



**Federation of Small Businesses**  
*The UK's Leading Business Organisation*



**FSB National Panel**

**February 2011 results**

**Prepared by Research by Design**

## Executive summary –

### Transport

- For over 70% of members, the use of a car is crucial to their business' operation.
- Nine in ten are negatively impacted by rising fuel costs, while 60% state that traffic congestion and the state of repair of the UK's roads affect their business.
- Just over half of members would be encouraged to use public transport. Lower fares would persuade two in five, while around a third suggest an increase in routes, improved reliability and improved car parking facilities would encourage them.
- Seven in ten identify investment in road infrastructure as an important future transport priority for the UK Government, with almost half arguing it is the most important priority.
- Three in ten claim that problems with the UK's transport infrastructure have cost their business over £2,500 in the last 12 months.
- Around a half of members claim they have or will be negatively impacted by recent rail fare rises.
- Six in ten claim to have no choice but to use a car for business purposes.
- Around four in ten identify electricity and hydrogen as viable alternatives for powering vehicles in 5-10 years.

## Executive summary –

### Broadband

- The majority of members access the internet via a broadband connection.
- Six in ten agree that the Government should put an obligation on one service provider to provide 2Mbps broadband to all parts of the UK.
- The vast majority agree that competition between internet providers is crucial to driving the expansion of the UK's broadband infrastructure.
- While a fifth of members already use a mobile broadband connection, a further 28% would if it were available in their area.
- Members are split over the ease of interaction with online Government services, 38% claim they are easy, 29% difficult. Amongst those encountering difficulties, members say websites are poorly laid out and instructions are poor or difficult to comprehend.

### Utilities

- The majority of FSB members do not support an increase in energy bills to subsidise an investment in nuclear power.
- The rising cost of energy is the biggest 'energy concern' to members.
- Eight in ten would support the abolition of 'roll over' energy contracts for businesses.
- Under half are aware of the forthcoming roll out of smart metering.
- Reliability and accuracy, compatibility of technology and understanding how to use the information are the greatest 'smart metering concerns' for members.
- Four in ten members are concerned by high water charges.

## Executive summary

### Planning

- 11% of members have applied or are currently applying for planning permission for their businesses. A change of use, a new build or an extension are the most popular types of application.
- Amongst those applying, around half have encountered an overly complex and overly protracted process.
- Around one in ten have been adversely affected by planning consent for another business development in their area.

### Scotland

- 85% of members currently use mobile phones for business purposes, as do 36% of their staff.
- Amongst users, 50% often encounter a lack of mobile phone signal.
- A loss of mobile signal impacts on businesses with a third rating the impact as significant.

### Northern Ireland

- Six in ten members are satisfied with their current internet provision, 26% are dissatisfied. Amongst those dissatisfied, speed of connection is a concern for almost 90%.
- Almost six in ten have changed or considered changing internet provider in the last 12 months.
- Around four in ten members have sought advice or training to help utilise the internet more effectively.
- A third argue Northern Ireland Water should be returned to the public sector; a quarter favour privatisation.

## Methodology

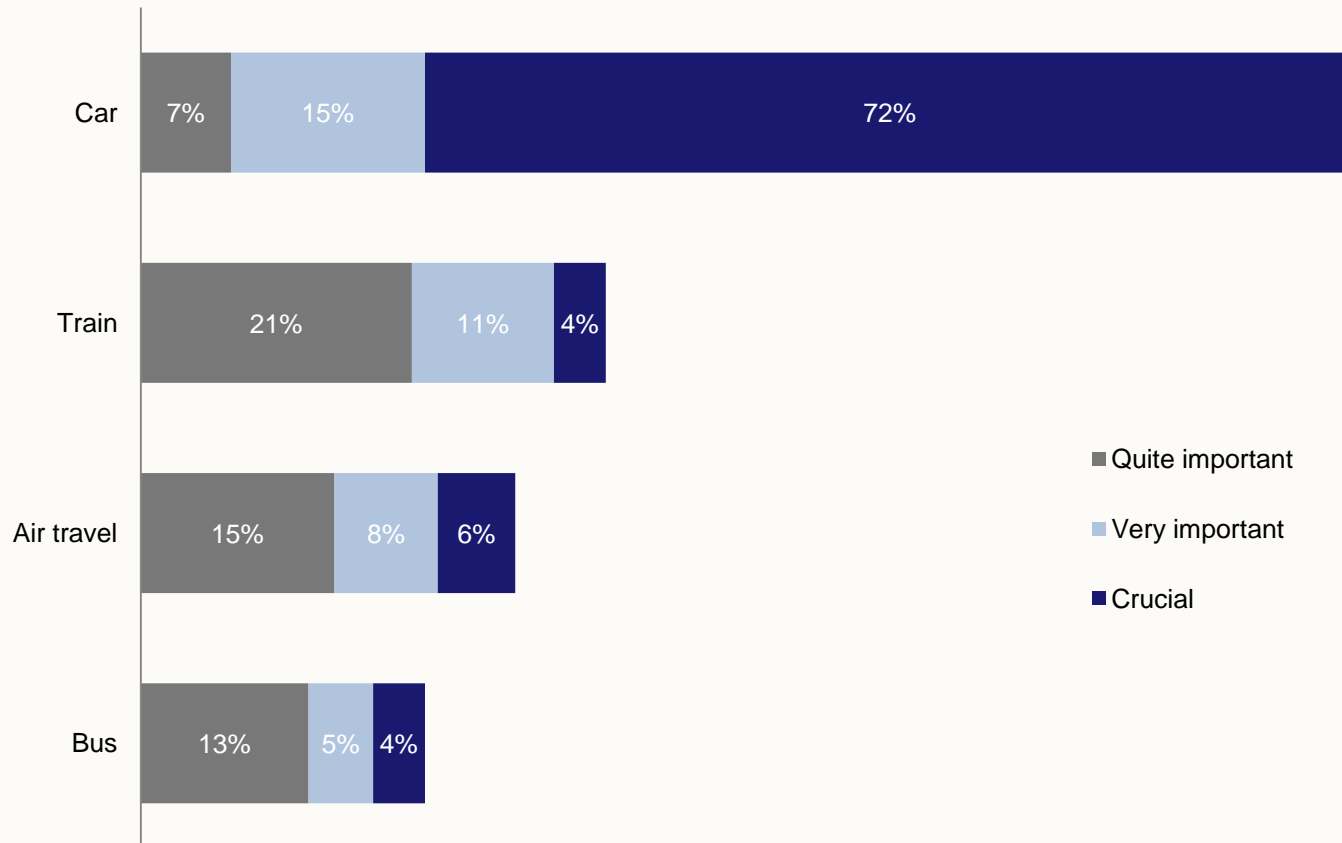
- Research findings are based on a survey made available to the FSB 'Voice of Small Business' Panel during February 2011.
- All panel members (4,296) were invited to take part in an online survey designed and hosted by Research by Design.
- Fieldwork took place between Monday 7th February and Friday 18th February 2011.
- Two reminder emails were sent to non respondents.
- 1,739 responses were received; a 40% response rate.
- Data has been weighted to the membership profile.

# Transport



**Q1. How important are each of the following methods of transport to your business' operation? Base: 1519-1717**

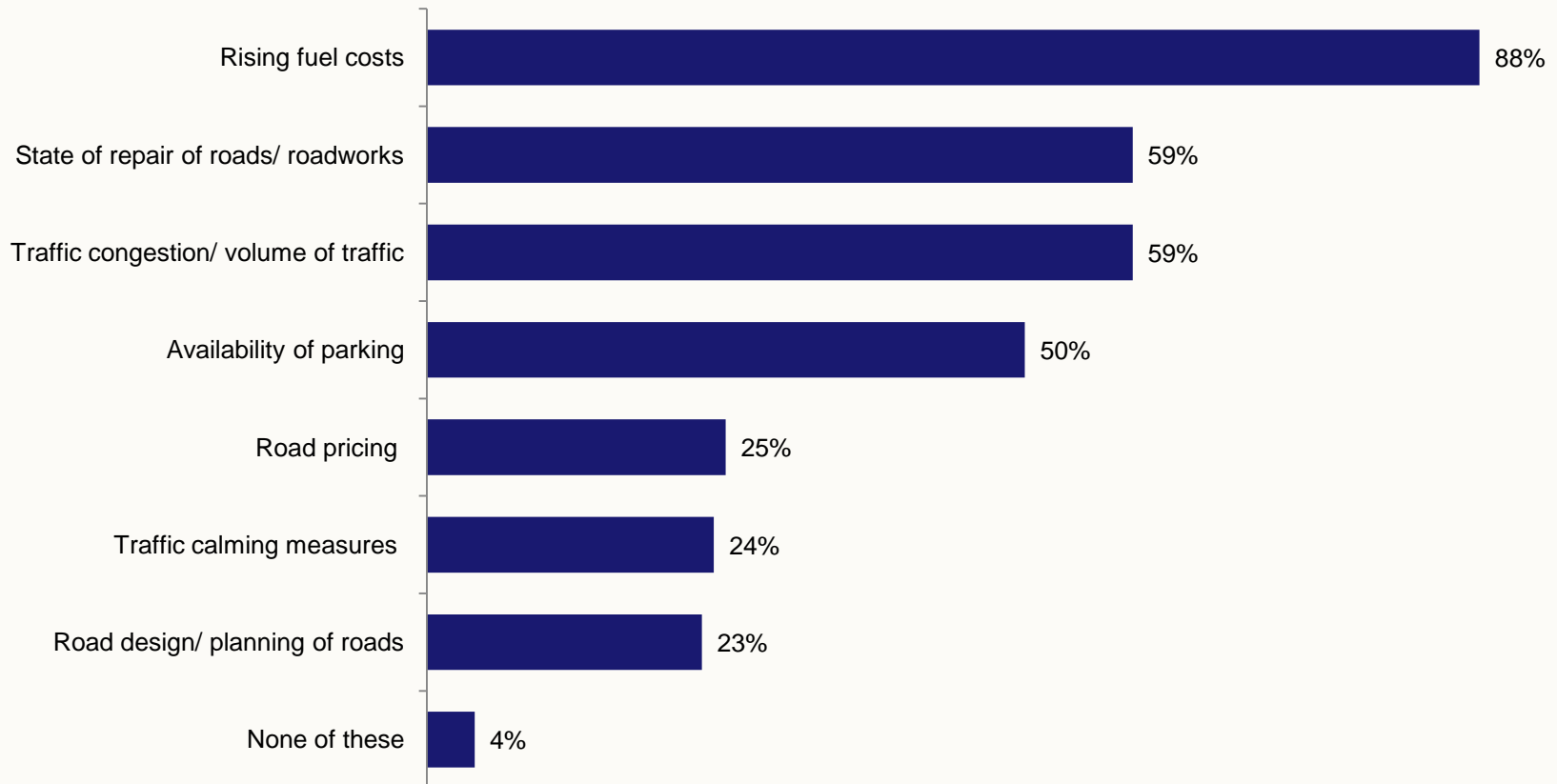
Importance of transport methods to business



**For the vast majority of members, the use of a car is crucial to their business' operation.**

**Q2. Thinking about your use of the UK's road infrastructure, which of the following, if any, negatively impact on your business? Base: 1736**

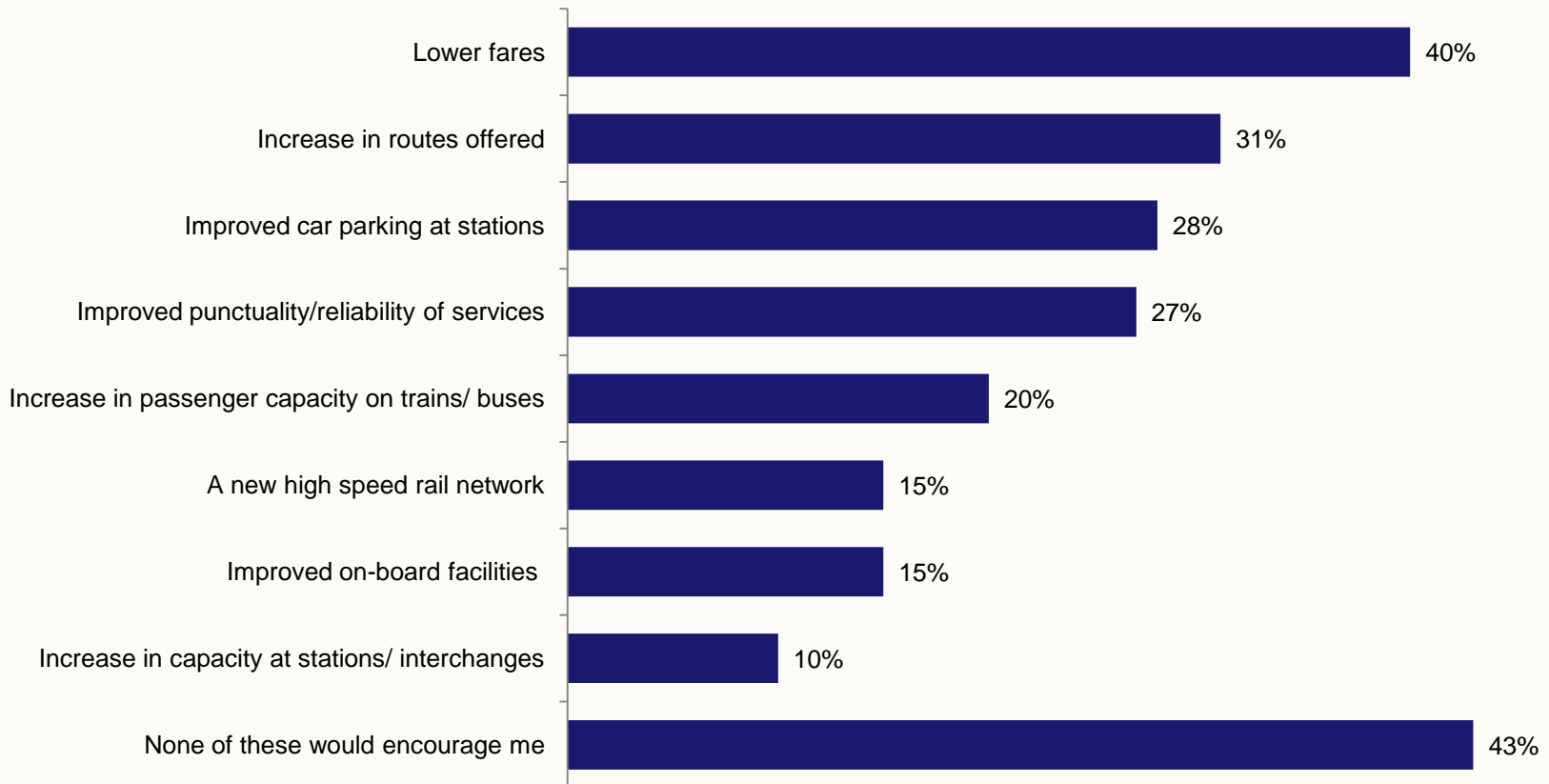
### Impact on business



**Nine in ten members are negatively impacted by rising fuel costs, while around 60% state that traffic congestion and the state of repair of the UK's roads affect their business.**

**Q3. Which of the following initiatives would be likely to encourage you to use the public transport network more?  
Base: 1732**

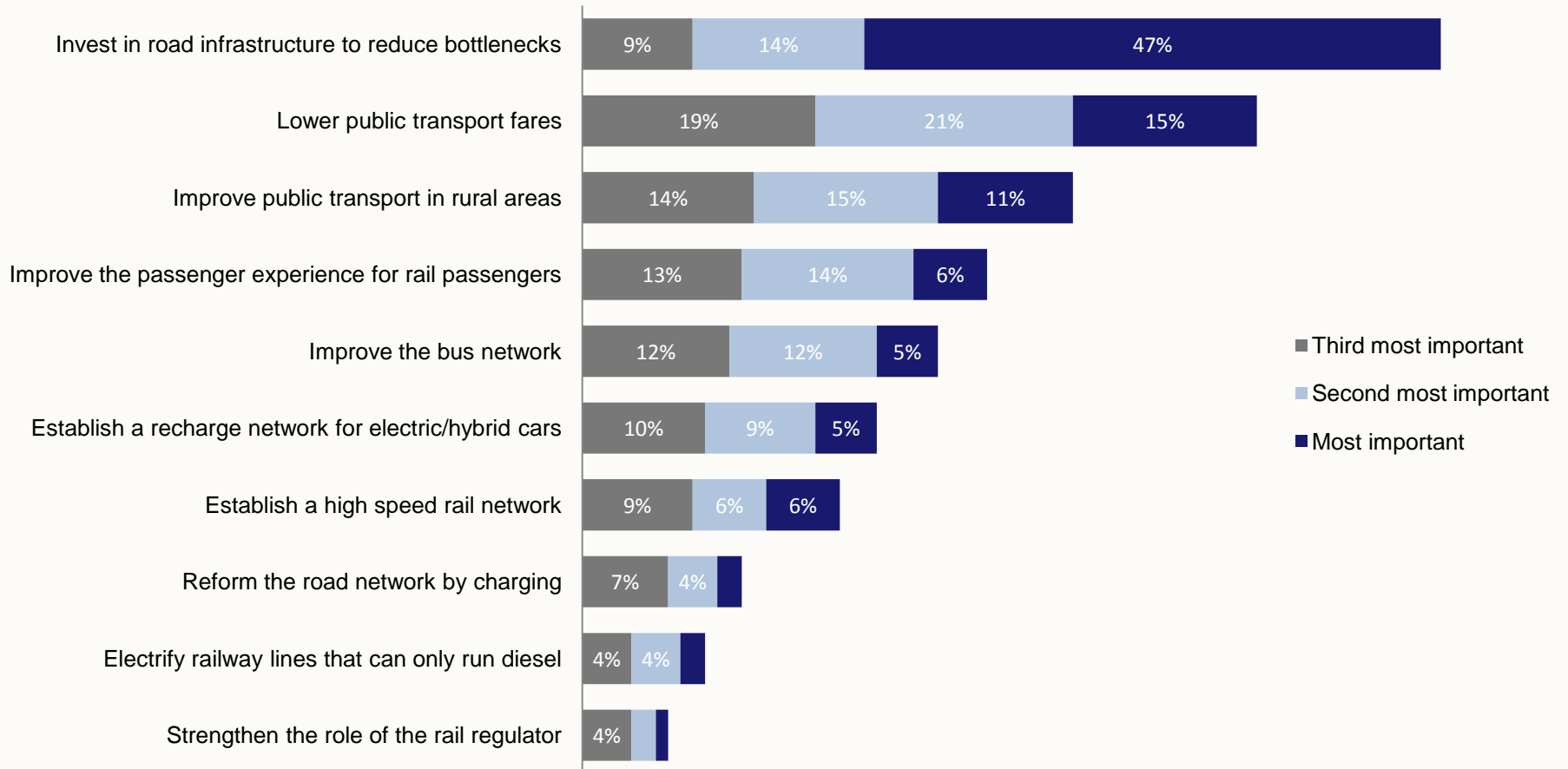
Initiatives to encourage use of public transport



**Just over half of members would be encouraged to use public transport by the introduction of initiatives. Lower fares would encourage two in five, while around a third highlight an increase in routes, improved reliability and improved car parking facilities.**

**Q4. Thinking about the UK Government's future transport priorities, which are the three most important? Base: 108-1172**

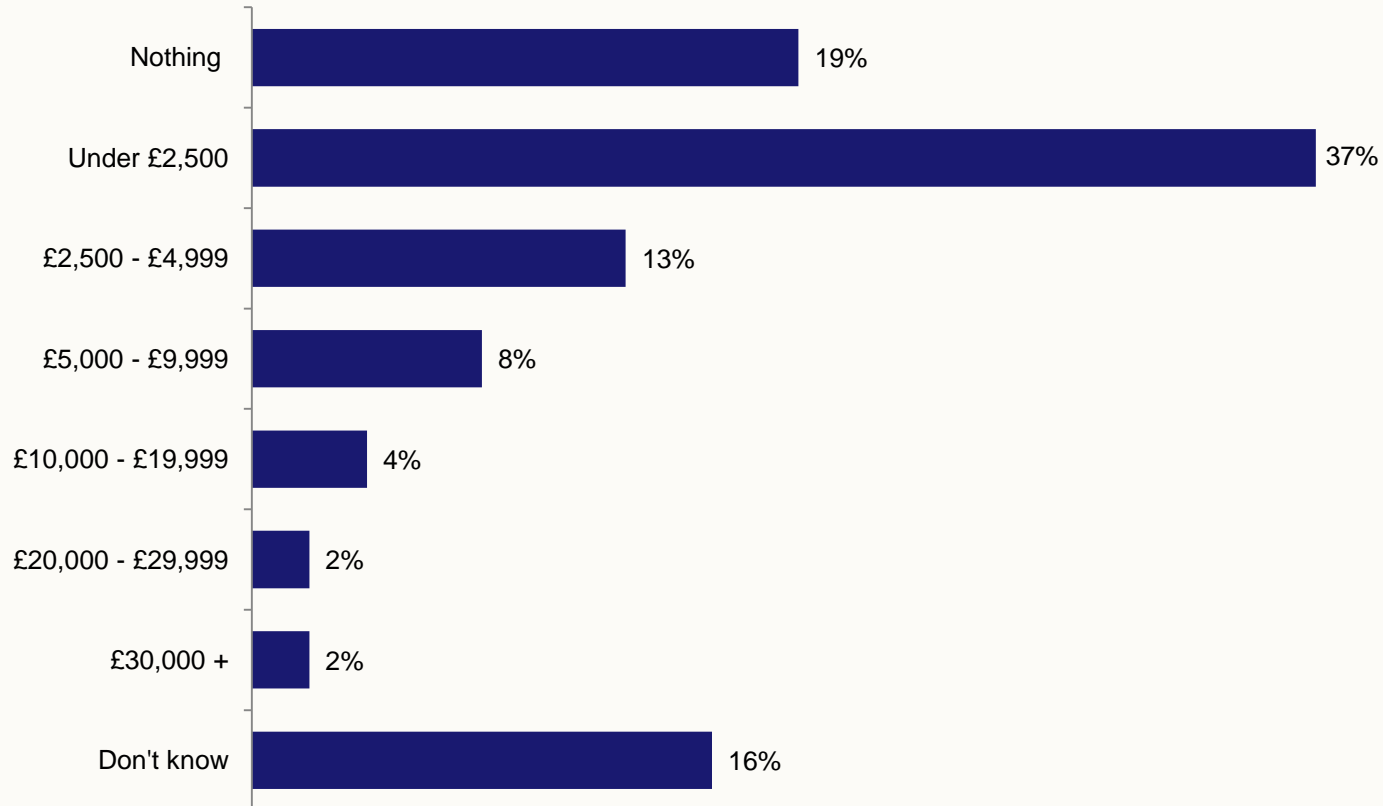
**UK Government's future transport priorities**



**Seven in ten members identify investment in road infrastructure as an important future transport priority for the UK Government, with almost half arguing it is the most important priority. Just over half highlight lower public transport fares and 40% improving public transport in rural areas.**

**Q5. Approximately, how much have problems with the UK's transport infrastructure cost your business in the past 12 months? Base: 1727**

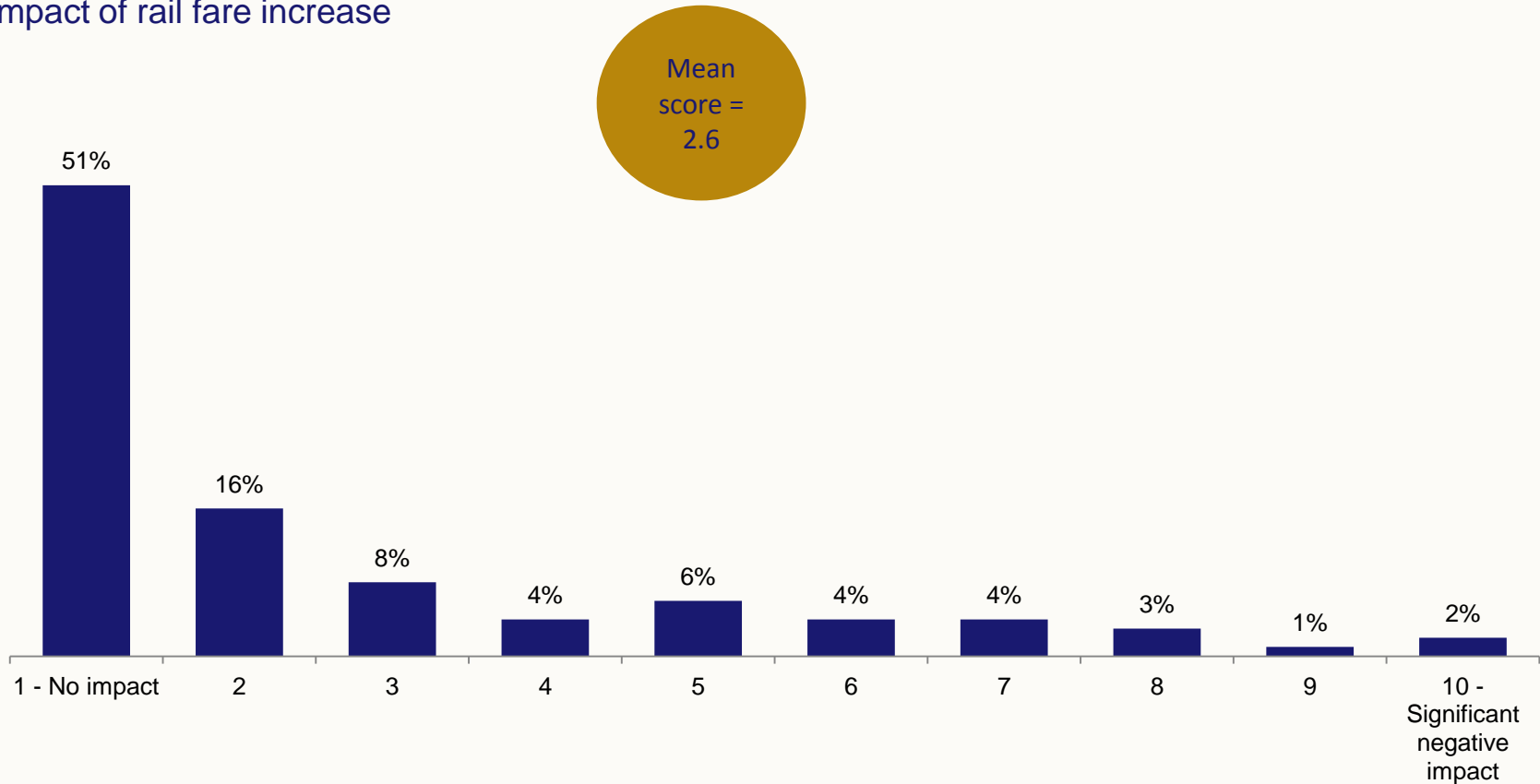
Cost to business



**Three in ten members state that problems with the UK's transport infrastructure have cost their business over £2,500 in the last 12 months. Around four in ten claim these problems have cost up to £2,500.**

**Q6. In January 2011, rail fares rose by an average of 6.2%, with some fares rising by as much as 10.8%. How have, or will, these rises impact on your business overall, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is no impact and 10 is significant negative impact? Base: 1711**

### Impact of rail fare increase



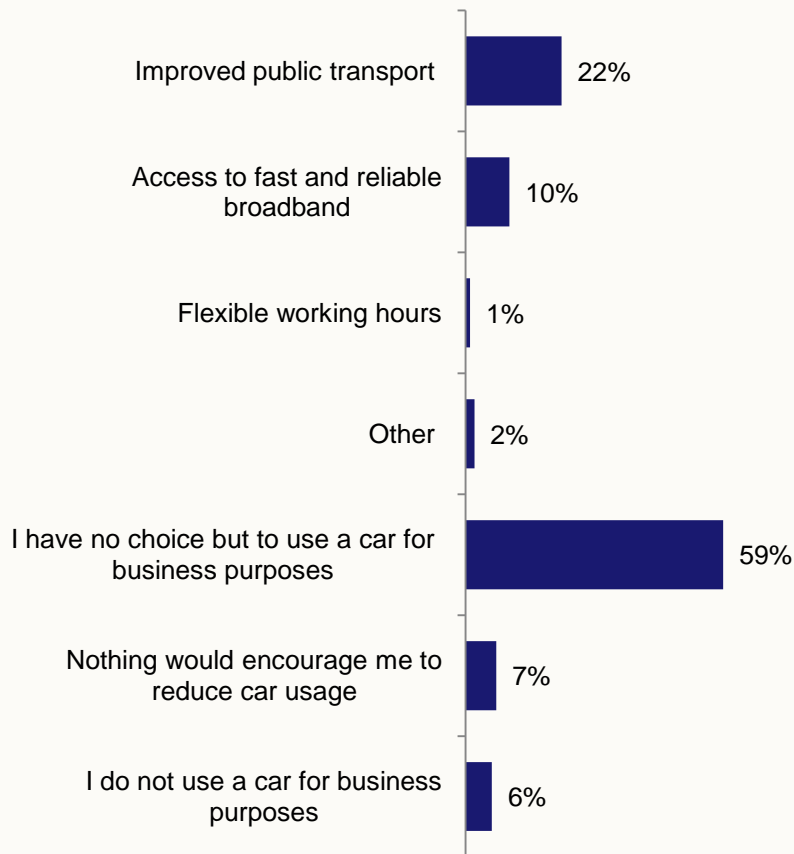
**Around a half of members claim they have or will be negatively impacted by recent rail fare rises; 9% believe this will significantly impact their business (giving a score of 7-10).**

**Q7. Which of the following initiatives, if any, would enable you to reduce your use of a car for business purposes?**

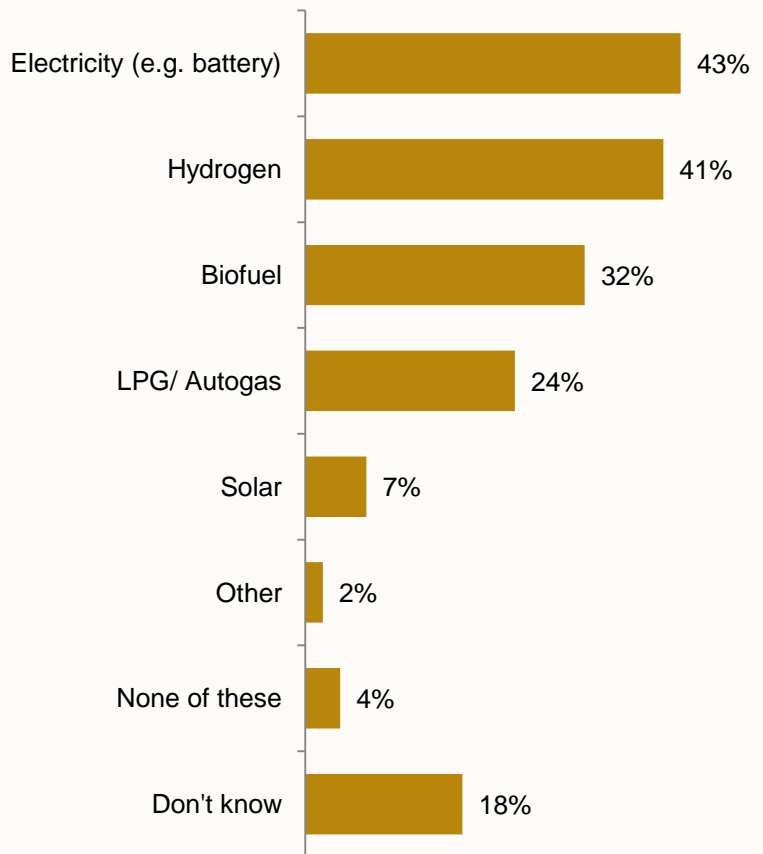
Base: 1731

**Q8. Which of these fuels do you think will be viable alternatives for powering vehicles in 5-10 years time? Base: 1734**

### Initiatives enabling reduced car usage



### Viable fuel alternatives



**Six in ten members claim to have no choice but to use a car for business purposes.**

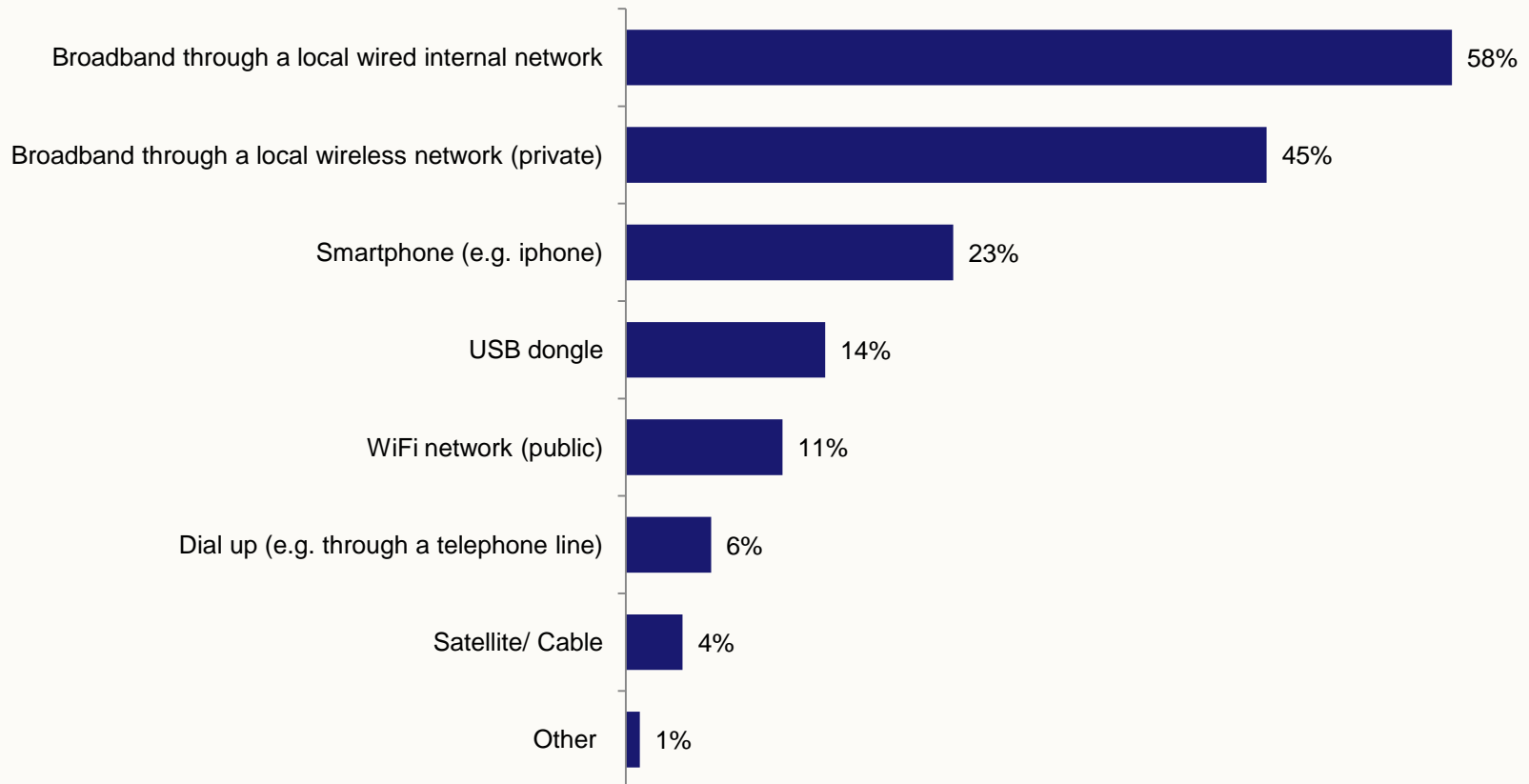
**A third or more identify electricity, hydrogen and biofuel as viable alternatives for powering vehicles in 5-10 years.**

# Broadband



**Q9. Which of the following does your business use to access the internet? Base: 1730**

**Internet access**

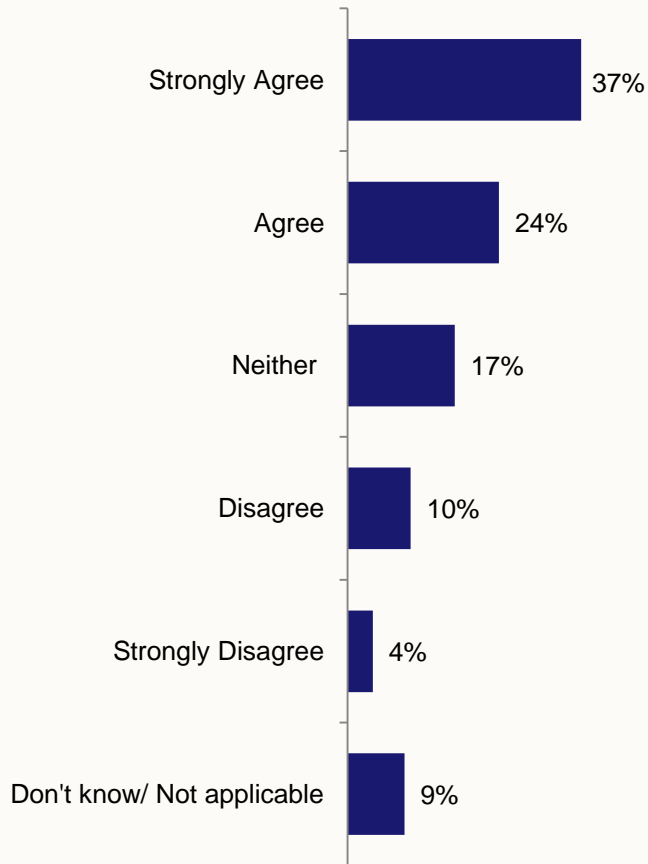


**The majority of members access the internet via broadband, 58% through a local wired internal network and 45% through a local wireless network.**

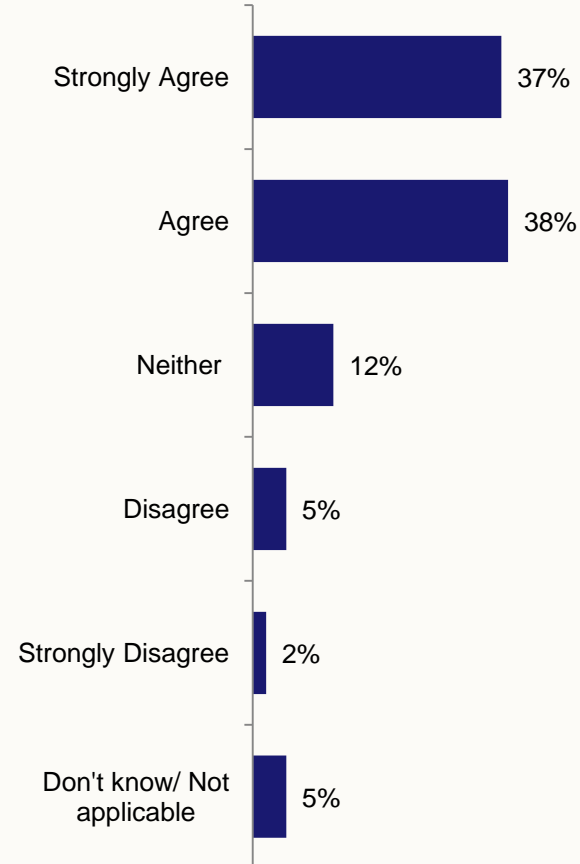
**Q10a. The Government should put an obligation on one service provider to provide 2Mbps broadband to all parts of the UK? Base: 1653**

**Q10b. Competition between providers is critical to driving the expansion of the UK's broadband infrastructure? Base: 1660**

### Government obligation on 2Mbps



### Internet provider competition

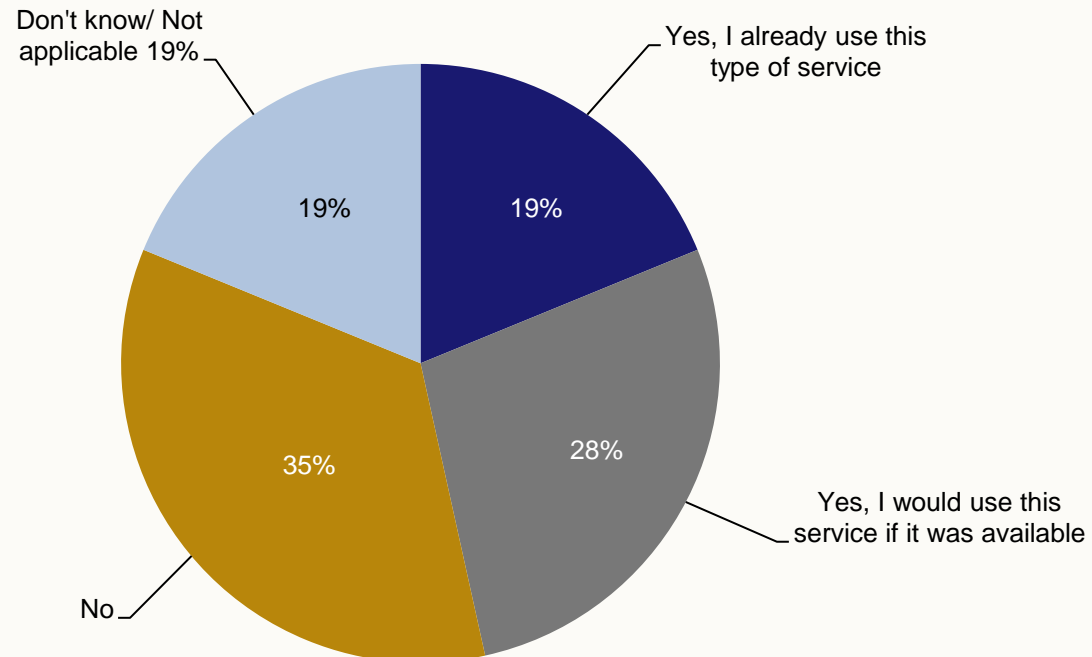


**Six in ten members agree that the Government should put an obligation on one service provider to provide 2Mbps broadband to all parts of the UK.**

**75% of members agree that competition between internet providers is crucial to driving the expansion of the UK's broadband infrastructure.**

**Q11. If a 'mobile broadband' connection was available in your area would you use this service for business purposes?**  
**Base: 729 (not currently using mobile broadband)**

### Future use of mobile broadband



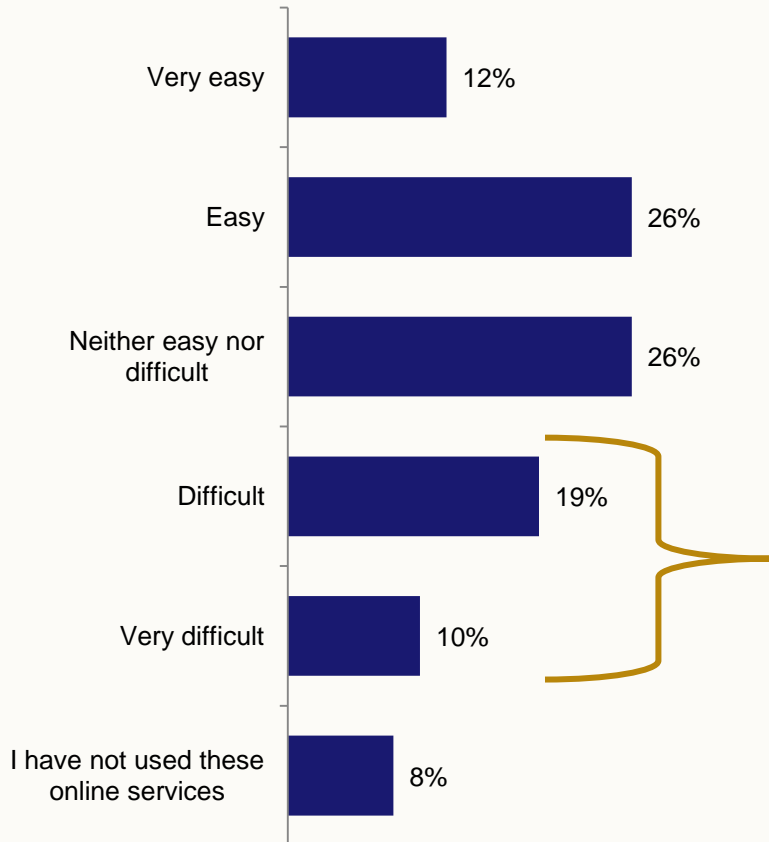
**While around a fifth of members already use a mobile broadband connection, a further 28% would if it were available in their area.**

**Q12. In your experience, how easy or difficult is it to interact with online local and central Government services?**

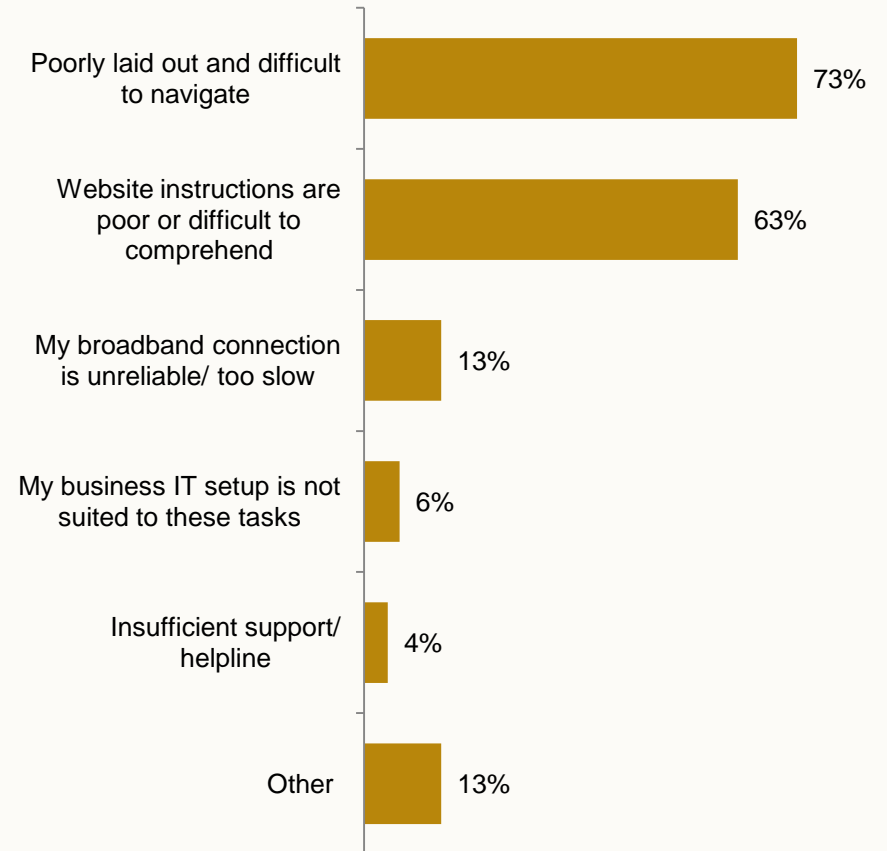
**Base: 1733**

**Q13. Why do you find interaction with online local and central Government services difficult? Base: 489**

### Use of online Government services



### Online service difficulties



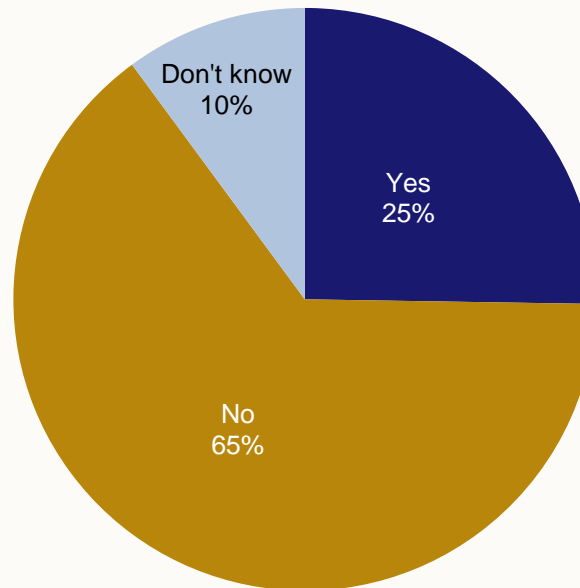
**Members are split over the ease of interaction with online Government services, 38% claim they are easy, 29% difficult. Amongst those encountering difficulties, members say websites are poorly laid out and instructions are poor or too difficult to comprehend.**

# Utilities



**Q14. The Government has announced proposals to increase the use of nuclear power in the UK. To facilitate this, significant investment is required in research, development and infrastructure. Would you support Government proposals to increase energy bills to subsidise this investment? Base: 1733**

### Support for energy bills increase



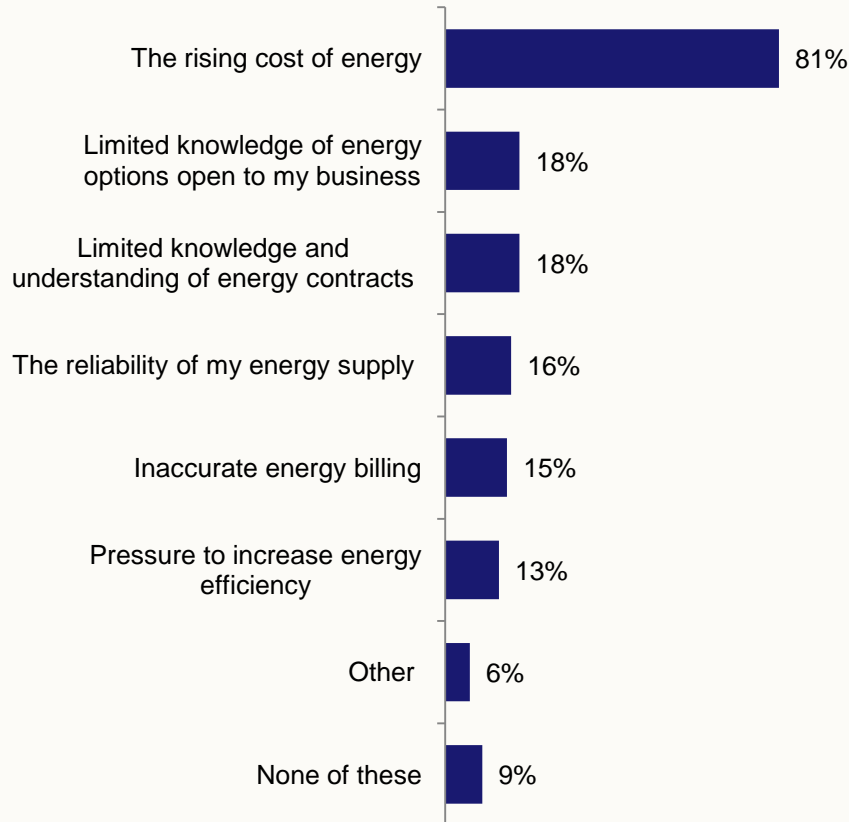
**The majority of FSB members do not support an increase in energy bills to subsidise an investment in nuclear power.**

**Q15. Thinking more generally about the provision of energy to your business, which of the following are concerns, if any?**

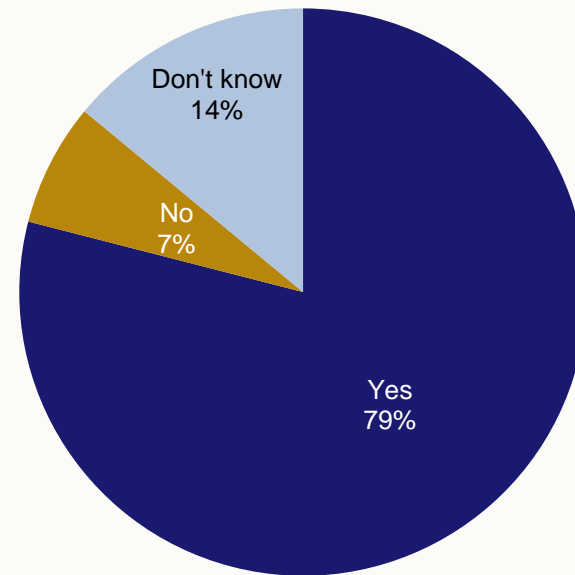
**Base: 1733**

**Q16. Would you support the abolition of 'roll over' energy contracts for businesses? Base: 1734**

### Energy concerns



### Support for abolition of 'roll over' contracts



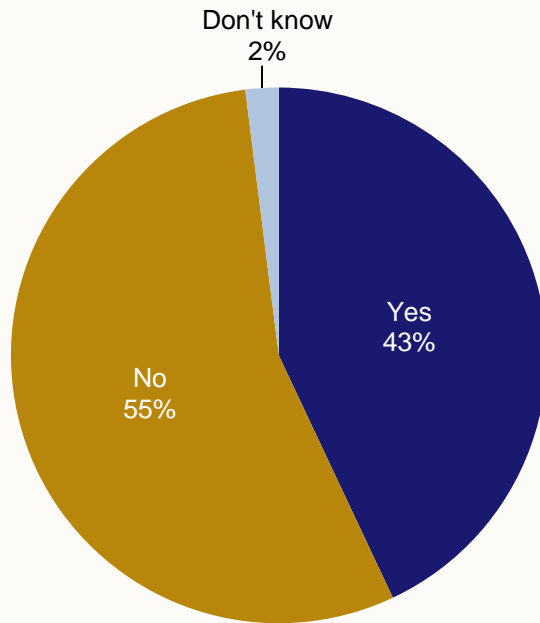
**The rising cost of energy is the biggest 'energy concern' to members.**

**Eight in ten would support the abolition of 'roll over' energy contracts for businesses.**

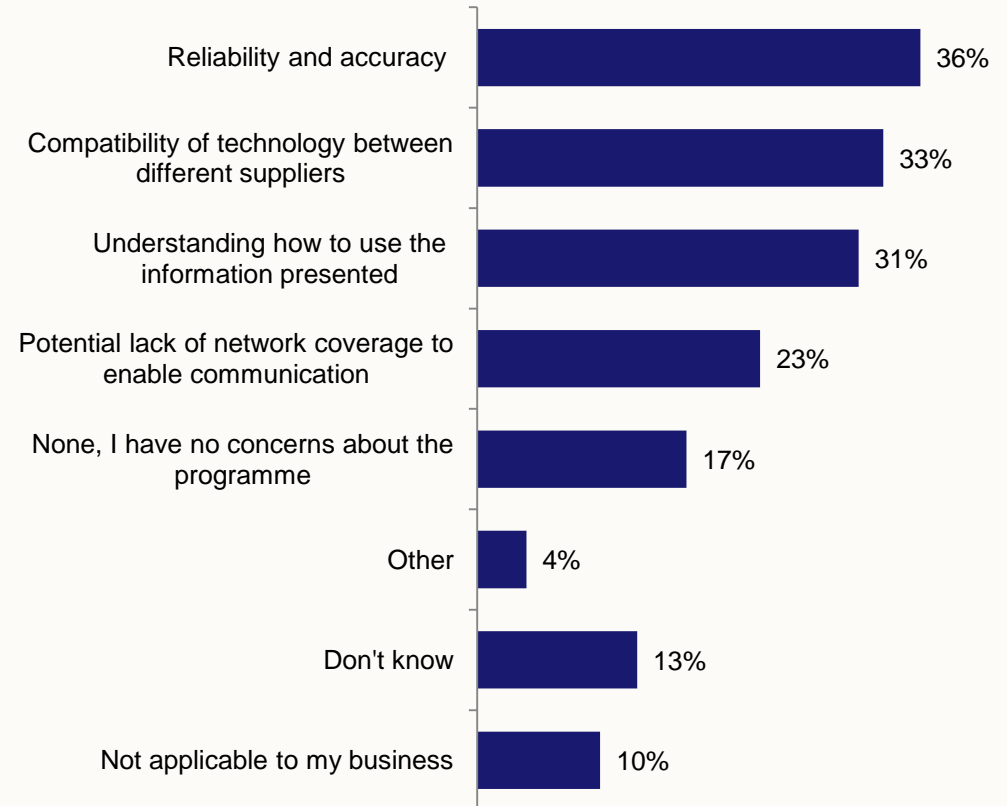
**Q17. Were you aware of the forthcoming roll out of smart metering? Base: 1656**

**Q18. Thinking about the 'Smart Meter' programme, which of the following, if any, are concerns for your business? Base: 1654**

### Awareness of smart meters



### Smart meter concerns



**Around four in ten are aware of the forthcoming roll out of smart metering.**

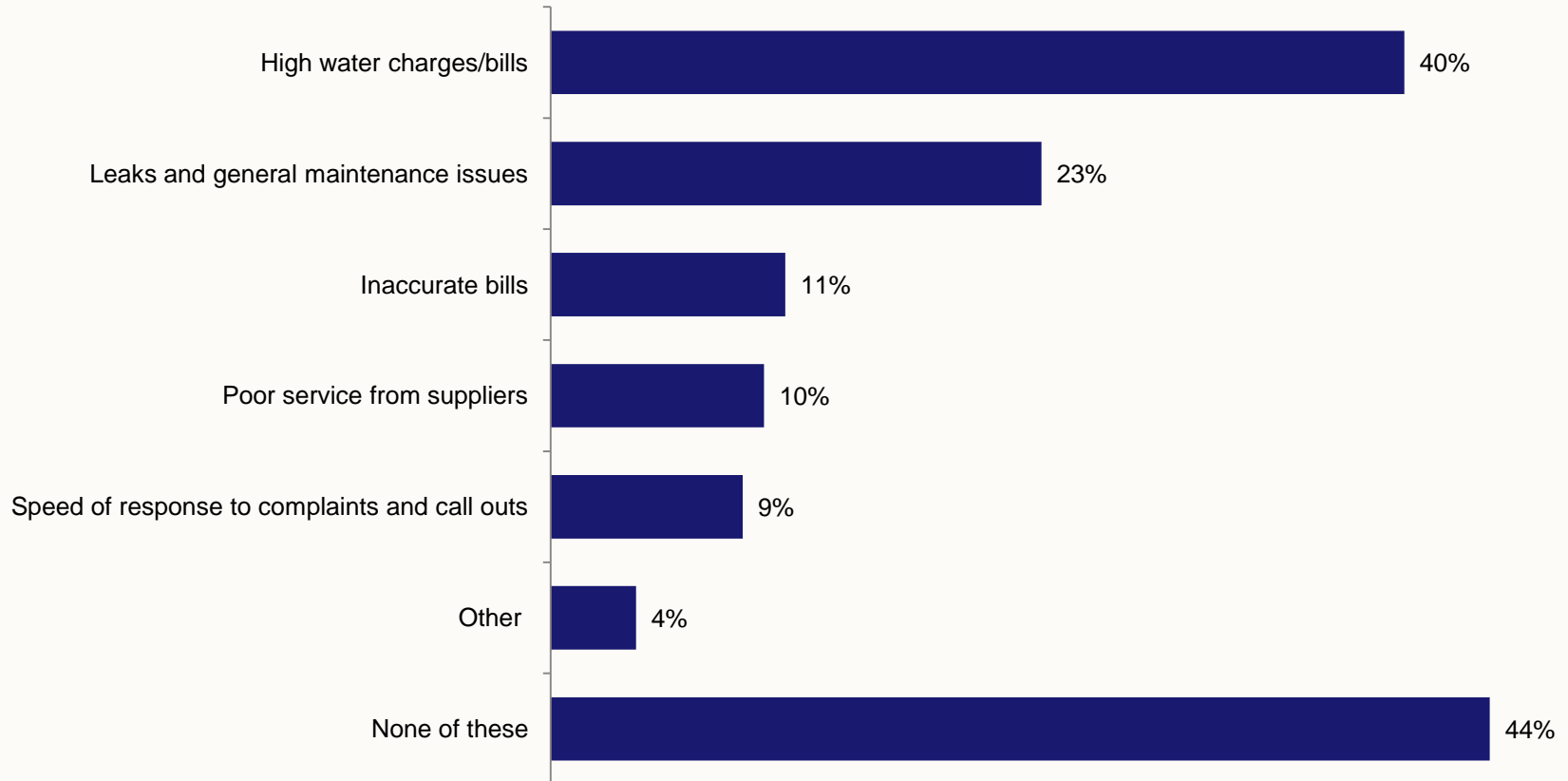
**Reliability and accuracy, compatibility of technology and understanding how to use the information presented are the greatest concerns for members.**

# Water



**Q19. Thinking about the water supply to your premises, which of the following, if any, are concerns for your business?**  
Base: 1733

## Water supply concerns



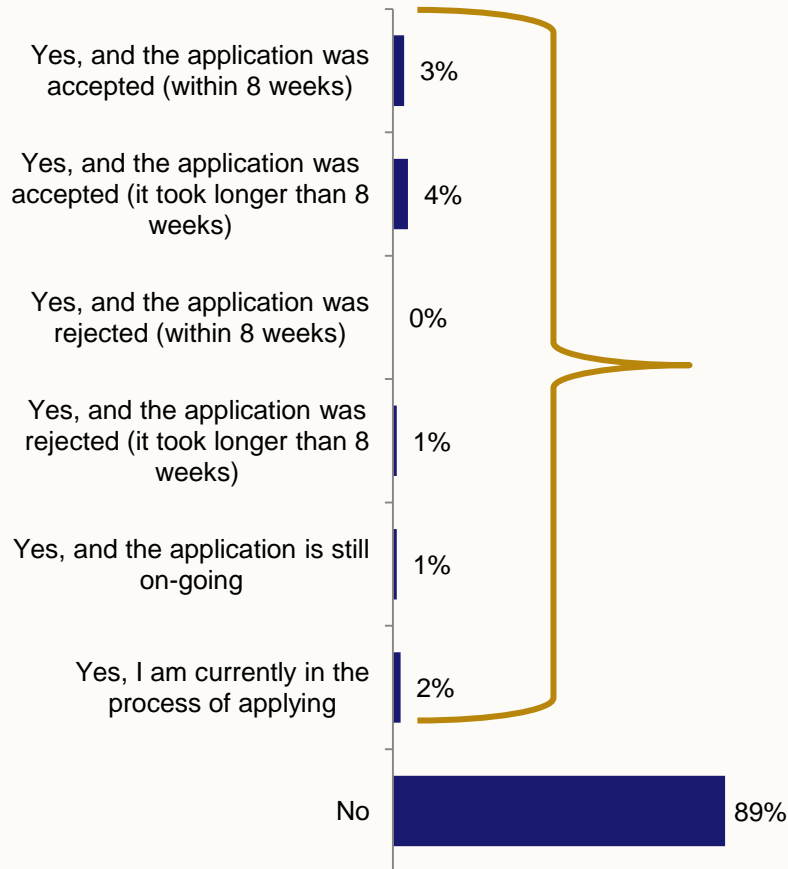
**Four in ten members are concerned by high water charges, for 23% leaks and general maintenance are an issue. The majority do not identify any concerns.**



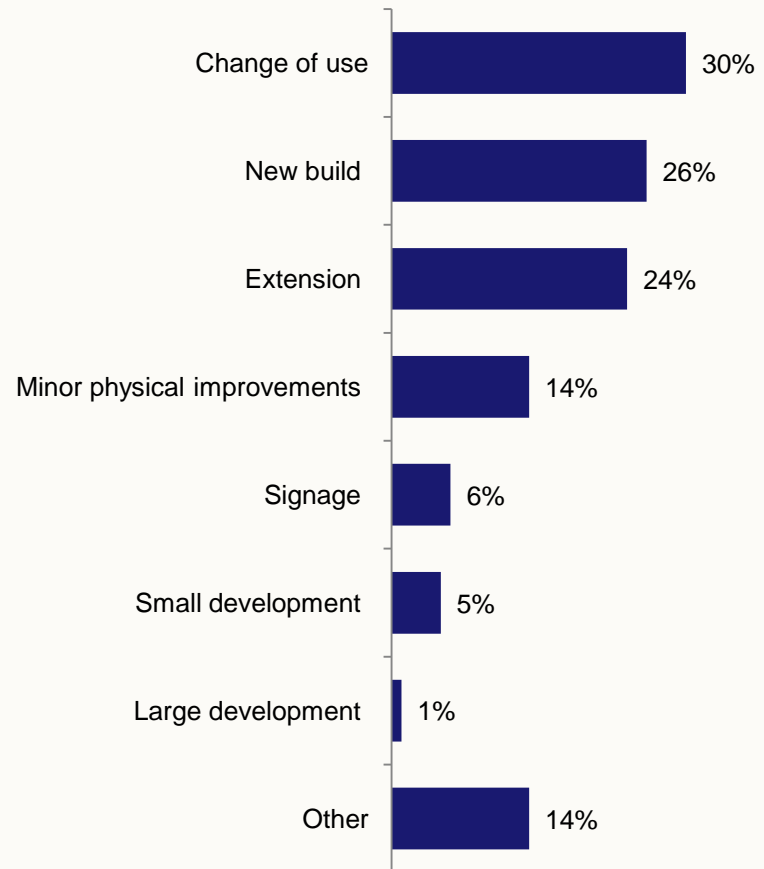
**Q20. Within the past two years, have you applied for or are you currently in the process of applying for planning permission for your business premises? Base: 1650**

**Q21. Specifically, what type of alteration or development does your application relate to? Base: 183**

### Applied for planning



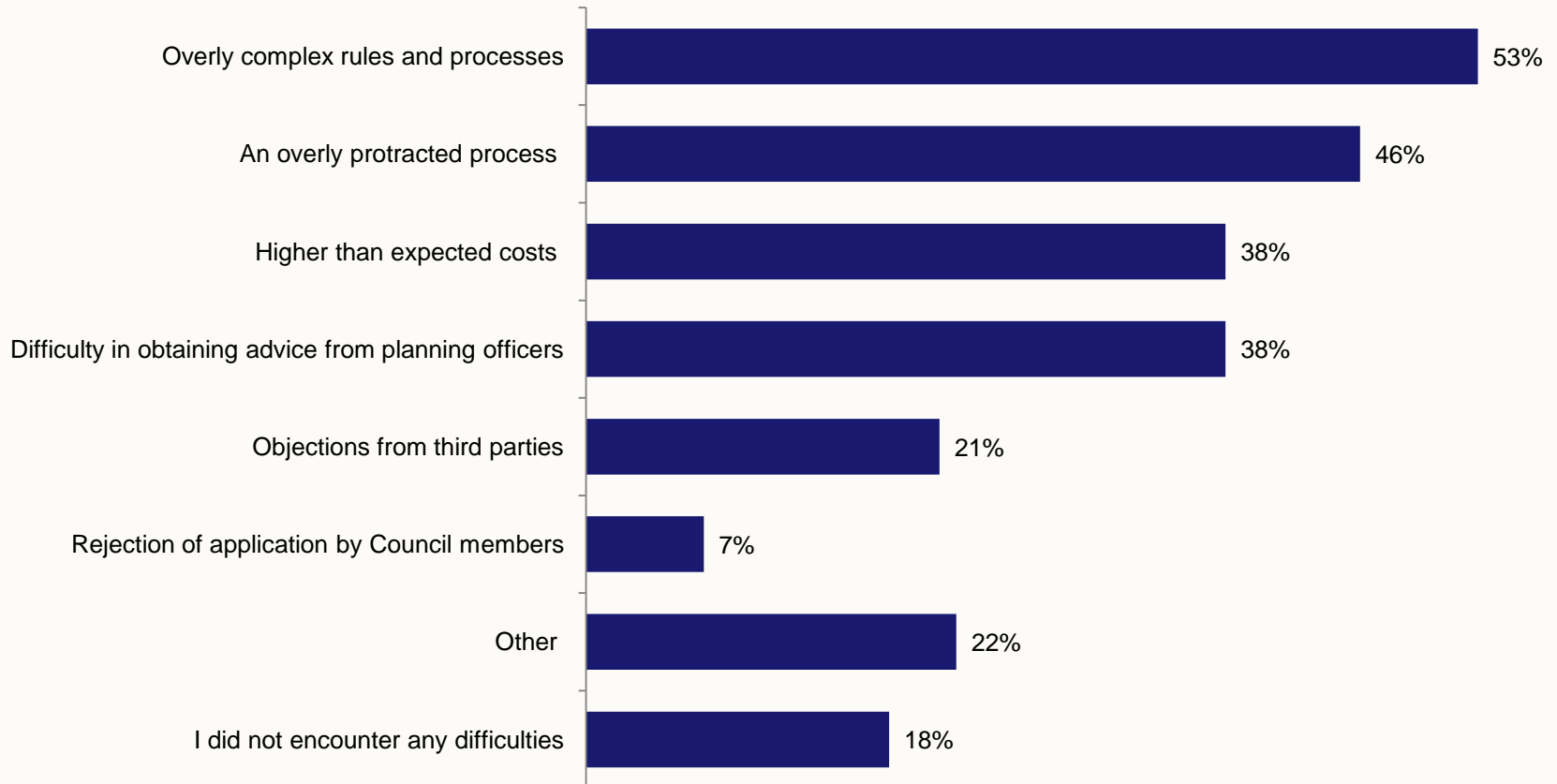
### Type of planning



**11% of members have applied or are currently applying for planning permission for their businesses. A change of use, a new build or an extension are the most popular types of application.**

**Q22. Thinking about the application process, which of the following, if any have you encountered? Base: 182**

**Planning application issues**

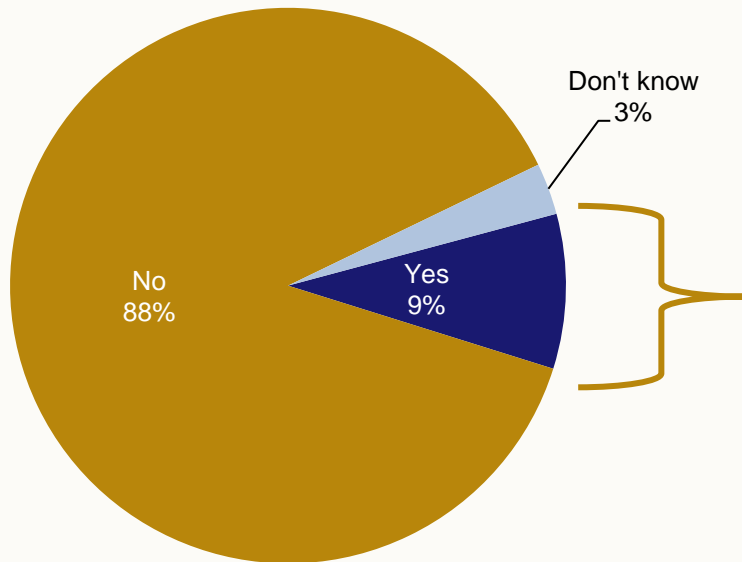


**Amongst those applying, around half have encountered an overly complex and overly protracted process. Around four in ten have encountered higher than expected costs and difficulty obtaining advice from planning officers.**

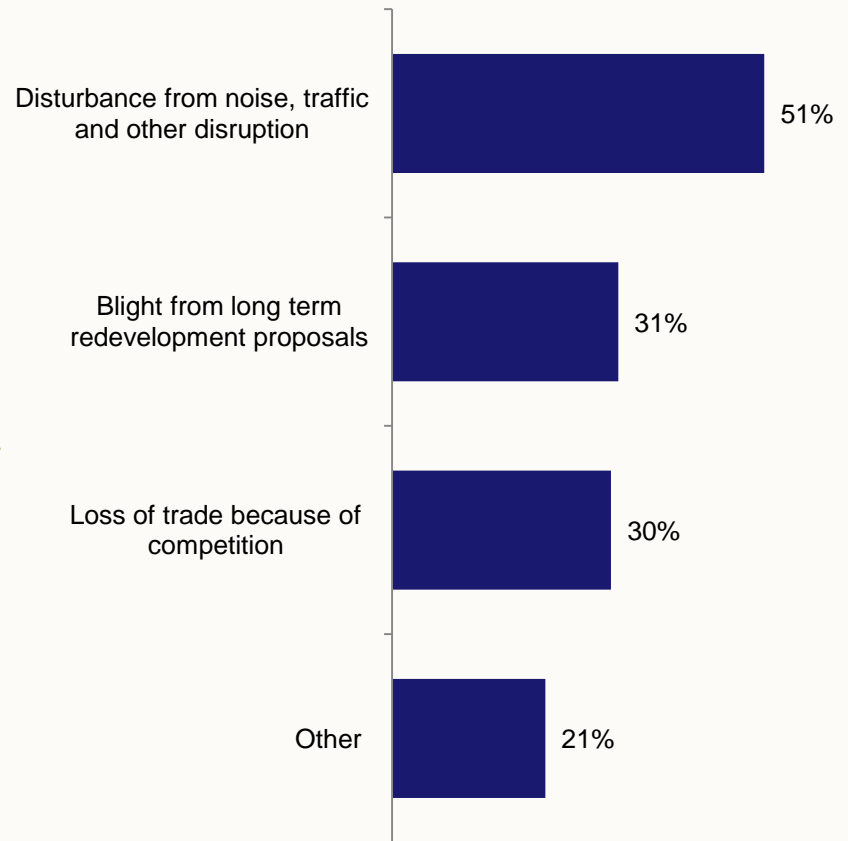
**Q23. In the past 2 years, has your business been adversely affected by planning consent for another business development in your area? Base: 1652**

**Q24. How has your business been affected (by planning consent for another business development in your area)? Base: 145**

Whether adversely affected by planning



Specific affect on business



**Around one in ten have been adversely affected by planning consent for another business development in their area. Of those affected around half have encountered disturbance from noise, traffic and other disruption.**

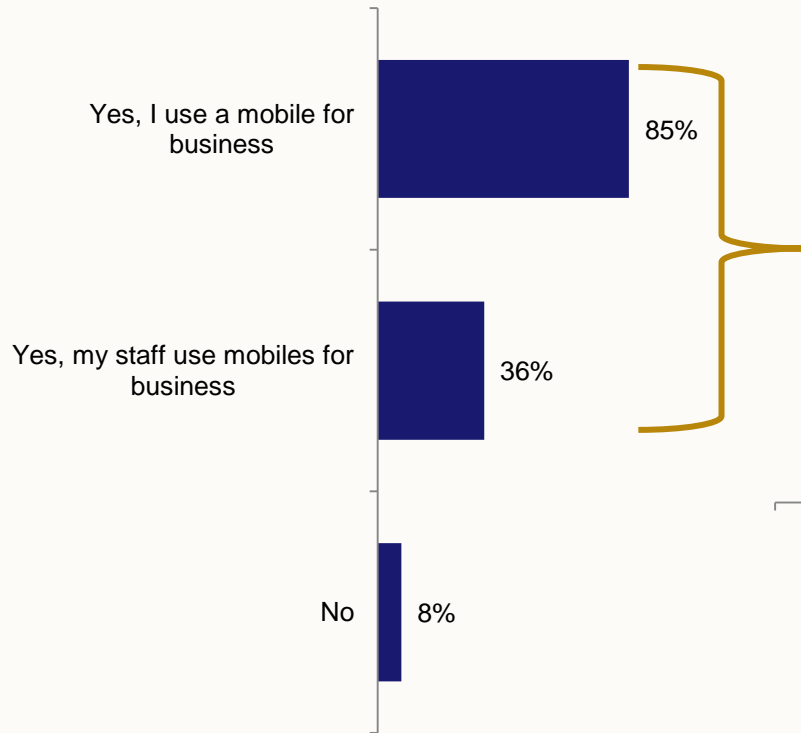
# Scotland



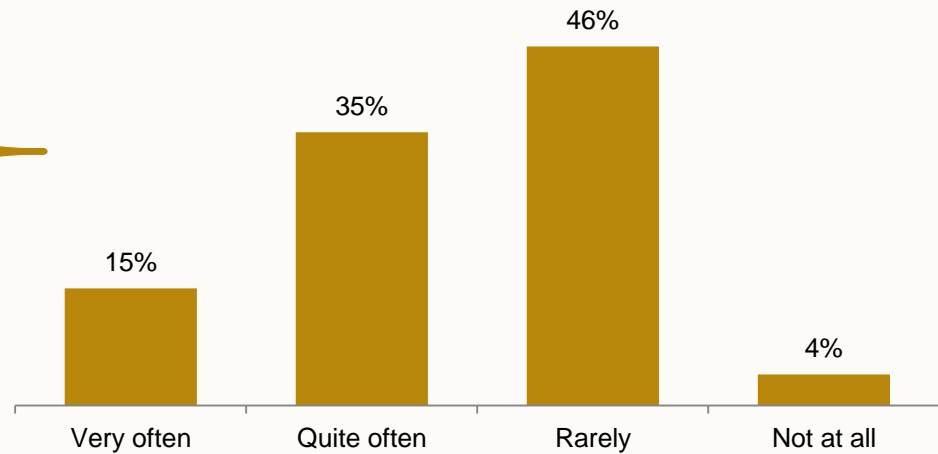
**Q25. Do you and your staff use mobile phones for business purposes? Base: 194**

**Q26. How often do you or your staff encounter a lack of mobile phone signal when using a mobile phone for business? Base: 178**

Mobile phone usage



Lack of mobile phone signal

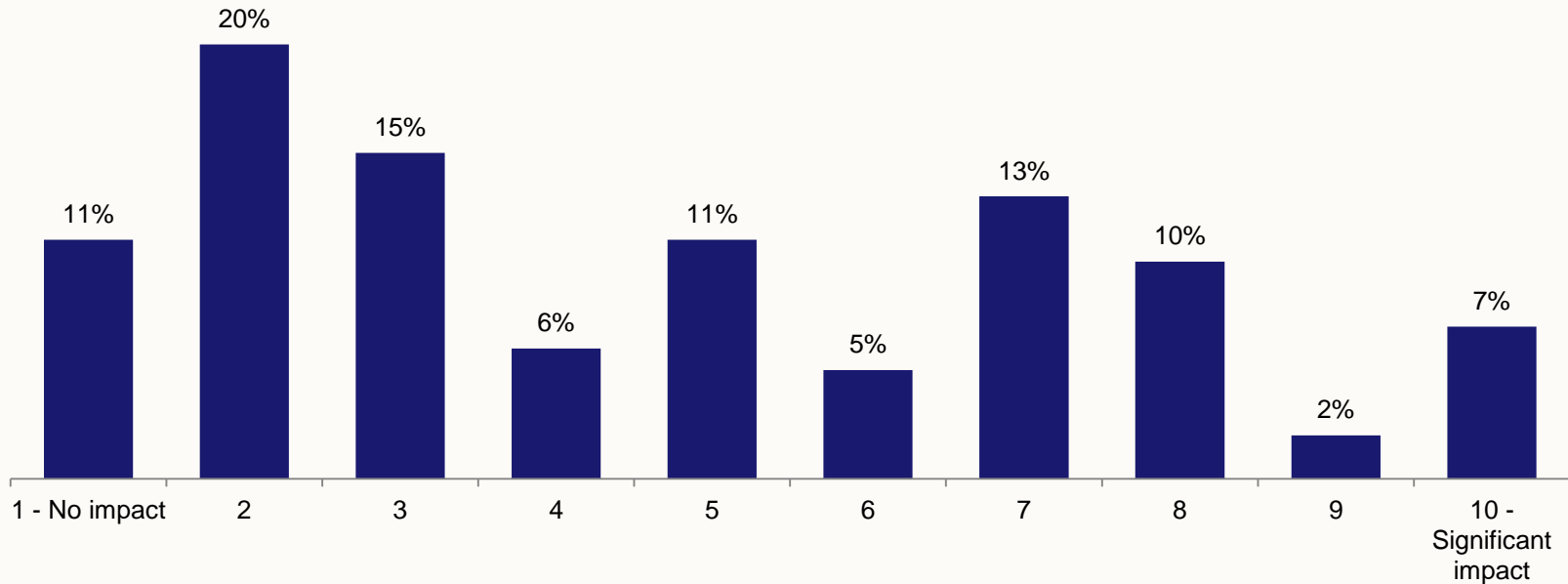


**85% of members currently use mobile phones for business purposes, as do 36% of their staff. Amongst users, 50% often encounter a lack of mobile phone signal.**

**Q27. How do you rate the impact on your business of this lack of mobile phone signal? Base: 174**

### Impact from lack of mobile phone signal

Mean score = 4.7

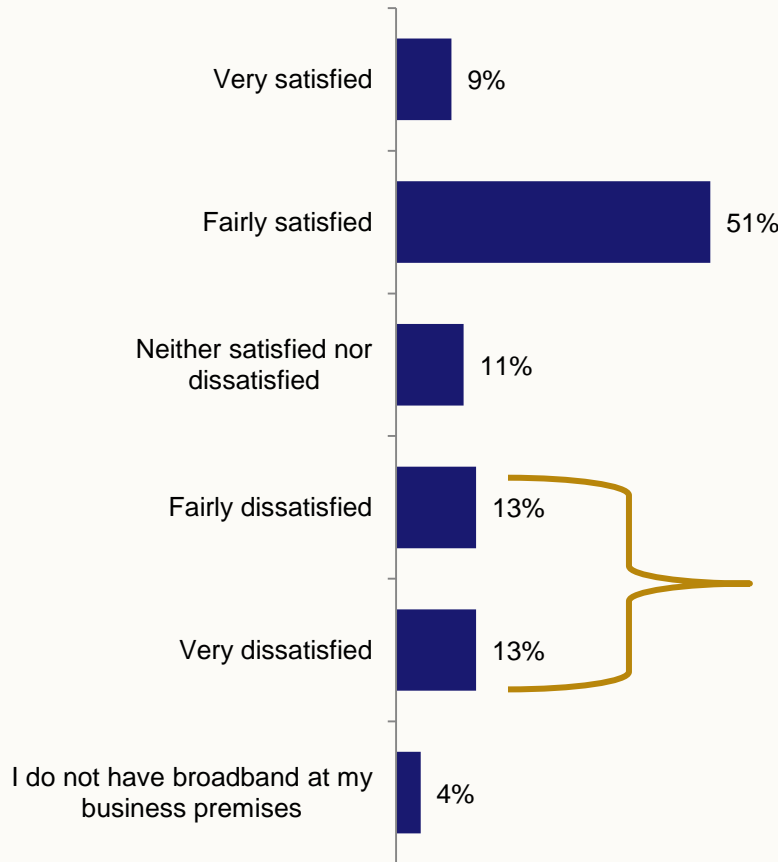


**A loss of mobile signal impacts on businesses with a third rating the impact as significant (seven or above out of ten)**

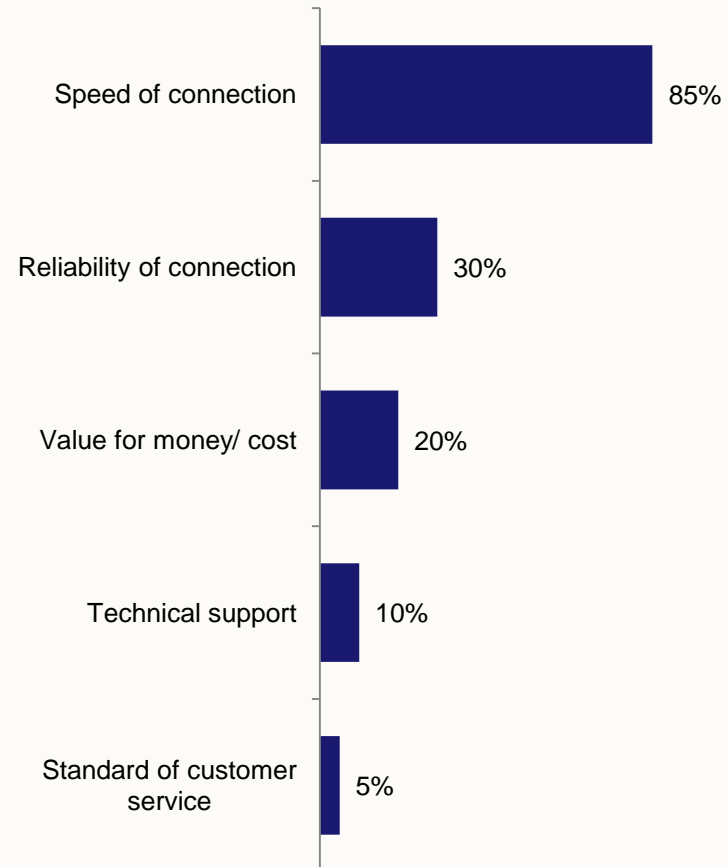


**Q28. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the internet provision to your business premises? Base: 80**  
**Q29. Which of the following, if any, are you dissatisfied with? Base: 20**

### Rating of internet provision to business



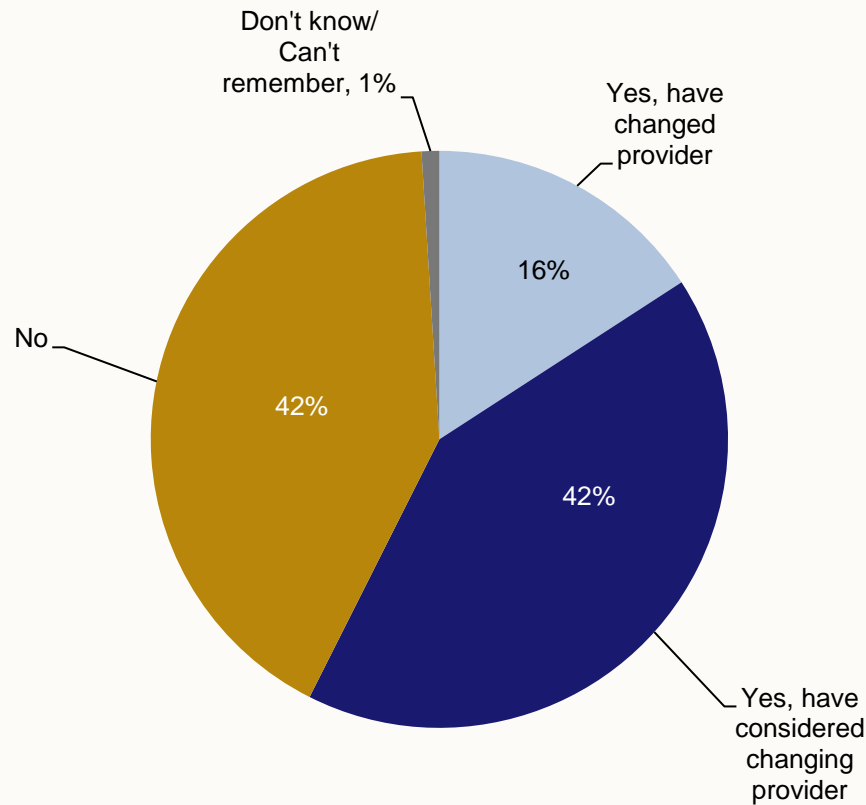
### Internet concerns



**Six in ten members are satisfied with their current internet provision, 26% are dissatisfied. Amongst those dissatisfied, speed of connection is a concern for the vast majority.**

**Q30. In the last 12 months, have you changed or considered changing your business' internet provider? Base: 77**

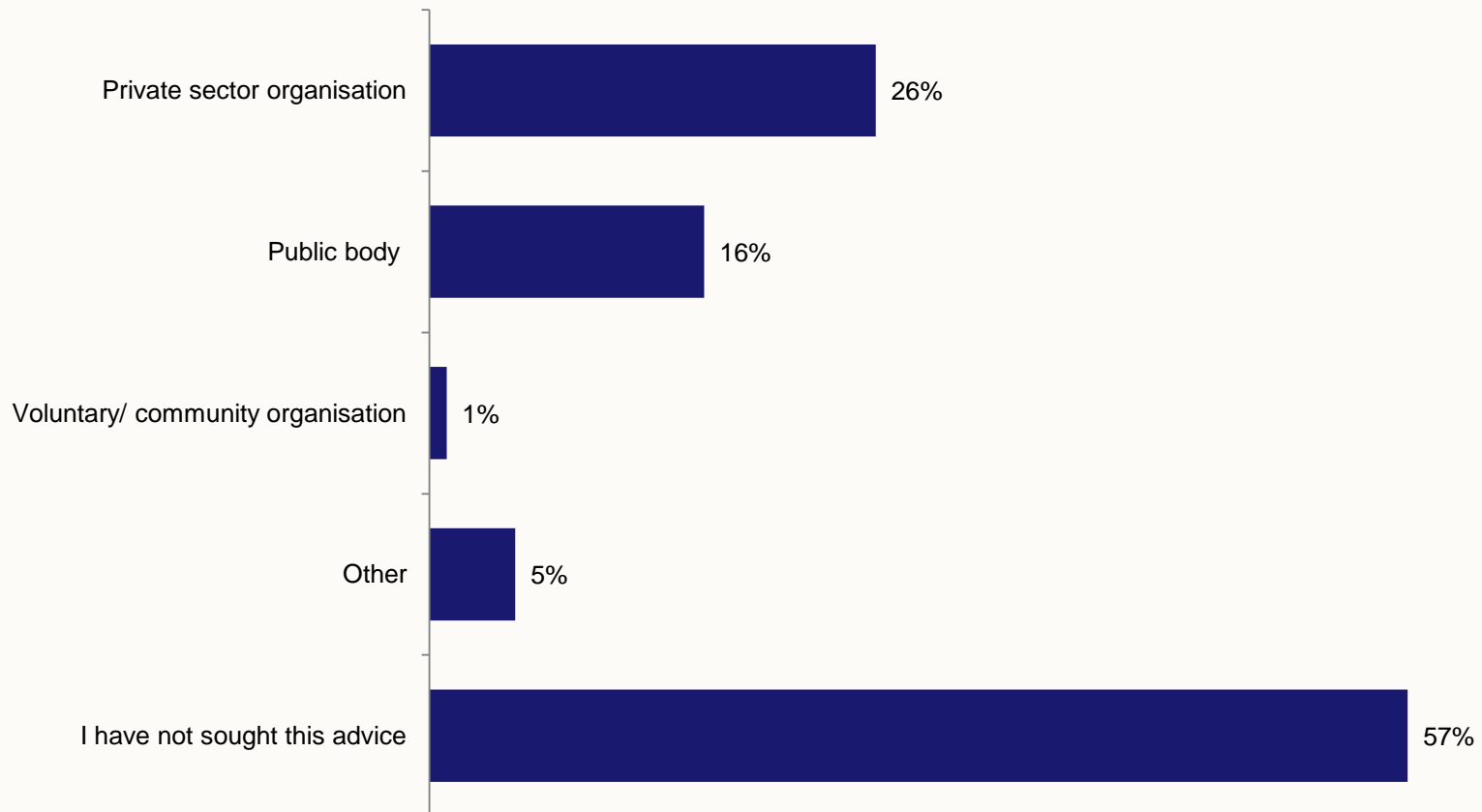
### Changed or considered changing provider



**Almost six in ten have changed or considered changing internet provider in the last 12 months.**

**Q31. Have you sought any advice or training from the following sources to help your business utilise the internet more effectively? Base: 80**

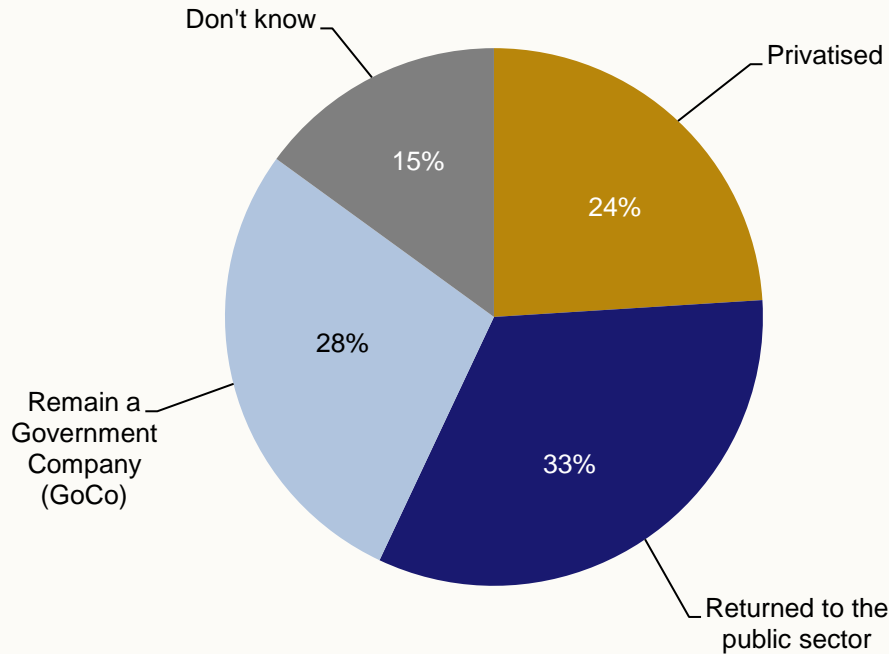
### Advice or training sources



**Around four in ten members have sought advice or training to help utilise the internet more effectively. Of those who have sought advice 26% have used a private sector organisation and 16% a public body.**

**Q32. Do you believe Northern Ireland Water should be privatised, returned to the public sector or remain a Government Company (GoCo)? Base: 79**

### Future of Northern Ireland Water



**Member opinion is divided over the future of Northern Ireland Water. A third believe it should be returned to the public sector, 28% suggest it should remain as a Government Company (GoCo) and a quarter favour privatisation.**