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INCLUSIVE MOBILITY

Transport practitioner personal
perspectives

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June 2026

SHAPING EVERY JOURNEY

Overview

This report describes findings from two engagement processes exploring transport practitioner perspectives on inclusive mobility:

1. A 2025 survey, primarily of TPA members, based on their personal travel experiences.
2. A collaborative exercise during the Inclusive Mobility Workshop at the 2025 National Transport Conference in Adelaide.

The objective was to build greater understanding within the profession of practical barriers to mobility, by inviting practitioners to reflect on their own experiences.



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PRACTITIONER SURVEY

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Introduction

A total of 125 people completed the survey. It sought to explore socially inclusive transport, and encourage professional engagement with the issue, by asking practitioners about their personal experiences.

The starting assumption was that most people have experienced exclusion in transport at least occasionally and can therefore provide at least an initial picture of inclusion and exclusion.

Methodology

An online survey was promoted, using TPA communications channels to promote the survey to our audience. The survey and background link were also shared within the individual networks of TPA's inclusive mobility working group, which potentially broadened the respondent sample slightly.

To maximise participation, respondents were advised of the approximate completion times at the start of each section, and had the option to "opt out" before continuing to the next section.

Questions were based on professional experience conducting transport surveys and our research on the "body of knowledge" of online transport surveys.

Methodology – questions asked

A mix of **quantitative and qualitative** questions were asked, through both multichoice and open-ended questions (with prompts for some questions).

Questions covered:

- general demographic information (age, gender, postcode, etc)
- general household structure and availability of car/mobility information
- any "personal" barriers to transport (eg disability, need for assistance, etc)
- system barriers in transport (eg accessibility, availability of public transport, information, personal safety, behaviour of others, availability of assistance by staff, etc)
- trip rates by trip purpose
- trips not taken due to barriers
- a recent experience of exclusion whilst travelling

Key findings

- Almost **two-thirds of respondents have at least one of the four barriers to inclusion** that we asked about (need assistance, cost, disability, caring responsibilities). So only one third have no barrier - and that is for a highly educated group (57% of respondents have a post graduate qualification), so our sample should be at the most advantaged end of society.
- **Having a caring role is the most common barrier** (40% of those with a barrier), followed by needing assistance (26%), cost of travel (24%) and disability (3%) (noting that people with disability are under-represented in our survey sample).
- Of those with a barrier, **46% have multiple barriers**. This emphasises the need for versatile solutions that can respond to individual circumstances.

Key findings

- **Work/education travel is done the most by respondents to our survey** (2.2 trips per week reported on average*), with shopping/medical and leisure/social travel slightly lower at an average of 1.7 trips per week each
- **Shopping/medical trips were more highly car dependent** than other trip purposes (47% car mode share), whereas work/education trips were skewed to public transport (39%), with car only 28%. Overall, rates of both public transport use and bike riding were high in our sample compared to the population generally.
- **Leisure/social travel was the trip type most commonly foregone** due to barriers to inclusion – 54% of respondents forego leisure travel, compared with 25% foregoing work travel and 36% foregoing shopping. Therefore, it is quality of life that is most impacted by exclusion.

* While this may seem low, the definition of trip in the survey means these trip rates are reasonably consistent with surveyed trip rates from other sources

Key findings

- **Around 8% of travel is foregone because of the cost of travel** - so this likely to underestimate the total of foregone travel as it relates to only one of the barriers to inclusion.
- **Three-quarters of respondents needing assistance relied on access to a car** in one form or another (driven by partner/family/friend/community group, carpooling, or using rideshare), and community bus made the list of transport options for a handful of respondents!
- **Cost as a barrier is driven by cost-of-living pressures** (so travel is balanced as part of the household budget), and by cost of PT fares and car running/purchase cost.

Key findings

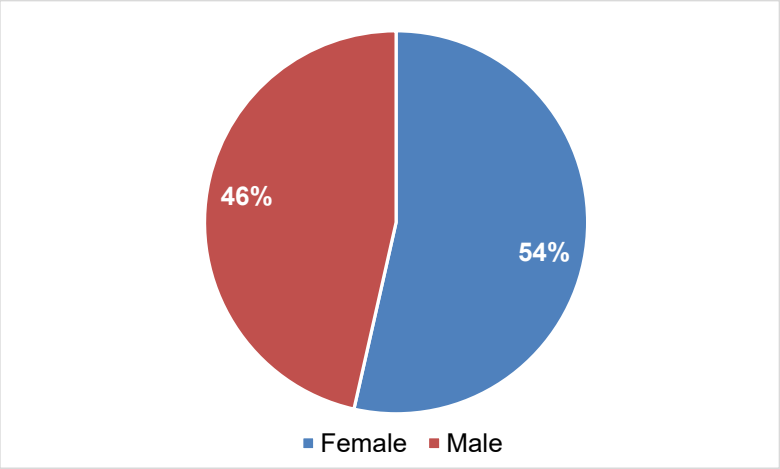
- **Public transport falls well short of respondents' expectations**, with accessibility of a service, frequency, reliability, connectivity, and physical accessibility, all often considered poor. Crowding and information availability were also raised as issues.
- **Cycling is fundamentally attractive** to our sample but discouraged by the low standard of facilities – cycle paths are often narrow, disconnected, sometimes crowded or impinged by traffic, and parking facilities are relatively uncommon.
- **Kindness/assistance of people** (including PT staff) is widely relied on, and fosters inclusion, while poor behaviour by others creates a feeling of exclusion).

Sample demographics

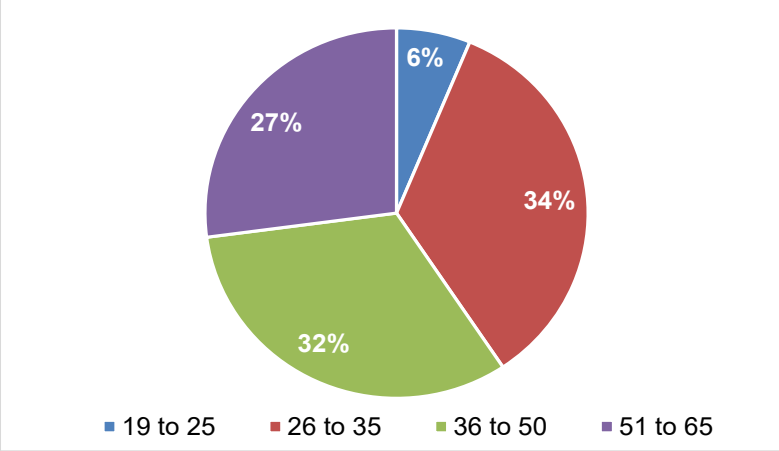
- A total of **125 people completed the survey**.
- Compared to the general population, **survey respondents had higher levels of education** and were more likely to live in inner urban areas. Young people were under-represented.
- The **number of people living in their household (2.9)** was slightly higher than average (2.5).
- The **average number of cars in their household (1.6)** was slightly lower than average (1.8).
- **Gender balance** was very similar to the general population.

Demographics

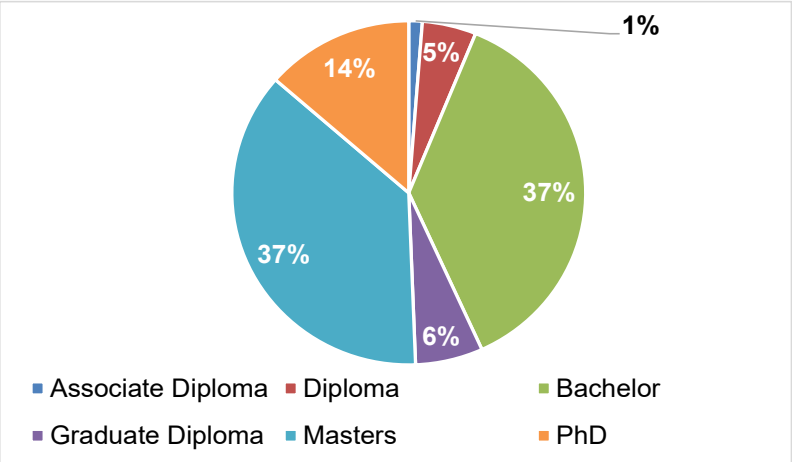
Gender – balanced but slight female bias (population is 51%)



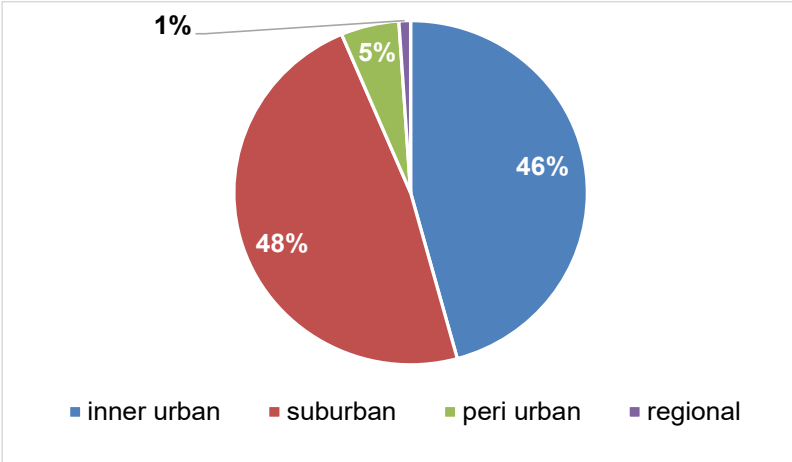
Age – early adulthood not captured, otherwise balanced (result of sample source)



Education – biased to advanced education (partly female bias)

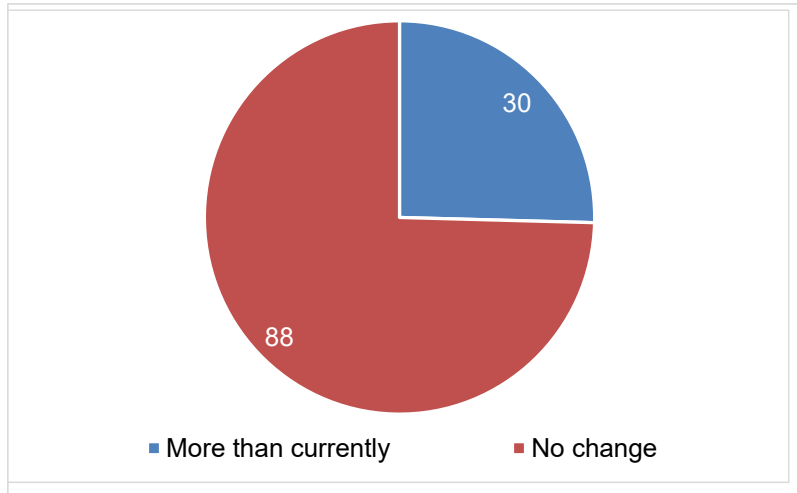


Location – biased to inner urban (correlated to high education attainment bias)

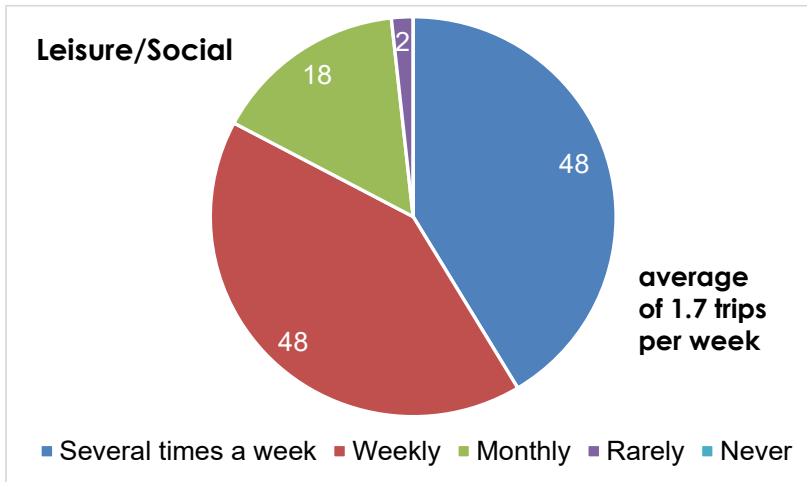
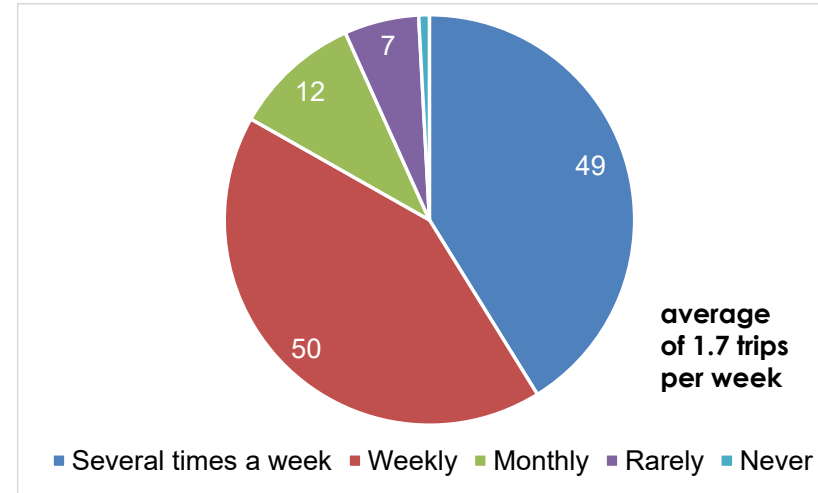


Trip Purpose

Trips made - work/education – on average about 33% more trips per week than either of the other trip purposes asked about in the survey



Shopping/Medical – very similar to leisure



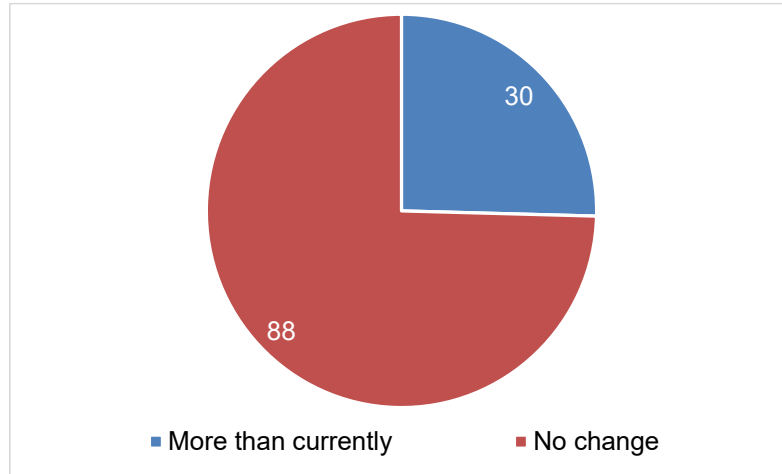
Note – these trip rates, travel modes, and other details will not align with typical Household Travel Survey findings, as these survey results come from:

- a small sample
- a “biased” sample, compared to the overall population
- a national sample
- geography extending beyond cities to include peri-urban and regional areas
- is longitudinal not cross-sectional (ie asks for trip over an extended period of time, not “how many of this type of trip did you do on this specific day”)

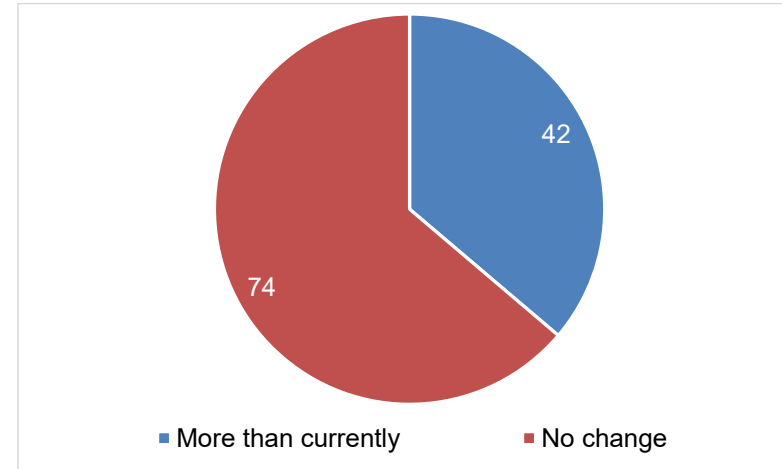
Average of 5.6 trips per week overall

Trip Purpose

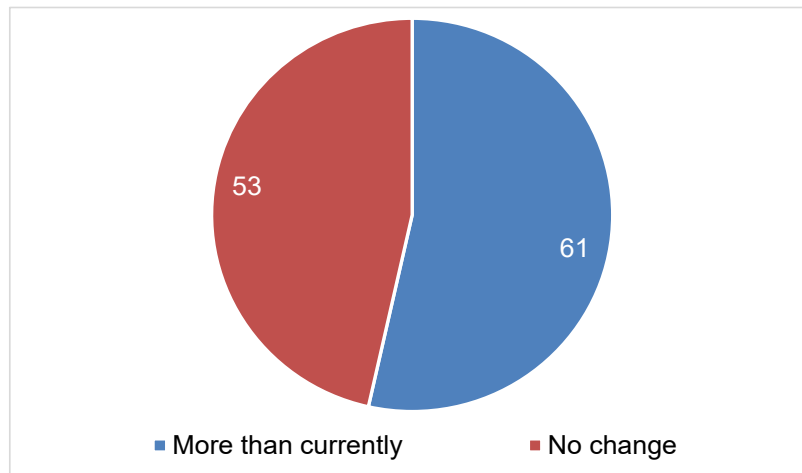
Additional trips - Work/Education – respondents prioritise work!



Shopping/Medical – and shopping is also pretty important



Leisure/Social – so these are discretionary, with exclusion being a barrier to participation – impacting quality of life, increasing social isolation

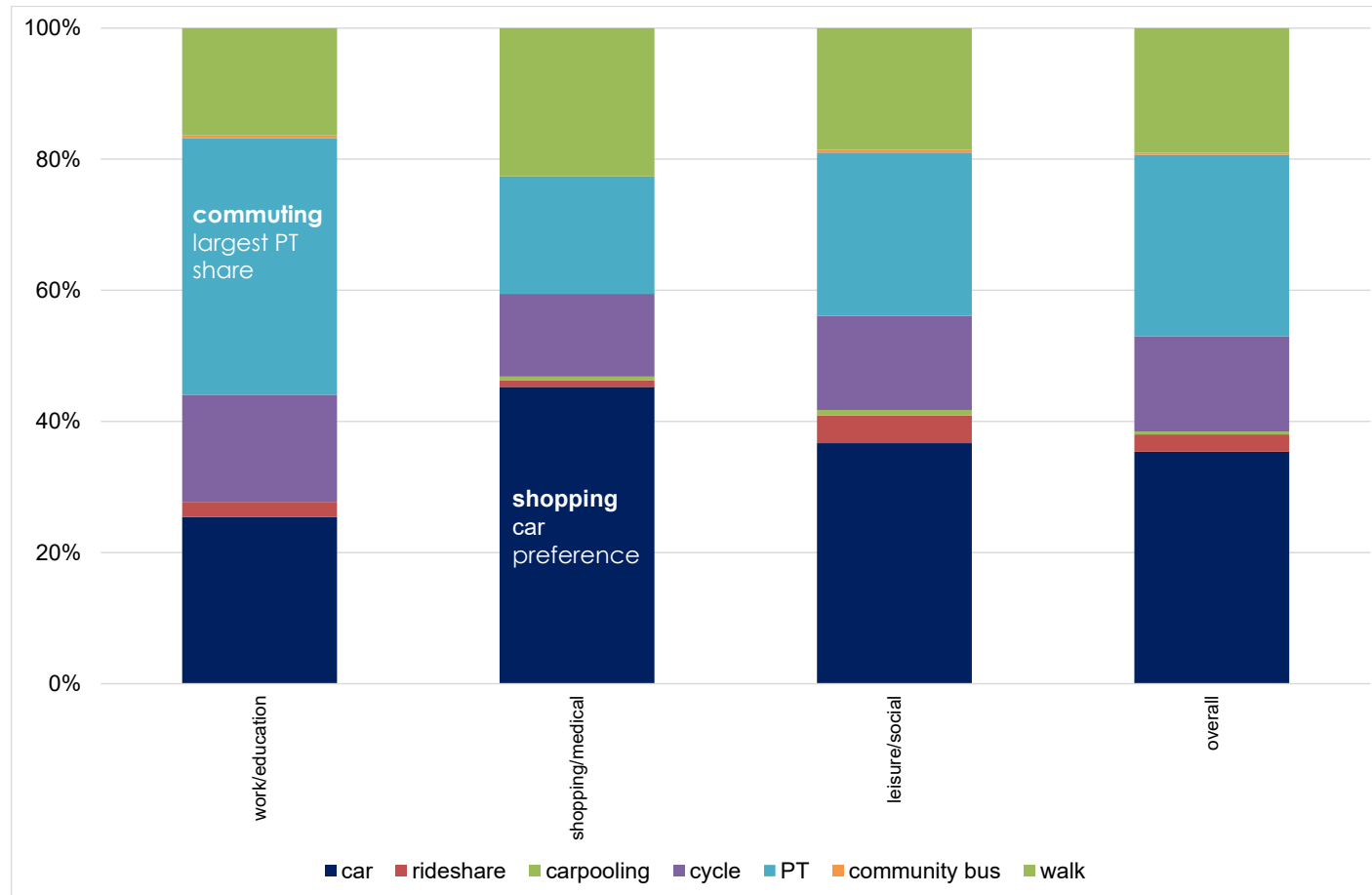


The survey asked whether people would travel 'more than currently,' if the barriers they identified were removed. The graphs show results by purpose / trip type (figures represent the number of responses, not percentages).

Trip Purpose

Modes by trip purposes – consolidated to single modes

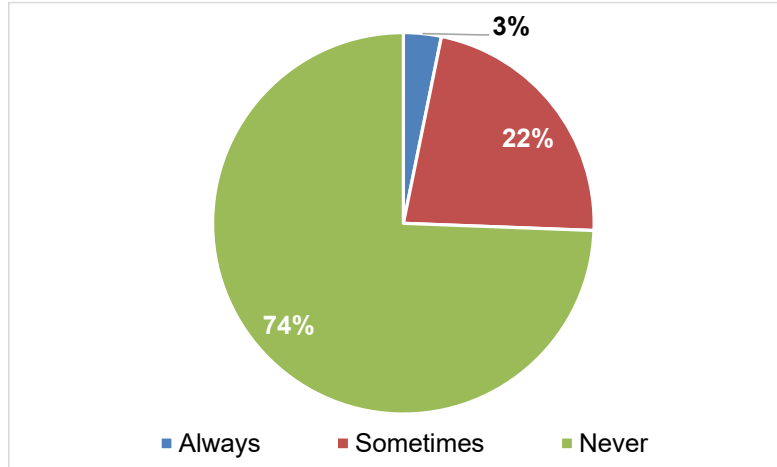
- commuting biased to public transport (correlates with inner urban and higher education attainment bias)
- shopping/medical is much more car-dependent on car (compared with work and leisure)



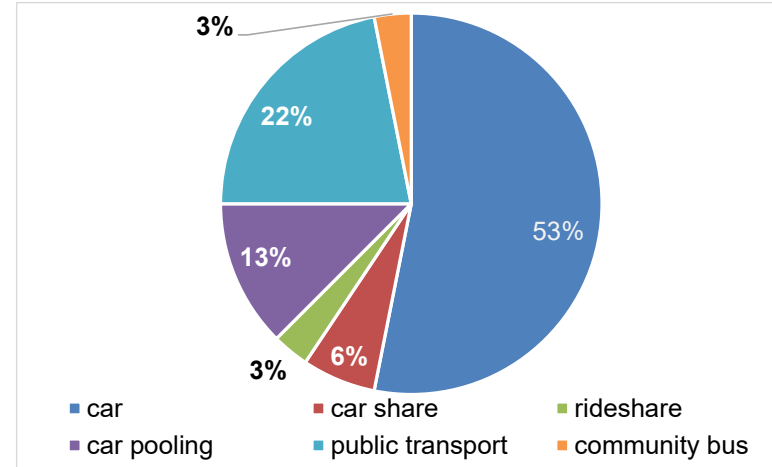
High overall PT mode share (**42% of mechanised modes**) correlates with inner urban and high education attainment biases in sample

Barriers to Travel – Need for Assistance

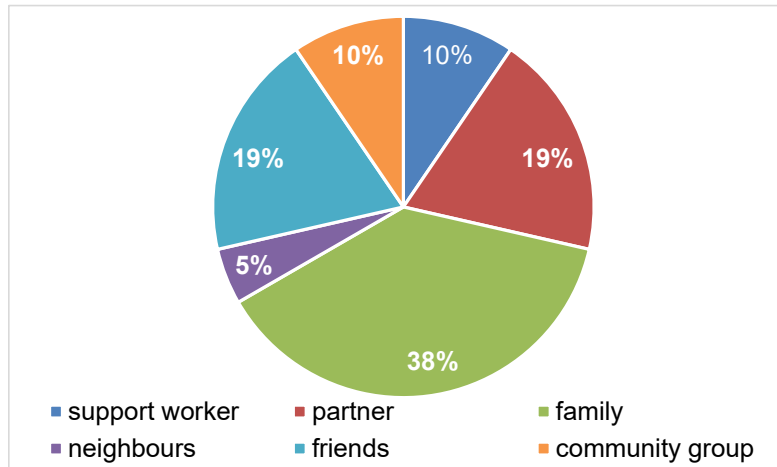
Need for travel assistance – 25% of sample



Mode used when travelling with others – 75% car



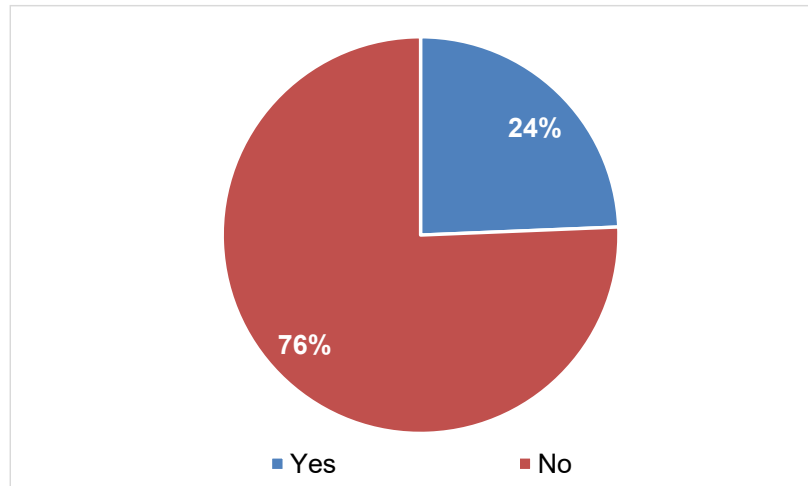
Who provides assistance



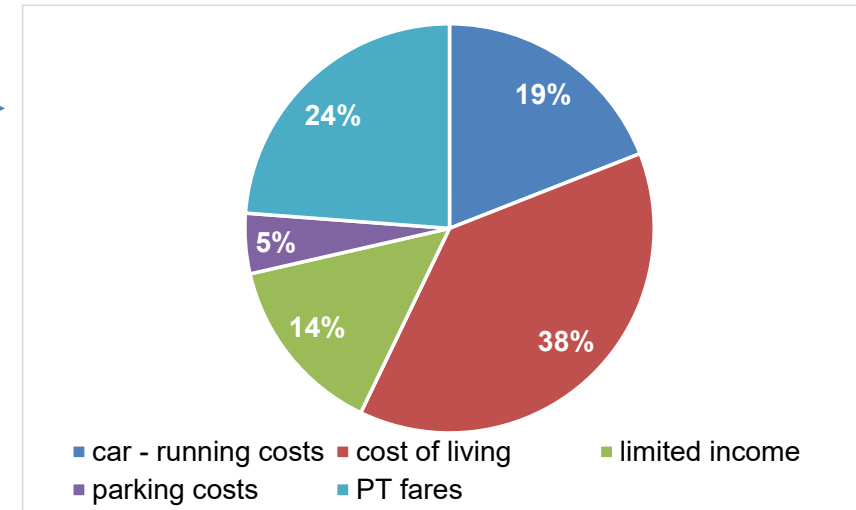
- Professional paid assistance (support worker) is used by only 10% of respondents
- Partner is relied on for assistance by 19%
- Family does the heavy lifting in providing assistance – 38% immediate family is 57%
- Neighbours are in the background
- Friends are relied on for assistance by 20%
- Community groups are in the background wider community is 33%

Cost as a Barrier

Cost as a barrier – 24% of responses



Reason cost is a barrier – capital 20%, cashflow 80%



Where cost is a barrier, a trip is skipped monthly or more often in 54% of responses – so 13% of all participants (24% x 54%) skip a trip due to travel cost

Reducing cost as a barrier would generate 0.5 trips/week per respondent, on average – equivalent to 8% more travel

Disability as a Barrier

Caring Responsibilities – 40% of responses

Disability as a barrier – only 3 responses said yes

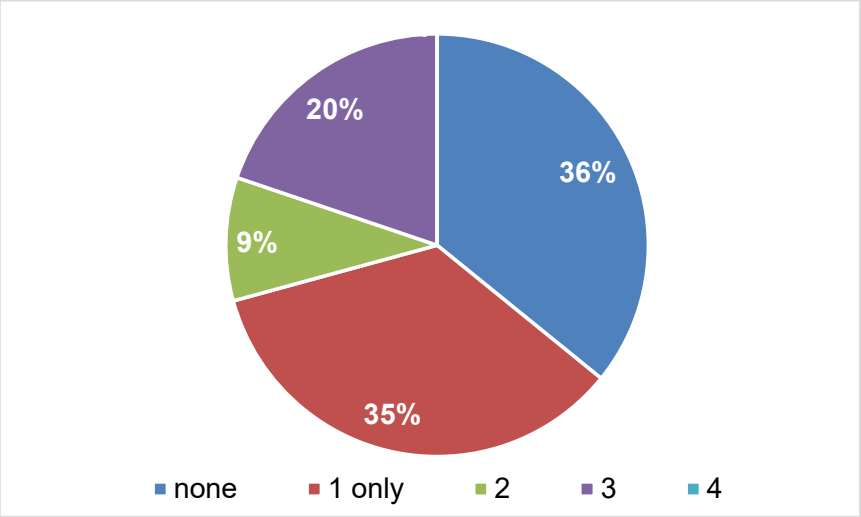
Experience of exclusion

- PT services changed at last minute; too crowded and noisy
- No bus options at the time of day of travel to a business function
- Access a walking track is very steep and difficult to walk with disability and a pram

Experience of inclusion

- Introduction of the quiet carriage on the train is really good and the Sunflower Layard program is also helpful.

Single/multiple barriers – 64% of responses have at least one barrier, 29% have multiple barriers



The 4 possible barriers are:

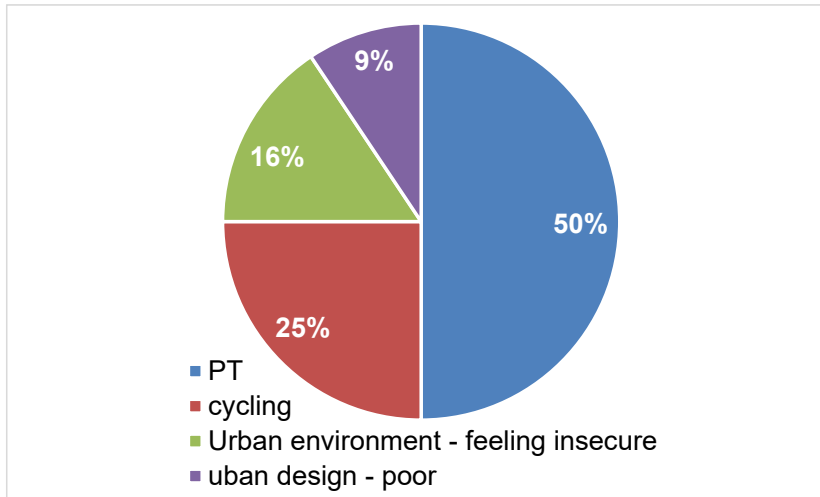
- need for assistance
- cost
- disability
- caring responsibilities

Multiple barriers are:

- cost + caring 8%
- assistance + cost 8%
- assistance + caring 8%
- disability + caring 1%
- assistance + cost + caring 3%
- assistance + disability + caring 1%

Experiences of exclusion or inclusion

Experience of exclusion – 24% of responses gave an example



Security

- Not feeling secure, in some cases necessitating using rideshare
- negative attitude from others

Cycling

- poor bicycle infrastructure facilities and parking provision
- negative attitude from others

PT

- service levels, in some cases necessitating using rideshare
- service and wayfinding information
- station/stop and vehicle infrastructure

Road/urban design

- poor road delineation/road space allocation
- poor urban design

Impact of exclusion – 76% persevered, 14% avoided

Made the trip but felt unsafe or uncomfortable	33%
Limited flexibility or choice (eg mode, time, destination)	28%
Reduced travel (eg combined trips, travelled less often)	16%

Avoided travelling (eg chose online services instead)	14%
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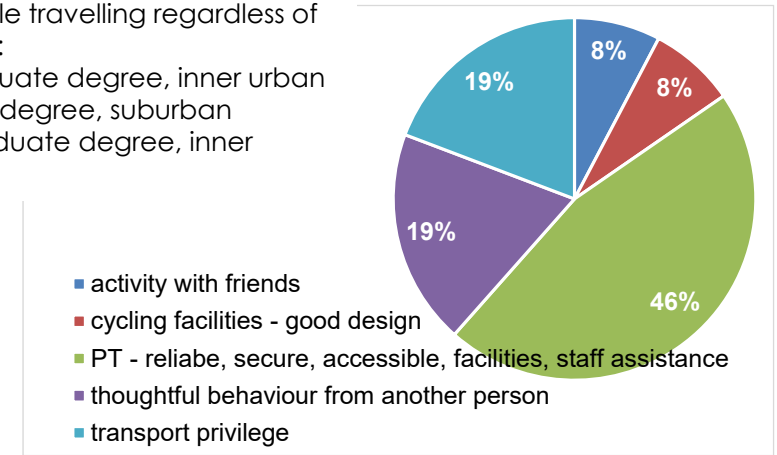
Limited ability to participate in activities	7%
Needed to ask someone for help	2%

Other (allocated to one of the above)	0%
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Inclusion – 19% of responses gave a positive travel experience

Privileged

- able bodied, living near PT, car enabled
- always comfortable travelling regardless of time, method, etc:
 F, 36-50, post graduate degree, inner urban
 F, 36-50, bachelor degree, suburban
 M, 51-65, post graduate degree, inner urban





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Practitioner survey – summary of open-ended responses

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Overall Transport Experience

- Respondents described a transport system that serves some people well but leaves many others struggling.
- Some respondents noted that they did not experience exclusion. Inner-urban residents with frequent public transport, good walkability, or cycling infrastructure often recognise their own transport privilege.
- “The transport system works very well for me where I live, I am not at all representative of the wider community.”
- In contrast, suburban and regional respondents reported limited choice and strong car dependence.
- Many felt investment is still focused on roads rather than inclusive transport options, restricting participation for people who cannot or do not wish to drive.
- “Public transport is extremely frustrating and time consuming and biking feels very unsafe. It's only because of my values that I persist”
- “I think there should be serious investment in public transport, in increasing service frequencies and routes. that would have the best impact on inclusive transport.”

Cost as a Barrier to Travel

Car Ownership Financial Strain

Rising fuel, maintenance, insurance, and registration costs increase financial pressure on car-dependent households.

Cost Impact on Travel Choices

Transport costs cause people to limit trips, stay home more, and reduce social and work participation.

Pricing Influences Behaviour

Parking fees in cities can discourage driving and promote public transport when alternatives exist.



Cost as a Barrier to Travel

Public Transport Cost Issues

High public transport fares limit short and local trips, reducing overall travel frequency and participation.

"Taking the train to Sydney and back cost close to \$20 per day. It makes me think twice before committing to doing anything there. The unfrequent local bus can cost up to \$16 for my husband and I to do a return trip to our local centre together, parking there is free or \$3.5, but we do not own a car for financial reasons."

"The cost of public transport increases significantly for families compared to the cost of using a private car for the same trip. "

"I do groceries every week. Taking a bus there is very easy, and timesaving but it is expensive for the distance I travelled. So, most of the time, I walk."



Key Barriers: public transport

- **Poor public transport service frequency** and weak connectivity were the most consistent barriers to inclusion.
- **Long waits, indirect routes, cancelled services**, and limited evening, weekend, and cross-suburban connections made public transport unreliable for non-work travel.
- **For many, trips that were short by car became unreasonably long by public transport**, reinforcing driving as the only practical option regardless of cost.
- “We only have 20 min services interpeak and that becomes 30 mins after about 8:30 pm. 30 mins is too long to wait after a show or going out to dinner.”
- “PT access and availability is the main issue. It only services CBD trips and not cross-city or suburban trips.”

Key Barriers: public transport

- “My teenagers use public transport a lot, and while cost isn’t an issue, wayfinding and jargon in timetables has caused them a lot of confusion. Likewise, my elderly parents struggle with things like the double-click on a mobile to get the virtual wallet working. All of these create barriers to access.”
- “I’ve calculated that what takes me 30 to 40 minutes in the car would take me 1.5 to 2 hrs by bus.”
- “Took our bikes on Bairnsdale train, completed Bairnsdale to Orbost rail trail... Return train to Melbourne was cancelled and replacement bus would not take our bikes. We stayed an extra night, then had lots of booking issues for next morning's train as it was fully booked.”

Safety, Comfort and Behaviour

- Personal safety strongly influenced travel choices, particularly for women and young people. Many avoided public transport, walking, or waiting at stops after dark due to fear of harassment or assault.
- “Safety is a concern – my son was a victim of assault on a bus.”
- “As a woman I think public transportation at night / after dark can feel really unsafe. In the bus people can approach you, in a taxi it often gets uncomfortable both due to my own previous experiences but also from stories I hear from others. But I also feel really vulnerable and unsafe walking.”
- “the wait time of 30mins for a train on weekend or mid-day is too long to be an easy choice. Especially at night.”

Safety, Comfort and Behaviour

- “If safety and walking safety between home/work and the transportation point could be better, I wouldn't have to hurry up to get my daughter to start driving.”
- Overcrowding, lack of cleanliness, unreliable information, and inconsiderate behaviour by other users further reduced comfort and confidence when travelling.
- “Sometime in February. Mid-day. Shopping in suburbs I was travelling solo. It was very hot and I had to spend 3 hours on public transport going to and from my destination because I don't have a car.”

Accessibility, Caring and Invisible Needs

- People travelling with children, prams, or invisible disabilities described frequent accessibility challenges. Broken lifts, poor platform alignment, limited space on vehicles, and sudden service changes made travel stressful or impossible.
- The system was widely seen as designed for able-bodied, unencumbered users, limiting autonomy and equity for carers and people with less visible needs.
- “If I were to have a child in the future, I would avoid trams entirely. I've witnessed parents with prams struggling with steps, prams falling off, and people accidentally kicking or pushing prams.”
- “Our household has people with disability (which) are not always visible... I strive to provide transport autonomy for my children, however there are challenges due to fragmented AT and PT network. Taking pedal bikes on the bus and train present challenges to teenagers who face additional discrimination and bias from residents, business operators, council, Sydney Trains and bus operators.”
- “Living with an invisible disability means I can get overwhelmed and have panic attacks when PT services are changed last minute; too crowded and noisy. All the recent disruptions to Sydney Trains has been very stressful.”

Accessibility, Caring and Invisible Needs

- “Travelling for leisure with my 2yo and 4yo children with a pram. The elevator was not operational at the Yeerongpilly train station requiring me to carry a pram and 2yo up two flights of stairs to access the platform. When boarding the train, the platform was not at a suitable height to easily push the pram onto the train.”
- “A residential development close to our home has blocked off entry to flat access to a close by walking track for the past 2 years. The alternative route to access the track is very steep and difficult to walk with disability and a pram. This limits my ability to access our closest station by foot and participate in regular leisure activities.”
- “I encountered significant challenges due to my back issues from previous injuries. Standing on the train or reaching up to hold on can cause shooting pains down my back and legs. Unfortunately, many passengers lean against the railings and lower handholds. Despite politely asking one individual to move so I could hold on, they ignored me and continued to block the handhold at my height. When I tried to hold on elsewhere, I received negative attitudes from others leaning against the poles, making the experience quite uncomfortable.”

Bike riding and walking

- **Many respondents wanted to cycle more** but felt discouraged by unsafe conditions.
- **Bike riders reported aggressive driver** behaviour and lack of respect.
- **Lack of physically separated bike lanes, inconsistent networks, conflicts with vehicles** and pedestrians, and limited secure parking were common issues.
- Where good infrastructure was available, respondents reported feeling safe, confident, and included, highlighting the importance of high-quality design.
- “My partner is discussing with me the idea of dropping down to one shared car, as he is interested in riding his bike to his work. I'm nervous because he would likely ride on a busy but relatively narrow road with no bicycle infrastructure.”
- “Wish that... more investment would be focused on improving separated bicycle lanes away from pedestrians and cars.”

Bike riding and walking

- I was cut off by a person driving a car and was almost wedged into the Kerb as I approached the entrance to the cross street; and was abused... the behaviour by this person not only threatened my safety, but knocked my confidence and made me concerned about the number of people driving cars who don't fully understand the road rules."
- "sometimes riding a bike can feel like you have nowhere that you belong - drivers hate you, pedestrians hate you and when there's no separated infrastructure you're evil in both ways."
- "Walking to my nearest PT - there are narrow or no footpaths, plenty of steep hills, and heavy traffic."

What Inclusion looks like

- Many people said that they **generally felt well catered for** if they were driving or had good access to public transport.
- **Positive experiences of inclusion** were shaped by **often small but meaningful factors** – frequent and reliable services; well-lit and safe environments; friendly and observant drivers; helpful passengers; and secure bike parking.
- **Acts of kindness and respectful behaviour** made people feel **welcome and legitimate** as transport users, showing that inclusion depends on social and operational factors as well as infrastructure.
- “readily available bus service, bus stop felt safe in a well passive surveillance area with lots of people using stop. Turn up and go service. Seating was available for comfort. Bus driver was nice.”



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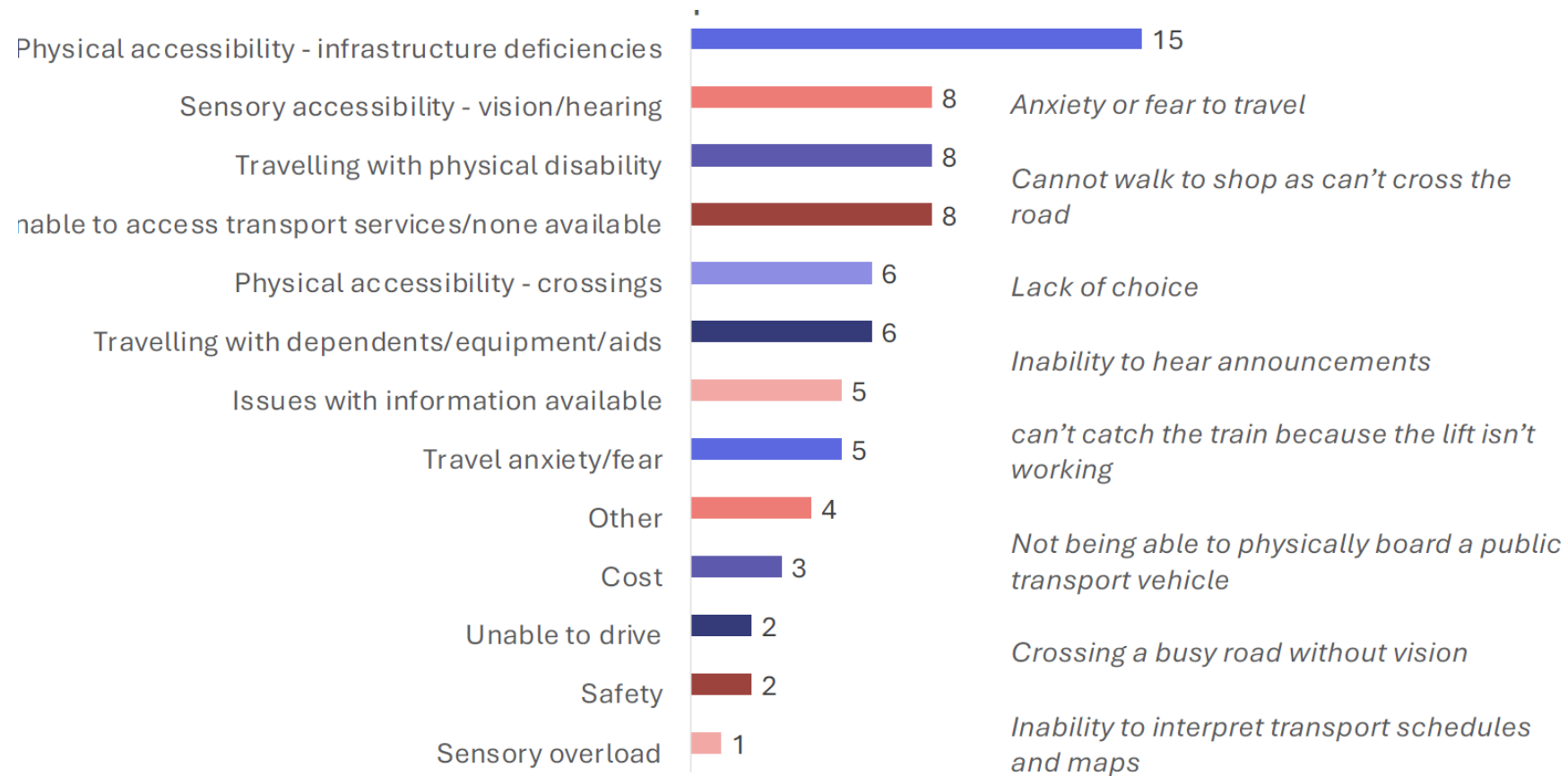
2025 NATIONAL TRANSPORT CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

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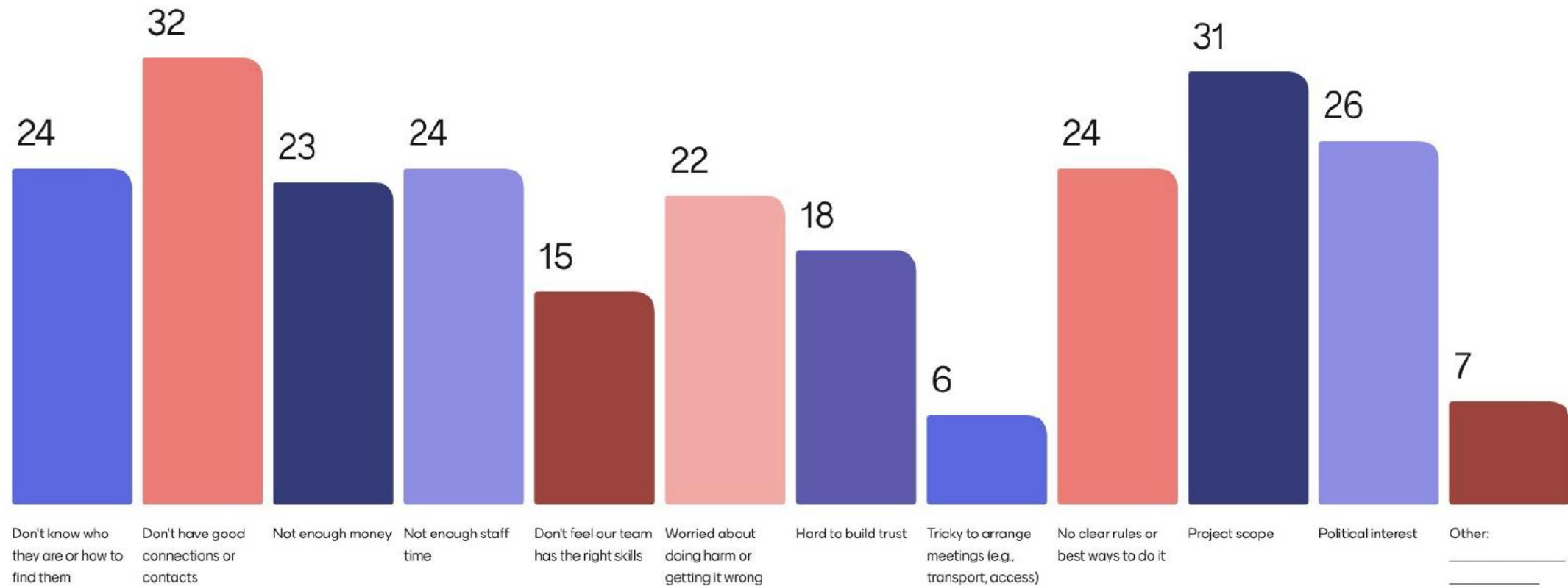
Introduction

- An **inclusive mobility workshop** was conducted at the National Transport Conference in Adelaide, September 2025.
- **Part of the workshop involved asking the practitioners to consider social inclusion in relation to their work.** They were able to respond via Mentimeter.
- Between **68 and 75 people responded** to each multi-choice type question, with open-ended questions attracting about 50 responses each.

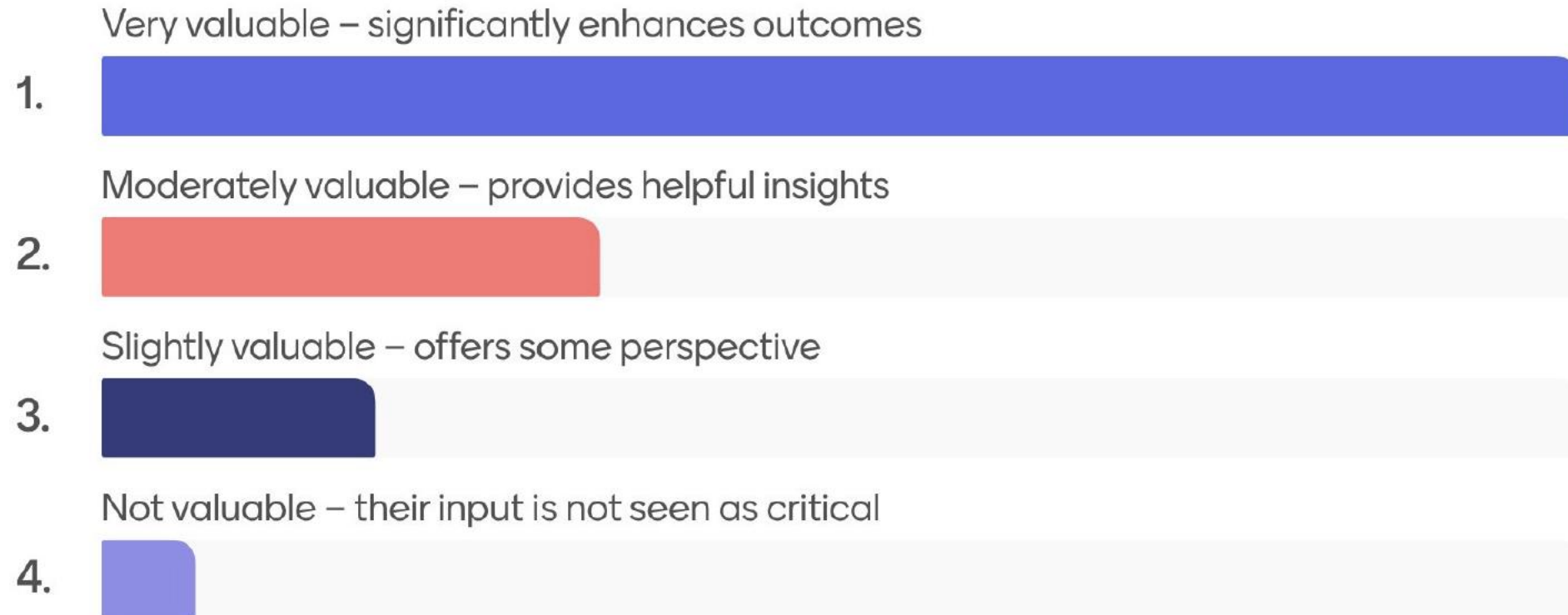
What's a transport barrier someone might face that you've never personally experienced?



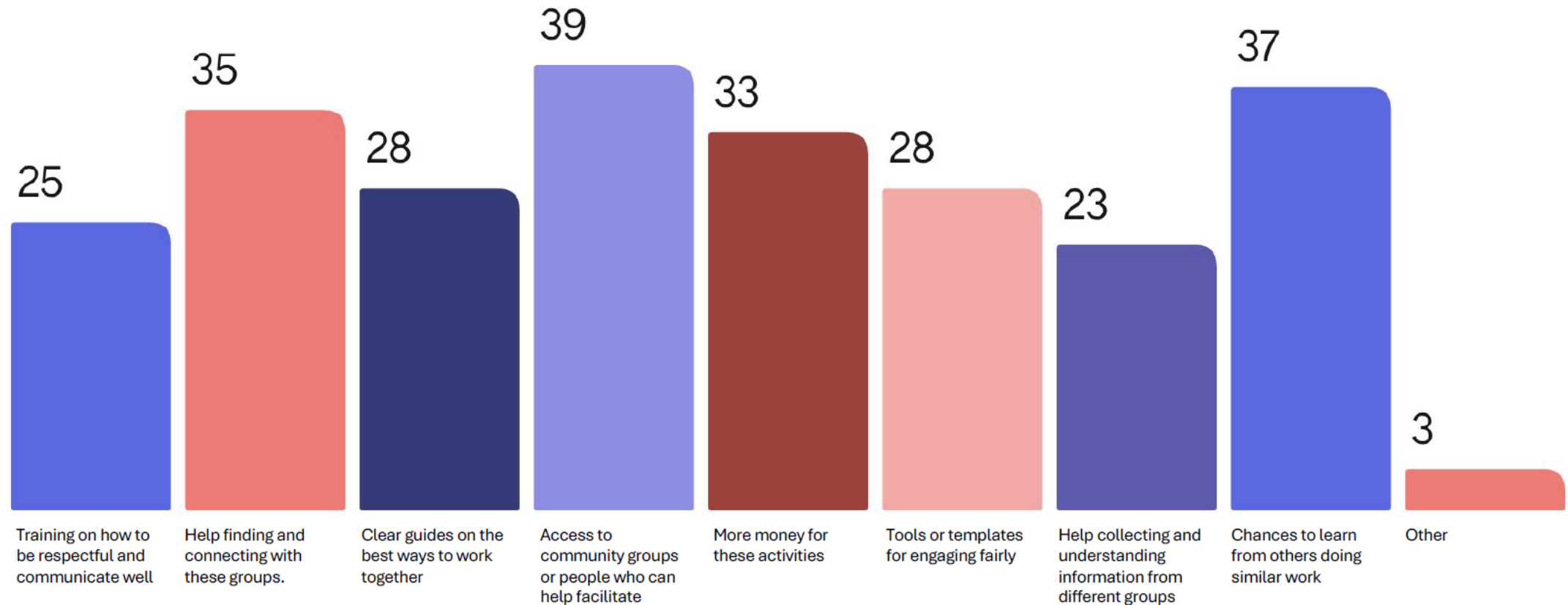
What are your barriers connecting to these groups?



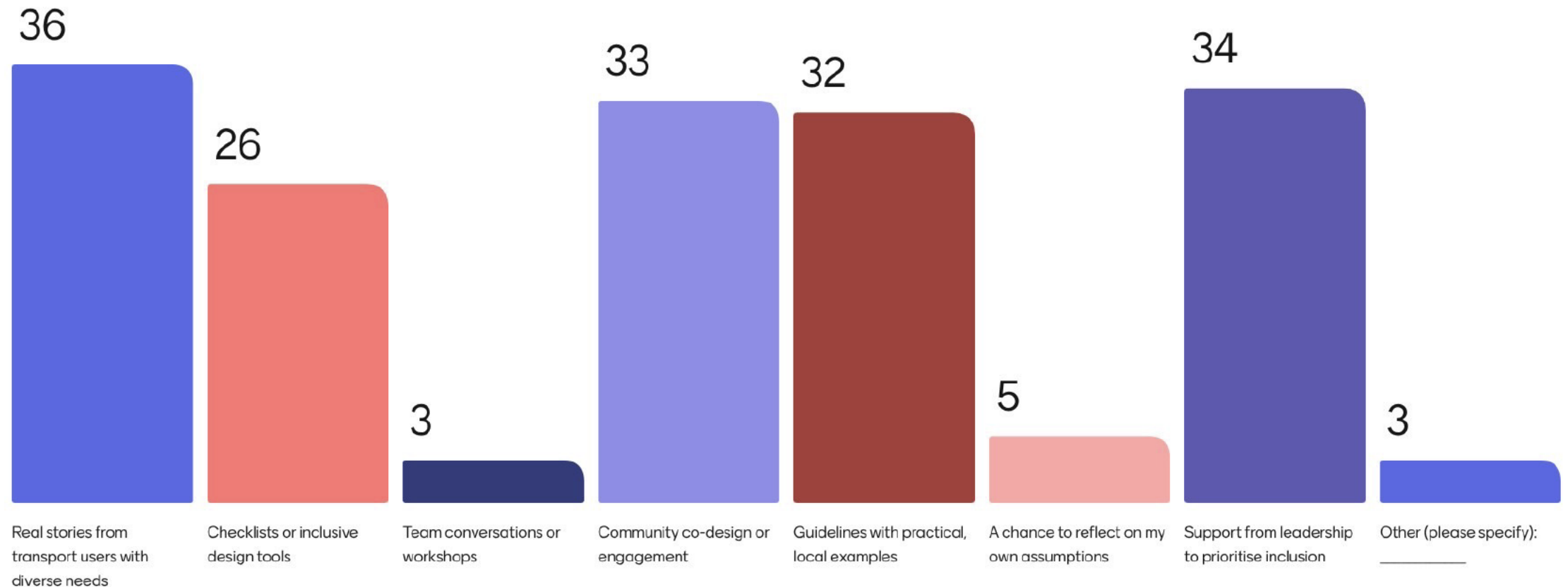
How important do you think it is to get input from these groups for your work?



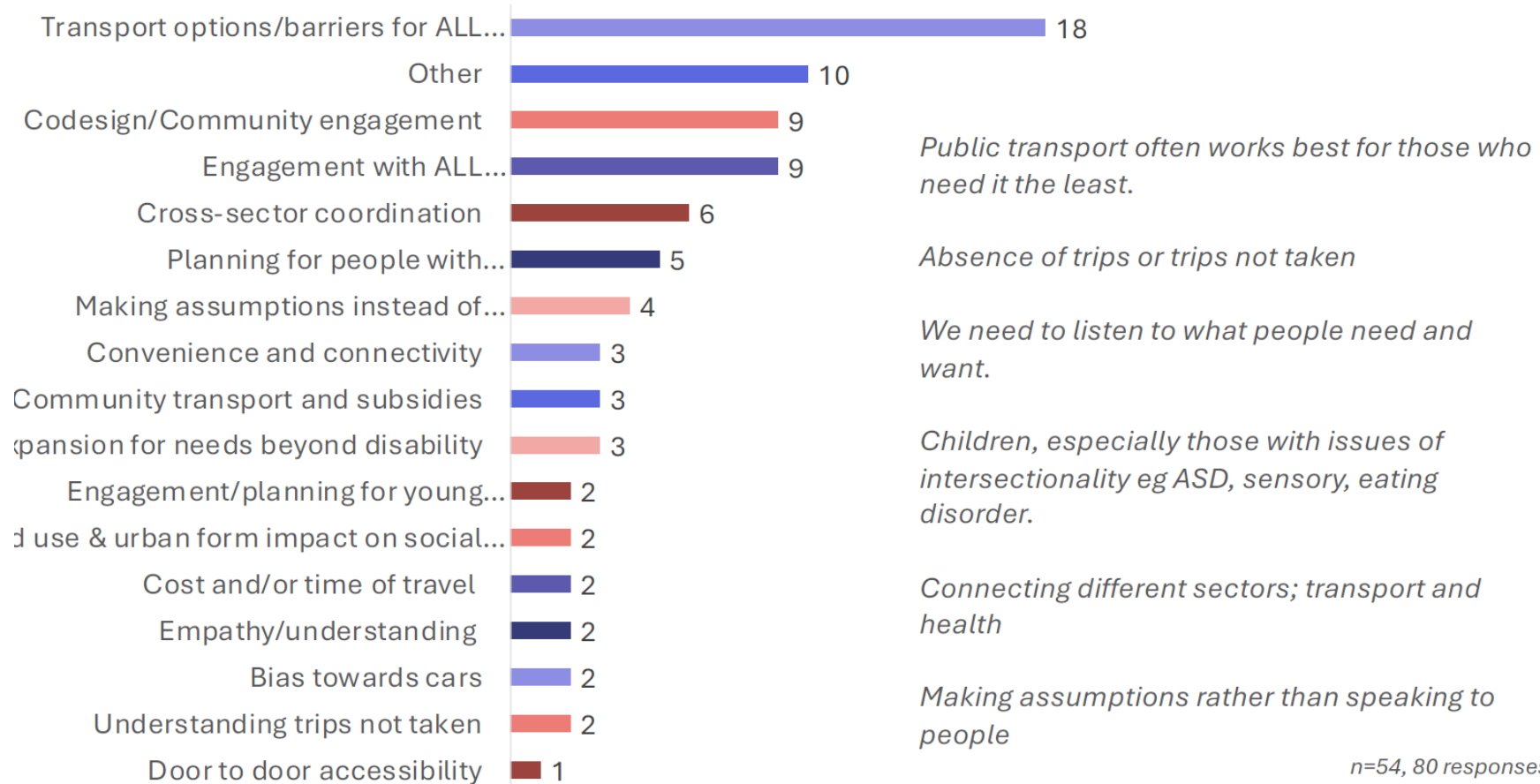
What help would you need to work better with diverse or less heard groups?



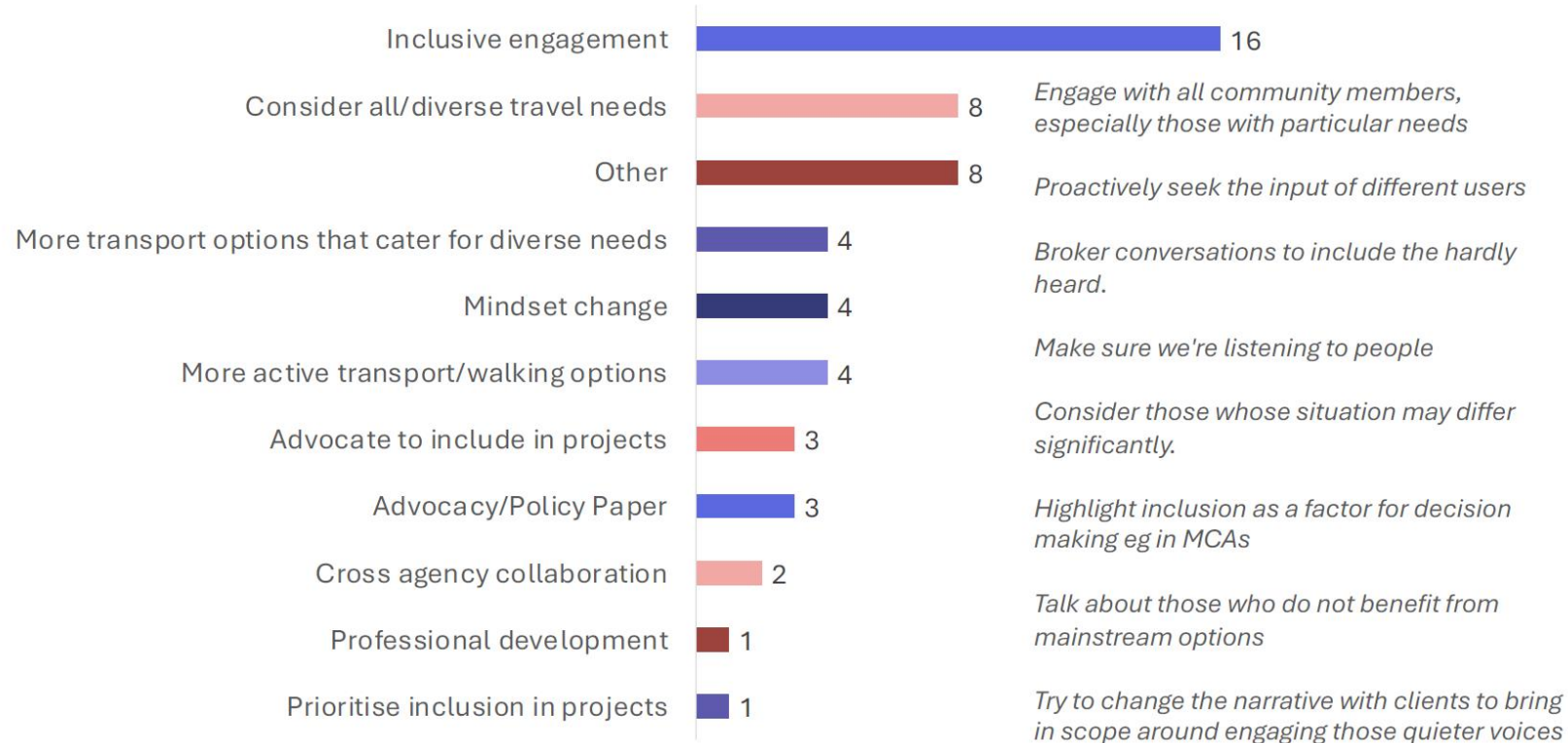
Which of these would help you consider inclusion more in your work? (select up to three)



What do you think we're overlooking when it comes to social inclusion in transport?



What's one thing you could do in your role to make transport more inclusive?



What is one thing TPA could do to improve the industry's response to social inclusion?



Advocacy for? Diversity and Inclusion, whole-journey accessibility, evidence-driven action, cross-agency coordination

"Advocacy to state and local governments to do GIAs and include inclusion as factor in decision making. "

"Educate clients"

"Provide guidance on how to best incorporate this thinking into different stages of the project life cycle "

n=46, 49 responses