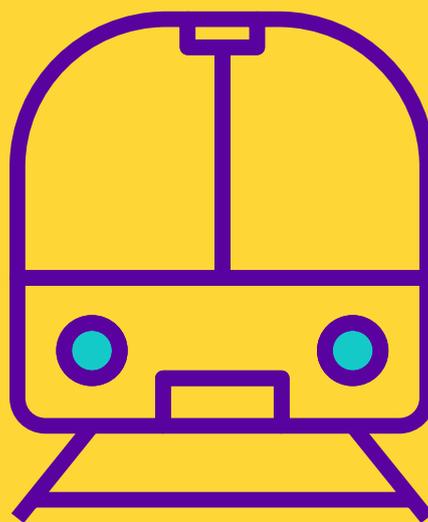


SCOPE

— Equality for
— disabled people



Travel fair

Ceri Smith and Clare Symonds
September 2019

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Preface

Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE

Let's face it, travelling by public transport can be really challenging and, at times, miserable. From packed carriages to unexpected delays and rising ticket prices, there's often something for us to complain about.

But for me and many of the UK's 14 million other disabled people, there are added frustrations and uncertainties that can turn what should be a straightforward journey into a nightmare.

Whether it's missing your stop on the train because your assistance failed to turn up, or being ignored by fellow passengers who would rather pretend to be asleep than help you out, negotiating the public transport network can be a real challenge.

I take more than 100 train journeys each year and experience first-hand the problems and inconsistencies that many disabled people face when travelling by public transport. And I hear time and time again from disabled passengers who reach out to me, having been let down by the UK's trains, buses, metro systems, taxis and trams.

Too many disabled people are being isolated by a service which should be connecting us. If we are really serious about tackling loneliness, getting more disabled people into work and enabling disabled people to be independent, we have to make travelling easier.

But, while the barriers to hassle-free, spontaneous travel for disabled people are currently numerous, they are not insurmountable.

A transport network that involves, works with, and listens to its disabled passengers would mean we all get to enjoy a better and more inclusive service. But alongside that we need to see disabled passengers' rights being upheld and our complaints met with real and tangible solutions.

Ultimately, disabled people just want to be able to travel fairly. We know that travelling can be miserable for everyone - and we just want the same experience as everyone else.

Introduction

Problems with public transport are a long-held British gripe. Whether it's delays on trains, infrequent buses, grumpy taxi drivers, or just general overcrowding on the commute, it can be tricky at times to travel.

But travelling by public transport can be especially hard if you're disabled, and at times it's outright impossible. Inaccessible vehicles, poor customer service, and lack of up to date information mean that problems using transport can make it stressful for disabled people to get to work, socialise or live independently.

Disabled people have been let down for too long by a patchwork of provision and regulation, making it difficult to know what to expect from transport companies or where to turn when things go wrong with their journey.

The disjointed nature of the public transport system means that there is little accountability and companies pass the buck between each other rather than working together to meet the needs of their disabled passengers. This means that problems often go unresolved and disabled people face the same issues time and time again, regardless of whether or not they complain.

This report outlines our evidence and thinking for how a more streamlined system could work for disabled passengers. We want to see more collaboration and accountability amongst public transport operators so that passengers can see the changes that they need and the public transport system works for the country's 14 million disabled people.

We want transport providers and operators to make a clear commitment to disabled passengers so that, no matter what mode of transport they're using, they know what they can expect in terms of service, and how they can raise complaints if things go wrong with their journey.

And we want to see companies uphold these promises, not just make a pledge and leave it at that. Disabled people have already waited too long for change to happen.

About this research

This report builds on research from Scope's **Independent. Confident. Connected.** report and is the culmination of several pieces of quantitative and qualitative research conducted with disabled people between September 2018 and July 2019.

In September 2018 we worked in partnership with Opinium on a project which explored disabled people's experiences of using public transport, findings of which were presented at the MRS Transport and Mobility Conference in November 2018. The quantitative phase involved surveys with 1,000 disabled people and 2,000 non-disabled people about their attitudes and experiences when using public transport. This was followed by a qualitative phase with 27 disabled people taking part in an online community to share their experiences and views of public transport over the course of a week.

In October and November 2018, Scope held two workshops with 19 disabled people, including two participants from the Opinium online community, in London and Leeds to talk to them about problems they faced using public transport.

Finally, in July 2019, we again worked in partnership with Opinium to survey 2,000 disabled people about how difficulty using public transport affects their ability to lead independent, confident and connected lives. We also sought to establish what disabled people would like to see from transport providers, operators and regulators to make travelling by public transport fairer and more inclusive.

Unless otherwise stated, the sample size for per centages given is 2,004 disabled adults from across England and Wales. Where appropriate, quotes from individuals who took part in the research have been included throughout this report in an anonymised form.



Key findings and recommendations

The research for this report has highlighted the ongoing problems disabled people face, and the resulting impact on disabled people's lives. Two thirds of disabled people have experienced problems using public transport in the last year¹ and 30 per cent of disabled people say that difficulties with public transport have reduced their independence².

Not being able to travel with confidence has a big impact on disabled passengers, and four fifths of disabled people we polled say they feel some level of anxiety or stress when they travel by public transport.

We recommend the following changes to enable disabled people to travel with confidence and lead independent and connected lives.

30 per cent of disabled people say that difficulties with public transport have **reduced their independence.**



1. Sample: 1,771 disabled people.
2. Sample: 1,002 disabled people.

1

Provide clarity for disabled passengers about what they should expect from all transport providers

The Government, Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and transport operators should work together to develop an accessible cross-modal passenger charter. This should be a readable, passenger-facing document which would promote a culture of accountability and transparency between operators and their customers, ensuring that disabled passengers can easily access the information they need to understand their rights on public transport as passengers with long term conditions or impairments.

2

Improve accountability across all modes of public transport

Government should work with industry and existing regulators to establish a single regulator for land transport. This would build on the ethos of the Inclusive Transport Strategy, which rightly recognises the fact that few journeys use just one mode of transport and would enable better cross-over throughout the network.

3

Ensure existing regulations are properly enforced

The Department for Transport should exert its power to ensure full implementation of existing regulations such as the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Requirements (PSVAR) and Rail Vehicle Accessibility Requirements (RVAR) after the January 2020 deadline and be clear on the penalties for operators if they fail to comply within the given time period. Accountability is key and the government should be clear on redress protocols, including where journeys are made inaccessible due to temporary issues such as broken ramps or rail replacement services.

4

Provide consistency of service

Our call for a single transport regulator to oversee all modes of land transport could make a big difference to disabled peoples' experiences of transport staff. Accountability across modes from a single regulator would provide a compelling business reason for all providers to meet certain standards of customer service. This would enable a more consistent approach to staff training, which currently varies significantly by operator. A single transport regulator would work with Government and operators to mandate and develop an effective user-led model for Disability Equality Training (DET), developed and delivered by disabled people.

5

Harness the power of open data

New technologies and innovations are invaluable to many disabled people when it comes to planning and carrying out their journeys on public transport. However, it is essential that the information provided is reliable and streamlined across all modes of land transport in acknowledgement of the fact that a significant proportion of journeys involve more than one mode of transport.

The release of open bus data in 2020 will be a step in the right direction, and Government should continue working to ensure that provisions for extending real-time information, especially relating to accessibility, for passenger use are extended across remaining modes of transport.



Consumer protections and accountability

Overall reliability of public transport

All users of public transport inevitably experience frustration whilst planning or carrying out journeys from time to time. Most passengers will have experienced delays and cancellations, lack of information, steep price rises, and other problems which regularly arise across the transport network.

These issues, however, have a disproportionate effect on disabled passengers. When already juggling the unpredictability of a condition or impairment, many disabled people can find the additional stresses and uncertainties of public transport take their toll³. Meanwhile, increasing fares can make travel costs a real strain on top of the significant extra costs that disabled people already have to manage⁴.

Disabled people face a number of additional barriers alongside these usual frustrations. Faulty lifts, crowded buses and insensitive attitudes are common occurrences⁵ and put many disabled passengers at a significant disadvantage. These problems pose an inconvenience at best, and at worst could potentially limit the appeal or feasibility of regular public transport use.

The disproportionate impact of delays and cancellations on disabled passengers was exemplified by rail network disruptions in May 2018, due to timetable changes. An independent inquiry by the rail regulator, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), into the disruption found that, during this period, complaints regarding accessibility increased and the impact of poor information provision on disabled passengers was particularly severe⁶.

3. Scope (2018), Independent. Confident. Connected.
scope.org.uk/campaigns/independent-confident-connected/

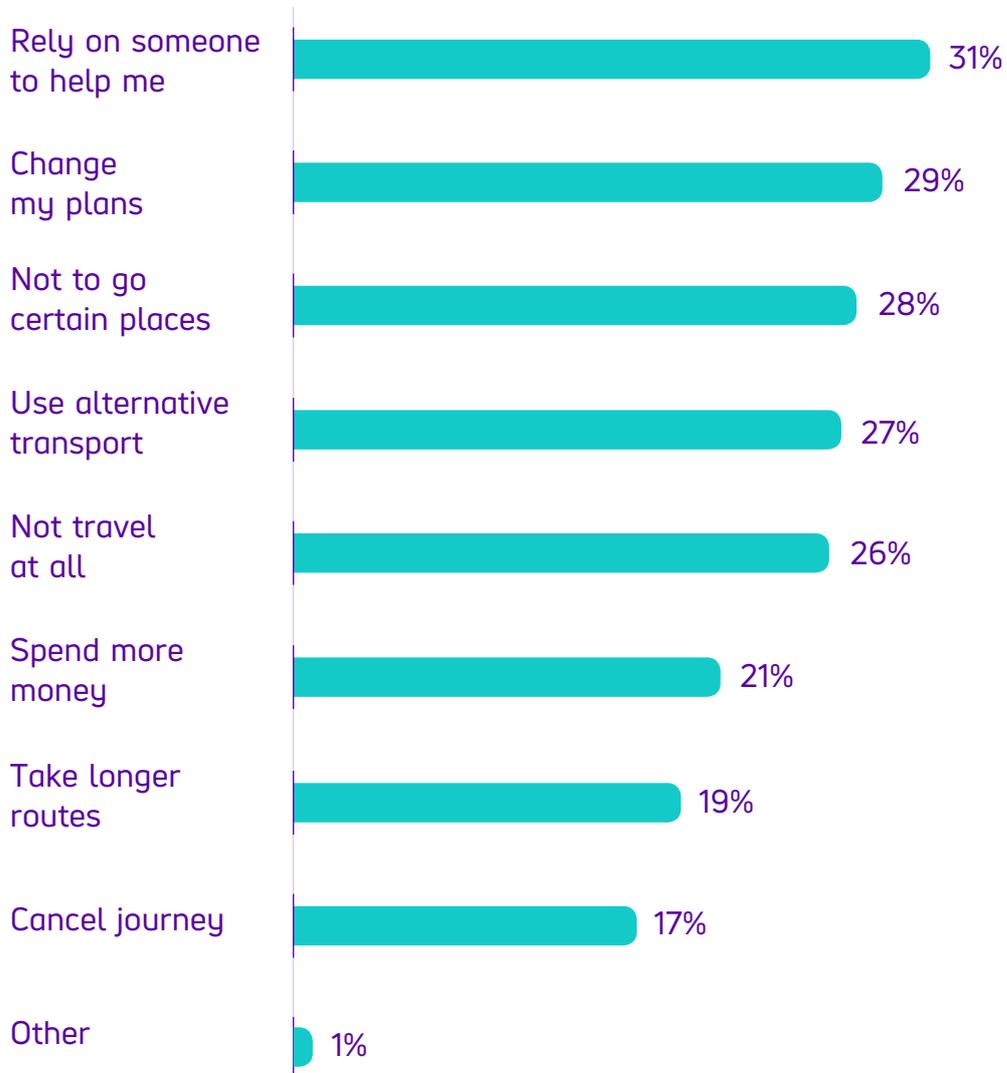
4. Scope (2019), Disability Price Tag.
scope.org.uk/campaigns/extra-costs/disability-price-tag

5. Department for Transport (2018), Inclusive Transport Strategy.
www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-transport-strategy/the-inclusive-transport-strategy-achieving-equal-access-for-disabled-people

6. Office of Rail and Road (2018) Inquiry into May 2018 network disruption.
orr.gov.uk/rail/consumers/inquiry-into-may-2018-network-disruption

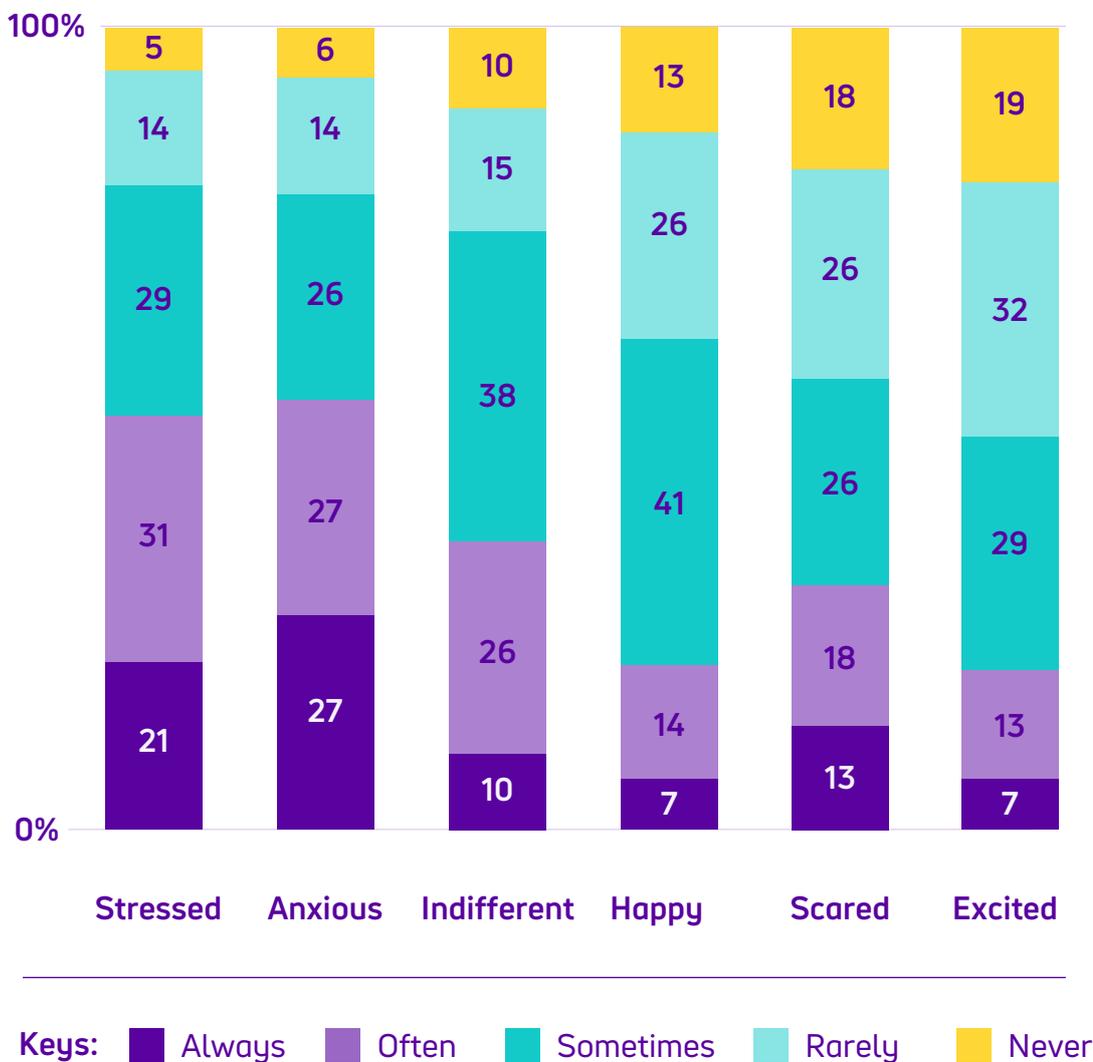
As figure one shows, the impacts of problems on public transport can be significant for disabled people. The fact that almost a third of disabled people find they have to rely on someone else to help in order to complete their journeys as a result of problems on public transport further serves to underline the impact that unreliability has on disabled peoples' sense of independence.

Figure one: As a result of problems on public transport, have you had to do any of the following?⁷



The ongoing ramifications of difficulty using public transport are very real for disabled people. Eight out of 10 disabled people we polled told us they feel stressed or anxious when they travel, with more than half reporting that this is the case most or every time they make a journey.

Figure two: How often do you feel the following emotions when planning or carrying out a journey on public transport?⁸ (in per cent)



Our research has highlighted **two key areas** where unreliability is particularly problematic for disabled passengers:



Planning ahead



Impacts of delays
on disabled people





Planning ahead

“ When I travel to London in my wheelchair... it does involve planning around lifts. They're often miles away from the platforms. ”

Disabled people often find they need to put extra time, planning and effort into activities in order to live independently⁹. And this principle applies just as much to travel as it does any other area of life. In particular, our research has highlighted the importance of journey planning in enabling disabled people to travel with confidence.

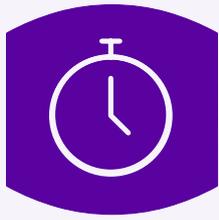
Planning ahead can take many forms. Disabled passengers with physical impairments which affect mobility can find that it's about the most accessible route and ensuring that support will be available to help complete their journey. For people with conditions which may affect their memory or their ability to process information, planning ahead might involve seeking assistance from a family member or friend before taking a journey. Passengers with fluctuating conditions such as mental health problems or chronic pain might plan to take journeys at specific times of day when they know that they generally feel more able to cope with travel.

Our research found that the poor reliability of both transport itself and available information affected disabled people's confidence in being able to travel. Over a fifth of disabled bus passengers¹⁰ and nearly a third of train passengers¹¹ said that they don't trust their journeys will go as planned. This can be particularly difficult when already accommodating the unpredictability of disability.

9. Scope (2018) Independent. Confident. Connected.

10. Sample size: 853 disabled people

11. Sample size: 811 disabled people



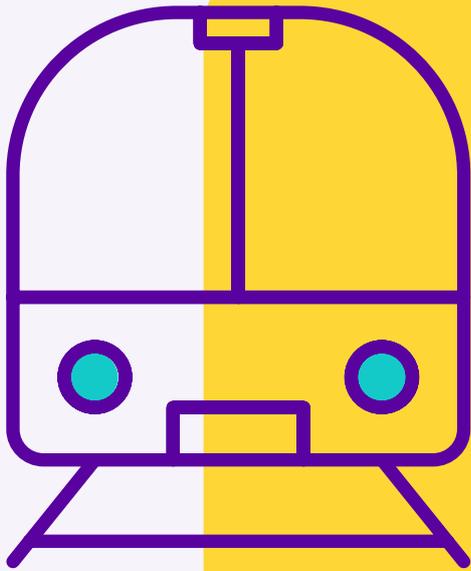
Impacts of delays on disabled people

“ Normally I take the train, but when there are engineering works or other problems, a long journey becomes an unmanageable one, and as I am not confident driving long distances on my own, sometimes I have ended up not going at all. ”

Disruption or delay to journeys can impact the provision of assistance or the availability of accessible infrastructure. For example, a Tube service terminating early may leave a disabled passenger at a station without lifts available or platform staff on hand to offer support. Likewise, an unplanned bus diversion can cause significant problems for a passenger who is visually impaired or has a learning difficulty.

While there are certain situations which are out of transport providers' control, such as delays, diversions, or breakdowns, these issues can very often be compounded for disabled passengers as a result of inadequate processes and the attitudes of staff.

Any form of disruption, rerouting or delay can throw planned timings off kilter, induce stress or anxiety and render any forward-planning obsolete. Crucially, while disruption is a frustration shared by all users of public transport at one point or another, last-minute changes can massively impact disabled passengers' ability to carry out their journeys in a safe, comfortable and timely manner – if at all.



“ I have to expect not getting picked up by the support staff at either end so leave lots of extra time, usually about an hour. ”

Reliability of accessible infrastructure and passenger assistance

Rail travel assistance

It is not only in the case of disruptions that assistance or accessible infrastructure fail. Over a quarter of disabled people we polled in September 2018 who use passenger assistance on trains stated that they were not satisfied with the reliability of support¹². This chimes with the ORR 2019 Annual Rail Consumer Report, which found that an average of a quarter of disabled passengers have not received all of the assistance they booked¹³. Among the worst performing Train Operating Companies, the failure rate for pre-booked assistance is over a third.

The unreliability of travel assistance on trains is a recurring issue for disabled people and our research has found that disabled people often put this down to poor staffing and ineffective communications between stations¹⁴.

12. Sample: 73 disabled people

13. Office of Rail and Road (2019), Measuring Up: Annual Rail Consumer Report 2019. [orr.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/41397/measuring-up-annual-rail-consumer-report-july-2019.pdf](https://www.orr.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/41397/measuring-up-annual-rail-consumer-report-july-2019.pdf)

14. Based on qualitative findings from workshops in London and Leeds in autumn 2018.

The inability to rely on booked assistance can cause significant inconvenience – sometimes meaning that passengers end up missing their stop¹⁵ or have to rely on other passengers to help them¹⁶. It can be demoralising and can discourage passengers who rely on assistance from using the rail network at all.

The unpredictability of rail travel assistance is particularly disappointing considering the significant effort and forward planning that people requiring assistance have to put into organising their journey. Passengers are currently required to submit assistance requests at least 24 hours in advance, although some Train Operating Companies do offer shorter notice periods for travel within their network¹⁷.

This is an inflexible system which significantly reduces the ability of passengers who require assistance to travel spontaneously as non-disabled passengers are able to.

Progress is being made on this point, not least as part of the ORR's recently updated Assisted Travel Policy guidance (previously known as Disabled People's Protection Policies, or DPPP's)¹⁸.

The new guidance has provisions for reducing the notice period for Passenger Assist to two hours from April 2022 onwards and aims to strengthen consistency of support and accessibility across the rail network, including ensuring that Train Operating Companies have responsibility for accessible travel.

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) is also seeking to develop new Passenger Assist apps for both staff and passengers¹⁹. These would allow for key information regarding the passenger and their requirements to be shared more accurately, and also enable more reliable communication between departure, interchange and destination stations. This has the potential to significantly reduce the percentage of failed assistance requests, as staff are given more up-to-date information and are more accountable when things do go wrong. Eventually passengers will have greater ability to keep staff abreast of changes to their journey, adding to the control and flexibility of passenger assistance.

15. For example: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-44910639

16. Based on findings from Opinium online community, September 2018

17. For example, MerseyRail will take assistance bookings with one hours' notice if a passenger is travelling on their services without transferring to another TOC.

18. Office of Rail and Road (2019) Accessible Travel Policy Guidance for Train and Station Operators. https://orr.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/41517/accessible-travel-policy-guidance-for-train-and-station-operators.pdf

19. Rail Delivery Group (2018) Easier assistance app will transform journeys for disabled rail passengers. www.raildeliverygroup.com/media-centre/press-releases/2018/469774616-2018-09-28.html



Ami's story

“There have been countless times, when my mum has booked assistance and yet they don't turn up until the last minute, causing me a great deal of anxiety.

On two occasions, other passengers have had to lift me in my wheelchair on and off the train because assistance never arrived. This is dangerous, not only for me, but for the passengers that are lifting me too. If it were not for their

kindness, then we wouldn't have gotten home, or been able to attend important appointments.

Quieter stations understandably have less staff, but they're often more efficient when assistance is needed. It's the bigger and busier stations that need to look into why some disabled people are not receiving a positive experience when assistance is required.”

Accessible infrastructure

Almost a third of disabled people polled said that they have been given incorrect information regarding the accessibility of a mode of transport or a station. Sometimes this may be because there is a lack of real-time information available for staff to be able to provide accurate guidance to disabled passengers. For example, lifts, ramps or audio visual equipment may break, or there may be a shortage of staff at a stop or station to assist someone to disembark.

Depending on the mode of transport, there are some measures in place to help disabled passengers reach their destination when broken infrastructure stops them from completing their journey. For example, Train Operating Companies have to outline within their Accessible Travel Policies (previously DPPP's) how they will arrange alternative accessible transport at no extra cost for disabled passengers when they are unable to complete their journey due to the inaccessibility of a station or substitute transportation.

“ Unbeknownst to me the lift was out of order. As a wheelchair user, this is obviously important information for me... Staff opened up the fire lift to let me get out. ”

However, due to the fragmented nature of the public transport system, even where there are procedures in place to try to mitigate for inaccessibility, these measures don't always work. For example, it is more than possible for there to be no wheelchair accessible taxis available in a given area, making it difficult for a Train Operating Company to fulfil their Accessible Travel Policy commitments if a disabled passenger requires alternative transport to complete their journey.

Similarly, inaccurate information can also be down to variations in terms of what accessibility information is seen as important. For example, access information on rail and metro systems has tended to focus on step-free access. However, for someone with hearing or visual impairment, it may be access to audio visual announcements which makes the difference to a mode of transport being accessible or not.

All of these issues add to the inconsistency disabled people face when travelling.



Lack of accountability

Accountability or consequence for transport providers who fail to provide a reliable service to their disabled customers is highly variable across modes of transport.

Currently, the public transport system is made up of a myriad of operators, regulators, watchdogs and passenger groups, and there is often little clarity on which body is responsible for individual issues when things do go wrong. Even within the same mode of transport the picture can be complicated. One of our research respondents highlighted the difficulty in establishing whether the station operator or the train operator was responsible when booked rail assistance failed to turn up. This complexity is often echoed by Train Operating Companies, and is referenced in the ORR's new guidance for accessible travel, particularly when it comes to taking responsibility for any redress for assistance failures²⁰.

Complaints procedures are also extremely complicated and vary between different modes of transport. Our research has found that there is confusion and a distinct lack of trust from disabled people that complaints would lead to change, despite 66 per cent of respondents saying that they have experienced a problem on public transport over the past 12 months²¹.

Of all respondents who did not submit a complaint every time they encountered a problem, well over a third said that they didn't complain because they didn't believe anything would happen as a result, while one in five said that they had complained in the past and nothing had been resolved²². These figures highlight a fundamental flaw in the current complaints process and demonstrate the lack of confidence disabled passengers have in operators' ability to adapt and respond to feedback.

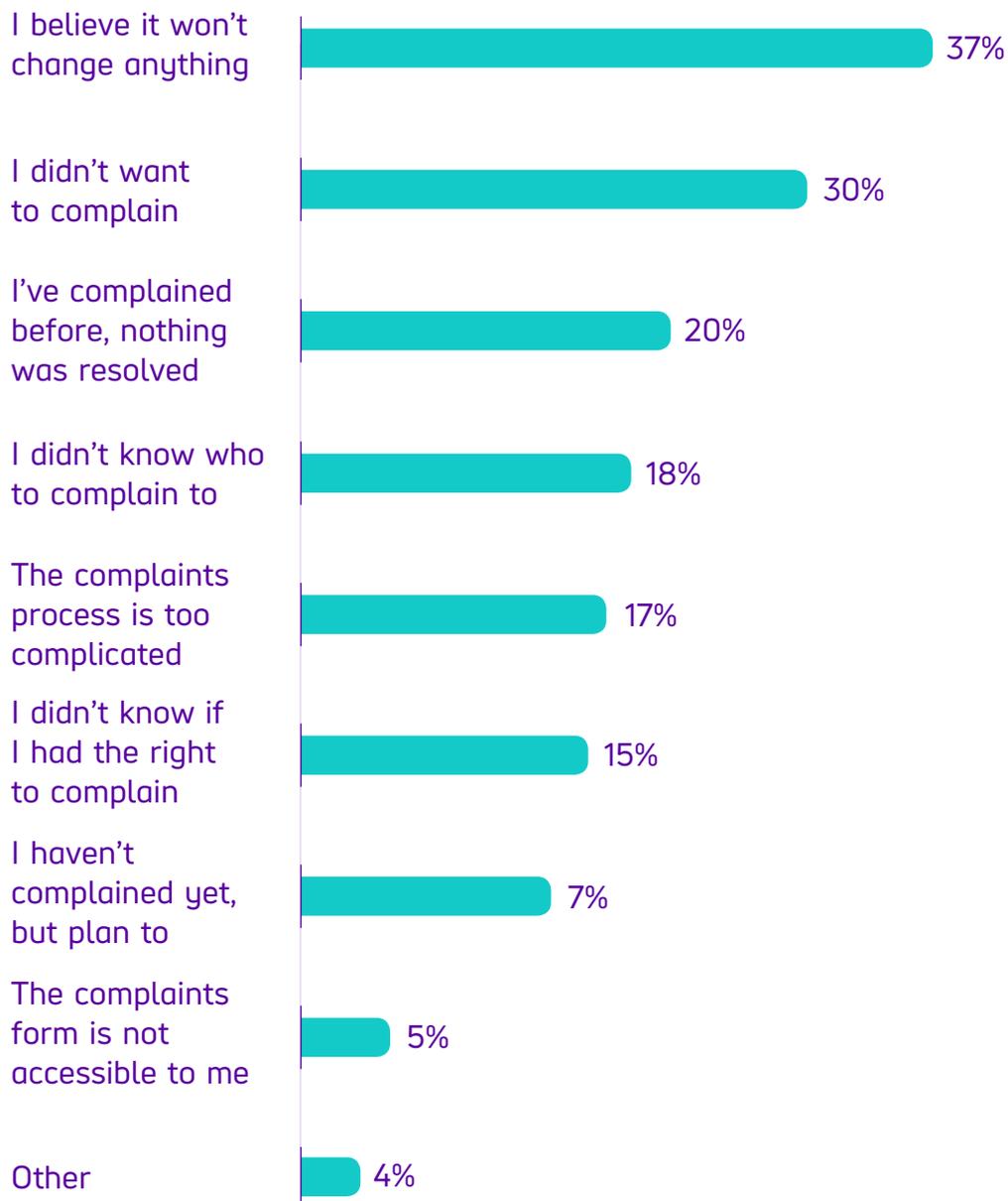
“ On the whole I tend to find that [complaining] is just too much hassle to be worth it... I know it will happen again in three days' time, so if I spent all my time complaining, I'd never do anything else. ”

20. Office of Rail and Road (2019) Accessible Travel Policy Guidance for Train and Station Operators

21. Sample: 1,167 disabled people

22. Sample: 1,018 disabled people

Figure three: Which, if any, of the following reasons explain why you have not submitted complaints every time you've encountered a problem on public transport?²³





Of those who did submit complaints, 46 per cent say they submitted complaints to the transport operator²⁴. However, almost half of those who complained were unhappy with the response they received²⁵, but only 10 per cent of complainants did anything to take their complaint further²⁶.

The recent introduction of the Rail Ombudsman has gone some way to addressing this problem on trains. The Ombudsman aims to resolve customer complaints about service providers and build customer confidence in the rail network. In the first quarter since its creation, it has dealt with a total of 726 complaints, including a small handful of accessibility-related issues²⁷.

There is, however, no equivalent national body for other forms of land transport. The complaints procedure for buses involves as many as 12 different bodies which differ depending on your location. In the case of taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs), it requires the passenger finding out which local authority has licensed the cab, which in some semi-urban areas can be hard to ascertain. This is further complicated by the fact that licensing standards can differ between neighbouring authorities²⁸.

This fragmented system for accountability also adds to the disconnect between modes of transport, which is often particularly hard for disabled people to navigate. A large number of journeys require multiple modes of transport, yet the sheer number of parties involved in the regulation and operation of each means that there is no degree of oversight across the wider transport network. If the connection from a bus to a train is inaccessible, meaning they are unable to complete their desired journey, how can a passenger know who to speak to?

24. Sample: 805 disabled people

25. Sample: 805 disabled people

26. 322 disabled people

27. Rail Ombudsman (2019) Quarterly report 01/01/19 - 31/03/19.

https://static.railombudsman.org/roweb/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/26165334/Rail-Ombudsman_1819_Q4.pdf

28. LGA (2017) Taxi and PHV Licensing Councillors' Handbook (England and Wales). www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/10.9%20Council%20Handbook%20-%20Taxi%20and%20PHV%20Licensing_November_2017.pdf



Recommendation

Government should work with industry and existing regulators to establish a single regulator for land transport. This would build on the ethos of the Inclusive Transport Strategy, which rightly recognises the fact that few journeys use just one mode of transport and would enable better cross-over throughout the network.

Primarily, this would aim to streamline the complaints procedure across all modes of public transport in order to make the process deliver better outcomes for disabled passengers.

A single regulator could also work towards improved reliability in service provision across the network and ensure that providers are held to account when things do go wrong, including through financial redress and action taken to prevent problems from repeating on future journeys.



Social attitudes and behaviours

Previous Scope research has found that other people's attitudes are one of the primary barriers to disabled people being able to live independent, confident and connected lives²⁹. Negative attitudes and behaviours from other people can often be magnified in the confined context of public transport and a small proportion of participants in our research cited that as a reason they choose not to use public transport as much as they would like.

From tuts and sighs, to asking personal questions about your condition, 45 per cent of disabled passengers have experienced negative attitudes from staff and/or other passengers in the past 12 months³⁰. Many highlighted ignorance and impatience as the main causes of negative reactions.

Our research shows that other peoples' attitudes are one of the most commonly occurring problems on public transport - second only to overcrowding - and the thought of other peoples' reactions can stop some disabled people from travelling at all.

29. Scope (2018) Independent. Confident. Connected

30. Sample: 1,771 disabled people

Staff behaviour and training

The attitudes of transport staff can make or break a journey for many disabled people we spoke to. When staff support disabled people, treating them with respect and providing the assistance required, they act as a gateway to independence for disabled passengers and set an example for other passengers about how to behave.

However, when disabled passengers encounter negative attitudes or a lack of awareness from transport staff, this can have a much wider impact on how they are treated by nearby passengers and how they feel about using public transport in the future.

Once again, not knowing what to expect is one of the main issues highlighted by disabled passengers. Many find that there can be inconsistency between providers and the service that they offer. For example, one workshop participant told us that one bus company's drivers are "so much nicer" than another company operating in the same area. This can mean that disabled passengers aren't sure what to expect from staff each time they travel, as training and organisational attitudes towards disabled passengers can vary hugely. This not only creates additional anxiety around the use of public transport, but also adds to an overall lack of understanding about what kind of treatment disabled passengers should expect.

Most of the instances discussed as part of our research indicated that often staff aren't necessarily actively discriminating, but at best their behaviour could be described as inconsiderate. However, this lack of consideration can be equally as problematic as outright negative behaviours.

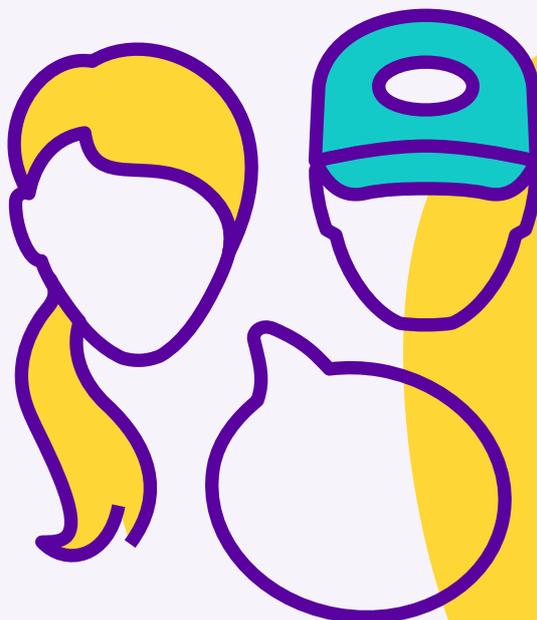
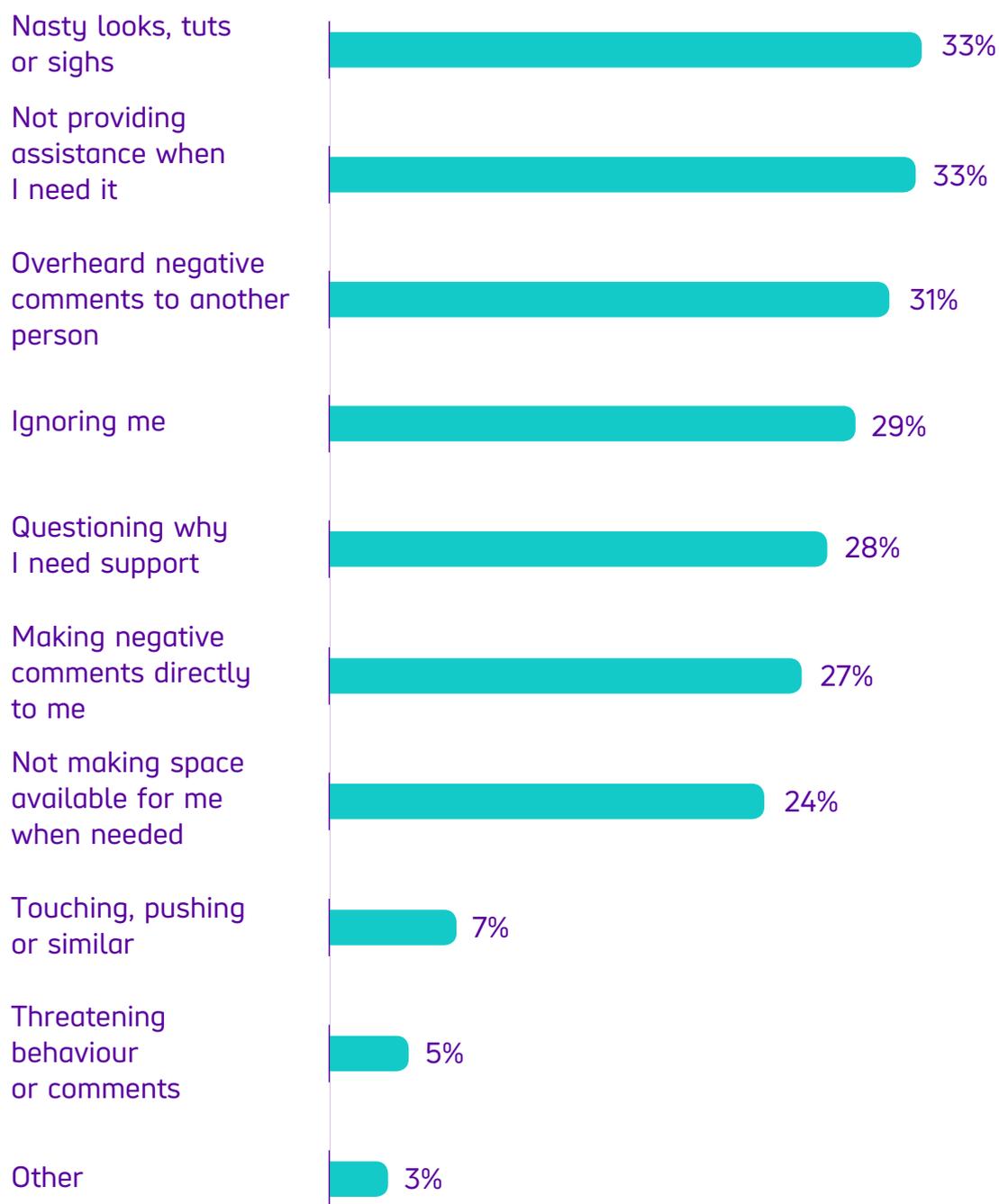


Figure four: Which of the following, if any, have you experienced from transport staff in relation to your long-term impairment or disability?³¹





For example, disabled passengers highlighted that buses can be difficult because drivers pull off without waiting for passengers to sit down. Other major factors involve being overlooked or ignored by transport staff or being questioned about why they need assistance.

Actively negative behaviours from staff are still frequently experienced by disabled people. Nasty looks or impatience can have a big impact on disabled passengers. As Scope has highlighted in previous attitudinal research, these instances may be seemingly 'one-off' to the perpetrator, but add up to a constant stream of negative behaviours for disabled people on the receiving end³².

Sometimes negative behaviour can come from misplaced good intent. One respondent said that members of staff often manhandle their wheelchair without consent, which is both dangerous and a violation of personal boundaries. In this instance, staff thought they were being helpful but did not have sufficient knowledge to handle the situation in a more appropriate way.

However, in a small number of cases, attitudes are more outwardly discriminatory.

The 2017 *Paulley v FirstGroup plc* Supreme Court judgement found that bus drivers should do more to support wheelchair users to gain access to wheelchair spaces³³. Yet there have continued to be documented incidences of bus drivers refusing to deploy ramps for disabled passengers, saying that the wheelchair space is occupied by luggage or pushchairs³⁴.

32. Scope (2018) The Disability Perception Gap. www.scope.org.uk/scope/media/files/campaigns/disability-perception-gap-report.pdf

33. The Supreme Court (2017), Judgment *First Group Plc v Paulley*. www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2015-0025-judgment.pdf

34. BBC (2019) London wheelchair user Katie Pennick 'refused' access to bus. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-48188270

In other cases, people with less visible impairments or conditions say that they have been subject to discrimination because staff don't believe that they are disabled. Overhearing nasty comments made by staff, questioning why support is needed and nasty looks, tuts or comments were all significantly higher amongst participants with less visible impairments than those with visible impairments or conditions.

On trains, failure of booked assistance could be deemed discrimination, as this means that Train Operating Companies are failing to comply with their Accessible Travel Policies/DPPPs. Participants in our workshops felt that staff sometimes didn't provide assistance because they felt that they wouldn't face any consequences.

“ If you're going into Kings Cross, they're not going to be able to tell you who your named person is going to be. The accountability simply isn't there. ”

All of these experiences further serve to show the need for consistent training to ensure all transport staff, especially those working directly with passengers, can provide confident and appropriate assistance when needed.

Steps are being taken in certain areas to improve staff understanding of both visible and less visible impairments and of the assistance that individuals might need, not least as part of the Inclusive Transport Strategy. Schemes like the sunflower lanyard – which has been rolled out on certain rail lines and in some airports – are designed to help staff notice people with invisible impairments³⁵.

35. For example, Heathrow airport www.heathrow.com/airport-guide/assistance-at-heathrow/hidden-disabilities



“ I asked a staff member for the disabled toilet key and was told I do not look disabled so I could wait for the regular toilet like everybody else. ”

This should enable staff to provide a better, more supportive service. But this can only happen if they have received the right level of training and know how to support disabled people, including those with less visible impairments.

While there are some great examples of innovation and service which has been designed fully with disabled passengers in mind, the experiences of disabled people uncovered throughout this research serve to underline the lack of accountability for bad customer service many disabled passengers continue to experience across the transport network.

Recommendation

Our call for a single transport regulator to oversee all modes of land transport could make a big difference to disabled peoples' experiences of transport staff. Accountability across modes from a single regulator would provide a compelling business reason for all providers to meet certain standards of customer service. This would enable a more consistent approach to staff training, which currently varies significantly by operator. A single transport regulator would work with Government and operators to mandate and develop an effective user-led model for Disability Equality Training (DET), developed and delivered by disabled people.

Public behaviour

Negative attitudes and behaviours from other passengers were often remarked on by disabled people throughout our research as being a particular problem.

Within our online community, participants with less visible impairments highlighted difficulties in getting other passengers to give up their seats or reported being on the receiving end of accusatory comments when they don't give up their seats for someone else. This was particularly the case with younger disabled people who felt that they were judged by others for not standing up to allow older passengers to sit.

There was scepticism from disabled people who took part in our research that much could be done to change other people's attitudes. But staff were mentioned as a mechanism to improve public attitudes by setting a standard themselves, or by calling out passengers who refuse to make room for disabled people.

Changing public behaviour is a big ask, and we recognise that this is a long-term ambition. However, operators are taking steps to improve public attitudes.

In particular, Transport for London (TfL) have run several schemes in order to improve public awareness of invisible impairments through their 'Please offer me a seat' badges³⁶ and inclusive signage on seats on some lines³⁷ which puts the onus on non-disabled passengers to consider the needs of those around them. Despite this, there is currently no national action taking place across transport providers to challenge public attitudes.

“ As I don't look 'disabled' I'm never offered a seat (or I get shouted out to give my seat up to an elderly person). ”

36. Transport for London (2019) Accessible travel in London. <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/accessible-travel-web.pdf>

37. Transport for London (2019) TfL urges Londoners to offer up their seats as research shows it still makes one in four people 'feel awkward'. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2019/april/tfl-urges-londoners-to-offer-up-their-seats-as-research-shows-it-still-makes-one-in-four-people-feel-awkwa>



The Department for Transport (DfT) has taken steps to ensure that negative attitudes from other passengers are being tackled across the UK. The Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Hidden in Plain Sight: Inquiry into disability-related harassment', which is referenced in the Inclusive Transport Strategy, shines a light on the extent and gravity of both active and indirect discrimination towards disabled people³⁸. As a result of this, DfT has committed to launching a £2m campaign which will aim to increase disability awareness amongst passengers on public transport and reduce disability hate crime across the network³⁹.

Scope is supportive of provisions within the Inclusive Transport Strategy to address public behaviour and has been supporting DfT in their upcoming behaviour change campaign which will aim to challenge the attitudes of the general public and encourage people to be more considerate of those around them. We will continue to support this campaign and we are interested to see how the longer-term impact of that project can be sustained.

38. EHRC (2011) Hidden in plain sight: inquiry into disability-related harassment. www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/hidden-plain-sight-inquiry-disability-related-harassment

39. As detailed in this press statement to launch the Inclusive Transport Strategy. www.gov.uk/government/news/next-steps-towards-a-fully-inclusive-transport-network

Infrastructure and information access

Physical infrastructure

Despite existing regulations such as Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR) and Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) recently or imminently coming into force, 11 per cent of disabled people polled stated that public transport in their area is inaccessible to them⁴⁰.

In particular, difficulty getting on and off vehicles, overcrowding and overwhelming spaces and lack of appropriate seating were highlighted as the most common areas where disabled people struggle to access public transport because of physical barriers⁴¹.



40. Sample: 774 disabled people

41. Sample: 1,167 disabled people

Participants in our research highlighted how issues appear to arise most frequently at interchange points, such as changing between a bus and tram, or changing trains⁴². This tells us that it is not simply the vehicles themselves which are inaccessible, but the environment surrounding them – train stations, streets and bus stops – and failures of systems to help people navigate these pinch points.

Despite the fact that London actually has the lowest proportion of disabled people in the UK⁴³, TfL services were mentioned in our online community of disabled adults from across the UK as being a good example of accessibility which enables disabled passengers to travel independently. Examples of positive changes for disabled passengers included automatic ramps on buses, ‘turn up and go’ assistance on the Underground and ‘Please offer me a seat’ badges.

The Inclusive Transport Strategy rightly makes reference to the fact that a significant number of journeys involve multiple modes of transport and that to enable inclusive and independent travel, the entire public transport network needs to be accessible. However, there needs to be concerted and sustained effort to ensure the accessibility of journeys are viewed from A to B rather than just on the basis of individual modes.

“ All London buses have ramps that come out automatically, so I can travel on any bus, at any time of my choosing, without having to book assistance in advance and without wondering if I’ll be stuck at the other end. ”

42. Sample: 262 disabled people

43. Department for Work and Pensions (2019) Family Resources Survey. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/791271/family-resources-survey-2017-18.pdf

Application of regulations

Participants in our online research often identified changes they wanted which are already part of protocol or procedures within public transport. This suggests that, where rules already exist, they are often being inconsistently applied or poorly communicated. This is leaving disabled people unclear about what they should expect from providers and staff, and thus worsening their experience of public transport.

For example, the deadline for overall compliance with RVAR on the rail network and the lattermost compliance for buses and coaches with the PSVAR is January 2020⁴⁴ ⁴⁵. However, even today, many disabled people still find trains and scheduled coaches are inaccessible. On top of this, enforcement of PSVAR is complex and reliant on an individual being clear on the law and knowing that a driver's actions are in contravention of the regulations and could well be a criminal offence.

Similarly, there remains ambiguity on the application of regulations related to the priority of wheelchairs over pushchairs on buses. The Paulley v FirstGroup Plc case effected a legal change in finding that it is unjustifiable for bus companies to not instruct their drivers to do more to ensure a wheelchair space is vacated by a non-wheelchair user⁴⁶.

The ruling is ambiguous though, and does not offer a clear course of action for bus drivers. There is still no legal duty on drivers or bus operators to expel passengers if they don't move themselves, their pushchairs or their luggage out of the wheelchair space. This has been exemplified by multiple news stories involving wheelchair users who, two years on from the ruling, have been refused access to buses because wheelchair spaces are occupied⁴⁷.

44. Department for Transport (2015) Accessible rail transport.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/accessible-rail-transport/accessible-rail-transport

45. Department for Transport (2005) Bus and coach accessibility and the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000. www.gov.uk/government/publications/accessible-buses-and-coaches/bus-and-coach-accessibility-and-the-public-service-vehicle-accessibility-regulations-2000

46. The Supreme Court (2017), Judgment FirstGroup Plc v Paulley. www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2015-0025-judgment.pdf

47. There have been multiple cases which have been reported in the news since the ruling, such as www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-48188270 and www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-somerset-46944952



Evidently, there is a need for regulation to be clearer and penalties more consistently applied if operators fail to adhere to accessibility regulations. This is especially difficult in the case of buses and taxis where, outside of London, there is no single regulator. Instead, local authorities oversee these transport modes in their individual areas. This fragmentation means that individual operators are not accountable to a single body, leading to difficulty in enforcing regulations and a lack of clarity as to who passengers should speak to about individual issues.

Clearer regulation would benefit disabled passengers and non-disabled passengers alike. There are increasing numbers of disabled and older people and transport operators should see these consumer groups as an opportunity rather than a challenge. By building inclusivity into their future designs, operators will be better serving a wider consumer base from the start. It is also cheaper and easier than finding solutions if they fail to consider the needs of disabled passengers and find themselves having to retrofit accessibility features later on.



Focus on physical accessibility

Traditionally, accessibility has been thought of in terms of physical features of public transport, especially step-free access. In reality, accessibility is much more complex than this. People with pain conditions might need a seat or extra space around them in order to travel, while autistic people might need a quieter space so that the noise of public transport isn't too overwhelming. Passengers with a visual impairment might be able to see their phones but not the size of the gap between a train and the platform. It must be recognised that, while step-free access is critical, accessibility is multifaceted and should serve the needs of people with both visible and less visible impairments and conditions.



Steps are being taken to acknowledge the challenges of travelling with a less visible impairment. Outside of public transport, the DfT's recent extension of the Blue Badge eligibility to cover people with invisible impairments is positive recognition of the fact that travel can be just as difficult for people who experience conditions like anxiety, autism and chronic pain conditions⁴⁸. The Inclusive Transport Strategy also places an important emphasis on the requirements of travellers with less visible conditions, including through improvements to physical infrastructure.

We welcome the progress Government and operators have made towards increasing their focus on making public transport accessible for all disabled people. We would like to see Government and operators actively engaging with disabled consumers and considering the needs of both visible and invisible impairments and conditions in the development and implementation of future transport policy as well as vehicle and station design.

We believe this additional accountability would help deliver improved reliability in service provision across the transport network, including during planned and unplanned disruption, and better reliability of accessible services and infrastructure. Through a single land transport regulator, providers could be held to account when things do go wrong, including through financial redress and action taken to prevent problems from repeating on future journeys.

Recommendation

The DfT should exert their power to ensure full implementation of existing regulations such as the PSVAR and RVAR after the January 2020 deadline and be clear on the penalties for operators if they fail to comply within the given time period. Accountability is key and the government should be clear on redress protocols, including where journeys are made inaccessible due to temporary issues such as broken ramps or rail replacement services.

48. Department for Transport (2019), People with hidden disabilities to benefit from Blue Badges. www.gov.uk/government/news/people-with-hidden-disabilities-to-benefit-from-blue-badges

Information access

Throughout our research, disabled people have highlighted the importance of having reliable information about their journey in advance to be able to use public transport. However, information access during a journey is also essential to people being able to travel with confidence. Especially in case of delays, rerouting or disruption, it is essential that passengers can find the information they need to help them complete their journeys.

Access to digital technology is a vital factor for many disabled people to live independently⁴⁹. The importance of digital in the context of public transport came through strongly from participants.

We found that digital resources are crucial tools for disabled people prior to their journey with 65 per cent of disabled people polled using either apps on a phone, like Google Maps or Citymapper, or a journey-planning website like National Rail to plan their journey in advance.

Given the importance of planning ahead, digital resources really can make journey planning and execution a lot more manageable.

“ What I would personally find the most helpful would be a better of ease of access for information such as stop times, where the vehicle is located, and once on the vehicle, upcoming stops. ”

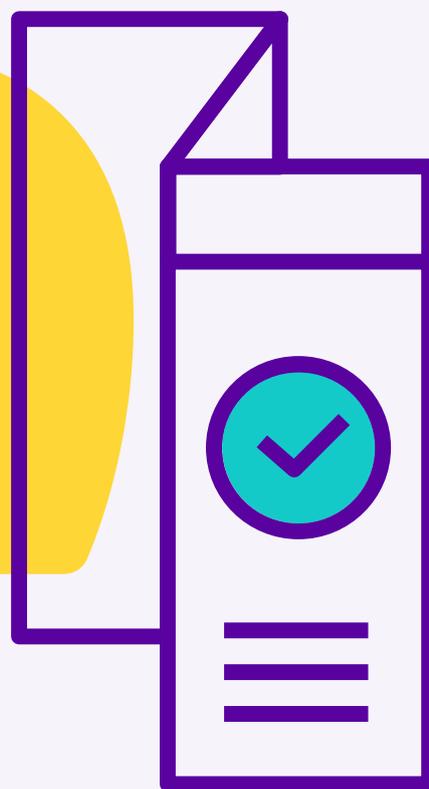
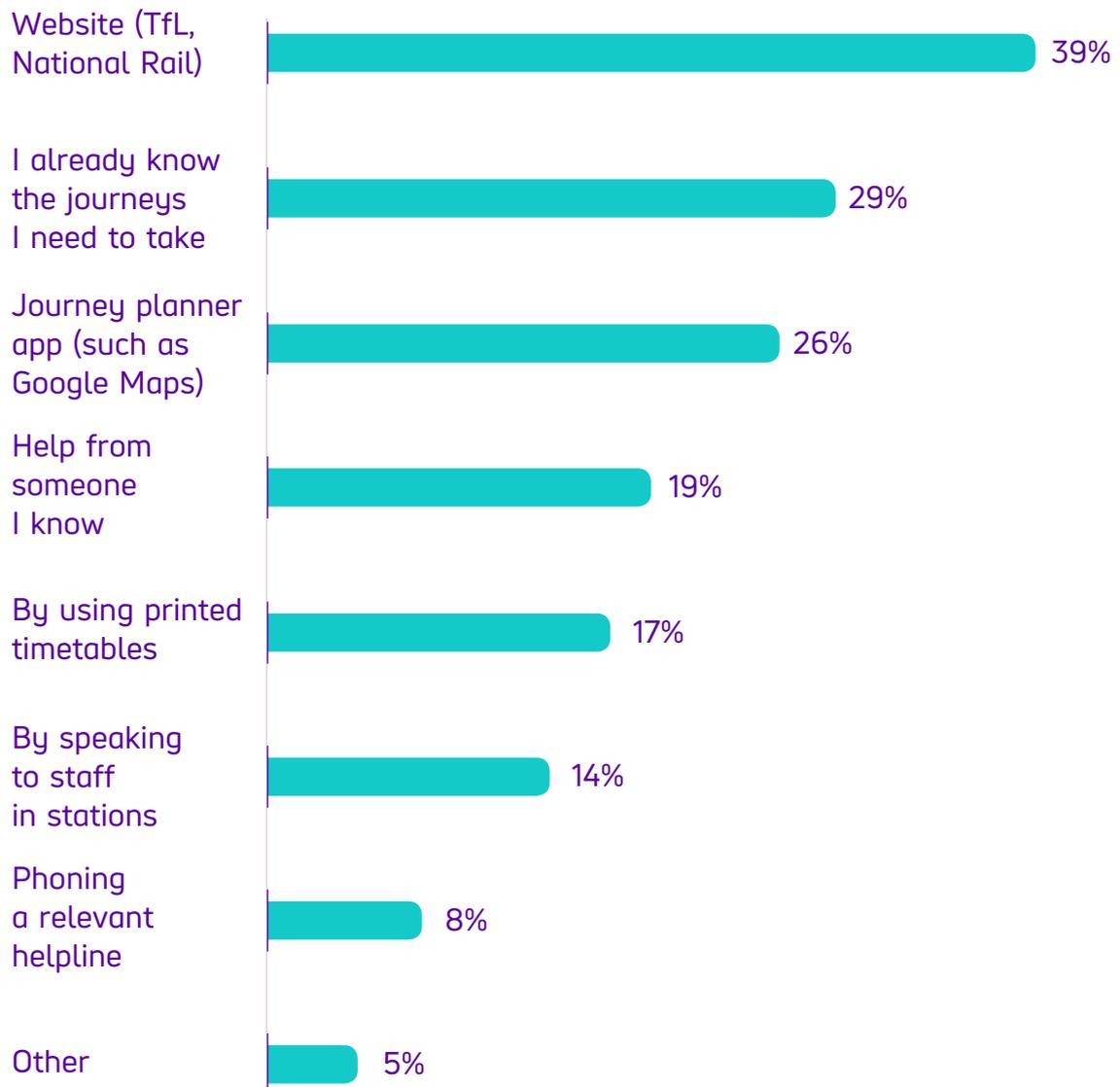


Figure five: How do you tend to plan your journeys on public transport?⁵⁰



Mid-journey updates also proved important for disabled passengers, with 55 per cent accessing travel information during their journey⁵¹. This mostly involved finding out about up-to-date arrival and departure times, information about delays and reminders about route and timings, such as reminders about where to get off. These were also highlighted as the three most important areas for the one in five disabled passengers who said they would like to access more information during their journey⁵².

Technology can be transformative, however it must be remembered that there remains a significant digital divide between disabled and non-disabled people, with disabled people regularly accessing the internet half as much as non-disabled people⁵³.

Alongside the continued development of effective digital solutions, there is a need to ensure multiple formats for information so that those without regular internet access or smart phones are still able to access essential information about their journey.

Only a quarter of respondents in our research said that information about their journey was always accessible and easy to understand. Operators across the public transport network have a range of different platforms and standards for providing up-to-date information. This means that finding out essential information about a journey can be difficult, especially when journeys often involve more than one mode of transport.

The Government recently announced that it would be establishing a bus open data digital service⁵⁴. This will release bus data to third party apps by the end of 2020, including route and timetable information, basic fare and ticket information and real time journey information.

This should be an important step towards simplifying journey planning across the country. We encourage the Government to continue work to make journey planning more streamlined and efficient across the UK, both for disabled and non-disabled passengers and potential passengers.

51. Sample: 2,004 disabled people

52. Sample: 892 disabled people

53. Ofcom (2019) Access and Inclusion in 2018. www.ofcom.org.uk/___data/assets/pdf_file/0018/132912/Access-and-Inclusion-report-2018.pdf

54. Department for Transport (2019) Consultation outcome Bus Services Act 2017: bus open data.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/bus-services-act-2017-bus-open-data>

Open data could especially be used to make travelling by rail more accessible. Although real-time journey and pricing information is already available, Train Operating Companies should share live data which affects the accessibility of the network so that disabled passengers can access information mid-journey. Releasing this real-time data could significantly improve journey planning for disabled people, yet the fact it has not yet been made available suggests there is ongoing reluctance from the rail industry to do so.

This uncertainty surrounding information provision can cause significant anxiety and concern before a journey even begins. 80 per cent of those polled said that they feel stressed at least sometimes, and 27 per cent feel anxious every single time they travel⁵⁵. With better, more reliable information provision, disabled passengers would be able to travel with more certainty and a better understanding of the access issues they may or may not encounter at each stage of their journey. To continue not to do so is simply unacceptable to disabled passengers.

New technologies and innovations are invaluable to many disabled people when it comes to planning and carrying out their journeys on public transport. However, it is essential that information provided is reliable and streamlined across all modes of land transport in acknowledgement of the fact that a significant proportion of journeys involve more than one mode of transport.

Recommendation

The release of open bus data will be a step in the right direction. Government should continue working to ensure that provisions for extending real-time information, especially relating to accessibility, for passenger use are extended across remaining modes of transport.



Charles' story

"Like many disabled people, I rely on public transport. Travelling can be a frustrating part of my day, especially as someone who has a limited amount of vision remaining.

I'm the proud owner of a guide dog called Carlo. He's very excitable and eager to be outside for walks and adventures. Carlo fundamentally gives me my freedom and ability to visit new places, but without public transport, we'd both be stuck.

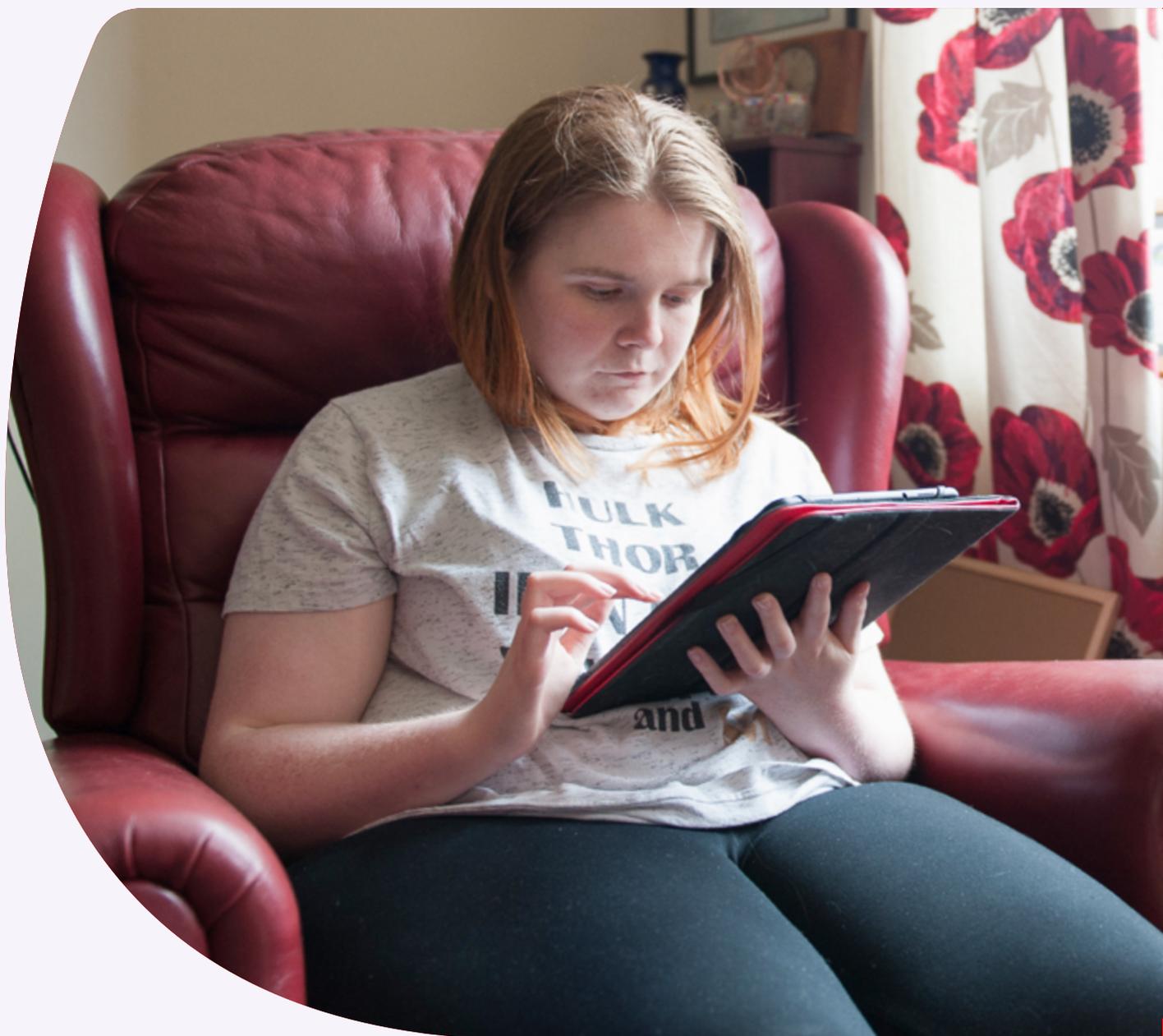
I was brought up using public transport and try not to depend on anyone to drive me places, so I'm quite confident and independent.

My biggest challenge with public transport is the amount of time involved with planning. A trip can take me double, or even triple the time to travel. Not to mention, having to leave almost an hour early in case of the usual delays or cancellation of services."

Passengers' rights

As described throughout this report, disabled passengers can experience an enormous range of issues when they use public transport - from negative staff attitudes to inaccessible train platforms and unclear information. Some processes exist to protect disabled customers' rights, especially on trains. However, documents outlining commitments to disabled customers from operators can be complex, hard to find and differ between operators, let alone between modes of transport.

As such, it can be difficult for disabled passengers to fully understand what their rights are on public transport, and how these rights should be enforced.



Consumer understanding

Our research suggests that, as well as facing over-complicated complaints procedures and accountability mechanisms, disabled passengers aren't making complaints because they are not completely clear about their rights.

15 per cent of disabled people we polled said that they hadn't complained because they didn't know whether they had the right to⁵⁶. Over a quarter of disabled people polled said that they would be more likely to make a complaint if they had a better understanding of their rights⁵⁷.

As Figure six shows, disabled passengers were particularly unsure of their rights in incidences of overcrowding, overwhelming spaces and negative attitudes from the public and transport staff.

Again, this issue is compounded by the disjointed nature of the public transport system. Currently, individual operators have a range of different documents regarding the rights of disabled passengers. Train Operating Companies are obliged to have Accessible Travel Policies (previously DPPPs), while bus operators have individual accessibility statements and advice to disabled passengers. Rules for taxis and Private Hire Vehicles are even more complicated and hard to find.

This multi-layered system is complicated and does not enable disabled passengers to trust that journeys will go to plan, nor empower them to understand their rights if things go wrong. We would like to see a simpler model for guidance which truly puts the interest of disabled passengers at its core.

Understanding rights as a disabled passenger

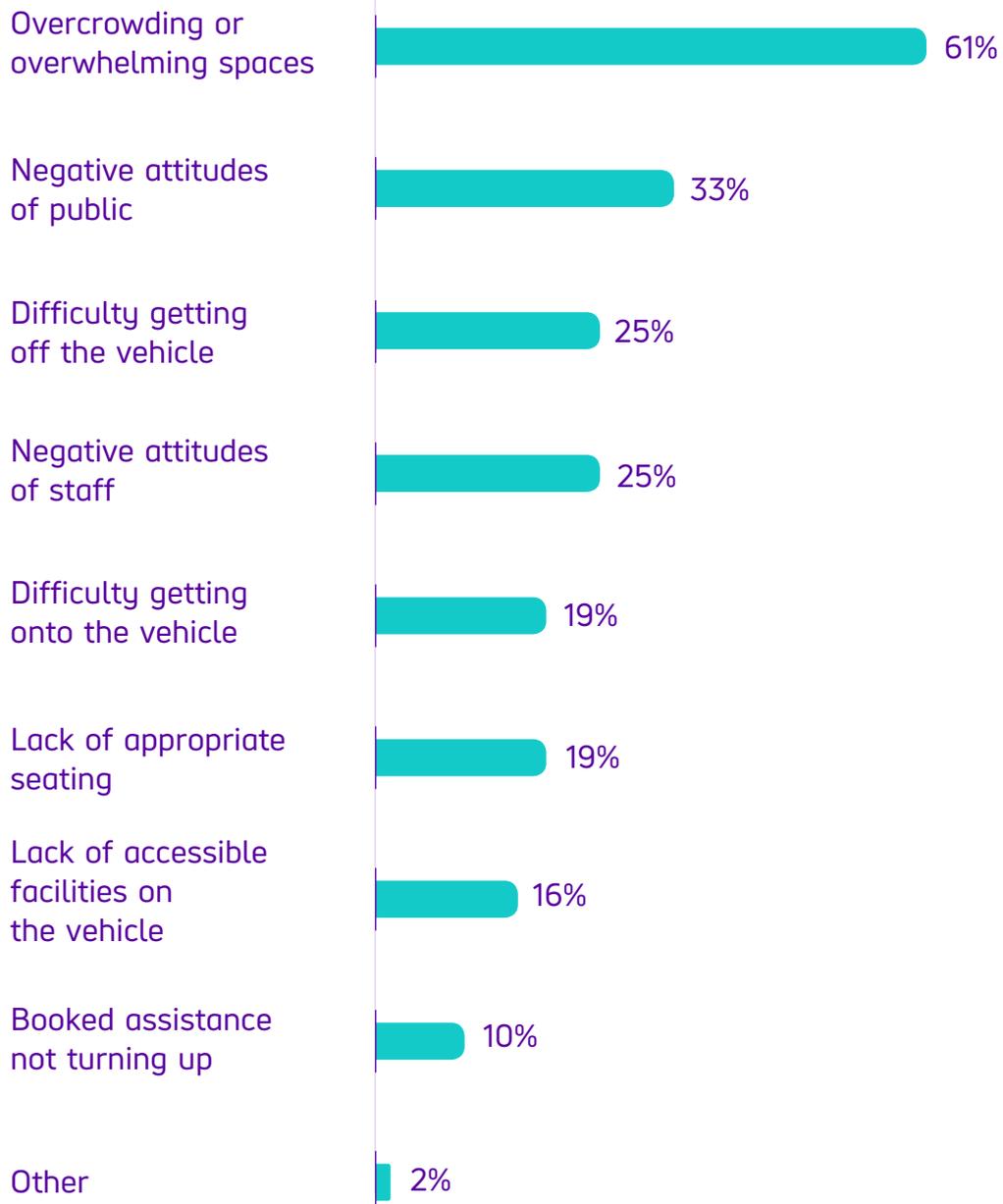
What's clear from our research is that the information currently available for disabled people to exercise their rights on public transport isn't enough. Fewer than one in five disabled adults polled thought that information regarding their rights as a passenger with a long-term impairment or condition on public transport is easy to find and accessible, while over half said that they would like to know more about their rights as a disabled passenger⁵⁸. This suggests that a more streamlined, readable approach would support disabled passengers to pursue complaints and feel more certain of what their rights are on public transport.

56. Sample: 1,018 disabled people

57. Sample: 2,004 disabled people

58. Sample: 2,004 disabled people

Figure six: Which issues did you experience that you were unsure whether it was possible to complain about?⁵⁹



The Government's recent proposal for an aviation passenger charter offers a positive model for empowering disabled passengers to understand and exercise their rights. The aviation passenger charter will be specifically designed to enhance customer experience and includes measures to support passengers with disabilities and other needs⁶⁰, empowering passengers to understand and exercise their rights. Having all the relevant information collated into one, readable document will prove a useful resource for disabled passengers, as well as enabling greater transparency with regard to airlines' commitments to their disabled passengers.

Scope would like to see a similar model applied to land transport. A public transport passenger charter would act as a best practice guide across the network to demonstrate the ways in which providers and operators should strive to improve travel experiences for their current and prospective passengers. This should cover the rights of consumers across all of public transport – rail, metro systems, trams, buses and taxis – and recognise the fact that many journeys require multiple modes of transport and that journeys must be fully accessible from start to finish.

Recommendation

The Government, ORR and transport operators should work together to develop an accessible cross-modal passenger charter. This should be a readable, passenger-facing document which would promote a culture of accountability and transparency between operators and their customers, ensuring that disabled passengers can easily access the information they need to understand their rights on public transport as passengers with long term conditions or impairments.

60. Department for Transport (2018), New aviation passenger charter to improve flying experience. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-aviation-passenger-charter-to-improve-flying-experience>

Conclusion

We know that there are no quick fixes to making our public transport network perfect. However, we believe that the recommendations set out in this report would enable Government and operators to build on the positive work already being done to improve the travel experiences of the UK's 14 million disabled people.

A single transport regulator would enable a much more accountable system, ensuring that regulations are being met, staff receive sufficient training and that the transport network as a whole is more streamlined. This would benefit all passengers, but we believe it would have a particular impact on disabled passengers, who have been overlooked and marginalised by the transport sector for so long.

We are realistic that establishing a single regulator is a longer-term aim. In the meantime, establishing and clearly communicating a passenger charter would offer disabled passengers the transparency to pursue complaints and advocate for themselves when things do go wrong. We want to see this covering all modes of land-based public transport so that disabled passengers can have greater clarity about what they should expect from transport providers and how they can seek redress if things go wrong.

We want to build a transport network which works for those who need it, which offers an opportunity, rather than a barrier, for disabled people to work, socialise and be independent. We believe that, by working together with Government and transport operators, we can implement real change, leading to a streamlined public transport network which works for us all.

Accessibility and inclusion on public transport has, for too long, been seen as an inconvenience or a niche issue, with efforts primarily focused on step-free access. The problems disabled people face just trying to get about are still far too great, and disabled passengers have been waiting far too long for change.

It's time we made travel fair.

As Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson recently put it when asked about her own experiences of travelling as a disabled person in a House of Lords debate: "It is really simple: I want the same miserable experience of commuting as everybody else⁶¹."

61. House of Lords Hansard (2019) Disabled People motion to take note: 9 May 2019
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2019-05-09/debates/032FCDF3-B2E2-49D6-946B-5301497AC582/DisabledPeople#contribution-27D2A049-04CF-4B12-817B-3B5601C59ECD>

We're Scope, the disability equality charity. We won't stop until we achieve a society where all disabled people enjoy equality and fairness.

We use our collective power to change attitudes and end injustice. And we campaign relentlessly to create a fairer society.

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