



# ARE WE THERE YET?

## BARRIERS TO TRANSPORT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IN 2023

Full report

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# Foreword

Access to transport is integral to a just society; it's how we access essential services, education and employment, healthcare, leisure, and our social lives. **Without the ability to get from A to B, the world stops at the front door.**

1 in 4 people in the UK are disabled<sup>i</sup>, and we do not have equal access to transport. We make roughly 30% fewer journeys per year than non-disabled people<sup>ii</sup>, the same figure as over 20 years ago<sup>iii</sup>. But it doesn't have to be this way. Indeed, it cannot continue to be this way. For disabled people to truly be equal members of society, this disability transport gap must be closed.

It is the responsibility of decision makers and transport operators to listen to the disabled community's experiences and to remove the barriers that stand in our way. Yet throughout our work campaigning for transport justice, a question we are often asked by decision makers is 'Where is the evidence?'

Data can be a powerful influencing tool, and there are clearly gaps in the current literature that can hinder change. Key information, such as which barriers to travel are the most significant, how experiences vary across different modes and demographics, and which interventions disabled people would most like to see, are not well documented in official statistics<sup>iv</sup>.

Where research exists, it can fail to interrogate the reasons behind travel patterns: do we use public transport less out of choice, or necessity, and what implications does this have for both policy development and the allocation of funding?

One of the foundational principles of the disability rights movement is 'Nothing about us without us'. This is the belief that disabled people's voices, lived experience, and expertise must be central in shaping the policies that affect our lives. Yet as a community, we are almost never given a real seat at the table when it comes to transport infrastructure and design and so, brick by brick, disabled people have been designed out of public life.

Therefore, when asked 'where is the data', we say this: disabled people have been speaking up about our experiences and the barriers we face for decades. The evidence of our lived experiences is there, but for change to happen we must be listened to and believed. Evidence of our experiences is no less valid if it comes directly from the community, instead of polling by a non-disabled research agency.

This new report is part of Transport for All's sustained efforts to remedy this injustice by putting the spotlight on our community's experiences and voices, and documenting the barriers we face and what needs to change. Now, the transport industry must listen and act to deliver transport justice for disabled people.

Caroline Stickland, *CEO of Transport for All*

# **CHAPTER 1:**

# **SETTING OUT**

**Introduction and key findings**

# About Transport for All

Transport for All is the disabled-led group breaking down barriers and transforming the transport system so disabled people can make the journeys we want, with freedom, dignity, ease, and confidence. We work with our members to campaign for change, to influence governments, industry, and the public, and provide peer support through our disabled-led casework service.

## A note on our language

### Transport terms

We use the term **‘walking/wheeling’** to make explicit to policymakers and transport planners that pedestrian environments must be made accessible to those using wheelchairs and other wheeled mobility aids, not just those on foot. We use the term **‘mobility aid’** to refer to a tool or piece of equipment that assists and aids a disabled person in their day-to-day activities. This could be a wheelchair or walking stick for those with mobility impairments, or a long cane or Guide Dog for those with visual impairment.

We use the term **‘cycling’** to acknowledge that many disabled people use adapted cycles which may not have two wheels. Cycling therefore refers to journeys made on any type of cycle, including trikes, handcycles, cargo-bikes, two-wheeled pedal bikes, e-bikes, recumbents, and tandems.

We use the term **‘light rail’** to encompass local, light-weight train, tram, and metro services.

In this research we asked participants questions about their experiences with taxis and/or Private Hire Vehicles collectively, although there are differences between these two services. Taxis, also known as hackney carriages, are available for immediate hire, can be hailed in the street (‘ply for hire’) or via a taxi rank, and can accept pre-bookings. Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs), also known as minicabs, must be pre-booked and cannot use taxi ranks. Sometimes PHVs are booked through mobile apps, for example Uber or Bolt. We’ll use **‘taxi’** to refer to both.

# Research terms

We use the term **‘mean’** to refer to average ratings or scores given by respondents when asked about their experiences on different modes of transport.

**‘Statistical significance’** helps researchers to determine whether their findings are meaningful and not just the result of random variability. If a finding is **‘statistically significant’**, then this indicates that any observed differences did not occur due to chance.

Throughout the report, we use **‘respondents’** to refer to people who answered a specific question, and **‘participants’** to refer more generally to those who took part in the survey.

## Who do we mean by ‘disabled people’?

At Transport for All we want to see progress for all disabled people. By disabled, we mean anyone who faces access barriers due to an impairment – including people who don’t use the word ‘disabled’ to describe themselves. This explicitly includes those of us who are Deaf, neurodivergent, chronically ill, have a mental health condition, have age-related impairments, and people with both visible and non-visible impairments.

This report uses the term **‘they’**, when talking about what respondents said. This is to make it clear which information comes specifically from this research. However, Transport for All is a disabled-led organisation, with a large membership of disabled people and allies, and so the report uses the term **‘we’** both when talking about the organisation and when talking about the wider disabled community of which we’re a part.

## Social Model of Disability

Our work uses the **Social Model of Disability**, the view that we are disabled by the barriers that exist in the world, rather than our individual bodies or minds. Those of us living with an impairment or illness are not inherently ‘disabled’ – this is something that is created in addition through exclusion. In a truly accessible world where all barriers are removed, we would still experience the effects of our impairments (such as fatigue, muscle weakness, or blindness) – but living with these would not result in exclusion from society, as society would be built to enable us to live full, vibrant, meaningful, autonomous lives.



# Methodology

## Our aims:

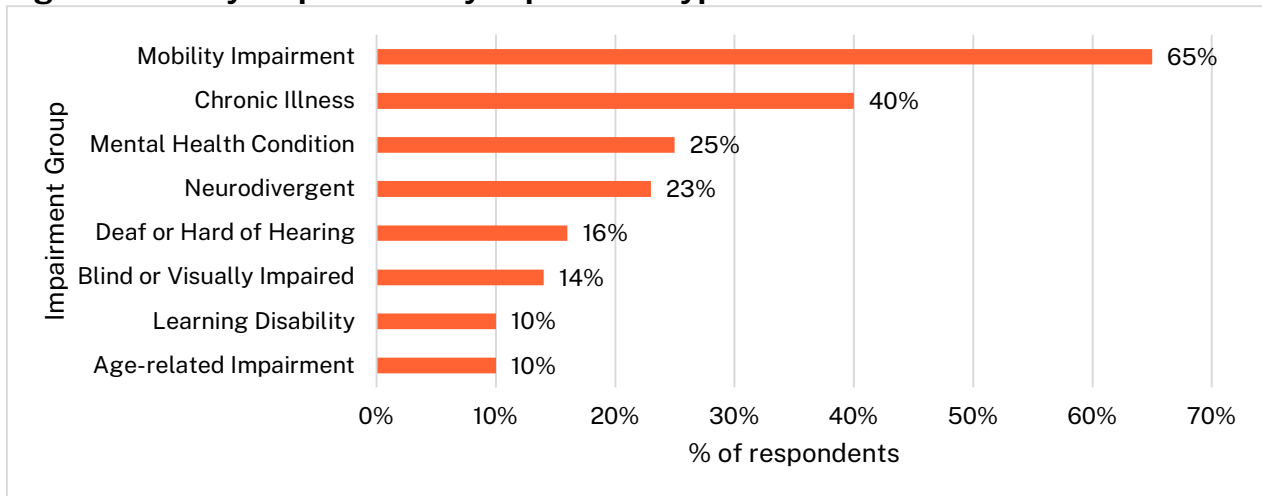
1. To map out disabled people's current usage and experience of transport and streets
2. To identify the specific barriers that disabled people face at each stage of a journey from start to finish, and evaluate their compounding effects.
3. To understand the impact that these barriers to transport have on disabled people's lives.
4. To understand what disabled people's priorities are for a future transport system that meets our needs.

This report presents highlights of the findings from research carried out by Transport for All during 2022 and 2023. This included a literature review and a series of qualitative workshops, which were used to design a survey with 150 questions. The survey asked respondents to share their experiences of making journeys between September 2021 and September 2022, and was split into 5 sections:

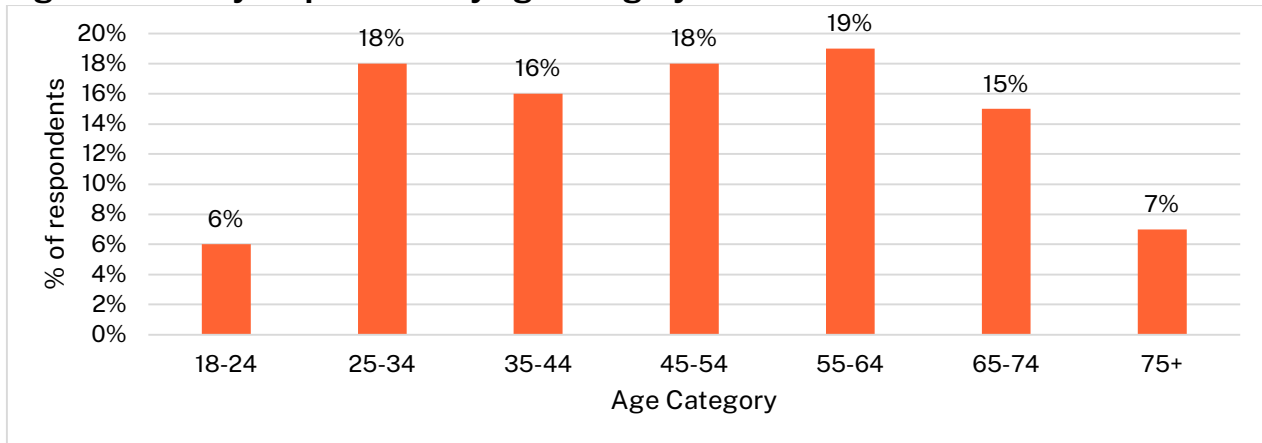
- **Journeys:** Included questions on frequency of travel, satisfaction with journeys, and use of green modes of transport.
- **Journey Planning:** Included questions on ease of finding information and tools used to plan journeys.
- **Modes of Transport:** Included questions on specific modes of travel and barriers experienced on them.
- **Solutions and the Future:** Included questions on awareness of transport schemes, improving access to transport, and priorities for the future.
- **About You:** Included questions on demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and impairment.

A total of 521 people completed the survey, of whom 63% identified as female, 32% identified as male, and 5% identified as non-binary or other. The most common age range among participants was 55-64 (19%), followed by 25-34 (18%), and 45-54 (18%). A number of impairment groups were represented, the most frequent of which was mobility impairment (65%), followed by chronic illness or long-term health condition (40%), and mental health condition (25%). Many participants had more than one impairment. Most participants lived in towns (33%), followed by suburban areas of cities (32%), and inner areas of cities (21%). Participants were most likely to be from London (31%), though there were responses from a wide range of counties throughout England.

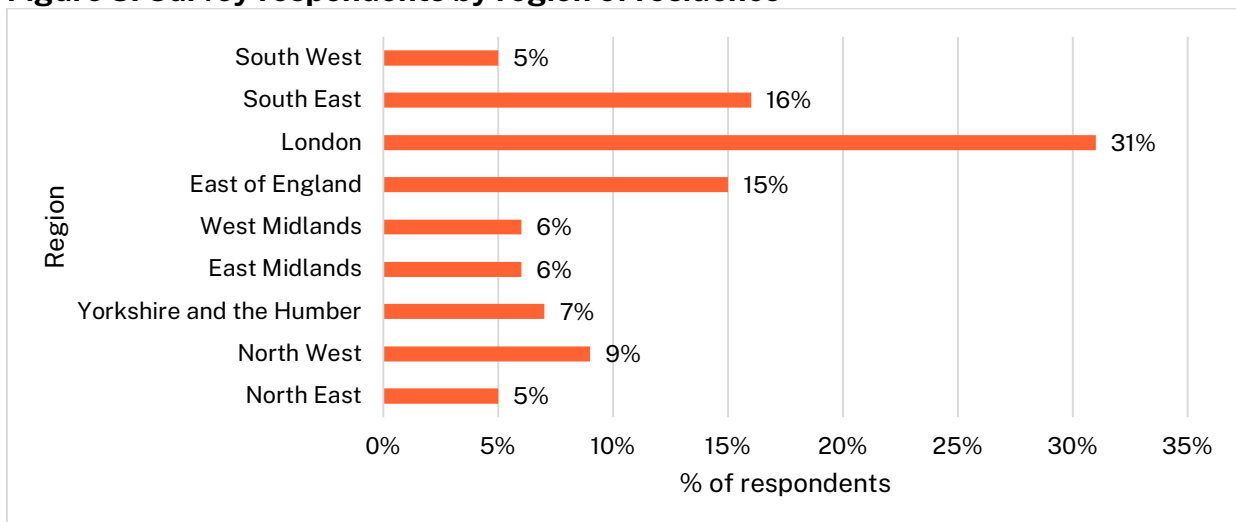
**Figure 1: Survey respondents by impairment type**



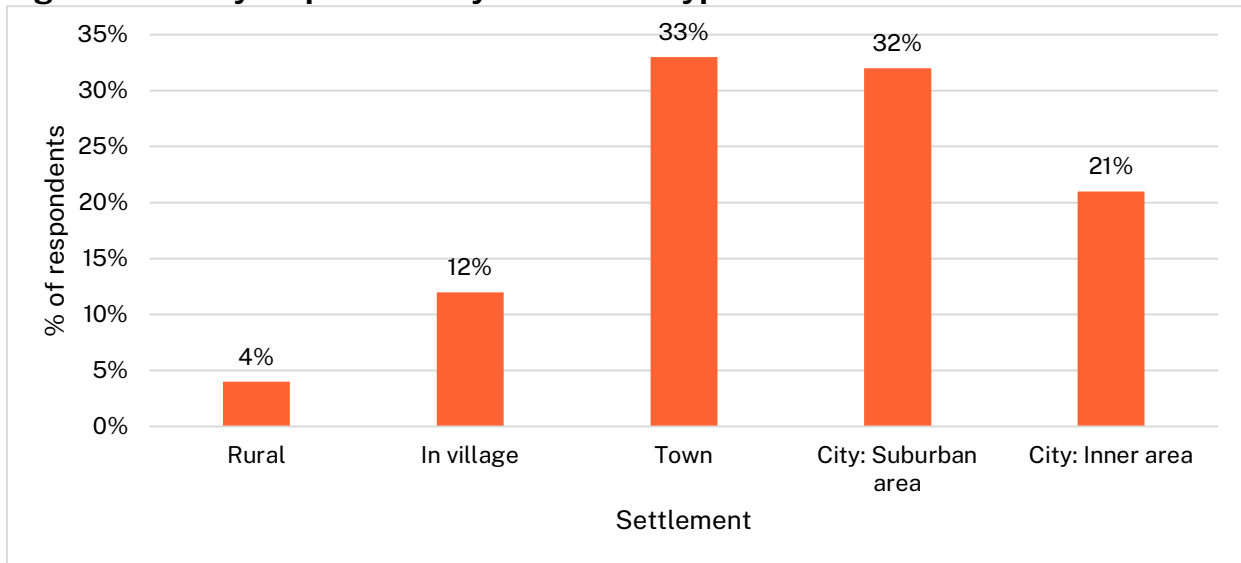
**Figure 2: Survey respondents by age category**



**Figure 3: Survey respondents by region of residence**



**Figure 4: Survey respondents by settlement type**



The scope of this research is trips made by disabled adults within England that involved leaving a house or place of residence for any purpose: for example, a trip to the shops, a journey to see friends, a commute to work or place of education, a trip to the doctor, or a trip with no destination (such as going for a walk or a drive). It covers public transport (bus, train, tram, metro, and light rail), private transport (car, taxi, or Private Hire Vehicle), and active travel (walking, wheeling, and cycling). Journeys made via door-to-door or community transport, aviation, or maritime were not included in this research.

Following the survey, in July and August 2023 we ran a second series of qualitative workshops to test the policy recommendations and conclusions that had come from the survey analysis. A shorter, 'highlights' version of this report is available on Transport for All's website in a range of formats.

# Key findings

- **56%** of respondents report being unhappy or extremely unhappy making journeys, with the average satisfaction rating being just **1.37 out of 3**.
- Respondents reported making on average just **5.84 journeys per week**. This is a third of the national average of 17 trips a week according to the National Travel Survey<sup>v</sup>.
- Overwhelmingly, disabled people said that the main reason for not making as many journeys as they would like is down to external factors: access barriers.
- Respondents who wanted to make more journeys told us they would like to make an average of **10.84** journeys per week. This suggests that removing barriers increase the number of journeys disabled people make by 50%.
- However, respondents told us they weren't confident that action would be taken to remove barriers. **44%** of respondents told us they thought that the accessibility of transport and streets would get worse in the next 10 years, while only **28%** felt things would improve and a further **28%** said things would stay the same.
- When thinking about a typical journey that they make, participants rated 'Interchanging or making connections' as the most difficult stage of the journey (**1.62**), followed by 'making a complaint' (**1.70**).
- **Cost** was the single most disabling barrier for 2 out of the 7 modes assessed (Train and Taxi/PHV).
- The majority (**71%**) of disabled people said they would like to use environmentally friendly modes of transport more, but that they were prevented from doing so by a lack of accessibility and availability.
- **77%** of respondents experienced poor pavements, including bumps, potholes, tree roots, broken tiles, and narrow width, making it the most frequently cited barrier of any mode of transport.
- **62%** of respondents reported planning journeys in advance "most or all of the time", while only **3%** never plan. **36%** of respondents use printed timetables to plan journeys. **38%** of people said poor information about accessibility of stations was a barrier to rail travel.

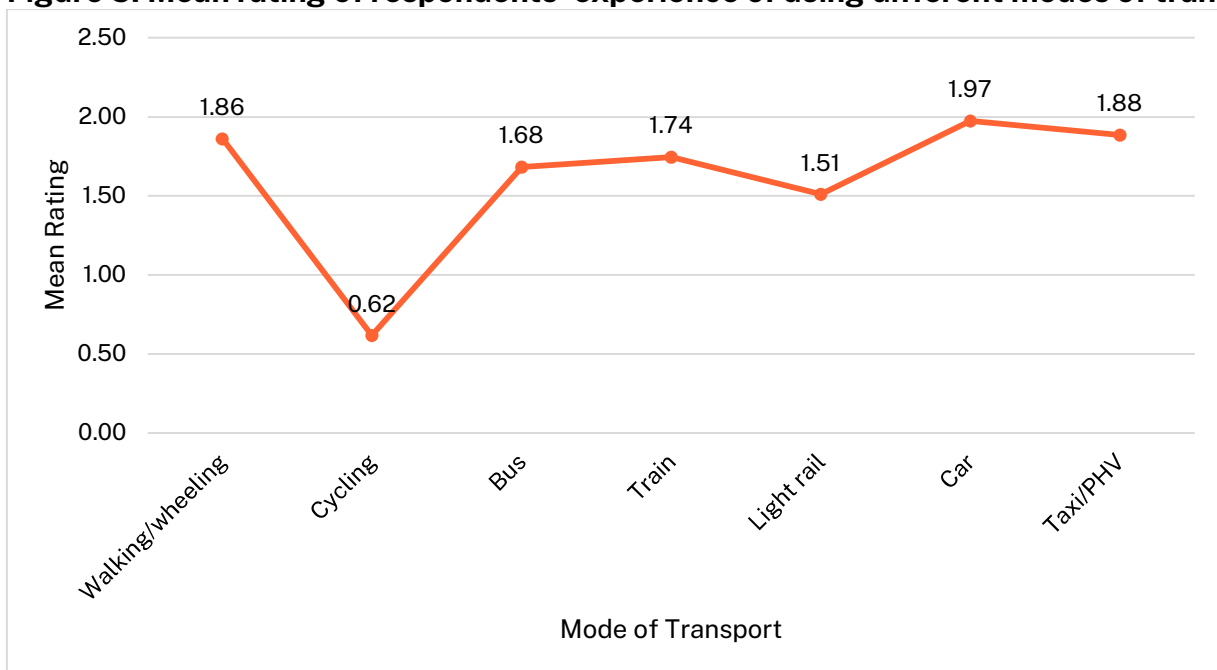
- Despite it being illegal, **26%** of respondents had recently experienced an access refusal while trying to travel by taxi or Private Hire Vehicle (where drivers either refuse to pick up a disabled person, or drive off upon seeing them). **15%** reported that they have been charged extra for being disabled when using taxis. Some told of drivers who added on a fee or left the meter running for the time it takes to load a mobility aid, or for the additional time a disabled passenger needed to get into the vehicle.
- **51%** of respondents experienced issues with priority seating and spaces when travelling by bus, such as seats being occupied or not clearly defined, or there being too few.
- Lack of step-free access and level boarding was the second most significant barrier to using trains (chosen by **13%**), and for light rail it was the most significant barrier (chosen by **24%**).

# Experience of modes

Throughout this survey, we use a 0-3 scale to measure experience. It works as follows:

- N/A: It's not available to me or I have no reason/desire to use/do this
- 0 - I cannot use/do this at all
- 1 - I can use/do this, but with extreme difficulty
- 2 - I can use/do this, but with some issues
- 3 - I use/do this, with confidence and ease

**Figure 5: Mean rating of respondents' experience of using different modes of transport**



## Walking/wheeling

On average, respondents rated their experience of walking and wheeling as 1.86 out of 3. Only 21% of respondents said they can walk and wheel with ease, while 6% said they cannot do it at all.

## Cycling

Respondents rated their experience of cycling as 0.62 out of 3, making it the most poorly rated mode of any in the survey, by a large margin. Only 4% said they could cycle with ease, while 41% said they could not cycle at all.

### Bus

Disabled people rated experiences of using the bus at 1.68 out of 3. 52% said that they can use the bus with some issues, while 13% could not use it at all.

### Train

The average rating for experiences of using the train was 1.74 out of 3. Only 13% said they can use the train with confidence and ease, while 10% said they cannot use it at all.

### Light rail

The average experience rating for light rail was 1.51 out of 3. 11% of respondents said they can use light rail with confidence and ease, while 16% of said they cannot use it at all.

### Car

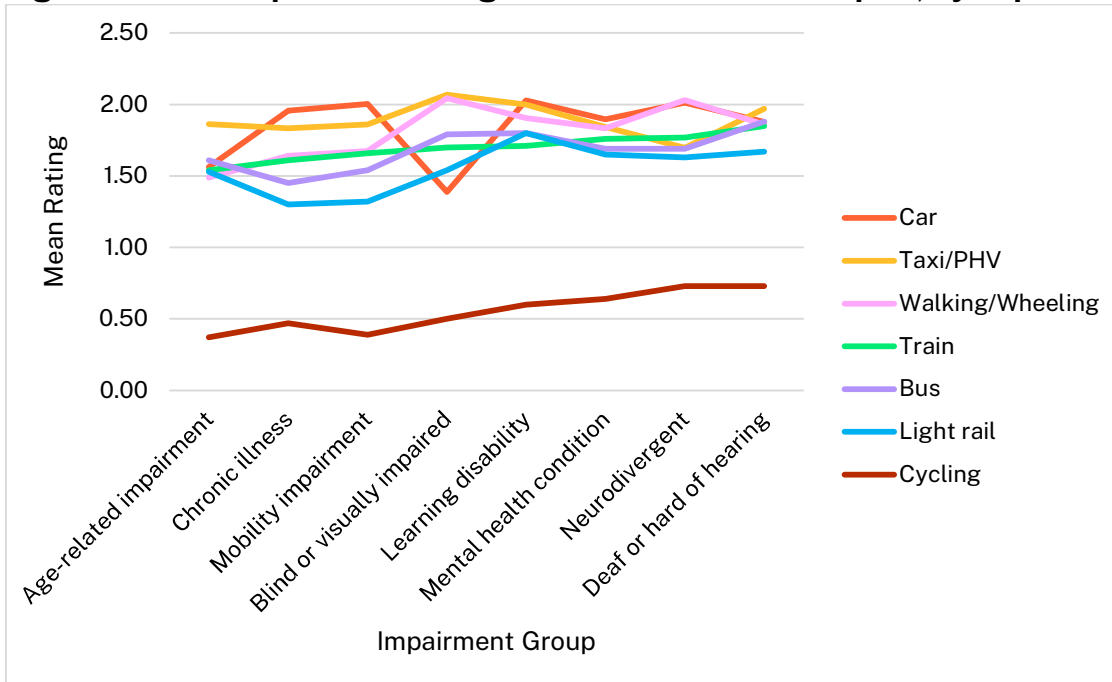
Respondents told us the car was the easiest and most accessible form of transport. On average disabled people rated their experience of using the car as 1.97 out of 3, with 32% saying they could use the car with ease and confidence, and only 13% saying they could not use it at all.

### Taxi / Private Hire Vehicle

Disabled people have a generally positive experience of taxis compared with other modes, giving taxis an average rating of 1.88 out of 3. 22% reported that they use taxis easily and with confidence, while 8% said they cannot use them at all.

However, there was significant variation in the experiences of different impairment groups.

**Figure 6: Mean experience ratings for each mode of transport, by impairment group:**



**Figure 7: Mean experience ratings for each mode of transport, by impairment group**

**Mean experience rating by impairment group**

<b>Mode of transport</b>	<b>Age-related impairment</b>	<b>Chronic illness</b>	<b>Mobility impairment</b>	<b>Blind or visually impaired</b>	<b>Learning disability</b>	<b>Mental health condition</b>	<b>Neuro-divergent</b>	<b>Deaf or hard of hearing</b>
Car	1.56	1.96	2.00	1.39	2.03	1.89	2.01	1.88
Taxi/PHV	1.86	1.83	1.86	2.07	2.00	1.84	1.70	1.97
Walking/Wheeling	1.49	1.64	1.68	2.04	1.90	1.83	2.03	1.86
Train	1.54	1.61	1.66	1.70	1.71	1.76	1.77	1.85
Bus	1.61	1.45	1.54	1.79	1.80	1.69	1.69	1.88
Light rail	1.53	1.30	1.32	1.54	1.80	1.65	1.63	1.67
Cycling	0.37	0.47	0.39	0.50	0.60	0.64	0.73	0.73

As the table and graph above demonstrate, while there were trends that were common across the impairment groups (for example, the experience rating for cycling was markedly lower than the other modes, and this was consistent across all impairment groups) there were also some notable variations. While the car came out on top for those with chronic illness, mobility impairment, learning disability, mental health condition, and neurodivergence, it earned the second-lowest mean rating among blind and visually impaired participants who favoured taxis and walking/wheeling.



# Comparison of modes

**Figure 8: Comparison of average rating, most commonly experienced barrier, most significant barrier, and most frequent impact for each mode.**

Mode	Average rating	Most commonly experienced barrier*	Most significant barrier**	Most frequent impact***
Walking/ wheeling	1.86	Quality of pavements (bumps, potholes, tree roots, cracked tiles, narrow) (77%)	Quality of pavements (bumps, potholes, tree roots, cracked tiles, narrow) (32%)	Journey is more difficult/ Stressful (66%)
Cycling	0.62	Not being able to cycle due to impairment or health condition (58%)	Not being able to cycle due to impairment or health condition (46%)	Stops me using this mode (72%)
Buses	1.68	Issues with priority space/seating (not enough, already in use, not clearly defined, etc) (51%)	Infrequent or unreliable service (18%)	Journey is more difficult/ Stressful (56%)
Trains	1.74	Expensive (65%)	Expensive (17%)	Journey is more difficult/ Stressful (61%)
Light rail	1.51	Overcrowded trains/stations/platforms (59%)	Lack of step-free access and level boarding (24%)	Journey is more difficult/stressful (59%)
Car / van	1.97	Lack of driver (I don't/can't drive and it is difficult to find a driver) (43%)	Lack of driver (I don't/can't drive and it is difficult to find a driver) (29%)	Journey is more difficult/stressful (59%)
Taxis PHVs	1.88	Expensive (64%)	Expensive (38%)	Stops me using this mode (49%)

\*The barrier which had the highest count of respondents select it when answering the question “which of the following barriers have you experienced to this mode of transport in the past 12 months (tick all that apply)?”

\*\*The barrier which had the highest number of respondents select it as their answer to the question “if you had to chose just one, what is the biggest/ most significant barrier you face to using this mode of transport?”

\*\*\*The option selected by the largest number of respondents in answer to “as a result of these barriers, have you experienced any of the following?”

# **CHAPTER 2 – THE JOURNEY**

**Detailed findings**

# Stages of a journey

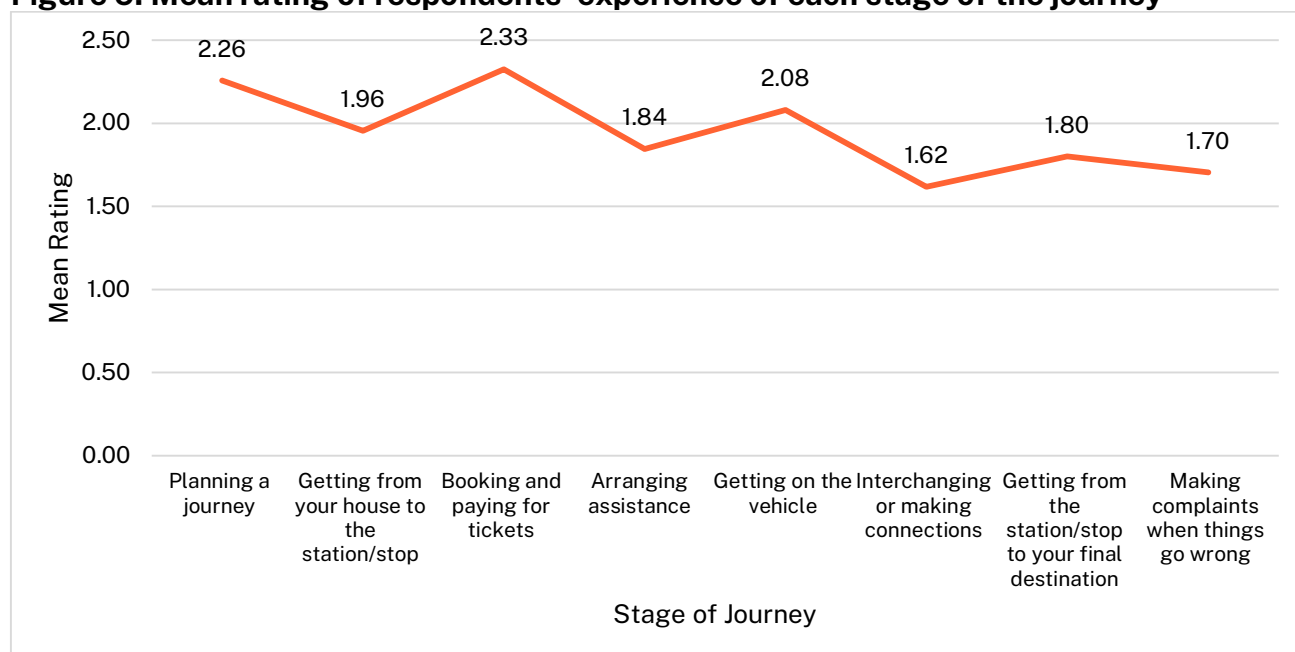
A truly accessible transport network is one where the barriers experience by disabled people are identified and tackled, on entire routes. Each stage of the journey presents barriers that can render the trip inaccessible, from finding information on a service and booking tickets right through to the last mile and beyond. These must be tackled together to affect change (after all, there is no use having an accessible fleet of vehicles on a bus route if the route to the bus stop is impassable).

For this research, we imagined a typical journey to be made up of the following stages:

1. Planning a journey
2. Getting from your house to the station/stop
3. Booking and paying for tickets
4. Arranging assistance
5. Getting on the vehicle
6. Interchanging or making connections
7. Getting from the station/stop to your final destination
8. Making complaints when things go wrong

When thinking about a typical journey that they make, respondents rated 'Interchanging or making connections' as the most difficult stage (with an average rating of 1.62 out of 3) and 'booking and paying for tickets' as the easiest stage (2.33).

**Figure 9: Mean rating of respondents' experience of each stage of the journey**



In this section, we will dive into the detailed findings of our research. We'll imagine this typical journey, and take you through the stages detailing the barriers disabled people face at each step.

We'll start by exploring issues that arise before disabled people even leave the house: issues with journey planning and obtaining accessible information. Next we'll look at active travel, acknowledging that most journeys start with some amount of walking/wheeling or cycling (if not at least to get to the first stop or to the car), and look at the barriers associated with each.

We'll then delve into public transport (trains, buses, and light rail), including looking at booking and paying for tickets, arranging assistance, and access to live information.

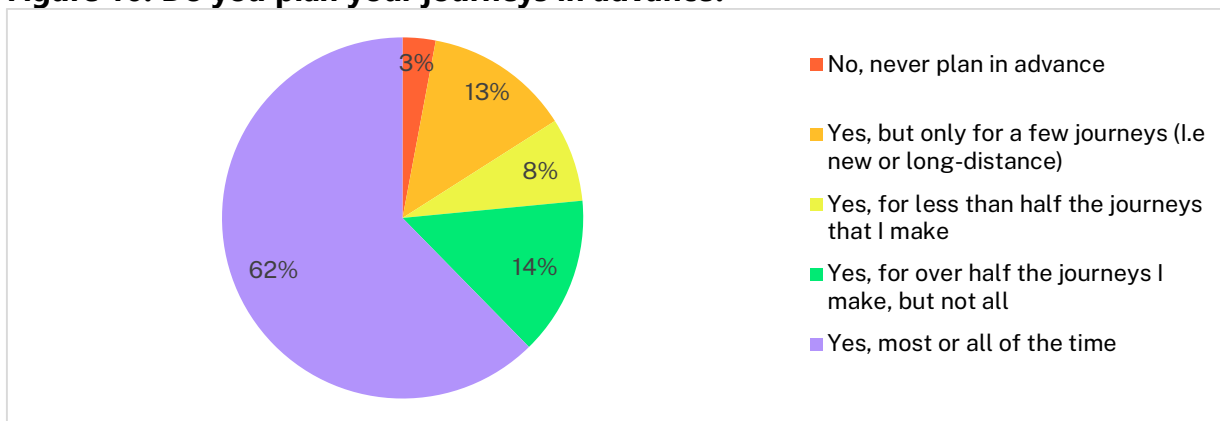
Finally we'll discuss private transport (cars/vans and Taxis/Private Hire Vehicles), often used for last mile or when public transport fails – and investigate why so many disabled people prefer the car to public transport.

# Journey planning

*“Travel needs to be planned like a military campaign.”*

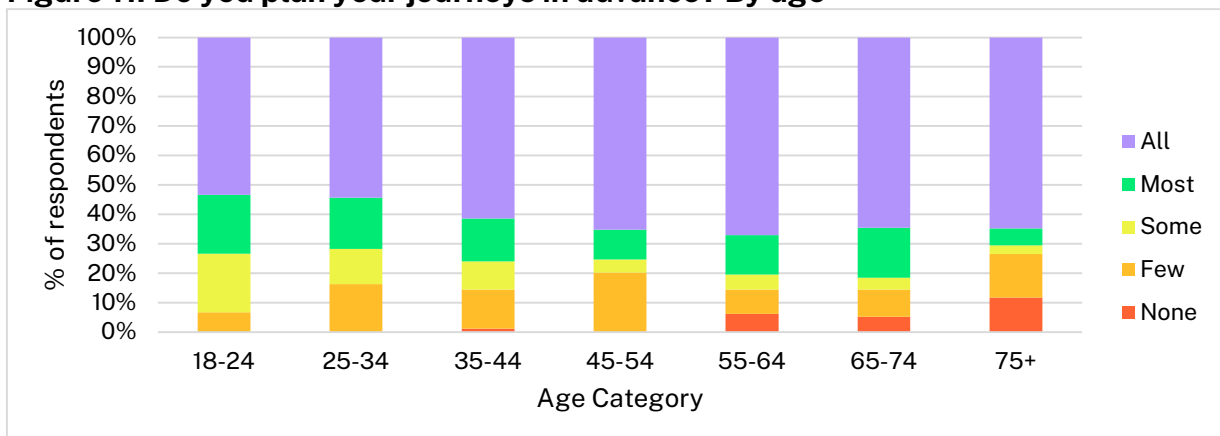
Access barriers start having an impact on disabled people before we’re even past the front door. 62% of respondents reported planning journeys in advance “most or all of the time”, while only 3% never plan. Advanced planning is clearly an essential part of many disabled people’s transport arrangements: disabled people explained how barriers are so pervasive that extensive research must be done, and meticulous arrangements made before setting out, just to ensure the journey will be accessible.

**Figure 10: Do you plan your journeys in advance?**



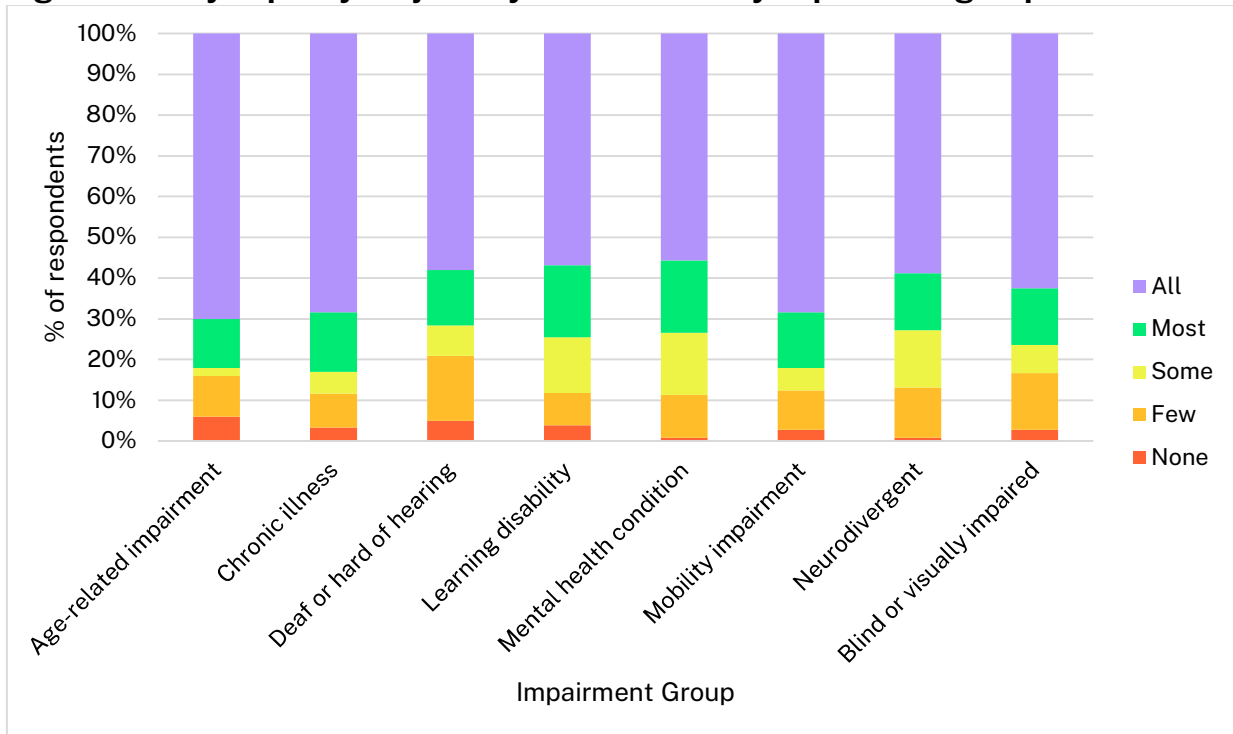
Whether journeys are planned in advance varied significantly by age. Only those in the older age groups (55-64, 65-74 and 75+) reported never planning their journeys, while no participants in the younger age groups (18-24, 25-34, 45-54) reported this.

**Figure 11: Do you plan your journeys in advance? By age**



It also varied by impairment group. Deaf or hard of hearing participants, participants with learning disabilities, participants with mental health conditions and neurodivergent participants were all less likely to plan all their journeys in advance than those without. Participants with a mobility impairment were far more likely to plan all their journeys than those without (68% versus 51%).

**Figure 12: Do you plan your journeys in advance? By impairment group**



The consequences of an unplanned journey can be significant: respondents reported getting stranded, leading to trauma and anxiety (and in the worst instances, putting people off travelling altogether).

“I once didn't plan and I ended up stuck on a tube station platform as the only exit was up 40 steps.”

# Planning feels mandatory

In a free-text box where we asked participants to explain why they do or do not plan journeys in advance, 26% of respondents told us they have to plan out of necessity, using language such as “forced” and “it’s essential”. A much smaller proportion of respondents told us they like to plan in advance as a matter of personal preference (8%).

Of those who felt forced to plan their journeys, the strength of feeling was noticeable. Many expressed frustration, feeling that they shouldn’t have to plan:

- “I have to plan because society refuses to give disabled people equal rights which would enable me to be independent.”
- “What you quickly learn as a powerchair user is that spontaneity does not work. Experience teaches you to think about all the things that can go wrong.”
- “In my bitter experience you can't just spontaneously "pitch up" and expect the journey to work out - it will be either prove impossible, or result in a negative emotional impact.”
- “I shouldn't have to call/phone/arrange in advance - turn up and go is a right for everyone...”
- “I have to plan way in advance to make sure there are accessible options. I cannot do spontaneous trips like most people do with friends because not all trains are equipped for disabled people.”

## Several reasons were reported to explain why planning felt mandatory:

### Step-free access

The most commonly cited reason (12% of respondents to this question) for having to plan journeys was the need to identify step-free routes. With only an estimated 25% of mainline rail stations in England having step-free access between all platforms (and a third of London Underground stations)<sup>vi</sup>, planning out a route that uses only step-free stations is necessary:

“Every single journey starts with checking the TfL Go app to confirm the lifts are working. It means I have to plan my journeys, even ones that I do every day and know the routes well. A single lift outage means I must completely change my plans.”

## Assistance

11% of respondents to this question told us about the need to arrange assistance in advance. This could involve pre-booking Passenger Assistance ahead of rail journeys, checking staffing levels at light rail/tram stations to ensure correct assistance will be provided, or arranging one's own care/support via a Personal Assistant (PA) or carer.

Many wrote that they felt they *must* book Passenger Assistance for their mainline rail journeys in advance of travel, either because they had been told to do so, or because negative past experiences had left them unable to trust the Turn Up And Go service:

- “I don't trust that I can just turn up and go.”
- “I have been told by the local train station that I have to book ahead of my journey as otherwise there will be no staff to get me on or off the train.”
- “I always need someone with me to help me and to keep me safe. Assistance isn't always available when I want it. If I have to pay a carer this is expensive.”

## Facilities

For many participants, being able to make a journey is contingent upon specific facilities being available. These could include toilets (including accessible toilets and Changing Places), charging points for mobility aids, parking (including Blue Badge parking, and walking distances between parking and destination), relief areas and water fountains for assistance dogs, waiting areas with heating, and Wi-Fi.

“If I'm having to travel a fair distance, I may need to think about having nearby facilities to catheterise.”

For users of wheelchairs, scooters and other similar mobility aids, it's also imperative to check there will be wheelchair/priority spaces (and, if preferred, to book these in advance), or in the case of using Taxis/PHVs - booking Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) which are often in short supply.

“You can't get wheelchair taxis instantly. There are hardly any wheelchair taxis, you can't just get them at a taxi rank. You have to book in advance.”



## Walking distance

It is not only steps and stairs that disabled people plan to avoid. Many need to identify the route that has the shortest walking distance, the fewest interchanges, or the least amount of time standing about between stops. Working this out is often challenging, and these routes often conflict with the step-free options (step-free routes may involve more walking, for example).

“I plan for step free access but also the distance travelled for interchange. For example I would rather go from St Pancras Thameslink rather than walk miles to get to the Victoria Line. I will also look at the bus stops and how far are they from station.”

## Lack of accessible information along the route

Information not being available in accessible formats (i.e. lack of audio or visual information) means that looking up information in advance is imperative for many Deaf and hard of hearing, and blind and visually impaired people.

- “I have to plan in advance because I can't read the info on display at the station or on the bus for example. I usually use journey planner or google to plan.”
- “Being blind you plan ahead to ensure you are safe travelling. E.G. I'd never go to a train station with no ticket office as I can't see automated machine.”

## Likelihood of things going wrong

Many people plan journeys meticulously to avoid issues en route, and to have backup options in place in case things going wrong. Disabled people plan alternative routes, predict what problems might occur and how to respond to these.

- “I have to plan, if I don't then I could end up going to a station or bus stop and finding out its not accessible or its closed. I have to create a route and alternatives.”
- “I cannot do anything without planning. Too many things could go wrong. Obviously regular trips need less advance planning as I know the pitfalls.”
- “I have to check updownlondon.com to see if my route is really available as a wheelchair user. I have to see what's really accessible. I have to make an alternate plan, or more than one alternate plan so I can quickly change routes. I have to check for diversions or lines that aren't working because it is difficult to change plans on the fly.”

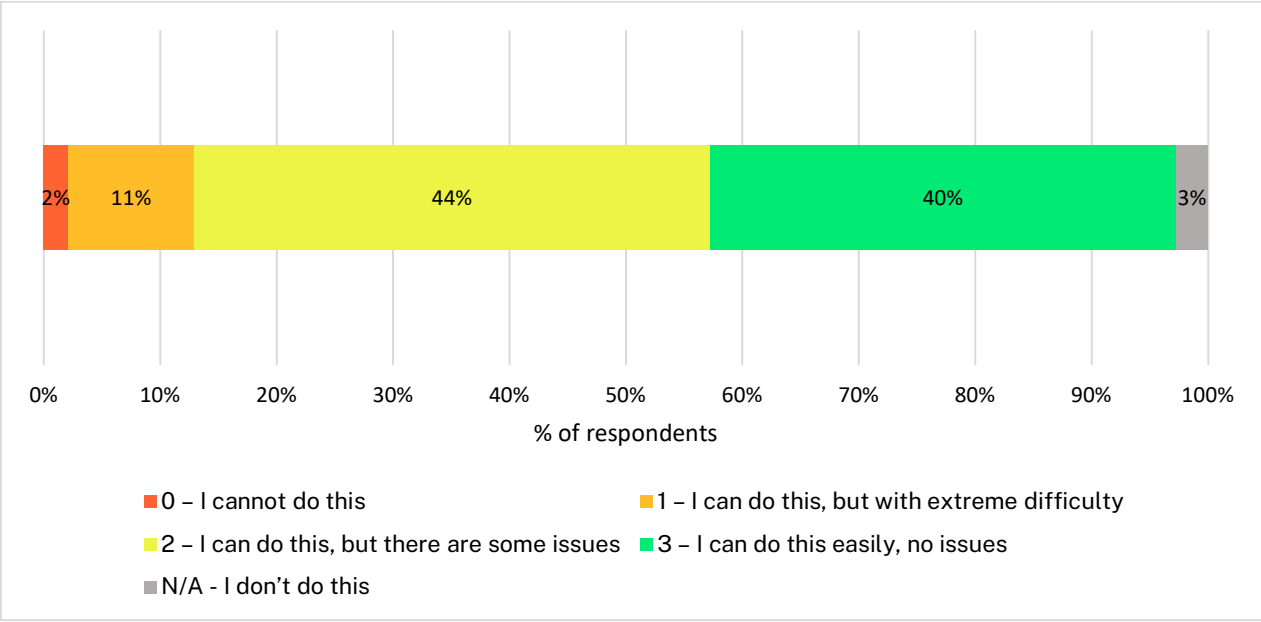
# Barriers to journey planning

Given how essential advance planning is for many disabled people, it is frustrating that the process of planning itself is so fraught with barriers. For many, planning and preparing for a journey takes a significant amount of time, and a great deal of energy and mental effort.

- “I have to plan in quite some depth. If using public transport, it can take up to 2 weeks to plan a trip”
- “I need to make sure I know my rights in terms of accessible travel and be prepared to assert them, and get myself mentally ready to travel.”

While 40% of respondents ranked journey planning as easy, 44% said they can do it but experience some issues, while a further 11% said they can do it but with extreme difficulty.

**Figure 13: How easy/difficult do you find the following stage of a journey: planning a journey**



This research shows that journey planning is hindered by two main barriers.

# 1. Missing information

Transport operators often don't make vital information readily available. Information that respondents said they required, but often couldn't find, included:

- Walking distances within stations
- Availability and working status of lifts and escalators
- Staffing levels, and information on how and where to find staff
- Crowding levels
- Noise levels
- Availability/location of toilets, accessible toilets, Changing Places, rest stops, relief areas for Guide Dogs, and other facilities
- Whether priority space/seat(s) are occupied
- Routes with fewest hills

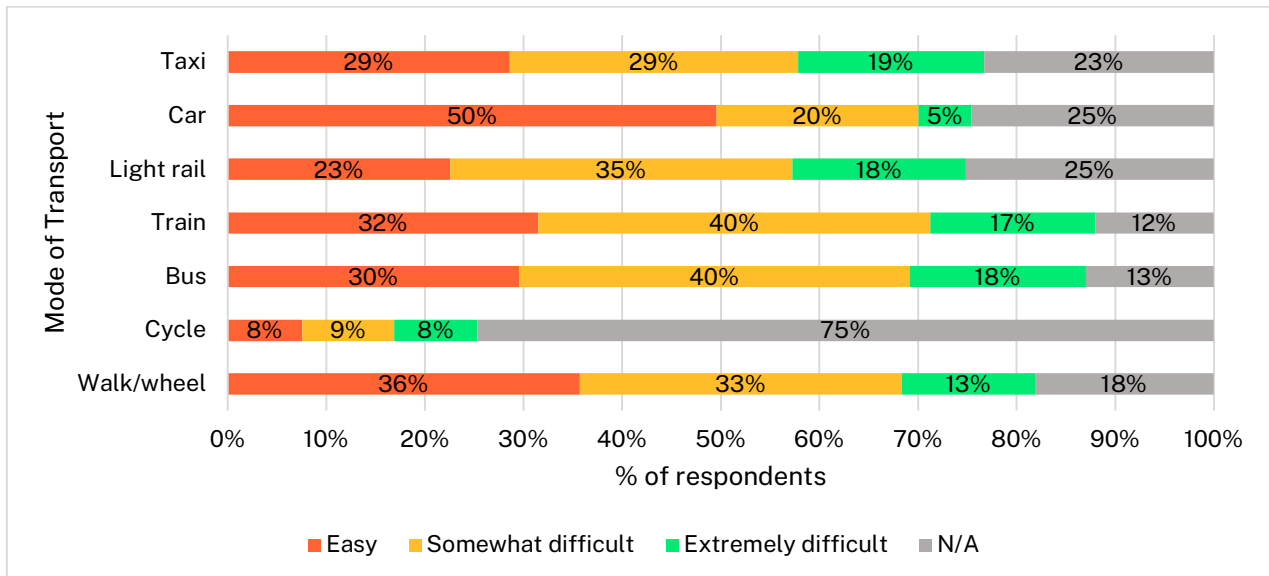
- “Being blind I need to plan safest places to cross roads, easiest places to catch buses, but it is hard to find this information.”
- “Walking is difficult due to my lung capacity. I struggle with long walks inside stations (e.g Kings Cross tube to mainline). TfL equate disability with wheelchairs and give you the ‘step free’ route, but this often requires even more walking. Many people can manage a few stairs but can't walk far, and this info is not available anywhere on TfL.”

Sometimes the information provided can be inaccurate, making it hard for disabled people to trust our journeys will go as planned.

“Some stations are advertised as step free from platform to train, but then the train comes and there is a step and my wheel will get stuck.”

Car journeys were the easiest mode to find information about in advance (50% of respondents said it was ‘easy’ and only 5% reported it being ‘extremely difficult’). Taxis are the most difficult mode to find information on, with 19% of respondents selecting ‘extremely difficult’.

**Figure 14: For each of the following modes of transport, rate how easy/difficult it is to find information in advance**



## 2. Inaccessible information

Transport operators often fail to provide information to disabled passengers in the formats we need. If travel details are only available on a website, this could exclude the 23% of disabled adults who have no access to the internet (compared with 6% of nondisabled adults)<sup>vii</sup>. Conversely, if information only exists as posters, signs, departure boards, or tannoy announcements, this excludes those with sensory impairments.

“I can't read bus stop timetables or rail station departure boards. I need to know what help to ask for e.g., where is the bus stop for a particular bus number. “

Yet this report shows that even when journeys are planned in advance, they can still go wrong, adding to the overall anxiety associated with travelling for many disabled people. The uncertainty around whether the information we have been given about our journey is accurate, or whether our best laid plans will still be dashed by barriers, can shatter our confidence completely.

“I plan all journeys no matter how short like going to the shop because I have had problems with works on the pavement. However, even with my best efforts to plan and make arrangements I have been stuck on trains when the booked assistance didn't bring a ramp for me to get off, or a lift is broken, or a “step free” station isn't actually step free...”

# How do disabled people plan our journeys

**Figure 15: Which tools do you use to plan journeys (tick all that you have used in the past 12 months)**

Method	%
Online: official website (e.g. National Rail Enquiries)	84%
Mobile app platforms (Citymapper, Google Maps, etc)	65%
Help from a friend or family member	49%
Online: other website (e.g. blog posts)	45%
Face-to-face at the information desk/office	42%
Printed timetable/map/information leaflet at a station or stop	36%
Social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc)	34%
Telephone Enquiry	28%
Information and advice from a charity or non-profit organisation	23%

The majority of respondents (84%) plan their journeys online using official websites such as National Rail Enquiries, and a large proportion (65%) plan through mobile app platforms such as Citymapper, Google Maps, and others. The internet and smartphones have certainly revolutionised journey planning for many disabled people, granting many access to a wealth of information that was not available previously (for example, Google’s live crowdedness feature).

- “I like to check how crowded rail/overground stations are on Google maps. If the estimate is anything over medium, I either don't go out or find an alternative. I cannot use the tube anymore, it makes me feel claustrophobic and panicky.”
- “We measure distances from the bus stop to anywhere, we check Google Street View for kerbs, height, ramps etc - we can't just hop on a bus. We use Google Maps bus stop icons to see how long buses will be to factor in bladder issues. I can read maps and route plan if we had transport and the internet speed existing but with public transport I need Google every single time.”
- “If I'm traveling somewhere new, then anxiety means I need to rehearse every step of the journey in advance, even to stepping through it in Google Maps streetview.”
- “I try to make sure I know every stage of the journey in advance, have important info (times and addresses) written down, and that my phone is fully charged. I typically 'walk' the route on Google maps in advance so I know where things are before I set off.”

However, a significant number of disabled people do not have access to the internet, or face barriers to using it<sup>viii</sup>. Therefore, non-digital means of planning journeys (visiting staff at a ticket office or information desk, checking printed timetables/maps/information

leaflets at stations or stops, and using the telephone), are of huge importance to ensuring digitally excluded disabled people continue to have access to the information we need.

A resounding 42% of respondents said they plan their journeys face-to-face with staff at ticket offices, and 36% of respondents used printed timetables. This is particularly notable given the fact the majority of respondents to our survey took part online and therefore have internet access.

# Active travel

Once a journey has been planned (or not, if travelling spontaneously), the first step is to set off. In the context of transport planning and accessibility, it's important to remember that most, if not all, journeys begin with some amount of walking/wheeling, if only to the vehicle, station, or stop. Barriers at this stage can therefore make all other modes of transport inaccessible.

- “To get to the train/bus/anything, I have to walk at least a little.”
- “Our local train station is within walking distance, however the route to it is not accessible due to steps. To make matters worse, the entrance nearest to me has been closed, adding a quarter of a mile to the walking route which I simply can't manage.”

Active travel also plays an important role in many disabled people's lives beyond being a connecting mode. Many participants told us how enriching they find going for a walk/wheel or cycle, or told us of the benefits to both mental and physical health.

- “I enjoy walking in the countryside and it gives me a feeling of well-being.”
- “As a guide dog handler I really enjoy walking, it's genuinely enjoyable to work together as a team. My guide dog can learn regular routes and even tackle new ones with a bit of technology assistance for me.”
- “On a nice, smooth path there is nothing better for relaxing than having a walk with my guide dog.”
- “Cycling makes me feel happy. It helps to smooth out my anxiety and control my mood when I'm feeling really bad.”
- “I really love using my adapted trike. As someone with a degenerative disease, it is great to be able to cycle places as it means I am building exercise into my daily routine. When I use my electric wheelchair, I am sat still and spend the day panicking about how inactive I am being. My trike gives me so much freedom and it's also fun. I wish I could use this mode of transport all the time.”
- “I like to get out on my e-assist wheelchair trike. It is comfortable to use on bumpy and uneven ground and is much better than my wheelchair on cobbles or grass. I like to use it to access the countryside and just to get out and about, particularly if the sun is shining. It's fun and makes me happy.”

Across both walking/wheeling and cycling, participants expressed a desire to make more journeys by these means, but faced extensive barriers to doing so. See Green Transport section for further discussion on this point.

# Walking/wheeling

Walking/wheeling is the second most frequently used mode by disabled people, accounting for 28% of all journeys made<sup>ix</sup>. Despite this, disabled people take 30% fewer walking trips per year than non-disabled people<sup>x</sup>.

Currently, the approach to delivering accessible walking infrastructure is limited to non-statutory guidance, including:

- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (published 2017) which provides technical guidance for Local Authorities to aid with planning networks of walking routes and prioritising walking infrastructure improvements<sup>xi</sup>.
- The Local Transport Note 1/20 on Cycle infrastructure design (published 2020) which provides guidance for local authorities on designing various aspects of pedestrian streetspace including junctions and crossings<sup>xii</sup>.
- Guidance on the Use of Tactile Paving Surfaces (published 2021<sup>xiii</sup>).
- Inclusive Mobility (published 2022) which sets out best practice on improve access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure for disabled people<sup>xiv</sup>.

Devolved transport authorities also tend to have their own pieces of guidance in place locally, which in some places deviate from national guidance:

- Transport for London publishes several design guidance documents including Accessible Bus Stop Design Guidance and Streetspace Guidance<sup>xv</sup>.
- Transport for Greater Manchester published its ‘Streets for All’ strategy, setting out requirements<sup>xvi</sup>.

While much of this guidance contains detailed steps to remove many barriers that exist to walking (for example, specification for gradients of dropped kerbs, provision of tactile paving at crossings, minimum pavement widths, etc) it is just that – guidance.

Furthermore, detailed guidance on the more complex and controversial elements of streetspace is lacking. For example, the measures set out in Inclusive Mobility<sup>xvii</sup> for making bus stop bypasses accessible are limited to the following:

1. “Engagement should take place with relevant groups of people from an early stage of the planning and design process. This should include organisations representing older and disabled people, as well as older and disabled individuals themselves. This will provide a forum to hear and address any safety concerns that they may have.” (p75)
2. “Crossing points should be controlled if cycle traffic speed is high” (p90)



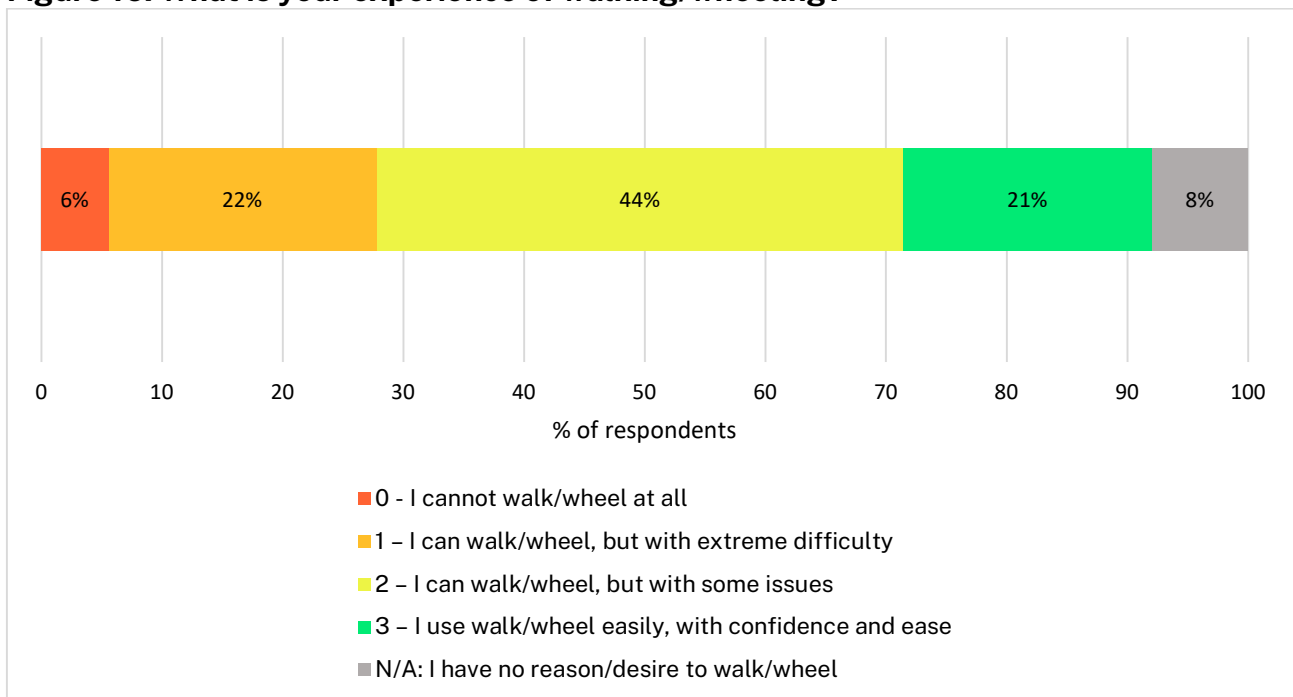
3. “It would be helpful if announcements on board buses included information on the of bus bypass or bus boarder stops.” (p90)

Walking/wheeling is an area that has been identified as needing investment; in England, the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) sets out the aim to increase the percentage of short journeys in towns and cities that are walked or cycled to 50% in 2030 and to 55% in 2035<sup>xviii</sup>.

A new body, Active Travel England, was set up in 2022 with the aim of making walking, wheeling and cycling people’s preferred modes of transport<sup>xix</sup>. However, in March 2023 the Government announced that funding for improvements was being reduced<sup>xx</sup>.

## Experience of walking and wheeling

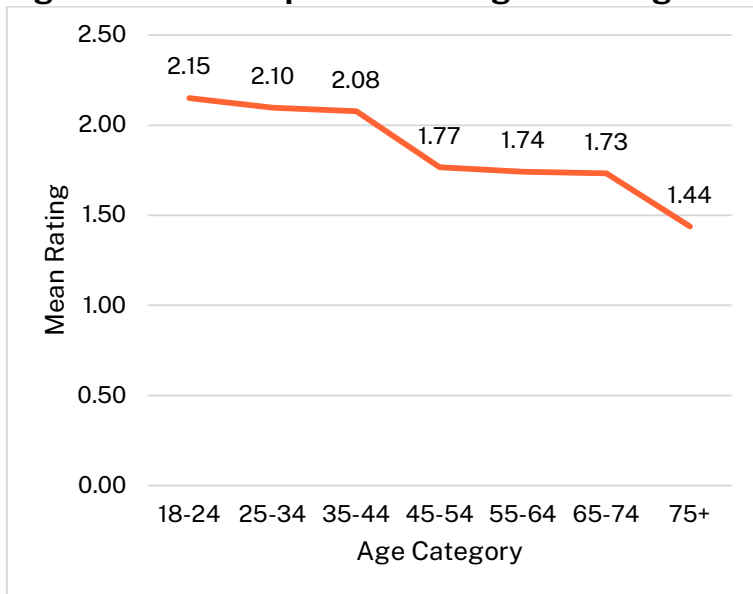
Figure 16: What is your experience of walking/wheeling?



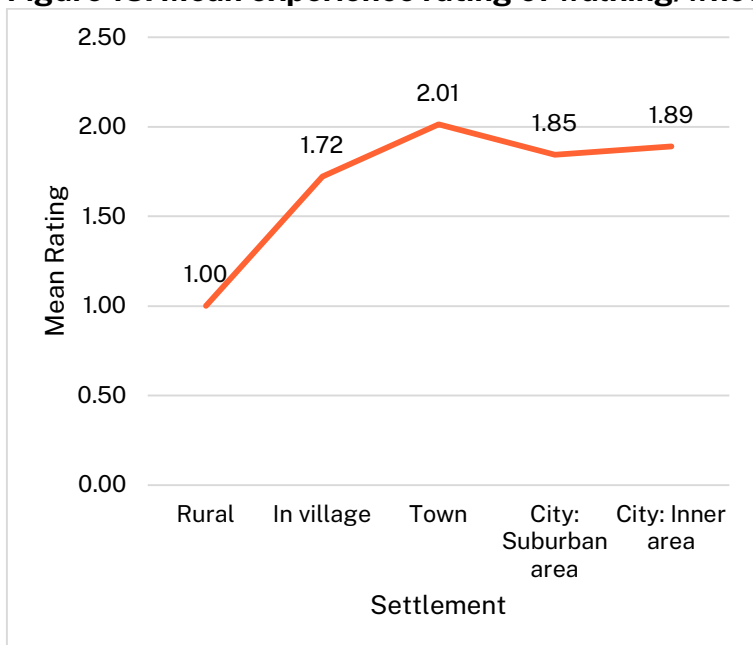
On average, respondents rated their experience of walking and wheeling as 1.86 out of 3. Only 20% said they could walk and wheel with ease, while 6% said they could not do it at all. Given that every journey begins and ends with walking and wheeling, this suggests that at least 80% of disabled people face barriers to travel each time they leave the house.

Age was a significant factor in determining people’s experience of walking and wheeling, with the average rating gradually falling from 2.15 among 18-34 year olds, to 1.44 among those over 75+. Those in rural settings were also likely to rate walking and wheeling far lower than those in other settlement types. Impairment type was also a factor that affected experiences of walking and wheeling; participants with age-related impairments rated this mode the lowest (1.49), while participants who were neurodivergent and blind/visually impaired rated it the highest (2.03 and 2.04 respectively).

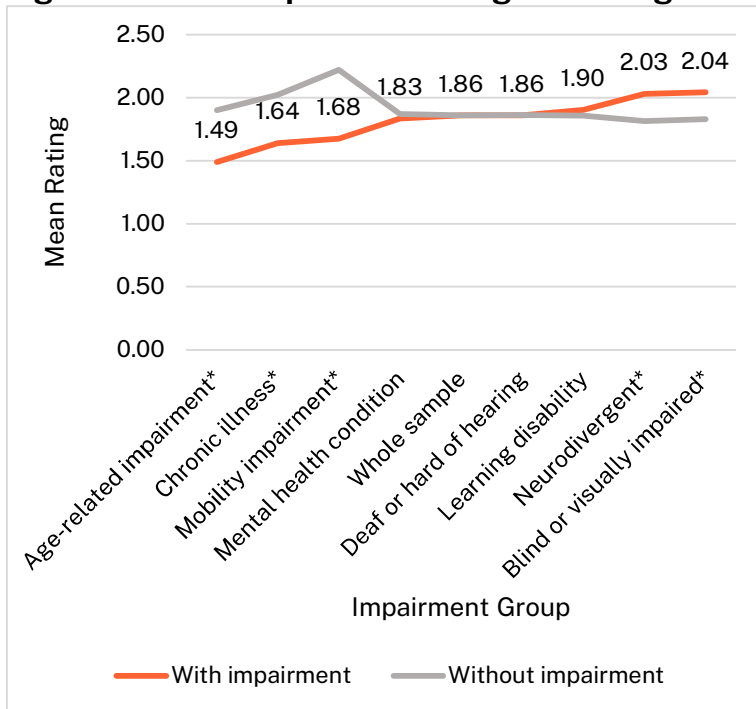
**Figure 17: Mean experience rating of walking/wheeling by age**



**Figure 18: Mean experience rating of walking/wheeling by settlement**



**Figure 19: Mean experience rating of walking/wheeling by impairment**



Note: \* is used to denote statistical significance, which indicates that the difference in mean ratings between participants with and without the impairment did not occur due to chance.

## What works well

By far the most frequently mentioned benefit of walking and wheeling was a sense of freedom and independence (25%). Not having to rely on assistance, which is felt to be unreliable, allows people to feel more in control of their journeys than with other modes. The ability to “go at my own pace” without being bound to a timetable also allowed people to make journeys more spontaneously, while stopping to rest when needed as well.

Another major benefit was enhanced wellbeing, both physical and mental. People said that it allowed them to relax and get some fresh air, as well as being a good source of exercise, which could help to alleviate pain, low-mood, and other symptoms of their impairments.

For some, walking and wheeling was simply enjoyable in its own right. In particular, people wrote about a sense of being part of the world, and the pleasure of being able to interact with nature and other people.

Perhaps expectedly, people cited walking and wheeling as a preferable mode for shorter or local journeys. A smaller number of people mentioned the low cost of walking, and the environment benefits.

- “I enjoy the freedom and independence of being able to just go without having to wait or depend upon assistance turning up. I enjoy getting some exercise and fresh air and being out and about in the world.”
- “Wheeling is making me a lot fitter than I was, and has really reduced my pain levels, meaning I can function much better in all areas of my life.”

## Barriers

**Figure 20: Which of the following barriers have you experienced to walking/wheeling in the past 12 months? (Tick all that apply)**

Barrier	Respondents
Quality of pavements (bumps, potholes, tree roots, cracked tiles, narrow)	77%
Street clutter (A-boards, bins, signs, bollards, outdoor dining, e-bikes and e-scooters)	65%
Pavement parking	57%
E-scooters/ bikes being ridden on pavements	50%
Lack of dropped kerbs	50%
Crossings are inadequate or hazardous for me to use (shared space, lack of controlled crossing)	44%
Environmental reasons (weather/slipperiness/ice and lack of gritting)	39%
Lack of public amenities (lack of rest stops, public toilets, water fountains, etc)	37%
Crowds	34%
Personal security (hate crime, lack of street lighting, speed and volume of traffic)	28%
My surroundings are too hilly/steep for me to walk or wheel	22%
I cannot walk or wheel	20%
Air pollution	16%
Lack of tactile paving	13%
I experience sensory overload on walking/wheeling routes	12%
I cannot walk far and I do not have access to a mobility aid I can use	12%
I cannot walk far and I do not want to use a mobility aid	8%
Fear of losing benefits	8%
The signage on my walking route is confusing	6%
Other	1%
No barriers – this mode is accessible to me	4%

Only 4% of respondents reported experiencing no barriers. Given that every journey begins and ends with walking and wheeling, this suggests that 96% of disabled people face barriers to travel each time they leave the house.

## Pavements

Issues with pavements were by far the most common barriers to walking and wheeling, with poorly maintained surfaces, street clutter, and pavement parking being the top three reported.

77% of respondents experienced poor surfaces, including bumps, potholes, tree roots, broken tiles, and narrow width, making it the most frequently cited barrier of any mode of transport. Poor pavements can render whole routes inaccessible and even dangerous. For wheelchair users, irregular surfaces can be painful or impossible to go over and can cause damage to the chair. Bad pavements also posed a serious trip hazard, particularly for blind and visually impaired people, and those with impaired balance.

57% of respondents experienced pavement parking, while 65% experienced street clutter including litter, bollards, A-boards, outdoor dining, parked cycles, and e-scooters. When the route is obstructed, disabled people were left with little option but to either go into the road, putting us at further risk from traffic, or turn back to find another route, making journeys even longer.

- “The biggest barrier I face as a blind guide dog handler is street clutter. Even the most familiar route can become impossible due to pavement parking, dumped rubbish, e-scooters or roadworks. It's really exhausting to manage and often means replanning routes which take longer and feel more stressful and unsafe.”
- “The road to my nearest bus stop is in awful repair. I have damaged my wheelchair and nearly fallen out of it due to bad paving. I have to go on an alternative route which takes twice as long to get me to the bus stop. And my chair is now damaged.”
- “Pavements can be really hazardous. I have had a number of falls due to poor surfaces and have scars and broken teeth as a result.”

## Crossings

As well as barriers on the pavement, disabled people frequently encounter barriers trying to get off the pavement.

50% of respondents experienced missing dropped kerbs, making it the fourth most common barrier. Where dropped kerbs do exist, people told us these were frequently broken, too steep to manage, or obstructed, again forcing people to turn back and find the next nearest place to cross or go into the road alongside traffic.

44% have contended with inadequate or hazardous pedestrian crossings. As well as there being too few controlled crossings, people also said that many lacked the audio-visual

cues needed to make them accessible, and left insufficient time to cross. A lack of tactile paving, which is vital for indicating where safe crossings are, was also experienced by 13% of respondents.

“I was on my way to a bus stop, following directions on google maps. I got to the end of the pavement and there was no dropped kerb. I had to turn around and go back the way I had come, but it was ages before I found a dropped kerb. I then had to come back again but this time wheeling along the road, while dodging cars. The annoying detour I had to take made me miss my bus.”

## Public and surroundings

As well as the physical infrastructure, barriers also frequently emerged from other surroundings, including public behaviour.

50% of respondents were affected by people cycling or scooting on pavements. Deaf and visually impaired people wrote about the number of collisions and near misses they had faced, with assistance dogs being spooked by vehicles speeding around them. In addition to pavement cycling, there were a number of other factors that made disabled people feel unsafe when walking or wheeling, including experiences or fear of hate crime, a lack of street lighting, and the speed and volume of traffic. 28% of respondents said safety issues like these were a barrier.

Around 8% of respondents said they were afraid of losing their benefits if they were seen to make walking and wheeling journeys, and would be perceived to be “perfectly ok and active if I’m seen to walk anywhere”.

Crowding was also cited by 34% of respondents. Crowded streets can not only cause anxiety and sensory overload, but can be physically dangerous for many disabled people. Some wrote about being walked into, knocked over, or pushed around, which could have a negative effect on people’s health, cause pain and injury, and damage mobility aids. Sensory overload was also linked to a number of factors in addition to crowds, including lighting, noise, and a lack of quiet places to stop, which had caused sensory overload for 12% of respondents in the past year.

“I get nervous walking from Blackfriars station to work as there have been a lot of mobile phone thefts recently. I rely a lot on my phone for directions and accessibility information on the move and I often don't feel confident to have my phone out in London. I also encounter barriers with people cycling or using e-scooters on the pavement. I so frequently have them come past me very suddenly and I have no awareness of them behind me. I don't walk in a very straight line because of my balance issues and I'm so worried I'll walk into someone's path, injuring me, them and my assistance dog.”

## Environmental

39% of respondents cited environmental barriers such as the weather, slippery surfaces, and ungritted paths as a barrier to walking/wheeling. Whilst weather patterns cannot be controlled, the impact of a lack of adequate shelter or timely gritting is likely to be high for disabled people.

Another environmental barrier is air pollution, which was experienced by 16% of respondents. Though it is particularly harmful for those with respiratory conditions, air pollution can have detrimental effects on every organ in the body at every stage of life<sup>xxi</sup>. Disabled people with pre-existing conditions are generally at higher risk of these health complications<sup>xxii</sup>.

22% said that their surroundings were too hilly or steep to make walking and wheeling journeys.

## Provision of amenities and signage

37% of respondents said that a lack of public facilities, such as accessible toilets, water fountains, and seating, presented barriers to walking and wheeling. Especially for those with energy limiting impairments or chronic pain, having adequate places to stop and rest is paramount.

Not only were facilities often unavailable or inaccessible, but they could also be difficult to locate. People mentioned not being able to find the information they needed, such as whether toilets were locked with a radar key, or where they might be able to sit down along a route.

Information was also an issue on paths themselves; 6% of respondents said that the signage along their route was confusing, absent, or inaccessible. 23% of disabled adults are non-internet users<sup>xxiii</sup>, and wayfinding apps are inaccessible to many. This means that comprehensive public signage along routes is absolutely crucial.

## Mobility aids

Many disabled people require a mobility aid to make walking and wheeling journeys. However, there are a host of barriers to getting a mobility aid that works for you.

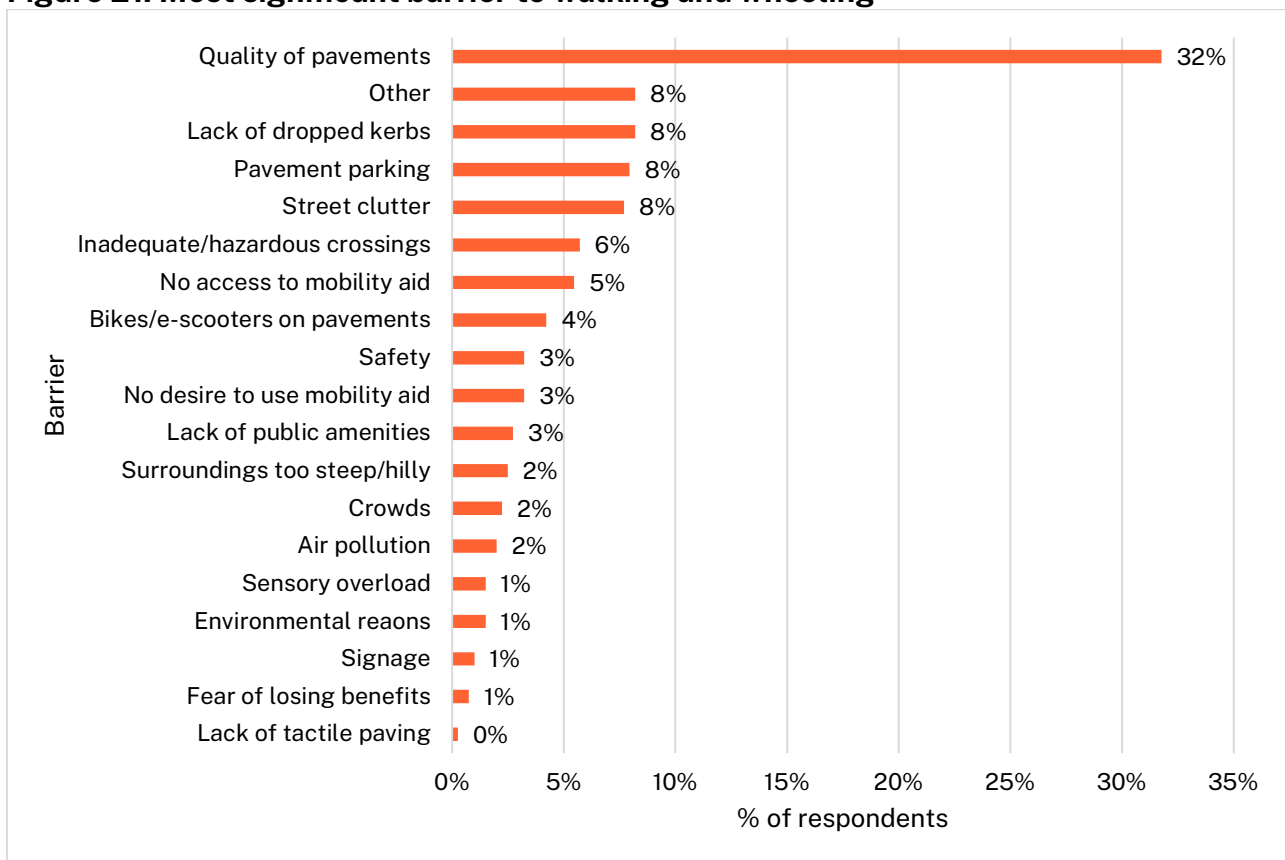
12% of respondents said they cannot walk far unaided yet are unable to access a suitable mobility aid. People told us that the mobility aid they would prefer is too expensive, and not available through the NHS. Others said the infrastructure and logistics surrounding

them (storage space at home or work, poor pavement surfaces, a lack of public charging points for electric wheelchairs/mobility scooters) meant they cannot use what would otherwise be an ideal option.

A further 8% of respondents said they couldn't walk far and did not want to use a mobility aid.

## Most significant barrier

Figure 21: Most significant barrier to walking and wheeling

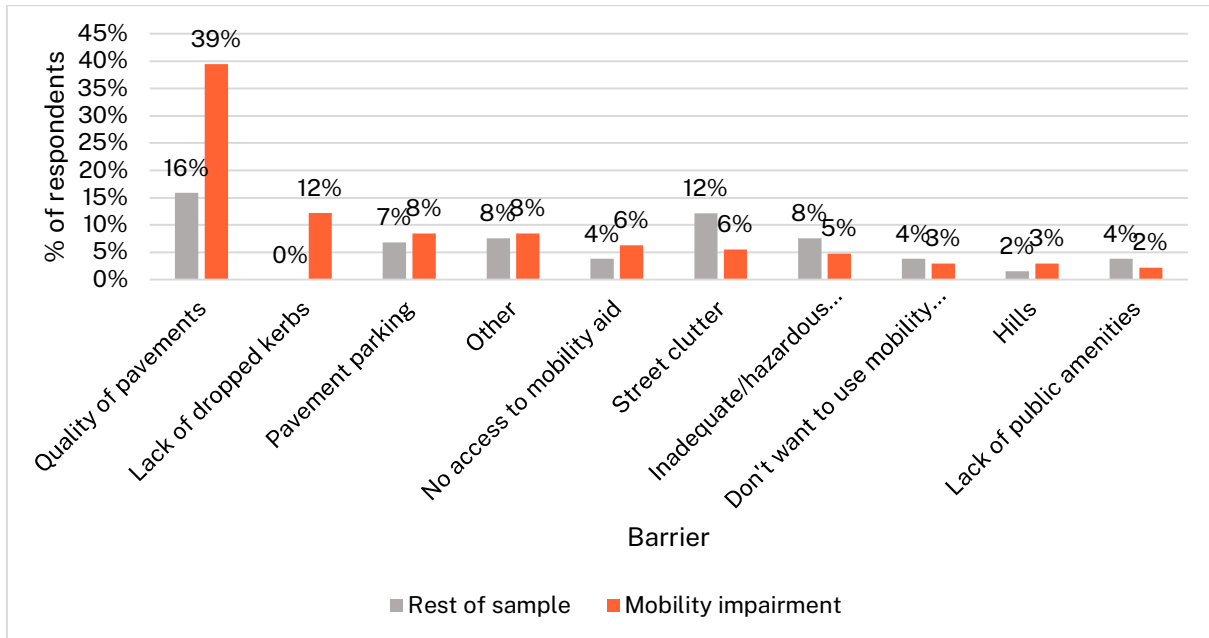


Respondents rated poor pavement surfaces as the single most significant barrier to walking and wheeling, with 32% placing this as their top barrier. This was also the most significant barrier for every impairment group, despite some small variations.

Those with mobility impairments were far more likely than rest of sample to select quality of pavements as their most significant barrier. Members of this group also were the only respondents to select lack of dropped kerbs as the most significant barrier.

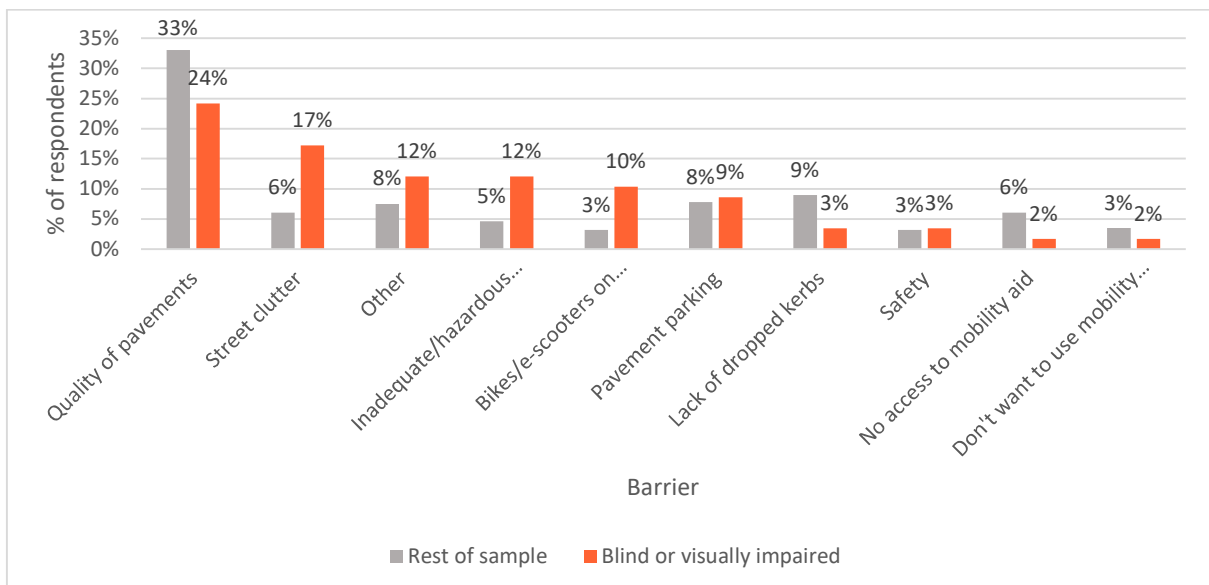


**Figure 22: Most significant barrier to walking and wheeling: mobility impairments compared to rest of sample**



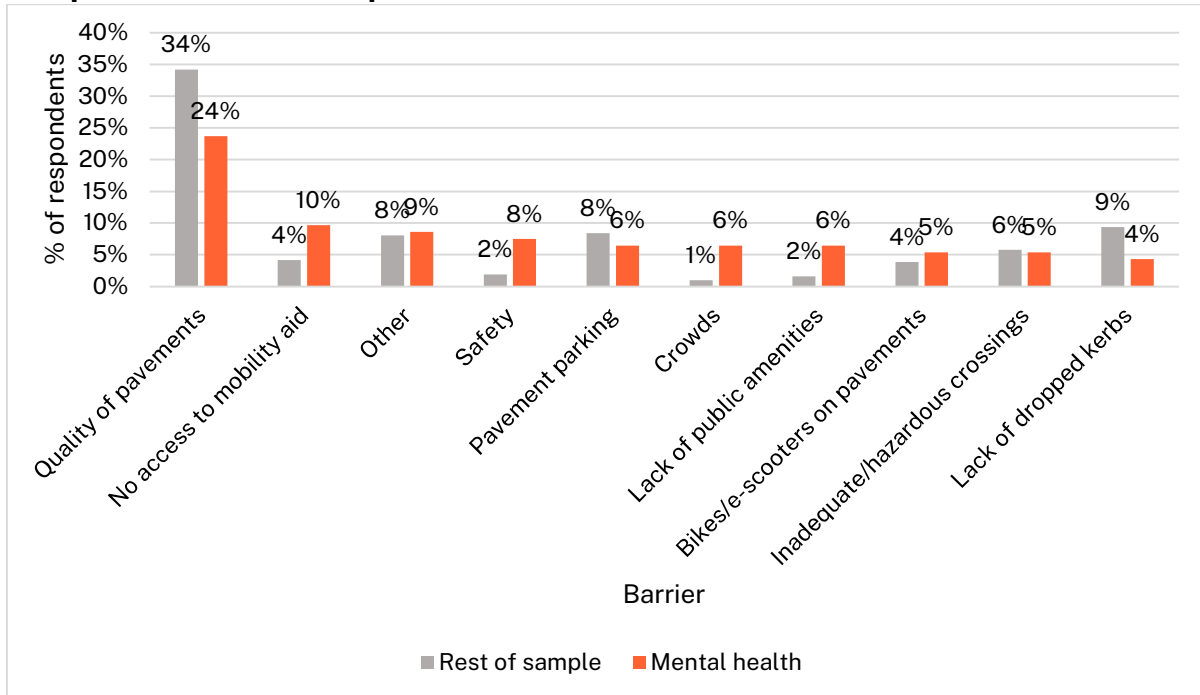
Blind and visually impaired participants were less likely than the rest of the sample to select quality of pavements (though this barrier still earned the highest proportion of selections as most significant barrier among this group) and were more likely to select street clutter, inadequate crossings, and pavement cycling.

**Figure 23: Most significant barrier to walking and wheeling: blind or visually impaired compared to rest of sample**



Respondents with mental health conditions were also less likely than the rest of the sample to select quality of pavements, and more likely to select no access to mobility aid, safety, and crowding.

**Figure 24: Most significant barrier to walking and wheeling: mental health condition compared to rest of sample**



## Impact

As a result of the barriers participants experience, the most common impact was the journey being more difficult/stressful (reported by 66% respondents).

**Figure 25: As a result of these barriers, have you experienced any of the following?**

Impact	%
Journey is more difficult/stressful	66%
Impacts my health	50%
Stops me making a journey	38%
Impacts my confidence	36%
I have to plan in advance	36%
Stops me using this mode	34%
Journey is longer	32%
I have to travel with someone	30%
Journey is more expensive	10%

## Changes disabled people want to see

We asked participants to write about what improvements could be made to make walking and wheeling more accessible to them. The responses largely fell into three categories:

1. Improvements to physical infrastructure
2. Changes in the attitudes and behaviour of others
3. Access to the tools needed to make walking and wheeling journeys

## Improvements to physical infrastructure

### Pavements

The most common suggestions were improvements to the accessibility of pavements. Pavement surfaces in particular were a top priority, with 29% of respondents to this question saying they wanted to see smoother and more well-maintained pathways. 16% wanted to see a reduction in pavement parking, with some calling for the ban in London extended to the rest of the country. A further 13% wrote about removing street clutter. Items that people frequently cited included dockless bikes, litter, and street furniture.

Underpinning these suggestions is a key message: more accountability from local authorities. Respondents felt that not enough was being done to enforce existing accessibility guidelines, and wanted to see their councils take more responsibility for the monitoring and maintenance of pavements.

“Throughout the UK there should be pavements that are sufficiently wide for a wheelchair, with regular dropped kerbs on both sides of the road and controlled crossings. Shops and other businesses should not be allowed to clutter pavements and people shouldn't be allowed to leave bicycles etc in the way of pedestrians.”

### Crossings

People also wanted to see an increase in the number of accessible crossings. 18% said that increasing the number of dropped kerbs, putting them at more regular intervals, and always ensuring they were on both sides of the road would improve their experience of walking and wheeling. There were also calls to improve existing drop kerb design, including a smoother and more gradual slope.

9% wanted more controlled crossings, particularly at busy junctions. Suggestions for making these more accessible included improved audio-visual cues, such as ensuring that there was always a beeping to signal when it was safe to cross. Some respondents suggested having the green man display on the side you are crossing from, rather than being placed on the opposite side of the road. There was also some mention of raised crossings, which would spare the need for a dropped kerb.

- “Making it mandatory for there to be dropped curbs whenever a new entrance to a property is cut, and having councils regularly review the safety of their existing dropped curbs on well travelled paths. Make sure the checked routes are clear online.”
- “More pedestrian crossings and remove cycle lanes from in front of them.”

### **Facilities and seating**

Participants also wrote about increasing the provision of accessible toilets and seating, with sheltered rest stops providing some protection from environmental barriers.

Multiple people also suggested providing public charging facilities for electric wheelchairs and mobility scooters. People who used power assisted mobility aids frequently wrote about how their walking and wheeling routes were limited by battery capacity, and said that knowing there would be a place to stop and recharge quickly would allow them to travel further with confidence.

- “More benches to sit on. Especially if they were covered to protect me from the elements.”
- “I have a top of range powerchair that cost me £12k in 2019, yet I still do not feel very confident going out in it for a day, I am constantly worried will my batteries last, will I breakdown. Why can’t powerchair batteries do a quick 30 min charge and why are there not public charging points to allow this to happen?”

## **Interactions with others**

### **Tackling pavement cycling**

11% wanted to see more measures to stop people cycling and scootering on pavements. Some of these suggestions focused on promoting awareness and considerate behaviour among cyclists, while others wanted to see the existing rules around pavement cycling enforced more effectively. Some participants wanted to see a removal of ‘shared space’ initiatives, with a complete separation of cycling and pedestrian areas.

### **Public behaviour and safety**

6% wrote about wanting to see negative behaviour and attitudes from other members of the public addressed, but there were fewer specific suggestions for how to go about this. Some suggested public awareness campaigns, while others expressed a more general desire for understanding and consideration from others.

An additional 4% wrote about addressing safety concerns. Most of these focused on improvements to the safety of infrastructure (e.g. less hazardous crossings and drop kerbs), while some wrote about antisocial behaviour.

## Access to the tools needed to walk and wheel

### Mobility aids

6% said that having access to a suitable mobility aid would improve their ability to walk and wheel. Many wanted to have much easier access to them through the NHS, including GPs, and a broader array of choices. The limited selection currently available through these channels meant that people frequently had to pay out of pocket. Some people therefore suggested more subsidies or grants be made available to purchase mobility aids.

As well as barriers to obtaining the mobility aid itself, people also wrote about wanting to see action to address the broader barriers to use including: stigma from members of the public, internalised stigma, having nowhere to store it, narrow pavements, and a lack of charging points.

### Access to information

5% wanted to see more accessible signage along walking and wheeling routes, with information presented accessibly to people across the impairment spectrum. People also wanted to see similar improvements to wayfinding apps.

There was demand for information about accessibility features along walking and wheeling routes, which many were unable to get hold of at present. Respondents wanted to get live information about obstructions, building work, dropped kerbs, and gradients, among other things, so that they could plan their journeys and be aware of any hazards or diversions.

### Transport

2% of respondents wrote about how improving public transport links would make walking and wheeling more accessible; it was suggested that more regular transport links could reduce the walking distance between two stops or modes, making these shorter walking and wheeling journeys more possible.

For others, being able to take their mobility aid on public transport was a key improvement. Doing so would remove one of the barriers people face to using a suitable mobility aid, and would therefore make walking and wheeling more accessible. Some also said that improved public transport would allow them to travel to scenic destinations, which would make them more likely to make leisurely walking and wheeling journeys.

## Other suggestions

Additional improvements that were put forward include: cleaner air quality, better lighting, traffic reduction measures, having amenities within walking distance, and not being penalised or having benefits removed for walking and wheeling.

# Cycling

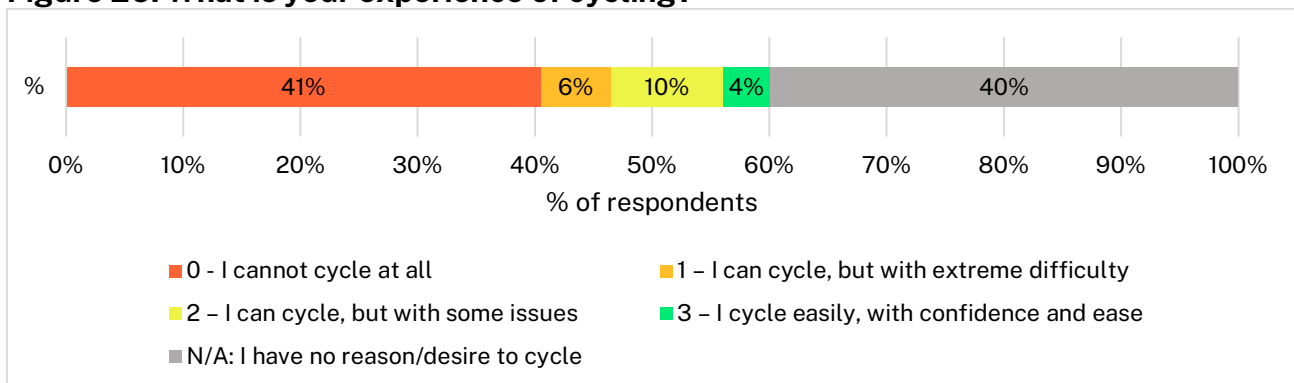
Much as is the case for non-disabled people, cycling has the smallest mode-share for disabled people. According to the National Travel Survey, an average disabled person makes just 2 journeys per year by cycling, compared with 17 for a non-disabled person (over eight times as many!)<sup>xxiv</sup>. This average figure somewhat masks the diversity in experience. Many disabled people are avid cyclists, some finding cycling more accessible and easier than walking and wheeling<sup>xxv</sup>. However, the majority (as many as 84% according to data from 2017) of disabled people never cycle<sup>xxvi</sup>.

As is the case for walking and wheeling, while the Local Transport Note LTN 1/20 provides some good guidance to local authorities on delivering accessible cycle infrastructure, it is just guidance – local authorities are not legally required to comply, and are not always provided with the investment and resources to do so.

Access to suitable cycles is another key issue – these are not available from NHS wheelchair services, and not available on the Motability Scheme.

## Experience

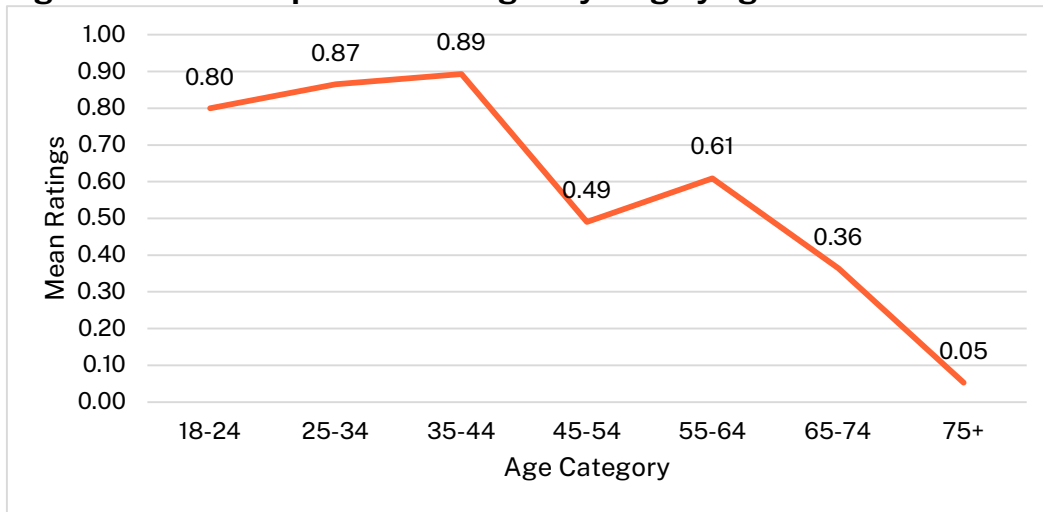
Figure 26: What is your experience of cycling?



On average, respondents rated their experience of cycling as 0.62 out of 3, the lowest of all the modes. Only 4% said they could cycle with ease, while 40% said they could not cycle at all.

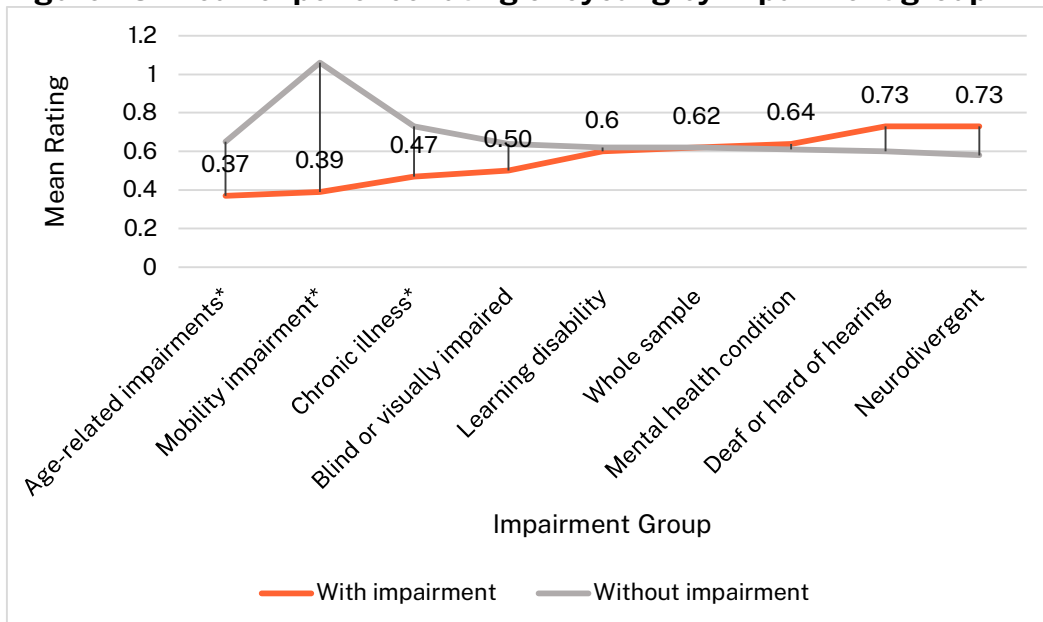
Though age was a factor that significantly influenced people’s experience, every age group rated cycling as below 1 on average. Participants in the 18-24 category rated cycling an average of 0.80 while those in the 75+ category rated cycling an average of 0.05.

**Figure 27: Mean experience rating of cycling by age**



Impairment was another factor that was statistically significantly likely to affect a respondents rating. Three impairment groups gave significantly lower ratings: age-related impairments (0.37 compared to 0.65 for those without), chronic illness (0.47 compared with 0.73 for those without) and mobility impairments (0.39 compared with 1.06 for those without). Participants without mobility impairments were the only group to give an average rating of above 1 (can cycle, but with extreme difficulty).

**Figure 28: Mean experience rating of cycling by impairment group**

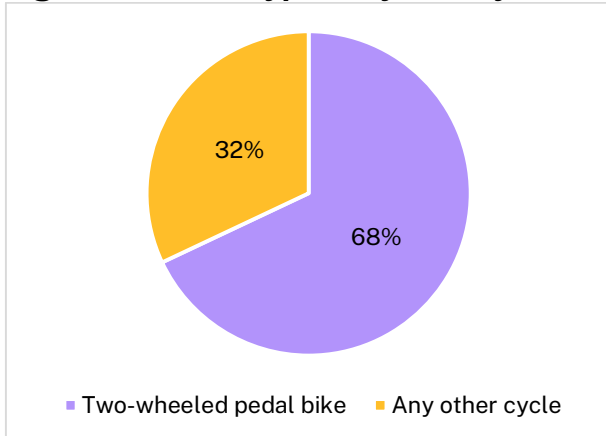


Note: \* is used to denote statistical significance, which indicates that the difference in mean ratings between participants with and without the impairment did not occur due to chance.

Overall, the findings suggest that disabled people find cycling deeply inaccessible, across impairment groups, and at every stage of life.

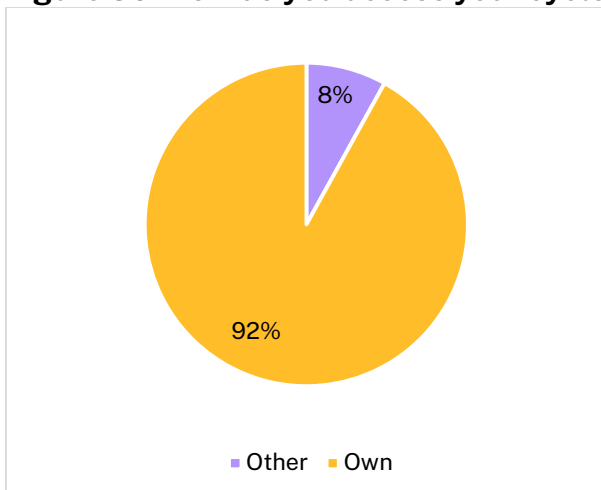
Of the respondents that do cycle, 68% use a standard two-pedal bike with no adaptations, while 32% use alternative cycles including e-bikes, front wheel attachments, tricycles, handcycles (both manual and powered), and more.

**Figure 29: What type of cycle do you use?**



Of those who have access to a cycle, 92% own their cycle. The remaining 8% access cycles through other means, such as cycle hire schemes, mobile apps, charities, and other organisations.

**Figure 30: How do you access your cycle?**





## What works well

21% of respondents to this question said that nothing works well at all. The two major reasons people gave for this was either that their impairment prevented them from cycling, or that they felt unsafe.

- “Nothing much any more. Knees no longer up to it. Haven't cycled in several years.”
- “Very little, as this mode isn't accessible to me as a visually impaired person.”
- “I don't own a bike - I haven't done since I was a teenager - and my cycling isn't good, so I'm not a very confident cyclist at all. I worry that, were I to buy a bicycle and use it, I'd pose a serious risk to my safety - and possibly that of others too.”
- “I did have an attachment that turned a manual chair into a tricycle but after it turned over on me, I no longer felt safe on it and got rid.”

For those that had positive experiences of cycling, the single most significant reason was that it gave them a sense of freedom. 24% said that cycling allowed them to make door-to-door-journeys without having to rely on others, and provided a sense of control and independence. People also said it allowed them to make journeys quickly (10%) and spontaneously (2%).

20% of respondents said that cycling has a positive impact on their physical health. As well as a good source of exercise, some also found cycling to be a good way to manage their impairment, and many said it was less painful for them than walking.

Respondents also wrote about the benefit to their mental and social wellbeing. 5% said cycling allowed them to get out and about, see others, and feel a part of the world around them, with 3% writing about the particular benefits of fresh air. 10% of people said it was simply an enjoyable way to get around.

Other things people said worked well about cycling were that it was cheap (1%) and environmentally friendly (7%). Some respondents also said that cycle lanes and other cycle friendly infrastructure were key to creating a positive experience for them (7%).

“It's brilliant - door to door, and I can get to places I wouldn't be able to get to if I walked or used the car. It's very liberating. It also means I don't have to worry about getting too tired - I can cycle for miles very happily, but struggle to walk so it's nice to be mobile without pain when I cycle!”

## Barriers

Only 3% of those who answered this question said that cycling was completely accessible to them, which is consistent with the extremely low experience rating participants gave this mode of travel. The barriers are often so prohibitive that they stop people cycling altogether, and those who do cycle have to fight against a number of obstacles.

**Figure 31: Which of the following barriers have you experienced to cycling in the past 12 months? (Tick all that apply)**

Barrier	Respondents
I cannot cycle due to my impairment or health condition	58%
Lack of road safety/ danger of collision	35%
Too few cycle lanes	27%
Fear of cycle theft	22%
Cycling lanes are poorly maintained	22%
Lack of storage/parking space	22%
I lack the skills/confidence to cycle	21%
Cycling infrastructure is not suitable for adapted cycles	20%
There is a perception that disabled people don't/can't cycle	18%
Cycle routes are poorly signposted	16%
Too expensive (cost of cycle, storage, adaptations etc)	13%
I fear or have experienced antisocial behaviour or hate crime while cycling	12%
I am sometimes denied access to public transport when I take my cycle	11%
Not enough opportunity to hire cycles	8%
I feel like cycling 'isn't for people like me'	8%
I fear that I will lose or have lost my benefits because I cycle	3%
None - this mode is accessible to me	3%

## Impairment

58% of respondents said they could not cycle due to their impairment, making it the most common barrier. While this framing contrasts with our own use of the Social Model (that we are disabled by barriers rather than our impairment) we chose to include this option in the survey due to strong feedback from workshop participants.

## Safety and confidence

The second most common barrier was dangerous roads and the risk of collision (35% of respondents). Some said that they were made to feel unsafe by poor driver behaviour and a lack of segregated cycling routes. Others also said their impairment put them at higher risk (e.g. being easily thrown off balance or unable to hear traffic approaching from behind.)

21% said that they lacked the skills or confidence to be able to cycle safely, and added that there were no adult classes available to help them improve. For some the safety risk came from other people, with 11% saying they were afraid of or had experienced antisocial behaviour or hate crime while cycling in the past year.

“I cannot cycle confidently and there are no adult classes in my area. A lack of accessible cycle parking. A lack of bike lanes mean I must cycle on busy main roads which is impossible. I am tired and sweaty when I get to my location and there's nowhere to store locks or helmets.”

## Poor cycling infrastructure

Poor cycling infrastructure was among the more common barriers. 27% said that there were too few cycle lanes, and 22% said that the ones available to them were often poorly maintained or obstructed. People who said their impairment made them more fearful of traffic collisions often added that they felt safer in cycle lanes.

20% also said that existing infrastructure was not suitable for adapted cycles, such as routes being too narrow. This is particularly concerning, given that 32% of those surveyed use a non-standard cycle.

Respondents also mentioned that cycle routes were poorly signposted, and that there wasn't a wayfinding app that could plan a journey using only segregated cycle lanes.

## Access to cycles and storage

Financial barriers prevented 13% of respondents from accessing a suitable cycle or storage space. Adapted cycles in particular can be prohibitively expensive, especially given the much higher living costs disabled people face<sup>xxvii</sup>.

8% also said that there were not enough opportunities to hire cycles, especially ones with adaptations, or tandem cycles with a pilot. This also deprived people of the opportunity to try an adapted cycle before committing to an expensive purchase.

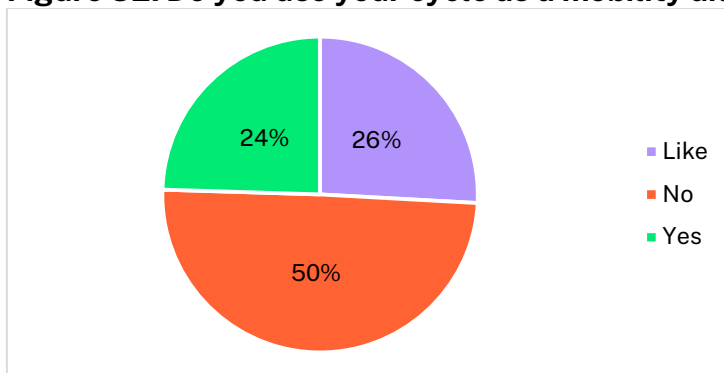
For 22%, storing the cycle was a major barrier to cycling. A lack of parking spaces, especially for larger adapted cycles, meant that people had nowhere safe to store it. This then increased the risk of cycle theft, which was a barrier for a further 22%.

- "All the times I could have used a specially adapted hand-cycle bike if such things were readily available & affordable. I feel sad, discriminated against, forgotten and unimportant in society."
- "...I also found that there wasn't space to park my trike anywhere as it is obviously bigger than a normal bicycle. My big concern is theft when I can't find a place to park it."

## Cycling as a mobility aid

Of those respondents who do cycle, 24% use their cycle as a mobility aid. A further 26% would like to use their cycle as a mobility aid, but face barriers to doing so.

**Figure 32: Do you use your cycle as a mobility aid?**



This echoes findings elsewhere in the survey which indicate that many disabled people want and need better access to mobility aids. We asked those who didn't currently use their cycle as a mobility aid, but told us they would like to, what barriers prevented them from doing so.

Only 33% said that a cycle would not be a suitable mobility aid because of their impairment, suggesting that the rest of the respondents to this question are facing primarily external (and therefore removable) barriers. Among these, cost was the most common barrier, with 25% saying the cycle they would need is too expensive.

6% said they would like to use their cycle as a mobility aid but lack the confidence to do so. A significant reason for this was the fear of traffic collisions, with 22% saying they felt too unsafe to travel on roads, while others said that they lacked the skills needed to use a

cycle as a mobility aid, and that there were not enough classes or opportunities to try or hire one out.

19% also said that there was insufficient cycling infrastructure for cycles to be a viable mobility aid, with an additional 14% saying they would have nowhere to park or store it at home. Integrating cycling with other forms of transport was also an issue for some; 6% said that although they could cycle on the streets, they could not take their cycle on buses or trains as they could with other mobility aids, which prevented them from making journeys further afield.

“Storage. My E-trike is too big to store in my hallway and too heavy to take upstairs; so I have to store it in a storage unit some 3 miles from my house and only use it occasionally for recreational cycling.”

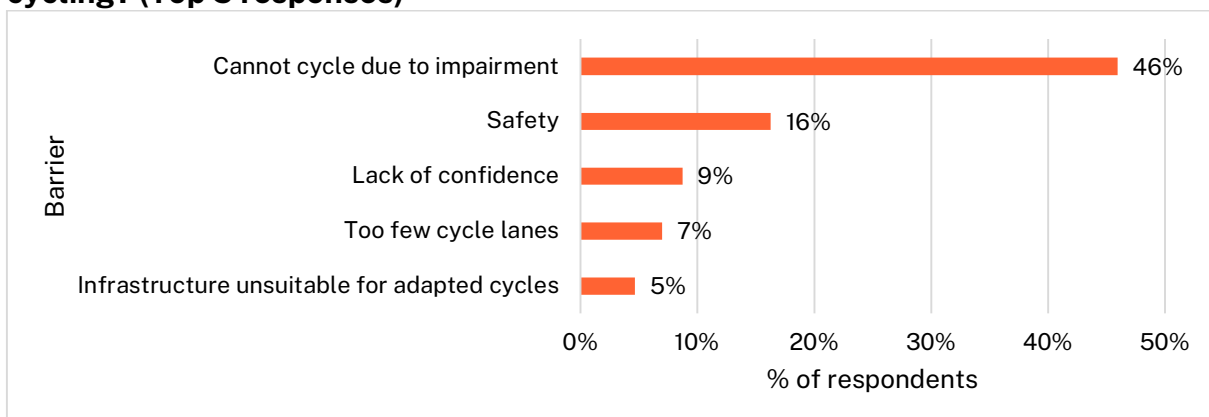
## Perceptions

18% of respondents said that they were impacted by a pervasive belief that disabled people don't or can't cycle. If held by decision makers, these attitudes can reinforce the physical barriers we face. If disabled people are believed to be inherently unable to cycle, accessible cycles and infrastructure don't get funded. This then prevents us from being able to cycle, and the pattern continues<sup>xxviii</sup>.

“I would love to be able to cycle but the lack of self steering bicycles, or of hireable tandems with pilots makes this impossible. I think it is just assumed that a visually impaired person would never be able to cycle and there is never any attempt to include us in the green travel revolution.”

## Most significant barrier

**Figure 33: If you had to choose just one, what is the biggest/most significant barrier to cycling? (Top 5 responses)**



Respondents overwhelmingly ranked their impairment or health condition as the single most significant barrier to cycling, with 46% of respondents selecting this option. This was far higher than the second highest option (lack of road safety/danger of collisions) which was selected by 16%.

## Impact

As a result of the barriers participants experience, the most commonly occurring impact was being stopped from cycling altogether (reported by 72% respondents).

**Figure 34: As a result of these barriers, have you experienced any of the following?**

Impact	%
Stops me using this mode	72%
Stops me making a journey	27%
Journey is more difficult/stressful	27%
I have to plan in advance	20%
Impacts my health	19%
Journey is longer	15%
Impacts my confidence	15%
I have to travel with someone	11%
Journey is more expensive	9%

## Changes disabled people want to see

We asked participants to write about what improvements could be made to make cycling more accessible to them. The responses largely fell into two categories:

1. Infrastructure
2. Access to cycles

### Infrastructure

By far the most popular suggestions were improvements to cycling infrastructure, with 42% saying they wanted to see more well maintained, segregated cycling lanes, and for these to be better connected or continuous. A further 10% said that there should be more places to park and store cycles, and that, like the cycle lanes themselves, they should be built to accommodate adapted cycles as well.

11% of people said that improvements to road safety would be necessary for them to cycle more. These answers referred both to creating safe infrastructure and changing driver behaviour.

5% also said that information and signage along cycling routes should be much more extensive and available in a wide range of formats. 2% said they would like to be able to take their cycle on public transport.

- “Cycle gates should be disability friendly - maybe something like the toilet radar system. All the gates that have turned me back have had locked car gates too, so why not have those locks standardised for disabled cyclists?”
- “More residential parking, more places with protected bike lines, and very importantly, continuous bike lines. The current cycling infrastructure forces cyclists to go on and off the part of the road used by car drivers. Every switch increases the risks of collision.”

## Access to cycles

Interestingly, about twice as many people wanted to see more opportunities to hire cycles (12%) than buy cycles (6%). As well as being able to hire adapted cycles more readily, some participants wanted opportunities to hire pilots for tandem cycles as well. Some also wanted to hire adapted cycles from designated pick-up points, in the same manner as docked bikes.

Of those who wrote about purchasing cycles, most wrote about lowering the cost, or increasing the number of subsidies and concessions available for disabled cyclists. A further 6% wanted opportunities to try out and learn how to use a cycle, and for these classes to be tailored for adults using adapted cycles too.

- “Opportunities for neurodivergent/disabled adults to learn - I feel like I've "missed the boat" or I wouldn't manage to keep up in a group of abled people”
- “Grants for e bikes “
- “Cheaper and more readily available storage options.”

## Other

14% said their impairment or health would have to improve for them to be able to cycle. 6% said that they wanted a change in the behaviour and attitudes of others towards disabled cyclists. People talked about wanting improved access to off-road routes, and to be assured that they will not lose their benefits if they cycle.

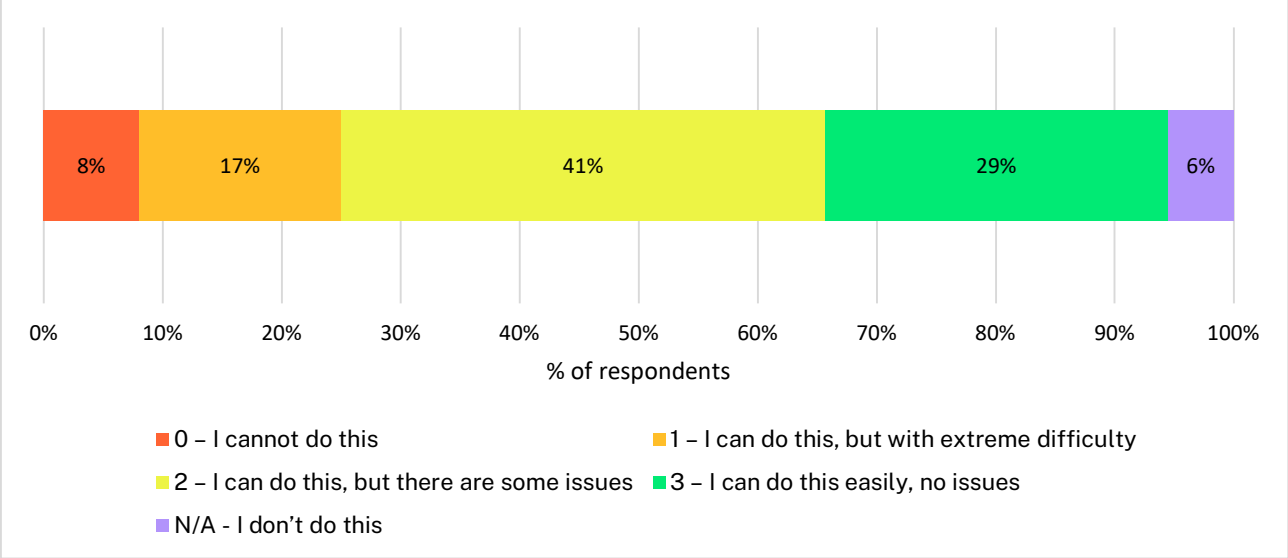
# Public transport

## Cross-cutting themes

### Getting from your house to the station/stop

After leaving home and setting off, the next stage of the journey (if taking public transport) involves making one's way to the first stop or station. This poses significant barriers to many disabled people due to inaccessible streetspace, detailed in the previous section on walking/wheeling. Most respondents experienced issues with this part of the journey, with 41% experiencing some issues, 17% experiencing extreme difficulty, and 8% reporting that they cannot do it at all.

**Figure 35: How easy/difficult do you find the following stage of a journey: Getting from your house to the station/stop**



“The bus is just easy. Getting to the stop, maybe less so.”



## Booking and paying for tickets

65% of respondents use a concessionary bus pass and so don't purchase tickets when travelling by bus. The second most common method was mobile/contactless payment.

**Figure 36: How disabled people purchase bus tickets**

Method	Bus
N/A - I use a concessionary pass	65%
I 'tap in' using a contactless payment (e.g mobile/ Apple Pay, debit card, Oyster card)	28%
I pay on the bus using cash	9%
I book tickets online or through mobile apps	6%
I purchase tickets using Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs)	4%
I purchase tickets in advance by speaking to staff in the ticket office	3%

60% of respondents use digital means to book tickets for train travel, such as booking them online or through mobile apps. However, many also reported using non-digital means, with the second most selected purchase method for train tickets being ticket offices (33%).

**Figure 37: How disabled people purchase train tickets**

Method	Train
I book tickets online or through mobile apps (e.g National Rail, Trainline)	60%
I book in person at stations by speaking to staff in the ticket office	33%
I 'tap in' using a contactless payment (e.g mobile / Apple Pay, Oyster card)	19%
I book at stations by using Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs)	18%
I book over the telephone	6%
I pay while on the train by speaking to a Guard	5%

45% of respondents use contactless payment to purchase tickets for light rail travel. The second most common purchase method was Ticket Vending Machines (16%), followed by ticket offices (18%).

**Figure 38: How disabled people purchase light rail tickets**

Method	Light rail
I book tickets online or through mobile apps (e.g National Rail, Trainline)	9%
I book in person at stations by speaking to staff in the ticket office	16%
I 'tap in' using a contactless payment (e.g mobile / Apple Pay, Oyster card)	43%
I book at stations by using Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs)	18%
I book over the telephone	2%

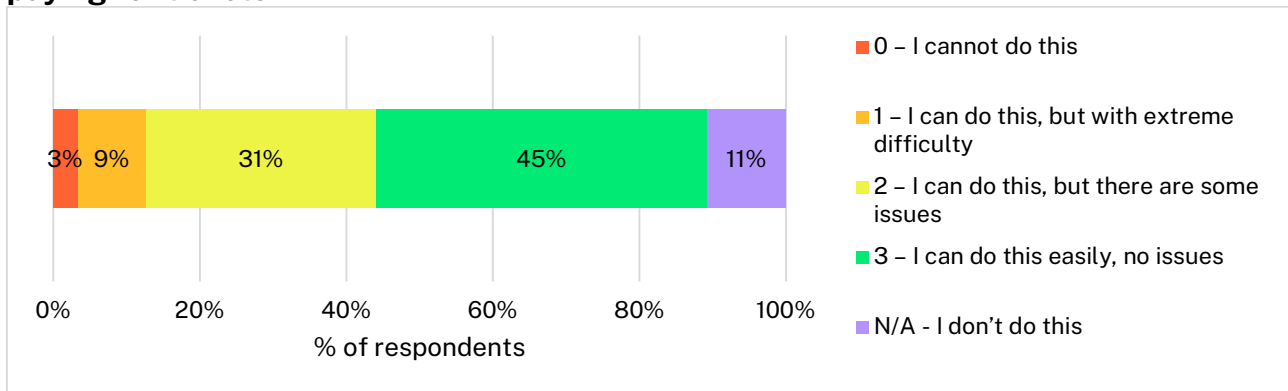
Across all modes, card was the most used payment method, yet many respondents used cash (14% for train).

**Figure 39: Payment method: train vs light rail vs bus**

Method	Train	Light rail	Bus
Card	91%	95%	27%
Cash	14%	11%	9%

Compared with other stages of the journey, respondents rated their experience of booking and paying for tickets higher, with most (45%) saying this was easy.

**Figure 40: How easy/difficult do you find the following stage of a journey: Booking and paying for tickets**



However, our research found that disabled people find booking train tickets particularly difficult, with 22% respondents reporting they had experienced this as a barrier to using trains.

**Figure 41: Percentage of respondents who experienced issues booking or purchasing tickets: train versus light rail**

Barrier	Train	Light rail
Issues with booking or purchasing tickets	22%	14%

Specific barriers include:

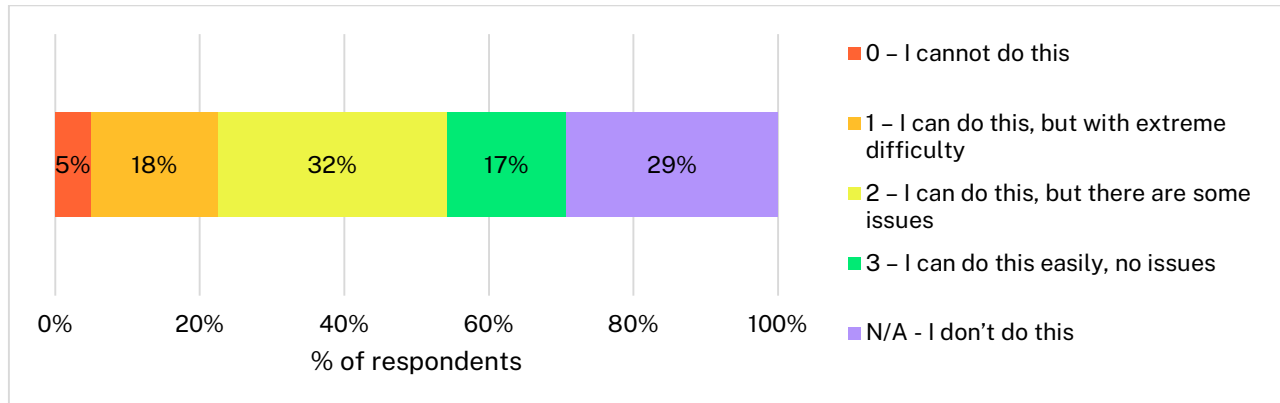
- Inconsistency (in payment methods, ticket validity, and pricing) causes confusion and anxiety
- Ticket Vending Machines are inaccessible and often the only available method
- Lack of staffed ticket offices so no one around to assist with purchasing tickets

“Booking a train ticket online requires a first-class honours degree.”

## Arranging and receiving assistance

17% respondents rated arranging assistance as easy, while 32% said they could do it with some issues, 18% said they could do it with extreme difficulty, and 5% said they could not do it at all.

**Figure 42: How easy/difficult do you find the following stage of a journey: Arranging assistance**



Our research found that participants had a similar experience of assistance across both train and light rail travel, with 37% of respondents experiencing it as a barrier to these modes.

**Figure 43: Percentage of respondents who experienced issues with arranging or receiving assistance: train versus light rail**

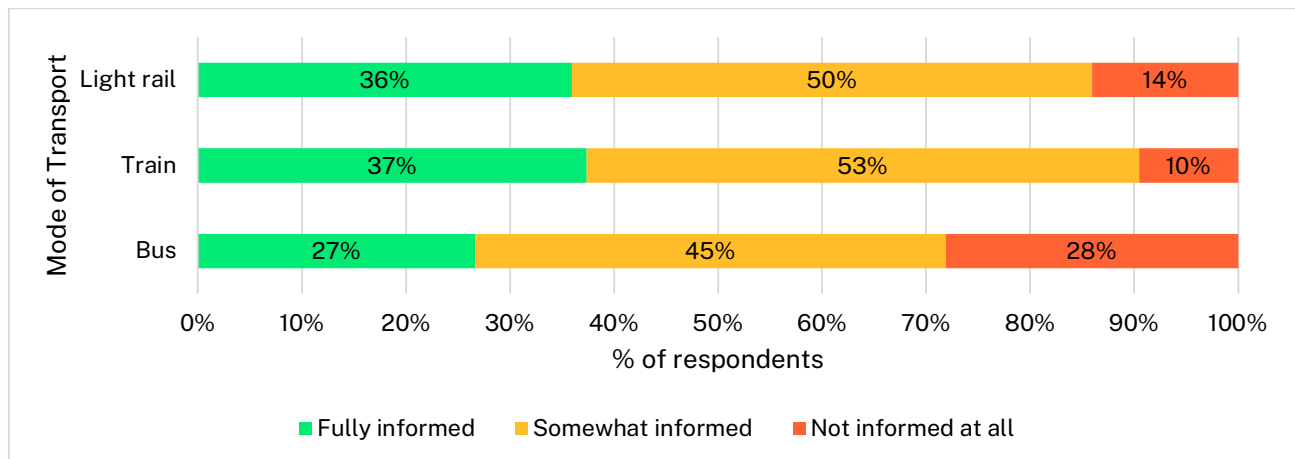
Barrier	Train	Light rail
Issues with arranging or receiving assistance	37%	37%

While it was not included as an option to select on the survey, 'lack of assistance (cannot get on or off bus without assistance that is not always provided by driver)' was spontaneously written by participants when asked what barriers they experience to using the bus.

"The train stopped, lights went off, nobody checked the train, nobody turned up to get me off."

## Access to live info

**Figure 44: Whilst travelling by this mode, how well informed do you feel about journey information? Comparison between bus, train, and light rail.**



This question asked participants to consider how well informed they felt while on the journey, including warnings and announcements about information such as delays, personal security, next destination, etc. While the responses were quite similar for light rail and train, our research found that disabled people feel less informed while travelling by bus, with 28% of respondents selecting “I feel not informed at all: information is not communicated to me in a way I understand”.

## Interactions with public and staff

**Figure 45: Percentage of respondents who experienced negative attitudes from staff or passengers: comparison between bus, train, and light rail**

Barrier	Bus	Train	Light rail
Negative attitudes/ antisocial behaviour/ hate crime from other passengers	35%	25%	28%
Negative driver/staff attitudes and behaviour	41%	25%	19%

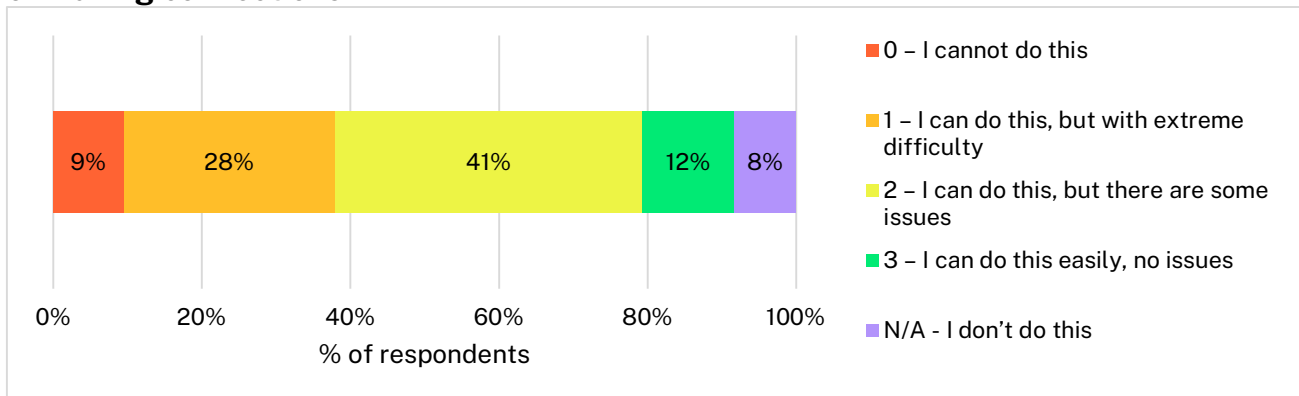
While negative attitudes from both staff and other passengers were experienced by respondents across all modes of public transport, our research found that this barrier was most commonly experienced when travelling by bus. 41% respondents had recently experienced negative bus driver behaviour.

“The driver became extremely angry and aggressive, and got out of his booth and stood up to yell down at me.”

## Interchanging or making connections

Compared with other stages of the journey, respondents rated their experience of interchanging or making connections the lowest, with only 12% saying they could do this easily. 41% respondents said they could do it with some issues, 28% said they could do it with extreme difficulty, and 9% said they could not do it at all.

**Figure 46: How easy/difficult do you find the following stage of a journey: Interchanging or making connections**



- “The big Central London stations have just far too much walking to get to certain exits/platforms/interchanges.”
- “I no longer do journeys that have changes so I only travel direct. Last time I attempted it, the staff on my second train weren’t told I needed assistance and I was left on the platform for about an hour after my train arrived. Staff then booked me a taxi, which took another hour to arrive.”

## Getting from the station/stop to final destination

Very similar barriers exist along the ‘last mile’ of a journey (getting from the station/stop to the final destination) as there are to getting from the house to the station/stop. Our research found disabled people experience more issues with this stage (it was given a lower mean rating than for getting to the first station/stop). Additional barriers include tiredness/exhaustion from the journey, safety concerns particularly if it is dark or late at night, fewer transport options available, and the cumulative impacts of things going wrong along the way.

“My train was delayed on my way back and I had to get off at an unfamiliar stop. As this was late at night there were no staff on duty and it was quite frightening. I nearly fell while I was getting off the train as I had no ramp. I felt very shaky & nervous waiting for the taxi on my own after midnight.”

# Bus

Government statistics show that disabled people make a greater proportion of our trips by bus than non-disabled people (5% compared with 3%)<sup>xxix</sup>, demonstrating the crucial role the bus plays as the often only accessible form of public transport available.

In the past few decades, progress has been made with regards to the accessibility of vehicles. Of the 31,000-strong bus fleet in England<sup>xxx</sup>:

- 28% have free WiFi
- 46% provide audio visual information
- 99% have been issued with an accessibility certificate, meaning that they comply with the standards as set out in the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR). All bus vehicles were meant to comply by 2017, and all coach vehicles by 2020<sup>xxxi</sup>.

Since 2008, (some) disabled and older people have been eligible for free off-peak bus travel under the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme<sup>xxxi</sup>. In 2022, journeys made with a concessionary pass (older person's or disabled) made up 20% of all bus passenger journeys in England<sup>xxxi</sup>.

The Department for Transport published Bus Back Better in 2021; the National Bus Strategy for England. It requires transport authorities and bus operators to produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan detailing the changes they will make.

Additionally, within the strategy the Government made a commitment to:

- Ensure that Government-funded buses deliver greater accessibility (for example, space for a second wheelchair, hearing loops and audio-visual information).
- Review the eligibility criteria for concessionary schemes<sup>xxxi</sup>

Despite this progress, the percentage of bus complaints that relate to accessibility increased between 2016/17 and 2021/2022<sup>xxxi</sup>, and barriers remain. For example, PSVAR regulations only apply to buses which can carry 22 or more passengers. Additionally, they rely on a 'standard' size wheelchair to determine the design of bus interiors which has not increased to reflect modern mobility aid sizes.

The 2017 Bus Services Act allows Government to require local operators to provide key information to disabled passengers in accessible formats<sup>xxxi</sup>. In 2023 those powers were used to introduce rules requiring local bus and coach services to provide audio-visual

information on the route and direction, upcoming stops, and details of diversions<sup>xxxvii</sup>. However, services have until October 2026 before they must do this.

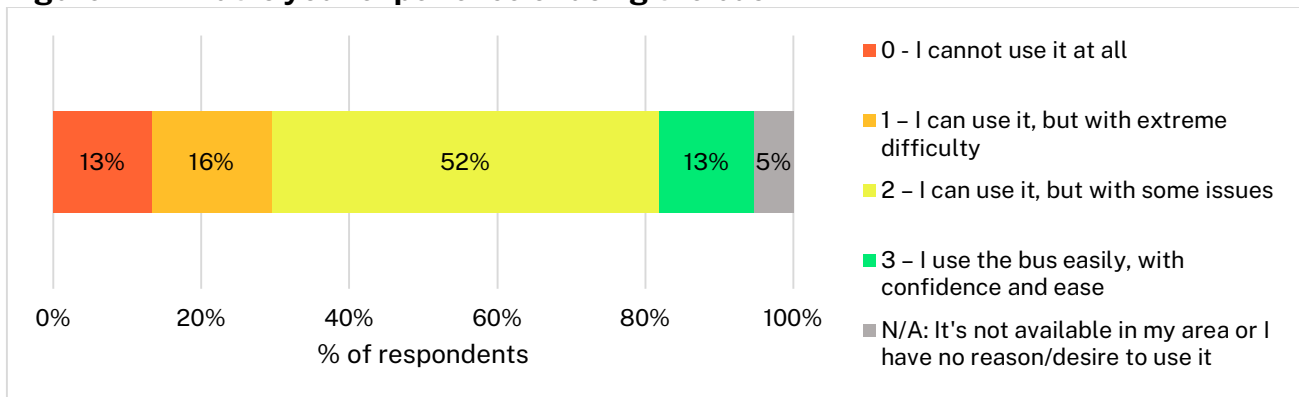
Legislation requiring drivers to be trained in disability awareness came was introduced in March 2018<sup>xxxviii</sup>. Department for Transport data shows 99% of bus operators required drivers to take this training<sup>xxxix</sup>, yet an audit from Bus Users UK found only 89% of drivers reported having been trained<sup>xl</sup>. There is no data on the quality or effectiveness of said training.

Something that has been an enduring issue for disabled people using buses is conflicts around the priority space, for example, what a driver should do if a wheelchair user wishes to board but the space is occupied by a buggy. In 2017 Doug Paulley took his case on this issue against the bus operator FirstGroup to the Supreme Court, citing the Equality Act (2010)'s principle that service providers must make "reasonable adjustments" for disabled service users. The Supreme Court ruled that FirstGroup had failed to make sufficient adjustments for the needs of disabled passengers, and set a legal precedent requiring operator's to adopt a policy of wheelchair users taking priority in the space. In practice this should look like drivers asking the passenger in the space to move, and if they don't, to ask them again more insistently<sup>xli</sup>.

## Experience

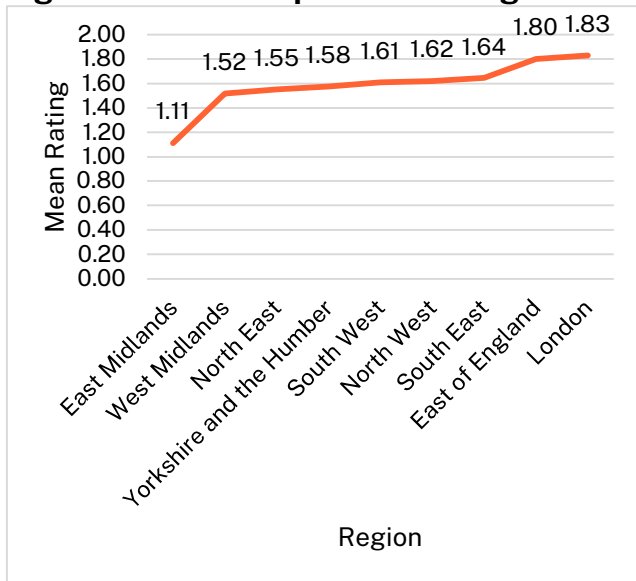
Despite progress made, and the many trips we make by bus, travelling by this mode continues to present challenges. Our research shows that on average, disabled people rate their experience of using buses at 1.68 out of 3. 52% said that they can use the bus with some issues, while 13% said they could not use it at all.

**Figure 47: What is your experience of using the bus?**



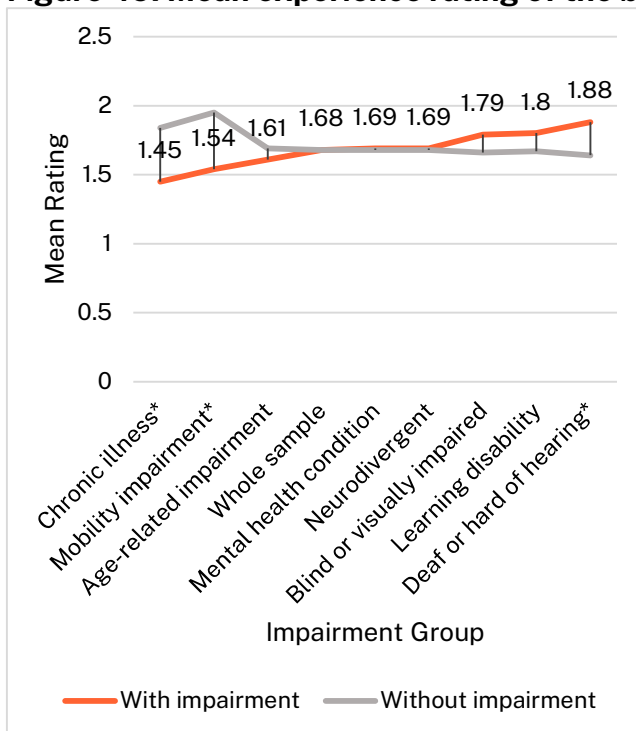
The region participants lived in significantly influenced their ratings. Participants in London gave the highest rating (1.83), while participants in the East Midlands gave a markedly lower rating than most other areas (1.11).

**Figure 48: Mean experience rating of the bus by region**



Impairment type was also a factor that affected disabled people’s experience of the bus. Groups that gave a lower rating were participants with mobility impairments (1.54 compared to 1.95 without) and those with chronic illness (1.45 compared to 1.84 without). Participants who were Deaf on the other hand gave a higher rating than those who weren’t (1.88 compared with 1.64).

**Figure 49: Mean experience rating of the bus by impairment**





Note: \* is used to denote statistical significance, which indicates that the difference in mean ratings between participants with and without the impairment did not occur due to chance.

## What works well

The benefits people wrote about most frequently were to do with physical access, with step-free access taking the top spot (19%). Buses with mechanically deployed ramps that could crouch to the kerb were spoken about especially positively.

9% also said the bus works well when there is enough space for their wheelchair or mobility aid, and a further 11% said that they found it easy to get a seat. Respondents said that not only was it important to have plenty of priority seating, but for these to be vacated by nondisabled people when needed.

7% said that audio-visual announcements on buses made them accessible, but these mentions were often caveated with phrases like “when/if it works”, suggesting this vital feature can be unreliable.

The bus was also a convenient option for many disabled people. 18% of respondents said that frequent bus services were a key benefit, and allowed them to make trips more spontaneously than with other modes. 10% said that they have a bus stop near to their home or their destination, which reduces the walking distance.

Other people wrote about positive interactions on buses, both with the driver and other passengers. 18% of respondents said that drivers were generally friendly and helpful, providing key assistance such as telling blind and visually impaired users which bus they are on. Other positive behaviours include waiting for disabled people to sit down before setting off, and asking passengers with buggies to vacate the wheelchair priority space.

A much smaller number of people wrote about positive experiences with other passengers (3%), but those that did said that people “looking out for” them, letting them know when they were at their stop, or providing other assistance when needed was helpful.

Around 6% said that the bus not being too crowded helped to make it accessible. However, this was also frequently caveated, with statements like “using the bus outside of busy periods” or “if the bus is quiet”, implying that the bus is less accessible outside of these hours.

The relatively low cost of the bus was also a benefit for 9% of respondents, with many of these saying their concessionary bus pass was key to keeping costs down. Some also mentioned the simplicity of the ticketing system and fare structure.

Around 5% said that the availability of journey planning information in accessible formats made bus travel accessible for them. This could be through timetables at the bus stops, or through wayfinding apps with live updates.

“I like that I can easily hop on or off given how frequent it is, and I am extremely thankful for free bus travel. As there are barriers to me learning how to drive free travel has definitely made getting about significantly easier for me and much less reliant on my family for lifts. Brighton buses are usually very good with visual announcements so I can easily tell where I am and when I need to get off when I am doing an unfamiliar route. The priority seating seems to be well respected which helps a lot.”

## Barriers

**Figure 50: Which barriers, if any, have you experienced to using the bus in the past 12 months (tick all that apply)**

Barrier	Respondents
Issues with priority space/seating (not enough, already in use, not clearly defined, etc)	51%
Overcrowding	49%
Infrequent or unreliable service	48%
It takes too long compared to other modes	43%
Driver attitudes and behaviour	41%
Inadequate bus stops/ shelters	40%
Risk of catching COVID-19	37%
Lack of accurate real-time information on bus times	37%
Negative attitudes/ antisocial behaviour/ hate crime from other passengers	35%
Bus stop is too far away/ not close enough to my home/ not close to destination	34%
Issues with ramp (broken/ too steep, deployed incorrectly, no ramp)	28%
Too many interchanges/ I have to change buses	27%
Personal security/ I don't feel safe	22%
Audio/visual information: announcements are not communicated to me in a way I can access	21%
Sensory environment (lighting, brightness, noise levels, smells)	21%
I cannot take my mobility aid or medical equipment with me	11%
Expensive	11%
Other	3%
None – this mode is accessible to me	4%

## Seating and spaces

Some of the most common barriers disabled people face when using buses are around priority seats and spaces.

51% of respondents experienced issues with priority seating and spaces such as seats being occupied or not clearly defined, or there being too few. In these instances, disabled people reported being left waiting until a vehicle with a free priority seat/space arrived, adding to journey time and uncertainty. Having to ask for a seat or space to be vacated can lead to conflict with other passengers, creating even more stress.

Despite wheelchair users having legal priority over buggies, disabled people tell us that drivers often do not let them on when there is a buggy on board, and that many parents do not stow the buggy when asked. This demonstrates that existing case law<sup>xiii</sup> around priority seating is not widely understood or enforced, despite visible signage.

Respondents with less visible impairments said they had particular difficulty getting a priority seat, as other passengers were generally unlikely to offer theirs, or could be argumentative when asked. Some reported being criticised, tutted at, or told to get out of a priority seat as they do not “look disabled”.

49% of respondents said that overcrowding had affected them on recent journeys, making it the second most common barrier to buses. Crowding can also mean that there is less priority seating available, and less space for those using mobility aids to manoeuvre safely.

11% of respondents reported being unable to take their mobility aid with them on the bus, either due to services not accommodating them or because of the stress involved.

40% of respondents experienced inadequate bus stops last year. Examples included a lack of seating, lack of shelter leaving people exposed to the rain and cold, inaccessible surrounding street space (such as cycle lanes cutting through ‘floating’ bus stops) and street clutter.

- “Sometimes I don't have a mobility aid with me and don't look disabled as it's a hidden disability and seats are taken. I don't have confidence to ask to sit down as I'm young and don't look visibly disabled, so I risk standing for the journey and being in more pain.”
- “The first 3 buses that arrived all had buggies on them, they all refused to move for me. None of the drivers were willing to intervene. A journey that should have been 20 minutes ended up taking 3 hours.”

## Convenience

48% of respondents reported infrequent and unreliable services as a barrier to using the bus. Infrequent services disproportionately impact disabled people: we're more likely to be prevented from boarding the first bus that arrives (due to barriers including the priority space being taken) so a longer wait between buses impacts us more.

43% of respondents felt that the bus takes too long compared to other modes. 34% of respondents also report having no bus stop near to their home or destination. This not only increases the time and energy disabled people expend getting to the stop, but also increases exposure to barriers along the pavement that could further disrupt the journey. Similar problems are presented by interchanges, which 27% of participants reported as a barrier; every interchange is another opportunity for a driver to turn you away, for there to be no priority seating, for the bus to be overcrowded, or for the service to be delayed.

- "The biggest barrier to the buses locally is the lack of them. They've just announced they're cutting the last reliable route. The buses that do exist are infrequent and unreliable. It's the impact on my mental health rather than the bus being inaccessible that is the issue. In London for example I use the buses all the time and they are great. But locally they just don't turn up or don't go to where I need them too. Or they just don't exist after 5pm."
- "Many times the buses do not turn up or are late. They also stop running at around 6pm so I can't travel in the evening."
- "In my area the local buses that take me to my GP and shops run once an hour, but they never follow the timetable and can turn up 40 minutes late, there's no seat at the bus stop and I can't stand for that long. Recently the council stopped the bus service all together for a few weeks and I had to make a formal complaint to the council. On other occasions the bus has been too full for me to board and be able to sit down and I can't travel safely standing and holding the poles."
- "In my home town I haven't used the bus in the past 12 months. The bus stop is too far away from my home. I haven't experienced the same difficulties in London."

## Interactions

41% of respondents experienced negative attitudes and behaviour from bus drivers. People told us about times when the bus driver failed to abide by existing codes of practice, suggesting that while there are accessibility regulations and driver training in place, these are inadequate, forgotten or ignored.

35% of respondents experienced discriminatory behaviour from other passengers, ranging from laughing, tutting, and rude remarks, all the way to harassment and hate crime.

Both these elements may contribute to 22% of respondents having fears around their personal security while using the bus.

37% of respondents reported the risk of catching COVID-19 from other passengers as a barrier to travelling by bus. This is said to be exacerbated by overcrowding, with some people telling us they use the bus much less frequently since the mask mandate has been lifted.

- “Buses are supposed to stop when they see a guide dog or blind person with a white cane. As we cannot flag them down because we can't see the numbers or the bus! So often buses drive past without stopping and so I miss my bus.”
- “My worse experience recently was when a bus pulled up with a buggy already on board. I went to the front of the bus to speak to the driver and to calmly remind him that wheelchairs have priority and to ask him to ask the person with the buggy to move. [The driver] shouted in my face that I don't have any right, and that 'we are all equal' so I don't take priority. He then sped off. It was very frightening and made me cry, and damaged my confidence.”
- “I've been getting buses very rarely since mask mandates were lifted. Without that protection it's not safe for me to get the bus.”

## Information

37% of respondents experienced a lack of real-time information while using buses last year, meaning live updates such as delays, cancellations, diversions, and vehicle faults (such as broken ramps) are not being clearly communicated. 21% of respondents said the information that was provided was not available in both audio and visual formats.

Factors such as age, impairment, and region were significantly likely to affect how well-informed disabled people felt.

- Adults under the age of 55 generally felt less well-informed. While those 55 and over generally felt more informed.
- Respondents who are either Deaf or hard of hearing, learning disabled, visually impaired, or who had a mental health condition were significantly more likely to report feeling uninformed. While participants with mobility impairments were more likely to report feeling well informed.
- Respondents in the West Midlands were significantly more likely to feel uninformed than any other region, while those in London felt the most informed. Those in

villages were also the least likely to feel informed compared to other settlements, with cities and suburbs generally performing better.

“The driver had shouted out if anyone needed the next stop, which as I am profoundly Deaf, I didn't hear and as a result was not until a few stops later where I had no idea where I was that I realised something must have happened. The driver started shouting at me for not saying anything and left me at a bus stop where I had no idea how to get home. It made me feel angry, scared and excluded.”

## Ramps

Despite almost all buses being certified as compliant with accessibility regulations<sup>xliii</sup>, the fact that 28% of respondents experienced issues with ramps shows these certifications are insufficient. Participants reported issues including mechanical faults such as ramps getting jammed, and drivers deploying ramps incorrectly (for example, not ‘kneeling’ the bus).

This unreliability can be a barrier in itself, with some participants avoiding buses altogether because they cannot be sure the ramp will be accessible on any given day.

Though buses in England are required to be wheelchair accessible on paper, pervasive issues with the ramp can mean that they are not accessible in practice.

- “Often a bus will pull up and the driver does not crouch/kneel the bus, and so when the ramp is deployed the ramp is extremely steep and means I cannot push myself up the ramp.”
- “My local bus route has one leaf ramps and is just about manageable in my electric chair which has anti tips, even then I get stuck because the ramp steepness forces my rear wheels (the drive wheels) off the ground, and there is no way I could use my manual chair as I would not be able to get up that steepness. As a result instead of a 25 min journey to my destination I have to take 50 mins going via two other bus routes with different style ramps to get to the same destination.”

## Other barriers

21% of respondents said that the sensory environment of the bus (lighting, brightness, noise levels, and smells) created barriers, with several saying that it could induce sensory overload. This is especially likely to affect those with mental health or neurological conditions, and those who are neurodivergent. For some blind and visually impaired respondents, low lighting can be a barrier as well.

Cost was also a barrier for disabled people using buses. Though some respondents listed the relatively low cost of bus travel as a positive in other parts of the survey, roughly the same portion (11%) said that fares were too expensive. As the bus is often cheaper than the train or private transport, it can be particularly prohibitive if this fare is still too high, as this leaves few other options.

Several wheelchair users also mentioned that having to sit backwards in the wheelchair space could cause motion sickness. For others, especially those who were also Deaf or hard of hearing, having to face away from the board displaying the next stop created additional barriers to accessing information.

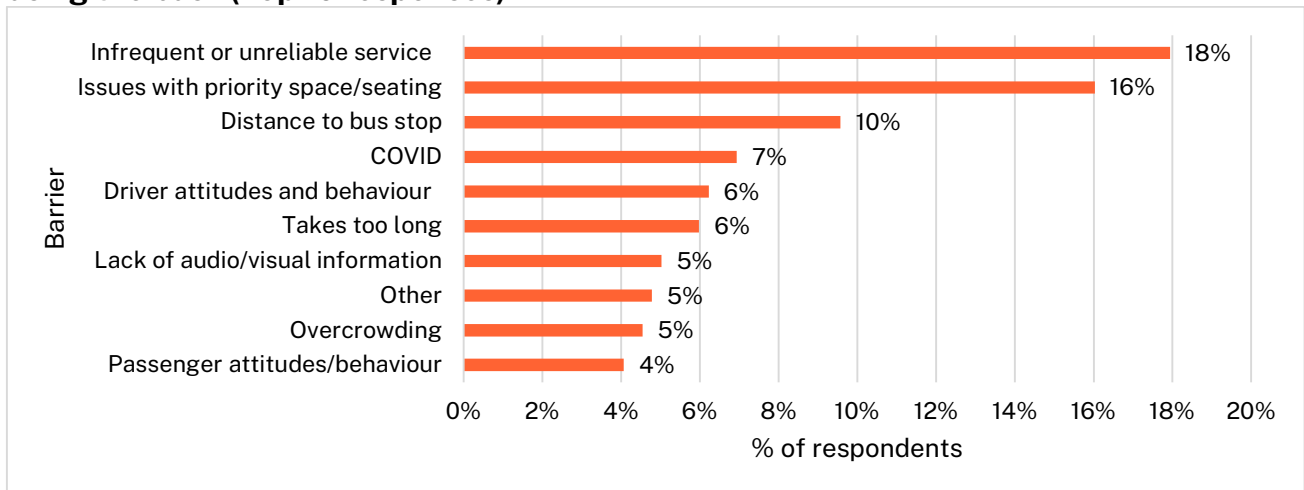
Other barriers participants wrote in include: a lack of assistance, confusion around bus routes and poor signposting, the driver not pulling up to the kerb side, and not being able to see the number of the bus to flag it down.

- “There have been some times when I have got off a bus early and walked the rest of the way due to feeling uncomfortable (noise, crowds). Also regarding longer distance journeys, I am considering switching to the train when I go to London as I have found the coach service often busy and sometimes noisy, causing me sensory overload.”
- “The bus fares are quite expensive - it costs me £4.50 to make a return run, to the Railway Station, and back.”
- “When needing to get to the doctors, the bus takes longer than the car and my fatigue and pain levels mean I can't use this mode of transport. With chronic migraine the sensory environment of the bus with bright lights and noises is inaccessible for me. This makes me feel frustrated and hopeless - I used to like getting the bus because it is good environmentally and can be convenient but my illness means it doesn't work for me.”

## Most significant barrier

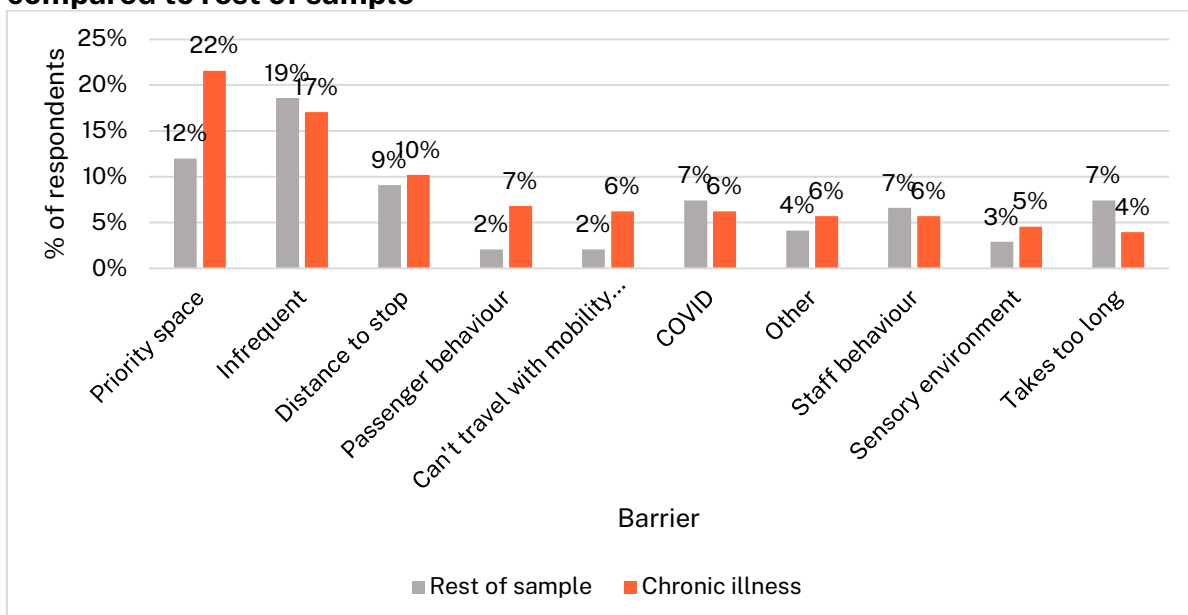
Overall, respondents rated infrequent or unreliable service as being the most significant barrier to bus travel (18%), which was closely followed by issues with priority space (16%). However, this varied significantly by impairment type.

**Figure 51: If you had to choose just one, what is the biggest/most significant barrier to using the bus? (Top 10 responses)**



Respondents with chronic illness generally chose conflicts around the priority space or priority seating (22%) as the most significant barrier, followed by infrequent service (17%), and distance to bus stop (11%).

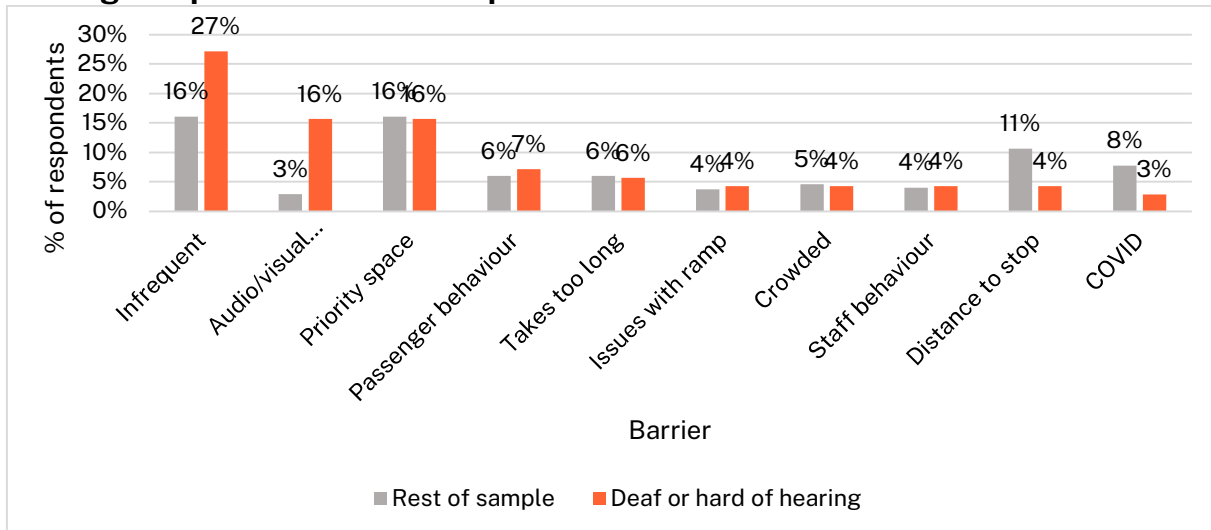
**Figure 52: Most significant barrier to the bus: respondents with a chronic illness compared to rest of sample**





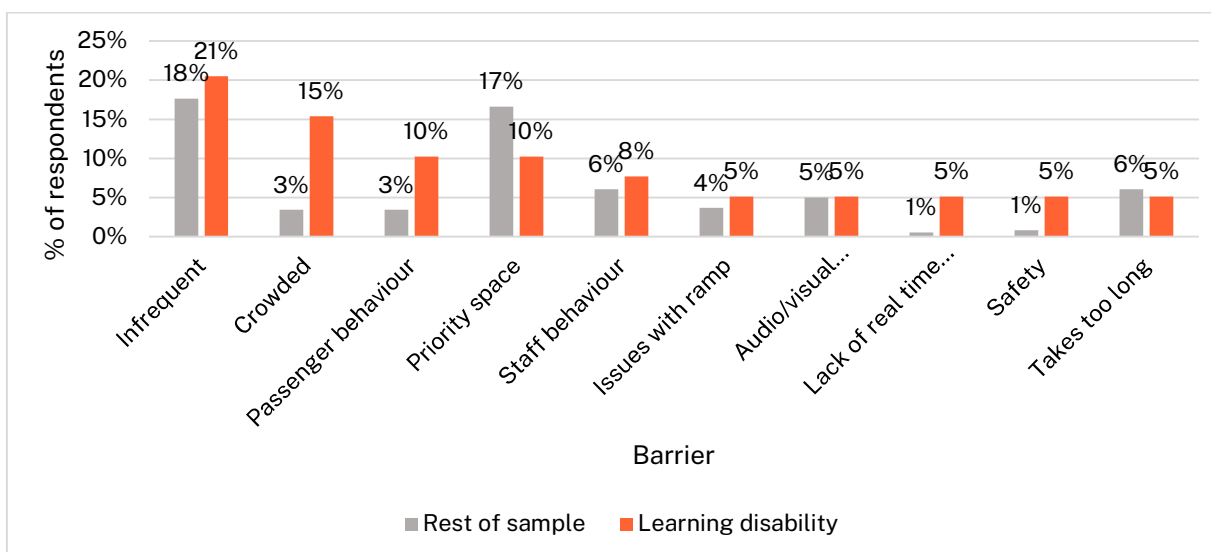
Deaf or hard of hearing respondents also chose infrequent service (27%), followed by inaccessible live information (16%). Deaf or hard of hearing respondents were more likely to choose lack of audio/visual info than the rest of the sample.

**Figure 53: Most significant barrier to the bus: respondents who are Deaf or hard of hearing compared to rest of sample**



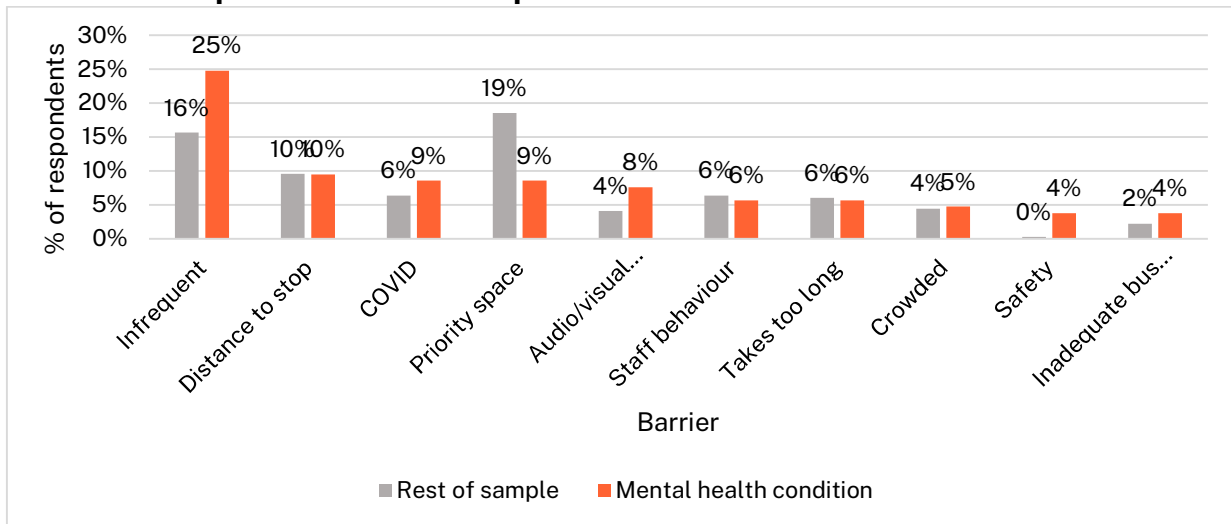
Respondents with a learning disability chose infrequent service (21%) followed by crowdedness (15%), then antisocial behaviour (10%). They were also far more likely to choose lack of real time information (5%) as the most significant barrier than those without a learning disability (1%).

**Figure 54: Most significant barrier to the bus: respondents with a learning disability compared to rest of sample**



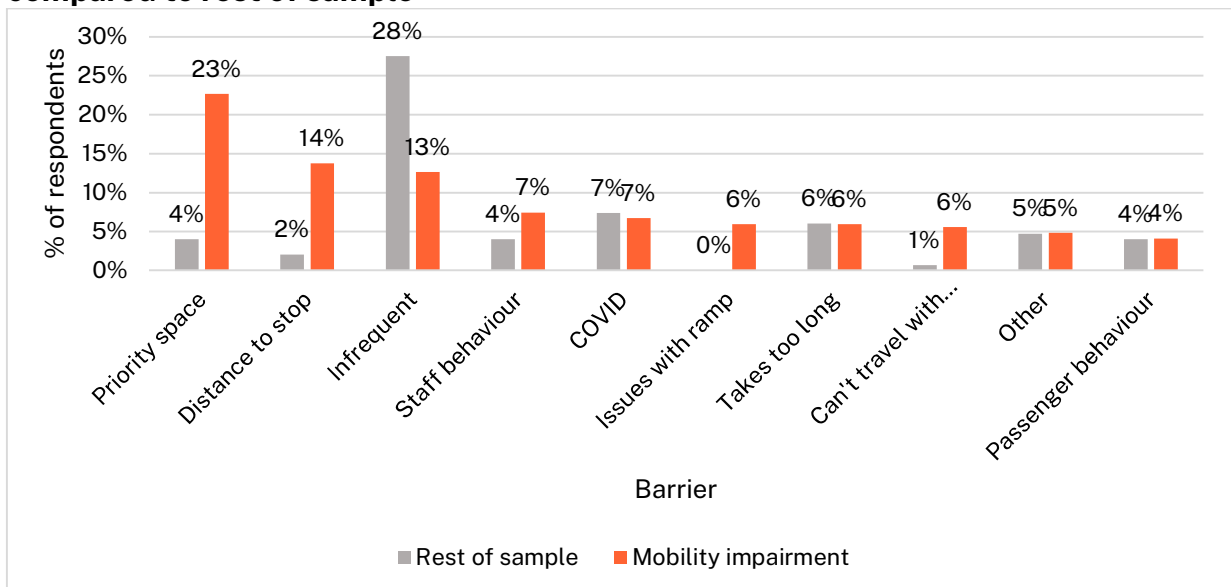
Respondents with a mental health condition chose infrequent service (25%) followed by distance to bus stop (10%). They were also far more likely to select safety than those without a mental health condition.

**Figure 55: Most significant barrier to the bus: respondents with a mental health condition compared to rest of sample**



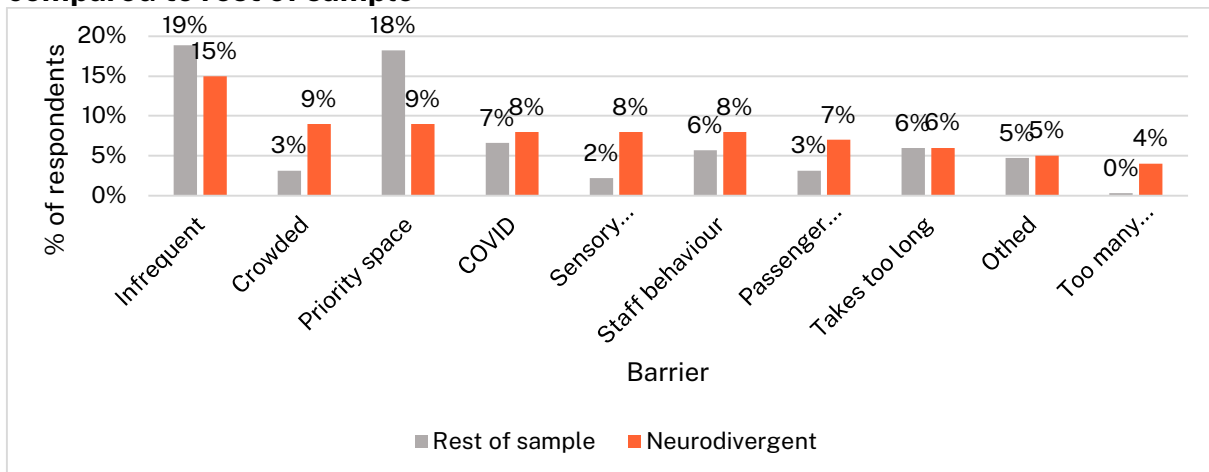
Respondents with mobility impairments generally chose issues with priority space (23%), followed by distance to bus stop (14%). They were also far more likely than those without to choose issues with ramps, and no space for mobility aids.

**Figure 56: Most significant barrier to the bus: respondents with a mobility impairment compared to rest of sample**



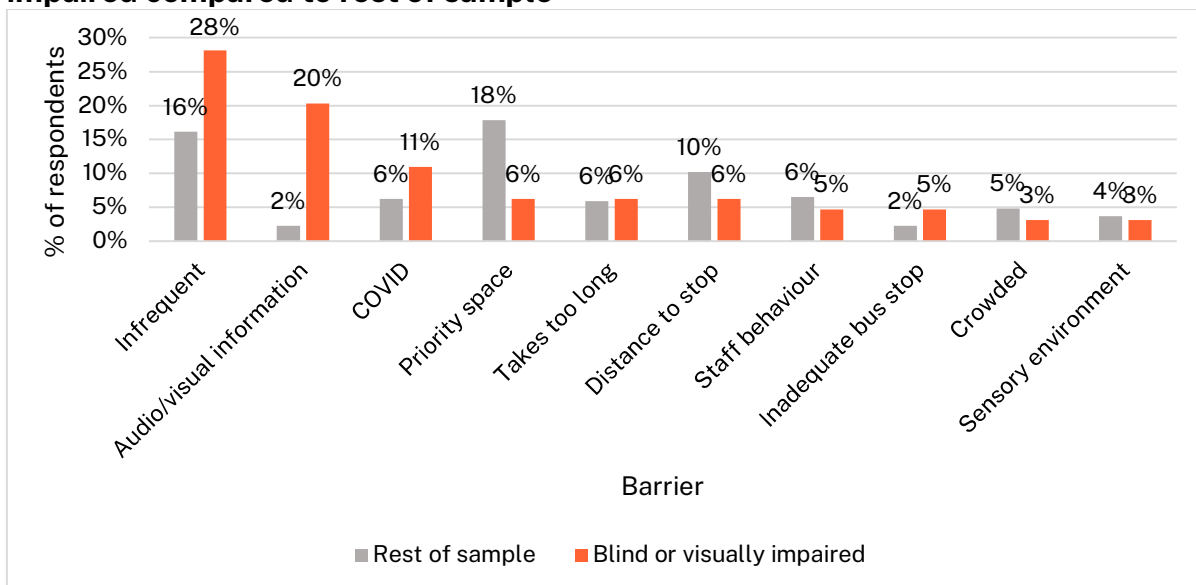
Neurodivergent respondents had the greatest variation in different barriers selected. The majority (15%) chose infrequent service, followed by priority seating (9%) and crowdedness (9%). Neurodivergent respondents were far more likely than non-neurodivergent participants to select the sensory environment, too many changes, crowdedness, safety, and price.

**Figure 57: Most significant barrier to the bus: respondents who are neurodivergent compared to rest of sample**



The majority of visually impaired respondents also chose infrequent service (28%), followed by inaccessible live info (20%, compared with 2% for those without visual impairment).

**Figure 58: Most significant barrier to the bus: respondents who are blind or visually impaired compared to rest of sample**



## Impact

The most common impact experienced by respondents as a result of these barriers is the journey being made more difficult/stressful (56% respondents).

**Figure 59: As a result of these barriers, have you experienced any of the following?**

Impact	%
Journey is more difficult/stressful	56%
Stops me using this mode	51%
Impacts my health	42%
Journey is longer	40%
Stops me making a journey	38%
I have to plan in advance	36%
Impacts my confidence	34%
I have to travel with someone else	18%
Journey is more expensive	11%

## Changes disabled people want to see

Using free text boxes, we asked participants to write about what improvements could be made to make buses accessible to them. The responses largely fell into four categories:

1. Access to information
2. Reliable service
3. Accessible vehicle design
4. Better interactions

### Access to information

#### Audio-visual information

By far and away the most common suggestion was the provision of audio-visual information across all bus routes (31% of respondents); nearly twice as many respondents wrote about this than the second most common suggestion (more priority spaces, 18%).

It was crucial not only for all information to be both announced and displayed, but for the announcements to be made clearly, and for the display to be visible from every seat, including those facing backwards. There were also calls for audio-visual information to be provided at bus stops as well as on board.

- “Audio visual announcements need to be accurate. We also need audio alerts for bus stops, like a button press to read out the buses coming.”
- “As a deaf passenger I would like announcements to not just be auditory on buses/ at bus stations but also incorporate use of screens - especially when there's disruption.”
- “Ask drivers to speak clearly when they are giving out information over the on board speakers. Hearing impairments means it often just comes across as mumbled words. You have to be sitting in front of the visual notices to see them, otherwise they are of no use.”

### **Live information**

A further 13% wrote about improvements to the availability and communication of live information on buses.

As well as more accurate and up to date bus maps, timetables, and journey planning apps, respondents said there were additional things they would need to know in order to make bus journeys accessible.

Information on crowding levels and the availability of seating would allow disabled people to plan routes more effectively and prevent long waits at bus stops. So too would being able to track the live location of buses and see how delayed they may be. Some respondents also wanted more information on payments, including which payment methods are accepted and what the fares are for a given journey.

Respondents also called for this information to be available in various places and formats (websites, apps, bus stops), making it accessible to a wider range of people.

“Better ability to access live updates while you're waiting at the bus stop. And also the reason for the delay e.g. if it is because the bus is being held/diverted, then I can get a taxi. If it is delayed because the traffic is bad, then there isn't much point in getting a taxi so I know I need to get the tube instead.”

## **Accessible vehicle design**

### **Priority spaces**

The second most common suggestion was improved priority seating and spaces (18%).

Many suggested having a larger priority space, or two priority spaces on any vehicle. This would allow more than one wheelchair user to travel at the same time, which could significantly decrease the stress and time wheelchair users have to expend waiting for a

bus with an available space. It would also make it easier for those using larger wheelchairs or mobility aids to manoeuvre safely.

There were also many calls for wheelchair user priority over buggies to be better enforced and understood, and for wheelchair users to have the option of facing forward if they wish.

Many also wanted more priority seating, and for nondisabled passengers to either leave them available or vacate them readily when a disabled person needs it. This would reduce the conflict and physical pain that disabled people often have to contend with, and increase confidence in travelling by bus.

### **Vehicle design**

There were also suggestions for improvements to other aspects of the vehicle design from 9% of respondents.

Several people wrote about more user-friendly placement of stop buttons, including having more of them and placing them in reach of every seat.

There were also calls for 'better lighting', though suggestions could differ and sometimes conflict; some wanted less harsh lighting to reduce sensory overload, while others wanted the vehicle to be brighter. One person suggested placing lights on the steps to the top floor to make the route more accessible for blind and visually impaired passengers.

Other suggestions included: more leg room, a clear pathway to the exit, and for the number on the front of the bus to be bolder.

### **Ramp**

4% of respondents put forward improvements to ramps. As well as ensuring that ramps were always working and that drivers always deployed them, several respondents said that the ramp needed to be less steep. This could be achieved either by using a longer ramp or by ensuring the bus could crouch/kneel.

- “Drivers would make announcements on crowded services to remind them that some people need seats more than them, and that if they are in the priority seat they should be prepared to give them up for people who need the seat more.”
- “Moving the blue button for wheelchair users to the window side where the wheelchair space is. Some buses already have this, but it should be standard for all buses. less likely for passengers to accidentally bump into it and its more accessible for disabled people compared to where they are right now.”
- “I wish the bays were much bigger as I don't want to be in competition with other wheelchair users or parents. Additionally I wish ramps were more regularly maintain and checked especially the electric ones and drivers were fully trained in their use.”

## More reliable service

Another common suggestion was more frequent and reliable bus services; 17% of respondents said they wanted to see more routes available, and for more buses on any given route. Several people also said that having services run in the evenings and on Sundays would allow them to travel at these times, while currently they have to avoid or cancel plans due to a lack of accessible alternatives.

A related issue is overcrowding, which 3% said they wanted to see improve, and which would likely decrease with a more regular service.

A further 3% also put forward suggestions for reducing traffic such as bus priority lanes to make journeys quicker and more punctual.

- “Reliability and availability - I try to avoid travel on Sundays and evenings as there are few or no buses so I plan activities a bit. It would be great if Sunday services were like the other days.”
- “More frequent service in more areas, more bus stops closer to where I need, less other traffic and more bus lanes so buses are faster.”

## Interactions

### Driver attitude and behaviour

Improvement in the attitude and behaviour of drivers towards disabled passengers was another common suggestion (17%). As well as drivers having a broader willingness and knowledge of how best to provide assistance, respondents had a number of specific suggestions. Some of these included: letting disabled people sit down before setting off, always pulling up to the kerb, knowing how to deploy the ramp safely, and asking people with buggies to vacate the priority space when needed.

Many respondents said that more driver training would help to resolve some of these issues. Some also said that complaints about driver behaviour needed to be taken more seriously.

### Passenger attitude and behaviour

A few people (4%) mentioned wanting the attitudes and behaviour of other passengers towards disabled people to improve, though this was mentioned less frequently than driver behaviour. Those that did specifically mention this issue said they wanted people to be more understanding and patient, fold buggies away when wheelchair users needed the priority space, and give up seats readily when asked. Some also hoped for better

awareness of less visible impairments, and those who might need a priority seat even if they do not “look disabled”.

- “Driver training and station staff training around learning disabilities and autism would be really good.”
- “Improved attitudes towards disabled people (both with Drivers and members of the public). I hear a lot of tuts and a lots of 'this is going to make me late' from other people. The suggestion is very much that I am causing a problem by taking the bus.”

## Other improvements

### Bus stops

10% wrote about improvements to bus stops, with many focusing on the information on display. Several respondents wanted the live information boards at stops to be better maintained and more accurate, as they can be particularly useful resource for disabled people. There was also mention of printed timetables being regularly updated and in bigger print.

Other respondents focused on the design and location of bus stops. As well as having bus stops nearer to their home or destination, people also wanted stops to be placed on more accessible parts of the pavement. This meant, for example, ensuring that the pavement was wide enough for wheelchair and scooter users to board the ramp, and always having a dropped kerb nearby. There were also several calls for better seating and more shelter at bus stops.

### Health and hygiene

Some also wrote about addressing health and hygiene issues while using the bus. More people wearing masks, or bringing back compulsory mask wearing on buses was suggested by a few respondents, as well as having better ventilation. Others said that they wanted buses to be generally cleaner and more well maintained.

- “More seats at bus stops, so many don't have anywhere to sit and when they do its often just something to lean on which doesn't help at all.”
- “Bus stops that are designed in such a way that you can always get a ramp down and a wheelchair off as there are multiple stops I would like to use but can't because there isn't enough space.”



# Train

Several measures are in place to try and address barriers to rail travel in England. For example, the Government's Inclusive Transport Strategy (2018) contained a number of pledges, including to review the eligibility criteria for the Disabled Persons Railcard, and to work with the Rail Delivery Group to create an app for passengers to book assistance<sup>xliv</sup>. The Access for All programme funds accessibility upgrades for stations, the allocation of which is decided through competitive bids. Accessibility of rail vehicles is mandated by legislation which sets out standards for features including door-widths, information displays, priority spaces and toilets – and all vehicles were meant to be compliant by January 2020.

As a condition of their operating licence, all licensed train and station operators are required to write and follow an Accessible Travel Policy (ATP). These policies must document how operators will provide an equitable service to disabled passengers across a range of areas including assistance, ticketing and staff availability. The ATP must detail how the operator will provide the two types of assistance:

1. pre-booked passenger assistance (arranged by the passenger up to 2 hours in advance) must always be provided “at any station during the hours that trains are scheduled to serve that station”;
2. Turn Up and Go (un-booked) must be provided “where reasonably practicable”.

The regulator, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), must approve the policies before they grant licences, and is also responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance.

Rail has dominated the transport policy landscape in recent years. The 2021 Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail set out the Government's plans to create a new body, Great British Railways, to manage rail, with a statutory duty to improve accessibility. It also included plans to develop and implement a national rail accessibility strategy, and carry out accessibility audits of all train stations<sup>xlv</sup>.

Despite these plans and pledges, the physical infrastructure of England's railways is wrought with barriers:

- Only 1 in 4 mainline train stations have step-free access (from street to platform only)<sup>xlvi</sup>.
- Just 2% have level boarding (train floors level with platform)<sup>xlvii</sup>. There is no National standardised height for train platforms meaning rolling stock continues to be purchased with different floor heights.
- At 67% of stations, the platform(s) are too narrow for wheelchairs to turn<sup>xlviii</sup>.

- Around 40% of rail stations have no tactile paving, a vital safety feature for blind and visually impaired people<sup>xlix</sup>.
- Dozens of dispensations have been awarded to companies to allow trains to continue running despite not being compliant with accessibility regulations<sup>l</sup>.

Due to the inaccessibility of rail infrastructure, many disabled people rely upon staff assistance to travel by train. Only 11% of stations are staffed at all times<sup>li</sup>, with a further 45% staffed only part-time<sup>lii</sup>. Operators can decide how to deploy staff, with few regulatory conditions.

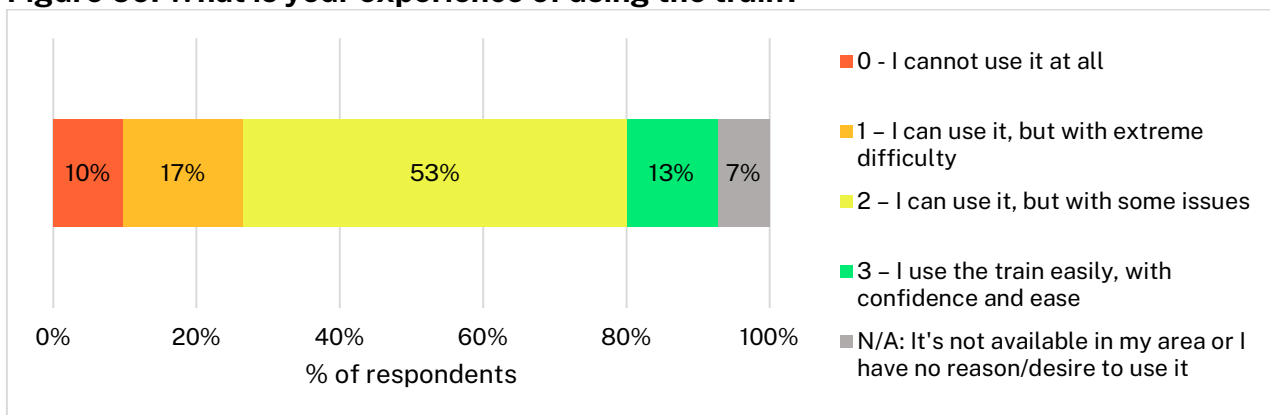
The Rail Delivery Group collects data on the number and success rate of pre-booked Passenger Assistance requests. In the year ending March '23, just 81% of Passenger Assistance requests resulted in all assistance being received<sup>liii</sup>. This means almost 1 in 5 assistance requests were unsuccessful. This figure also only applies to pre-booked assistance (which must be booked a minimum of 2 hours in advance of travel), and not 'Turn Up and Go', where passengers can request assistance immediately upon arriving at a station, on which there is very little data.

All of this amounts to a difficult experience using rail for many disabled people, and it's no wonder we make far fewer journeys by this mode than non-disabled people. The National Travel Survey 2021 found that people with a 'mobility difficulty' made on average 2 trips per year, as opposed to 14 trips per year completed for the average person with 'no mobility difficulty'<sup>liv</sup>.

## Experience

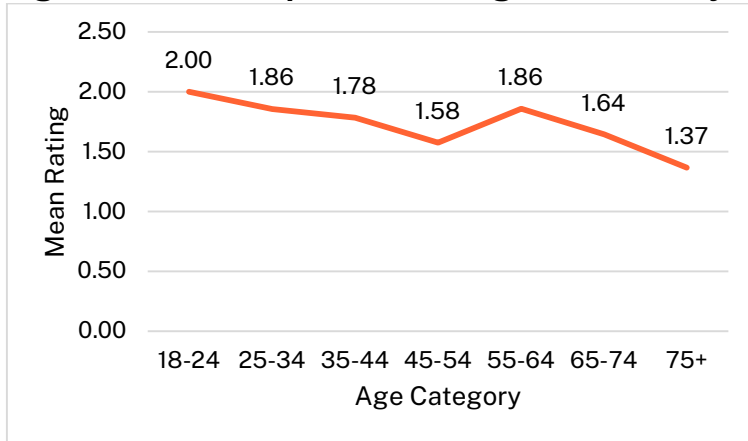
On average, respondents rated their experience of using the train as 1.74 out of 3. Only 13% said they can use the train with confidence and ease, while 10% said they cannot use it at all.

**Figure 60: What is your experience of using the train?**



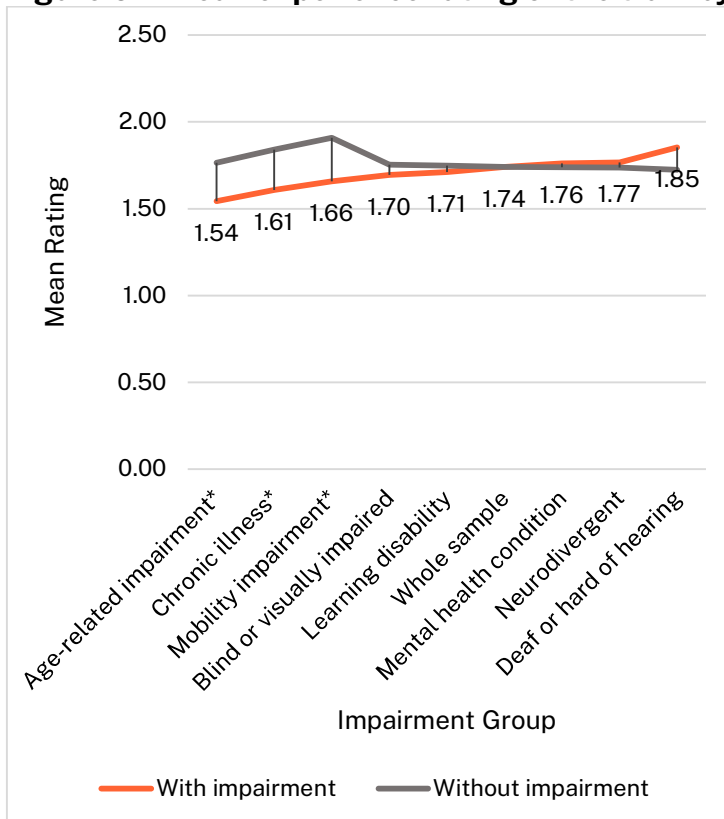
Age was a factor that significantly impacted respondent's rating. Those in the 18-24 age category rated trains the highest (average of 2.0), with ratings falling steadily as age increased. Those in the 75+ category gave a significantly lower rating (1.37).

**Figure 61: Mean experience rating of the train by age**



Impairment also impacted experience ratings. Groups who gave lower rating were respondents with age-related impairments (1.54 versus 1.77 without), chronic illness (1.61 versus 1.84 without), and mobility impairments (1.66 versus 1.91 without).

**Figure 62: Mean experience rating of the train by impairment**



Note: \* is used to denote statistical significance, which indicates that the difference in mean ratings between participants with and without the impairment did not occur due to chance.

Respondents were asked about their awareness and usage of initiatives in place to make train travel more accessible.

38% of respondents reported using passenger assistance (the service in general), while 15% reported wanting to use passenger assistance but experiencing barriers to doing so. 23% of respondents reported being aware of passenger assistance but not wanting to use it, while 24% reported not being aware of this initiative.

While 38% of respondents reported using passenger assistance, only 18% reported using the passenger assistance app. 11% reported wanting to use the passenger assistance app but experiencing barriers to doing so. 20% of respondents reported being aware of the passenger assistance app but not wanting to use it, while 51% reported not being aware of the app.

15% of respondents reported using turn up and go, while 11% reported wanting to use turn up and go but experiencing barriers to doing so. 13% of respondents reported being aware of turn up and go but not wanting to use it, while 61% reported not being aware of this initiative.

**Figure 63: Awareness and usage of initiatives to make train travel more accessible**

Initiative	I use this	Have heard of it and want to use it, but cannot due to barriers	Have heard of it, but do not want/need to use it	Have not heard of this
Passenger Assistance (the service in general)	38%	15%	23%	24%
Passenger Assistance App	18%	10%	20%	51%
Turn Up And Go	15%	11%	13%	61%

## What works well

The factor that was most important in making train journeys work well for disabled people was staff assistance; 30% of respondents said that when assistance is on hand and delivered promptly, train travel is much more accessible. The ability to both book assistance in advance or ‘Turn Up and Go’ was also important, as was knowing that there

would be an easily identifiable member of staff from whom to request it. Mentions were made of the Passenger Assist App, noting that it can make booking assistance easier. The behaviour and attitudes of staff was important, with 13% saying that staff were friendly and knowledgeable of various access requirements.

Another aspect of train travel that disabled people found positive was the convenience. 13% of respondents said that it was a fast way to travel, and 9% said services are generally punctual as well. Many also found the train to be easier and more comfortable than other modes, especially when it saves having to drive.

Rail services being well connected with each other as well as other modes was also a positive. This included having accessible parking bays near the station, being able to change between trains easily, or being able to take direct routes with no interchanges at all.

The availability of space on board trains was also an important factor. 10% of respondents said that being able get a seat, or book one in advance, helped to make journeys accessible and comfortable, especially when they could ensure access to priority seating near the doors. Wheelchair priority spacing being available and clearly signposted was also important. 5% also said that trains not being too crowded helped with finding a seat, as well as reducing stress and sensory overload.

Respondents also said that access to travel information allowed them to plan their routes and navigate access barriers effectively, with audio-visual announcements helping to keep people informed en route. A few said that station signage was generally provided and helpful when navigating the station.

The final theme that came up was ticketing. Respondents said that being able to book tickets in advance helped them to plan journeys, and being able to book tickets in advance, and through various channels (apps, online, ticket offices) gave options to disabled people across the impairment groups.

- “Passenger assistance is usually great. I can turn up and go at my local station without issue (even when booked assistance thinks I should be traveling on a later train). Train guards often make sure they're with me when I'm due to get off at an intermediate stop in order to ensure assistance turns up.”
- “I find information easy to find and understand and station staff helpful, knowledgeable, willing and willing to adapt to my hearing loss (several times staff have written directions/information down for me to be sure I had the correct details.”
- “Assistance staff being available, well trained and welcoming at entrances or access meeting points. Assistance staff following the correct process, listening to my needs and supporting me to safely board the train.”

- “The staff on the platform and ticket office are as helpful and kind as they can be, they are necessary for me to use they train.”
- “Nothing reliably! Sometimes there's assistance, sometimes there are lifts, sometimes the disabled toilets are near enough to use, sometimes it's not so crowded I get bashed about, sometimes I can reserve a seat... but without knowing for sure these are available I can't risk train travel.”

## Barriers

**Figure 64: Which of these barriers, if any, have you experienced to using trains in the past 12 months (tick all that apply)**

Barrier	Respondents
Expensive	65%
Overcrowding of trains and stations	49%
Issues with lifts: not working, too small, too few	44%
Lack of step-free access or level boarding	43%
Cannot easily get to and from stations (lack of accessible parking, expensive taxis, surrounding streetspace is inaccessible, etc.)	41%
Not enough priority seating, or conflicts as to who has priority	40%
Poor information about accessibility of stations	38%
Staffing levels: not enough staff available or no staff	38%
Rail replacement services (poorly signposted, stressful, etc.)	37%
Issues with booking or receiving assistance (Passenger Assist, Turn Up and Go)	37%
Lack of accessible facilities on board and in stations	35%
Risk of catching COVID-19	31%
Infrequent or unreliable service	27%
Poor signage, signposting and wayfinding in stations	27%
Negative attitudes, antisocial behaviour, or hate crime from other passengers	25%
Staff attitudes or behaviour	25%
Sensory environment (lighting, brightness, noise levels, smells)	23%
Issues with booking or paying for tickets	22%
Lack of accurate real-time information on train times	18%
Audio/visual information: announcements are not communicated to me in a way I can access	17%
Personal security / I do not feel safe	17%
Lack of tactile paving on platforms	9%
Other	3%
None – this mode is accessible to me	3%

## Fares and ticketing

65% of respondents reported that they could not afford to use trains as and when they needed to, suggesting train travel is prohibitively expensive. This makes cost the most common barrier to train travel.

The rise in rail fares, as well as the rising cost of living<sup>lv</sup>, is likely to have made this issue even.

But it is not just our own fares we have to worry about. Many disabled people travel with a PA or carer, and have to pay for their ticket as well. This means that, even with a concessionary discount on their own tickets, disabled people can still end up paying more per journey than non-disabled people.

Infrastructure barriers can also increase the price: people told us when their nearest station was inaccessible to them, they are required to pay for a longer journey to get to a station that they can board from.

22% of respondents said they face additional barriers when booking or paying for tickets. A lack of staff assistance was a key factor in this, with several respondents saying that they could not travel at all when the ticket office was closed. This could be because navigating which ticket to buy was too complex, or because alternative options such as ticket vending machines (TVMs) were inaccessible.

When it comes to purchasing tickets, 33% of respondents told us they use ticket offices, compared to 18% who told us they use TVMs. 14% respondents use cash to pay for tickets. Therefore, proposals to close ticket offices would entrench these barriers even further.

- “Station not being accessible, so having to travel to a different station and the additional cost of this. I need to travel with someone with me and this means I have to pay more, even with a disabled persons railcard, it is more expensive than for a non-disabled person.”
- “The high cost of train tickets is also a barrier to my use of trains - currently it is expensive, seat bookings can be cancelled and the risk of infection seems high. It is paying a lot for an uncomfortable and often unreliable service.”
- “Travelling on trains in the south-east of England there is no QR code ticketing, meaning that in many places the only option is an inaccessible ticket vending machine or the use of a smart card, incompatible with other systems, and usable only with a clunky, unreliable app. This means that I am unable to purchase tickets as quickly and easily as others, and increases my reliance on the use of ticket offices. The difficulty obtaining an additional seat for my guide dog also means that he frequently has to sit in the aisle, putting him at some risk of being trodden on. “
- “Spontaneous travel is sometimes not attractive as have to travel when tickets offices aren’t closed, not enough time to buy a ticket at the first opportunity as don’t know where ticket offices are situated, not enough time to buy one before

connecting trains depart, so tend not to make the journey, makes me feel that I can't win and that ticket office closures are really going to impact how much I travel.”

## Insufficient space

The second most reported issue was overcrowding of trains and stations, which affected 49% of respondents. Disabled people reported overcrowding prevents them from safely moving through the train or accessing toilets, inducing sensory overload and panic attacks, and putting mobility aids and assistance dogs at risk of harm. It can also increase the chance of contracting COVID-19, which was a barrier for 31% of respondents.

Crucially, overcrowding can limit the number of available seats. 40% of respondents said that a lack of priority seating, or conflicts as to who has priority, had been a barrier to using the train. People reported feeling forced into uncomfortable situations, either having to stand in pain for prolonged periods of time, or request that someone give up their seat, which is sometimes met with great hostility.

Respondents also wrote about problems with the wheelchair priority space; not only could there be too few on some services, but the available spaces could be too small for those with a larger chair or scooter or cluttered with luggage.

- “When trains are crowded, and seating is unavailable I do not have the confidence to explain to those in priority seating that I have disabilities that are not obvious to others.”
- “I recently experienced a passenger who went straight for the only priority seat in the carriage, and who swore at me when I asked to sit in that seat. I am visibly disabled, currently using crutches. There are never announcements from the train companies reminding people that priority seats are designed for those who need them, and that people should avoid them on crowded services if they don't need them. “
- “There was no disability seating on a train i took recently. Also no free seats in general, i had to stand by the doors for 40 minutes with my mobility aid. I was incredibly stressed and embarrassed. Resulted in me having so much pain in my body that i'm still flaring from now.”

## Step-free access

Issues with step free access on the rail network were extremely common, with 43% of respondents saying this had been a barrier for them in the past year.

At the limited number of stations that do have step-free access, lifts can frequently be taken out of service at short notice. 44% of respondents experienced issues with lifts on



recent journeys, including outages, lifts being too small for larger wheelchairs or mobility scooters, and too few lifts to meet demand.

While a quarter of stations are step-free from street to platform, only 2% of stations have level boarding<sup>vi</sup>. Wheelchair and mobility scooter users reported being prevented from travelling spontaneously as a result, and only travelling from stations that have staff to deploy a manual boarding ramp within staffed hours.

This forced dependency on staff assistance to get on and off the train also puts disabled people at greater risk of being stranded when assistance fails, either trapped on the platform or having to travel miles off course to get to an accessible station at short notice.

Large gaps between the train and the platform can also be strenuous or hazardous for many disabled people across the impairment groups, and even services that are described as 'level boarding' can still have gaps wide enough to trap wheels and canes.

- “I cannot use a train without someone travelling with me, planning the route in advance with ramps to assist on and off the train etc and knowing there is step free access to the road.”
- “My local station is accessible by lifts through an entrance on 1st floor of a shopping centre- but they lock the lifts at 6pm when the shops close despite keeping centre otherwise open for train users to exit. So I ended up stranded, no staff in the ticket office, had to shout out in an empty station/shopping centre, eventually was told to exit via the carpark - a very steep incline with no pavement, absolutely terrifying, both the “on my own in a station” part and going down that carpark ramp.”
- “When lifts are out at a station and don't know until we get there. have to reroute making the journey longer and more convoluted.”
- “Some stations are advertised as step free from platform to train but my wheel will get stuck when I'm trying to get onto the train because it's a little raised, someone needs to go check all those stations, with a wheelchair user because this is something you cant just look at and be like its okay, you need to have someone who is a wheelchair user go and use these stations to get an accurate account.”
- “To use the train, I have to travel past my station by a number of stops, to a station with a lift, cross the platform & come back to avoid stairs at my home station. This can extend any journey time by over an hour. The journey from my nearest town would be 12 minutes without this diversion. If I need to return late, the time I can leave is reduced to accommodate the extra time. Additionally, the lifts are not always working, & this can be hard to find out in advance.”
- “I needed to change trains at Clapham Junction. First, there was a huge gap between the train and platform getting off, and luckily two passengers helped me, literally lifted me off! But it knocked my confidence. Then, the lift to the platform I needed to board my next train wasn't working, I had to struggle down the steps and missed my train.”

## Getting to and from the station

For many disabled people, the barriers to train travel occur long before boarding the train, with 41% of respondents saying they cannot easily get to and from the station at either end of the journey. This could be because the station is too far away, or because there is poor connectivity with other modes.

Physical infrastructure around the station can exacerbate these barriers. People reported that a lack of accessible parking prevented them from driving to the station, or meant they had to walk a significant distance from the car, leading to pain and fatigue. Sometimes this meant respondents had little choice but to hire a taxi to get to the station instead, adding to the already prohibitive cost of train travel.

If the streetspace surrounding a station is inaccessible, such as the nearest dropped kerb being obstructed, respondents said this could prevent them from travelling at all.

“The closest train station is a long way away and I haven't been able to get to it. I have not been able to make journeys because of that, and I have not been able to visit my family or friends. It feels very sad not to have seen my family in a long time.”

## Information

38% of respondents said that poor information about the accessibility of stations had been a barrier to train travel. People reported having to abandon trips halfway through after running into unexpected access barriers, or being reluctant to use the rail at all without the information they need.

Even when information was available in advance, 27% of respondents said that poor signage within stations prevented them from finding the correct platforms, lifts, and facilities. Often, this was made worse by a lack of visible staff to ask for directions.

Respondents also faced barriers to accessing live information, with 18% saying there was a lack of accurate, real-time updates, and 17% saying that updates were not communicated in accessible formats. This resulted in people missing stops, and being unaware of platform changes, delays, and other vital updates.

Only 37% of respondents felt well informed during a journey (for example in relation to announcements about delays, personal security, and next stops), and a significant 10% said they didn't feel informed at all.

This varied significantly by impairment group. Respondents who were Deaf or hard of hearing, visually impaired, neurodivergent, or who had a learning disability or mental health condition were all significantly more likely to report feeling uninformed while on a

train journey. Rates were particularly high for respondents with learning disabilities, with 33% saying they felt uninformed. Respondents with mobility impairments on the other hand were significantly more likely to say they felt informed than other groups, though 63% still did not feel fully informed.

- “Missed a connection due to sudden platform changes and poor signage - also no staff to ask for direction.”
- “My partner and I both got on a train. We both use mobility aids and both hard of hearing. The train was evacuated but we did not hear the announcement. Nobody came with a ramp to get us off. So we were stuck on the train, with everyone else getting off. We didn't know why they were.”
- “Visual announcement signs have not been working and there are no hearing loops at stations that are in full working order.”

## Staffing and assistance

Respondents told us that having assistance delivered reliably was the most important factor in making a journey go well. 38% of respondents said that low staffing levels and issues with booking and receiving assistance had been a recent barrier to train travel.

People told us that their prebooked assistance had been late, delivered incorrectly, or had not shown up at all. These were rarely one-off instances; in fact, regular assistance failures are part and parcel of disabled people’s experiences travelling by rail<sup>lvii</sup>.

11% of respondents told us they usually plan their journeys because assistance must be arranged in advance, due to the inadequacies of Turn Up And Go. However, issues with assistance occurred even when booked in advance.

This can not only be extremely disruptive, causing undue stress and making people miss their trains, but can also be dangerous; many people wrote about getting stranded on the train or the platform for long periods of time with no assistance, and without access to toilets or medications.

Many reported not being able to find station staff to obtain assistance, regardless of whether they had booked in advance or not. We were told about situations where respondents were forced to expend time and energy searching around the station, or shouting for help.

This is not only extremely disruptive, causing undue stress and making people miss their trains, but can also be dangerous. Participants wrote about getting stranded on the train or the platform for long periods of time with no assistance, and without access to toilets or medications. In these situations, some people had to resort to asking members of the public for help, or even tweeting at train companies.

In addition to issues with the assistance itself, assistance services are poorly promoted. 51% of respondents had never heard of the Passenger Assistance mobile app (launched in 2021). 24% respondents had not heard of the Passenger Assistance service in general, and 61% had not heard of Turn Up And Go.

While participants often spoke highly of the staff they interacted with, generally finding them helpful and friendly, the negative attitudes and behaviour of some staff created barriers for 25% of respondents. This ranged from being “treated like a nuisance and a burden” for requiring assistance, to staff using demeaning or offensive language towards them.

- "The staff forgot I needed assistance and was left on the platform for about an hour after my train departure time I had to call passenger assist for them to ring the station. Staff then booked me a taxi another hour. But said I should have come to the reception (I'm blind they left me on the platform). Then said it was ok though because now I can complain and I'll get a full refund and the taxi will take me to the house so I do t have to walk from the station. (This was during a change). I tried to complain but couldn't. As the process was so inaccessible. I got home 3 hours after when I should have. I no longer do journeys that have changes so I only travel direct and pay family petrol money to Pick me up. They usually have to drive a 2 hour or 3 hour round trip. And I know I am lucky that I have family that will do this. "
- “Luggage in the wheelchair space and the assistance person referring to me as ‘the wheelchair’ - which didn't boost my confidence!”
- “Left on a train majority of the time. They've used incorrect ramp which caused my power chair to tip which resulted in 5 fractures in my leg and ptsd then tried to blame me for their failure, even told ambulance to hurry up as I was delaying other trains.”

## Unreliability

Though everyone is affected by disruptions and unreliable services, these have a more pronounced impact on disabled people. 37% of respondents said that rail replacements had affected their ability to travel by train in the past year, and could be stressful, poorly signposted, too far away, and lacking step-free access.

Infrequent or unreliable services affected a further 27% of respondents. When rail services change last minute, disabled people can face a whole new set of access barriers, with no time or information on how to navigate them. Disruptions to rail services can also make it stressful or difficult to rearrange assistance, or find a seat if the previous reservation is cancelled.

Because disabled people have significantly fewer transport options to use in the event of a disruption, many respondents were either stranded or forced to book expensive taxis to complete their journey. This added to the already prohibitive costs disabled people face while travelling by rail.

- “Rail replacement bus would be an extremely long journey that would be painful.”
- “Bus replacements are more difficult for me to use, it can be difficult in these instances to know where you meet your assistance. Also, my partner is a Guide Dog Owner and some replacement bus services are not accessible for Guide Dogs.”
- “On return journey (at unmanned station with no step-free access to other platform, including toilet and sheltered area) there were issues on the line that lead to multiple trains being cancelled and endlessly delayed. After being on the platform for 2 hours I tried to use the help point and get a taxi arranged - I needed desperately to empty my catheter bag but had no access to a toilet - and it seemed that the trains weren't going to restart any time soon. [...] Abled passengers were getting trains in the other direction to a larger station that had trains and then getting a direct train past me. I did not have this option and staff didn't seem to understand this. This wasn't helped by the trains not being cancelled until they had had an ever-extending delay of an hour - so help point were like "there's a train in 20 minutes" when that train was being constantly delayed further.”

## Facilities and environment

35% of respondents reported a lack of accessible facilities, both in the station and on the train. This includes toilets, rest spaces, and changing facilities. Several people also said that even when there were accessible facilities on board, they could be out of order or in inaccessible locations.

As well as the accessibility of facilities, the sensory environment can also create barriers. Harsh lighting, strong smells, and noise levels can all contribute to discomfort and sensory overload, with 23% of respondents saying these environmental factors had affected them on recent journeys. Dim lighting can also be problematic for people with visual impairments, who often require higher contrast to navigate the station.

A further barrier for blind and visually impaired people is the lack of tactile paving on platform edges. 26% of respondents had encountered platforms with either partial or no tactile paving, with each of these encounters posing the risk of serious injury or death. Tactile paving is missing from roughly 40% of stations<sup>lviii</sup>, meaning that visually impaired people are routinely forced to use dangerous infrastructure, or are prevented from travelling by rail at all.

- “Often the disabled toilets are not working on trains, this makes using the train impossible.”
- “Trains are by far the worst mode of transport for food smells and bright lighting, particularly as I use them for longer journeys.”

## Safety and security

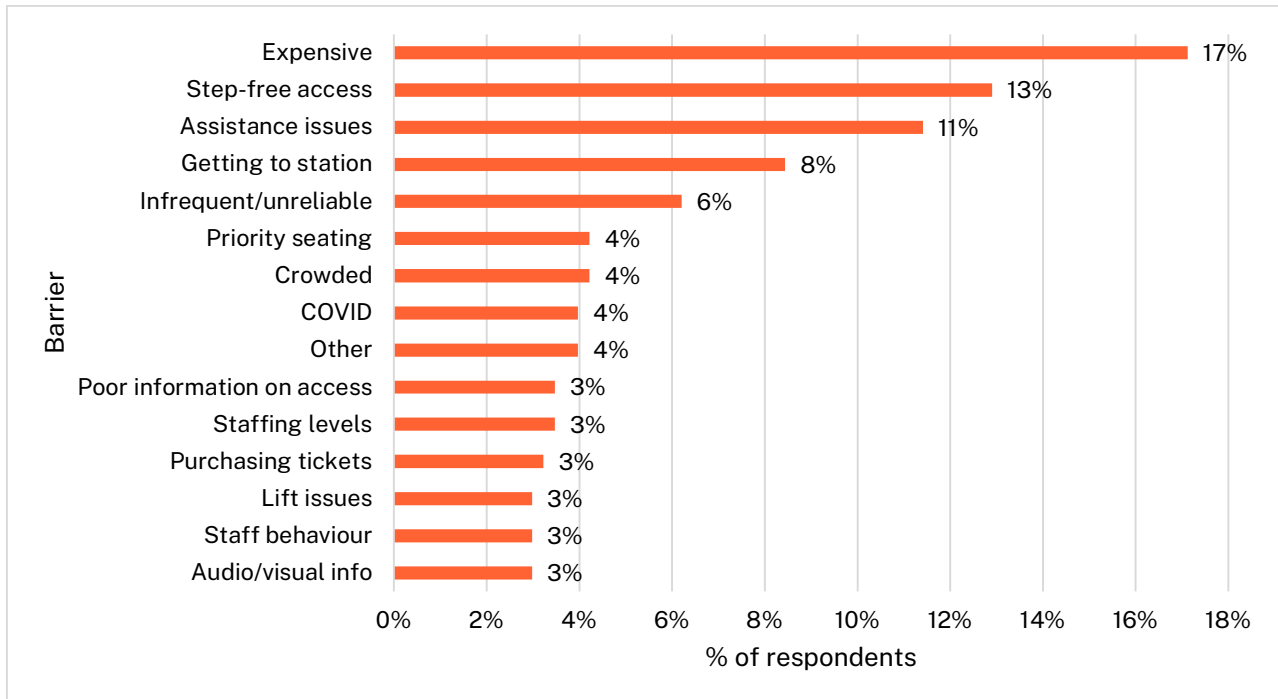
Personal security was also an issue for disabled people travelling by rail, with 17% reporting concerns for their safety as a barrier in the past year. Some safety issues emerged from the inaccessible infrastructure, such as having mobility aids caught in the gap between the train and the platform, being injured in crowds, or tipping backwards on steep boarding ramps.

Safety concerns also arose from interactions with staff and other passengers, ranging from rudeness and prejudice towards disabled people, all the way to hate crime. 25% of respondents had encountered negative attitudes and behaviour from other passengers.

- “They even attempt to use incorrect ramps that are not safely attached to the train, and try to bully me into using them [...] I am concerned at what could have happened to me if I didn't resist some of the attempts to make me use unsafe equipment. I feel that I always have to look out for my own safety when travelling by train, because I can't assume I will be kept safe.”
- “I have had to get off a train a stop early because a man was being creepy. It was late at night, there were no staff in the train and the stop I planned to get off at was unmanned at that time, as well as poorly lit. This meant I had a long walk in the dark (3 miles) to get home, as I had to get off a stop early to avoid being alone with him.”

## Most significant barrier

Figure 65: If you had to choose just one, what is the biggest/most significant barrier to using the train? (Top 15 responses)



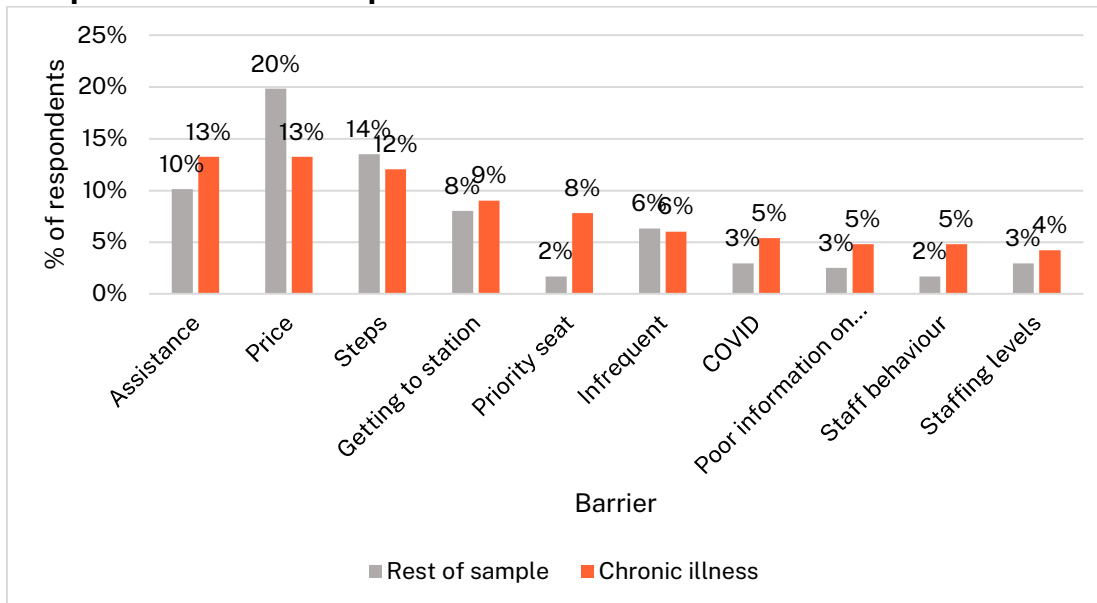
Respondents rated the cost of train travel as being the most significant barrier. This was selected by 17% of respondents, and was closely followed by a lack of step-free access and level boarding (13%), then issues with booking and receiving assistance (11%).

While cost was the most significant barrier overall, the most significant barrier for each impairment group varied substantially.

Respondents with a chronic illness, learning disability, or who were neurodivergent were all more likely to select problems with assistance as their top barrier. This was the most selected barrier in each of these groups, followed by or tied with cost.

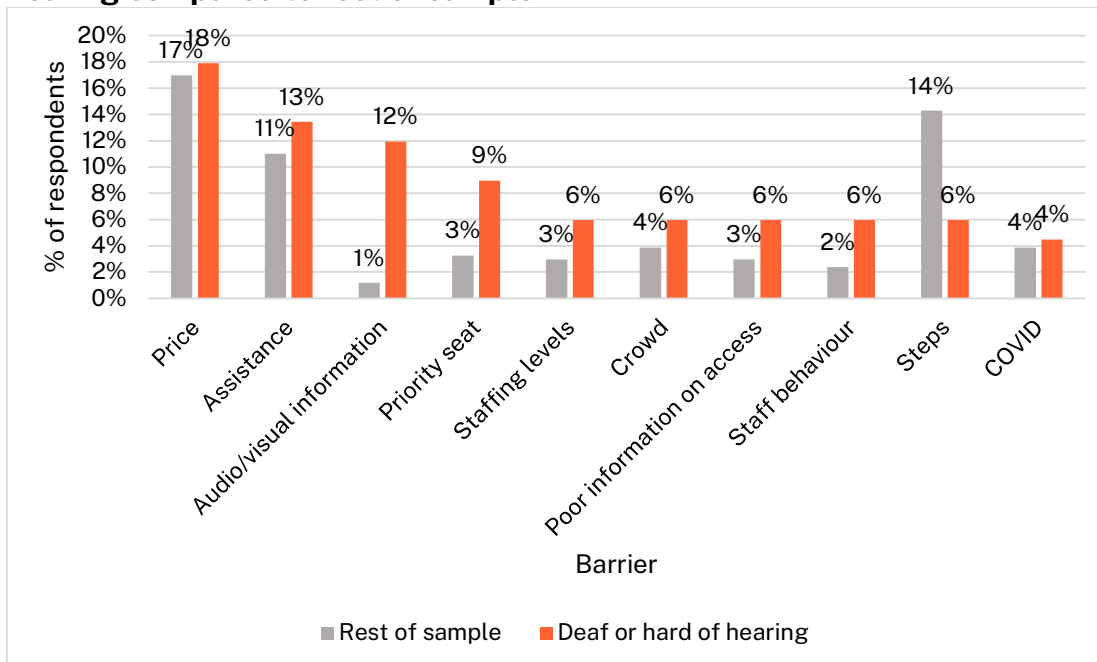
Respondents with chronic illness were also more likely to select issues with priority seating (8% compared with 2% of those without), risk of COVID-19 (6% compared with 3%), poor information about accessibility of stations (5% versus 3%), and staff attitudes or behaviour (4% versus 3%).

**Figure 66: Most significant barrier to the train: respondents with a chronic illness compared to rest of sample**



Deaf or hard of hearing respondents were far more likely to select a lack of audio/visual announcements as the top barrier than other groups (12% versus just 1% of rest of respondents). This was their third most selected barrier, after cost and assistance. They were also more likely to select issues with priority seating (9% versus 3%).

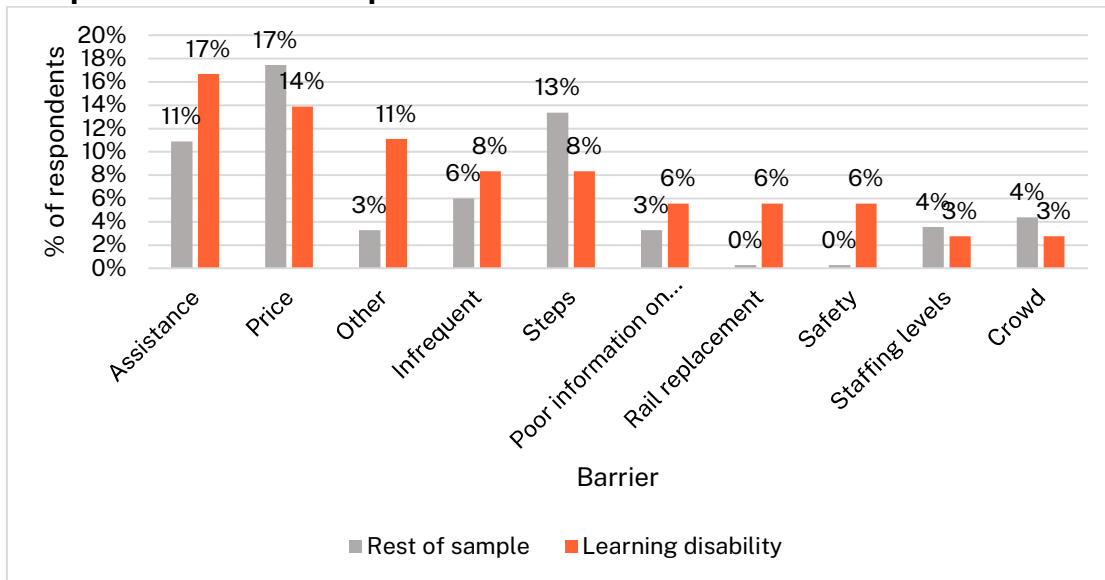
**Figure 67: Most significant barrier to the train: respondents who are Deaf or hard of hearing compared to rest of sample**





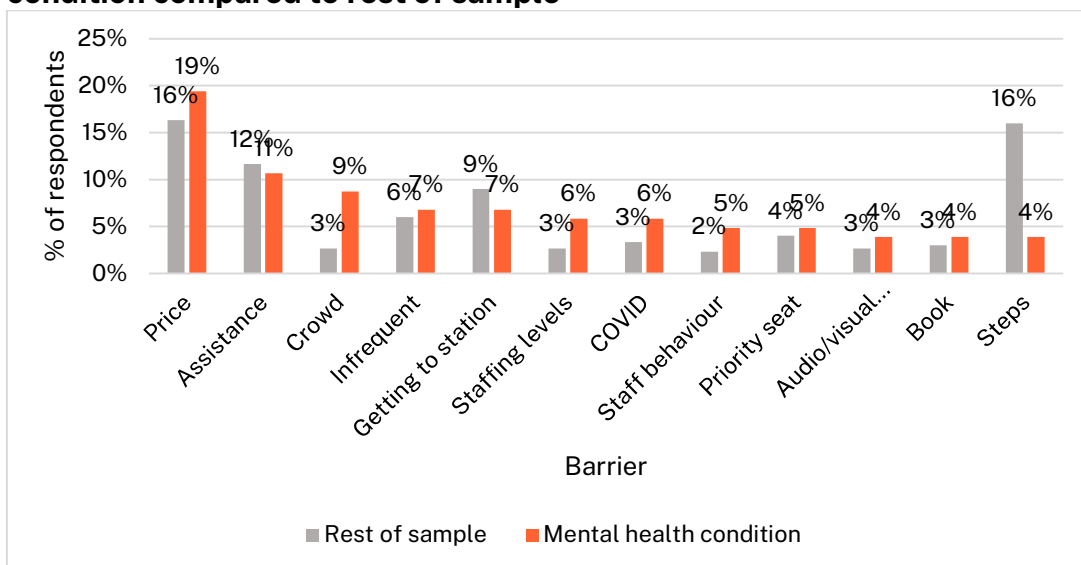
Respondents with learning disabilities were far more likely to select ‘other’ in answer to this question (11% versus 3%) and this was the third most commonly selected barrier, suggesting our survey had not adequately captured the experiences of this group.

**Figure 68: Most significant barrier to the train: respondents with a learning disability compared to rest of sample**



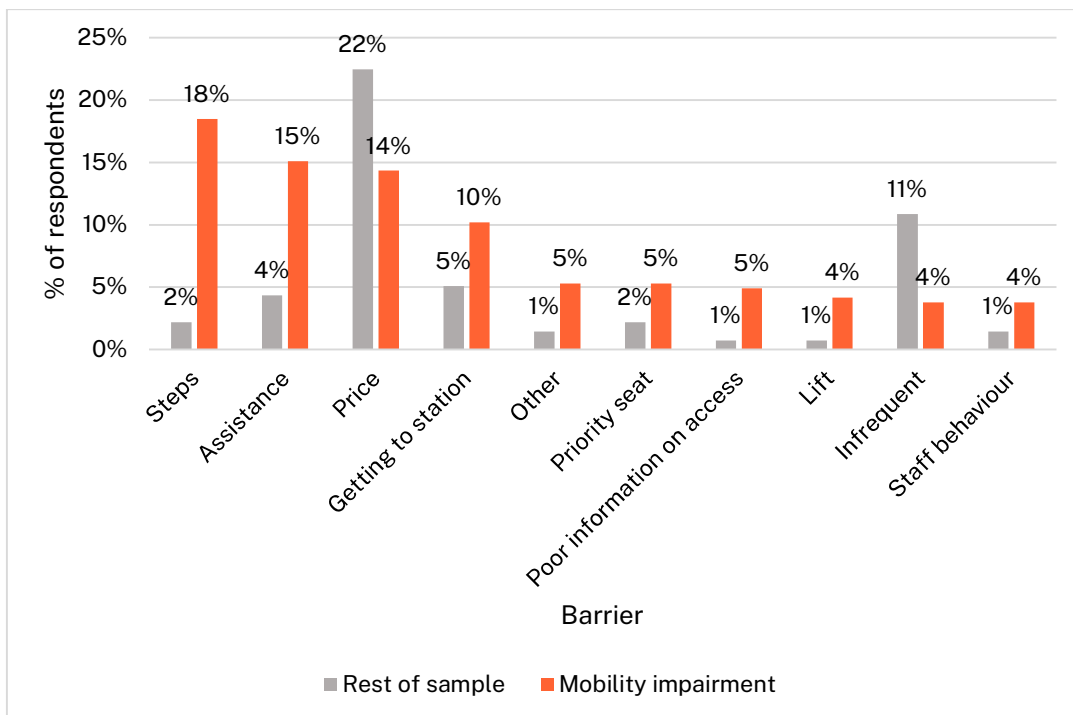
Respondents with mental health conditions were more likely to choose overcrowding (9% versus 3% for those without), this being the third most commonly selected barrier in this group.

**Figure 69: Most significant barrier to the train: respondents with a mental health condition compared to rest of sample**



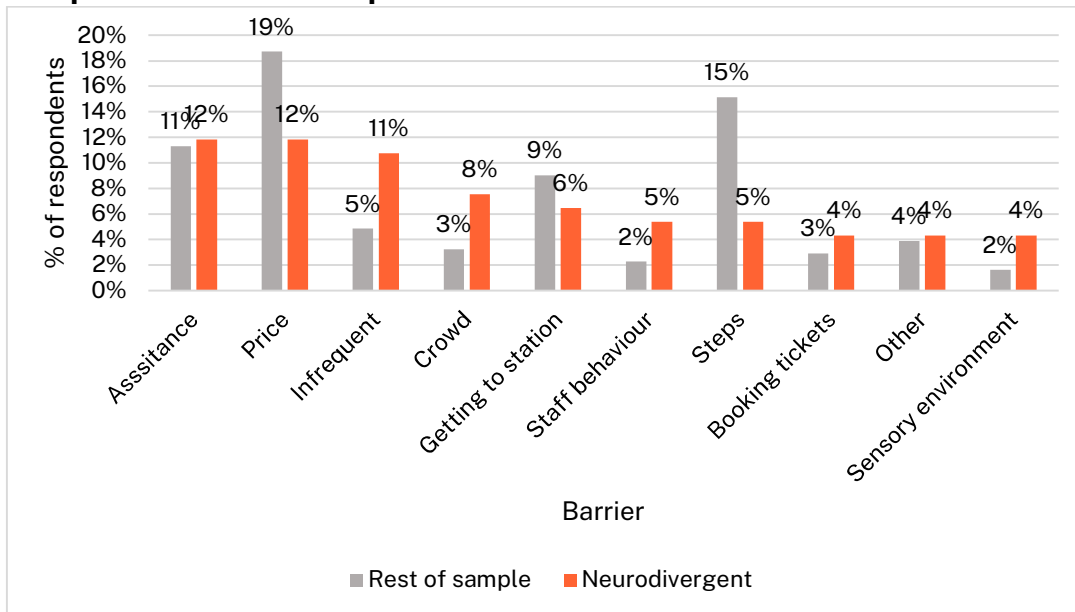
Unsurprisingly, respondents with mobility impairments were far more likely to select a lack of step-free access than those without (18% versus 2% for those without), with this being the most significant barrier for this group. The second most significant barrier was problems with assistance, with this group also far more likely to select this than the rest of the sample (15% versus 4%). They were also more likely to select 'Cannot easily get to and from stations' (10% versus 5%).

**Figure 70: Most significant barrier to the train: respondents with a mobility impairment compared to rest of sample**



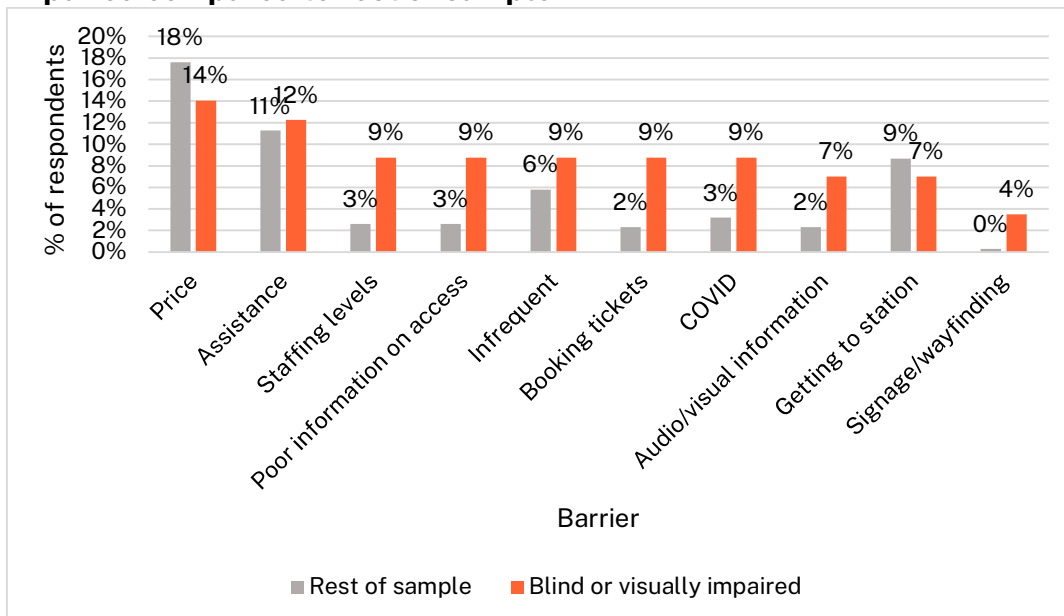
Neurodivergent respondents were more likely than the rest to choose infrequent service (11% versus 5%) and overcrowding (8% versus 3%).

**Figure 71: Most significant barrier to the train: respondents who are neurodivergent compared to rest of sample**



Blind respondents were more likely to choose staff behaviour (12% versus 3%), poor information about accessibility of stations (9% versus 3%), infrequent services (9% versus 6%), issues with booking and paying for tickets (9% versus 2%), COVID-19 (9% versus 3%), and audio/visual information (7% versus 2%).

**Figure 72: Most significant barrier to the train: respondents who are blind or visually impaired compared to rest of sample**



These findings also confirm the importance of a pan-impairment approach to designing policy; while the single most important barrier for each group may have varied significantly, cost was consistently high on the list for everyone, and was the most important barrier for disabled people overall.

## Impacts

The most common impact experienced by respondents as a result of these barriers is the journey being made more difficult/stressful (61% respondents).

**Figure 73: As a result of these barriers to trains, have you experienced any of the following?**

Impact	%
Journey is more difficult/stressful	61%
I have to plan in advance	50%
Impacts my health	42%
Stops me using this mode	39%
Stops me making a journey	30%
Impacts my confidence	30%
Journey is more expensive	28%
Journey is longer	25%
I have to travel with someone else	25%

## Changes disabled people want to see

Using free text boxes, we asked participants to write about what improvements could be made to make trains accessible to them. The responses fell into three categories:

1. Reliable and affordable service
2. Access to assistance and information
3. Improvements to physical infrastructure

### Reliable and affordable service

#### Cost

The most frequent suggestion for how to improve accessibility on the rail network was reducing the cost (17% of respondents). Comments ranged from reducing fares, to

expanding discounts for disabled people, to offering a free companion ticket for those travelling with PAs or carers.

There were also calls to expand the eligibility for a Disabled Person's Rail Card, as well as making it easier to apply this and other discounts when booking a ticket.

### **Reliable**

8% of respondents said that having a more punctual and reliable service would make rail more accessible. This would not only allow disabled people to plan journeys more confidently, but also travel more spontaneously; if there are problems boarding one service, it is less disruptive if there is another one coming along shortly.

As well as less disruption overall, respondents wanted a more proactive staff response when there were unexpected problems. This includes having backup plans and alternative routes devised for them, and for this to be done in a much more reasonable timeframe.

More reliable and regular services would also help to address the related issue of crowding, which 5% of respondents wrote about. There were also suggestions to have more carriages available, and to have staff check on the welfare of disabled passengers during crowded services.

### **Interchanges**

6% wrote about coordinating train services with each other and other modes of transport more effectively.

This included coordinating bus timetables with train departures and having more accessible express services to and from stations. Providing more accessible parking bays and ensuring the surrounding streetspace was accessible would also remove barriers to the station.

To improve interchanges and reduce the walking distance, people suggested providing more transport for disabled people within stations (such as wheelchairs or buggies operated by staff).

- "Being able to use my freedom pass to cover part of my journey without having to go to the station to buy an advance ticket. I'd like to be able to apply my freedom pass online at the same time as my railcard."
- "Affordability. Train prices leap above inflation and disabled people are underrepresented in the ""rich people"" demographic, and yet may depend on the infrastructure more."
- "Price down. Make the world inclusive."

- “If I knew there would not be an issue in getting a space on a train, I would not have to shell out and pay 1st class ticket prices (and I recognise that I am fortunate to be able to afford this).”
- “I cannot buy the wheelchair concession online like other tickets, I’ve complained but after over 8 years nothing has been done to provide this service and one risks being abused by guards and threatened with the police by not buying a ticket.”
- “More reliable services with a lower cost and better cross country connectivity.”
- “More frequent - after work trains from Birmingham to Newcastle were every hour, meaning I often wouldn't arrive until late and then would struggle with onward transport.”
- “More resilience. Trains get cancelled too often and the network is not good enough at ensuring there's a route to complete journeys that doesn't involve loads of walking/queuing.”
- “Having the bus coordinated with getting to the train station. The 58 bus stops outside the station, however it is due to arrive at the station within a minute of the train leaving, leaving this as an unviable option, especially when the bus timetable is unreliable itself.”
- “Better secure accessible cycle parking, better accessibility within stations especially more information eg platforms and arrival times for all trains visible on each platform so you know where to go without having to try and get up and down between levels to find information boards or staff to ask.”
- “I've not yet managed to use a train with a wheelchair (only crutches) and am able to walk a bit, so I'm hopeful that even if assistance doesn't work out, I'll be able to get on and off the train...”

## Access to assistance and information

### Assistance

It is clear that disabled people are being badly let down by assistance services, with 16% writing about ways to improve it. Many respondents simply wanted assistance to show up when it is booked, as well as a more reliable Turn Up and Go service to allow for spontaneous travel.

When assistance did fail, respondents said that it should be easier to make a complaint, with more accountability and compensation for these failures.

People also wanted more fail-safes in place to ensure they weren’t stranded.

Suggestions included some kind of intercom or messaging service so that disabled passengers could check assistance was waiting for them at the platforms, or a tracking feature on the Passenger Assist app.

Some also wanted to be able to board the train first to assure they had ample time to find a seat, deal with any problems, and avoid getting blocked or injured by crowds.

## **Staff**

Given how important staff are in making the rail network accessible, it is unsurprising that respondents wrote about wanting to have more staff available on board and in the station (8%), and for those staff to have better training in supporting disabled passengers (10%).

Several expressed their concern about the trend towards de-staffing stations, and stressed that it was essential that staff were not only available, but visible and easy to get hold of in a timely manner.

As well as better training, some also wanted staff to better advocate for disabled passengers, and remind others to vacate the wheelchair space or priority seat if needed.

## **Information**

There were a significant number of suggestions for how to improve access to information, both during the planning stage and on the journey.

15% of respondents said they wanted more easily available information about the accessibility of services, and for these to be accurate and presented in a range of formats. This includes information that isn't widely available at the moment, such as live crowding levels, walking distances within stations, and seating availability.

Respondents also wanted better communication of cancellations and delays, and for alternative routes to be displayed in the event of lift outages or other disruptions.

Another key priority for disabled people was for all live information be provided in both audio and visual formats (16%). Respondents wanted overhead announcements to be spoken more clearly, and for display boards to be bigger and not so high up. Some wanted other ways to access audio-visual information, such as through phone and text services.

Some respondents wrote about improvements to signage and wayfinding (4%). Those that did mentioned that they wanted clearer communication about where to change trains, locations of accessible facilities, and more regular and consistent signage through the station. A small number of people wrote about having this provided in alternative formats.

- “My dream would be for every train to have step-free access. Until then, assistance intercoms on trains to allow passengers to contact staff would be a good start. If emergency levers on all trains (whether underground or overground) were at wheelchair height, this would provide a simple back-up solution for those occasions when no assistance arrives. We should all get the passenger assistance that we require and should not have to keep complaining about the same issues time and time again.”
- “I've had issues with Passenger Assistance either not turning up or not being very good (like not looking for me, a blind person, not introducing themselves, expecting

me to have information to hand when I'd supplied it as part of my booking and can't safely check my phone when I'm rushing across a busy concourse!)."

- "[...] staff at stations and on the trains, these people are necessary for helping disabled passengers. The thought of the there being cuts to station staff or making trains guard-less is a major issue and, should these go ahead, would make rail travel and complete no go."
- "It would be nice if you didn't sometimes feel like a burden or hassle when asking for help with a ramp - most staff are really nice but sometimes it can feel like you have to do more (e.g. booking ahead, asking for help) than other passengers and if you haven't had time to call ahead to book assistance you've done something wrong."
- "Improve accessibility of information to deaf passengers, especially where there is a rail replacement service. The onus must be on the operator to be responsible at ensuring deaf passengers make this service rather than the deaf passenger somehow knowing to have a challengingly confusing conversation with a staff member."
- "I work in access and inclusion and do a lot of work around accessible rail, so I'm aware there is a lot of work going on within the industry to improve things. That having said, I'm exhausted with the unreliability of the trains and the complete lack of accessible information for me as a deaf passenger. Having accurate travel information displayed on the train and on the platforms in visual formats would make such a huge difference to my journeys and take away a lot of the uncertainty. More priority spaces would also be beneficial, and much better access to accessible bathrooms."
- "Better accessibility within stations especially more information eg platforms and arrival times for all trains visible on each platform so you know where to go without having to try and get up and down between levels to find information boards or staff to ask."
- "Electrical announcements inside & outside of trains & train station, if booked online in advance, text or have a train member of staff to tell me what's going on. If I'm on my phone, would like to be able to click onto a time & train cabin I am in & see the journey I'm on & see the live announcements about the train."
- "More staff! I buy tickets online but I hate it and have bought tickets for the wrong days by mistake. These mistakes can be costly. Most recently I wasn't able to make my train journey at all because of it."

## Improvements to physical infrastructure

### Step-free access

Expanding the provision of step-free access and level boarding was also high on the list of priorities for respondents, with 14% writing about each. With the right investment, hundreds of routes that are currently unusable for disabled people would become possible, reducing journey time and allowing people to travel more freely. Level boarding



would also increase independence, and reduce the risk of people getting stranded on the train without a manual boarding ramp.

There were also calls to provide more lifts in stations with existing step-free access. This would again reduce journey time, and also make stations more resilient against outages.

### **Facilities**

12% of respondents wanted better provision of accessible facilities, including toilets, changing rooms, and benches throughout stations. Onboard trains, people said that being seated nearer to accessible toilets and luggage areas would allow them to use these more easily. Many also stressed that accessible toilets could frequently be out of order even when provided, and wanted to see these fixed with much more urgency.

There were also many calls for improvements to the sensory environment. As well as trains being cleaner, respondents suggested having better ventilation and air conditioning, as well as quiet waiting rooms in the station. Several respondents throughout the survey mentioned severe allergies to particular chemical fragrances, and some suggested that the quiet carriage could also be made a sensory friendly area to accommodate this and other access needs.

### **Seating**

8% of respondents wanted to see more priority seating and wheelchair spaces on board trains. As well as broader provision, people wanted there to be better signposting of priority seats, and for nondisabled passengers to either leave these vacant or give their seat more freely when needed.

- “Disabled toilets always being available throughout the train and being easy to identify their location before getting on the train. i have to sit near the disabled toilet when travelling, i cannot move through the train safely.”
- "Level boarding. This would make a huge difference because: 1. it would remove the 'spectacle' of being plonked on to a train by a member of staff - sounds like a small thing but I have had some incredibly humiliating experience when boarding trains (like the time a staff member picked me up and carried me on to the train) 2. it would return my independence and give me the freedom to travel like everyone else; no more booking in advance or wondering if someone will meet you to get on/off the train - I would really like to be able to travel without relying on other people.”
- “Keep all ticket offices open. Make it possible to book wheelchair space with a companion seat (next to me or opposite) and to book assistance and tickets with one phone call.”
- “It would be great if quiet carriages also accommodated other sensory issues, with dimmer/ non-fluorescent lighting and no food allowed.”

- “Station accessibility is the core issue for me, it's pointless legislating that all trains must be accessible if we don't apply the same measure to stations. We need long term planning to bring all stations up to at least level access to platform level, and ideally level access to train.”

# Light rail

Light rail and trams differ from “heavy” or mainline rail in that they have slightly different regulatory and safety requirements, are generally administered at a local level instead of nationally, and typically utilise light-weight vehicles and tracks. In England, the following systems are considered to fall into this category:

- London Underground
- Docklands Light Railway
- London Trams
- Nottingham Express Transit
- West Midlands Metro
- Sheffield Supertram
- Tyne and Wear Metro
- Manchester Metrolink
- Blackpool Tramway

Throughout this section we’ll refer to all of these as ‘light rail’.

Accessibility requirements for light rail vehicles are covered by the The Rail Vehicle Accessibility (Non-Interoperable Rail System) Regulations 2010<sup>lix</sup> which mandates the specifications of features such as boarding devices, handrails, toilets, wheelchair spaces, and doorways. As is the case for heavy rail, the Department for Transport can grant exemption orders to light rail operators authorising the use of vehicles on a network even if they do not comply with the regulations. Many such exemptions are in place, covering light rail systems including Docklands Light Railway, Blackpool Tramway and London Underground, for specifications such as dimensions of priority space, provision of boarding devices, and audio/visual announcements<sup>lx</sup>.

Light rail is fast, high-frequency and high-capacity, and often considered the vital arteries of an urban area. However, in some cities many disabled people are locked out of benefitting from these features, due to barriers such as overcrowding and lack of step-free access. For example:

- Only 92 out of 272 London Underground stations have step-free access<sup>lxi</sup>, at nearly half of these there is no level boarding and so a manual boarding ramp is required.
- The Docklands Light Railway uses driverless trains and stations are generally unstaffed, meaning those requiring assistance (such as sight-guiding for visually impaired people) may not be able to use it.

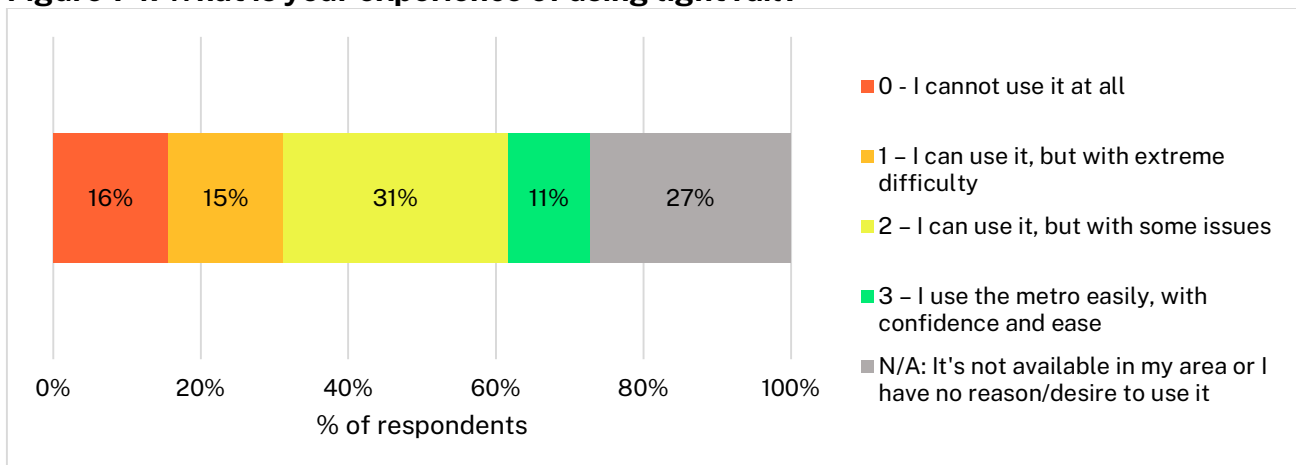
- According to information available on their websites, all stations and vehicles on Nottingham Express Transit, Tyne and Wear Metro, West Midlands Metro, Sheffield Supertram, Manchester Metrolink, and Blackpool Tramway are wheelchair accessible. However, this research has found that disabled people do not consider or experience all stations to be accessible.

According to Government statistics, during 2012 to 2019, disabled people took about half as many journeys by light rail than non-disabled people (5 journeys per year vs 11.4 journeys per year)<sup>lxii</sup>. This differs little between London and systems across the rest of England.

## Experience

Respondents gave light rail an average rating of 1.51 out of 3. 11% of respondents reported they can use light rail easily with confidence and ease, while 16% of respondents reported they cannot use light rail at all.

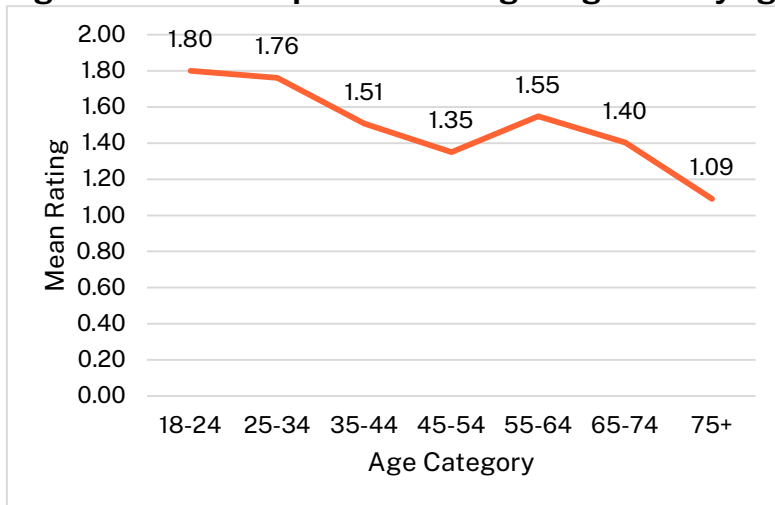
**Figure 74: What is your experience of using light rail?**



This varied significantly across age and impairment groups.

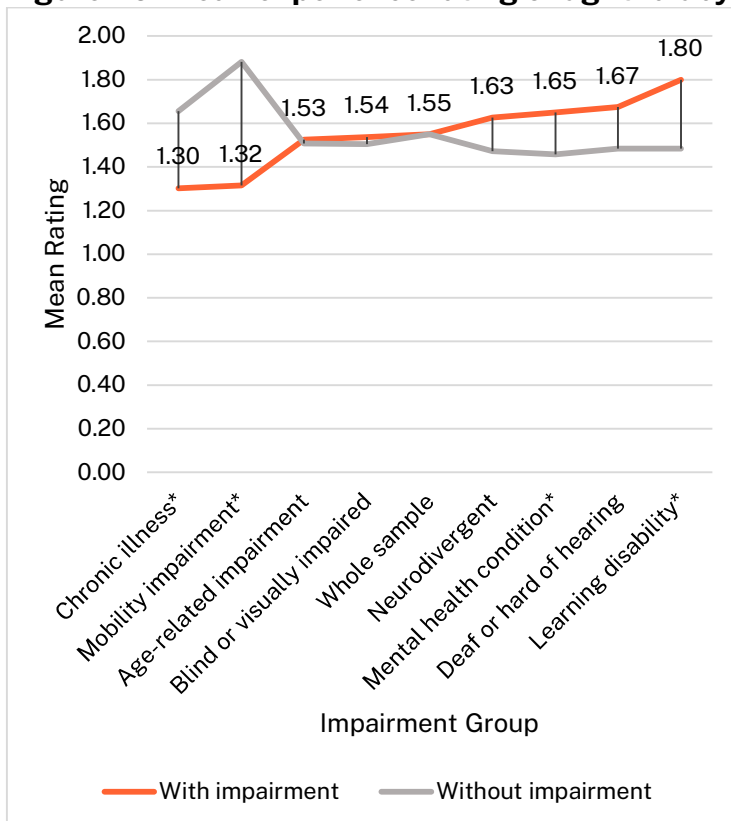
Younger respondents also gave higher ratings. Those age 18-24 gave the highest rating (1.80), with satisfaction progressively decreasing through age groups.

**Figure 75: Mean experience rating of light rail by age**



Respondents with a chronic illness or mobility impairment gave significantly lower ratings than those without, while respondents who had a mental health condition, learning disability, or were Deaf or hard of hearing gave higher average ratings than those without.

**Figure 76: Mean experience rating of light rail by impairment**



Note: \* is used to denote statistical significance, which indicates that the difference in mean ratings between participants with and without the impairment did not occur due to chance.

## What works well

228 people answered this question, and of those that did 12% said nothing works well at all.

The positive feature that the most people did write about was the provision of step-free access on light rail services (24%), with an additional 11% mentioning the availability of level boarding. However, people often used the phrase “when the lifts are working”, suggesting that frequent outages can be a limitation.

Many respondents also talked about the convenience of light rail. 15% said that it was a fast way to get around, and 14% said that services were frequent and reliable. A number of people wrote that convenient interchanges were also important, saying their journeys were easier and more efficient when there were short walking distances between platforms, and when light rail was well connected with other modes.

11% of respondents said that staff assistance made their journeys work well. Turn Up and Go was a particularly positive feature for respondents, and it was important that assistance was not only available but delivered efficiently. Many wrote that staff were generally warm, friendly, and helpful.

Access to information was also key. 7% said that having details of upcoming services, and the access features of various stops, allowed them to plan and execute routes effectively. It was important that this information and live announcements were provided in audio-visual formats. 5% said wayfinding and signage within stations was also clear.

Being able to find a seat, both on board and while waiting at the station, was a positive feature for 6% of respondents.

- “Usually staff are well trained and provide excellent support. They receive specific visual impairment awareness training which really helps.”
- “There are screen displays which quickly inform me what stop it is and what the whole service is and in the case of the Victoria line, which sides the door will open on, which is incredibly helpful and should be rolled out to other lines.”
- “Easy to plan journeys with apps, usually enough benches. Announcements are usually clear. TfL give an impression of being genuinely responsive to disabled passengers and I feel confident that underground staff would help me in an emergency.”

## Barriers

**Figure 77: Which of these barriers, if any, have you experienced to using light rail in the past 12 months (tick all that apply)**

Barrier	Respondents
Overcrowded trains/stations/platforms	59%
Lack of step-free access and level boarding	51%
Issues with lifts (not working, too small, too few)	47%
Lack of staff assistance / issues with arranging or receiving assistance	37%
Poor information about accessibility of stations/stops	36%
Lack of toilets	35%
Walking distances within stations	34%
Risk of catching COVID-19	31%
Lack of rest places (benches, alcoves)	28%
Negative attitudes, antisocial behaviour, or hate crime from other passengers	28%
Personal security / I do not feel safe	27%
Poor signage, signposting and wayfinding	26%
Sensory environment (lighting, brightness, noise levels, smells)	23%
Lack of escalators	22%
Staff attitudes and behaviour	19%
Audio/visual information: announcements are not communicated to me in a way I can access	16%
Expensive	14%
Issues with purchasing tickets	14%
I cannot take my mobility aid or medical equipment with me	12%
Infrequent or unreliable service	11%
Lack of tactile paving	5%
Other	2%
None – this mode is accessible to me	7%

## Overcrowding

Overcrowding was the most frequently reported barrier for disabled people travelling by light rail and was experienced by 59% of respondents. This is a slightly higher percentage than those who reported overcrowding on trains (50% of respondents).

Crowding can make it either unsafe or impossible for disabled people to board a service, meaning that respondents had to spend more time waiting on the platform, or abandon

their journey. People told us that they only travel off peak, or simply avoid light rail for fear of getting caught in a crush.

Others reported contending with injury, sensory overload, or panic attacks due to overcrowding. An increased risk of COVID-19 in crowds was reported as a barrier to using light rail for 31% of respondents. Crowded services also mean fewer available seats, putting disabled people in positions of conflict with other passengers.

- “I now feel almost unable to use the Victoria line. It is so overwhelming, so hot, so busy, inundated with a constant flood of people even every 2 minutes another train but still rammed, but they are making it busier and busier all the time. I can't bear it. It is fast and convenient but it is so intense and distressing I almost can't do it anymore. It was not so busy off-peak 10 years ago.”
- “I was travelling into London and the train was full so I had to stand and found it difficult to grip onto the rail and also extremely tiring before I even reached my destination and when I arrived I found that there were several sets of steps to negotiate before reaching an escalator and other passengers rushed by me making me feel in fear of falling and a nuisance for holding them up too!”
- “The Manchester Metrolink's platform and staircase are often overcrowded. One time, the staircase was overcrowded and I could not hold a handrail going down the stairs (something I always do). I fell badly and fell down quite a few stairs. I was not majorly injured, other than scratches and bruises. However, this could have been avoided if there were fewer people.”

## Step free access

51% of respondents said that a lack of step-free access and level boarding had been a barrier to travel. This had led people to take longer and more convoluted routes, making journeys more time-consuming, stressful, and expensive. A lack of level boarding also required people to rely on manual boarding ramps provided by staff, putting further limitations on independent travel.

Where level boarding is available, respondents reported crucial design flaws, such as confusing signposting, and a remaining gap between the train and the platform that makes it inaccessible for some.

47% reported problems with lifts, including them being frequently out of service, too small, poorly signposted, or long distances apart. Sudden suspensions in lift services put disabled people at serious risk of being stranded in stations, especially on underground metros with no phone signal or Wi-Fi.



The walking distances within stations was also a barrier for 34% of respondents. The London Underground came up frequently in these answers, with the extended walking times causing pain and fatigue, especially for those with mobility or energy limiting impairments.

This can be exacerbated by a lack of escalators: stairs are not just a barrier for wheelchair and mobility scooter users, and while some disabled people may be able to manage a few steps, a whole flight might be prohibitive. Escalators are therefore a crucial accessibility feature for metro services, but one that 22% of respondents found to be lacking.

- “I was getting the Tube to a work meeting. Despite (as I always do) checking TfL Go app before I set off to confirm the lifts were all working along my route, when I arrived at Green Park station the lift was out of service. I was trapped, underground, with no way to exit the station, and - as I was travelling alone - no way of finding help. Obviously underground my phone didn't have signal so I couldn't call or message anyone. I was frantically wheeling up and down the platforms trying to find a member of staff, but there was no one around and I couldn't find a help point. Finally I managed to find someone. They called someone else to try and fix the lift. It became apparent that the lift could not be fixed for a while, so I had to get back on the Tube to the nearest step-free station which was all the way in Earl's Court. It was a nightmare and I was 2 hours late for my meeting, and exhausted.”
- “I have accepted that I can no longer use the Underground, due to the amount of walking required, and in some places there are stairs, too.”
- “Had to do loads of walking in stations to make a change. No lifts so had to do a lot of extra walking. Difficult to find info on accessibility of stations. No seating. This all causes me anxiety and a lot of physical pain.”
- “I took the underground from Westminster to Kings Cross and found it really hard to find the right lifts to take to get to the outside especially at Kings Cross. The amount of walking and length of tunnels between stops can be impossible and it would be great if there was ad hoc assistance on the underground.”
- “The lifts at a main station were out of order, which was not clearly marked on the app. Station staff were unable to find an alternative accessible route and ended up having to carry my wheelchair down the escalator which felt unsafe and dangerous.”
- “I needed to travel to a station where I needed the ramp to get out of the tube. I spoke to a member of staff before boarding the train and assured me that the platform was level access that I didn't need the ramp. But unfortunately when I got to the stop I couldn't get out and as a result of that I missed the stop and couldn't get out until the final stop of the tube line service. This made me feel really upset as I was on my way to a wedding ceremony and arrived there two hours late.”

## Assistance and staff

37% of respondents said that they have experienced problems with assistance.

Frequently, respondents said they were unable to find station staff to ask for assistance, and even when staff were available and visible, the assistance could be poorly coordinated or inappropriate. Combined with other barriers, searching for and waiting for assistance made light rail journeys excessively time consuming.

Respondents also wrote that staff could sometimes be unaware of how to provide the right assistance or use alternative forms of communication, leaving disabled passengers having to advocate for themselves or defer to other passengers for support. 19% said that they encountered negative attitudes and behaviour from staff, sometimes being rude and dismissive, or making them feel like a nuisance for requesting assistance.

- “Trying to use the Bakerloo line at Paddington - I didn't know who to contact and where they were when I wanted assistance. The gate line staff were Elizabeth line staff - they rang the right team up for me but it took about 30 minutes for assistance to be coordinated. One of the members of staff didn't know that the station was accessible via ramp.”
- “I have to have someone call up for assistance as that is the only option. Staff only communicating with the person I'm travelling with rather than myself as I'm Deaf and they won't bother with alternative communication.”
- "Being yelled at from a distance there was no lift... Husband and son carried the powerchair, and I crawled up the stairs. No help from staff”
- “One of the assistance that i booked decided to take both myself and my guide dog and another visually impaired person down a flight of a hundred steps at old street, which doesn't have any lifts. I said I'd wait for the next train but he wasn't having it. Then trying to find him and the other visually impaired person on a packed platform wasn't fun. It was pretty horrendous.”

## Information

36% of respondents said it is difficult to find accurate and relevant information about the accessibility of stops or stations (including escalators, rest-stops, level boarding points). Lift outages were often recorded incorrectly, leaving respondents stranded mid-journey. This is compounded by a lack of information on alternative routes when there are sudden changes to the timetable, or the accessibility of a given station/stop.

A lack of audio-visual announcements was a barrier for 16% of respondents, causing them to miss crucial live updates. Unexpected changes to the service were particularly problematic for Deaf and hard of hearing passengers, as these tend to be relayed exclusively over audio announcement.

26% also said that the wayfinding within stations was either confusing or inaccessible. When there are no visible staff to ask for help, and where there are long distances between platforms, disabled people reported having to trek around the station searching for where they need to go.

- “I've recently begun travelling on the Tube with my assistance dog who cannot go on escalators. This has made it significantly more difficult to travel on the Tube. Signage is often poor and I've spent long times going in circles trying to find stairs or lifts. At some stations there are stairs part of the way up, with the rest escalators and multiple lifts and navigating platforms to get to other lifts is really problematic. It's also really difficult to find accurate information about whether stations are escalator free. I've often not been able to find staff on the underground to help me find where to go. It has decreased my confidence when travelling by tube and made it significantly more stressful. I have to allow a lot more time when travelling and it has made me late for work events in the past despite allowing extra travel time.”
- “Today, I had the misfortune of needing to use the central line and overground, I checked online to plan my journey and checked that lifts were working using the TfL Go app, and also the TfL website and then the TfL twitter feed that tells you when lifts are out of order. But all the information was wrong. At Stratford I discovered both the overground lifts and central line lifts were out of order, a member of station staff told me which lift was working but when I walked all the way there it was out of order. This caused me to be late for my health appointment, and made me very upset and frustrated. The unnecessary walking around the station has left me with pain and fatigue, and now I can't take the risk of trying this route again because it's impossible to get information about accessibility. It's ridiculous, how are we as disabled people supposed to live our lives and work and get to appointments?”
- “Tannoy announcements have shared information about when a service will finally depart if there's delays and this isn't always accessible to me. It makes me feel tired and unnecessarily vigilant.”
- “One of the issues I have discovered particularly on the Underground since I've had sight issues is the eligibility of the newer Train Describers located on platforms showing when the next train is. They are simply too small to read any distance away from them. This in turn can induce crowding at busy stations which is less than ideal and can heighten anxiety levels in the confines of the Underground which can be cramped space anyway. Not being able to read these Train Describers makes you reliant on the trains announcements although sometimes these too are defective. The trains on the Circle, District, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan lines seem to have a persistent issue with their trains and this can cause a lot of confusion especially since these lines overlap significantly on their routes. A combination of poor Train Descriptor design and unreliable train info systems can make travel on these lines particularly stressful and not a good travel experience.”

## Accessible facilities and environment

35% of respondents said that a lack of accessible toilets on board and in stations was a barrier for them.

28% also reported insufficient seating and rest spaces, and a further 23% said that features of the sensory environment such as lighting, noise levels, and smells created barriers. Sensory overload was a common experience, and a lack of quiet respite areas was more likely to impact those who are neurodivergent or who have mental health conditions.

Low lighting and poor contrast on surfaces were also a barrier for blind and visually impaired passengers navigating the station.

- “Very noisy very stressful when you depend on your hearing only.”
- “Some stairs are not marked on the steps with yellow paint.”

## Personal safety

Concerns around safety and personal security presented barriers for 27% of respondents. Some wrote about the ways inaccessible infrastructure put them in danger (e.g., getting injured in crowds, being stranded when step-free access was suspended), while some were made to feel unsafe by other passengers.

28% of respondents experienced negative attitudes and behaviour from other passengers. This ranged from being rude or mocking, to assault and hate crime. A few people also said they were not confident anything would be done if they reported it or said they have reported an incident and seen little result. A lack of visible staff increased these concerns around safety for some respondents.

- “I was using walking aids. I got onto the train and asked someone if I could sit down next to them on the priority seat. He did not move his bag. He argued with me. It was embarrassing and I was horrified. Some passengers offered me their seats but the date had been done. He was fully abled.”
- “Other passengers making comments and being rude on the London Underground made me lose confidence and not want to use it again the last time I was in London at the end of July. Plus it's really overcrowded and often a sensory bombardment, particularly at peak times.”
- “Some passengers can be very rude - recently, I was going to take a seat when a young man rushed into it while tripping over my cane, then spent the whole journey talking with his friends about me and the general consensus among them was ‘She's

blind anyway, it doesn't matter.' Travelling alone, I don't know how to react and do worry about my safety in these situations, and when it is crowded.”

- “Main barrier at the moment is over helpful passengers grabbing me. A passenger offered me help and I refused they insisted but I said no I was ok. He stood next to me till the train arrived. Then he grabbed a hold of my cane arm and prevented me from using my cane to navigate onto the train and tried to drag /pull me to get me on the train. This is whilst I was located very close to the edge of the platform (train side of the tack tiles) and there is a gap between the train and the platform edge. I eventually got him off me with help from another passenger and got on the train very shaken. Made me feel uncomfortable using the train.”

## Ticketing

14% of respondents faced financial barriers to travelling by light rail. As well as the fare itself, disabled people reported additional costs created by other access barriers on the network, such as taking the bus to a staffed station instead of the one closest, taking a taxi when step-free access is suspended, or paying for a PA's ticket as well as your own.

An additional 14% faced other barriers to purchasing tickets. Respondents told us that in the absence of staff or ticket offices, they were forced to use TVMs, which were often inaccessible. Others said that the fare system was too confusing, and often found themselves unsure of which ticket they needed or how to go about purchasing it.

- “If I can't get a ticket or have one already then unless there are staff around to help, which often there is not, I find it difficult to get a ticket/top up oyster etc.”
- “The bigger barriers for me are to do with overcrowding on services and the fact that buying tickets from machines are the only options, it would also be good to have signage for nearest toilet facilities.”
- “Cannot access tickets no ticket office and can't use ticket machines.”
- “I would like to use tube in London but as I live outside need to buy tickets but can't use ticket machines.”

## Other barriers

12% of respondents said that not being able to take their mobility aid or medical equipment with them was a barrier, particularly an issue for those who use mobility scooters which are permitted on some, but not all, light rail systems. For some, the limited step-free access available on light rail services (particularly in London) forced them to leave their mobility aid at home in order to make their journey, often to the detriment of

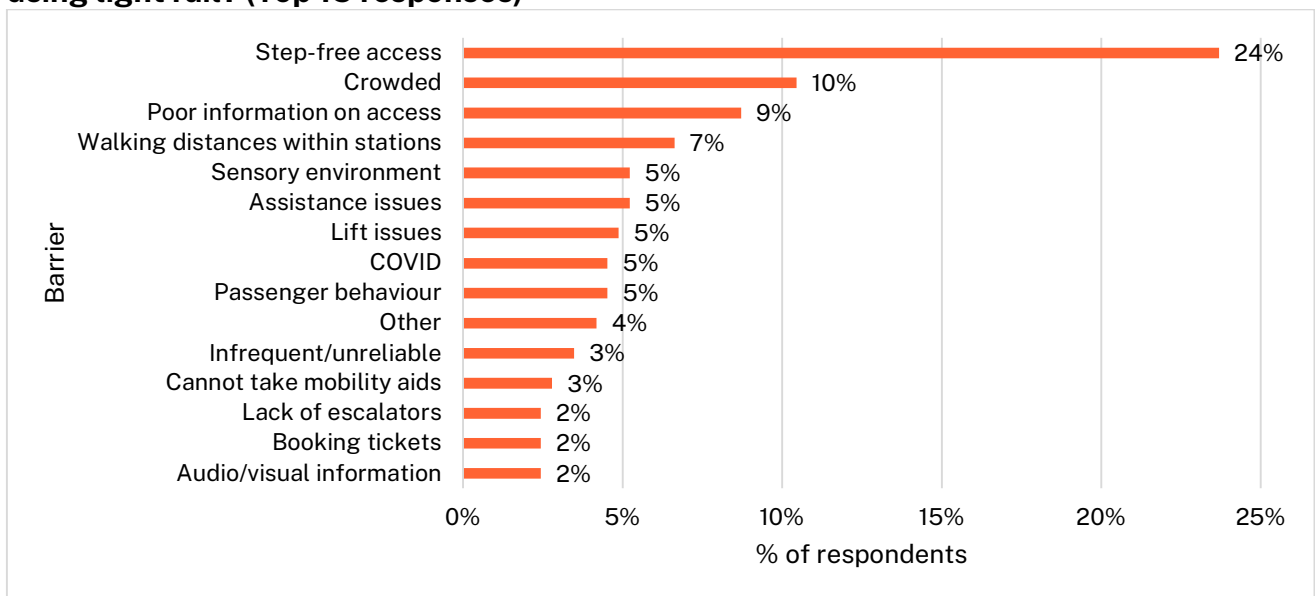
their health and comfort. For those who use their mobility aid full time, this puts whole swathes of the metro out of bounds.

11% said that infrequent or unreliable services was a barrier, and 5% experienced a lack of tactile paving.

## Most significant barrier

Respondents rated a lack of step-free access as the most significant barrier to using light rail. This was the case for 24% of respondents, and was significantly higher than the second most significant barrier (crowding, 10%). It is interesting to note that though a lack of step-free access was not the most commonly experienced barrier, it was by far the most disabling for those who did experience it.

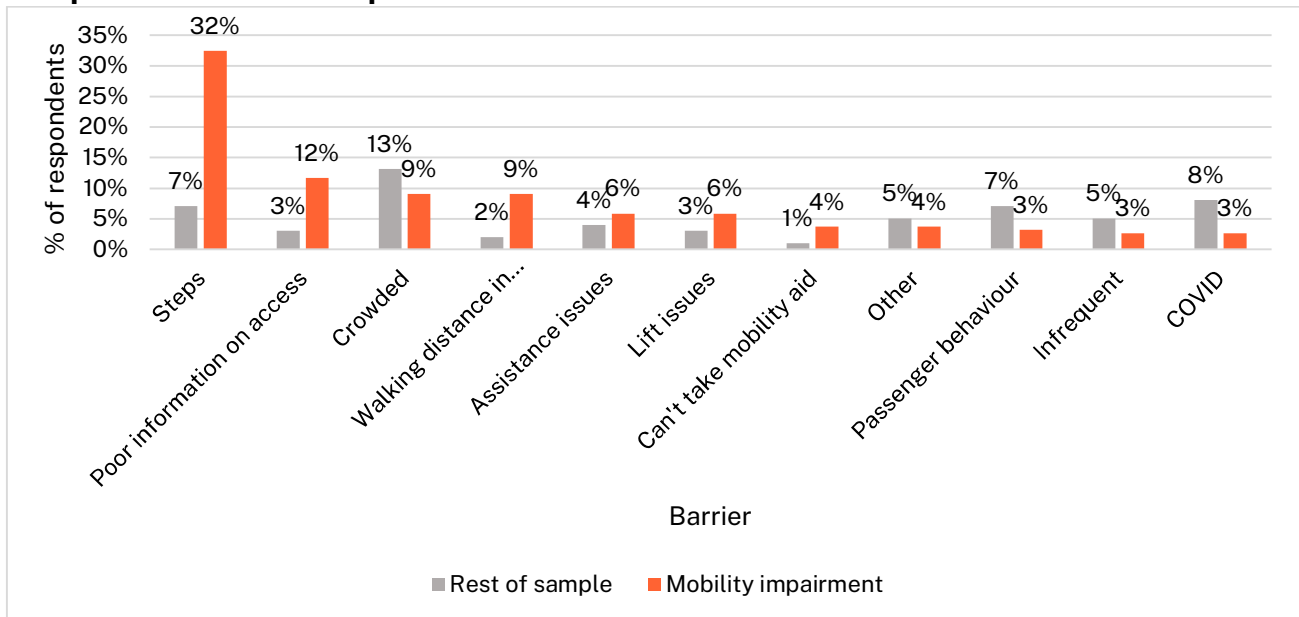
**Figure 78: If you had to choose just one, what is the biggest/most significant barrier to using light rail? (Top 15 responses)**



The only significant variations in ratings were among those with mobility and visual impairments.

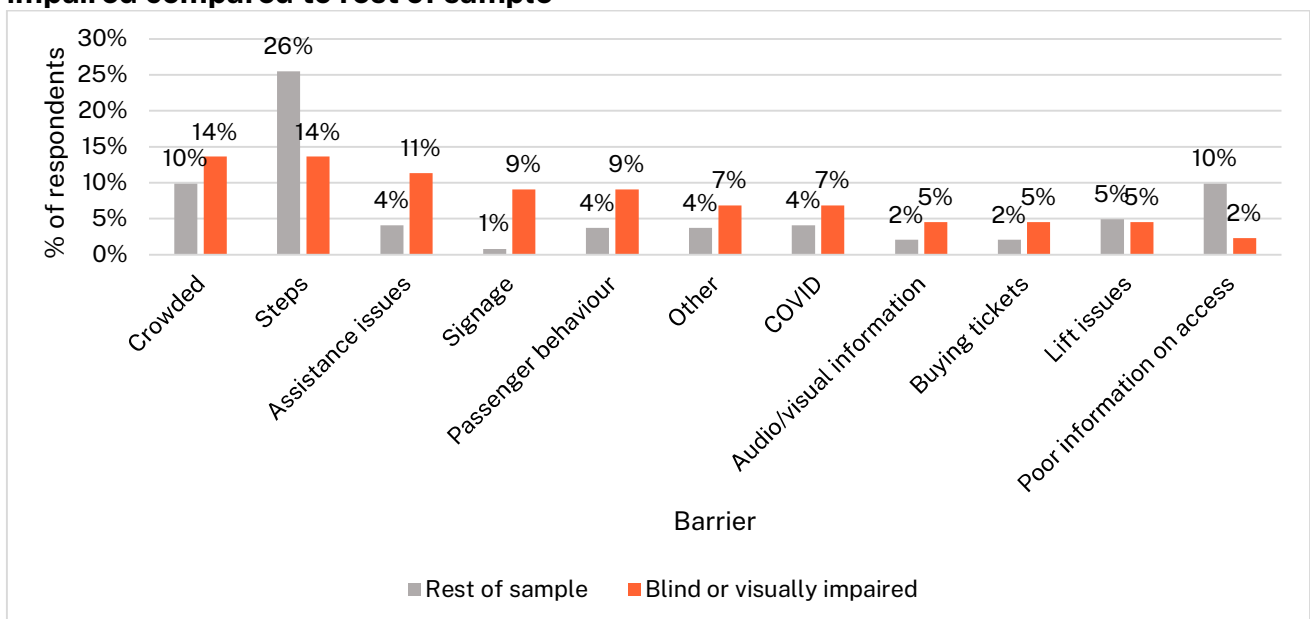
Respondents with mobility impairments were far more likely to choose lack of step free access than those without (32% versus 7%). They were also more likely to choose poor information about stations (12% versus 3%) and walking distance within stations (9% versus 2%).

**Figure 79: Most significant barrier to light rail: respondents with a mobility impairment compared to rest of sample**



Blind and visually impaired respondents ranked a lack of step-free access and overcrowding in joint first place (14% of the vote for each). They were also more likely to choose a lack of staff/issues receiving assistance (11% versus 4%) making this the third most common barrier for this group.

**Figure 80: Most significant barrier to light rail: respondents who are blind or visually impaired compared to rest of sample**



# Impact

**Figure 81: As a result of these barriers to light rail, have you experienced any of the following?**

Impact	%
Journey is more difficult/stressful	59%
Stops me using this mode	45%
Impacts my health	38%
I have to plan in advance	31%
Impacts my confidence	29%
Stops me making a journey	26%
Journey is longer	26%
I have to travel with someone else	21%
Journey is more expensive	14%

## Changes disabled people want to see

Using free text boxes, we asked participants to write about what improvements could be made to make light rail services more accessible. The responses fell largely into three categories:

1. Improvements to physical infrastructure and environment
2. Access to staff and assistance
3. Access to information

### Physical infrastructure and environment

#### Step-free access

Expanding the provision of step-free access was by far the most common call for improvements to light rail. 28% of respondents wrote about step-free access, and 10% mentioned level boarding specifically.

However, people made it clear that there was limited use installing lifts in more stations if they were constantly out of order: lifts must also be more reliable, and outages have to be resolved with much greater urgency. Information on lift and escalator suspensions should also be accurate and easy to obtain.



Some also mentioned having bigger lifts, both to accommodate larger wheelchairs and reduce wait times, as well as more escalators. Many also wanted the walking distance within stations to be reduced, or suggested providing more transport within stations such as wheelchairs and travelators.

### **Space**

9% of respondents wrote about either reducing crowding on light rail, or ensuring that disabled people were able to safely use and navigate busy services. Some suggested that more staff assistance could help to address this issue, guiding passengers through the station and helping to ensure they were able to get on and off the train at peak times.

A further 5% said that having more seating and respite areas in the station would be useful, especially when it is busy. Increasing the availability of priority seating on board and making sure these were clearly signposted was also key. Respondents added that nondisabled passengers either leaving priority seats vacant, or giving them up much more readily, would increase their confidence in travelling by light rail.

### **Environment**

As with other modes, respondents wanted more accessible toilets on board and in stations. 4% said they wanted improvements to ventilation and air conditioning, not only to address pollution and over-heating, but also to mitigate the risk of COVID-19. Many of these answers also included calls for mask wearing to be more widely adopted or made compulsory again. A number of people said stations should be better lit, with high contrast surfaces and signage.

- “More stations with step-free access and level boarding. In the absence of that, I need more information about how much walking there is within a station, how many steps there are, and where there is seating. This would help me to make decisions about whether a station is only slightly inaccessible to me and can be just about managed, or completely inaccessible meaning I need to find another route.”
- “LEVEL BOARDING NOW!”
- “Make it a legal requirement that all new light rail have to be completely step free and all stations renovations need to ensure that they are completely step free. Issue financial awards to passengers every time a lift is not working at a particular station that leads to incomplete journeys.”
- “I like the priority seats where they have the actual picture of a wheelchair on the chair. People use them less.”
- “On train announcements asking for priority seats to be kept free for priority passengers.”

- “Clearer information when lifts are broken; priority repairs for lifts; staff to routinely attend trains that have terminated unexpectedly to check if passengers need assistance.”

## Access to staff and assistance

### Staff

Increasing the availability of staff on light rail services was the second most common suggestion and was written about by 20% of respondents. People wanted more staff on the platforms and throughout the station, so that they could easily request information and assistance in a timely manner.

Some also mentioned more staff training in order to address some negative attitudes and behaviours they had experienced, including how to support people with various access needs, and better knowledge of the accessibility features and routes through their assigned station.

Some people proposed having a Passenger Assist style app for light rail services to make requesting assistance easier.

### Safety

3% wanted more security staff, including guards on trains, to ensure the safety of disabled passengers and better support victims of disability related hate crimes.

## Access to information

### Access features

10% called for more easily available, accurate, and accessible information about light rail travel. This includes information on step-free stations, escalators, walking distances within stations, and locations of accessible toilets and seating. Respondents also wanted live updates on any changes to the accessibility of stations, especially lift and escalator outages.

### Audio-visual formats

7% of respondents wanted more consistent provision of audio-visual updates, with information including next stops, delays, and suspensions in step-free access all being given on display boards and overhead announcements. Many said that the current implementation was patchy, and wanted universal provision across stations and lines, as well as clearer overhead announcements.

## Wayfinding

8% wrote about improvements to wayfinding within stations. This included not only ensuring that signage to different platforms and branches are more clearly signposted, but that information about station layout is available online and in other formats so that routes can be checked in advance. A couple of respondents said that the colour contrast of signs and surfaces could be improved.

- “More accurate information on all types of tube map about which stations are accessible, which are not, and in which ways exactly stations are accessible. The current provision of information is full of negligent errors. More accurate information about the current status of lifts at stations (working/out of service). The current provision of lift information is useless because it is so often wrong that it can never be trusted.”
- “People making the announcements should speak slower and clearer so you can understand what is being said.”
- “Better audio-visual announcements, often it is very hard to tell what station I am at, especially when taking a new route and people are blocking the windows so I can't see the roundels. Tube maps on trains are also tiny and it's really hard to follow them.”
- “Better information about escalator free routes.”
- “If there were to be more information about how many steps are needed to exit or enter every station and when are the busier and less busy travel times plus have rest areas for fatigued passengers when there are a lot of steps and/or no lifts
- “Delay information being relayed on the screens as well as the tannoy announcements, as well as which sides the doors will open at my stop, to minimise the amount of manoeuvring down the carriage.”

# Private transport

## Private v public: disabled people's preferences

Our research found that private forms of transport (cars/vans and taxis/PHVs) were the most highly rated modes by respondents, with them being rated on average 1.97 and 1.88 out of 3 respectively.

77% respondents told us they prefer the car to using public transport. This did not vary with age, gender, region, or settlement, but did vary by impairment group. Participants with mobility impairments were more likely to report preferring the car (80%) than those without (69%).

**Figure 82: Why do you prefer using the car to public transport?**

Reason	%
Goes door to door/goes directly to where I want to go	84%
Less tiring / stressful	77%
Easier/more convenient	77%
No time restrictions/can travel at any time I want	74%
Enables me to travel independently	63%
Safer/more secure	55%
Quicker/public transport takes too long	52%
Public transport options in my area are inaccessible to me	51%
Less risk of catching COVID-19	47%
Only way I can travel with another disabled person/mobility aids/ carry medical equipment	28%
Other	3%

Cars and taxis are often used as a last resort when public transport fails.

- “Wanted to attend a BBQ near Woking. The nearest train station was not fully accessible and there were no staff at weekends. Finding out this information took ages online. The next closest accessible station was miles away from my destination and after numerous telephone calls I could not find an accessible taxi and the cost would have been prohibitive. I ended up driving and getting stuck in traffic for hours.”

- “I was left with no way to get home after all the evening trains were cancelled and was given no choice but get a taxi which cost over £40. The experience has made me feel very anxious about travelling in the evenings, even on familiar routes.”

## Car/van

Car travel is a lifeline for many disabled people. Government statistics show that, like non-disabled people, disabled adults made almost two-thirds of all trips by car in 2021<sup>lxiii</sup>. However, disabled adults make a higher proportion of journeys as car passengers than non-disabled adults (19% compared with 12%), and we make slightly fewer trips as drivers (42% compared with 48%).

However, 28% of disabled adults live in households which don't have access to a car, compared with 15% of non-disabled adults<sup>lxiv</sup>. Additionally, in 2021 only 61% of disabled adults had a full driving license, compared with 80% of non-disabled adults<sup>lxv</sup>.

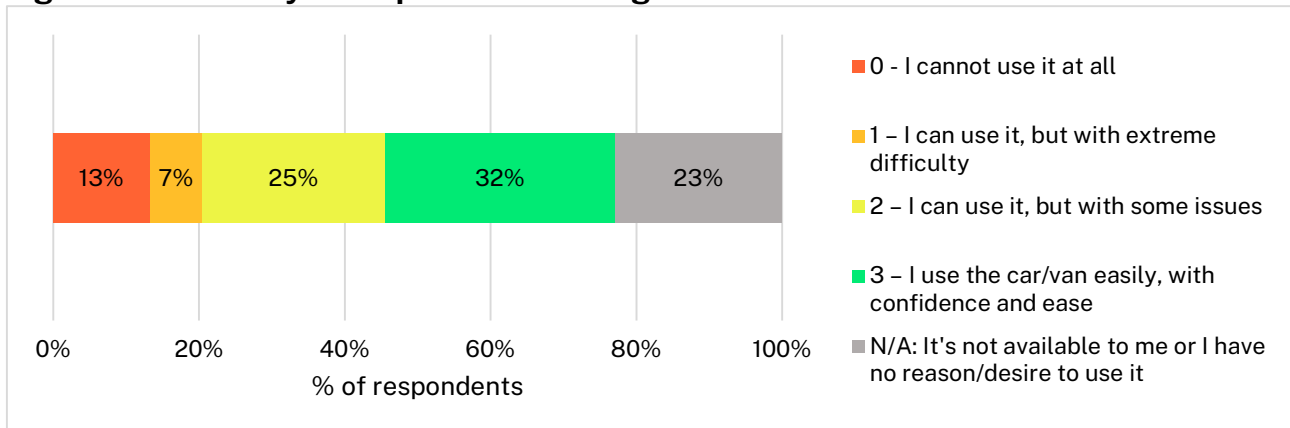
Several concessionary schemes exist to mitigate the financial impact of using a car. For example, drivers who receive some disability related benefits can claim road tax exemption<sup>lxvi</sup>. The Blue Badge scheme, administered by local authorities, issues cards to disabled people allowing us to park closer near to shops and services. In August 2019, Blue Badge eligibility criteria widened to include more people with non-visible impairments. In 2019/20, 2.15 million people were automatically eligible for a blue badge, yet only 46% of those people held a badge<sup>lxvii</sup>.

Provision of designated accessible parking spaces varies across the country. Manual for Streets recommends that 5% of parking spaces in residential areas be allocated for blue badge holders<sup>lxviii</sup>. Local Authorities can create either statutory spaces, the use of which can be enforced, or advisory spaces which cannot. The former are used sparingly due to costs of enforcement<sup>lxix</sup>.

## Experience

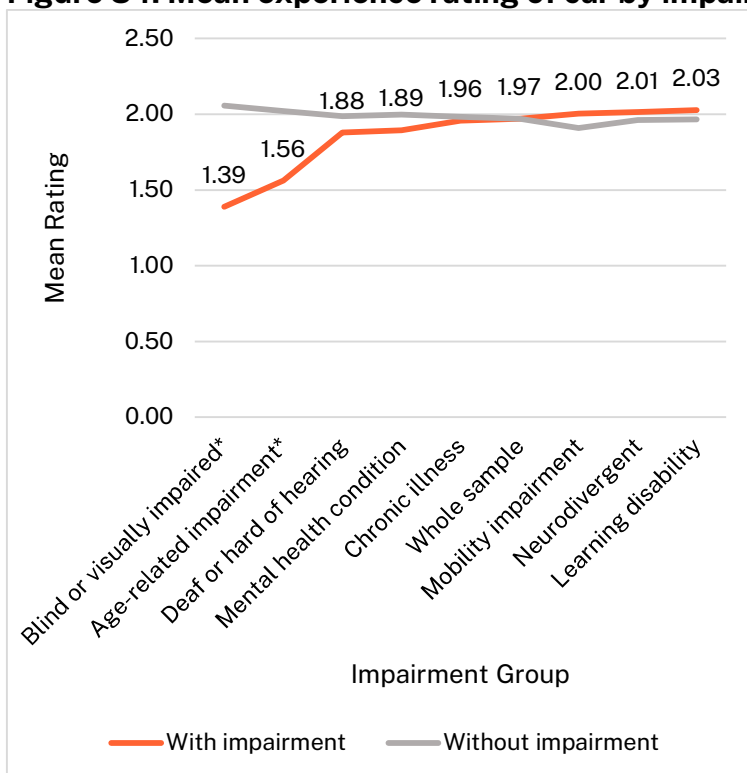
On average, participants rated their experience of using the car as 1.97 out of 3. This makes the car the most highly rated mode across the survey, with 32% saying they could use the car with ease and confidence.

**Figure 83: What is your experience of using the car?**



There was some variation across impairment type. Those with age related impairments reported a lower average rating (1.56) than those without (2.02). Blind and visually impaired respondents gave the car an even lower rating (1.39) compared to those without a visual impairment (2.06).

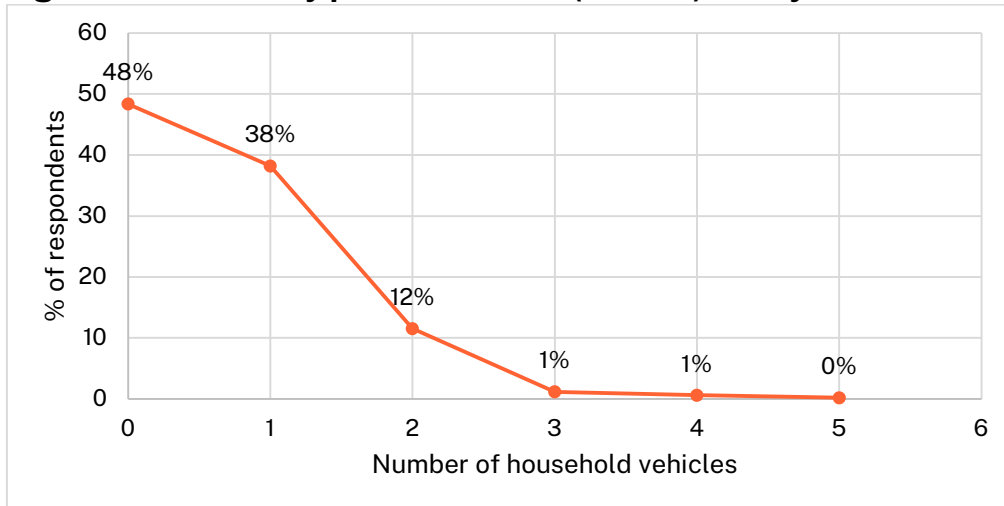
**Figure 84: Mean experience rating of car by impairment group**



Note: \* is used to denote statistical significance, which indicates that the difference in mean ratings between participants with and without the impairment did not occur due to chance.

# What kind of cars do disabled people use?

**Figure 85: How many private vehicles (car/van) does your household have?**

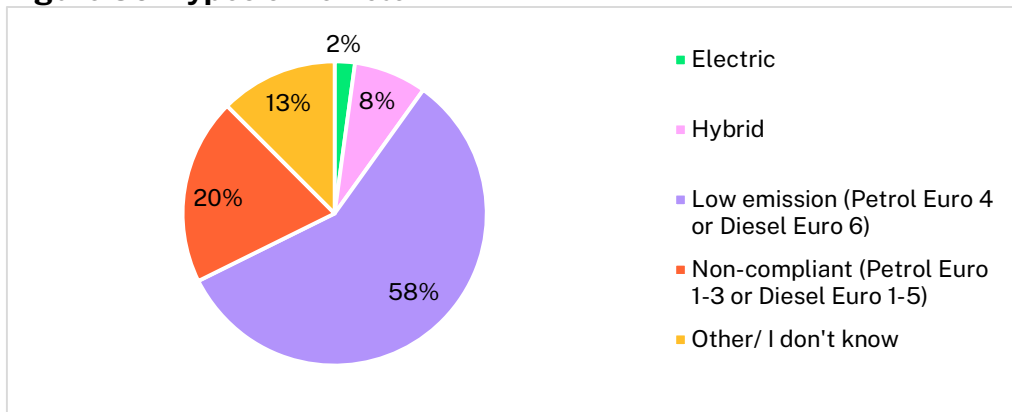


48% of respondents reported they have no household access to a private vehicle. 38% report having one vehicle, and 12% have two. Respondents on higher incomes were more likely to have at least one vehicle, as were those in rural areas. Respondents in the Northwest of England had the highest mean average number of vehicles (1.00 per household) and those in London had the fewest (0.53).

Respondents who told us they hold a Blue Badge were more likely to have a car than those without (mean average of 0.83 versus 0.51).

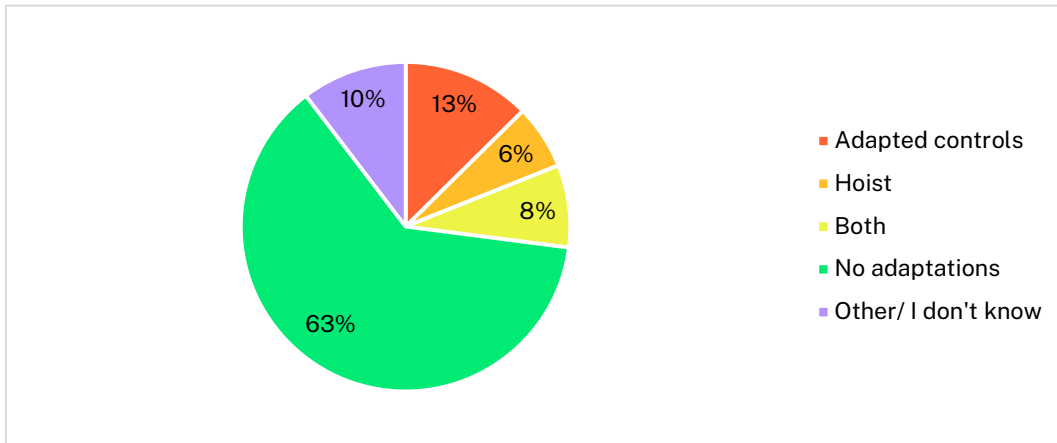
Our research found that respondents who hold a concessionary pass were less likely to own a car than those who don't: respondents with a Disabled Persons Railcard owned a mean average of 0.57 cars compared with 0.77 for those without; respondents with a bus pass owned a mean average of 0.58 cars versus 0.86 for those without.

**Figure 86: Types of vehicle**



Of respondents who do have access to a vehicle, the majority of these (58%) have a low emission vehicle. 20% of respondents have a vehicle that is not compliant with emission standards. Only 2% have an electric vehicle. This did not vary significantly by any parameter.

**Figure 87: Vehicle adaptations**



Of those with access to a vehicle, 63% of respondents have no adaptations. 13% have adapted controls, 6% have a hoist, and 8% have both.

People with a mobility impairment were far more likely to have at least one car adaptation.



## Barriers

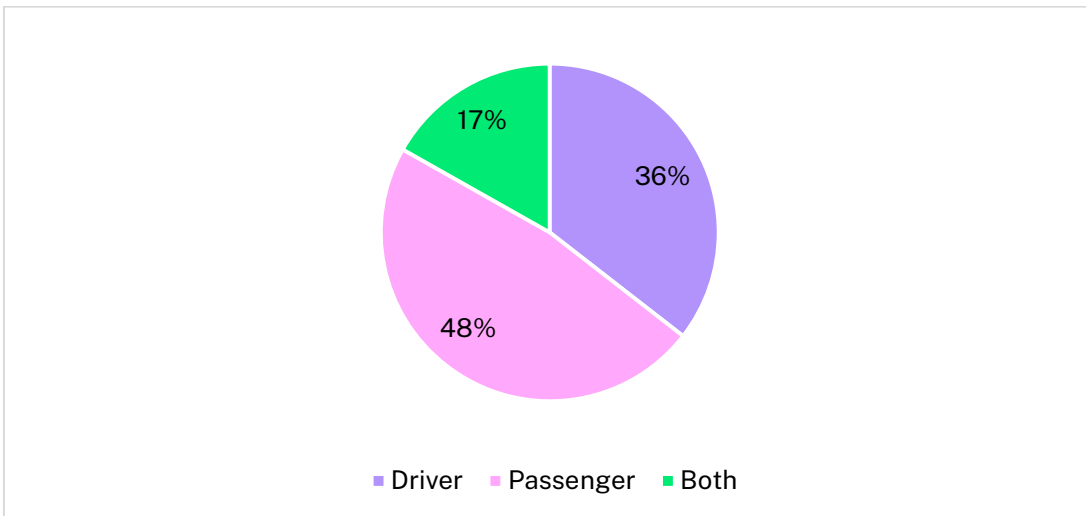
**Figure 88: Which of these barriers, if any, have you experienced to using the car or van in the past 12 months (tick all that apply)**

Barrier	Respondents
Lack of driver (I don't/can't drive and it is difficult to find a driver)	43%
Cost	40%
Number of car parking spaces for disabled people	38%
Traffic	36%
Distance between car parking and where you need to go	32%
State of roads (potholes etc)	27%
Traffic reduction measures (i.e congestion zones, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, one-way systems, bus priority)	23%
Vehicle design – I can't find a vehicle that suits my needs OR I have difficulty getting into and out of the vehicle easily/independently	17%
Lack of facilities at motorway services (i.e accessible toilets)	11%
Fuel refilling stations/ EV charging points are inaccessible to me / I can't use them	8%
Access to driving lessons and assessments for adaptive vehicles	7%
Difficulty navigating and reading signs	7%
Other	2%
None – this mode is accessible to me	11%

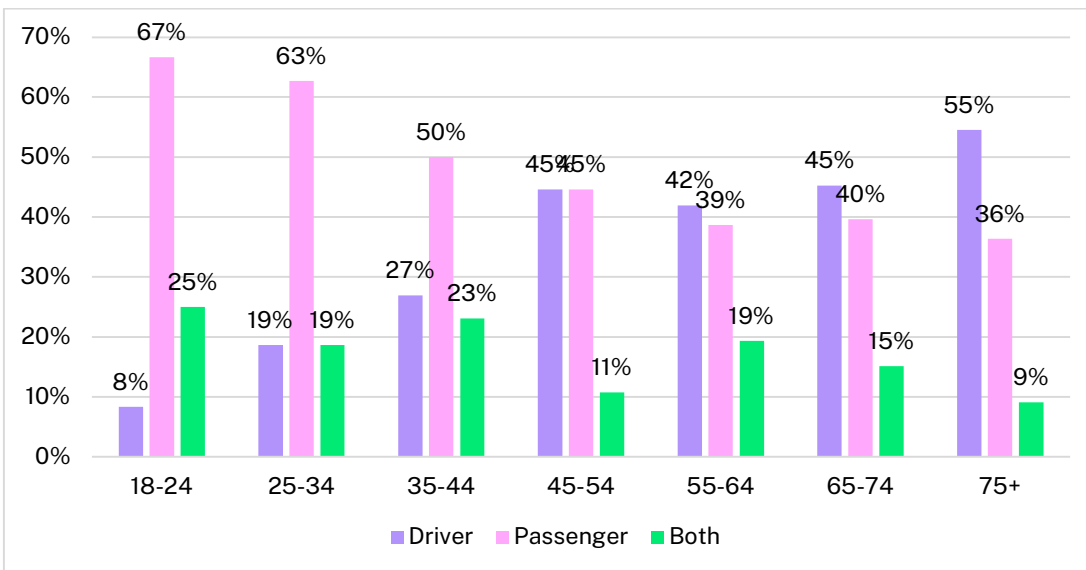
## Access to a driver and vehicle

Difficulty finding a driver was the most common barrier, with 43% of people saying they could not or did not drive, and were often unable to find someone who could. 48% of respondents said that they exclusively or primarily used the car as a passenger, with only 36% saying they mainly drove themselves. These findings suggest that, despite relying on the car due to access barriers on public transport, many disabled people are regularly left without the necessary support to use it.

**Figure 89: How do you use the car/van mainly?**



**Figure 90: How do you use the car/van mainly, by age**



As well as finding a driver, many disabled people face barriers to finding a suitable vehicle. 17% of respondents said that they could not access a vehicle that met their needs, or that they struggled to get in and out of their car independently. For some participants, the cost of an appropriate or adapted vehicle was too high, or there didn't seem to be a suitable design at all. An additional 7% reported a lack of instructors and assessments for those using adapted vehicles.

- “I have had an assessment for car adaptations and a lesson in an adapted car. I had to get a very expensive taxi journey to get to the assessment centre on both

occasions because they weren't accessible by public transport and I didn't have anyone to take me. As I'm unlikely to be eligible for a Motability vehicle, I would have to fund an adapted car myself, and that's currently not affordable for me. This means I continue to be reliant on other people to give me lifts, or expensive taxis."

- "I am the process of trying to get back to driving (with adaptations - hand controls/wheelchair hoist) to achieve more independence. I have had my initial driving assessment and know what adaptations are required. However trying to then a) find a suitable adaptation specialist, b) find a suitable car (that isn't a van!!) and c) find a driving instructor to have familiarisation lessons, has proven to be almost impossible. There is one (1 x single) adaptation driving instructor in a 25 mile radius of my home - and getting schedules to align for lessons is nigh on impossible. We desperately need more accessibility trained driving instructors."

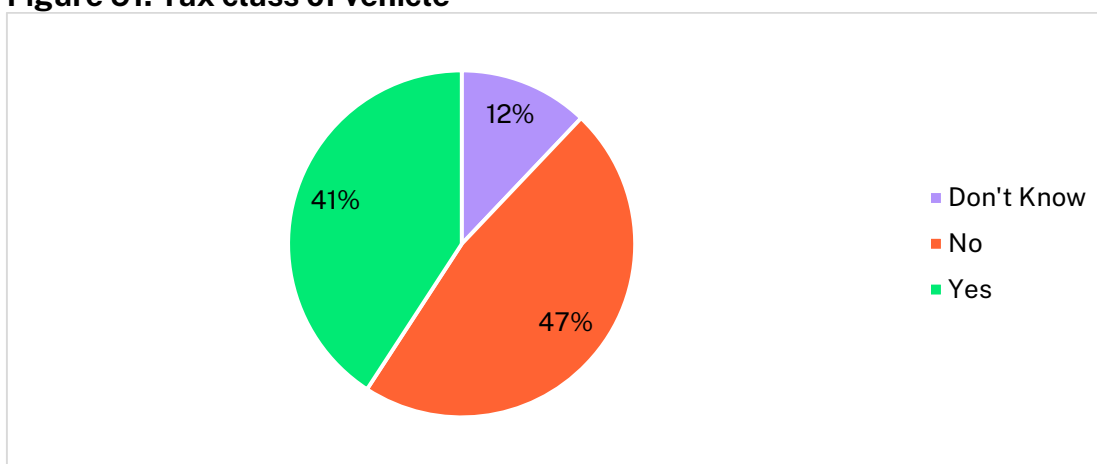
## Financial barriers

40% of respondents faced financial barriers to car travel, encompassing both our higher living costs and the costs of a vehicle, tax, and fuel. The vehicle adaptations used by 37% of those surveyed can add thousands to the already mounting costs.

There is a tax exemption in place for vehicles used by disabled people to help mitigate these barriers. However, 12% were unaware of whether they had a disabled tax class vehicle or not, suggesting that there is either not enough awareness of this exemption, or that there are other barriers to accessing it.

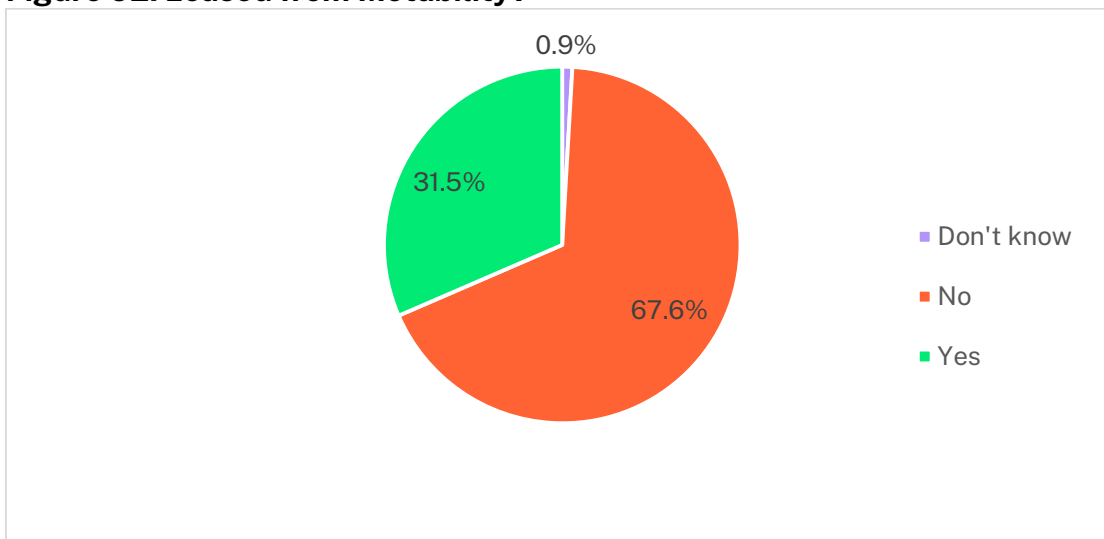
Respondents with mobility impairments were much more likely to have a vehicle with the disabled tax class (54%) than those without mobility impairments (13%). Neurodivergent respondents on the other hand were much less likely to have a disabled tax class vehicle (25%) than neurotypical respondents (45%).

**Figure 91: Tax class of vehicle**



The Motability Scheme also seeks to mitigate financial barriers to driving by allowing disabled people who receive the higher mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to lease a suitable vehicle using this allowance. However, there are significant barriers to accessing the Motability scheme and the benefits required to qualify for it<sup>lxx</sup>. This once again leaves many disabled people to pay out of pocket for vital (and expensive) adaptations.

**Figure 92: Leased from Motability?**



32% of respondents leased their car from Motability, and those with mobility impairments were far more likely to use this scheme. 43% of all respondents with mobility impairments had a Motability car. Participants who hold a Blue Badge were more likely to have a Motability car, as were participants with Disabled Persons Rail Card.

## Parking

A lack of spaces for disabled people to park is a significant barrier to driving and was the third most frequently reported issue for this mode (38%).

In the absence of an accessible space, disabled people reported having to park a long way from our destinations, increasing journey time and walking distance. This distance was a barrier for 32% of respondents. This is a particularly concerning issue given how many participants use the car precisely because it allows us to make door-to-door journeys and reduces the walking distance.

People with larger, adapted vehicles such as wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs), also told us about issues with finding a space big enough, especially in the absence of enough Blue Badge parking bays.

## Traffic

For disabled people, traffic and the policies around it can be extremely divisive issues. While 36% said that traffic is a barrier for them, traffic reduction measures like Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods, road user charging policies such as congestion zones, and one-way systems were also barriers for 23% of respondents.

This suggests that while measures must be taken to reduce traffic, that these measures must also account for the access needs of disabled people, or they can end up exacerbating the very problems they seek to address, as well as creating new ones.

Respondents reported a range of examples of how traffic impacted them, including that extended time sitting down can cause pain, inflammation, and exhaustion, while increasing exposure to air pollution for both those inside and outside of the vehicle. It can also prevent people from addressing other vital needs, including going to the toilet and taking medication.

People also told us about examples of traffic reduction initiatives that have had a negative impact, saying that the need to navigate around Low Traffic Neighbourhoods has increased their journey times, caused them to sit in traffic for longer, and forced them to make unexpected diversions. Participants also reported that measures like speed bumps can cause serious pain, especially for those with spinal injuries.

- “When driving a normal journey or long journey, when I arrive at traffic on the motorway, I have no way of knowing about traffic in advance as its broadcasted in emergency news wave on the radio & the fact I can't hear it & don't know how to access it, I get bit stressful when not knowing what's going on, so I accept it when I'm stuck in traffic but it is a nuisance if I end up needing the toilet & the traffic is not moving.”
- “As I have spinal issues, traffic calming measures such as sleeping policemen and rumble-strips are at best uncomfortable, at worst acutely painful. This is often worse in car parks due to the use of measures which would not be acceptable on the road. I hit one yesterday which literally took my breath away, the rise and fall was so sharp.”

## Other infrastructural barriers

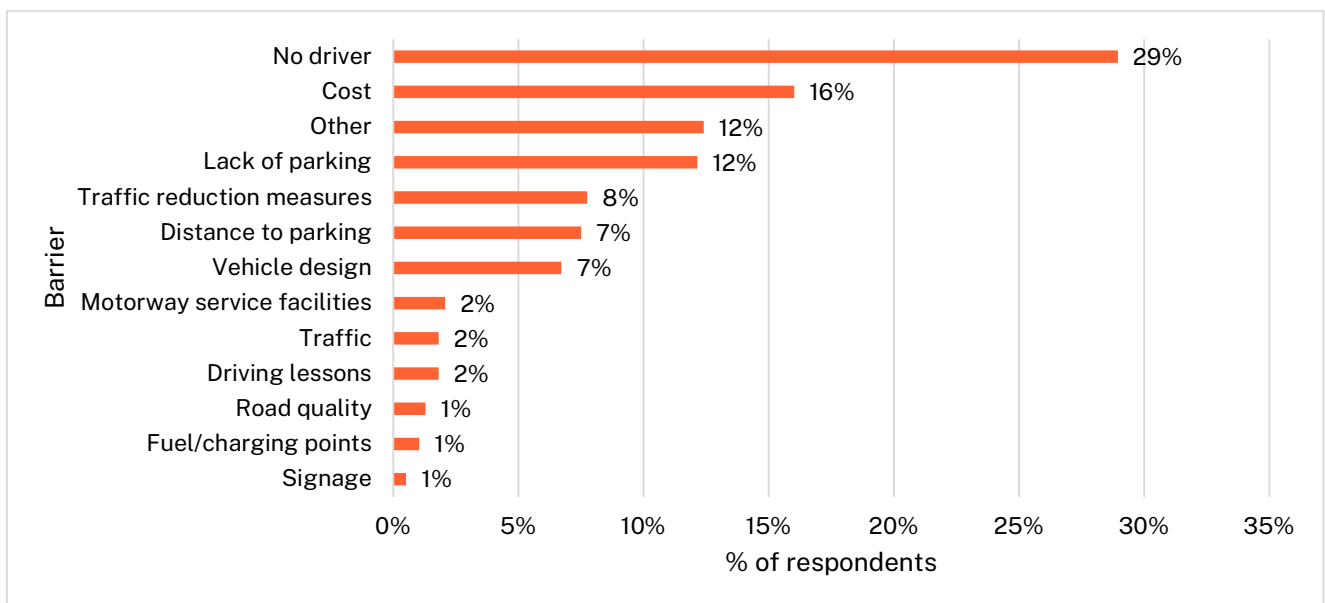
27% of respondents said that potholes, road works, and badly maintained surfaces made traveling by car inaccessible. As well as forcing people to take unexpected diversions and increasing journey time, irregular surfaces can cause serious pain for some.

Many essential facilities also exclude disabled people, with 11% saying that service stations lacked accessible facilities such as toilets, and 12% of disabled drivers saying that fuelling and EV charging points were inaccessible to them.

7% also said that they had difficulty navigating or reading signs. Again, given that many wayfinding apps and online sources are inaccessible, road signs are particularly important for disabled people.

## Most significant barrier

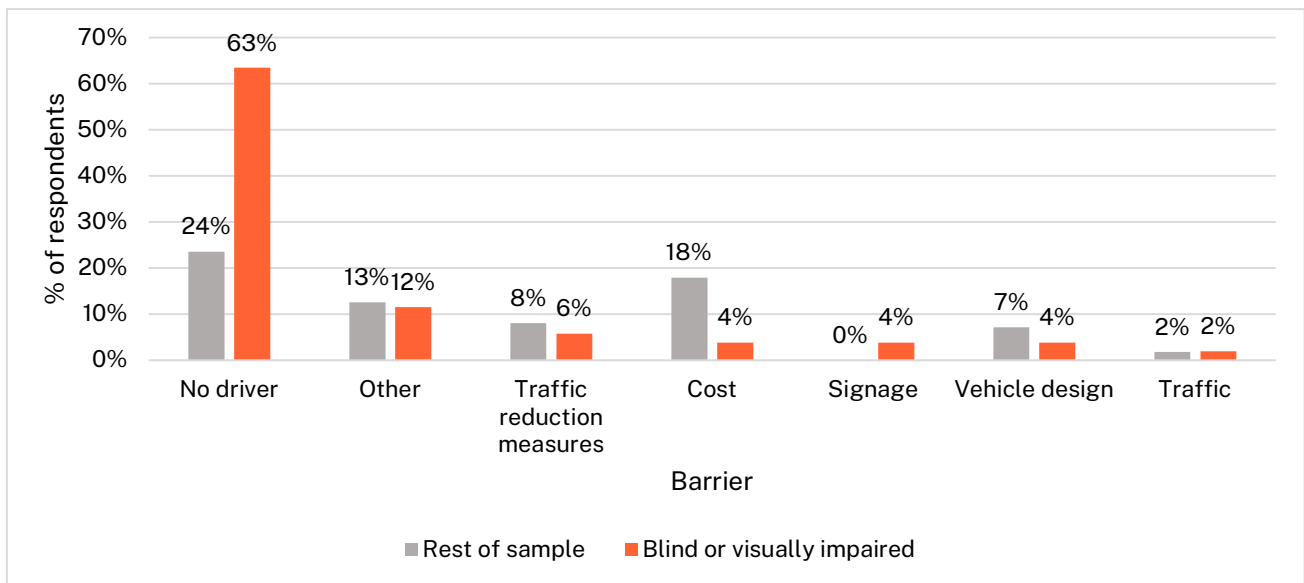
**Figure 93: If you had to choose just one, what is the biggest/most significant barrier to using the car?**



Out of all these barriers to using the car, respondents said that difficulty finding a driver was the most significant. 29% ranked this as their top option, almost double the proportion of the second most voted option (Cost, 16%). This makes difficulty finding a driver both the most pervasive and the most disabling barrier to disabled people using the car.

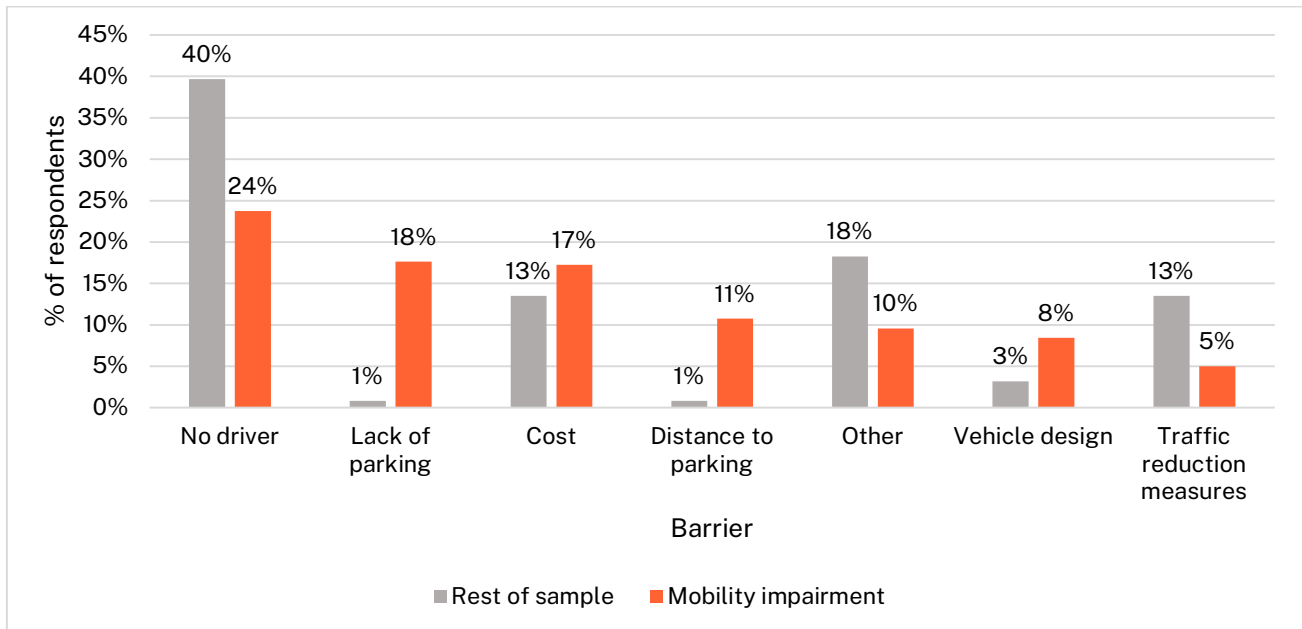
Blind and visually impaired respondents were far more likely to choose lack of driver: 64% of participants with visual impairment chose lack of driver compared with 24% of people without visual impairment. They were also the only respondents to select difficulty reading signs as the most significant barrier (4% compared to 0% without visual impairment).

**Figure 94: Most significant barrier to the car: respondents who are blind or visually impaired compared to rest of sample**



While lack of driver was also the most significant barrier for respondents with mobility impairments (24%), this group were also more likely than those without mobility impairment to select cost (18% compared with 13%), number of car parking spaces for disabled people (18% compared with 1%), distance between parking space and destination (11% compared with 1%), and vehicle design (8% compared with 3%).

**Figure 95: Most significant barrier to the car: respondents with a mobility impairment compared to rest of sample**



## Impact

The two most commonly reported impact of the barriers faced to using the car were having to plan in advance, and journey being made more difficult/stressful.

**Figure 96: As a result of these barriers to the car, have you experienced any of the following?**

Impact	%
Journey is more difficult/stressful	51%
I have to plan in advance	51%
Stops me using this mode	41%
Impacts my health	41%
Stops me making a journey	40%
I have to travel with someone else	40%
Journey is more expensive	36%
Journey is longer	33%
Impacts my confidence	27%



## Changes disabled people want to see

We used free text boxes to ask participants what improvements could be made to make car or van travel more accessible to them. The responses largely fell into three categories:

1. Accessible vehicles
2. Accessible infrastructure

### Accessible vehicles

#### Cost

Though the most significant barrier was lack of driver, this was not the primary focus of people's suggested improvements, which is centred around measures to reduce costs. 18% who answered this question called for increased subsidies, better access to funding, and expanded concessions for disabled people travelling by car or van. Addressing the burdensome cost of adaptations and WAVs came up frequently, as did the cost of fuel.

Many also said that being able to access the higher rate of PIP would enable them to drive more. Not only would this give people the additional funding they need, but would also provide easier access to Blue Badges, the Motability scheme and subsidised vehicles.

#### Driver

11% of respondents said that having more access to drivers would make it easier for them to use the car, making it the third most frequently suggested improvement. Some mentioned a general desire for more people in their lives who could drive them on an ad hoc basis, while others specified that they would like to have more professional access, either from care assistants, hired drivers, or volunteer programmes. Some respondents mentioned a desire for fully self-driving cars, eliminating the need for a driver altogether (although it must be noted that current proposals in this area are likely to still require a driver being present in an 'autonomous' vehicle).

#### Vehicles

8% said that having access to a suitable car would improve their experience. There were calls for expanded access to the Motability scheme to achieve this, as well as a wider range of available vehicle options.

Changes to the design of the vehicle were suggested just as frequently, especially by those who require a wheelchair accessible vehicle. Many wanted a vehicle that allowed them to stay in their wheelchair without transferring, while others needed access to a more spacious vehicle that allowed them to safely stow their chair away.

Calls for more accessible vehicles did not exclusively focus on hoists. Many said that design changes like brighter interiors with higher contrast designs, easily adjustable seating, automatic gears, larger boots, and easier ways to enter and exit the vehicle would all make driving more accessible.

### **Lessons**

A further 5% said they would like more access to driving lessons. Respondents said there were very few instructors available who could teach in an adapted vehicle, and even fewer who could deliver the lessons in accessible formats like BSL. There were also calls for cheaper or subsidised lessons as well.

- “I can’t use an electric car and there are very few cars available to suit my needs. The upfront cost of a Motability car is now significant and I don't qualify for financial help.”
- “I'd love to have easier access to instructors who can sign, or who have very good Deaf awareness. I don't currently know how to find out this information - a lot of it seems to be word of mouth, and instructors seem to be very far afield.”

## **Accessible infrastructure**

### **Traffic**

Both traffic itself and traffic reduction measures created barriers for disabled people, and the improvements participants suggested reflected this divide. While traffic was reported as a barrier by significantly more participants than traffic reduction measures, there were far fewer suggestions for ways to improve it.

Instead, more people focused on changes to traffic reduction measures (8%). Often people wanted to see exemptions for disabled people from Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), though low emissions zones were also mentioned. People also wanted to be able to link their exemption to more than one car. As we have seen, 48% of disabled people primarily use the car as a passenger and are likely to be receiving lifts from different people in different vehicles.

While most people wanted subsidies or exemptions, some mentioned redesigning the layout of LTNs and other schemes, while others wanted to see them scrapped altogether.

There were also calls for reduced traffic. Most expressed a general desire to see less traffic and fewer cars on the roads, while others proposed specific measures like incentives for car sharing schemes. Some said they wanted more accessible live information on traffic and delays, so they could plan their journey accordingly.

## Parking

15% of respondents wanted to see more parking spaces, making it the second most common suggestion. Importantly, these calls did not exclusively focus on Blue Badge bays; many disabled people face barriers to accessing a Blue Badge, and so benefit from increased availability of general parking. Other improvements put forward were bigger spaces, more parking close to the destination, and cheaper or subsidised parking.

There were also specific suggestions for creating more Blue Badge bays. As well as increasing the number of spaces available, and fewer time restrictions on when they could be used, many wanted improvements to the design of accessible bays themselves. In particular, people wanted more space at the back and sides of the bay, so that they could safely deploy ramps and hoists without hitting other vehicles.

Participants also wanted to see more monitoring and enforcement to make sure only Blue Badge holders were parking in these spaces, and more penalties for those who misuse them. Many also wanted eligibility for Blue Badges to be expanded, as well as making the process for applying easier.

- “Having disabled car parking spaces with yellow hashes behind the car so that I can get out of my car safely. Most out of town retail parks have none at all. This means I have to lower the ramp into oncoming traffic and many times, other drivers have almost crashed into my ramp.”
- “Exemptions to LTNs - often I have to drive an extremely long way around to get somewhere vs. pre-LTNs, and without a viable transport alternative I feel like this unfairly impacts disabled people. If you don't have a choice but to use a car, you are more impacted vs. an able bodied person who could walk / cycle / use public transport instead.”

# Taxis and PHVs

Given the extensive barriers to public transport and active travel, as well as the large proportion of disabled people who cannot drive or have no household access to a vehicle, Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) fill a vital gap in disabled people's mobility options. This is reflected in Government statistics: disabled people with "mobility difficulties" make more than double the number of trips per year than non-disabled people<sup>lxxi</sup>. Despite the essential role taxis play, many access barriers remain.

Requirements on licensing authorities for taxis are limited to requiring them to maintain lists of which vehicles are wheelchair accessible. There is no requirement at a national level for a percentage of a fleet to be accessible.

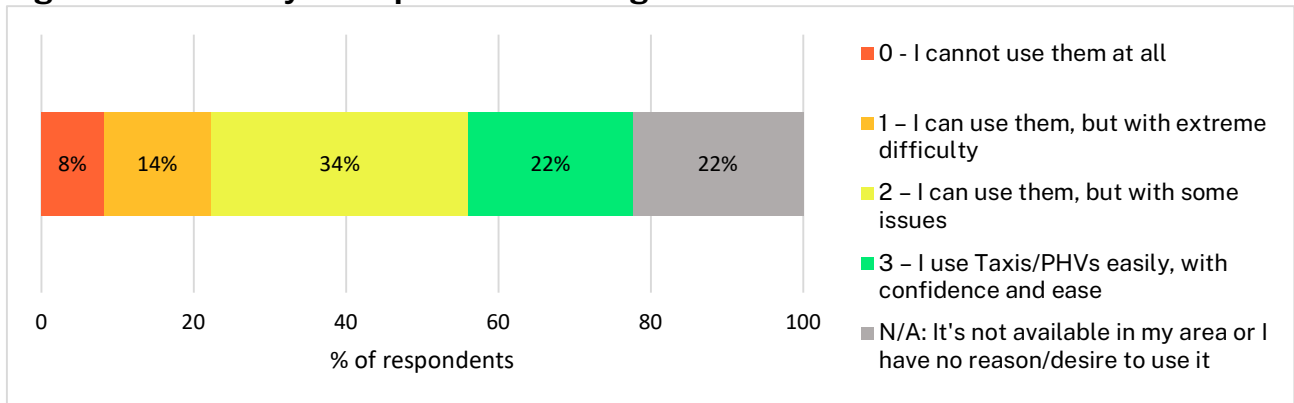
As of July 2023, 13% of all licensed vehicles across England were wheelchair accessible, consisting of 55% of taxis and just 2% of PHVs<sup>lxxii</sup>. The percentage of wheelchair accessible taxis nationally has fallen to 55% from 58% in 2016-17<sup>lxxiii</sup>. While all taxis in London are wheelchair accessible, in the rest of England outside of London this falls to 39%.

In summer 2022 the 'Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons)' Act was passed. This closed a loophole and expanded certain provisions in the Equality Act to apply to all disabled people where previously they only applied to those with particular impairments or in specific circumstances. Now, non-exempt drivers must accept the carriage of any disabled person who could reasonably travel in their vehicle, provide reasonable mobility assistance to enable a passenger to get into and out of the vehicle with their mobility aids, and not make or propose additional charges for doing so.

## Experience

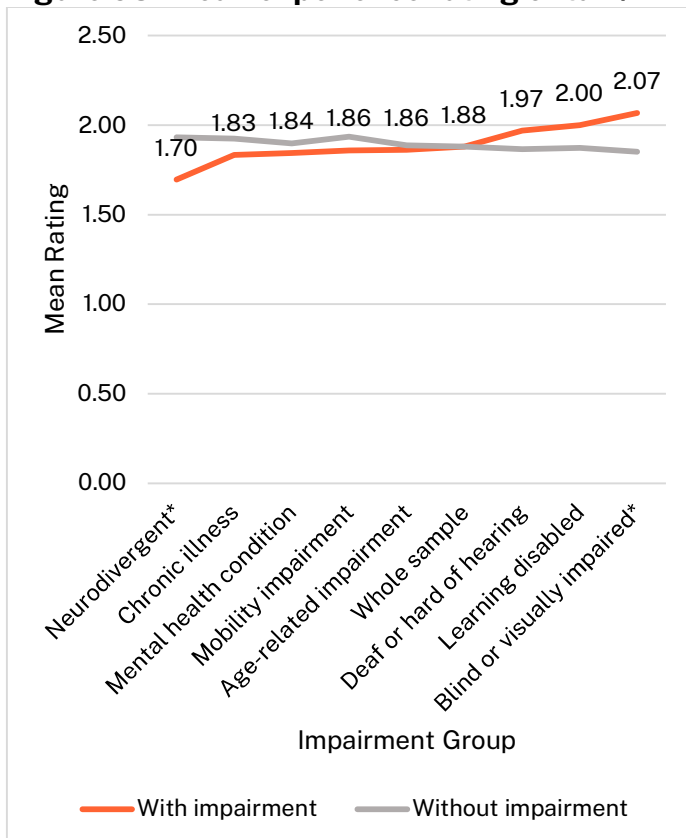
Respondents had a generally positive experience of taxis, giving this mode an average rating of 1.88 out of 3. 22% reported that they use taxis easily and with confidence, while 8% said they cannot use them at all. This is a considerably higher rating than other modes in the survey.

**Figure 97: What is your experience of using taxis/PHVs?**



Interestingly, this rating did not vary significantly between age groups, settlements, regions, or most impairment types. Neurodivergent respondents gave a slightly lower average rating (1.7 compared to 1.93 for neurotypical participants), while blind and visually impaired respondents gave a slightly higher rating (2.07 compared with 1.85 for those without visual impairments).

**Figure 98: Mean experience rating of taxi/PHVs by impairment**



Note: \* is used to denote statistical significance, which indicates that the difference in mean ratings between participants with and without the impairment did not occur due to chance.

## What works well

When asked about the benefits of travelling by taxi, disabled people overwhelmingly wrote about the convenience and ease of this mode. The most common reason given was that it provides door to door journeys, which removes many of the barriers that come with changing modes, and reduces the walking distance on either side of the journey. This was a significant benefit for 29% of respondents. When taxi journeys work well, participants said they were less stressful, more comfortable, and quicker than the alternatives.

Having a driver who provides the appropriate assistance was also key factor in making taxi journeys accessible. This was the second most common theme brought up by respondents, with 17% of saying that they have found drivers to be friendly and helpful.

For wheelchair and mobility scooter users, taxis provide one of the few truly step-free options. Being able to hire a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) was therefore a significant benefit for many respondents. Black cabs in particular were brought up as a good option for wheelchair users; participants said they were consistently wheelchair accessible, and drivers were helpful and provided assistance.

Disabled people also had positive things to say about the experience of booking taxis. The variety of ways to hire a ride – online, through apps, phone calls, or hailing one at a taxi rank – meant that there were often a range of options to suit different access needs.

Some also said that being able to pre-order a taxi allowed them to avoid the stress of a last-minute rush, and get transport sorted well in advance. Conversely, some also said that being able to book a taxi last minute allowed them to travel spontaneously, as opposed to other modes which often required meticulous planning to navigate.

People also said that taxis and PHVs worked well when they were available, reliable, and punctual.

- “They can get me from A to B quickly and easily, and are especially useful when I'm feeling stressed about planning a route, being around a lot of people, being fatigued or in pain, and/or being on time. Mini-cabs can be pre-booked which is sometimes useful for planning purposes. I like using ride-hailing apps such as Addison Lee and Uber, because when those services are available I know I will always have a safe option for getting to where I need to be. I don't have to worry about the route, as that's the driver's job.”
- “Well trained drivers are supportive and helpful, so the journey can remain 'drama-free'. Generally they will try and drop you in a location that is accessible and safe to depart the vehicle. Taking a taxi also reduces the amount of wheelchair pushing I need to do to get to my destination (versus travelling by train). I like the fact that I can travel relatively independently via taxi and there are far less variables that can go wrong versus other modes of transport.”

## Barriers

**Figure 99: Which of these barriers, if any, have you experienced to using taxis/PHVs in the past 12 months (tick all that apply)**

Barrier	Respondents
Expensive	64%
Not enough Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) available	34%
Negative attitudes/behaviour from driver	29%
The driver provides unsatisfactory assistance	27%
I have experienced access refusals	26%
When booking, the operator does not listen/understand my access request	26%
Lack of available/accessible kerbside pickup	24%
I get charged extra for being disabled or having a mobility aid	15%
The booking system is not accessible to me	15%
Other	6%
Issues with the design of the vehicle	3%
None – this mode is accessible to me	7%

## Cost

Cost was the most common barrier to using taxis and PHVs by some margin, with 64% of respondents saying they could not afford to use taxis as much as they want or need. While taxis are often one of the most physically accessible modes for many disabled people, this suggests they are one of the least financially accessible. Our research shows disabled people are being forced to rely on a mode of travel that we cannot afford to use.

Some participants wrote about cancelling journeys and plans because they didn't have the money to get a cab, or only making very short trips to keep costs down. Some also said that they have to use black cabs for accessibility reasons, but these journeys are often more expensive.

- “PHV/Taxis are just too expensive to justify using them regularly.”
- “I tend to resort to taxis when unable to walk but when no buses are available, although this is an expensive option. Sometimes if a taxi is my only transport option, I simply won't go.”

## Lack of suitable vehicles

The second most common barrier to taxis was the limited availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs), which affected 34% of respondents. People told us this created a constant sense of anxiety and uncertainty when making taxi journeys; people couldn't be sure how long the wait would be until a WAV became available, or whether there would be any availability at all.

In some cases, this has led to people being forced to use non-WAVs to make a journey to the detriment of their health, while others had to abandon their journey.

Some said that they have had to go out without their wheelchair and use crutches, even though this resulted in more pain and discomfort.

A smaller number of participants said they experienced issues with other aspects of the vehicle design. These include: seats being too high, not enough space to stow mobility aid, or doors that are difficult to enter and exit.

- “We have only one taxi company in Norwich that has wheelchair accessible vehicles. These are used for school run and day centre contracts so actually booking one is almost impossible because they only have 2 wavs. The vehicles are not available at times I need them often don't work beyond 5pm and don't want to work at weekends”
- “Despite having a London Taxicard I find it near impossible to book a black cab (WAV) from my home in London which is quite far out in Zone 5. This means that if I go somewhere that I can't access by other public transport due to inaccessible station nearby, I have to go with crutches not a wheelchair in a regular cab or uber, which causes more pain and impacts my health.”

## Problems with drivers

Negative experiences with driver behaviour were very common and were reported by 29% of respondents. This ranged from unsolicited remarks and uncomfortable questions to outright hostility, including throwing or breaking mobility aids.

Despite it being illegal, 26% of respondents had experienced an access refusal (where drivers either refuse to pick up a disabled person or drive off upon seeing them).

Even when drivers did agree to carry some respondents, they could give inadequate or sometimes dangerous assistance. This includes not safely deploying a ramp, failing to fix a wheelchair user in place properly, or demanding a guide dog be stowed in the boot.



15% reported that they have been charged extra for being disabled. Some told of drivers who added on a fee or left the meter running for the time it takes to load a mobility aid, or for the additional time a disabled passenger needed to get into the vehicle. Both of which are illegal.

Some also said that their local firms charge more for WAVs than standard cars, or that they have been charged a 'cleaning fee' for a guide dog, despite them causing no mess or damage. Another problem for blind and visually impaired participants was that the meter reading display was not accessible to them. This meant they could not confirm the fare for themselves, and were at risk of being overcharged by unscrupulous drivers.

- “I tried to get into a pre-booked taxi with my guide dog by the driver refused to carry her. He was rude and argumentative and it left me feeling shaken and stranded a long way from other modes of transport.”
- “A driver refused to take my wheelchair. I also get asked lots of questions about my accident which was traumatic.”
- “Multiple drivers have turned up seen my wheelchair and refused me service, they have also charged my extra for putting my wheelchair in the car or for the amount of time it takes me to get into the car.”
- “I only started using a wheelchair earlier this year. I have a degenerative disease and using a wheelchair is something I have tried to avoid my entire adult life. It was really difficult for me to accept that I had reached a point where I had no choice. It took me months to build up the courage to travel to London and use my chair. In the same day, one taxi driver started to pull over when he saw my mum flag him down and then drove off when he caught sight of me in my chair, the next driver sighed and complained as he deployed the ramp and the final driver said that it was 'so annoying' that he had to do this and made it clear that he was unhappy with having me as a passenger. He was even more livid when we didn't tip him for the 'extra' service he had had to provide.”

## Booking

As well as barriers during the journey, disabled people frequently face barriers to booking a taxi in the first place. 26% of respondents said that their access requests have been misunderstood or ignored by call handlers when trying to book a taxi. People told us that this meant they either couldn't get a taxi at all, or that an inaccessible vehicle showed up. A further 15% said that the booking systems themselves are often inaccessible. When there are limited operating companies in a given area, it is even more important that they provide a range of booking formats. We also found that out of all the modes of transport covered in this survey, participants rated taxis as being the most difficult mode to find information on, with 19% of our respondents saying this was extremely difficult.

- “Taxi turned up with broken ramp despite the booking having been specifically for a wheelchair user. I was unable to get to my appointment on time and I had to re-book. This meant that I waited an extra 5 months for urgent medical treatment. It made me feel angry and upset.”
- “I don't use taxis as most require a phone call to book and having to speak to the driver to agree destination”

## Additional barriers

24% of respondents said that a lack of a suitable kerbside pickup or drop off location was a barrier to taxi travel. This could be because of litter or other obstructions on the kerb, or because there are cycle lanes along the wayside that make crossing to the vehicle unsafe. This is another important reminder of the way that barriers on one mode of transport, particularly walking and wheeling, can have a knock-on effect on other modes.

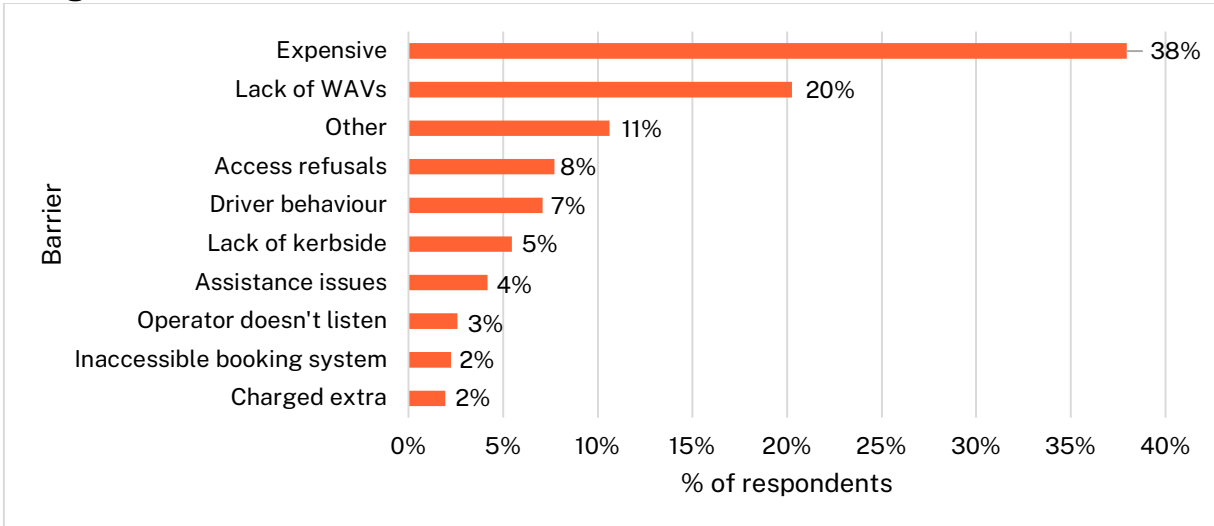
A few respondents said that safety concerns were a barrier to taxis, including the ongoing risk of contracting COVID-19. This was exacerbated by some drivers refusing to wear masks or open the windows when requested.

Some said that the “horror stories” they hear from other disabled people puts them off using taxis to begin with. There seemed to be a sense among respondents that, when taxis work well, they are a convenient and accessible way to get around. But when people do encounter barriers, they can be profoundly distressing, to the point that even second-hand stories can shatter disabled people’s confidence in using this mode.

- “Sometimes drop off points for taxis are very difficult to find as cycle lanes are there now and most taxi drop off points do not have dropped curbs.”
- “Taxi drivers are ignoring my requests to put a mask on (vulnerable to COVID due to long COVID)”

# Most significant barrier

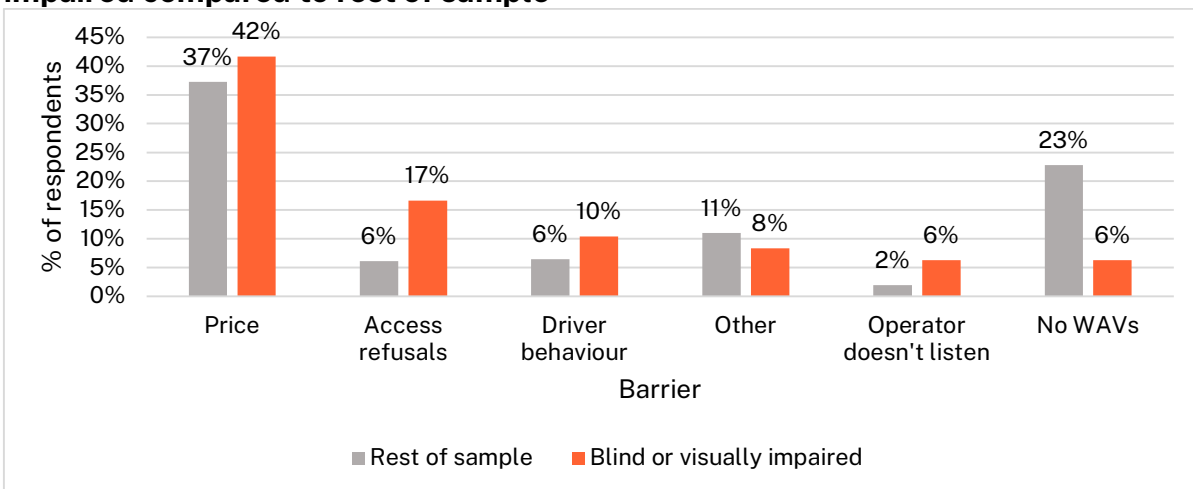
**Figure 100: If you had to choose just one, what is the biggest/most significant barrier to using taxis/PHVs?**



38% of participants said that the single most significant barrier to taxis was the prohibitive cost, making it both the most frequently experienced and most disabling barrier, followed by a lack of WAVs in second place (20%).

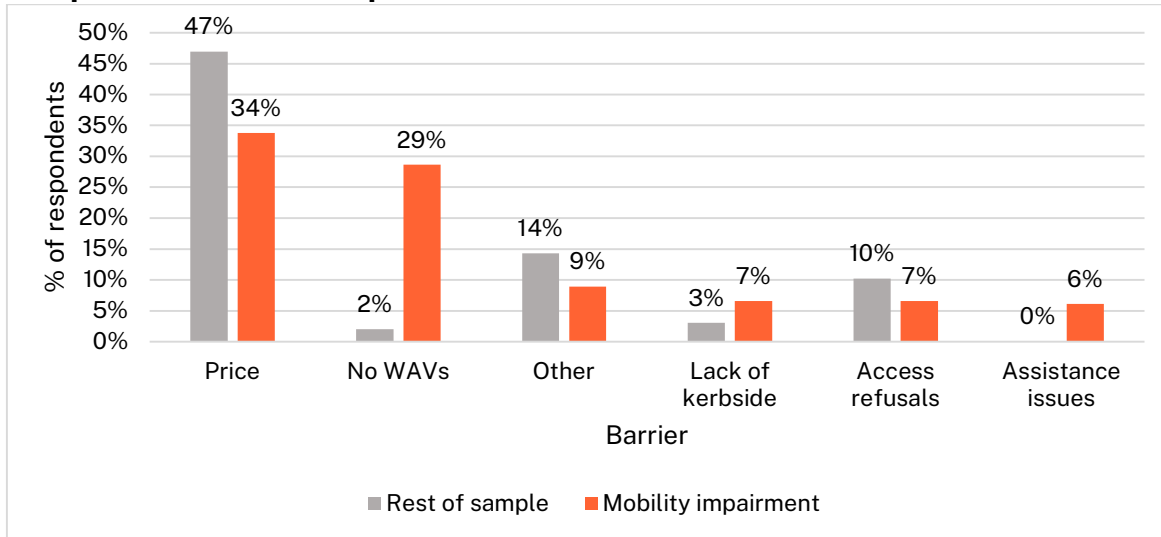
Blind and visually impaired respondents were slightly more likely to choose cost as the most significant barrier (42% compared with 37% of those without a visual impairment), and far more likely to choose access refusals (17% compared with 6% of those without a visual impairment).

**Figure 101: Most significant barrier to taxis: respondents who are blind or visually impaired compared to rest of sample**



This varied significantly for respondents with mobility impairments, who were slightly less likely to choose cost (34% compared to 47% of those without), and far more likely to choose a lack of WAVs (29% compared to 2% of those without).

**Figure 102: Most significant barrier to taxis: respondents with a mobility impairment compared to rest of sample**



## Impact

The most commonly reported impact as a result of barriers to taxis was being stopped from using taxis altogether (49%), closely followed by the journey being made more expensive (45%).

**Figure 103: As a result of these barriers to taxis, have you experienced any of the following?**

Impact	%
Stops me using this mode	49%
Journey is more expensive	45%
Journey is more difficult/stressful	40%
Stops me making a journey	34%
I have to plan in advance	29%
Impacts my health	28%
Impacts my confidence	26%
I have to travel with someone else	17%
Journey is longer	11%

## Changes disabled people want to see

Using free text boxes, we asked participants to write about what improvements could be made to make taxis and PHVs accessible to them. The responses largely fell into three categories:

1. Having the means and tools to hire a taxi
2. Improved driver behaviour
3. Availability of suitable vehicles

### Having the means to hire a taxi

#### Cost

By far the most common suggestion for making taxis more accessible was reducing the cost (35% of respondents). This is perhaps unsurprising, given that cost is the most common and disabling barrier for this mode.

To achieve this, many called for increased concessions or subsidised taxis for disabled passengers, including expanding the Taxicard scheme. Respondents also wanted reassurance that they would not be overcharged for journeys simply for being disabled.

Some also noted that, though black cabs are consistently more accessible than other services, they are also more expensive. Respondents said that if there were greater availability of WAVs on platforms like Uber, or if the cost of black cabs were reduced for disabled people, they would be more likely to use them.

A small number of respondents also said that reducing traffic or allowing taxis to drive through Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) would reduce journey times, thereby keeping costs down.

#### Booking

9% of participants wanted to see changes in the booking system for taxis and PHVs. This included better understanding from telephone operators handling access requests, and more reliable ways of passing on these requests to drivers to ensure that a suitable vehicle was always provided. Some suggested disability equality training for call handlers as one way to achieve this.

Respondents also wanted the booking systems themselves to be consistently available in a wide range of accessible formats. It was suggested that every service provide the option to book online, or over the phone, and that booking platforms provide audio-visual information for Deaf and visually impaired users.

- “On booking forms (all taxi firms should have this option), there should be an option to express access requirements and to confirm how information should be relayed (eg. orally or not). I've told people on Uber I am Deaf and would prefer text-based communication but they still talk from the driver's seat. If essential information needs to be communicated en route, then they could send a quick message on hands free, for example.”
- “I'd say cheaper but taxi drivers need to earn money to live.”
- “Costs should be subsidised for those with disabilities especially if get disability benefits”
- “Government subsidy to bring in price of taxis at par with public modes of transport for people with disabilities.”
- “Cost – the subsidised fare has gone up considerably”

## Improved driver behaviour

### Driver attitudes

25% of respondents said that, for taxis to be more accessible for disabled people, the attitudes and behaviours of drivers would have to improve. This was the second most common suggestion following reduced costs.

Drivers being willing and understanding of how to provide assistance was a key part of this. This includes pulling up directly to the kerbside when picking up or dropping off a passenger, handling wheelchairs and other mobility aids with care, and doing so without hostility towards the person who needs assistance. Many felt mandatory disability equality training for drivers would help to bring about this change.

### Access refusals

Despite it being illegal to for taxi drivers to refuse their services to disabled people, this is still a common experience for many. Respondents felt that not enough was being done to enforce these provisions in the Equality Act and said that reports of access refusals needed to be taken more seriously, with drivers meaningfully held to account for access refusals and other discriminatory behaviour. Some also said the process of reporting discrimination needed to be clearer and easier.

- “Confidence access refusals can be reported easily and that such reports will then be acted on and such behaviour challenged effectively.”
- “The things that would need to improve drivers knowledge of carrying disabled passengers”
- “Disability equality training for all taxi drivers, Complaints fully investigated, and action taken. Ask drivers about dog allergies at application stage.”

## Availability of suitable vehicles

### Availability

The low availability of taxis was consistently a barrier for disabled people, and 24% of respondents said increasing the number on the road would improve their experience of this mode. Having a reliable service would not only boost confidence for users, but would also reduce the risk of disabled people being stranded without any transport options.

### WAVs

As well as increasing the availability of taxis in general, 16% of respondents said it was vital that the number of WAVs increased too. Many respondents also said that these should be built to accommodate larger wheelchairs and mobility scooters, and that the ramps should be less steep as well.

### Vehicle design

There were some other suggestions for how taxis and PHVs could be designed more accessibly. These included: wider doors, more leg room, bigger boots for wheelchairs and mobility aids, and better interior lighting for blind and visually impaired passengers. Some respondents also mentioned stopping the use of artificial air fresheners or fragrances, which could cause allergic reactions.

- “There should be more (and a wider range of) WAV taxis throughout the UK. I can only use black cabs due to the height of my wheelchair and other taxis with two separate ramps are too wide for my wheelchair. Trying to book a taxi with a single ramp and sufficient headroom is almost impossible, but this should not be the case. You should be able to book black cabs (rather than just flagging them down) and all drivers should be trained about using their taxi ramp and how to assist passengers with disabilities. Black cabs should also have longer integral ramps that aren't too steep when used without a kerb.”
- “A law to force companies to have at least one accessible taxis in rural areas and several in cities”
- “Better design so that the ramp is not so steep - this would mean that less assistance would be needed. The drivers need to be willing to turn the chair and use suitable restraints - often the restraints are too short to be comfortable.”

# **CHAPTER 3: THE DESTINATION**

**Impact and discussion**



# Transport injustice

The findings of this research reflect what disabled people have been saying for a very long time: we do not have equitable access to any mode of transport, and the impacts of this injustice can be felt in every corner of our lives.

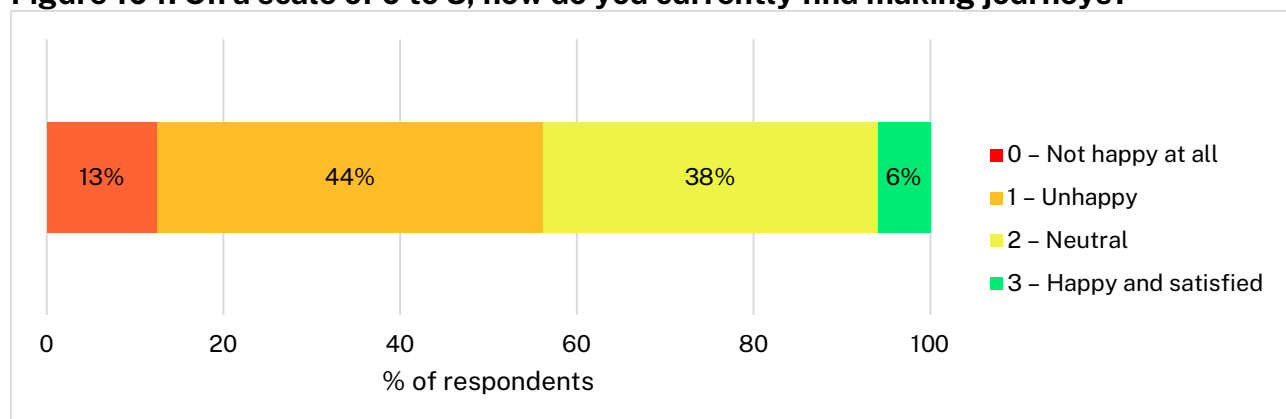
In this chapter we'll set out what this means for disabled people, wider society, and the climate.

## We're unhappy making journeys

Participants were asked to rate how happy they are making journeys on a scale of 0-3, with 0 being 'Not happy at all', and 3 being 'Happy and satisfied'.

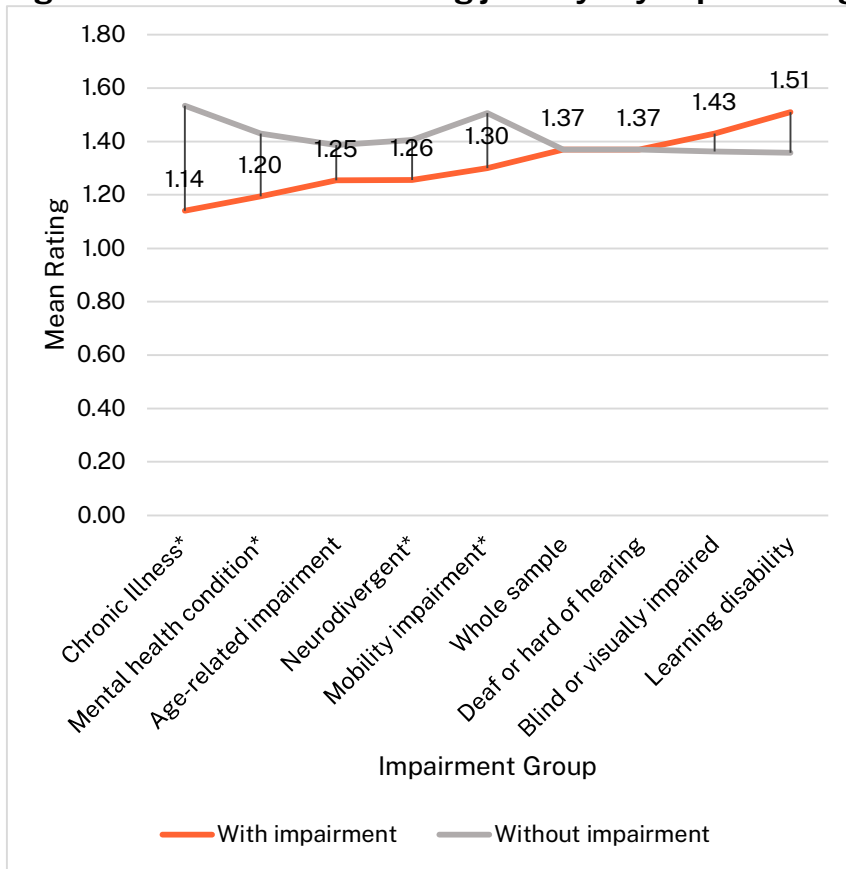
The average answer was just 1.37 out of 3, with 56% of respondents reporting they are either unhappy or extremely unhappy making journeys. Only 6% said they are happy and satisfied.

**Figure 104: On a scale of 0 to 3, how do you currently find making journeys?**



Impairment group was a factor that was significantly likely to impact rating. Those who had a chronic illness, mental health condition, mobility impairment, age related impairment, or who were neurodivergent all reported a lower rating than respondent without those impairments.

**Figure 105: satisfaction making journeys by impairment group**

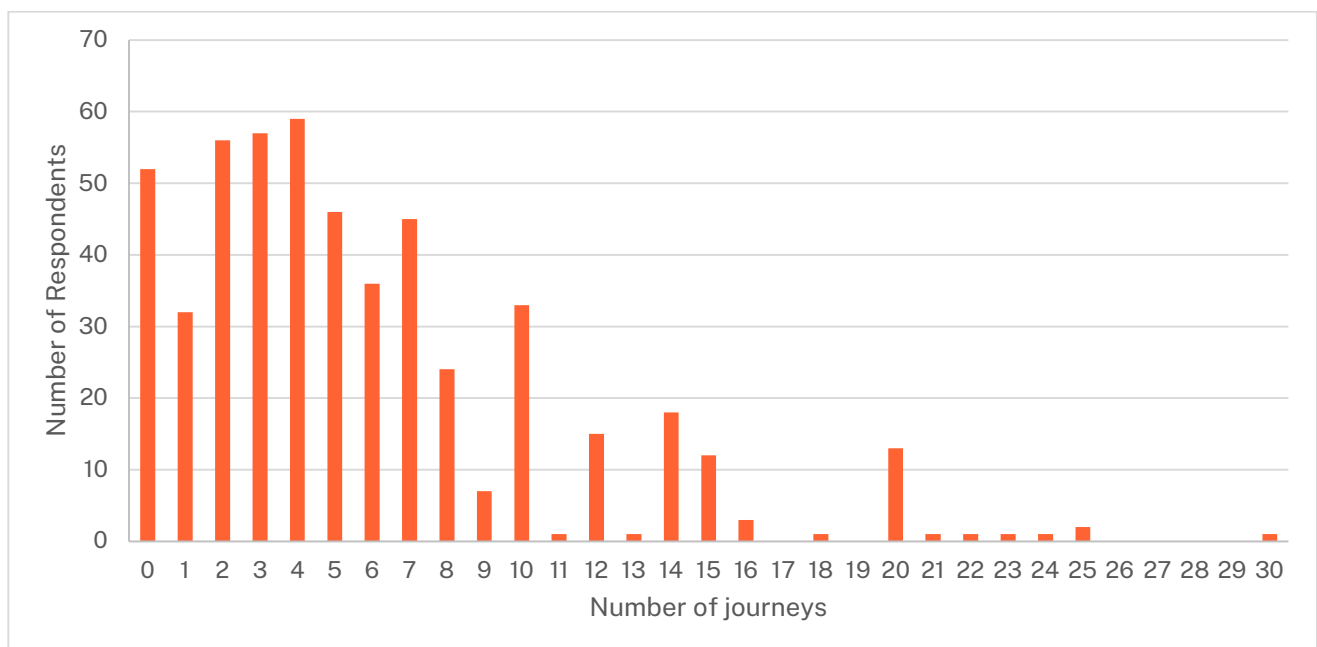


Note: \* is used to denote statistical significance, which indicates that the difference in mean ratings between participants with and without the impairment did not occur due to chance.

# We make fewer journeys than non-disabled people

We found that disabled people make far fewer journeys than non-disabled people, with an average of just 5.84 journeys per week. This is a third of the national average of 17 trips a week according to the National Travel Survey.

**Figure 106: Number of journeys per week by number of participants**



Factors which influenced how many journeys a respondent reported making include age, settlement, region, Blue Badge possession, and impairment type:

- Respondents in the 18-24 age category made the highest number of journeys per week (7.87 average), while people in the 75+ age category made the lowest number of journeys per week (4.42 average).
- Respondents in inner cities made the highest number of journeys per week (7.69) while respondents in rural areas made the fewest (4.61).
- Respondents with age-related impairments made the fewest number of journeys per week, followed by those with chronic illness, mental health conditions, and

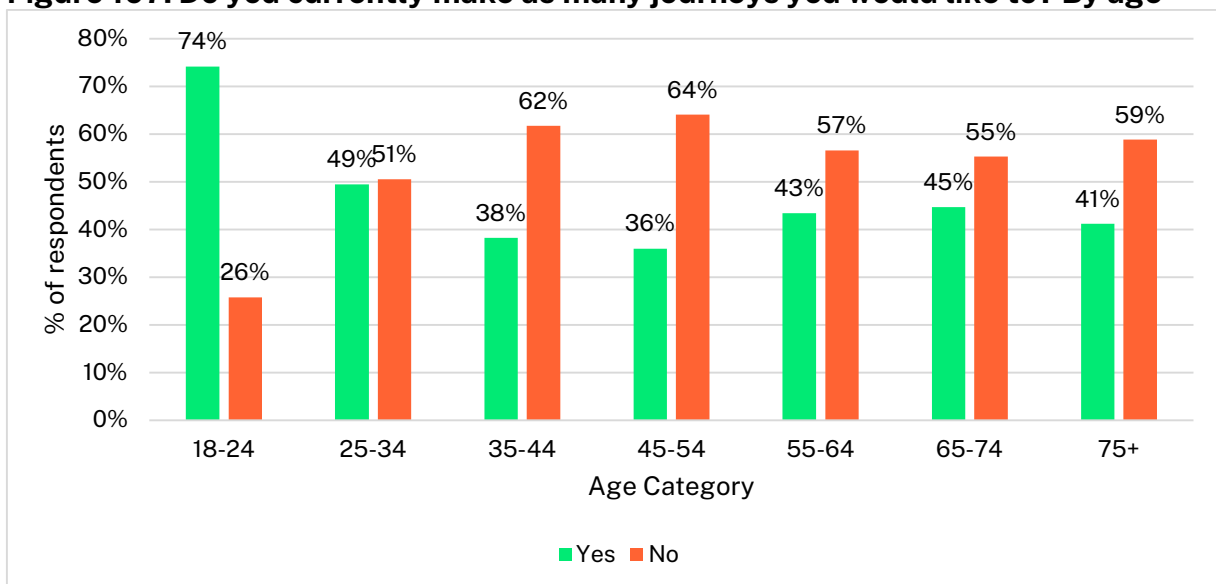
mobility impairments. Blind and visually impaired respondents made a greater average number of journeys per week than other respondents.

## Many of us want to travel more

56% of respondents report currently making as many journeys as they would like, while 44% do not.

This varied significantly by age. Respondents in the 18-24 age category were more likely to answer yes when asked if they currently make as many journeys as they want (74% yes and 26% no), while those in all other age categories were more likely to answer no, most notably in the 45-54 age category (36% yes and 64% no).

**Figure 107: Do you currently make as many journeys you would like to? By age**

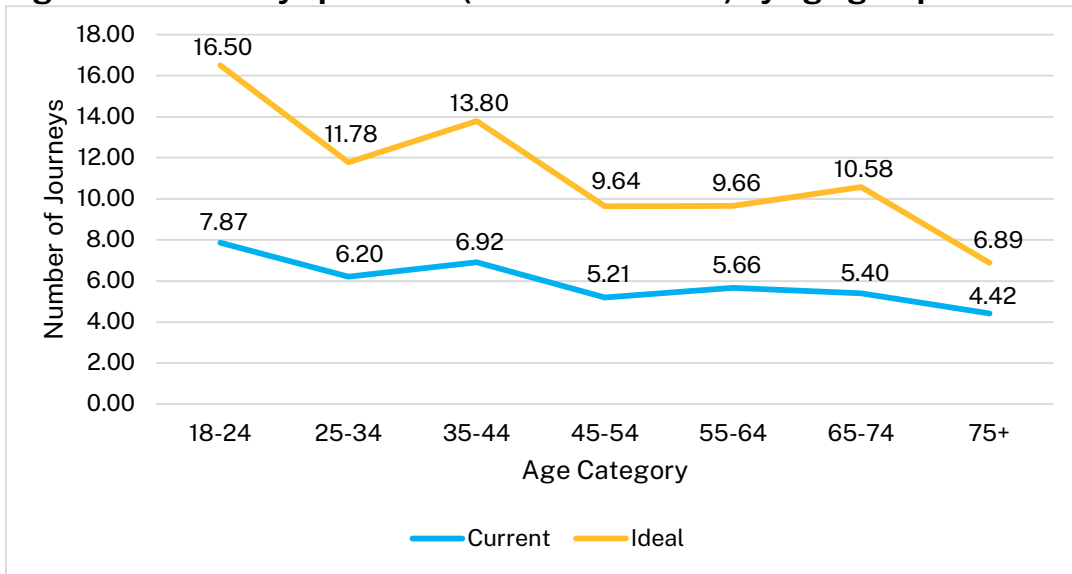


When asked how many journeys they would ideally make if transport was fully accessible, the respondents who wanted to make more journeys told us they would make on average 10.84 journeys per week.

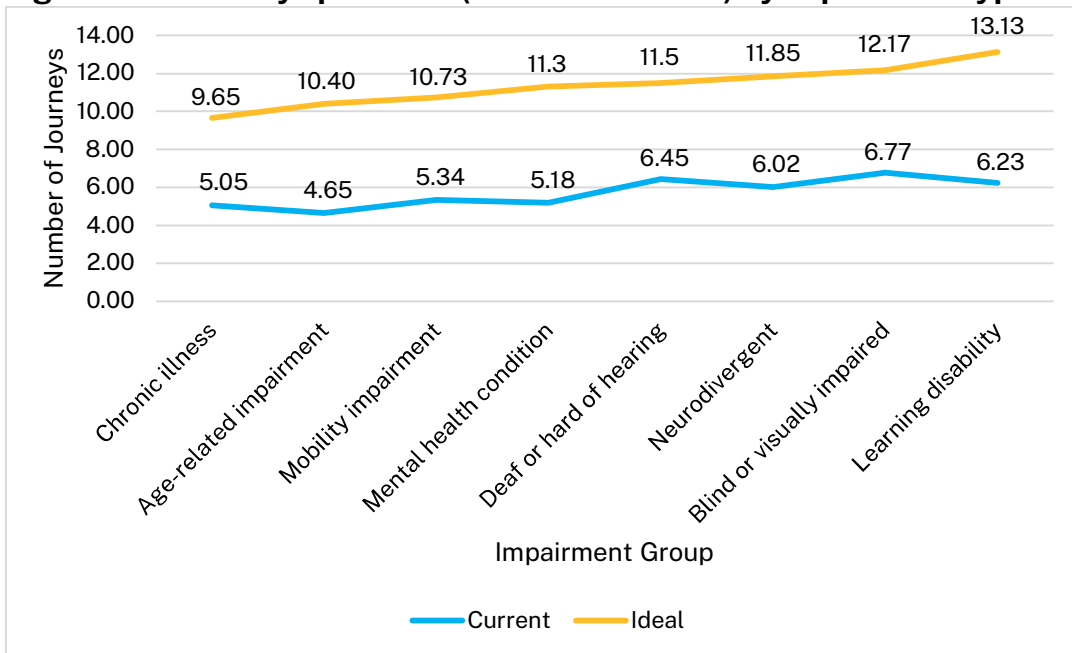
This suggests that across all participants removing barriers could mean disabled people making 50% more journeys.

Respondents in the 18-24 age category report wanting to make the most journeys per week at 16.50, while those in the 75+ age category report wanting to make the fewest at 6.89.

**Figure 108: Journeys per week (current and ideal) by age group**

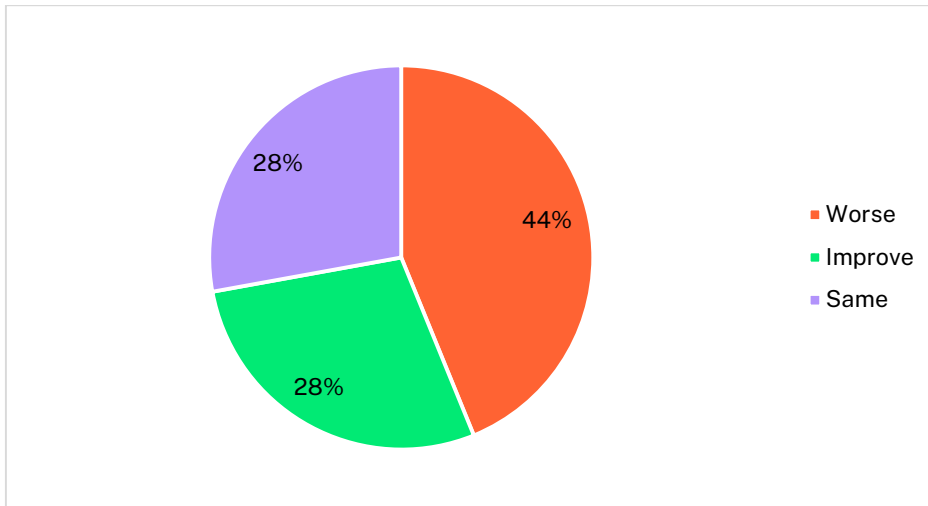


**Figure 109: Journeys per week (current and ideal) by impairment type**



However, respondents told us they weren't confident that action would be taken to remove barriers. 44% of respondents told us they thought that the accessibility of transport and streets would get worse in the next 10 years, while only 28% felt things would improve and a further 28% said things would stay the same.

**Figure 110: In your opinion, do you think accessibility of transport and streets will improve for disabled people in the next 10 years?**



## Impacts are felt widely

What is the impact of inaccessible transport on disabled people's lives?

- “My world has become very small. I rarely see other people or have social interactions. I feel very lonely and bored with life. I struggle to get more physically fit or expand my energy capacity back to where it was before the Covid-19 pandemic because the initial hurdles are so high. I often miss out on networking which could progress my career, because I struggle to get to in-person events and meetings.”
- “It impacts absolutely all areas of my life. Journeys take me 2-3 times longer than non-disabled people, which eats into my free time. It means I have less time to spend on things I enjoy. Sometimes the journey to somewhere (i.e, a friends house, or a pub), is so long and exhausting that I feel it's not worth doing (as I will be tired by the time I arrive). Sometimes I avoid doing things (working in the office, going out, seeing friends) because I can't deal with the journey, which makes me feel isolated and cut off from the world, impacting my wellbeing and mental health. I just wish I could teleport.”

**Inaccessible transport prevents disabled people from participating in leisure activities, hobbies, going to events, socialising and enjoying the things in life that are important to us.** As well physically preventing us from getting to particular locations, access barriers can make our journeys longer, eating into the time and energy we have for leisure activities. This was the most frequently cited impact, mentioned by 34% of respondents.

- “I often decide not to go to a place or event because I'm worried it will be too much of a challenge getting public transport or nearby parking and I'm concerned I'll struggle with pain afterwards.”
- “I can't visit family and friends anymore as journey times have increased and have become too stressful”
- “The reduction in bus services, including the withdrawal of Sunday and evening services means I am unable to access social activities as I work from home during the day.”
- “Because of a lack of frequent bus options that run to time in my local area, I have to walk everywhere, which given limited energy levels, restricts me. I cannot see friends, use shops, or go to local events as often as I would like to. There is also no transport which covers my health centre.”
- “It has reduced my capacity to travel, meaning I only make journeys that are absolutely essential, avoiding nearly all travels for pleasure. This has obviously had a big impact on my mental health, socializing, cultural life, as well as my work.”

**Relatedly, inaccessible transport leads to disabled people experiencing loneliness and isolation.** Respondents frequently used phrases such as “I cannot go out” or “I don't leave the house” and made it clear that this was often not due to their impairment or condition but is a result of the transport network's failure to be accessible and inclusive.

- “Being trapped at home has a big impact on my mental health. I am no longer socialising most trips are for either hospital appointments or food shopping or collect my medication and costs more as I need a taxi as can't get on a bus with my wheelchair at times at all as it's taken by a pushchair.”
- “There is no public transport to my village. No car = no mobility. Very isolating. My car broke down recently so it brought home how hard it will be when I lose my license (won't be that long)”
- “I feel more isolated and excluded. I cannot attend community day centres or committee meetings of visually impaired in Camden because dial a ride door to door bus service only allows one trip a week.”
- “I can't do ANYTHING. Can't go shopping, can't get groceries, can't see friends. Can't do ANYTHING”
- “Wanting and being well enough to go somewhere and not being able to because of transport barriers is worse than being too ill to go out in the first place.”
- “The lack of accessible transport makes it incredibly difficult to live my life. Socialising is almost a military operation of trying to ensure I get there vaguely when needed and that wherever I'm meeting friends is actually an accessible location. It causes huge amounts of stress, both immediately from access problems and more generally with making me scared to even go out because of the multiple different ways I can have access problems. The state of pavements definitely contributes negatively to my chronic pain, too.”

**As well as isolation, inaccessible transport has other detrimental impacts on mental health.** Respondents wrote about the stress, frustration, uncertainty, and exhaustion they have to contend with due to the daily barriers they face. Past access failures can also reduce people's confidence in using a particular mode of transport, or sometimes using any transport at all. Even the anticipation of these barriers meant many respondents were stressed every time they left the house.

- “It causes me undue stress. The stress of planning, of booking access, of the discrimination and distress when things go wrong on the journey, and having to complain about it afterwards and take action, means they take up an inordinate amount of my time, energy, mental health and executive function.”
- “It's like Russian roulette you don't know how many of these difficulties you will face on a journey and it is endlessly stressful.”
- “Affects me getting to from work, being able to just go out after work, being able to access classes or social things in the evenings. All affects mental health as feel less independent and isolated.”
- “I dare not use public transport using my mobility aids as I am anxious about the accessibility ie ramps being usable (gradients, lips), space on vehicles, having to wait for multiple vehicles before one has space, getting stuck partway on the journey, missing appointments and wasting journeys due to timings not working out.”

**Inaccessible transport also takes a physical toll on disabled people.** Respondents wrote about the many ways in which their physical health is impacted by barriers for transport. Often, stress and journey times could leave them exhausted and in pain, even on quick trips to the shop. This was made worse by a lack of other provisions like public seating or Blue Badge parking.

The inability to go out and participate in leisure activities also meant that people were not exercising as much as they would like, which could lead to a worsening of their existing impairment. Inaccessible transport also prevented people from attending medical appointments or accessing other vital care.

Sometimes, the physical toll could be even more direct. Broken pavements, overcrowded light rails, and unsafe manual boarding ramps were among the many barriers that had caused injury or harm to respondents while travelling.

- “It's difficult to get to medical appointments. I haven't been able to get fully vaccinated due to lack of accessible transport.”
- “My general fitness level has decreased dramatically. I'm basically a hermit and I'm worried about the long term effect on my health if things don't change.”
- “The nearest bus stop is 0.5miles away from the house and has an uphill to the bus stop and an up hill back to my house. This makes walking what is already difficult and tiring now a painful journey.”



**Inaccessible transport robs disabled people of valuable time.** Every stage of our journeys is made longer by access barriers, from the detailed planning, to the complex routes, to the process of complaining afterwards. We are frequently made even later by disruptions, leaving less time for the things that really matter to us.

- “I can't get to work quicker than other people can, so i have to leave my house even earlier than others just to make it on time. My wheelchair battery runs out after long journeys, so i use buses or trains to get around as much as i can but a lot of the time i cant use a lot of the same routes as other people, which means i cant stay out to socialise as much as other people.”
- “When I lived in London, I ended up taking ridiculously long journeys to avoid stairs on the tube and I am not looking forward to having this problem again but it will beat being housebound. “

**Disabled people are less independent as a direct result of inaccessible transport.**

Respondents were often forced to rely on others to move through the world (e.g. a friend giving them a lift, a member of staff providing a manual boarding ramp) meaning they had to work on someone else’s timetable, and were restricted in how and when they could travel.

- “I am limited because I can't make trips independently. I need my carer to travel with me. This means I'm limited to the time the carer can be with me. So I'm limited where, when and which transport I use. Who I meet too. I need carer to help make things accessible or to advocate for me and assist with journey route. “
- “it's hard to get out to see friends without having to ask to be driven everywhere so I've no independence and it's frustrating because I like to go out. I don't have a car but even getting to the bus stop is complicated and the buses are not reliable so I waste a lot of time. So making journeys sometimes seems more hassle than it's worth and that can make me even more depressed.”
- “The ability to travel on a train for instance without the constant anxiety that someone will be there with a ramp at each change and destination. Why in the 21st century are we still building trains and platforms that need the use of a person with a mechanical ramp nowadays is beyond me!”

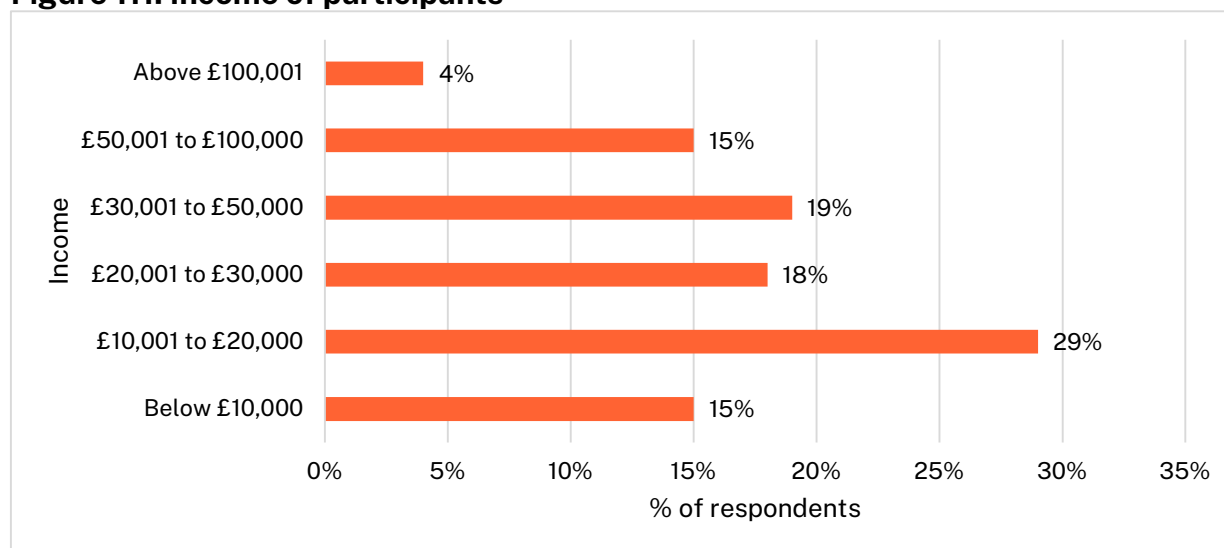
# The cost of living and transport injustice

“It's affecting my ability to work and earn enough money to live.”

Financial barriers to transport are some of the most significant and pervasive barriers reported in this research. When asked the main reason for not making as many journeys as they would like, 10% of respondents said the cost of travel, and this was the single most disabling barrier for 2 out of the 7 modes assessed (Train and Taxi/PHV).

Scope estimates that households with at least one disabled adult or child face an extra £975 in living costs per month<sup>lxxiv</sup>. We are also twice as likely to be unemployed<sup>lxxv</sup>, and twelve percentage points more likely to live in poverty than non-disabled people<sup>lxxvi</sup>. This means that, as well as incurring higher transport costs, disabled people have significantly less income to pay for it, making financial barriers even more prohibitive for our community.

**Figure 111: Income of participants**



44% of respondents reported their total income (before tax and including benefits) as below £20,000, well below what the Joseph Rowntree Foundation considers to be the Minimum Income Standard (that a single person needs to earn £25,500 a year to reach a minimum acceptable standard of living).

# Transport is more expensive for disabled people

On top of the costs everyone faces (tickets, buying or renting a vehicle), disabled people often contend with the additional expense of mobility aids, vehicle adaptations, tickets for PAs or carers, among other things – adding thousands of pounds per year to the cost of travel.

“I need to travel with someone with me and this means I have to pay more, even with a disabled persons railcard, it is more expensive than for a non-disabled person.”

As well as these *direct* financial barriers, disabled people also face *indirect* financial barriers. These are the ways in which non-monetary access barriers can drive up the cost of the journey even further. For example, a lack of step-free access at someone's local train station may force them to drive to a station further afield, incurring the additional cost of fuel and parking.

“I can't live a normal life unless I pay for taxis to take me everywhere. When I do try and use public transport I find that the buses don't run on time or I can't use them because there are no seats available, and trying to use the tube or overground is a nightmare because supposedly accessible stations often have lifts that are out of order and there's no information, so you turn up and find out you can't travel, or the incompetent staff tell you the lifts are working when they are not.”

These indirect financial barriers can be as pervasive as the direct costs themselves. For example, while 11% of respondents cited cost as a barrier to bus travel, 11% also said that, because of access barriers while using buses, their journeys were more expensive. Those who experienced barriers such as a lack of audio-visual information, overcrowding, and negative driver attitudes and behaviour (to name but a few), were all statistically more likely to report increased cost as an impact than those who did not experience these barriers. This could be down to having to take a more expensive mode (such as taxis) to avoid these barriers, choosing a different route which may be longer and more costly, or requiring assistance or aids that must be paid for out of pocket.

# The cycle of transport poverty

These barriers can lock disabled people in a vicious cycle of financial hardship. When asked about the impact that inaccessible transport has on their lives, 18% of respondents wrote about the detrimental impact it had on their work. People described missing events and opportunities for career progression, not being able to do particular types of work that require or benefit from attendance on-site, or their ability to work at all being “severely curtailed”.

“For most of 2021, I worked from home for a company based in Sheffield. When we had to return to the office, I was entirely reliant upon my parents driving me to and from work due to a lack of reliable and accessible transport. This became unmanageable and was a significant factor in me leaving my job at the end of the year. [...] I have missed out on so many opportunities through poor access to public transport.”

These impacts were the same across age, gender, region, and impairment groups, and the findings are consistent with existing research.

According to a report from Motability<sup>lxxvii</sup>, 1 in 4 disabled people say that inaccessible transport limits their employment options, and 1 in 10 said it impacts their education. This is the cycle of transport poverty: not being able to travel limits our work opportunities, reduces our incomes, leaving us with less cash to spend on the transport which costs us more.

Financial barriers to transport impacts other areas of our lives, too. A report from Cystic Fibrosis Trust found that 1 in 5 people with Cystic Fibrosis have missed a hospital appointment due to the cost of getting there in the past year, with calls to the charity concerning transport and hospital access increasing two-fold.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Young Lives vs Cancer also found that almost three quarters of young people with cancer and families are now struggling with travel costs during treatment, and 1 in 10 have missed or delayed treatment as they could not afford the travel.<sup>lxxix</sup>

## Benefits and concessions

There are some benefits and concessions available for disabled people which seek to mitigate these financial barriers, including:

- PIP
- Disabled Person’s Railcard
- English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (for buses, and some other local transport)
- The Motability Scheme
- Access to Work

However, our research suggests there are significant barriers to obtaining them, and they do not go far enough to adequately meet the extra costs we face.

Issues reported by participants include time restrictions on when some concessionary passes can be used, and difficulty applying their discount when purchasing a ticket. For those travelling with a PA, the discount on their ticket was rendered virtually redundant, as they still had to pay the costs of their essential companion.

In some areas, such as Greater Manchester, local concession passes allow disabled people to travel for free on local buses, trams and trains (with some time restrictions depending on the pass held), but do not include the cost of a carer's ticket. The MerseyRail pass for disabled people provides free travel on local buses, trams, trains and ferries, with no time restrictions. Elsewhere, East Sussex provide a carer pass for some companions of disabled people, but their local pass is for buses only and to travel at off-peak times.

The eligibility criteria for these schemes can also be extremely narrow, meaning that thousands of disabled people do not have access to the concessions and equipment we need. For example, while 19% of respondents said they use the Motability Scheme, 27% said they wanted to use it but could not as they are not eligible or they experience barriers to applying.

- “I don't think that I caught a train since early 2020 until very recently after receiving my Disabled Persons Railcard (like Travelcard for buses, I only became eligible for the Railcard recently after receiving PIP for the first time - a process which took over a year and ended with a tribunal hearing). Before that, I hadn't caught a train in ages as fares are prohibitively expensive.”
- “I then applied for higher rate PIP on the basis that I could barely move / function. I was denied this and, as a result, could not access Motability which would have paid for the very expensive high-tech adaptations that I need to drive.”

Respondents were asked about their awareness and usage of national concessionary schemes in place to make transport more accessible. Only 3% of respondents reported using cycle to work schemes, while 19% reported using Motability and 11% reported using Shopmobility.

27% of respondents reported being aware of Motability but not being able to use the scheme due to barriers, while 18% reported the same for Shopmobility, and 22% reported the same for cycle to work schemes.

39% of respondents reported being aware of Motability but not needing to use it, while 55% reported the same for Shopmobility and cycle to work schemes.

15% of respondents were unaware of Motability, while 16% were unaware of Shopmobility, and 21% were unaware of cycle to work schemes.

**Figure 112: Awareness and usage of national concessionary schemes to make transport more accessible**

Concessionary Scheme	I use this	Have heard of it and want to use it, but cannot due to barriers	Have heard of it, but do not want/need to use it	Have not heard of this
Motability	19%	27%	39%	15%
Shopmobility	11%	18%	55%	16%
Cycle to work scheme	3%	22%	55%	21%

Data were also collected on awareness and usage of London-based concessionary schemes. Only 9% of respondents based in London reported using Dial-A-Ride, while 21% reported using Taxicard.

21% of respondents reported being aware of Dial-A-Ride but not being able to use the scheme due to barriers, while 24% reported the same for Taxicard.

53% of respondents reported being aware of Dial-A-Ride but not wanting to use it, while 29% reported the same for Taxicard.

18% of respondents reported being unaware of Dial-A-Ride, and 26% reported being unaware of Taxicard.

**Figure 113: London-based respondents' awareness and usage of concessionary schemes in London**

Concessionary Scheme	I use this	Have heard of it and want to use it, but cannot due to barriers	Have heard of it, but do not want/need to use it	Have not heard of this
Dial-A-Ride	9%	21%	53%	18%
Taxicard	21%	24%	29%	26%

Respondents were asked to report whether they held various concessionary passes available for disabled people. 53% of respondents reported that they held a Blue Badge, while 42% reported that they held a Disabled Persons Railcard, and 62% reported that they held a local authority bus/rail pass.

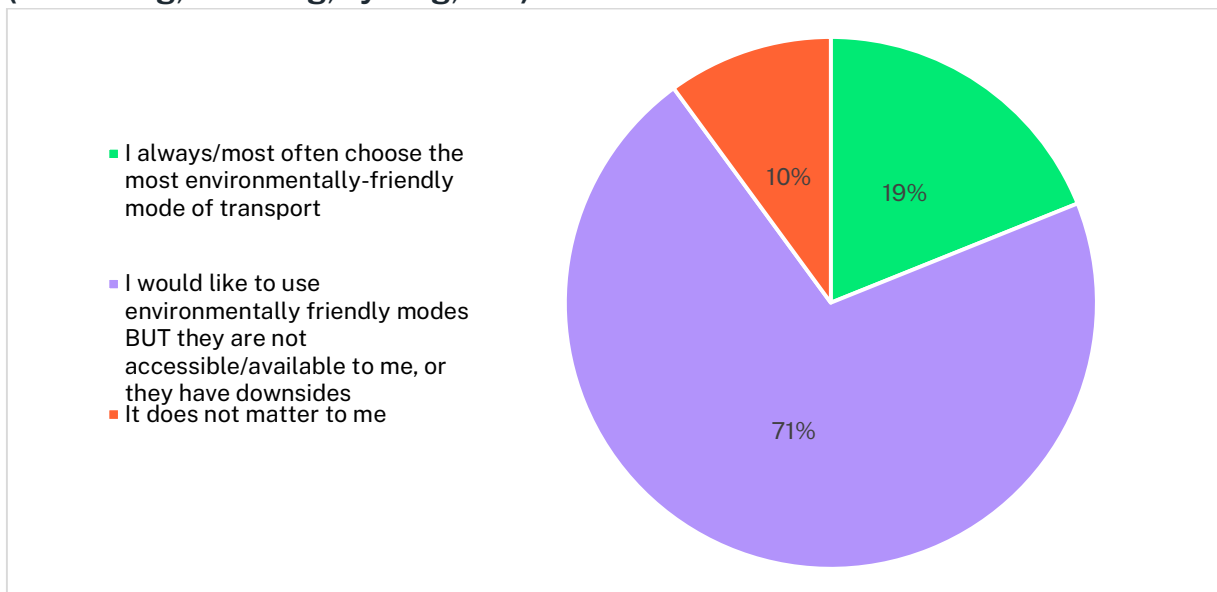
**Figure 114: Receipt of concessionary passes available for disabled people**

Concessionary Pass	Yes	No
Blue Badge	53%	47%
Disabled Persons Railcard	42%	58%
Local authority concessionary fares (bus/rail) pass	62%	38%

# Green transport

“I am in favour of things being environmentally friendly, but right now any mode of wheelchair accessible transport would be welcome, even if it were coal or steam driven.”

**Figure 115: How do you feel about green/environmentally friendly modes of transport (i.e walking, wheeling, cycling, bus)?**



**19% of respondents said they always or most often chose the most environmentally friendly mode of transport.** For those that did use green transport, the most common reason was because it was the most readily available, convenient, or accessible for a given journey. Interestingly, this was a more important factor in determining whether disabled people used public transport than environmental concerns alone.

**This is because many disabled people felt they did not have the luxury of choice when it came to using sustainable modes.** Travelling while disabled is already fraught with so many barriers, that many of us have to prioritise getting from A to B by whatever limited means necessary. Respondents wrote about feeling “forced” to use certain modes (green or not), and emphasized that they do not have as many options as non-disabled people. This meant that many could not use sustainable modes, even when they wanted to.

“I deeply care about climate justice and desperately want to use greener and more sustainable modes of transport, but these are often inaccessible to me. I can't cycle,



pavements are atrocious which makes wheeling difficult, the Tube is mostly out of bounds, and buses take forever. It means I am sometimes forced to take taxis.”

## Barriers to sustainable travel

**Importantly, the majority (71%) of respondents said they would like to use environmentally friendly modes of transport more, but that they were prevented from doing so by a lack of accessibility and availability.** As well as the mode specific barriers detailed in this report, respondents identified some cross-cutting barriers to sustainable travel options. These include:

### → Irregular and unreliable public transport options

“Local bus services are almost impossible for me. There are no buses after 6pm and none on Sunday so wherever I go it is a minimum of a 3 mile walk both to and from a bus stop or ask family or friends to drive me.”

### → Poorly joined up routes

“There are no tram stations within a sensible distance of my home, and I would need three or four busses to get to a lot of the places I visit.”

### → Risks to safety and wellbeing (e.g. pain, fatigue, risk of catching COVID-19)

“Driving is generally the best option for me, it provides door to door transport, safety and comfort. Safety is so important, since I have been disabled I feel more vulnerable travelling alone, having a safe space, car, helps to mitigate anxiety.”

### → Low staffing or lack of PA/carer

“I cannot find my way from one mode of transport to another without help ie. change platforms at a railway station I don't know.”

### → Financial barriers to mobility aids, adapted cycles, and public transport fares.

“[...] bus stops/train stations too far for me as I can only walk very limited distances. I really need a motorised wheelchair but can't afford one as well as leasing a car so that limits how far I can get anywhere once parked.”

While respondents predominantly cited external barriers, 31% said that their impairment prevented them from using particular modes. It is important to acknowledge that many disabled people will continue to require private transport, even if access to public transport and active travel improve.

But for a significant portion of our community, making more sustainable journeys is a real possibility if barriers are removed, and one the majority of us want to see realised. It is also clear that robust, structural change is required to remove barriers and make sustainable transport more available, accessible, and convenient for all.

# **CHAPTER 4: THE ROAD AHEAD**

**Recommendations**

# Our recommendations

This report demonstrates in stark detail that the current state of accessible transport in England is unjust, and unacceptable. Its findings speak volumes: our community wants to make more journeys, to have more choices of how to travel, and to have the resources and mobility aids we need to be able to make our journeys.

The 2018 Inclusive Transport Strategy (ITS) included a series of actions that sought to equalise transport access for disabled people by 2030. Yet with only seven years to go, many of the government's own metrics show that the strategy has stalled<sup>lxxx</sup>. It's imperative that the Department for Transport investigates the reasons for this and takes action to address areas that the Strategy did not encompass – such as Active Travel.

In closing, we return to the question that we've been asked so many times before: where is the data? We ask the same of all those who have the power to improve transport access. Be transparent and publish your analysis on why the duties, guidance, and pledges that exist have not yet succeeded. Accessible transport is not a point of competitive advantage: it should be for all, and progress towards it, evaluations of current interventions, and plans for the future should be published for all to benefit.

We want to work constructively with all those responsible for policy and practice across the transport sector to ensure disabled people's experiences are truly influencing decisions from the boardroom to the front line. Now it's time for the industry and wider system to act. Here are some places it might want to begin.

# Engagement barriers

This report demonstrates a lack of progress on inclusive engagement despite ongoing evidence of urgent need. For example, almost three years on from our *Pave The Way* report into Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, this issue continues to divide local communities. Local Authorities still have some way to go to implement inclusive engagement, mitigation of negative impacts, and ensuring walking, wheeling, and cycling infrastructure upgrades are accessible to disabled people.

Unless industry challenges the assumptions it holds about disabled people's transport preferences, barriers across all modes risk being here to stay. Better engagement across the sector holds the key.

## Recommendation 1

1. National Government, Local Government, regional transport authorities and industry must:
  - Meaningfully engage and co-design with the disabled community and Disabled People's Organisations to:
  - review, revise and reinforce policy and guidelines, and when designing, delivering, and evaluating vehicles, schemes, and systems
  - ensure that consultation processes are well-documented, inclusive, and responsive to the needs and concerns of the disabled community, taking a pan-impairment perspective
  - deliver against all recommendations outlined in this report
  - Where consultation and engagement are outsourced to third parties, this approach must be mandated and enforced through contracts

## This must lead to:

- All transport designs, guidance and legislation being co designed with disabled people
- Legislation, guidance, and policy that is fit for purpose, takes a pan-impairment approach, and prioritises barrier removal
- Accessible consultation and engagement becoming the default approach, rather than 'best practice' to be aspired to
- Disabled people and Disabled People's Organisations working as equal partners within Governments and industry, with fair remuneration, to inform design and policy decisions
- Disabled people being truly involved at the heart of decisions, avoiding consulting or engaging being a 'tick box' exercise

# Enforcement barriers

Barriers stemming from a lack of accountability and enforcement were raised across many areas of the survey. For example, the Public Sector Equality Duty tells public bodies, and private companies who deliver a public service, that they must “take steps” to “consider” how any action will impact protected characteristic groups. This report provides evidence that these directives do not go far enough to ensure that disabled people are protected from decisions that will impact our ability to travel or access public transport services.

The means of enforcement can be a barrier in itself. For example, requiring individual disabled people to make claims under the Equality Act means a claim must be made every time a person is discriminated against, even if it is by the same body: placing a repeated burden of enforcing the law on the disabled person being discriminated against.

Inadequate enforcement means that barriers are not recorded or removed. Instead, disabled people and our organisations are often left to highlight barriers and drive change, despite the transport industry having both the power and opportunity to make improvements. Lastly, the current situation is not future proof. Whether the future of transport is autonomous vehicles, Demand Responsible Transport, or even hoverboards, the sector’s approach to enforcement and regulation leave us concerned that a two tier transport system will be embedded even further.

## Recommendation 2

2. National Government must:

- Introduce a single regulator with a remit for accessibility encompassing all transport modes and streetspace, and provide sufficient investment and resourcing to ensure a consistent approach to enforcement across the sector. This regulator should:
  - Gather data on compliance with legislation, guidance and standards using transparent methods and act on the results promptly
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of existing legislation and policies in prohibiting discrimination and access refusals, and take action to address gaps
  - Establish accessible and streamlined complaints processes with swift response times, prompt resolution and impact on future practice

## **This must lead to:**

- Barriers caused by or occurring during interchanges being identified and removed by operators
- More consistent experiences for disabled people on multi-modal journeys
- More cross-industry working, with disabled passenger's experiences impacting on improvements across all modes
- Simplified and accessible ways to make a complaint or report non-compliance
- Increased transparency of when operators or industry bodies are not complying with accessibility legislation, and the penalties received
- Increased satisfaction of disabled people with complaints processes and experiences of using a regulator

# Infrastructure barriers

Greater transparency is needed on how infrastructure investment is prioritised, for what regions and on which modes, and the methods used must reflect the reality of travel for disabled people. For example, the Government's Levelling Up Fund prioritisation method appears to use the average journey times across an area as a metric for prioritisation, without assessing journey times for step-free or other more accessible routes<sup>lxxxix</sup>.

Elsewhere, good practice on transport infrastructure is limited to pledges, guidance, or voluntary standards, such as the recent Publicly Available Specification (PAS) for Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (PAS 1889). Without mandating this good practice, results can't be guaranteed.

Lastly, indecision at a national level, despite asking for and receiving evidence – such as continued inaction on pavement parking in England – has meant infrastructure barriers which should have been removed continue to persist.

Action is needed across all elements of infrastructure, and it must be taken by a wide range of groups. For example, in national and Local Governments infrastructure spans across transport, housing, planning and other departments. Without a joined-up approach to improving infrastructure across England, barriers will remain.

## Recommendation 3

3. National Government, Local Government, regional transport authorities and industry must:
  - Work in collaboration with one another, and Disabled People's Organisations, to develop and implement transparent prioritisation methods that reflect the reality of current inaccessible transport
  - Provide ring-fenced investment in accessible and reliable public transport options, making them a feasible choice for disabled people
  - Proactively audit and address obstacles regularly, and enforce regulations and penalties where obstacles remain
  - Enhance the accessibility and usability of infrastructure at all parts of a journey, for example invest in ticket vending machines (TVMs) to increase accessibility, level-boarding across the rail and light rail networks, and increase the availability of secure accessible adapted cycle storage



## **This must lead to:**

- Increased numbers of rail and light rail stations with step-free access and level boarding
- Increased availability of the full range of infrastructure and facilities required for disabled people to make journeys, from seating, to toilets, to parking spaces
- Greater confidence among disabled people that we won't encounter infrastructure barriers on our journeys

# Financial barriers

Evidence of the extra costs faced by disabled people, both direct and indirect, is not new. Yet action has been slow and fragmented. There must be a significant and swift change to the approach to concessions for travel for disabled people, overhauling the eligibility criteria, and standardising concessions across modes to ensure equity and fairness. Furthermore, financial barriers to travel should be addressed alongside a holistic approach to the range of resources we need to make journeys: from access to mobility aids, to access to adapted vehicles and cycles.

## Recommendation 4

4.

a. All concessionary scheme administrators and providers (including Local Government, regional transport authorities, operators, and industry bodies) must:

- Overhaul the criteria used to assess eligibility for concessions, taking a social model approach
- Work with disabled people to co-produce solutions to ensure accessibility and simplicity of the application process for the scheme

b. Local Government and combined authorities must:

- Urgently implement the full range of enhancements to the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme in their area of jurisdiction, to include free travel:
  - at all times (i.e before 9.30am and after 11pm)
  - for any person travelling as the companion to a disabled person
  - on other modes of transport within the region, including light rail, trams, and trains

c. Sub National Transport Authorities must:

- Work together to explore joining up the operation of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme, to enable card holders to travel between regions

## **Recommendation 5**

5. Government, including the Department for Transport, Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health and Social Care must:
  - Review and streamline financial assistance for the direct and indirect costs of travel beyond fares, including:
    - Accessible vehicle and cycles purchase, adaptation and storage
    - Costs of accessible driving lessons and cycle training
    - Costs of appropriate mobility aids
    - Extra costs when journeys go wrong

### **This must lead to:**

- No disabled people being excluded by the flawed link between concessions and inappropriate criteria such as Personal Independence Payment entitlement
- A consistent approach across to concessionary transport across England
- Simplified and accessible ways to make an application, with previously excluded disabled people taking up the schemes
- A reduction in regional disparities in access and criteria for mobility aid provision
- Increased number of disabled people eligible for vital and wide-ranging financial assistance
- Disabled people no longer being financially disadvantaged by the direct and indirect costs of travel

# Attitudinal barriers

Encounters with staff and the general public were highlighted as significant barriers to travel. Industry can take steps to remove attitudinal barriers by investing in safe staffing levels, and providing good quality Disability Equality Training designed and delivered by disabled people. Where training currently exists it has limitations: for example, the Office of Rail and Road only requires train companies to provide refresher disability training to frontline staff<sup>lxxxii</sup>, which does not address company culture at all levels.

## Recommendation 6

6. Regulators, national Government, Local Government, regional transport authorities and industry must:
  - Interrogate the causes of negative interactions between staff and disabled people, including the effectiveness of current staff training programmes, putting in place actions to address these
  - Through co-produced research, establish what is required in terms of staff numbers, skills and training across transport services to enable staff to meet the wide range of passenger needs – from booking, to accessing facilities, to passenger assistance including Turn Up and Go, and ensure this requirement is met
  - These actions could come under the responsibility of the aforementioned single transport accessibility regulator once established, but should not wait until then

## This must lead to:

- Regular high-quality training for all frontline and back-office transport staff which follows the Social Model of Disability, and is developed and delivered by disabled people
- Enough staff being in place across transport networks at all times so that disabled people can access frontline transport staff's support with ticket purchasing, wayfinding, and assistance whenever it is required and without needing to arrange this in advance

# Information and communication barriers

Across all modes, respondents to the survey highlighted the importance of accurate, reliable and accessible information being available to all disabled people both to plan a journey and while on the move. While progress is being made, for example the introduction of BSL announcements at some rail stations, and the recent mandating of audio visual announcements on new buses, gaps remain: local bus services in rural areas were particularly highlighted by survey respondents as information deserts.

Additionally, while digital booking options and means of accessing information are used by many disabled people, this research highlights the importance of non-digital methods. These methods must be retained, supported, and invested in.

## Recommendation 7

7. National Government, Local Government, regional transport authorities and industry must:
  - Evaluate and quickly address the provision of accessible information on vehicles, streets and on stations, including:
    - The accessibility of signage and wayfinding information, including temporary disruptions due to streetworks or other obstructions
    - Gaps in the provision of accessible information on board vehicles and at stations and stops
  - Commit to retaining and improving multiple accessible formats and contact channels for both information and payment.
  - Ensure these are accessible to unbanked and digitally excluded people, both before and during a journey.

## Recommendation 8

8. Transport operators and transport technology companies (also known as Mobility as a Service (MaaS) platforms) must:
  - Work with disabled people to co-produce solutions to guarantee the accessibility of their websites, booking platforms and apps
  - Provide information that disabled people rely upon: ranging from real-time information on station accessibility features, to whether a wheelchair space on a bus is occupied, to alternative routes for planned and unplanned disruptions
  - Go significantly further than the Government's MaaS code of practice which 'recommends' accessibility, and instead design accessible platforms taking a co-production approach

## **This must lead to:**

- Disabled people easily having the information and options required to make the journeys we need and want to make, using the mode and route of our choice
- Increased availability of the information and tools required to plan, make, and adjust journeys, in a range of accessible formats
- Disabled people and Disabled People's Organisations working as equal partners in the design and development of technology platforms
- A pan-impairment approach being taken to accessibility, data requirements, user testing, and setting measures of success

# **Change is possible**

The evidence from our community is clear. 40 years on from the founding of Transport for All, and almost 30 years on from the Disability Discrimination Act, disabled people still experience inequality and discrimination. This can't go on.

In response, we have a bold five-year plan to achieve our vision of transport justice for disabled people.

If you'd like to be a part of the journey, sign up as a member and join our movement of disabled people fighting for a better future.

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