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Motability

Transport needs for disabled people

Full report

britainthinks.com

Contents

01

Background and methodology

02

Key findings

03

Experiences of travel and transport

04

Challenges using transport

05

Impact of challenges using transport

06

Changes to transport

07

Conclusions

08

Appendix

01 Background and methodology

The overall aim of the research was to understand disabled people's experiences of travel and the key challenges they face

Motability commissioned BritainThinks to conduct research to provide insight into the transport needs, challenges and expectations of disabled people, both now and in the future. Objectives were identified as:

- 1 To map current usage of different forms of transport and mobility services.**
- 2 To explore the extent to which needs are being met by current services and initiatives, and where there are gaps.**
- 3 To identify the key transport challenges people encounter and the impacts of these challenges.**
- 4 To explore expectations around transport and mobility, and what informs these expectations.**
- 5 To understand what people with disabilities need and want most in the future with respect to their personal mobility.**

We conducted an iterative, three-stage research programme



We consulted a total 47 disabled people across the qualitative research

Across this sample, 42 participants took part in an online community and 5 participants took part in teledepth interviews (each split across two sessions).

		Sample
Disability/ impairment type	Physical impairment	38
	Visual impairment	9
	Hearing impairment	9
	Mental health condition	8
	Social or behavioural difficulty	3
	Difficulty with memory	2
	Learning difficulty	3
	A long-term health condition	5
Wheelchair user	Yes	21
Motability scheme user	Yes	16



We surveyed two audiences in the quantitative research, which are analysed separately in this report

Wider disabled community (n=1,504)

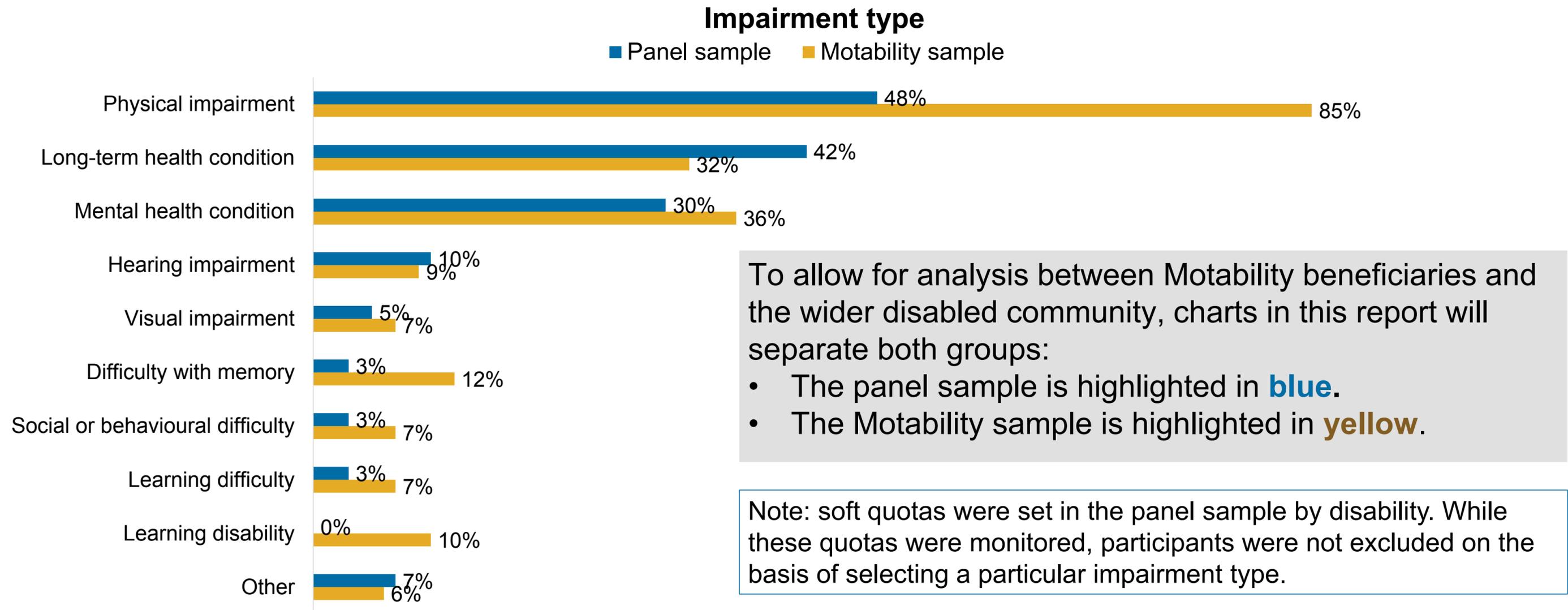
- Panel sample: disabled people (100%)
- Gender: male (48%), female (52%)
- Age: 18-34 (13%), 35-54 (26%), 55+ (61%)
- Region: urban (25%), suburban (50%), rural (24%)
- Employment: working (36%), student (3%), retired (39%), not working (21%), other (1%)
- Soft quotas were set in this sample to achieve a spread across gender and disability. While these figures are not meant to be representative, they are reflective of the wider disabled population in the UK.

Motability scheme beneficiaries (n=2,877)

- Motability sample: disabled people (84%), appointees (16%)
- Gender: male (49%), female (51%)
- Age: 18-34 (20%), 35-54 (40%), 55+ (40%)
- Region: urban (20%), suburban (50%), rural (27%), other/don't know (3%)
- Employment: working (7%), student (4%), retired (15%), not working (72%), other/don't know (2%)

Additional detail on the demographic breakdown of each audience can be found in the appendix.

Survey respondents represent a spread with regards to disability type. Motability beneficiaries weight towards physical impairments.



Reporting conventions

- Throughout this report, we:
 - Lead with reporting on **the panel sample**, as the primary aim of this research is to examine the views of the wider disabled community.
 - Report any key differences compared with the sample of **Motability customers**.
 - Indicate where additional data has come from as follows:

Statistically significant **sub-group differences found in the main panel sample only** (e.g. disability type, aids used, region, etc.) are pulled out in grey boxes.

Differences for **Motability sub-group analysis** are pulled out in yellow boxes (or highlighted yellow on comparison charts).

Findings from the **qualitative online community or telephone interviews** are highlighted in light blue boxes.

02 Key findings

Key findings (1)

1

Survey respondents report high use of private and public transport. However, experiences of public transport are more likely to be negative than those of private transport.

While 3 in 4 participants use the bus (76%) and/or train (75%), more than 1 in 10 report having negative experiences on the bus (18%) and/or train (16%). This compares with 1% who report negative experiences in private vehicles, despite similar usage rates (car driven by you 73%, driven by someone else 90%).

2

There is low awareness of existing travel initiatives to support disabled people (with the exception of the Motability Scheme).

Most respondents were not aware of Passenger Assist, the NHS voucher scheme for wheelchairs, Taxi Card or Turn Up and Go. By contrast, the majority (85%) say they are aware of the Motability scheme.

3

Close to half (44%) of disabled people find travelling at peak times challenging.

The qualitative research found that issues travelling during peak times, such as crowds and unreliable transport, often point to larger issues of inaccessible infrastructure (e.g. will I be able to access the bus, get a seat on the train etc.) and poor information provision (e.g. will I be able to tell when my train is due, etc.).

Key findings (2)

4

Challenges related to poor accessibility, lack of information and complex journeys have the biggest impact on experiences of travel. Attitudes of other passengers and staff also have an impact – but to a lesser degree.

However, these elements are often linked, for example if a bus driver doesn't enforce priority seating or if other passengers make a user feel embarrassed or judged, this can make a form of transport inaccessible.

5

Challenges related to transport have wide ranging impacts. This includes a loss of independence (experienced by 28% of respondents) and not making certain journeys (27%).

Further, 7% of survey respondents say they have not taken a job, had to stop working, or had to make changes to their work patterns as a direct result of challenges with transport.

6

Expectations for the future are low. Two fifths (39%) of survey respondents do not think public transport will ever improve for disabled people.

When evaluating potential ideas and initiatives, disabled people focus on getting the basics right, such as the enforcement of existing rules and better information provision.

03 Experiences of travel and transport

Like many people in the UK, travel has dramatically decreased among disabled people during Covid-19

- Nearly all participants in the qualitative research considered themselves to be especially vulnerable to the virus.
- Almost all described having completely ceased using public transport, and said they think it will be a long time before they feel comfortable travelling by public transport again.
- The main mode of transport for those who had been travelling in their local areas was by car (their own or one driven by a friend or family member).

"I'm more careful about going out and I now only go out in my car instead of using public transportation."
(LTHC, male, 58)

"I have not used buses since Covid-19 started. I don't trust the hygiene of them right now and won't be putting myself or my family in any uncertain situations."
(Physical impairment, female, 30)

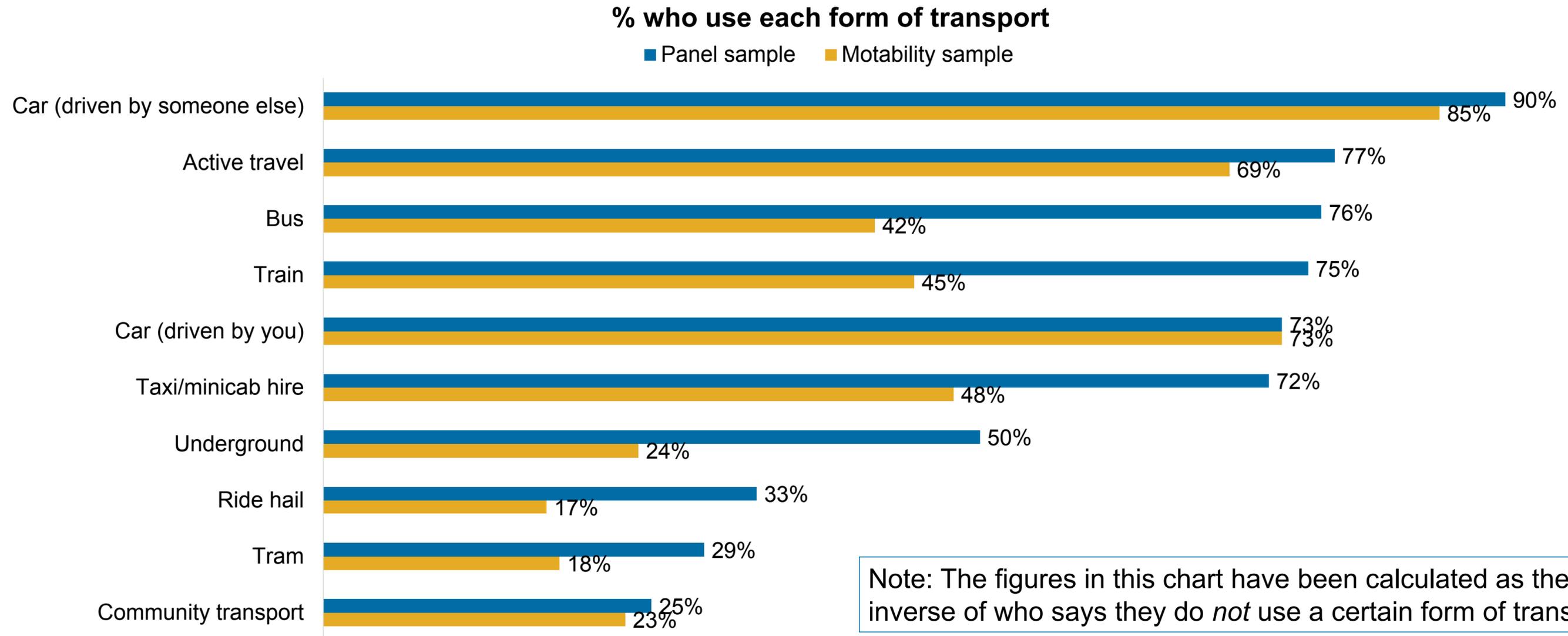
Participants described a spontaneous preference for private transport over public transport overall

- Though some benefits of public transport were identified, such as low cost and the opportunity for social interaction, using public transport was described as less reliable and inaccessible for many.
- Private travel, especially for those able to drive, was felt to be more convenient and less unpredictable and therefore risky than public transport.
- For some, particularly those with physical or sensory impairments, public transport requires physical effort and energy that they don't have.
 - For example, walking to the nearest bus stop.

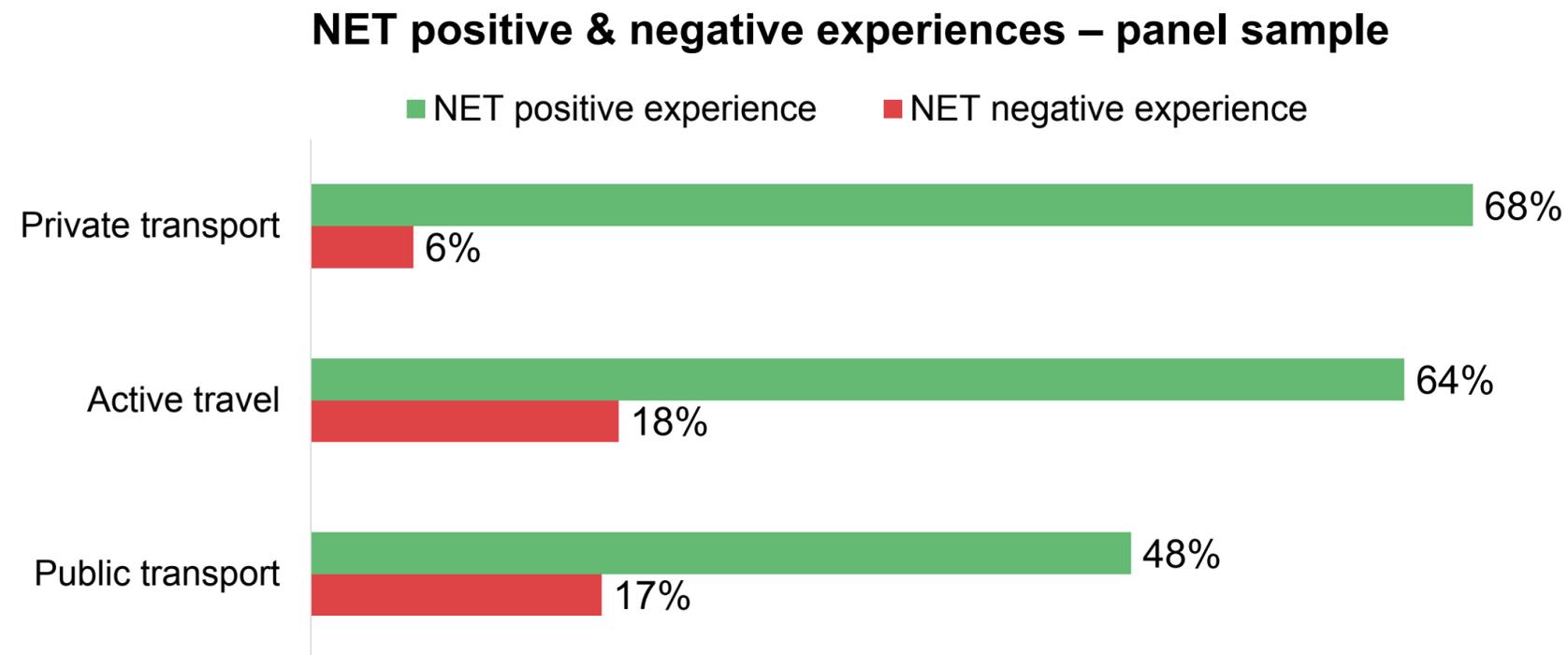
“You have your own space [in private transport], it can get you somewhere quicker and more comfortably. It can also come and pick you up from your location and take you to where you need to go rather than having to make your way to and from public transport.”
(Learning difficulty, female, 24)

“My biggest issue is how tiring traveling is. To go by public transport is a killer, with all the walking, the waiting and the faffing about.”
(LTHC, female, 38)

The most used forms of travel amongst disabled people include both private and public transport types



More than two thirds (68%) of disabled people report having positive experiences on private transport, compared to less than half (48%) who report positive experiences on public transport



The main reasons for this preference from the qualitative research include:

Inaccessibility of infrastructure

Lack of information

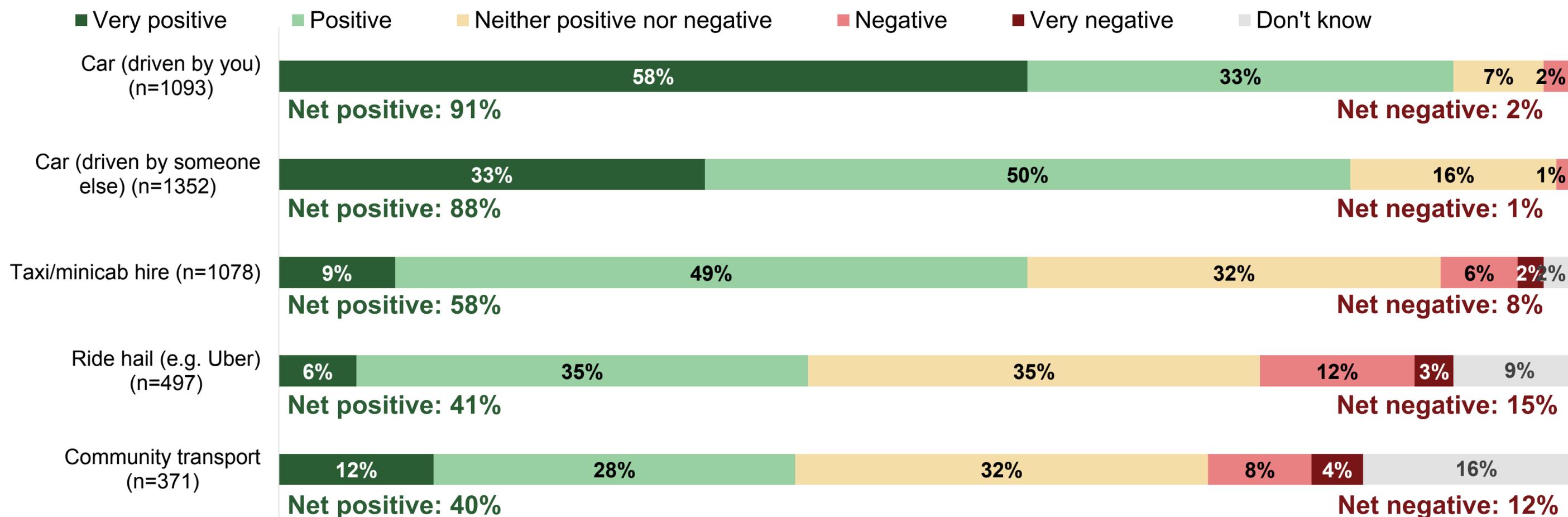
Unavailable in their area

Comfort

Reliability

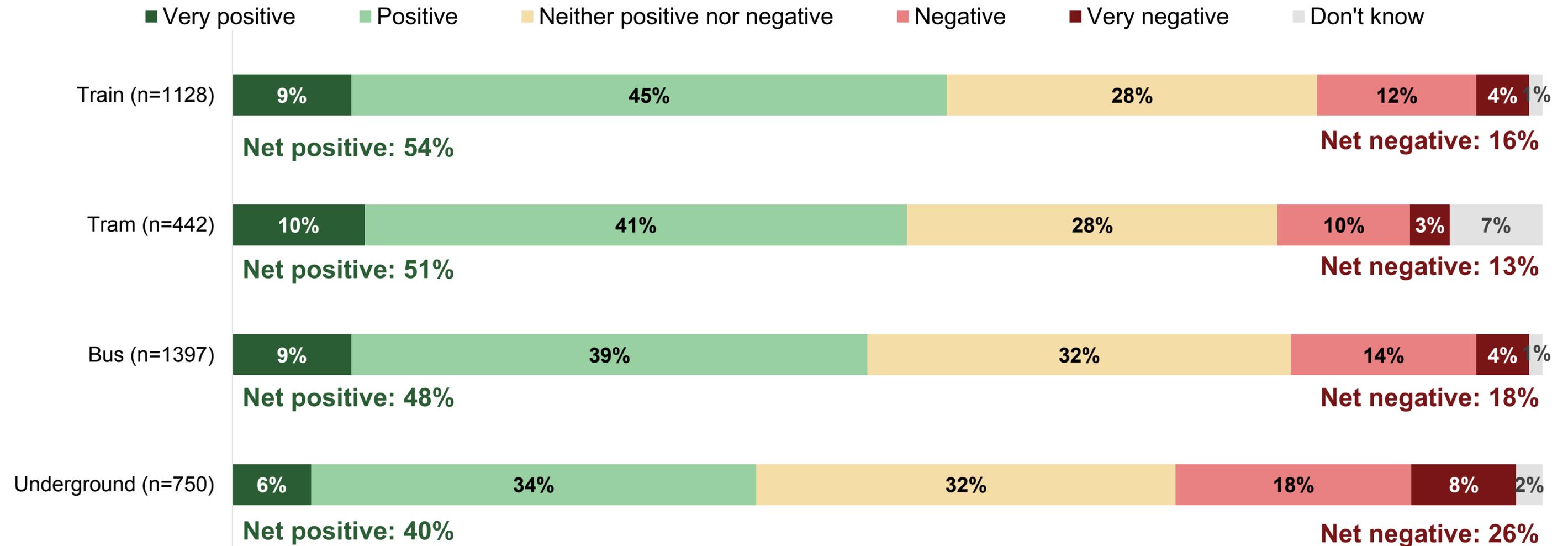
Among those that do so, 9 in 10 disabled people (91%) have positive experiences driving their own vehicles

Experience of using private transport – panel sample



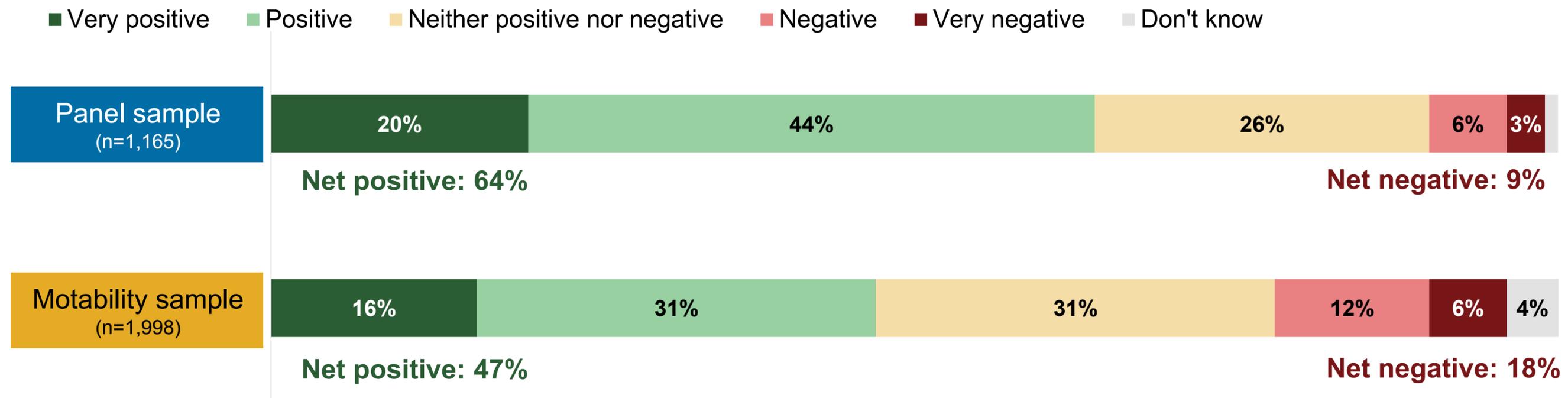
Around half of disabled people who use trains and buses say that they have a positive experience (54% and 48% respectively)

Experience of using public transport – panel sample



Almost two thirds (64%) of disabled people who use active travel say they have positive experiences of this as a form of transport

Experiences of active travel



Those in **rural (45%)** and **suburban (48%)** areas are less likely to have a positive experience using active travel, compared to those in **urban areas (57%)**.

The qualitative research found that while participants do not always consider active travel as 'travel', many of the challenges they experience with transport start with active travel, such as a bus stop being too far away or a lack of ramps to access a station.

Case study: Adrian, physical impairment



Adrian is a wheelchair user and has a high preference for using private transport over public transport for a number of reasons:

- **Reliability:** though Adrian cannot drive and is reliant on his drivers, he finds public transport too unreliable
- **Emotional impact:** if Adrian is travelling on his own, he requires assistance to onboard the train/bus which is often not available. He has also experienced judgement from rude and disrespectful passengers which impacts his mental health
- **Inaccessible infrastructure:** as a wheelchair user, Adrian finds there to be too many inaccessible points which impact his journey, for example dropped curbs which he describes as making him feel vulnerable, especially in unfamiliar settings
- **Door to door:** Adrian is heavily reliant on there being accessible infrastructure and less moments at which ‘things could go wrong’ which is why he prefers using private transport which takes him directly from A to B

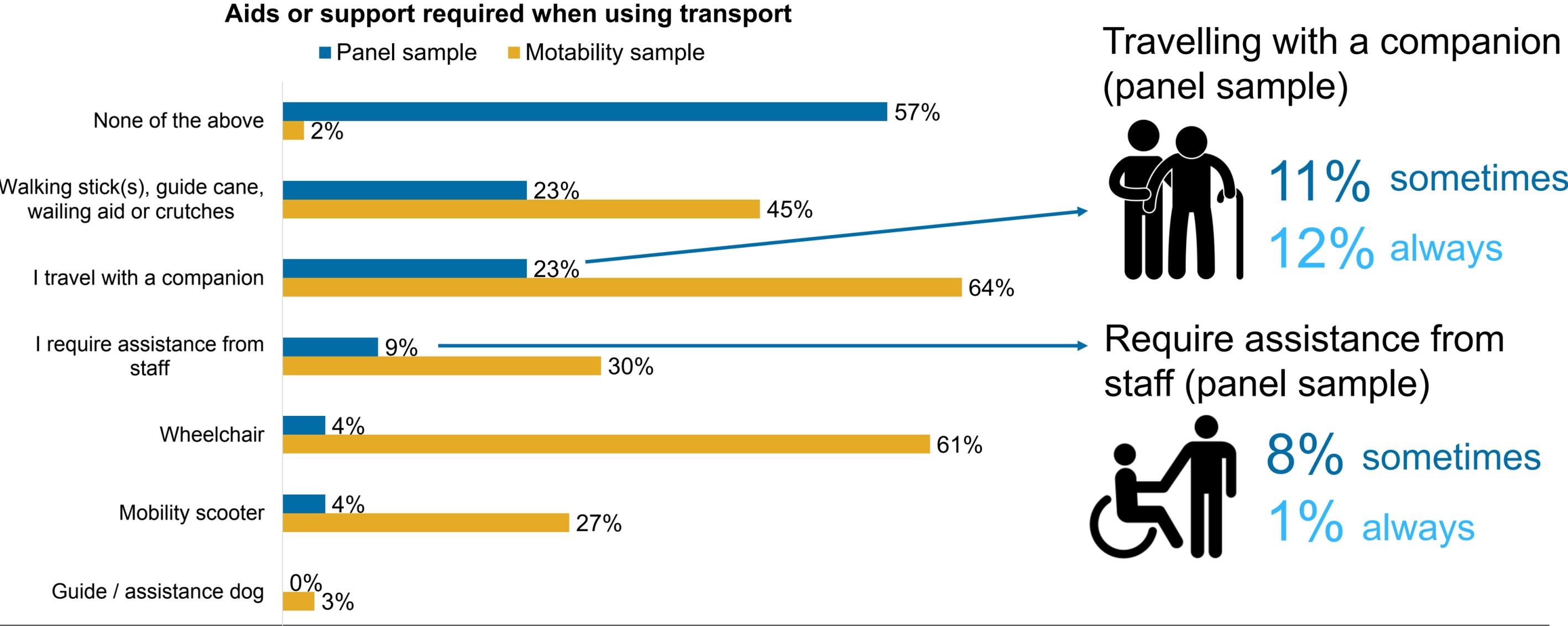
Case study: Anita, physical impairment and mental health condition



Anita has a number of physical and mental health conditions, though her most used forms of transport are buses, trams and trains for the following reasons:

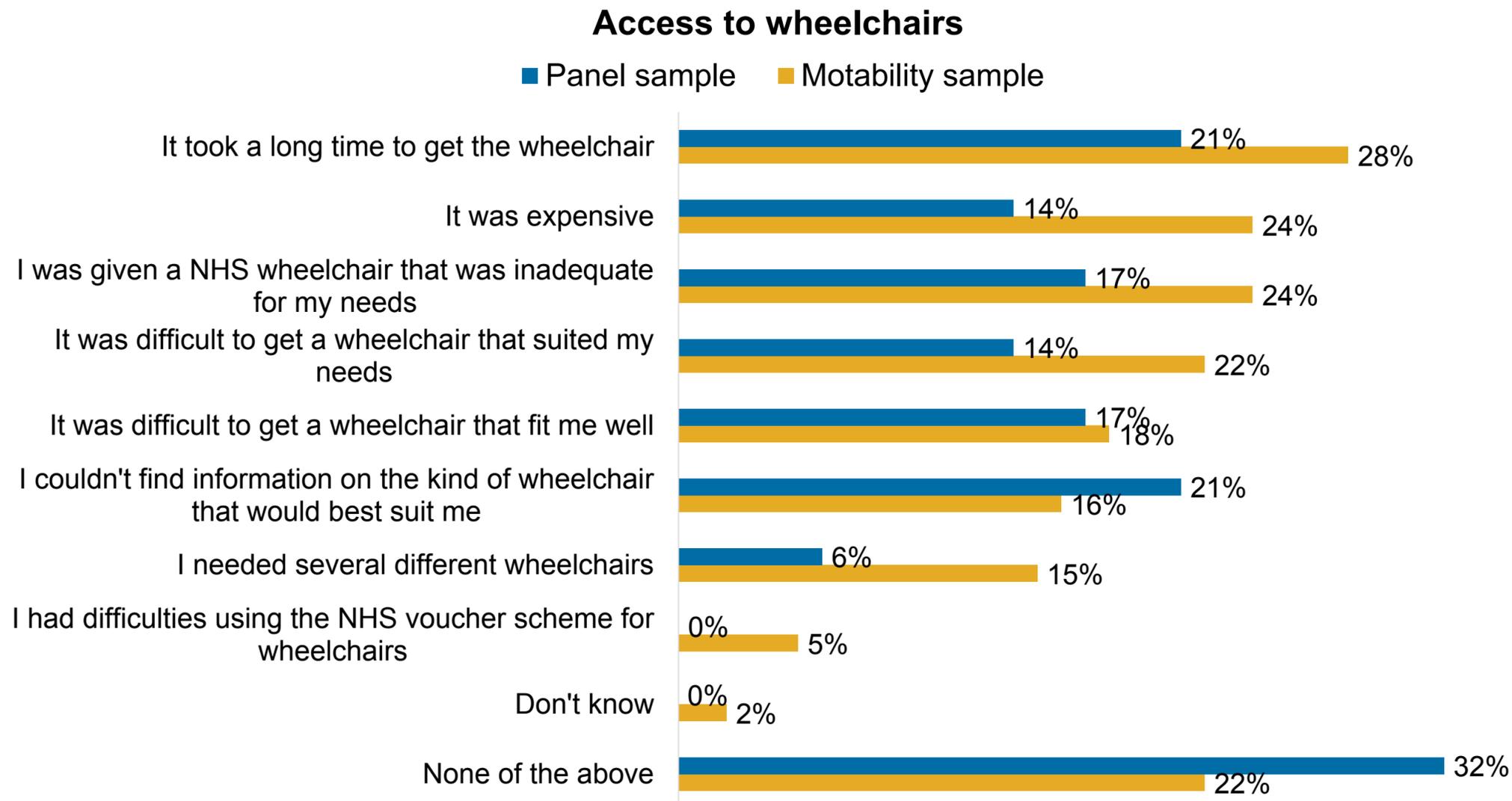
- **Affordability:** Buses and trams in particular are cheaper than private hire for getting around
- **Good network:** Anita is lucky with her local bus network which takes her to many of her favourite destinations and she has a bus stop by her home
- **Enjoyable experience:** Anita likes taking buses and trams as she likes looking out the window and getting to know the route and the city, though she has had some bad experiences with drivers who have not stopped when she has rung the stop bell or driving off before she has sat down
- **Speed:** Anita takes the train for longer journeys, though she mentions that trains are particularly inaccessible with many stations having no lift access and limited assistance

Over half (57%) of disabled people surveyed, say that they do not use aids or support when using transport



Q6. Which, if any, of the following aids or forms of support do you use when using transport? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents, Panel sample (n=1504), Motability sample (n=2877), panel sample: sometimes travel with a companion (n=172), always travel with a companion (n=187), sometimes require assistance from staff (n=122), always require assistance from staff (18)*. *Caution: low base size of less than n=100.

The majority (68%) of wheelchair users report experiencing issues accessing a wheelchair



“Having support from medical professionals to guide me to what was a good chair would have helped a lot. I wasn't aware of any of the grants or schemes available”
 (Physical impairment, female, 22)

- **Wheelchair users are less positive about using public transport overall.**



14% of wheelchair users feel positive about their experiences using buses, compared to **37% of the panel sample**

Q7. You've indicated that you use a wheelchair when using transport. Have you ever experienced any of the following difficulties with your wheelchair, either when you were first getting it or presently? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents who use a wheelchair, Panel sample (n=1504), Motability sample (n=2877), panel sample: wheelchair users (n=66)*, Motability sample: wheelchair users (n=1744). ***Caution: low base size of less than n=100.**

Q9. Overall, how positive or negative are your experiences of each of the following types of transport? If you do not use a type of transport, please select that option. Base: Panel sample (n=1504), Motability sample (n=2877).

The process of accessing a wheelchair was varied amongst participants in the qualitative research

- There was not a single, uniform process for acquiring a wheelchair amongst the online community participants.
- The processes included:
 - Using schemes, such as those from their local councils or disability charities
 - Using the NHS service
 - Buying second hand or from friends.
- Various participants from the online community mentioned acquiring wheelchairs through friends or purchasing second hand.

“The process of getting my wheelchair use was fairly simple. My town allows you to hire one for free with proof of postcode.”

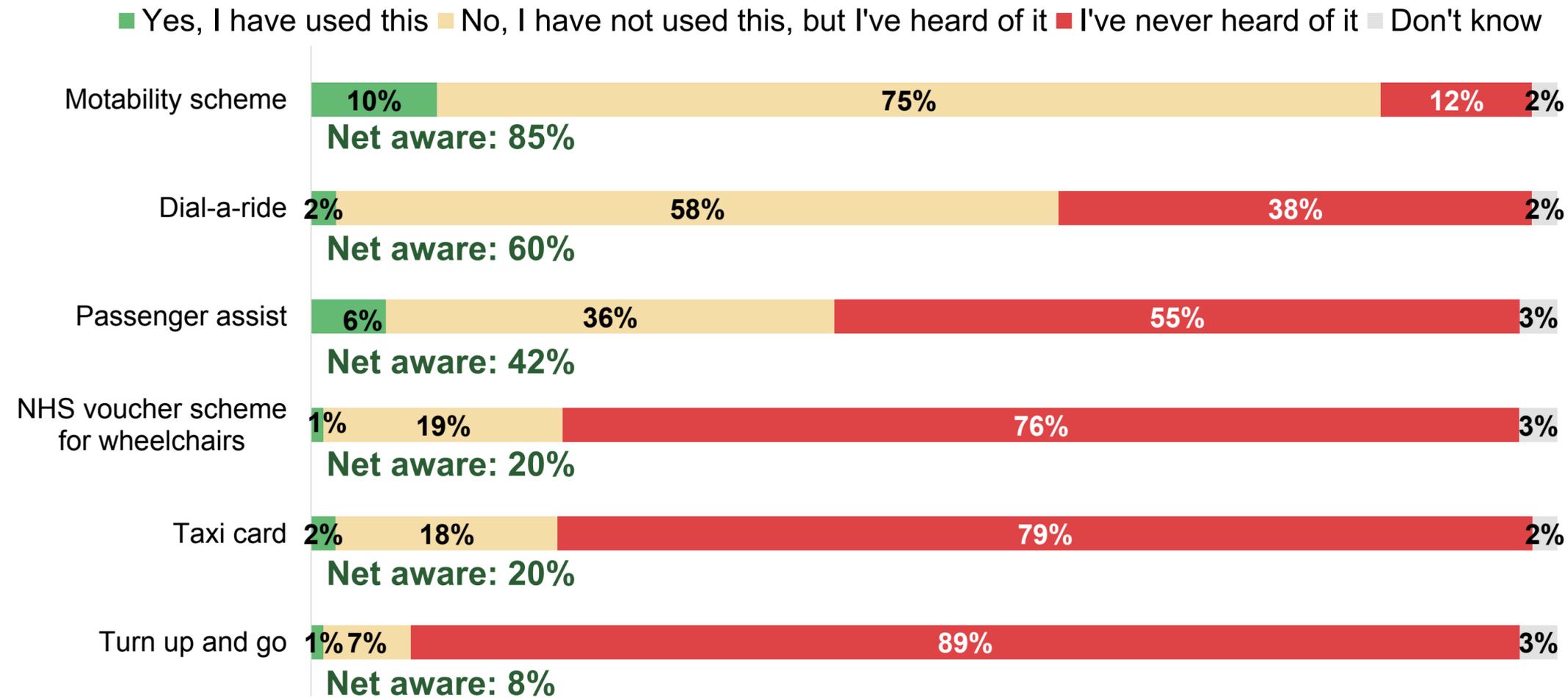
(Physical impairment, female, 61)

“I had to source a wheelchair myself and had no support. I ended up with a secondhand wheelchair from a family friend. I wasn't aware of any of the grants or schemes available to help with the cost of buying a chair until after I'd got the chair.”

(Physical impairment, female, 22)

Awareness and use of travel initiatives is low overall, with only 6% having used passenger assist

Awareness and usage of travel initiatives – panel sample



Those **ages 18-34 (35%)** are more likely to say they have never heard of the Motability scheme than those **ages 35-54 (12%)** and **55+ (8%)**.

Those who **use a mobility aid (27%)** are more likely to have used the Motability scheme than those **who do not use mobility aids or travel with assistance from others (3%)**.

Q8. Here are a range of different travel initiatives for disabled people. Which of the following best describes your experience of each initiative? Base: Panel sample (n=1504), panel sample: 18-34 (n=192), 35-54 (n=389), 55+ (n=923), mobility aid (n=389), none of the above (n=850).

04 Challenges of and barriers to using transport

Key challenges of using transport

Qualitatively, participants described experiencing multiple challenges when using public transport

Taken together, these challenges can be grouped into four overarching themes:

1. Infrastructure and accessibility

“On the bus and train I struggle to hear people or announcements, even with my hearing aids.”
(Hearing impairment, male, 50)

2. Information availability

“Signage and directions on the tube would be easier to read if they were at about 5 feet height or even on the platform or floor.”
(Visual & hearing impairments, male, 48)

3. Other practical barriers

“One of the biggest challenges is the amount of people. The tube can get very crowded and I find this stressful and it makes me feel anxious.”
(Mental health condition, female, 24)

4. Attitudes and behaviours of other people

“Trains are hugely expensive, there’s never a seat, hardly any standing room, and they’re often late.”
(Physical impairment, male, 40)

1. Infrastructure and accessibility

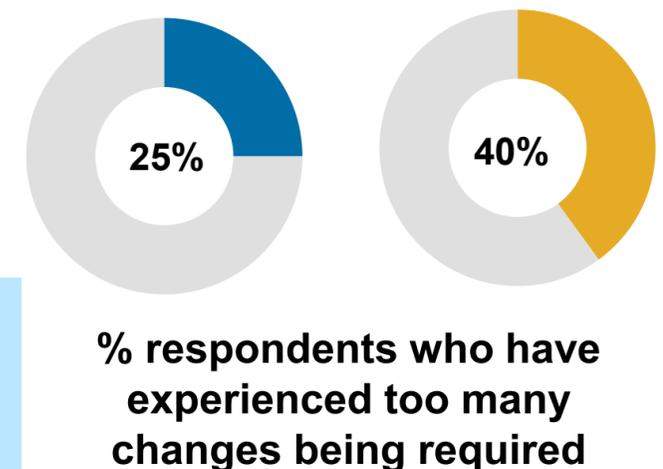
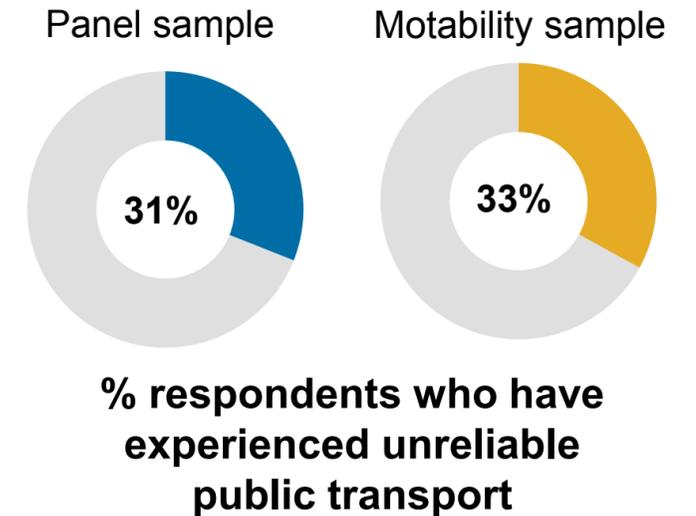
2. Information availability

3. Other practical barriers

4. Attitudes and behaviours of other people

Unreliability and the number of changes required were raised as key challenges relating to infrastructure and accessibility

- Already having to manage their own often unpredictable conditions, the additional unpredictability of public transport represents a key challenge.
- Journeys that require changes present numerous challenges: associated with each individual form of transport used and the need to navigate intersections.
 - This was particularly difficult for those who use mobility aids and/or have mental health conditions such as anxiety.
 - Inaccessible infrastructure at any point in the journey can derail the entire journey.
- The physical infrastructure of the transport vehicle and environment were also raised as barriers in using public transport, including:
 - Access to wheelchair spaces on buses and trains, a lack of priority seating, the layout of train stations and the location of bus stops relative to starting and destination points



“Reliability is very important when you're a disabled person. When things go wrong it can be more than a nuisance, it can be dangerous for some disabled people.”
(LTHC, male, 50)

“Buses have ramps, but these can be a nightmare. Buses have to park well to use the ramp and the driver has to be willing to get the ramp out.”
(Physical impairment, wheelchair user, female, 22)

1. Infrastructure and accessibility

2. Information availability

3. Other practical barriers

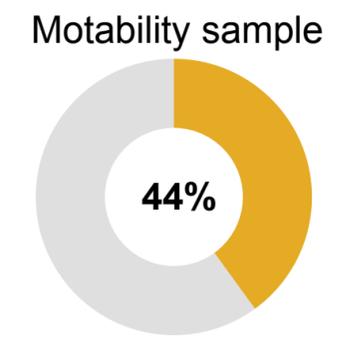
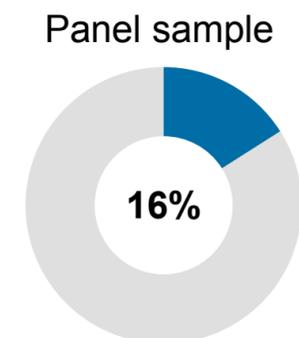
4. Attitudes and behaviours of other people

A lack of available information on accessibility was also raised as an important challenge

- Participants described a lack of information about transport accessibility, particularly that of train and underground stations, as making it difficult to plan journeys.
 - Participants also noted that when they are able to find details on station accessibility, information about unavailable facilities, such as out of order lifts or accessible toilets, are often not kept up to date.
- A lack of clear visual signage and audio communications also acts as a barrier for using public transport for some.
 - Participants with hearing and visual impairments noted that a lack of accessible signage and announcements meant they often had to rely on companions, staff or other passengers to navigate public transport.

“Many a time I’ve got to London and the underground escalators are broken and I’ve had to walk up the stairs. It would be great to know ahead of time where lifts are, if they’re working and where blue badge parking is.”
(Physical impairment, female, 56)

“Information needs to be at wheelchair height and not hanging from the roof.”
(Physical & visual impairment, wheelchair user, male, 49)



% respondents who have experienced difficulty planning travel on public transport

1. Infrastructure and accessibility

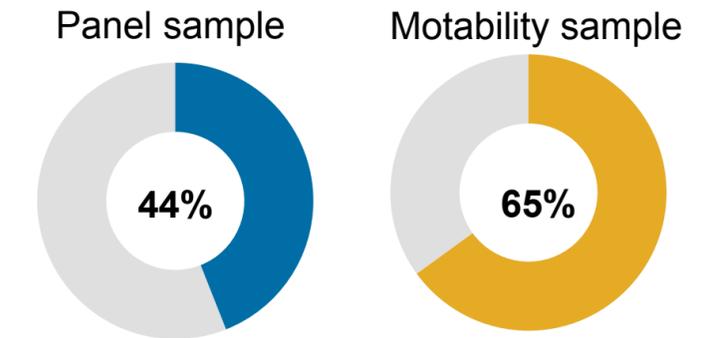
2. Information availability

3. Other practical barriers

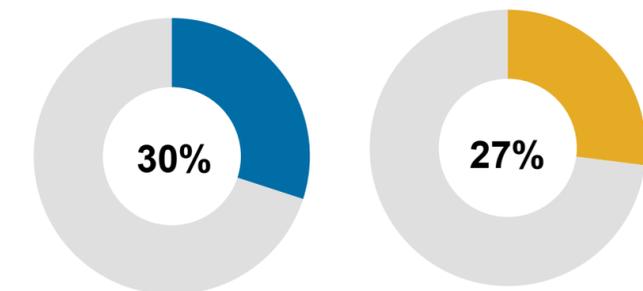
4. Attitudes and behaviours of other people

Other practical barriers to using public transport include cost and time of travel

- The qualitative research found that travel at peak times often exacerbated issues such as a lack of priority seating.
 - Wheelchair users in particular described difficulties accessing wheelchair spaces and those with hidden disabilities described feeling judged by other passengers for requesting a priority seat.
- Participants also described train travel as very expensive, especially for those who always travelled with a companion and thus had to pay for two fares per journey.
 - Among those that travelled by tram and underground, these modes of transport were also regarded as expensive.



% respondents who have experienced challenges traveling on public transport during peak times



% respondents who experienced challenges with the cost of public transport

"I find the biggest challenge with travel is when it'd busy as I can't stand for too long. I try to travel at less busy times but sometimes it isn't possible."
(Physical impairment, female, 47)

"Everyone knows the trains are awful, late and expensive. You pay through the nose for no seat!"
(Physical impairment, LTHC, male, 40)

1. Infrastructure and accessibility

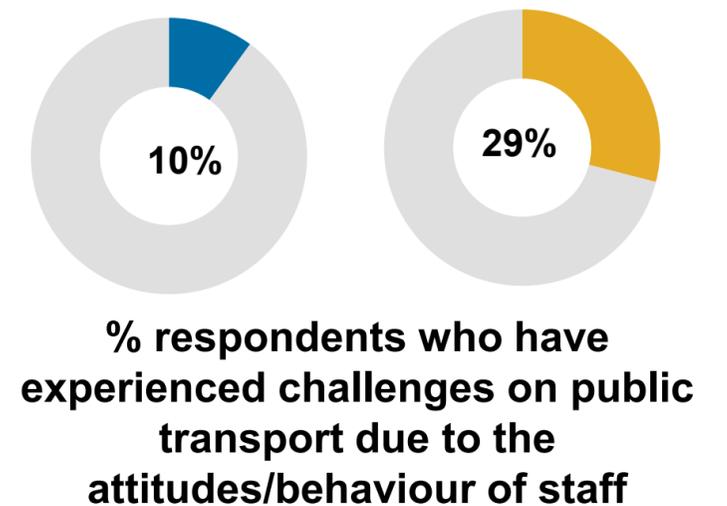
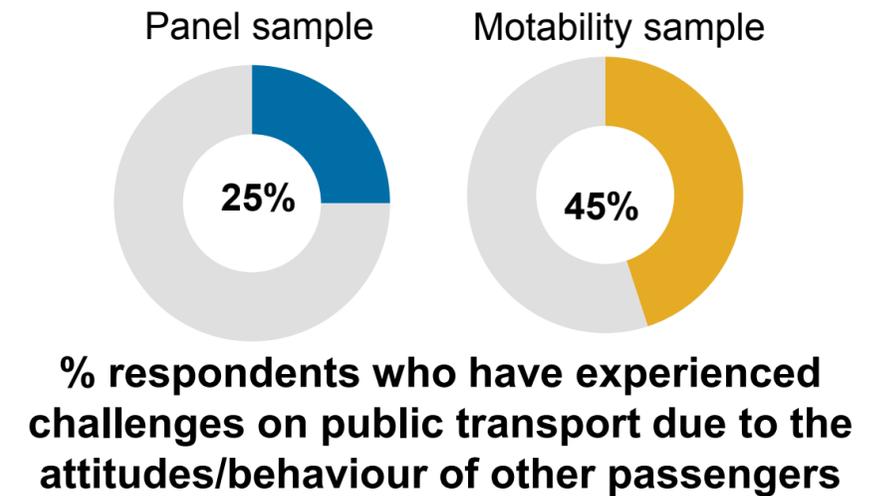
2. Information availability

3. Other practical barriers

4. Attitudes and behaviours of other people

Attitudes and behaviours of other passengers was also felt to be a key challenge in using public transport among participants

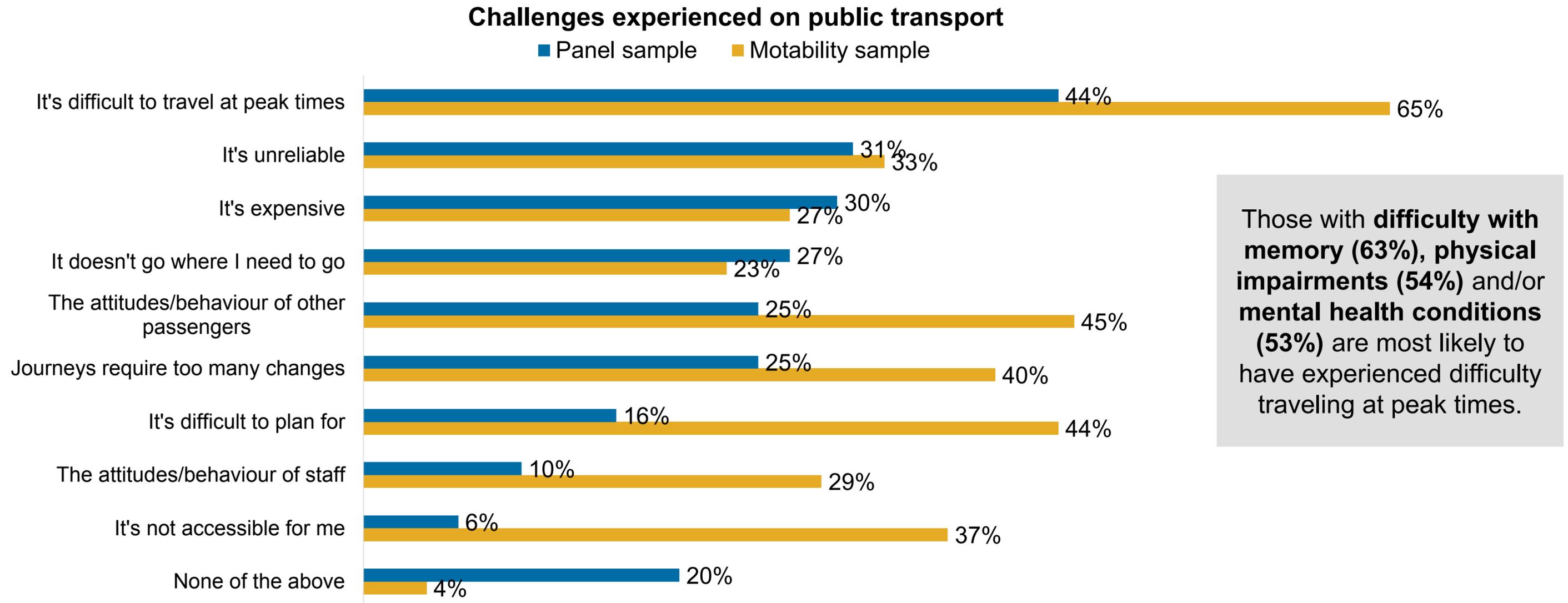
- The qualitative research found that attitudes and willingness to be helpful among other passengers and staff on public transport is extremely varied.
 - Those with hidden disabilities described particular difficulties getting a seat during peak times due to judgement from other passengers.
- When requesting assistance from public transport staff, participants described experiences as varied and dependent on both staff willingness and ability to be helpful (as a result of training and/or time available to do so).



“Some people just can’t be bothered to help people. You get some really grumpy bus drivers that are always in too much of a hurry to help you.”
(Physical impairment, difficulty with memory, female, 35)

“I have had many issues with bus drivers questioning my disability.”
(Visual impairment, LTHC, female, 33)

Quantitatively, experiences travelling on public transport at peak times has emerged as the most widespread challenge

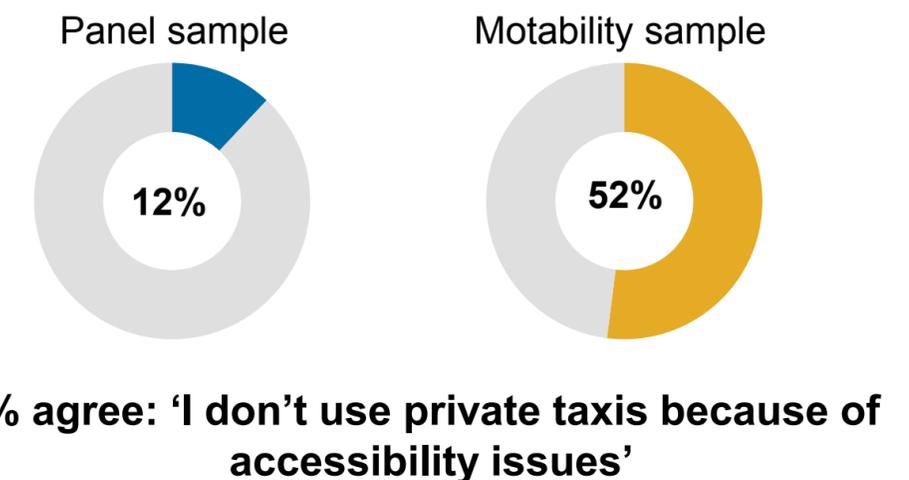


Q11. Below is a list of some challenges disabled people may face when using public transport. Which, if any, of the following challenges with public transport have you experienced before? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents who use public transport: Panel sample (n=1274), Motability sample (n=1671), panel sample: difficulty with memory (n=38)*, physical impairment (n=582), mental health condition (n=397). *Caution: low base size of less than n=100.

While private transport is largely considered preferable to public transport, challenges around cost and obtaining accessible vehicles emerged in the qualitative research

- Many participants expressed using taxis as a last resort e.g. if no one was available to drive them, as many did not consider public transport to be an option. This was often due to the following:
 - **Cost:** taxis can be prohibitively expensive, especially for those on limited incomes, as many within the disabled community are.
 - **Accessibility:** those with wheelchairs described numerous experiences where having called for an accessible taxi, an unsuitable vehicle arrived. This was also described as a concern by those who travelled by ride hail.

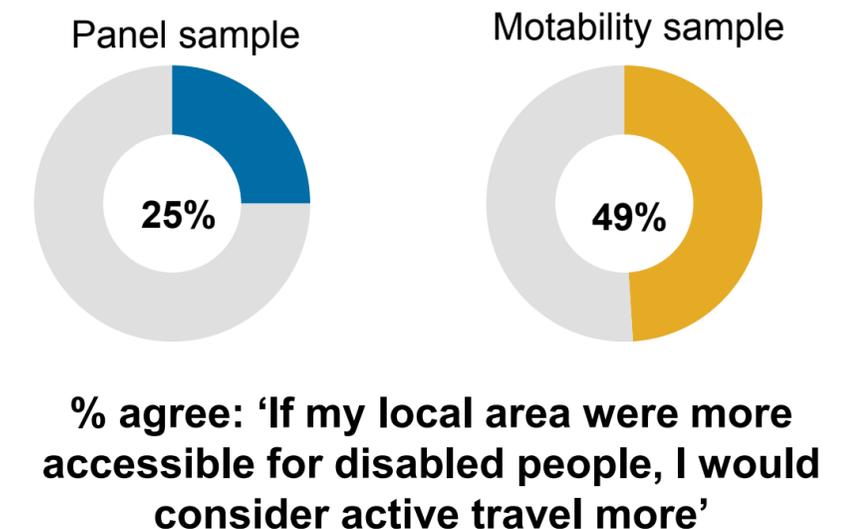
“I’ve had taxi drivers moan about having to fold up the wheelchair to put in the boot or refuse to take me, even though I told the controller when I rang that I was in a wheelchair.”
 (Physical impairment, mental health condition, wheelchair user, female, 54)



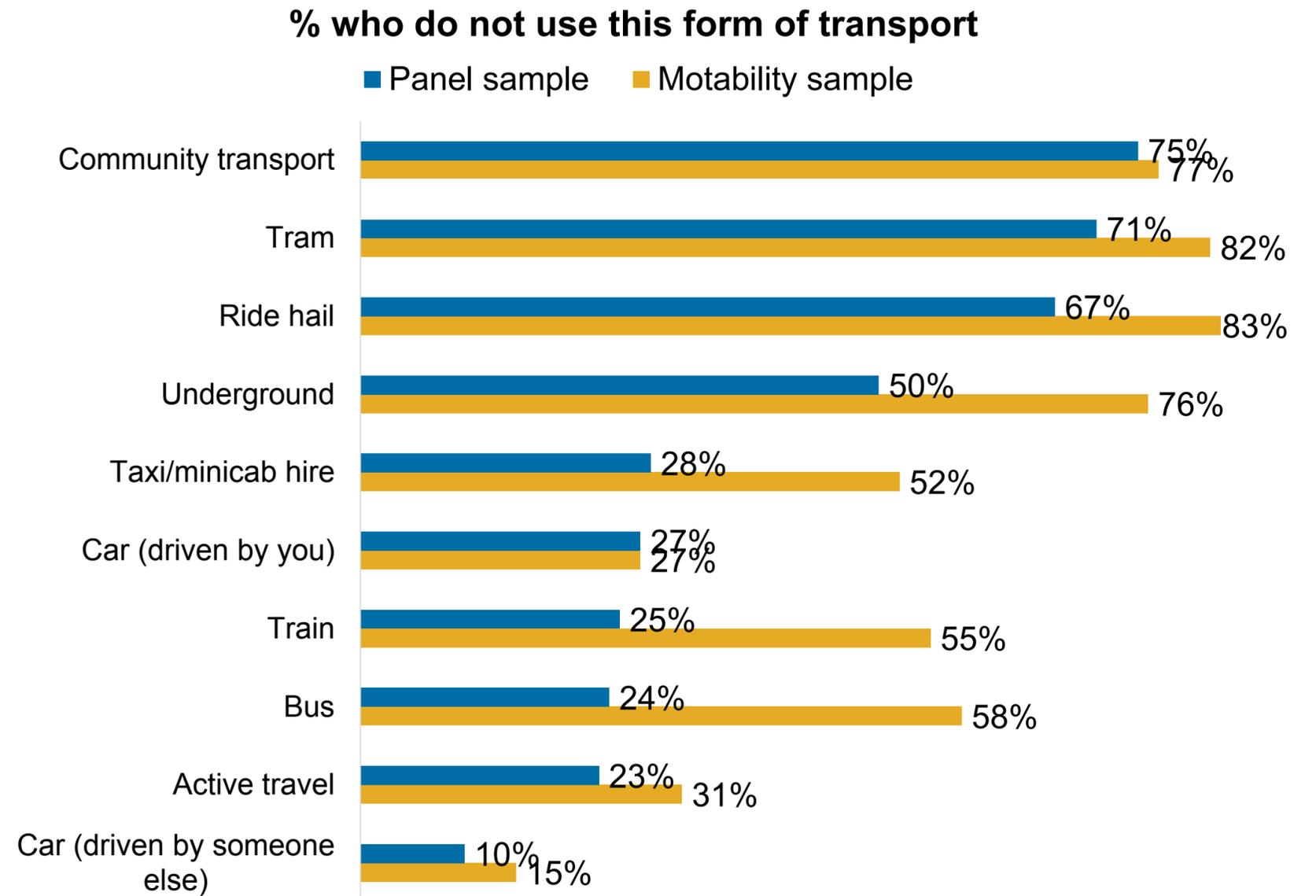
The unpredictability of new environments presents a barrier to active travel, particularly for those with mobility aids

- Participants in the qualitative research expressed concern about finding dropped kerbs, ramps, places to sit, and unexpected physical barriers such as uneven pavement stones when using active travel.
- While these concerns were especially prominent for those with mobility aids, many felt that they would use active travel more given the opportunity.
 - The survey found that those with guide canes (50%), wheelchairs (44%), mobility scooters (42%) and walking sticks (29%) were more likely to agree they would use active travel more if their local area were more accessible, compared to the wider disabled community (25%).

"I use a wheelchair most days. I get anxiety about finding dropped kerbs for crossing in unfamiliar surroundings."
(Physical impairment, wheelchair user, male, 56)

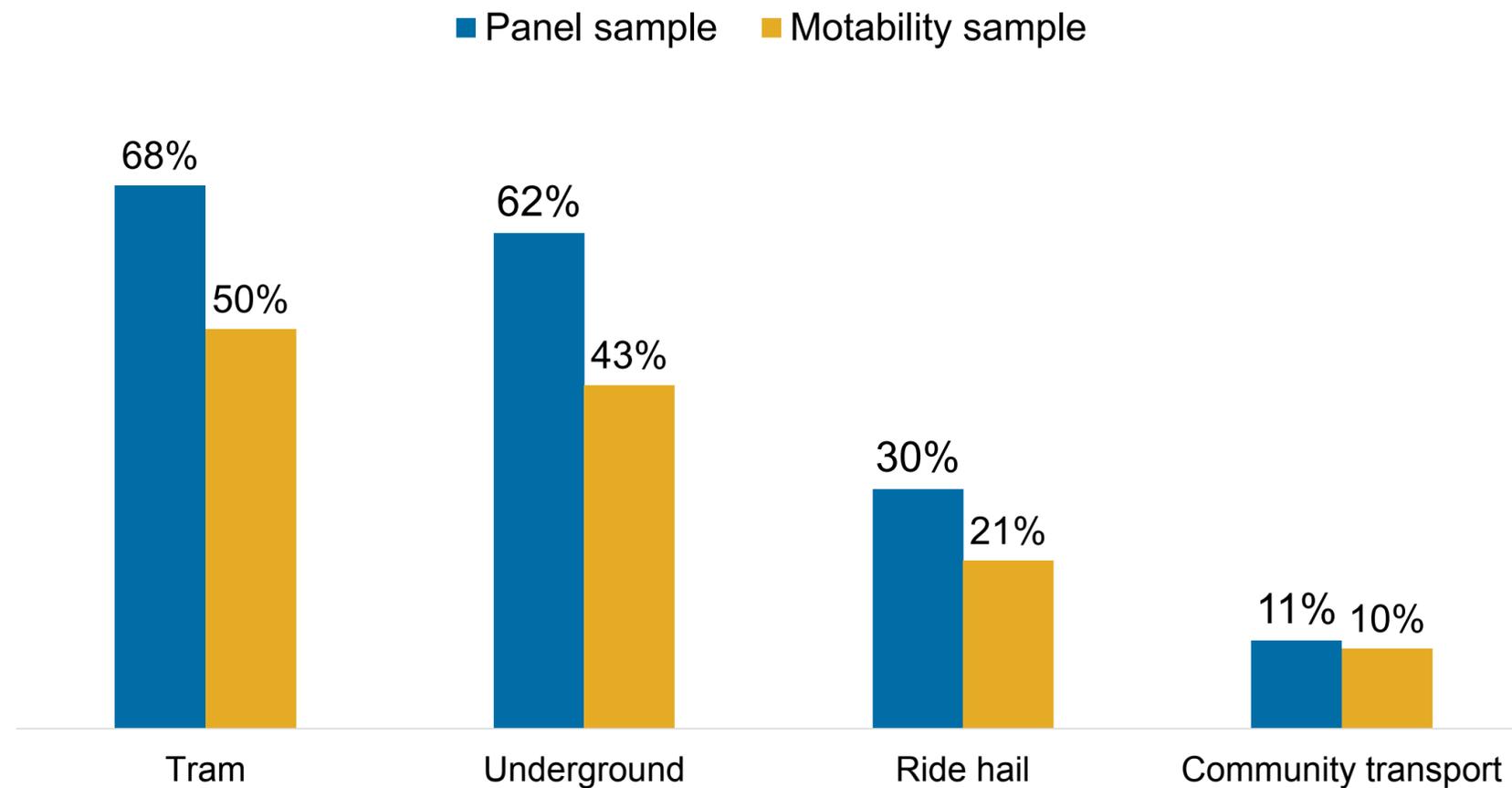


Key barriers to using transport



Certain forms of transport, such as trams, underground and ride hail are not available in local areas

‘This form of transport is not available in my area’



The qualitative research found that the tram was popular among participants from Nottingham. The Nottingham tram system is well known within the disabled community as being a good example of accessible transport.

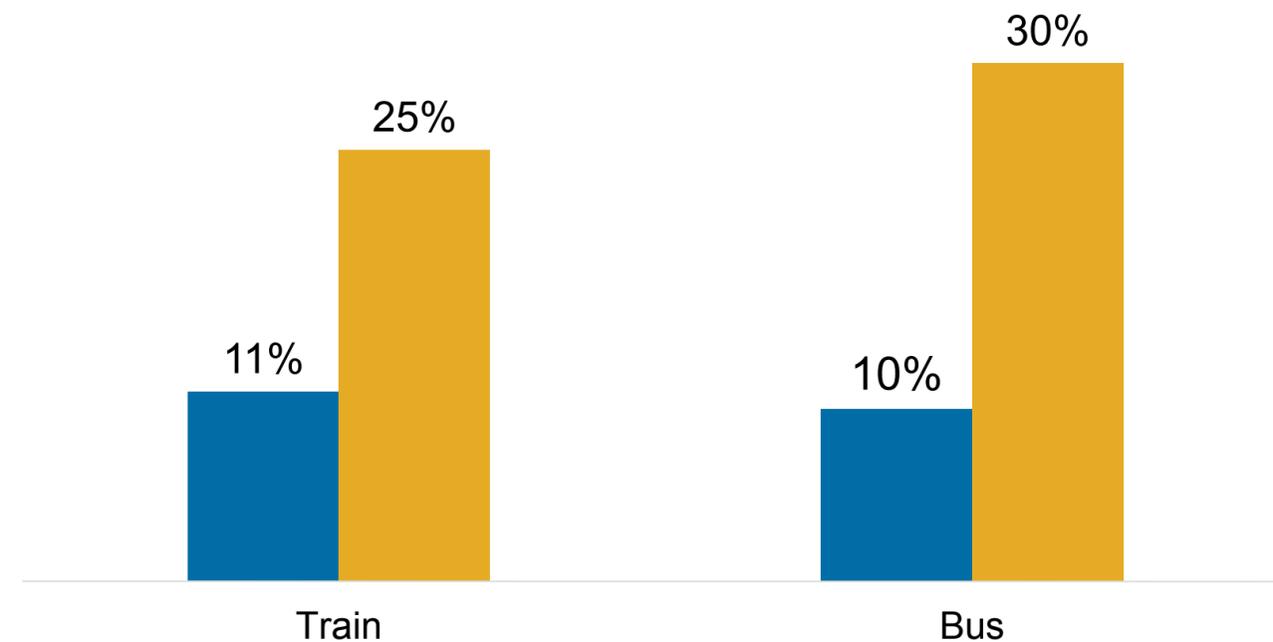
“I use the tram to get to the hospital. The tram is great to travel on as accessibility is great – the platform and tram are level. The journey is quite quick, and I don’t have to worry about finding a car parking space or paying parking fees.”

(Physical impairment, wheelchair user, female, 22)

A significant minority say they are unable to use the train (11%) or bus (10%) because they are not accessible to them

‘This form of transport is not accessible to me’

■ Panel sample ■ Motability sample



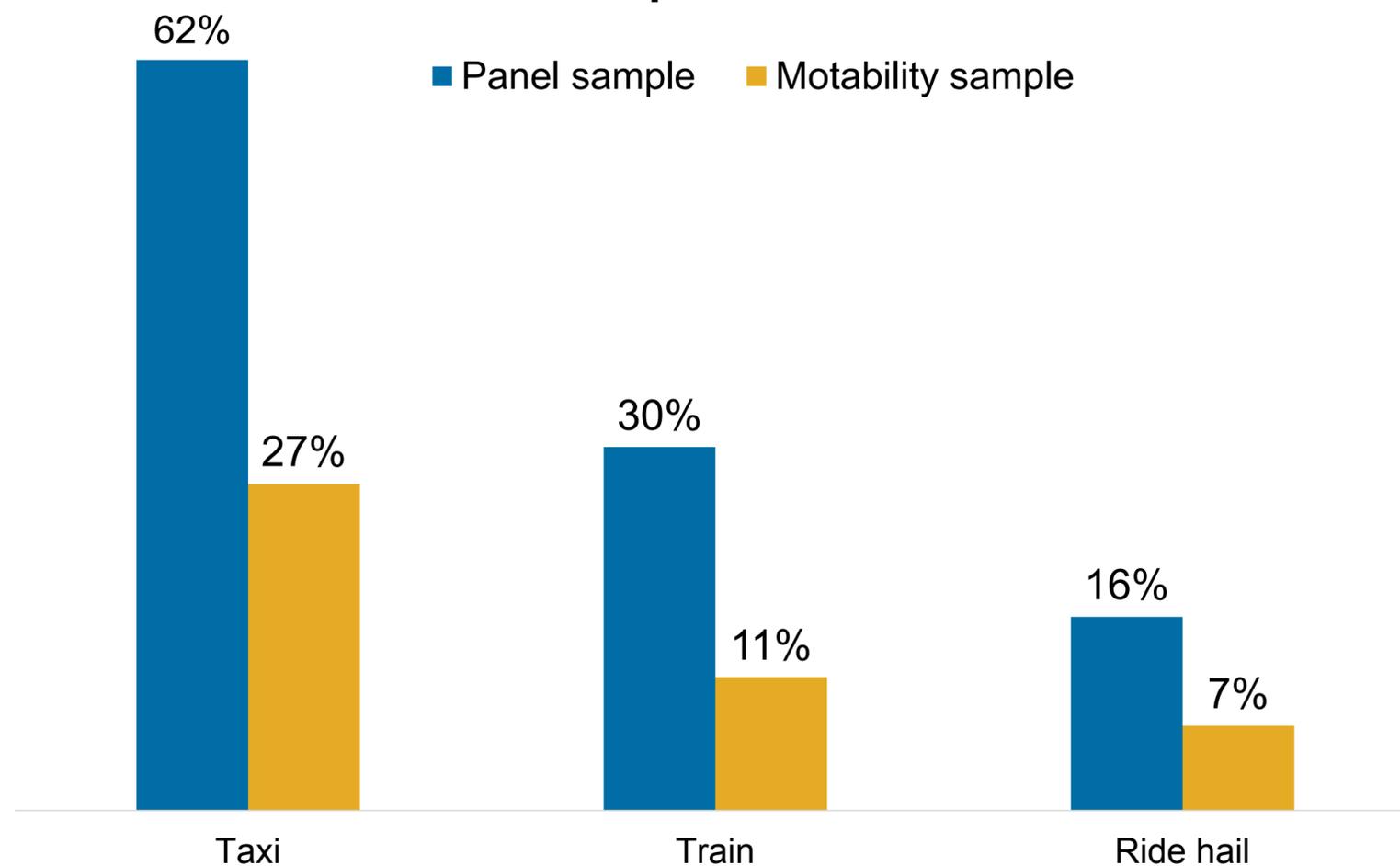
In the qualitative research, participants with mobility aids were more likely to say they had stopped using buses and/or trains as a result of inaccessible infrastructure. In particular, as there is typically only one wheelchair space on buses and trains, participants had previously found that they were often unable to travel by this mode of transport when they wished to do so.

The qualitative research also found that train stations are considered to be extremely varied in their accessibility and layout and present their own challenges, alongside those faced on trains.

“Access to public transport is only available with a lot of help getting a wheelchair on to a bus. I would not bother trying a train as it would be near impossible... I would like the train to be an option.”
 (Physical impairment, wheelchair user, male, 49)

Close to two thirds (62%) of disabled people do not use taxis because they are too expensive

'I do not use this form of transport because it is too expensive'



The qualitative research found that for those on limited incomes, taxis and trains were considered very expensive. Participants across the sample expressed this viewpoint.

While some used these forms of transport as a last resort, others did not consider these to be an option due to the expense.

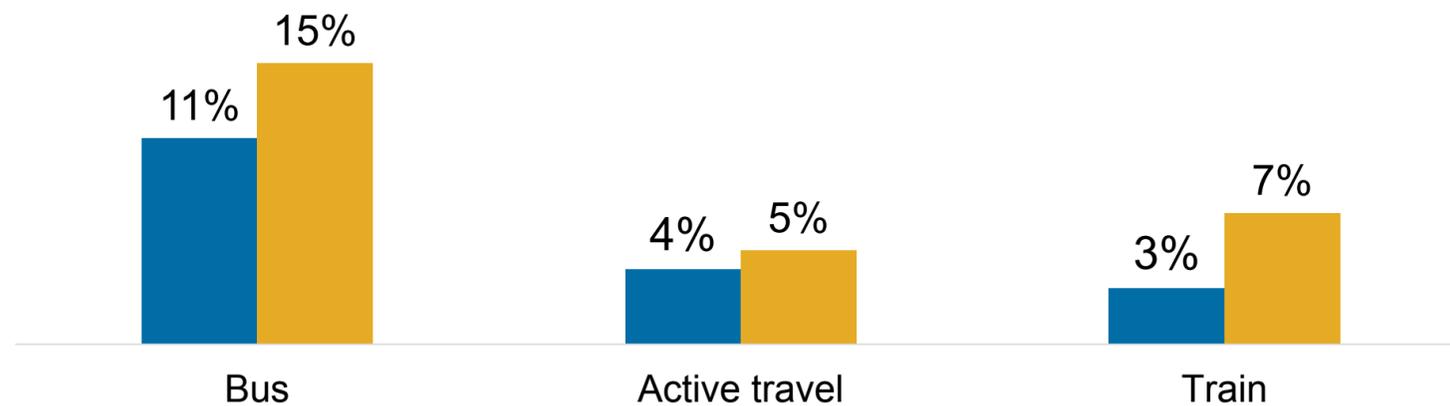
"I can't justify paying taxi fares, especially for short journeys."
(Physical impairment, female, 54)

"I would like to use the train more, but cost is an issue as we are on a lower income."
(LTHC, male, 50)

Negative experiences have put over 1 in 10 (11%) off using the bus, and to a lesser extent active travel and train travel

‘I have had a negative experience that’s put me off using this form of transport’

■ Panel sample ■ Motability sample



Those in **urban areas (22%)** are more likely to have had a negative experience on the bus, compared to those in **suburban (12%)** or **rural (5%)** areas.

Those with **difficulty with memory (27%)** and **mental health conditions (18%)** are also more likely than other impairment types to agree they had had a negative experience on the bus.

“It makes me very anxious going somewhere I don’t know well and when a bus driver won’t help or tell me the stop, it makes me not want to go and use the buses as I will panic.”
 (Visual impairment, LTHC, female, 33)

Case study: David, visual & hearing impairments, 48



- David lives in London and is severely visually impaired. David typically travels by bus, underground or walking.
- David regularly walks 7 minutes to the main road to visit the local shops and finds this to be a stressful experience due primarily to uneven pavement and pathways. He also finds other clutter on the pavement, such as bicycles and advertising boards, difficult to navigate.
- When David takes the bus, he often has difficulty differentiating which bus is his at the bus stop, especially if more than one come at once. Once on the bus, David does not always get a priority seat and often has trouble finding space for his guide dog.

“My journey begins from outside my doorstep, as it’s from there that I am leaving my safe environment to embark into the unknown.”

Case study: Bethany, physical impairment, 58



- Bethany stopped used public transport last year, after finding it too unreliable to deal with, along with dealing with the nature of her condition, which causes her chronic pain.
- Walking or standing waiting for too long causes Bethany a great deal of pain and with buses and trains often being late, or having trouble getting a seat, Bethany was often left immobile for days after use due to the pain.
- Bethany now travels only by car, often calling ahead to her destination to make sure there will be blue badge parking available. If parking isn’t available, Bethany typically doesn’t make the journey.

“Being able to travel door to door is very important to me. My car is there whenever I need it as opposed to walking to and then waiting at bus stops or train stations.”

05 Impact of challenges using transport

Transport-specific impacts

Qualitatively, participants described making changes to the way they travel as a result of the challenges they experience

- Participants described avoiding certain types of journeys that they found most challenging. These included:
 - **Long distance journeys:** participants described flare ups in pain and exhaustion as a result of long journeys.
 - **Travel during peak times:** as previously discussed, difficulties getting a seat on public transport or getting a car parking space means that many altered their schedules to avoid travelling at peak times.
 - **Complex journeys with multiple forms of transport:** participants preferred private transport to engaging with multiple forms of public transport, and in some cases would take on the unwelcome expense of a taxi to avoid a complex journey.
 - **Journeys to unfamiliar places:** some described limiting their travel to only complete journeys they were familiar with, as the risk of inaccessible infrastructure, lack of parking, and disruptions to journeys were seen to increase outside of familiar journeys.

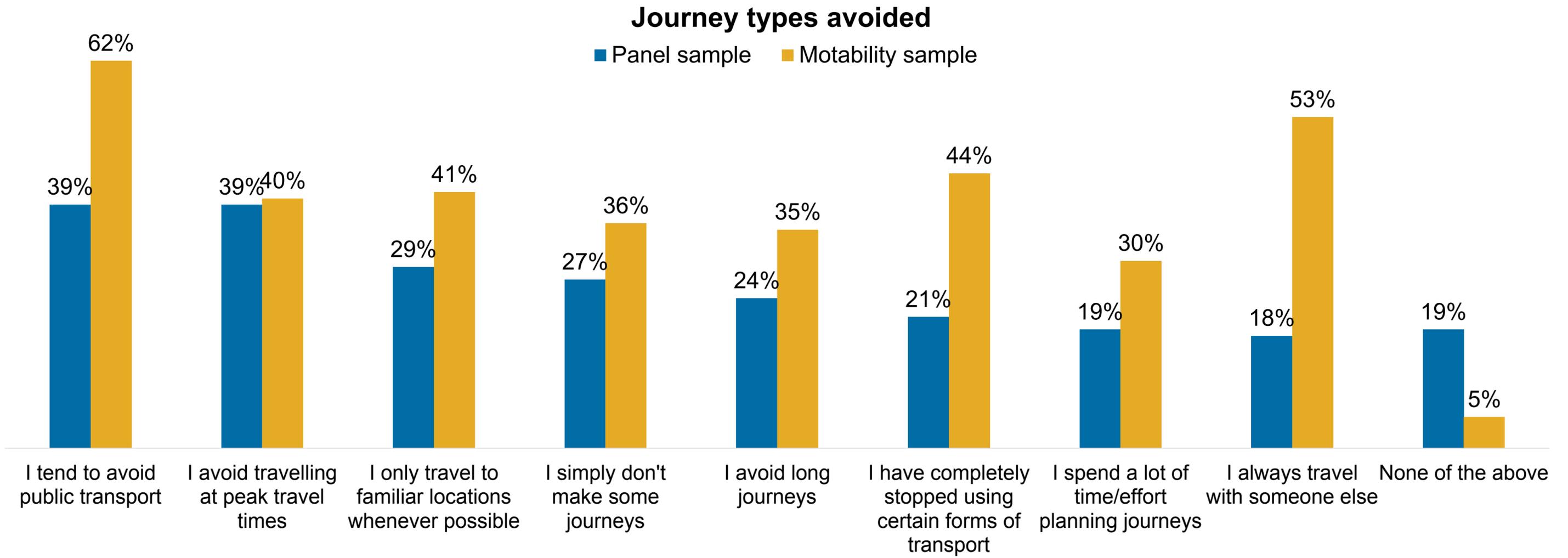
“I never use transport during busy times. It’s difficult to get on and people are reluctant to move out of allocated spaces.”

(Physical impairment & LTHC, wheelchair user, male, 56)

“I don’t see very well and I panic when I don’t know where I am very well. This can make me anxious using public transport and I will often ask bus drivers to tell me where it’s best to get off and to tell me when we are there.”

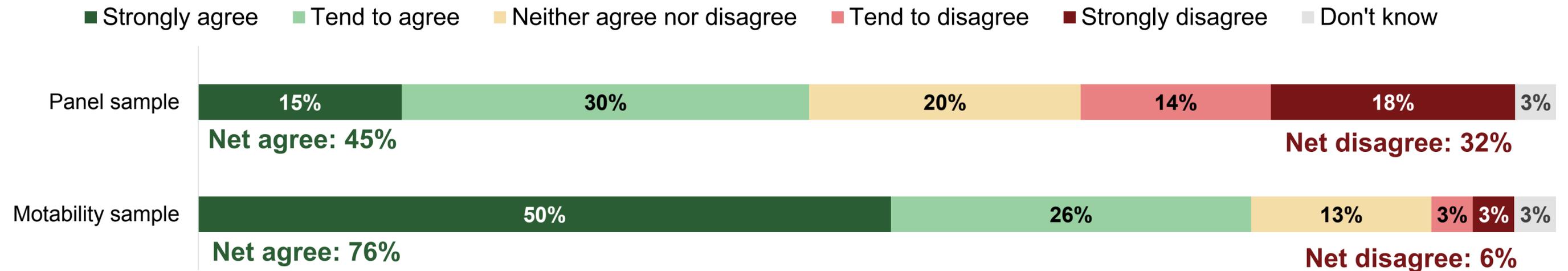
(Visual & LTHC, female, 33)

These findings are supported quantitatively, with a significant minority of disabled people saying they avoid certain types of travel as a result of challenges with transport



Close to half (45%) of disabled people agree they can't travel spontaneously due to the need to thoroughly plan every journey

'I can't travel spontaneously as I need to thoroughly plan every journey'



The qualitative research found that the majority of participants undertook detailed planning at each stage of a journey. The burden of planning increases for new and unfamiliar journeys.

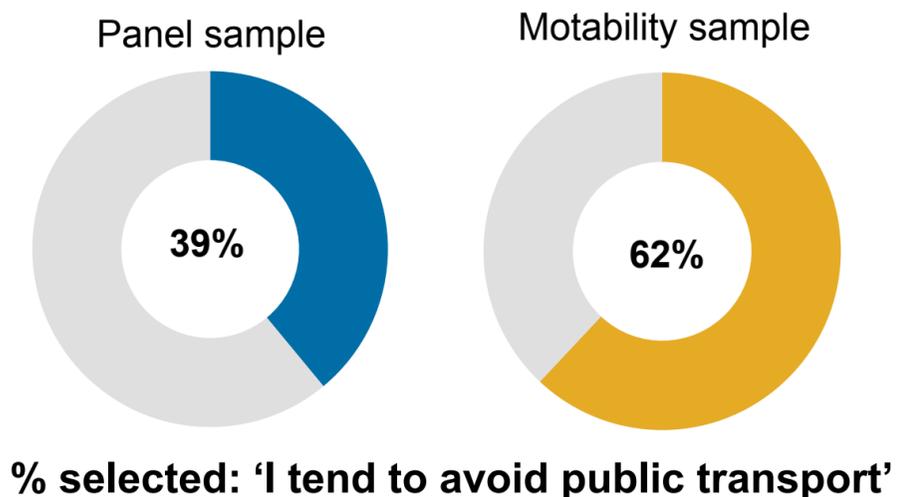
"I've had to start planning things better and in advance, so I could either have someone drive me or get a better plan. Any trip that's an hour away also demands an overnight so I can rest before returning."
(LTHC, male, 48)

Those who use **mobility aids, such as wheelchairs (79%), mobility scooters (64%) and walking sticks (60%)** are more likely than the panel sample overall to agree with this statement.

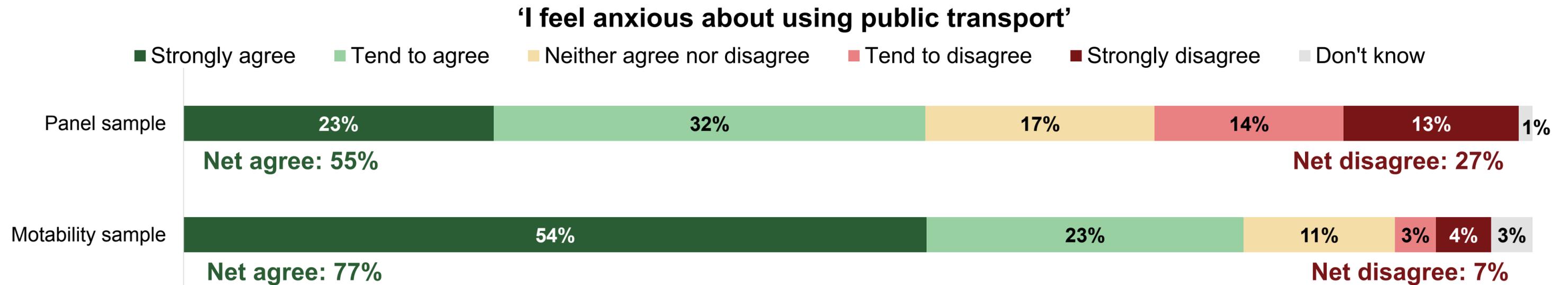
Nearly 2 in 5 disabled people (39%) say they tend to avoid public transport

- Qualitatively, participants described avoiding travel by bus, with travel by train coming in a close second.
 - For some participants with wheelchairs and/or mental health conditions, private transport was the only transport option they considered feasible.
- In the quantitative research, those who use a mobility aid (52%) or need help from either a companion or staff to travel (52%) are more likely than those who do not use a mobility aid or require help from people (32%) to avoid public transport.

“I’ve never been comfortable using public transport with my mobility scooter... I’ve tried researching everything about transportation on public transport, just for a change rather than driving, but I always can’t use it due to the weight and size of my scooter.”
(LTHC, male, 48)



Over half (55%) of disabled people agree they feel anxious when using public transport



Participants in the qualitative research described crowds and the unreliability of public transport as causing considerable anxiety, with some opting to no longer use public transport as a result.

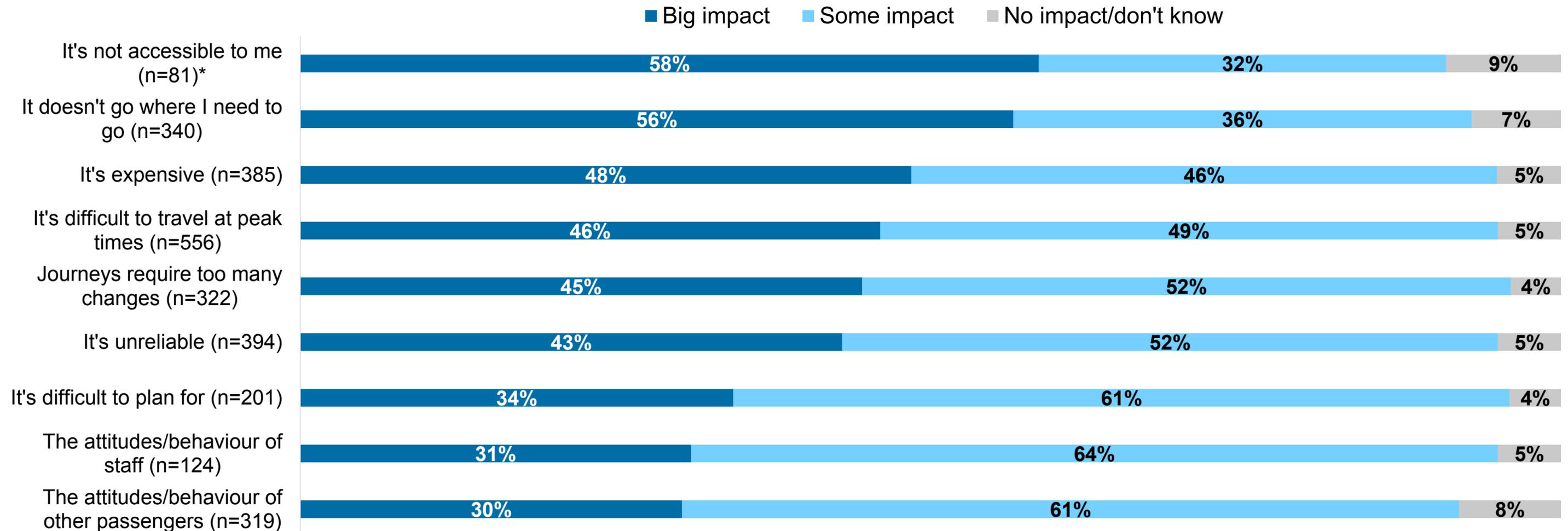
Others still relied on public transport and described judgement from other passengers and staff as a source of anxiety on public transport.

Those with **social or behavioural difficulties (85%)** are more likely to agree with this than the panel sample overall, followed by those with **mental health conditions (74%)**.

Those **who travel with a companion or require help from staff (80%)** are more likely to agree with this statement than the panel sample overall.

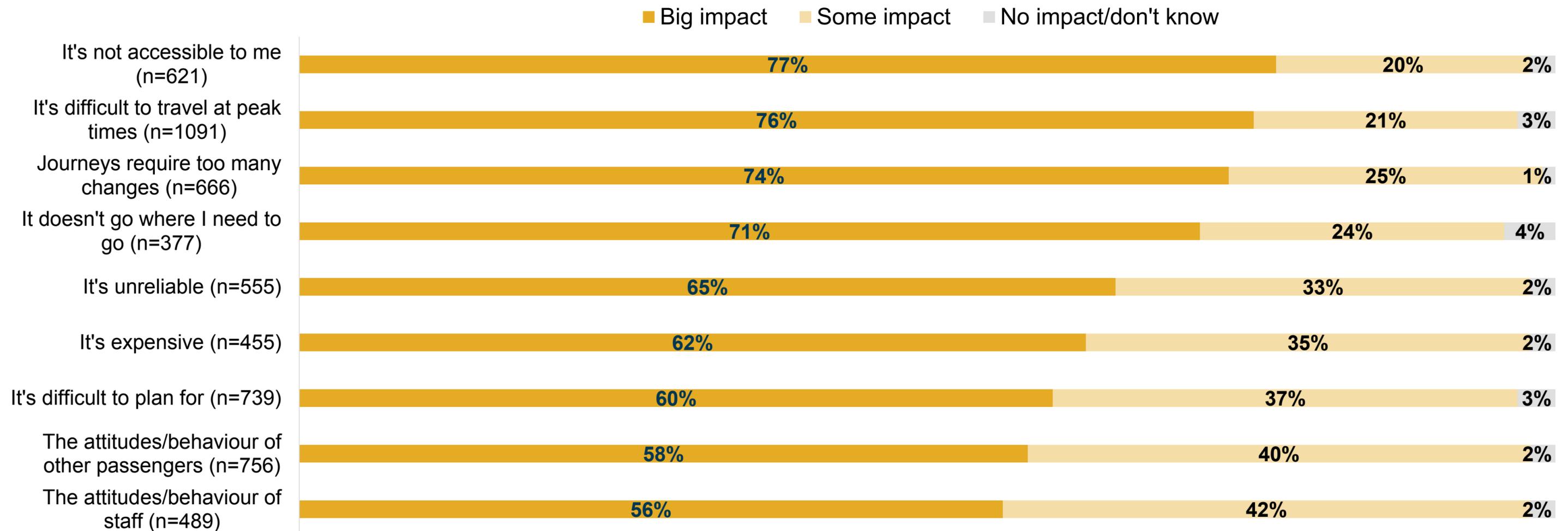
Inaccessibility and transport not going where they need it to are the public transport challenges felt to have the greatest impacts

Impact of challenges on those who use public transport – Panel sample



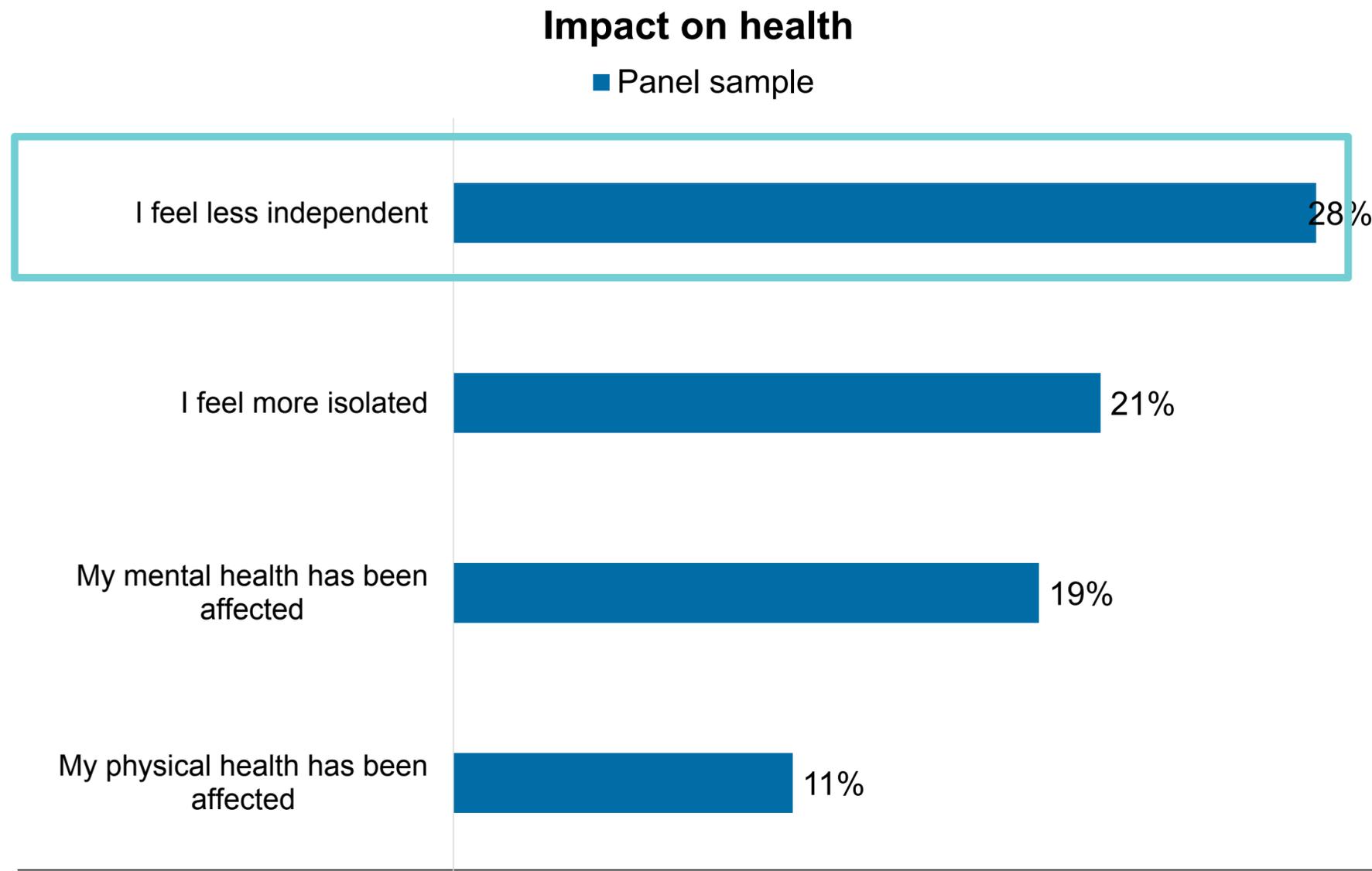
Inaccessibility is similarly felt to have the greatest impact for the Motability sample, followed by difficulty traveling at peak times

Impact of challenges on those who use public transport – Motability sample



Wider impacts

Over a quarter (28%) of disabled people say they feel less independent as a result of challenges with transport

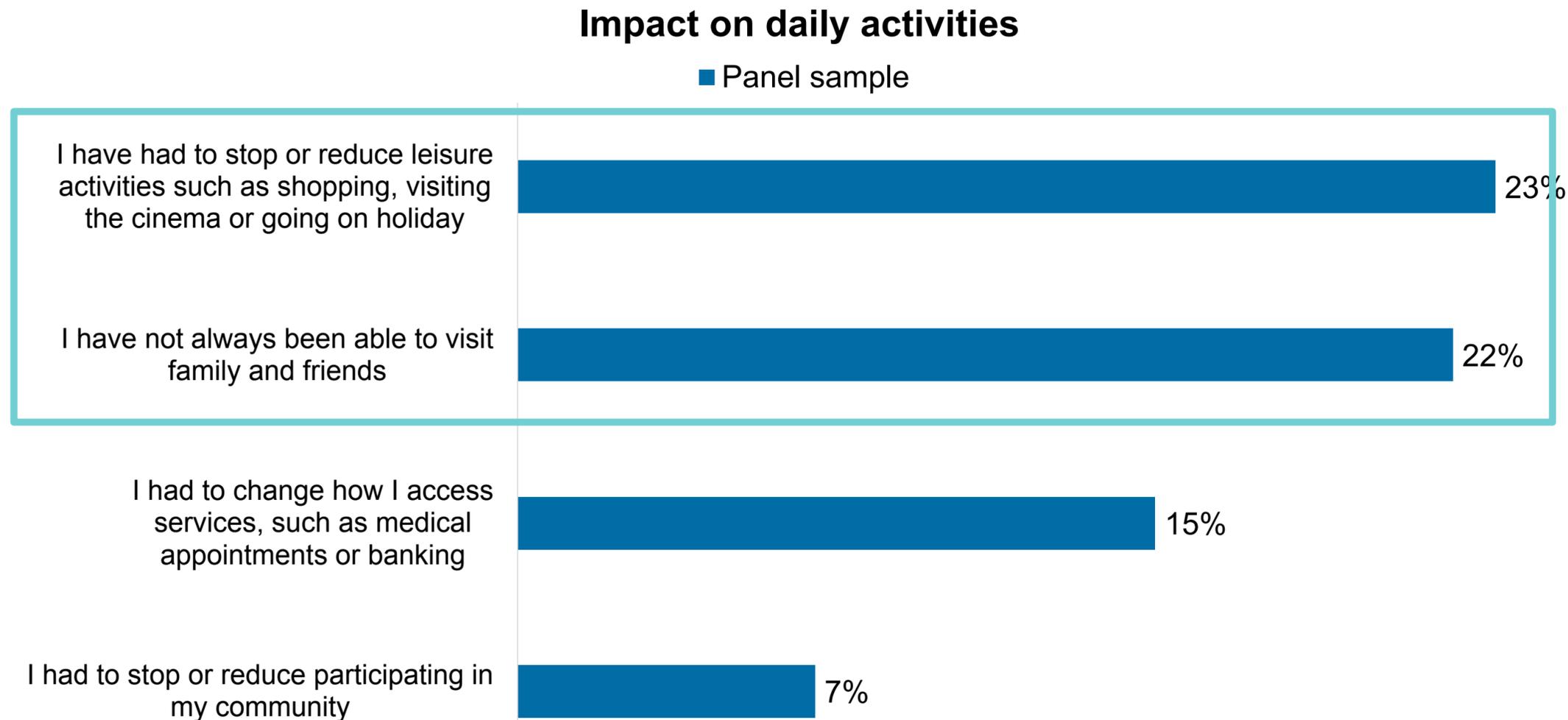


Participants in the qualitative research who needed to travel with a companion as a result of challenges with transport described feeling significantly less independent as a result.

"I just have to either not go out or wait until I have someone with me."
(Physical impairment, wheelchair user, female, 27)

Those who travel with a companion or require assistance from staff (50%) and those who use a mobility aid when traveling (46%), are more likely to feel less independent as a result of challenges with transport than those who don't travel with a companion or use any mobility aid (15%).

Nearly a quarter (23%) of disabled people say they have reduced leisure activities or not been able to visit friends and family (22%) as a result of challenges with transport

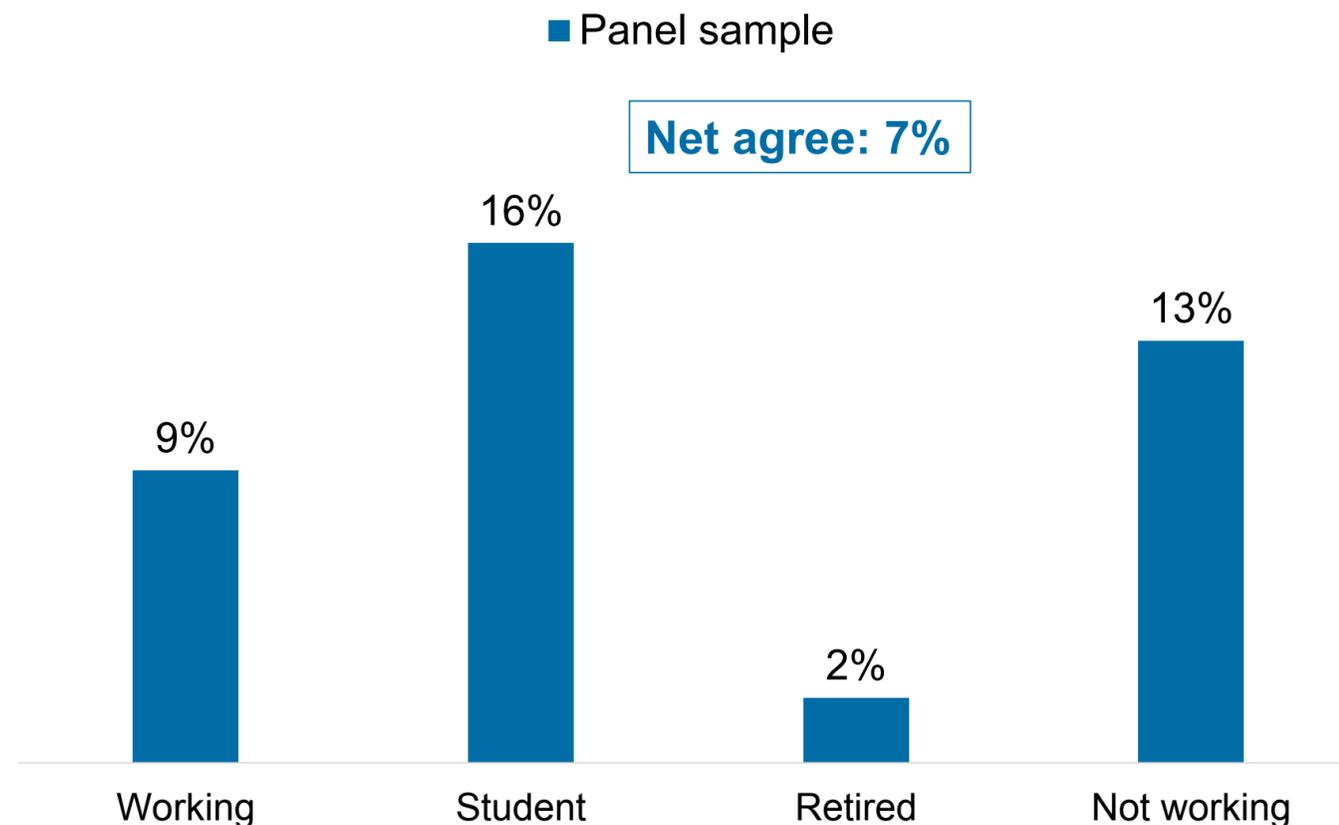


Those who are **not working (32%)** are more likely to have stopped or reduced leisure activities as a result of challenges with transport than those who are **students (13%), working (19%)** or **retired (23%)**.

Those who are **not working (32%)** are similarly more likely to not always have been able to visit family or friends than their **working counterparts (18%)**.

A significant minority (14%) of those not working, but seeking work or temporarily unemployed have experienced an impact on their employment as a result of transport challenges

'I was unable to take a job, had to stop working, or had to change my hours as a result of challenges with transport'



These participants are more likely to be **18-34 (15%)** than **35-54 (10%)** or **55+ (5%)**.

They are more likely to need **assistance from a companion or member of staff to travel (11%)**.

Those not working due to their **disability (15%)**, **currently furloughed (15%)** or **not working, but seeking work or temporarily unemployed (14%)** were more likely than those working fulltime (5%), part time (11%) or retired (2%) to agree with this statement.

Case study: Jonathan, physical impairment, 35



- Jonathan lives in London and regularly travels using the bus and underground. He was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis five years ago and describes this as an invisible illness.
- Jonathan finds that as the public generally views him as a young, healthy person, he is often judged for sitting, especially during peak travel times. Even when he is in pain, Jonathan sometimes feels like he has to give up his seat for others. This makes traveling very difficult.
- As a result of this, Jonathan tries to avoid peak travel times. He has also reduced the amount of non-essential travel he does, such as for leisure activities and socialising, preferring to travel only when necessary.

“I have an invisible illness, so if it is rush hour and I am sitting because I am physically in pain, I will be getting dirty looks to stand up... I feel I can only go out when it is a bit quieter and I can sit in the middle so I won't have to offer up my seat.”

Case study: Frances, mental health condition, social or behavioural difficulty, 48



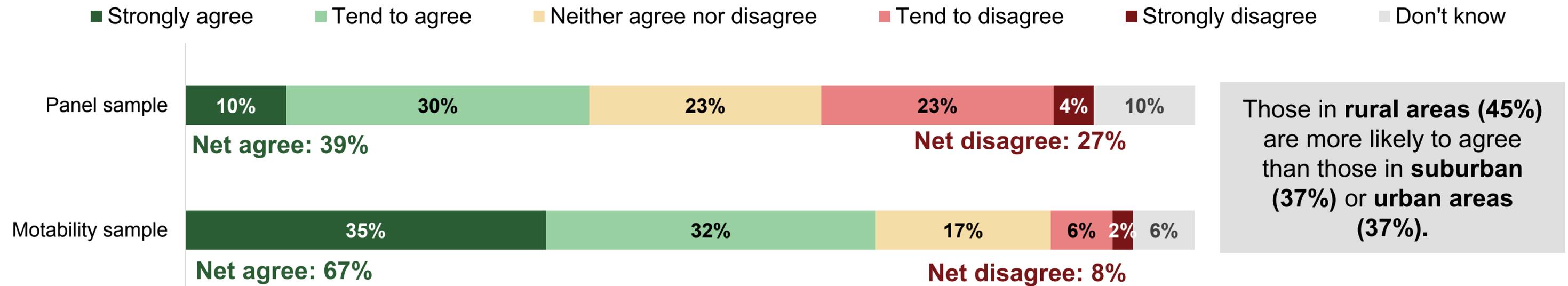
- Frances acquired her impairment 15 years ago. Since this time, her anxiety about using public transport and taxis has grown and she has become increasingly likely to avoid traveling at all. She described feeling very nervous in crowds and getting increasingly confused about how to navigate different forms of public transport.
- Frances will now only travel if her daughter is available to drive her. While she feels lucky her daughter lives close by and is able to visit 2 to 3 times a week, Frances feels isolated for the majority of the week. Frances has also had to reduce the amount she sees her other two daughters, as she would have to travel by train to see them.

“I find it hard to be around people and to travel to any destination is very difficult because I often do not want to leave the house. I especially do not and cannot travel on public transport or by taxi as it makes my anxiety worse.”

06 Changes to transport

As a result of the many challenges faced on transport, expectations for change are low among disabled people

'I do not think public transport will ever improve for disabled people'



Qualitatively, as a result of these low expectations, many described giving up on using public transportation altogether and relying on their car and other's to drive them when needed. This was felt to have a significant impact on independence.

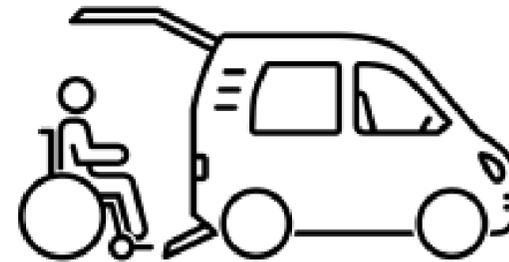
As a result, when considering potential changes to transport participants focused on the basic issues that are currently not working for them and prioritised 'quick fixes' that they could make an immediate difference.

We tested five different ideas for improving transport in the qualitative research

Adequate staff training

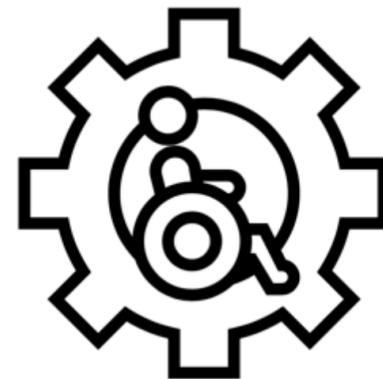


Improved access to private transport



Live information app

Improved accessibility infrastructure



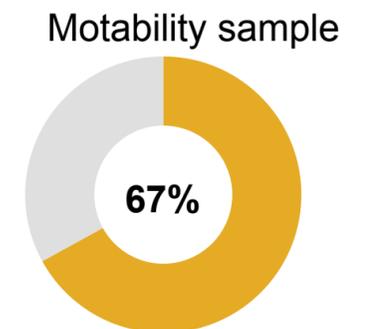
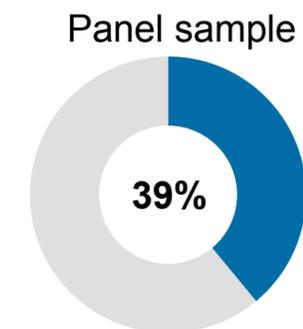
Improved access to public transport



As expectations of transport are low, participants tend to prioritise ‘getting the basics right’ when thinking about the future

- Participants in the qualitative research prioritised solutions that felt tangible and achievable, relating to information provision and behaviour.
 - An app providing detailed, real time information was received most favourably overall, followed by disability led staff training.
- Participants were less optimistic about the possibility of transport being made more accessible, despite this being a near universal issue experienced. As a result, solutions about investment in infrastructure were received less positively.
 - It is possible this was in part because creating an accessible transport infrastructure feels like a massive undertaking that has yet to happen, and one that is so unlikely to happen, that it is difficult for many to visualise.
 - Rather, participants advocated for the maintenance of existing infrastructure and for existing rules to be enforced.

“Improving the infrastructure has been suggested for years, but still in the 21st century public transport is often inaccessible.”
(Physical impairment, wheelchair user, female, 65)



Recap: % agree: ‘I do not think public transport will ever improve for disabled people’

Qualitatively, participants also pointed to the importance of improving interactions with other passengers and staff

- While this was difficult to articulate in terms of a solution, numerous participants expressed their support for measures to address judgmental attitudes and behaviours of other passengers on public transport.
 - This was especially the case for those with ‘hidden disabilities’ and those who require the wheelchair space to access transport.
- Disability led staff training was thought to be one way to address poor behaviour on transport, with staff taking a leading role in enforcing existing rules such as access to priority seating.
- Being able to speak to real people rather than automated systems when requesting assistance was mentioned as another opportunity for interactions to be improved.

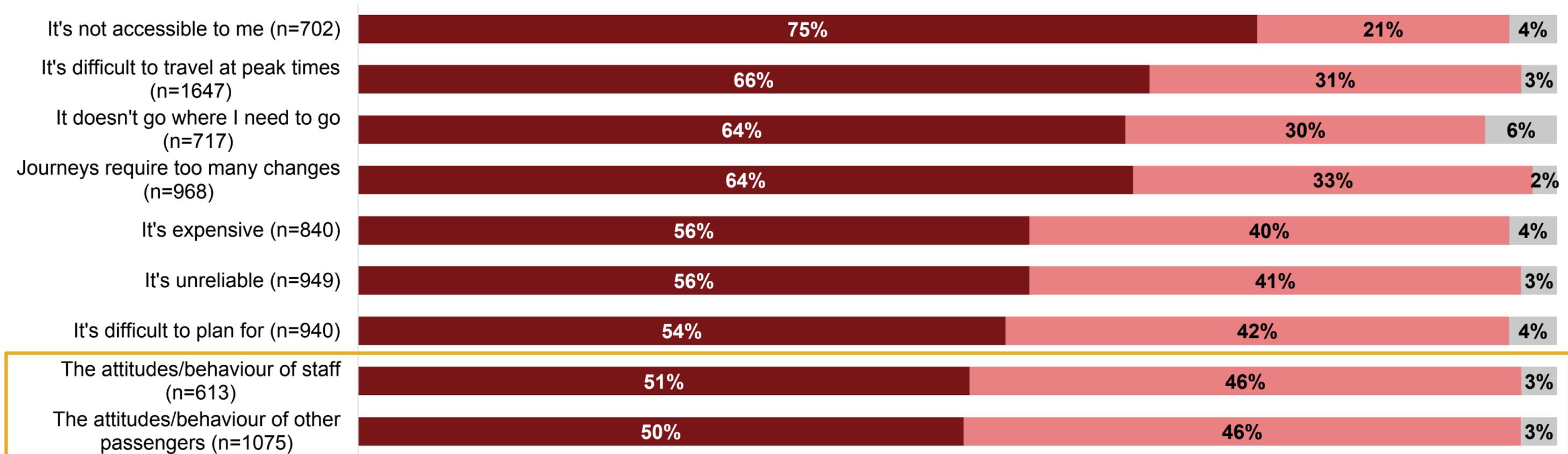
“It should be a good, reliable and trustworthy service. Bus drivers or other relevant people should be trained on the basics of how to help disabled people (even though most of it should be common sense!)”
(LTHC, female, 38)

“I kind of feel the whole of society needs to change to improve disabled access to public transport. People need to be more respectful of the rules.”
(Mental health condition, male, 45)

This is despite other people's attitudes having slightly less of an impact compared to accessibility

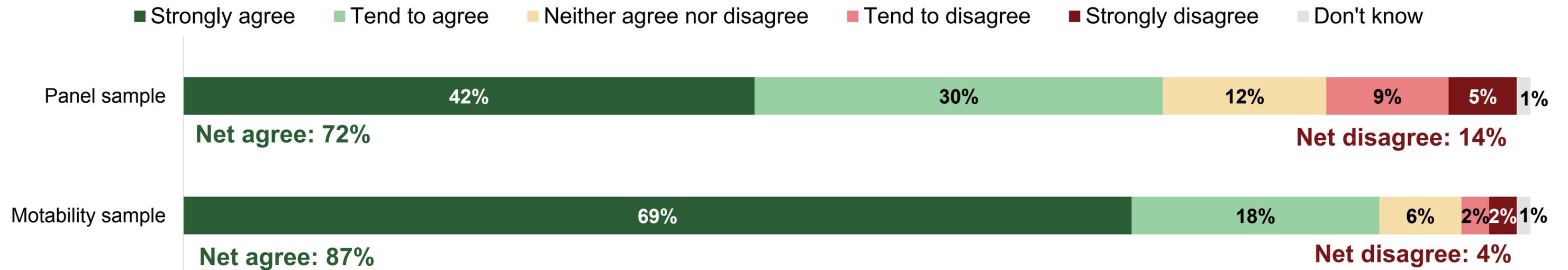
Impact of challenges on those who use public transport

■ Big impact ■ Some impact ■ No impact/don't know



In a context where expectations for improvements to public transport are low, the majority (72%) of disabled people say they would prefer to travel by car, even if public transport were improved

'Even if public transport were improved, I would prefer to travel by car'



It is possible this is in part because it is difficult to visualise public transport becoming accessible. 'Improvements' tend to be interpreted as maintaining the status quo, and at best, enforcing existing rules.

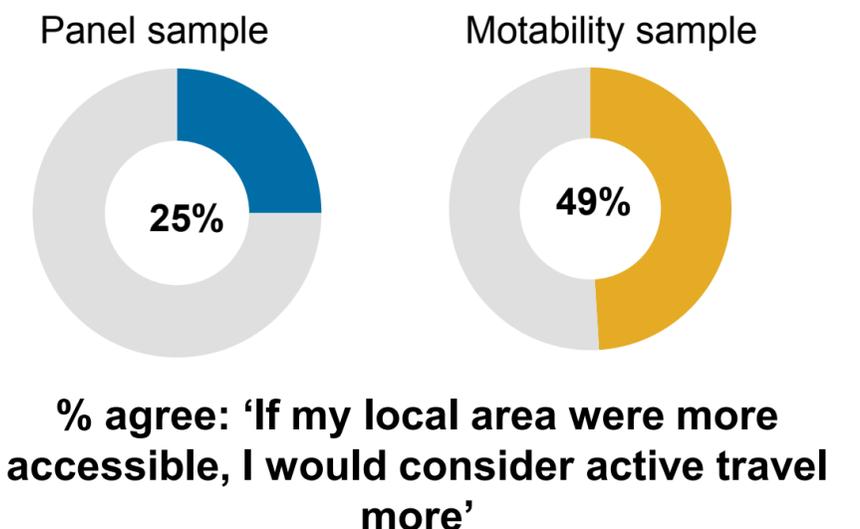
Those in **rural areas (84%)** are more likely to agree with this than those in **suburban (74%)** or **urban areas (59%)**.

"I don't and won't use public transportation as I don't feel safe with it."
(Physical impairment, male, 58)

A quarter (25%) of disabled people agree they would consider active travel more if their local area were more accessible

- Participants in the qualitative research described using active travel as a form of exercise and a way for them to feel more independent e.g. by travelling to the shops or to a friend's house.
- While many did not consider activities such as walking to the bus stop to be active travel, this is where many described their challenges with public transport beginning.
 - Challenges included walking to a bus stop or station, a lack of seating at bus shelters and a lack of benches along the way.
 - These problems were exacerbated for those with mobility and/or visual impairments who were further hindered by uneven pavement, street clutter and a lack of street crossings.
 - Wheelchair and mobility scooter users also pointed to the lack of ramps and dropped kerbs as hindering their ability to use active travel.

"I try to exercise by using my wheelchair outside occasionally. It's good for stamina and building up fitness. But it depends on the outside accessibility conditions. Often ramps are not in place."
(Physical impairment, wheelchair user, female, 65)



07 Conclusions

Recap of key findings

1

Experiences of public transport are more likely to be negative than private transport. While many participants rely on buses and trains, experiences are often negative (18% and 16% respectively).

2

There is low awareness of existing initiatives to support disabled people, with more than half (55%) saying they have never heard of Passenger Assist.

3

Key challenges with public transport include travel during peak times and unreliable public transport.

4

Poor accessibility, lack of information and complex journeys have the biggest impact on experiences of travel. Attitudes of other passengers and staff also have an impact – but to a lesser degree.

5

Transport challenges lead to a loss of independence (28%) and deciding not to make certain journeys (27%).

6

Expectations for the future are low. Two fifths (39%) of survey respondents do not think public transport will ever improve for disabled people.

Implications of the research for disability, transport and public sectors (1)

- **Certainty is very important for this audience.** Better information is key to supporting planning and dealing with the uncertainty of public transport. There is strong support for improved, real-time information.
 - Public transport: provide real-time information on accessibility across transport modes in one centralised location
 - Private transport: provide information on blue badge parking availability, accessibility of motorway rest stops and toilets
 - Active travel: provide information on accessibility of environments, such as dropped kerbs, benches, ramps etc.
- **Improving use and awareness of existing support is a quick win.** There is a clear role for signposting and connecting disabled people with existing services.
 - Public transport: raise awareness of passenger assist, disabled rail card and companion passes and other travel initiatives
 - Private transport: raise awareness of taxi schemes and community transport options
- **Cost is a prohibitive factor for many.**
 - Public transport: reduce train fares for disabled people, as well as for carers and companions of disabled rail users
 - Private transport: reduce or provide financial support for taxi/ride hail fares for disabled people
- **Traveling at peak times exacerbates numerous existing issues, on public and private transport.**
 - Public transport: disability-led training for staff should emphasis enforcing rules, especially during peak times; public-facing campaigns should highlight the impact on disabled people of not being able to access priority seating
 - Employers could offer flexible hours (especially for those with mental health issues) so they can avoid traveling at peak time

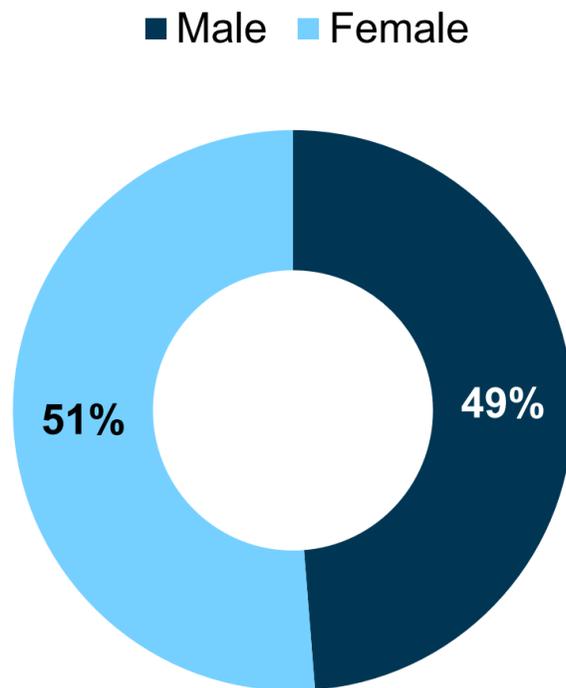
Implications of the research for disability, transport and public sectors (2)

- **Transport options are not always accessible.** Improvements involve (but are not limited to):
 - **For buses:** the placement/frequency of bus stops, the availability of seating and covering at bus stops, as well as the lowering of buses, provision of automatic ramps, and the availability of priority seating and wheelchair spaces.
 - **For trains:** the layout of stations, the accessibility of facilities and platforms, access to the train (and consistent use of ramps), the placement and number of priority seats, wheelchair spaces and accessible toilets.
 - **For private vehicles (including cars, taxis and ride hail):** ensure accessible vehicles, including WAVS, are included in fleets and easily bookable, and blue badge parking is readily available.
- **Complex journeys are currently not an option for many.**
 - Public transport: consultations should explore the needs of disabled people to inform the introduction of more direct routes via public transport.
 - Private transport: explore provision of community transport, low cost taxis and other options for shared services.
- **Future provision should engage early and include user-centred design.**
 - Planning to develop future infrastructure and travel initiatives should include disabled people in the planning stage wherever possible to ensure any new services are designed inclusively.

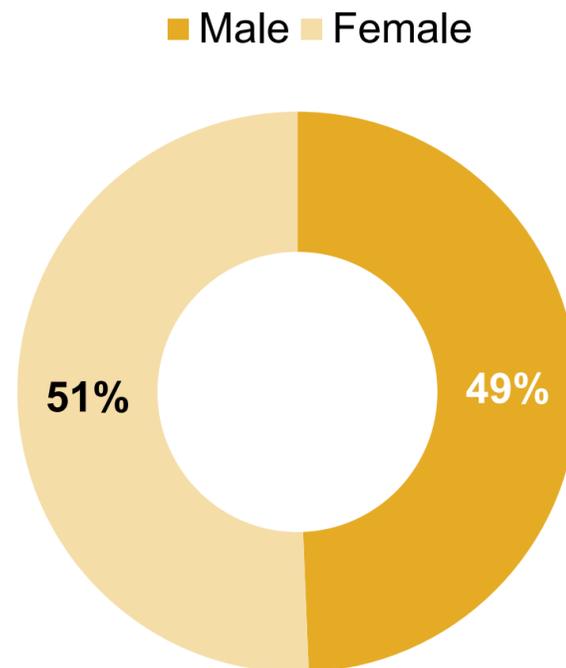
08 Appendix

Gender and age

Gender – Panel sample

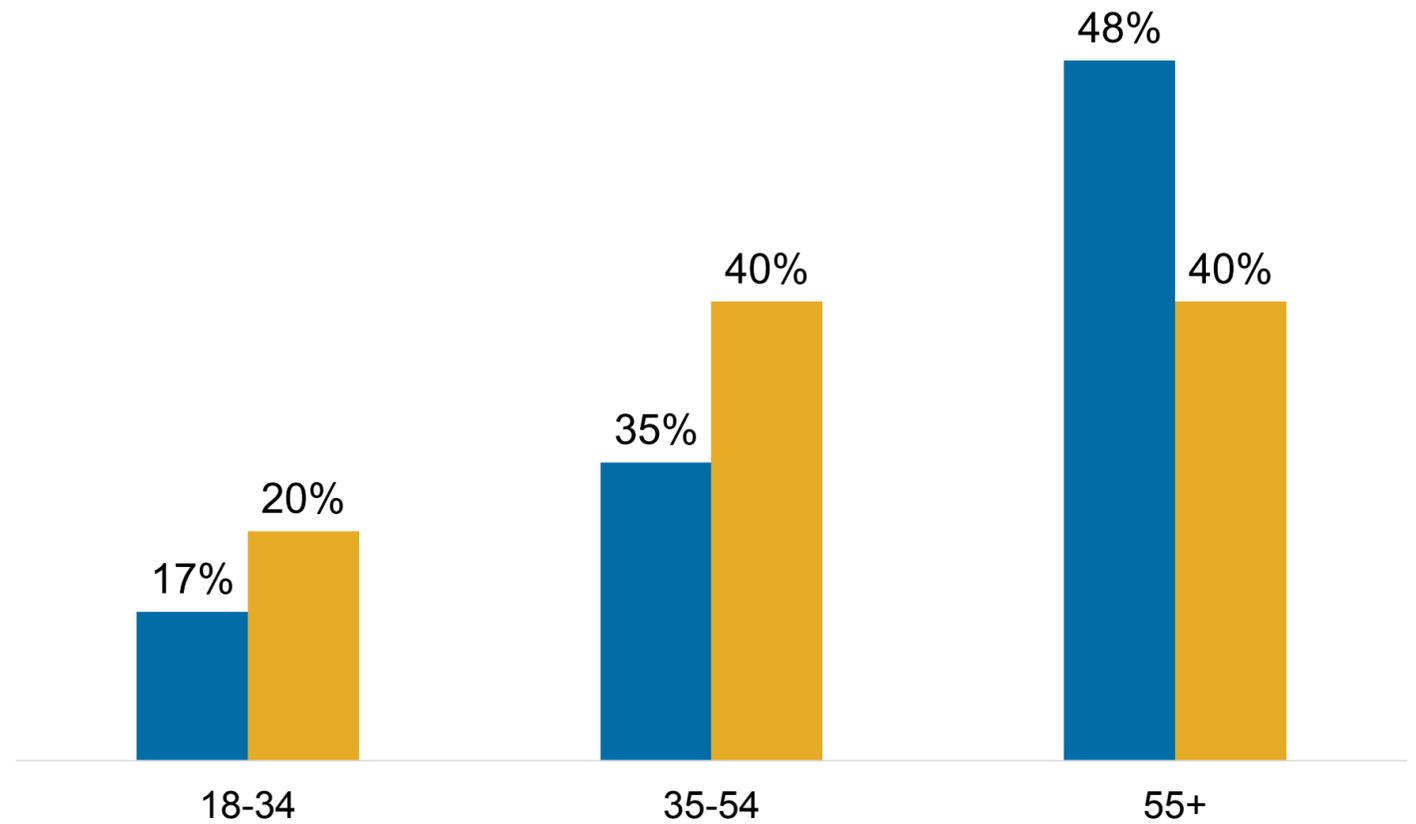


Gender – Motability sample

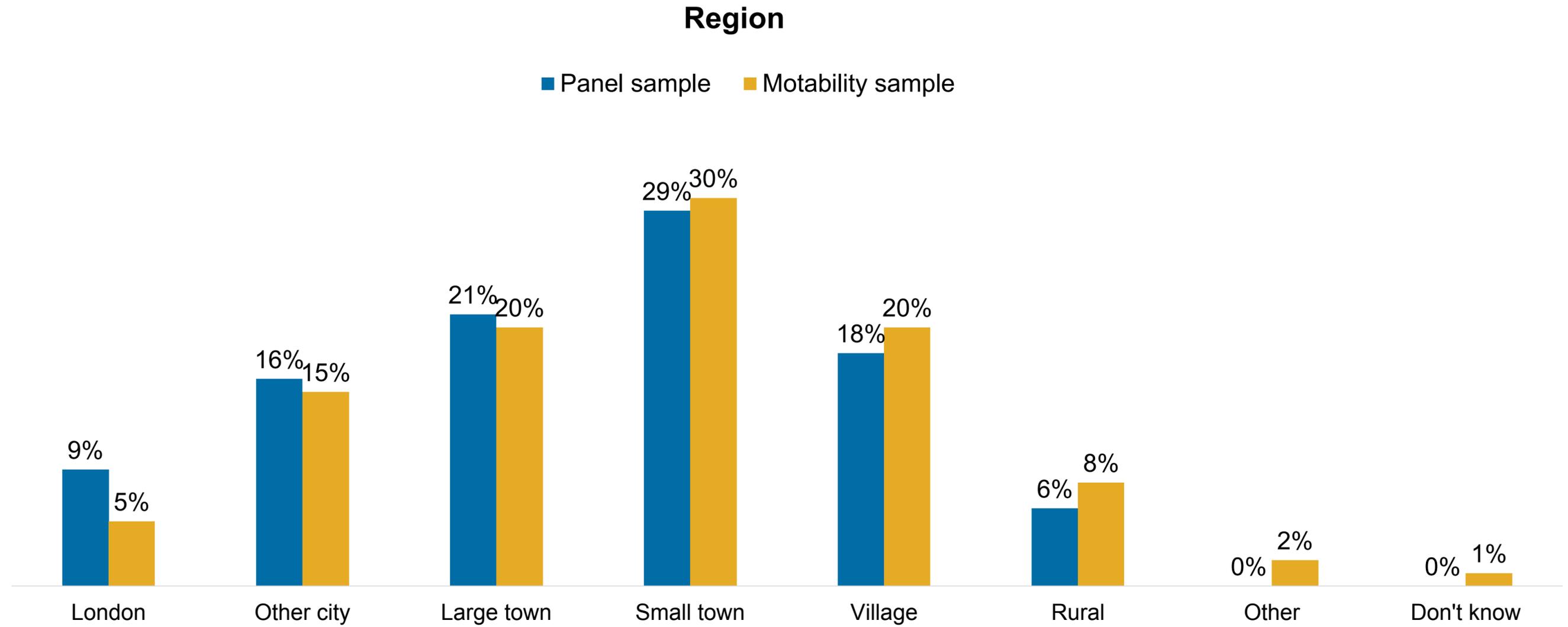


Age

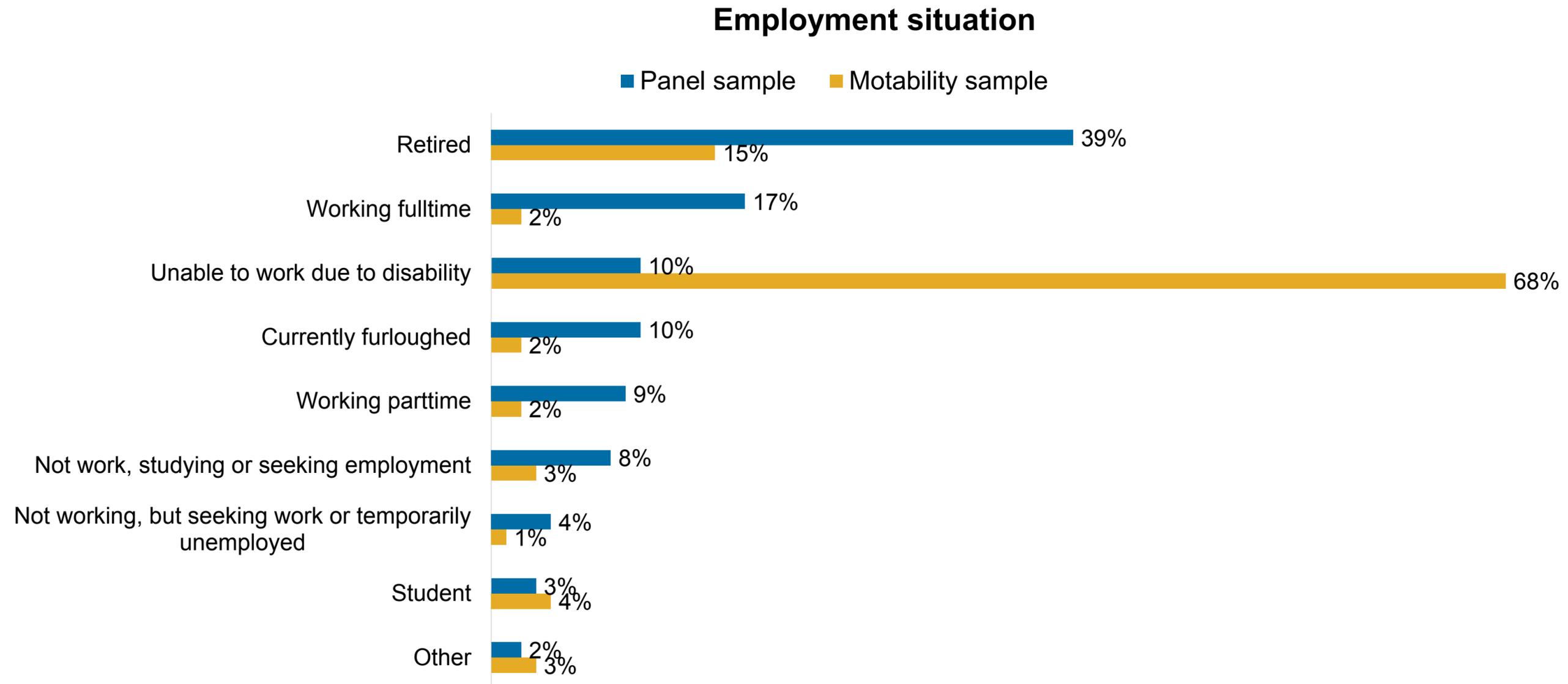
Panel sample (dark blue), Motability sample (orange)



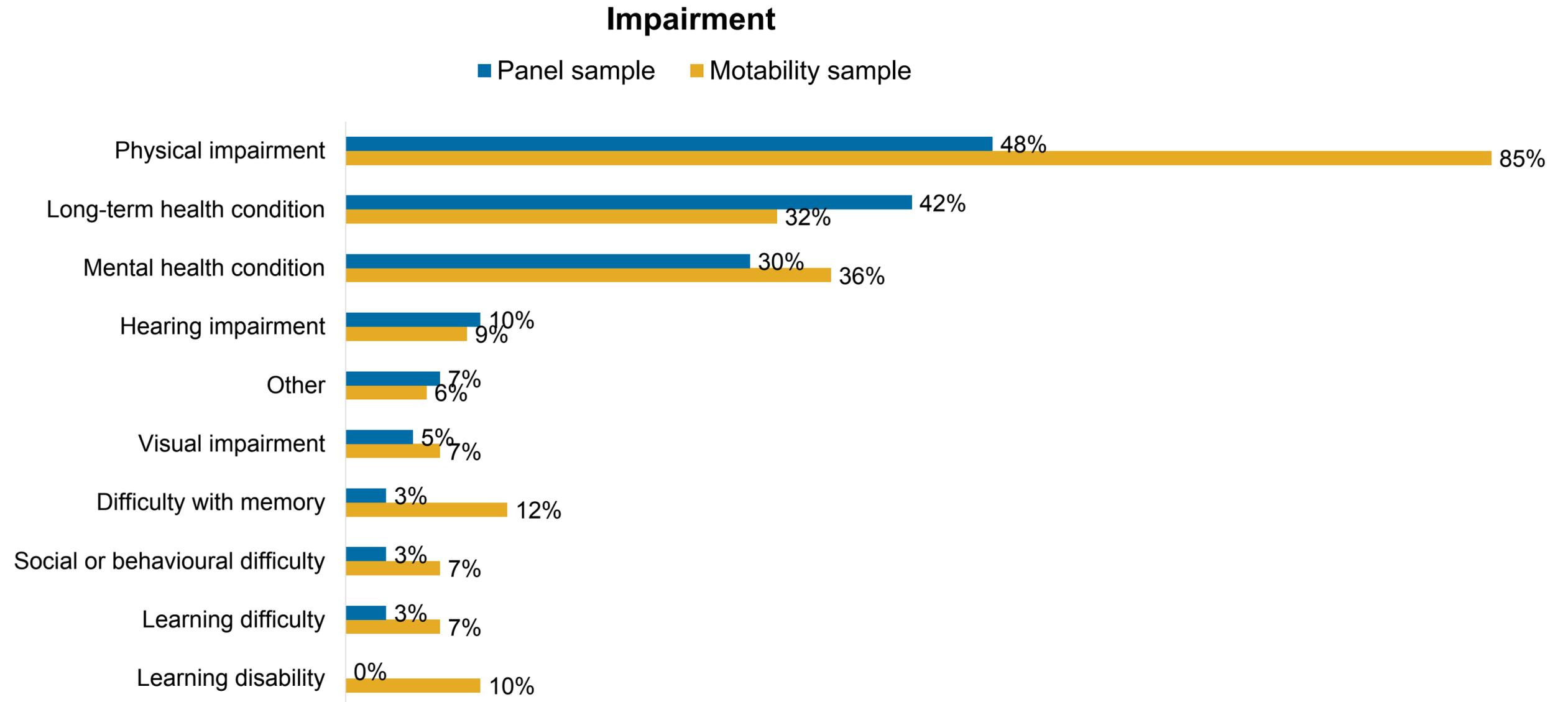
Region



Employment



Impairment type



Thank you

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