

Traffic signals

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Research conducted by Synovate

1. Executive Summary

Two fifths of those who ever walk in London claim to experience a traffic signal fault at least once a month.

Nine out of ten Londoners had never reported a traffic signal fault, with a further three per cent saying they were not sure or could not remember. Of those having reported a fault, this was more likely to have occurred via the local council than TfL. Around ten to fifteen per cent of Londoners were aware of being able to use the TfL website and by calling TfL customer services to report a fault.

The greatest concern associated with using a pedestrian crossing when the traffic signals are not working was personal safety by far, with nearly half saying this was their main concern. Frustration and the delay caused were the greatest concerns by around one in six.

The pattern of results of which is the greatest concern for car drivers / powered two-wheeler (P2W) riders / cyclists relating to traffic signals not working is very similar to that relating to pedestrians and pedestrian crossings. The greatest concern by far was personal safety, with two fifths saying this was their main concern. Frustration and the delay caused were the greatest concern by around one in six.

Around half of regular users of a car, P2W or a bicycle said the phasing at traffic light junctions they use regularly in their borough was either excellent, very good or good. Around a quarter rated the phasing as fair, while one in five rated it as poor or very poor.

Around two thirds of Londoners thought that drivers have enough time, while a quarter thought they had too little time to pass through the junction during the 'green' period. Around one in ten thought drivers had too much time.

The pattern of results relating to the amount of time pedestrians have to cross the road when they have a green signal is very similar to that of drivers of vehicles. Around two thirds thought that pedestrians have enough time, while a third thought they had too little time. Around one in twenty thought they had too much time to cross.

Nine in ten Londoners interviewed did not know how often signal phasing is reviewed.

Around two fifths of Londoners said they knew of adaptive signal junctions, with males more likely to know about them than females.

Two fifths of people incorrectly thought the green man period is the length of time pedestrians have to cross the road. One in five incorrectly thought that once the green man signal goes off, traffic will be given a green light.

Two thirds of people knew at least some of the features of the Pelican and Junction crossings and generally how they differ from other crossing types. Understanding of the Puffin crossing was lower however, with less than half saying they knew at least some of its features and generally how it differs to other crossing types.

People aged over 65 years were most likely of all age groups not to know each of the three crossing types.

Two per cent of car drivers and P2W riders said they either sometimes do not obey, do not usually obey or hardly ever obey traffic signals. Those who give one of these three responses are most likely to be aged 16-24.

A fifth of cyclists said they either sometimes do not obey, do not usually obey or hardly ever obey traffic signals. As is the case with car drivers and P2W riders, those who give one of these three responses are most likely to be aged 16-24.

The proportion of pedestrians saying they either sometimes do not obey, do not usually obey or hardly ever obey traffic signals is also one fifth. Those who give one of these three responses are most likely to be aged 16-24 or 25-34.

Two fifths of Londoners believe that buses get priority at signal junctions in London. This proportion is much higher than that relating to other traffic types, with around one in ten saying cars and pedestrians get highest priority.

Half of Londoners said they are interested in being informed in future about proposed changes to the phasing of traffic signals. Of those interested in being informed about changes to phasing, the channel through which people are most likely to want to hear about changes is the local newspaper, followed by a sign near the traffic lights or on the TfL website and council website.

2. Introduction and Research Objectives

Following the Directorate of Traffic Operations (DTO) receiving a high level of correspondence (around 200 to 300 per month) and a general analysis of complaints between September and November 2007, DTO wished to conduct research with Londoners about the work of traffic operations. The research was required to explore both the perceptions and understanding of DTO's work, particularly relating to traffic signals.

The objective of the research was to better understand customer perceptions and understanding of DTO's work, particularly relating to traffic signals.

DTO wished to use insights gathered from the research to inform potential improvements to traffic operations and future communications activity.

A representative sample of Londoners was interviewed by telephone¹. 1,005 interviews were conducted by fully trained Synovate telephone interviewers.

Interviews were conducted with the householder with the 'next birthday'. Potential respondents were re-contacted at least five times if they were initially unavailable.

Fieldwork took place between 6th and 26th October 2008.

¹ Fieldwork was conducted as part of the 'Regular Research Slot' run by Synovate – monthly interviews conducted exclusively for TfL, on which questions from a variety of internal clients can be placed.

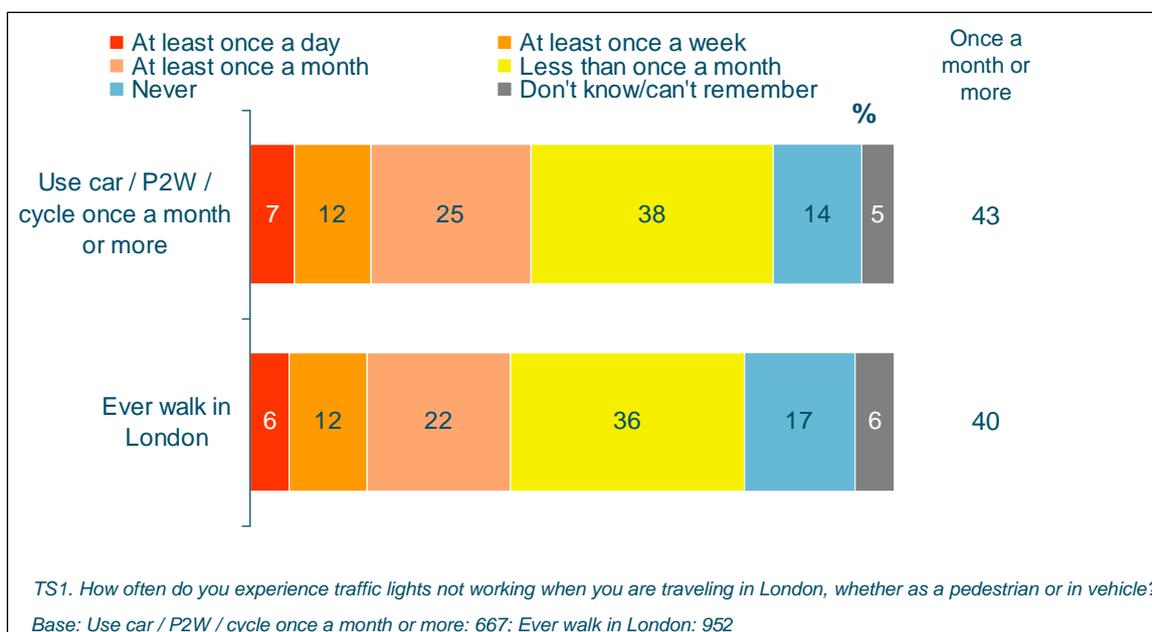
3. Traffic signal faults

3.1 Frequency of experiencing a traffic signal fault

We asked Londoners taking part in the survey how often, if at all, they experience traffic signals not working.

It can be seen from Chart 1 that two fifths (40%) of those who ever walk in London claim to experience a traffic signal fault at least once a month. The proportion is very similar among regular users of a car, powered two-wheeler (P2W) or a bicycle (i.e. use at least once a month): 43%. Those interviewed who are aged 65 years were least likely to experience a fault, along with those aged 55-64 years (33%).

Chart 1: Frequency of experiencing a traffic signal fault



The frequency of experiencing a fault is claimed to be greatest in the Outer North boroughs (made up of Barnet, Brent, Enfield, Waltham Forest), with 50% in these group of boroughs saying they experience a fault at least once a month.

3.2 Reporting traffic signal faults

In the survey Londoners were asked their awareness of different ways of reporting a traffic signal fault. They were also asked if they had reported a traffic signal fault, and if so how they did, and how long it took for the most recent fault they reported to be repaired.

From Chart 2, it is evident that around ten to fifteen per cent of Londoners and of regular users of a car, powered two-wheeler or a bicycle were aware of being able to use the TfL website and by calling TfL customer services to report a fault.

Of all age groups, those aged 65 or more and people aged 16-24 were most likely to say they are aware of being to report faults via the TfL and via TfL Customer Services. Specifically, 16% of over 65's were aware of the TfL website way of reporting and 21% of 16-24 year-olds; 22% of over 65's were aware of the TfL Customer Services way of reporting and 22% of 16-24 year-olds.

Chart 2: Whether aware of ways of reporting a traffic signal fault



Those living in the Outer West boroughs (made up of Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Richmond Upon Thames) and Outer East boroughs (made up of Barking & Dagenham, Bexley, Greenwich, Havering, Redbridge) were least likely to be aware of reporting a fault via the TfL website, with around seven per cent of people aware in these boroughs.

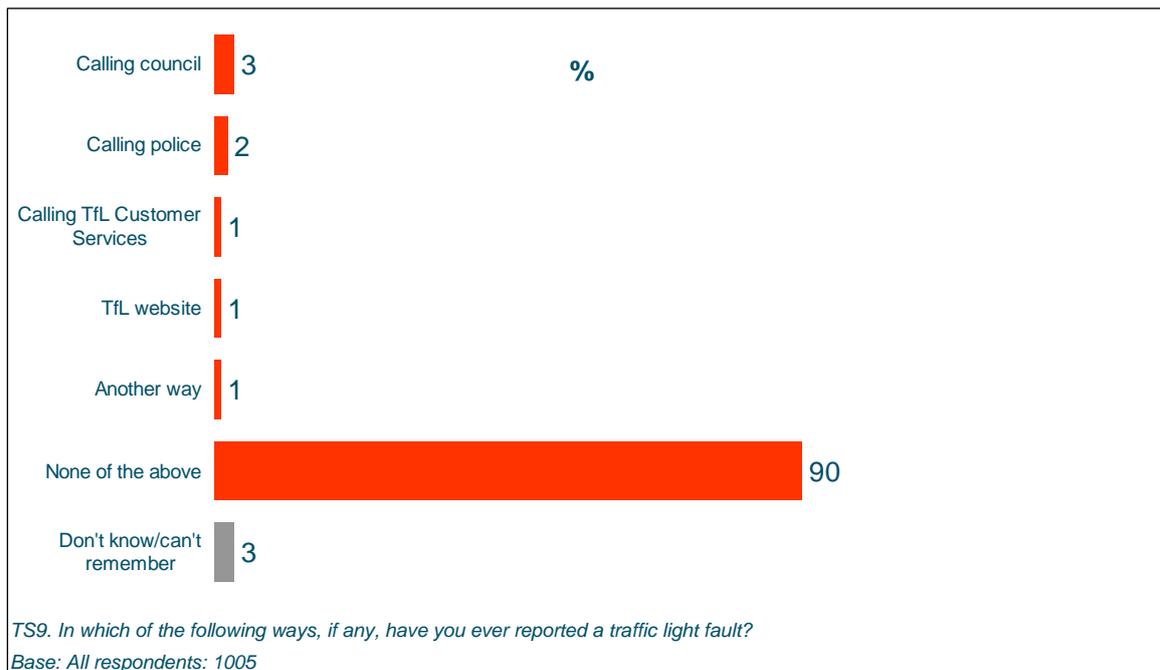
Those in central boroughs (made up of City of London, City of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea) were most likely to be aware (20% were).

Chart 3 shows the proportion of all Londoners interviewed who had ever used different ways of reporting a traffic signal fault in the past.

Nine out of ten Londoners (90%) had never reported a traffic signal fault, with a further 3% saying they were not sure or could not remember.

The most common way of reporting a fault was calling the council (3%), followed by calling the police (2%).

Chart 3: Ways in which people have reported a traffic signal fault



One per cent had contacted TfL Customer Services to report a fault, and the same proportion said they had reported a fault on the TfL website.

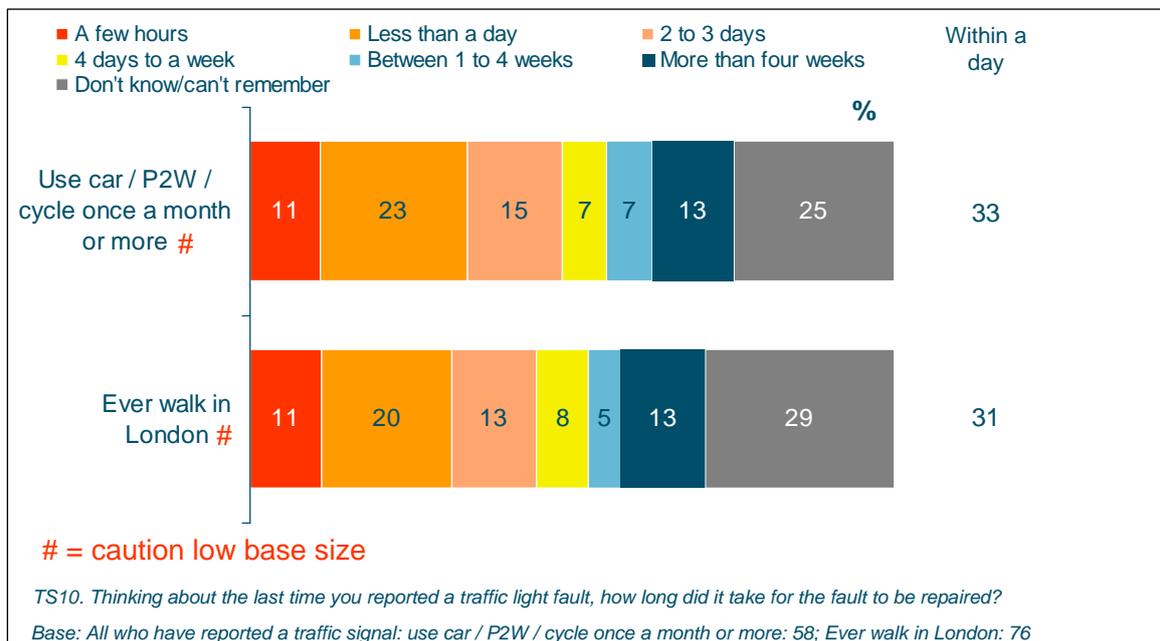
There is no difference in the pattern of results between regular drivers of a car and pedestrians.

The 76 people who said they had ever reported a fault were asked how long it took for the most recent fault they reported to be repaired. Chart 4 shows the findings from this question. It should be noted that the sample size of 76 is small and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting the results,

It can be seen that around a third of regular users of a car, powered two-wheeler or a bicycle (33%) and pedestrians (31%) said that the most recent fault they experienced

was repaired within a day. Around three quarters said it took between two days and four weeks, while one in eight (13%) said it took more than four weeks.

Chart 4: Time taken to repair last faulty traffic signal reported



Around a quarter of each traffic type group could not remember or did not know how long it took for the faulty traffic signal to be repaired.

Those living in Outer East boroughs (made up of Barking & Dagenham, Bexley, Greenwich, Havering, Redbridge) and in Outer South boroughs (made up of Bromley, Croydon, Kingston Upon Thames, Merton, Sutton) were least likely to say that the most recent faulty traffic signal they reported was repaired with in one day (16% and 17% respectively said this).

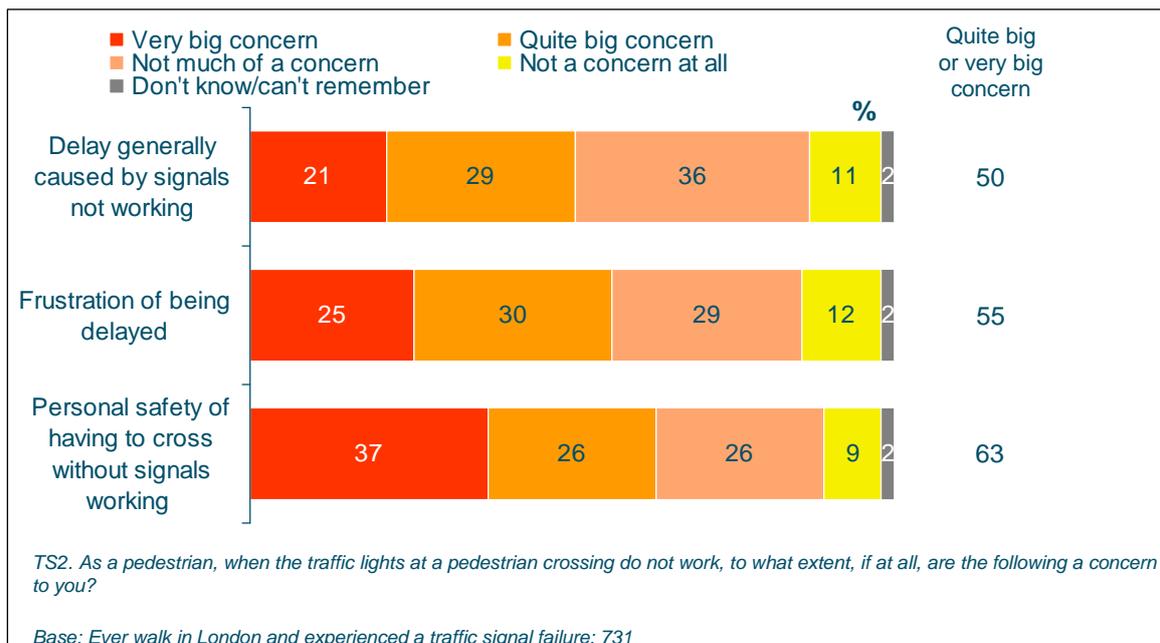
3.3 Extent and nature of concern with traffic signal faults

People interviewed were asked about the extent and nature of their concerns with traffic signal faults, both related to pedestrian crossings and vehicle traffic signals.

Pedestrians were asked to what extent they were concerned with the delay from signals not working, the frustration at being delayed and about their personal safety of having to cross without the signals working.

From Chart 5 below it can be seen that at least half of Londoners think that each of these three consequences of traffic signal faults are a concern (either quite a big or a very big concern). Half (50%) said this for the delay from signals not working, a similar proportion (55%) for the frustration at being delayed and a larger proportion, 63%, about their personal safety of having to cross without the signals working.

Chart 5: Extent of concern among pedestrians when a pedestrian crossing is not working



There are some significant differences between demographic groups in the level of concern with these three factors. Those aged 16-24 and 35-44 were most concerned by the delay caused (61% and 59% respectively said either it was either a quite or big concern), while those aged 65 or more were least concerned about this aspect (34%). Females and BME people were most concerned with the delay: 55% and 66% respectively.

Those living in Outer North boroughs (made up of Barnet, Brent, Enfield, Waltham Forest) were most likely to say a pedestrian crossing is a big or quite big concern to them: 62% said this.

Frustration at being delayed was lowest among those aged 65 or more, with 31% saying this.

Concern with personal safety of having to cross without the signals working is higher among females (71%) than males (54%).

After being asked how concerned they were about the three possible consequences associated with traffic signal failures, people were asked which of these three was their greatest concern.

From Chart 6 overleaf it is evident that the greatest concern by far was personal safety, with nearly half (45%) saying this was their main concern. Frustration and the delay caused were the greatest concerns by around one in six (15% and 14% respectively). Around one in five (22%) thought that all three concerns were equally important.

Females were more likely than males to name personal safety as their main concern, with 49% of males saying this compared to 39% of females.

Chart 6: Greatest concern among pedestrians when a pedestrian crossing is not working

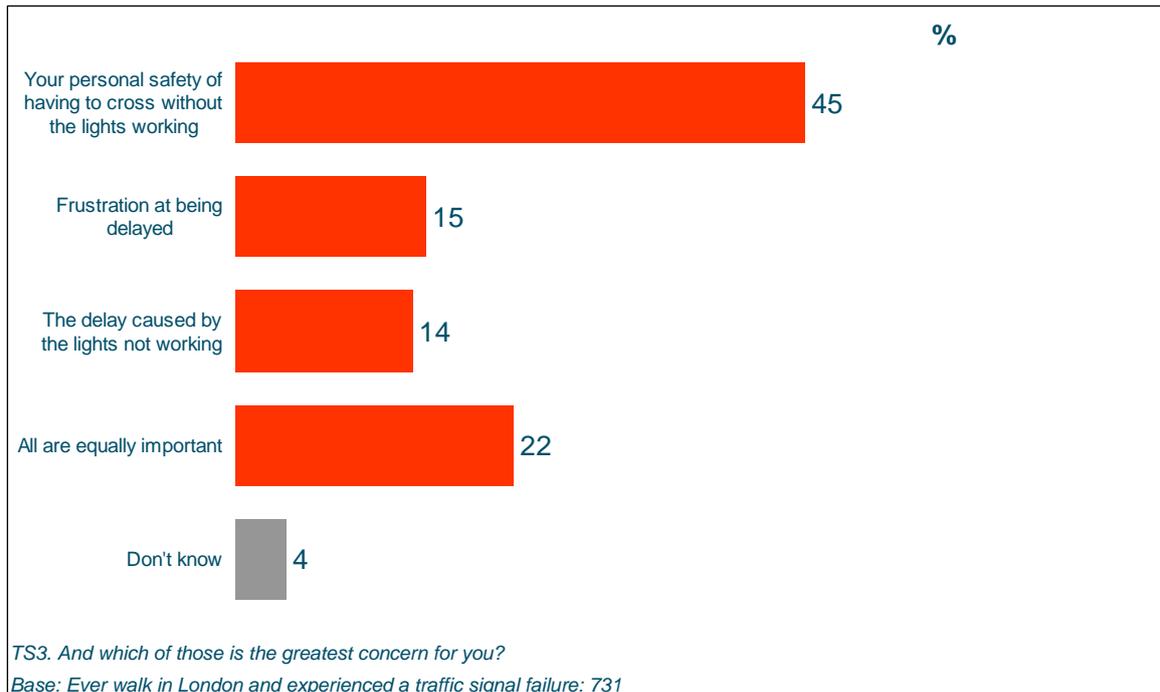
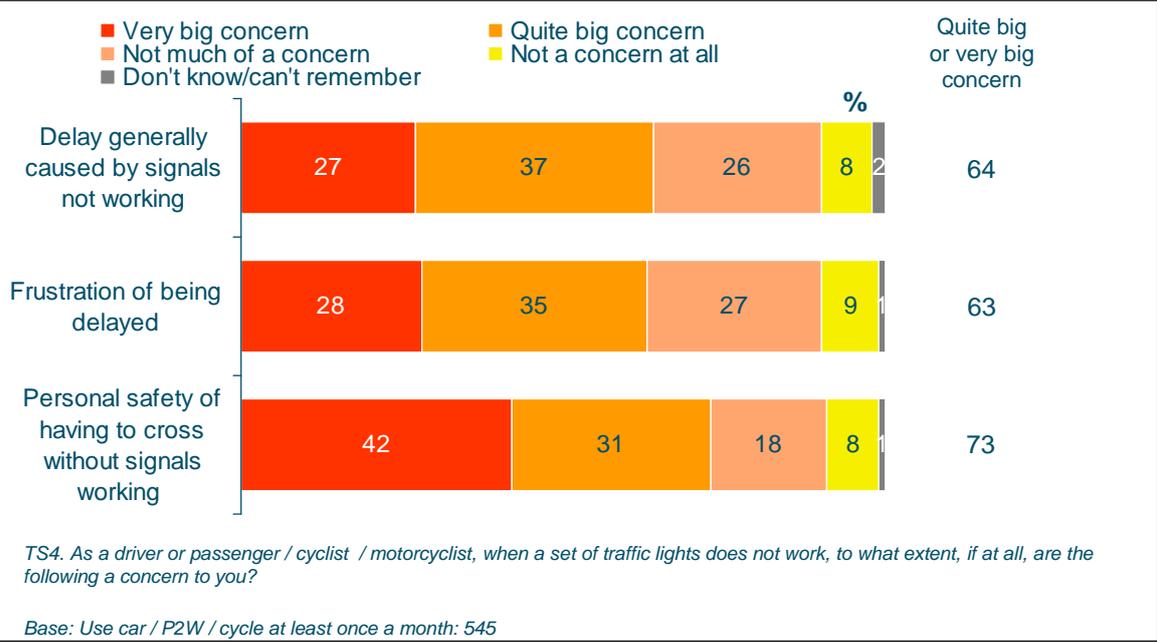


Chart 7 shows the extent of concern that regular users of a car, powered two-wheeler or a bicycle have with the delay from traffic signals not working, the frustration at being delayed and about their personal safety of having to cross a junction without the signals working.

Two thirds were concerned with the delay and frustration (i.e. said they were quite a big or very big concern): 64% said this for the delay caused and 63% for the frustration caused. Concern was higher regarding personal safety of having to cross a junction without the traffic signals working, with three quarters (73%) saying this.

Among those aged 65 or more, concern with the delay (either 'quite a big concern' or 'very big concern') was 53%, significantly lower than 25-34 year-olds (77%). Concern with the frustration at being delayed was also lower among 65 year-olds (45%) than 25-34 year-olds (73%), and also lower than 16-24 year-olds (65%).

Chart 7: Extent of concern among car / P2W / cycle users when traffic signals are not working

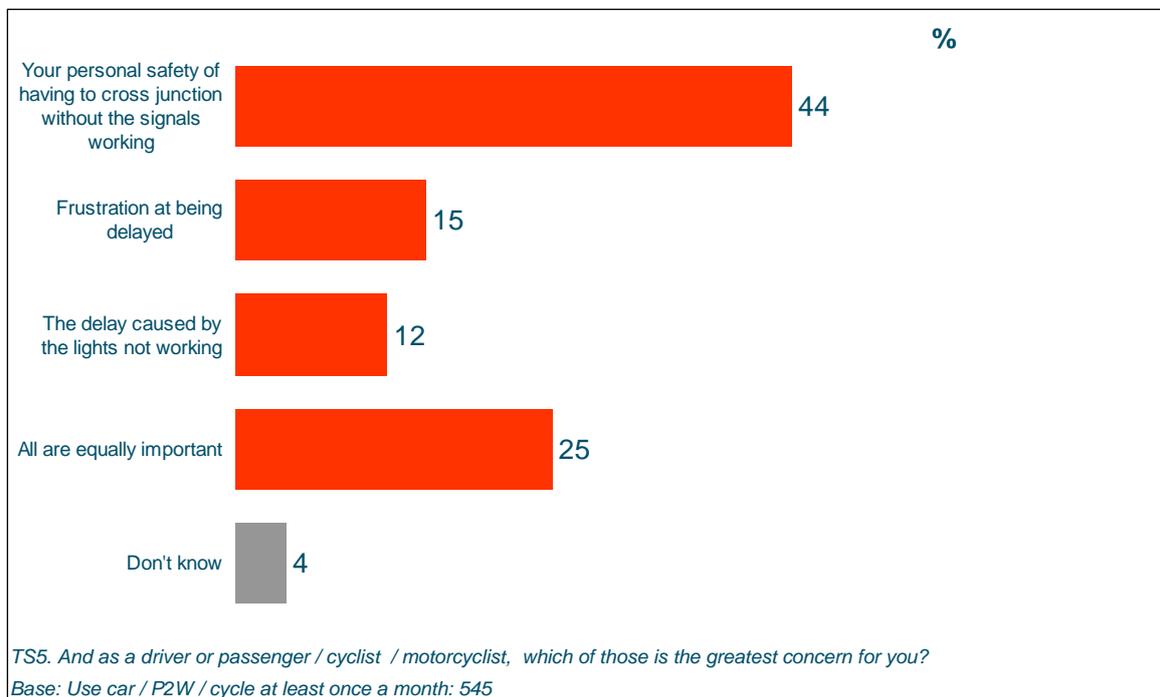


Concern with personal safety was higher among females (80%) than males (66%).

Chart 8 shows the proportion of regular users of a car, powered two-wheeler or a bicycle who felt that each of the three aspects related with traffic signal faults was their greatest concern.

It can be seen that the pattern of results is very similar to that relating to pedestrians and pedestrian crossings (Chart 6). The greatest concern by far was personal safety, with two fifths (44%) saying this was their main concern. Frustration and the delay caused were the greatest concern by around one in six (15% and 12% respectively). One in five (25%) thought that all three concerns were equally important.

Chart 8: Greatest concern among car / P2W / cycle users when traffic signals are not working



People aged 65 or more were most likely of all age groups to name personal safety (54%).

Females were more concerned about personal safety than males (49% vs. 40% respectively). Males, on the other hand, were more concerned than females about the frustration at being delayed (19% vs. 11% respectively).

Those in Central boroughs (made up of City of London, City of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea) were most likely of all borough areas to be concerned about their personal safety of having to cross without the lights working (59% said this).

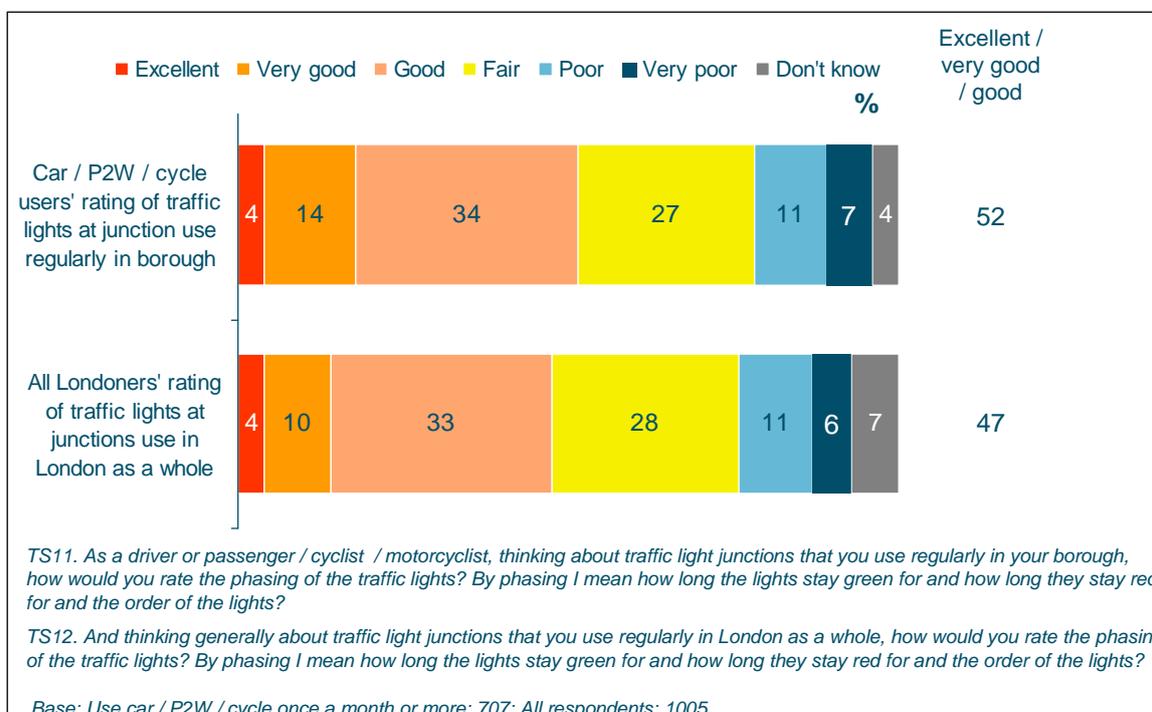
4. Traffic signal phasing

People interviewed were asked various questions about the phasing of traffic lights.

Firstly, people were asked to give their overall opinion of traffic light phasing in London, taking their response from a six-point scale from excellent to very poor.

Chart 9 shows that around half of regular users of a car, powered two-wheeler or a bicycle (52%) said the phasing at traffic light junctions they use regularly in their borough were either excellent, very good or good. The majority of this 52% is made up with people saying 'good' (34%), while a much smaller proportion said 'excellent' or 'very good' (18%).

Chart 9: Overall opinion of traffic light phasing



Around one in five (18%) said the phasing was poor or very poor.

People aged over 65 years old were most likely to say excellent, very good or good (58%), along with 16-24 year-olds (61%) and 25-35 year-olds (58%).

The pattern of results among all Londoners is similar to those of regular vehicle users. Around half (47%) said the phasing at traffic light junctions they use regularly in London as a whole were either excellent, very good or good. The majority of this 47% is made up with people saying 'good' (33%), while a much smaller proportion said 'excellent' or 'very good' (14%).

Around one on five (17%) said the phasing was poor or very poor.

The proportion rating the phasing of traffic lights as excellent, very good or good was the same in each of the three traffic signal maintenance company areas (52% in all three areas). The three maintenance companies are:

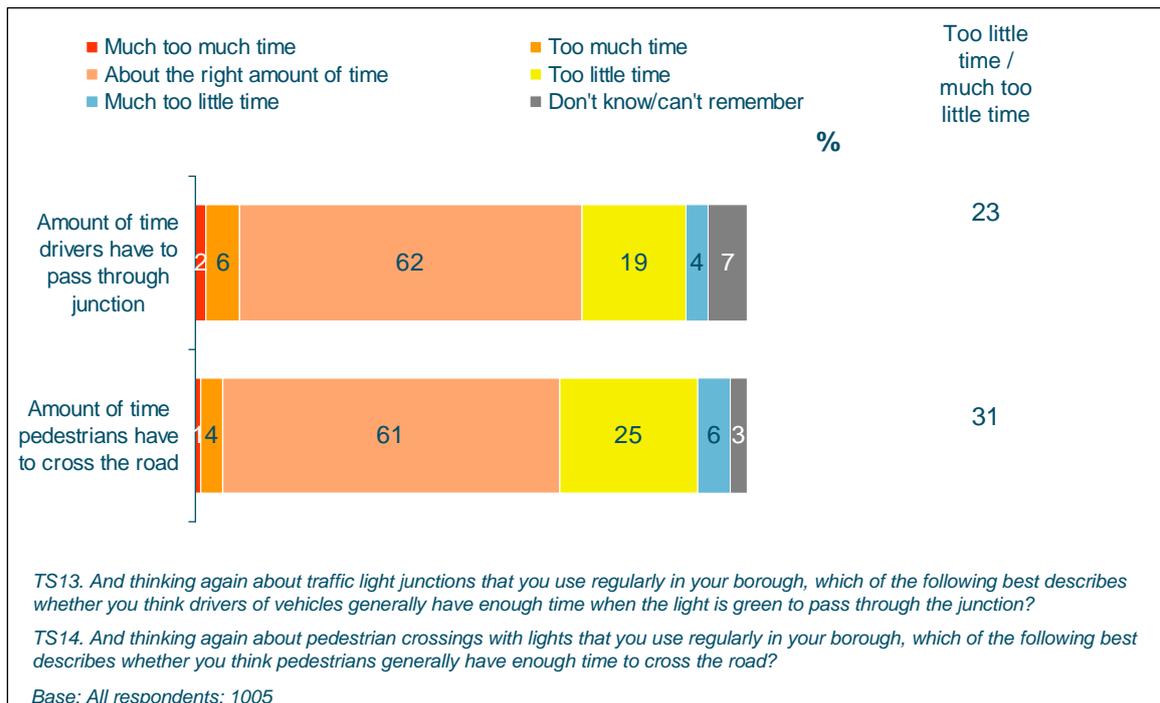
- Serco (responsible for maintenance in City of London, Westminster, Camden, Islington, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Kensington & Chelsea, Brent, Harrow, Barnet, Haringey, Enfield);
- Peek (Greenwich, Lewisham, Southwark, Lambeth, Wandsworth, Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Havering, Barking & Dagenham, Newham, Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Sutton, Merton, Kingston Upon Thames);
- Siemens (Hammersmith & Fulham, Richmond Upon Thames, Hounslow, Hillingdon, Ealing).

Those surveyed were asked to what extent they thought that drivers of vehicles generally had too much or too little time to cross junctions when they have a green signal. The same question was asked in relation to pedestrians and crossing the road at pedestrian crossings with signals.

Chart 10 shows that around two thirds (62%) thought that drivers have enough time, while a quarter (23%) thought they had too little time (either 'too little' or 'much too little'). Around one in ten (8%) thought they had too much time.

The pattern of results relating to the amount of time pedestrians have when they have a green signal is very similar to that of drivers of vehicles. Around two thirds (61%) thought that pedestrians have enough time, while a third (31%) thought they had too little time. Around one in twenty (5%) thought they had too much time.

Chart 10: Perception of amount of time drivers and pedestrians have to cross junction / road



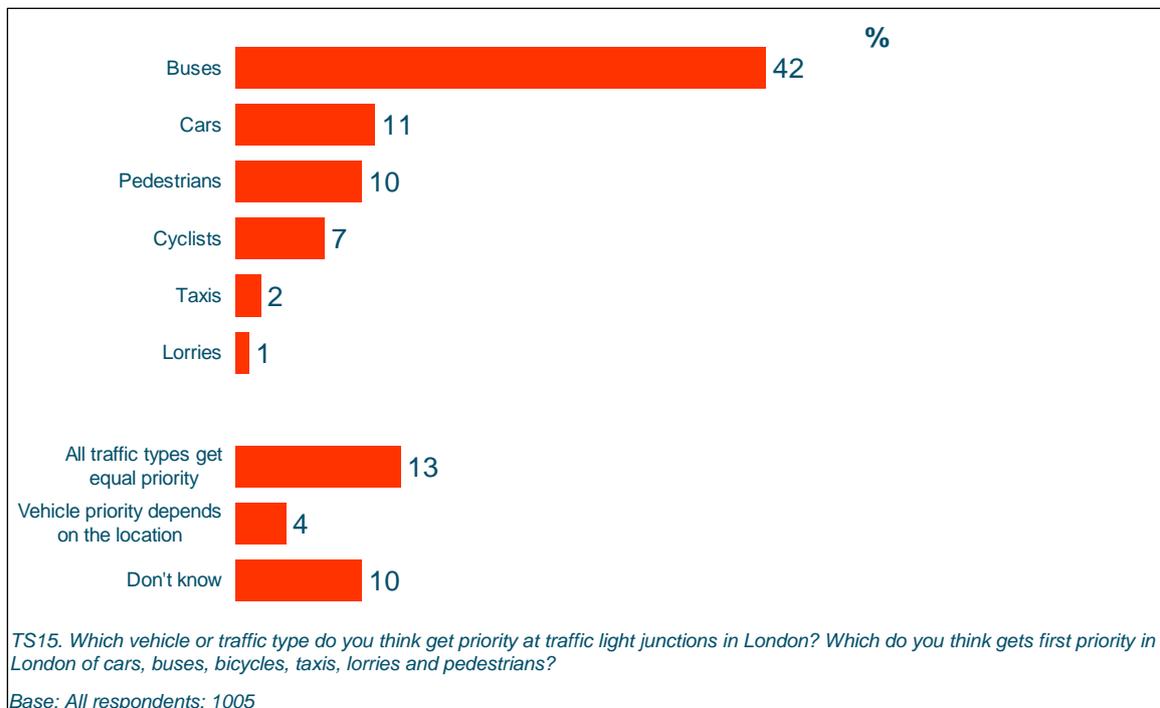
Females were more likely to say that pedestrians had too little time (35%) than males (27%).

Chart 11 shows the proportion of Londoners who think that each traffic types gets priority at junctions. It shows that the vehicle type thought to have highest priority by most is buses (42% thought they had highest priority).

Other vehicles were thought to have highest priority by a much smaller proportion. Around one in ten (11%) thought cars had priority, while a similar proportion said pedestrians (10%). Cyclists were thought by a smaller proportion to have priority (7%).

Taxis and lorries were thought by the smallest proportion to have priority (2% and 1% respectively said these).

Chart 11: Perception of which vehicle or traffic type gets priority at signal junctions in London



One in eight (13%) said that all traffic types were equally likely to get priority. One in twenty (4%) said that vehicle priority depends on the location. One in ten (10%) did not know or had no opinion.

People aged 65 or more are most likely of all age groups to say that all traffic types get equal priority (19%) and are also most likely to say don't know (18%).

Those living in the Outer West boroughs (made up of Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Richmond Upon Thames) were most likely of all borough grouping to say buses have priority over other traffic types (50% say this).

Those living in the Outer West boroughs (made up of Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Richmond Upon Thames) and Central boroughs (made up of City of London, City of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea) were least likely of all boroughs to say cars have priority over other traffic types (4% and 6% respectively).

Those living in Central boroughs (made up of City of London, City of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea) and Inner North boroughs (made up of Camden, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Islington, Newham, Tower Hamlets) are most likely of all boroughs to say bicycles have priority (14% and 10% respectively).

In the survey people were asked if they knew how often traffic signal phasing is reviewed in London (Chart 12). The vast majority of Londoners interviewed did not know how often signal phasing is reviewed. One in twenty (5%) believe it occurs every 6 months or less, and a similar proportion (4%) think it occurs once a year. One per cent knew correctly that it happens every two to three years (it actually happens every three years).

Chart 12: Perceived frequency of traffic signal phasing being reviewed in London

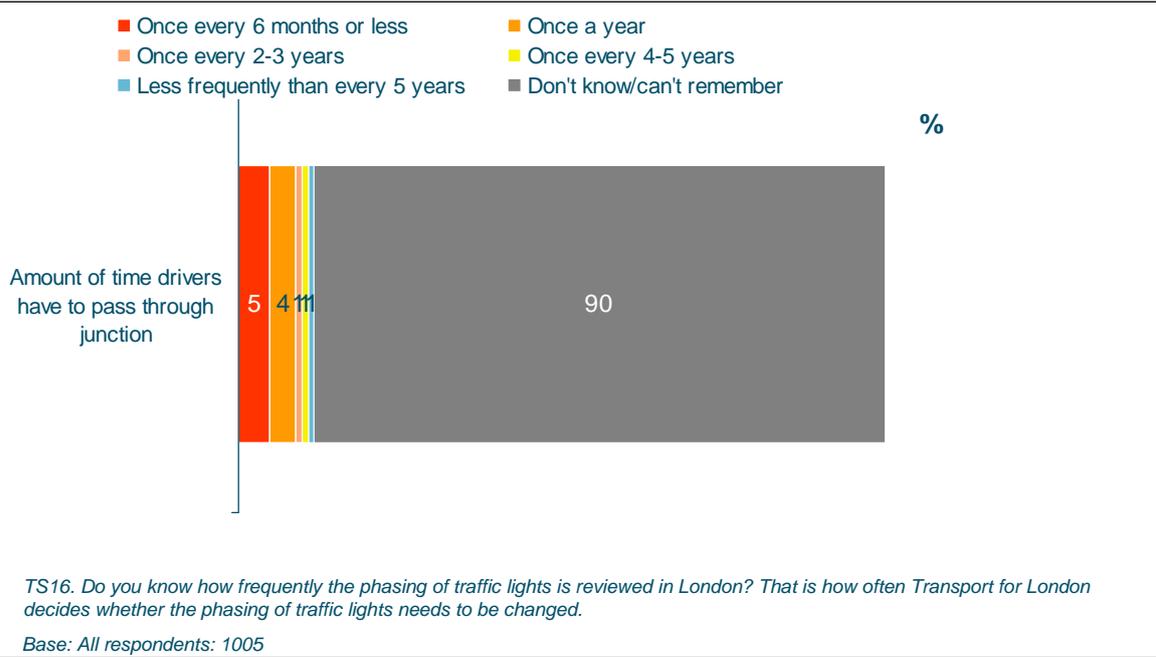
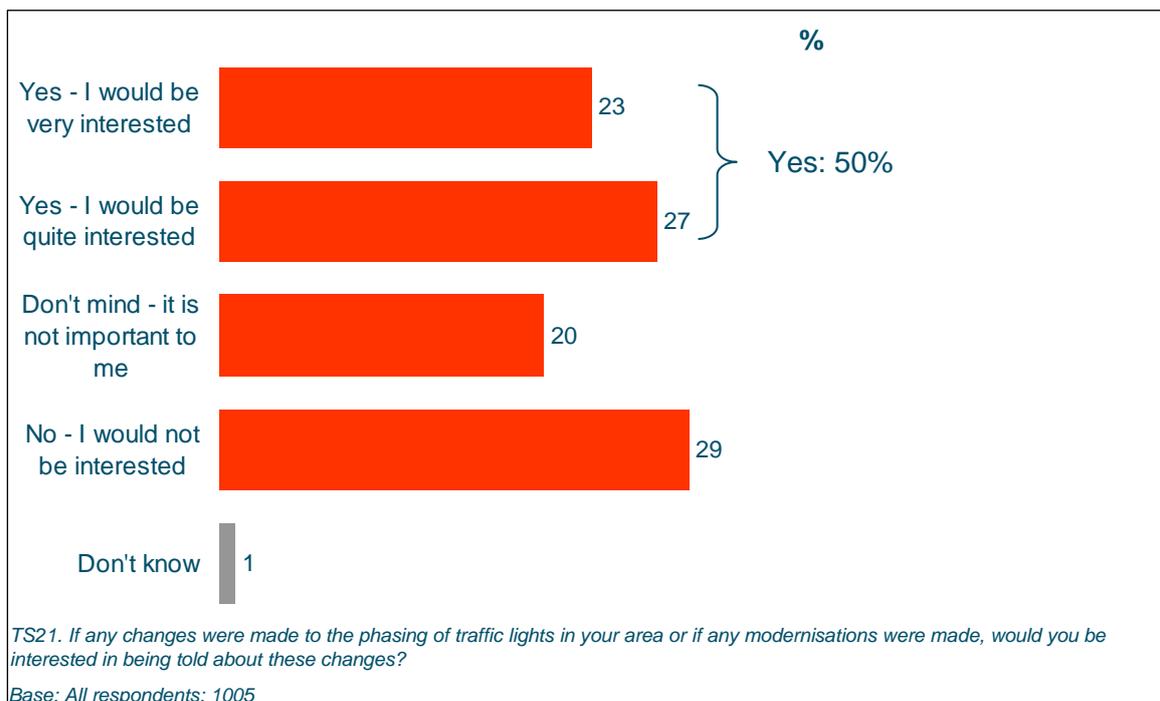


Chart 13 shows that half of Londoners (50%) are interested in being told in future about proposed changes to the phasing of traffic signals. Almost half of these (23% of all Londoners interviewed) are very interested.

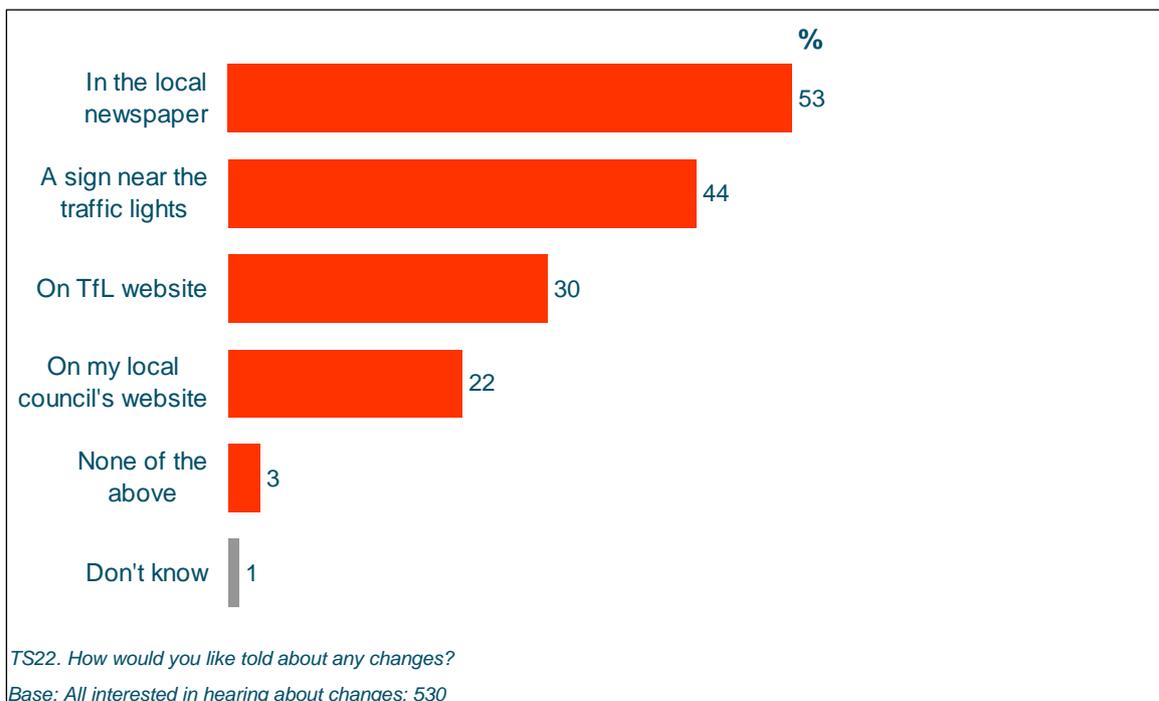
Interest in being told about intended changes is higher among people over 65 years (58%) than 16-24 year-olds (45%) and 25-34 year-olds (42%).

Chart 13: Interest in being told about changes to the phasing of traffic signals in future



Of those that are interested in being told in future about changes to phasing, the channel people are most likely to want to hear about them (Chart 14) are in the local newspaper (53%), followed by on a sign near the traffic lights (44%) and on the TfL website (30%) or council website (22%).

Chart 14: Channels through which would like to be told about any changes to the phasing of traffic signals in future



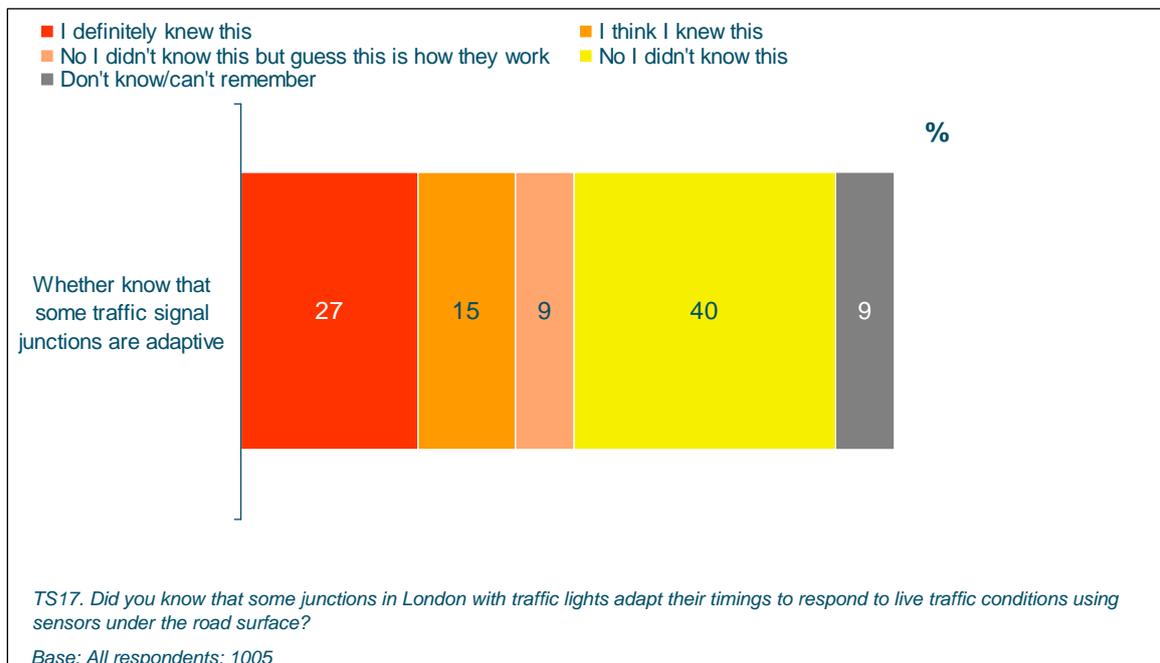
Over 65 year-olds are the age groups most likely to want to be told in the local newspaper (66%), but least likely to want to hear via the TfL website (16%).

The survey asked whether people were aware that some signals are controlled by a real time responsive traffic management computer system which uses information from vehicle detectors under roads.

From Chart 15 it is evident that around two fifths (42%) said they either definitely knew this or thought they knew it. Specifically, a quarter said they definitely knew this (27%) and one in six (15%) said they thought they knew this.

Two fifths (40%) said they did not know it, one in ten (9%) said they did not know / not sure, while the remaining one in ten (95) said they didn't know this but guessed that this is how they worked.

Chart 15: Whether know that some traffic signal junctions are adaptive (their timings respond to live traffic conditions)



Males were more likely to say that they were aware of these adaptive signal junctions than females, with half (49%) of males saying they definitely knew it or thought they knew it, compared to a third (36%) of females.

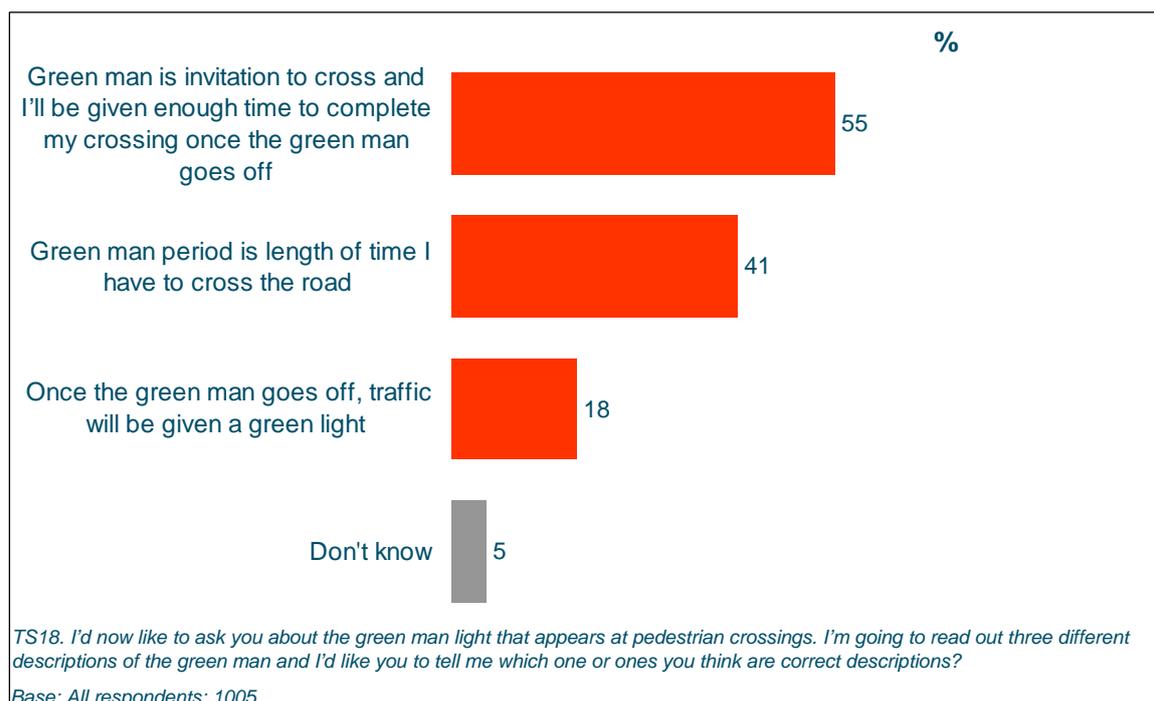
5. Pedestrian crossings

People interviewed were asked what their understanding is of the green man period, of what happens when you press the green man button on the wait box and the extent of their understanding of Pelican, Puffin and Junction pedestrian crossings.

People were read out three alternative explanations of what the 'green man period' period is and were asked to say which one or ones they thought was correct. Over half (55%) correctly understood that the green man period is an invitation to cross and that pedestrians will then have enough time to complete their crossing once the green man signal turns off.

Chart 16 shows that two fifths (41%) incorrectly thought the green man period is the length of time pedestrians have to cross the road. One in five (18%) incorrectly thought that once the green man signal goes off, traffic will be given a green light.

Chart 16: Understanding of green man period on pedestrian crossings



People aged 55-65 were most likely of all age groups to know correctly that the green man period is an invitation to cross and that pedestrians will then have enough time to complete their crossing once the green man signal turns off (60% said this).

People aged over 65 years were most likely of all age groups to say they did not know (9%).

Those in central boroughs (made up of City of London, City of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea) were most likely of all borough groupings to incorrectly believe that traffic will be given a green signal once the green man signal goes off (24% said this).

Londoners surveyed were read out descriptions of Pelican, Puffin and Junction crossings and were then to say how much they knew about each of them, choosing their answer from a scale of four responses shown in Chart 17.

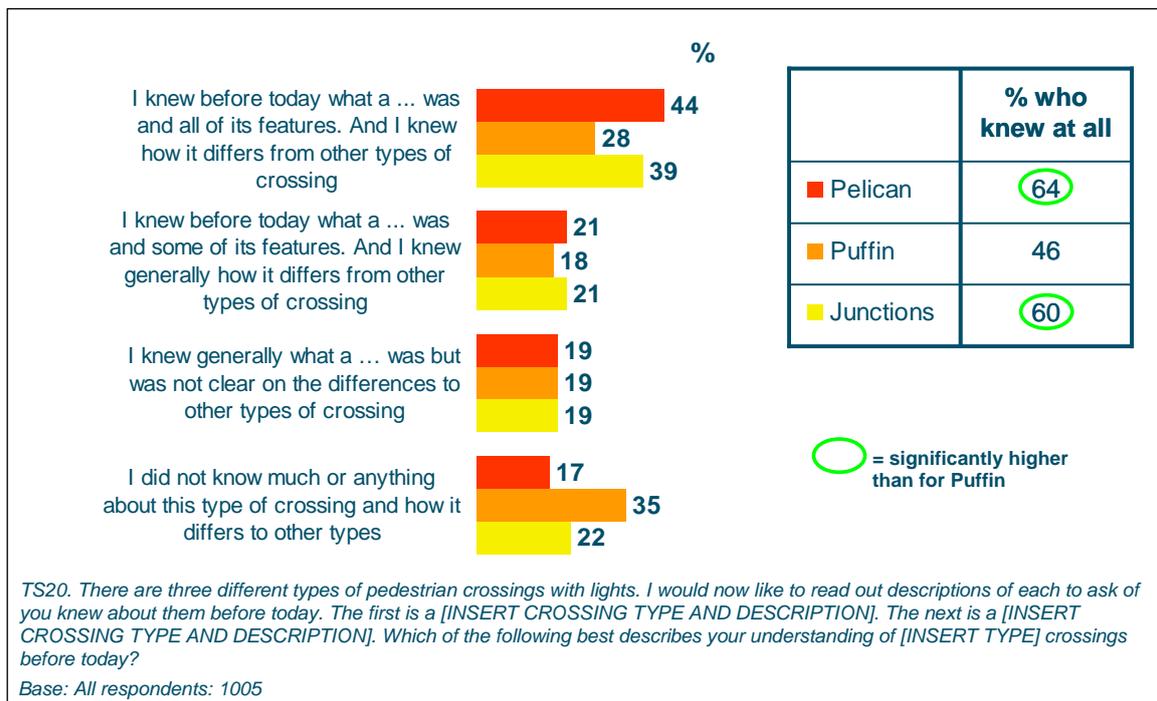
The descriptions of the three crossing types read out to interviewees are as follows:

- "Pelican Crossing, where the green man to cross the road is on the opposite side of the crossing. The solid green man is followed by a flashing green man. During the flashing green man period, traffic is shown a flashing amber light."
- "Puffin Crossing, which have a red and green man on the push button box. And this box with the red and green man is on the side of the crossing you are waiting at, The green man is immediately followed by a red man which stops people from starting to cross the road, but allows people already on the crossing enough time to cross. Electronic detectors make sure that vehicles do not move until the crossing is clear of people crossing."
- "Junction - In most cases at a junction people crossing are shown a green man to tell them they can cross, followed by a period when neither the green man or red man lights are showing, which makes sure that people on the crossing have enough time to cross safely, before any vehicles move."

It can be seen that two thirds of people (64%) knew at least some of the features of the Pelican crossing and generally how it differs from other crossing types. (Within this

64%, 44% said they knew all of its features, while 21% said they knew some of its features and generally knew how they differ from other crossings).

Chart 17: Claimed knowledge of pelican crossings, puffin crossings and junction



The proportion who knew at least some of the features of the Junction crossing and generally how it differs from other crossing types was similar to that of Pelican crossing, with three fifths (60%) saying this.

Understanding of the Puffin crossing was lowest of the three crossing types, with approaching half (46%) saying they knew at least some of its features and generally how it differs to other crossing types. A third said they did not know much or anything about Puffin crossings (35%), significantly higher than the proportion saying this about Pelican (17%) and Junction (22%) crossings.

People aged over 65 years were most likely of all age groups not to know each of the three crossing types. A quarter said they did not know anything or knew little about Pelican crossings, half (51%) said this of Puffin crossings and a quarter (29%) of junction crossings.

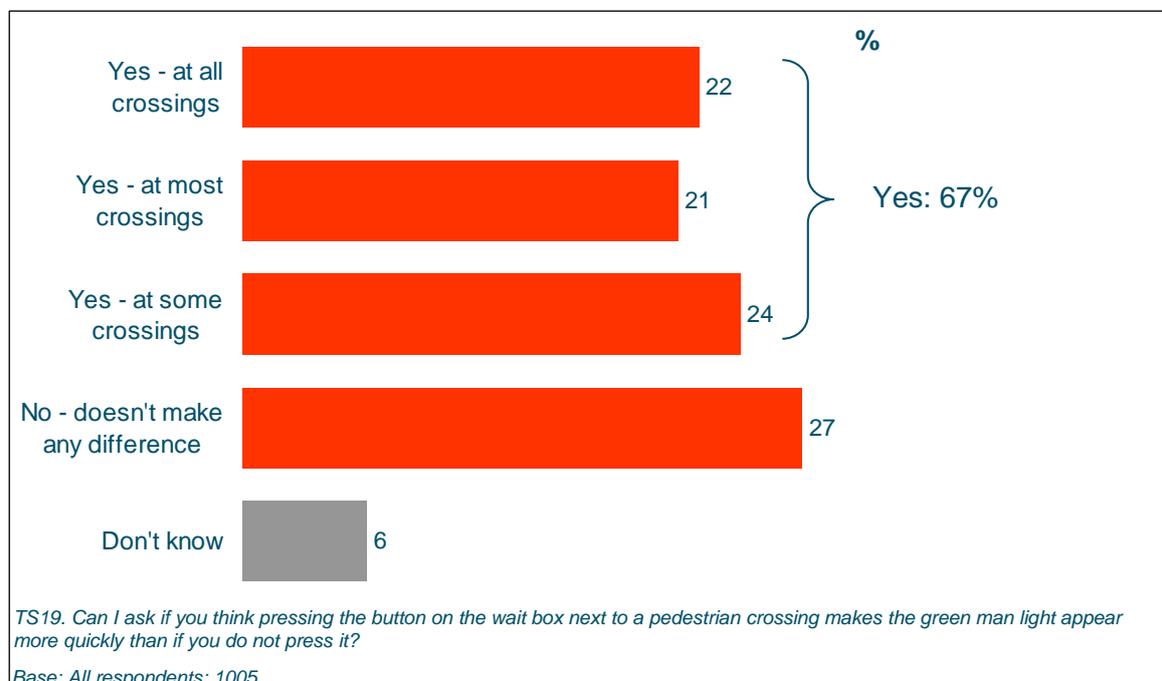
Those in central boroughs (made up of City of London, City of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea) were most likely of all borough groupings to say they know little or nothing about Pelican crossings (23% said this) and Puffin crossings (50%).

People were asked in the interview whether they thought pressing the button on the wait unit next to a crossing makes the green man signal appear more quickly than if you do not press it.

As can be seen in Chart 18, two thirds thought this is the case, at least at some crossings. Around a fifth thought this is the case at all crossings (22%), and the same proportion say this of most crossings (21%) and some crossings (24%).

A quarter (27%) did not think that pressing the button on the wait box made any difference to how quickly the green man signal appears.

Chart 18: Whether think pressing button on wait unit next to crossing makes green man signal appear more quickly than if you do not press it



Over 65 year-olds were most likely of all groups to say they did not know (13% said this).

6. Compliance with traffic signals

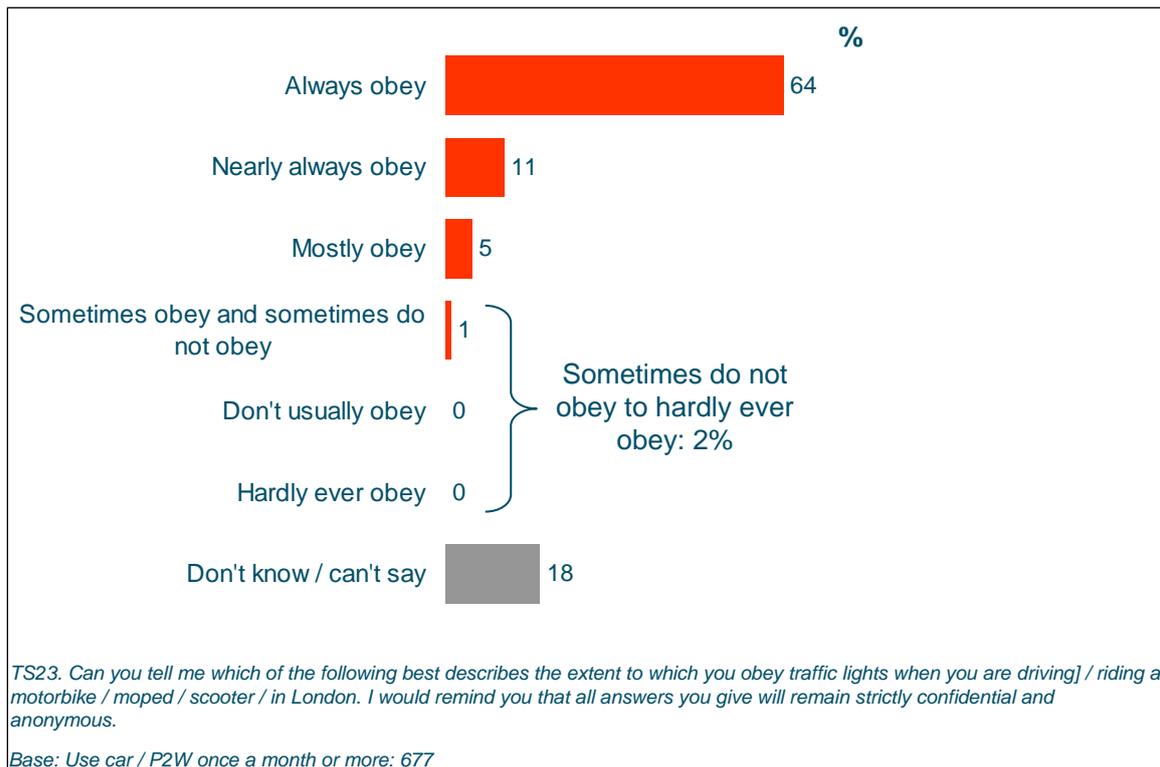
At the end of the interview, people were asked to what extent they obeyed traffic signals in London. People were asked to answer as car drivers / P2W riders, as cyclists and as pedestrians separately.

To reassure those interviewed and to encourage candid responses, interviewees were reminded that all answers they give will remain strictly confidential and anonymous.

From Chart 19 it can be seen that two thirds of car drivers / P2W riders said they always obey traffic signals, one in ten (11%) nearly always obey them and one in twenty (5%) mostly obey them.

Two per cent said they either sometimes do not obey, do not usually obey or hardly ever obey them. Those who give one of these three responses are most likely to be aged 16-24 (7% of this age group).

Chart 19: Extent to which car drivers / powered two-wheeler riders obey traffic signals in London

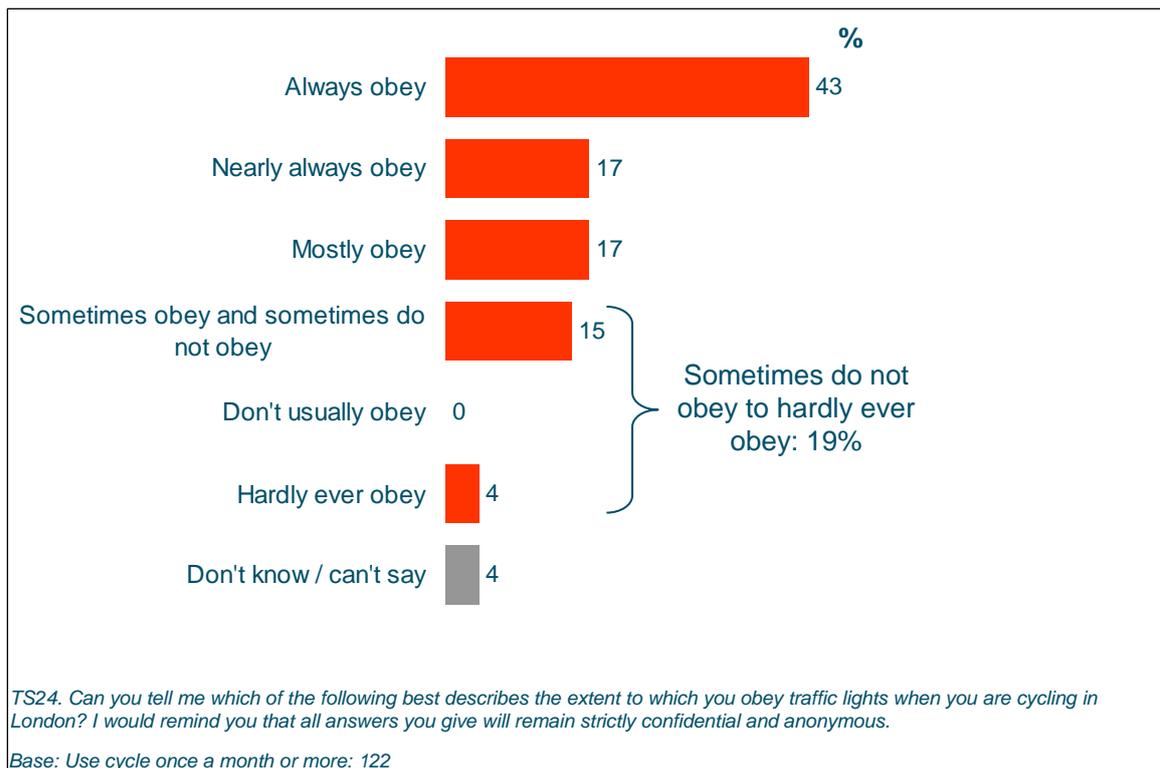


Powered vehicle users living in Inner North boroughs (made up of Camden, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Islington, Newham, Tower Hamlets) were most likely of all boroughs to say they sometimes do not or hardly ever obey traffic lights (5% said this).

Chart 20 shows that two fifths of cyclists (43%) said they always obey traffic signals, one in six (17%) nearly always obey them and one in six (17%) mostly obey them.

A fifth (19%) said they either sometimes do not obey, do not usually obey or hardly ever obey them. Within this group, one in twenty cyclists (4%) said they hardly ever obey traffic signals. Those who give one of these three responses are most likely to be aged 16-24 (7% of this age group).

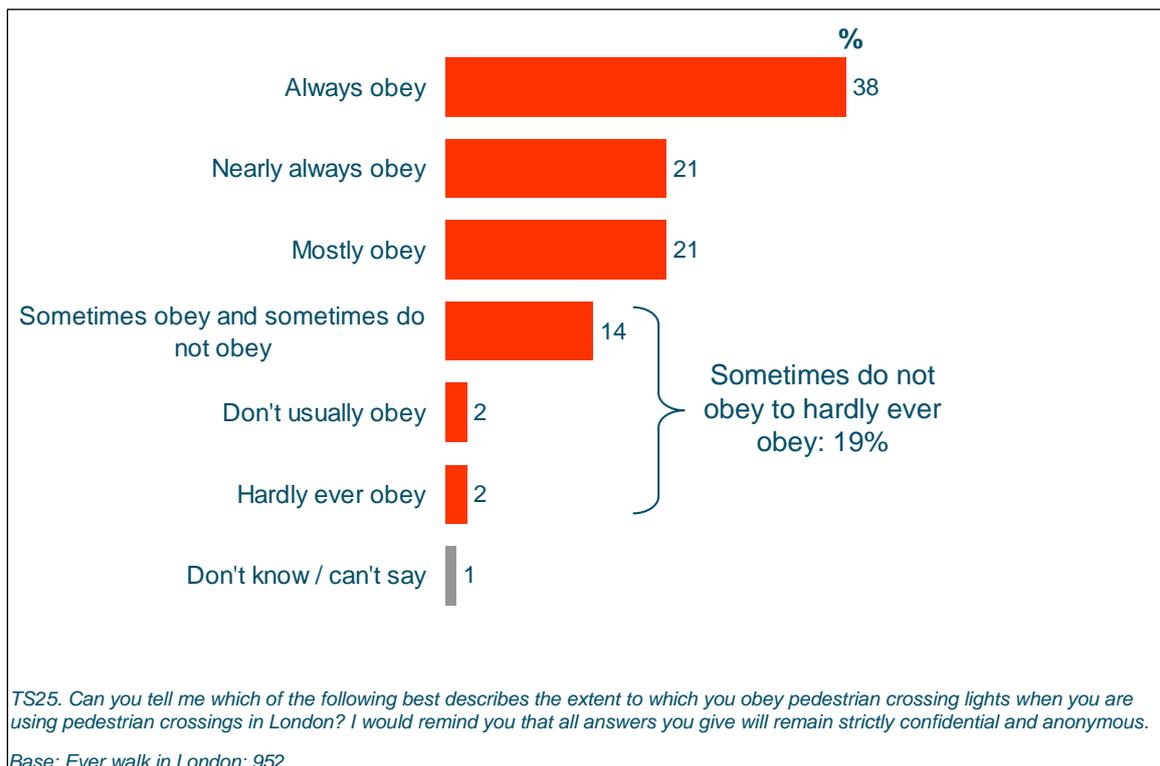
Chart 20: Extent to which cyclists obey traffic signals in London



From Chart 21 it can be seen that two fifths of pedestrians (38%) said they always obey traffic signals, one in five (21%) nearly always obey them and one in five (21%) mostly obey them.

A fifth (19%) said they either sometimes do not obey, do not usually obey or hardly ever obey them. Within this group, one in twenty pedestrians (2%) said they hardly ever obey traffic signals. Those who give one of these three responses are most likely to be aged 16-24 (31% of this age group) or 25-34 (20%).

Chart 21: Extent to which pedestrians obey pedestrian crossing signals in London



Pedestrians living in inner boroughs were significantly more likely than those living in outer boroughs to say they sometimes do not or hardly ever obey pedestrian crossing lights (24% of those in inner London said this, while 15% of those in outer London said this).