Washington State Transportation Commission

Ferry Riders' Opinion Group

2026 Winter Performance Survey Results

Washington State Transportation Commission

Preface

The Ferry Riders' Opinion Group (FROG) was created in 2010 as an online community where ferry riders have an ongoing opportunity to weigh in on ferry issues through surveys and quick polls (single questions). This allows for data to be collected over time to understand how reactions to key issues and operations are changing.

This report is the 2026 WSF Winter Ferry Performance Study with a target audience of January through March 2026 ferry riders.

This audience was sampled from the FROG panel and was further publicized via WSTC and WSF communications which included rider alerts, website, newsletter, and social media posts.

Methodology

- Online survey with respondents from Ferry Riders Opinion Group (FROG) panel
- Conducted March 25 to April 15, 2026, regarding respondents' personal experience riding Washington State Ferries during the 2026 winter travel period (January through March 2026).
- As an incentive for survey participation, four $50 Visa gift cards were awarded via sweepstakes. Eligibility was open to riders who completed the survey or joined FROG to participate in future surveys.
- A total of 3,119 interviews were completed with January-March 2026 WSF riders.
- Data was weighted to reflect WSF actual ridership January 1 - March 31, 2026, by route, boarding method and ticket type used, based on the last trip taken.
- In addition, 515 FROG members who had not ridden WSF during the period of January-March 2026 were also included. These non-riders were not weighted and are included in these results where appropriate.

Overall Satisfaction, Perceived Value, and Impact of Cost on Ridership

Systemwide satisfaction has stabilized after a volatile five years

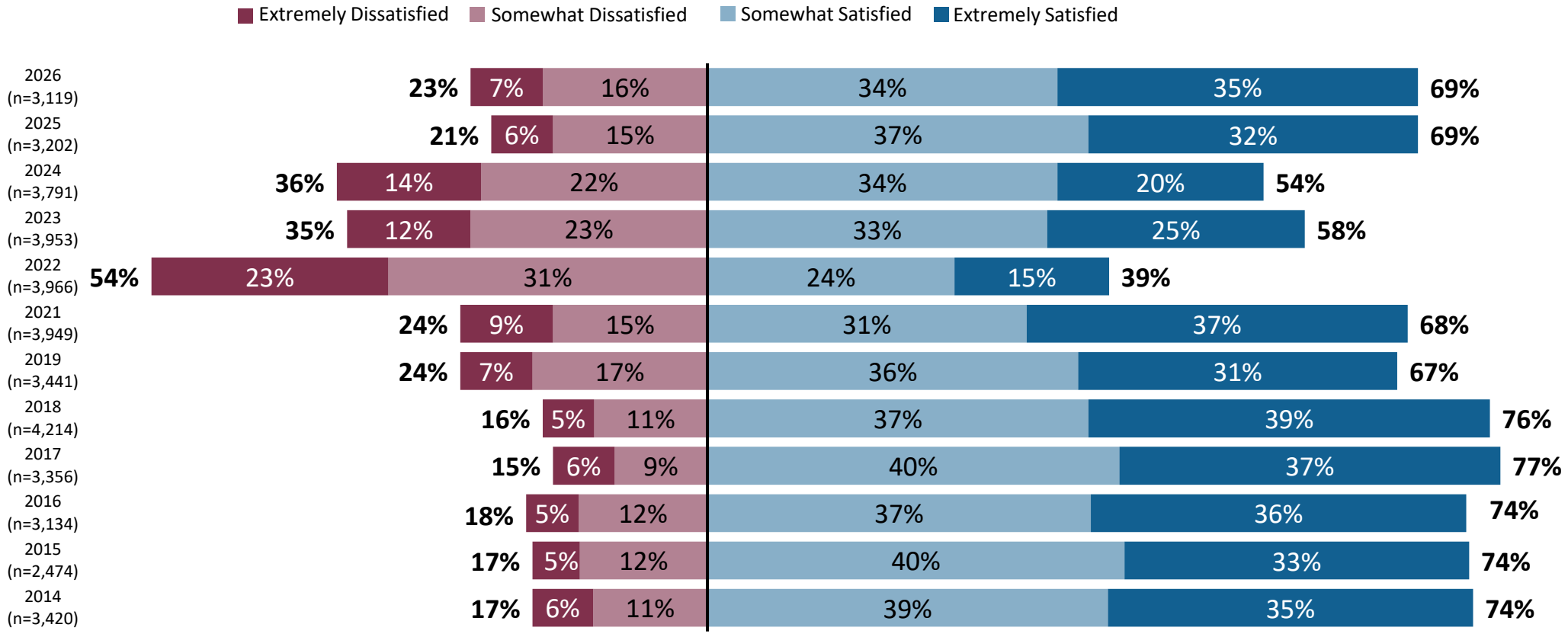
WSF continues to make meaningful progress, with **rider satisfaction stabilizing** after increases seen last year and on-time performance showing real improvement. More riders reported being extremely satisfied in winter 2026 than at any point in the past four years, reflecting the positive impact of changes WSF has made across the system, with comments about staffing issues declining significantly since 2023.

However, overall dissatisfaction also *increased* slightly this year, including on 7 of the 11 routes, and concerns around value, parking, and transit coordination persist.

New cost pressures are beginning to shape how often riders use the ferry system, though many share that they believe the system is moving in a positive direction. Meeting rising rider expectations requires continued attention to the areas that matter most: dependability, affordability, real-time updates, and frequency of sailings.

Overall Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction remains at 69% for the second consecutive year, with more riders reporting being extremely satisfied (35%) than at any point in the past four years. While overall dissatisfaction increased slightly to 23%, overall dissatisfaction remains well below 2023 and 2024 levels.



Only ratings of satisfaction (4-5) or dissatisfaction (1-2) are shown, Ratings of 3 or don't know are not shown.
*The **bold** percentages represent the corresponding total dissatisfaction/satisfaction*

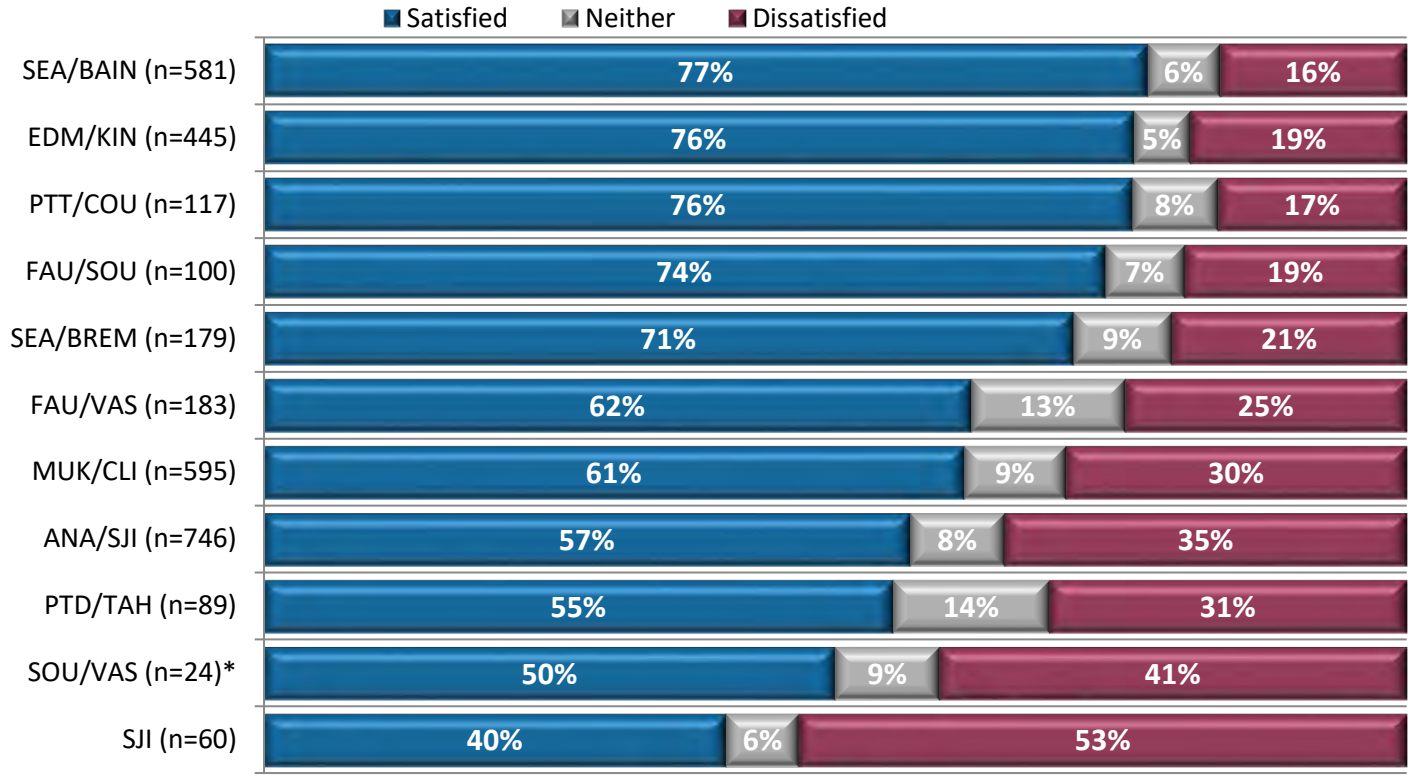
Note: Research was not conducted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q1. For this survey, we are interested in your experiences and opinions of Washington State Ferries during January through March 2026 only. All things considered, how satisfied are you with the service provided by Washington State Ferries from January through March 2026?

Overall Satisfaction by Route

While systemwide satisfaction was similar to last year, results varied widely by route. Satisfaction was highest on the Seattle/Bainbridge (77%), Edmonds/Kingston and Pt. Townsend/Coupeville (76%) routes and lowest on the SJI (40%) and Southworth/Vashon* (50%) routes, which also had the highest dissatisfaction. Seattle/Bremerton posted the largest satisfaction gain (+12%) year over year, while SJI (-33%) and Southworth/Vashon (-15%) saw the steepest declines.

Overall Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction by Route - 2026



Satisfaction			Dissatisfaction		
2026	2025	Shift	2026	2025	Shift
77%	69%	+8%	16%	19%	-3%
76%	80%	-4%	19%	12%	+7%
76%	79%	-3%	17%	15%	+2%
74%	62%	+6%	19%	29%	-10%
71%	59%	+12%	21%	30%	-9%
62%	55%	+7%	25%	32%	-7%
61%	68%	-7%	30%	25%	+5%
57%	71%	-14%	35%	20%	+15%
55%	63%	-8%	31%	29%	+2%
50%	65%	-15%	41%	11%	+30%
40%	73%	-33%	53%	18%	+35%

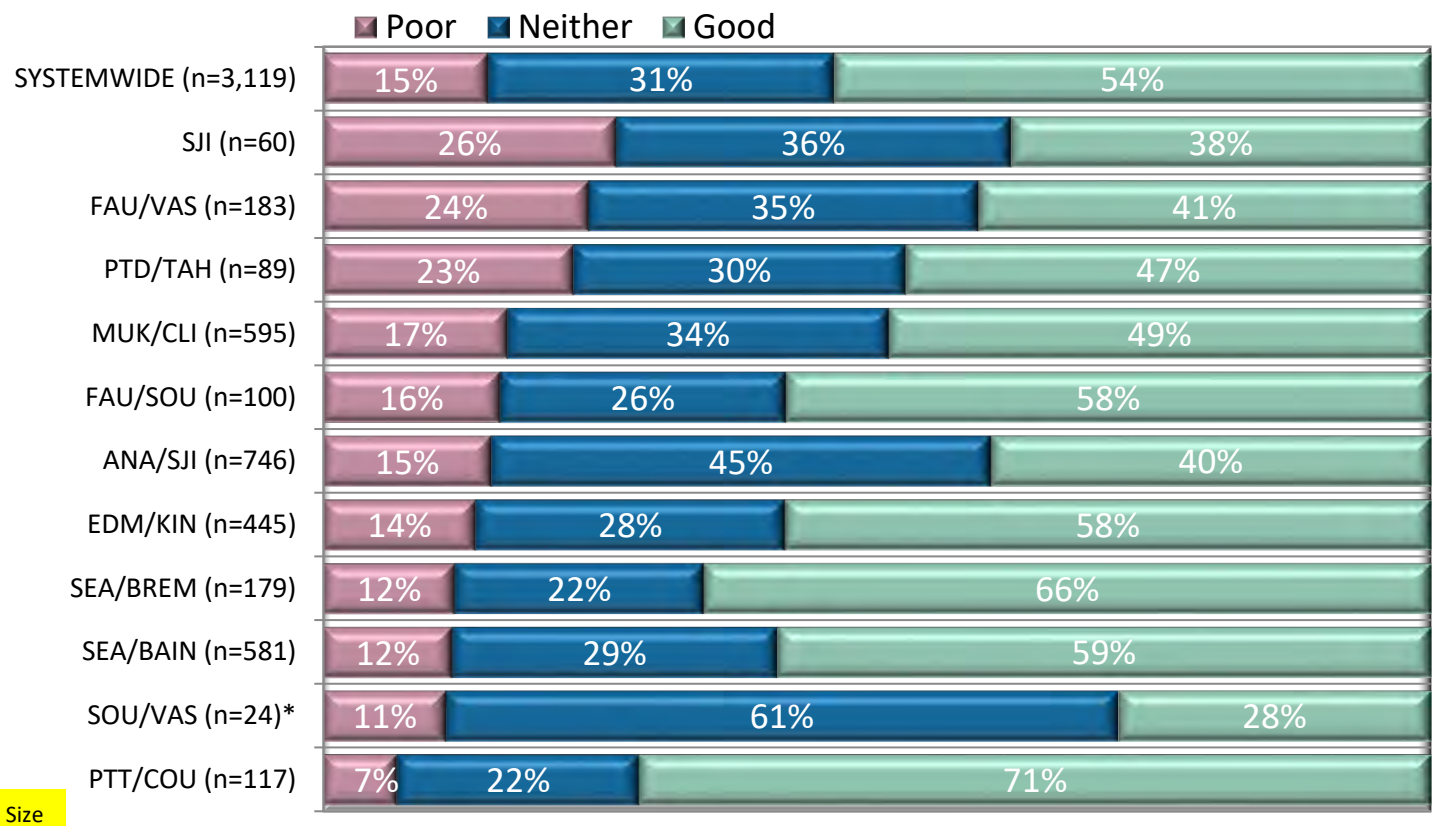
Q1. For this survey, we are interested in your experiences and opinions of Washington State Ferries during January through March 2026 only. All things considered, how satisfied are you with the service provided by Washington State Ferries from January through March 2026?

* Note: Small Sample Size

Perceived Value by Route

Systemwide, 54% of riders rate WSF a **good** value, down from 58% in 2025. Conversely, 15% of riders rate WSF a *poor* value, up from 11% in 2025. Poor value ratings increased across most routes year over year, with SJI seeing the largest increase (up 19 percentage points).

The Port Townsend/Coupeville route is perceived as having the highest value, with 71% of riders rating it a good value (though this has declined year-over-year by 8%-points).



	Poor Value			Good Value		
	2026	2025	Shift	2026	2025	Shift
SYSTEMWIDE (n=3,119)	15%	11%	+4%	54%	58%	-4%
SJI (n=60)	26%	7%	+19%	38%	36%	+2%
FAU/VAS (n=183)	24%	20%	+4%	41%	40%	+1%
PTD/TAH (n=89)	23%	18%	+5%	47%	43%	+4%
MUK/CLI (n=595)	17%	10%	+7%	49%	57%	-8%
FAU/SOU (n=100)	16%	12%	+4%	58%	61%	-3%
ANA/SJI (n=746)	15%	13%	+2%	40%	51%	-11%
EDM/KIN (n=445)	14%	8%	+6%	58%	65%	-7%
SEA/BREM (n=179)	12%	9%	+3%	66%	65%	+1%
SEA/BAIN (n=581)	12%	11%	+1%	59%	61%	-2%
SOU/VAS (n=24)*	11%	17%	-6%	28%	45%	-17%
PTT/COU (n=117)	7%	3%	+4%	71%	79%	-8%

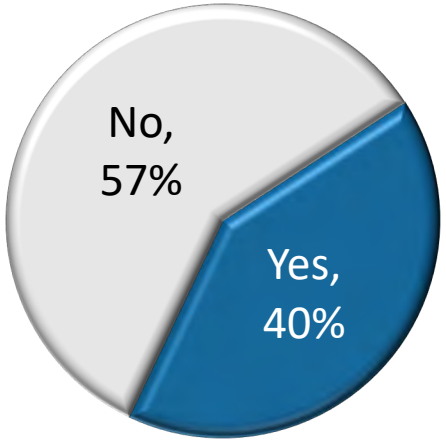
* Note: Small Sample Size

Q116. Considering your personal experience with the ferries, which of the following phrases best describes the value of riding Washington State Ferries to you?

Cost Impact on Ferry Ridership

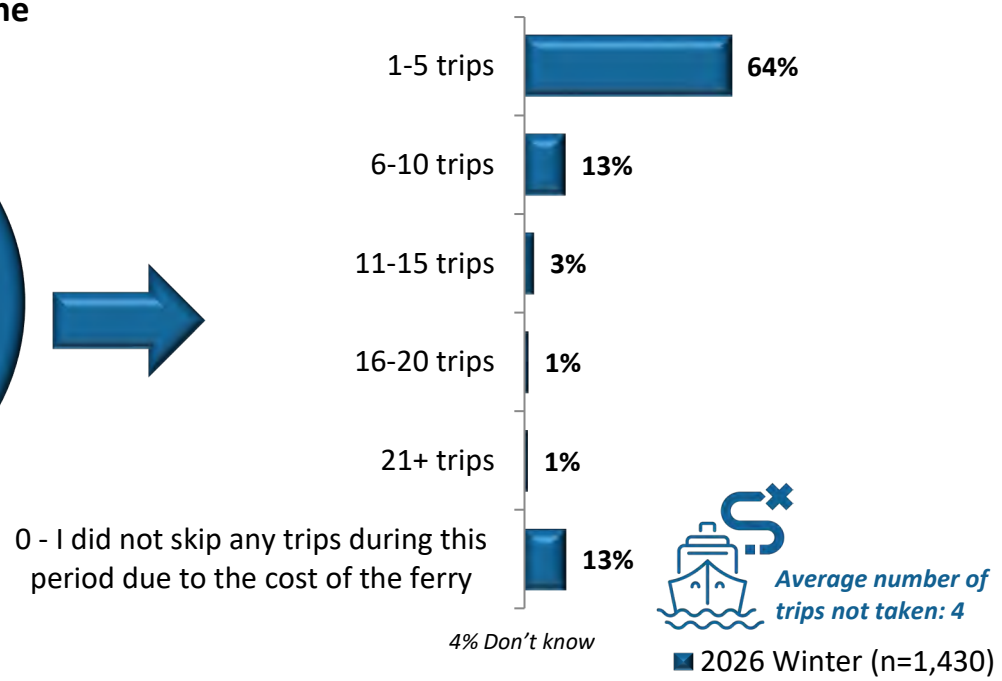
Two in five riders (40%) say the cost of a ferry ticket affects how often they ride. Among those whose ridership is impacted by cost, most skipped one to five trips between January and March 2026, averaging four missed trips. Personal business and activities (53%) and visiting family and friends (44%) are the most common trip types foregone due to cost.

Does the cost of a ferry ticket affect how often you ride the ferries?



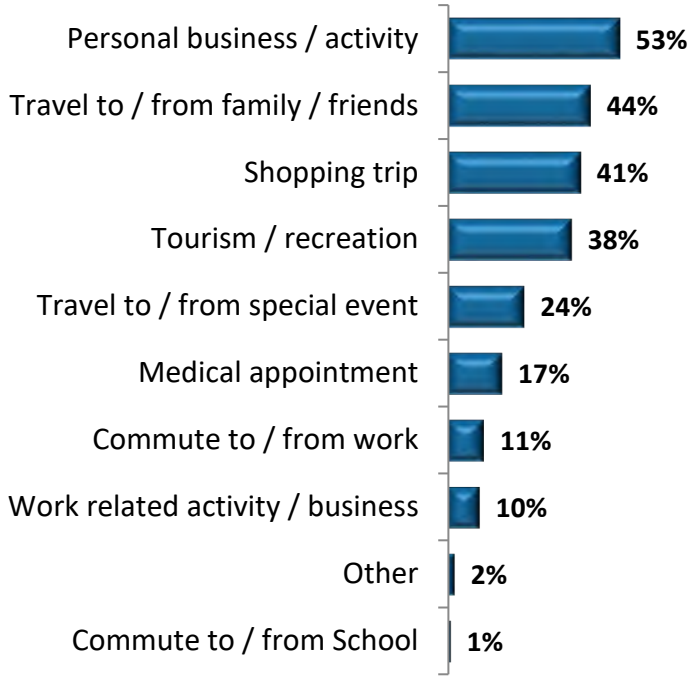
3% prefer not to answer

Number of Trips Not Taken Due To Cost of Ferry



4% Don't know

Type of Trip Not Taken Due To Cost of Ferry

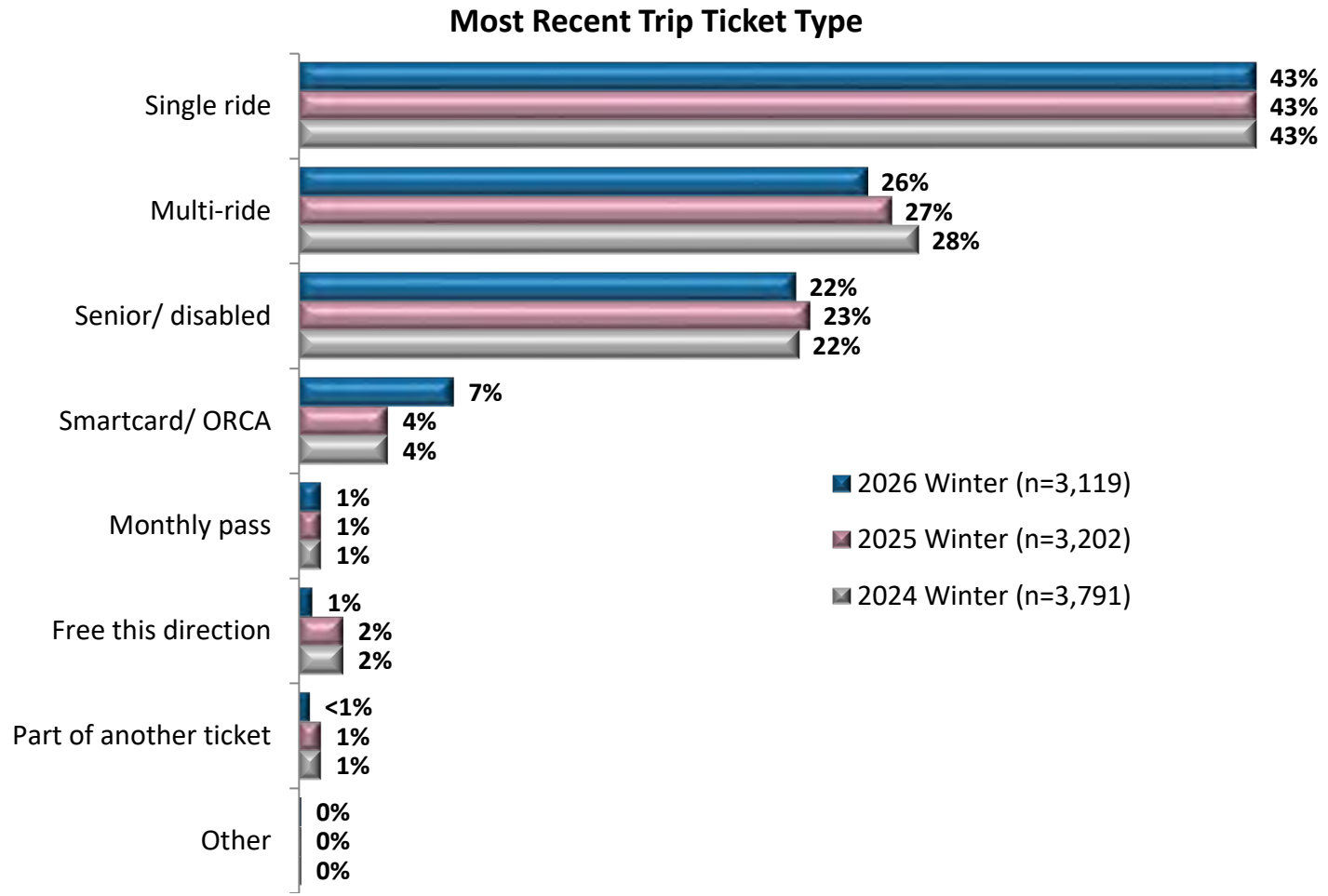


QN8: Does the cost of a ferry ticket affect how often you ride the ferries?
QN8a: In the period of time between January and March 2026, roughly how many WSF trips did you decide to not take, due to the cost of riding the ferry?
QN8b: What type of trips did you not take due to the cost of riding the ferry?

Ticket Purchase and Credit Card Fee Awareness

Most Recent Trip –Ticket Type and Purchase

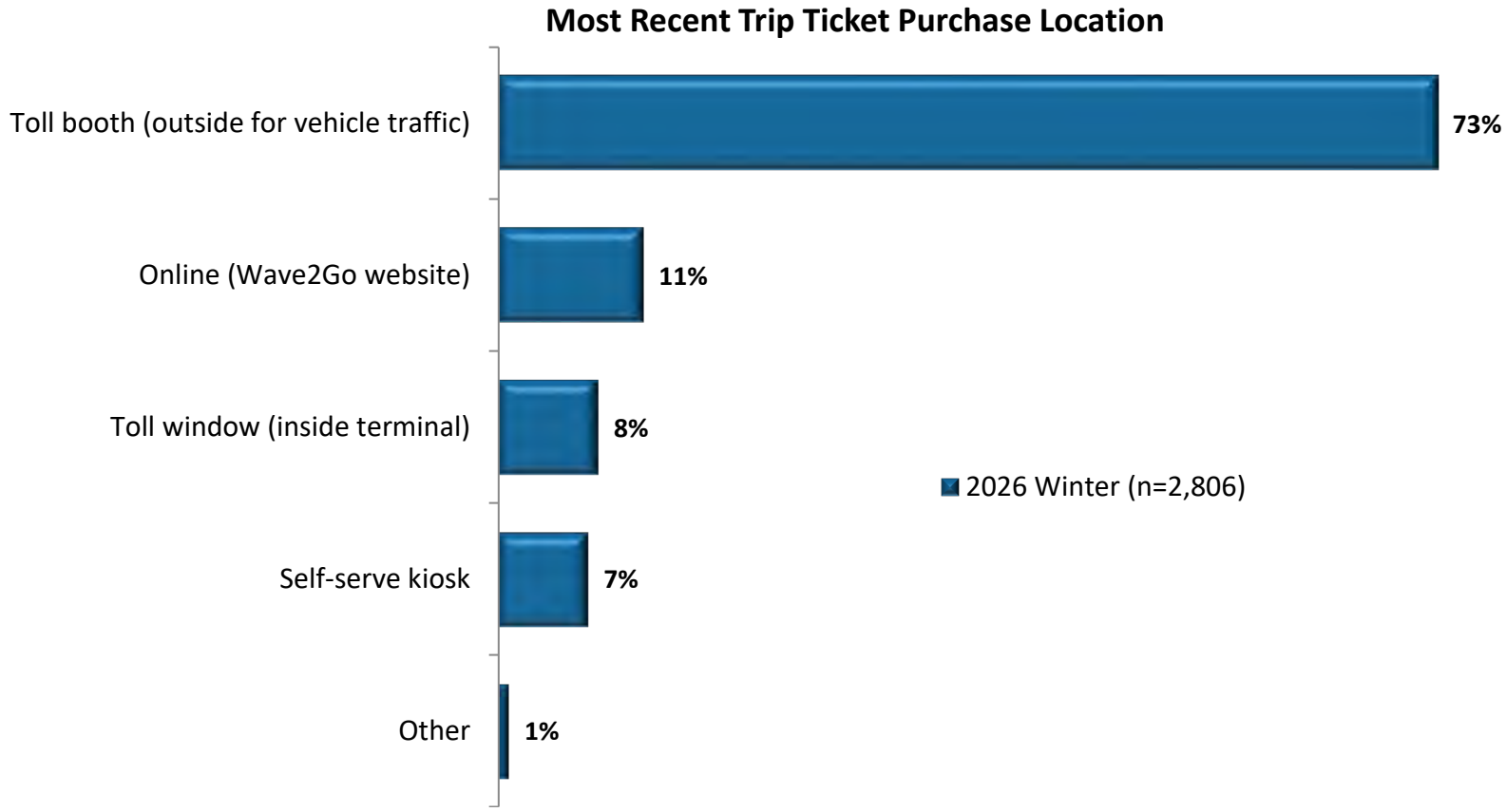
Single-ride (43%) ticket use remained unchanged over the past three years, while multi-ride continued its downward trend, declining to 26% in 2026. Smartcard/ORCA use saw the most notable increase, rising from 4% in 2025 to 7% in 2026.



Q19. Thinking about your FERRY RIDE ONLY on the {most recent} route, on what kind of ticket were you traveling?

Most Recent Trip –Ticket Purchase Location

Nearly three in four riders (73%) purchased their most recent ticket at the toll booth, making it by far the most common purchase location. Online via Wave2Go is the second most common, with about one in ten riders (11%), followed by the toll window inside the terminal and self-serve kiosks (8% and 7% respectively).



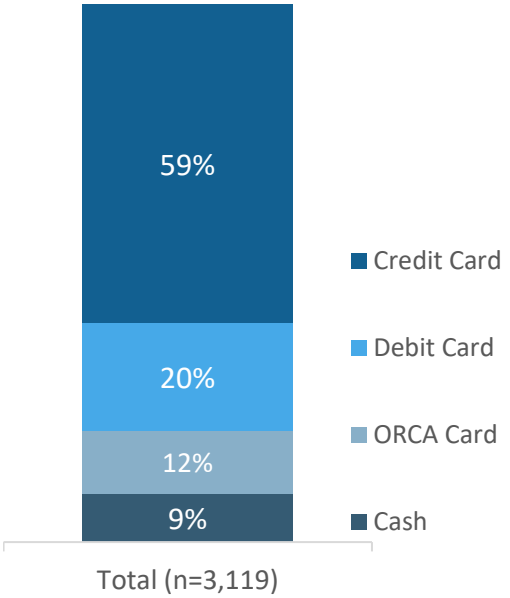
Note: Question added in 2026.

Q19A. Thinking about your FERRY RIDE ONLY on the {most recent} route, where did you physically pay for your fare?

Ticket Payment Methods and Card Fee Awareness

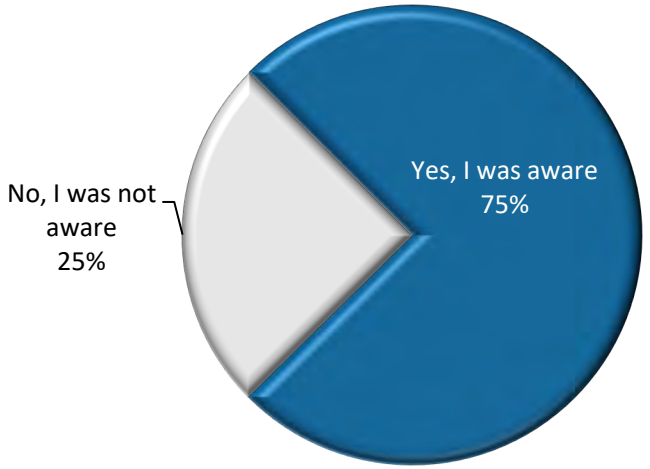
Nearly four in five riders (79%) typically pay for ferry tickets with either a credit card (59%) or debit card (20%). Three in four riders (75%) were aware of the 3% transaction recovery fee on card payments that went into effect on March 1st, 2026, with awareness highest among work commuters and riders on the Anacortes/San Juan Islands and Mukilteo/Clinton routes.

How Riders Typically Pay for Ferry Tickets



All respondents (n=3,119) asked; n=6 said other – not included in chart.

Awareness of Credit/Debit Card Transaction Fee



All respondents (n=3,119) asked

Riders whose most recent trip purpose was a work commute were significantly more likely than all other riders to be aware of the fee.

Riders whose most recent route was Anacortes/San Juan Islands or Mukilteo/Clinton were significantly more likely to be aware of the fee than those whose most recent route was Edmonds/Kingston, Seattle/Bremerton, or Seattle/Bainbridge.

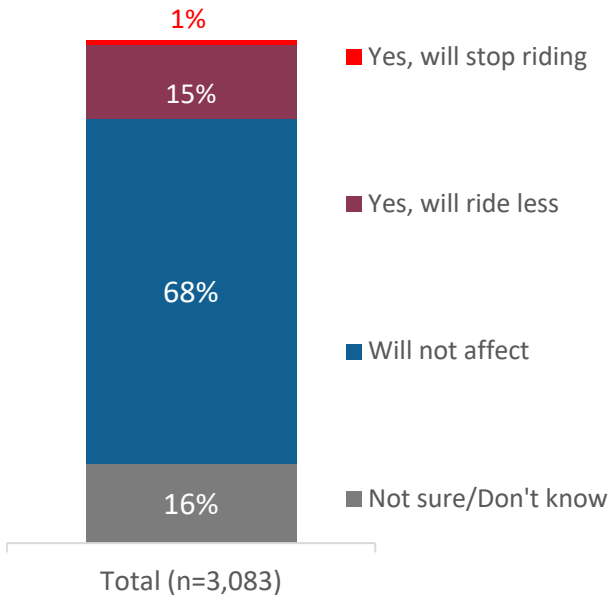
Note: Questions added in 2026.

QN1: When purchasing ferry tickets, which payment method do you typically use?
QN2: On March 1st, 2026, Washington State Ferries introduced a 3% transaction recovery fee for using a credit/debit card to make purchases, per legislative direction. Were you aware of this fee?

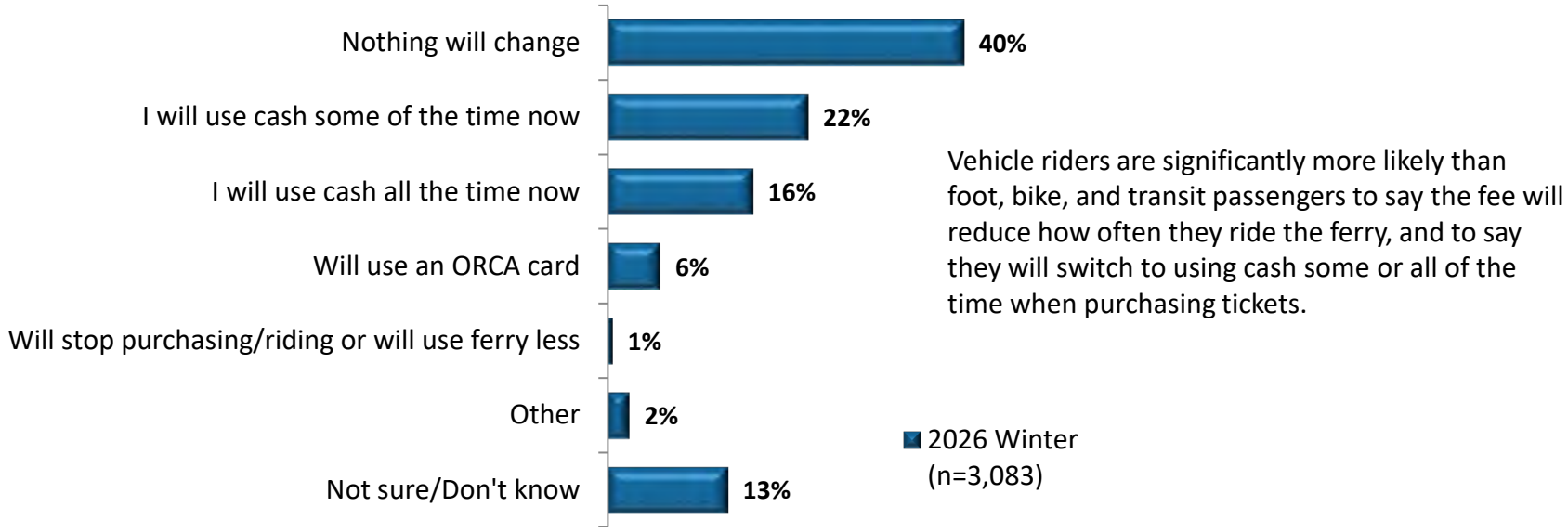
Impact of Card Fee on Ridership and Payment Behavior

Most (68%) say the 3% card recovery fee will not affect how often they ride the ferry, though about one in six (16%) say they will ride less or not at all. For payment behavior, two in five (40%) say nothing will change, while others indicate they will shift to using cash some (22%) or all (16%) of the time, with a smaller share switching to ORCA (6%) and 13% unsure if anything will change.

Impact of Fee on Ferry Ridership



Impact on Ticket Purchase Method



Vehicle riders are significantly more likely than foot, bike, and transit passengers to say the fee will reduce how often they ride the ferry, and to say they will switch to using cash some or all of the time when purchasing tickets.

Note: Questions added in 2026.

QN3: Does the credit/debit card recovery fee implemented on March 1st, 2026, affect how often you will ride the ferry?
QN4: Will the 3% credit/debit card recovery fee change how you purchase ferry tickets?

Ferry Service Priorities

Background on the Service Priority Exercise

A service priority exercise was added to the survey this year to measure the relative importance of different service attributes when it comes to rider satisfaction with WSF.

Survey respondents were asked a series of 8 trade-off questions where they were shown a set of different service attributes and asked which is most important to them and which is least important to them.

Based on the results, each attribute was scored and assigned a value out of 100. Results can be interpreted as an item with twice the score being twice as important. For example, an attribute with a score of 20 is twice as important as an attribute with a score of 10.

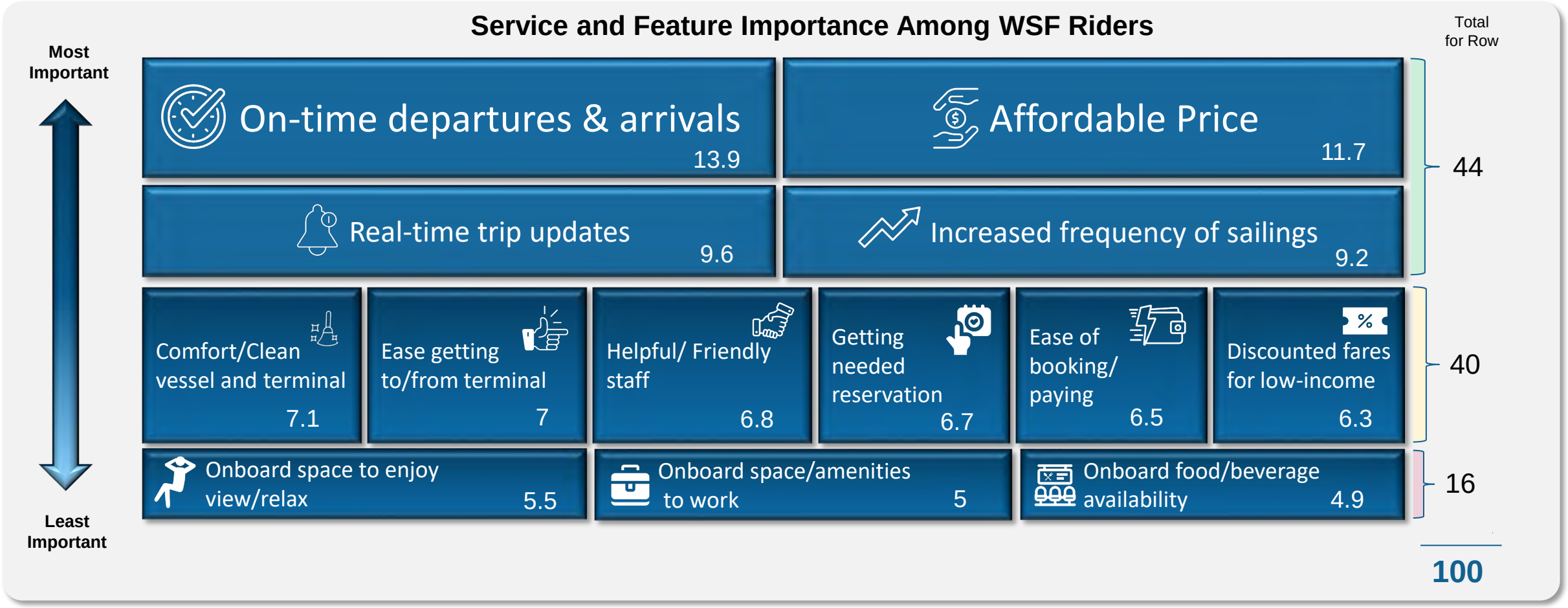
Example Trade-Off Question

From the list below, please select **ONE item that is MOST important** to you by checking the box in the left column and **ONE item that is LEAST important** to you by checking the box in the right column.

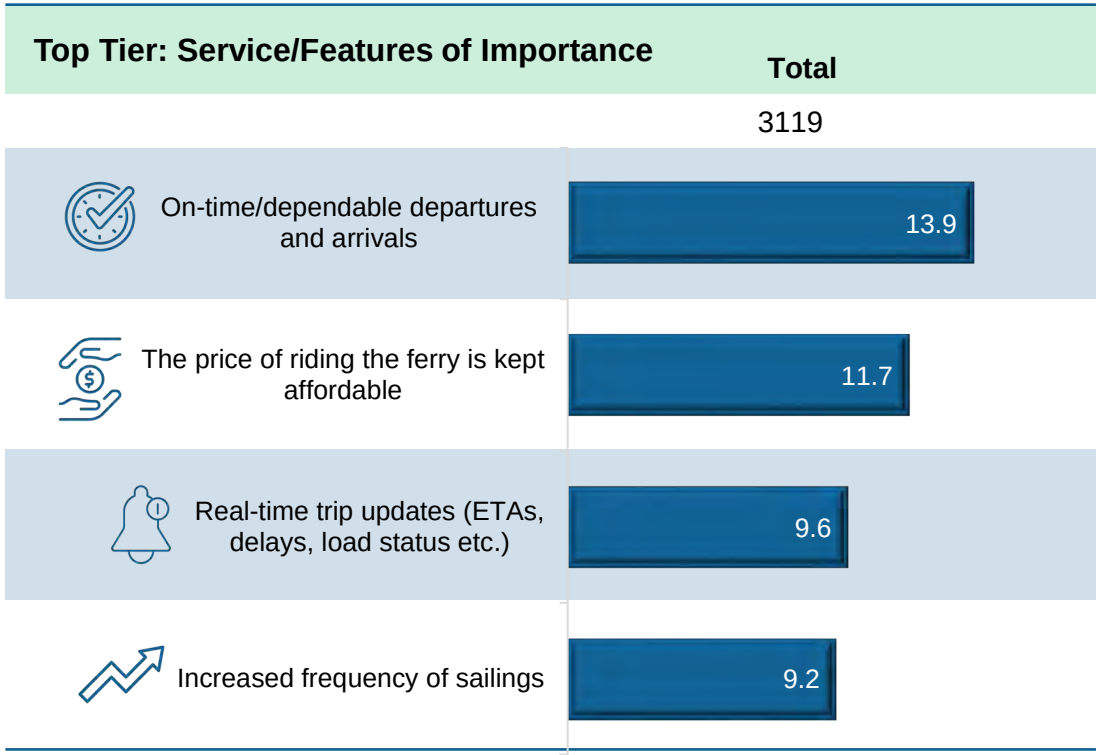
MOST important		LEAST important
○	Onboard space and amenities for working (tables, outlets, WiFi etc.)	○
○	Comfort and cleanliness of vessel and terminal waiting areas	○
○	Low-income riders receive discounted fares	○
○	The price of riding the ferry is kept affordable	○
○	Real-time trip updates (ETAs, delays, load status etc.)	○

Service Priority Exercise: Overall Results

On-time performance, affordable pricing, real-time trip updates, and increased sailing frequency form the top tier of rider priorities. Vessel comfort, staff helpfulness, ease of access, booking, paying and obtaining reservations and low-income discounted fares are also considerations, though relatively less important. Onboard relaxing space, amenities to facilitate working onboard, and food and beverage availability are the least important.



Service Priorities by Rider Type and Trip Purpose



These results are based on the service priority exercise. The scores are shown on a probability scale where all the attributes have positive values totaling '100'. As these scores are ratio scaled, the results can be interpreted as an item with twice the score being twice as important.

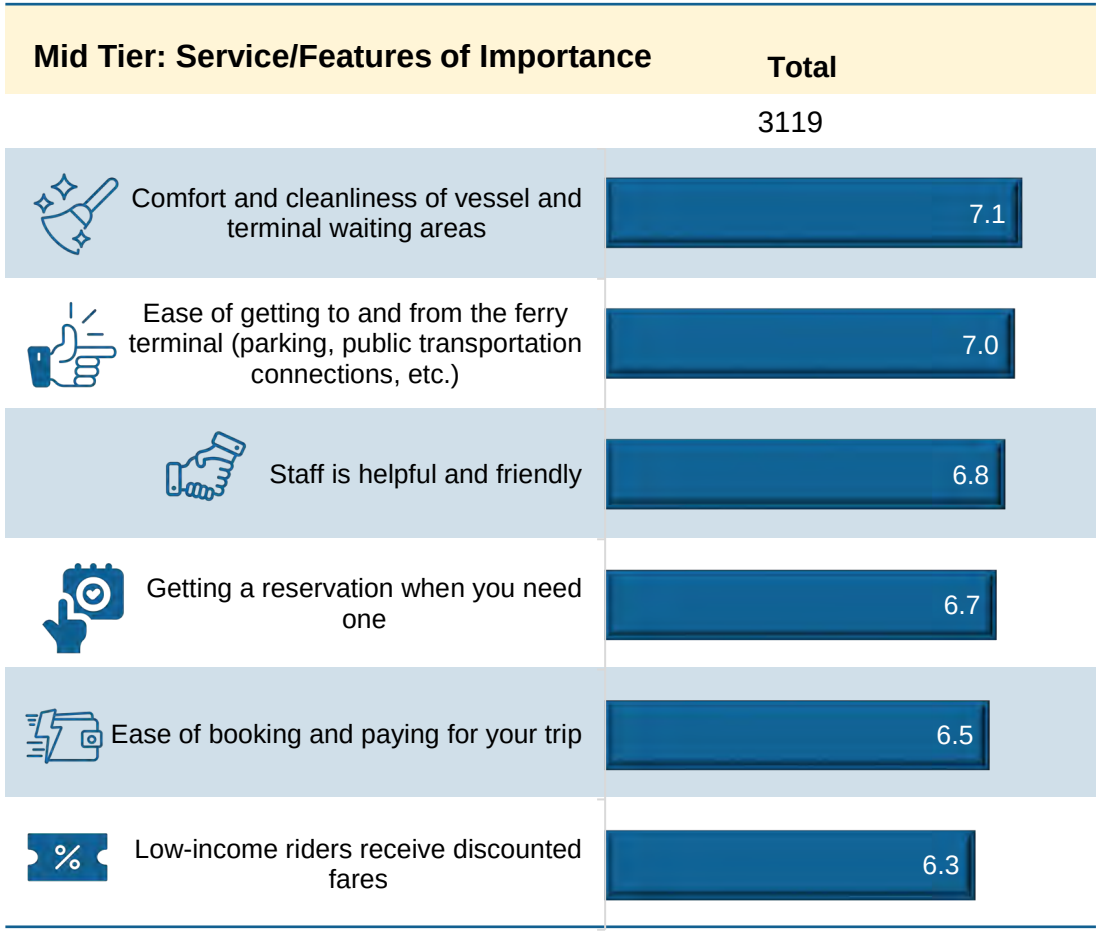
Running on time is the top priority systemwide, ranking well above sailing frequency and showing riders value reliability more than frequency. Vehicle passengers, non-discretionary riders, and higher-income riders (over $75K) feel this most strongly.

While dependability is the most important priority *overall*, among riders with lower incomes (under $75K), affordability surpasses dependability and takes the top spot. Vehicle passengers also rate affordability significantly higher than foot/bike/transit passengers. On the other hand, higher income riders place significantly greater importance than their counterparts on real-time updates.

Non-discretionary riders (e.g. commuters or those riding for medical appointments) prioritize sailing frequency significantly more than discretionary riders.

Non-discretionary trips are those riders take out of necessity, such as work commuting or medical appointments. Discretionary trips are those taken by choice, such as recreation, visiting family or friends, or shopping.

Service Priorities by Rider Type and Trip Purpose



These results are based on the service priority exercise. The scores are shown on a probability scale where all the attributes have positive values totaling '100'. As these scores are ratio scaled, the results can be interpreted as an item with twice the score being twice as important.

Comfort and cleanliness and ease of terminal access are both important, with foot/bike/transit passengers rating these aspects significantly higher than vehicle riders.

Staff friendliness scores has similar importance across all rider types. On the other hand, reservations are, as expected, much more important to those riding with their vehicle. Vehicle riders also place significantly greater importance on ease of booking.

For riders with incomes under $75K, discounted fares rank 5th in importance out of the 13 attributes, sitting above comfort and cleanliness, ease of terminal access, and staff friendliness. For higher-income riders, discounted fares rank much lower (10 out of 13).

Non-discretionary trips are those riders take out of necessity, such as work commuting or medical appointments. Discretionary trips are those taken by choice, such as recreation, visiting family or friends, or shopping.

Service Priorities by Rider Type and Trip Purpose

Bottom Tier: Service/Features of Importance	Total
	3119
Onboard space to relax or enjoy the view	5.5
Onboard space and amenities for working (tables, outlets, WiFi etc.)	5.0
Availability of food and beverage service onboard	4.9

These results are based on the service priority exercise. The scores are shown on a probability scale where all the attributes have positive values totaling '100'. As these scores are ratio scaled, the results can be interpreted as an item with twice the score being twice as important.

Onboard experience features rank lowest across all rider types, but foot/bike/transit passengers prioritize all three significantly higher than vehicle riders.

Higher-income riders (over $75K) place significantly greater importance on food and beverage and working amenities than lower-income riders, and discretionary riders place significantly greater importance on space to relax and enjoy the view.

Non-discretionary trips are those riders take out of necessity, such as work commuting or medical appointments. Discretionary trips are those taken by choice, such as recreation, visiting family or friends, or shopping.

Service Priorities by Most Frequent Route

On-time performance and affordability are the top two priorities on nearly every route, but notable differences emerge at the route level. Getting a reservation is the biggest divide, ranking as #1 on PTT/COU and #2 on ANA/SJI, compared to #12 on Seattle/Bainbridge and Seattle/Bremerton. Sailing frequency is ranked higher on Seattle/Bremerton (#2) and Fauntleroy/Vashon and Fauntleroy/Southworth (#3), while it ranks #4 systemwide.

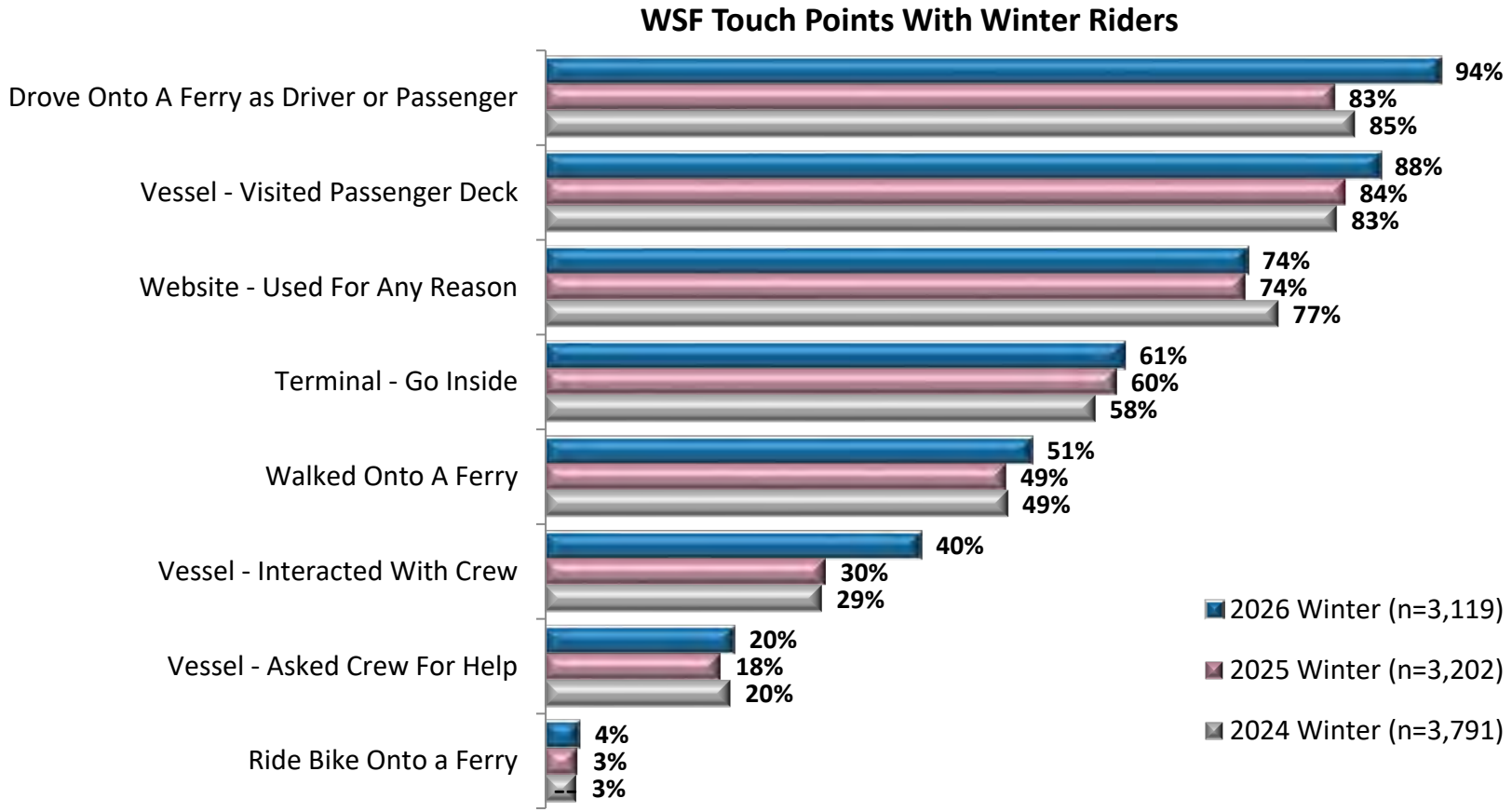
	Most Frequent Route Ridden											
Service/Features of Importance	**Total**	**SEA/ BAIN**	**SEA/ BRE**	**PTD/ TAH**	**EDM/ KIN**	**FAU/ VAS**	**FAU/ SOU**	**SOU/ VAS**	**PTT/ COU**	**MUK/ CLI**	**ANA/ SJI**	**INTER SJI**
	3119	584	181	93	447	191	99	14*	96	602	768	44*
On-time/dependable departures and arrivals	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**1**
The price of riding the ferry is kept affordable	**2**	**2**	**3**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**3**
Real-time trip updates (ETAs, delays, load status etc.)	**3**	**3**	**4**	**3**	**3**	**4**	**4**	**3**	5	**3**	5	6
Increased frequency of sailings	**4**	**4**	**2**	**4**	**4**	**3**	**3**	**4**	**4**	**4**	**4**	**4**
Comfort and cleanliness of vessel and terminal waiting areas	5	5	6	6	5	8	6	7	7	9	7	5
Ease of getting to and from the ferry terminal (parking, public transportation connections, etc.)	6	6	5	7	7	5	7	9	9	6	10	**11**
Staff is helpful and friendly	7	7	8	5	6	6	5	6	8	5	8	8
Getting a reservation when you need one	8	**12**	**12**	10	10	**11**	10	8	**1**	8	**2**	**2**
Ease of booking and paying for your trip	9	8	**11**	9	9	7	8	10	6	7	6	7
Low-Income riders receive discounted fares	10	9	10	8	8	9	9	**5**	10	10	9	9
Onboard space to relax or enjoy the view	**11**	10	9	**11**	**11**	10	**11**	**11**	**11**	**11**	**11**	10
Onboard space and amenities for working (tables, outlets, WiFi etc.)	**12**	**11**	7	**13**	**13**	**13**	**13**	**12**	**13**	**13**	**12**	**12**
Availability of food and beverage service on board	**13**	**13**	**13**	**12**	**12**	**12**	**12**	**13**	**12**	**12**	**13**	**13**

**Caution small sample size.*

Performance Ratings & Public Transit Usage

Rider Interaction With WSF

The most common rider touchpoints remain driving onto the ferry (94%), visiting the passenger deck (88%), and using the WSF website (74%). Vessel crew interactions saw the largest increase, with 40% of riders reporting an interaction, up from 30% in 2025.



Q(s) During the winter period, did you … Q20 Go inside a ferry terminal for any reason? Q30 Did you walk onto a ferry? Q43 Did you either drive onto a ferry or board as a passenger in a vehicle? Q43B Did you ride your bike (non-motorized) onto a ferry? Q70 Did you use/visit the vessel passenger deck area? Q80 Did you have any interaction with any of the vessel crew? Q103 Did you specifically ask a WSF vessel staff member for help/assistance? Q90 Use the WSF website?

Summary of Attribute Dissatisfaction by Rider Type

Consistent with 2025, parking and on-time performance generate the highest dissatisfaction systemwide. Vehicle riders are more dissatisfied than foot passengers with both. Coordinated sailing schedules with transit services and efficient vehicle loading procedures also stand out as higher dissatisfaction attributes compared to the rest of the attributes.

Color Code: Dissatisfaction Light (10-19%), Medium (20-29%), Heavy (≥30%) Number of Respondents Varies by Question (Max n Size Shown)	Dissat. (Extremely/ Somewhat) n3119	Vehicle (Rider & Passenger) n2560	Foot Passenger n559
There is adequate parking near the terminals	**28%**	34%	18%
WSF has on-time/dependable departures	**25%**	26%	22%
WSF has on-time/dependable arrivals	**24%**	25%	21%
WSF sailing schedule is adequately coordinated with transit services	**14%**	14%	14%
WSF vehicle loading procedures are efficient and allow for adequate room between vehicles	**10%**	10%	7%
WSF vehicle loading and unloading crews provide clear directions and/or hand signals	**9%**	9%	7%
WSF bike loading and unloading crews provide clear directions and/or hand signals	**7%**	7%	7%
Bathrooms on the ferries are clean and well maintained	**6%**	5%	8%
WSF efficiently processes vehicles through ticket lanes	**6%**	6%	3%
WSF vehicle loading and unloading crew are friendly, courteous and polite	**6%**	6%	5%
WSF walk-on passenger loading and unloading procedures are efficient	**6%**	6%	6%
WSF provides easy loading and unloading for walk-on passengers	**5%**	6%	3%
WSF makes buying tickets easy and quick	**5%**	5%	2%
The terminal to vessel passenger walkway is comfortable and safe	**4%**	5%	2%
Terminals are comfortable, clean and well maintained	**4%**	5%	3%
WSF bike loading and unloading procedures are efficient	**3%**	2%	4%
Ferry passenger seating areas are clean and comfortable	**3%**	2%	4%
WSF vessel crew are helpful, competent and knowledgeable	**3%**	4%	0%
WSF vessel crew are friendly, courteous and polite	**3%**	4%	1%
WSF bike loading and unloading crew are friendly, courteous and polite	**2%**	3%	1%
WSF toll booth staff are friendly, courteous and polite	**2%**	2%	2%

Summary of Attribute Dissatisfaction by Route

Parking near terminals is the top driver of dissatisfaction system-wide, especially on the FAU/VAS and FAU/SOU routes. Dependability is another consistent pain point, with on-time departures and arrivals drawing notable dissatisfaction, particularly on INTER/SJI and FAU/VAS routes. A smaller but still notable pain point is sailing schedule coordination with transit services, which stands out on ANA/SJI and INTER/SJI routes.

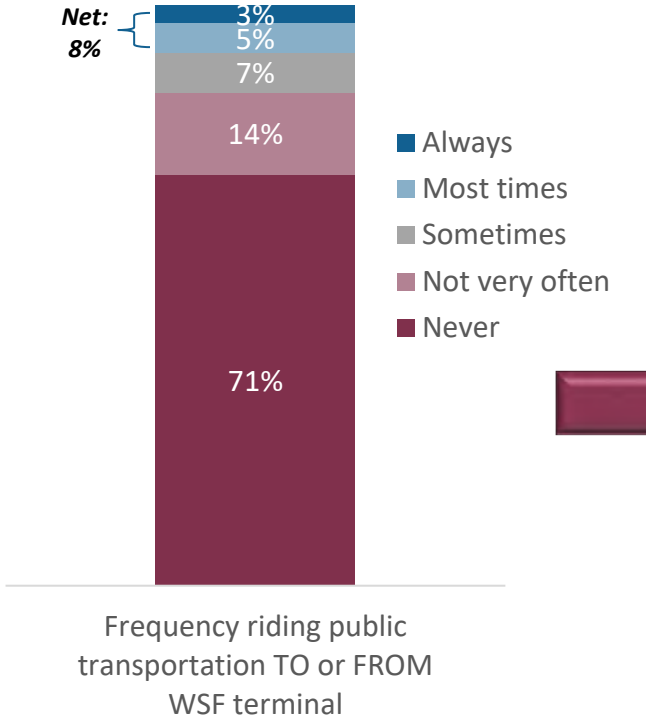
Color Code: Dissatisfaction Light (10-19%), Medium (20-29%), Heavy (≥30%)	Dissat. (Extremely/ somewhat)	SEA/ BAIN	SEA/ BRE	PTD/ TAH	EDM/ KIN	FAU/ VAS	FAU/ SOU	SOU/ VAS	PTT/ COU	MUK/ CLI	ANA/ SJI	INTER SJI
Number of Respondents Varies by Question (Max n Size Shown)	3119	581	179	89	445	183	100	24*	117	595	746	60
Overall system dissatisfaction	**23%**	**16%**	**21%**	**31%**	**19%**	**25%**	**25%**	**41%**	**17%**	**30%**	**35%**	**53%**
There is adequate parking near the terminals	**28%**	16%	27%	24%	28%	54%	48%	7%	22%	44%	16%	17%
WSF has on-time/dependable departures	**25%**	28%	18%	29%	16%	33%	29%	20%	10%	29%	31%	50%
WSF has on-time/dependable arrivals	**24%**	28%	16%	31%	14%	32%	29%	12%	8%	27%	29%	41%
WSF sailing schedule is adequately coordinated with transit services	**14%**	10%	20%	18%	11%	22%	18%	5%	9%	10%	34%	43%
WSF vehicle loading procedures are efficient and allow for adequate room between vehicles	**10%**	7%	7%	15%	6%	18%	9%	18%	5%	8%	20%	28%
WSF vehicle loading and unloading crews provide clear directions and/or hand signals	**9%**	6%	7%	13%	7%	19%	6%	18%	4%	9%	13%	23%
WSF bike loading and unloading crews provide clear directions and/or hand signals	**7%**	7%			5%	20%					4%	
Bathrooms on the ferries are clean and well maintained	**6%**	7%	13%	4%	7%	6%	7%	14%	3%	1%	5%	6%
WSF efficiently processes vehicles through ticket lanes	**6%**	4%	3%	4%	6%	17%	3%	6%	1%	5%	5%	9%
WSF vehicle loading and unloading crew are friendly, courteous and polite	**6%**	5%	4%	7%	5%	9%	9%	9%	6%	4%	6%	14%
WSF walk-on passenger loading and unloading procedures are efficient	**6%**	7%	5%	4%	5%	9%	5%	20%	4%	3%	6%	0%
WSF provides easy loading and unloading for walk-on passengers	**5%**	5%	2%	2%	6%	11%	5%			3%	8%	0%
WSF makes buying tickets easy and quick	**5%**	5%	6%	7%	4%	5%	5%	2%		5%	5%	8%
The terminal to vessel passenger walkway is comfortable and safe	**4%**	2%	1%		7%	10%	5%	5%	1%	3%	6%	0%
Terminals are comfortable, clean and well maintained	**4%**	4%	2%	2%	3%	6%	5%		4%	2%	9%	25%

**Caution small sample size.*

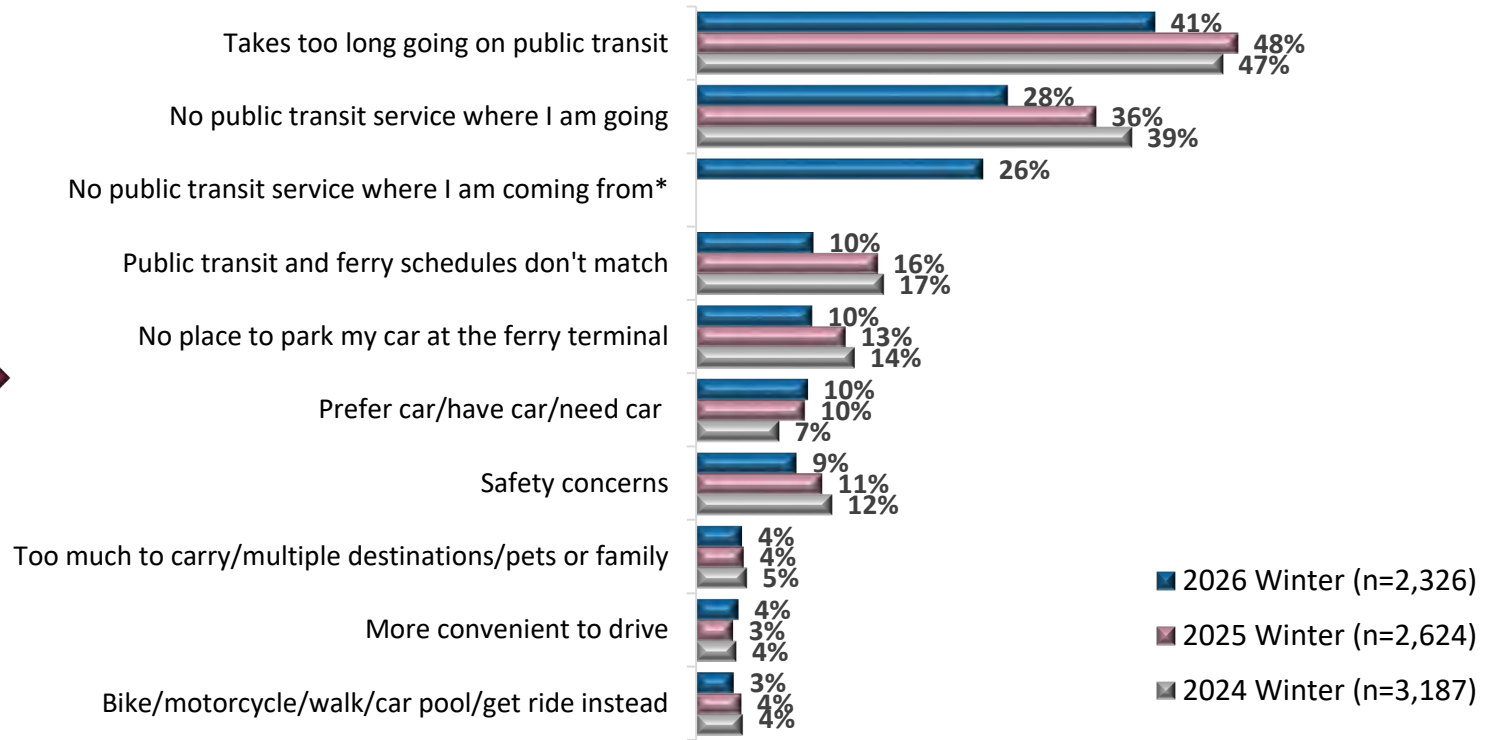
Public Transit Usage

Public transit usage to or from WSF terminal remains low at 8%, with most (71%) riders never using it. Taking too long remains the primary barrier (41%), though this has declined notably from 48% last year. Lack of service to the destination (28%) and from the origin (26%) are also key barriers, while schedule mismatches between public transit and ferry times have declined significantly from 16% in 2025 to 10% in 2026..

Riding Public Transportation To/From WSF Terminal



Reasons for Not Riding Public Transportation To/From WSF Terminal



**New option introduced in 2026*

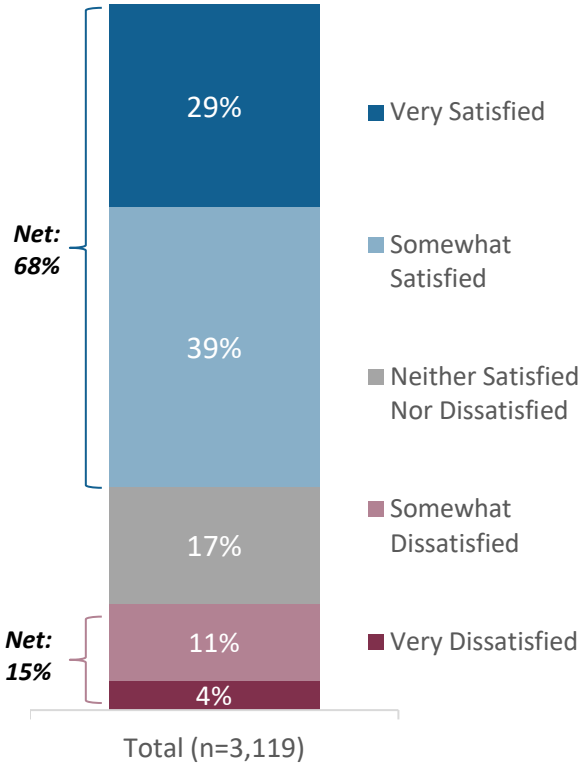
Q135C. How often did you ride public transit TO or FROM a WSF terminal in the past three months (January-March 2026)?
*Q135A1. (ASKED OF THOSE NOT USING PUBLIC TRANSIT) Which of the following are reasons why **you do not** ride public transit either TO or FROM a WSF terminal?*

WSF Communications

WSF Communication

Over two thirds of riders (68%) are satisfied with WSF communication efforts, consistent with previous years, while 15% are dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction continues to center on schedule reliability, late or missing alerts, and the need for more consistent, accessible, and reliable real-time information.

Satisfaction with WSF Communication



If people indicated they were dissatisfied, they were asked to provide specific comments. We received 413 comments. Below is a sampling of those comments.

"WSF web site is filled with too much clutter making useful information hard to find. Useful = finding accurate updates such as how many spaces left for sailings on particular routes and times. having ready access to phone numbers to call and get information." **Somewhat Dissatisfied**

"When boats are 30 minutes or more late, the vessel watch feature and how many car spaces are left on a ferry are often inaccurate and not real time." **Somewhat Dissatisfied**

"Website poorly managed for delays, etc., and no apparent option for email updates, which should be opt-in automated. Wait times constantly unreliable and one has to use traffic cameras and guess." **Somewhat Dissatisfied**

"Frequently, when alerting that sailings are canceled due to crew shortages, there is no hint that alternative to getting home to Friday Harbor are being worked on. (Since two sailings to Friday Harbor are the same.) Also, alerts by email are redundantly duplicated as often as not. Running late by 22 minutes is no big deal in the San Juan runs--especially when the alert tells us to check the vessel watch which has that information in real time. Lastly, the terminology is inconsistent--sometimes the alerts refer to the #2 boat, sometimes the Samish, and sometimes the 12:05 sailing." **Very Dissatisfied**

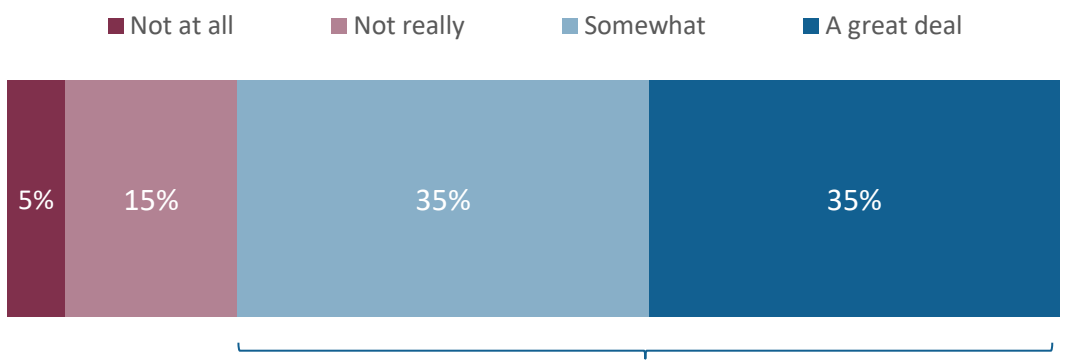
Q132. How satisfied are you with the efforts of Washington State Ferries to communicate information you need to know (including schedule changes, general ferry topics, etc.)?
Q133. Why do you say you are [RECALL ANSWER BASED ON Q132] with WSF's efforts regarding communicating the things you need to know such as schedule changes, general ferry topics, service responses, etc.?

Additional Comments & Suggestions

Thoughts on Vessel Age

Seven in ten riders say vessel age contributes at least somewhat negatively to schedule reliability.

Perceived Impact of Vessel Age on Schedule Reliability



10% Don't know

"…Surely everyone knew that aging ferries would be less reliable. So don't repeat the mistakes of the past and plan for future growth now. - You've made some improvements in reliability, but we need more ferries!..."

"We need more ferries in order to maintain reliable arrivals and departures. Ferries are the same as roads, they need to be maintained."

"Our ferry system desperately needs an overhaul of new ferries and more employees. I know this isn't news and some state reps are working hard on this. Our state needs the ability to build and maintain the ferries here. I let my reps know this."

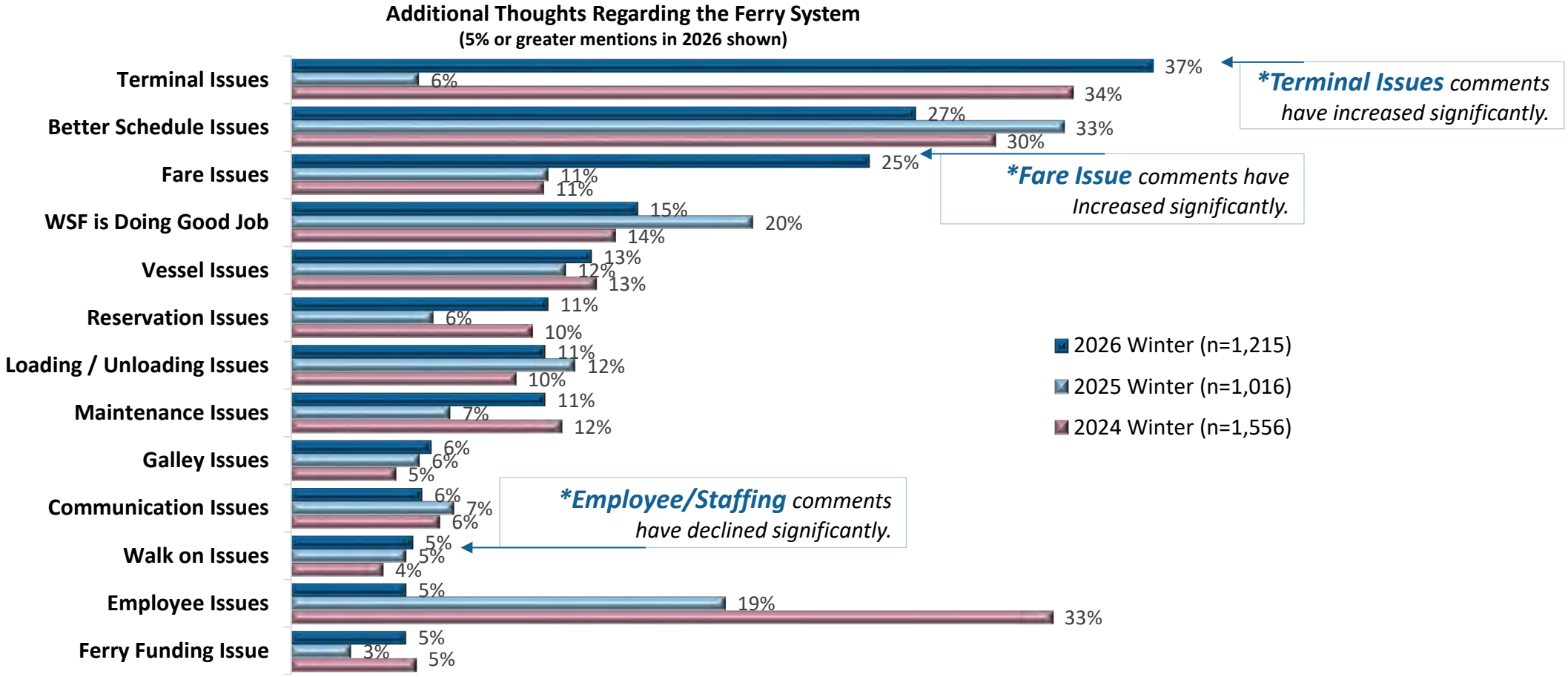
"I worry that the age of the ferries will negatively affect WSF system and the future availability of transportation services. We depend on the ferries to provide transport to medical care. If the old ferries are not maintained and replaced as needed, we will face increased disruptions in service similar to that caused by repairs needed to the Kennewick. It is almost impossible to predict when to get to the ferry terminal for on time arrival at appointments."

"WA ferries are vital to the state and must be supported! We need new boats in the pipeline! I can see the crews are doing their best to cope with staffing and budget challenges. It is very appreciated!"

QN9: Do you feel the age of Washington State Ferries vessels contributes negatively to schedule reliability?

Additional Thoughts Regarding WSF

When asked for additional thoughts regarding the ferry system, terminal issues (37%) and schedule improvements (27%) are the most common areas for feedback, though schedule comments have declined compared to last year. Fare issues have increased significantly, now cited by one in four comments (25%), while employee and staffing comments have declined significantly over the past two years.



10% Don't know

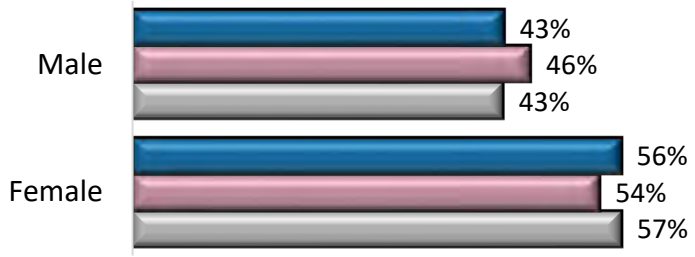
Q111/112. Do you have any additional thoughts regarding the ferry system you would like to share?

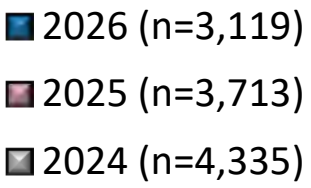
Demographics & Ridership Conditions

Demographics – Comparison of 2026 to Previous Years

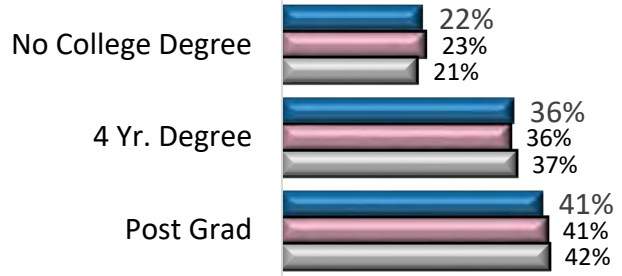
Demographics for the past three years are shown below. Notable changes this year include a lower proportion of male riders, a continued increase in riders ages 65+ (now 55%), and a continued rise in retired riders (47%). The share of riders employed full time continues to decline.

Gender

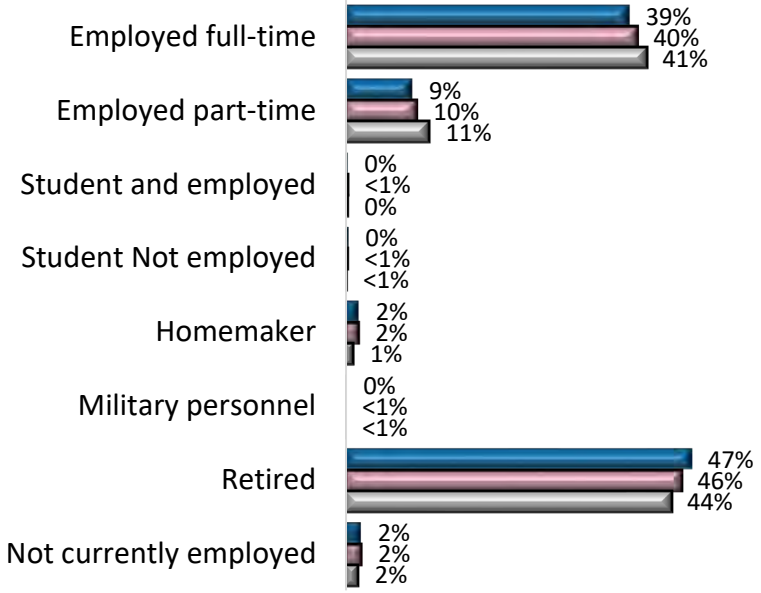




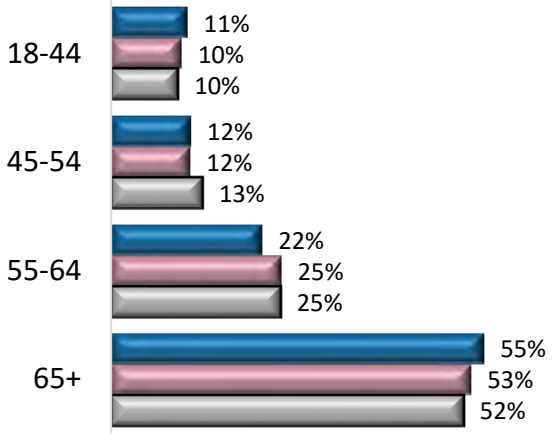
Education



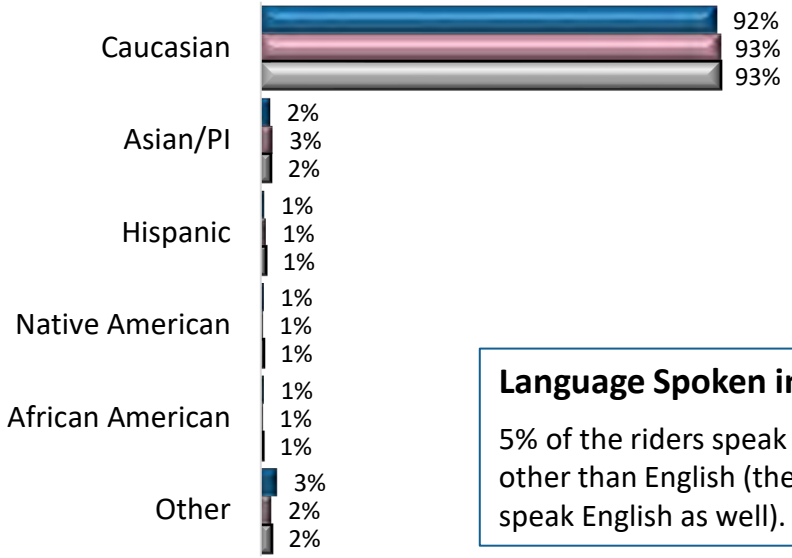
Employment



Age



Ethnicity



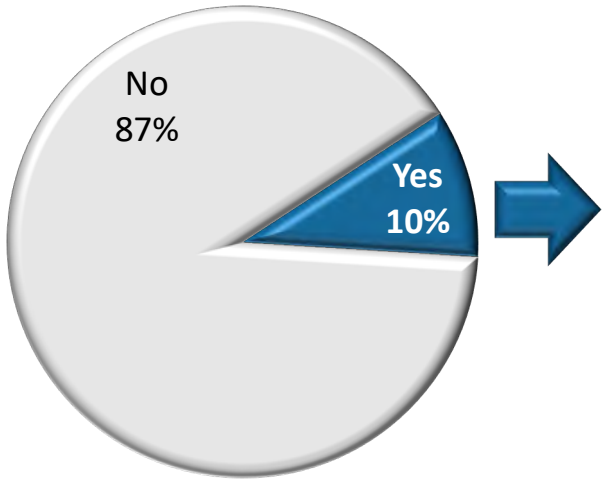
Language Spoken in the Home

5% of the riders speak a language other than English (they may also speak English as well).

Conditions Affecting Ferry Access

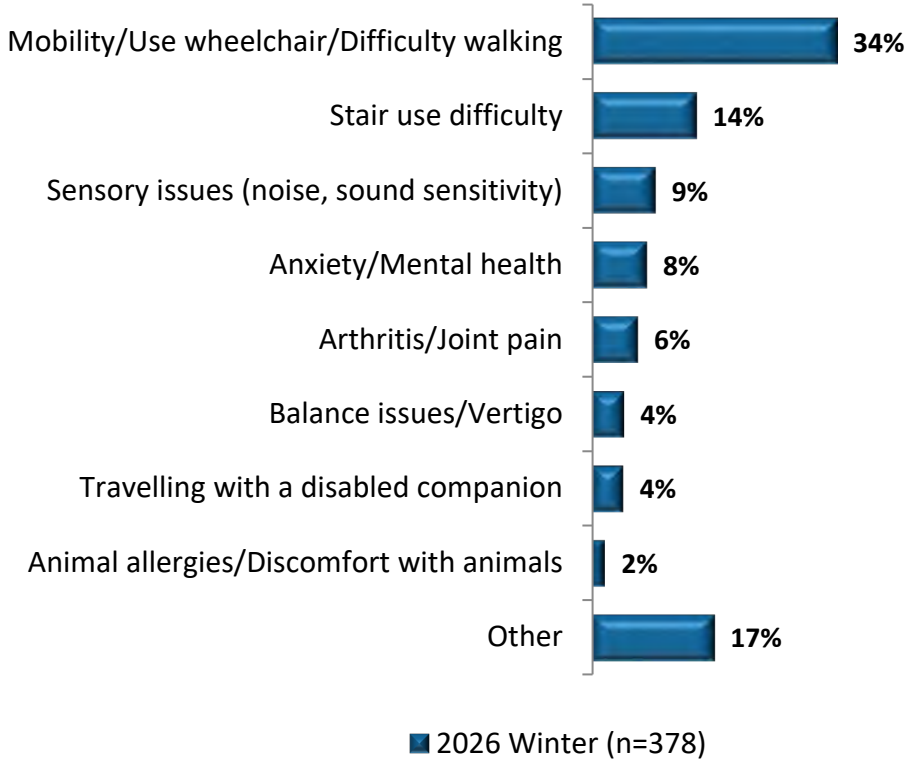
One in ten riders (10%) report a physical, sensory, cognitive, or mental health condition that affects how they access or use the ferry. Among these riders, mobility-related conditions are most common, including difficulty walking or wheelchair use (34%) and difficulty using stairs (14%), with challenges most often related to elevator access and navigating vessel and terminal facilities.

Riders Experiencing Conditions That Affect Ferry Access



3% prefer not to answer

Conditions Affecting Ferry Access



"Both my husband and I have polio and wear leg braces and use crutches. Difficult to climb stairs and walk up and down the loading ramp."

"The lights are too bright and cause headaches when riding at night. Your only option is to stand outside to avoid the lights but it's too cold for long trips."

"One family member has dementia and must be closely supervised. Another has difficulty walking far. Being close to the vehicle deck restroom is imperative."

"I use crutches so it is hard for me to access areas from the car deck or walk on to the ferry when it is loading from the car deck."

"I have vertigo, so narrow steep staircases are hard for me. Sometimes the elevator is hard to find or out of service."

"I have an extreme and life-threatening allergy to animal fur and dander. The new rules about dogs can make a ride rehabilitating (SIC). Particularly when dogs are allowed up all over the seating."

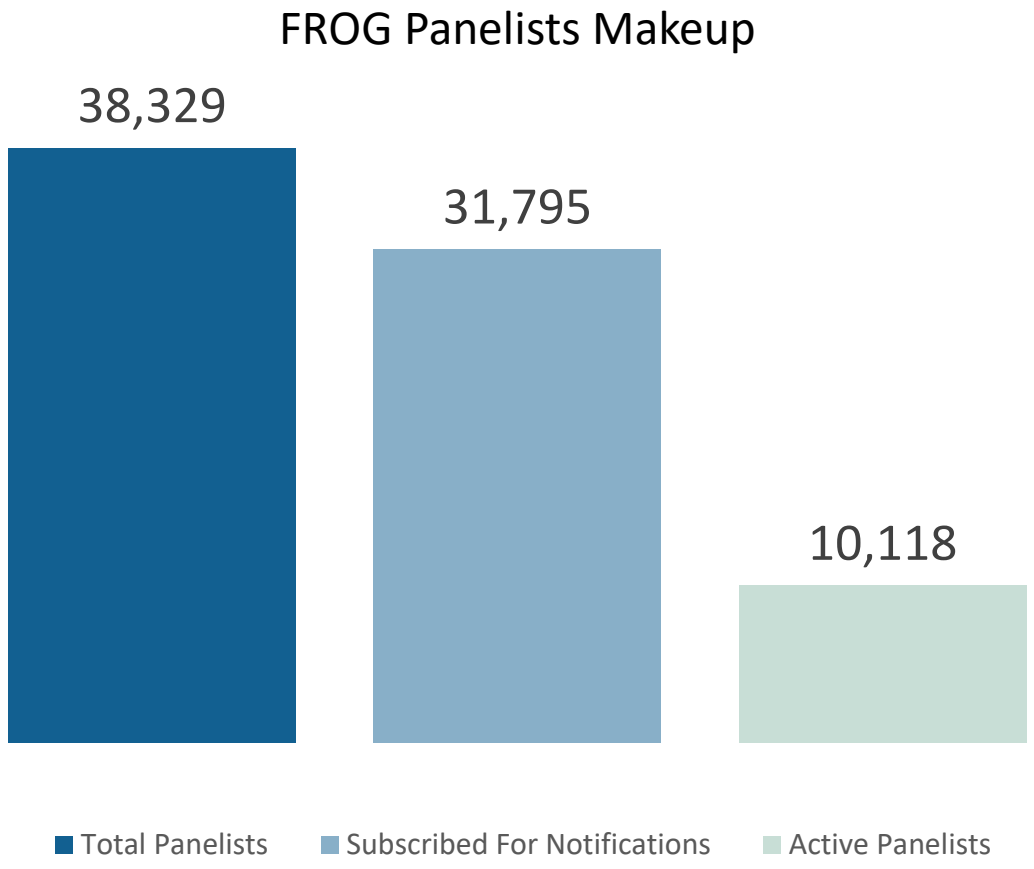
NOTE: Verbatim responses can be found in the Excel spreadsheet file for this question.

QN7: Do you experience any physical, sensory, cognitive, or mental health conditions that affect the way in which you access or use the ferry?

FROG Panel Stats and What's Next

FROG Panel Stats

Despite constant panel growth, less than a quarter of total members participated in a FROG survey within the past three years. Continued focus on recruiting new members is essential to the ongoing health and viability of the FROG panel.



FROG Panel Stats

New outreach efforts more than tripled FROG panel sign-ups this year. From January 1 to June 30, 712 people joined the FROG panel, up from 215 during the same period in 2025.

Ongoing Social Media Campaign

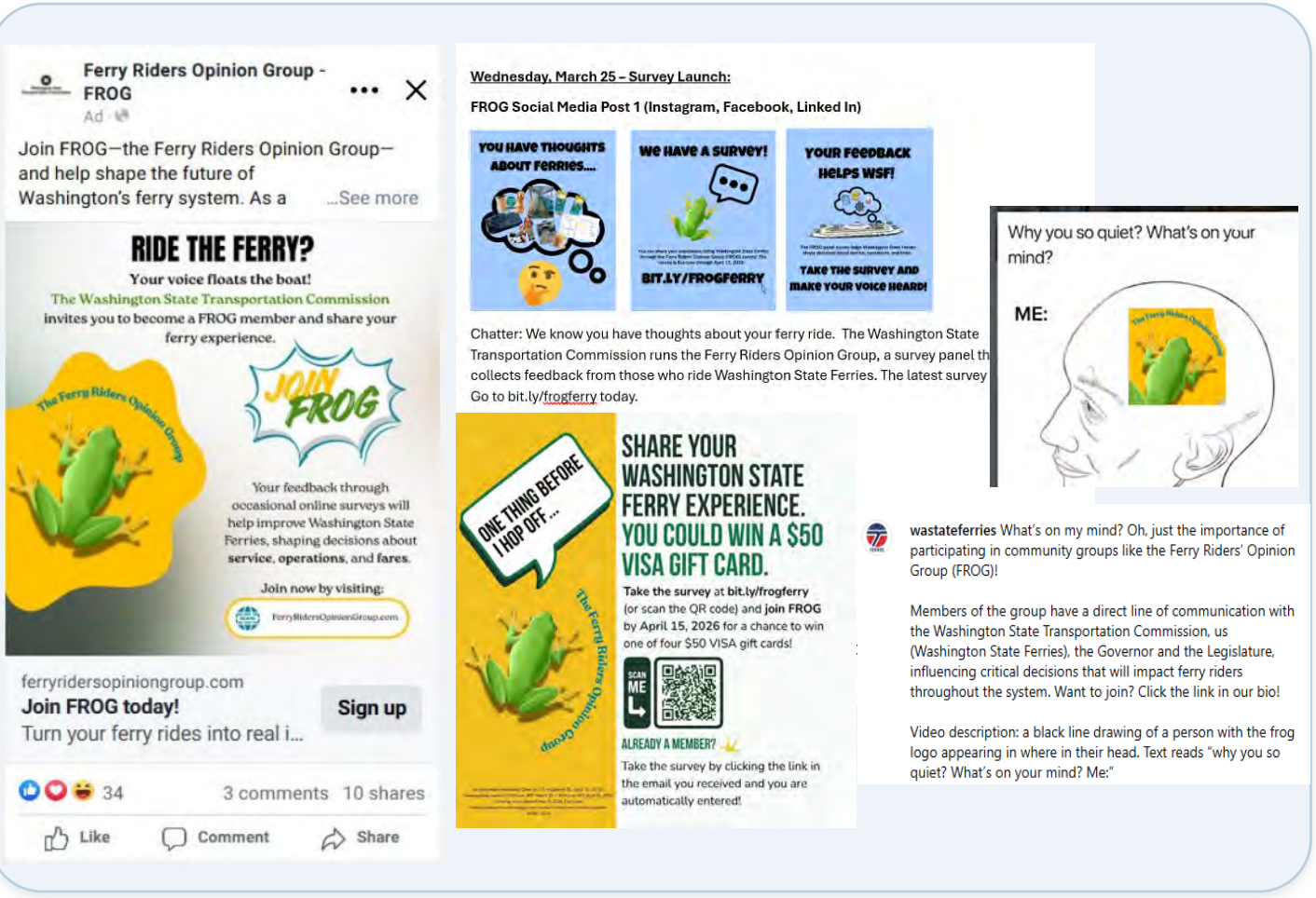
Paid advertising across META platforms such as Facebook and Instagram throughout the year, targeting Washington State Ferries riders to keep FROG panel sign-up visible and drive continuous recruitment.

Social Media Collaboration with WSF & WSTC

During the Winter Performance period, we increased our communication efforts by collaborating with the WSF and WSTC social media profiles. Posts encouraged followers to participate in the open-link survey and to join the FROG panel so they could take part in future surveys, extending our reach significantly.

Sweepstakes

To show appreciation for participation, we ran a gift sweepstakes in which four winners each received a $50 Visa gift card. It was open to riders who joined FROG during the period and to existing panel members who completed the survey, rewarding new and returning participants alike.



What is Next

In Q3 and Q4 of 2026, we will sustain efforts towards FROG panel growth through continued online ads, gather in-person feedback with a summer onboard survey on all routes, and conduct a second FROG research effort – the Summer Performance Study.

ONGOING

Continued Online Ads

We will continue running paid online ads on META platforms (Facebook and Instagram) to encourage FROG panel sign-ups.

JULY 2026

Summer Onboard Survey

An onboard survey across all WSF ferry routes, running between July 31st and August 30th, capturing recreational and infrequent rider feedback in real time and encouraging FROG panel sign-ups.

SEPTEMBER 2026

Summer Performance Study

Launching end of September 2026, the Summer Performance Survey will be sent to FROG panel members and offered as an open-link survey, with collaborative social media efforts from WSF and WSTC to encourage sign-ups and participation.

THANK YOU!

For More Information Contact:

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Aaron Halbert, WSTC Financial Analyst
Chelsea Benning, Survey Program Project Manager

360-705-7070