

“ LITTER!!! Everywhere!!!! ”

“ Also the amount of rubbish on the roadside is depressing to say the least. ”

**Vehicle debris (like tyres), consumer waste (for example, food packaging) and roadworks leftovers all contribute to perceptions of litter**

“ Some road work signs left lying around in laybys. Rubbish everywhere on side of road ”

“ The amount of rubbish/debris at the roadside. There seemed to be more remnants of vehicle tyres than I can recall previously. ”

...although people do sometimes experience – or fear – more **tangible effect**

“ Too much litter ...not only is it unsightly, it poses extra hazards if an incident occurred. ”

“ ...the amount of rubbish in the last few years has got much worse. They used to pick up rubbish - what has happened? It is dangerous if it gets on the road and also it is a fire hazard. ”

“ Large amount of rubbish/litter on side of road, very distracting ”

“ ...that day was extremely windy... things were flying all over the roads, cones, branches, litter etc. Things that didn't need to be there...”

**Implication that roads are not maintained in other ways or that accountability is not taken seriously**

“ The rubbish on the side of the road is disgusting. Admittedly people shouldn't drop litter but it appears that you do very little to maintain the road. Its embarrassing. ”

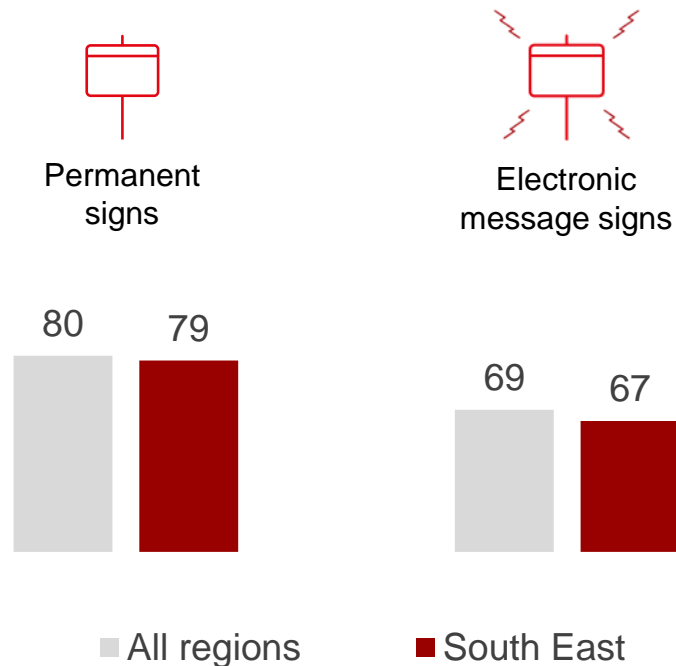
“ There is also a significant amount of litter at both junctions that never seems to be cleared. ”

“ Rubbish on the verges, it's disgusting. I tried to get through to a department to mention this but council blame Highways England and vice versa. I gave up in the end ”

# Permanent signs in the South East perform similarly to national average (though have improved to overtake it in early 2023), but electronic signs perceived to be slightly less prevalent

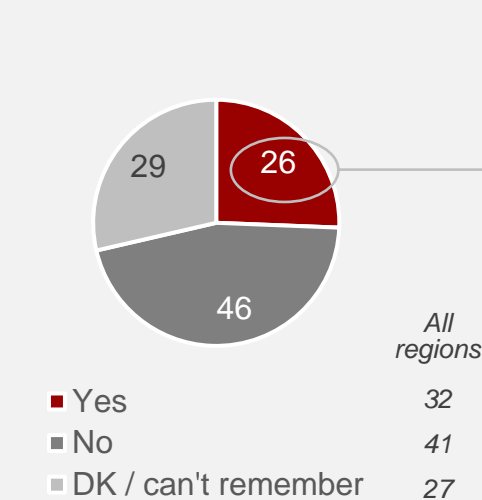
## Rating of signage

% very/fairly satisfied, South East vs all-region average



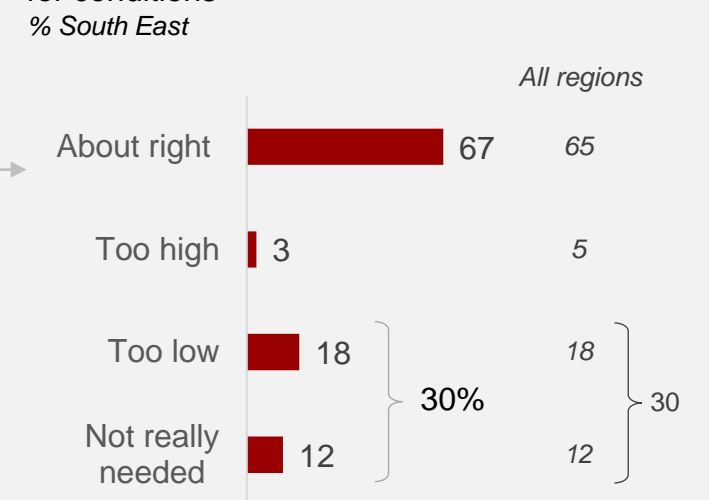
## Saw electronic signs

% South East



## Appropriateness of electronic speed limits

% South East



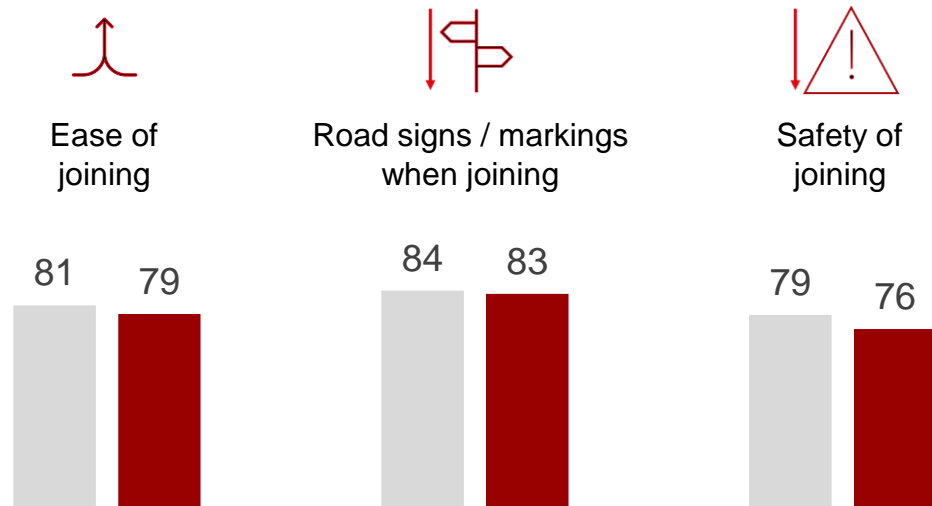
Similar pattern across all regions

Base: Permanent signs (8,585), Aug '22 – Jul '23, South East (1,609)  
 Electronic signs, among those having seen them, Aug '22 – Jul '23, all regions (6,195), South East (1,146)

Most users satisfied with joining/leaving SRN; leaving a marginally smoother process. Where the South East is rated a little lower than the average, this is driven by slightly poorer experiences in Kent, Sussex Surrey than Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire

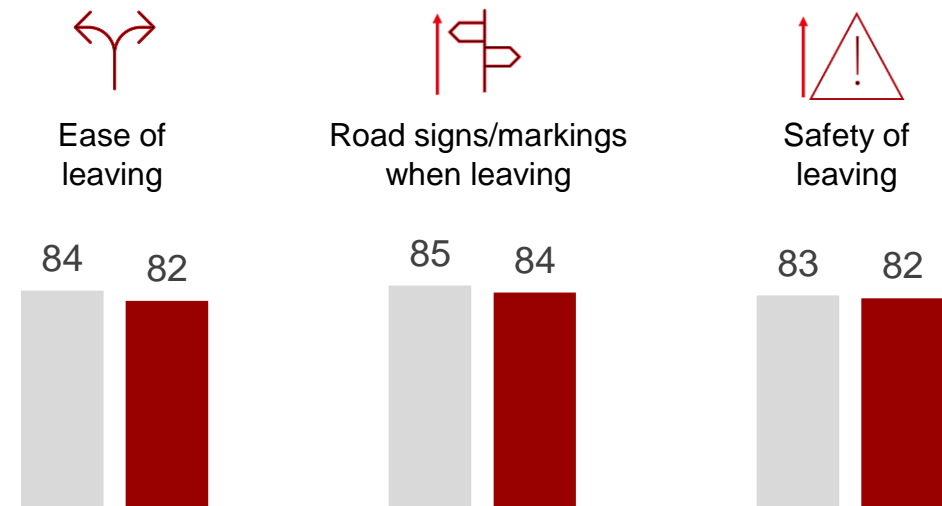
Rating of joining

% very/fairly satisfied, South East vs all-regions average



Rating of leaving

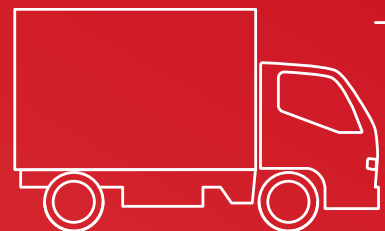
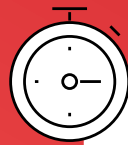
% very/fairly satisfied, South East vs all-regions average



■ All regions

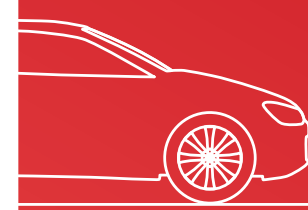
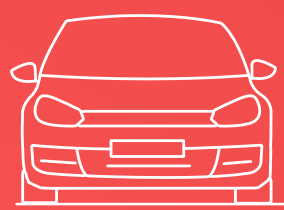
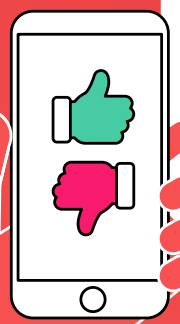
■ South East

Base: all regions (8,908-9,010), South East (1,680-1,706), Aug '22 – Jul '23



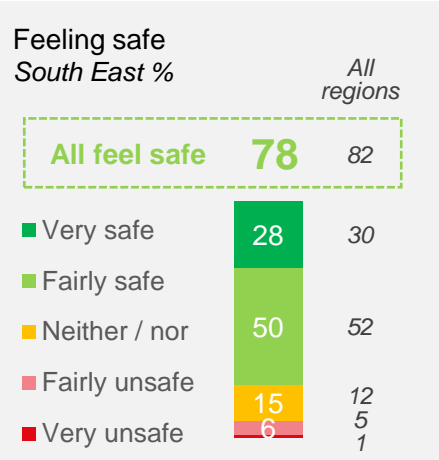
## Focus on other topics

Using and sharing the road comfortably  
SRN users and smart motorways  
Some smaller driver groups



# Safety perception a little below average in the South East. Improved driver behaviour, more consistency of traffic movement, and better weather mitigation could all help to alleviate stress.

## Safety perception in the South East is a little below average



South East has the lowest safety rating of all regions, except M25 region which also scores 78.

Similar across both areas within the South East, and below average on both motorways and major A roads here.

Base: All answering, Aug '22 – Jul '23, South East (1,713), all regions (9,055)

## All drivers can feel unsafe at times, but this is a little more likely for those with certain...

### Driver/party characteristics

- Females
- With a disability
- When travelling alone OR with young children

### Journey patterns and road usage

- Driving a motorcycle or light goods vehicle
- In weekday peaks, for commuting
- On motorways – especially smart motorways – though safety is also an issue for major A roads in the South East

### External factors

- In heavy rain, or after dark
- When disrupted (delays, roadworks, heavy traffic)

Findings in this column and box are at national level

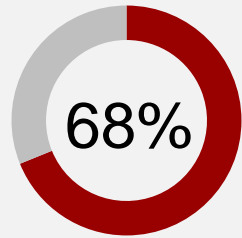
## When they felt unsafe during a journey, drivers' reasons for dissatisfaction were similar to those who felt safe (with perceived congestion and roadworks the key issues), but with heightened emphasis on:

- Variable/temporary speed limits  
*Drivers ...[braking] without warning, especially ...when 50 turned to national speed limit then back to 50 quickly then back to national speed limit for no apparent reason.*
- Other factors linked to smart motorways  
*...no hard shoulder ...if you break down there is nowhere to go and [I] feel more vulnerable with the motorcycle... also the variable speed cameras ...flickering ... and one reading the wrong speed limit compared to the others*  
*This is a smart motorway. A car was stationary in first lane but there were no warnings on the overhead signs.*
- Poor maintenance/presentation  
*Too much litter ...it poses extra hazards ...[And] 60 to 40 to 50, back to 40, national speed limit, then 40... in the space of 4 junctions ...increases risk by drivers looking constantly at the signs, their dash and surrounding traffic.*
- The weather  
*...I don't like that draining asphalt isn't used yet in a country where rainy days are the norm... can lead to ...accidents*
- Poor lighting/markings  
*Large puddles ...in the overtaking lane. Extremely dangerous as no street lighting, no drainage*
- ...and comments around others' accommodation of these issues  
*...confusing roadworks and accompanying signage ...especially when other drivers use intimidation to hurry you.*



# Poor driving perceived as common and many feel more could be done to address it... but equally, not all recognise their own potentially risky behaviour

## Experienced poor driving behaviour, South East %



All-regions average: 70%

More common in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire (70%, vs. 65% in Kent, Sussex, Surrey).

This is linked to the fact that, in all regions, poor driving is more common on motorways (76%, vs. 62% on A roads).

## Poor driving seen, South East %

	South East %	All regions
Middle lane hogging	47	48
Not signalling	37	39
Speeding	38	37
Tailgating	36	35
Undertaking	26	27
Veering between lanes	24	25
Pulling out dangerously	20	22
Using mobile phone	14	19
Very slow driving	16	17
Cutting me up	15	17
Sudden braking	12	13
Jumping traffic lights	1	2
Verbal / other abuse	1	1
Other	4	4

## Most blame other drivers themselves:

*People driving in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> lane, not overtaking anybody*

*There are always lots of lorries and it's annoying when they overtake each other*

## ...but for many, other authorities bear some responsibility

*...fine apart from the idiots who 'hog' the centre lane... this issue needs to be lawfully addressed!*

*Roundabout ...has two lanes but as they are unpainted traffic weaves around, causing danger*

*The variable speed limits changed frequently... adds danger as vehicles brake suddenly. The general standard of driving is appalling, and should be better policed.*

*I find the speed signs are not sensitive enough and people then ignore them as there appears to be no reason for [them]... dangerous but... common*

## Attitudes to risk South East %

- Agree
- Neither/nor
- Disagree



## Those willing to drive fast and take risks are a little more likely to be:

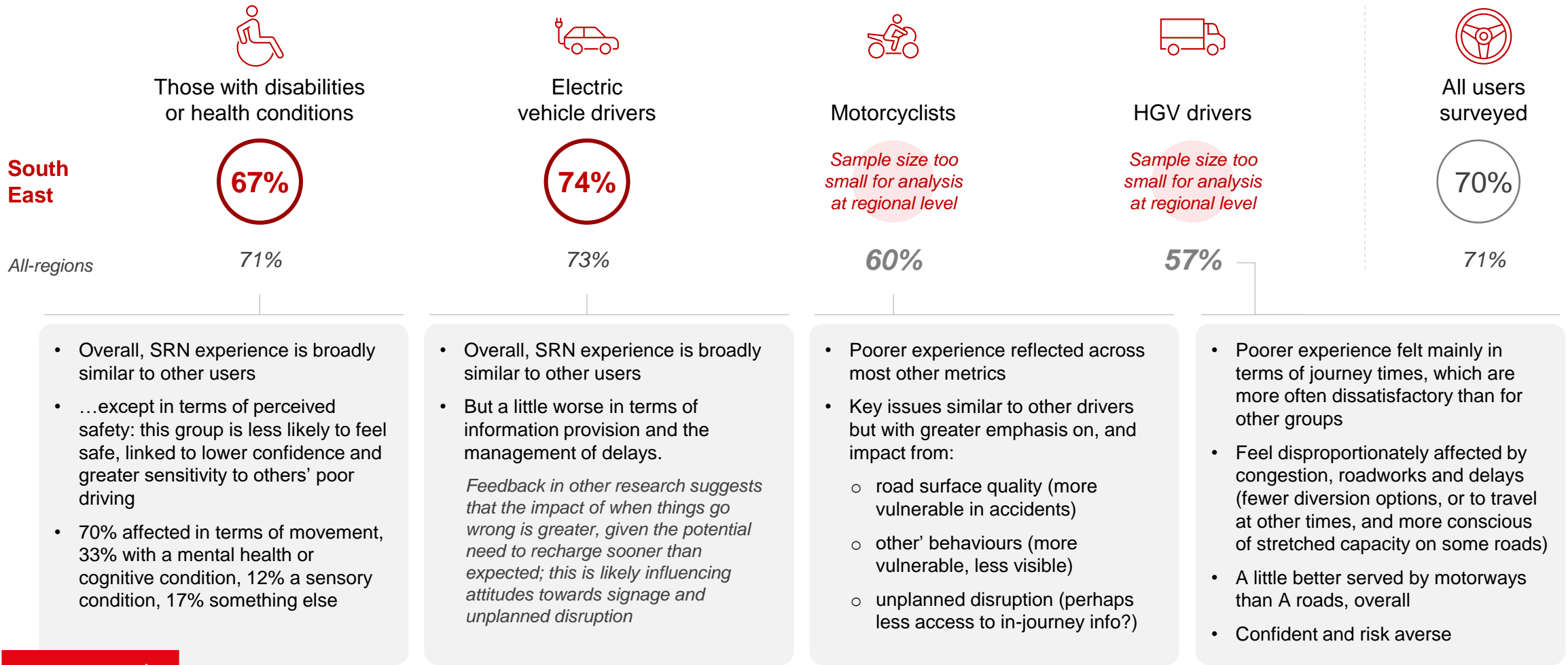
- Male, under 60
- More frequent drivers
- Car drivers (rather than vans, lorries, buses)
- In the South East and M25 region

Findings outside of grey boxes are at national level



Base: all SRN users surveyed Aug '22 – Jul '23 (9,091), South East (1,719). Experienced others' poor driving behaviour (6,153), South East (1,147)

# The experience of some smaller SRN user groups



Findings in grey boxes are at national level

Base: all answering overall satisfaction  
 All regions motorcyclists (285), HGVs (242), disabled drivers (728), EV drivers (628), all (9,055). South East disabled drivers (149), EV drivers (114), all (1,712)  
 Data for sub-groups based on two years (Aug '21-Jul '23). "All users" data is based on last 12 months only (Aug '22 – Jul '23), as throughout the majority of this report except where specified

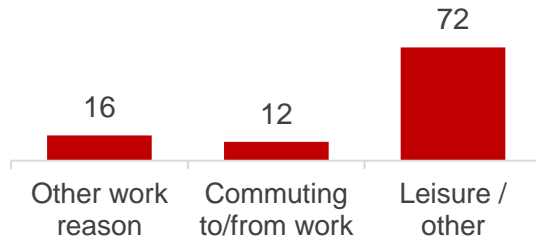
# Context for the results and reporting conventions



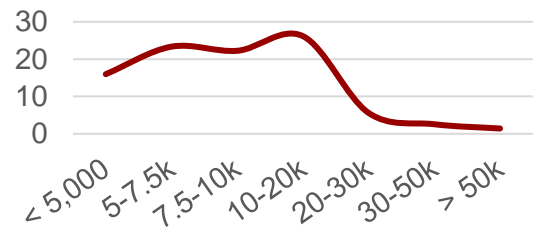
# Users, and how they use the SRN in the South East

## Driving context

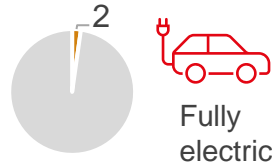
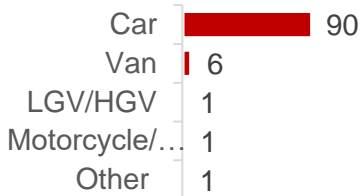
Journey purpose



Annual mileage (total)



Vehicle type



## The traveller(s)

Gender

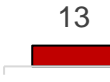


Male  
59

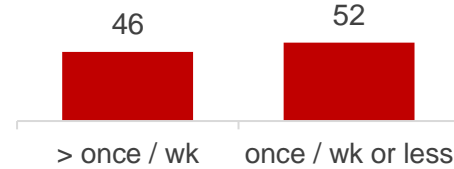


Female  
39

Age



Frequency on SRN



Any disability



Travelling party



43  
Alone



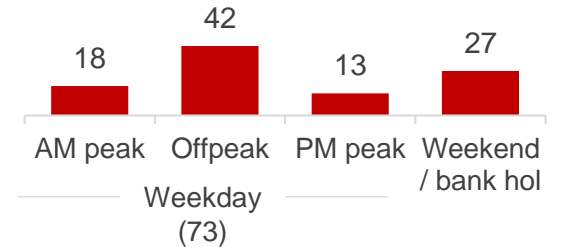
42  
Passengers (only adults)



15  
Passengers (inc. kids)

## Environment

Journey time

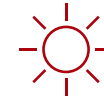


19% journeys took place (partly) after dark



46% journeys took place on major A roads (vs. 38% nationally)

Weather



40  
Sunny



36  
Overcast



15  
Light rain



8  
Bad weather

Figures shown are for the South East; patterns are very similar at all-regions level

Base: all SRN users surveyed, South East, Aug '22 – Jul '23 (1,719)

# Some principles in the reporting



## Time periods for reporting

Throughout this report, the majority of results show the feedback for journeys which took place between August 2022 to July 2023.

In a small number of instances (marked on the relevant pages) we have supplemented data from this 12-month period with feedback from before August 2022 in order to increase the sample size for reporting purposes.

## National and regional-level data

Some pages in this report show data at all-regional (within England) level, summarising a particular topic where the findings are relevant to all regions.

Findings on this page are at national level



These pages are indicated with this symbol.

In other cases, results are at regional level.



## Satisfaction and other ratings

Where figures are shown for 'good', 'poor', 'satisfied' ratings, etc., this is the percentage of users who gave an opinion. i.e. this excludes people for whom it was not relevant at all, and those who answered 'don't know'.










## 'Traffic lights'

Some pages in this report use 'traffic lights' to summarise how well or poorly journeys on the SRN are rated among a particular group of users, on a particular topic, compared to average.

In some cases, this gives an overview of the topic from across several specific measures within a theme, together with qualitative feedback from users on the same themes, in response to open-ended questions (for example, 'road condition' covers surface, lighting, markings, cats eyes, litter).

Colours used in these traffic lights therefore take an overview perspective, and constitute a judgement as informed by the survey data. Colours used can be interpreted as follows:

-  Well above average across all relevant measures (and this finding may be supported by notable positive qualitative feedback)
-  Above average across most relevant measures (and may be supported by some positive qualitative feedback)
-  A little above average across some relevant measures (but not all)
-  Largely in line with average (this includes where sample sizes are too small to be confident that the result is genuinely different from average)
-  A little below average across some relevant measures (but not all)
-  Below average across most relevant measures (and may be supported by some negative qualitative feedback)
-  Well below average across all relevant measures (and may be supported by notable negative qualitative feedback)

# Contact

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Passengers' Council