TriMet Attitudes & Awareness Survey

2026 Final Report

Presented to the TriMet Board October 28, 2026

Attitude & Awareness Survey Overview

TriMet conducted the **A&A Survey** from April to May 2026 to understand:

- How residents of the Portland tri-county service area view TriMet
- Community knowledge of TriMet services, tools and procedures
- Core values and behaviors regarding transportation choices
- Riders' satisfaction with TriMet and use of its tools and services
- Areas of strength and where improvement is needed

Survey Administration (N=5,257; 3,891 riders / 1,366 non-riders**)**

- Mailed surveys to randomly selected households (n=2,631)
- Emailed announcements in TriMet newsletters (n=1,724)
- Social media posts and ads (n=829)
- Outreach at community events (n=73)

Attitude & Awareness Survey Overview (Cont.)

Mailing Method Details:

- ETC Institute mailed survey packets to a random sample of 35,000 households across the TriMet service area
- Packets included: cover letter, printed survey, and instructions for completing the survey by mail or online
- Survey materials were available in English and Spanish; additional translations by phone
- Respondents could enter a drawing for one $500 gift card
- ETC Institute also followed-up with these households via text, email, and phone

Demographic Summary

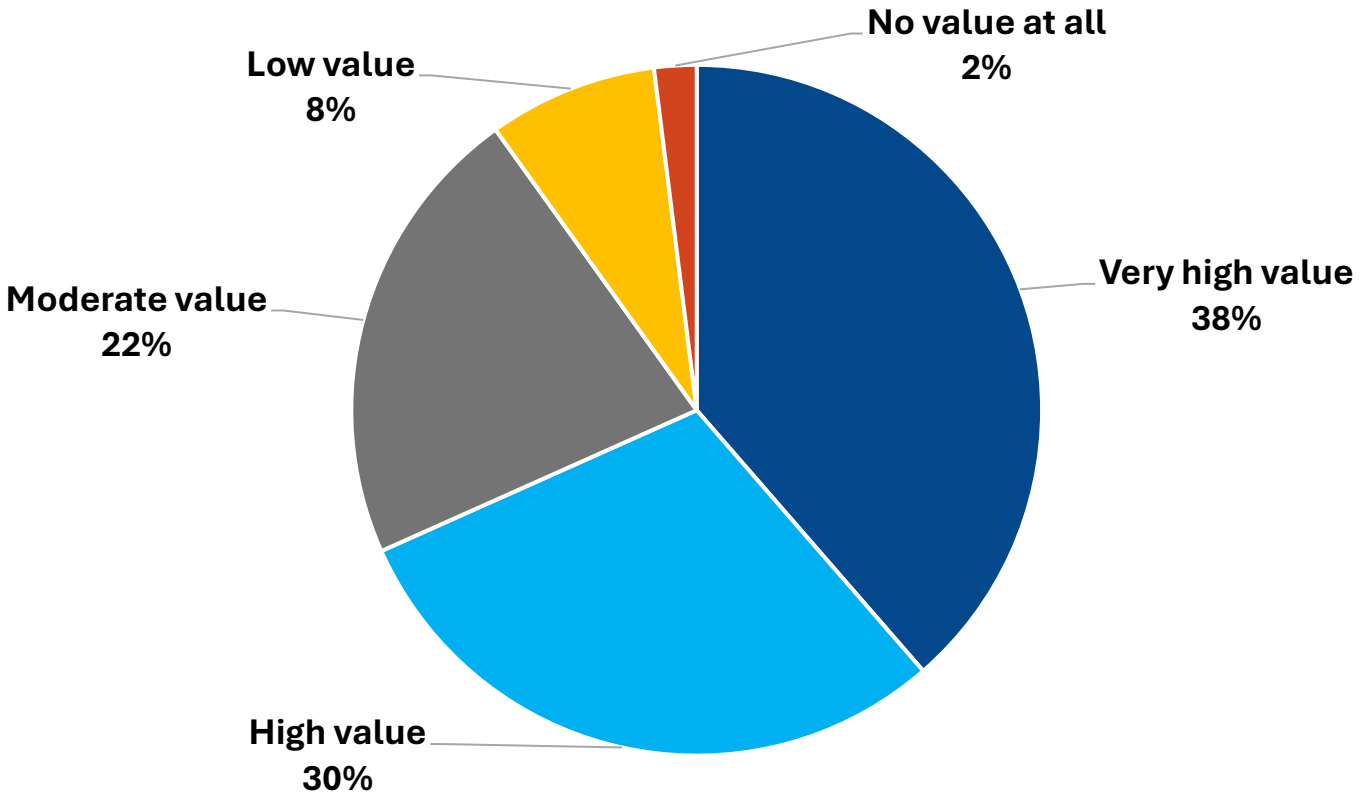
- **TriMet continues to serve a very income-diverse community**, with a near-equivalent proportion of riders earning under $50k and over $100k.
- **Mostly working:** 65% are employed full or part-time, 16% retired.
- **Riders are skewing sharply younger in 2026:** the 25-44 group rose to 46% from 38%, while the 55+ share dropped to 28% from 39%. The group 45-54 maintained at 17%.
- **Women are now the majority of riders** at 50% versus 46% men and 4% nonbinary, a reversal of the 2022 split when men led 50% to 46%.
- **Car access is real, not absent:** 80% of riders live in a household with at least one vehicle, 89% of those can usually use one, and 77% hold a license and can drive—these are riders by choice as much as, or more than, necessity.
- **Still commuting in person:** 37% never work or attend school from home, and among those who do go remote, 32% do so all 5 weekdays.

Wins

Perceived Value

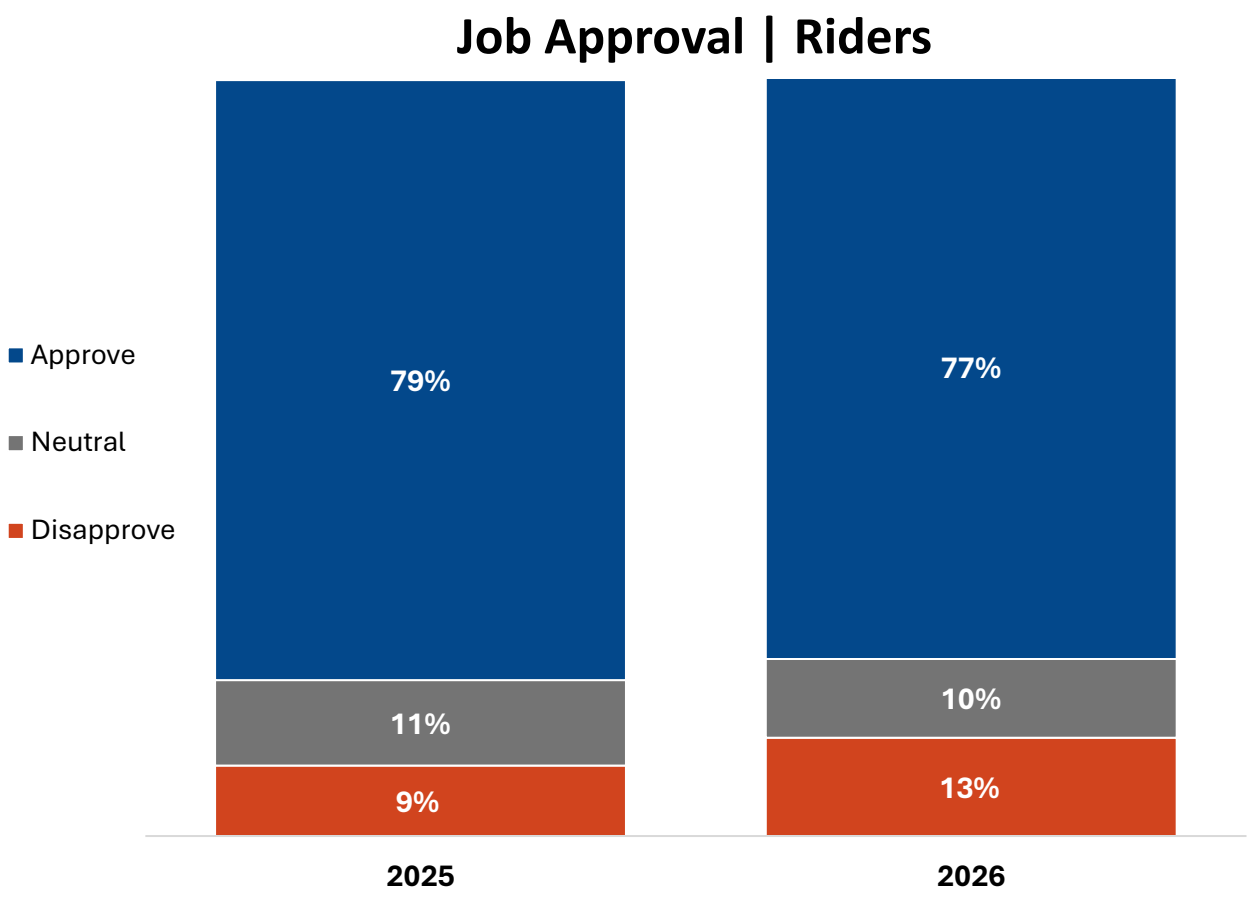
TriMet continues to provide broadly recognized regional value.

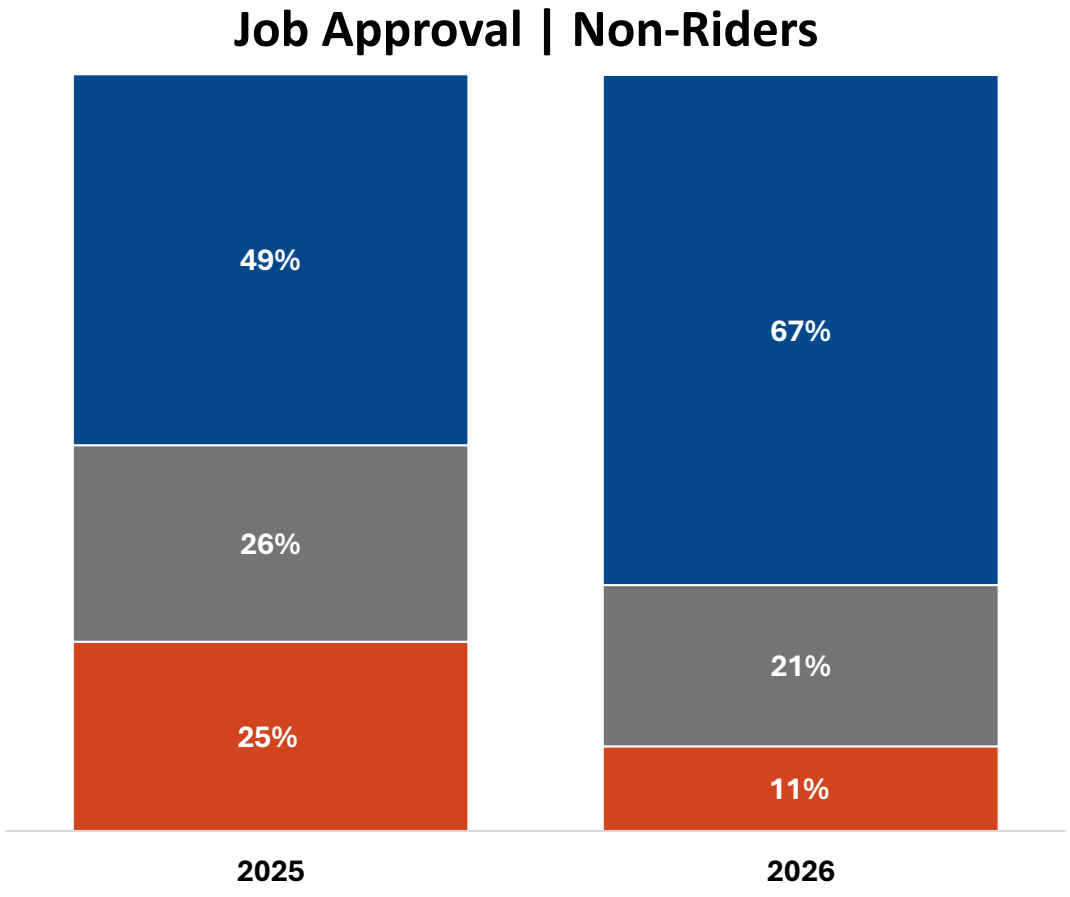
91% of the overall community believe TriMet provides a moderate to very high value.



Job Approval | Riders and Non-Riders

Approval remains strong despite a challenging operating and economic environment.
87% of riders approve or feel neutral about the job TriMet is doing; down 2%.
88% of non-riders approve or feel neutral about the job TriMet is doing, up 14%.

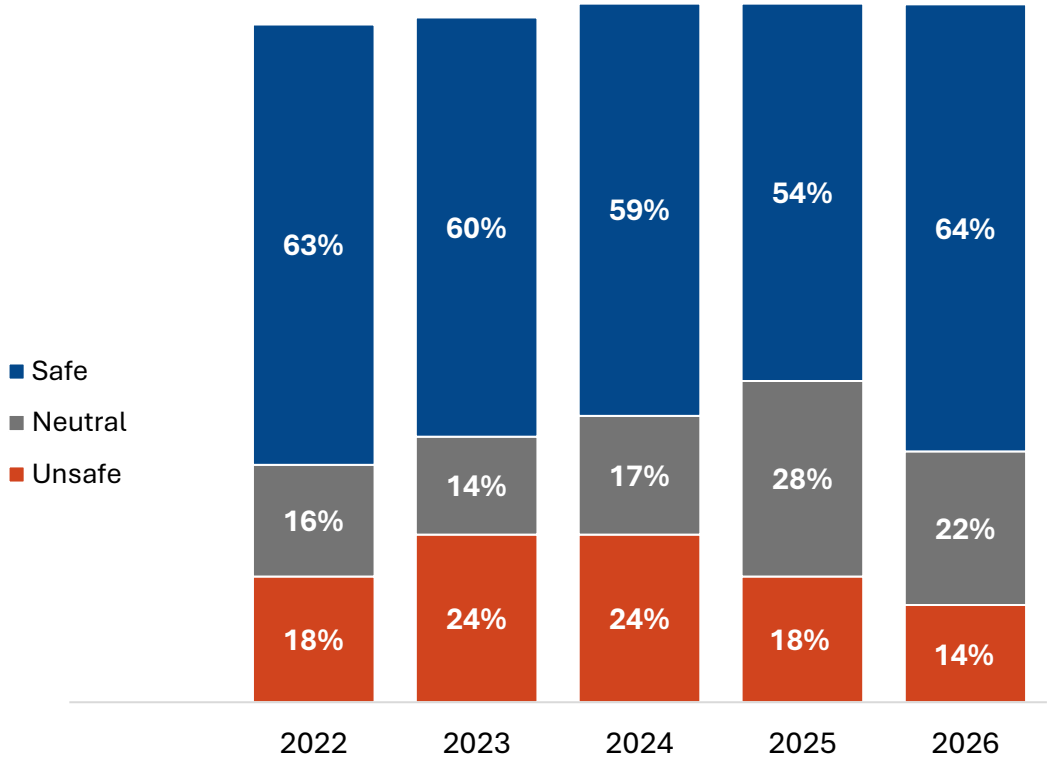




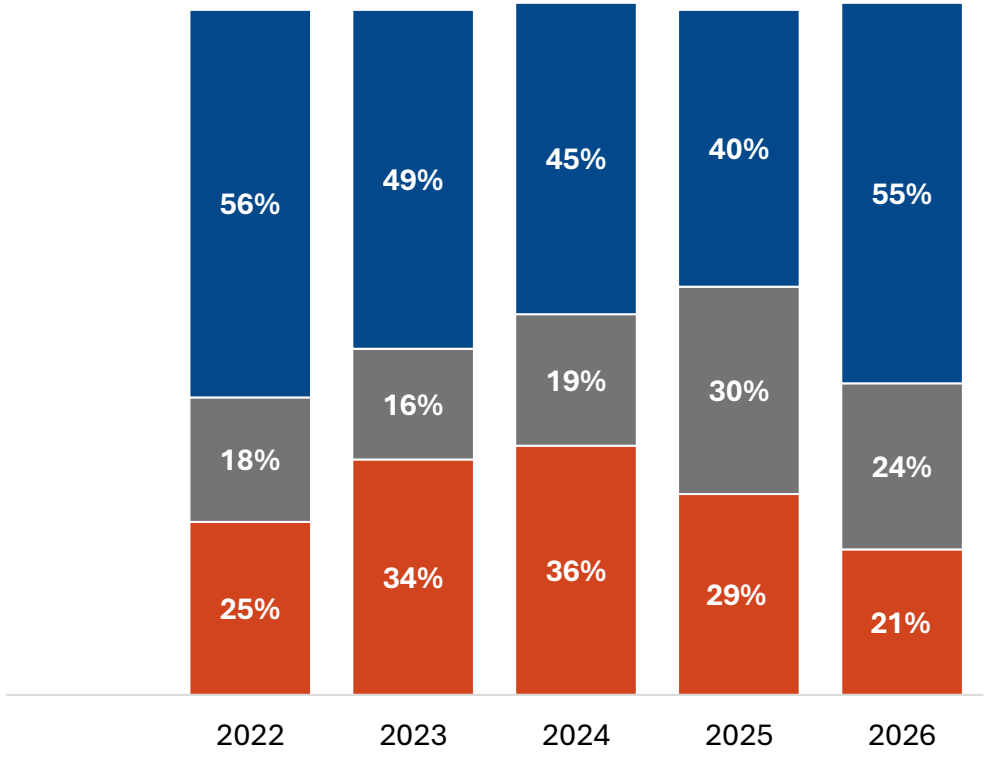
Safety

Rider safety perceptions improved meaningfully. Rider safety ratings reached their highest levels since 2022 for both bus & MAX, with **10% and 15% improvement, respectively**.

Perception of Safety for Bus Services is the highest it has been since 2022.



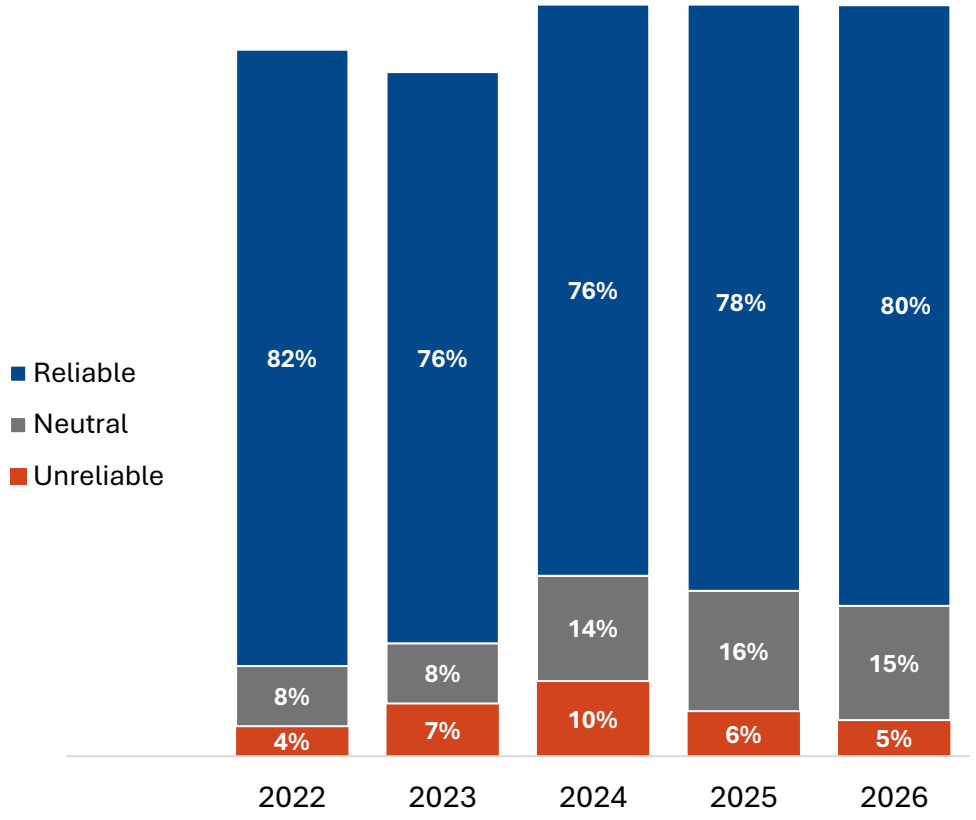
Perception of Safety for MAX Light Rail Services is the highest it has been since 2022.



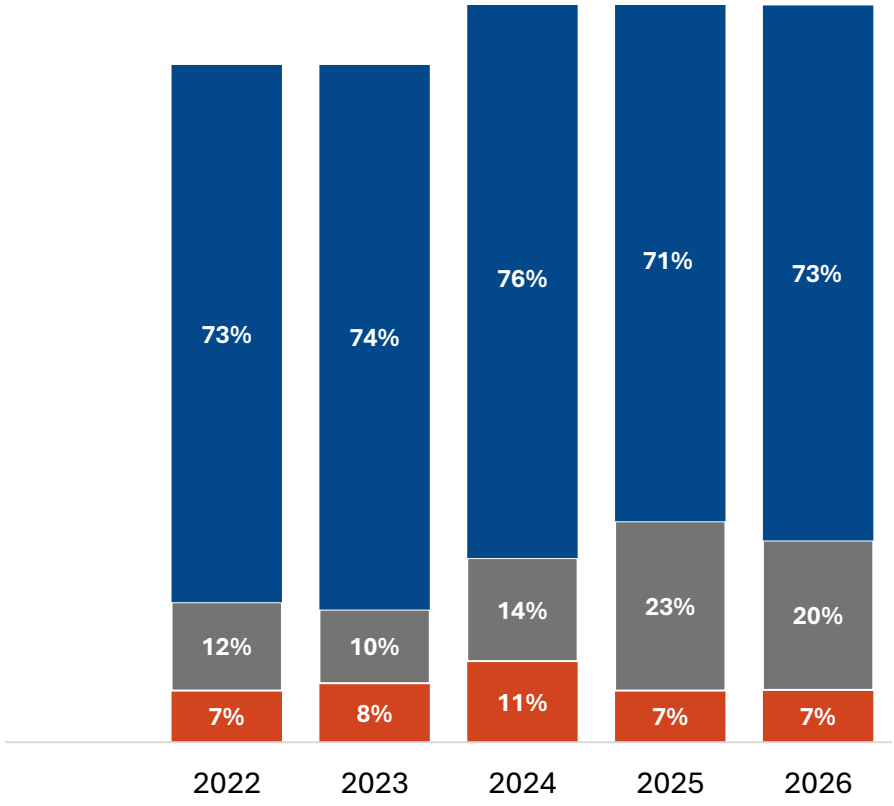
Reliability

Reliability remains a core strength. Perceptions of bus and MAX reliability exceed 70%.

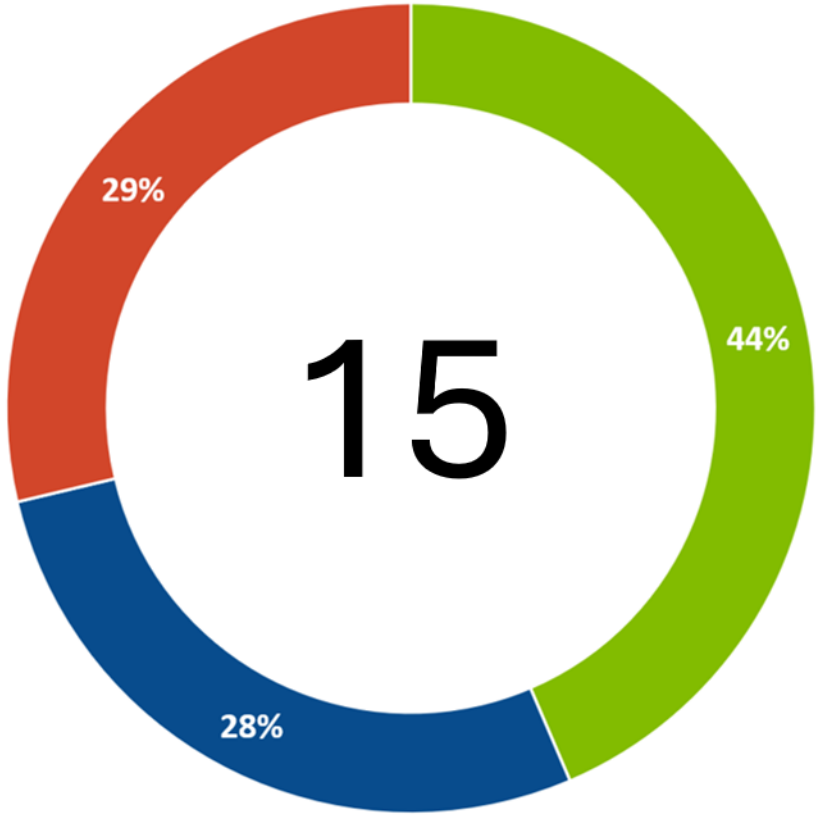
Perception of Reliability of MAX is the highest it has been since 2022.



Perception of Reliability of Bus is higher than 2025 and 2023.

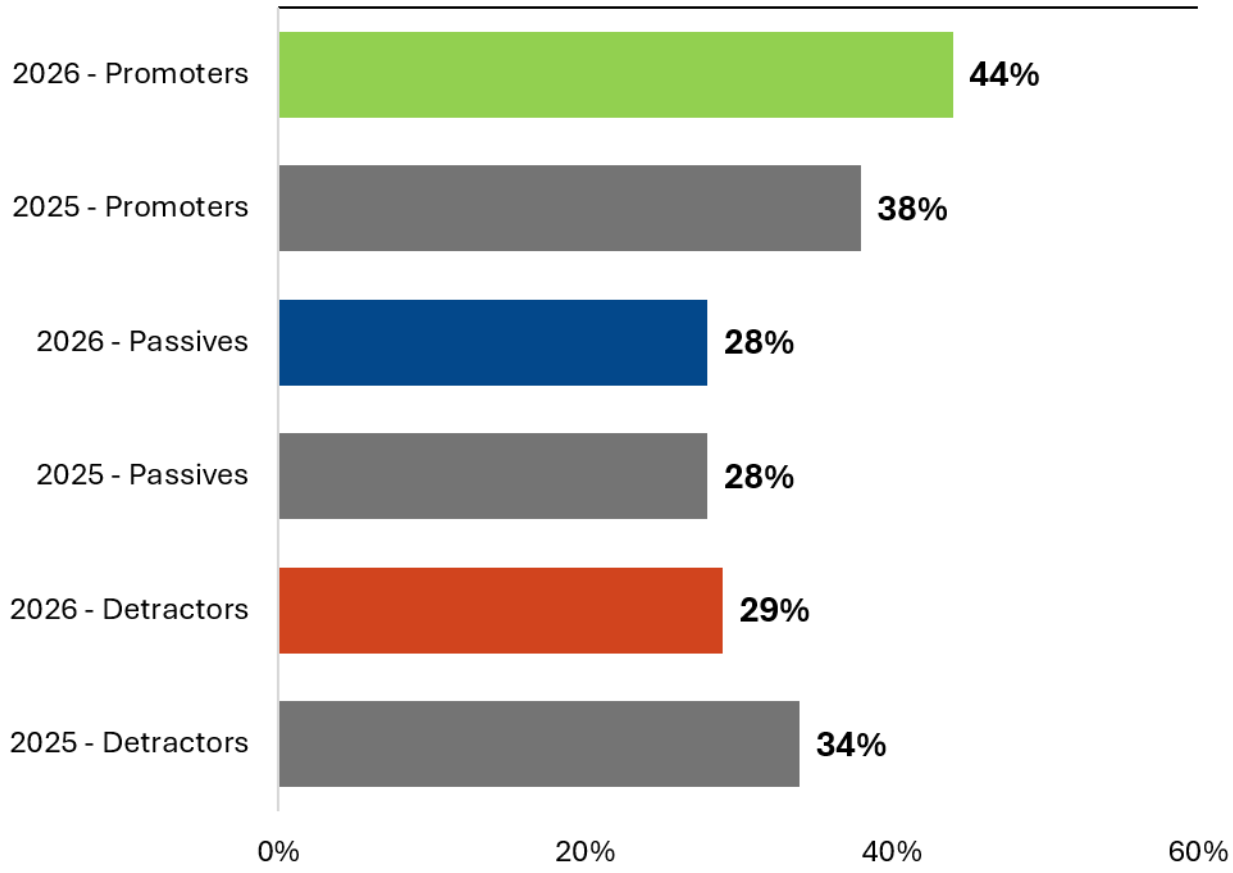


Net Promoter Score



** The NPS score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of Promoters from the percentage of Detractors.*

44% of respondents would recommend TriMet to friends or family.

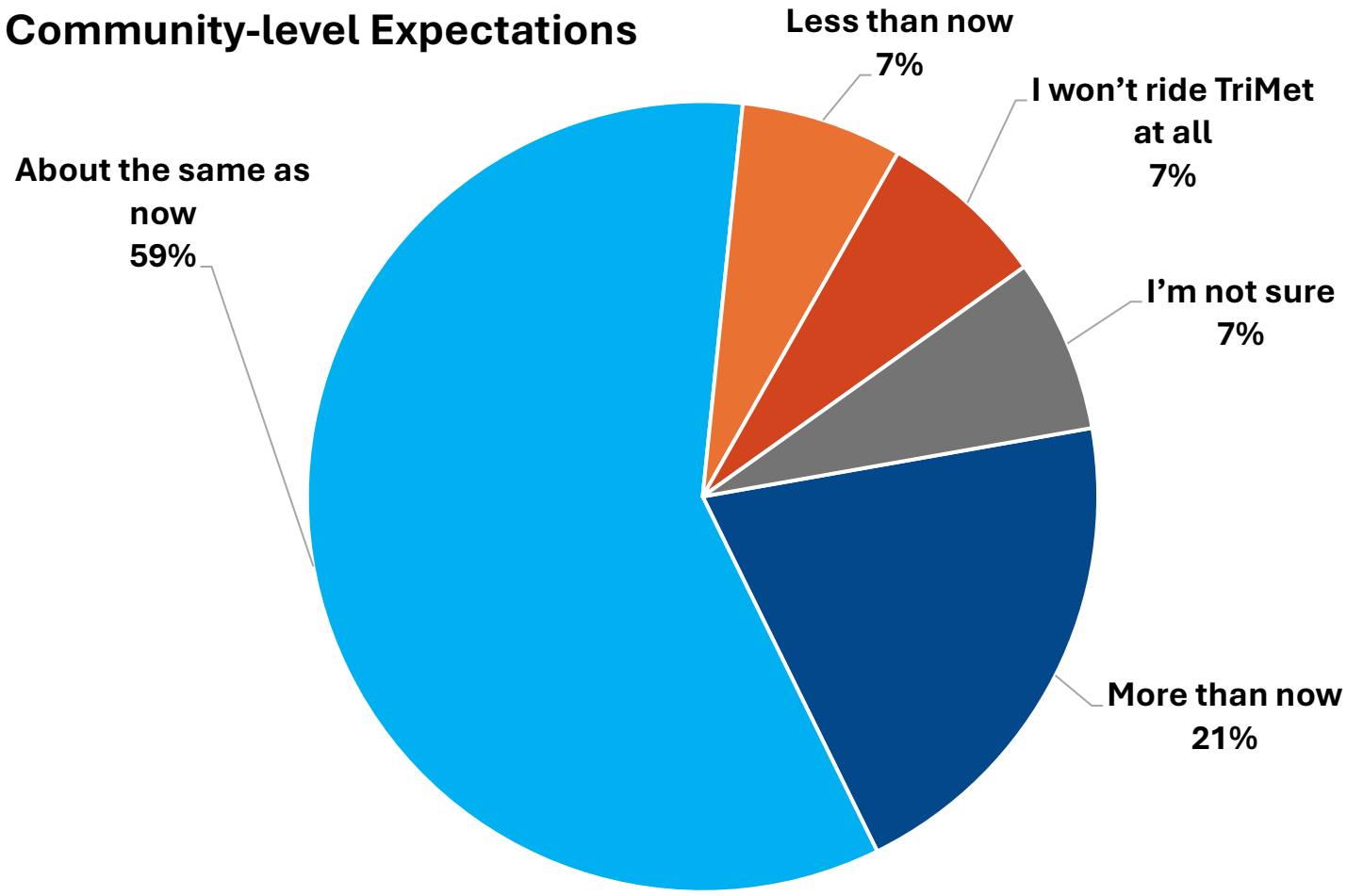


Future Use of TriMet

21% indicated they're planning to use TriMet more in the next six months *(6% improvement year-over-year)*. Only 7% indicated they would use it less.

Among riders:
65% will stay at their current level
22% plan to ride more
9% plan to ride less

Among non-riders:
16% plan to ride more
15% are unsure (transit hesitant)



Future Use of TriMet

"**What could TriMet do to get you to ride, or ride more often?**"(3000+ comments)

Common themes:

- 24%: greater staff presence and faster intervention with disruptive passengers
- 18%: better geographic coverage, fewer transfers or more crosstown connections
- 17%: more frequent service
- 16%: lower fares or fareless service

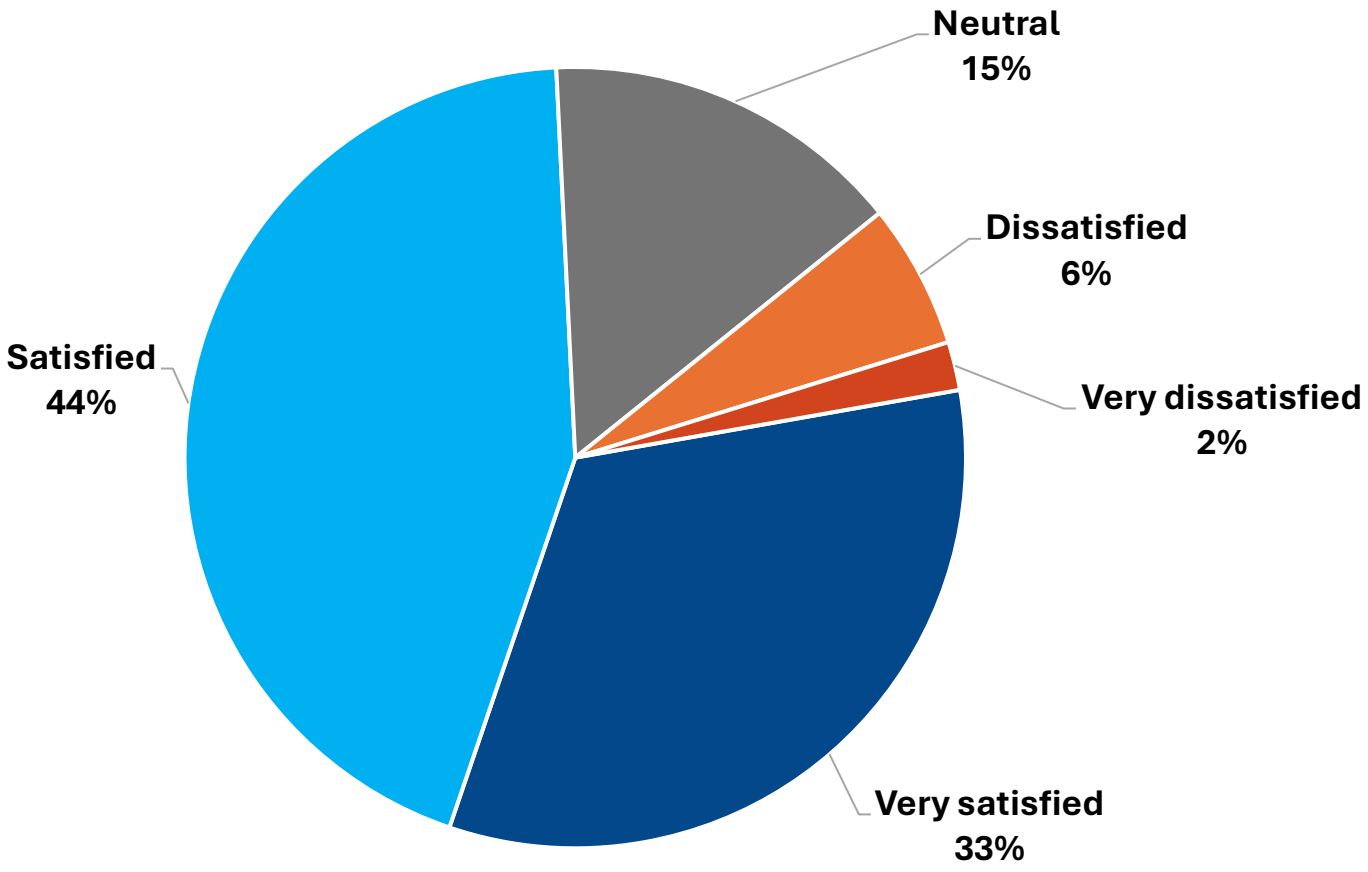
Less than 10% mentioned:

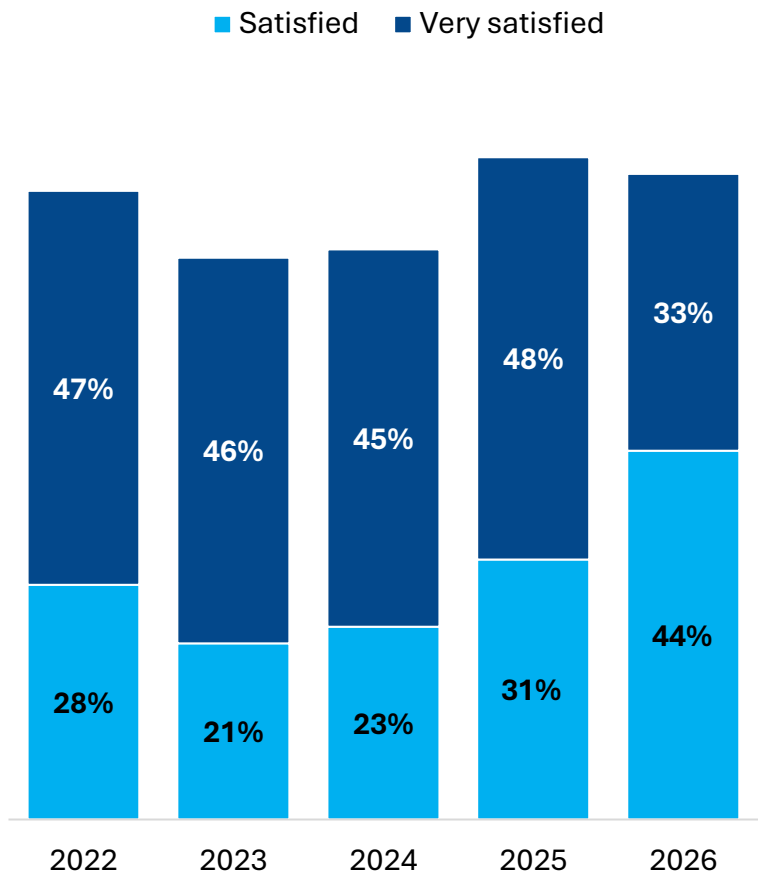
- Cleanliness and sanitation (9%)
- Reliability and on-time performance (7%)
- Shelters, seating, lighting and other station amenities (4%)
- Fare enforcement (3%)

Satisfaction with Travel Experience

92% of riders feel satisfied or neutral with the travel experience they've had on TriMet. Among dependent riders – those who ride most often – 84% are satisfied or very satisfied.

Satisfaction Among All Riders

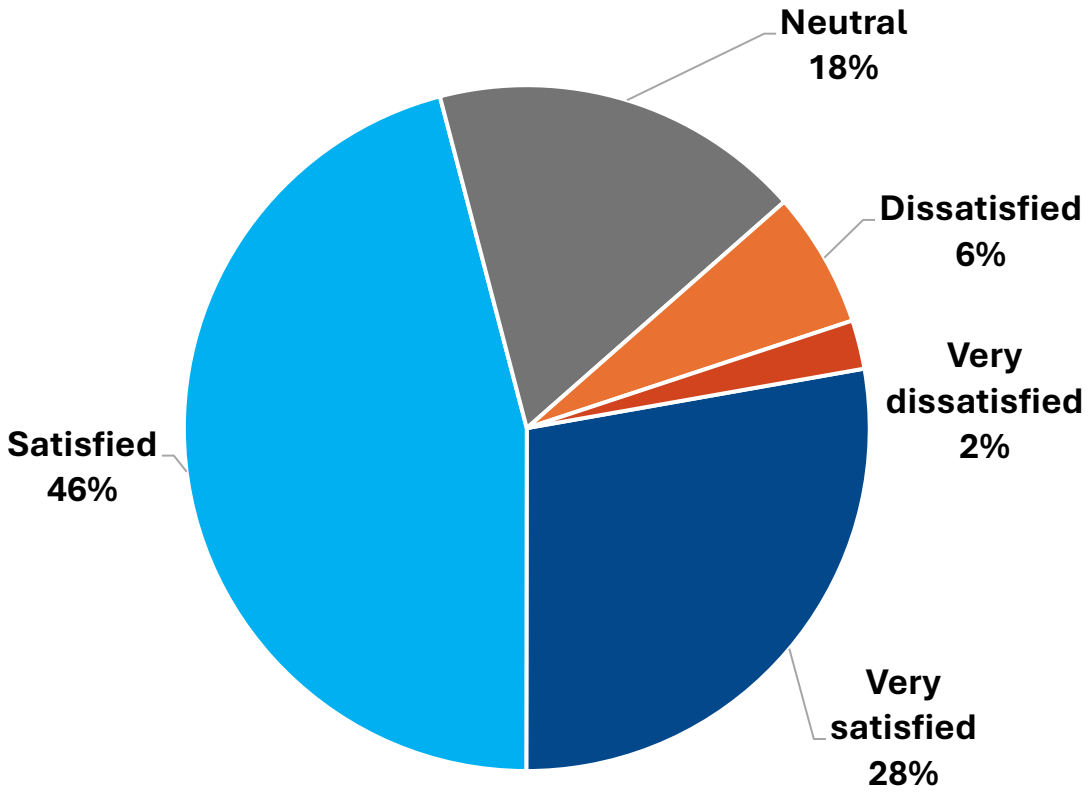




Satisfaction with Travel Experience

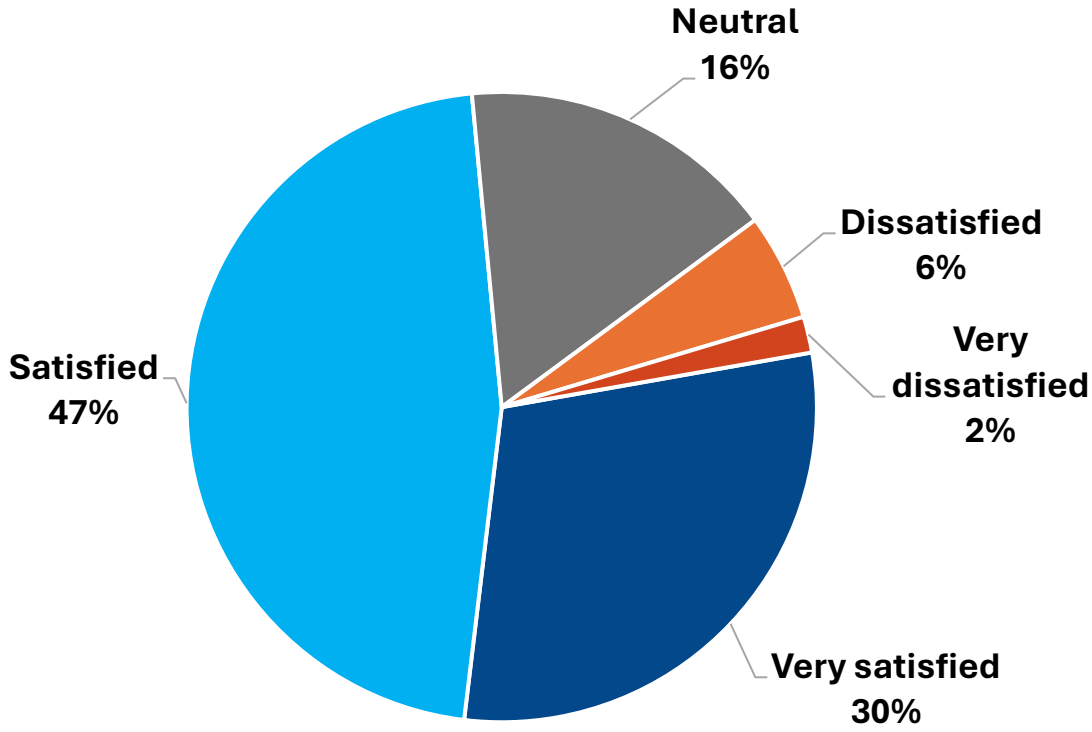
Bus users are slightly more satisfied than those who use MAX Light Rail.

MAX Light Rail Users



92% satisfied or neutral

Bus Users



92% satisfied or neutral

Strengths and Positive Momentum

Relative Strengths

- 91% see moderate to high value in TriMet services
- 87% of riders and 88% of non-riders approve or feel neutral about the job TriMet is doing; **approval grew 18% among non-riders year-over-year**
- 92% of riders feel satisfied or neutral with their travel experience, across vehicle types

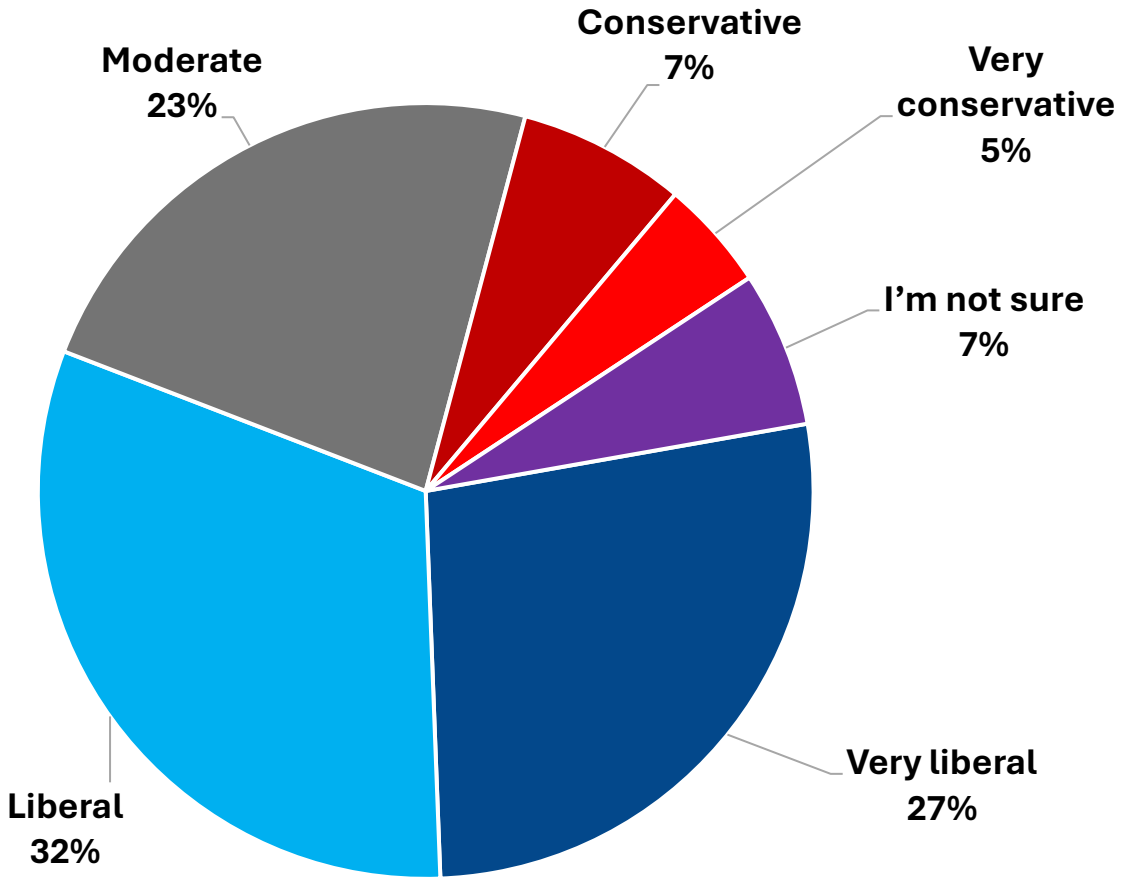
Positive Momentum

- Bus and MAX safety perceptions at multi-year highs
- Fewer riders feel unsafe riding bus and MAX compared to 2025
- Perceived reliability of MAX service is 80% - the highest since 2022
- About 1 in 5 (21%) members of the community expect to ride more in the next six months versus only 7% who expect to ride less

Voter Priorities

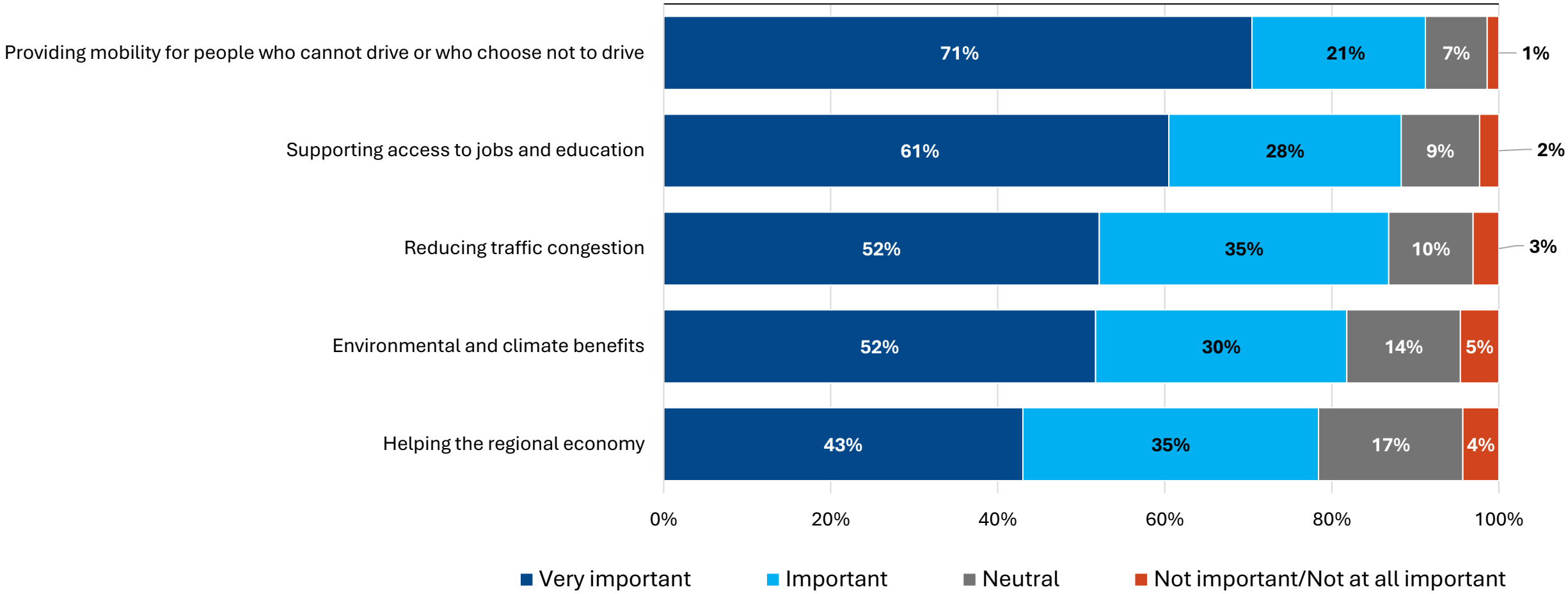
Sample Characteristics

- 92% registered to vote
- 65% ‘most certain’ to vote in future elections
- 19% ‘likely to vote’ in future elections
- Most identify as liberal (32%) or very liberal (27%), mirroring the political leanings of the Portland metro area



TriMet's Economic Value to the Region

Providing mobility for people who cannot drive or choose not to drive was found **'very important'** by most when thinking of the value of public transit



Support for Government Funding

Support for transit funding by group:

Overall % who support: 85% (7% oppose)

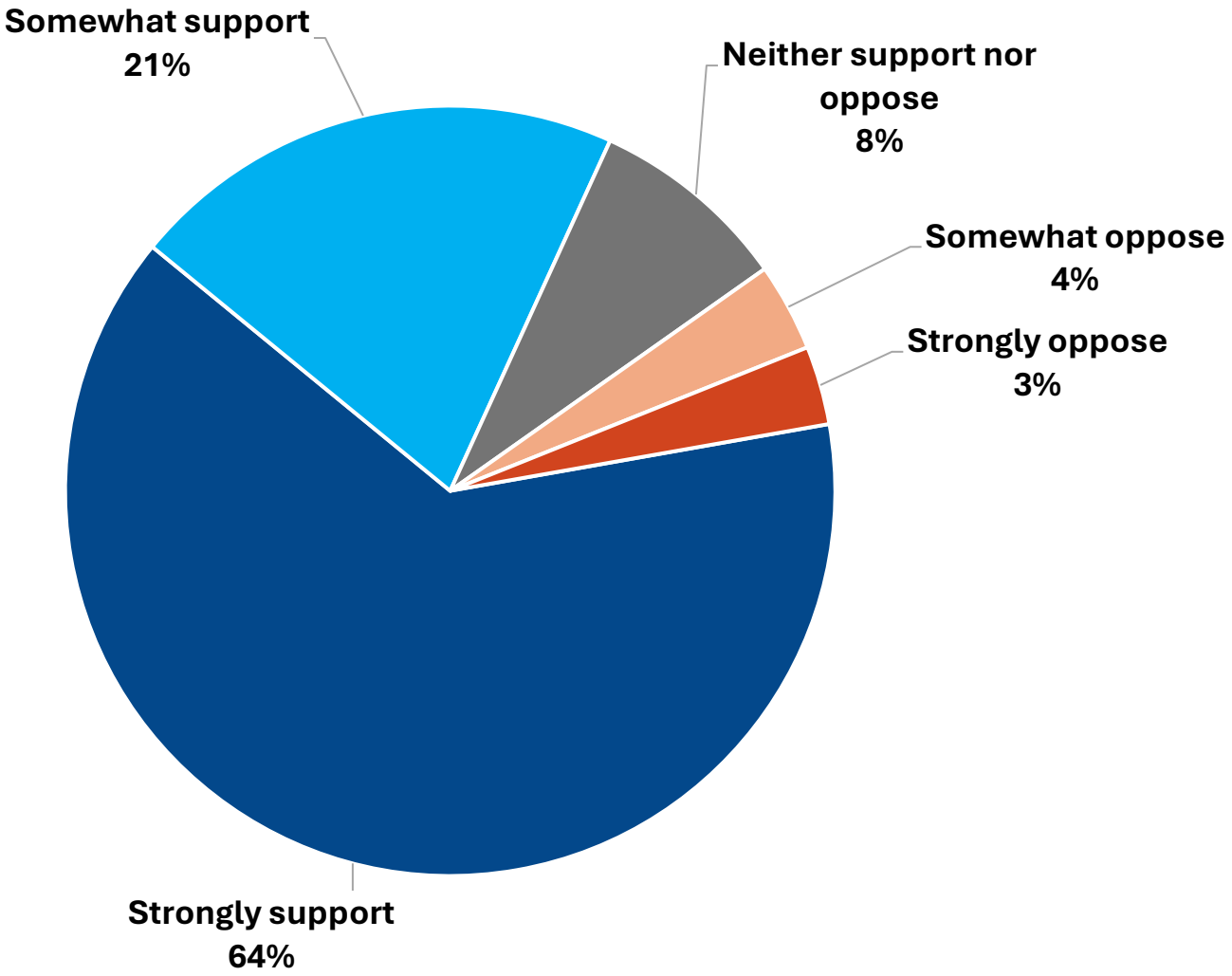
- Riders: 89% (4% oppose)
- Non-riders: 73% (15% oppose)

Demographics

- Women: 86% (6% oppose)
- Men: 85% (8% oppose)
- Registered, likely voters: 87% (6% oppose)
- Respondents who earn less than $30K annually: 85%

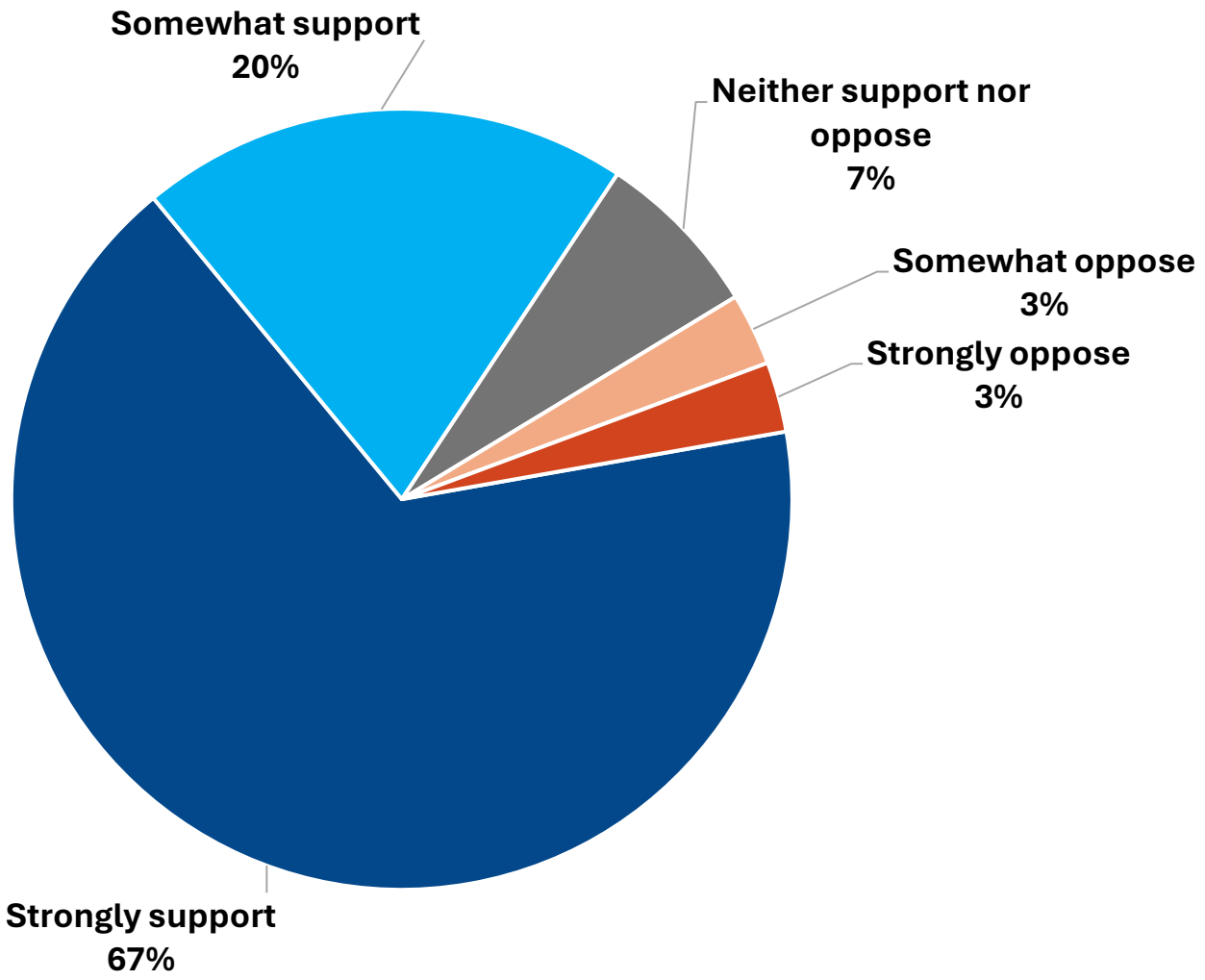
Support for Government Funding

64% of all respondents strongly support government funding for transit, with only 3% strongly opposing.



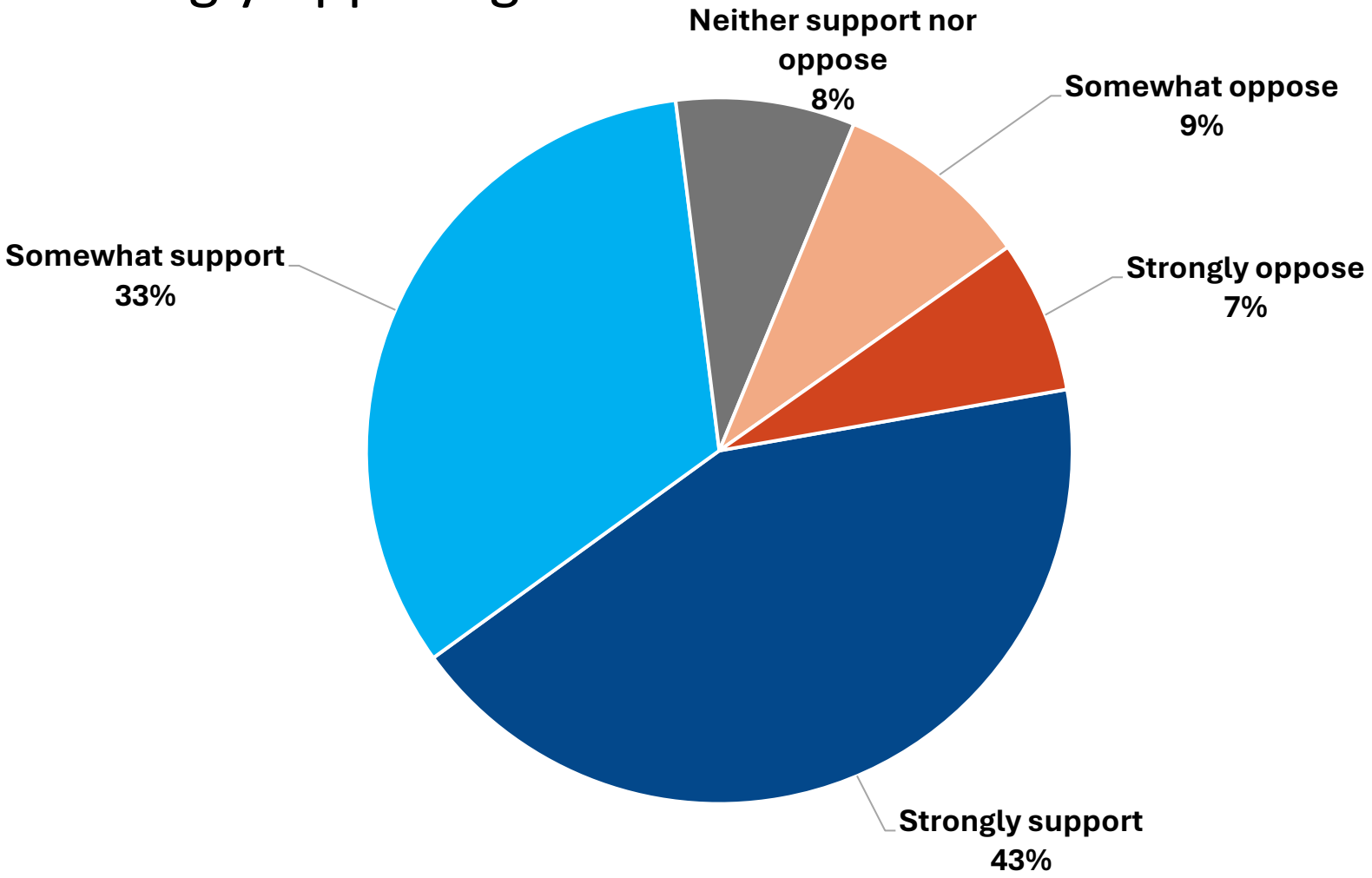
Support for Government Funding - Likely Voters

67% of ‘registered, likely voters’ strongly support government funding for transit, with only 3% strongly opposing.



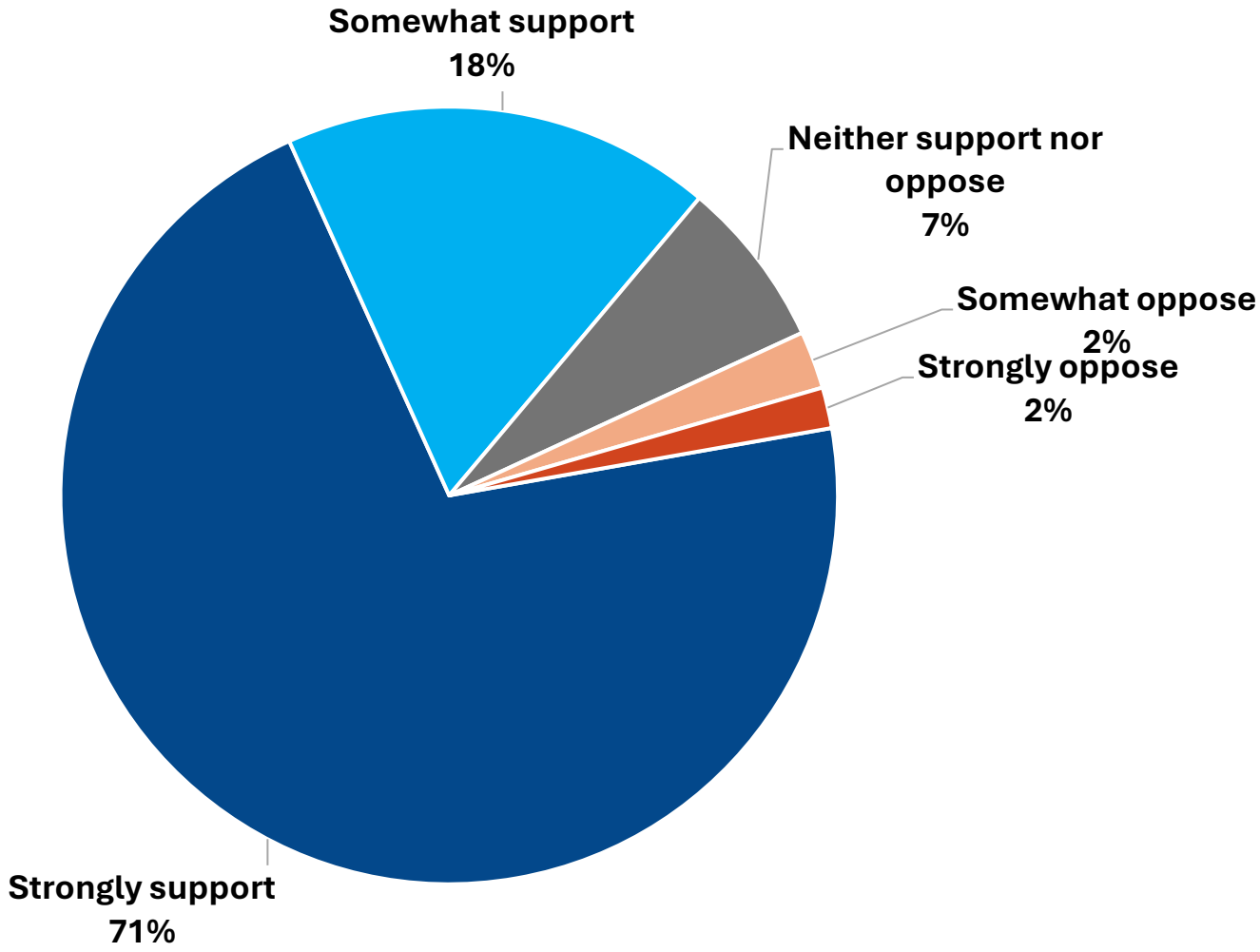
Support for Government Funding - Unlikely Voters

43% of ‘non-registered/unlikely voters’ strongly support government funding for transit, with only 7% strongly opposing.



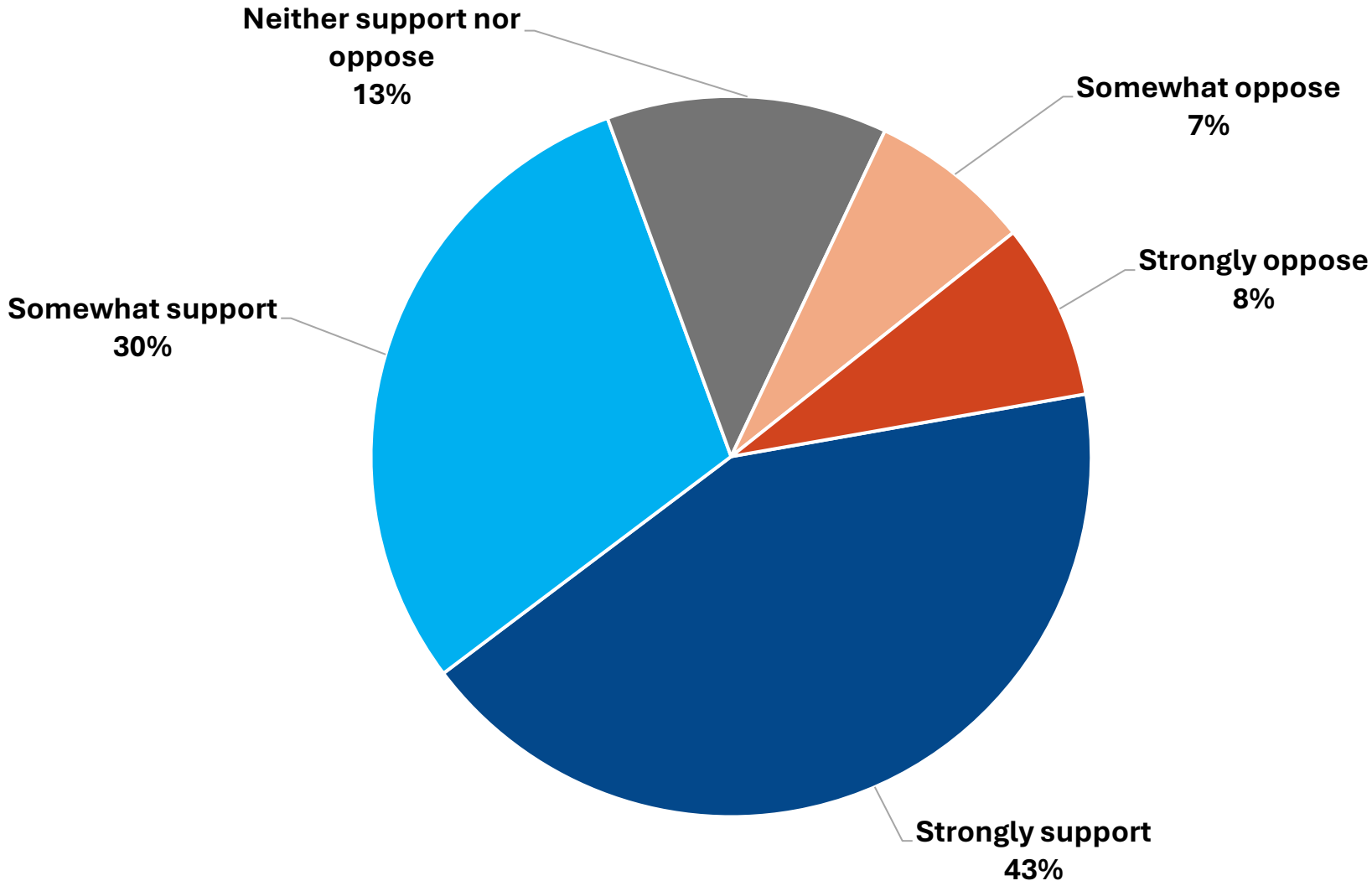
Support for Government Funding - Riders

71% of riders strongly support government funding for transit, with only 2% strongly opposing.



Support for Government Funding - Non-Riders

43% of non-riders strongly support government funding for transit, with only 8% strongly opposing.



Government Priority Feedback

"**What is the most serious problem that you think local government needs to address in the Portland area?**" (3,000+ comments)

Common themes:

- 39%: prioritize addressing unsheltered houselessness, encampments, assistance
- 17%: prioritize substance use, open drug use, addiction treatment, mental health
- 17%: prioritize public safety, enforcement of public space rules
- **16%: prioritize transit funding, service preservation, maintaining routes/frequency**

Less than 10% noted improvements in:

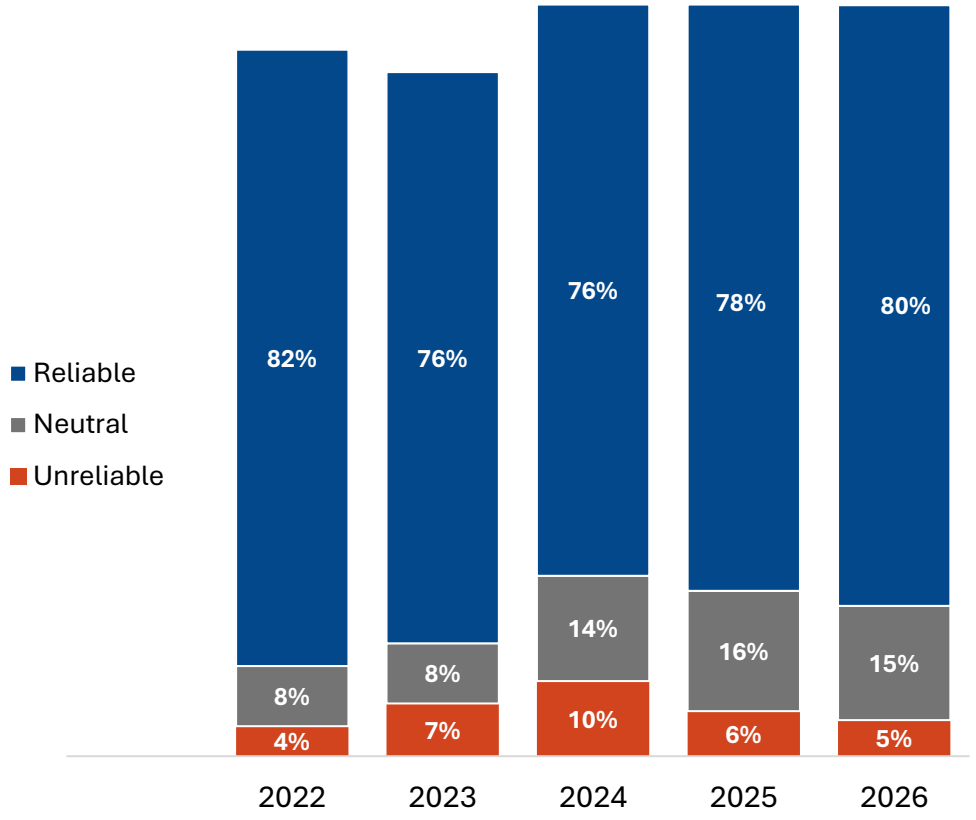
- Housing affordability (7%)
- Government accountability and transparency (7%)
- Roads, infrastructure, traffic (6%)
- School funding, K-12 education (2%)
- Climate change, emissions, sustainability (1%)

Service Quality Perceptions

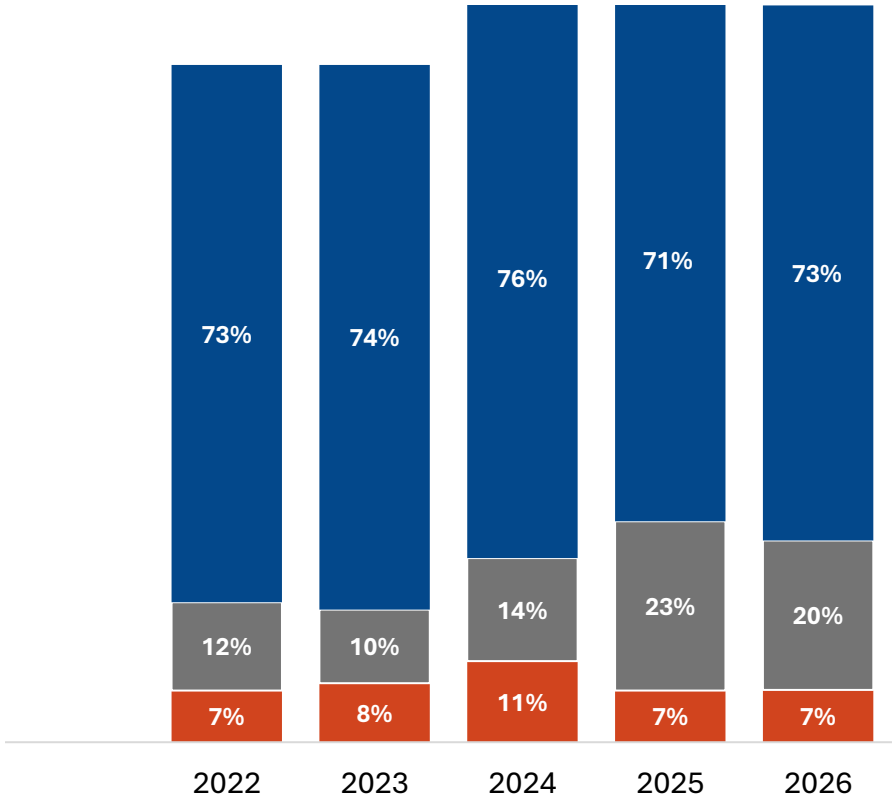
Reliability

Reliability remains a core strength. Perceptions of bus and MAX reliability exceed 70%.

Perception of Reliability of MAX is the highest it has been since 2022.

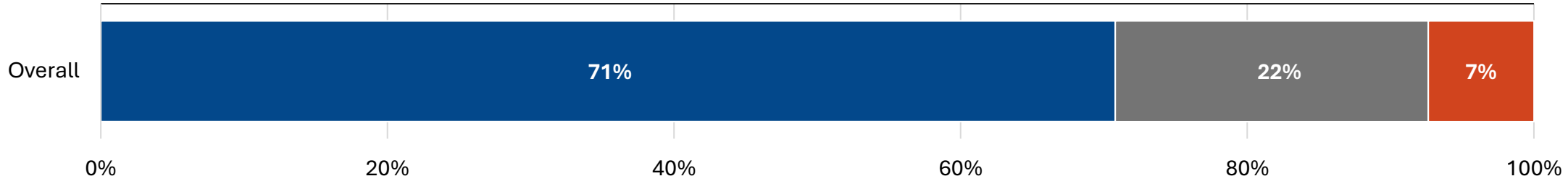


Perception of Reliability of Bus is higher than 2025 and 2023.

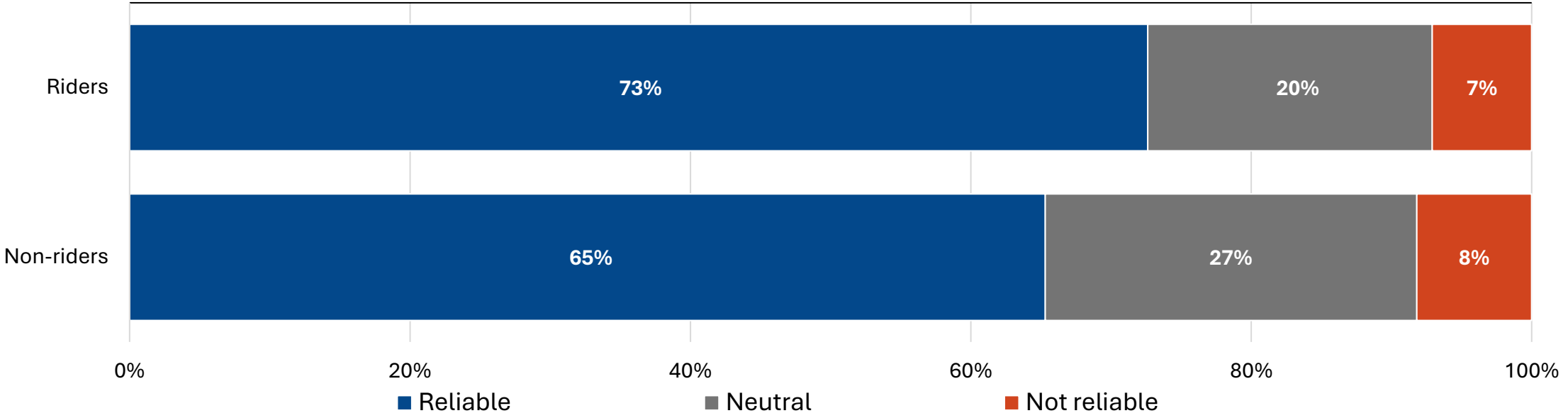


Reliability of Bus Service

71% overall perceive TriMet bus service as reliable, and only 7% as unreliable.

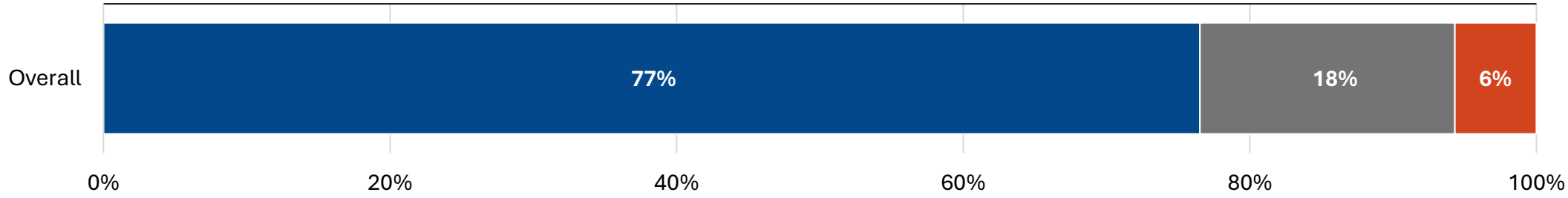


Perception of reliability is higher among riders (73%) than non-riders (65%).

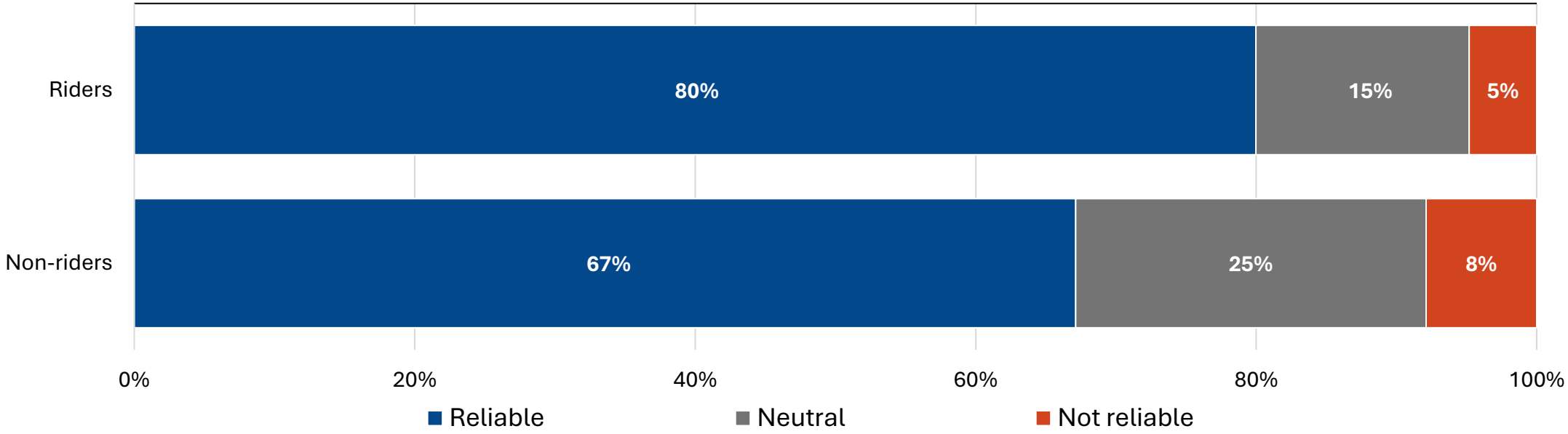


Reliability of MAX Light Rail Service

77% overall perceive MAX light rail service as reliable, and only 6% as unreliable.

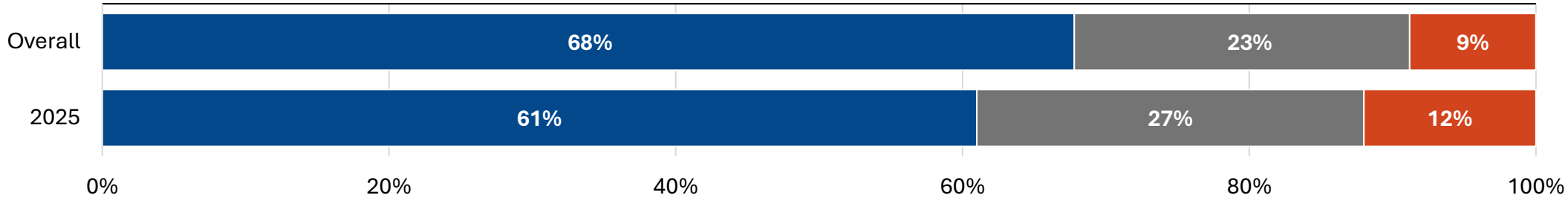


Perception of reliability is higher among riders (80%) than non-riders (67%).

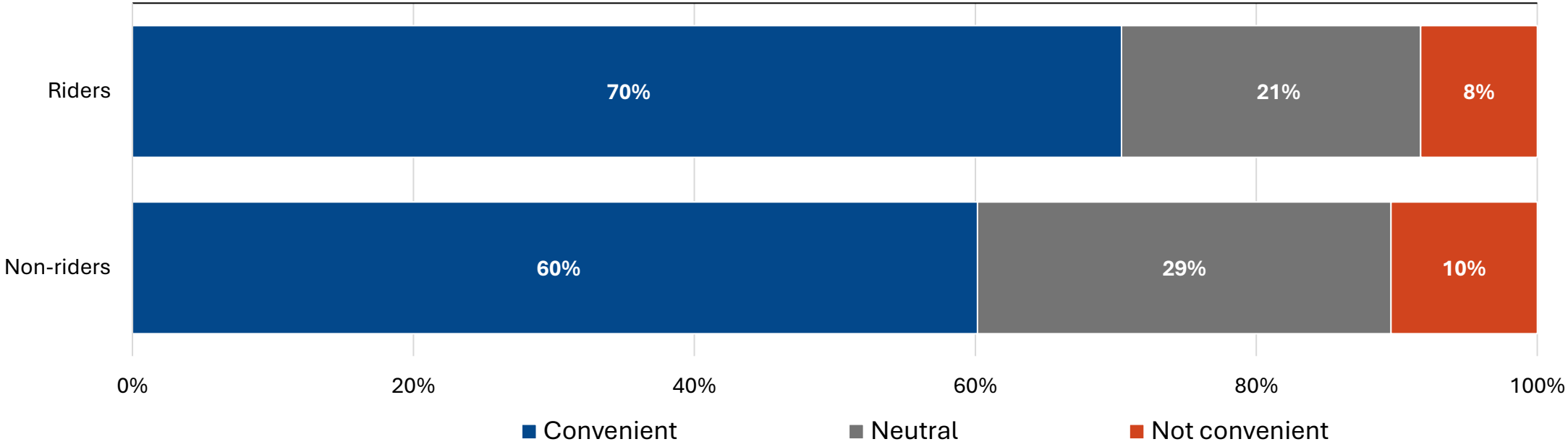


Convenience of Bus Service

68% overall perceive TriMet bus service as convenient, up 7% from 2025.

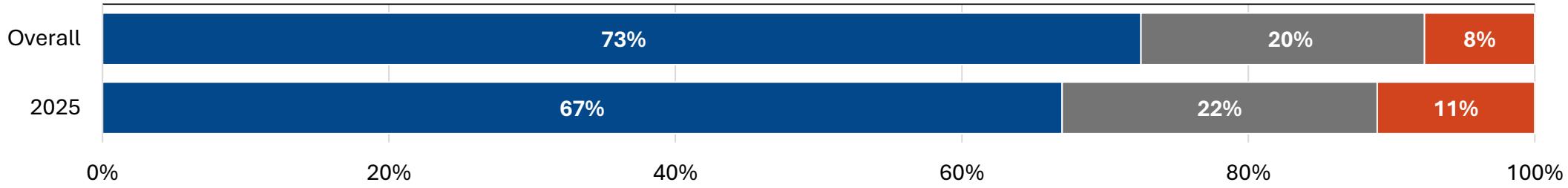


70% of riders perceive bus service as convenient, compared to 60% of non-riders.

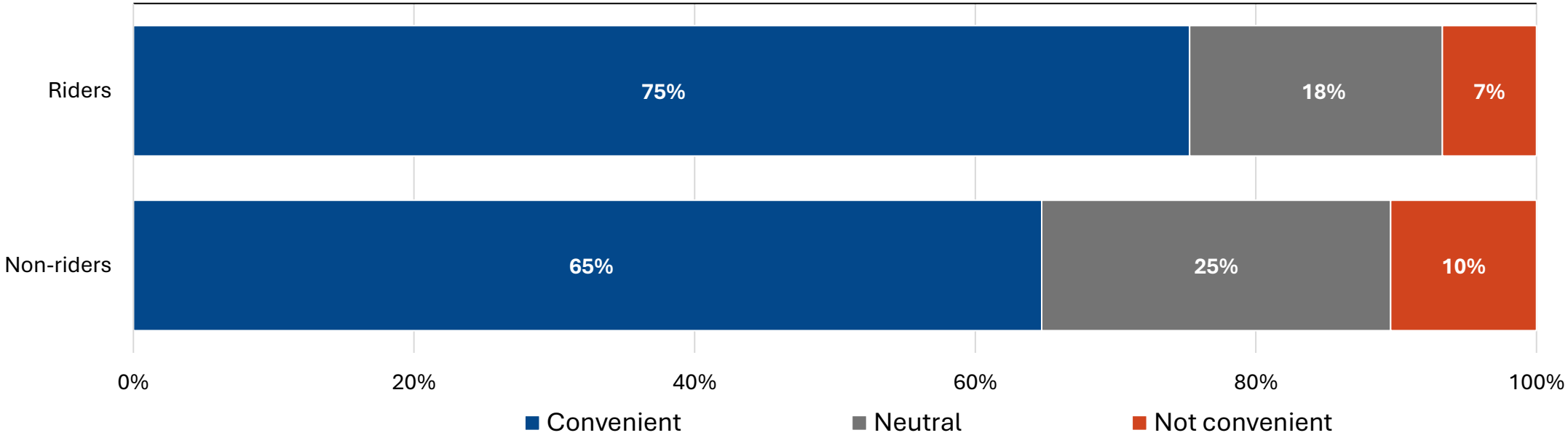


Convenience of MAX Light Rail

73% overall perceive MAX service as convenient, and only 8% view it as inconvenient.



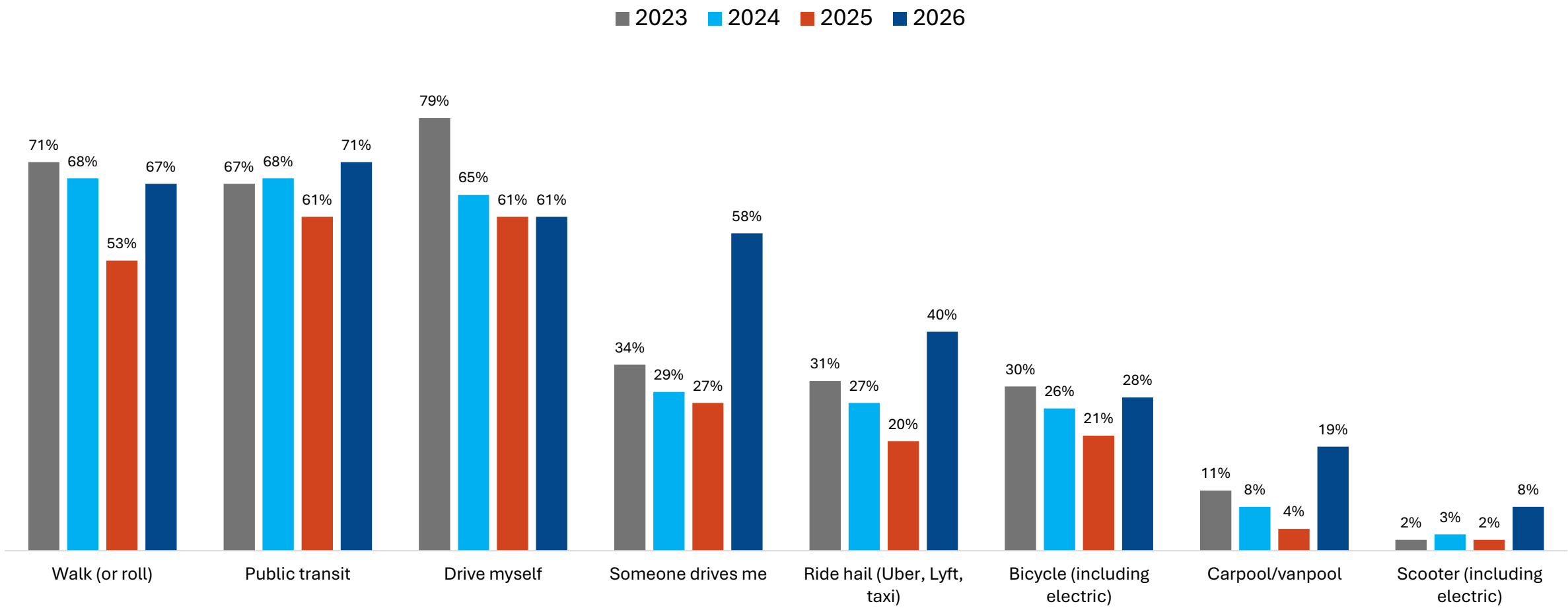
75% of riders perceive MAX as convenient, compared to 65% of non-riders.



Trip Planning and Ridership Trends

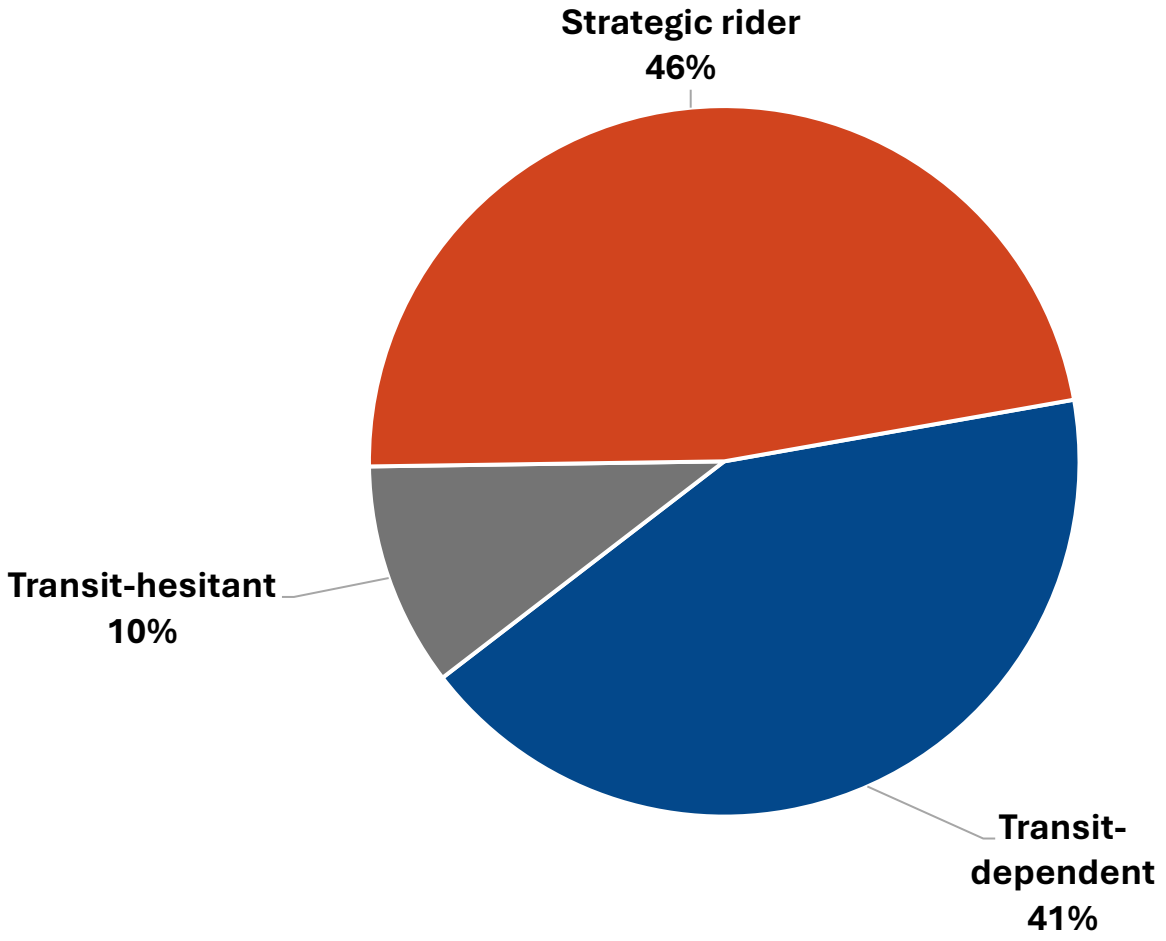
Most Used Mode of Transportation

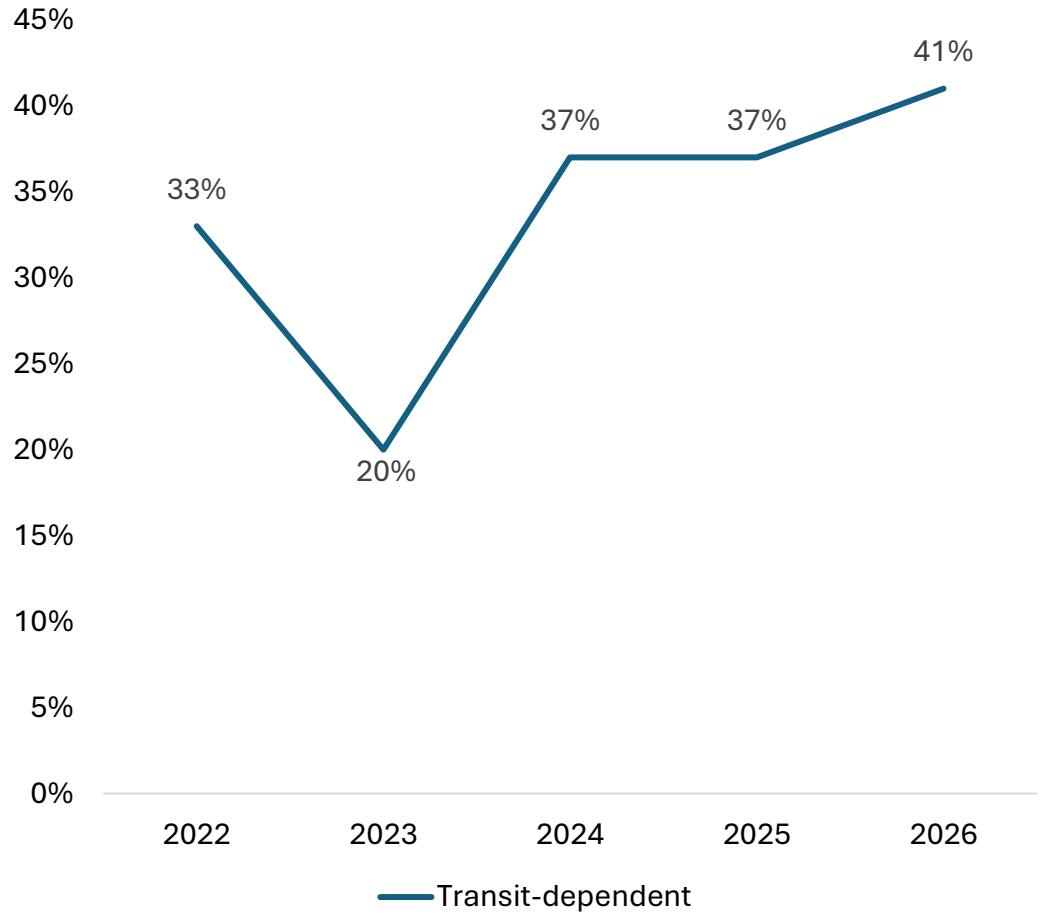
In 2026, the community has shifted **more multi-modal** than seen in prior years, with substantial **growth in transit (up 10%)**, along with carpooling and active transportation use.



Transit Dependence

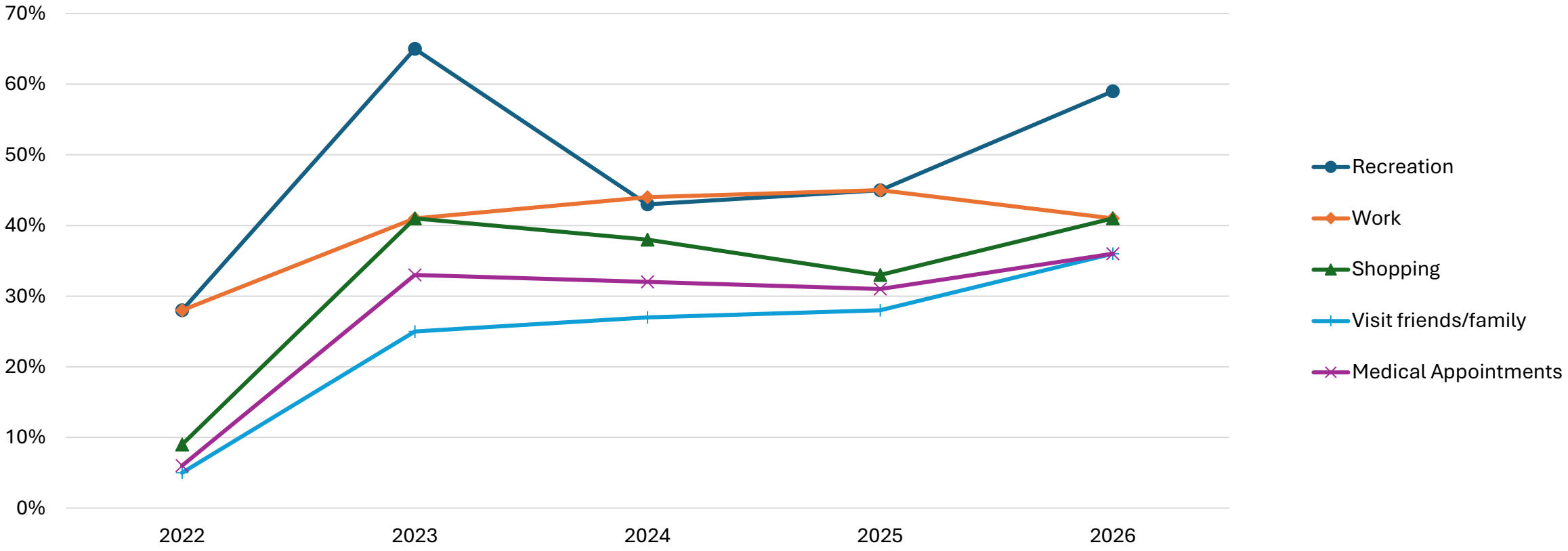
41% describe themselves as **transit-dependent.** This is higher than recent years. 43% of current dependent riders earn less than $50,000 annually. 61% have a license and can drive.





Trip Purpose

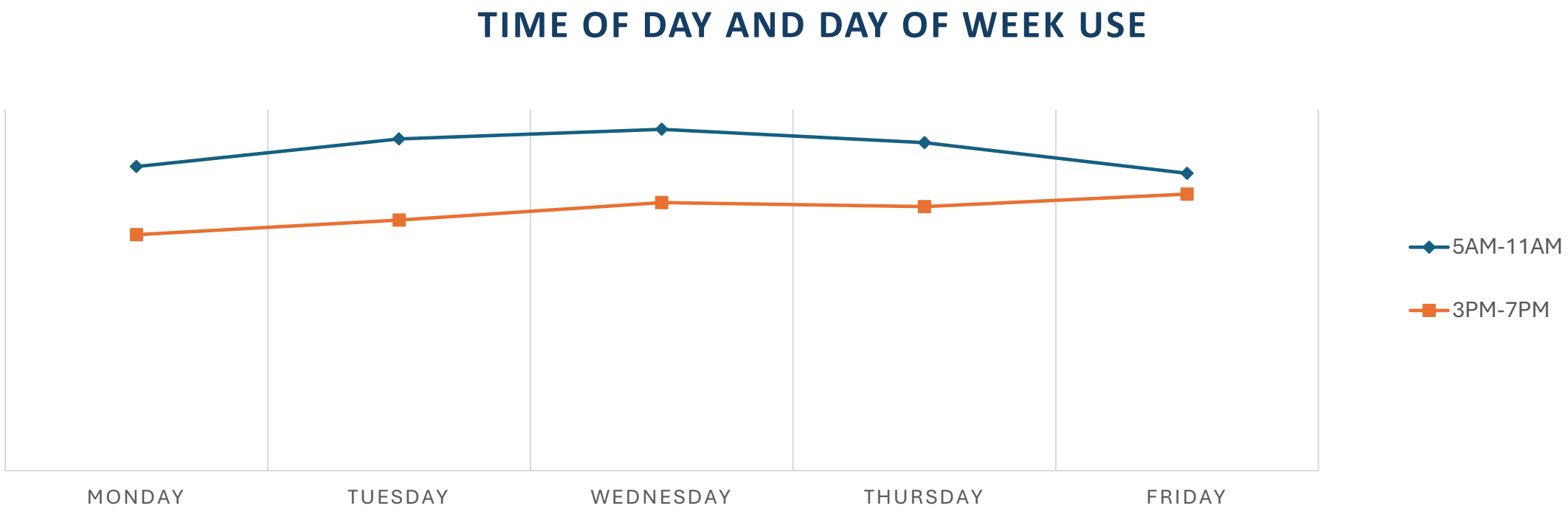
Riders' primary purposes have diversified over time. Pre-pandemic, the majority rode for recreation and work, but an increasing number now ride for shopping, friends and family visits and medical appointments. **In 2026, most (59%) are riding primarily for recreation.**



Rider Behavior Patterns

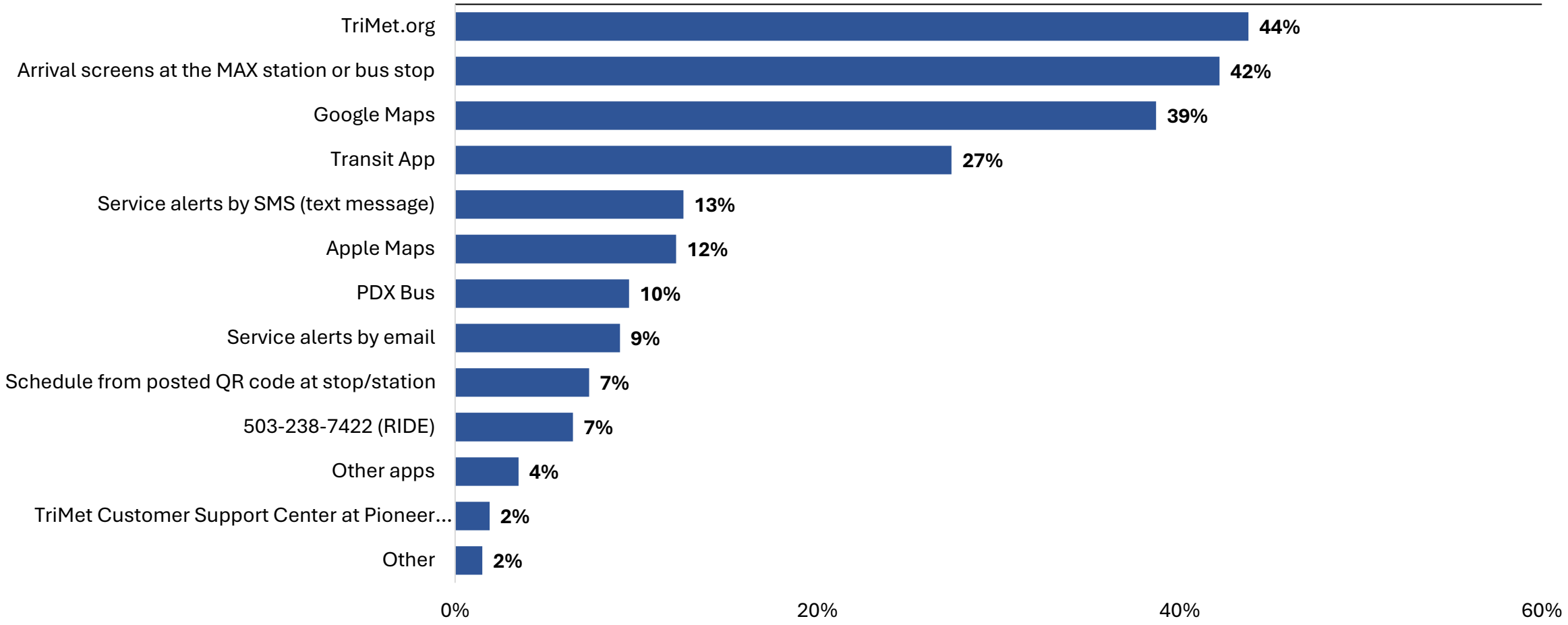
Overall, rider behavior patterns are changing:

- Peak commuting hours continue to show the greatest ridership
- Morning use decreases later in the week while night increases



Trip Planning

Riders most frequently rely on TriMet.org (44%), arrival screens at stations and stops (42%), and Google Maps (39%) to plan trips and check arrival times.



Transit Safety Perceptions

Safety

Rider safety perceptions improved meaningfully. Rider safety ratings reached their highest levels since 2022 for both bus & MAX, with **10% and 15% improvement, respectively**.

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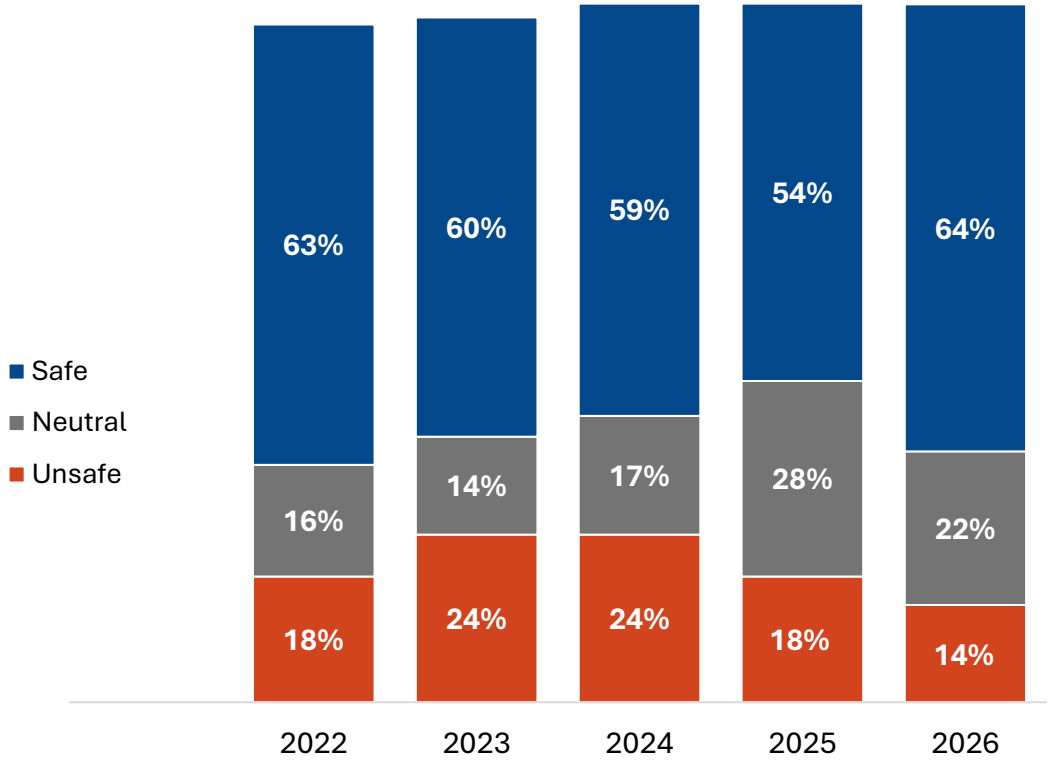

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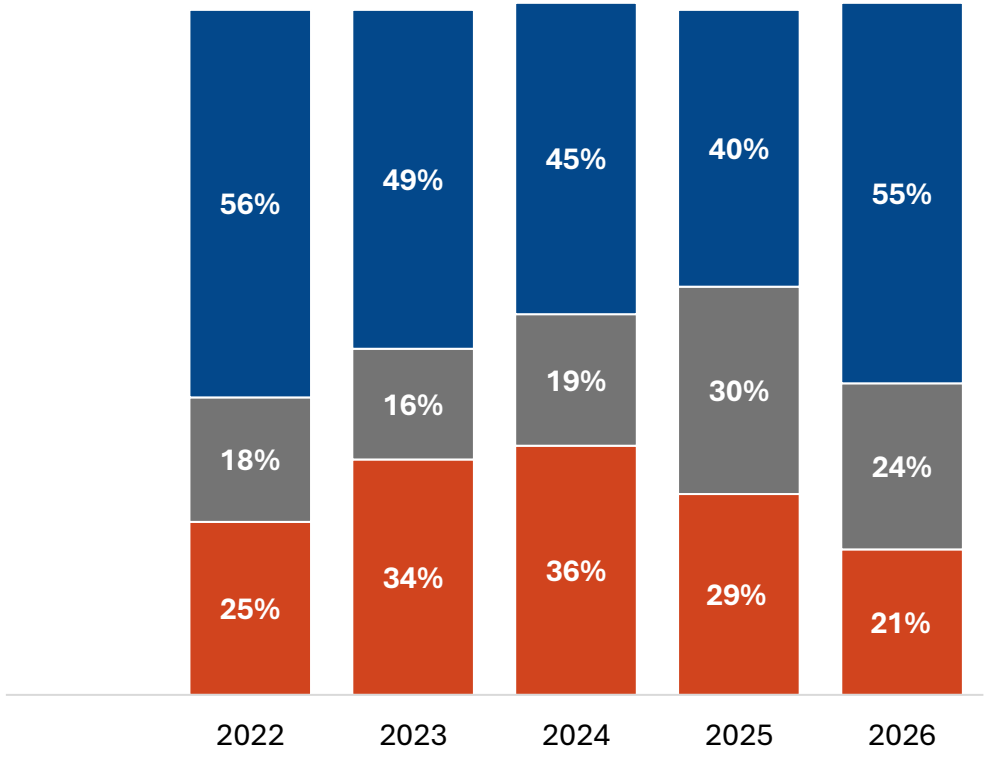
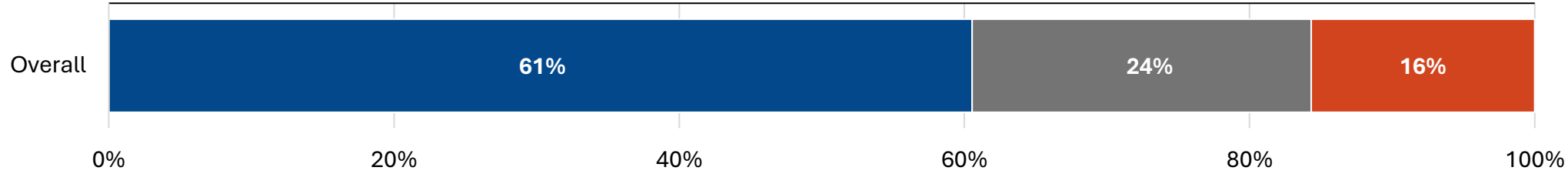
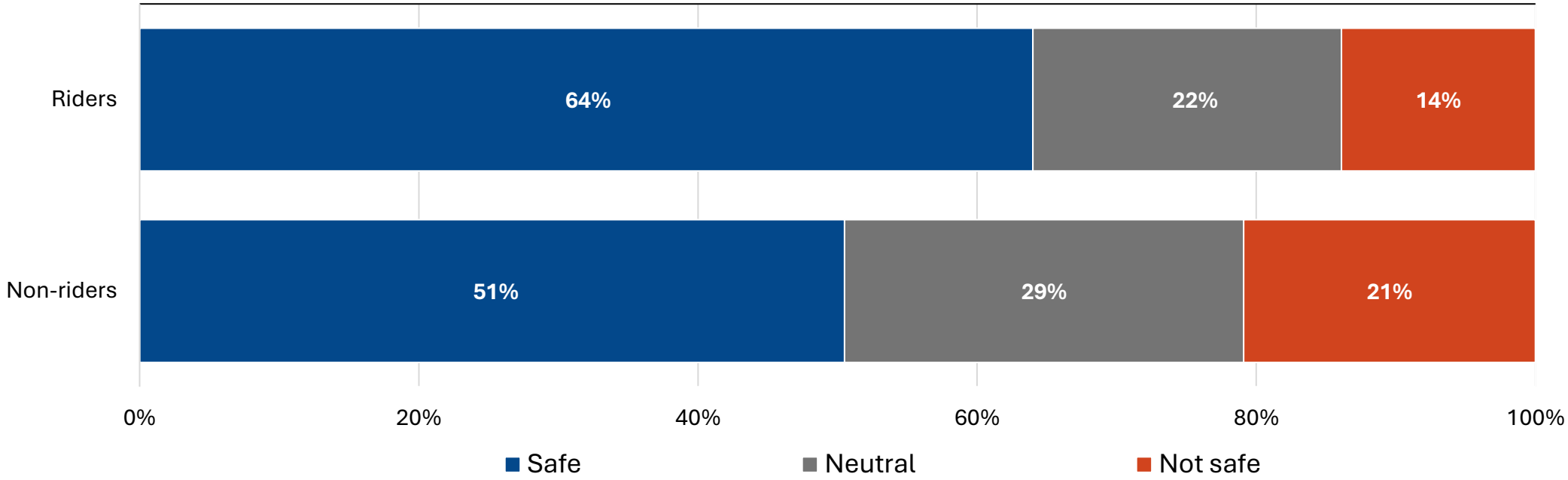


Safety of Bus Services

Overall, 85% of the community feels safe or neutral using TriMet bus service.

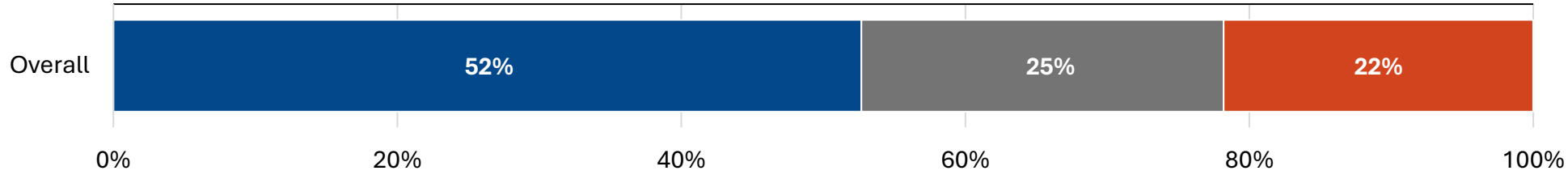


86% of riders feel safe or neutral, compared to 80% of non-riders.

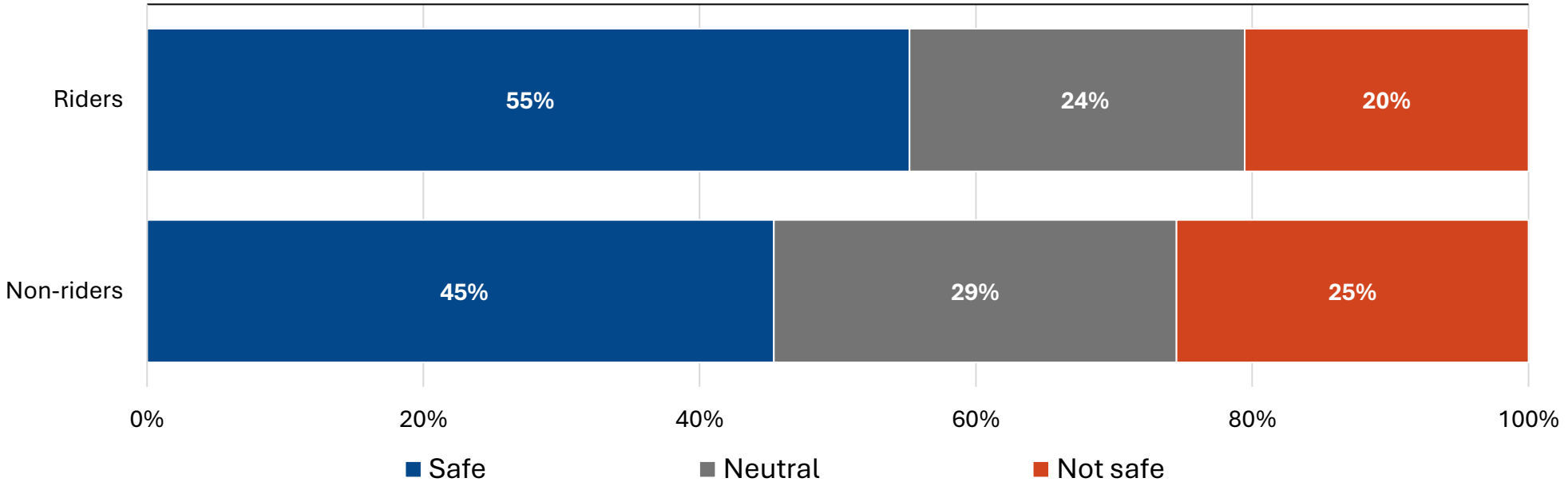


Safety of MAX Light Rail Services

Overall, 77% of the community feels safe or neutral using MAX light rail service.

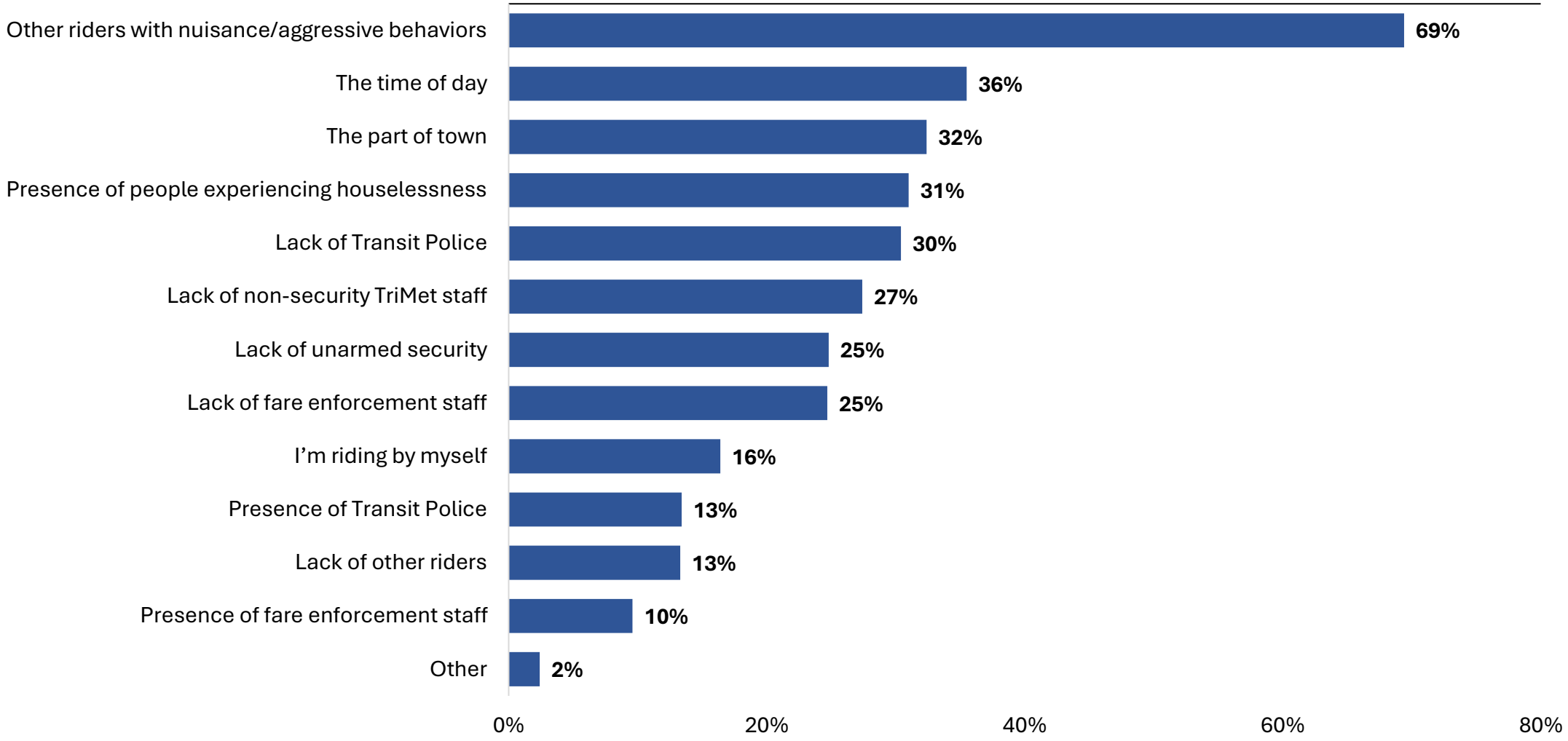


79% of riders feel safe or neutral, compared to 74% of non-riders.



Safety Feedback

Among the 14% and 20% of bus and MAX riders, respectively, who reported feeling unsafe, the possibility of other riders acting out was the top issue considered in onboard safety.



Safety Feedback

"**What safety concerns, if any, do you have when riding or thinking about riding TriMet?**" (+3,000 responses)

Community feedback provided important context and nuance. Specifically:

- Respondents rarely experience safety issues as isolated factors.
- Concerns about other riders, homelessness, drug use, behavioral health and no security personnel present often converge around a broader sense of **unpredictability**.
- Visible staff and security can provide reassurance, but feedback suggests riders are ultimately looking for **confidence that someone will notice and intervene quickly** when a situation becomes unsafe.

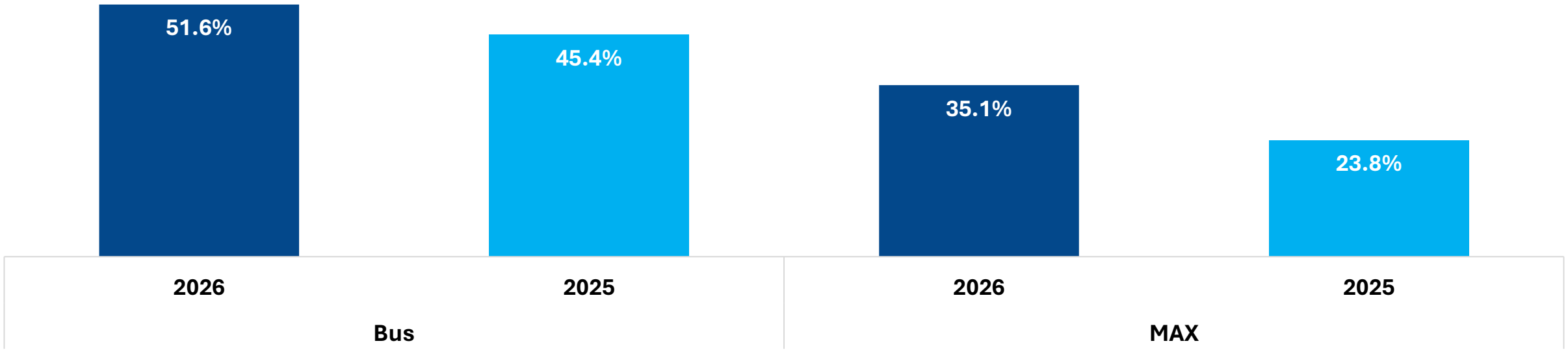
Findings suggest that emphasizing an environment of predictability, where on board security is monitored and responsive will continue to improve safety perceptions.

Safety Perceptions Among Women

This year:

- 13% more women reported feeling safe on buses
- 6% more reported riding TriMet buses almost daily
- 11% more reported riding MAX almost daily

Proportion of women identifying as ‘frequent riders’



Comparing Performance

Background

The benchmarking data contained in this report are protected intellectual property. Any reproduction of the benchmarking information in this report by persons or organizations not directly affiliated with TriMet is not authorized without written consent from ETC Institute.

ETC Institute's benchmark survey data comes from a panel of transit riders and non-riders drawn from surveys conducted within the past five years across all 50 states. Responses from users of more than 80 transit systems were included.

The benchmark survey data provided in this report was collected during the Spring of 2025. Results were monitored to ensure distribution in proportion to population size of each transit system's region.

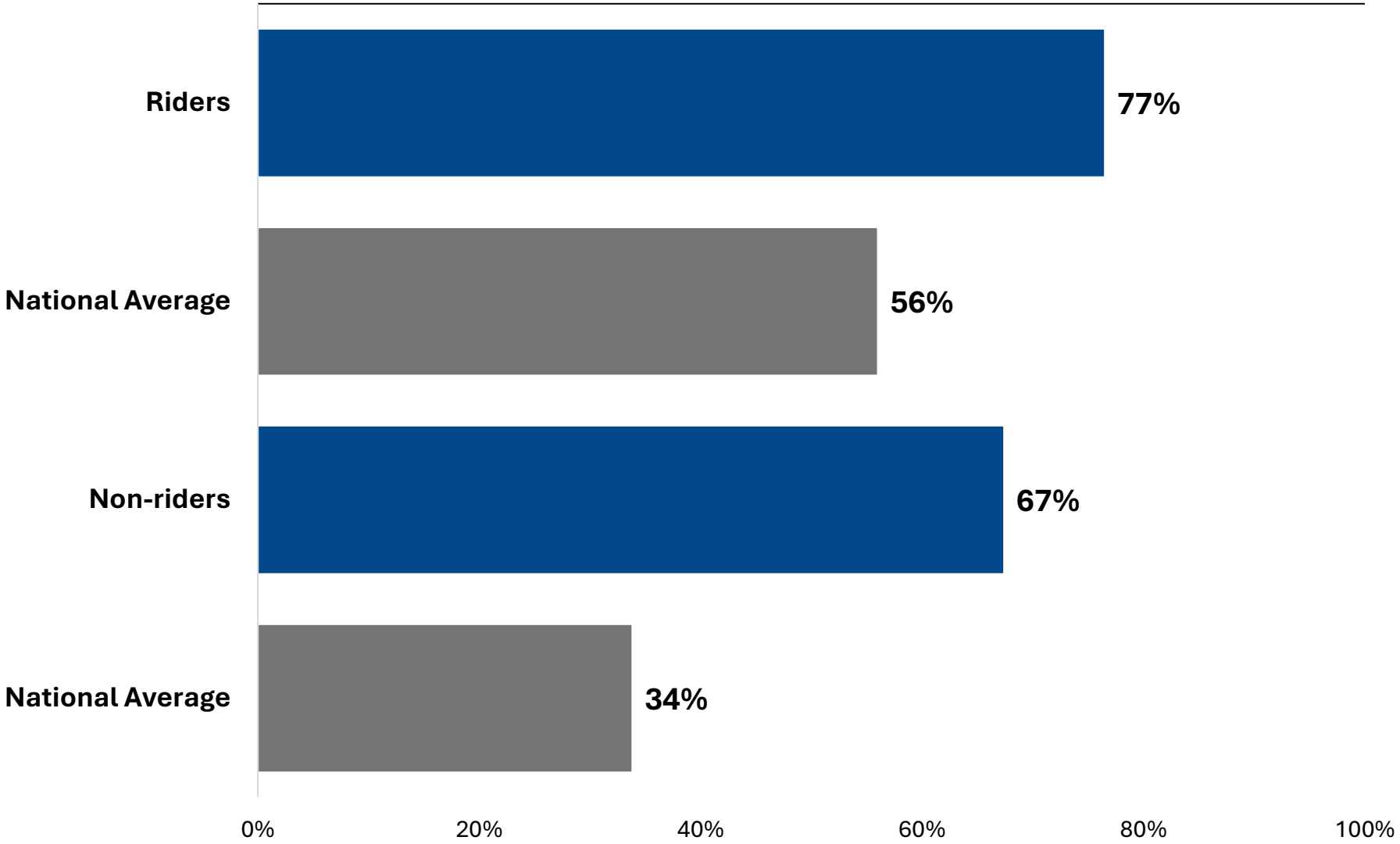
TRIMET

ETC INSTITUTE

TriMet Outperforms National Benchmarks Across Core Measures:

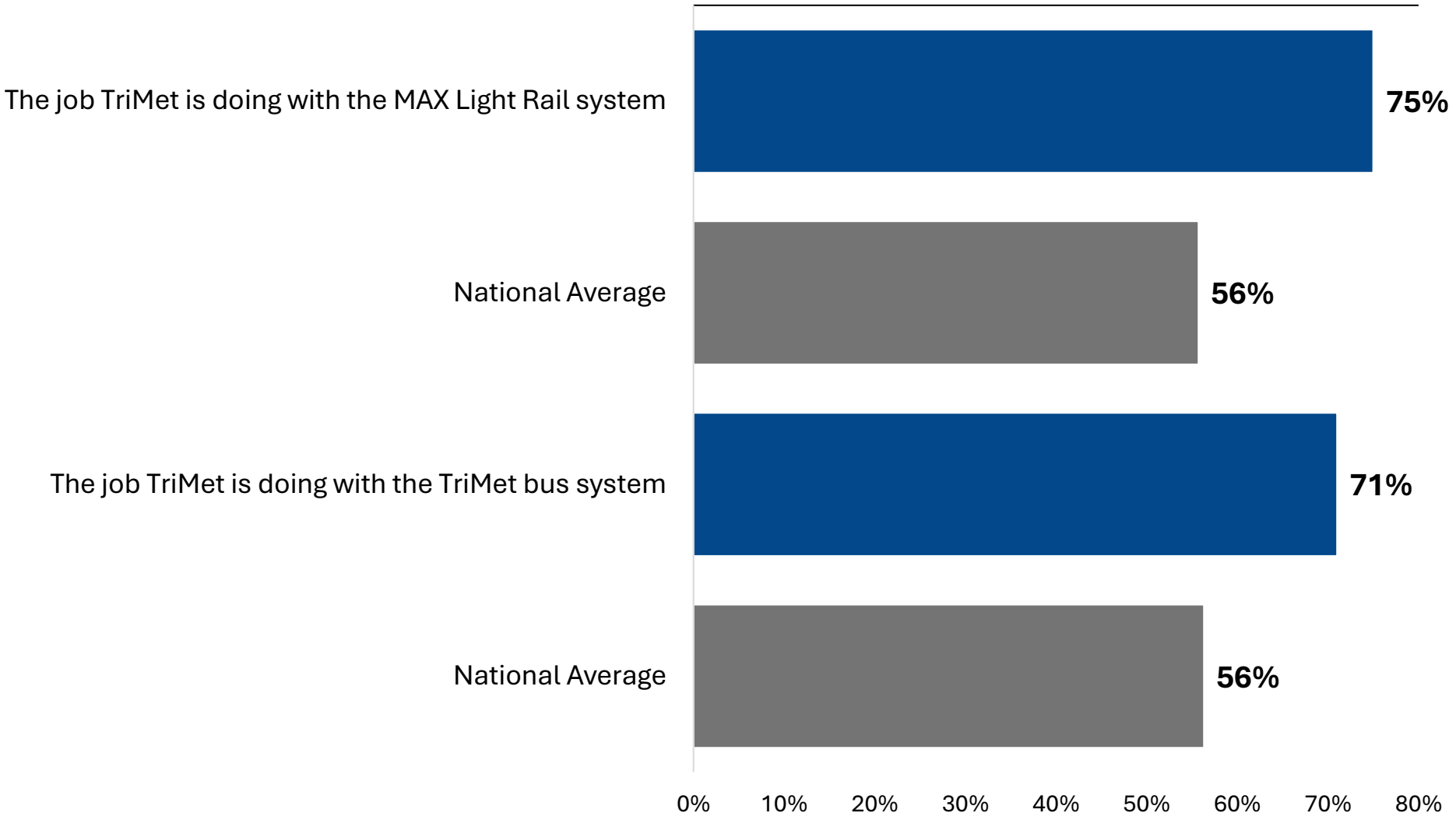
- **Overall approval:** Riders: +21 pts. **|** Non-Riders: +33 pts.
- **Bus and Light Rail approval:** Bus: +19 pts. **|** Light Rail: +15 pts.
- **Convenience**: Bus: +14 pts. **|** Light Rail: +14 pts.
- **Reliability**: Bus: +23 pts. **|** Light Rail: +24 pts.
- **Safety:** Riders: +18 pts. **|** Non-Riders: +7 pts.
- **Regional value:** 91% compared to 67% nationally: +24 pts.
- **Support for increased funding:** 85% compared to 61% nationally: +24 pts.

Approval



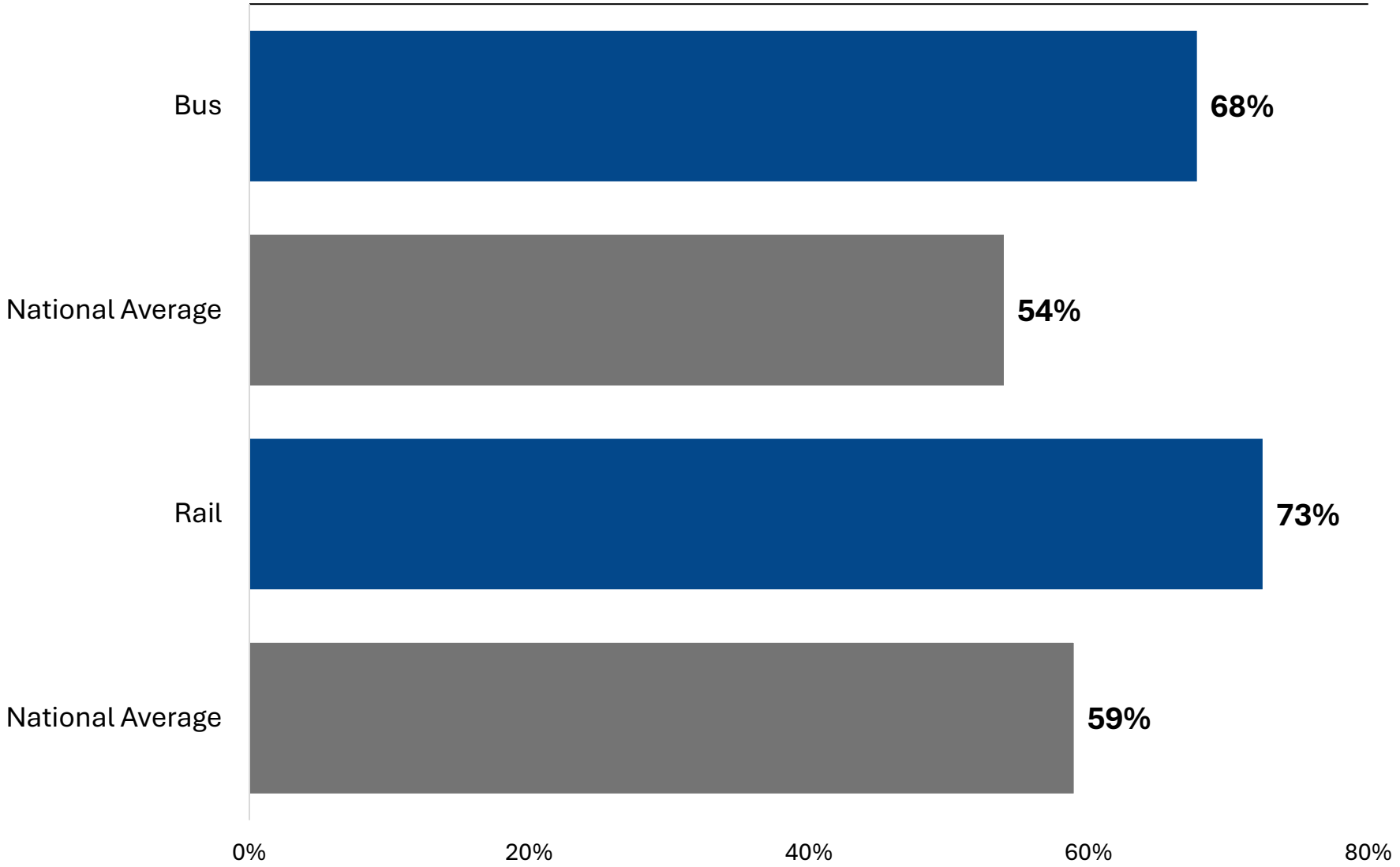
Approval for the overall job TriMet is doing is higher than the National Average among riders and non-riders.

Approval



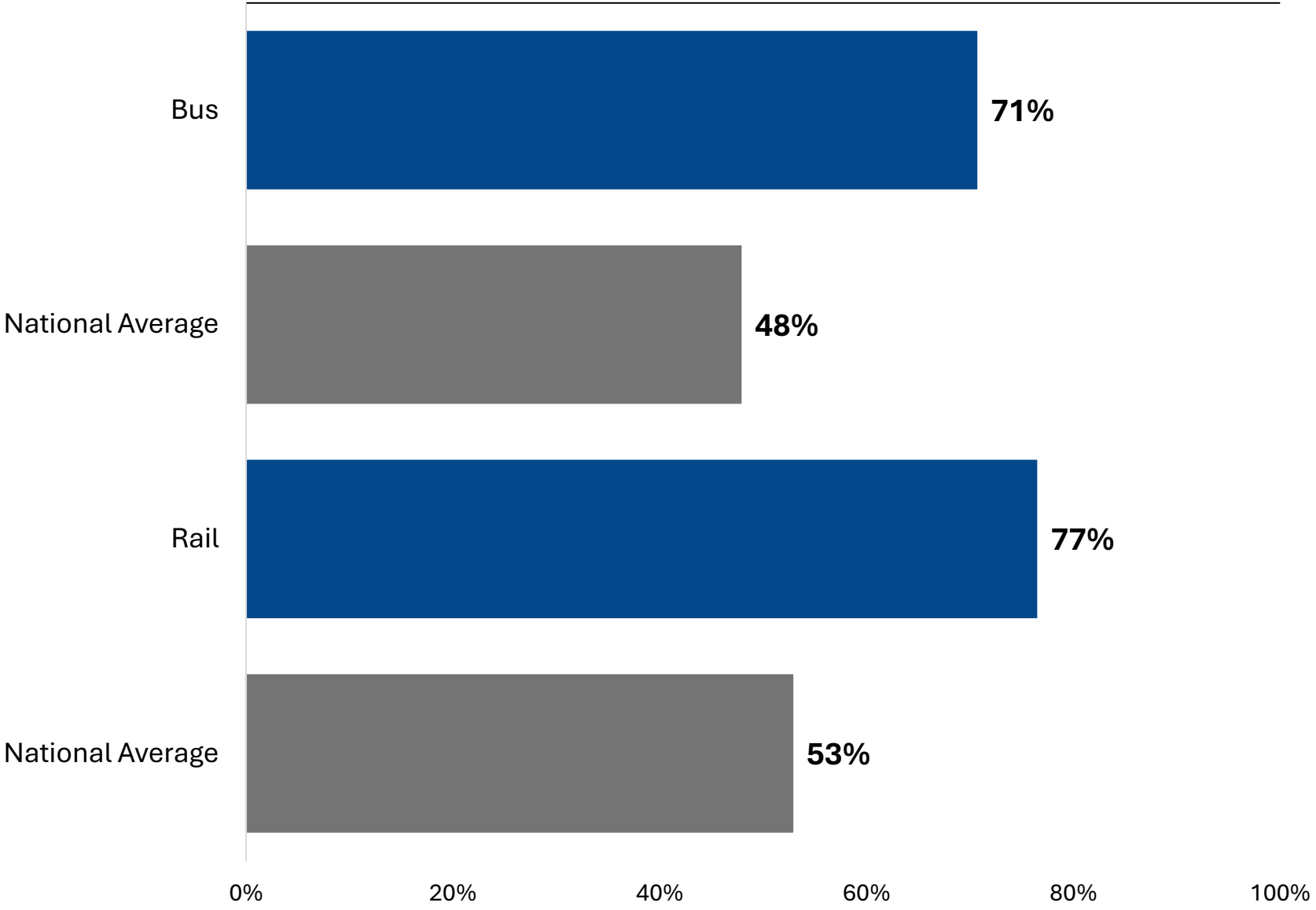
Approval for both the bus system and MAX Light Rail system is higher than the National Average.

Convenience



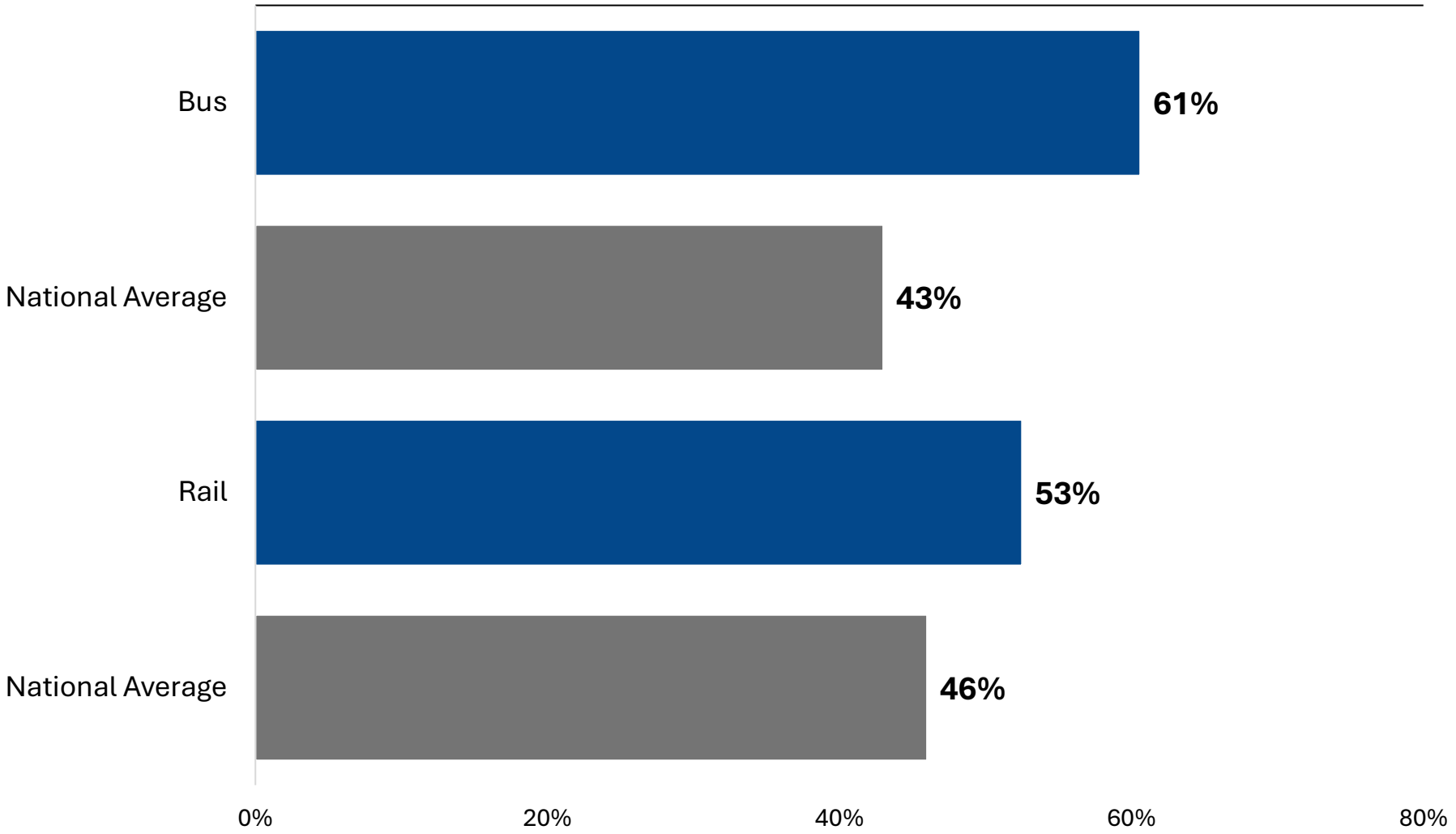
TriMet Bus System and MAX Light Rail System rank above the National Averages for convenience.

Reliability



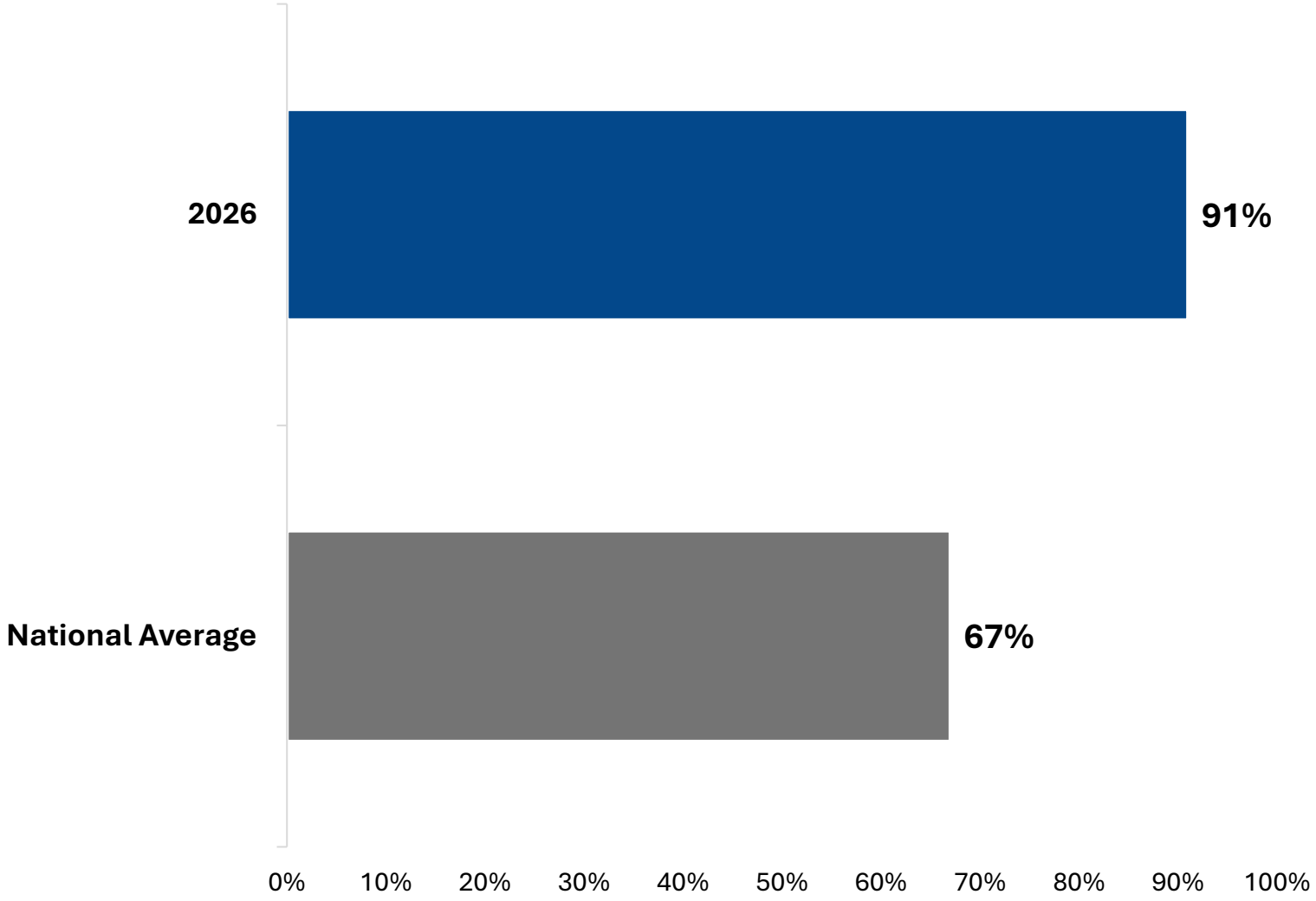
For both Bus and Rail services in the area, reliability ranks higher than the National Average.

Safety



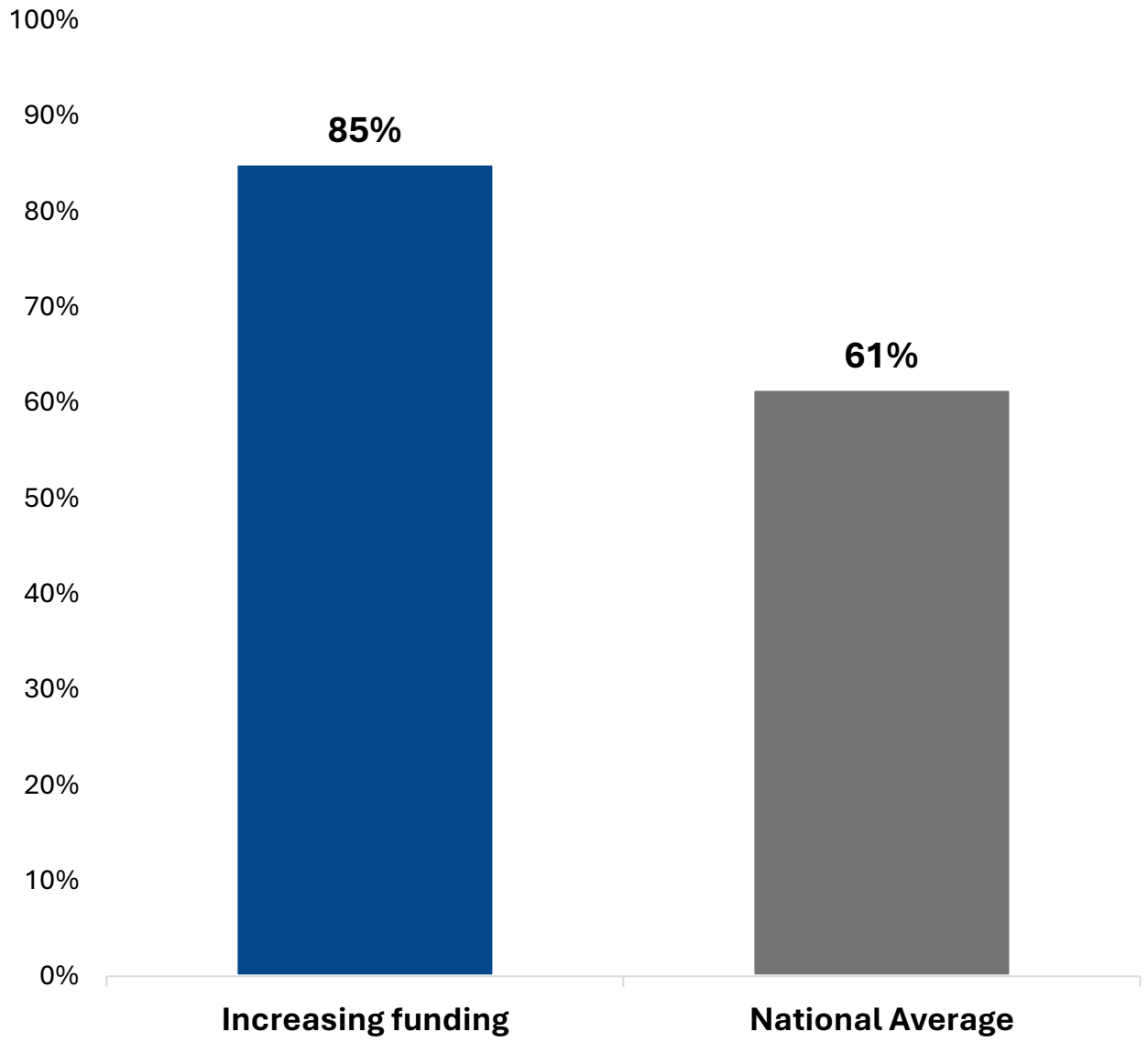
For both Bus and Rail services in the area, safety ranks higher than the National Average.

Perceived Value



The value that TriMet provides to the region ranked higher than the National Average.

Public Support for Transit Funding



85% of respondents believe that funding for transit in the Portland area should increase, which ranks higher than the National Average of 61%.

Recommendations

Areas to Maintain

- Continue to highlight TriMet's role as a vital mobility provider for people who cannot or choose not to drive
- Sustain recent gains in public perceptions of safety on buses and MAX
- Preserve the system's strengths in reliability and convenience, which continue to outperform national benchmarks
- Maintain multilingual, multimodal outreach efforts to ensure broad participation from both riders and non-riders
- Reinforce the strong support for transit and continued investment in transit funding.

Areas to Monitor or Intervene

- Address the perception gap between riders and non-riders, particularly regarding safety and reliability.
- Continue educating and communicating on onboard safety realities and improvements, to project an environment that is comfortable.
- Monitor whether service reductions begin to negatively affect perceived convenience, satisfaction or intentions to use transit in the future.

Levers for Future Performance

- Pair operational safety improvements with visible communication that highlights those improvements.
- Expand the use of real-time information tools to reduce uncertainty and reinforce perceptions of reliability.
- Tailor communications to non-riders, whose perceptions are generally less positive than those with firsthand transit experience.
- Emphasize reliability, safety, convenience, and mobility access in public-facing communications.
- Conduct follow-up analysis to identify the experiences and perceptions that most clearly distinguish promoters from detractors.

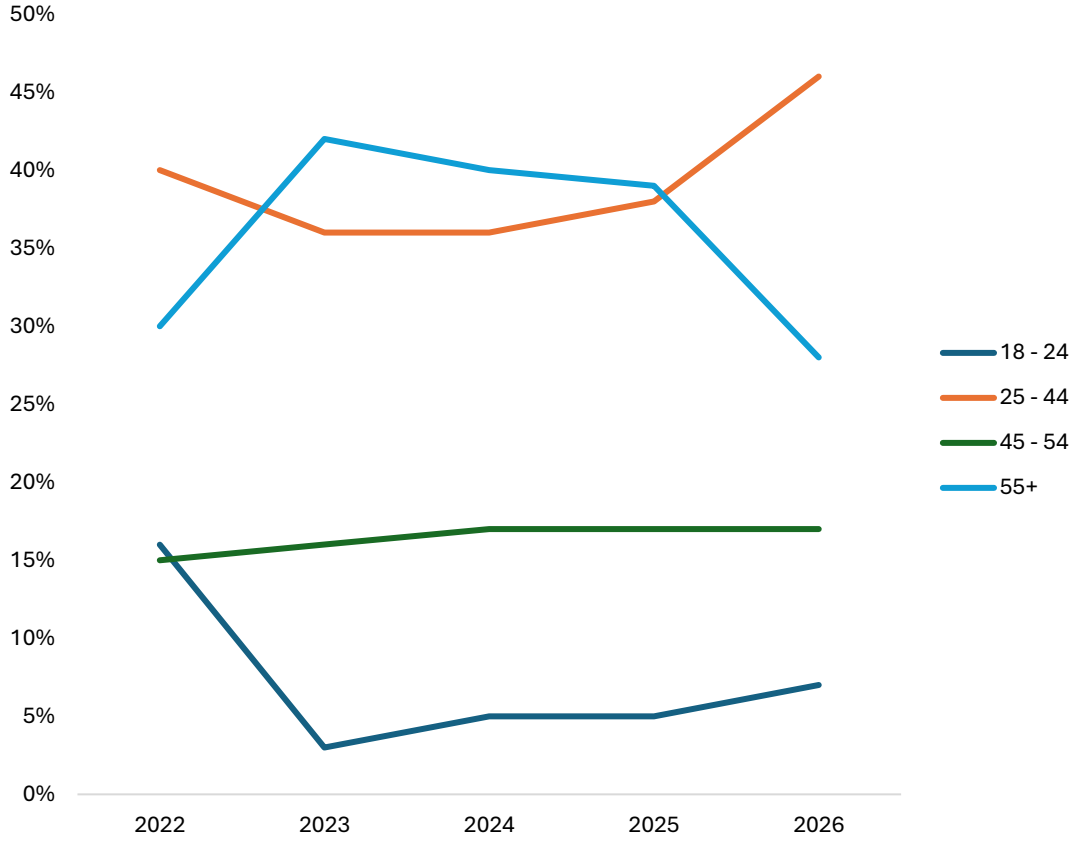
Demographics

Demographic Summary

- **TriMet continues to serve a very income-diverse community**, with a near-equivalent proportion of riders earning under $50k and over $100k.
- **Mostly working:** 65% are employed full or part-time, 16% retired.
- **Riders are skewing sharply younger in 2026:** the 25-44 group rose to 46% from 38%, while the 55+ share dropped to 28% from 39%. The group 45-54 maintained at 17%.
- **Women are now the majority of riders** at 50% versus 46% men and 4% nonbinary, a reversal of the 2022 split when men led 50% to 46%.
- **Car access is real, not absent:** 80% of riders live in a household with at least one vehicle, 89% of those can usually use one, and 77% hold a license and can drive—these are riders by choice as much as, or more than, necessity.
- **Still commuting in person:** 37% never work or attend school from home, and among those who do go remote, 32% do so all 5 weekdays.

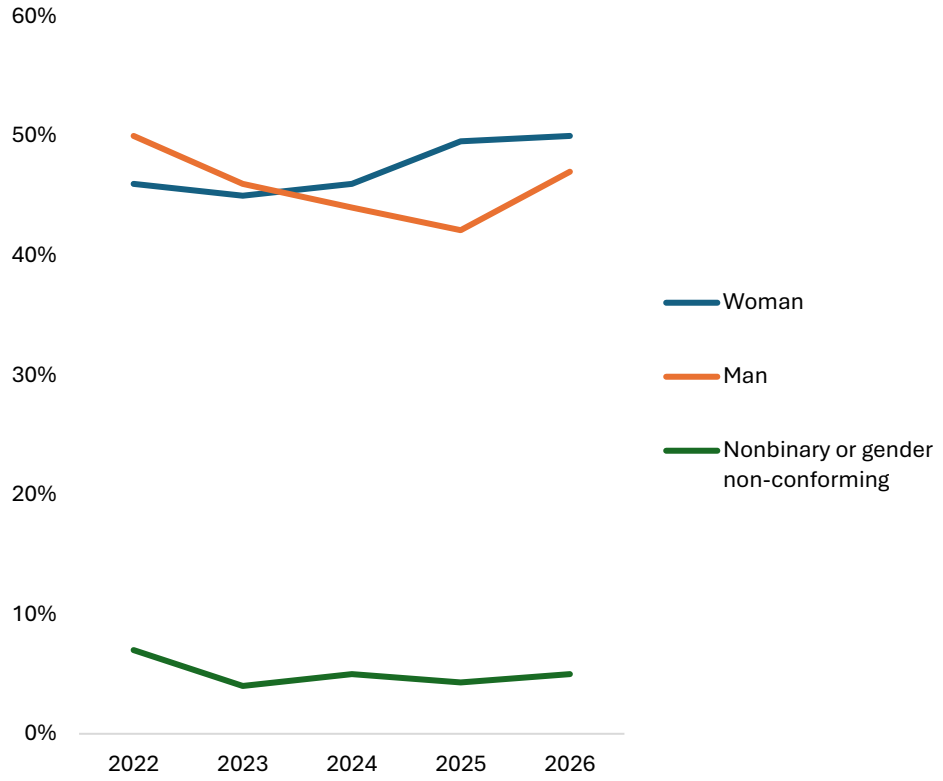
Riders' Age

- **Riders skewed sharply younger in 2026:** the 25-44 group rose to 46% from 38%, while the 55+ share dropped to 28% from 39%.
- **The middle held steady:** 45-54 has stayed within 15-17% since 2022, meaning the change is a straight handoff from older to prime working-age riders.



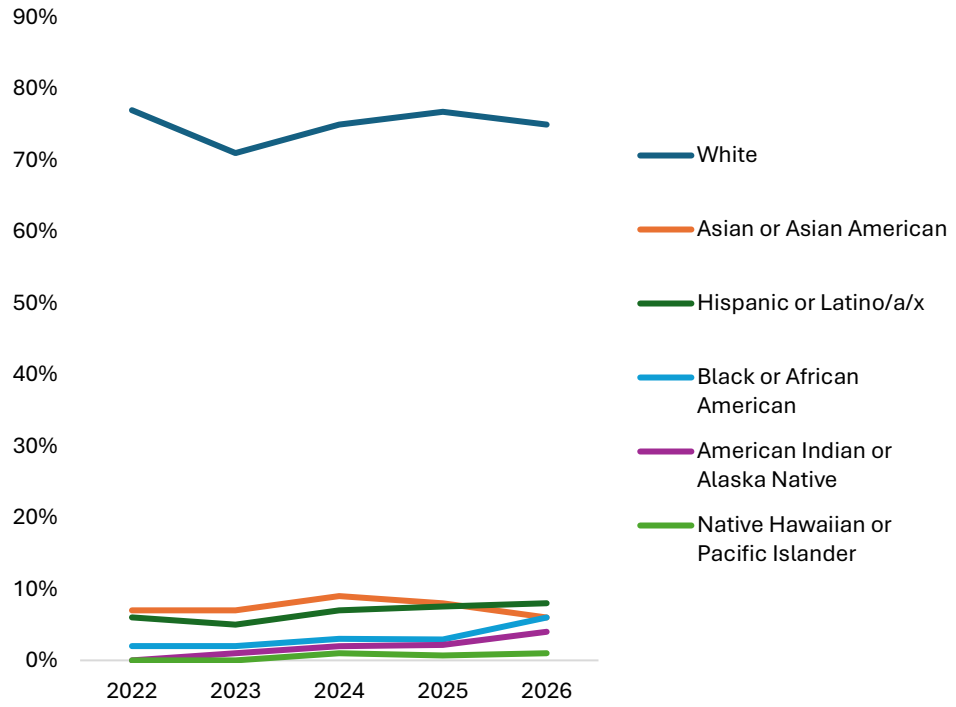
Riders’ Gender

- **Women are now the majority of riders** at 50% versus 46% men and 4% nonbinary, a reversal of the 2022 split when men led 50% to 46%.
- **The crossover happened in 2025** and held through 2026, coinciding with the outreach effort that **lifted women’s bus safety perceptions by 26%** and grew frequent women riders by 10 points.



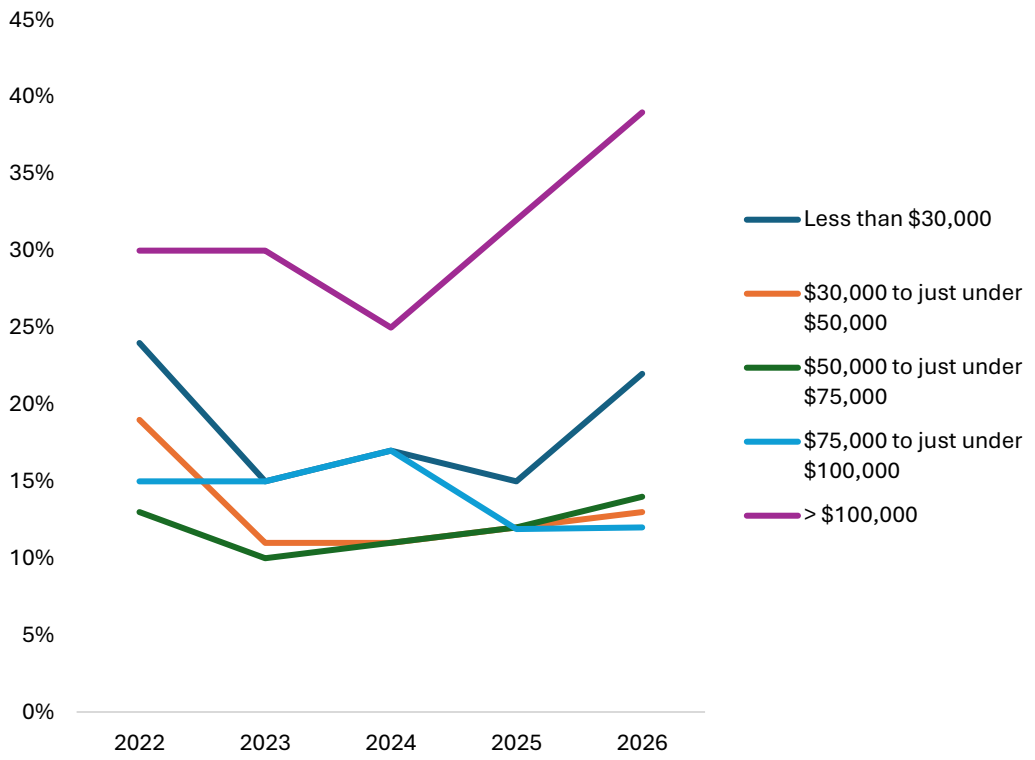
Riders' Race/Ethnicity

- **The sample stays 75% White,** roughly unchanged from 77% in 2022, overall representation has not broadened much.
- **The movement is at the margins:** Black respondents tripled to 6% and American Indian or Alaska Native rose to 4% since 2022, while Asian or Asian American respondents fell from a 2024 peak of 9% to 6%.



Riders' Household Income

- High earners ($100K+) rose to 39% while the under $30K group also grew to 22%.
- The TriMet demographic continues to strongly trend as income diverse, with a near-equivalent proportion of riders earning under $50k and over $100k.



Thank you!

Questions? Contact research@trimet.org.