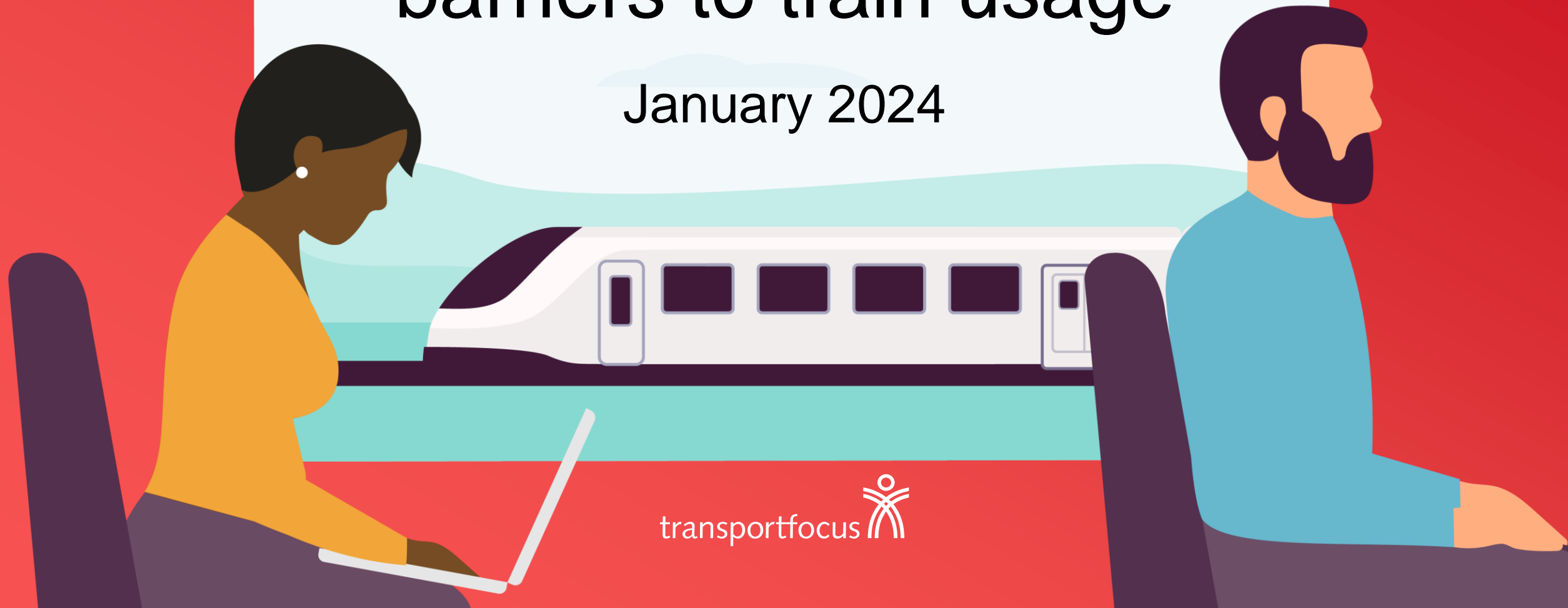


Motivations and barriers to train usage

January 2024



Introduction



This report explores the motivations and barriers to rail usage. We asked current, lapsed and non-users of public transport about their travel by train. We asked how this has changed in the last year, what is driving changes in usage, and what the key barriers are which mean they don't travel by train more, or at all.

Transport Focus undertook this research in March 2023. We can compare some of the findings with a previous survey, undertaken in March 2022, which was focused on how train usage had changed since the pandemic.

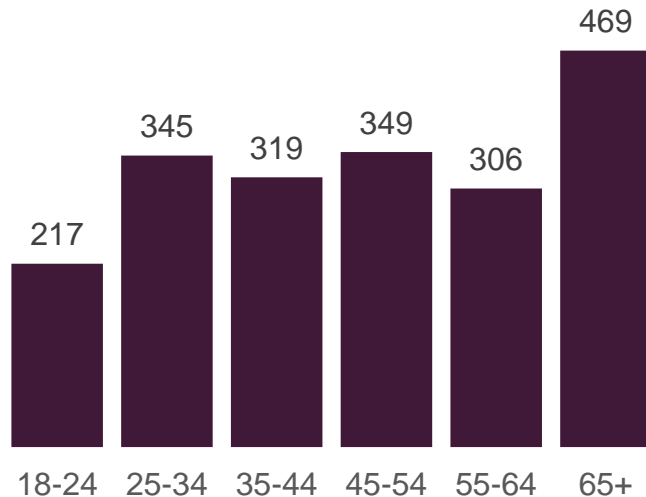
We hope this report provides the rail industry with useful insight on the opportunities and challenges the railway faces to attract people to choose rail travel for more journeys.

Survey method and sample breakdown

2006 online interviews using Yonder Consulting weekly omnibus.

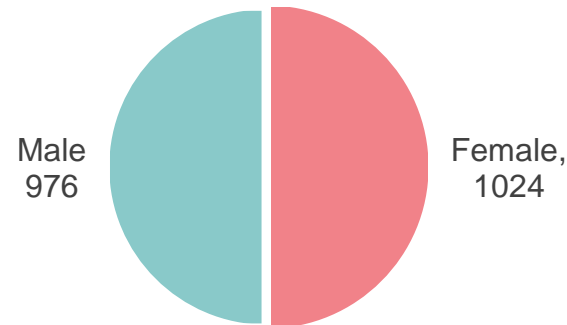
Total: 2,006

Sample size by age



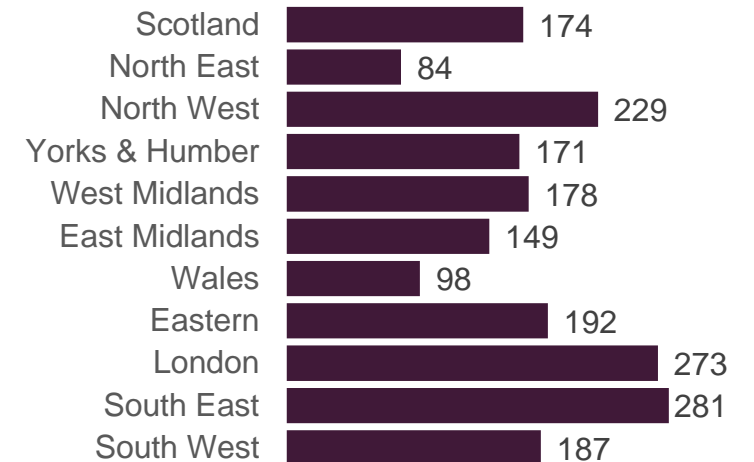
Nationally representative of population of Great Britain* – not all respondents are passengers on public transport.

Sample size by gender



Fieldwork took place 27-28 March 2023.

Sample size by region



*Nationally representative according to age, gender, region, social grade and ethnicity

Key findings

1

Two fifths in our survey use the train at least quarterly. There are fewer non-users than last year.

2

Covid prompted a change in usage of public transport that continues to have a lasting effect for some - over half of lapsed users last used the train before the pandemic began in March 2020.

3

Nearly a fifth of current users have increased their train usage in the last year. More commuting/outings and increased fuel costs have been motivations to use the train more.

4

A quarter have decreased their train usage in the last year. Making fewer journeys, rail strikes and the increased cost of rail travel have contributed to this.

5

Around a third of current users would consider using the train more frequently in future. Better value for money would be the biggest motivator for this, followed by improved reliability and fewer rail strikes.

6

Around a quarter of lapsed train users are likely to consider using the train again. Better value fares, reliability, and closer proximity to a station would encourage this.

7

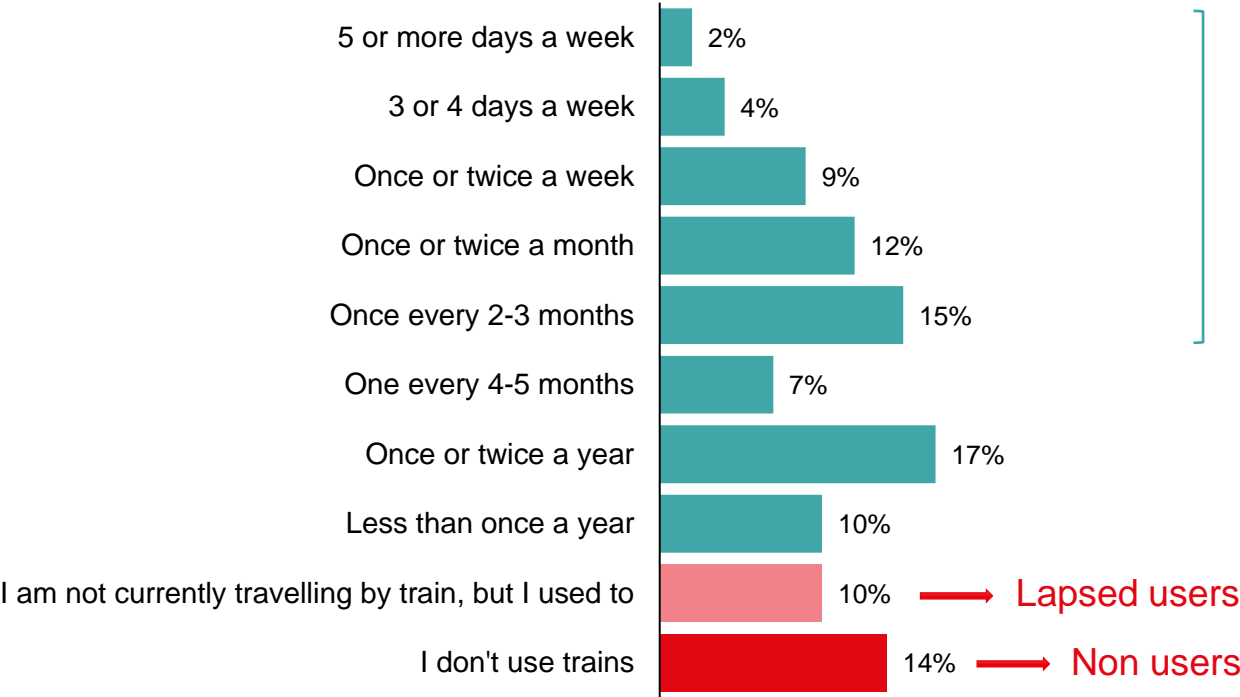
The majority of non-users don't use the train because they prefer to travel by car; cost is also a factor. Better value fares would be the biggest driver for non-users to use the train.

Current use of trains



Two fifths of people in the survey use the train at least quarterly

How often do you currently travel by train?



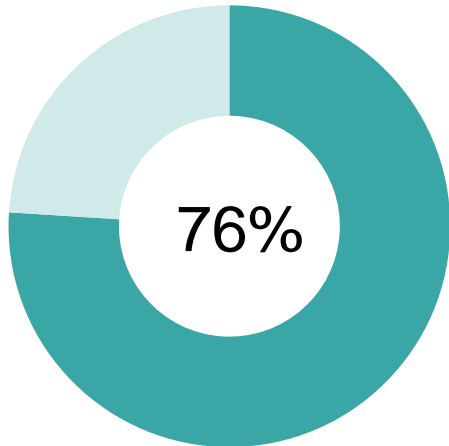
42% At least quarterly

In 2022 twice as many people said they don't use trains

Base: All respondents (2006)

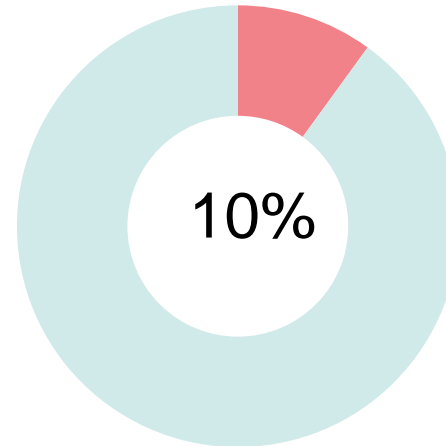
Current users make up three quarters of respondents

Current users



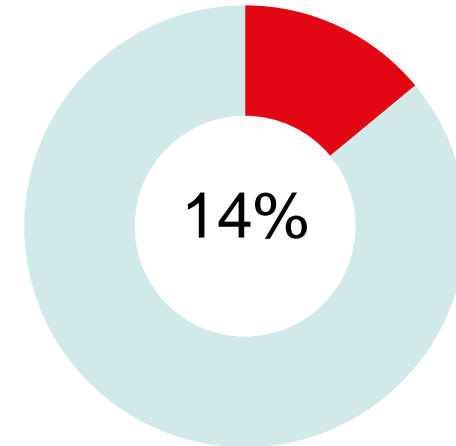
All who didn't say "I am not currently travelling by train, but used to" or "I don't use trains"

Lapsed users



All who said "I am not currently travelling by train, but used to"

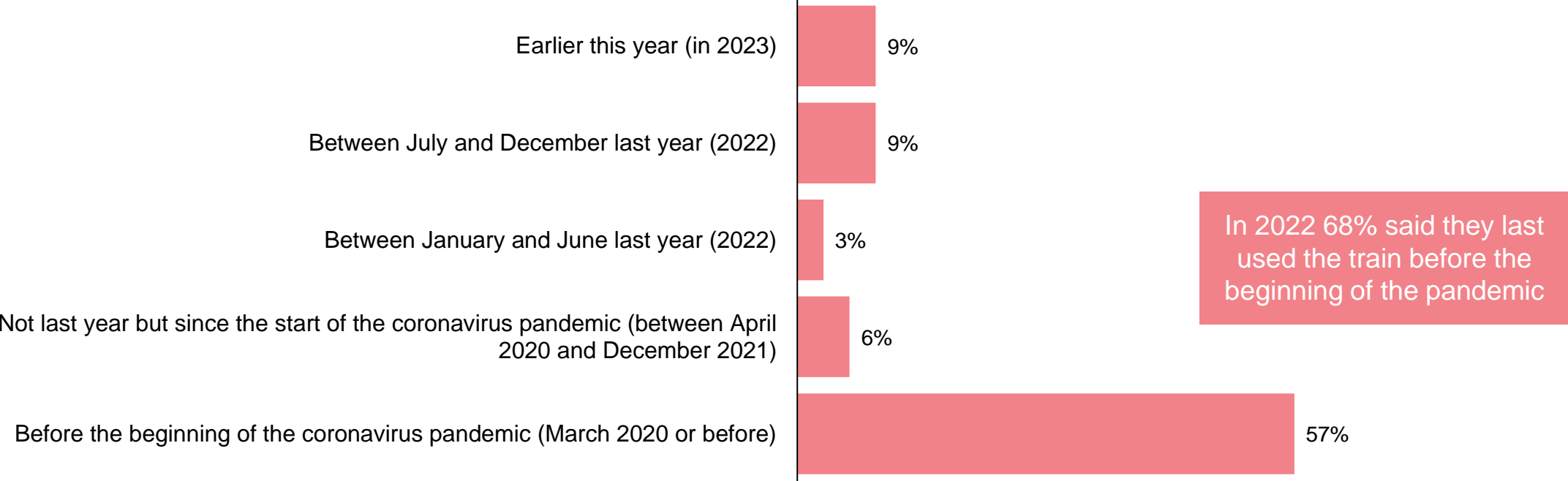
Non users



All who said "I don't use trains"

Over half of lapsed users last used the train before the pandemic began in March 2020

Approximately, when did you last travel by train?



Base: All those who are not currently using trains, but used to (199)

Covid prompted a change in usage of public transport that continued to have a lasting effect for some

“Not used public transport since March 2020 and start of Covid pandemic. Prior to Covid I would use buses/trains infrequently and mainly during Christmas to get home leaving the car so I could have a drink.”

Male, 55, Yorkshire & Humberside

“Since Covid, don’t go out much at all, even using my car less, was supposed to travel to a funeral by train in October last year...but the train was cancelled while we were sat on the platform. Nothing could encourage me to use a train at the moment after that upset”

Male, 28, South West

“Trains have been a nightmare since after Covid with strikes and rail works, and trains being cancelled last minute.”

Female, 31, Eastern

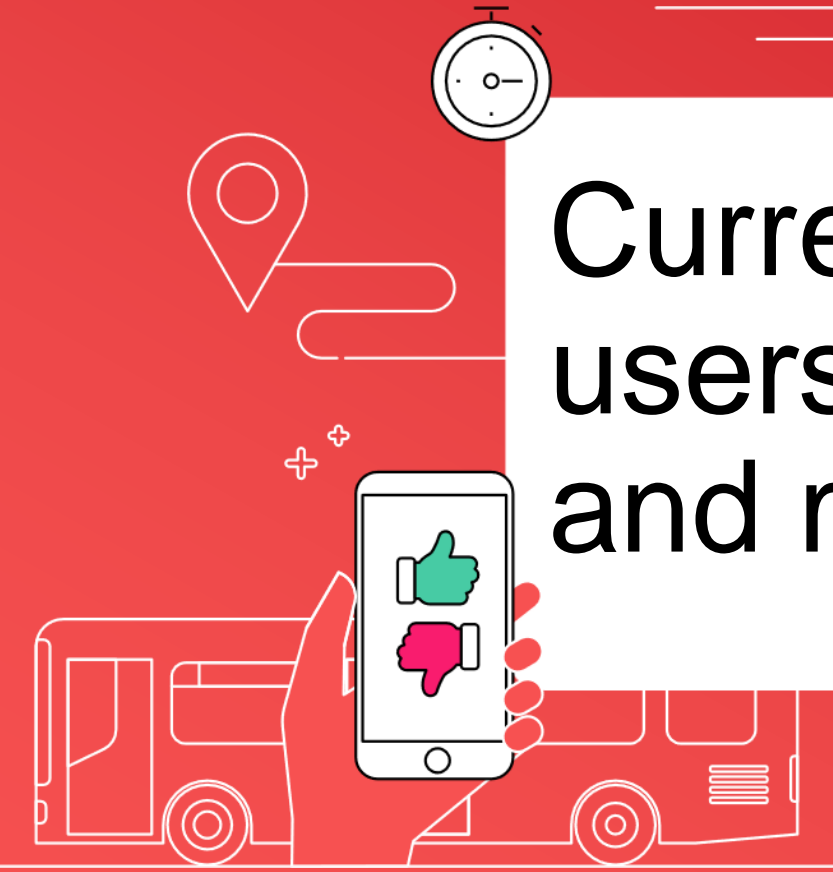
“There are two areas of concern for me, Covid and protection from catching it and the increase in the cost of living which my pension hasn’t kept pace with.”

Male, 73, West Midlands


“Using less when Covid started, then not feeling safe on transport due to crowding and mental health problems so I use my car more..”

Female, 50, South East





Current train
users' behaviours
and motivations

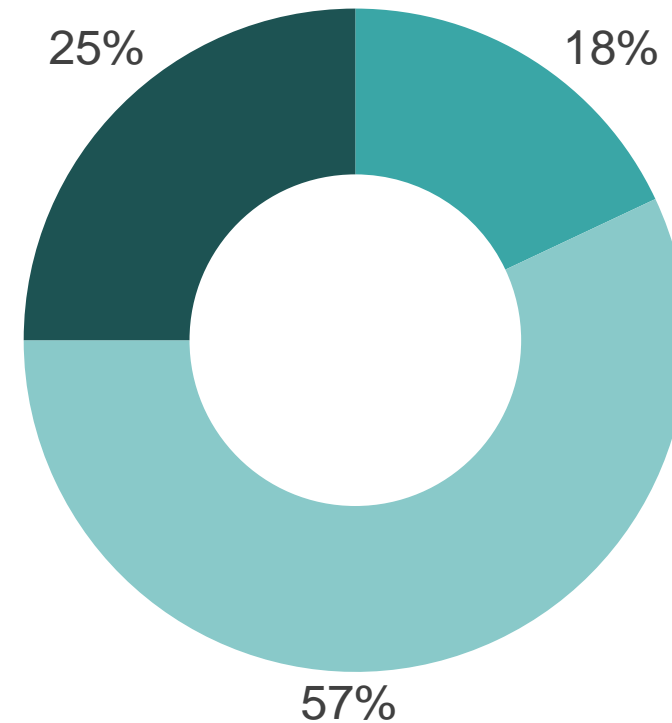


Nearly a fifth of current users have increased their train usage in the last year, while a quarter have decreased their usage

Thinking about how you used trains a year ago and how you use them now. Would you say....?

Last year, 37% said they used trains less often than they did before the pandemic

- More often than I did previously
- Frequency has not changed
- Less often than I did previously



Base: All those who are currently using trains (2023 = 1528)

Increased commuting/outings and increased fuel costs are motivations to use the train more

"I have been using trains more frequently socially as I've been going to more places."

Female, 38, Scotland

"I have taken the train more often due to rise in fuel costs so its cheaper to get a train to my hometown."

Male, 19, Yorkshire & Humberside

"Due to working from home didn't use public transport for nearly two years and started cycling, after that using train twice a week."

Female, 30, South East

"Have received a senior bus pass for free travel and a senior railcard for reduced fares so using the bus/train more often."

Male, 67, North West

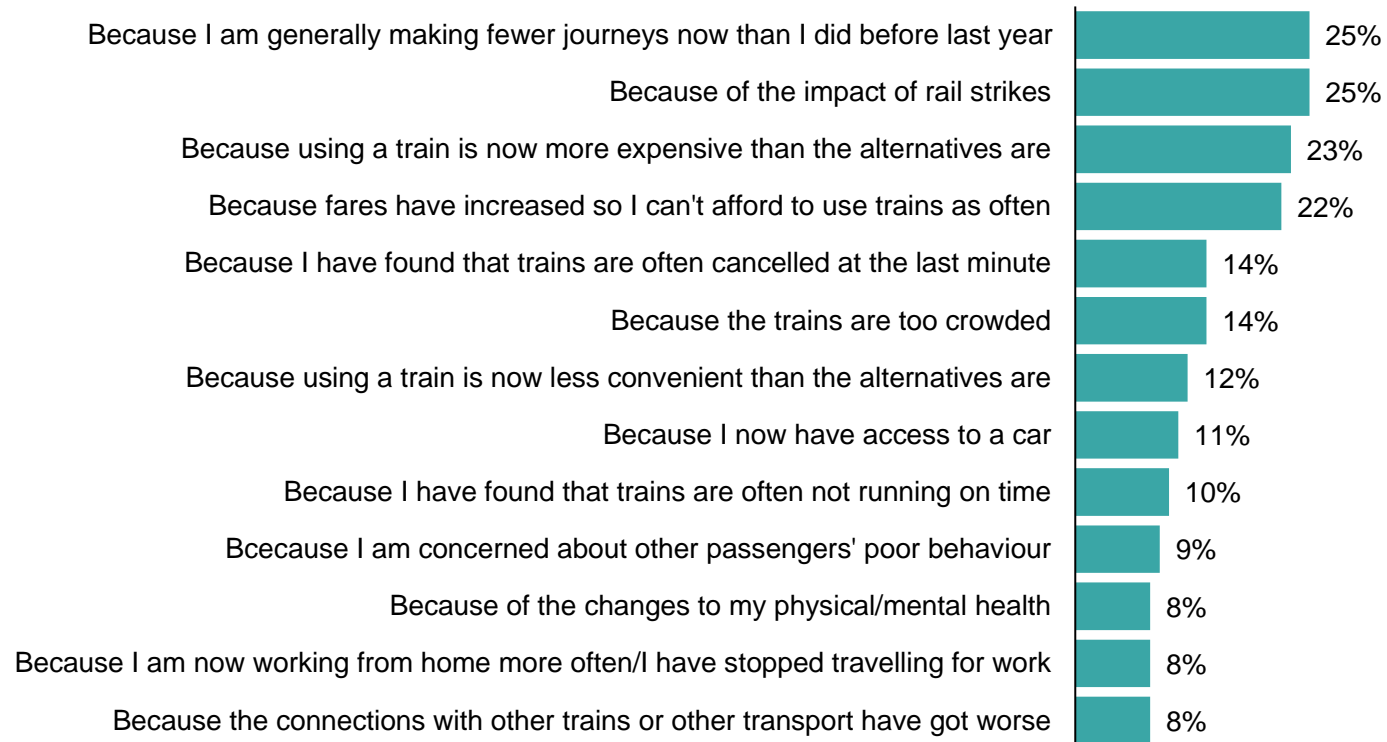


"I am now doing a weekly commute by train & get the bus back from the train station in these instances."

Male, 31, Eastern

Making fewer journeys, rail strikes and the increased cost of rail travel have all been reasons to use the train less often

Why are you using trains less often than you did a year ago? (Top 13)



Base: All those who are currently using trains less frequently than they did last year (375)

In their own words...

“

I would use trains more often if they were less expensive and weren't going on strike every five minutes

Female, 72, West Midlands

”

“

The prices are rising so high now that I cannot afford to take many train journeys and just travel mainly now when I need to make travel connections, eg, airport. In addition, the strikes are having an impact on the number of services running making it off putting.

Male, 51, East Midlands

”

“

You cannot trust the trains to run on time or even run at all - added to that they increase the prices for a service that I do not trust

Male, 64, Eastern

”

“

The train prices seem to have risen considerably. There also are less direct trains from my place of study and where I'm living for university to my parents house so I tend to visit less...

Female, 21, North West

”

For some, a decline in health or concern over accessibility have prompted reduced usage



Not in the last year but my use of public transport changed when I became ill and disabled because I feel unsafe and feel that public transport isn't tailored for people like me

Female, 56, London



Disabilities do not allow access. I have a mobility car which is suitable to my needs. It is parked in rear of garden and easy access to and from. My health is getting worse as well.

Male, 68, West Midlands



I have not been able to use the train to visit my son in Worthing, since strikes started - about two years - as I cannot risk being stranded without the disabled help formerly reliably offered by the two rail companies involved. My mobility now involves a walking aid as well as wheeled luggage.

Female, 85, Eastern



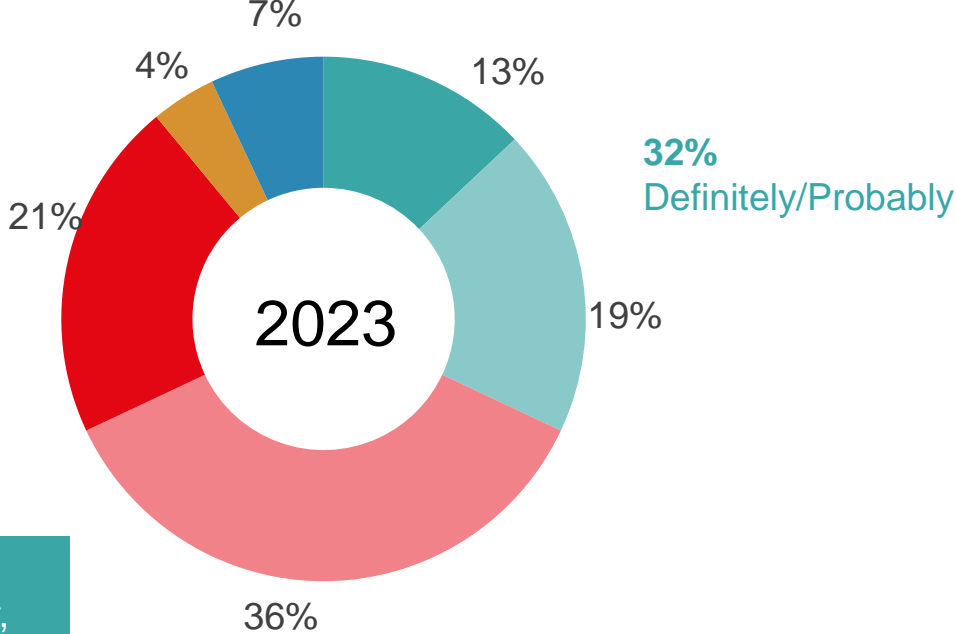
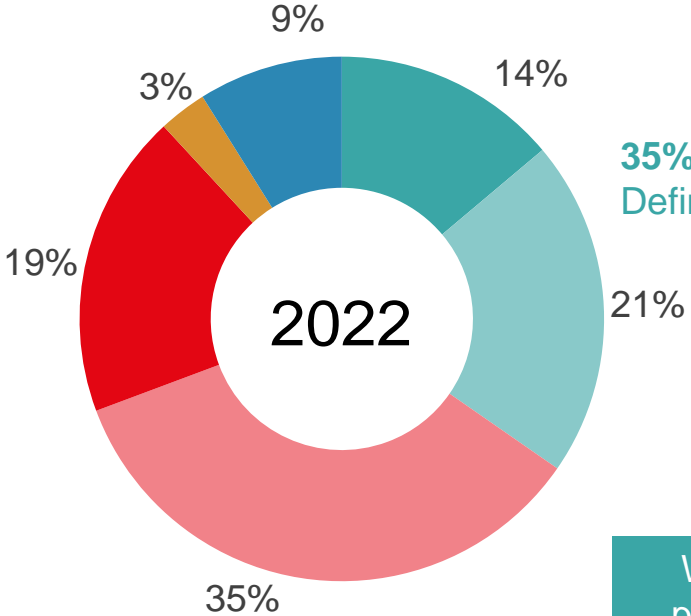
As my wife is now disabled, it is much more difficult to use public transport and we have resorted to leasing a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

Male, 53, Scotland



Around a third of current users would consider using the train more frequently in future

Would you consider using trains more frequently in future?



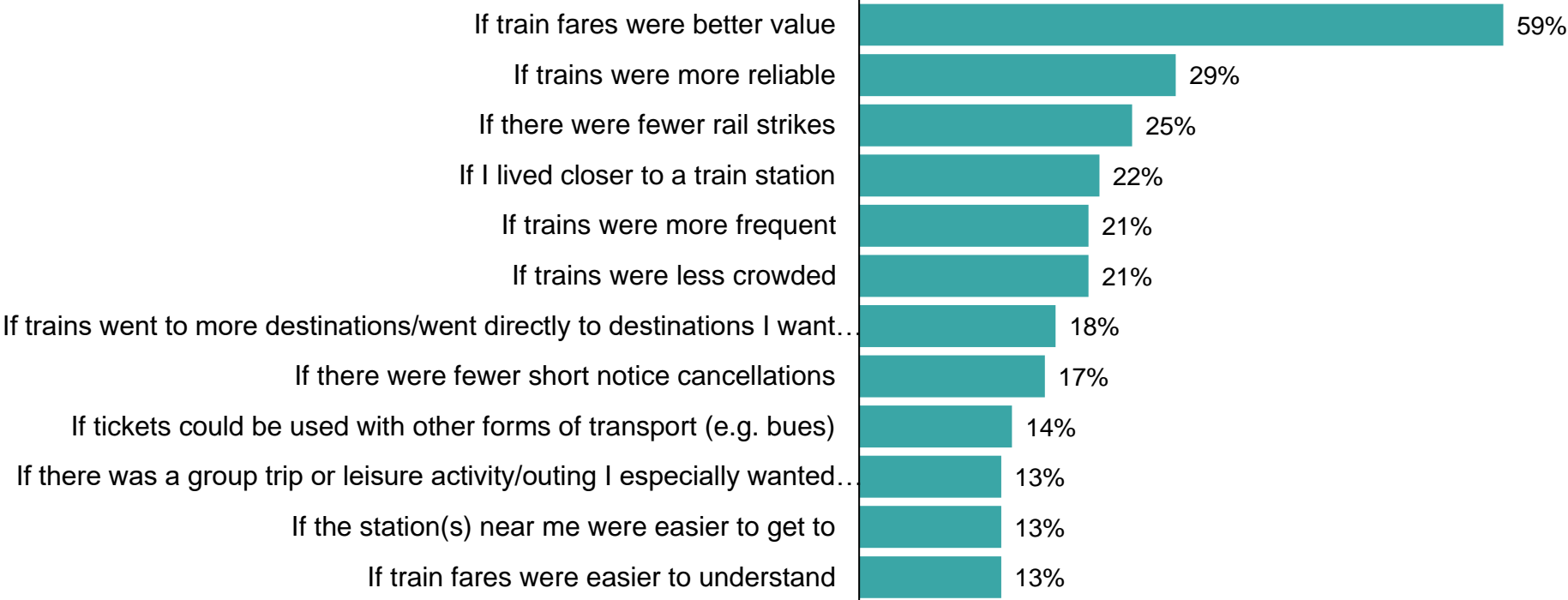
While this is a similar proportion to last year, more people are using the train this year, providing a bigger pool who would consider using it more

- Definitely
- Probably
- Possibly
- Probably not
- Definitely not
- I don't know

Base: All those who are currently using trains (2022 = 1056) (2023 = 1528)

Better value for money would be the biggest motivator to use the train more, followed by improved reliability and fewer rail strikes

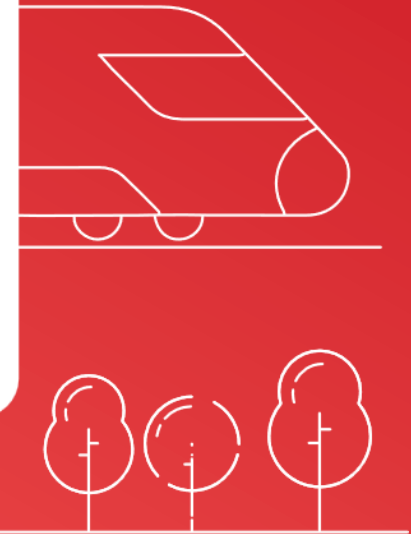
Which five reasons would most encourage you to use trains more in future? (Top 12)



Base: All who would consider using trains more (1048)

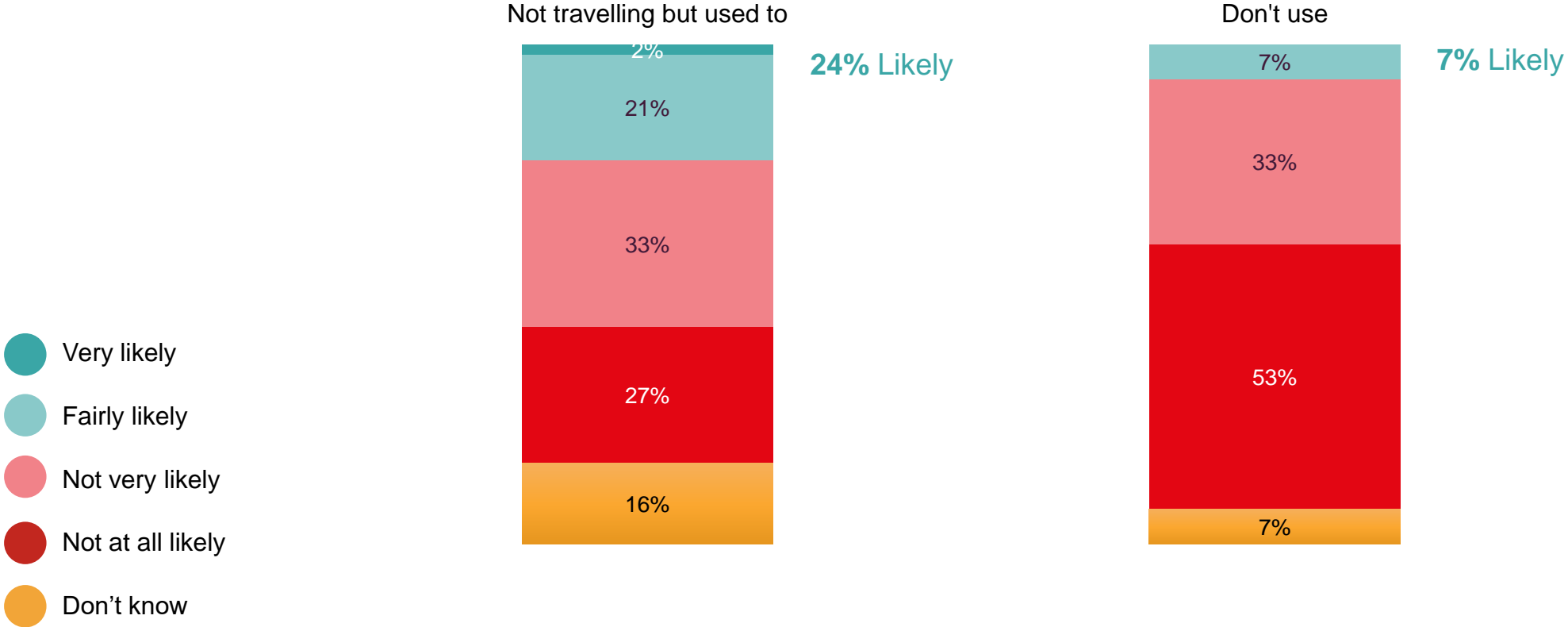


Lapsed and non users' barriers and motivations



Around a quarter of lapsed train users are likely to consider using the train again

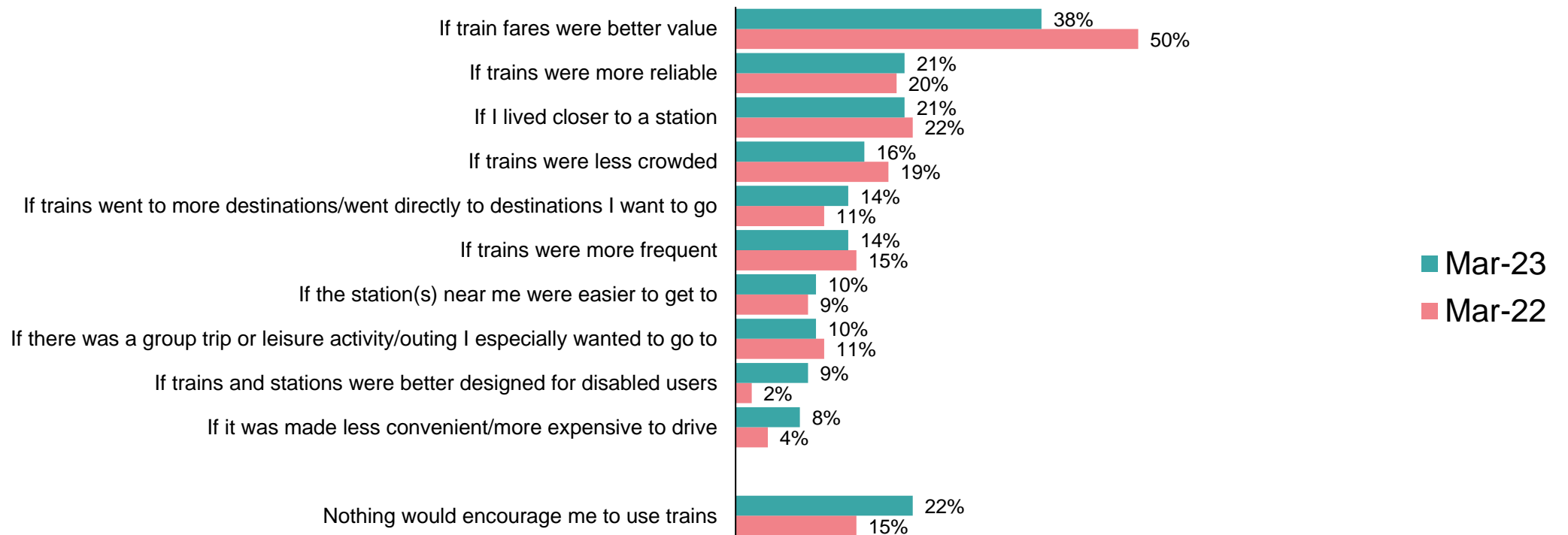
How likely is it that you will use trains in the future?



Base: Those who are not currently using trains, but used to (199) and those who do not use trains (278).

Better value fares, reliability, and closer proximity to a station would encourage lapsed users to use the train once again

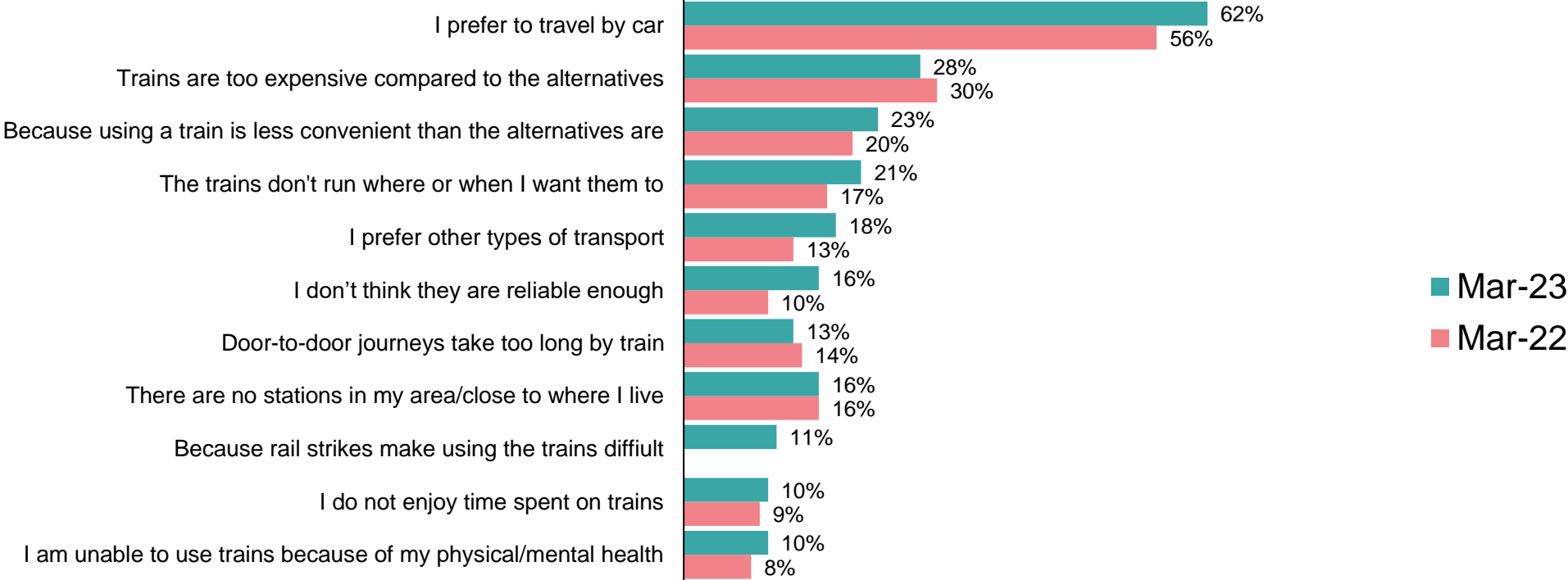
Which five of the following would encourage you to use your local train service once again? (Top 9 reasons shown)



Base: All those who do not use trains, but used to (2022 = 334) (2023=150).

The majority of non-users don't use the train because they prefer to travel by car. Cost is also a factor

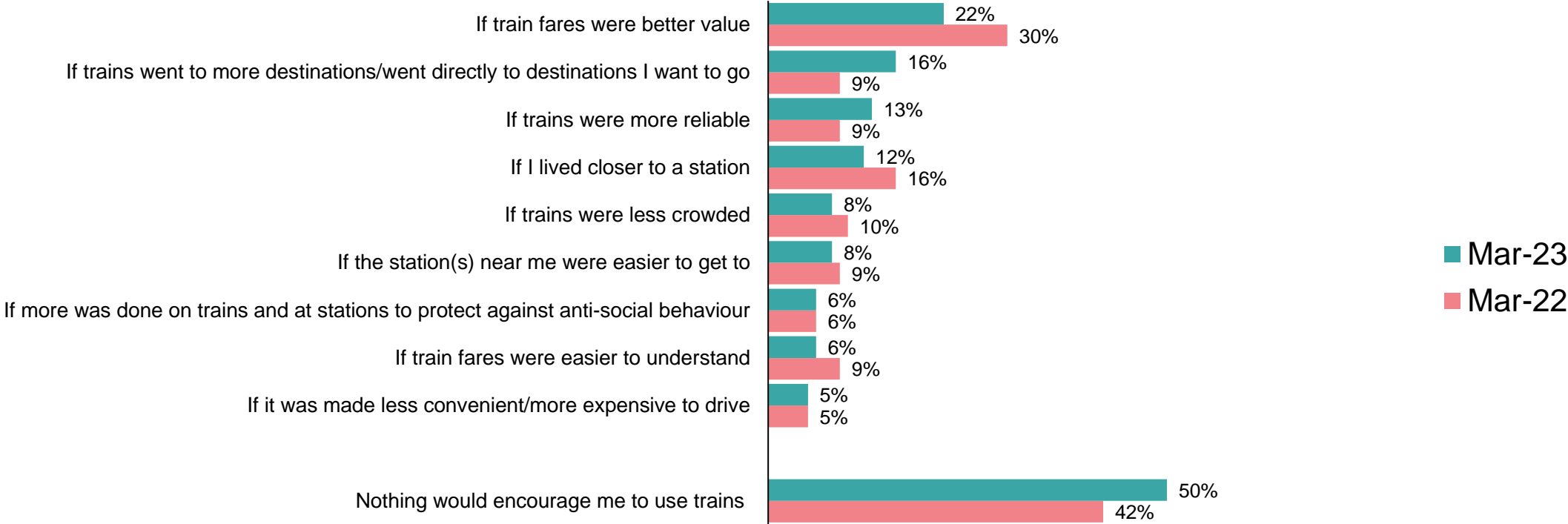
Which of the following reasons best describes why you do not use trains? (Top 12)



Base: All those who do not use trains (2022 = 628) (2023=279).

Better value fares would be the biggest driver for non-users to use the train

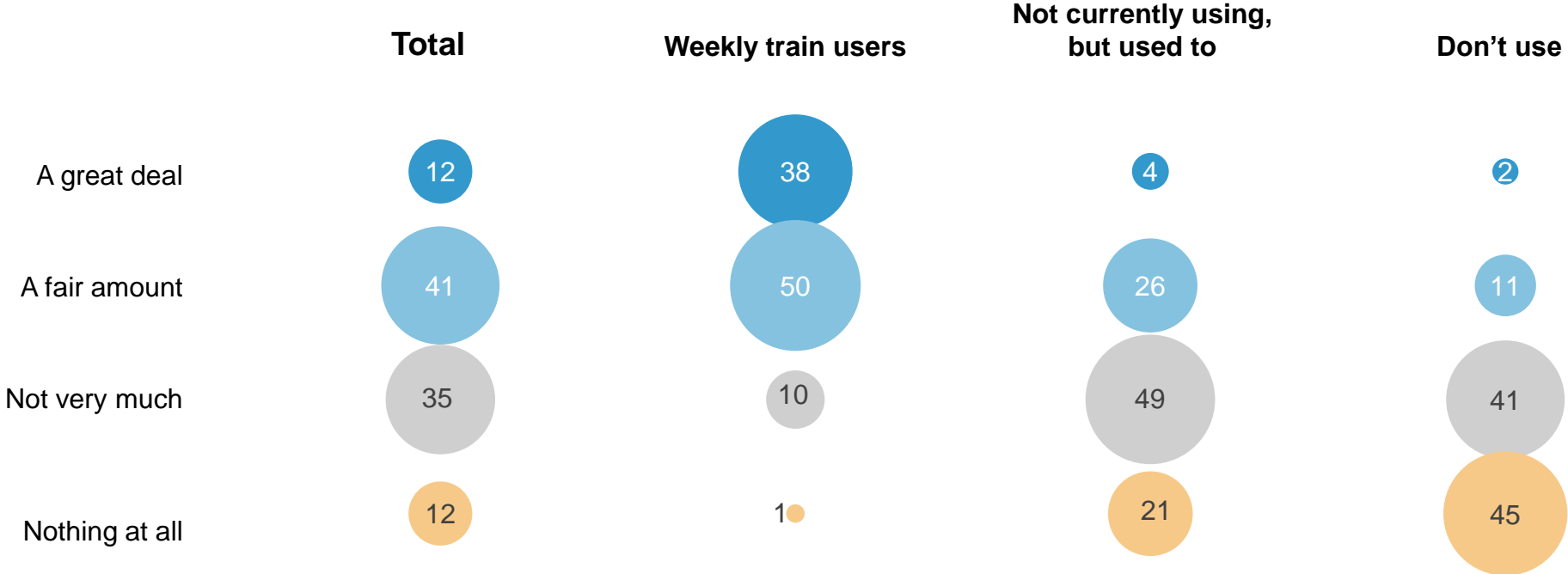
Which five of the following would encourage you to use your local train service? (Top 12)



Base: All those who do not use trains (2022 = 618) (2023=279).

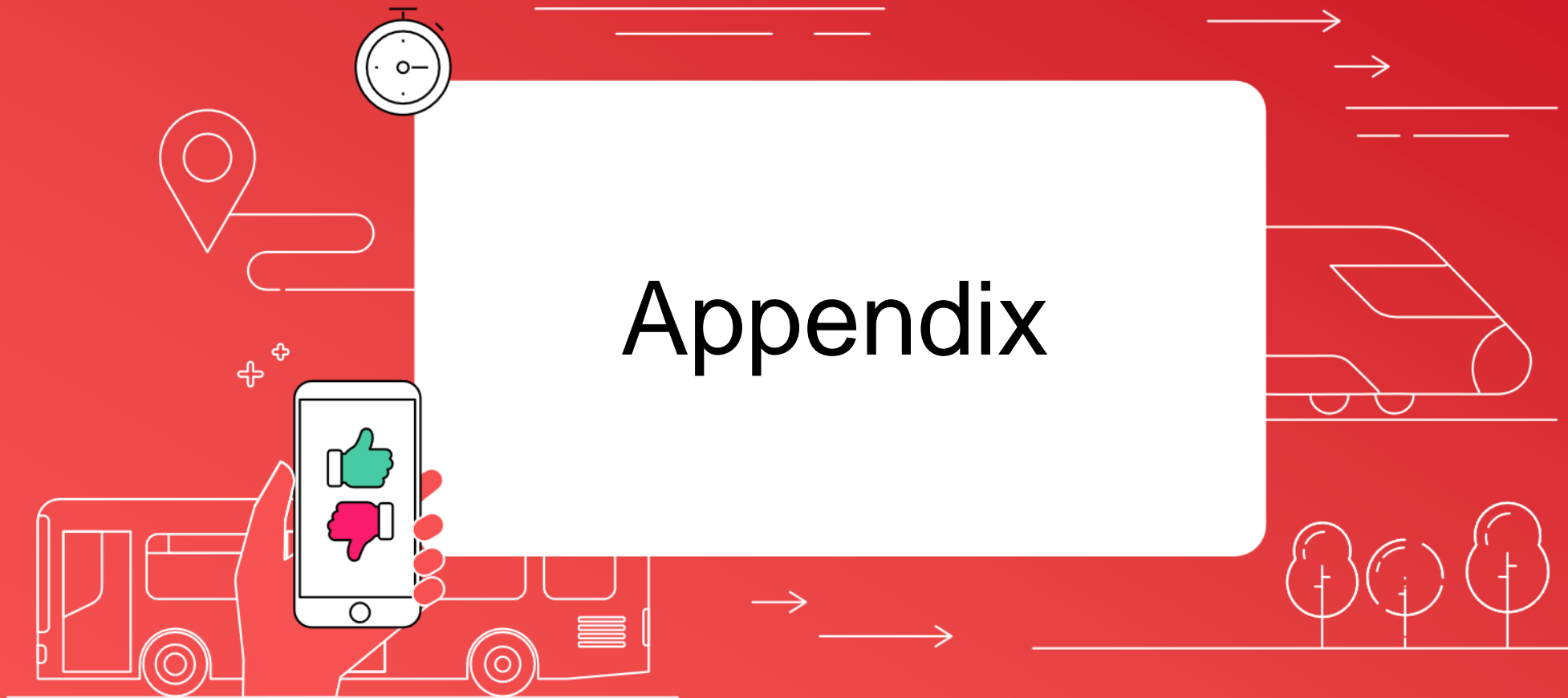
The majority of non users have significant gaps in their knowledge about train services

How much overall would you say you know about your local train service?



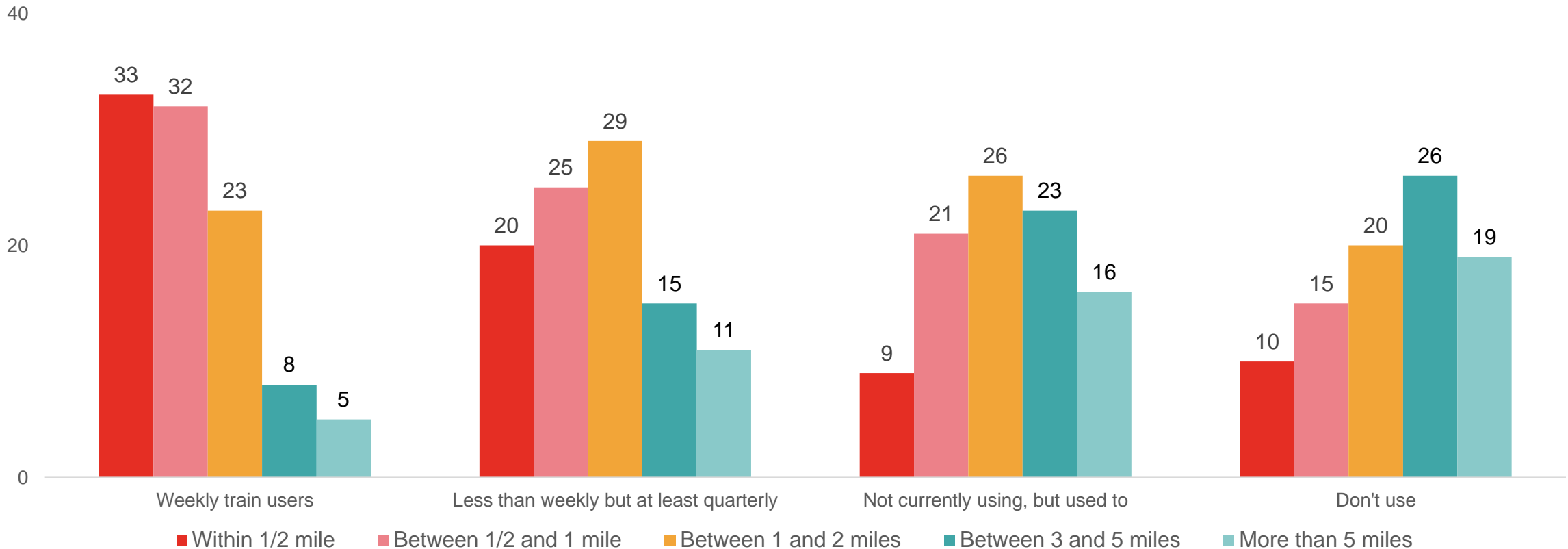
Base: All respondents (2006) Weekly train users (290) Not currently using but used to (199) Don't use (279).

Appendix



The majority of frequent train users live close to a station

Approximately how close is your nearest train station?



Base: Weekly train users (290) Less than weekly but at least quarterly (538) Not currently using, but used to (199) Don't use (279)

A small number of train users hold a free travel pass

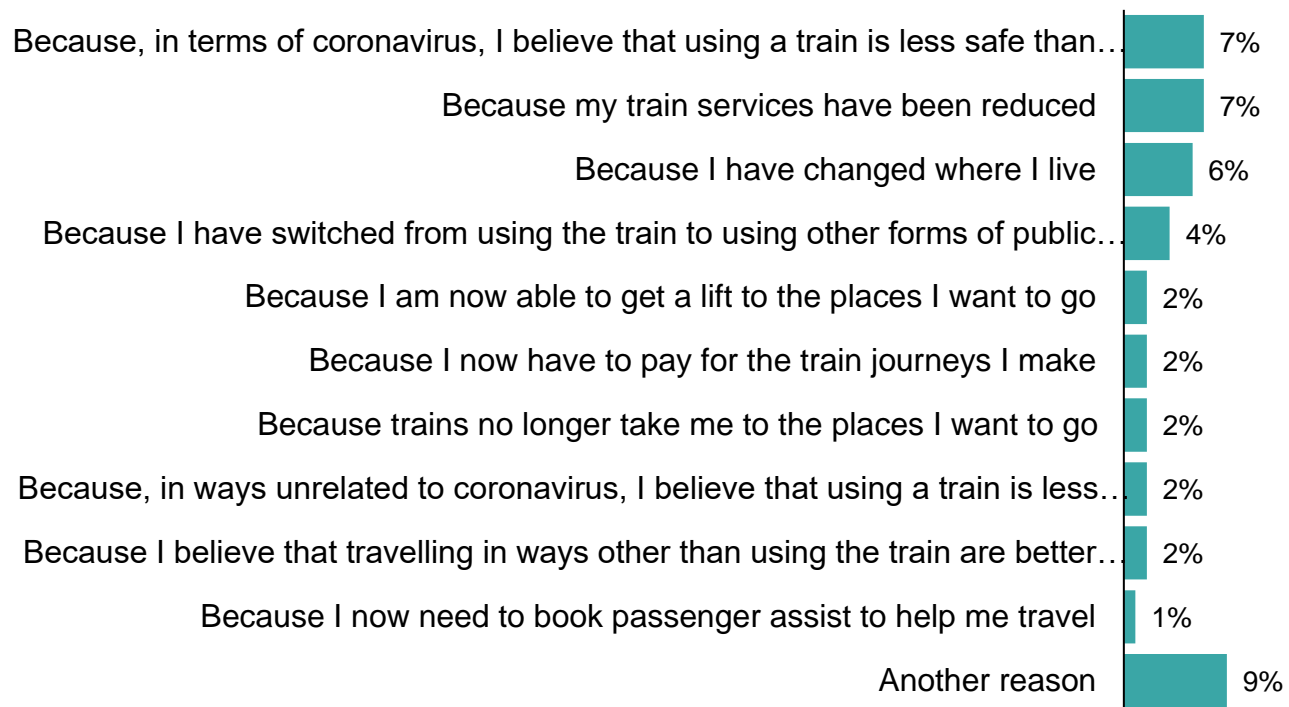
Do you currently have a pass which allows you to travel for free on local train services?



Base: All respondents (2006) Weekly train users (290) Not currently using, but used to (199) Don't use (279)

Why are you using trains less often? Among current users – Bottom 11

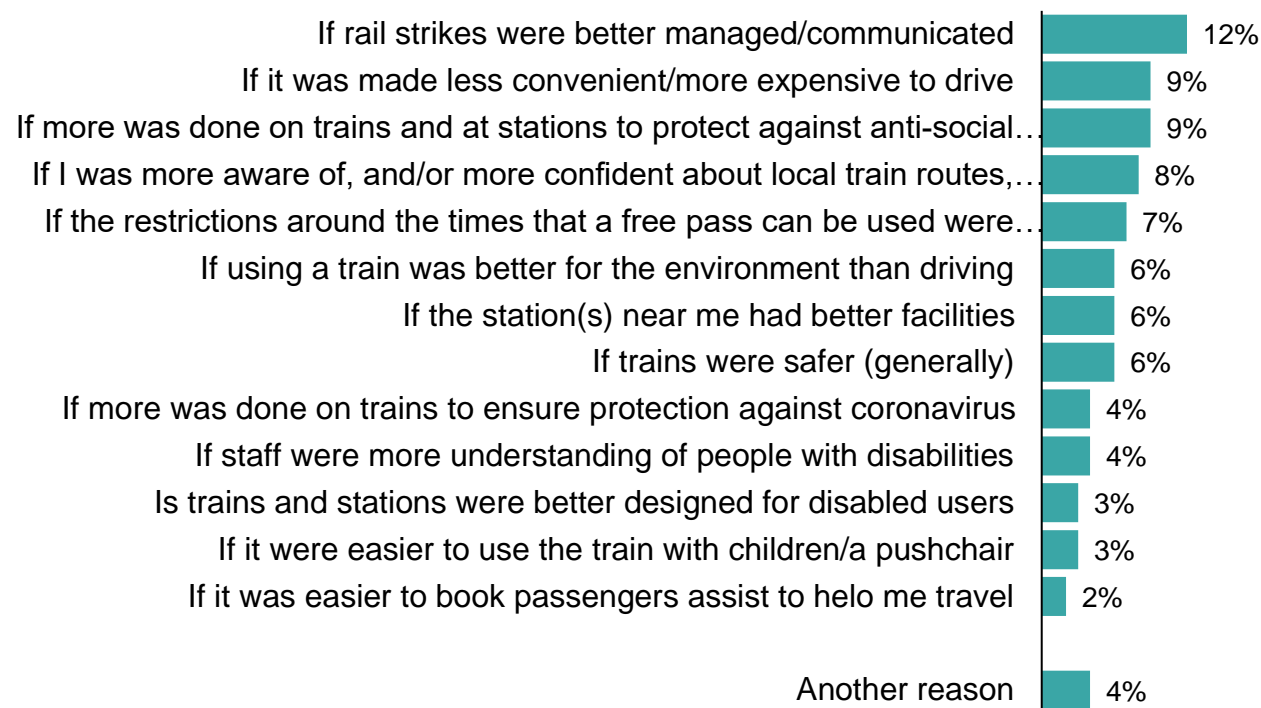
Why are you using trains **less** often than you did a year ago? (Bottom 11)



Base: All those who are currently using trains less frequently than they did a year ago (381)

What would encourage you to use trains more in future? Among current users – Bottom 14

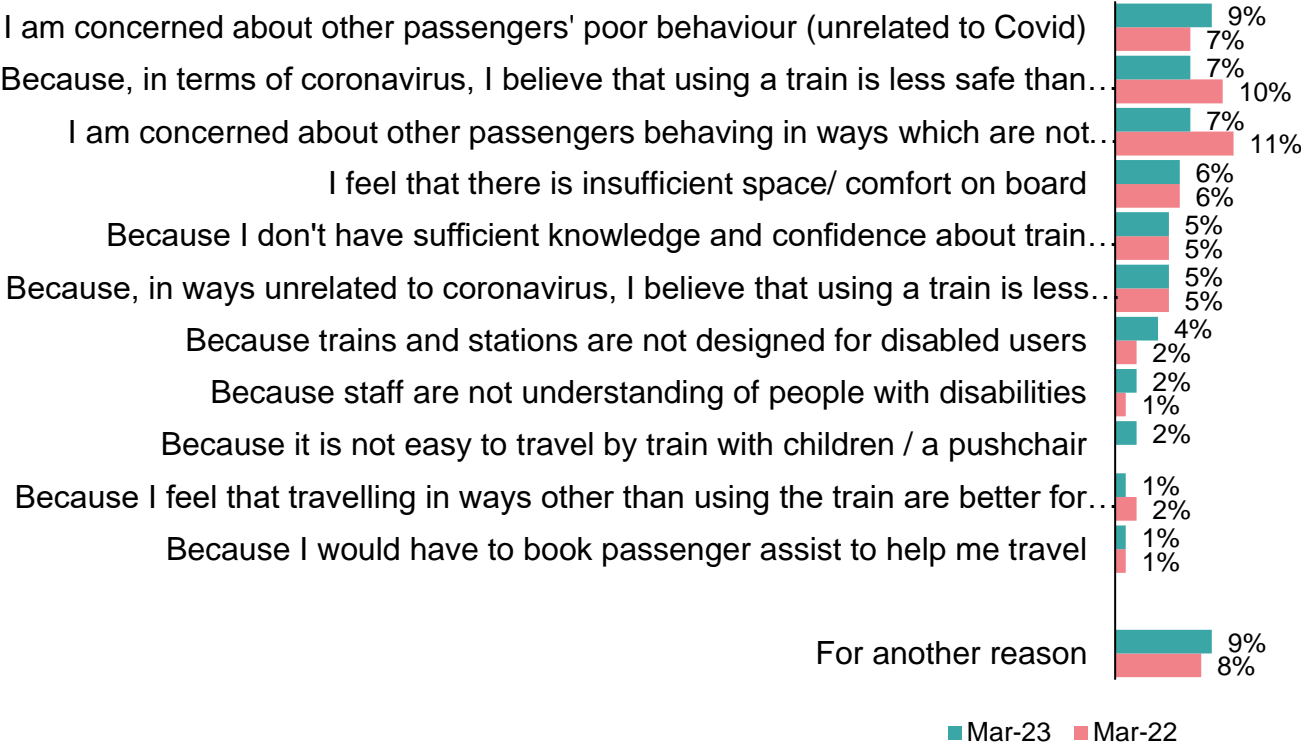
Which five reasons would most encourage you to use trains more in future? (Bottom 14)



Base: All those who are currently using trains less frequently than they did a year ago (381)

Which of the following reasons best describes why you do not use local trains? Among non users – Bottom 11

Which of the following reasons best describes why you do not use trains? (Bottom 11)



Base: All those who do not use trains (2022 = 628 (2023=295).

Contact

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