

# Students, bicycles and cycling

Survey research into student experiences of and attitudes towards cycling

**June 2017**

# Research summary

# An online survey with higher education students, delivered in June 2017, received 2042 responses revealing that...

Respondents are most likely to say they walk to their place of study (31%) and drive to their place of work (24%). 6% cycle to university and the same proportion (6%) cycle to work.

The 3 most important factors for choosing how they travel to university are: how long it takes to complete the journey, cost and convenience. The same reasons are important when choosing ways of travelling to work.

Of those who use a bike to get around at university, commuting to and from university or work are the journeys most frequently undertaken by bike.

Over half (56%) say they have not ridden a bike in the last 12 months. A further quarter have only done so a few times in the last year. 7% say they cycle 4 or more days a week.

Of those who use a bike to get around at university, 1 in 3 say they cycled more this academic year than they have done previously, the same proportion say they plan to cycle more next academic year. However, 1 in 4 have cycled less this year.

1 in 3 respondents say they have access to a bike, even if they don't currently use it.

General reasons given for not cycling are concerns about road safety and traffic, having too much to carry and the weather. These are also factors that influence respondents the most in terms of their personal cycling behaviour.

Respondents express concern about their safety when cycling, with 82% saying that cyclists are vulnerable to other road users and 64% saying that traffic makes them afraid of cycling.

Main reasons for cycling are getting/keeping fit, saving money and because it's better for the environment. These same factors would personally motivate respondents to cycle.

Respondents suggest there is room for improvement in terms of support for cycling at their university, however they also show a lack of awareness over what is available e.g. 45% don't know if cycle training is offered.

Having safer places to leave their bikes, shower and locker facilities and promoting campaigns to encourage cycling would help students to cycle/cycle more. Having dedicated cycle lanes and offering a bike rental scheme would also encourage more cycling.

# Research objectives and methodology

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## **Objective:**

The survey was designed to gather insight from students in higher education into their attitudes towards cycling, and their cycling behaviours.

## **Methodology:**

The survey was advertised online via the NUS Extra student database to students studying in higher education, and promoted as a survey about what they do in their spare time.

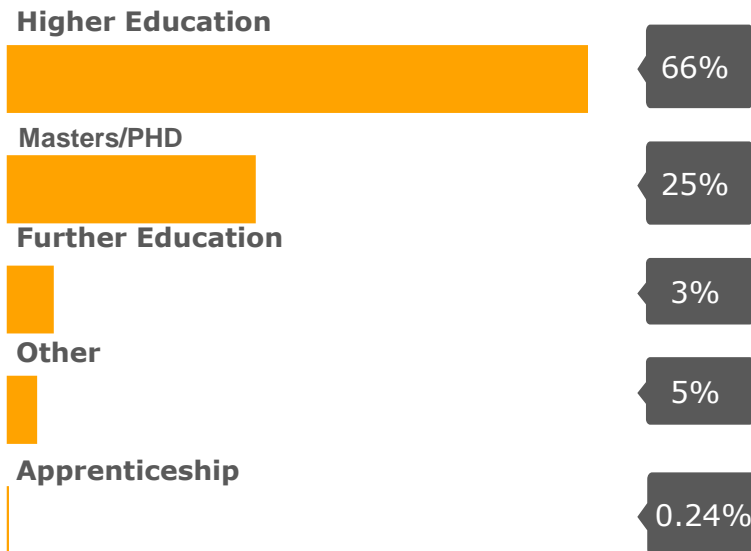
The survey took approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. A prize draw of £150 or one of four £25 runner up prizes was offered to incentivise completion.

A final sample of 2042 responses was achieved.

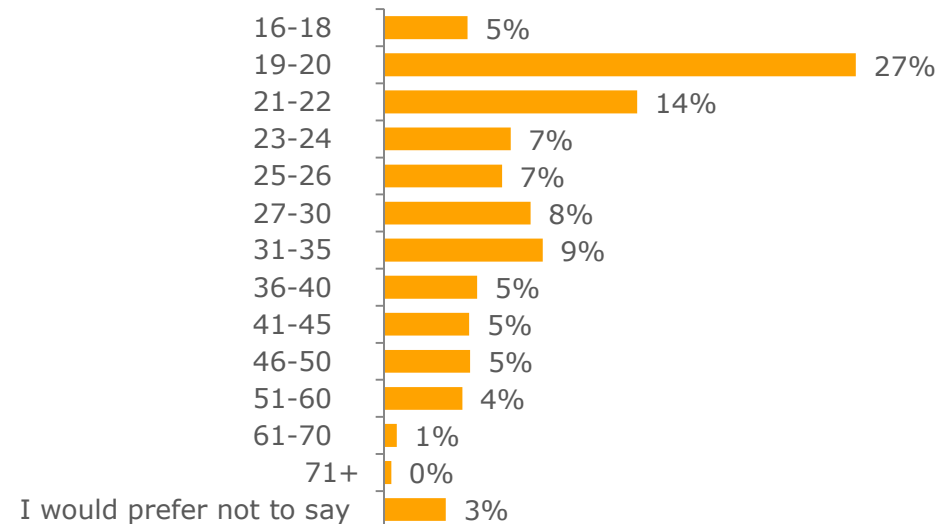
# The respondents

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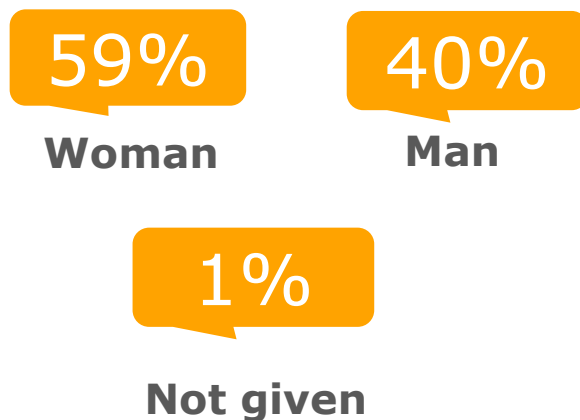
## LEVEL OF STUDY



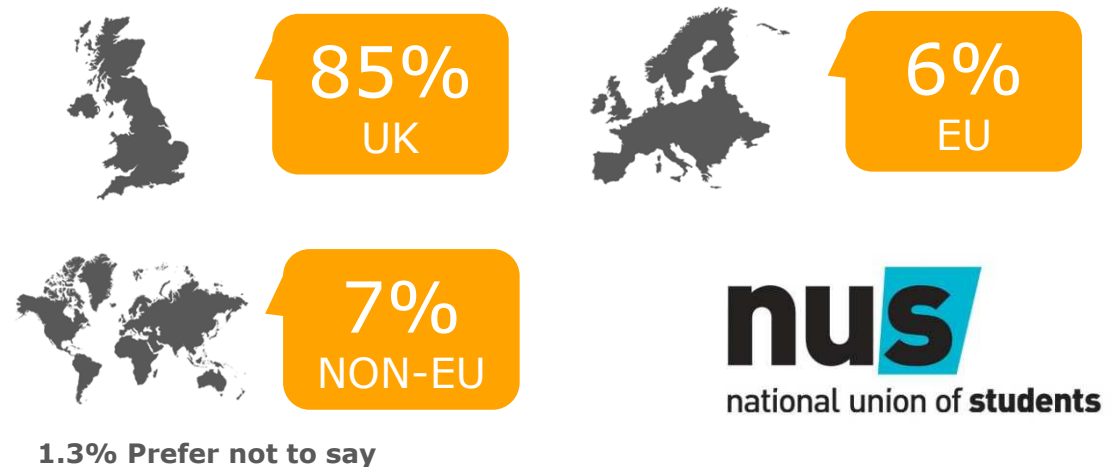
## AGE



## GENDER IDENTITY

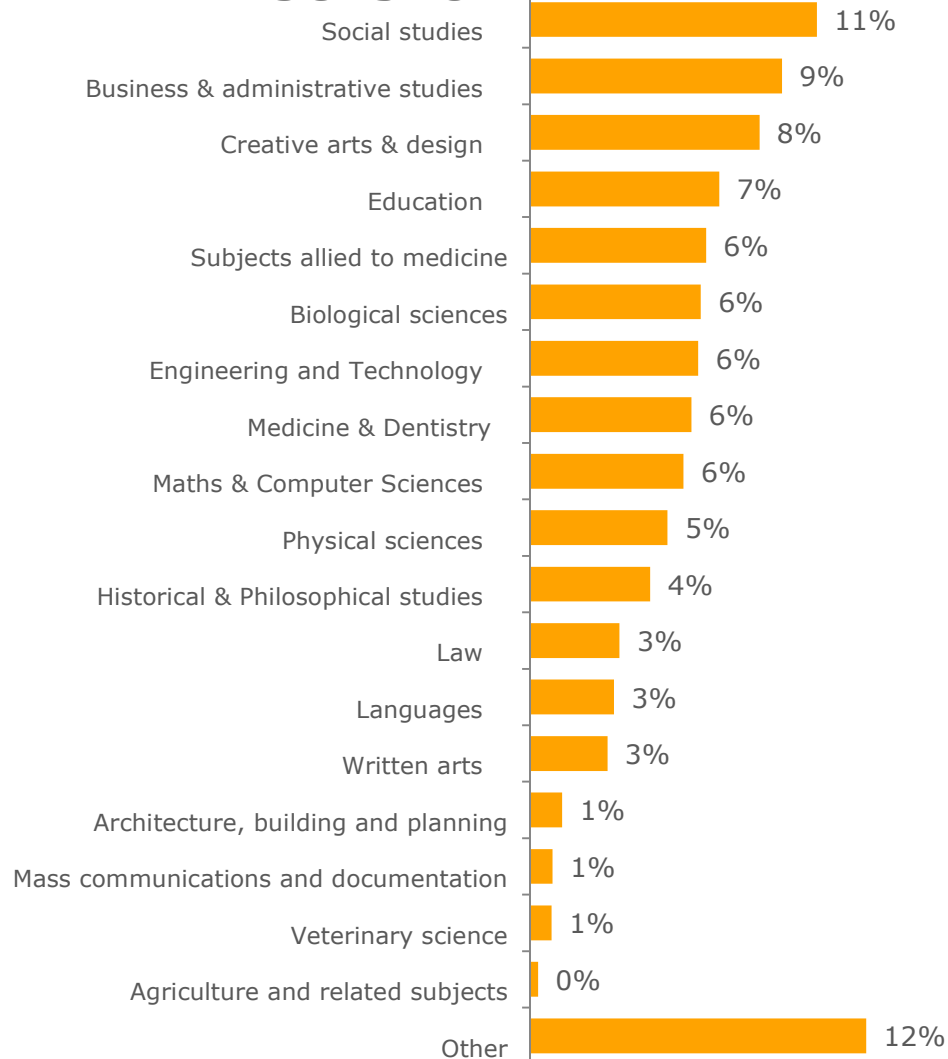


## NATIONALITY



# The respondents

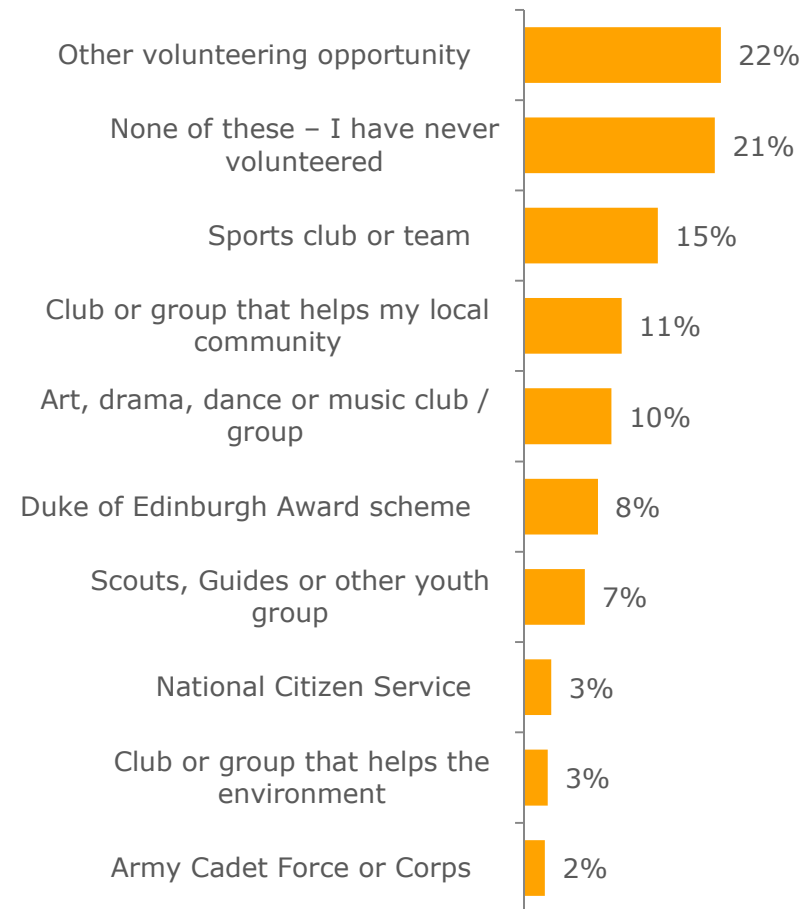
## SUBJECT



**F1. And which of the below most closely matches with your course subject?**

[Base: 2036 Balance: No response]

## SPARE TIME



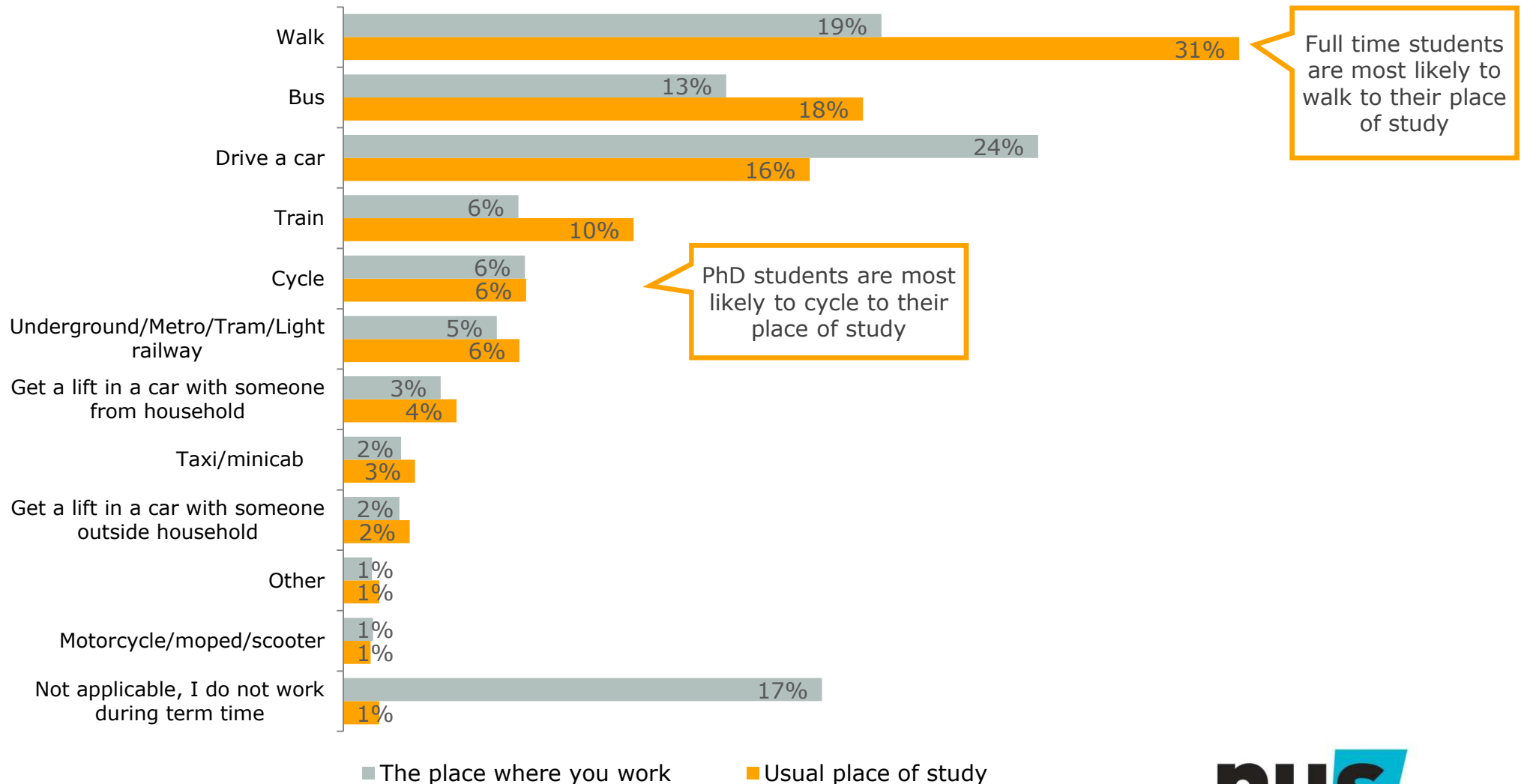
**F2. What volunteering activities, if any, have you ever taken part in?**

[Base: 2033 Balance: No response]



# Findings in detail

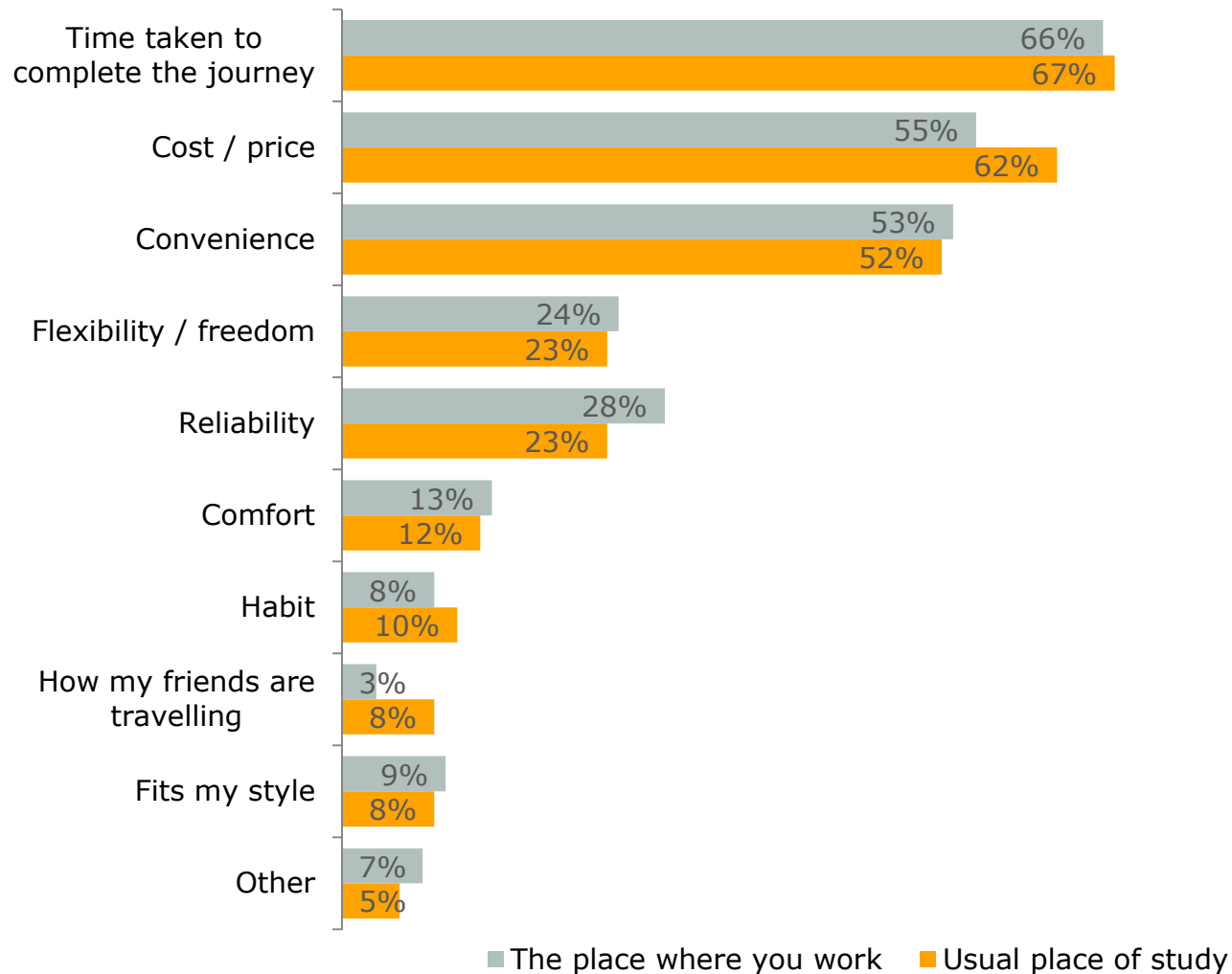
Respondents are most likely to say they walk to their place of study (31%) and drive to their place of work (24%). 6% cycle to university and the same proportion (6%) cycle to work.



**B1. Thinking about where you live during term time at university...how do you usually get from where you live to...?**

Base: 1879 (usual place of study) and 1347 (the place where you work) Balance: No response]

The 3 most important factors for choosing how they travel to university are: how long it takes to complete the journey, cost and convenience. The same reasons are important when choosing ways of travelling to work.

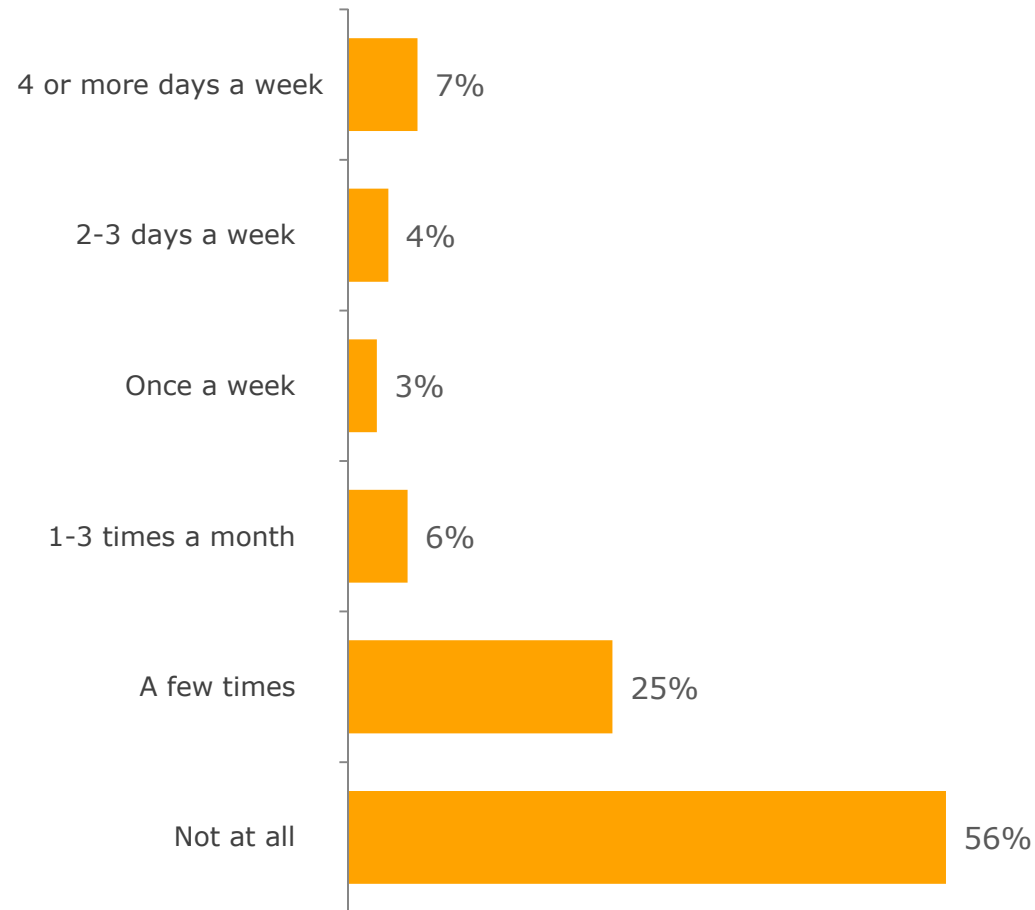


PhD students are most likely to rate time taken to get to university to be important

**B2. While you're at university, which are the three most important factors that influence your decision on how to travel from where you live to...?**

Base: 1827 (usual place of study) and 1007 (the place where you work) Balance: No response]

Over half (56%) say they have not ridden a bike in the last 12 months. A further quarter have only done so a few times in the last year. 7% say they cycle 4 or more days a week.



Women students are most likely to say they haven't ridden a bike in the last year

C1: Approximately how often have you ridden a bike in the last 12 months?

[Base: 2039 Balance: No response]

1 in 3 respondents say they have access to a bike, even if they don't currently use it. Of those who cycle whilst at college, 4 in 10 do so for pleasure or exercise.



**32% have access to a bicycle whilst at university**

Students who are men or PhD students are most likely to have access to a bike

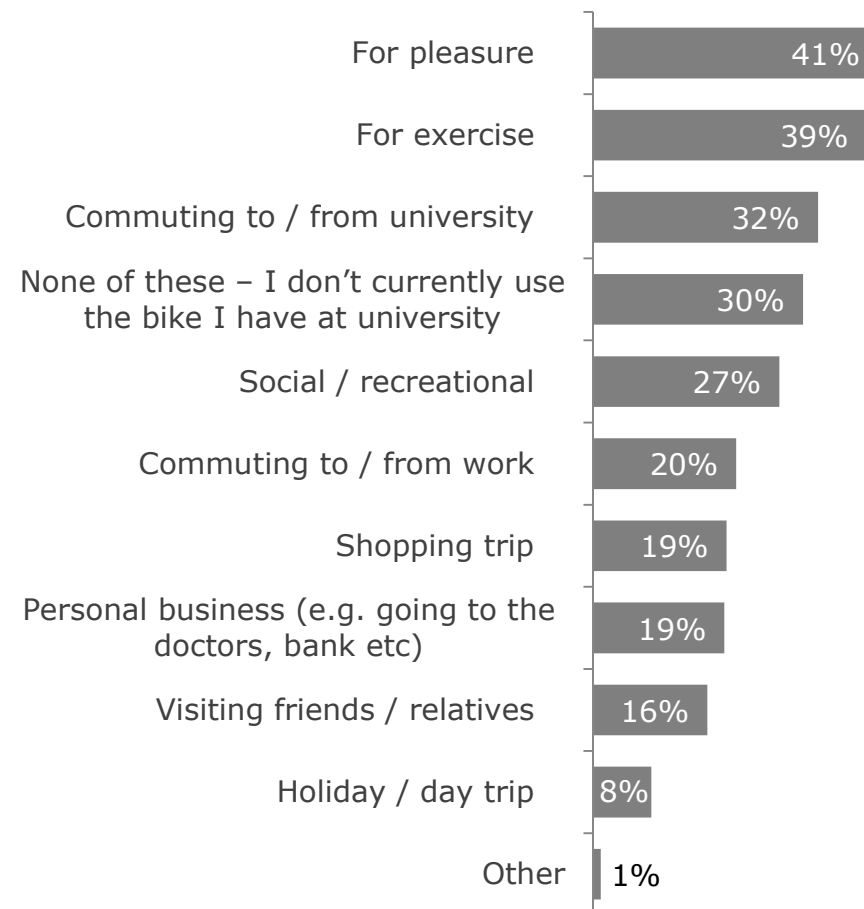
**60% do not have access to a bicycle whilst at university**



8% Didn't know

**C2: When you're at university, do you have access to a bicycle, even if you don't currently use it?**

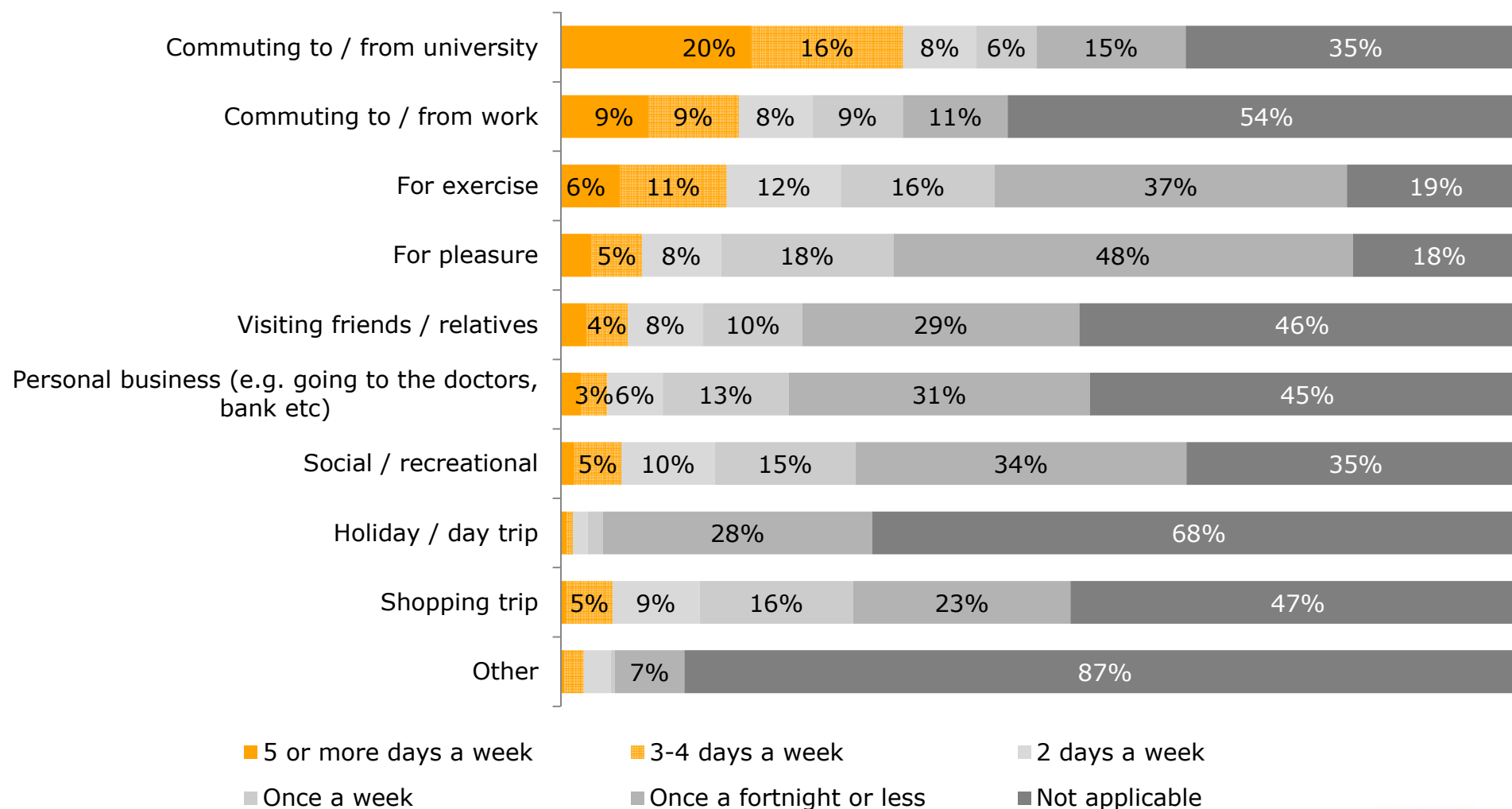
[Base: 2037 Balance: No response]



**C3: What types of journey do you make by bicycle while you're at university?**

[Base: 650 Balance: Do not have access to a bicycle/don't know]

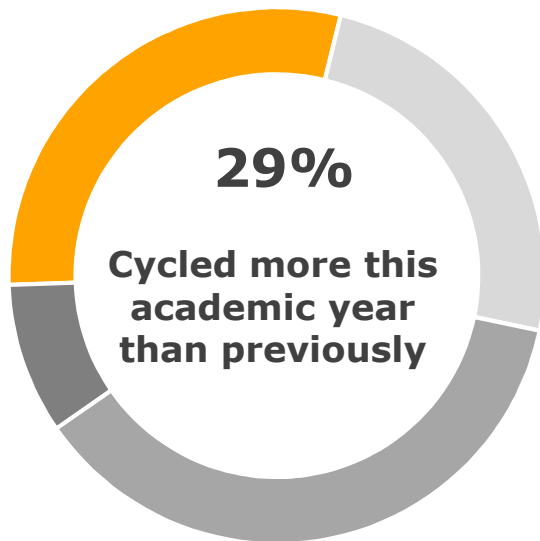
Of those who use a bike to get around at university, commuting to and from university (20% do this 5 or more days a week) or work (9% do this 5 or more days a week) are the journeys most frequently undertaken by bike.



C4: You said you use your bike to get around at university. Please tell us how often you typically cycle to complete these journeys.

[Base: c.340 Balance: No response / Do not use a bike at university]

Of those who use a bike at university, around 1 in 3 say they cycle more this academic year than they have done previously, the same proportion say they plan to cycle more next academic year. However, 1 in 4 cycle less this year.



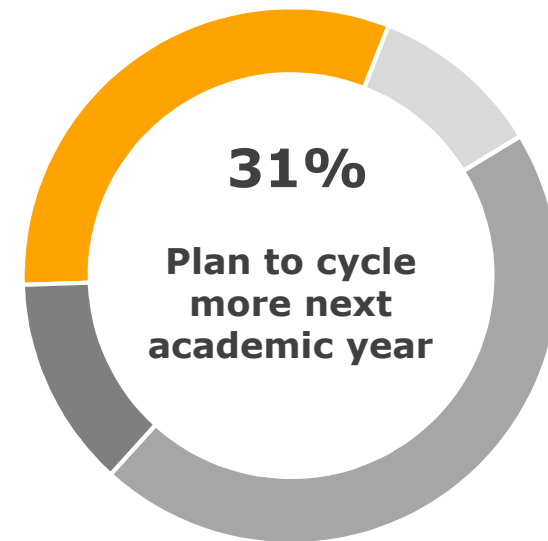
More Less About the same Don't know

**Reasons for cycling more include...**

Health and fitness	"I want to exercise and practice a healthier lifestyle"
Change in location	"Live closer to uni so more realistic to use than bus like last year"
Increased convenience	"More convenient form of travel for where I'll be living"

C5: Thinking about how much you've used your bicycle this academic year (2016-17), how does this compare with how often you cycled during the previous academic year?

[Base: 650 Balance: No response / Those who don't use a bike at university]



More Less About the same Don't know

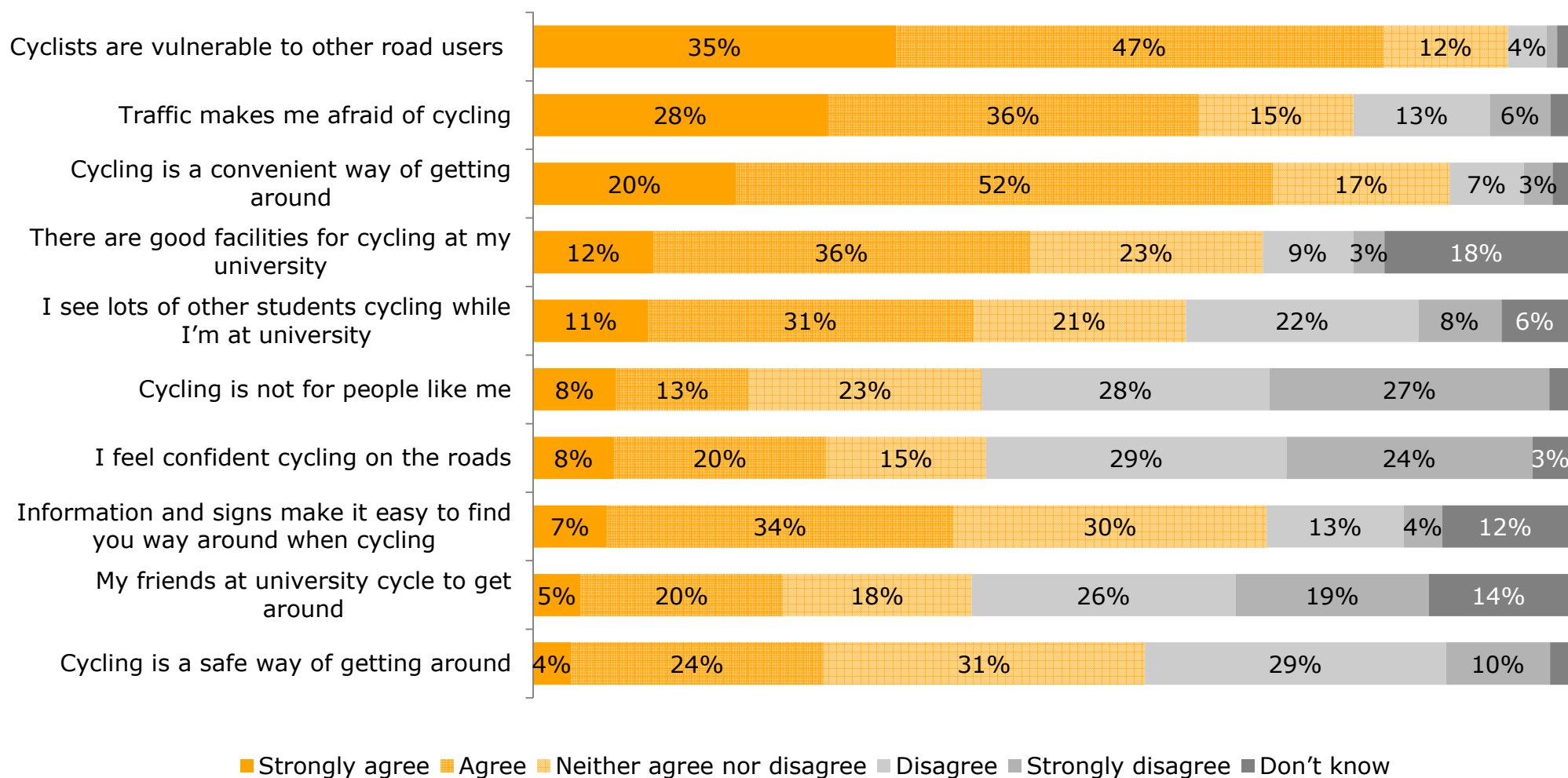
**Reasons for cycling less include...**

"My uni work timetable increased so couldn't spare the hour's commute by bike"	Journey time
"It is too dangerous on the roads to cycle"	Safety concerns
"Live closer to university compared to last year"	Change in location

C6: And thinking about next academic year, how often do you think you'll be cycling compared to this academic year?

[Base: 645 Balance: No response / Those who don't use a bike at university]

Respondents express concern about their safety when cycling, with 82% saying that cyclists are vulnerable to other road users (agree or strongly agree) and 64% saying that traffic makes them afraid of cycling (agree or strongly agree). On the other hand, respondents recognise the convenience offered by cycling (72% agree or strongly agree) and almost half say there are good facilities for cycling at their university (48% agree or strongly agree).

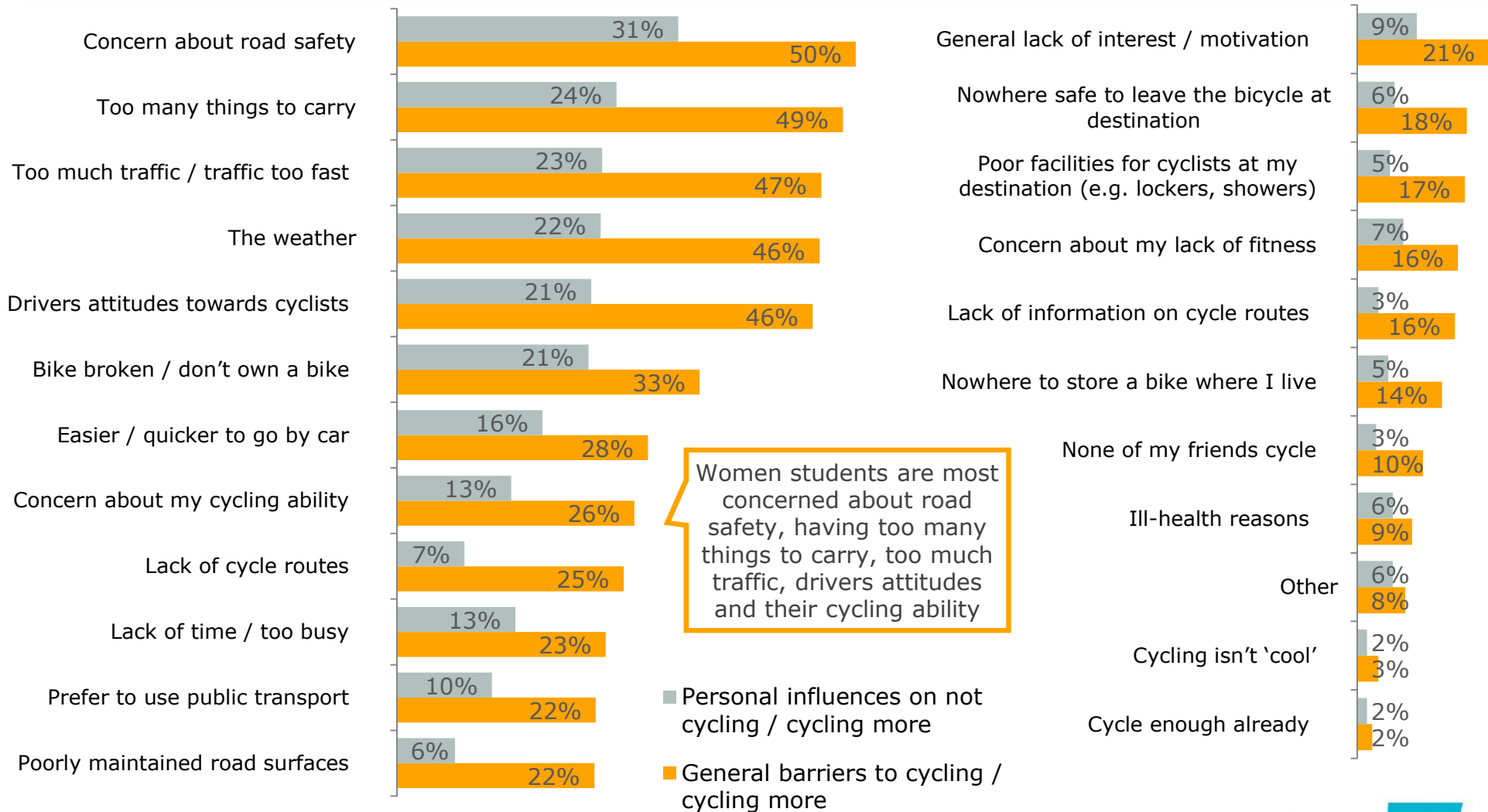


D1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?.

[Base: c.2003 Balance: No response]



General reasons given for not cycling are concerns about road safety and traffic, having too much to carry and the weather. These are also factors that influence respondents the most in terms of their personal cycling behaviour.



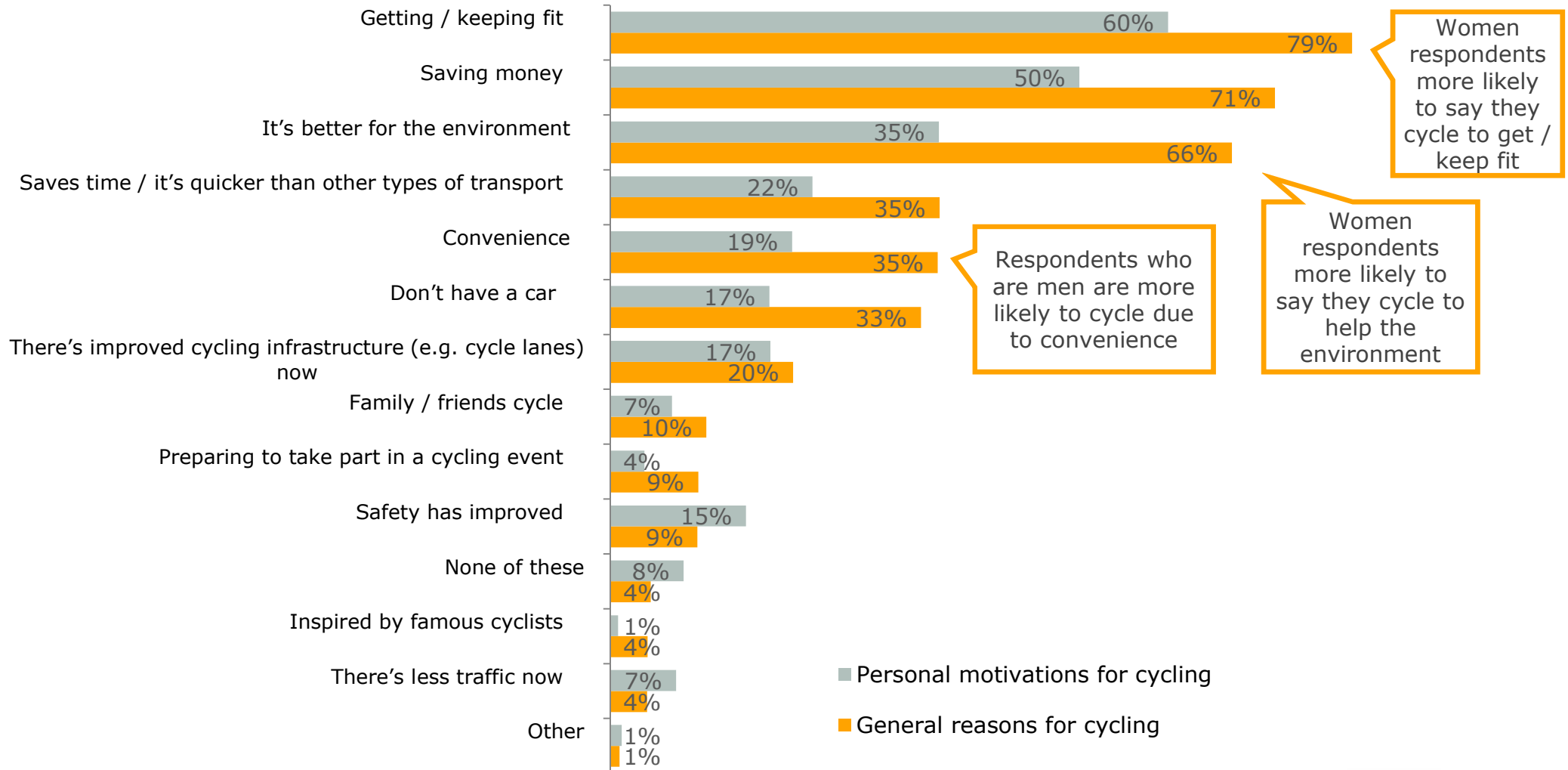
D2: Please tell us which of the following reasons for not cycling or not cycling more and tell me which apply to you?

[Base: 2023 Balance: No response]

D3: And which of these influence you most?

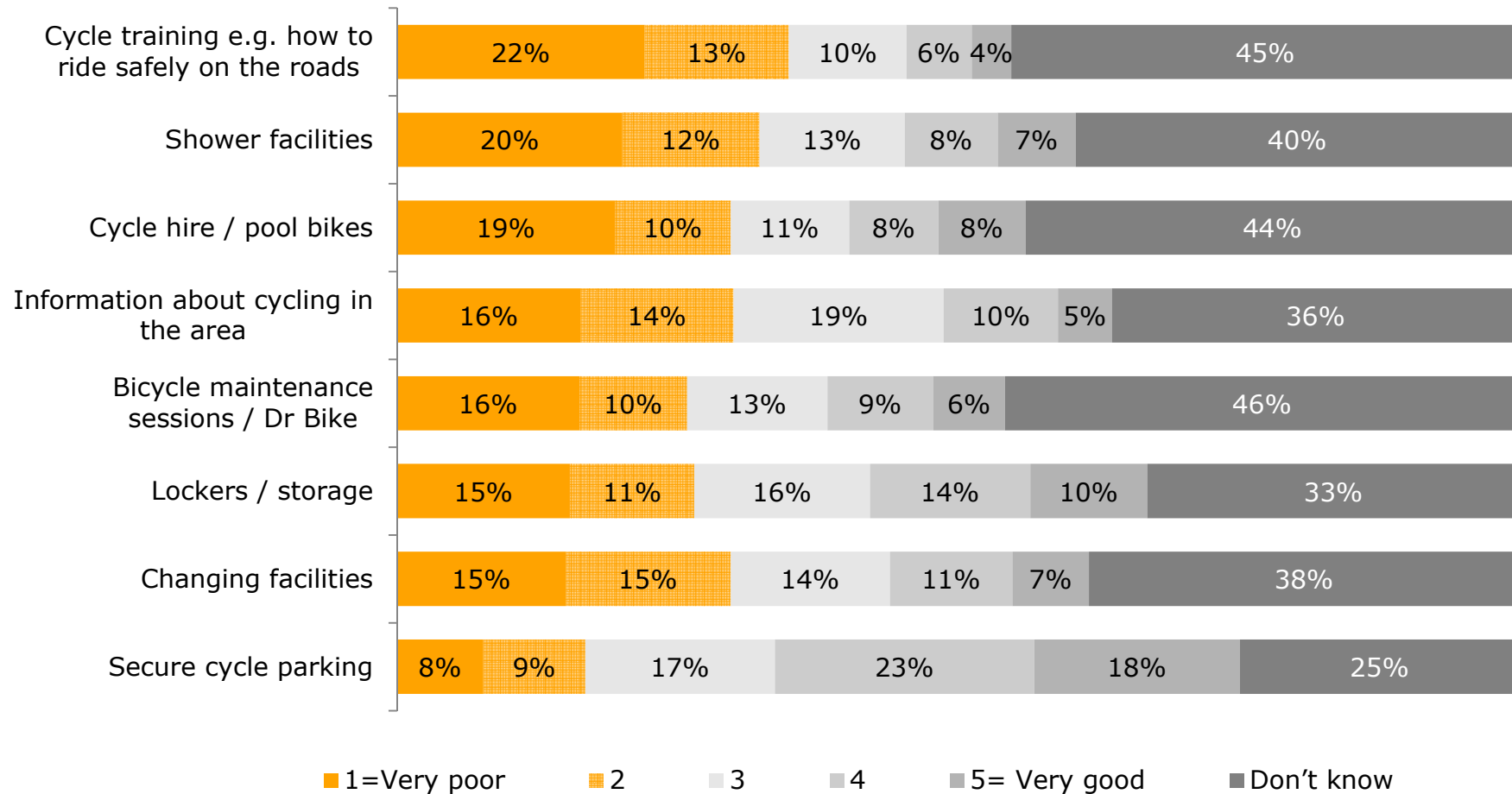
[Base: 2014 Balance: No response]

General reasons identified for cycling are getting/keeping fit, saving money and because its better for the environment. These same factors would encourage respondents to cycle more.



**D4: Which of the following would you say are reasons for cycling?**  
 [Base: 2027 Balance: No response]  
**D5: And which of these would encourage you personally to cycle the most?**  
 [Base: 2028 Balance: No response]

Respondents suggest there is room for improvement in terms of support for cycling at their university, however they also show a lack of awareness over what is available e.g. 45% don't know if cycle training is offered. Between a quarter and a third say shower facilities, lack of cycle hire and information about cycling in the area are poor. Secure cycle parking facilities are, however, considered to be good for 4 in 10.



E1: How would you rate the following facilities or initiatives that help people to cycle at your university?  
 [Base: c.1983 Balance: No response]

Having safer places to leave their bikes, shower and locker facilities and promoting campaigns to encourage cycling are suggested as facilities or initiatives that would help students to cycle/cycle more. Having dedicated cycle lanes and offering a bike rental scheme are also suggested as possible ways to encourage more cycling.

**Safer cycle parking/storage (25%)**

"More information on safe routes. Safer storage of bikes (sheds not just posts). Renting bikes."

**Promotions and campaigns (24%)**

"Promote awareness of the benefits to the environment and the little financial cost"

**Facilities e.g. showers/lockers (17%)**

"More lockers/shower areas, improved infrastructure-CYCLE LANES"  
"More information about cycling and how it is beneficial - increase motivation to cycle. More signs/directions around the university for students. More cycle lanes."

**Dedicated cycle lanes/routes (15%)**

"We have a cycle hire scheme but it is not advertised. No idea how to access the secure bike storage and there aren't any showers."

**Bike rental schemes (11%)**

"Make it part of the introduction to the university. Include visible cycle lanes along the boulevards. secure bike parking outside buildings. Gifts for cyclists"

"Rent bikes, information on bikes, encourage cycling"

Please contact Rachel Drayson – Insight manager (Sustainability) for further information about this research at [rachel.drayson@nus.org.uk](mailto:rachel.drayson@nus.org.uk)