

# Making space

Improving London's streets for walkers and wheelers

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October 2025

# Background

Streets are a vital part of London's transport network. Every day, 6.7 million trips are made by walking or wheeling, accounting for 25.8 percent of all journeys in the city.

However, street conditions are not meeting public expectations, and barriers to safe and accessible travel remain widespread.

London TravelWatch has commissioned Yonder Consulting to conduct research to understand what people need from their streets and how improvements should be prioritised.

The findings will shape London TravelWatch's work and help advocate for safer, more accessible, and better-quality streets.

## Objectives



- 1. Refresh understanding of public priorities for London's street space**
- 2. Explore differences in views by location and demographic groups, including people with disabilities, families, and older adults**
- 3. Assess public support for potential solutions to street-related challenges**

# Methodology

## 1. Qualitative research

### Gathering strategic insights from stakeholders

**4x 30-minute online interviews with London TravelWatch's key stakeholders in the urban planning, transport and civil infrastructure sector.**

**These interviews helped to:**

- Identify strategic priorities and pain points across the transport and urban mobility system.
- Understand what policy-makers and advocacy groups see as key gaps in Londoners' street experiences.
- Surface hypotheses and dimensions to test in the quantitative survey.
- Align survey content with emerging policy, infrastructure priorities, and lived reality.

Analysis was then conducted to pull out key themes and findings to inform the survey at both the overall and subgroup level (e.g., people with disabilities, families with young children, inner and outer London), where relevant, to highlight nuances in experience.

## 2. Quantitative survey

### Understanding Londoners' walking and wheeling experiences

**A 15-question survey conducted with 1,003 Londoners aged 18+ via Yonder's online London Omnibus.**

- Fieldwork was conducted between 4th and 9th July 2025.
- Quotas set on London region, age, ethnicity and gender.
- Post-field weighting on the London population's age, gender, region, ethnicity, working status and home ownership.
- Data was overlaid with the Index of Multiple Deprivation which is a composite measure of relative deprivation across income, employment, education, health, crime, housing and environment to explore how experiences vary by socio-economic need.

Analysis has been conducted at both an overall and subgroup level, calling out significant differences (at 95 percent confidence).

# Key findings

## Walking is integral to daily life in London

Walking is the most common way Londoners get around. Two-thirds walk regularly, and is particularly common among younger, wealthier, and ethnically diverse Londoners. In the past six months, 12% of Londoners have wheeled using wheelchairs, mobility aids, or buggies with higher rates among parents, people living in Central London, and those with eyesight conditions. One in four Londoners carry additional items such as pushchairs, trolleys, or luggage, with this being most common among disabled people, parents, and those in Inner London.

## Satisfaction with walking/ wheeling is high, but some face more barriers

Three in five are satisfied with their overall experience walking/wheeling in London, but older people, parents and those with physical conditions are more likely to be dissatisfied. Poor pavement conditions, crowding and safety concerns are the biggest causes of dissatisfaction. These issues disrupt everyday journeys, particularly for those with additional needs.

## Accessibility and space gaps persist across London’s streets

While two in three find London’s streets easy to navigate, many feel they don’t work for everyone. Just 38% agree the streets are accessible for disabled people, and those with physical conditions are twice as likely to say there is a lack of rest points, safe crossings and accessible infrastructure. Three in five Londoners also feel there’s too much competition for space between walkers, cyclists and other road users.

## Safety and confidence drop after dark

Most Londoners feel comfortable and safe walking or wheeling during the day. However, two in five feel unsafe walking alone at night, and over half say London’s streets can feel overwhelming or stressful. These concerns are especially pronounced among women and people with physical or mental health conditions.

## Crowding, noise and physical barriers affect many journeys

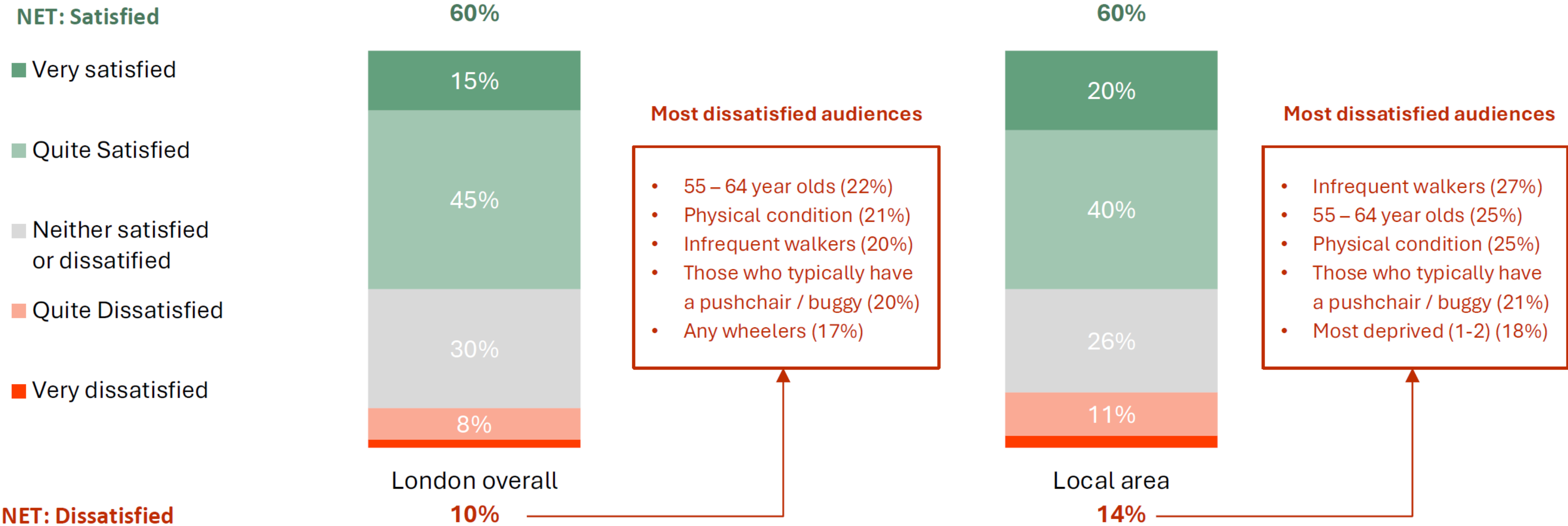
Crowded pavements, noise, and physical obstacles are the most frequently reported issues, and two in five Londoners have experienced a disruption to their journey in the past month. Access barriers, such as missing or uneven pavements and a lack of toilets are especially common among disabled and older people. Parents and those in deprived areas are more likely to cite crowded pavements as a key barrier.

## Pavements, rest stops and toilets are top investment priorities

Well-lit streets, good pavements and green spaces are seen as the top priorities for making London’s streets work well, but dissatisfaction is highest for pavement quality, toilet access and pedestrian congestion. These areas, alongside safer crossings and more rest points, top funding priorities, particularly among older and disabled Londoners. While public transport dominates long-term investment preferences, walking and wheeling are clearly viewed as a core part of London’s transport future.

Overall satisfaction with walking / wheeling in London

Three in five Londoners are satisfied walking/wheeling, though older people, Londoners with physical conditions and those with young children are more likely to be dissatisfied





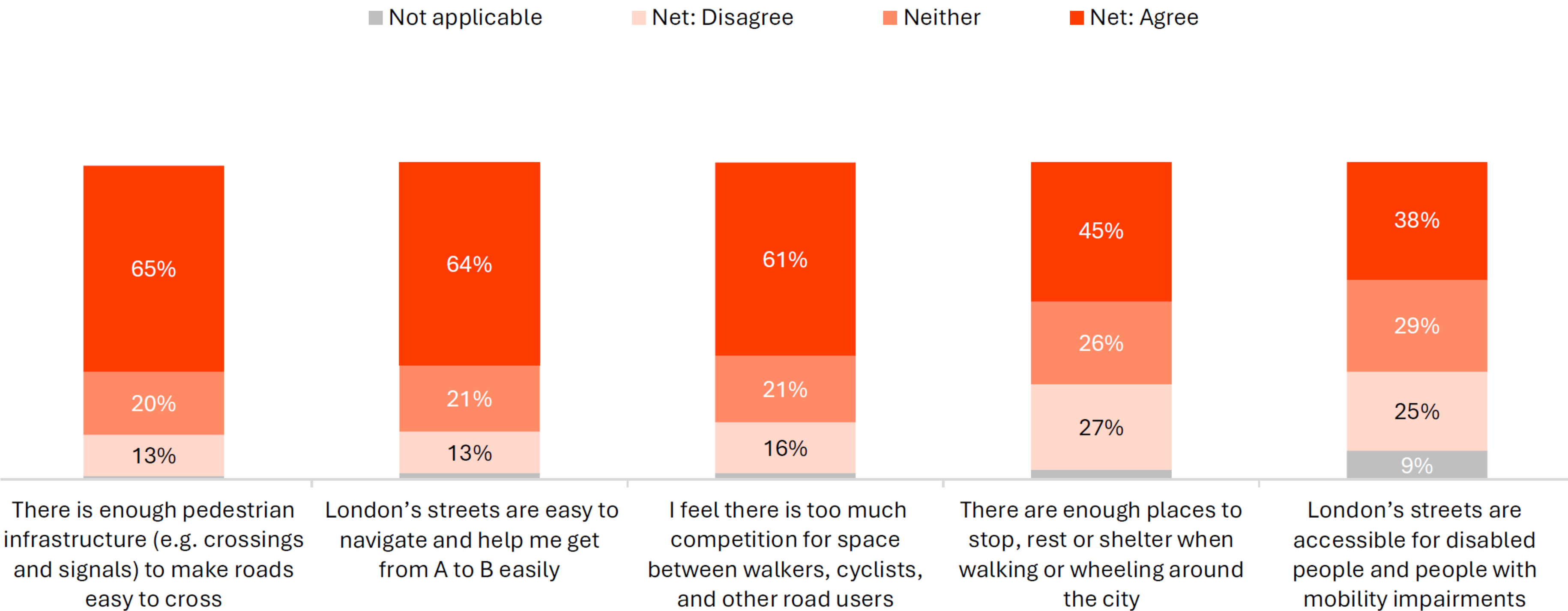
Reasons why dissatisfied with overall walking / wheeling experience in London

Poor pavement conditions, crowding and feeling unsafe are causing dissatisfaction, especially among older Londoners and those with physical or mental conditions

Pavement quality & accessibility	Overcrowded streets	Crime and feeling unsafe
<p>“The <b>pavements in both London and Bromley are appalling</b>. Nearly tipped out of wheelchair recently in Bermondsey Street.”</p> <p><b>Woman, 65+, physical condition</b></p>	<p>“Shops are <b>often crowded with no way for push chairs or wheelchairs getting around</b>. People do not allow you enough space to get through...”</p> <p><b>Man, 65+, no conditions</b></p>	<p>“Too many people have their faces stuck to their phones and don't watch where they are going. <b>Too many bikes and scooters on pavements. I don't feel safe and often very vulnerable.</b>”</p> <p><b>Woman, 55-64, physical condition</b></p>
<p>“<b>Pavements are bumpy, some kerbs are steep</b>, some kerbs don't even exist...”</p> <p><b>Man, 18-24, no conditions</b></p>	<p>“...my trolley gets stuck very difficult walking, I've tripped so many times it's frightening. <b>Dog poo every where rubbish big items like beds bikes thrown on the streets</b> mattresses everywhere..”</p> <p><b>Woman, 65+, physical &amp; mental conditions</b></p>	<p>The amount of litter, anti social behaviour, inconsiderate cyclists who think the law doesn't apply to them, vehicles illegally blocking the pavements and risk of crime.”</p> <p><b>Man, 35-44, no conditions</b></p>
<p>“<b>Several pavements are cracked, broken or otherwise damaged</b>, not always drop kerb available..”</p> <p><b>Woman, 55-64, physical condition</b></p>	<p>“The streets <b>are too crowded sometimes</b>, and there is too much crime. There are too many ebikes and increased risks of mugging. There are also people harassing you for money.”</p> <p><b>Woman, 55-64, physical &amp; mental conditions</b></p>	<p>“<b>The constant danger from cyclists</b> - often on the pavement/footpath and <b>rarely obeying traffic lights or other legal requirements.</b>”</p> <p><b>Man, 65+, no conditions</b></p>

Attitudes towards physical environment and accessibility – Total sample

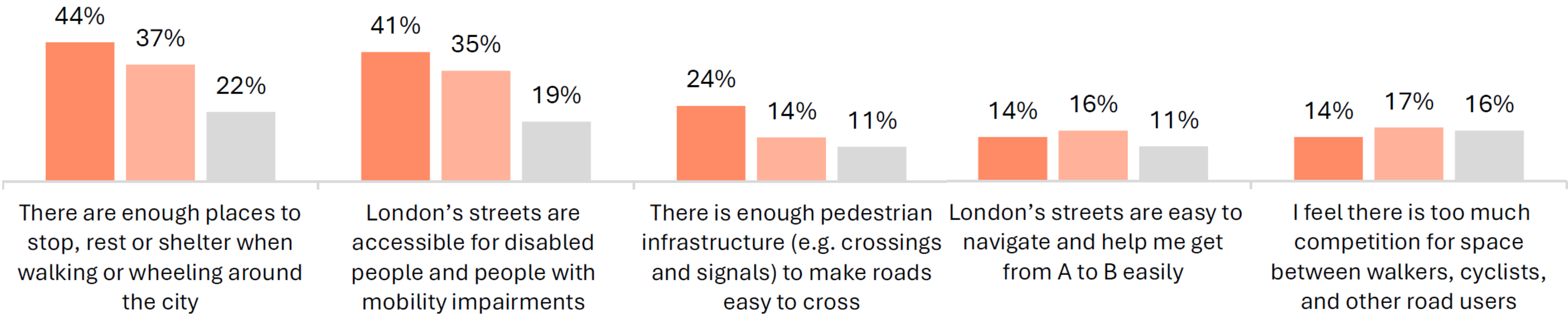
Two in three find London’s streets easy to navigate, but fewer agree they’re accessible for disabled people or offer enough places to rest. Three in five also feel there’s too much competition for space



Attitudes towards physical environment and accessibility – by condition

Londoners with a physical condition are twice as likely to say streets lack rest points, accessibility and safe crossings compared to those with no conditions

NET: Physical conditions    NET: Mental conditions    No condition



Colourful crossings and art in public spaces creates a lot of barriers for a range of disabled people making it inaccessible and difficult to cross.

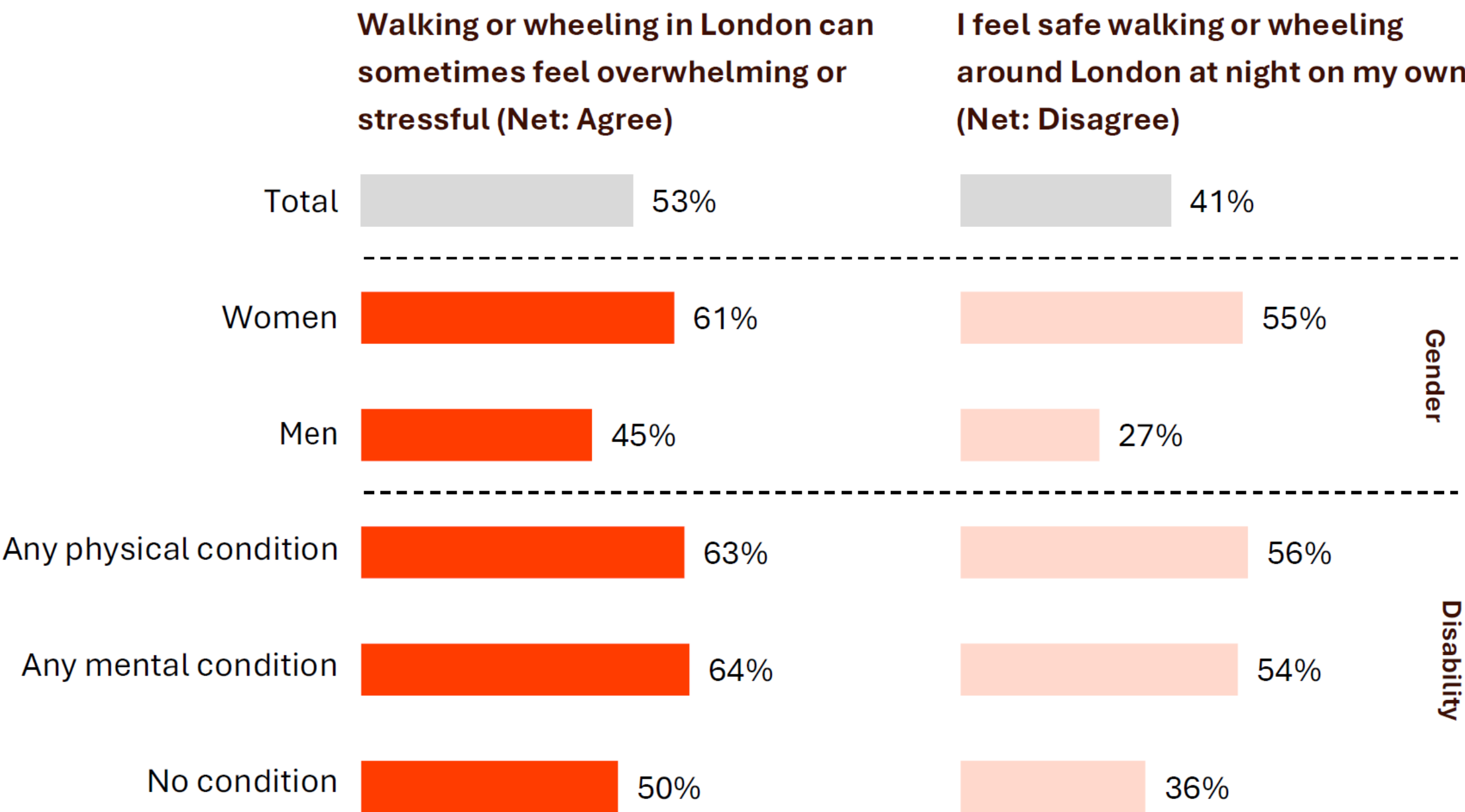
For assistance dog handlers, for example, the dogs often are really reluctant or hesitant, or just will refuse to cross a street that has a colourful crossing because they haven't been trained how to navigate in that space.

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Attitudes towards safety and confidence by gender and disability

Stress and night-time safety concerns are significantly higher for women and those with physical or mental health conditions



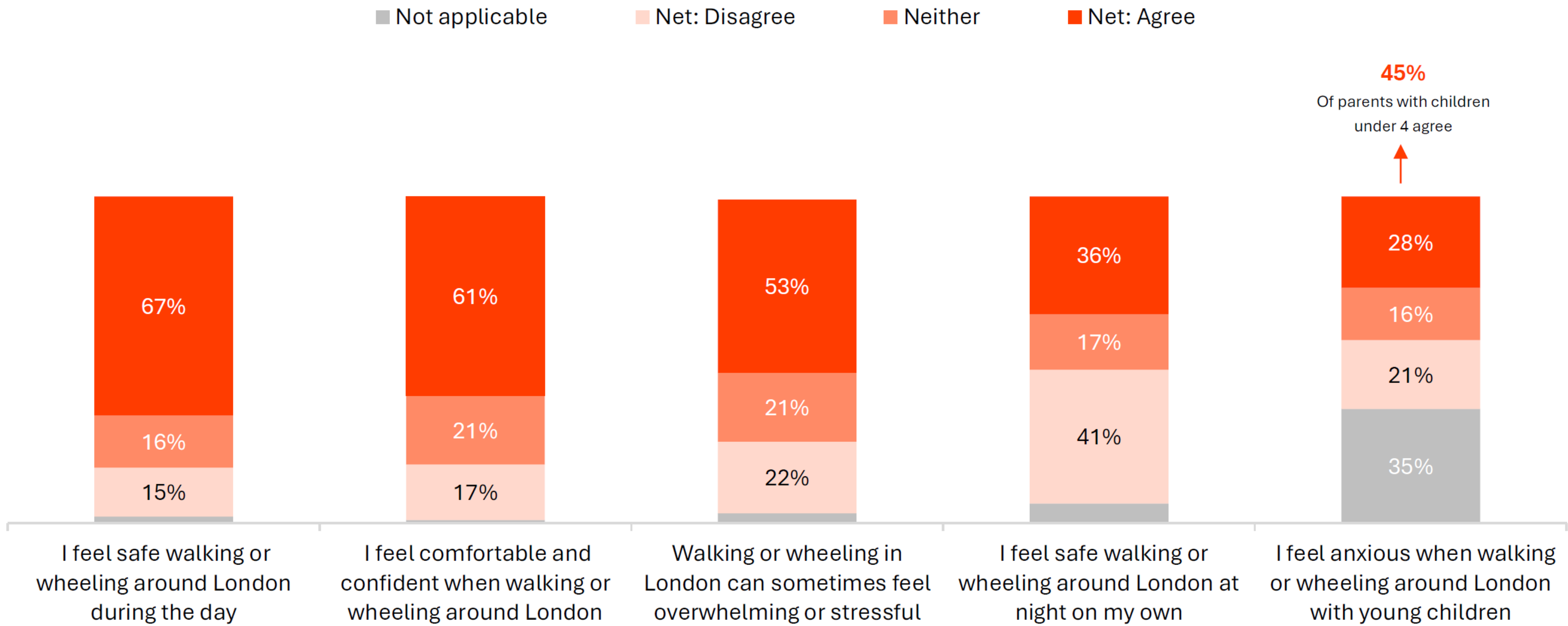
“Safety is a key concern, and some people just don't feel safe walking – particularly at some parts of the day, and some particular populations.

Give people the confidence and remove the barriers around being able to travel actively.

London Councils

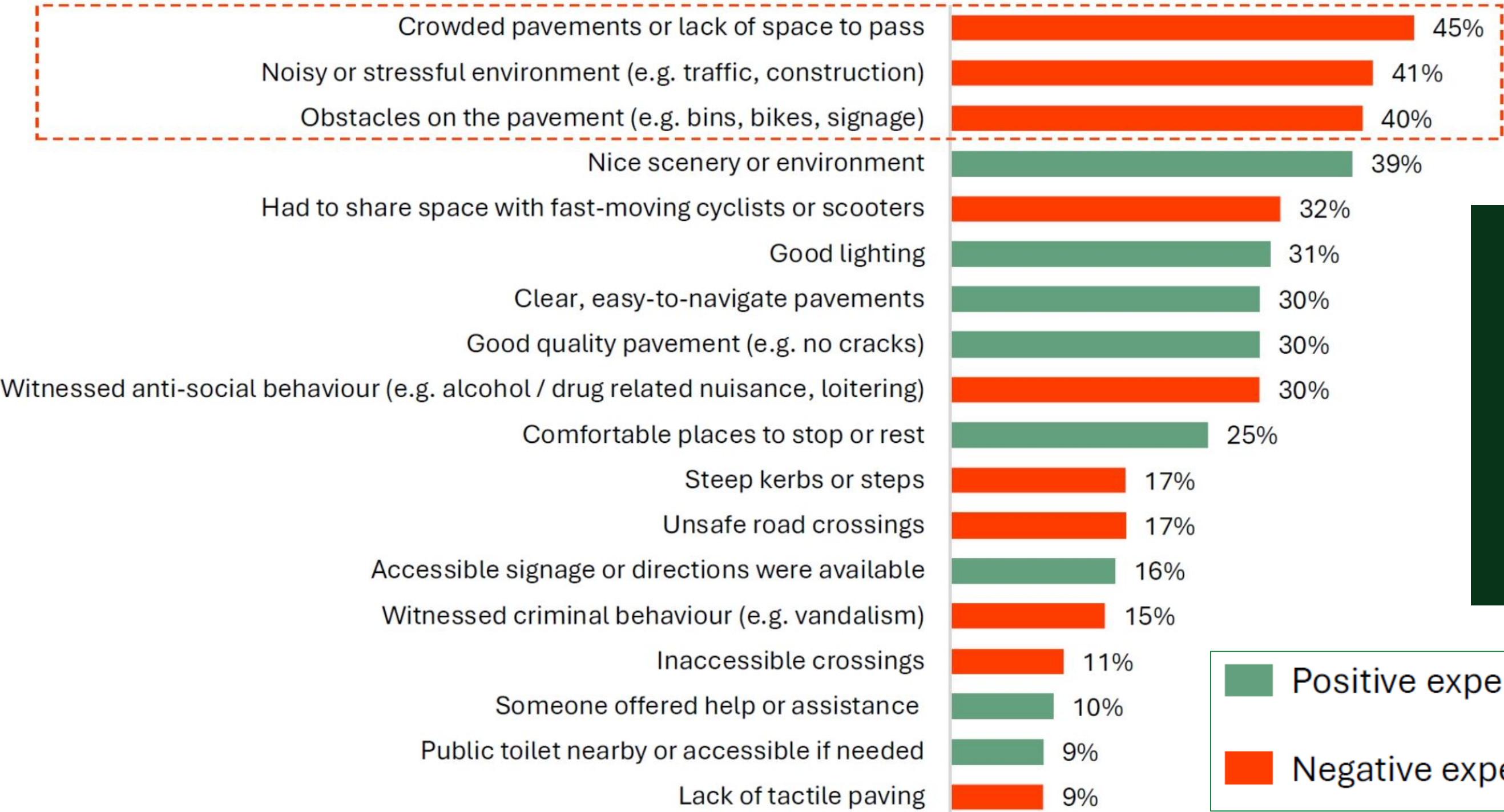
Attitudes towards safety and confidence – Total sample

Two in three feel safe walking/wheeling around London during the day, but safety at night is a concern for two in five. Half also find the streets overwhelming or stressful



Overall experience walking / wheeling in London in the past month

In the past month, the most common walking/wheeling experiences in London involved crowded pavements, noise and physical obstacles



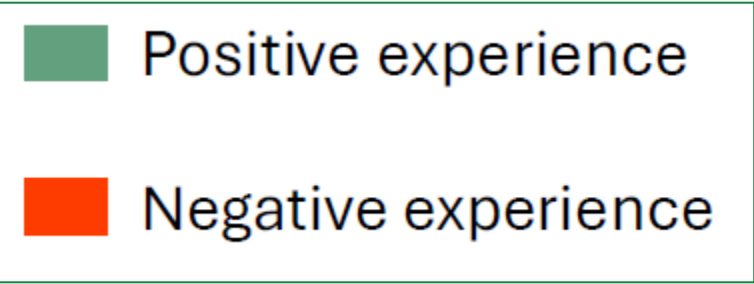
“ We found that busy stations, or areas of London that have really busy stations or interchanges, can be extremely overwhelming and stressful for a lot of disabled people.

**Transport for All**

“ Lack of kerbside space and crowding, particularly around the high streets in inner London, but also in outer London is a real challenge.

A nice walking space means actually having space to walk and having enough space so a wheelchair or buggy can pass you. But often the kerbside is not big enough.

**London Councils**



Experienced an issue walking / wheeling in London in the past month

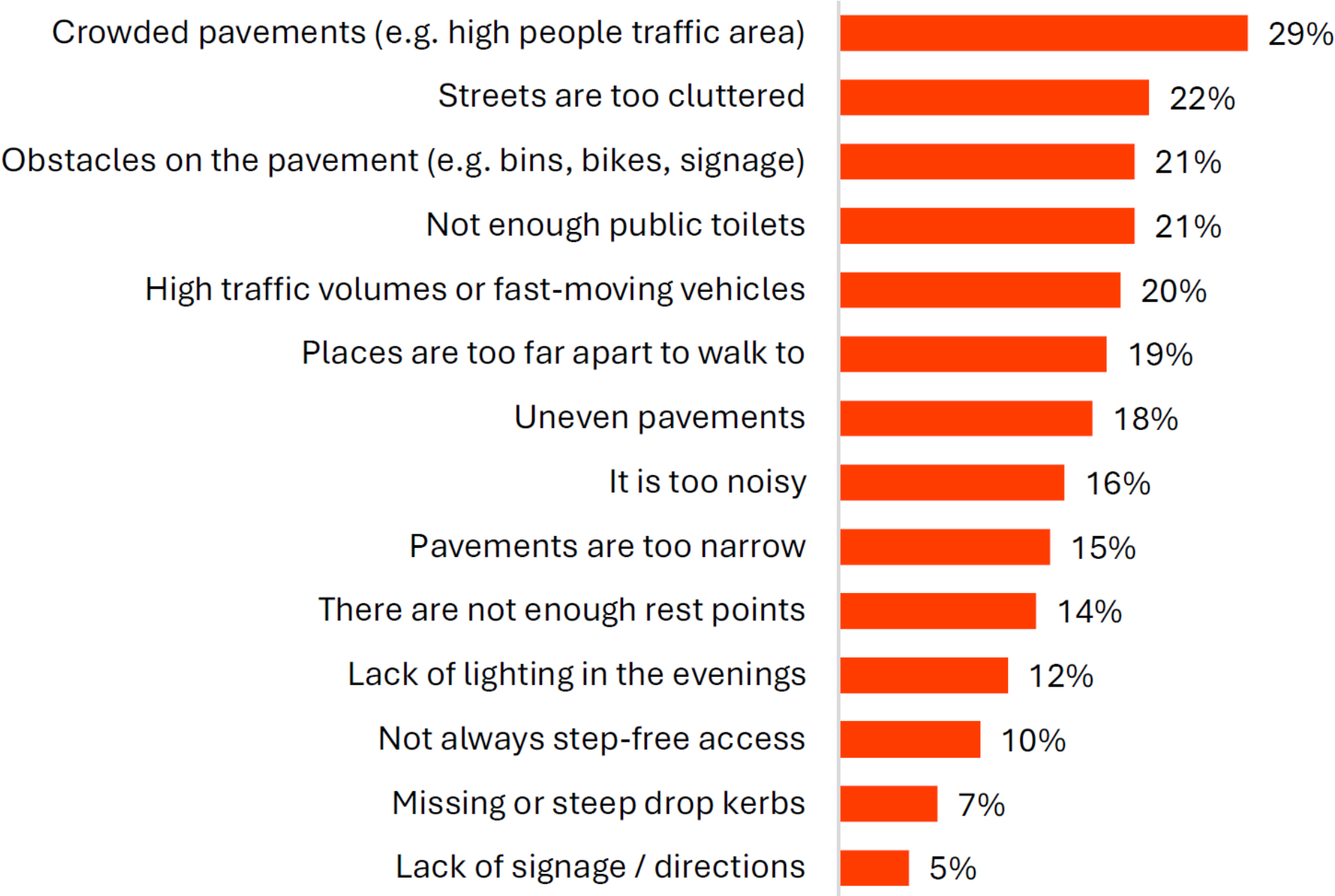
Two in five have experienced issues walking/wheeling in London in the past month, especially those carrying items, with physical or mental conditions, and parents





Reasons preventing more frequent walking / wheeling in London – Select up to 5

Seven in ten Londoners cite a reason that stops them walking/wheeling in London more often, with crowded pavements the most common barrier

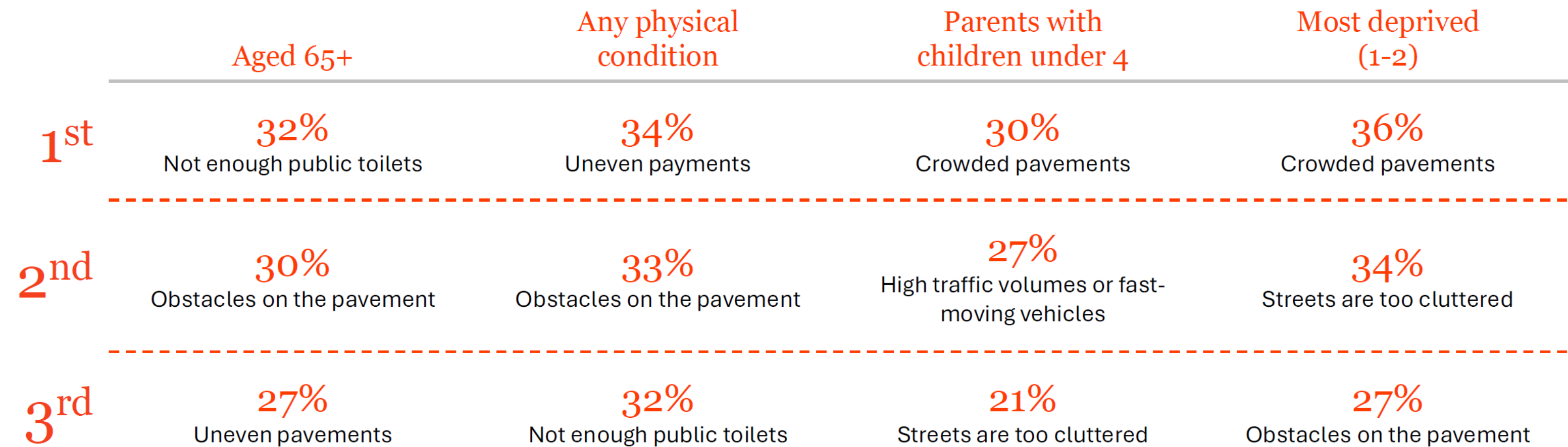


**71%**  
report a reason that prevents them from walking or wheeling in London more often



Top 3 reasons preventing more frequent walking / wheeling in London across key audiences

Crowded pavements are the top barrier for parents with children under 4 and deprived Londoners, while older people and those with a physical condition highlight pavement quality and toilets

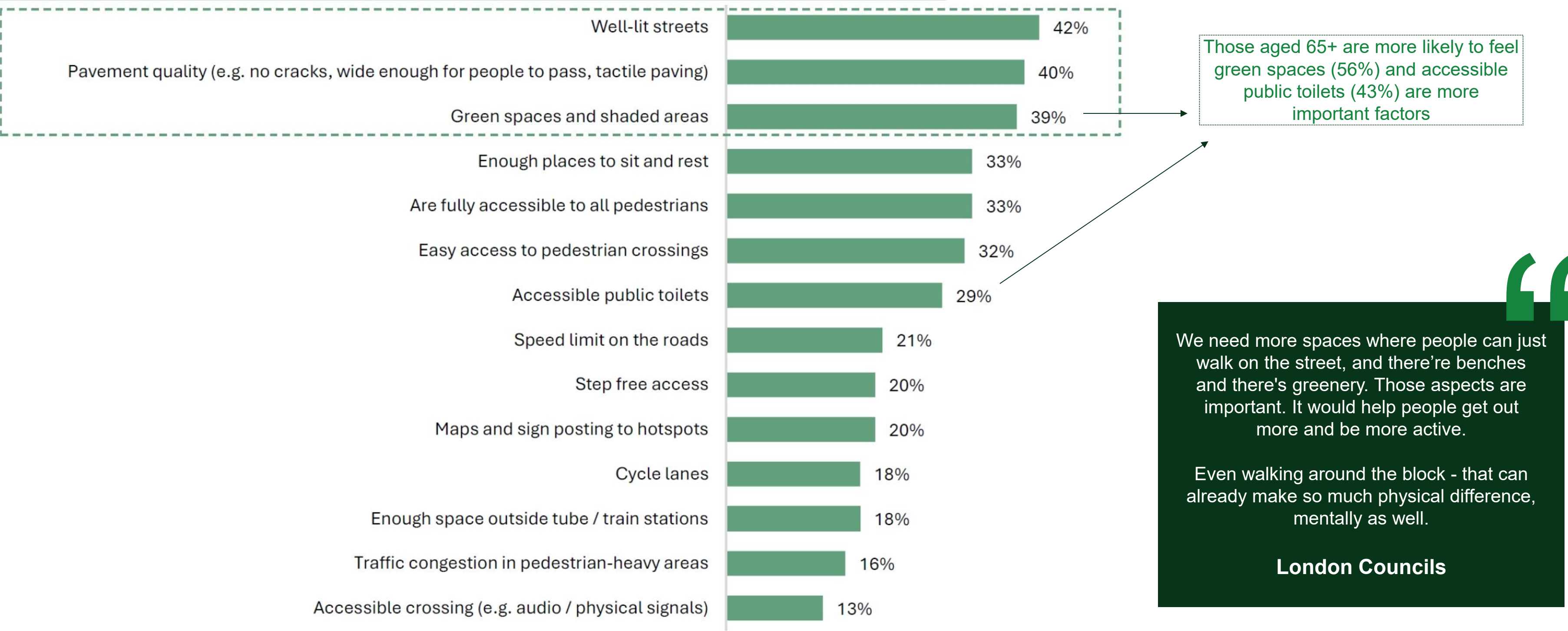


The most commonly reported barrier to walking and wheeling, in terms of London street space, is the quality of pavements. The provision of things like drop kerbs and tactile paving cause barriers that can in a lot of cases completely shut disabled people out from certain areas or opportunities because the streetscape is just really inaccessible.

Transport for All

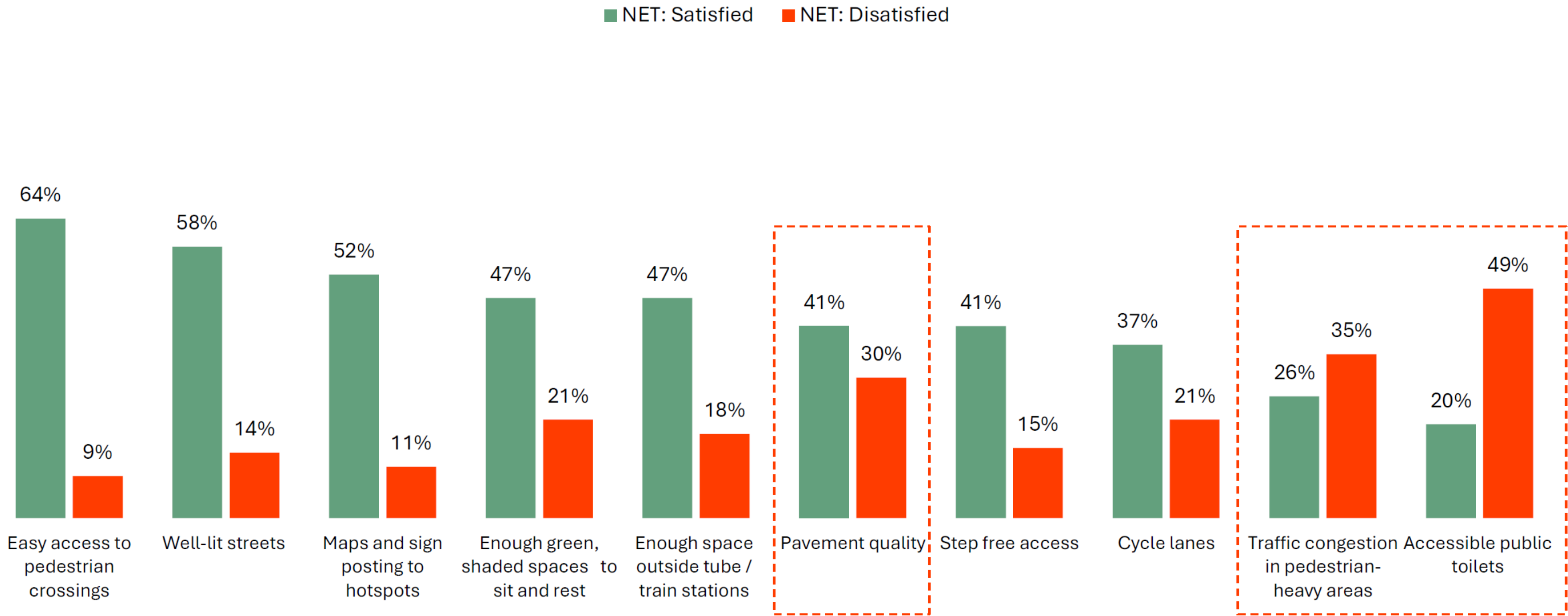
Most important factors for making streets work well for walking /wheeling in London

Well-lit streets, good pavements and green spaces are seen a the most important factors for making London’s streets work well for walking/wheeling



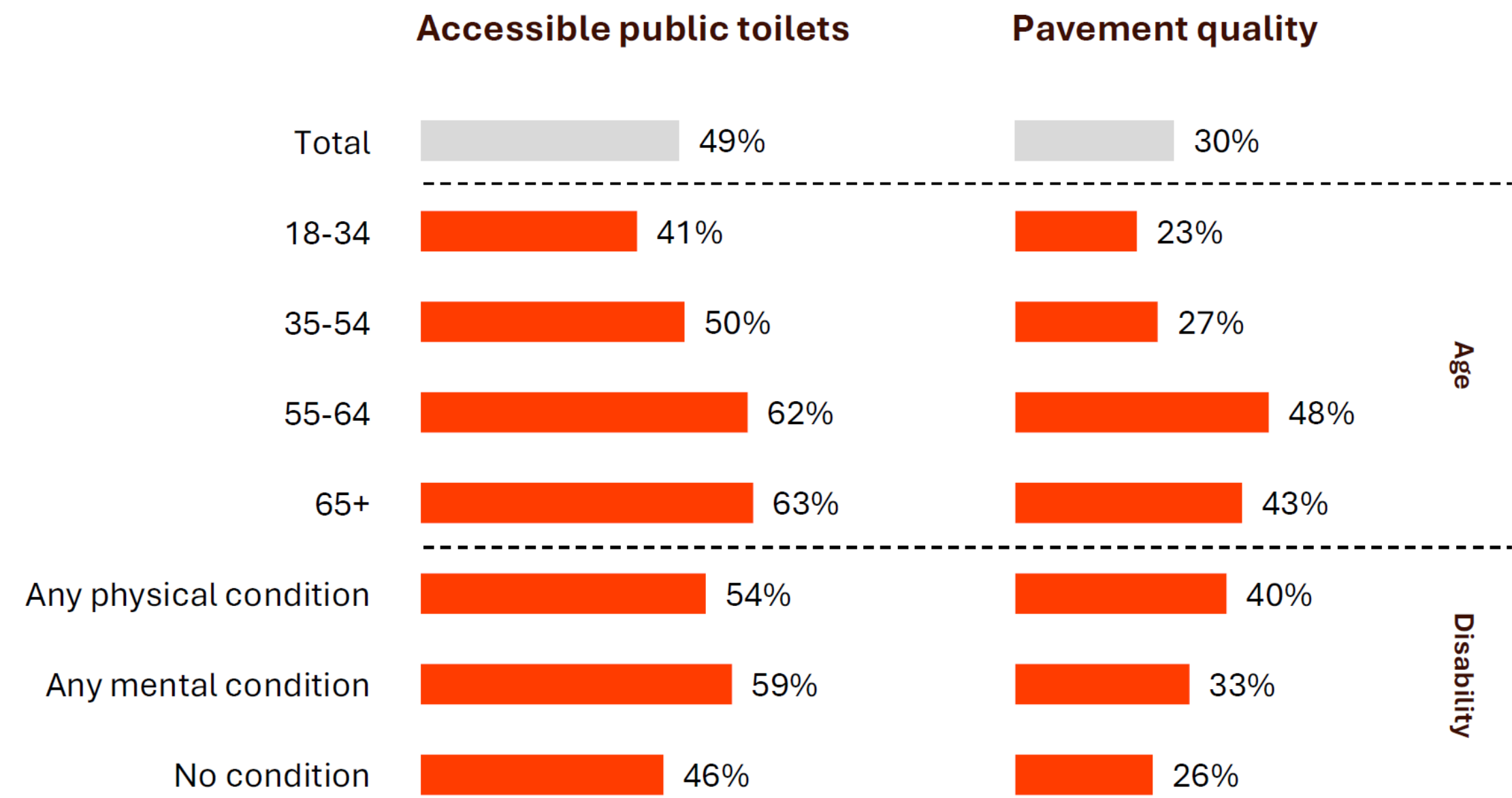
Satisfaction with specific street features – Total sample

A majority are satisfied with crossings and street lighting. However, public toilet accessibility, pavement quality and traffic congestion draw the most dissatisfaction



Net: Dissatisfied with specific street features

Older and disabled Londoners are most dissatisfied with public toilet access and pavement quality

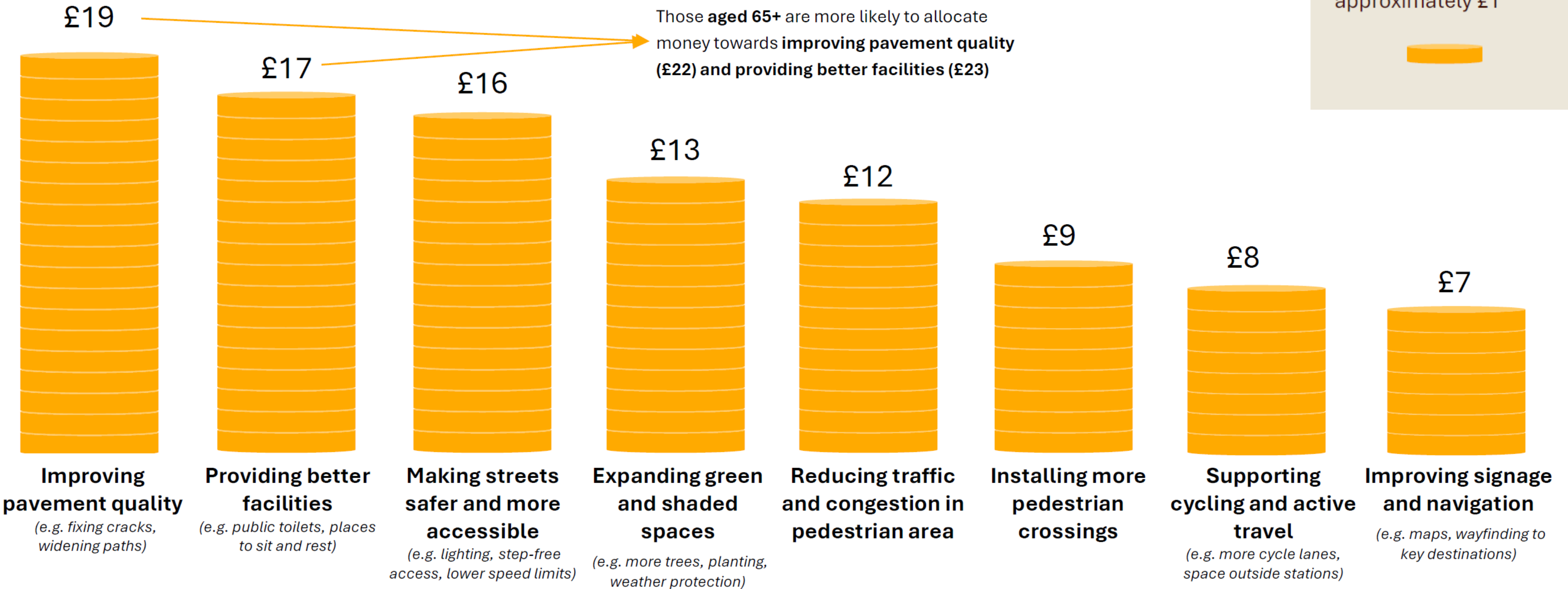


“We looked at the provision of accessible toilets in our report for prioritising funding of resources, because that was something that disabled people fed back which could really make or break a decision for them of where they travel.”

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Money allocation task – How Mayor should divide budget (Mean score)

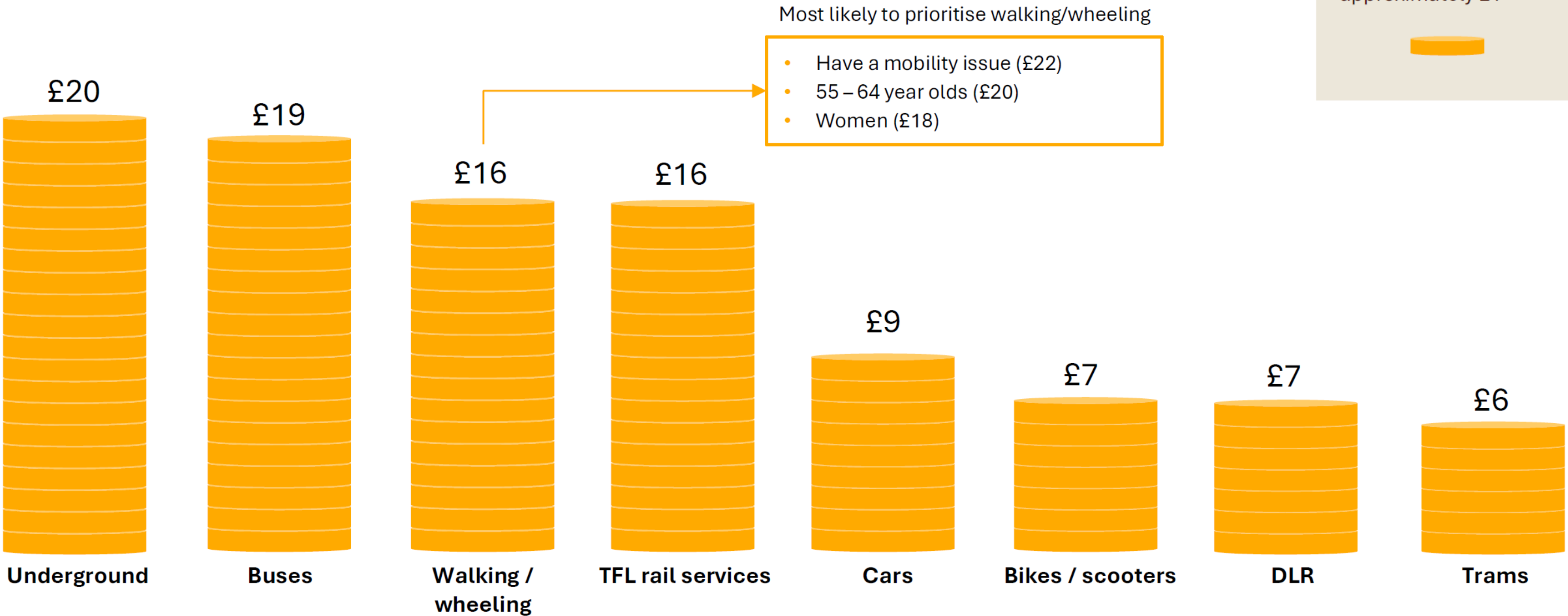
Pavement quality tops Londoners’ priorities for street investment, followed by providing better facilities and making them safer and more accessibility





Money allocation task – How Mayor should divide budget (Mean score)

Public transport leads where Londoners want future investment from the Mayor, but walking/ wheeling are seen as a core part of the city’s transport future



# Our recommendations



## **Improving overall pavement quality and facilities to make streets safer and more accessible**

Steps to repair damaged or uneven pavements, expand public toilet provision and seating, and add accessibility features like tactile paving and dropped kerbs (including at crossings and busy junctions) can all make for a better journey.



## **Co-designing street spaces with different groups to make sure they work for everyone**

This includes working with groups most affected by changes, particularly those with additional accessibility requirements including disabled people, older adults and parents.



## **Working between TfL, boroughs and businesses to remove unnecessary obstacles to reduce barriers to walking and wheeling**

This includes things like A-boards and e-bikes on pavements, and only placing things like bins, benches and micromobility infrastructure in places where they will not impede or narrow the sidewalk for pedestrians.



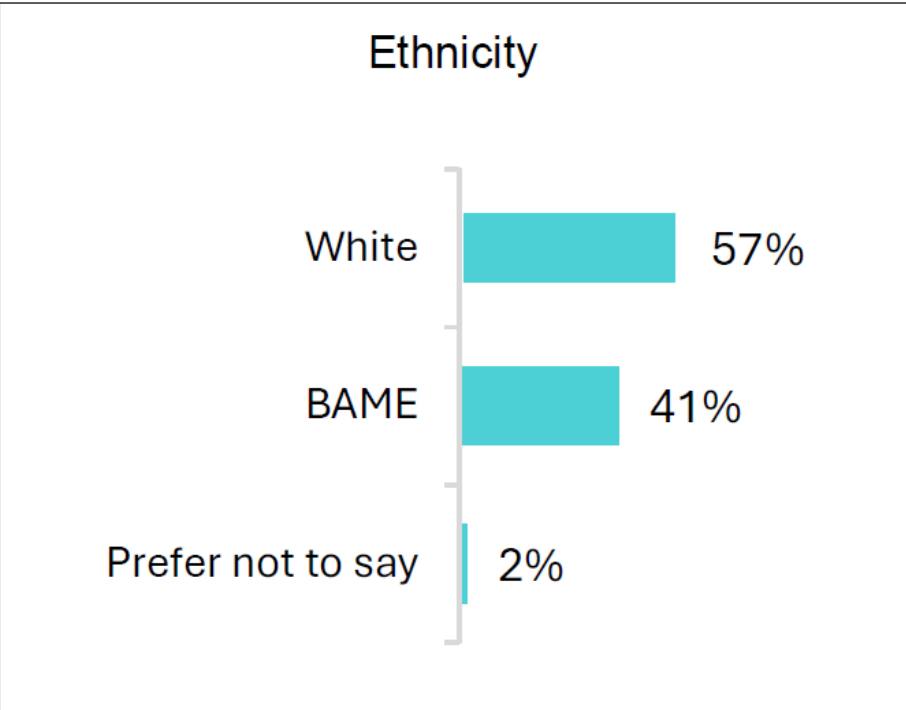
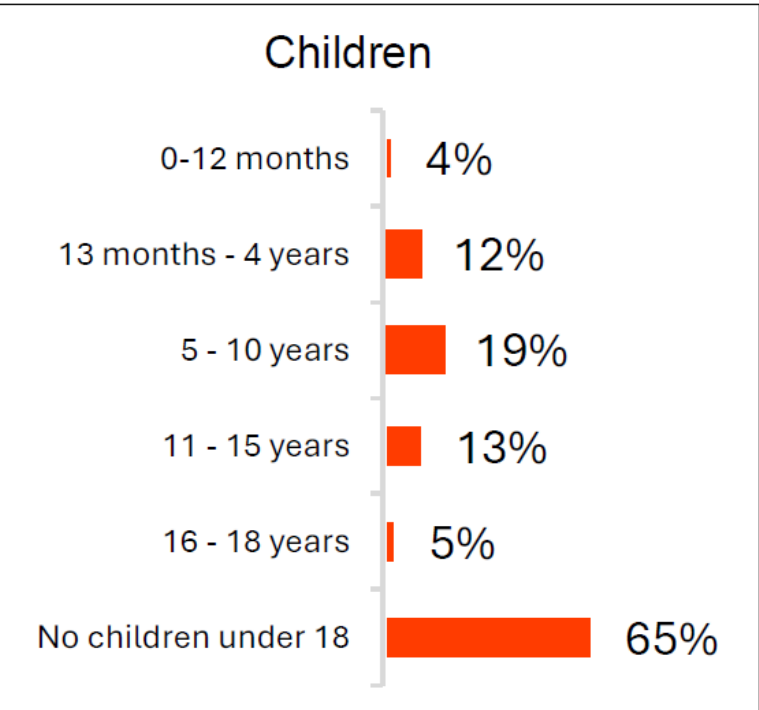
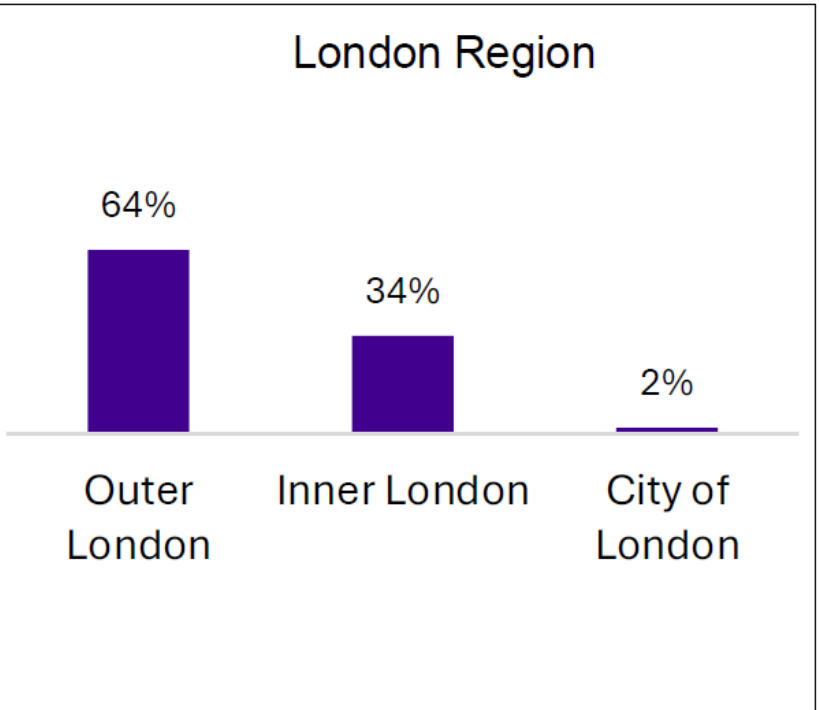
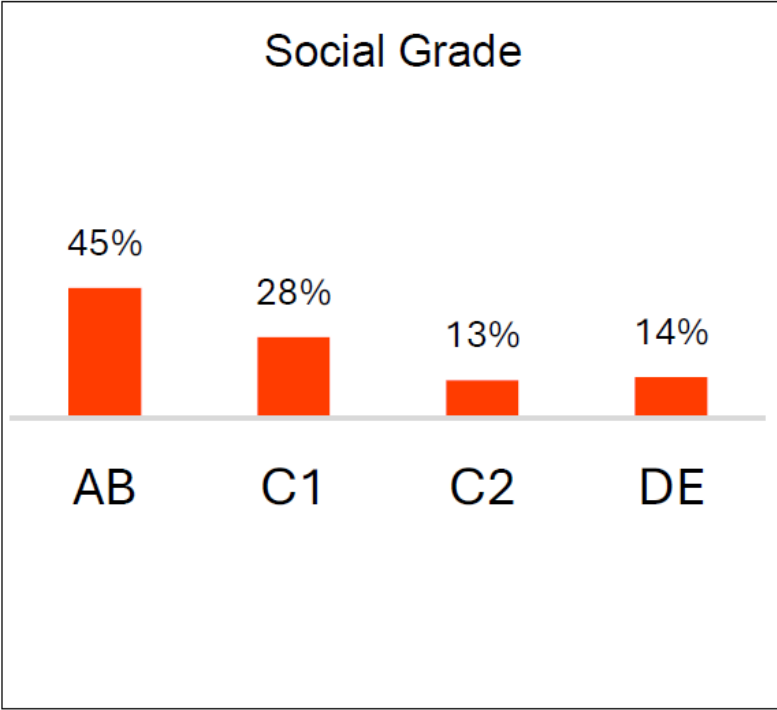
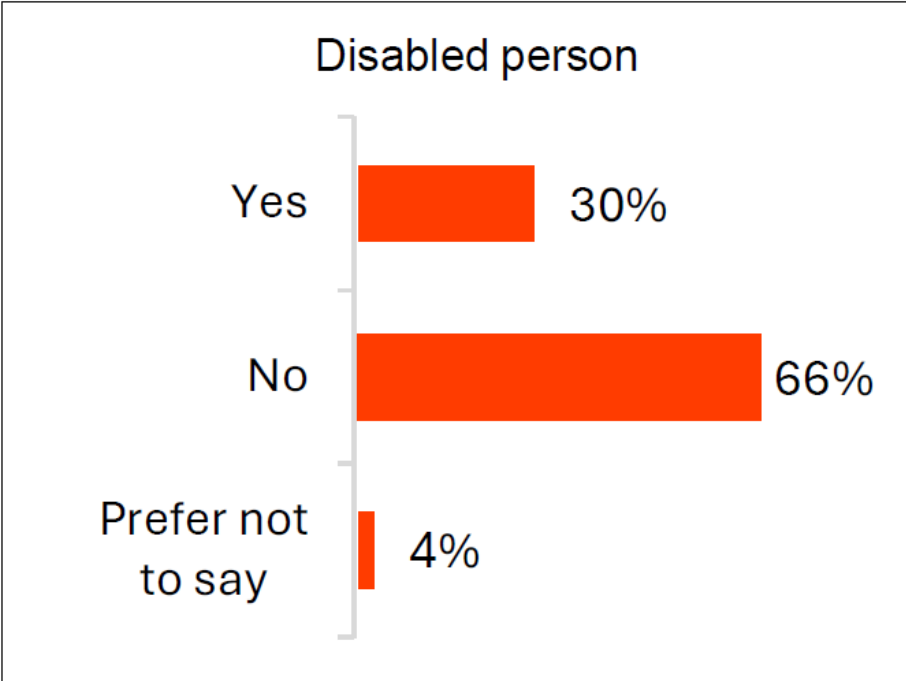
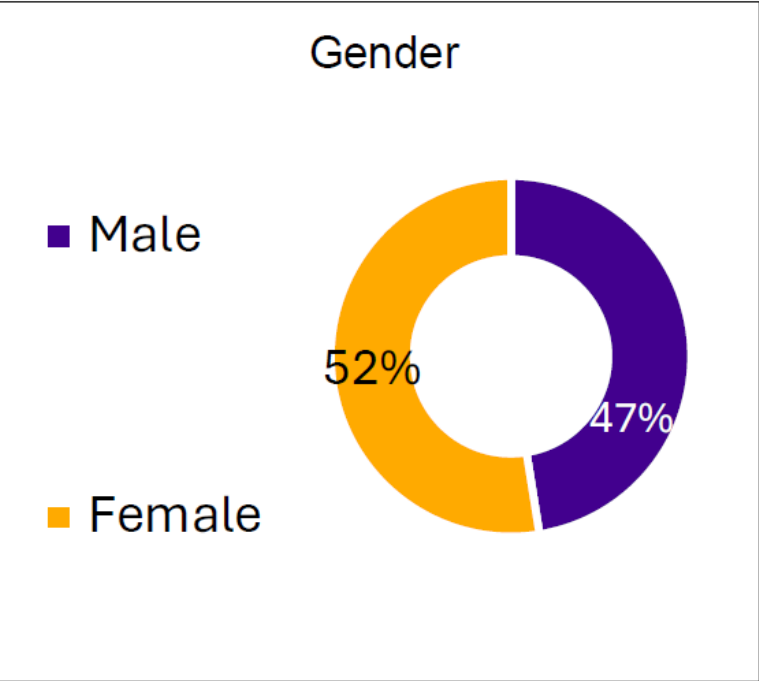
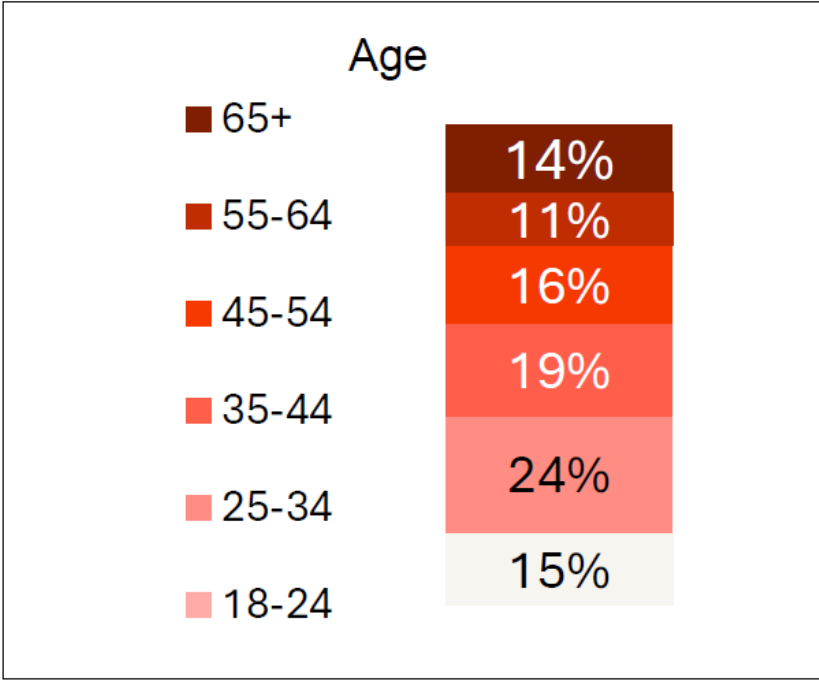
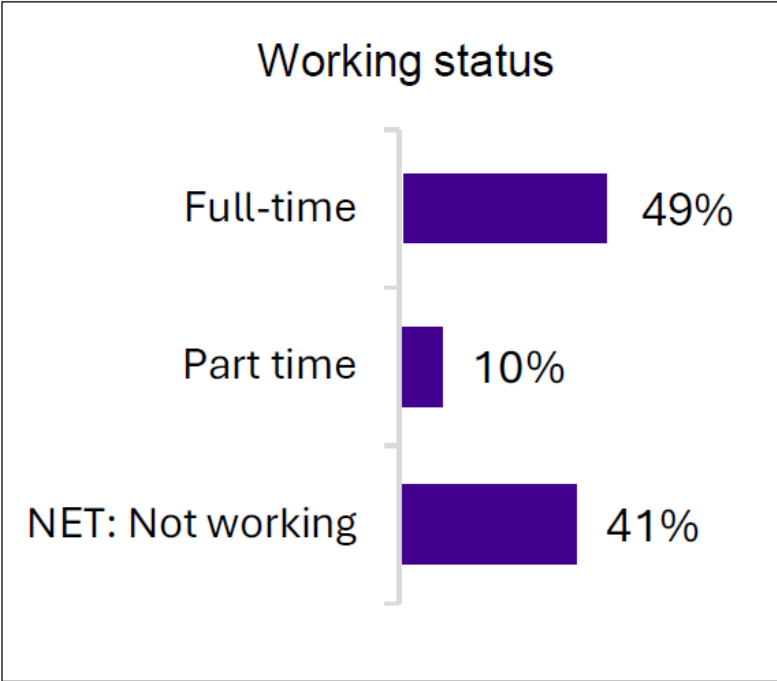
## **Better use of available funding to focus on Londoners' priorities for improvement**

Consistent, longer term and focused funding can help give local authorities the tools they need to more effectively plan and implement the measures needed to improve London's streets.





Profile of the quantitative respondents



While many are satisfied with walking and wheeling in London, they are aware of ways to improve the streets in London further and can see how others may find it dissatisfying – particularly those with mobility aids

“Walking or wheeling in London can be **enjoyable** due to its **green spaces, pedestrian-friendly zones, and good transport links**. Areas like central London offer walkable routes with lots to see. *However, it can also be frustrating—crowded pavements, uneven surfaces, air pollution, and limited accessibility in some areas make it challenging, especially for those using mobility aids or push chairs*”

“It’s satisfying when there’s **enough room** on the **path** for people to walk in both directions”

“There's **lots of space** for walking, it's **safe**, it's **free**, the ground is **easy** and **comfortable** to walk on, there's lots of places to visit by foot and the **sights** and **experience** is **amazing** especially in cities.”

“Paths are **wide, smooth** and **safe**, making it **easy to navigate** and enjoy the city”

“There's **plenty of green space**, the **pavement** is **well maintained** and there's **dropped curbs** for those with wheeled mobility aids”

“Generally **easy** for me to get around, but would *imagine it difficult if I was wheeling, especially with the amount of Lime bike congestion there is*”

“Generally **safe** to do so and we have some great **scenery**”

“London is just a great **walkable city**”

“The **vibrant atmosphere, well maintained infrastructure** and **pedestrian-friendly areas** are what makes walking in London satisfying to me”

# Thank you

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