

**New Bus for London In
service assessment**

Job Number 11212

June 2012

Contents

- Aims and method
- Summary
- Design
- Ambience
- NBfL specific features
 - Conductor
- Respondent profile

Aims and method

Aims

The New Bus for London (NBfL) came into service in February 2012 on the high frequency route 38 between Clapton and Victoria

Research has previously been conducted in a hall test, however this research gathers in-service feedback on the NBfL compared with conventional double decker buses

Specific aims were to understand:

- In-service perceptions of **design** on board the NBfL
- In-service perceptions of **ambience** on board the NBfL
- Any particular **problems** using the NBfL in service
- Any **improvements** to the NBFL design which customers feel are needed
- Perceptions of the **conductor**

Method

A face to face interviewing programme was undertaken

- 750 interviews with customers on bus route 38 between Clapton and Victoria
 - 221 on NBfL; 529 on the conventional bus
- Interviewing covered all days of the week
 - 11 – 24 June
- Surveys conducted throughout the day
- The average questionnaire length was 8 minutes
 - This might reduce the incidence of short hop customers within the sample
- Data are unweighted

NB: it was intended that interviewing would be evenly spread between the two bus types – however with very few NBfL buses in service, and some timetabling changes, more interviews were eventually carried out on the conventional bus. However sufficient interviews were conducted on the NBfL for reasonably robust comparisons to be made

Summary

Summary

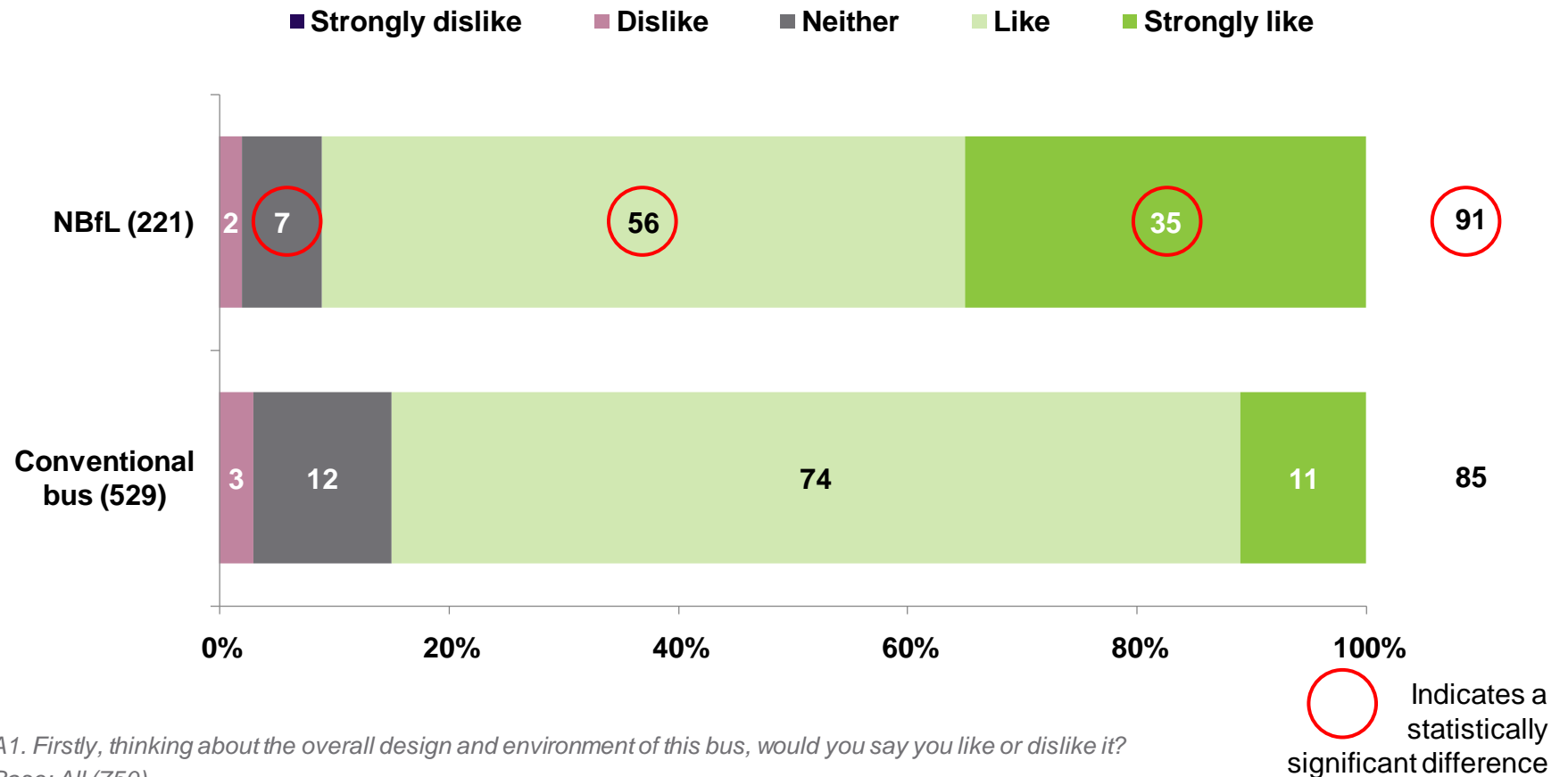
The customer experience on board the NBfL is rated more highly than on the conventional bus

- Both bus types receive largely positive feedback from customers
- However, the NBfL out-performs the conventional bus in many areas
 - There may be a 'new product' effect which could tail off over time
 - However the results are strong enough to indicate a genuine preference for the NBfL
- There is more of a 'wow factor' with the NBfL, which receives a high proportion of 'top box' ratings
 - For example, 35% 'strongly like' the overall design and environment of the NBfL compared with 11% for the conventional bus
 - The NBfL is rated higher than the conventional bus for vibration, smoothness of ride, and engine noise
- Areas for further monitoring were lighting, temperature and ventilation
 - In these areas, the conventional bus performed better than NBfL
 - While most customers thought that no improvements were needed to the NBfL, where issues were raised these tended to relate to temperature and ventilation (there were known issues with the air conditioning on the NBfL during the fieldwork period which may have affected customers' perceptions)
- Conductors were well regarded: NBfL customer satisfaction with conductors' behaviour and attitude was 89 out of 100
 - There was reasonably good understanding of the conductor's role in providing assistance and information, however 30% still thought that the conductor was responsible for checking tickets

Overall design and environment of this bus

NBfL has 3 times as many customers saying that they “strongly like” the overall design and environment than the conventional bus

Overall design and environment



A1. Firstly, thinking about the overall design and environment of this bus, would you say you like or dislike it?

Base: All (750)

Design

A note on reporting

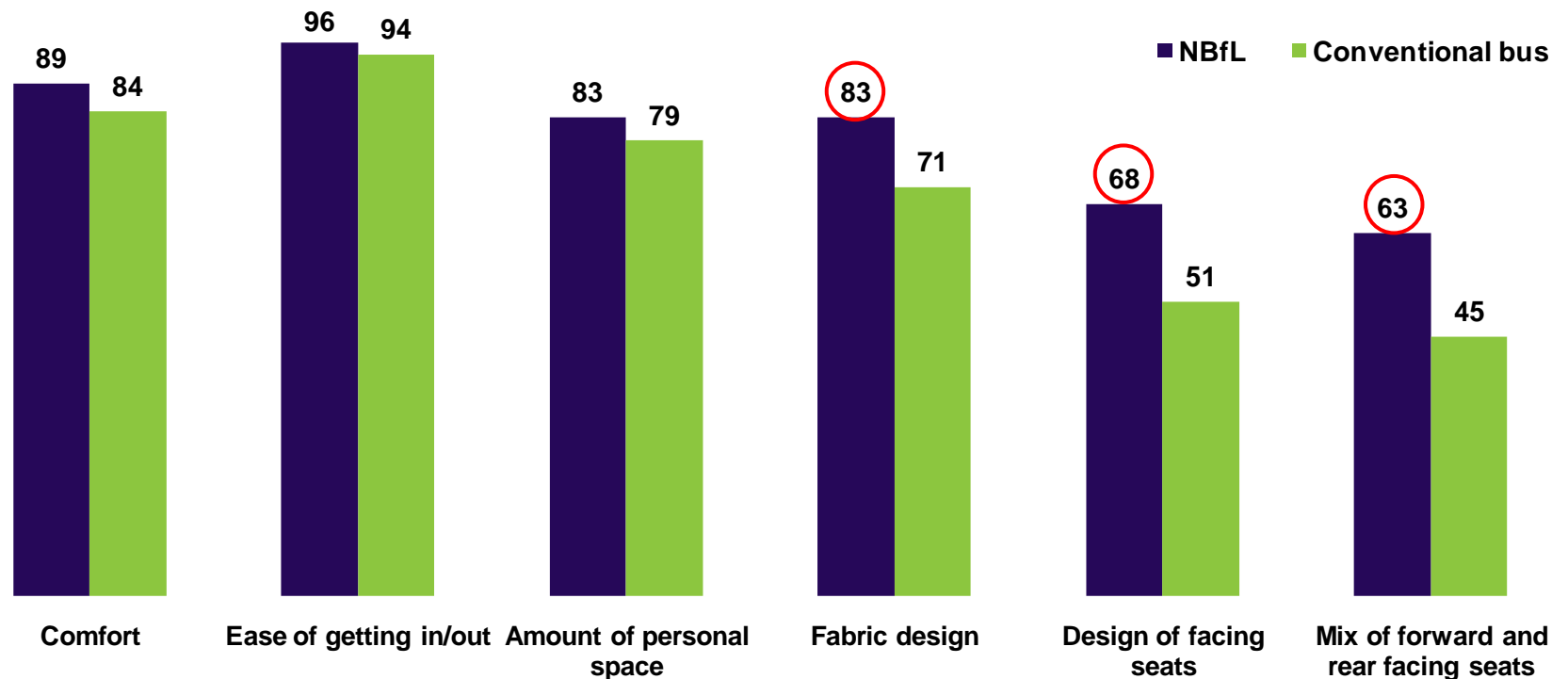
- As the NBfL is relatively new, in a number of questions there are reasonably high levels of people saying 'don't know'
- We have generally *excluded* don't know responses so that a fair comparison can be made between the bus types
- Where we have included 'hall test' results, these are from an external survey not carried out by SPA Future Thinking

Seating

All aspects of seating on the NBfL are considered satisfactory by a greater proportion of customers than for the conventional bus

Although receiving the lowest ratings, design of facing seats and mix of forward and rear facing seats are considered to be substantially better on the NBfL than the conventional bus

% giving a positive rating



| | | | | | | |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Hall test | 81 | 82 | 61 | 74 | 58 | 75 |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|

B1-B6. Aspects of seating

Base c.750 (excluding all saying 'don't know')

Seating - comfort

Almost two fifths of those on the NBfL report that the seats are 'very comfortable' – almost double the level saying so on the conventional bus

Comfort of seat



| |
|-----------|
| Hall test |
| 81 |

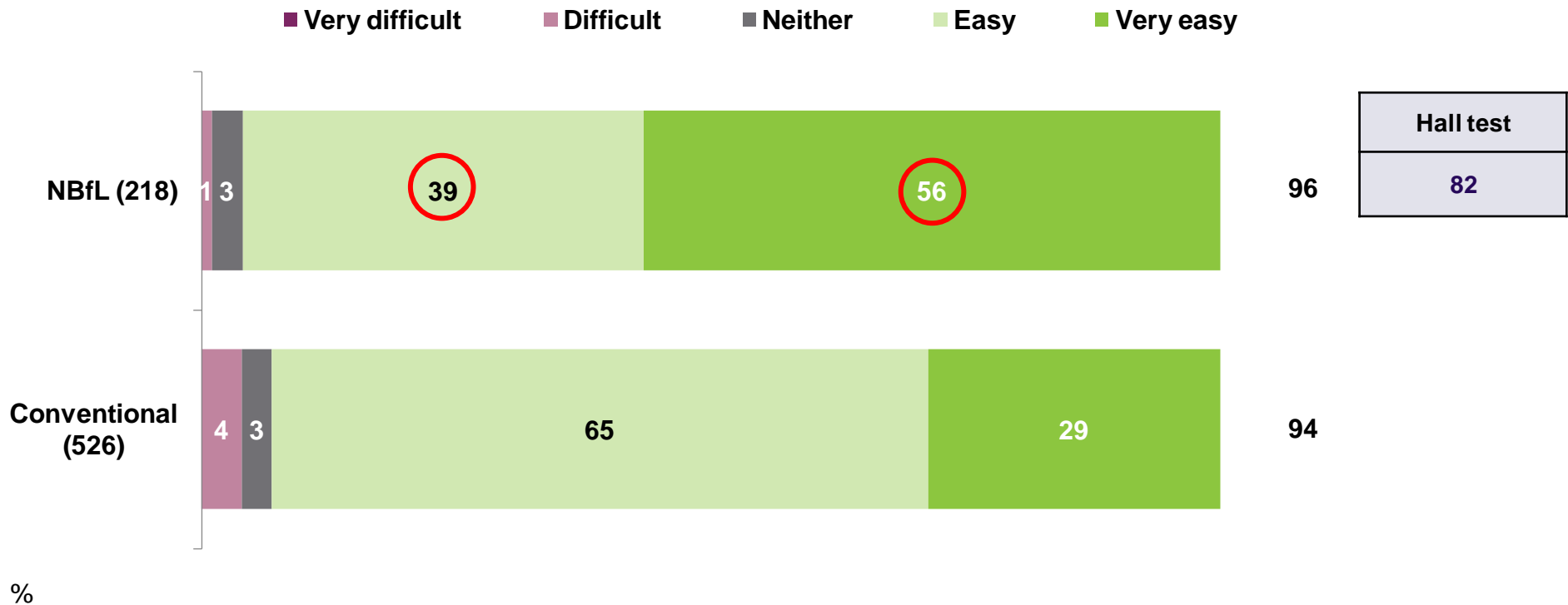
○ Indicates a statistically significant difference

B1 Do you find the seat comfortable or uncomfortable? Base 750

Seating – ease of getting in/out

More than half of customers on the NBfL rate the seats as ‘very easy’ to get in/out of, compared with around a third on the conventional bus

Ease of getting in/out of seat



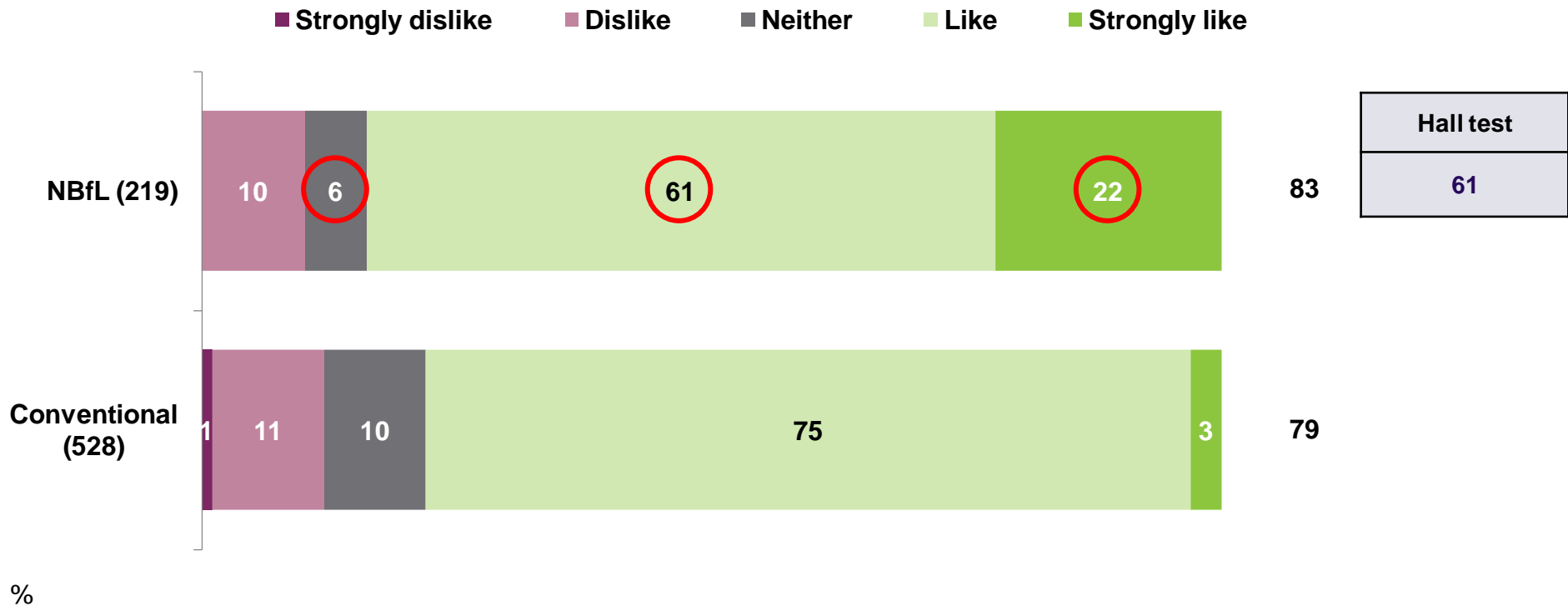
B3. Do you find it easy or difficult to get into or out of the seats?
Base 750

○ Indicates a statistically significant difference

Seating – amount of personal space

A fifth of customers on the NBfL ‘strongly like’ the amount of personal space, compared with just 3% on the conventional bus

Amount of personal space



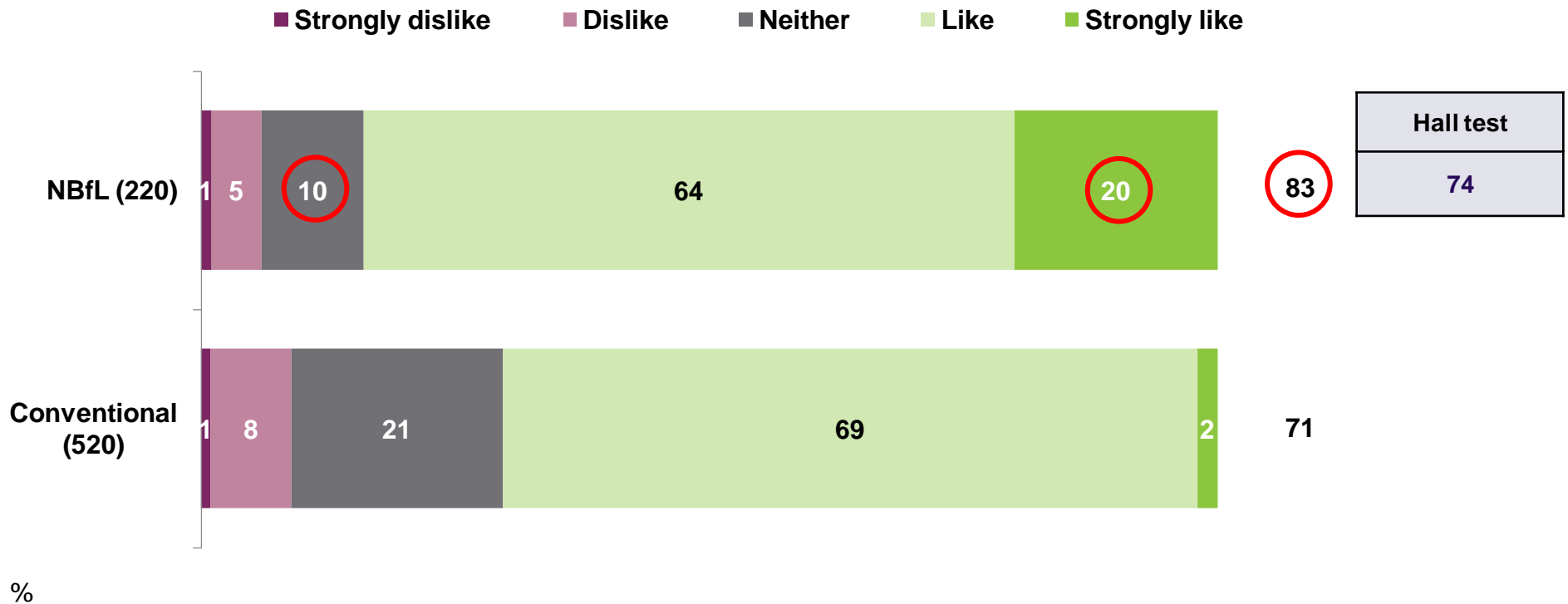
B5a. What do you think about ... the amount of personal space in the seat?
Base 750

○ Indicates a statistically significant difference

Seating – fabric design

Nearly a fifth of customers on the NBfL strongly liked the seating fabric, compared with just 2% on the conventional bus

Fabric design



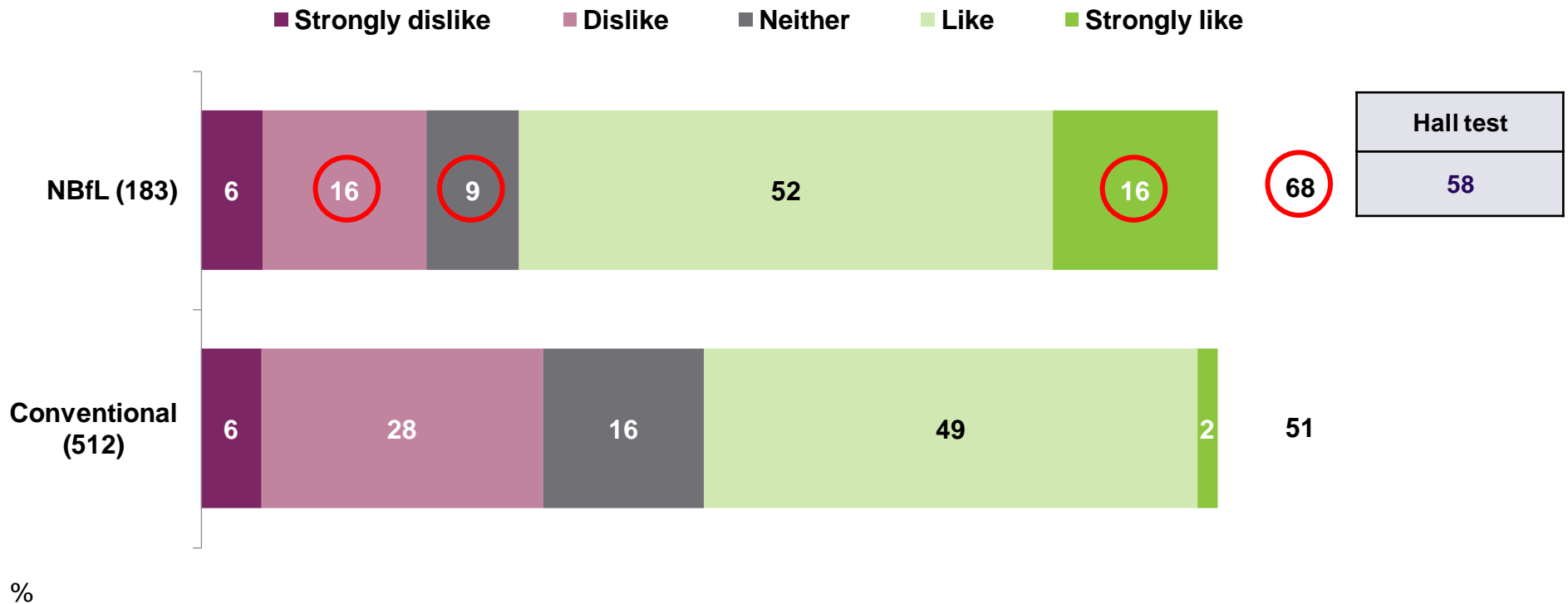
5b. What do you think about ... the fabric design?
Base 750

○ Indicates a statistically significant difference

Seating – design of seats facing each other

Customers on the NBfL are significantly more likely to like the design of seats facing each other than on the conventional bus – however there is resistance to this type of seating on both bus types

Design of seats facing each other



B5c. What do you think about ... the mix of forward facing and rear facing seats?
Base 750

○ Indicates a statistically significant difference

Seating – mix of forward/rear facing seats

Customers on the NBfL are more likely to think the mix of forward/rear facing seats is good than on the conventional bus – and they are less likely to rate the mix as bad

Mix of forward/rear facing seats

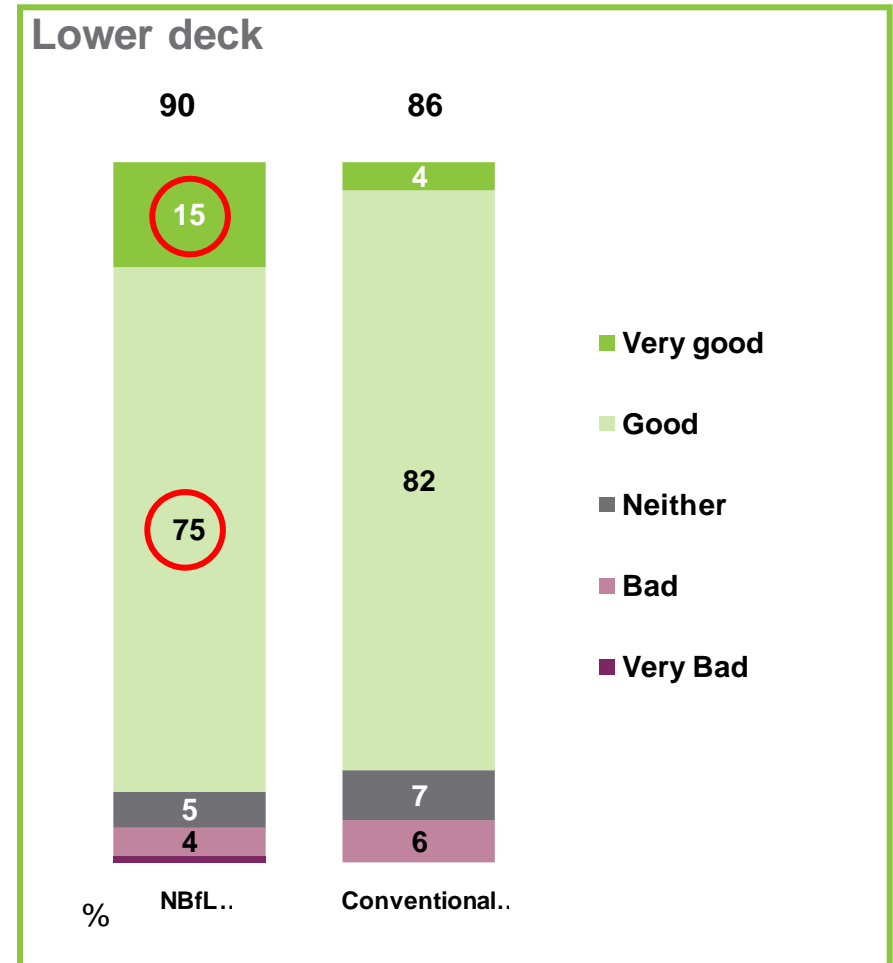
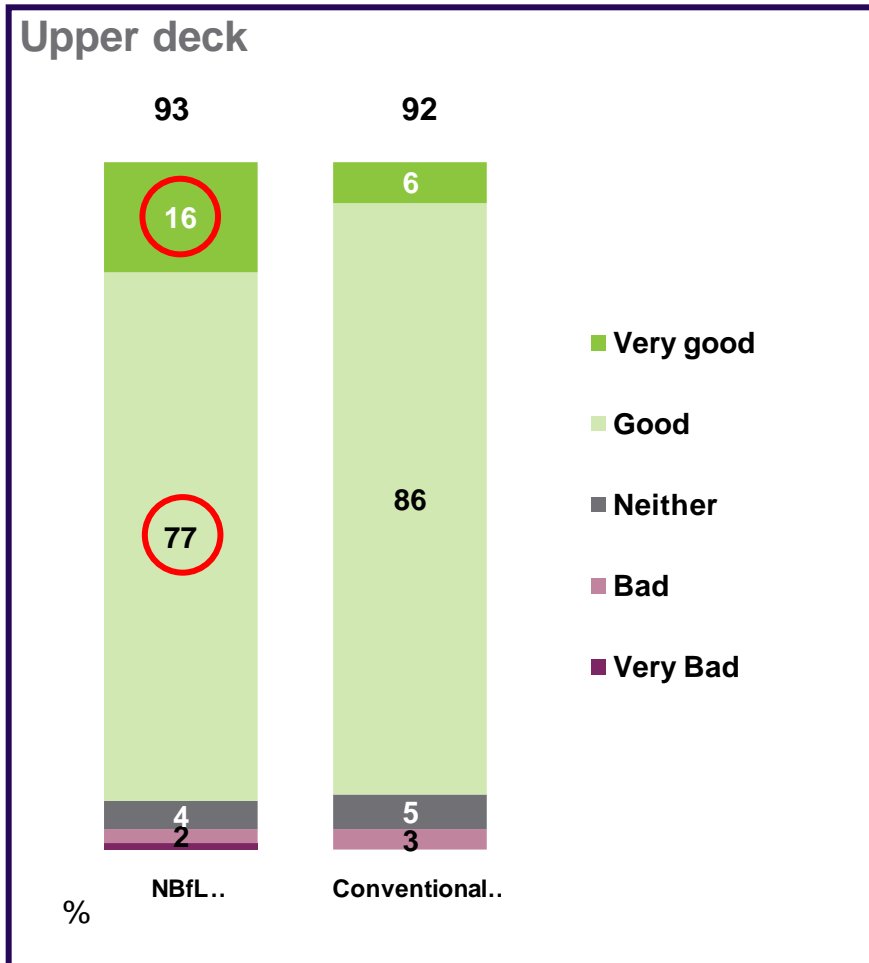


B6. Do you find the mix of forward and rear facing seats...?
Base: All (750)

○ Indicates a statistically significant difference

Spaciousness

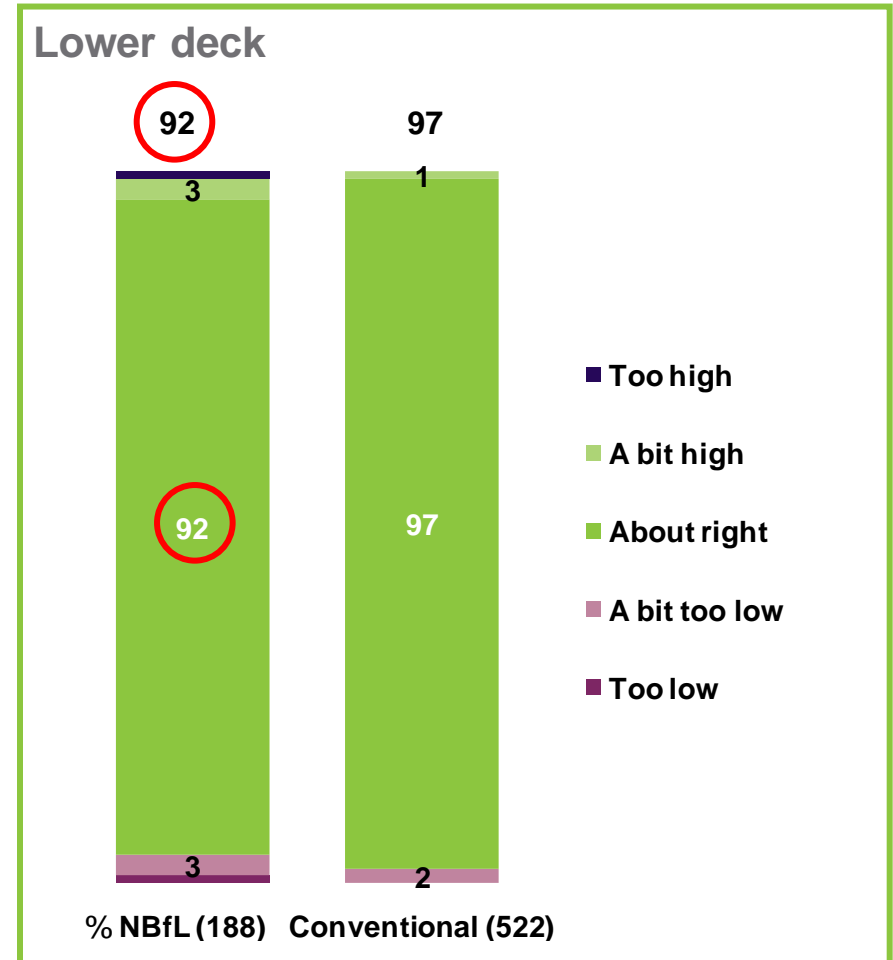
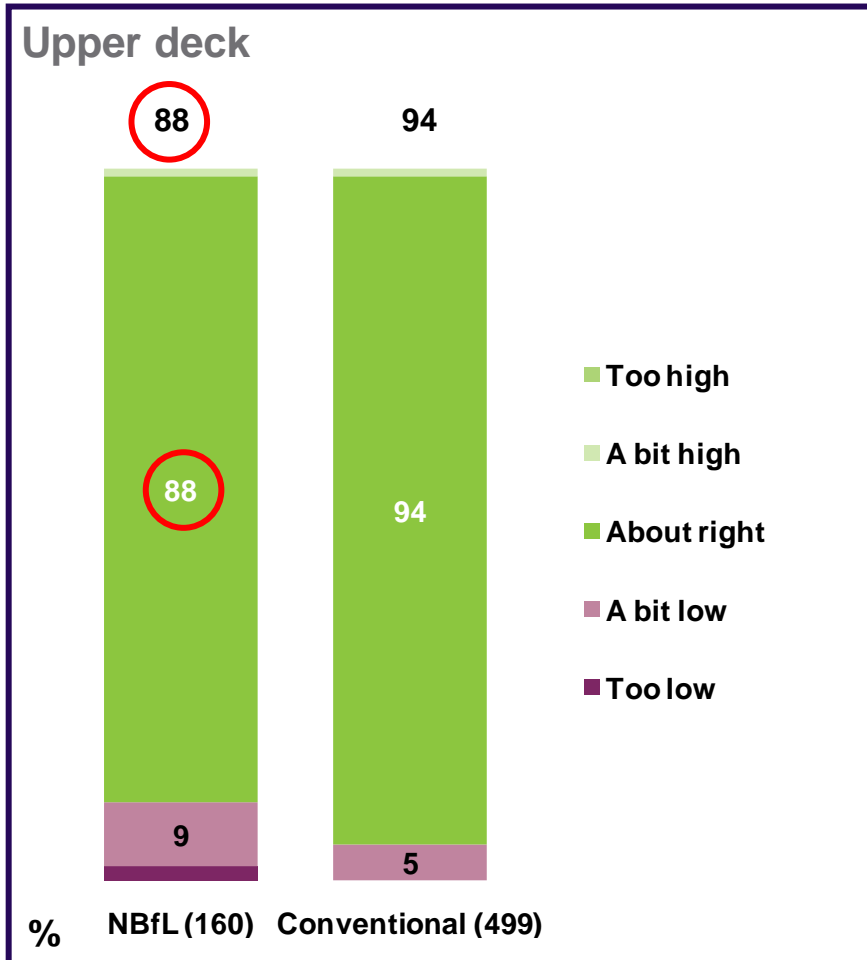
There are no statistical differences in terms of overall spaciousness between bus types, although customers on the NBfL are more likely to rate the spaciousness as 'very good'



G1 What do you think about the spaciousness on this bus, specifically...?
Bases shown

Ceiling height

Ceiling height on both upper and lower decks considered to be about right by the majority of customers – higher proportions on the conventional bus



G2. And what do you think about the ceiling height on the...?
Base. All (750)

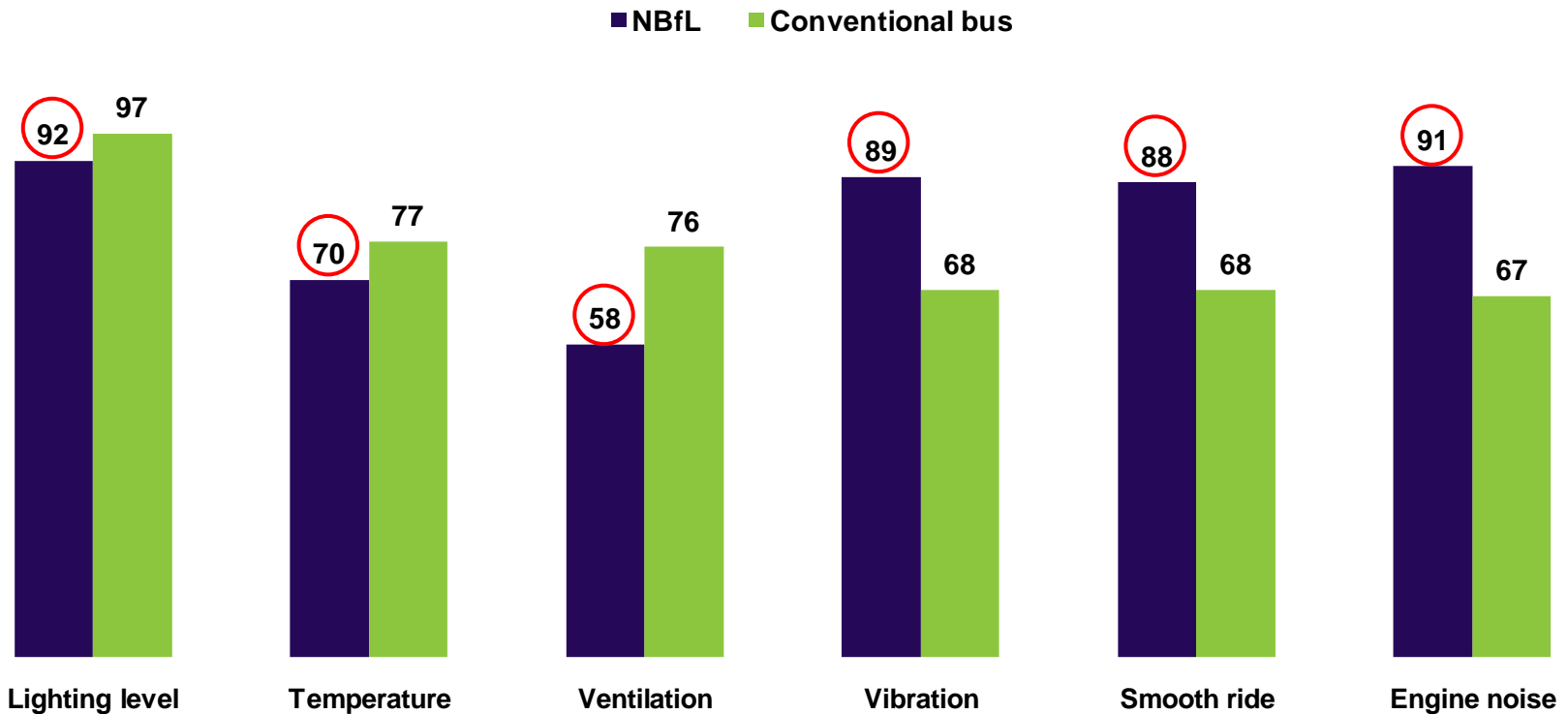
Ambience

Reporting notes

- During the fieldwork period, there were known issues with the air conditioning system on the NBfL which may have affected customer perceptions of temperature and ventilation
- During the fieldwork period, the NBfL was not running late at night, meaning that customer perceptions of the lighting levels were not based on after-dark experience

Heat and light; noise and vibration summary

The NBfL is generally considered better than the conventional bus except for lighting, temperature and ventilation



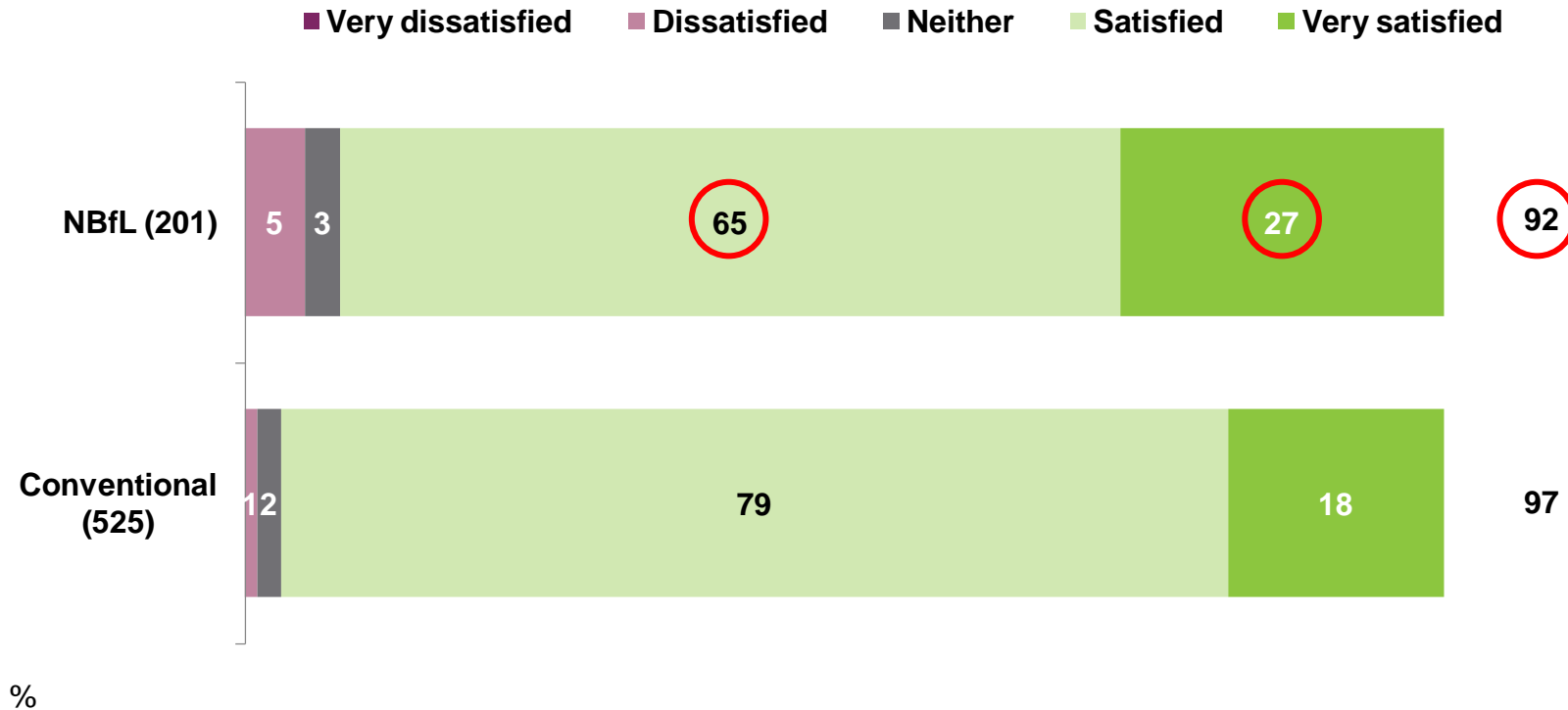
For all six measures, the NBfL receives significantly more top box ratings than the conventional bus

Lighting

Conventional bus rated more highly for lighting level

- Customers had not had much time to experience NBfL lighting after dark at the time of interviewing
- Both bus types receive high satisfaction ratings for lighting levels

Lighting level

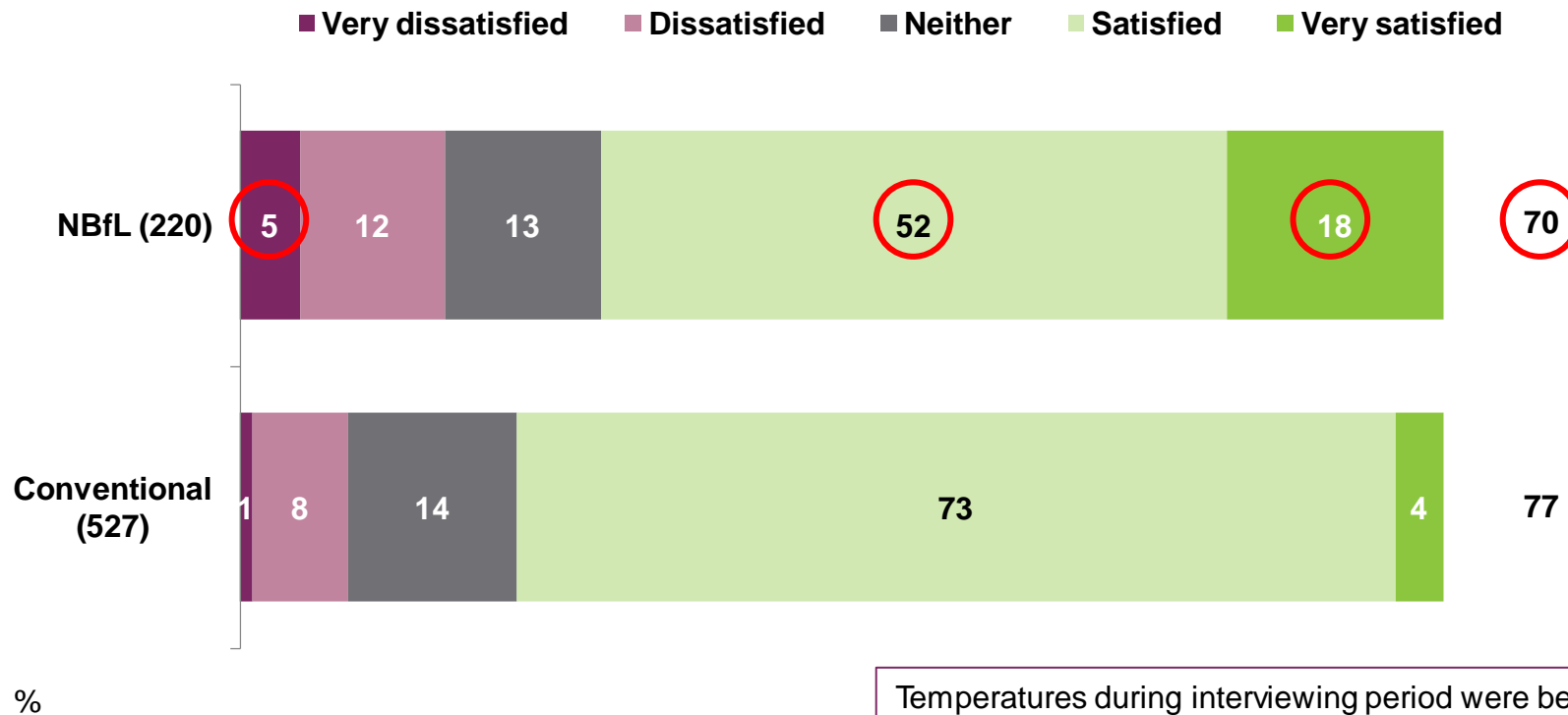


H1a. How satisfied are you with... the lighting levels on the bus?
Base: All (750)

Temperature

Temperature on the conventional bus was more highly rated than on the NBfL; however NBfL receives more top box ratings

Temperature

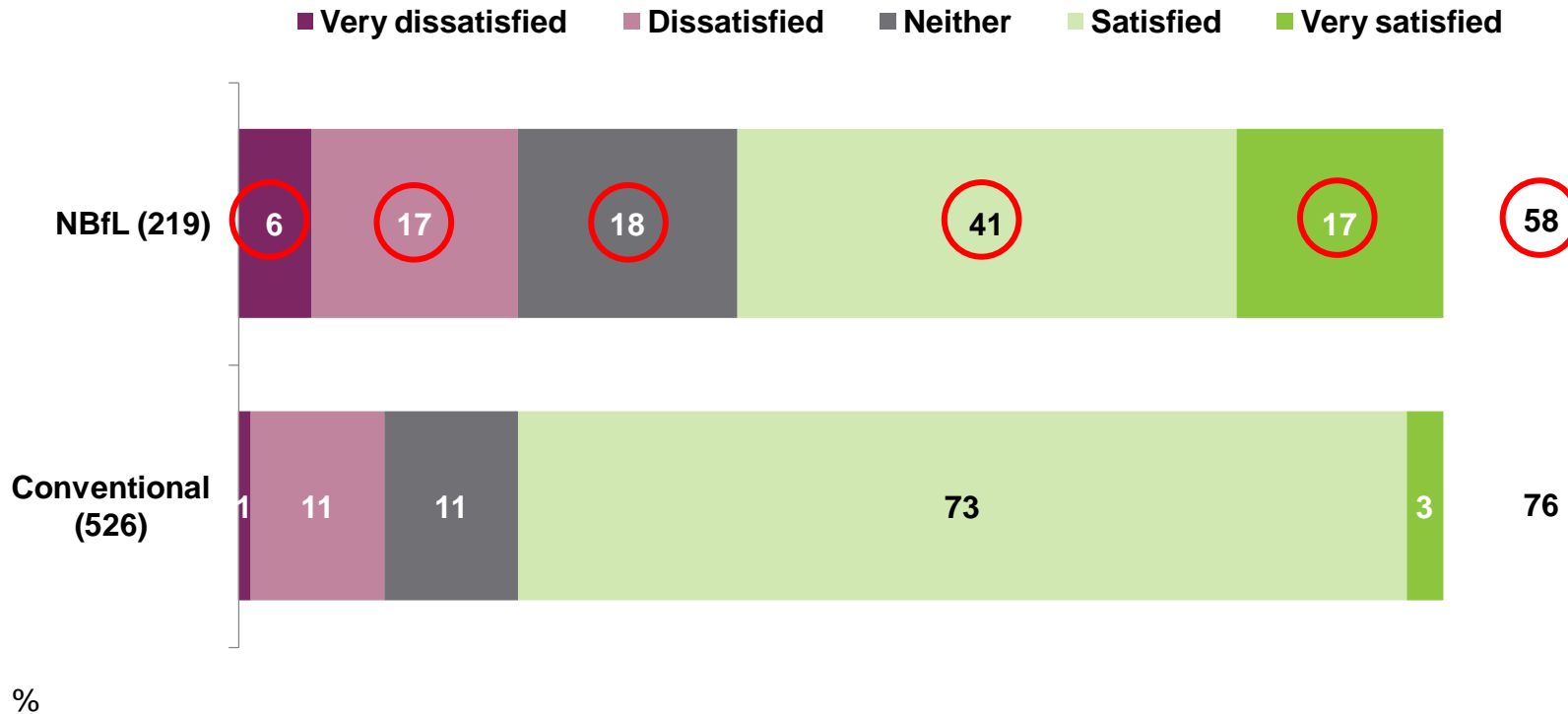


Temperatures during interviewing period were between 18C and 22C, with rain on around half of the interviewing days

Ventilation

A quarter of the NBfL customers are dissatisfied with the ventilation on board, twice as many as on the conventional bus

Ventilation

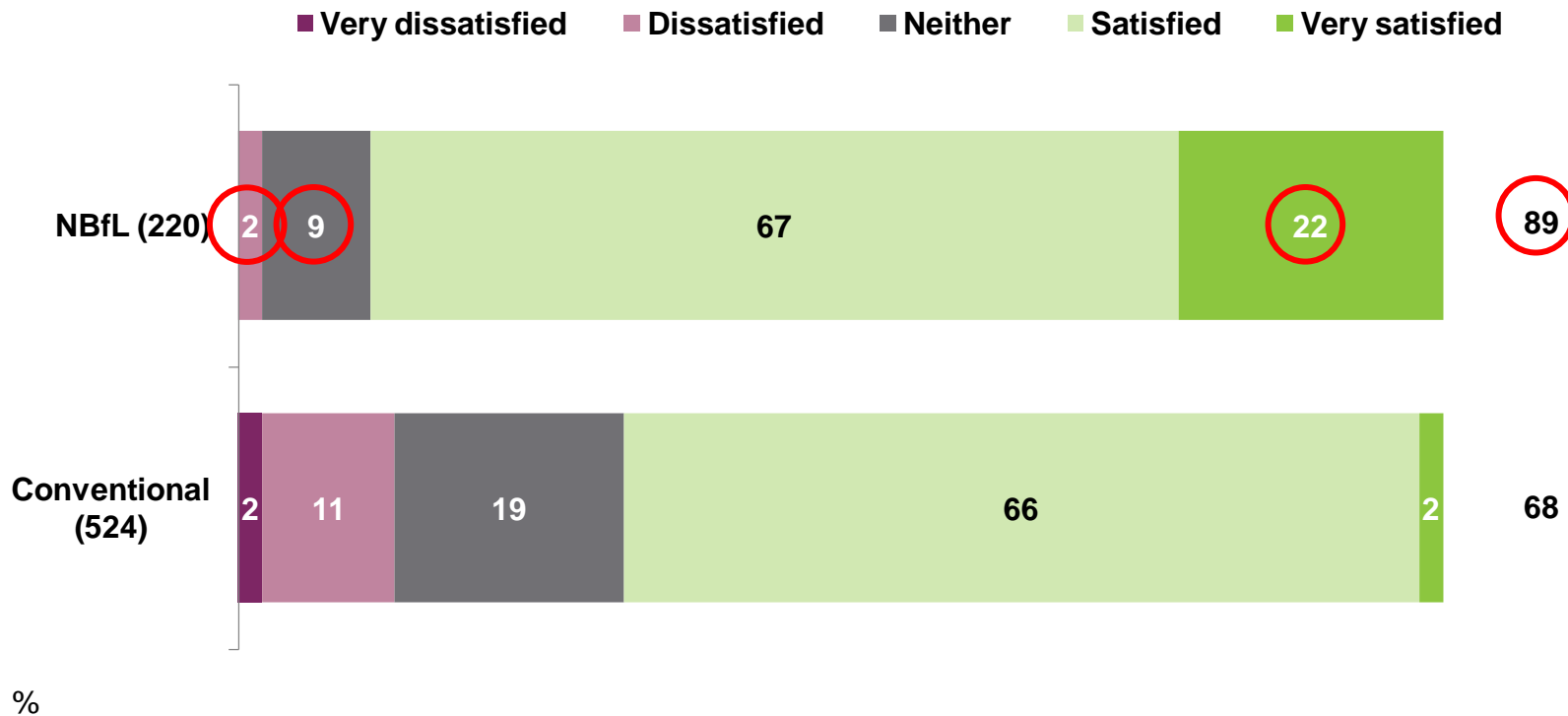


H1c. How satisfied are you with... the amount of ventilation?
Base: All (750)

Vibration

The NBfL performs better than the conventional bus in terms of customer perceptions of the amount of vibration

Vibration

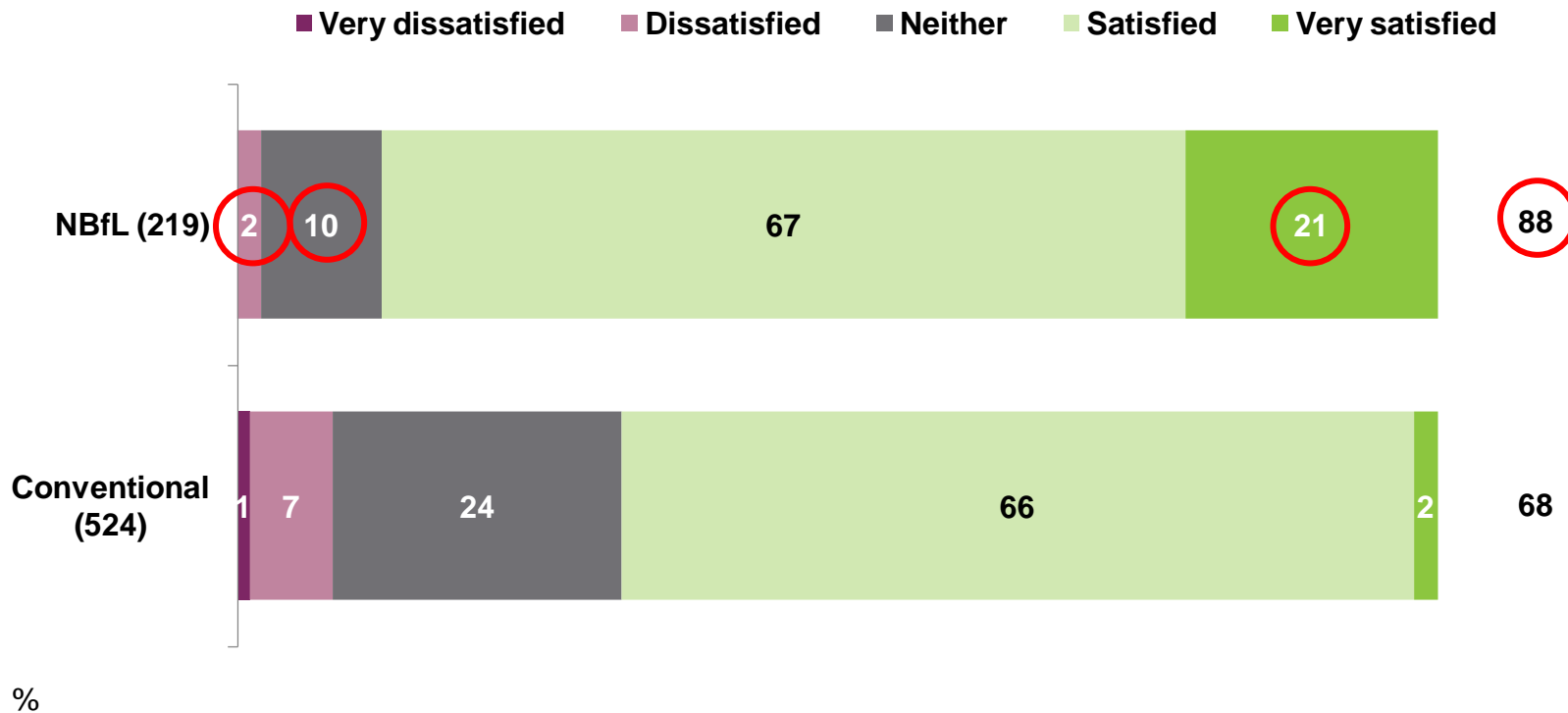


H1d. How satisfied are you with... the amount of vibration when the bus is moving?
Base 750

Smoothness of ride

Almost 90% of NBfL customers are satisfied with the smoothness of ride, compared with around a third of those on the conventional bus

Smoothness of ride



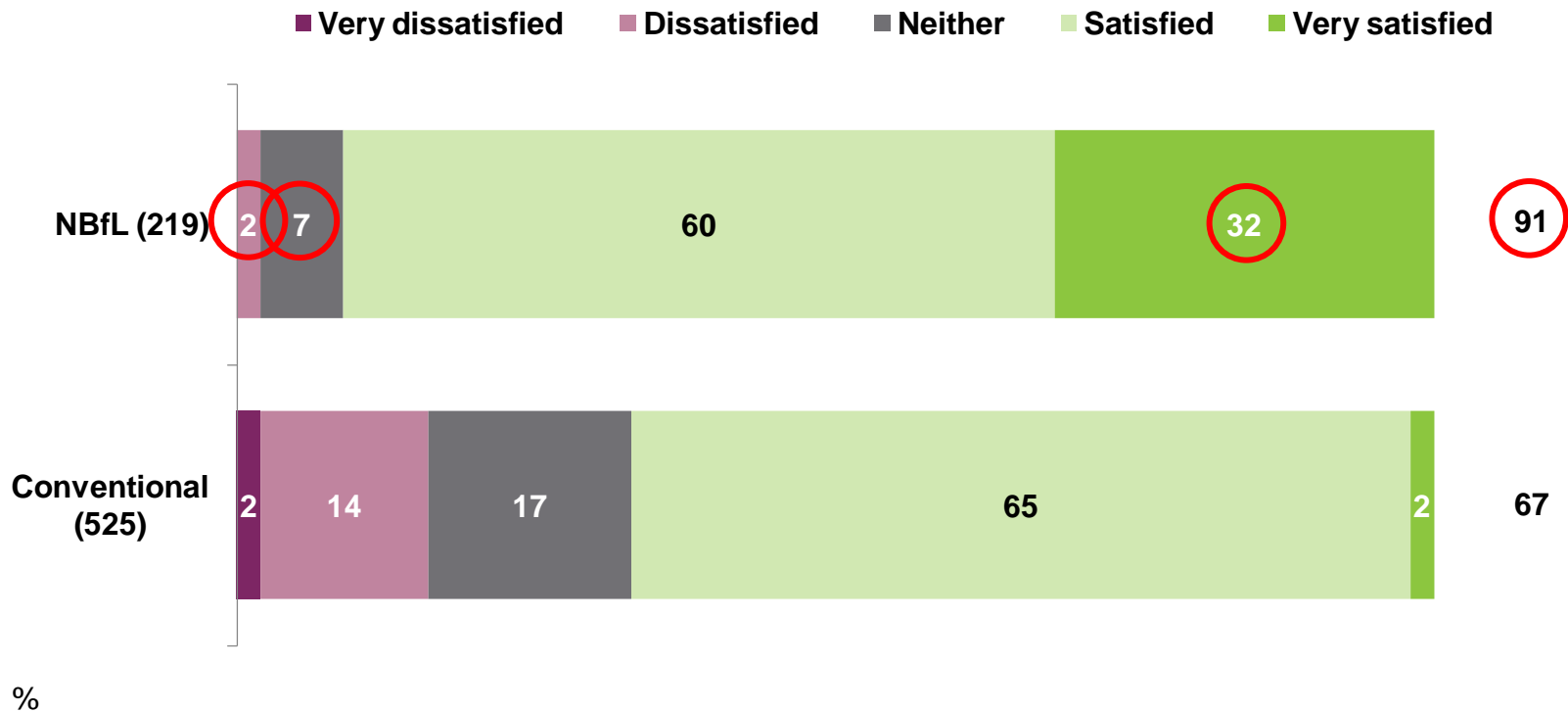
H1e. How satisfied are you with... the smoothness of the ride?

Base 750

Engine noise

On engine noise, as with smoothness of ride and vibration the NBfL performs better than the conventional bus

Engine noise

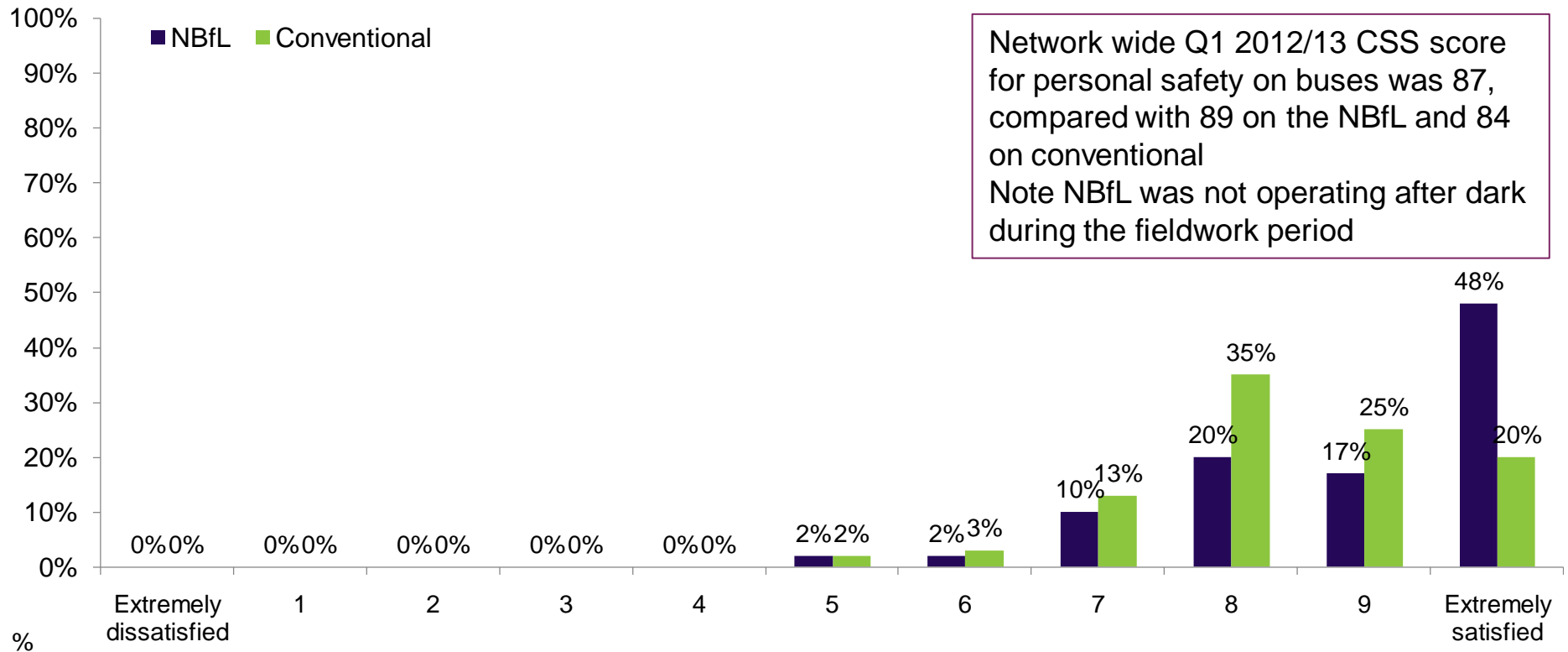


H1f. How satisfied are you with... the noise from the engine?
Base 750

Personal safety

Satisfaction with personal safety is very high on the NBfL, with very few customers giving a satisfaction rating of six or below

Satisfaction is level for customers travelling on the upper and lower decks, and for major demographic groups



G5. On a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is extremely dissatisfied, and 10 is extremely satisfied, how satisfied are you with your personal safety during this bus journey?

Base 221 / 529

Issues specific to NBfL

Wheelchair users

Findings taken from AMTS report 2012 prepared by GfK

Boarding and alighting

Most assessors were able to board and alight without any difficulties. There was one instance where the assessor experienced an issue with the ramp; it was deployed correctly, however it did not retract after use. The rear platform was seen to improve accessibility as it enabled other passengers to exit at the rear whilst the ramp was being used.

Wheelchair space

The wheelchair space was available most of the time, there were 4 occasions when the space was initially blocked, however they were able to get into the space after it was made available. The wheelchair space was felt to be suitable for their wheelchair, although it could be improved if there was space for a buggy as well. The handrails in the wheelchair area were positioned suitably, although the upright post could be positioned differently to allow more space.

Staff interaction

There was a conductor present on all buses and when the assessor was able to speak to a conductor they were rated as 'Excellent' or 'Good' for helpfulness, politeness and patience. The conductor was seen to play a positive role in making the bus accessible by assisting assessors with the ramp and ensuring they were able to alight at the required stop.

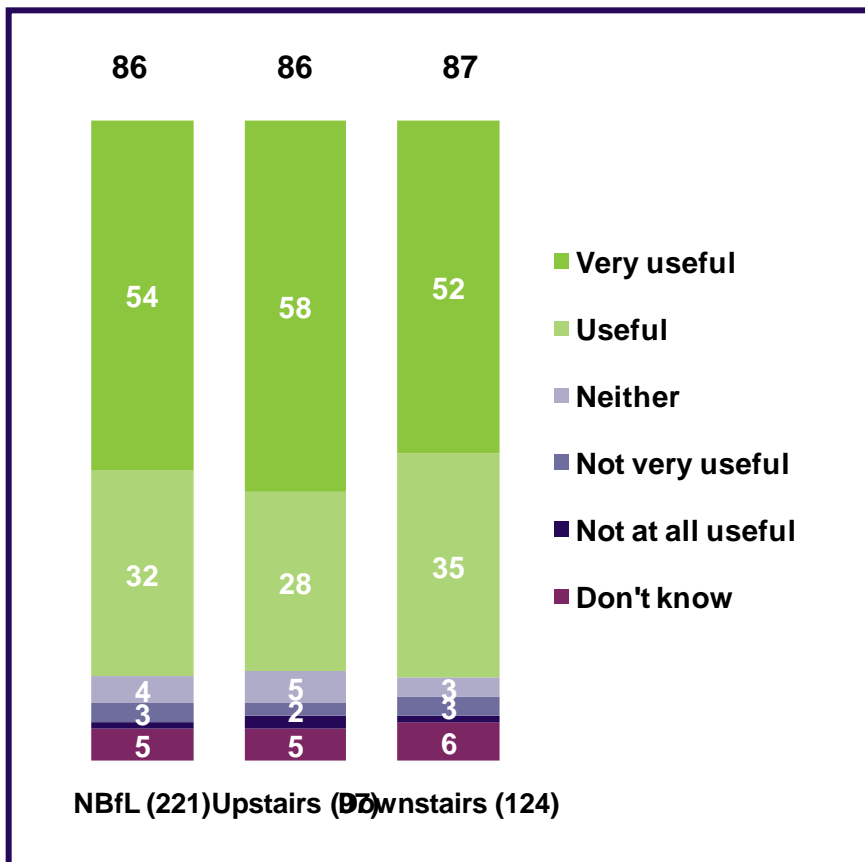
Information

Assessors reported that the location of the iBus display at the rear of the bus was an improvement compared to other buses.

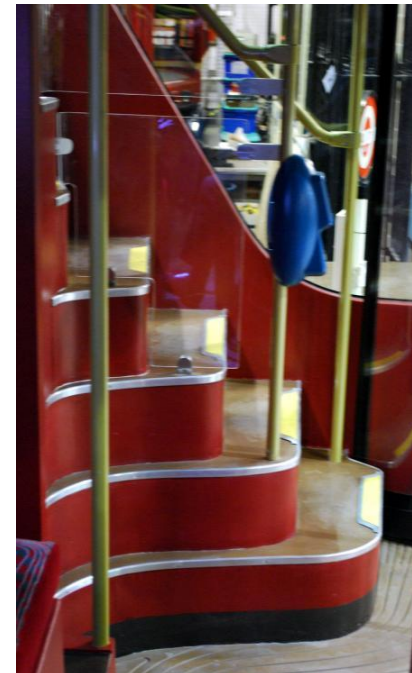
Two sets of stairs

NBfL users responded favourably to the two sets of stairs

The two sets of stairs are found to be useful by the overwhelming majority of NBfL customers – over half consider them very useful



→ Although those seated upstairs are slightly more likely to find two sets of stairs useful, this difference is NOT statistically significant

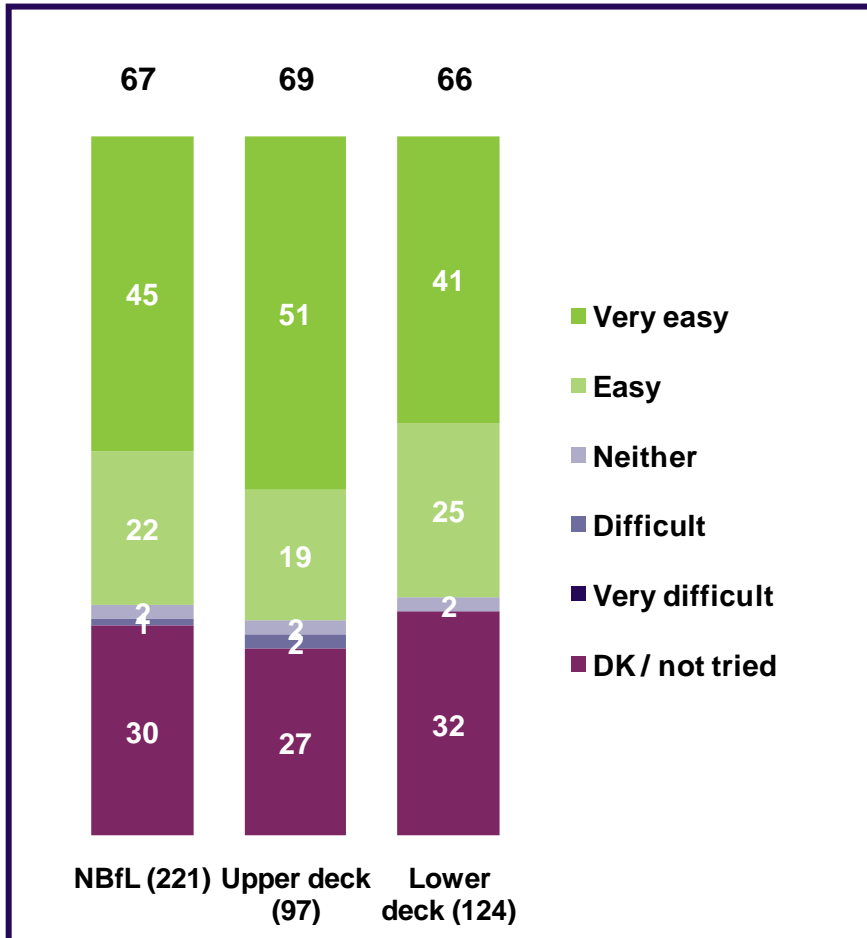


D1. How useful is it to have two sets of stairs on this bus?

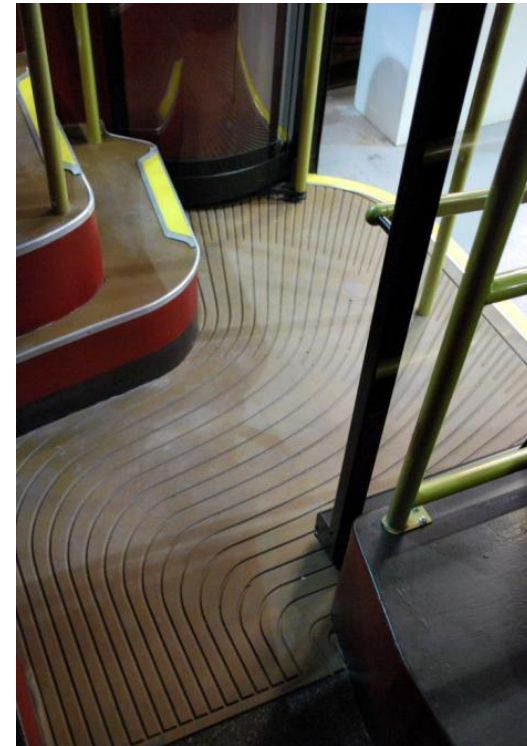
Base: NBfL passengers 221

Rear platform

Almost all those with experience of using the rear platform found it easy



→ Almost all customers that expressed a view felt that the rear platform was easy to use (96% after removing don't know responses)

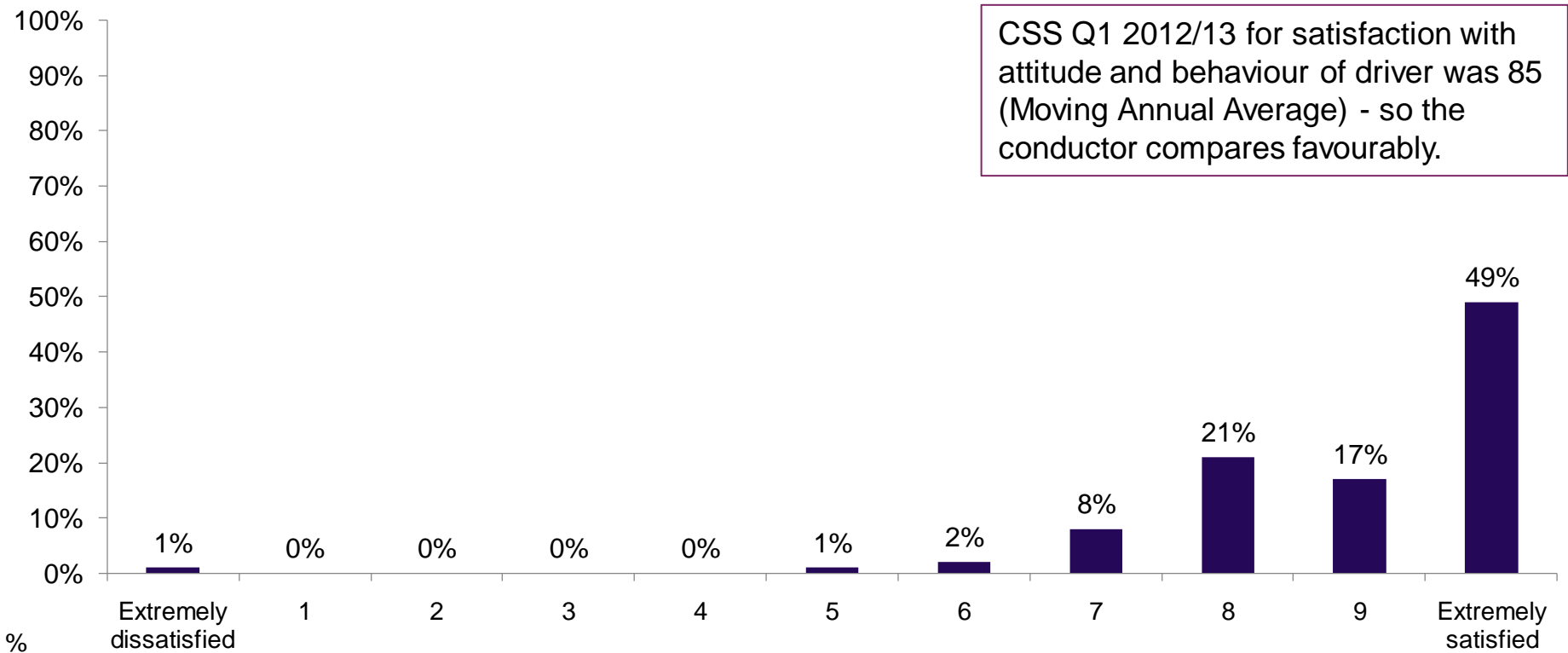


J3. How easy or difficult is it to use the rear platform?
Base: All (221)

Satisfaction with conductor

NBfL customers scored 89 for their satisfaction with conductors' behaviour towards them

Almost half are 'extremely satisfied'

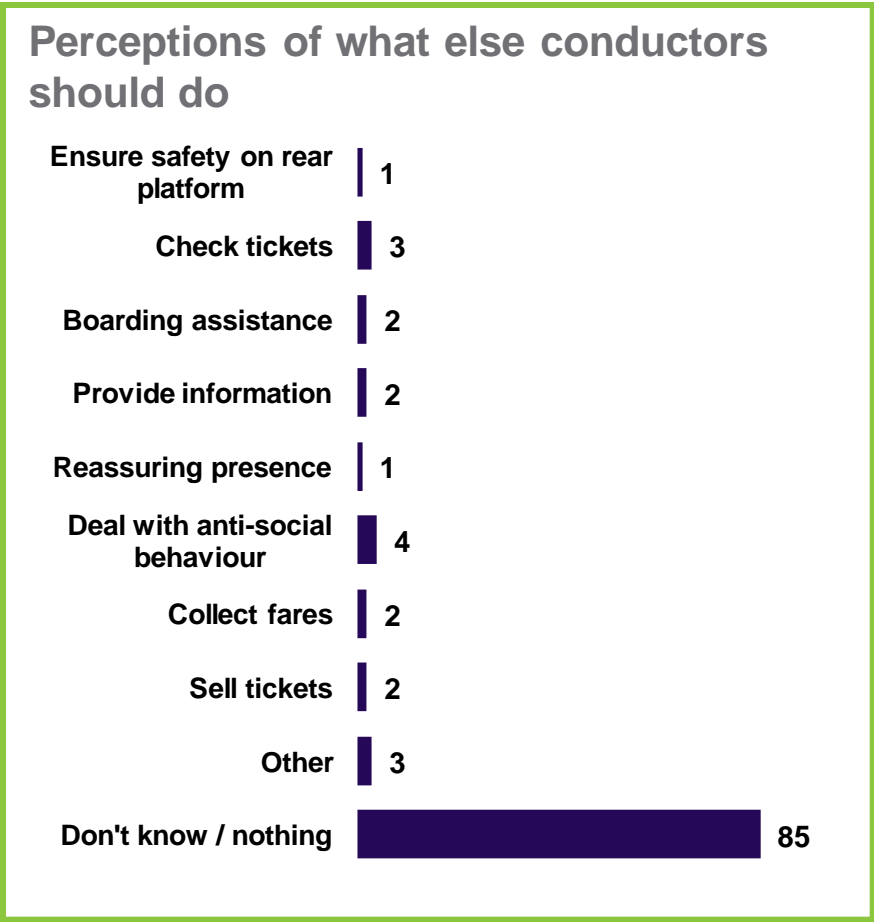
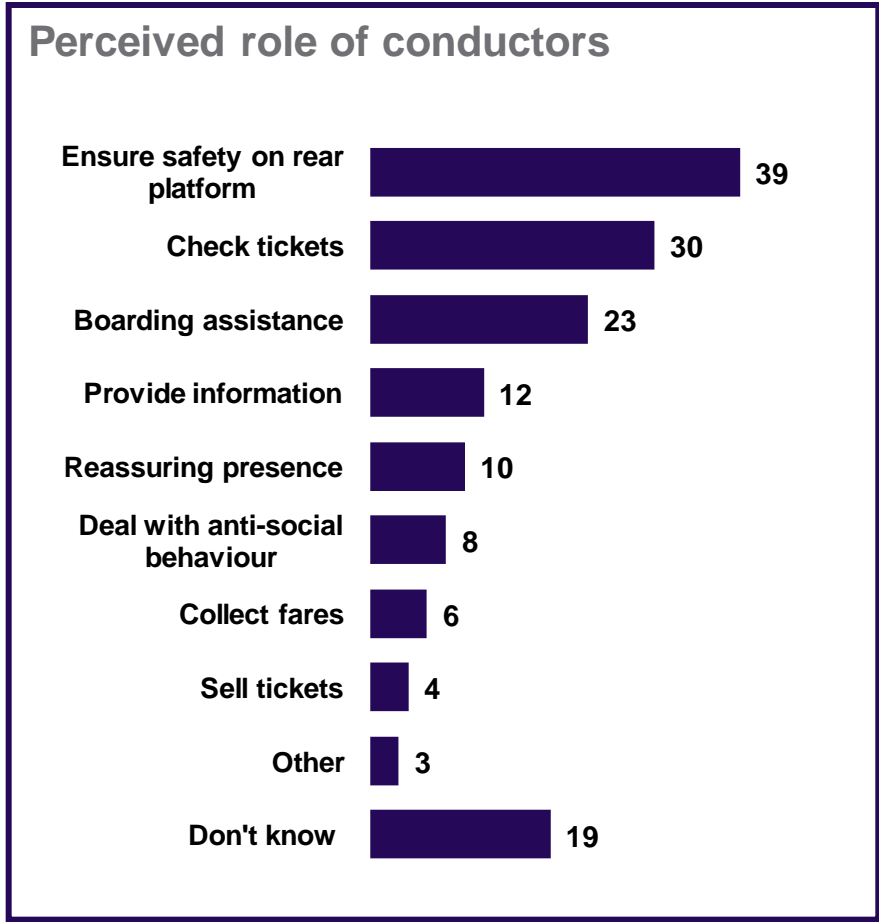


K2. On a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied, how satisfied are you with conductors' behaviour and attitudes to you?

Base 221

Perception of conductor's role

Most customers believe the conductor's role to be to ensure safety when using the rear platform and to provide boarding assistance. 30% think they are there to check tickets, but only a minority think they sell them. More could be done to improve customers' understanding about conductors' ability to provide information and to provide a reassuring presence

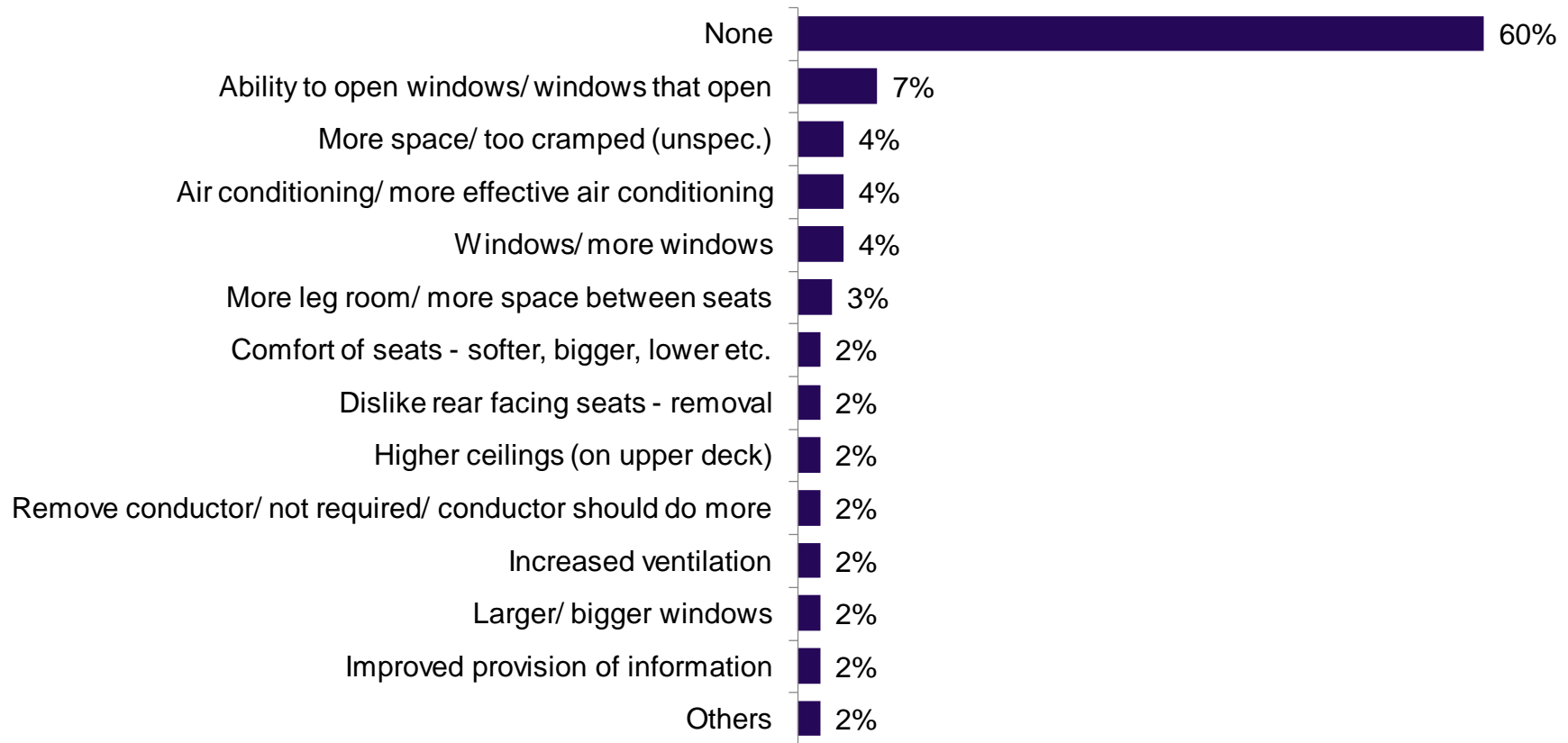


K1. What do you think the role of the conductor on this bus is? NBfL 221

K3. Is there anything else that the conductor is not doing that you think they should be doing?

Customer suggested improvements

Most customers could not suggest any improvements to the NBfL; of those that could, windows, temperature and space were the most commonly mentioned



L2. Do you think there are any improvements needed to the New Bus for London?

Base: all with experience of NBfL (420)

Respondent profile

Demographic profile

| | NBfL | Conventional | Bus user survey 2008* |
|----------------|-------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Male | 44% | 40% | 46% |
| Female | 56% | 60% | 54% |
| 16-24 yrs | 19% | 15% | 22% |
| 25-34 yrs | 30% | 34% | 28% |
| 35-44 yrs | 16% | 22% | 17% |
| 45-54 yrs | 16% | 17% | 11% |
| 55-64 yrs | 13% | 8% | 7% |
| 65-74 yrs | 5% | 3% | 6% |
| 75+ yrs | <0.5% | 2% | n/a |
| No disability | 96% | 95% | 91% |
| Any disability | 4% | 5% | 9% |

* Day figures quoted
 Age figures include under 16s (not shown)
 Figures for all bus users, not specifically Route 38

A20 .Gender All (750)

M1. Which of the following age bands do you fall into?

M2. Do you have a disability or long-term health condition?

Bus travel frequency

| | NBfL | Conventional | Oyster data |
|------------------------|-------|--------------|-------------|
| 5 or more days a week | 76% | 66% | 51% |
| 3-4 days a week | 11% | 14% | 25% |
| 2 days a week | 8% | 10% | 10% |
| Once a week | 1% | 4% | 8% |
| Once fortnight | <0.5% | 2% | 4% |
| Once a month | 1% | 2% | 1% |
| Less than once a month | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| This is the first time | 1% | <0.5% | n/a |

M3. Typically, how often do you use London buses to travel round London?

Base: All (750)

Bus journey purpose

| | NbFL | Conventional | Bus user survey 2008* |
|---|-------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Commuting to/from work | 71% | 71% | 49% |
| Leisure | 11% | 12% | 7% |
| Shopping | 5% | 2% | 12% |
| Visiting friends / relatives | 2% | 4% | 9% |
| Tourism | 1% | <0.5% | 1% |
| Going to/from school/college/university | 7% | 5% | 14% |
| Personal business | 2% | 5% | 2% |
| Other | <0.5% | 1% | 7% |

* Day figures quoted
 Figures for all bus users, not specifically Route 38

M4. And finally, when do you use London buses, what type of journey are you most commonly making?
 Base. All (750)