

**Dial-a-Ride usage
and member
profile**

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Contents

1.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
2.	INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	5
3.	AGE AND GENDER PROFILE OF THE MEMBER GROUPS.....	8
4.	REASONS FOR JOINING DIAL-A-RIDE.....	10
5.	AWARENESS THAT DAR SERVICE IS FREE OF CHARGE.....	14
6.	USAGE OF DIAL-A-RIDE	16
6.1	Number of Times Used, When Last Used and Proportion of all Trips Dial-a-Ride is Used For.....	16
6.2	Changes in Usage of Dial-a-Ride since January 2008	19
6.3	Perceived Impact of Free Fares on Future Use	23
6.4	Reasons for not Using Dial-a-Ride.....	25
7	SATISFACTION WITH DIAL-A-RIDE	27
7.1	Overall Satisfaction	27
7.2	Ease of Arranging Trips	28
7.3	Difficulties Experienced with Free Travel.....	30

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Research conducted by Synovate

1. Executive Summary

In October 2007, it was announced that Dial-a-Ride (DaR) would no longer be charging fares. The policy was implemented in January 2008.

New registrations for Dial-a-Ride increased following the announcement of free fares (to 721 during October to December 2007 from around 550 in the previous two quarters), and again following the implementation of the policy (to 873 during January to March 2008). Similarly, the number of requests from January to March 2008 increased to 116,527 (from around 105,000 in the previous two quarters).

A quantitative telephone survey was conducted by Synovate in order to assess the effect of the announcement and introduction of free fares on registrations, inactive users and current users. Four groups of DaR members were included in the research:

- Those who registered between October and December 2007;
- Those who registered from January 2008 onwards;
- Those who became active DaR users again from January 2008 onwards after a period of inactivity of at least six months;
- A representative sample of users who joined between December 2005 and September 2007.

Awareness among DaR members of the fares for DaR becoming free is high.

Awareness is lower among joiners since the announcement of free fares than those who joined before the announcement:

- Eight in ten of those who joined between December 2005 and September 2007 and those inactive for six months or more until January 2008 were aware that the service is free. A lower proportion (seven in ten) of those joining between October and December 2007 and since January 2008 knew this.

The service being free emerges as a very minor reason for people deciding to register with Dial-a-Ride members after the announcement and introduction of free fares:

- When asked without being prompted with a list of possible reasons, the main reasons given for becoming a member of Dial-a-Ride related to mobility, disability and health reasons. A very small minority of those who registered since the announcement of the free fares (2%) said that they became a member because it is free;
- When prompted with a list of possible reasons, around a third of those who had joined since January 2008 and just over a quarter of those who joined between October and December 2007 said the free fares were a reason for them registering. However, the importance of free fares as a reason for joining was relatively low, as the proportion of these two groups who named free fares as a reason (when prompted) were lower than thirteen of the fifteen reasons read out to members in the survey;
- When asked to name *one main* reason for joining DaR, mobility issues were named as the main reason by far for all four groups, with around a quarter of each group saying this. The Dial-a-Ride service becoming or being free was named by only one per cent of those who joined between October and December 2007 and of those between January and March 2008.

The DaR service becoming free was a minor reason for people deciding to use the service more since the introduction of free fares:

- The most common reason given (without prompting with a list) for using Dial-a-Ride more since January 2008 than before was to make certain types of journeys or go to certain places, mentioned by around a quarter. A very small proportion (3%) spontaneously mentioned the introduction of free fares as a reason for using Dial-a-Ride more since January 2008;
- When prompted with a list of possible reasons, a quarter said that free fares was a reason for them using Dial-a-Ride more, but this proportion is relatively low compared to other reasons;
- When asked to name *one main* reason for using DaR more since the introduction of free fares, around a quarter said it was due to their illness becoming worse, followed by one in seven naming convenience. Around one in twenty (4%) stated the service becoming free as their main reason, indicating that it is significantly less important than other factors.

Although the DaR service becoming free was a minor reason for people deciding to use the service more since the introduction of free fares, around quarter to a third said they would use the service more in future because it is free:

- The majority of DaR members (over half to two thirds) said that the introduction of free fares would not impact on the amount they use the service in the future. Around a quarter (28%) of those who joined DaR

between December 2005 and October 2007 said the introduction of free travel would result in them using Dial-a-Ride more in the future. Joiners since the announcement were similarly likely to say so (34% on average) and members who became active again (33%).

As was the case in the Customer Satisfaction Survey, the scores for the ease of arranging trips were lower than satisfaction overall:

- The average satisfaction score for ease of arranging trips ranged between 4.8 and 6.8 (on a 0 to 10 scale) for the four groups, compared to 7.2 to 8.1 for overall satisfaction.
- Satisfaction with ease of arranging trips was lower among recent joiners those who joined between October and December 2007 (4.8) and those who joined since January 2008 (5.1) than the other two member groups who joined previous to October 2007.

2. Introduction and Research Objectives

Dial-a-Ride is a door-to-door bus service for disabled Londoners who have difficulties using conventional public transport. Until recently, fares were charged for this service, but in October 2007, it was announced that Dial-a-Ride would no longer be charging fares. The policy was implemented in January 2008.

New registrations for Dial-a-Ride increased following the announcement of free fares (to 721 during October to December 2007 from around 550 in the previous two quarters), and again following the implementation of the policy (to 873 during January to March 2008). Similarly, the number of requests during January to March 2008 increased to 116,527 (from around 105,000 in the previous two quarters).

Research was conducted by Synovate in order to assess the effect of the announcement and introduction of free fares on registrations, inactive users and current users. This report contains the findings from this research.

Furthermore, as part of the exercise, desk research was conducted on the Dial-a-Ride database of registrations to determine the profile of those registered between October and December 2007, since January 2008 and inactive users that have become recently active.

The objectives of the customer research were:

1. To determine the extent to which free fares – in the context of other motivations - accounts for the increase in Dial-a-Ride registrations among the following groups:
 - Those who registered between October and December 2007 (i.e. after the announcement of free fares but before their introduction);
 - Those who registered from January 2008 onwards (i.e. after free fares for Dial-a-Ride were introduced);

2. To assess the extent to which free fares accounts for inactive Dial-a-Ride users becoming active again following the introduction of free fares in January 2008;
3. To establish the extent to which Dial-a-Ride users are using the service more, or making more requests, as a result of the service becoming free.
4. To determine the profile of those registered between October and December 2007, since January 2008 and inactive users that have become recently active.

The research was undertaken in July 2008 and comprised a telephone survey of four groups of Dial-a-Ride members:

1. *Those who registered between October and December 2007:* in order to assess the impact of the free fares announcement on the decision to register with Dial-a-Ride;
2. *Those who registered from January 2008 onwards:* in order to assess the impact of the implementation of free fares on the decision to register with Dial-a-Ride;
3. *Those who became active DaR users again from January 2008 onwards after a period of inactivity of at least six months:* in order to assess the role of free fares in encouraging inactive users to use Dial-a-Ride again;
4. *A representative sample of users who joined between December 2005 and September 2007:* in order to explore whether free fares have increased their usage of Dial-a-Ride or requests for usage of the service.

A total of 407 interviews were conducted, with targets of 100 interviews with each group. Quotas were set on gender and age for each of the groups, approximately in line with the proportions in the database (from the desk research exercise).

Table 1 shows the weighted demographic profile for each of the member groups.

Table 1: Sample size of the four different sample groups

Sample size					
	Oct - Dec 2007	Since Jan 2008	Inactive till Jan 2008	Pre Oct 2007	Total
Sample size	102	102	102	101	407

Please note that the period from December 2005 to September 2007 is abbreviated to 'Pre Oct 2007' in charts throughout this report.

Weighting was applied to the data at the analysis stage in order to ensure the each of the four samples matched the gender and age profile as per the database.

To address any issues with the telephone approach in terms of respondents' capabilities, where possible, a carer was interviewed if the registered member was unable to participate in the telephone interview, (a method previously adopted for the Dial-a-Ride Customer Satisfaction Survey). In total 14% of interviews were conducted with carers.

3. Age and Gender Profile of the Member Groups

Table 2 below shows the age and gender profile of the four different groups according to the database of members.

It can be seen that those who joined in October to December 2007 or from January to March 2008 are more likely to be male than those who had been inactive users for at least six months and those who joined between December 2005 and September 2007.

Those who joined between December 2005 and September 2007 are more likely to be 80 or more years old than the other three groups, which is to a certain extent to be expected, since the other three groups joined more recently.

Table 2: Age and gender profile of member groups (according to database)

Age and Gender Profile of User Groups (According to Database)				
	Oct - Dec 07	Since Jan 08	Inactive till Jan 08	Pre Oct 07
<i>Number of records in database</i>	1,589	4430	774	35,189
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	29	30	24	24
Female	71	70	76	76
<i>Age</i>				
Under 65	21	20	21	18
65-79	34	35	32	28
80+	45	45	47	54

Table 3 overleaf shows the weighted demographic profile of those we interviewed from each of the four groups. There are no statistically significant differences between member groups.

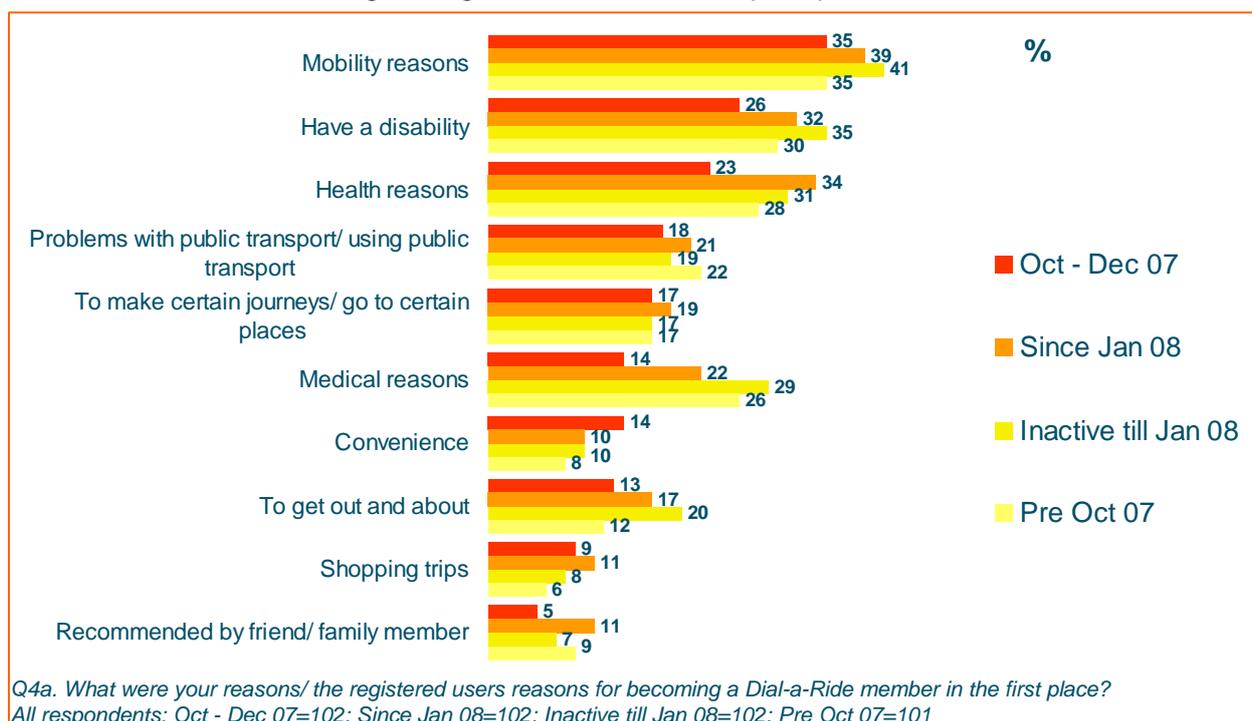
Table 3: Weighted demographic profile of those interviewed

Weighted Demographic Profile of Those Interviewed				
	Oct - Dec 07 (n=102)	Since Jan 08 (n=102)	Inactive till Jan 08 (n=102)	Pre Oct 07 (n=101)
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	29	30	24	24
Female	71	69	76	76
<i>Age</i>				
Under 65	21	20	21	18
65-79	33	35	32	28
80+	45	45	47	53
<i>Working Status</i>				
Work full time	1	3	1	0
Work part time	1	2	2	2
No paid job – housewife or househusband	3	2	1	0
No paid job – unable to work	16	7	13	12
Unemployed and looking for work	1	5	4	0
Retired	77	80	80	83
Student	0	0	0	1
<i>Ethnic Group</i>				
White	82	81	78	75
BAME	15	13	18	15

4. Reasons for Joining Dial-a-Ride

All member groups were asked for their reasons for becoming a Dial-a-Ride member in the first place. They were first asked to give their answer without being prompted at all with possible reasons. The question was subsequently asked with possible reasons read out to people, so that they could say whether each reason was one that applied to them when they became a Dial-a-Ride member. The extent to which the reasons were mentioned are shown on Charts 1 and 2.

Chart 1: Reasons for registering with Dial-a-Ride - unprompted



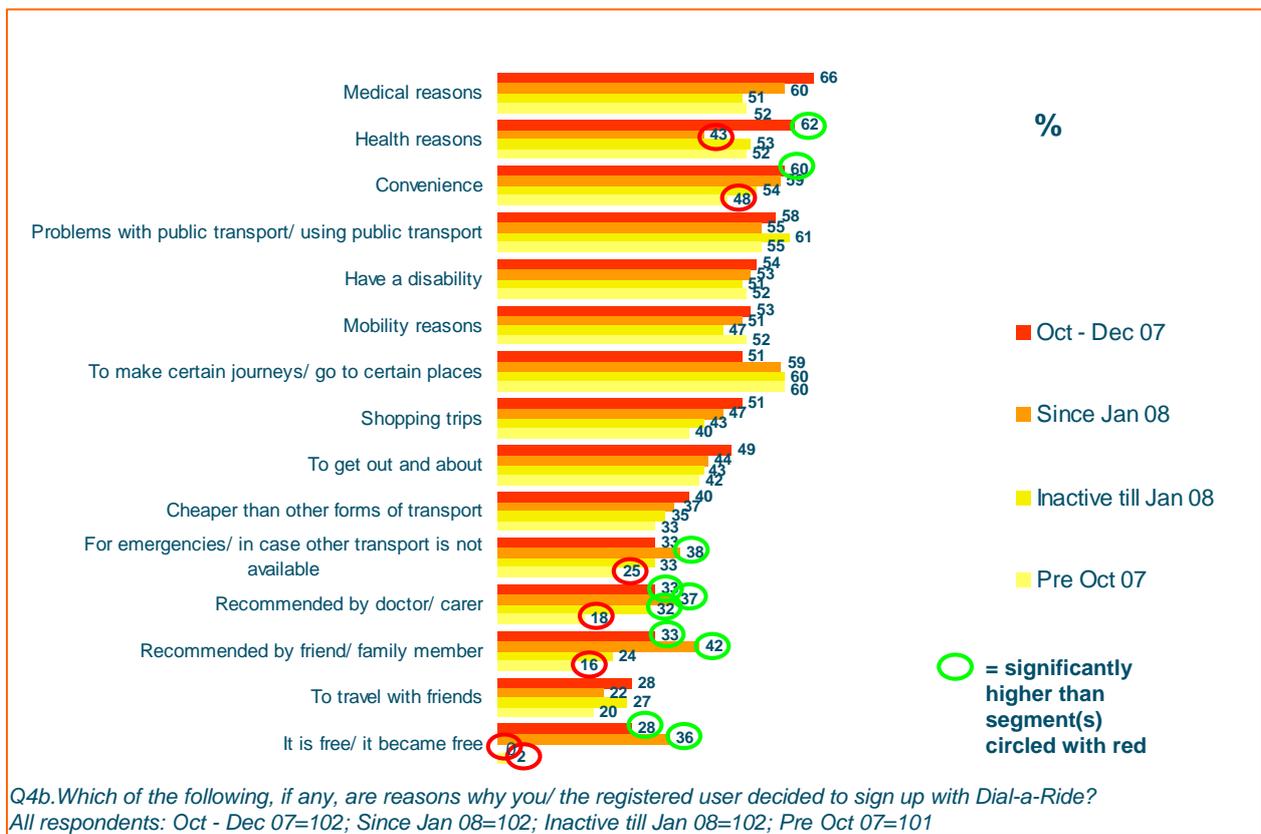
A wide range of reasons were given by members at the unprompted question, with the main mentions being mobility reasons, having a disability, and health reasons. There are no significant differences between member groups or by key demographic groups.

A very small minority said that they became a Dial-a-Ride member because it is free. Specifically, two per cent of each of the groups except for those inactive until January 2008 (0%) gave this as a reason.

When people were prompted with a list of possible reasons for joining Dial-a-Ride, seven reasons emerged as the most important, namely medical reasons, health reasons, convenience, because of problems using public transport, being disabled and because of mobility reasons.

Those registering in October to December 2007 were significantly more likely than those who joined from January to March 2008 to mention medical and health reasons.

Chart 2: Reasons for registering with Dial-a-Ride - prompted



Around a third of those who had joined since January 2008 (36%) and just over a quarter of those who joined between October and December 2007 (28%) said the free fares were a reason for them registering.¹ The proportion of these two groups who named free fares as a reason (when prompted) was lower than thirteen of the fifteen reasons read out to members in the survey, indicating that it was less important than the majority of reasons.

After being asked their reasons for joining both unprompted and then prompted, people were asked to give their one *main* reason for joining Dial-a-Ride.

It can be seen from Chart 3 overleaf that mobility issues were named as the top mention by far for all four groups, with around a quarter of each group saying this. The next most common reasons were “to get out and about” and “health reasons”.

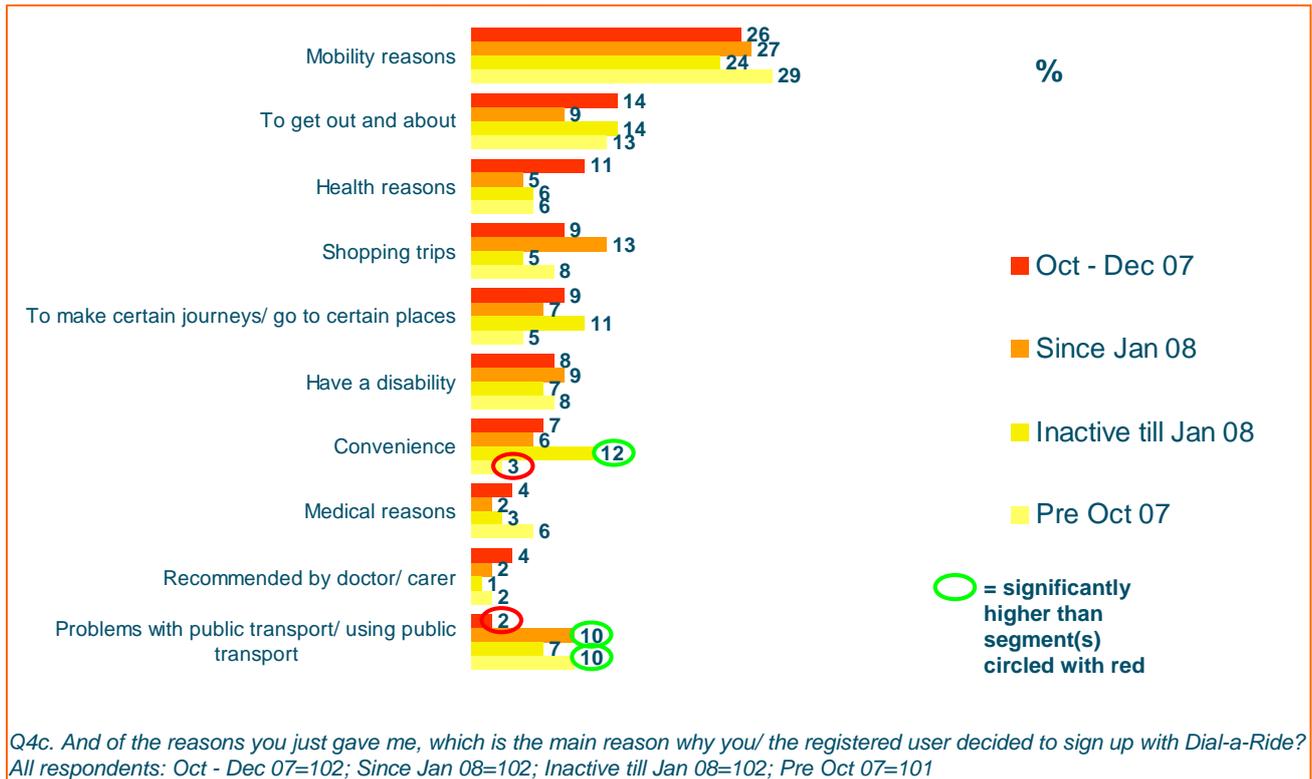
The Dial-a-Ride service becoming or being free was named by only one per cent of those who joined between October and December 2007 and those between January and March 2008.

Those who had become active users again in January 2008 after being inactive for at least six months were more likely than those who joined between September 2005 and December 2007 to name convenience as a main reason for joining.

Those who joined between October and December 2007 were less likely than others to name problems with using public transport as their main reason for joining.

¹ Of people joining between September 2005 and December 2007, two per cent named free fares as a reason (which would not have been the case when they joined). This apparent discrepancy can probably be attributed to confusion on the part of this small minority giving this reason.

Chart 3: Main reason for registering with Dial-a-Ride

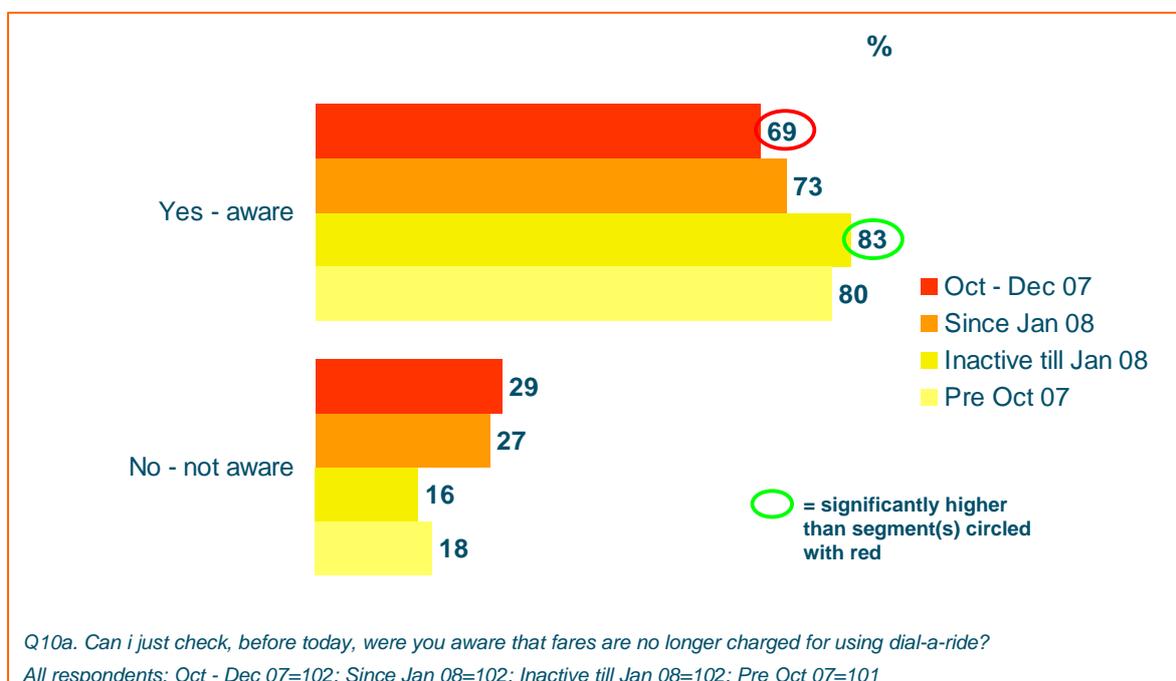


5. Awareness that DaR Service is Free of Charge

It can be seen from Chart 4 that around 80% of those who joined between December 2005 and September 2007 and those inactive for at least six months until January 2008 were aware that the service is free. Around 70% of the other two groups of more recent joiners (those joining between October and December 2007 and those who joined since January 2008) knew this.

The level of awareness of those who joined between October and December 2007 (69%) was significantly lower than those inactive for at least six months until January 2008 (83%).

Chart 4: Whether aware that fares are no longer charged for the Dial-a-Ride service



Awareness was significantly higher among those who have used Dial-a-Ride more than ten times (88% compared with 74% of those who have used the service less than

ten times and 65% of those who have never used it). Women were more likely than men to be aware of this (79% compared with 68%).

6. Usage of Dial-a-Ride

6.1 Number of Times Used, When Last Used and Proportion of all Trips Dial-a-Ride is Used For

Chart 5 shows the number of times registered members have actually used the service. Unsurprisingly, those who joined the service more recently have used the service less, with 16% of those who joined since January 2008 having used it more than ten times, increasing to 57% of those who joined prior to October 2007. Those who joined between October and December 2007 or since January 2008 are also more likely to have never used the service.

Chart 5: Number of times have used Dial-a-Ride

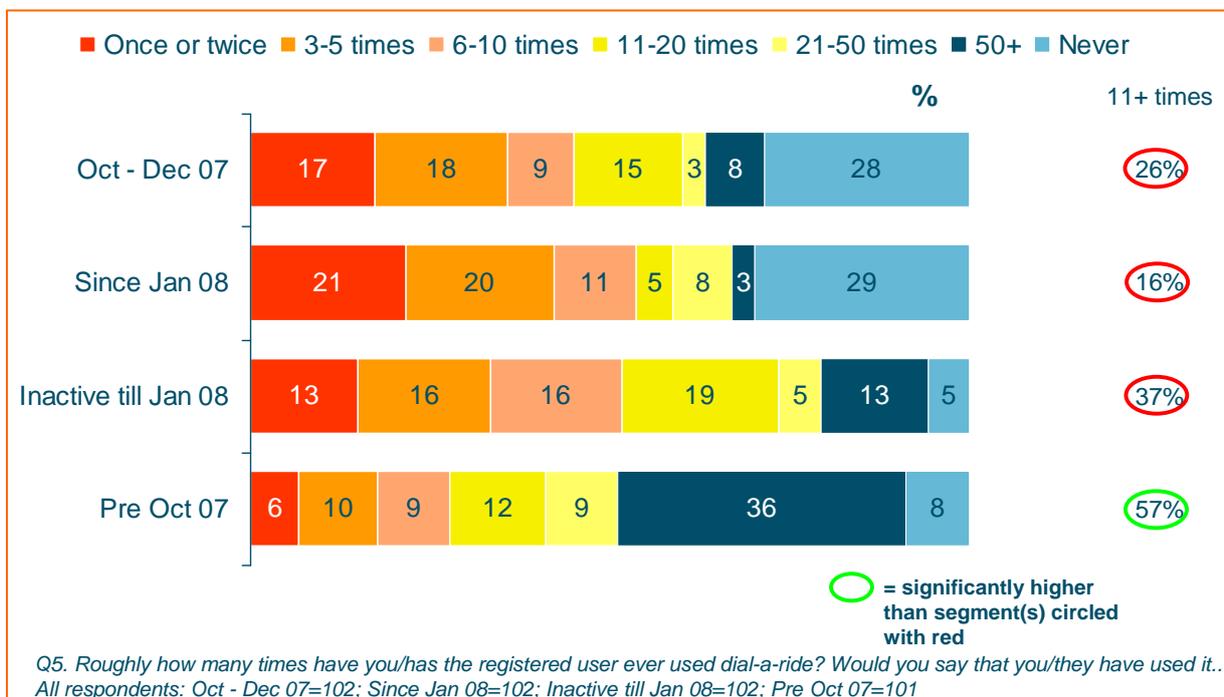
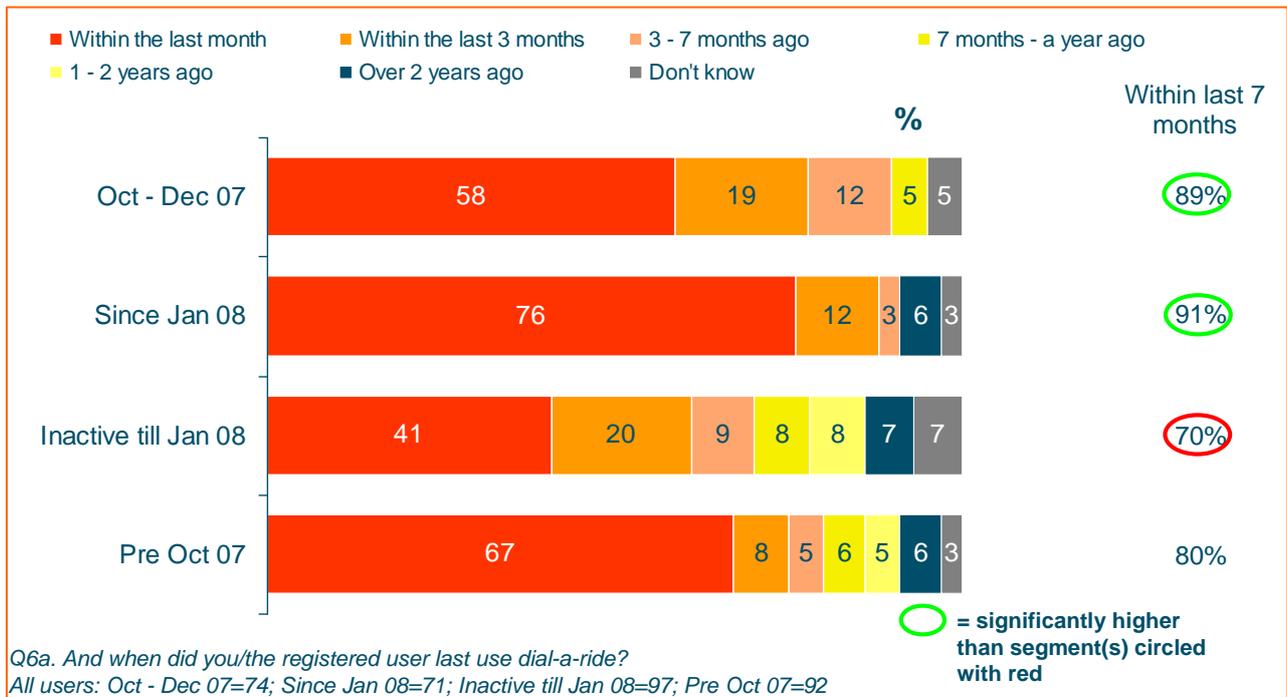


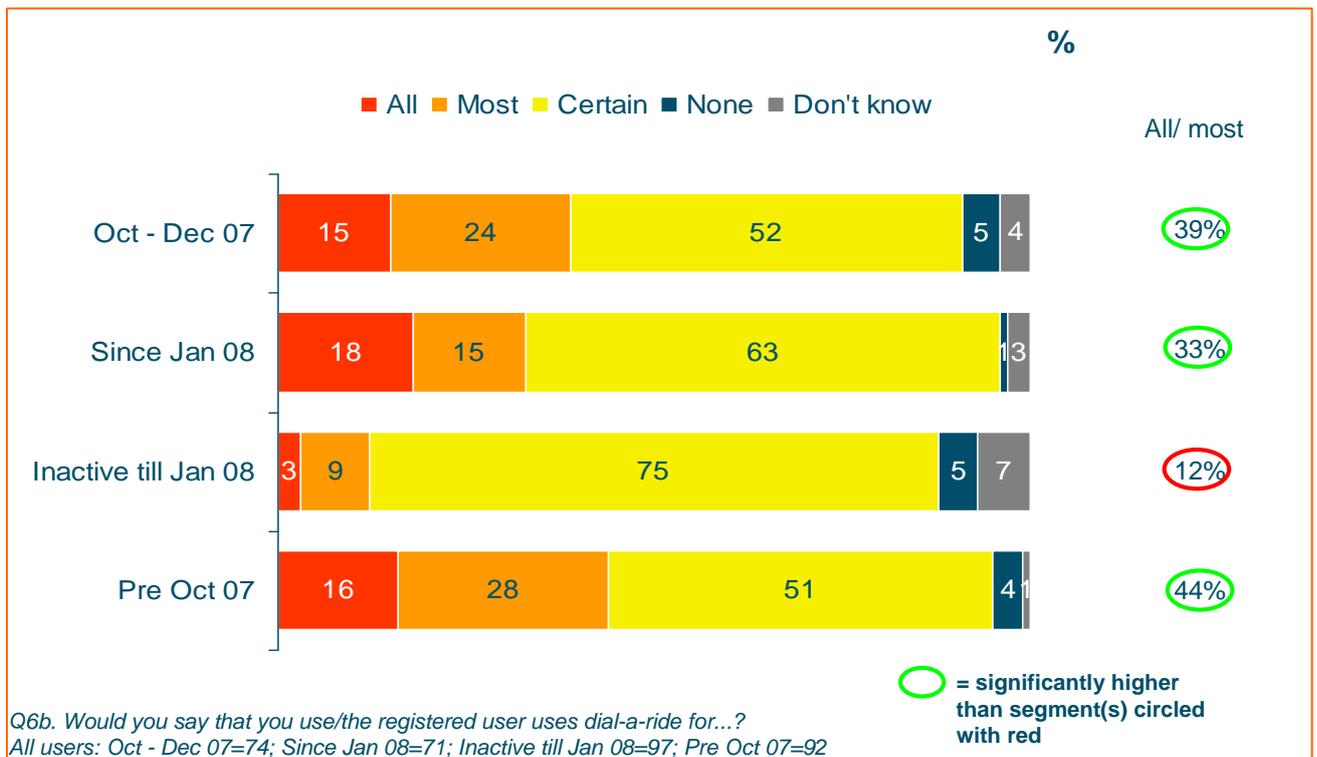
Chart 6 shows that among those who have ever used Dial-a-Ride, those who registered more recently are more likely to have used the service in the previous seven months (i.e. between January and July 2008). Among those who joined since October 2007, around nine in ten had used the service in the last seven months (89% of October to December 2007 joiners and 91% of joiners since January 2008).

Chart 6: When last used Dial-a-Ride



The majority of users said they used Dial-a-Ride only for certain trips, as opposed to for most or all. Those users who had been inactive for at least six months until January 2008 were most likely to say this (75%), with 12% of these saying they used DaR for all or most trips. The proportion of the three other groups saying they use DaR for all or most journeys is significantly higher (ranging from 33% to 44%).

Chart 7: Proportion of all trips made with Dial-a-Ride



6.2 Changes in Usage of Dial-a-Ride since January 2008

All members who registered with DaR prior to January 2008 were asked whether they had been using the service more or less since January 2008 (i.e. since free fares were introduced) compared to before January 2008.

It can be seen from Chart 8 that – according to members themselves – around a quarter of those who joined after the announcement of free fares have used the service more since January 2008 (when they became free) than before. A similar proportion (27%) said that they had used it less.

Chart 8: Whether have used Dial-a-Ride more or less since January 2008

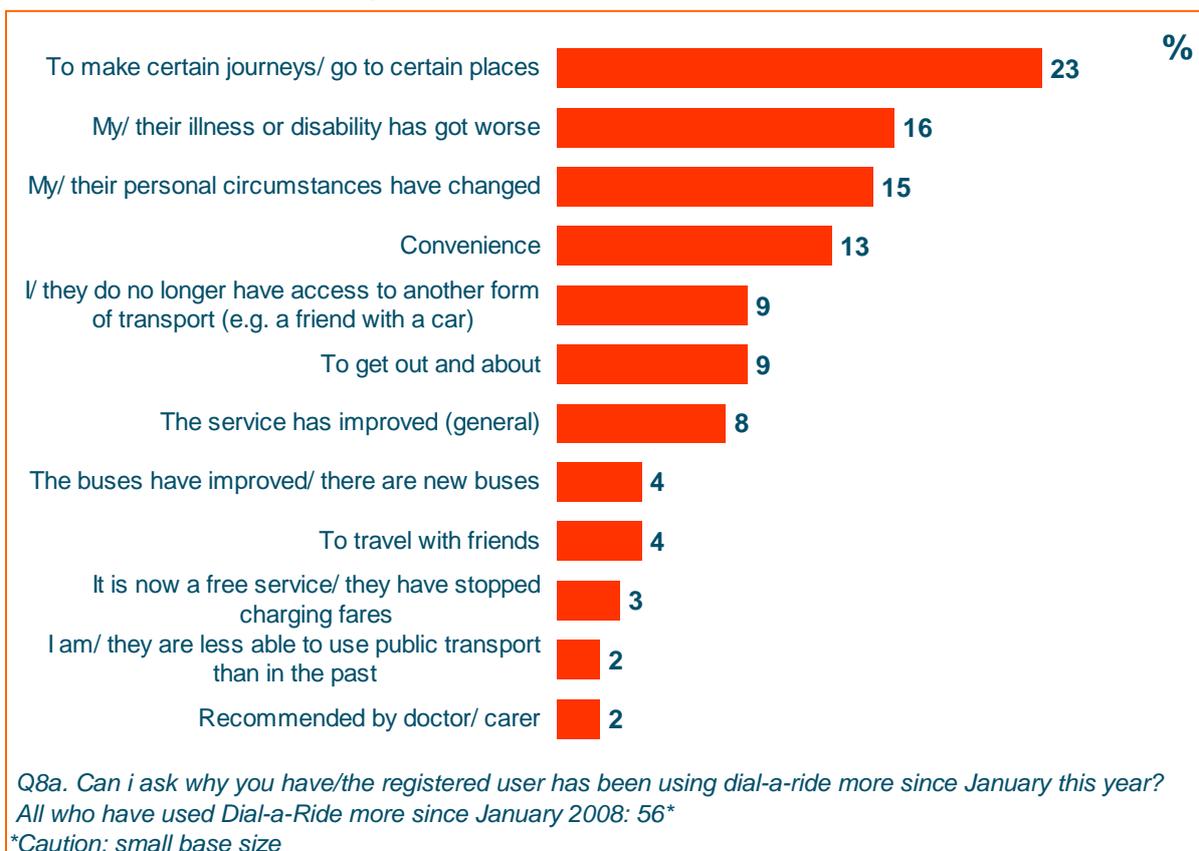


The proportion of the other two groups (Inactive till Jan 2008 and Joined Pre Oct 2007) who had used the service more since January 2008 was slightly lower than those

joining between October and December 2007 (22% and 17% respectively). Moreover, the difference between the proportions saying they had used the service more and those saying they used it less is greater for these two groups, implying that there had been a larger net decrease in use of these two groups than those who joined since the announcement of free fares was made.

Chart 9 shows the reasons given spontaneously (i.e. without prompting with possible reasons) for using Dial-a-Ride more since January 2008. Due to the small base size, the results cannot be broken down by member group.

Chart 9: Reasons for using Dial-a-Ride more since January 2008 (unprompted)

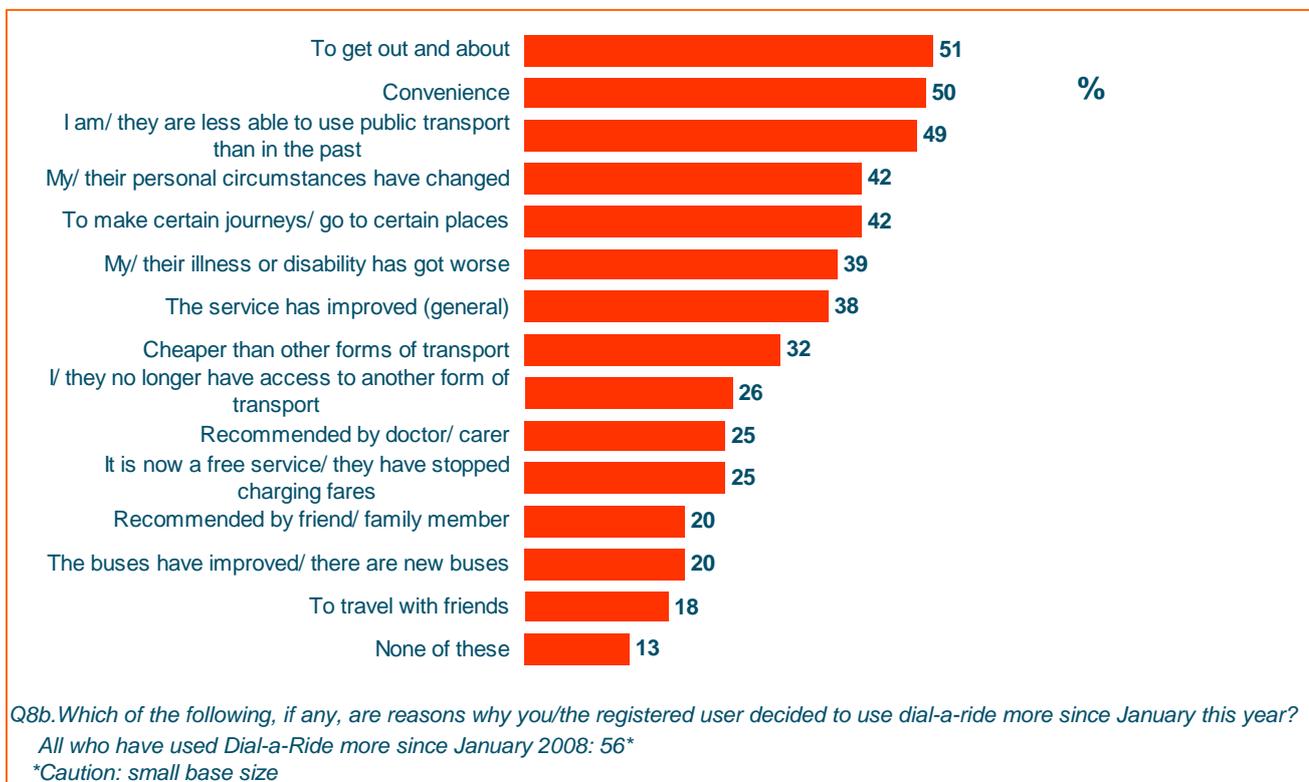


The most common reason given for using Dial-a-Ride more was to make certain types of journeys or go to certain places, mentioned by around a quarter (23%). Following this, other reasons were that their illness or disability had got worse (16%) and due to a change in personal circumstances (15%).

A very small proportion, three per cent, spontaneously mentioned the introduction of free fares as a reason for using Dial-a-Ride more since January 2008.

People interviewed were also asked prompted with a list of reasons why they had used the service more since January 2008 than before.

Chart 10: Reasons for using Dial-a-Ride more since January 2008 (prompted)

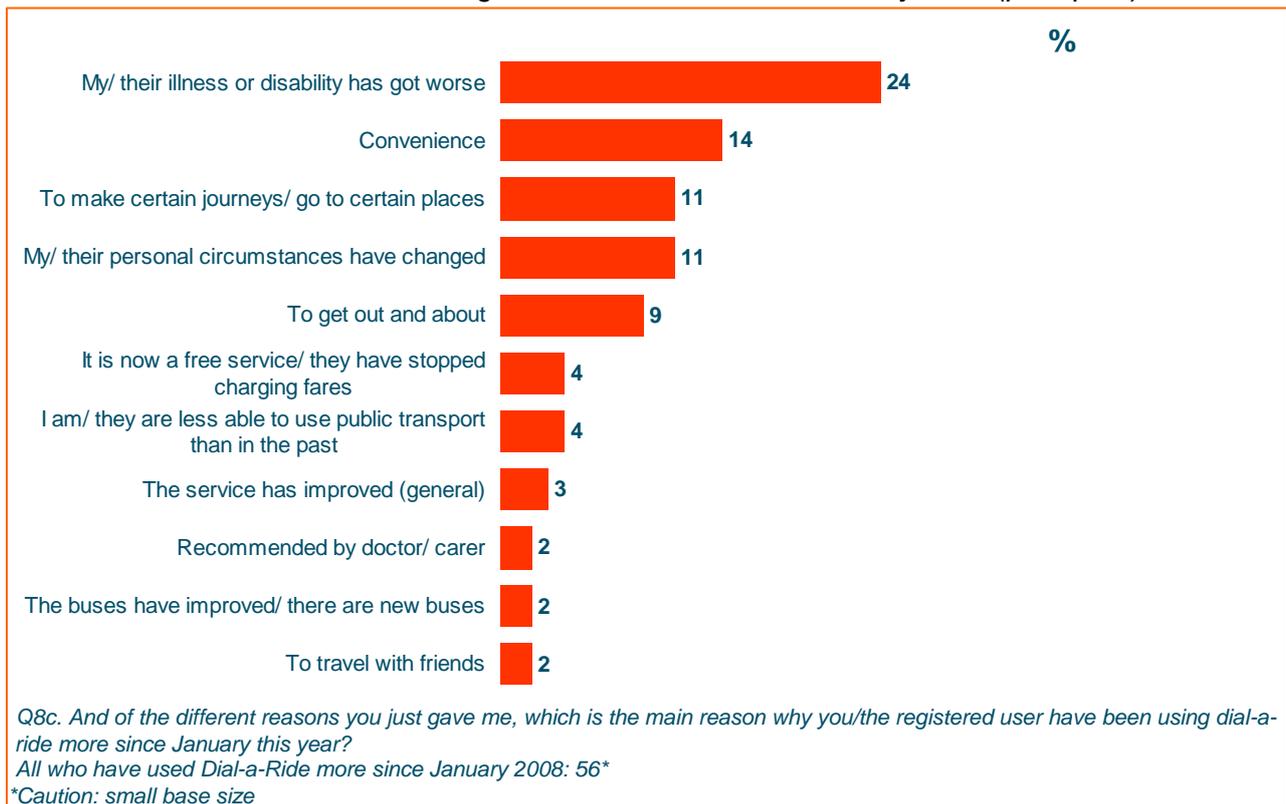


Around half of those using Dial-a-Ride more since January said that they did so in order to get out and about (51%), for convenience (50%), or because they are less

able to use public transport (49%). A quarter (25%) said that it was because of the service becoming free as a reason for using Dial-a-Ride more. This proportion is relatively low compared to other reasons given.

After being asked their reasons for using DaR more since January 2008, both unprompted and then prompted, people were asked to give their one *main* reason for doing so. The findings from this question are shown in Chart 11.

Chart 11: Main reason for using Dial-a-Ride more since January 2008 (prompted)



It can be seen that a quarter (24%) said that the main reason they use Dial-a-Ride more is due to their illness becoming worse. One in seven (14%) said that the main reason was convenience, and around one in ten said it was to make certain journeys (11%), due to a change in personal circumstances (11%) or to get out and about (9%).

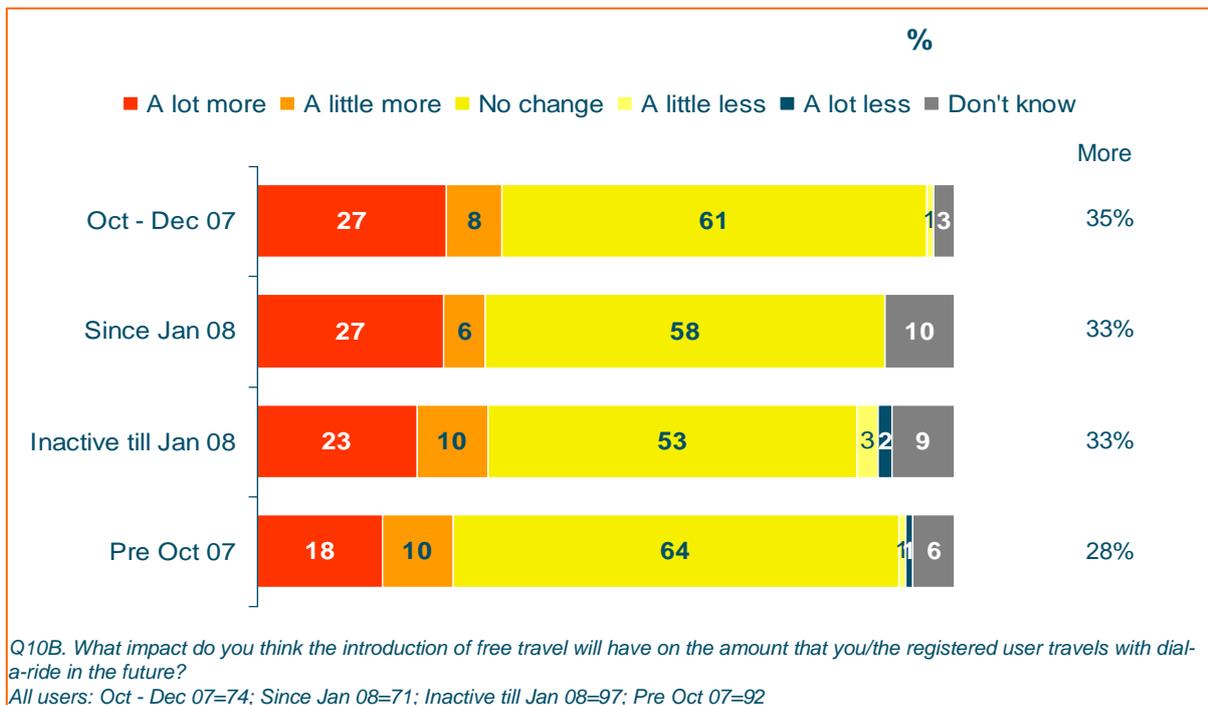
One in twenty (4%) stated the service becoming free as their main reason, indicating that it is significantly less important than other factors.

6.3 Perceived Impact of Free Fares on Future Use

All those who had used Dial-a-Ride previously were asked what impact they felt the introduction of free travel would have on their future use. The findings are shown in Chart 12 below.

Around a quarter to a third of users felt that the introduction of free travel would result in them using Dial-a-Ride more in the future, with no significant differences by member group. However, those who joined between December 2005 and September 2007 were less slightly likely to say they would use it more in the future because of the free fares (28%), compared to the other three groups.

Chart 12: Perceived impact of free travel on future use of Dial-a-Ride (users)



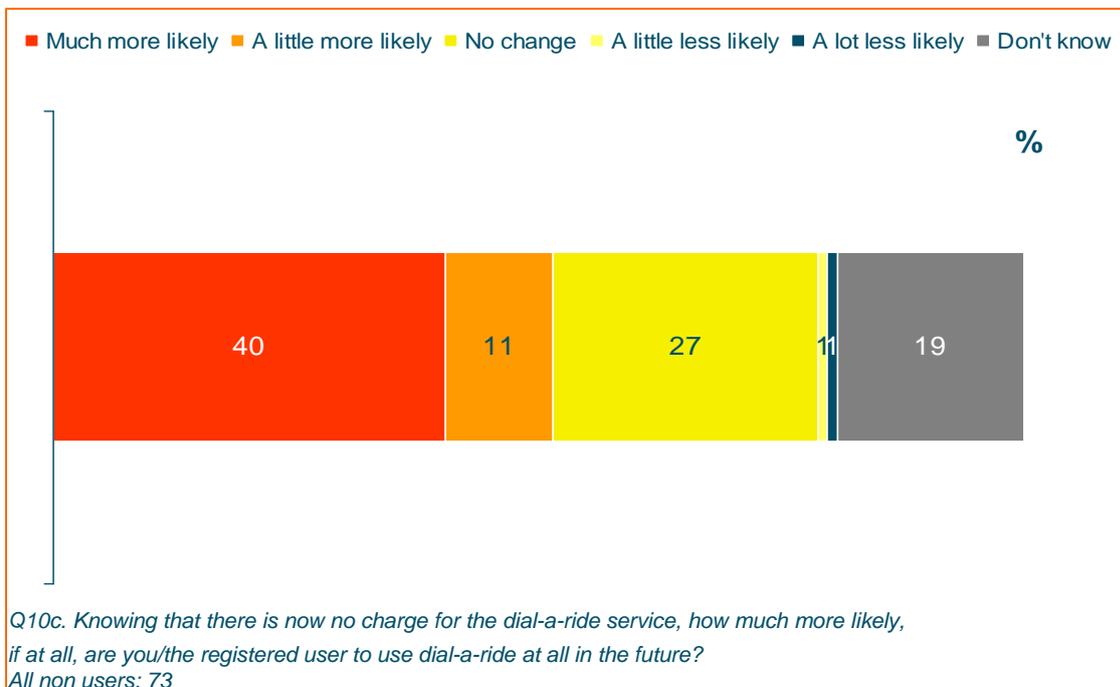
The majority of members (over half to two thirds) felt that the introduction of free fares would not have an impact on the amount they will use Dial-a-Ride in the future.

A very small proportion (3%) said they would use the service less as a result of it becoming free.

Those aged under 80 were more likely to say that they would use the service more (41% compared with 22% of those aged 80+), as were those from BAME ethnic backgrounds (49% compared with 29% White members).

Those who had not used Dial-a-Ride previously were asked how likely they would be to use Dial-a-Ride in the future now that the service has become free. Due to the small base size, the results are not broken down by member type.

Chart 13: Perceived impact of free travel on future use of Dial-a-Ride (non-users)



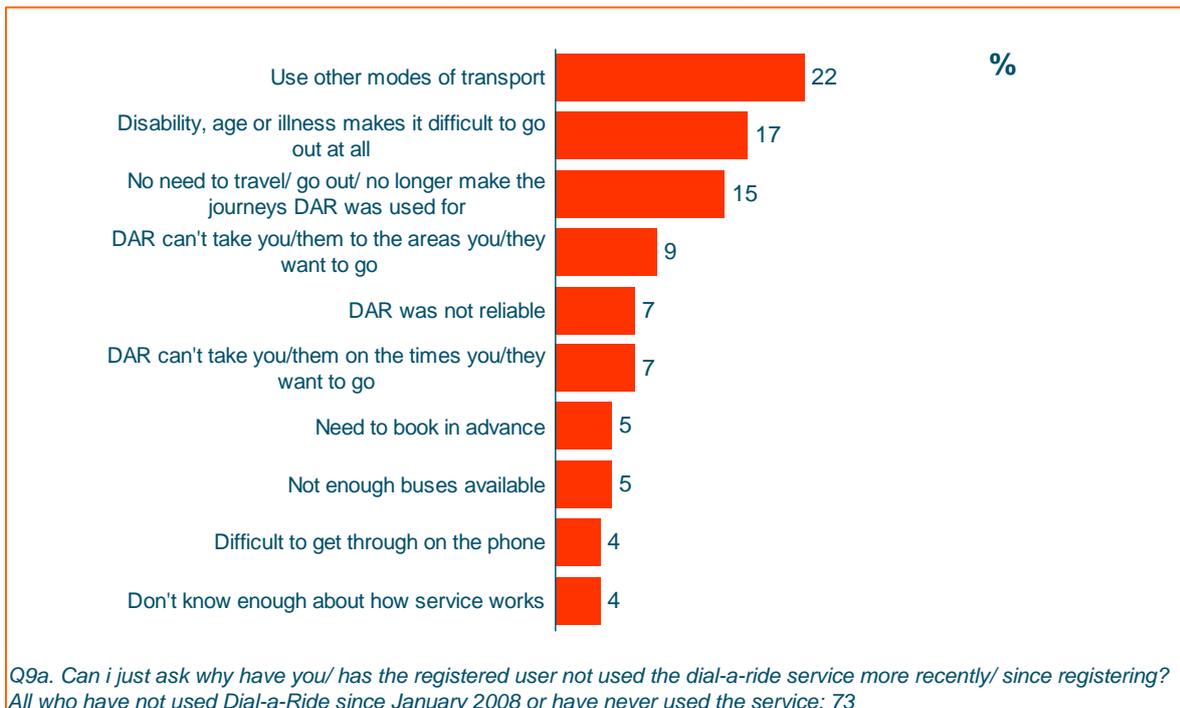
From Chart 13 on the previous page, it can be seen that around half of non-users (51%) said that they would be more likely to use Dial-a-Ride in the future, with a quarter (27%) saying that it would not make a difference. A fifth said they did not know.

6.4 Reasons for not Using Dial-a-Ride

Those who had not used Dial-a-Ride since registering with the service were asked to explain their reasons for this.

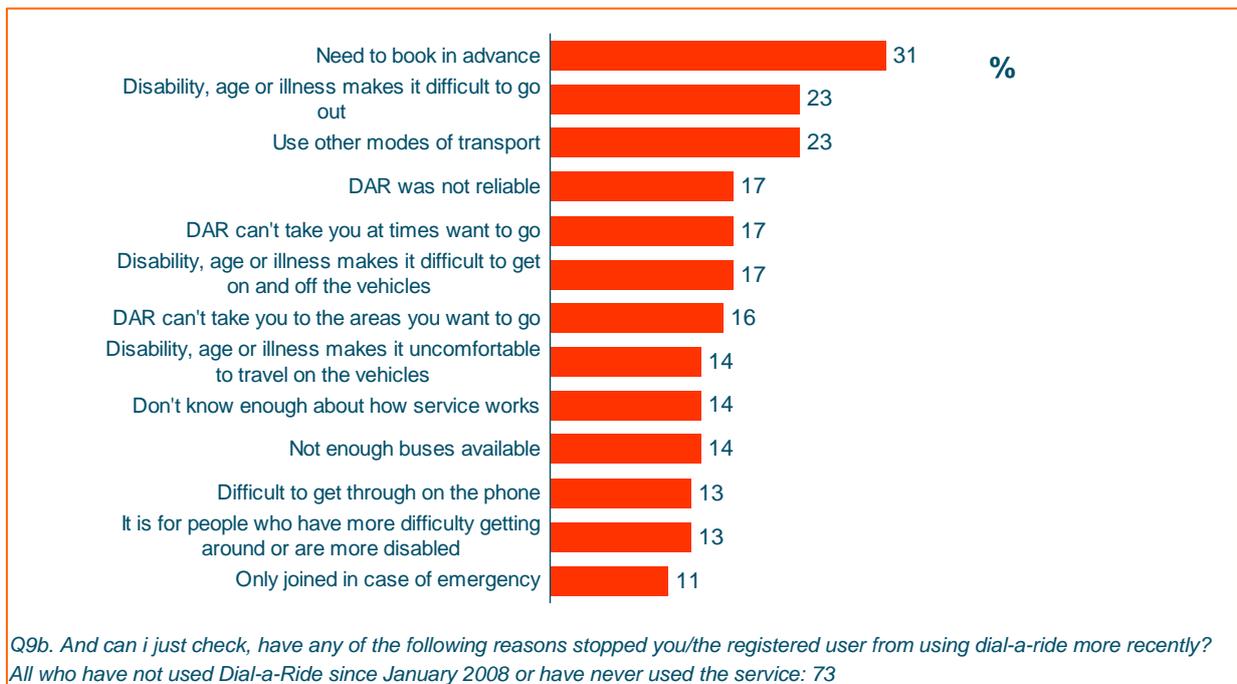
The most common reason for non-use was that other modes of transport were used instead (22%). Following this, other common reasons were that the member's disability, age or illness makes it difficult for them to go out (17%), or that they no longer to travel or make the journeys they previously used Dial-a-Ride for (15%).

Chart 14: Reasons for not using Dial-a-Ride since registering (unprompted)



After prompting with a list of possible reasons, the most common reason given for not using Dial-a-Ride was the need to book in advance, mentioned by around three in ten (31%). The next most common reasons were disability, age or illness or that other modes of transport are used, each mentioned by around a quarter (23%).

Chart 15: Reasons for not using Dial-a-Ride since January 2008/ since registering (prompted)



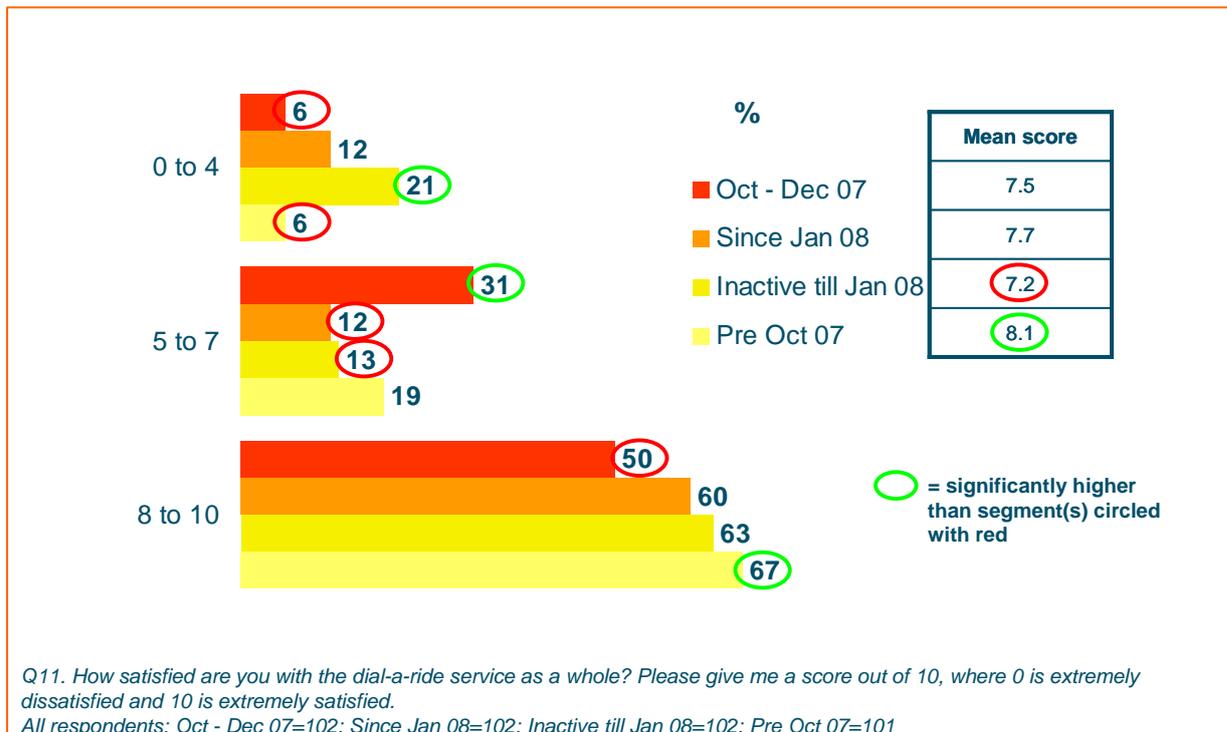
7 Satisfaction with Dial-a-Ride

7.1 Overall Satisfaction

All members were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with Dial-a-Ride on a scale from 0 to 10.

The average score for each group ranged between 7.5 and 8.1. Satisfaction was highest among those who registered with Dial-a-Ride prior to October 2007, with two thirds (67%) giving a score between 8 and 10, compared to just half (50%) of those who joined between October and December 2007.

Chart 16: Overall satisfaction with Dial-a-Ride



The satisfaction scores are lower than that of the most recent Customer Satisfaction Survey wave (equating to 9.3 on the scale (expressed as 93 in the CSS in the

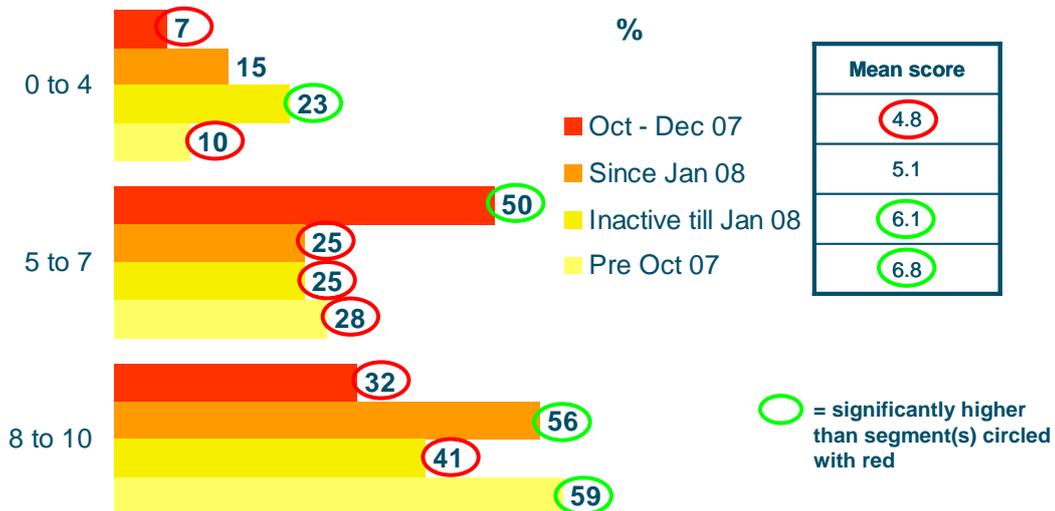
February 2008 wave)). We believe that this is an artefact of this survey, as a number of questions relating to a different subject are asked before the overall satisfaction question which may have influenced the response.

Older members were more likely to give a score between 8 and 10 (72% of those aged 80+ compared with 50% of those aged under 80), as were those from White ethnic groups (63% compared with 45% of those from BAME groups).

7.2 Ease of Arranging Trips

Satisfaction with ease of arranging trips is shown in Chart 17.

Chart 17: Satisfaction with ease of arranging trips



Q12. Now I'd like you to think specifically about how easy it is to arrange a trip with dial-a-ride. How satisfied are you with the ability to arrange trips? please give me a score out of 10, where 0 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied
 All users: Oct - Dec 07=74; Since Jan 08=75; Inactive till Jan 08=97; Pre Oct 07=92

The average satisfaction score for ease of arranging trips ranged between 4.8 and 6.8 for the four groups. Satisfaction was higher among those who joined prior to October 2007 and those who became active users again in January 2008 (average scores of 6.8 and 6.1 respectively), compared to those who joined between October and December 2007 (4.8) and those who joined since January 2008 (5.1).

The satisfaction scores are – like overall satisfaction - lower than that of the most recent Customer Satisfaction Survey wave (equating to 7.6 on the scale (expressed as 76 in the CSS in the February 2008 wave))². As was the case in the CSS study, the scores for the ease of arranging trips are lower than satisfaction overall.

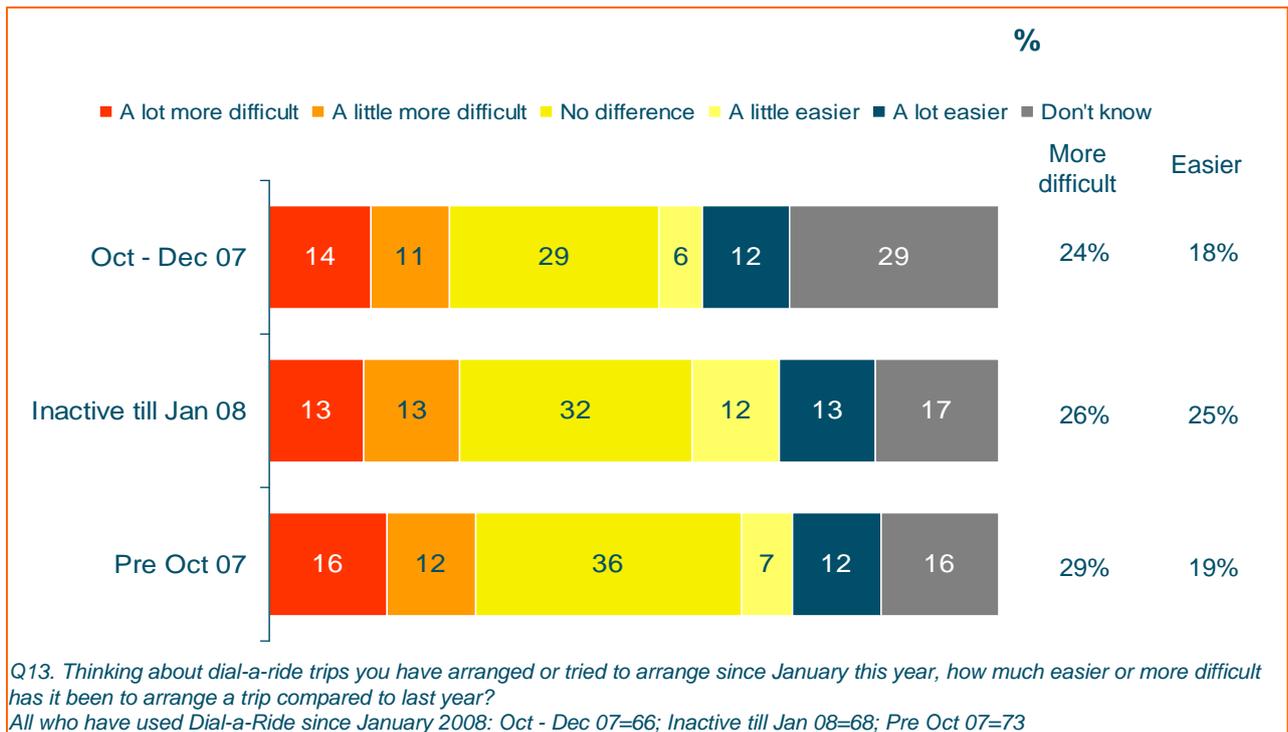
Those who have used Dial-a-Ride more than twenty times were more likely to give a score of 8 to 10 (59% compared with 43% of those who have used it less than twenty times. Females were more likely to give a score of 8 to 10 (51% compared with 37% of males), as were those aged 80+ (53% compared with 41% of those aged under 80).

Those who had used Dial-a-Ride last year were asked whether it was now easier or more difficult to arrange trips, or if there was no change.

It can be seen in Chart 18 overleaf that around a quarter of members overall felt that arranging trips had become more difficult, with no significant differences between groups. Around a third overall felt that there was no difference, while fifth to a quarter felt that it had become easier.

² The question wording in the CSS was the 'booking process' as opposed to 'ease of arranging' but the meaning is clearly very similar.

Chart 18: Ease of arranging trips compared with last year



7.3 Difficulties Experienced with Free Travel

Encouragingly, three quarters (75%) of Dial-a-Ride members had not experienced any difficulties since the service became free, with a further one in ten (10%) saying that they did not know or had not used Dial-a-Ride since the service became free.

Of the 15% who have experienced a problem, the main issues were the service being busier, difficulties with making a booking, and unreliability or buses not turning up (each named by 5% of members).