



# Understanding consumer needs relating to night-time travel and personal safety

Consumer Council for Northern Ireland

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# Executive summary

This research explores the views of consumers on how safe they feel when travelling at night. It identifies their concerns and brings forward insights from consumers and stakeholders into ways to address these concerns.

In undertaking the research we gathered evidence through a Northern Ireland wide public survey and spoke directly to consumers and stakeholder organisations. In doing so we had a particular regard to gathering the views of potentially vulnerable groups such as women, young people, and disabled people.

Crime and road safety statistics are not assessed by this consumer attitudes survey. Such statistics are not presented in a format that provides for straightforward comparison of consumer perceptions with frequency of reported incidents.

The key finding of our research is that many consumers have concerns for their personal safety whilst travelling at night and this is deterring them from travelling. This view is highest amongst women but is also high amongst consumers with a disability and younger consumers.

Our research found that consumers had concerns about personal safety on all transport methods at night (public transport, taxis, walking, cycling and driving). Concerns were raised in our focus groups about the need to ensure that women and girls feel safe travelling at night and the need to ensure that disabled people are not excluded from travelling at night.

An individual's perception of personal safety can be a complex issue. The reason a person may feel unsafe when travelling is not necessarily just a response to their immediate environment, or the service a person is experiencing at the time of travel. It may also be influenced by previous experiences and pre-conceived attitudes. However, it is important that consumers' perceptions, concerns and insights are understood by policymakers, as night-time travel promotes social inclusion and is vital to driving the night-time economy.

Therefore, along with our key recommendation, we set out in this report 15 key insights derived from our research with consumers and stakeholders, which suggest practical interventions and indicate where attention should be focused.

## **Key finding:**

- consumers are deterred from travelling at night because they don't feel safe

Our survey's overarching finding was that feeling unsafe travelling alone at night deters most consumers (68%) from doing so at least some of the time. This rose to 80% of female consumers.

## **Key recommendation:**

- a holistic and strategic approach is required to address consumer perceptions and concerns about their safety when travelling at night

## **Key themes**

Analysis and further insights regarding our key finding can be found in on page 7. In addition to the key finding some themes emerged from our research which we have set out with analysis and insights for each in from page 11. In summary the themes are:

### **Theme 1: improved public transport and taxi availability**

A strong theme that emerged from both consumers and stakeholders is that limited late night public transport services and the current shortage of taxi drivers is reducing people's night-time travel options. This is in turn causing people to choose to travel less at night.

### **Theme 2: physical infrastructure improvements**

This theme focuses on how physical infrastructure such as streetlighting, CCTV, cycle lanes and the condition of the roads affects how safe people feel when travelling at night.

### **Theme 3: regulation and enforcement**

This theme considers how travellers feel safer knowing that effective rules to control behaviour are in place and are enforced. It also highlights the particular concern given to the vulnerability of women and girls when travelling at night.

### **Theme 4: safety and vulnerability awareness and training**

This theme discusses practical interventions such as training and personal attack alarms that can make people feel safer when travelling at night.

### **Theme 5: consumer engagement with people who travel**

This theme highlights the benefit of listening to users of transport services and tailoring solutions to safety issues around their needs.

# About the Consumer Council

The Consumer Council is the statutory consumer representative body for Northern Ireland, responsible for protecting, empowering consumers and representing consumers, promoting their interests.

We operate under our sponsor department, the Department for the Economy (DfE), on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive.

We are an insight-led evidence-based organisation:

- Providing consumers with expert advice and confidential guidance.
- Engaging with government, regulators and consumer bodies to influence public policy.
- Empowering consumers with the information and tools to build confidence and knowledge.
- Protecting consumers by investigating and resolving consumer complaints under statutory and non-statutory functions.
- Undertaking best practice research to identify and quantify emerging risks to consumers.
- Campaigning for market reform as an advocate for consumer choice, welfare and protection.
- Our statutory powers cover consumer affairs, energy, transport, water and sewerage, postal services and food affordability and accessibility.

These legal responsibilities are drawn from legislation, licences given to companies working in Northern Ireland, and cooperation agreements set in memorandums of understanding. The work we carry out also aligns with a number of the Articles in the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup> (NI Protocol).

Our non-statutory functions educate, empower and support consumers against discriminatory practices in any market through advocacy work, as well as education and outreach programmes covering a broad range of topics including promoting consumer rights, financial inclusion and a more sustainable energy future.

We serve Northern Ireland's 1.9 million citizens and champion consumers in everything we do. We prioritise those who are disabled or chronically sick, who are of pensionable age, who are on low incomes and who live in rural areas.

We have responsibilities under the Rural Needs Act 2016 and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Our aim is to ensure government policies recognise consumer needs in rural areas and promote equality of opportunity and good relations across a range of equality categories.

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<sup>1</sup> [Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland](#), House of Commons Library

# Background to the research

Travelling at night is important to people. We have found in this research the top three reasons for doing so are socialising, shopping and work. Travel at night promotes social inclusion, particularly for vulnerable persons and is vital to driving the night-time economy.

However, the number of licensed taxi drivers has fallen by a quarter since 2013 and only a small number of Translink services run late at night. Regional media has reported on consumers fearing for their personal safety due to the lack of transport options<sup>2</sup> and businesses saying they are losing trade because people are leaving early due to worries about getting home.<sup>3</sup>

Recent research has also found that women in particular feel unsafe travelling at night. For example, a report by Ulster University, published in September 2023<sup>4</sup> showed that 43% of women feel unsafe on public transport at night, with 40% feeling unsafe walking alone at night.

The Consumer Council is responsible for protecting, empowering, understanding and representing consumers.<sup>5</sup> In undertaking this research we set out to do this by listening to consumers and their representatives and presenting their insights for stakeholders and policymakers to consider.

## Methodology

The research was based on four complementary elements:

- quantitative survey

A large-scale quantitative survey of 1,000 Northern Ireland consumers conducted by the market research company Cognisense. Full analysis of the survey findings is provided in Appendix 1.

- secondary research

This consisted of online research by Consumer Council staff on current issues experienced by consumers travelling at night, previous research undertaken (both by the Consumer Council and by other organisations), and interventions taken in the UK and Ireland.

- stakeholder interviews

We interviewed ten stakeholder organisations representing different consumer and business organisations to get their views on personal safety when travelling at night. A list of organisations that took part is provided in Appendix 2.

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<sup>2</sup> [Belfast's lack of late night public transport options sparks concern over women's safety](#), Belfast Live, 12 June 2022

<sup>3</sup> [Belfast's night-time economy being damaged by shortage of taxis and public transport options, warns music venue boss](#), Belfast Telegraph, 8 June 2022

<sup>4</sup> [Every Voice Matters! Violence Against Women in Northern Ireland](#), Ulster University, 2023

<sup>5</sup> [Consumer Council NI](#)

- focus groups

We held five focus groups representing transport users with a range of different perspectives to get their views of personal safety when travelling at night. A list of the focus groups is provided in Appendix 1.

Full details of the research methodology are provided in Appendix 2.

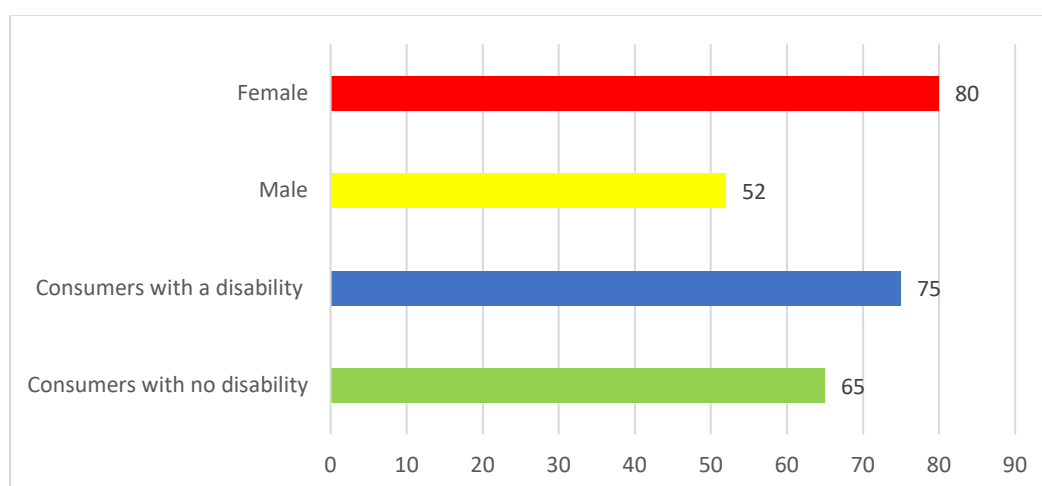
# Key Consumer Council survey findings

## Consumers are deterred from travelling at night because they don't feel safe

Our survey found that feeling unsafe travelling alone at night deters most consumers (68%) from doing so at least some of the time. Female consumers, and consumers with a disability were significantly more deterred.

Figure 1 sets out the percentage of different categories of respondent who were deterred from travelling alone at night because they feel unsafe, either all of the time or some of the time.

**Figure 1: percentage of consumers deterred from travelling alone at night because they feel unsafe, either all the time or sometimes (n=580)**



- Females were more likely than males to be deterred from travelling alone at night because they don't feel safe (male, 52%: female, 80%).
- Consumers with a disability were more likely to be deterred than those with no disability (disability, 75%: no disability, 65%).
- younger consumers were also more likely to be deterred:
  - 18-24 79%
  - 25-34 79%
  - 35-49 66%
  - 50-64 60%
  - 65+ 59%

The remainder of this section examines how safe people feel using various forms of transport at night. We present the main survey findings and separately provide comments and views expressed during the focus group and stakeholder organisation interviews.



## Public transport

### Consumer Council survey findings

- 49% of respondents felt safe or very safe travelling alone at night on Ulsterbus, 47% on the train, 42% on Translink Metro and 32% on the Glider
- 22% felt unsafe or very unsafe travelling alone at night on the Glider, 19% on the train, 16% on Translink Metro and 15% on Ulsterbus

### Comments from the Consumer Council focus groups

**“I do see staff on the Gliders which does make me feel safer although hearing about all the trouble on the Gliders on the news recently does put me off a bit”**  
Express Yourself Social Café.

**“I have no issues travelling on trains at night, but I know my wife would feel unsafe travelling on her own with the lack of security”**  
Translink Passenger Panel.

## Taxis

### Consumer Council survey findings

60% of respondents said they felt safe or very safe travelling alone at night in a taxi, compared to 12% who felt unsafe.

## Cycling

### Consumer Council survey findings

16% of respondents said they felt safe or very safe cycling alone at night, compared to 54% who felt unsafe or very unsafe.

## Walking

### Consumer Council survey findings

28% of respondents said they felt safe or very safe walking alone at night, compared to 42% who felt unsafe or very unsafe. Women (59%) were more likely to feel unsafe compared to men (27%).

### Comments from Consumer Council focus groups

**“The walk to my student accommodation is well lit, but if I’m on my own I’ll always let someone know what my route is”**  
Express Yourself Social Café.

**“Walkers are very vulnerable at night – there are no defined footpaths in rural areas.”**  
Teemore Women’s Group.

## Stakeholder organisation comments

“Students are very hesitant to walk home alone - or even two or three together”  
Queen’s University Students’ Union.

## Driving

### Consumer Council survey findings

- 88% of respondents said they felt safe or very safe in their own vehicle at night, compared to 5% who felt unsafe or very unsafe
- 15% of respondents said they didn’t like driving or travelling in a car at night

### Secondary research

Recent Consumer Council research into the views of electric vehicle (EV) drivers found that 49% of consumers did not always feel safe at public charge points and this rose to 62% amongst women.<sup>6</sup>

## Female perception of personal safety when travelling at night

### Consumer Council survey findings

- women (59%) were more likely to dislike travelling alone at night than men (26%)
- being around other people when travelling alone was significantly more important for women (60%) than men (45%)

Figure 2 shows the difference between men and women in term of feeling safe on various forms of transport. Women on average felt more unsafe on all forms of transport when travelling alone at night, apart from in their own vehicle, compared to men.

**Figure 2: percentage feeling unsafe or very unsafe when travelling alone at night (n=855)**

Form of transport	Male	Female
Own vehicle	6	4
Translink Metro	11	23
Glider	18	27
Ulsterbus	10	21
Train	11	26
Taxi	10	15
Bicycle	43	64
Walk	27	59

<sup>6</sup> [Electric Vehicles - Consumer Research](#), Consumer Council, February 2024

## Comments from Consumer Council focus groups

“If I’m on my own in a taxi I’ll ring someone I know and talk to them for the length of the journey”

Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network.

“As a lone woman I do feel very vulnerable. Anyone can flag you down. Years ago, people would automatically stop to help if you had a puncture, now it’s not so likely and even if they did, is it safe?”

Teemore Women’s Group.

# Themes arising from the research

This section details the themes emerging from our research.

## Theme 1: improved public transport and taxi availability

### Public transport

#### Context

Figure 3 shows the percentage of Translink bus services (Ulsterbus, Belfast Metro and Glider) which run after 7pm on Friday and Saturday evenings. The last Metro and Glider services leave Belfast City Centre at around 11pm and these operate on limited routes.

**Figure 3: percentage of Translink bus services departing after 7pm, Friday and Saturday nights<sup>7</sup>**

	Friday night (after 7pm)	Saturday night (after 7pm)
Ulsterbus*	5.5%	8.2%
Metro	13.0%	15.5%
Glider	21.2%	21.4%

\*Note that Ulsterbus services include school buses which only operate during Monday-Friday daytime hours.

Additional services are also provided by a number of private operators.

#### Secondary research

Previous Consumer Council research found that 65% of consumers would use public transport more if there were more night services.<sup>8</sup> Other recent research supports the call for increased public transport. The 'Free the Night' organisation<sup>9</sup> found that 93% of people in Northern Ireland were unsatisfied with the transport options available to them at night. It recommended that public transport be extended in line with the current and amended licensing laws in Northern Ireland.

Research conducted by London Travel Watch in 2022<sup>10</sup> found that 23% of passengers and 48% of women respondents no longer travelled at certain times of the day due to safety concerns. The researchers said these results show that frequent and reliable public transport is critical if people are to feel safe when travelling, particularly after dark.

<sup>7</sup> Data supplied by Translink, 4 December 2023

<sup>8</sup> [Decarbonisation of Transport in Northern Ireland](#), Consumer Council research, September 2023

<sup>9</sup> [Transforming Nightlife in Northern Ireland](#), Free the Night, 2022

<sup>10</sup> [Personal Security on London's Transport Network – Recommendations for Safer Travel](#), London Travel Watch, 2022

## Consumer Council survey findings

- 75% of respondents used their own vehicle to travel alone at night and 31% said the reason for this was the lack of public transport
- 29% said the lack of public transport made them feel unsafe travelling at night even when travelling with others
- 39% said they would use buses if more were available at night, with 25% saying they would use trains if more were available at night

## Comments from the Consumer Council focus groups

**“The only way we could go out at night as a group is to hire a private bus as there’s no public transport, and since COVID-19 that has become so expensive that it’s not an option”**

**Teemore Women’s Group.**

**“The only way many disabled people living outside of Belfast can get out at night is to drive or have a buddy with a car”**

**Black Box Constructor Team.**

**“More students are now choosing to live at home whilst attending university, but transport hasn’t changed to reflect that. Many clubs and societies meet at night, and it means you can’t fully participate in student life. It would be good to have later services even just on Friday and Saturday nights”**

**Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network.**

Translink ran its “Nightmovers” service during December 2023. This is an additional number of late-night services running on specific routes. The costs were more expensive than regular services, £6 for a single fare on Translink Metro, compared to around £2.20 for a single fare during the day. Whilst there was support for additional late-night services, there was concern about the cost.

**“I do worry about getting home. If there were later services, I’d worry less. I know Translink are putting more late-night buses on but it’s only for Christmas and £6 is very expensive”**

**Black Box Constructor Team.**

## Stakeholder organisation comments

**“The lack of public transport at night means you have to rely on others and therefore you lose your independence”**

**Deafblind UK.**

**“A companion pass, as proposed in the recent consultation on Concessionary Fares, would be really useful on public transport at night. Deaf people and people with sight loss may prefer to travel with someone, particularly going to new places that they aren’t familiar with”**

**Deafblind UK.**

**“Anecdotal evidence suggests that students are going out less due to the lack of transport, and when they do, they are staying local rather than travelling into the city”  
Queen’s University Students’ Union.**

Representatives of businesses operating in the night-time economy told us they felt the lack of public transport at night was impacting on their trade. They also felt that transport organisations need to collaborate with local councils and other stakeholders to ensure a holistic approach to personal safety and travel at night:

**“I first noticed back in March 2022 that people were leaving our venue much earlier due to making sure they made the last bus. I had a situation where a headline act was playing to very few people as most had left by 10:30pm – there needs to be more public transport at night”  
Oh Yeah Music Centre.**

**“Improving late night transport and transport to rural areas would encourage more people to come into the city at night”  
Linen Quarter BID.**

**“Licensing laws are now extended so venues can open for longer, but transport needs to be aligned”  
Oh Yeah Music Centre.**

The PSNI told us they believe there is a big demand for more late night public transport services and that having this would mean that people would go home at different times and so prevent overcrowding in the city at night.

Bus and Coach Northern Ireland, which represents around 60% of private bus operators in Northern Ireland, noted the potential role private bus operators could play.

**“It would be helpful if the DfI looked at the gaps and the demand and look at a partnership/integrated approach with private operators. Private operators can be more flexible.”**

A taxi operator told us that they supported more public transport at night:

**“The expansion of the Translink service would be good for taxis now. More options mean more people want to go out at night.”**

## **Taxi availability**

### **Context**

There is clear evidence of the decrease in the number of licensed taxi drivers. At the end of March 2022, there were 6,733 licensed taxi vehicles in Northern Ireland, a 25% drop from the previous year and the lowest number since recording began in 2013.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [Driver, Vehicle, Operator and Enforcement Statistics 2022-23 – Tables \(Table 6.2\)](#), DfI, November 2022

There have been particular issues with a shortage of taxis in the evenings, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights. The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) cited concerns for public safety in its decision to increase the maximum taxi fare in December 2023.<sup>12</sup> DfI intended this increase to act as an incentive for more drivers to work antisocial hours and therefore increase the number of taxis available in the evenings and at weekends.

### **Consumer Council survey findings**

- 23% of respondents said that a lack of taxis made them feel unsafe at night travelling with others and was cited by significantly more women (28%) than men (16%)
- 28% said the fear of unlicensed taxis made them feel unsafe travelling at night with others and was cited by more women (33%) than men (21%)
- 30% said that they would use taxis to travel at night if more were available

### **Comments from the Consumer Council focus groups**

Representatives agreed there was a lack of taxis available at night, and this caused particular concerns for some disabled consumers.

**“It would put me off travelling at night because I’d worry about not getting a taxi home”**

**Express Yourself Social Café.**

**“I travel a lot at night by taxis for accessibility reasons, I can’t really use public transport. I’ve noticed a big difference in the last five months or so in their availability”**  
**Black Box Constructor Team.**

There was concern about unlicensed taxis and unscrupulous drivers who may charge more than the maximum fare.

**“Taxi drivers seem to be able to charge what they want, and it makes me nervous that I won’t have enough money on me”**

**Express Yourself Social Café.**

### **Stakeholder organisation comments**

**“I’ve heard of taxis refusing guide dogs and there is definitely a lack of wheelchair accessible taxis”**

**Deafblind UK.**

There was support for a system where students could use a taxi even if they did not have money immediately to hand.

**“Queen’s University used to have a partnership with Valucabs whereby if students didn’t have the money for a taxi they could get a voucher – similar to that operated in Glasgow. It stopped due to the pandemic and has not been resurrected. It’s maybe not**

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<sup>12</sup> [Maximum taxi fares to increase](#), DfI, November 2023

**so much of an issue now that most taxis accept cards but it's still a good idea”  
Queen’s University Students’ Union.**

Business representatives said that action needs to be taken to increase the number of taxis.

**“People are now planning their nights around getting home safely. The numbers of taxi drivers have dropped significantly after COVID-19 and you’re hearing more about illegal taxis. The answer is to increase the regulated fares, and to make it easier to be a taxi driver”**

**Oh Yeah Music Centre.**

The representative of the taxi industry felt that whilst a rise in the maximum fare was needed, they were also concerned that the application process for new drivers was too onerous and put off new drivers from applying.

## **Consumer insights derived from Consumer Council survey and focus groups**

### **Theme 1: improved public transport and taxi availability**

1. increase the amount of late night public transport with fare concessions applying to additional services
2. identify areas which are currently poorly served by public transport at night
3. have a comprehensive review of issues affecting the supply of taxi drivers
4. reduce the license fees for accessible taxis and use existing powers under the Taxis Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 to link the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles to operator licensing



## Theme 2: physical infrastructure improvements

### Streetlighting

#### Context

Research by the 'Free the Night' organisation found that good street lighting was a top safety indicator for people in Northern Ireland and increases the amount of people who leave home at night.<sup>13</sup> Ulster University reported that 56% of women keep to well-lit areas to make them feel safer in public spaces.<sup>14</sup>

#### Consumer Council survey findings

74% of respondents said that street lighting made them feel safe travelling alone at night.

#### Comments from the Consumer Council focus groups

Representatives were in agreement about the need for better streetlighting, particularly in more rural areas:

**“I’m more concerned about getting to and from the train station at night because of the lack of lighting on the roads”**  
Translink Passenger Panel.

**“There’s also a major issue with maintaining streetlights”**  
Black Box Constructor Team.

### Condition of the road network

#### Comments from Consumer Council focus groups

Representatives expressed concern about the poor condition of some roads, particularly in rural areas.

**“The number of potholes is increasing and it’s very scary after dark. I think they are causing a lot of accidents”**  
Teemore Women’s Group.

**“At the moment you can barely see the road signs at night, half of them are covered with overgrown hedges”**  
Teemore Women’s Group.

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<sup>13</sup> [Transforming nightlife in Northern Ireland](#), Free the Night, 2022

<sup>14</sup> [Every Voice Matters! Violence Against Women in Northern Ireland](#), Ulster University, 2023

# CCTV

## Context

Research by Free the Night<sup>15</sup> has shown that CCTV in licensed venues and on transport vehicles could help make people in Northern Ireland feel safer.

Translink has CCTV cameras onboard its buses and trains, and at stations.<sup>16</sup>

## Consumer Council survey findings

31% of respondents said that knowing CCTV is available makes them feel safer when travelling alone at night.

## Stakeholder organisation comments

The PSNI told us that CCTV improves the perception of safety but there could be more public awareness of where it is available. For example there are multiple CCTV cameras on public transport and 118 PSNI cameras situated around Belfast City Centre.

## Secondary research

In recent Consumer Council research on electric vehicles, consumers felt that charge points would benefit from CCTV coverage:<sup>17</sup>

**“Although it does little for you at the time, it would certainly act as a deterrent for some criminals. As you’re negotiating the charging machine, your car may be open, while you search your purse or wallet for cards, etc ... a criminal’s dream, unlike the typical petrol station which I regard as pretty safe ... with plenty of cameras, other consumers filling up or shopping.”**

# Cycling

## Consumer Council survey findings

16% of respondents said they felt safe or very safe cycling alone at night, compared to 54% who felt unsafe or very unsafe.

## Comments from Consumer Council focus groups

Representatives cited the need for better cycling infrastructure both in urban and rural areas, particularly as there were increasing numbers of cyclists.

**“We need properly segregated lanes”  
Express Yourself Social Café.**

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<sup>15</sup> [Transforming Nightlife in Northern Ireland](#), Free the Night, 2022

<sup>16</sup> See for example [School Bus Safety](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Electric Vehicles - Consumer Research](#), Consumer Council, February 2024

**“There are increasing numbers of cyclists at night yet there’s no cycle lanes” Teemore Women’s Group.**

## **Public transport infrastructure**

### **Context**

With streetlighting and CCTV already highlighted in our survey as important aspects in consumer perceptions of feeling safe at night, interviews with focus groups and stakeholders indicated the importance of feeling safe whilst waiting for their train or bus to arrive.

### **Comments from Consumer Council focus groups**

Representatives said that the bigger bus and rail stations felt safe at night but that tended not to be the case for smaller waiting areas. They also felt improvements could be made to make bus stops more accessible, particularly at night.

**“I feel safe waiting at larger stations, but I wouldn’t want to walk up to Botanic or another smaller station”  
Translink Passenger Panel.**

**“There tends to be poor lighting and no access to toilets at smaller stations. It feels very isolating”  
Translink Passenger Panel.**

**I sometimes take the 1am service to Dublin from Belfast. As the station is closed you have to stand out in Glengall Street which feels very isolated with poor lighting. Could they consider some other arrangements for the new station?” Translink Passenger Panel.**

### **Stakeholder organisation comments**

**“People with sight loss or with a learning disability may not be able to read bus electronic timetables at the shelter. This is even more important at night where you could miss the last bus home. A simple infrastructure change could make so much difference”  
Deafblind UK.**

## **Consumer insights derived from Consumer Council survey and focus groups**

### **Theme 2: physical infrastructure improvements**

5. fix faulty streetlights quickly and provide additional streetlighting in rural areas
6. ensure there is sufficient signage indicating the presence of CCTV on public transport and other areas where people travel at night

7. all public electric vehicle charge points should have working CCTV cameras in place
8. give a high priority to providing new cycle lanes that are segregated from road vehicles
9. public transport waiting areas for night-time services should be well lit and provide call points for urgent assistance
10. additional measures should be put in place to encourage more people with disabilities to use public transport at night. For example, audio timetables at bus stops

## Theme 3: regulation and enforcement

### Public transport

#### Context

Translink publishes on its website Conditions of Carriage for its services which set out the rights and obligations of passengers.<sup>18</sup> These Conditions include provisions regarding the behaviour of passengers, such as not to use offensive language or consume alcohol. Any person who travels on a transport service operated by Translink shall be deemed to have agreed to travel on these Conditions.

#### Comments from Consumer Council focus groups

Representatives raised concerns around the consumption of alcohol on public transport and there was a perception that the rules around drinking alcohol on public transport were not being enforced:

**“There’s a problem with people drinking alcohol and being drunk on buses and trains. It’s really intimidating”**  
**Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network.**

### Taxis

#### Context

Responsibility for dealing with complaints about licensed taxis resides with the Department for Infrastructure. A response to a Freedom of Information request made to the Department for Infrastructure in September 2019 revealed that between 2016 and September 2019, the Department for Infrastructure received 277 complaints about taxi drivers/taxi operators.<sup>19</sup>

#### Comments from Consumer Council focus groups

Representatives were unsure what they should do if they experience an issue with their taxi journey.

**“Can you complain about a taxi driver? Where would you go to do this?”**  
**Black Box Constructor Team.**

### Electric vehicles

65% of respondents to recent Consumer Council research on electric vehicle infrastructure felt that it would be important for a code of practice to commit to providing measures to ensure personal safety, a higher proportion of females (76%) felt this way.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> [Conditions of Carriage](#), Translink

<sup>19</sup> [FOI request DFI/2019-0357](#), DfI, September 2019

<sup>20</sup> [Electric Vehicles - Consumer Research](#), Consumer Council, February 2024

## Policing

Translink currently provides funding for the PSNI's Safe Transport team, which was formed in 2021.<sup>21</sup> It consists of six Constables and covers the whole of Northern Ireland. The PSNI told us that the aim is for the team to be highly visible on board trains and at the main transport hubs, and also on board Glider services. They told us that their presence acts as a deterrent and provides reassurance to both passengers and Translink staff.

## Violence against women and girls

### Context

In 2018 the International Transport Forum published its report, 'Women's Safety and Security: A Public Transport Priority', which in its introduction stated that, "many women feel exposed to physical aggression, sexual harassment or other forms of unwelcome behaviour on public transport".<sup>22</sup>

In 2023 the NI Executive Office consulted on its Strategic Framework on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.<sup>23</sup> The consultation document specifically referred to public transport as a place that should be made safer for women and girls.

The Women's Night Safety Charter was first established in London in 2018 and has since been rolled out in a number of UK cities. Hospitality Ulster and White Ribbon NI are supporting its rollout in Northern Ireland.<sup>24</sup> The Charter is a commitment by organisations and businesses operating at night to support the campaign to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

The PSNI has worked with a number of licensed venues and security staff across Northern Ireland to roll out the "Ask for Angela" safety initiative,<sup>25</sup> where anyone who is feeling unsafe can use a code-phrase and a trained member of staff will then look to provide support and assistance. Translink has recently joined the "Ask for Angela" scheme.

### Comments from Consumer Council focus groups

Participants in focus groups, particularly women's groups, highlighted that women feel more vulnerable than men and concerns over violence against women could not be separated from this higher perception of risk.

**"I feel uncomfortable in taxis, and don't like getting in a taxi on my own. In the past sexual comments have been made by the driver."**

**Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network.**

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<sup>21</sup> [Police Service's Safe Transport Team encourages public to travel safely when out and about this summer](#), PSNI, July 2023

<sup>22</sup> [Women's Safety and Security: A public transport priority](#), International Transport Forum, 2018

<sup>23</sup> [Ending Violence Against Women and Girls - Public Consultation](#), The Executive Office, 2023

<sup>24</sup> [Women's Night Safety Charter](#), Hospitality Ulster

<sup>25</sup> [Ask For Angela](#), PSNI

## Stakeholder organisation comments

Business representatives we spoke to feel the roll out of the Ask for Angela initiative and Women's Night Safety Charter were positive developments. Translink have already signed the Charter and the major taxi firms in Northern Ireland told us that they intend to modify their staff training programmes to accommodate these initiatives.

## Secondary research

In 2022, Transport Scotland undertook research into 'Women's and girls' views and experiences of personal safety when using public transport'.<sup>26</sup> This stated that "Almost all women reported that they 'very often' or 'always' felt unsafe when using public transport."

## Initiatives from elsewhere in Great Britain and Ireland

### Context

A number of initiatives have been developed in Great Britain and Ireland aiming to address the issue of personal safety when travelling at night.

### Secondary research

In June 2018 the Mayor of Greater Manchester appointed a Night-Time Economy Advisor, supported by a Night-Time Economy Panel, who has developed a Night-Time Economy Strategy for the region.<sup>27</sup> Transport is a key theme of the strategy with an objective of getting a better understanding and mitigating people's concerns with using public transport at night, most notably safety concerns.

Since 2016 London has had a Night Czar who works in partnership with night-time industries, local authorities, the Metropolitan Police and Transport for London. The current Night Czar visited Belfast in January 2023 and met with representatives from the Belfast Night-Time Economy Partnership.<sup>28</sup>

The Irish Government established a Night-Time Economy Taskforce in July 2020. Its report, published in September 2021,<sup>29</sup> supported a number of transport initiatives including more 24 hour public transport options, an integrated transport system and a ride-hailing option for rural areas.

## Stakeholder organisation comments

Business stakeholders in Northern Ireland who spoke with us indicated that there would be support for similar initiatives:

**"There would be benefit in having a single contact, for example a Czar or a voluntary ambassador"**

**Linen Quarter BID.**

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<sup>26</sup> [Women's and girls' views and experiences of using public transport](#), Transport Scotland, March 2023

<sup>27</sup> [Greater Manchester Night Time Economy Strategy](#), GM Combined Authority, March 2022

<sup>28</sup> [London Night Czar visits Belfast to help review night time economy](#), Belfast Telegraph, January 2023

<sup>29</sup> [Report of the Night-Time Economy Taskforce, Dept of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#), September 2021

## **Consumer insights derived from Consumer Council survey and focus groups**

### **Theme 3: regulation and enforcement**

11. highlight the enforcement of public transport conditions of carriage relating to anti-social behaviour
12. raise awareness of the process to make a complaint about a licensed taxi driver



## Theme 4: safety and vulnerability awareness and training

### Context

All Translink's customer facing staff undertake Customer Services training which covers disability awareness, vulnerable customers and dealing with conflict. Regulated taxi drivers are required to undertake periodic training on disability awareness, ensuring the safety of passengers and reaction in the event of aggression.

### Public transport

#### Comments from Consumer Council focus groups

Representatives raised training as an issue to help people feel safe:

**“There needs to be additional training for Translink staff so that women aren't left on their own in vulnerable situations”**

**Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network.**

### Taxis

#### Comments from Consumer Council focus groups

Representatives raised driver training, more information for customers and the lack of female drivers as concerns.

**“Taxi drivers have so little disability awareness. Some people need to take more time to get in and out of the car, or maybe some support in counting out money”**

**Black Box Constructor Team.**

#### Stakeholder organisation comments

**“We would get a number of complaints every week from people saying they were not allocated a female driver. More women use taxis but only 2% of drivers in fleet are women. We are taking part in the “Females in the Fleet” project to bring more women into the industry”**

**Taxi representative.**

### Personal interventions

#### Comments from Consumer Council focus groups

Representatives discussed personal interventions to increase the feeling of safety, particularly for women and girls, and how technology could help.

“There should be advice sessions given as to what to do if you are in a vulnerable situation. It’s so important to look out for each other and teach about bystander intervention”

Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network.

“Personal Safety Alarms used to be given out to students. This might be enough to deter”

Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network.

“There’s an app in the UK called the Hollie Guard which sets off an alert and activates the phone’s camera, sending a message and recording to your pre-defined emergency contacts”

Northern Ireland Rural Women’s Network.

## **Consumer insights derived from Consumer Council survey and focus groups**

### **Theme 4: safety and vulnerability awareness and training**

13. provide guidance to the public on what to do if they feel unsafe when travelling at night

14. increase awareness of apps and alarms available to consumers who may feel vulnerable

## **Theme 5: consumer engagement with people who travel**

### **Comments from Consumer Council focus groups**

Comments suggested that the voices of consumers who may experience vulnerable circumstances need to be heard.

One example discussed was the impact that proposed pedestrianisation in parts of Belfast City Centre may have on venues holding night-time events which are particularly aimed at people with hidden disabilities. Being unable to be left off directly outside the venue may deter some people with hidden disabilities from attending. Suggested solutions to this were put forward, including retractable bollards or some form of RADAR key system that would allow only certain vehicles access.

Rural groups expressed frustration at a perceived focus on night-time transport provision in urban areas. It was felt that there were specific concerns around personal safety at night in rural areas which needed to be addressed, such as a lack of streetlighting.

### **Consumer insights derived from Consumer Council survey and focus groups**

#### **Theme 5: consumer engagement with people who travel**

15. consult with all sections of the community to identify solutions that benefit all people who travel

# Conclusion

Our research found that many consumers have concerns for their personal safety whilst travelling at night and this is deterring them from travelling. Consumers indicate there is a need for:

- 1. improved public transport and taxi availability**
- 2. physical infrastructure improvements**
- 3. regulation and enforcement**
- 4. safety and vulnerability awareness and training**
- 5. consumer engagement with people who travel**

The reasons why a person feels unsafe when travelling are not necessarily a simple response to the immediate environment or service a person is experiencing at a particular time. As such it is a complex issue for policy makers to address. Therefore our key recommendation is that:

**A holistic and strategic approach is required to address consumer perceptions and concerns about their safety when travelling at night.**

Successfully reducing the concerns of consumers about their safety travelling at night will increase social inclusion and benefit the economy.

We look forward to further engagement with all stakeholders involved in this important issue.

## Contact information

If you have any questions, require further information or wish to discuss any aspect of our report, please contact:

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## Appendix 1: analysis of survey findings

### How often do consumers travel at night (between 7:00pm and 6:00am)

Figure 1 shows that 46% of consumers travel alone at night at least once per week, whilst 45% of consumers rarely or never travel alone at night.

**Figure 1: how often do you travel alone at night? (%) (n=1000)**

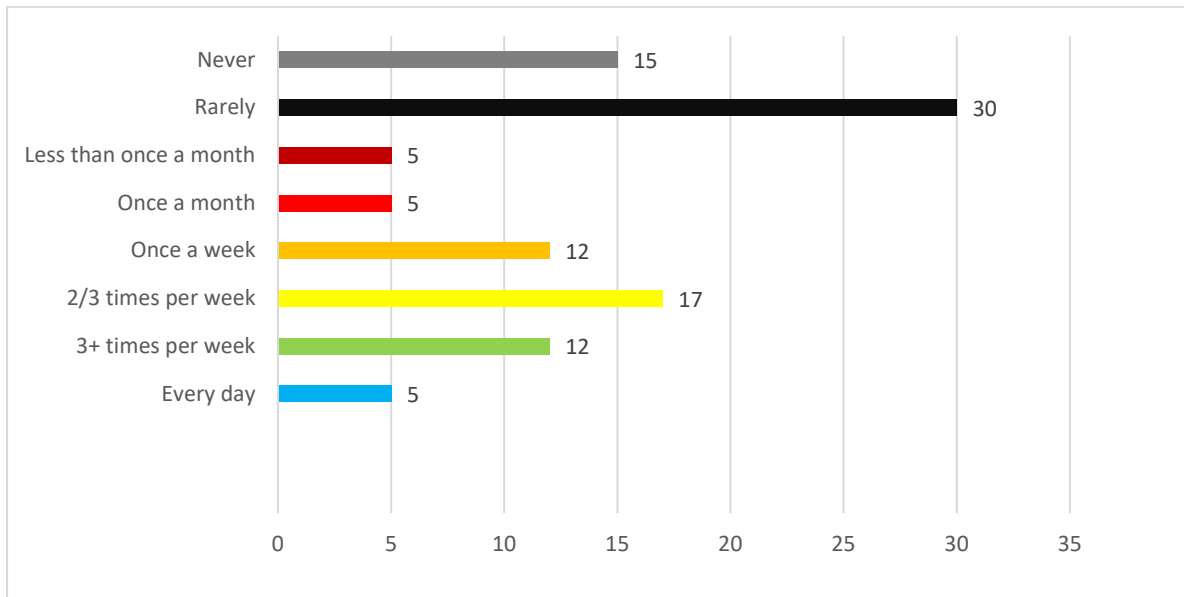
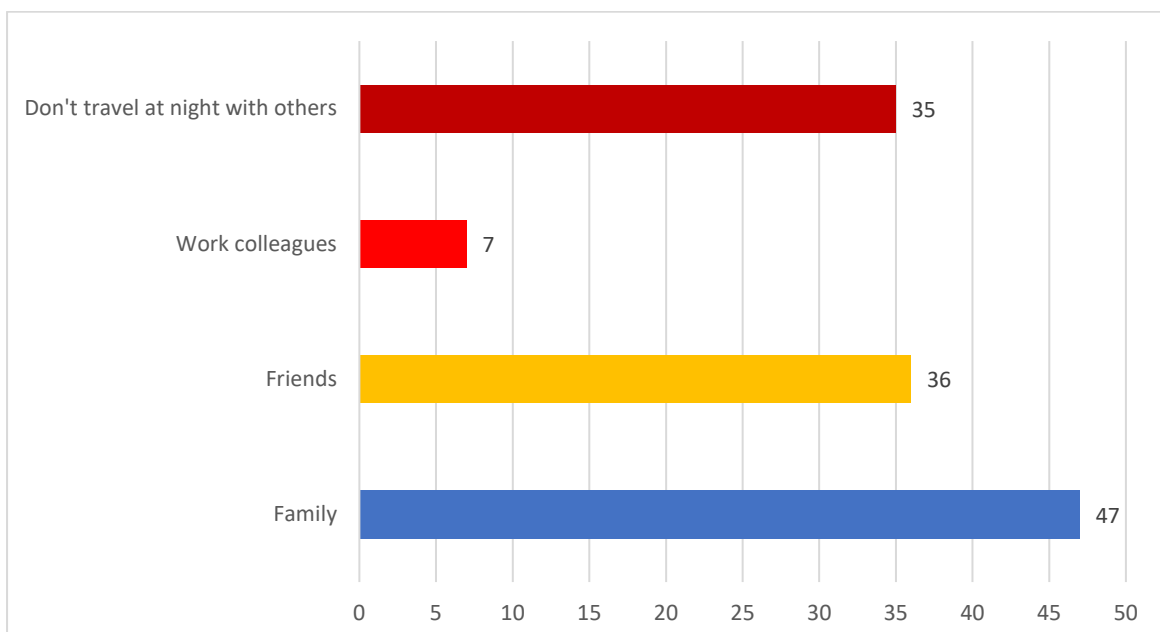


Figure 2 shows that 47% of consumers travel with their families at night, whilst 36% travel with friends. However 35% do not travel with others at night.

**Figure 2: do you travel at night with others (i.e. people you know)? If so, who do you typically travel with? (%) (n=1000)**



There were a number of statistically significant differences between different consumer groups:

- more men (51%) than women travel alone at least once per week (42%)
- women were more likely to rarely or never travel alone at night (female, 48%: male, 40%)
- younger consumers were more likely to travel alone at least once per week:
  - 18-24 61%
  - 25-34 52%
  - 35-49 55%
  - 50-64 42%
  - 65+ 27%
- those with a disability were less likely to travel alone at least once a week (disability, 41%, no disability, 48%) and were more likely to rarely or never travel at night (disability, 49%, no disability, 42%)
- significantly more older consumers do not travel at night with others:
  - 18-24 14%
  - 25-34 32%
  - 35-49 37%
  - 50-64 41%
  - 65+ 43%

### Methods used to travel at night

Figure 3 shows that the majority of consumers (75%) use their own vehicle to travel alone at night.

**Figure 3: when you travel alone at night, what methods do you use? (%) (n=855)**

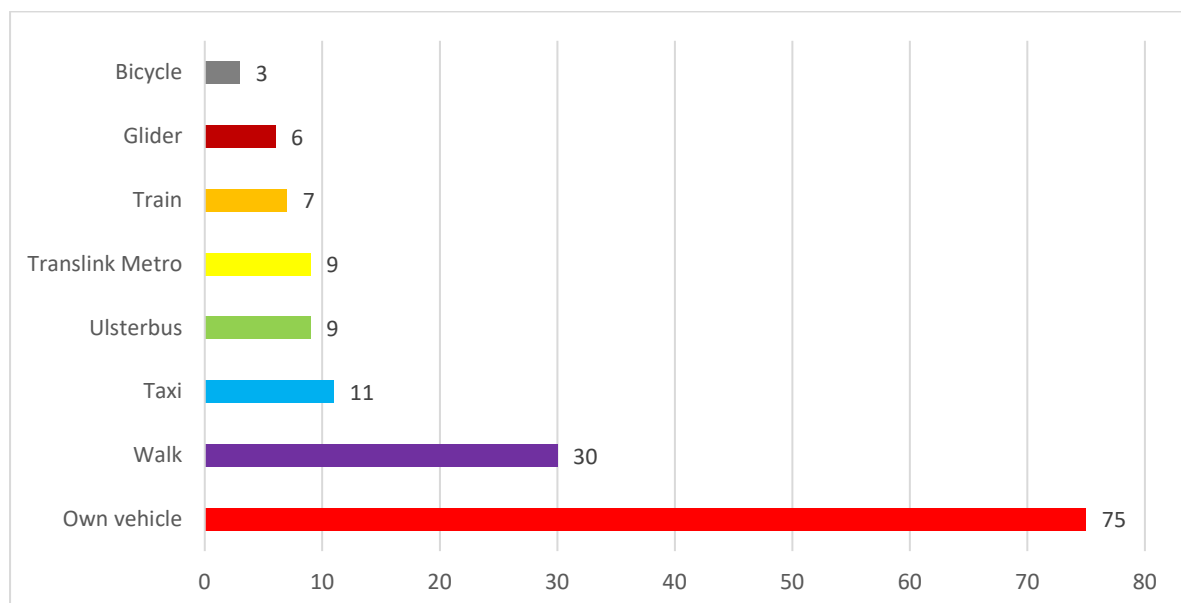
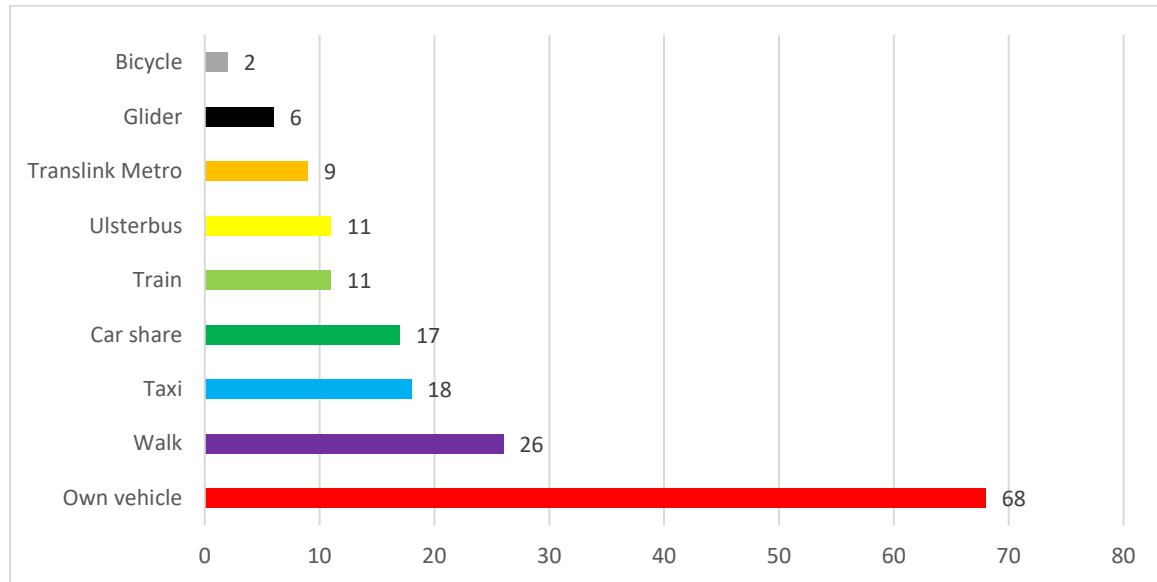


Figure 4 shows that the majority of consumers use their own vehicle to travel with others at night. However taxis were a more popular option than when travelling alone (18% versus 11%), and 17% of consumers used a car share.

**Figure 4: when you travel with others at night, what methods do you choose? (%) (n=650)**



There were a number of statistically significant differences between different consumer groups:

- more consumers in rural areas used their own car to travel alone at night (rural, 84%: urban, 73%) and to travel with others at night (rural, 79%: urban, 65%)
- more men than women used walking as a method to travel at night, both alone (male, 37%: female, 22%) and with others (male, 33%: female, 20%)
- younger consumers were more likely to use walking as a method to travel at night

Age	% walking alone at night	% walking with others at night
<b>18-24</b>	41%	36%
<b>25-34</b>	34%	29%
<b>35-49</b>	30%	22%
<b>50-64</b>	29%	22%
<b>65+</b>	19%	23%

- consumers with a disability were more likely to use taxis to travel alone at night (disability, 14%: no disability, 10%)



- public transport (i.e. Ulsterbus, Translink Metro, train and Glider) was used most by the 18-24 age group

<b>Age</b>	<b>% using public transport alone at night</b>	<b>% using public transport with others at night</b>
<b>18-24</b>	58%	56%
<b>25-34</b>	41%	40%
<b>35-49</b>	24%	37%
<b>50-64</b>	20%	23%
<b>65+</b>	28%	37%

- taxis were used most by the 25-34 age group:

<b>Age</b>	<b>% using taxis alone at night</b>	<b>% using taxis with others at night</b>
<b>18-24</b>	12%	17%
<b>25-34</b>	18%	22%
<b>35-49</b>	10%	20%
<b>50-64</b>	13%	18%
<b>65+</b>	5%	13%

- car sharing was used most by the 18-24 age group to travel with others:

- 18-24      35%
- 25-34      20%
- 35-49      12%
- 50-64      11%
- 65+        11%.

## Reasons for choosing methods of transport

Figure 5 shows the range of reasons for choosing transport methods when travelling alone. Convenience tended to be the most common answer, with 82% of consumers stating this as the reason for travelling in their own vehicle.

**Figure 5: reasons for choosing transport method when travelling alone at night (%)**

	<b>Own vehicle (n=643)</b>	<b>Translink Metro (n=78)</b>	<b>Glider (n=51)</b>	<b>Ulsterbus (n=79)</b>	<b>Train (n=60)</b>	<b>Taxi (n=95)</b>	<b>Bicycle (n=22)</b>	<b>Walk (n=256)</b>
<b>Convenience</b>	82	65	67	65	72	69	79	50
<b>Feels safe to me</b>	58	45	24	42	53	62	39	16
<b>Most affordable option</b>	16	55	45	55	45	9	56	36
<b>Lack of public transport</b>	31	5	12	12	5	27	49	22
<b>Lack of taxis</b>	9	19	21	13	9	-	30	20
<b>For health reasons</b>	4	-	4	3	1	1	33	42
<b>Can't afford alternative</b>	5	11	17	11	7	4	19	19

Figure 6 shows the range of reasons for choosing transport methods travelling with others. Convenience again was the most common answer, with 85% of consumers stating this as a reason for travelling in their own vehicle.

**Figure 6: reasons for choosing transport method when travelling with others at night (%)**

	<b>Own vehicle (n=437)</b>	<b>Translink Metro (n=58)</b>	<b>Glider (n=41)</b>	<b>Ulsterbus (n=73)</b>	<b>Train (n=75)</b>	<b>Taxi (n=118)</b>	<b>Bicycle (n=13)</b>	<b>Walk (n=167)</b>	<b>Car share (n=104)</b>
<b>Convenience</b>	85	53	68	70	69	76	61	56	66
<b>Feels safe to me</b>	64	46	32	38	45	42	56	26	66
<b>Most affordable option</b>	21	47	45	54	44	8	63	37	33
<b>Lack of public transport</b>	22	8	9	5	11	36	43	21	19
<b>Lack of taxis</b>	8	6	14	5	5	2	8	20	12
<b>For health reasons</b>	5	5	10	2	2	2	20	39	5
<b>Can't afford alternative</b>	5	4	13	6	4	-	6	10	4

### **Own vehicle**

- convenience was the main reason for using their own vehicle when travelling alone
  - male 89%
  - female 74%
  - disability 79%
  - no disability 83%
- women and those with a disability were more likely to view travelling in their own vehicle as feeling safe to them
  - male 50%
  - female 68%
  - disability 68%
  - no disability 56%
- men and those with a disability were more likely to choose this method due to a lack of public transport
  - male 34%
  - female 27%
  - disability 35%
  - no disability 30%

## **Public transport (Translink Metro, Glider, Ulsterbus, Train)**

- consumers are less likely to choose feeling safe as a reason for using the Glider when travelling compared to other methods of public transport, both alone and with others
- significantly more men chose feeling safe as a reason for travelling alone on the train than women (male, 62%: female, 43%)

## **Taxi**

- men chose convenience as the main reason for using taxis to travel alone (male, 90%: female, 49%). Women chose feeling safe as the main reason (male, 46%: female, 77%)

## **Bicycle**

- the top reasons for using bicycles were convenience and it being the most affordable option
- significantly more men chose feeling safe as a reason for travelling alone on a bicycle at night (male, 44%, female, 15%)

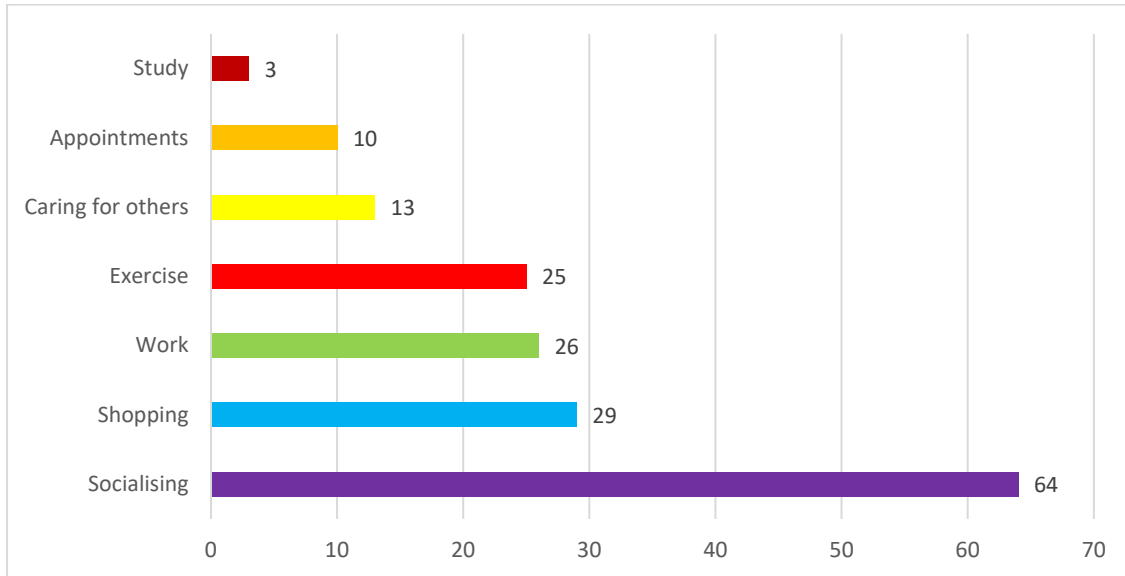
## **Walking**

- convenience and health reasons were the top reasons for walking at night, whether alone or with others
- significantly more men chose feeling safe as a reason for walking at night, both alone (male, 20%: female, 9%) and with others (male, 34%: female, 16%)
- significantly more women than men said walking was the most affordable option, both alone (male, 29%: female, 48%) and with others (male, 32%: female, 43%)

## Why do consumers travel at night?

Figure 7 shows that socialising was the most popular reason for travelling at night but there were a number of other reasons including shopping, for work, exercise and caring for others.

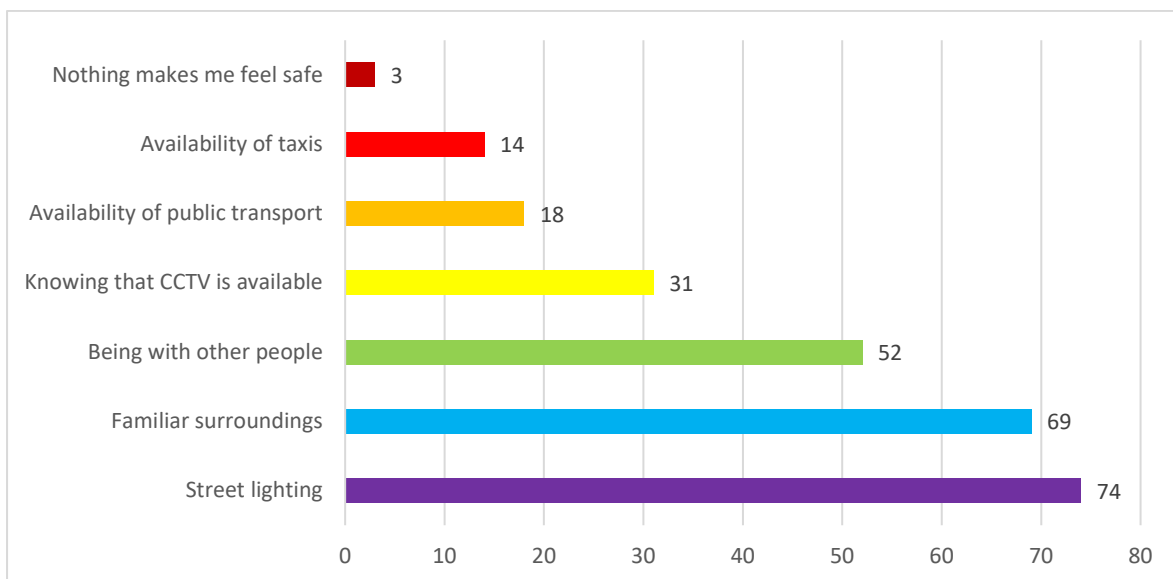
**Figure 7: for what reasons do you travel at night? (%) (n=855)**



## What makes consumers feel safe travelling at night?

Figure 8 shows what makes people feel safer travelling alone at night. Street lighting was the most popular reason followed by keeping to familiar surroundings and being with other people.

**Figure 8: what, if anything, makes you feel safe travelling alone at night? (%) (n=855)**

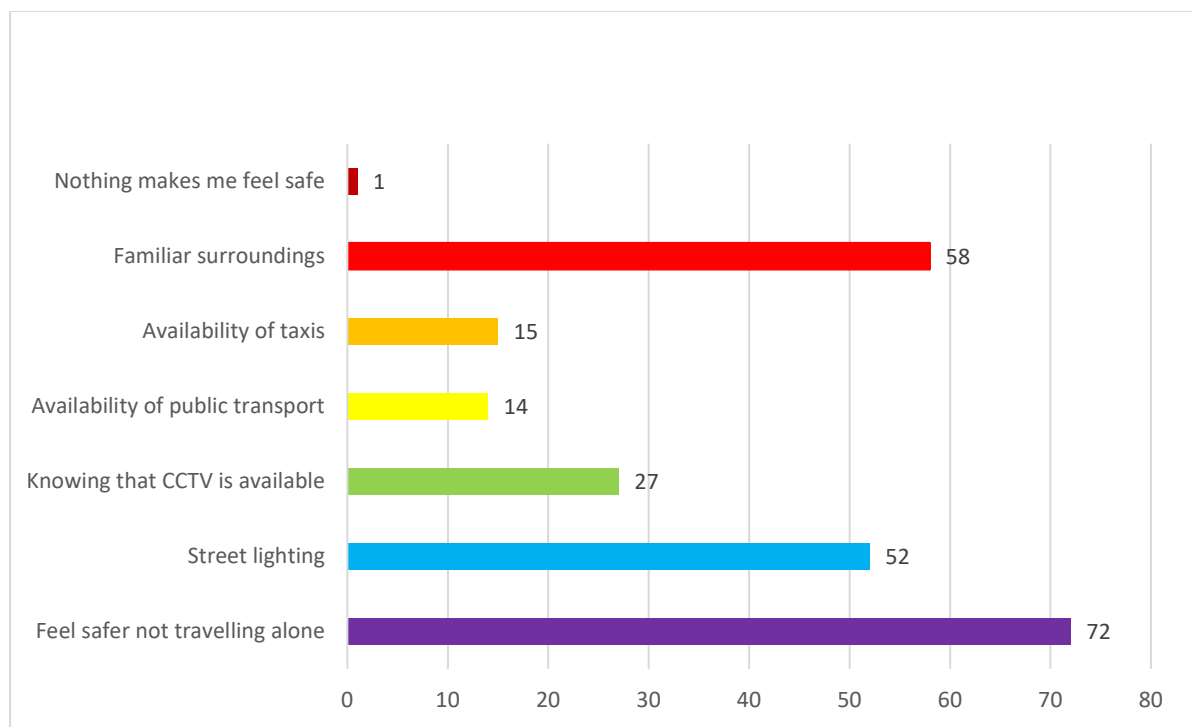


- being around other people when travelling alone was significantly more important for women than men (male, 45%; female, 60%)

- knowing that CCTV is available (male, 26%; female, 35%), and street lighting (male, 71%; female, 77%), were also more statistically important for women than men

Figure 9 shows what makes people feel safer travelling with others at night. Not travelling alone was the most popular reason followed by keeping to familiar surroundings and street lighting.

**Figure 9: what, if anything makes you feel safe travelling with others at night? (%) (n=624)**



- feeling safer not travelling alone was more important for women than men (male, 65%; female, 77%)

## Levels of safety travelling by various methods at night

Figure 10 shows that consumers feel safest travelling alone in their own vehicle.

**Figure 10: levels of safety when travelling alone at night (%) (n=855)**

	Own vehicle	Translink Metro	Glider	Ulsterbus	Train	Taxi	Bicycle	Walk
<b>Very unsafe</b>	3	4	7	4	4	3	16	15
<b>Unsafe</b>	2	12	15	11	15	9	38	27
<b>Neither safe nor unsafe</b>	7	41	46	35	34	28	31	29
<b>Safe</b>	40	34	27	41	38	47	14	23
<b>Very safe</b>	48	8	5	8	9	13	2	5

- rural consumers were more likely to feel unsafe or very unsafe travelling alone by bicycle (58% v 48%) and walking (46% v 36%) than urban consumers

Figure 11 shows that consumers feel safest travelling with others in their own or someone else's vehicle. Bicycle was the least safe method, followed by walking.

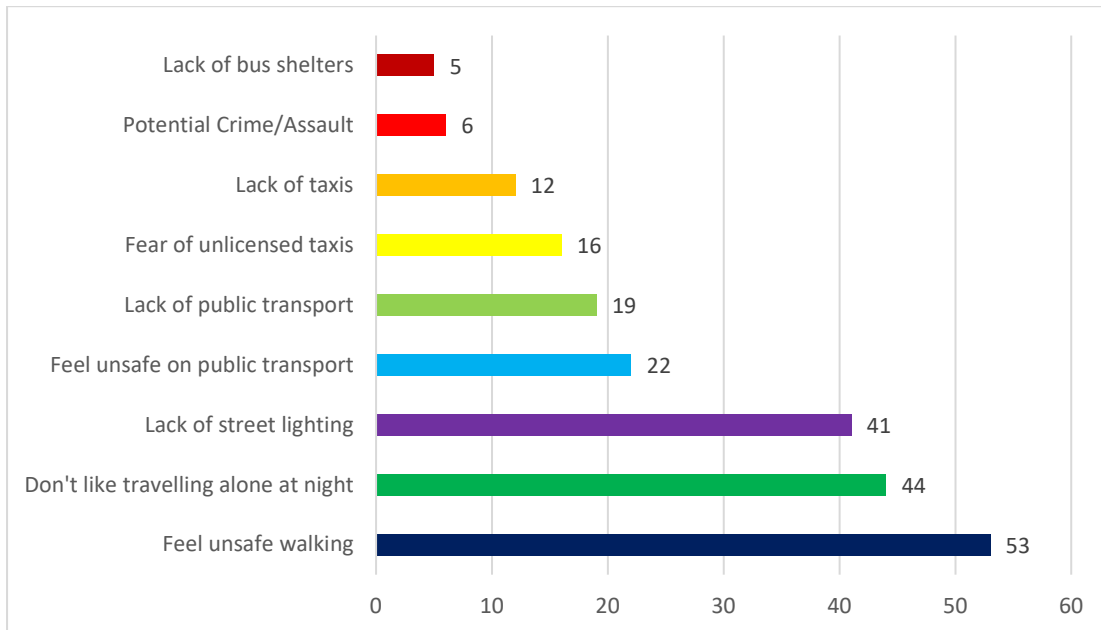
**Figure 11: levels of safety when travelling with others at night (%) (n=650)**

	Own or someone else's vehicle	Translink Metro	Glider	Ulsterbus	Train	Taxi	Bicycle	Walk
<b>Very unsafe</b>	2	4	6	3	3	3	16	12
<b>Unsafe</b>	2	11	12	11	12	8	31	23
<b>Neither safe nor unsafe</b>	11	38	42	35	34	27	32	26
<b>Safe</b>	43	38	34	43	43	49	18	31
<b>Very safe</b>	42	8	6	9	9	14	4	8

## Why do consumers feel unsafe travelling at night?

Figure 12 shows the main reason for feeling unsafe travelling alone at night was walking alone, followed by a general feeling of not liking to travel alone at night and a lack of street lighting.

**Figure 12: if you don't feel safe travelling alone at night, what are the reasons for this? (%) (n=580)**

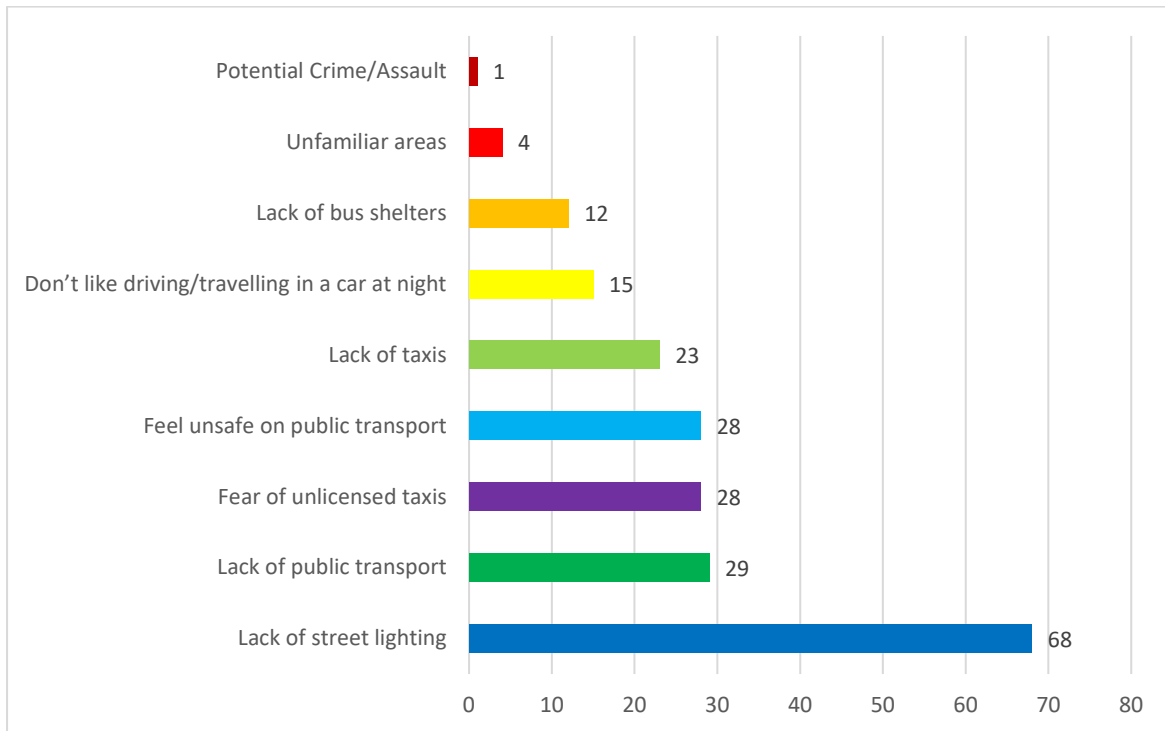


- women were more likely to feel unsafe walking than men (male, 40%: female 64%) and to not like travelling alone at night (male, 26%: female, 59%)
- younger consumers were more likely to feel unsafe walking
  - 18-24 61%
  - 25-34 53%
  - 35-49 52%
  - 50-64 51%
  - 65+ 51%
- consumers with a disability were also significantly more likely to feel unsafe walking alone (disability 63%, no disability 50%)
- consumers with a disability were also more likely to cite a lack of public transport as a reason for feeling unsafe travelling alone at night (disability 27%, no disability 17%)
- younger consumers were more likely to cite feeling unsafe travelling on public transport
  - 18-24 32%
  - 25-34 20%
  - 35-49 21%
  - 50-64 23%
  - 65+ 16%



Figure 13 shows the main reason for feeling unsafe travelling with others at night is a lack of street lighting, followed by a lack of public transport, fear of unlicensed taxis and feeling unsafe on public transport.

**Figure 13: if you don't feel safe travelling with others at night, what are the reasons for this? (%) (n=399)**

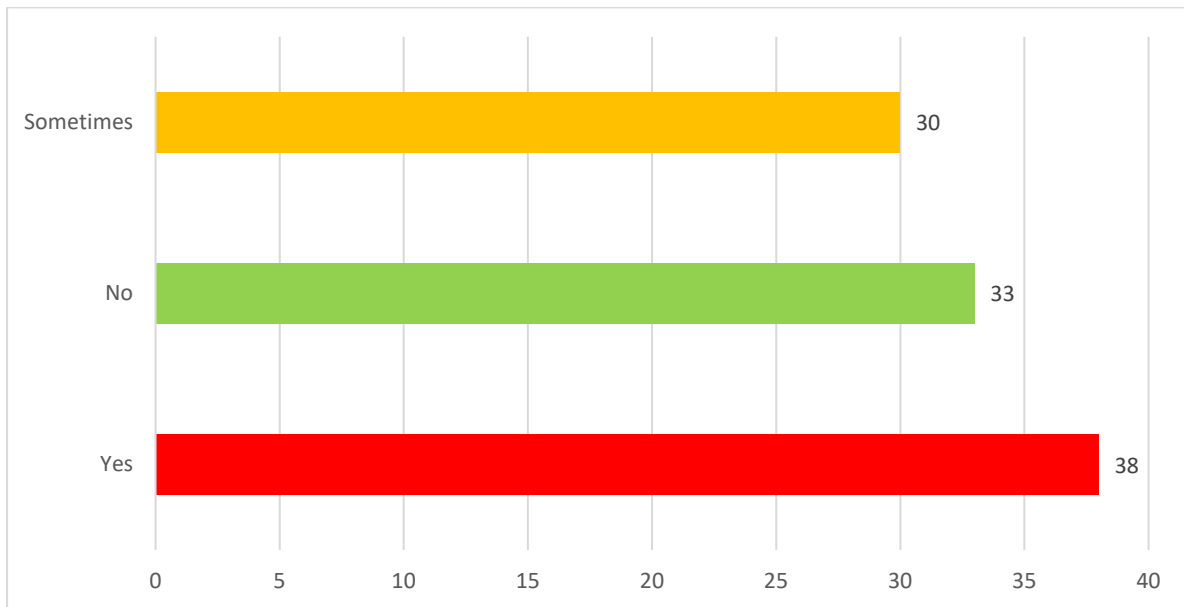


- fear of unlicensed taxis was cited as a reason by more women than men (male, 21%: female, 33%)
- lack of taxis was cited as a reason for feeling unsafe travelling with others at night by significantly more women than men (male, 16%: female, 28%)
- lack of public transport impacted more consumers with a disability when travelling with others than those with no disability (disability, 37%: no disability, 26%) as did feeling unsafe on public transport (disability, 34%: no disability, 25%)
- not liking driving or travelling in a car at night was noted by more rural than urban consumers (urban, 14%: rural, 21%)

## Does feeling unsafe deter consumers from travelling?

Figure 14 shows that feeling unsafe travelling alone at night deters the majority of consumers from doing so at least some of the time.

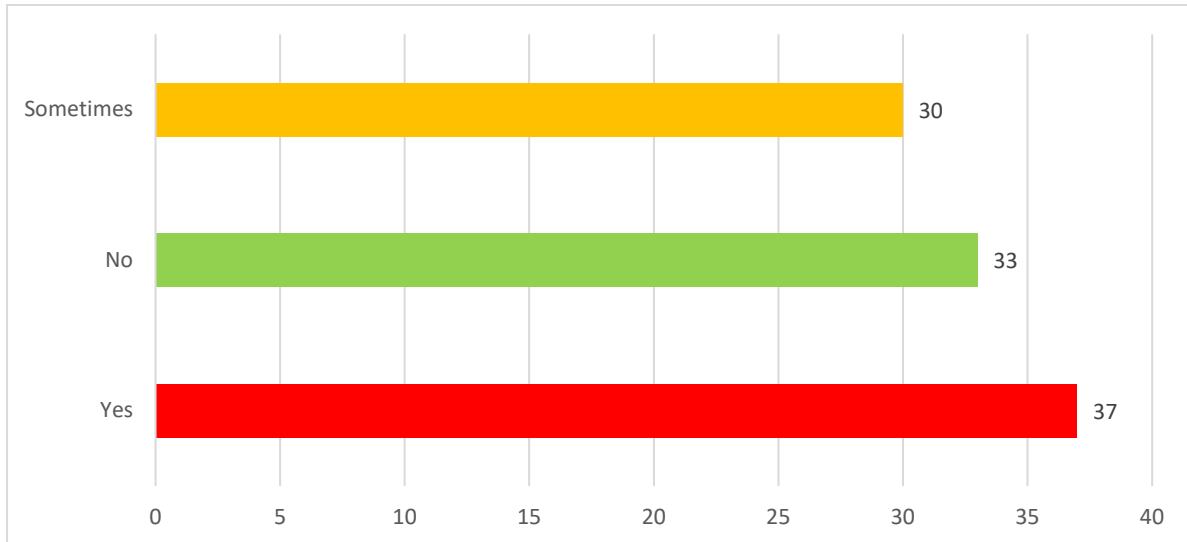
**Figure 14: if you feel unsafe travelling alone at night, does this deter you from doing so? (%) (n=580)**



- women were more likely than men to be deterred from travelling alone at night, sometimes or always (male, 52%: female, 80%)
- younger consumers were more likely to be deterred from travelling alone at night, sometimes or always
  - 18-24 79%
  - 25-34 79%
  - 35-49 66%
  - 50-64 60%
  - 65+ 59%
- consumers with a disability were more likely to be deterred than those with no disability (disability, 75%: no disability, 65%)

Figure 15 shows that feeling unsafe travelling at night with others also deters the majority of consumers from doing so at least some of the time.

**Figure 15: if you feel unsafe travelling at night with others does this deter you from doing so? (%) (n=399)**

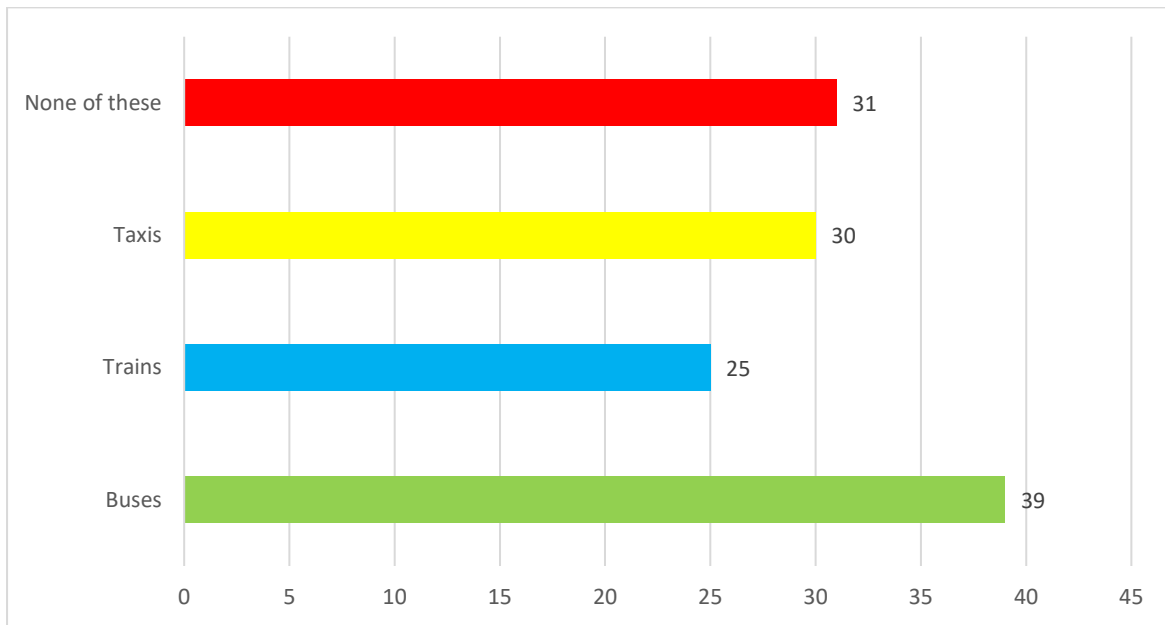


- women were more likely than men to be deterred from travelling at night with others, sometimes or always (male, 52%: female, 77%)
- consumers with a disability were more likely to be deterred than those with no disability (disability, 82%: no disability, 61%)

## Would consumers use more transport options if they were available at night?

Figure 16 shows that 39% of consumers would use buses, 30% would use taxis and 25% would use trains if more were available. However 31% would not use any of these options.

**Figure 16: which, if any, of these options would you use, if more of them were available at night? (%) (n=1000)**



- more men than women would use buses (43% versus 35%) and trains (28% versus 22%)
- more women responded that they would use none of the options (34% versus 28%)
- younger consumers were more likely to use either bus or train if more were available at night:

Age	% more likely to use bus if more were available at night	% more likely to use train if more were available at night
18-24	51%	35%
25-34	34%	27%
35-49	34%	30%
50-64	39%	20%
65+	40%	17%

- rural consumers were more likely to use none of the options than urban consumers (urban, 30%: rural, 36%)

## Appendix 2: research methodology

The research was based on four complementary elements:

### 1. Quantitative survey

The first element of the project was a quantitative survey of 1,000 Northern Ireland consumers conducted by the market research company Cognisense. The content of the survey questionnaire covered the following themes:

- do consumers travel at night, either alone or with others?
- why do they choose certain methods of transport to travel at night?
- for what reasons do they travel at night?
- what makes consumers feel safe and unsafe travelling at night?
- how safe or unsafe do they rate various forms of transport?
- does not feeling safe deter them from travelling at night?
- if more transport options were available would consumers use them?

### Survey methodology

Cognisense conducted the survey as part of an omnibus using an online panel methodology with results representative of the Northern Ireland adult population. Fieldwork was conducted during October 2023.

## Sample profile

Table 1 presents an overview of the sample profile weighted by age, sex, disability, local government district and whether they lived in a rural or urban area.

**Table 1: overview of sample profile [n=1000]**

		Weighted sample	
		%	N
Sex	Male	49	485
	Female	51	515
Age	18-24	14	142
	25-34	17	168
	35-49	24	242
	50-64	24	243
	65+	20	205
Disability	Disability	24	237
	No disability	76	763
Local government district	Antrim and Newtownabbey	6	61
	Ards and North Down	14	140
	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	10	101
	Belfast	22	215
	Causeway Coast and Glens	5	49
	Derry and Strabane	11	112
	Fermanagh and Omagh	6	55
	Lisburn and Castlereagh	7	73
	Mid and East Antrim	4	38
	Mid Ulster	7	67
	Newry, Mourne and Down	9	88
Rural/urban*	Urban	57	568
	Rural	26	259

\*17% refused to answer whether they lived in a rural or urban area.

Full analysis of the survey findings is provided in Appendix 1.

## 2. Secondary research

This consisted of online research by Consumer Council staff of current issues experienced by consumers travelling at night, previous research undertaken (both by the Consumer Council and by other organisations), and interventions taken in the UK and Ireland.

## 3. Stakeholder interviews

We interviewed ten stakeholder organisations representing different consumer and business organisations to get their views of personal safety when travelling at night. These interviews were conducted between December 2022 and November 2023. The organisations were:

- Deafblind UK

- Queen's University Students' Union
- Translink
- Bus and Coach NI
- Valucabs
- Fonacab
- PSNI
- Free the Night
- Belfast Linen Quarter BID
- Oh Yeah Music Centre

#### **4. Focus groups**

We held five focus groups representing transport users with a range of different perspectives to get their views of personal safety when travelling at night. We paid particular regard to gathering the views of potentially vulnerable groups such as women, young people and disabled people. Consumer Council staff led these focus groups, both remotely and in person and were conducted between October and November 2023. The following organisations helped organise and recruit for the focus groups, and we are grateful for their assistance:

- Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network – 10 participants.
- Teemore Women's Group – 12 participants.
- Translink Passenger Panel – NI Railways group – 10 participants.
- Black Box – Express Yourself Social café (a group of people with a disability who meet once per week to participate in creative activities) – 7 participants.
- Black Box Constructor Team – (an advisory team made up of adults from the disabled community who input into the running of a number of arts-based activities by and for people with learning disabilities by the organisation) - 4 participants.

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