

Mind the Gap: The Next Step

Disabled people's experiences with Scottish public transport

by Ryan McQuigg



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Introduction

The May 2007 elections in Scotland ushered in a new Scottish Government. This new Government had its own set of priorities and objectives, but the Government also welcomed new ideas and stated that they would listen and learn to make Scotland 'healthier, wealthier, fairer and smarter'.

Leonard Cheshire Disability decided to take this opportunity to raise the issue of accessible transport in Scotland. All too often the main issue that disabled people relate back to us is that public transport is still inaccessible. Scotland has unique geography and demographics which gives greater emphasis on public transport as a tool to enable people to travel around Scotland.

We hope that examining Scottish disabled people's experiences will both highlight their serious and present concerns and also act as a reference point for decision makers looking to bring about real and meaningful improvements to the accessibility of public transport in Scotland.

'Mind the Gap: the next step' identifies the key areas where action is needed to ensure that Scotland's public transport is accessible to all who wish to use it. This report shows that public transport plays a vital role for Scotland's citizens; it acts as a gateway for greater freedom and choice. However, inaccessible transport creates a barrier for disabled people. There is a myriad of consequences stemming from inaccessible transport ranging from social isolation, lack of independence and spontaneity to missed life chances.

'Mind the gap: the next step' aims to build on Leonard Cheshire Disability previous reports, Mind the Gap (2003) and 'Into the unknown' (2008) which examined the barriers faced by disabled people when it comes to accessing public transport and the impact this had on disabled people.

'Into the unknown' adds great weight to Leonard Cheshire Disability's record on transport issues, both in research and campaigning terms. The report confirms Leonard Cheshire Disability's commitment to ensuring that accessible transport for disabled people remains very much on the political radar.

While previous reports focused on disabled people's experiences from across the UK. Leonard Cheshire Disability thought the time was right to examine the views of disabled people in Scotland towards public transport, so that the new Scottish Government can listen and learn from their experiences.

'Mind the Gap: the next step' dovetails perfectly with Leonard Cheshire Disability's previous research into accessible transport. It is hoped this report will compel transport providing companies in Scotland to meet and indeed exceed their minimum duties and ensure a fair and equitable service for all.

Transport and the law

Transport is covered by both Part 3 and Part 5 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). Previously transport vehicles had been exempted from the law, but part 3 of the DDA was extended in December 2006 to include taxis, buses, and trains. Part 3 of the DDA is the part of the law that requires providers of services to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that their service is accessible. For stations and transport infrastructure this includes making adjustments to the physical features of the facilities, as well as adjustments to the way in which the service is delivered. For transport vehicles it generally means adjustments to the way in which the service is provided.

From 26th July 2008 a new EU directive has been introduced to ensure greater help for disabled passengers at all European airports who have a disability, or suffer from reduced mobility. These passengers must be given appropriate and suitable help by airports to help them through the airport process.

The regulation requires that airport staff provide assistance to departing passengers with a disability or reduced mobility through the entire airport process, involving check-in, processing through airport security, and boarding.

It is also important to note that airport operators are not allowed to charge disabled or reduced mobility passengers for any assistance provided.

Part 5 of the DDA sets out accessibility guidelines that newly built transport vehicles need to meet. This part of the law has been in force for transport vehicles for longer than Part 3 and so rail vehicles and buses are on a long-term timetable for accessibility. All trains in the UK will have to be fully compliant with accessibility regulations by 2020, and all buses and coaches by 2017. Any new trains or buses that come into service are required to comply with the regulations.

However, despite these Laws, which are aimed at safeguarding disabled people's rights when it comes to transport, we have found that disabled people are still not fully utilising public transport. Indeed, Leonard Cheshire Disability's 'Disability Review 2007', a survey of over 1,000 disabled people¹, found that 67% of disabled people would use public transport more regularly if it was more accessible. The Scottish Household Survey also found that a non-disabled adult is 50% more likely to make any kind of trip than a disabled adult.²

¹ Laidler et al, Disability Review 2007, Leonard Cheshire Disability, 2007

² Scottish Executive, Improved public transport for disabled people, 2006 Vol 1

Public transport plays a very important role, as it ensures that all members of society are able to travel, not just those with access to a car. However, to truly empower all of society, public transport must be fully accessible.

Accessibility does not just mean easy to reach, it also means easy to use....

....An accessible transport system is one that recognises the need for every stage in the journey to be accessible to disabled people. It sets out to include as many people as possible. It does not attempt to meet every single need. Rather, by considering people's diversity, accessible transport systems try to break down unnecessary barriers and exclusion. In doing so they will often achieve superior solutions that benefit everyone³.

"It is a key priority for this Government that we ensure that everyone has access to vital transport links."

Transport Minister, Stewart Stevenson MSP⁴

Leonard Cheshire Disability welcomes the commitments made by the Transport Minister to ensure everyone has access to transport. Our report, however, finds that there is still a long way to go to make this ambition a reality. Disabled people will closely scrutinise this commitment to make sure that words are backed up with meaningful action.

³ Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, DPTAC, website

⁴ Transport Scotland website: www.transportscotland.gov.uk

Executive Summary

We conducted a survey of 213 disabled people from across Scotland and facilitated several focus groups in order to explore the public transport usage of Scotland's disabled people, while also exploring the impact that inaccessible transport can have on disabled people's social exclusion.

Nature of Impairment	As a percentage of overall respondents
Physical Impairment	22.5%
Wheelchair User	30%
Visual Impairment	13.6%
Communication Impairment	9%
Cognitive Issues	9.9%
Multi Impairment	8.4%
Mental Health	6.6%

Some of the report's key findings included:

- **70%** of respondents stated that they cannot rely on public transport
- **47%** of those people seeking employment believed that inaccessible transport restricted their ability to find a job, while 41% stated that they had actually had to turn down an offer of employment because of inaccessible transport
- **20%** of respondents who had been in work reported that inaccessible transport was a key factor in their leaving employment
- **62%** of respondents had missed out on visiting family or friends due to the lack of accessible transport
- Two thirds (**66%**) of people surveyed had missed a social activity due to lack of accessible transport
- **31%** of those respondents who had had a medical appointment in the past 12 months had missed an appointment due to inaccessible transport

- **32%** of respondents stated that they had faced problems entering further education or training programmes due to inaccessible transport
- **90%** of respondents had not used a ferry in the past 12 months
- **72%** of respondents had not travelled on a plane in the last 12 months
- Only **8%** of respondents use a bus very often, perhaps because only **7%** found the bus very easy to use compared to **45%** who found it very or fairly difficult to use
- Just **5%** of the respondents travel by train very often, compared to **28%** of people who have not travelled by train in the last 12 months; while **23%** of people reported that travelling by train was very difficult
- Nearly **40%** of respondents said that they do not feel safe on Scotland's' public transport

These findings show that inaccessible transport has a direct and negative impact on the lives of disabled people in Scotland. The lack of accessible transport creates poverty of opportunity, particularly for disabled people who wish to access employment, training or education prospects. Inaccessible transport can also add to social isolation, as many disabled people reported that inaccessibility denied them the opportunity to visit family or friends or take part in leisure or social activities. A number of respondents to our survey reported that they felt like 'a prisoner in their own homes'.

Any work to enhance public services and to target these services to disabled people will be fatally undermined if disabled people still struggle to access a vital service like transport - so often the gateway to these other services.

The report highlights the 'gaps' that exist when it comes to accessible transport, and we would like the Government and other decision makers to 'mind' their actions to close this gap. The vital 'next step' for Government in Scotland must be to tackle the issue of accessible transport, as without this any flagship policy that promotes greater inclusion will only ever fly at half-mast.

We are calling for:

- The Government to ensure that the requirements on transport providers under the Disability Discrimination Act are vigorously enforced. This includes the Government encouraging the speedy change by providers to make rail and bus fleets 100% accessible before the legal deadline - Scotland can and should take a lead in the UK in this area.
- The Government to form a 'true partnership' with transport operators, the business community and local authorities to create an information 'one stop shop' for all of Scotland's transport. This should include an accessibility map so that a disabled person can look at their journey in far greater detail and find out if there are any accessibility gaps in their chosen route.
- The Government to expand the concessionary travel card scheme so that people who are in receipt of the lower mobility rate of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) are included in the scheme.
- All local authorities to introduce a uniform taxicard scheme across Scotland, in order to end the postcode lottery.
- All transport staff on the front line of public service to undergo robust disability equality training, led by disabled people, both as part of their induction and ongoing development.
- The Government to lead a public awareness campaign that both informs people of accessible transport while also highlighting to all passengers their responsibilities regarding travel behaviour and etiquette

“Transport must operate as a system, a seamless network, where accessibility is both the sum of its parts and where thought and effective planning takes account of the accessibility of the relationship between the separate elements of the system. Transport networks must be planned, designed, managed and maintained to enable everyone to live, work, learn and participate in the activities they choose without being confronted by barriers that prevent them from doing so”⁵.

Work, Education and Training

The results from our report highlight that disabled people are finding that inaccessible public transport is a major barrier to entering the workplace and/or gaining qualifications.

72% of respondents to the 'Mind the Gap: the next step' survey stated they do not have access to a car. This is a worrying statistic, especially when this information is coupled with the results of the 2006 Scottish Household Survey⁶ which found that **67%** of those that travelled to work went by car or van. This indicates that having access to a car can be a vital tool for travelling to work. The low levels of car ownership amongst our respondents may be linked to continuing levels of low income among disabled people.

Leonard Cheshire Disability's 'Disability poverty in the UK'⁷ report found that disabled people in the UK are twice as likely to live in low-income households as non-disabled people. Whilst this inequality exists it is likely that many disabled people will be excluded from owning a car on the grounds of cost, despite the fact that inaccessible public transport could make car ownership a necessity for some.

Of those respondents to 'Mind the gap: the next step' who were seeking employment, **47%** said inaccessible transport restricted their ability to find a job. When we break the figures down we find that **66%** of wheelchair users who were seeking employment thought that inaccessible transport restricted them finding employment.

“The nearest bus stop to me is a twenty minute walk, but I have a mobility problem and can't drive... it would be a very difficult journey for me to make on a regular basis..... I want to work, I really do, but what can I do if I can't get there?”

A staggering **41%** of those surveyed who stated they were looking for work said that they had had to turn down an offer of employment because of inaccessible transport.

“I have a limited choice of jobs... I went for an interview a few months back, I was over the moon when I was told they wanted me, but then it dawned on me, how was I going to get to the new job, when accessible public transport doesn't go near the place ? ... Sadly I had to turn down the offer. I'm still depressed about it today...”

⁶ Scottish Household Survey: 2006 - Quarter 3

⁷ Parcar G, 'Disability poverty in the UK', Leonard Cheshire Disability, 2008

Accessible public transport can also be a critical factor in people retaining their jobs, particularly for those who acquire an impairment whilst in work. One in five of the respondents to our survey (**20%**) said that they had had to leave a job due to inaccessible public transport.

“There is a lack of suitable transport that I can use with confidence. I rely on my partner who drives but when she got a new job she could no longer drive me to my work, I had to leave my job and friends as a result”.

Nearly **6%** of respondents who were seeking employment were dealt the double blow of having both to leave a job and turn down other job offers because of inaccessible transport issues.

“My local bus service is not reliable.... Lack of spaces for my wheelchair... the cost of other transport means that I was basically working for free, well more like working to pay the taxi driver, as most of my wage went to him... it just costs too much to get anywhere!”

Our findings suggest that inaccessible public transport in Scotland provides continuing barriers to disabled people looking for employment. It is also clear that those same barriers can exist for disabled people looking to gain skills through education or training programmes.

Nearly a third (**32%**) of respondents stated that they had faced problems entering further education or training programmes due to inaccessible transport.

“I'm studying some courses online, but it's not the same as being physically in a classroom in a university building. My friends tell me stories of their Uni life, and I feel that I'm missing out on that experience, just because I can't use the transport available to get to Uni.... also the campus itself isn't totally accessible... I despair that in the 21st century I can't go to Uni even though I have the grades to get on the course...”

The fact that disabled people are twice as likely to live in poverty as non-disabled people⁸ puts into sharp focus the need for better accessible transport. A lack of accessible transport can create a direct barrier for disabled people not only in gaining skills but also in entering the job market.

Figures suggest that around **48% of disabled people** in Scotland are in employment, compared to around **82% of non-disabled people**⁹.

8 Scottish Household Survey: 2006 - Quarter 3

9 Parckar, G, 'Disability Poverty in the UK', Leonard Cheshire Disability, 2008

The UK Government has stated that “employment... is the best route out of poverty. It also strengthens independence and dignity.... It builds family aspirations, fosters greater social inclusion and can improve an individual's health and well-being.”¹⁰

The Scottish Government has also signalled its goal that everyone should be given the chance to better themselves:

“We want a Scotland in which every individual has the freedom and opportunity to be all that they can be”.¹¹

Communities Minister, Stewart Maxwell MSP

To genuinely provide this freedom to all, and to close the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people, the Government in Scotland must put in place measures that will tackle the barriers caused by inaccessible public transport that can prevent disabled both entering further education and finding a sustainable pathway to employment.

¹⁰ High level summary of equality statistics: Key trends for Scotland
<http://www.scottishexecutive.gov.uk/Publications/2006/11/20102424/5>

¹¹ The Department for Work and Pensions Green Paper A new deal for welfare: Empowering people to work
Communities Minister Stewart Maxwell. 28 Nov 2007:
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialReports/meetingsParliament/or-07/sor1128-02.htm#Col3806>

Health and Social Impact

Health

'Mind the Gap: the next step' highlights the importance of public transport in accessing health services. When public transport is not fully accessible to disabled people it can lead to additional costs both to the patient and to the health service in terms of missed appointments, additional stress and anxiety and even poorer health.

"...The train I was to take to the health centre didn't have enough spaces for me, even though I rang the station in advance... staff weren't helpful when I pointed this out... my next appointment was made two months later...I paid for a taxi that time even though it costs so much more."

Of those people who actually had a medical appointment in the last 12 months, nearly one person in every three (**32%**) stated that they had missed an appointment due to lack of accessible transport.

"No really accessible buses go past the medical centre. I have a car but parking there is a nightmare, what's the point if I have to park a mile away... I've been late for two appointments for that reason and one couldn't be rearranged... now I turn up two hours early to scout the car park... it's a waste of my time and I get stressed.. "

28% of those surveyed had been unable to pick up a prescription due to lack of accessible transport.

"If it wasn't for my daughter I would be unable to get my prescriptions."

A further **23%** of disabled people who needed medical treatment either deferred or did not seek it simply because of inaccessible transport.

Research has shown that, in 2007, 1.5 million GP appointments¹² were missed in Scotland. The cost of these missed appointments is estimated to be £31.5m. This figure would be even higher if the 700,000 missed nurse appointments were also added to the equation, but no average cost is readily available for nurse appointments.

12 Article from Channel 4 based on Developing Patient Partnerships research:
<http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/society/health/missed+gp+appointments+cost+30m/712772>

What can be taken into account, though, is the conservative estimate which shows that over half a million hospital appointments¹³ were missed in Scotland at a cost of £50.7m.

We have seen in our survey that **32%** of people who had a medical appointment could not attend those appointments, which highlights that inaccessible transport plays an active role in adding to the number of missed appointments in Scotland. Given the cost of these missed medical appointments both to the well-being of patients and the nation's finances, there is a real economic case to be made that Scotland's transport must be fully accessible. Investing funds now will in the long run actually save the nation money by reducing the number of costly missed medical appointments.

Social occasions

'Mind the Gap: the next step' looked at how inaccessible transport can create a barrier to employment opportunities as well as prevent disabled people from accessing health services. Such issues can exacerbate disability poverty through a very direct impact on income or health. But equally important is the social cost, where barriers stemming from inaccessible transport can hinder disabled people's engagement in social and community activities, decrease opportunities in daily life and even create barriers to forming relationships.

Nearly **50%** of disabled people responding to our survey had missed out on a special occasion due to lack of accessible transport. These include people missing anniversaries, birthdays, and Christmas celebrations and even people stating that they had missed funerals and a wedding.

66% of disabled people surveyed stated they had missed a social activity due to lack of accessible transport. This includes:

- 47** missed cinema trips
- 27** missed leisure centre visits
- 26** meetings at a pub which never materialised
- 23** sporting events missed
- 12** people missing a meal in a restaurant
- 17** people missing a party

Nearly **62%** of people have stated that a lack of accessible transport has stopped them visiting family and friends.

¹³ Scotsman newspaper article December 2007: <http://news.scotsman.com/latestnews/1390-Scots-don39t-turn-up.3619753.jp>

Social exclusion and isolation is a process that causes individuals or groups, who are geographically present in a community, not to participate in the normal activities of members of that society.

Unfortunately, our report has found that inaccessible transport has led to disabled people becoming trapped in transport poverty, a poverty that can best be described as 'the unnecessary exclusion of disabled people from current forms of transport, especially public transport'¹⁴

Our figures highlight that transport poverty has contributed to the social isolation of disabled people. This is a worrying situation, as research has shown that:

“Social isolation is comparable with that of cigarette smoking and other major biomedical and psychosocial risk factors”¹⁵

“Social isolation....has powerful effects on health.... such psychosocial risks accumulate during life and increase the chances of poor mental health and premature death”¹⁶

All this suggests that transport disadvantage or deprivation can induce or exacerbate the conditions that lead to the 'exclusion' of individuals or communities.¹⁷

The assumption of car ownership in the UK has resulted in both a culture and a landscape in which mobility is both expected and necessary to participate in society.

Indeed, recent planning policy has altered in response to increases in car ownership. Changes in the location of employment, education, healthcare, leisure, shopping and, in consequence, social networks, have challenged the sustainability of localised existences. For example, more out of town retail parks have sprung up, businesses are moving from expensive town centres to more affordable spaces away from the central business district. All this has occurred alongside the decline of public transport, in terms of affordability, availability, accessibility and acceptability.

This has meant that today's 'modern landscapes seem to be designed for forty year old healthy males driving cars'¹⁸

This situation has resulted in disabled people having reduced access to formal and informal social networks and increasing isolation and separation, not only from goods and services but from social activities, family and friends.

14 Department of Transport: Social exclusion and the provision of public transport: Main Report

15 Psychosomatic Medicine 63:273-274 (2001); James S. House, PhD

16 WHO Report: Wilkinson and Marmot, 2003, p 12

17 The Role of Transport on Social Exclusion in Urban Scotland - Literature Review 2001

18 Journal of Transport Geography: Transport and social exclusion: investigating the possibility of promoting inclusion through virtual mobility

Disabled people who are trapped in transport poverty will face reduced equality of opportunity and a reduced ability to participate in civic life.

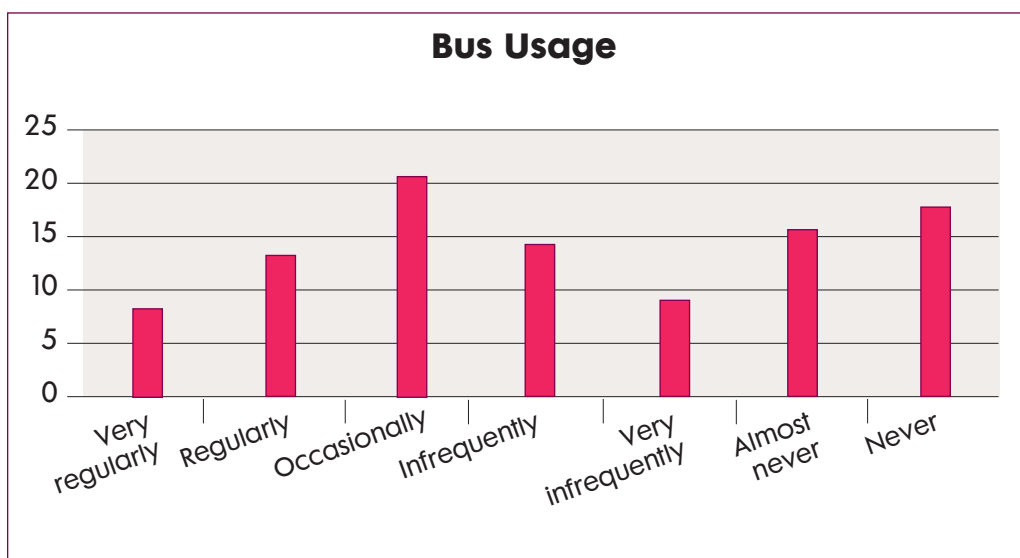
If we want to break the chains of transport poverty and enhance people's social mobility, we must increase people's physical mobility, and a fully accessible public transport infrastructure is the main way to achieve that goal.

However, the following chapters will show that Scotland has a long way to go to ensure that it has a public transport system fit for purpose to meet everyone's needs.

On the Buses

Buses provide the sustainable mass public transport necessary to support economic growth and accessibility. They are uniquely placed to provide the essential links needed throughout Scotland to enable us all to get to work and to access shops, schools and health services. They are the principal, most frequently used and most widely available mode of public transport.¹⁹

Whilst buses are the most commonly used form of public transport, our survey found that there are still barriers that can prevent disabled people from using bus services, and that, when they are used, experiences can be mixed.

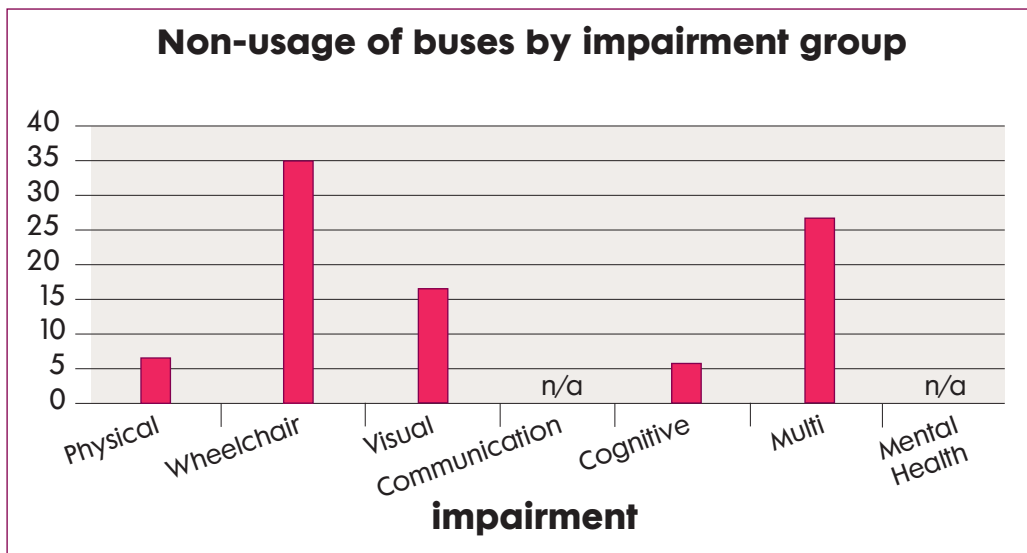


Of those surveyed around a third (**32%**) said they have either used a bus just once in the past year or had not used a bus at all. In comparison, only **8%** of respondents said that they use the bus very regularly.

“It's not just the driver's negative attitude but other passengers that make me feel that I'm causing a nuisance just for wanting to use the bus...”

The table overleaf sets out the level of bus use by impairment type. The lowest usage figures came from wheelchair users, with well over a third reporting that they don't use the bus at all.

¹⁹ An Action plan for buses in Scotland 2006.



“The driver stops very sharply and they don't wait for me to get off, I don't like it, means I don't use the bus...”

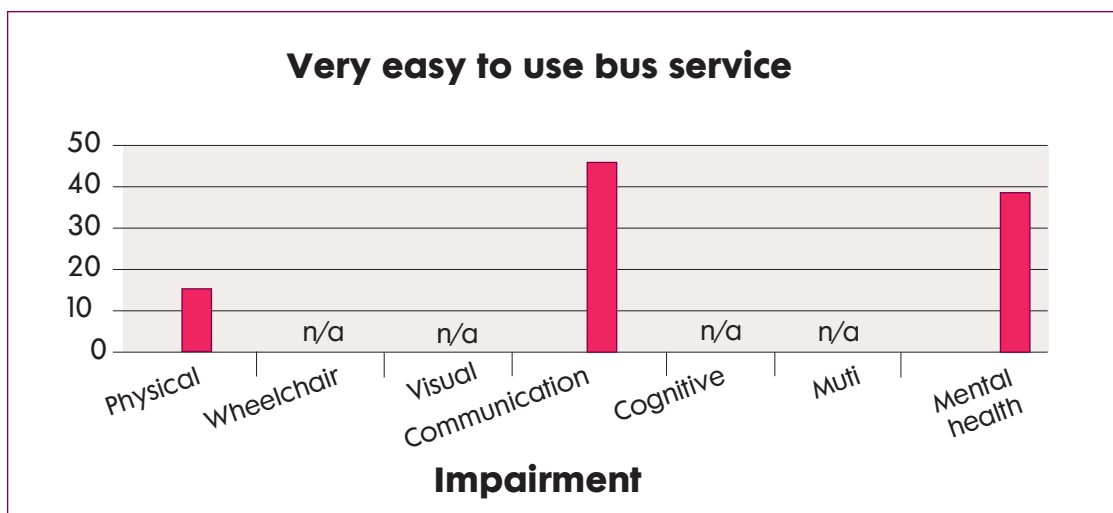
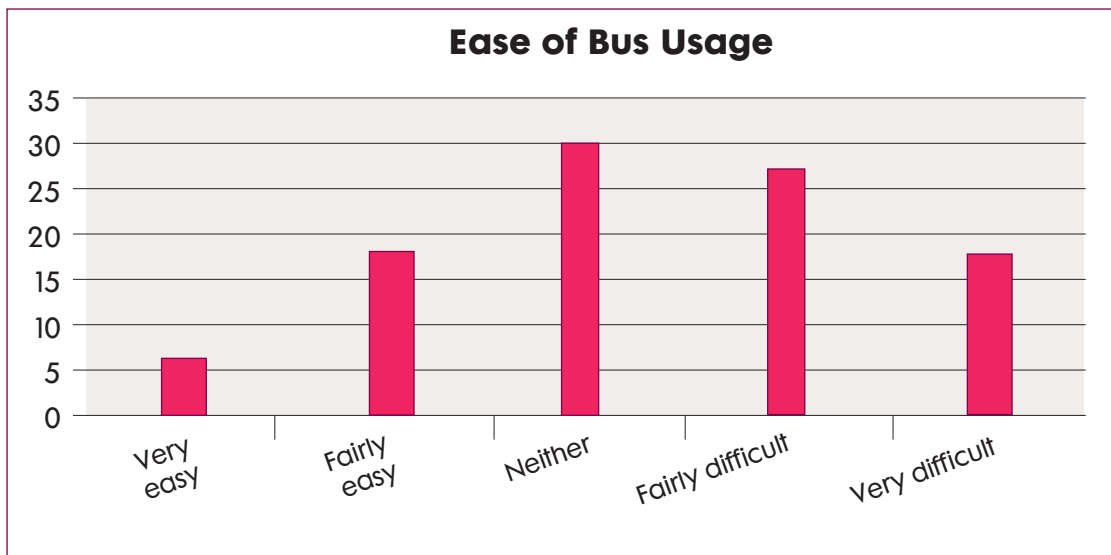
“I find the bus simple to use I don't have any real issues, well maybe the timetables could be clearer.”

“I'm blind and the driver doesn't always call out my stop even when I ask him to, the other day I missed my stop and it took me ages to make my way back home... this has happened too many times, often it is other passengers who alert me to my stop...”

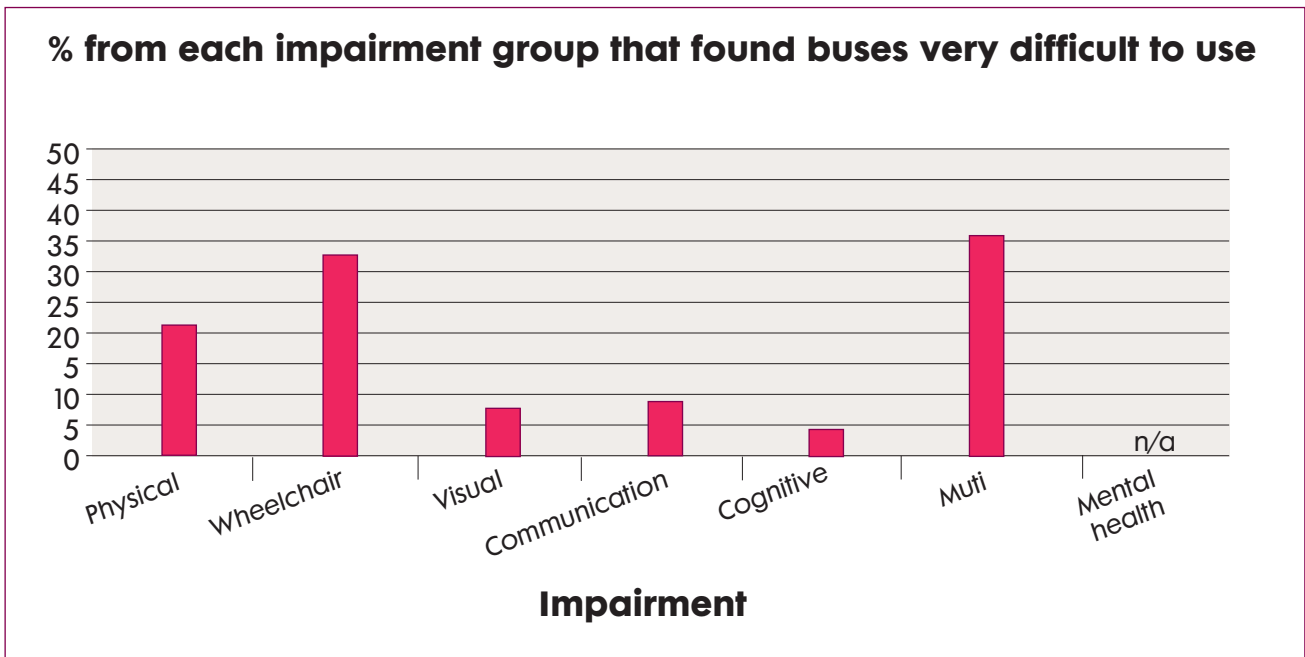
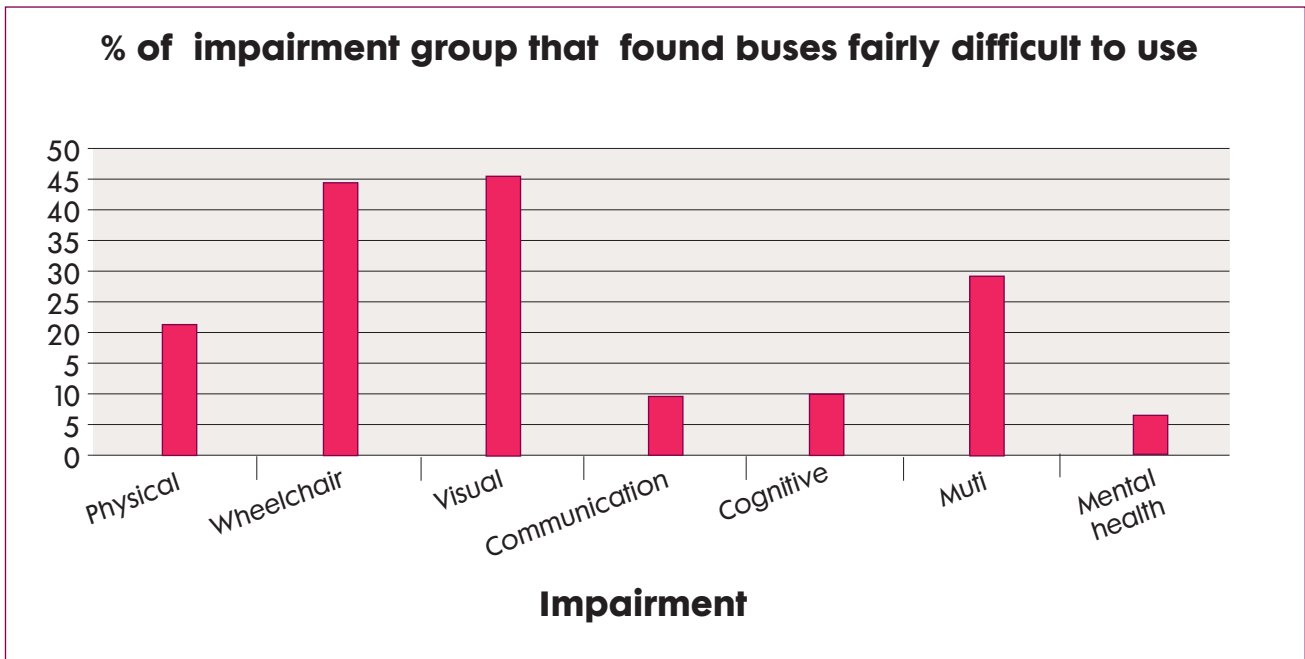
“The new buses in my area are wonderful, the bus lowers and their ramps work ... the difference to the old bus is remarkable.. hats off to them...”

Only **7%** of respondents reported that they found buses very easy to use, while **45%** stated that they found them either fairly or very difficult to use.

When the information was broken down by impairment type we find that no wheelchair users found the bus very easy to use. People with a visual impairment, people with multiple impairments and people with a cognitive impairment also failed to register the bus service as very easy to use. Conversely, those with mental health conditions or communication impairments were generally very comfortable using bus services.



When we examine those respondents that stated they found the bus service very difficult to use, and break them down by impairment, we find that **80%** of wheelchair users found the buses either very or fairly difficult to use. This sharply highlights that bus services are still difficult modes of transport for wheelchair users despite the latest legislation.



I want to see all bus operators raise their standards...²⁰

Former Transport Minister, Tavish Scott MSP, Dec 2006.

In Scotland there are over 1,000 licensed bus operators with a total fleet of 11,783 vehicles²¹. But, despite Government efforts to see an increase in standards, the findings from our survey suggest that there is still a long way to go until disabled people feel that public bus services are fully accessible. Whilst our survey uncovered some examples of excellent practice among bus providers, respondents also reported significant difficulties with bus provision in Scotland.

²⁰ An Action plan for buses in Scotland. <http://openscotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/01141850/1>

²¹ Scottish Parliament Information Centre excel spreadsheet

The time it takes to get to a bus

Transport accessibility is not simply about physically accessible vehicles, important though they are. Issues such as the location of bus stops can also be crucial to ensuring accessibility. Government, both national and local, must do more to ensure both that bus stops are properly accessible, and that those who require additional support to reach bus stops are able to access that support, as the length of journey to reach a bus stop can have a direct bearing on whether an individual will be able to access that service.

This can be a particular issue in rural areas in Scotland. Official transport figures report that **13%** of people in Scotland had to walk 7 minutes or more to their nearest bus stop, but this jumps to an average of **26.5%** for those people living in rural areas. Figures also show that, while in all urban areas at least one bus service will be available, **12%** of households in 'remote rural' areas are not catered for by a bus service at all.

The frequencies of buses in rural areas can also present a major problem. In large urban areas **44%** of households are catered for by a bus service which has five buses or more an hour; but in 'remote' rural areas there are no households that can boast the same frequency of service. Indeed, the figures suggest that **33%** of households in remote rural areas have to wait over an hour for a bus, while in urban areas no households face this wait.²²

"... My bus stop isn't in a safe place, it's really just a mud patch on the side of the road, no pavement or path, it's not safe...."

"I've been to Germany and they have talking busses which tell the people exactly what stop they are at and what it is near the stop, why can't we do that here?"

"Some bus drivers don't even stop for you... that happened to me the other day, he just drove straight past me.."

Buses are an important part of the transport solutions... that they are accessible to passengers... will be supported by the Scottish Government.

Although I welcome the new provision for wheelchairs that I have seen in many buses, there continues to be a problem in rural areas and I recognise that we need to look at that. ²³

Transport Minister, Stewart Stevenson MSP

²² Scottish transport statistics No 26 - 2007 Edition: Table 1
²³ Scottish Parliament, Debate Passenger Transport 31/01/08

As the statements have shown, the Government is aware that there are continuing problems with regard to the accessibility of buses. Access to public transport for disabled people is a critical issue - we would therefore press for more action to overcome the problems that have been identified in our survey.

Recommendations

Below are a number of recommendations and discussion points.

More must be done both to improve the accessibility of bus provision and to encourage and support disabled people to use buses that are fully accessible. For this to happen bus operators must:

- Provide audio and visual announcements on all their buses. Finland, Germany and now London have introduced buses with new communication systems. This enables automated announcements as to which stop is next. The buses not only tell you which is the next stop but also offer information about the surrounding area and tourist attractions. Electronic tracking devices can enable information to be sent to bus stops to state where a certain bus is at any given time.

Scottish bus operators could take a lead in this area. Providing such support could be essential for some disabled passengers, but it would clearly benefit all passengers. There is also a clear business opportunity through such a system.

As well as opening up bus provision to more disabled people, some businesses and tourist organisations could also get the chance to highlight their places of interest, in return for helping to meet some of the initial cost of the system.

- Ensure staff undergo robust disability equality training, led by disabled people, both as part of their induction and ongoing development. This training should not just be about ticking boxes; it should be up to date and give staff the knowledge and confidence to meet the needs of their disabled passengers.

- Carry out daily checks to ensure that the accessibility features are in working order, thus reducing the instances of them failing.

- A number of respondents to our survey reported that buses that should have been accessible were rendered inaccessible by ramps or other equipment failing to work.

- Make as a priority expanding the numbers of low floor accessible buses. Scottish transport providers should be taking a lead by aiming to ensure that 100% of the fleet is accessible well before the 2017 deadline.

- Ensure where wheelchair accessible spaces are provided on buses it is essential that these spaces are reserved for those that need them. Clear guidelines must be given to staff and other passengers about the use of these spaces. We have already seen Lothian buses take a stance on this issue recently.
- And finally we would urge bus operators to form partnerships with disabled groups/organisations to introduce a 'mystery shopper' element to evaluate their services. This 'mystery shopper' would not only highlight areas of concern but also highlight examples of good practice.

Taxi for everyone?

Where mass transit vehicles such as trains and buses are not available, or not accessible, many disabled people will be forced to rely on taxis. Regular use of taxis can, however, be prohibitively expensive, and the extra cost is not necessarily a guarantee of accessibility.

It is important that a disabled person should be able to hire a taxi on the spot with the minimum delay or inconvenience, and having accessible taxis available helps make that possible.²⁴

Although the above statement indicates that the important principle of ensuring accessible vehicles are always available is well understood, on the ground, disabled people's experiences can differ considerably.

Responses to Freedom of Information requests from Leonard Cheshire Disability for this research found that in Scotland only five local authorities out of the possible 32 have 100% of their taxi fleet (excluding private hire) accessible for disabled people. One local authority reported that none of its fleet was accessible. (See Annex 1 for a full break down of local authorities' accessible taxi/private hire fleet.) The information shows that a postcode lottery exists for disabled people when it comes to accessing a taxi service which is fit for purpose.

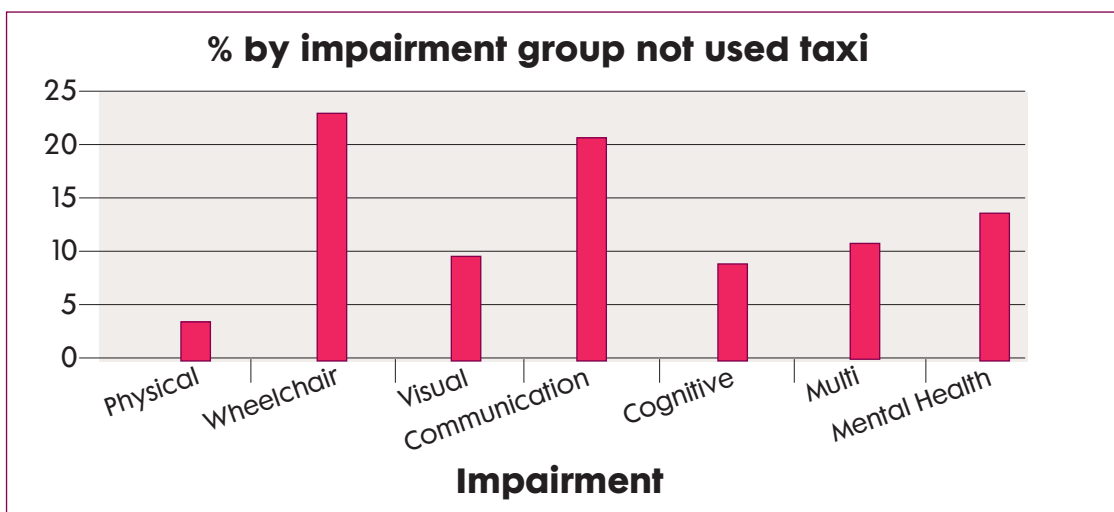
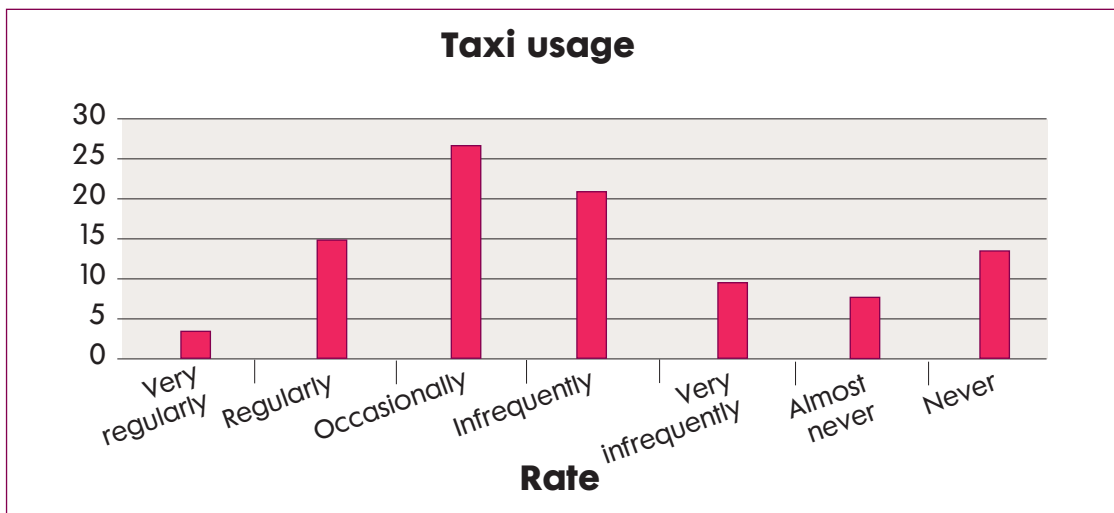
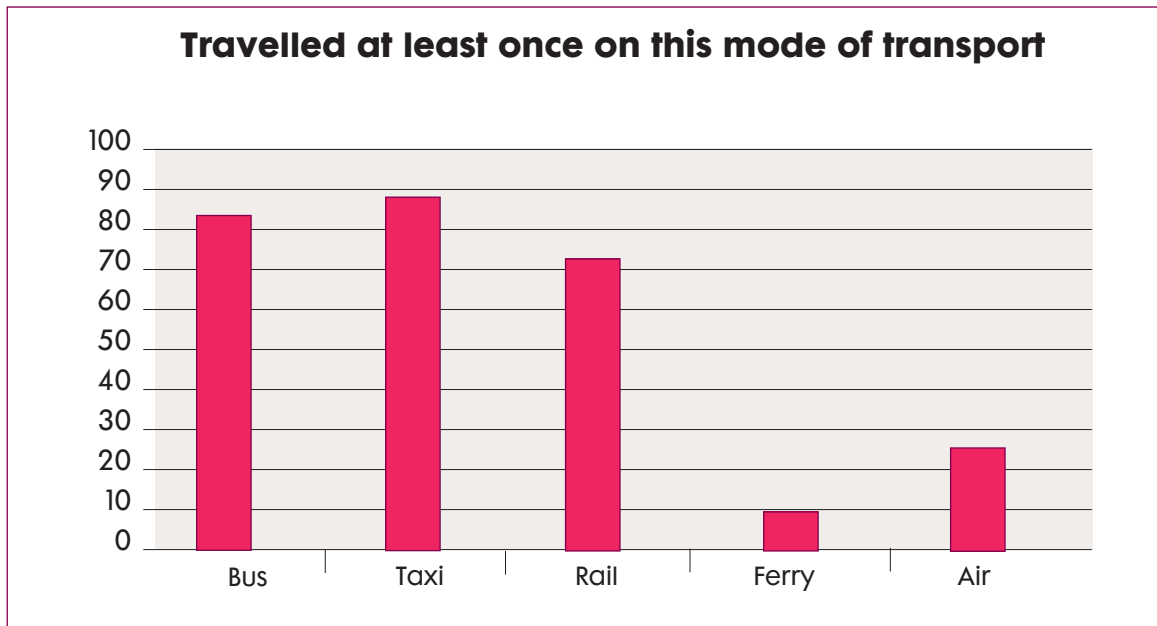
'Mind the gap: the next step' shows that more people have travelled by taxi than any other form of public transport; **86%** of people from our survey stated that had travelled by taxi.

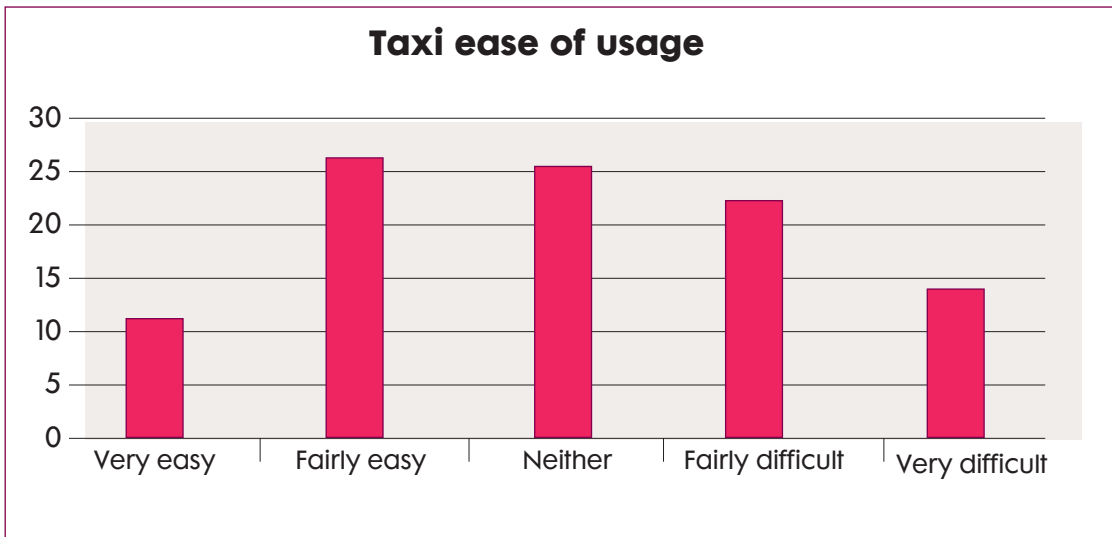
More than a quarter of respondents to Leonard Cheshire Disability's survey reported that they used taxis occasionally, suggesting that for most disabled people taxis are a common mode of transport, but not one that they would use every day.

“Taxis cost too much, I can't afford to use taxis all the time even if I really need one. I have to seriously think about using a taxi.”

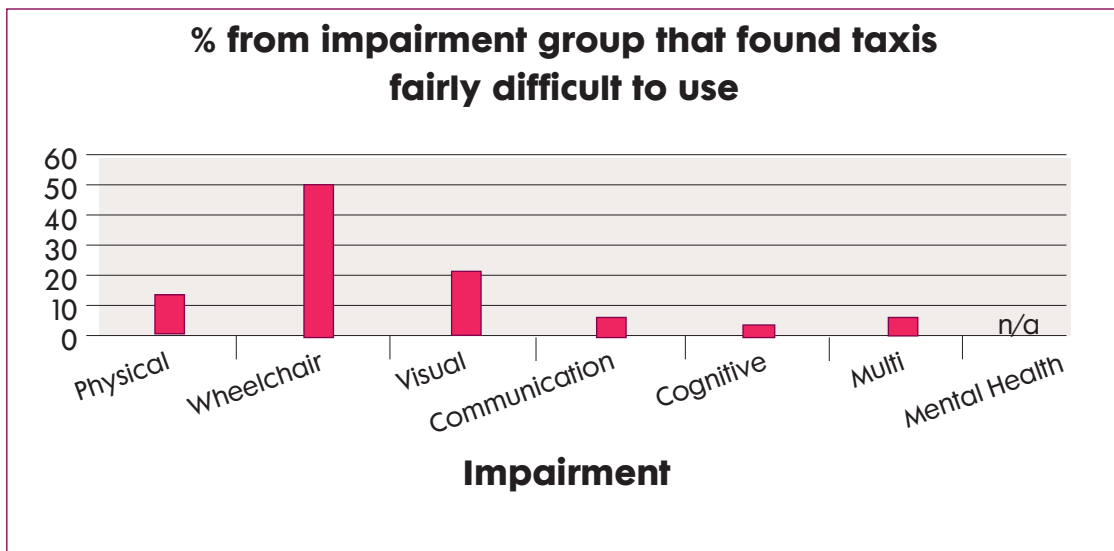
Despite taxis being the most popular mode of transport, more than **35%** of people who used taxis still found them either fairly or very difficult to use. At the same time, however, a majority (just over **50%**) of people who have used a taxi were either neutral in their views or thought taxis were fairly easy to use.

24 Taxi and Private Hire Car Licensing: Best Practice for Licensing Authorities 2007

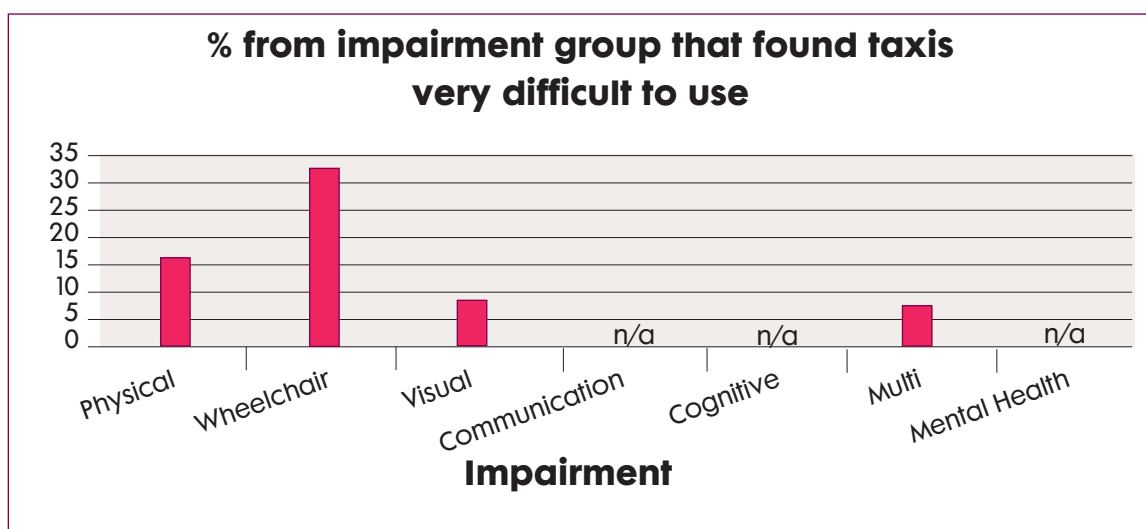




Examining the results more closely, we find that **80%** of wheelchair users and over **30%** of people with a visual impairment found taxis either fairly or very difficult to use.



“I don't like the way taxi drivers treat me... they moan about the size of my wheelchair and say that it's too heavy to push into taxi..they don't use the extension to the ramp which makes it very steep getting into taxi...”



“The taxi driver wouldn't let me in with my assistance dog...”

“I'm profoundly deaf and I have problems contacting a taxi.... text mobile is not available everywhere...”

“When I book a taxi I always ask for the same driver, Alan. He has always been pleasant and patient, it's sad that not all drivers are like Alan, he should be the rule not the exception!”

“I have a speech impairment and the drivers don't take their time when I try to give my destination, they say hurry up spit it out, or make me write it down, even though it's my choice to tell them verbally... it's really frustrating and makes me angry after all I'm the customer... and the customer should be always right...”

“If I'm with someone the driver always asks them questions and ignores me, plus I'm sure I get 'taken for a ride' in more than one way, I'm blind, my journeys seems to cost more... I've compared prices with friends who are not blind and for the same journey I do pay more...”

The Taxicard scheme is one way that local authorities have sought to support disabled people when it comes to the higher cost of using a taxi.

A Taxicard allows the holder to make taxi journeys at a reduced rate. The Taxicard scheme is designed to help disabled people get about by making taxi journeys cheaper.

Yet again, however, disabled people can face a postcode lottery when it comes to accessing this scheme. At present the Taxicard scheme only operates in 14 council areas across Scotland.²⁵

Recommendations

When bus or train services are inaccessible, and given that the increased likelihood of low income will leave many disabled people unable to afford a car, taxis can be the only option for some. Using taxis is expensive, though, and it is important that taxi operators offer a better service to fit the price. Taxi providers should:

- Ensure that disability equality training is available to drivers. A common complaint from respondents to this survey about taxi travel was the attitude of drivers. Poor driver attitudes can be just as significant in making a transport service inaccessible as the physical design of the vehicle
- Work with Government, both national and local, to make the case that a Taxicard scheme should be available across the whole country, so as to put an end to the current postcode lottery. The scheme should be uniformly adopted to rule out any local discrepancies
- Advise and inform disabled people of improvements to their services
- Set out clear, measurable steps and timelines to meeting their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act

Trains on the right track?

The Railways for All Accessibility Strategy for Great Britain was launched by the Department for Transport in March 2006 and describes what the railway industry is doing to improve access for disabled people. A key part of this strategy is the Access for All funding stream targeted at improving the accessibility of stations.

Speaking in 2006 about the strategy, the then Transport Minister Tavish Scott MSP stated:

"It will ensure that disabled people have trouble-free access to rail services, allowing them to travel without the difficulties and stresses they have experienced in the past".²⁶

Whilst improvements to accessibility have been made in recent years, particularly to rolling stock, there is clearly still a long way to go before Scotland has a fully accessible rail system. Leonard Cheshire Disability's research suggests that many of Scotland's railway stations remain inaccessible and that, despite improvements that have been made, many disabled people still report problems when travelling by rail. It is clear that the Railways for All strategy is simply not enough on its own to lead to a new age of accessibility for Scotland's railway stations.

An audit of the public information on Scotland's railway stations reveals that:

Just **39%** of stations had accessible parking facilities

Just over **50%** of Scotland's stations are fully accessible or Step-free.. This figure includes some stations featuring caveats regarding un-surfaced paths, rough ground or gates.

Less than **1%** of ticket machines are at a height easily accessible for a wheelchair user

Just **1%** of ticket desks are deemed fully accessible

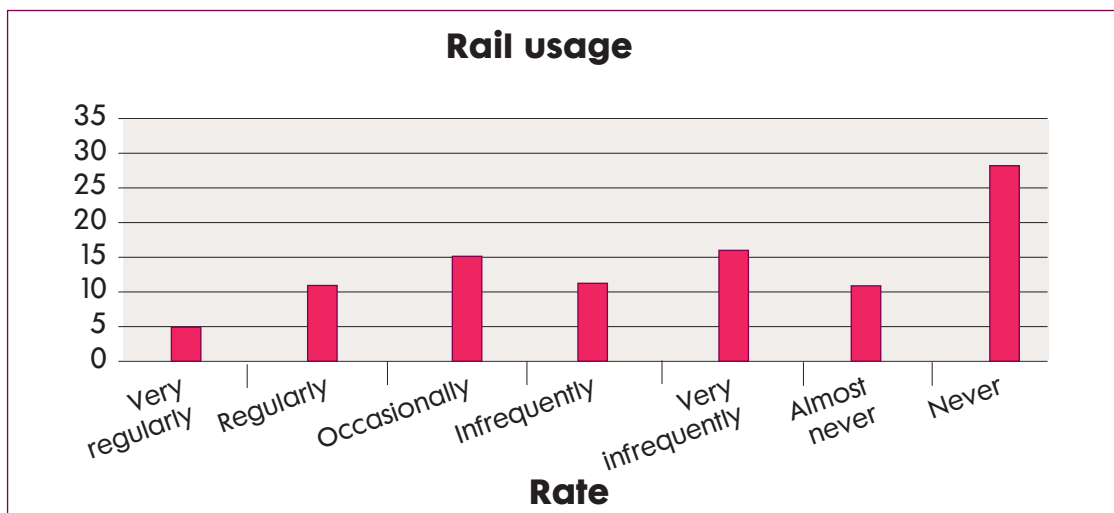
Just **1%** of public phones in train stations are considered fully accessible

Only **4%** of stations have made sure that all their public doors offer wheelchair access

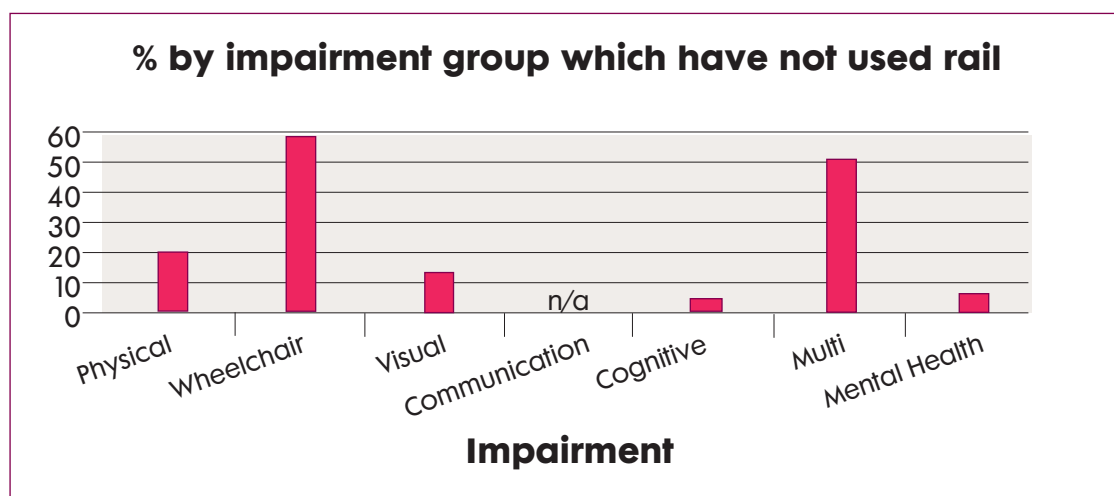
The audit highlights the barriers which society has placed in front of disabled people when it comes to accessing rail travel.²⁷

The fact that slightly more than half of Scotland's stations claim to be step-free is a move in the right direction, but it still means that almost half of railway stations would not be fully accessible for wheelchair users. This lack of accessibility would, of course, also mean that these stations would be less easy to use for others with a physical impairment, for parents with young children or for anyone with heavy luggage.

28% of respondents to the 'Mind the gap: the next step' survey revealed that they haven't used a rail service in the last twelve months compared to just over **5%** who stated that they use trains very regularly.

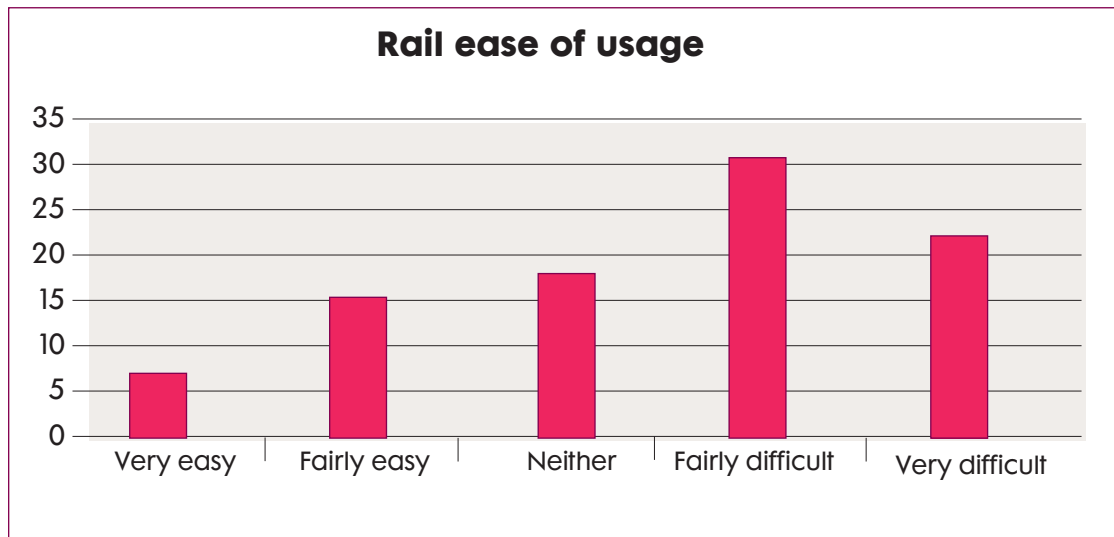


As we can tell from the graph below, the majority of wheelchair users and people with multiple impairments reported that they did not use rail as a form of transportation.

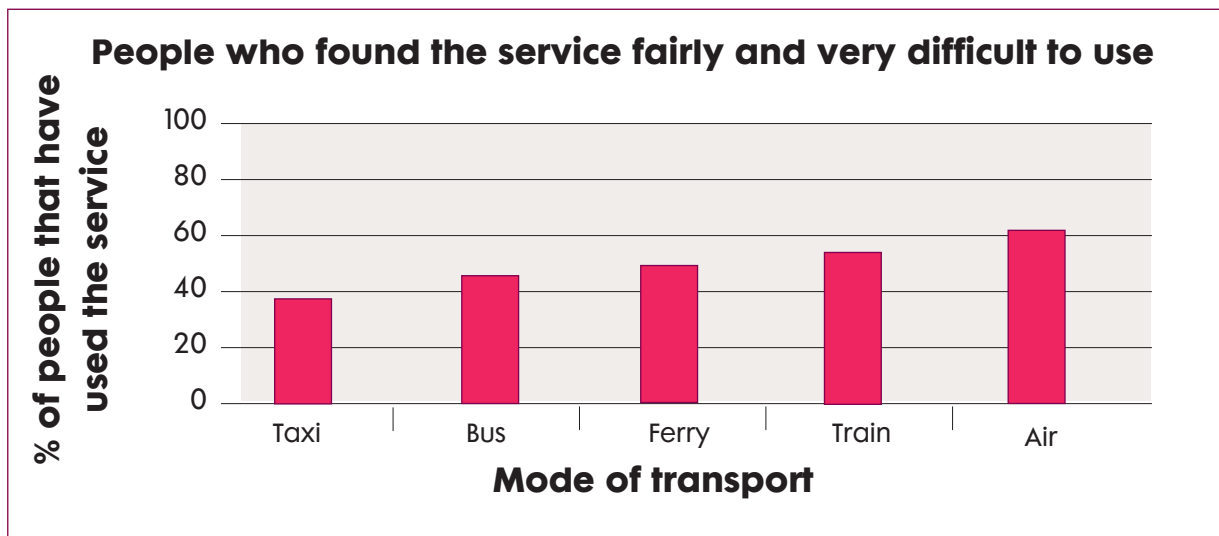


27 Leonard Cheshire Disability research from National Rail Enquiries

More than half (**54%**) of respondents said that they found rail travel fairly or very difficult to use, compared to just under a quarter who reported that they found it very or fairly easy.



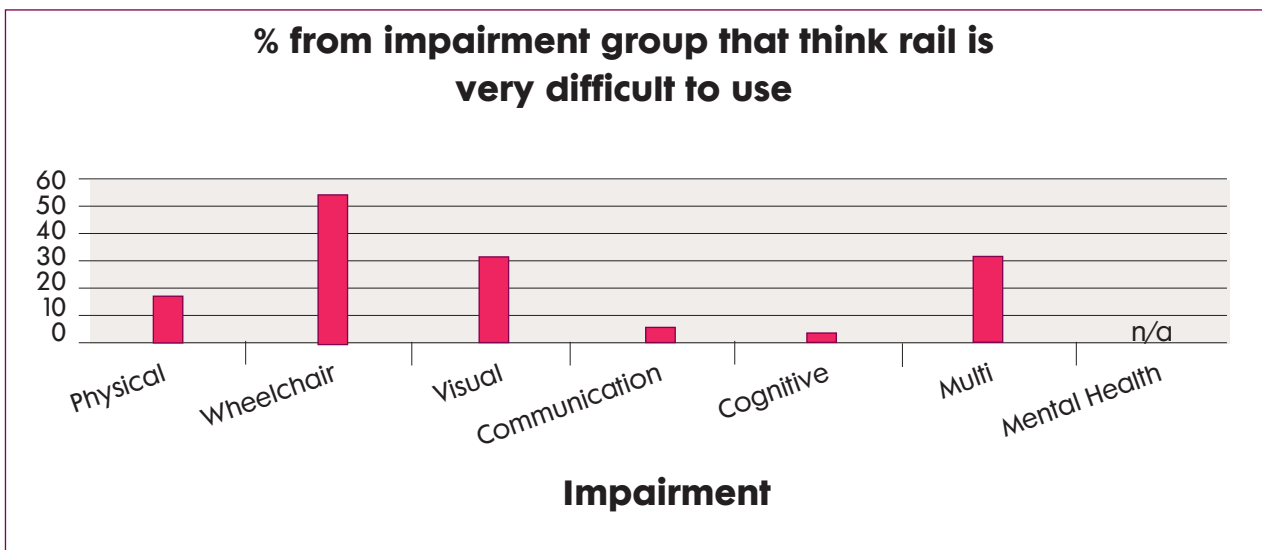
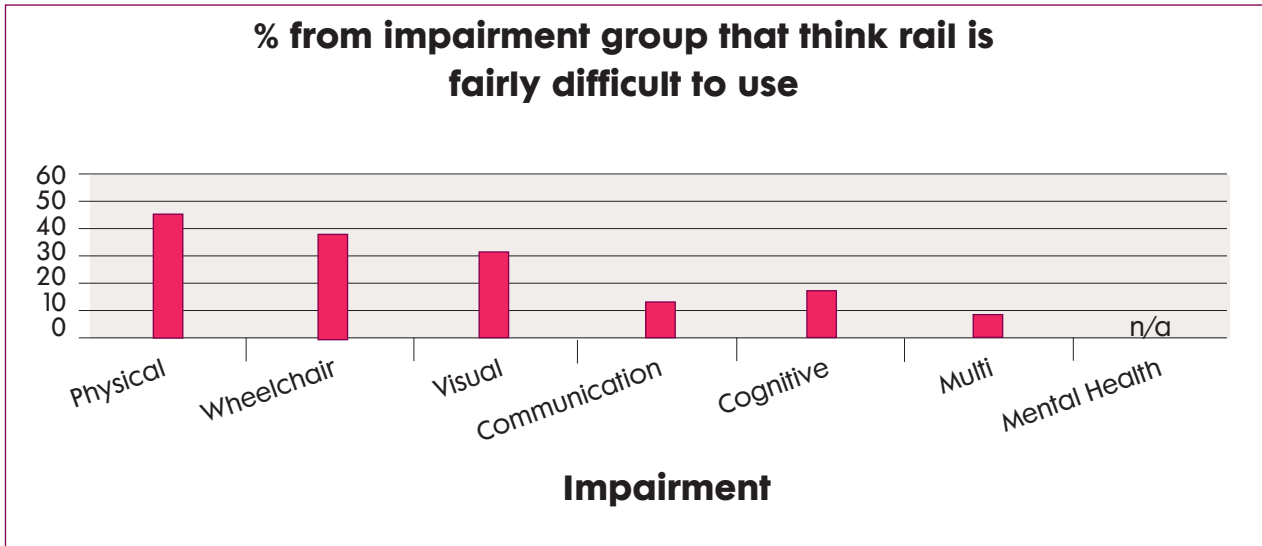
The chart below shows that people found the train the most difficult mode of transport to use after air travel. Given that trains should provide a more 'everyday' form of mass transport, this is a concerning figure for Scotland's railways.



“Despite me ringing up the station two days in advance, I had no assistance when I arrived. The fact that I have to book assistance in advance means I can't be spontaneous. If I fancied a day trip on the spur of the moment it's a no, no for me.”

“...the train I was on didn't have an audio or visual station announcement system, and I can't read the sign on the platform telling me where I am. This means I miss my stop..”

Again the figures suggest that wheelchair users experienced the most difficulties in using the rail network. A vast majority (**96%**) reported that rail was either very or fairly difficult to use, whilst figures were also high for people with visual impairments (**68%**) and people with a physical impairment (**68%**).



“It takes a lot of time to plan for a journey; I have found that out to my cost. Some parts of my trip might not be accessible, and I only found this out when I reached the inaccessible bit... not all train stations are open to me...”

“...All the policies in the world are fine but not if they forget to tell their staff all about them...”

“Travelling by train costs too much for the service you get; we should get more discounts. Also the information provided at the station is poor: I can never hear the loud-speaker and I find it hard to understand the timetable.”

Recommendations

Below are a number of recommendations and discussion points.

Unfortunately our survey has revealed that many disabled people can still struggle in accessing the train. Our survey and focus groups revealed various reasons for this, ranging from train design, physical access to stations and staff training. Therefore, we urge train operators to:

- Keep the policies and implementation of the assisted passenger reservation system under constant review in order to improve its effectiveness.

Too often disabled people do not have the spontaneity of travel that other people take for granted, so when disabled passengers take the time to inform staff of their travel needs, they should be afforded full assistance. Respondents to our survey suggested, however, that assistance that is booked is still not always made available.

- Ensure staff undergo robust disability equality training, led by disabled people, both as part of their induction and ongoing development. This training should aim to give staff the knowledge and confidence to meet the needs of their disabled passengers.

Staff training is paramount to ensure that disabled passengers feel that their needs will be met.

- Help further encourage disabled people to use rail services. And, to recognise the fact that disabled people are twice as likely as non-disabled people to live in low income households, the disabled person's rail card could offer better discounts to disabled people.

- Make compliant forms more accessible (i.e. easy to read and complete) and highly promote them. These forms should act as a catalyst to bring about real change. Compensation packages must be thought out with the collaboration of disabled people. The rail regulator must ensure that complaints are acted upon with due care and diligence.

- Put in place clear audio and visual announcements both onboard the train and at the stations as soon as possible.

- Utilise the funding available through the Access to All fund, train operating companies must ensure that they build access requirements fully into any refurbishment programmes, and that investment in improving access is stepped

up across Scotland. As it should be unacceptable that almost half of all train stations are not 'step-free' and far too few stations offer fully accessible in-station ticketing facilities.

- Ensure more accessible spaces are onboard trains, while those which are accessible must be enforced so those disabled passengers which need them are given the chance to utilise them.
- Put in place a mechanism to guarantee that genuine accessibility across the network should become a mandatory aspect of rail franchise agreements, ensuring that this is not an area where costs can be cut.

Ferry travel - all plain sailing?

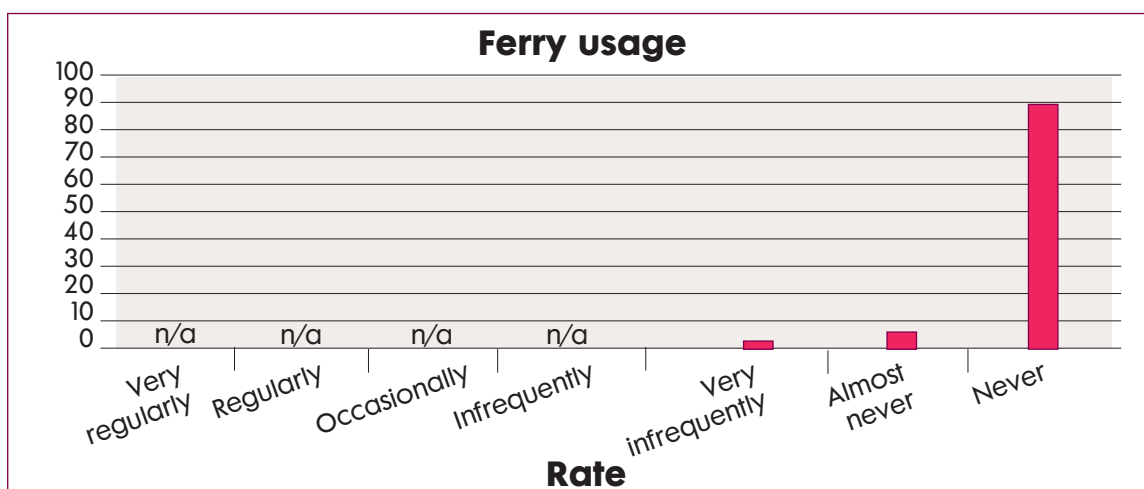
The majority of ferry services in Scotland are provided by companies directly owned by the Scottish Government, i.e. Caledonian MacBrayne and NorthLink. Accordingly, it is clear that the Government has a major role to play in this form of public transport.

The Scottish Government is committed to improving Scotland's lifeline ferry services. For these communities, a reliable ferry service is just as important as a new road or rail link in a large town or city. In fact, many would argue that it is even more important than that, as it is their only link to mainland Scotland and beyond.²⁸

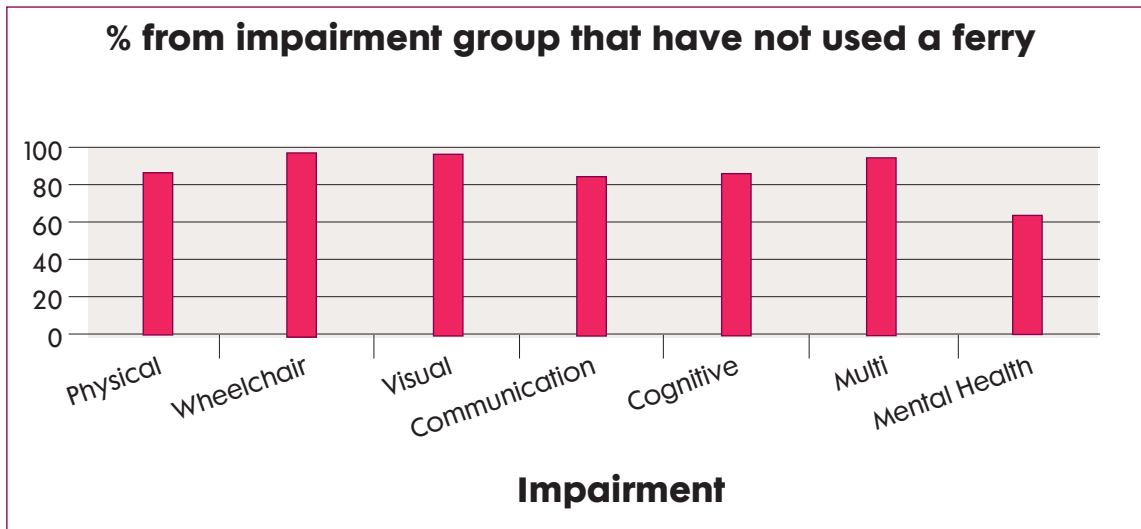
Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson MSP

Despite the fact that ferry services can be hugely important to many Scottish communities, a massive **90%** of respondents said that they have not used a ferry at all in the past twelve months. This is almost certainly linked to the geographical spread of respondents, and to the fact that ferry travel is in any case generally less common than other forms of public transport. But is also important to point out that low usage levels may well be linked to the fairly high numbers of respondents who stated that using services was difficult.

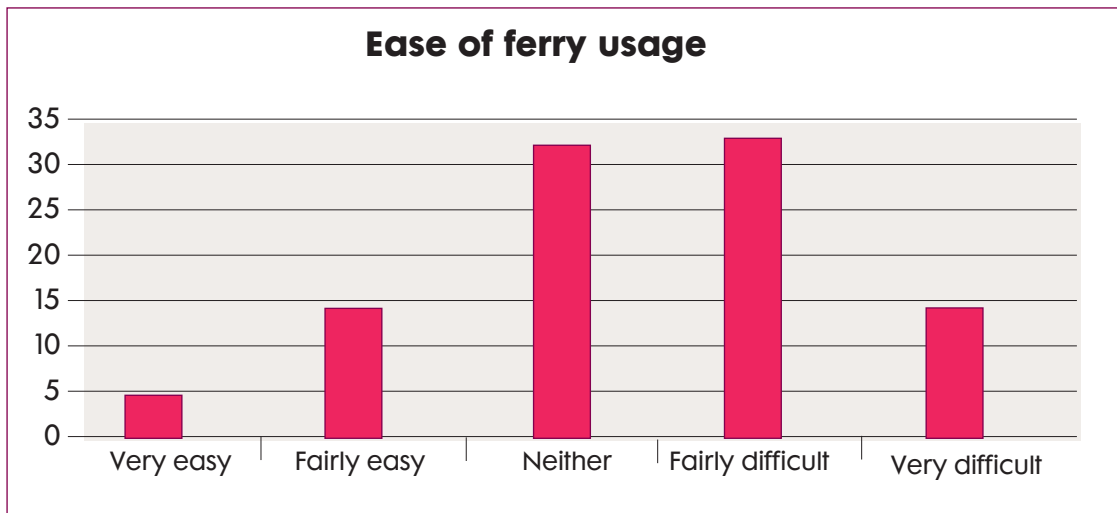
"No lifts onboard the ferry, the aisles are too narrow..."



28 Scottish Government press release: Ferry services <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2007/09/20113846>



Almost **50%** of those who have used a ferry said that they found the service either very or fairly difficult to use. A common message from respondents to the survey was that bad experiences stemming from inconsistencies in service could often be enough to put people off travelling, increasing the likelihood that people will not wish to use the service again.



“I have difficulty in walking up and down steps, I feel I am holding people up and I have to apologise to other travellers..”

“It was hard to find information on what services the ship had... needed to phone and the person at the other end couldn't answer my questions....”

“There were no accessible toilets onboard.... Plus it's hard getting to the ferry port... no accessible transport to take me have to pay for a taxi.”

The numbers of people surveyed who have actually travelled by ferry is too small for us to offer a statistically reliable breakdown by impairment type. Nevertheless, what can be surmised from the small numbers is that the physical accessibility of ferry service is still an issue, although, as with all modes of transport, staff attitudes are also critical.

Recommendations

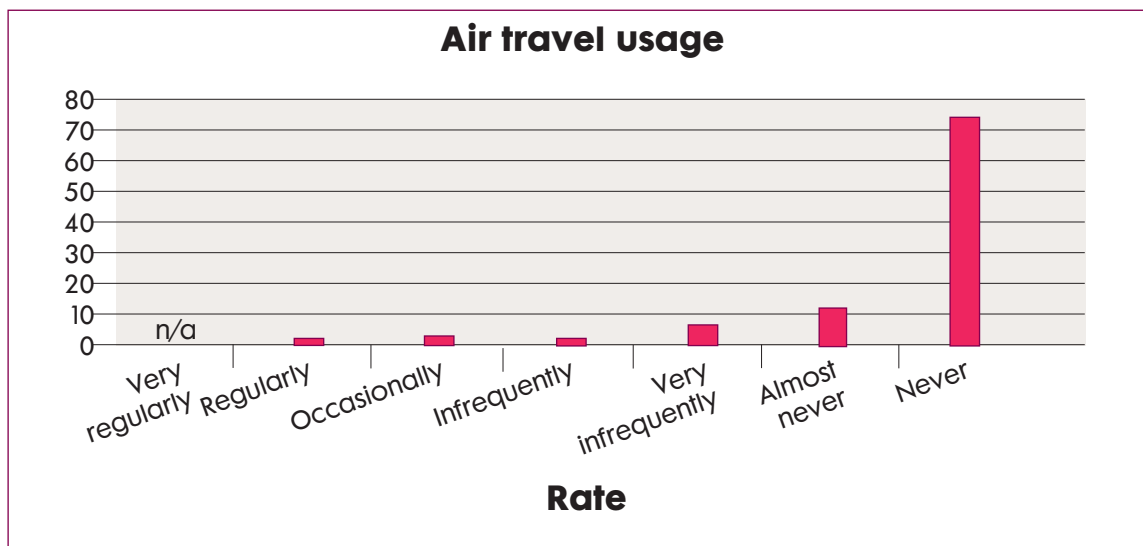
Below are a number of recommendations and discussion points regarding ferry travel. Ferries help people reach parts of Scotland that can otherwise be all but impossible to visit. However, as we have seen, the vast majority of respondents to Leonard Cheshire Disability's survey reported that they had not travelled by ferry in the last year. For some this means that some parts of Scotland are all but inaccessible. Around half of respondents to our survey who took a trip in a ferry reported finding it difficult to use. This suggests that there are significant barriers facing disabled people using ferry services, and that much more work is needed to reduce these barriers.

- Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), which currently does not apply to ferries, should be extended to ensure that disabled people have enforceable rights when using ferry services.
- Ensure staff undergo robust disability equality training, led by disabled people, both as part of their induction and ongoing development.
- Signage and information onboard ferries should be clear, easy to access, and available in different formats.
- If a ferry operator makes announcements to passengers, such as announcements concerning delays, schedule changes, onboard services and safety matters, the operator should have the means onboard the vessel of providing these announcements to all passengers, including those with sensory impairments or learning disabilities.
- Evidence suggests that at present too many of Scotland's ferries are unable properly to accommodate wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments (for example, doorways are not wide enough for wheelchair users, accessible toilets are not available or serving counters are too high). More investment is urgently needed to ensure that ferries are barrier-free to all disabled passengers.
- Any obstacles or projections should be colour-contrasted from their surrounding area.
- Car ferries should be able to provide full access from the vehicle deck, through the use of wheelchair-accessible elevators or other types of elevating device, to ensure that disabled passengers enjoy full access to all facilities onboard.
- If there are passenger lounges on a ferry, each lounge should offer clear floor space to enable wheelchair users to move freely. The floor space should be large enough for a guide dog or other support animal to lie down.

Flights of fancy?

A recent Leonard Cheshire Disability report examining disabled people's experiences of air travel found that: **11%** of disabled respondents had had to cancel or delay a trip because of problems accessing a flight; **25%** said that booking was a problem; and **37%** had experienced negative attitudes from staff onboard flights and at airports²⁹.

The 'Mind the Gap: the next step' survey found that more than half of respondents who had travelled by air in the past 12 months found it a very or fairly difficult experience, whilst nearly three-quarters (**73%**) of respondents stated that they had not used air travel in the last twelve months. The difficulty of use and the cost of using this form of transport were common reasons given by respondents for not using air travel.

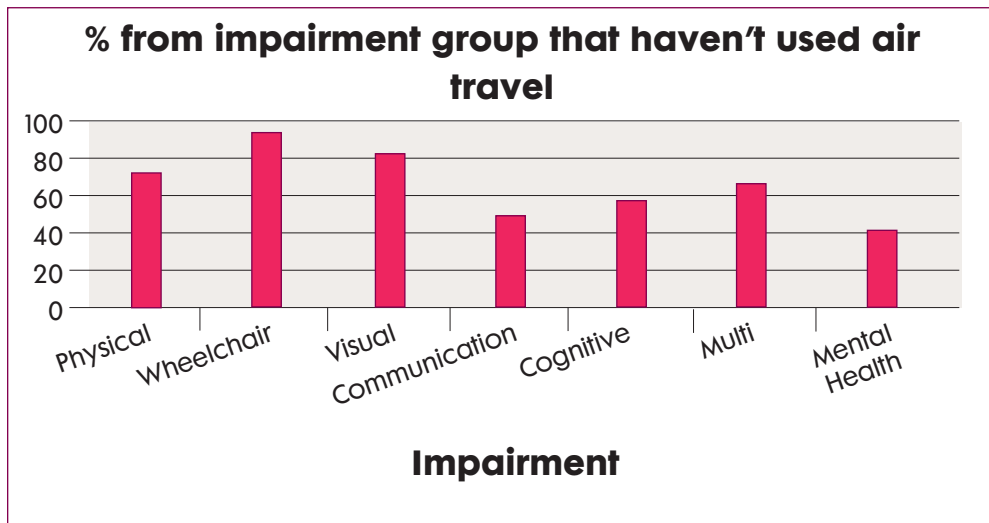


“It costs too much to fly especially when I have to get a taxi to the airport... and when I was there I had to pay for the use of a wheelchair at the airport...”

“The security checks and long queues take a toll on me both physically and mentally.”

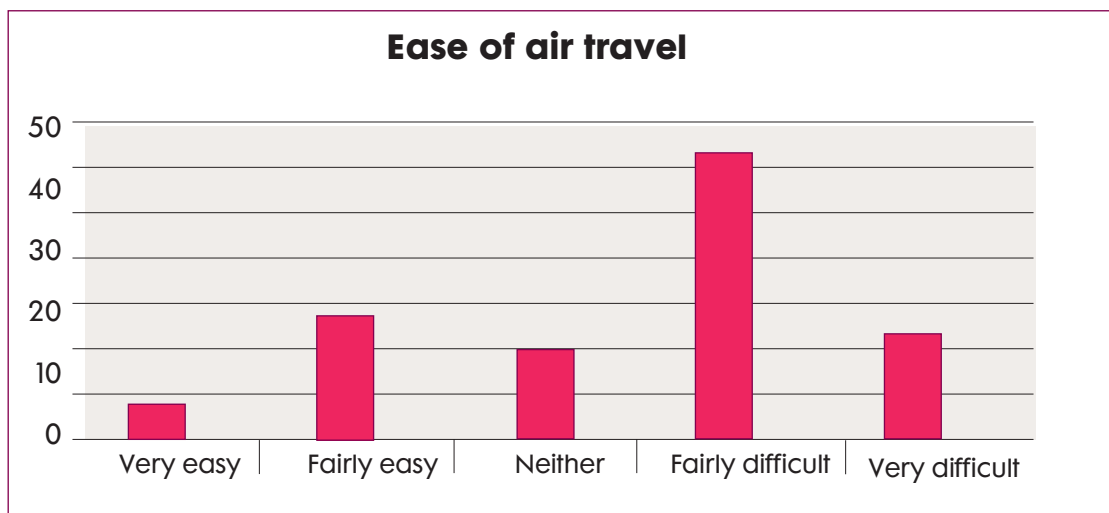
29 Laidler, A 'Now boarding: Disabled people's experiences of air travel', Leonard Cheshire, 2007

As highlighted below, the vast majority of respondents from across the impairment spectrum hadn't used air travel with the slight exception of people with mental health impairments.

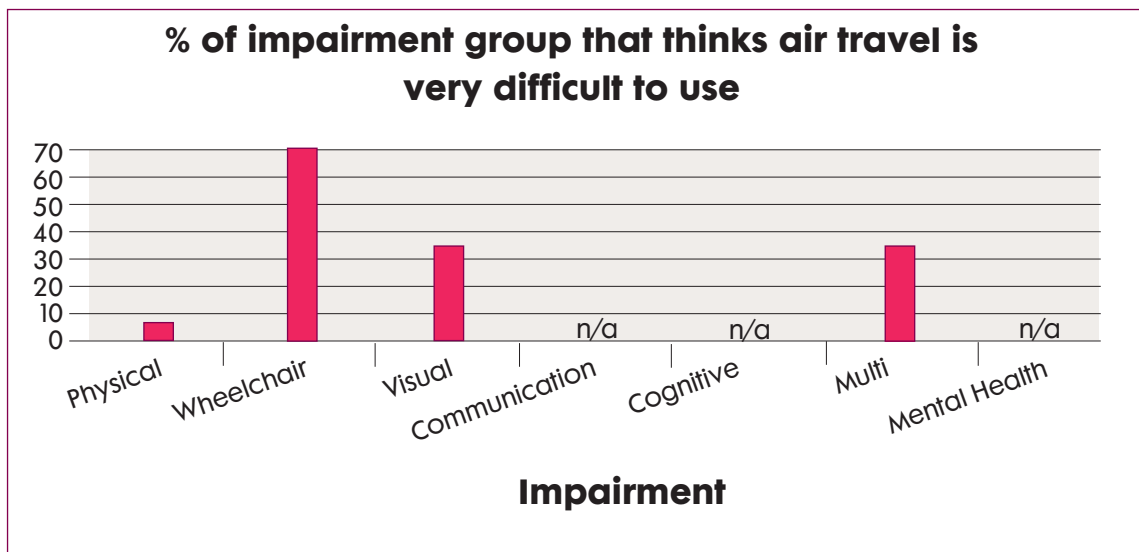
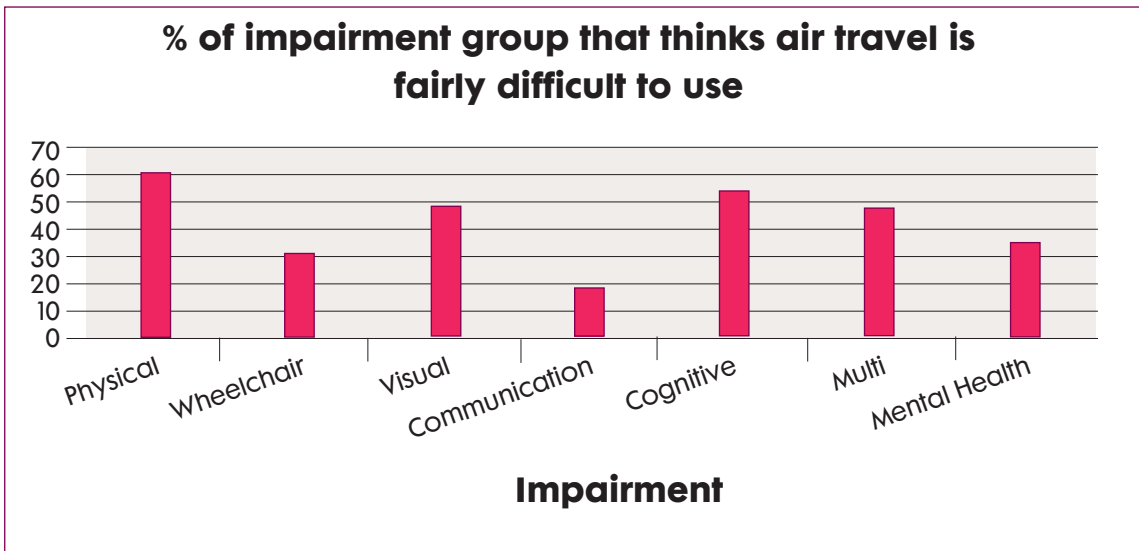


“The seats onboard the plane do not meet my needs... I paid a lot of money but, instead of receiving 1st class service, I was treated worse than cattle....”

Difficulty of air travel is a major reason why people have not used the service. Out of all the forms of transport covered in the survey, air travel had the highest percentage of respondents who found it difficult to use. This broke down as follows.



“I need some assistance at airport both getting on the plane and finding which checkout desk to go to. I get in a panic looking for the different desks then finding where to go to get the plane. Airports are confusing and I don't like going alone...”



The large expansion of 'no-frills' airlines has opened up air travel to many people for whom it might previously have been unaffordable. This has led to a sharp upturn in the number of air passengers, including of course disabled passengers. For example, passenger numbers at Edinburgh Airport have increased by 154% over the past ten years, rising from 3.3 million in 1996 to over 8.5 million today. By 2013, passenger numbers could reach almost 14 million, and as many as 26 million by 2030³⁰.

However, the degree of difficulty reported by respondents to this survey suggests that this increase in passenger numbers (which means airports have become busier and more crowded) has not been matched with investment to improve access and enhance working practices.

Air travel is currently only partly covered by the DDA. Airports, infrastructure and booking mechanisms are covered by Part 3 of the DDA, but travel on board planes is not covered. There is, however, a recent European regulation which places duties on airlines and airports to ensure that they are not discriminating against disabled people.

30 Edinburgh Airport Press Release

Recommendations

Below are a number of recommendations and discussion points regarding airline travel.

■ Booking procedures are covered under the DDA, and it is disappointing to find evidence (garnered from Leonard Cheshire Disability's Now Boarding report) that disabled people are having to face additional costs in booking, simply because of the need to inform an airline of assistance needs. Better enforcement is needed to stop this unacceptable practice.

■ Under the new EU regulation there is a legal requirement for tour operators and agents to ensure that information on assistance needs is successfully transmitted. This must be efficiently conveyed.

■ Staff must undergo robust disability equality training, led by disabled people, both as part of their induction and ongoing development. This training will give staff the knowledge and confidence to meet the needs of their disabled passengers.

■ One reason for the difficulties seems to be the issue of poor communication at check-in; respondents complained that their assistance needs were not properly communicated to airline staff. Therefore, the adoption of an in-built system which holds passengers' assistance needs from the booking stage of a flight right through to boarding the flight itself is needed.

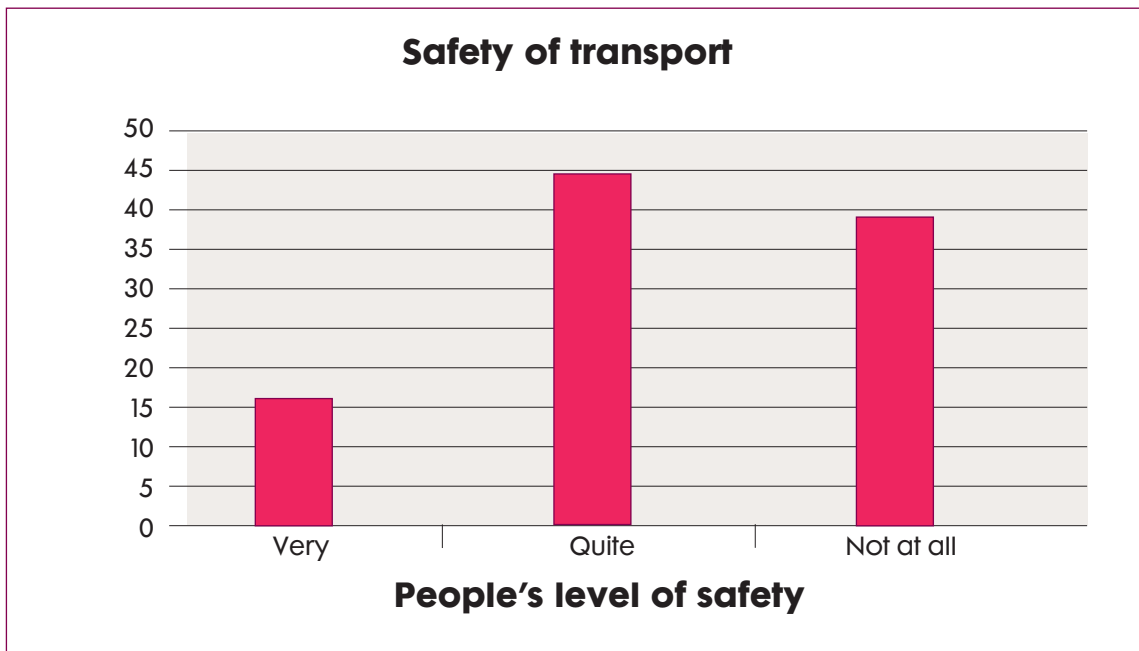
■ More thought and investment must be given to ensure that both the design and allocation of seating offer adequate provision for disabled passengers.

■ Leonard Cheshire Disability was disappointed that the 2005 DDA regulations did not remove the current exemption from aircraft transportation.

■ While we acknowledge that airline operators still have a duty to avoid discrimination against disabled people and to make reasonable adjustments for them in respect of matters such as timetables, booking facilities and waiting rooms at airports, our report highlights that more action is needed to open up air travel to disabled people. Therefore, we urge that part 3 of the DDA should be extended to cover air travel, which would offer increased rights for disabled people to challenge any discrimination or poor service they encounter from airlines.

Safety in numbers

A key issue that emerged from our survey results was that of safety whilst travelling. Only **16%** of people reported that they felt very safe on public transport, while nearly **40%** stated they did not feel safe at all on public transport.



Recent research from the Department of Transport shows that, although six billion journeys are made in the United Kingdom every year by bus, coach and rail, 11.5% more journeys would be made on public transport if passengers felt they were more secure³¹.

Safety, or the lack of it, can be another barrier that disabled people face when trying to access public transport. Whether this lack of safety is a feeling or an experience of threat, insecurity or discomfort in relation to one or more real or perceived risks, far too many of our respondents reported that they simply don't feel safe on Scotland's public transport.

"... I was waiting at the train station late at night, no staff to be seen, a group of young lads were nearby. They sounded drunk and were shouting and laughing; I felt very insecure... I vowed never to travel alone at night again...."

31 Department for Transport web site Tackling Crime on Public Transport www.dft.gov.uk

If people do not feel safe either waiting for public transport or actually being onboard then many will take the option not to take the 'risk' by deciding not to travel on public transport.

Often these safety problems can be the direct result of actions and policy decisions taken by the authorities, such as removing staff from railway stations, removing conductors from buses and closing waiting rooms.

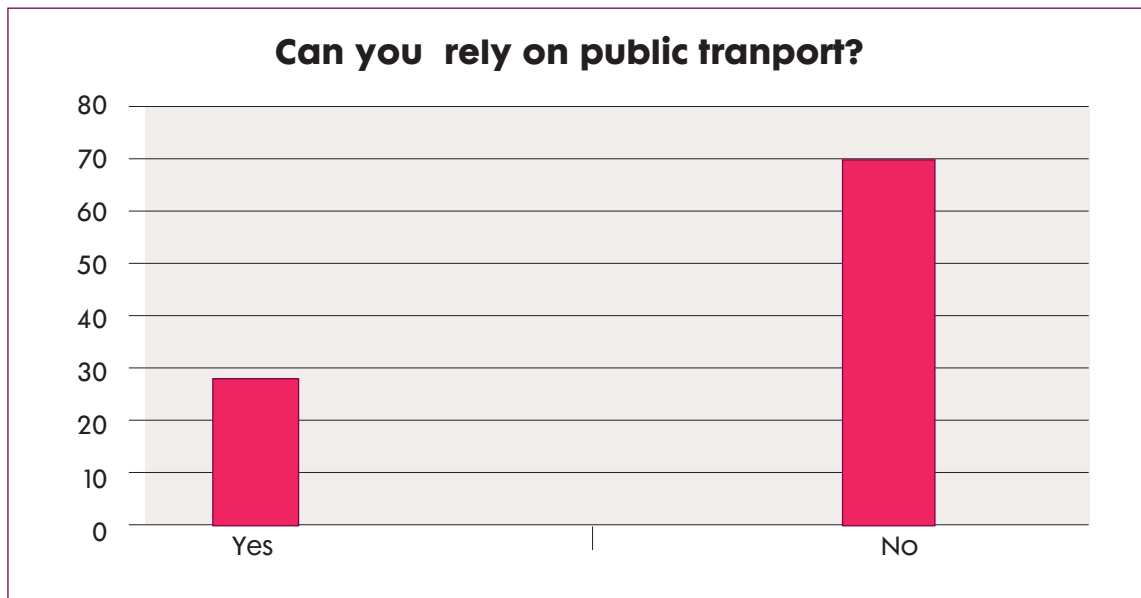
These measures more often than not have been taken in order to cut costs, but they have also cut the 'safety cord' for passengers.

Recommendations

- The reintroduction of 'conductors' on buses - particularly in the evenings and at night.
- Introduction of 'secure' carriages on some trains (i.e. a designated carriage with a 'guard' or attendant and CCTV).
- Staff at, and policing of, bus stations.
- Better lighting at: bus stops/stations: railway stations: taxi ranks: ferry ports.
- CCTV at bus and railway stations.
- Safety campaigns targeted at the public, providing education and advice on how to enhance ones own safety when travelling.

Reliability

Over **70%** of disabled people responding to our survey stated that they could not rely on public transport.



Reliability is one of the key indicators of level of service for public transport, and yet we can see that disabled people feel that the service that they are receiving is far too inconsistent. A lack of reliability in public transport results in uncertainty and delays which cause anxiety and discomfort for the passengers.

Consistency in service can be a particular issue for some disabled people - if there are only limited numbers of fully accessible services, it becomes increasingly important that those services operate reliably. Similarly, for those who require assistance when using the rail network, just a small gap in service can render an entire journey inaccessible.

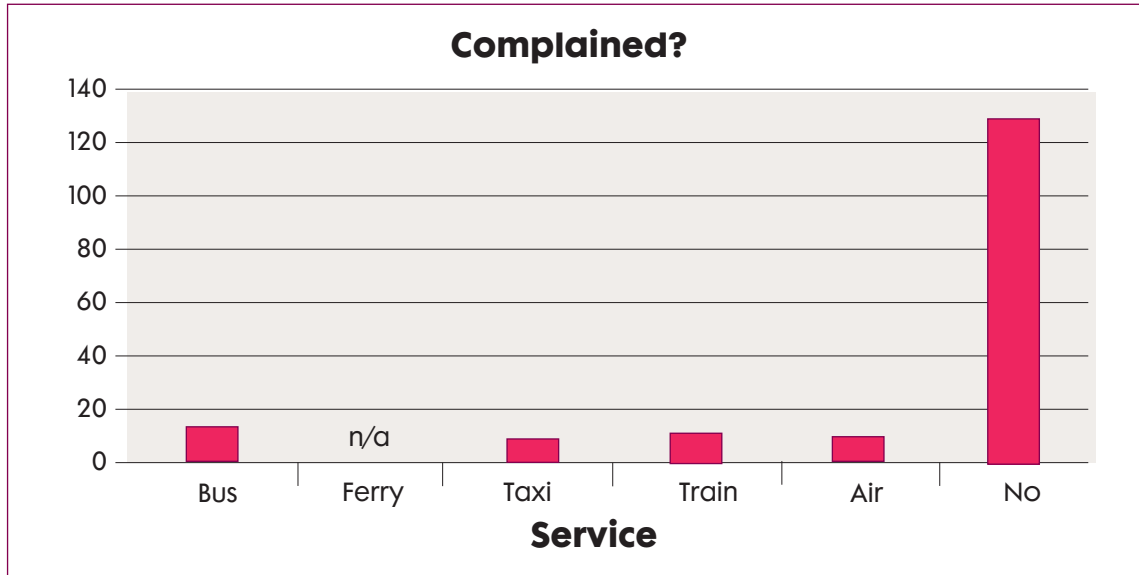
“I hate asking people for lifts all the time, but I can't trust the bus, don't have real independence.”

“I need to know what time I will set off on my journey and what time I'll be coming back at, if I make a journey plan I must stick to it, but if it doesn't work I get frustrated and anxious...”

Recommendations

- To increase reliability and avoid delays there must be an in-built accessibility capability when it comes to booking seats/tickets.
- Planning must be mainstreamed and the various transport co-ordinated across the services so that passengers are not frustrated by having to wait for hours for the next connecting service. For example, the Glasgow to Mallaig train arrives at 1.34pm, one minute before the Mallaig-Armadale ferry leaves for Skye. Travellers must then wait until 3.05pm for the next ferry. The same situation occurs for buses and trains. More should be done to make the timetables work better.
- Instead of passengers having to conform to inconvenient schedules, schedules should conform to passengers' needs.

Complained?



“What's the point in complaining? They never listen!!”

Even though our report has shown that disabled people have experienced significant problems with transport services, very few people have taken the time to complain about this.

For change to take place providers need to be made aware of the problems, but unfortunately too many disabled people seem to believe that their concerns will not be examined fully and that the transport system has tended to ignore their needs.

The introduction of the DDA in 1995, and its subsequent extension through the DDA 2005, should have opened up the transport system to listening to the views of disabled people. Certainly many transport operators do seem to be willing to engage with disabled people, and, where local authorities are involved in transport provision, the Disability Equality Duty introduced by the DDA 2005 actually requires them actively to engage with disabled people. Leonard Cheshire Disability believes it is essential that disabled people get their voice heard and are given an opportunity to engage with the main decision makers.

More needs to be done to encourage disabled people, and for that matter all passengers, to come forward with their views and complaints. Only when information/problems are presented to decision makers can solutions be found.

Recommendations

- Complaints procedures must be accessible in that they must be easy to understand and complete. If Complaint forms are too difficult for people to complete other alternative formats, such as audio cassette or computer disk and dedicated phone lines should be adopted so that as many people as possible can voice their opinion on the service they received.
- Transport providers should publicise changes made to their service due to people's complaints/suggestions.
- Transport providers and the Traffic Commissioner for Scotland need to do more to engage with all passengers to ask for their thoughts on the service they receive. The Traffic Commissioner also should invest in an information drive so that the public is more aware of her role.
- Bigger fines and the threat of cancelling contracts should be handed out to transport providers who, despite complaints and warnings to change their working practices, still continually fail to meet the needs of their disabled passengers.

Recommendations

'Mind the Gap; the next step' has found that being unable to access services and visit family and friends are isolating experiences. Barriers to this social engagement can arise directly from the lack of a truly accessible public transport system. Good quality public transport is a key service enabler for other services. Some respondents to our survey reported that public transport can make the world a bigger place, instead of the world beginning and ending in one's own house. For public transport to be truly 'public' it needs to be open to all - too many of the respondents to this survey stated that inaccessible services left them feeling like 'prisoners in their own homes'.

Action must be taken, both by Government and by transport providers, to ensure that we open up public transport and make it more accessible.

Inaccessible public transport can create barriers to employment, it can create barriers to social engagement, it can even create barriers to health and well-being. Breaking down these barriers is essential - it will help to challenge disability poverty, it will produce a transport system that is easier for everyone to use and it will help lead to a fairer and more equal Scotland.

There are examples of best practice in transport in Scotland, but there are also many areas where improvements are still needed. Among the areas where Leonard Cheshire Disability would like to see real action taken are:

Better staff training and development

All transport staff on the front line of public services should undergo robust disability equality training, led by disabled people, both as part of their induction and ongoing development. This training should not just be about ticking boxes but should give staff the knowledge and confidence to meet the needs of their disabled passengers.

A partnership with disabled groups/ organisations should be formed to establish a 'mystery shopper' system which will not only highlight bad practice but also celebrate those good working practices that exist already.

Information and communication

Information is one of the keys needed to unlock the provision of transport for disabled passengers. However, information should be a 'two-way street', for information must be given to disabled people by transport providers and in turn information must be given by disabled people to the providers.

So, consultation with disabled people must be a priority for Scotland's transport providers as well as the Government, we were concerned about Government plans to amalgamate the Mobility and Access Committee (MACS) into the Public Transport Users Committee (PTUC). We believed this would have diluted disabled people's opportunities to consult with Scotland's transport industry. Therefore we are pleased with the decision to safeguard MACS independence.

We are also calling for a one-stop shop of information for all of Scotland's transport. While 'Traveline' has made a valiant attempt to provide this, key areas of information are still missing. While a disabled passenger may know that his/her route from A-D is accessible, what about A-B or B-C?

An accessibility map should be created so that a disabled travellers can look at his/her route in greater detail and find out if there are any accessibility gaps in it. This will also highlight areas where change is needed to rectify the accessibility problem.

This accessibility map should include buses, taxis, ferries, trains and flights, an ambitious endeavour but something that should be considered. Funding can be gathered from a true partnership of Government (local and national), travel operators and the business world in general. Scotland should not lack ambition in this area - it has the chance to take the lead on it.

Announcements

There is a real call for all modes of transport to have better audio and visual announcements on board. An example of the way ahead on this issue has already been shown by London with the introduction of the 'ibus', an example for Scotland's companies to follow.

Awareness campaign

The Government will need to drive a public awareness campaign to inform people of the availability of new accessible transport, whilst also highlighting to all passengers their responsibility when it comes to accessible seating and disabled passengers.

The Government should also make transport providers aware of the benefits of making their fleet accessible before the 2020 deadline (2017 for bus operators).

Planning

The pedestrian environment must be improved. This includes factoring in issues around pavements and having bus stops placed in easily accessible spots, and ensuring that street furniture does not obstruct and create unnecessary obstacles for people with visual or mobility impairments, but that stops do provide adequate

shelter and seating to ensure that they are safe. Good lighting and effective provision of information will also be crucial.

Many respondents stated that their local bus stops are not fit for purpose, either because of their location or the fact that they have no shelter facilities. Mechanisms should be developed to allow local Government, passenger groups, bus operators and disabled passengers to come together to help consult on design and location of bus stops / shelters.

Cost of travel

One factor which can put disabled people off travelling by public transport is its cost. Disabled people are twice as likely to live in a low income household as non-disabled people. While we warmly welcome the national concessionary travel scheme, Leonard Cheshire Disability would like the review of the scheme to advise the Government to widen entitlement to those people who are on the lower rate of Disability Living Allowance mobility component.

Taxis can be a particularly expensive form of travel, but many disabled people have continually relied on this form of transport. Currently disabled people in Scotland find themselves in a postcode lottery when it comes to this provision. Only 14 out of 32 local authorities offer disabled passengers the Taxicard, and even when this is offered the level of benefit is variable, both in terms of the number of journeys supported and the level of subsidy offered.

Leonard Cheshire Disability would like to see an end to the postcode lottery that affects the Taxicard scheme. The scheme should follow the national concessionary travel scheme; the scheme must be uniformly adopted to rule out any local discrepancies. At the very least, the Government should offer guidance to local authorities to offer such a scheme.

Conclusion

Leonard Cheshire Disability welcomes the commitments given by Government, Transport Scotland, local authorities and transport providers to increase accessibility for all. There have been some important moves forward on these commitments, including deadlines for train and bus accessibility and the extension of Part 3 of the DDA to include most transport vehicles. It is clear, however, that we remain a very long way from having a fully accessible public transport system.

Indeed, Scotland's transport system is an inheritance of the past, a past where accessibility issues weren't taken into account or given due importance. We must remember that having better accessibility across our transport system not only benefits disabled travellers but society as a whole.

Furthermore, Scotland, like many countries, has an ageing population. Recent figures confirm that the number of children under 16 is projected to decrease by 7 per cent between 2006 and 2031, while the number of people aged 75 and over is projected to increase by 81 per cent over the same period³².

These demographic trends indicate that, over the coming decades, the number of people with restricted mobility will increase as the population ages. More than half of people over the age of 75 would be considered disabled people under the DDA³³.

A public transport system that addresses the needs of all the population is an absolute necessity. However, the simple fact remains that there is a lack of transport which meets the needs of disabled people. This lack of accessible transport leads to an uncertain and stressful travel experience for disabled people.

Transport operators, providers and businesses should realise that disabled people in Scotland have an annual spending power of £5 billion which should not be ignored.

Despite this our report has shown that disabled people in Scotland strongly believe that they are not yet able to rely on public transport. This is borne out by the facts that fewer disabled people than non-disabled often travel in buses or trains, while the majority of respondents to this survey hadn't recently travelled by sea or air.

32 General Register Officer for Scotland, 2008

33 Improving the life chances of disabled people, Cabinet Office, 2005

Inaccessibility can stem both from physical barriers and from negative attitudes from drivers or other passengers, or even a lack of accessible information. All of these factors create barriers that hinder disabled people who wish to use public transport. Information in an accessible format is simply not always available for disabled passengers, whilst disabled people have even reported that assistance pre-booked in advance often did not arrive.

Across all transport types, it is clear that robust disability equality training (led by disabled people) needs to be delivered to staff, to equip them with the knowledge and confidence to meet the needs of disabled passengers. Leonard Cheshire Disability urges transport providers to implement this in staff inductions and refresher courses as a matter of urgency.

Scotland's unique geography also causes barriers to disabled passengers. People who live in rural areas can face the added pressure of infrequent public transport. Therefore, targeted funding may be required to operate evening services in some rural areas. This is important in order to challenge the isolation that can be experienced by people living in these rural areas.

All these problems intertwine to produce a lack of confidence in public transport for disabled people. Without intervention from the Government and transport operators, the growing social isolation which confronts disabled people will only widen, and disability poverty, including poverty of opportunity, will worsen.

Whilst there have been some positive steps to encourage more disabled people to use public transport, like the concessionary travel card scheme, not all disabled people have this financial freedom to travel, as disabled people on the lower rate of DLA mobility component are not offered this. Leonard Cheshire Disability would argue that this should change and the current review recommends that this scheme be rolled out to all of Scotland's disabled citizens.

In Scotland, there exists a postcode lottery when it comes to the Taxicard scheme; efforts must to be made to ensure that all local authorities issue this card with consistently uniformity.

While an element of the financial burden may have been lifted by the travel card and Taxicard, this doesn't mean that disabled people will necessarily be able to access transport. If an accessible mode of transport is not available, then the schemes will end up being largely pointless.

'Mind the Gap: the next step' has shown that transport plays a truly vital role in supporting people access the wider community, whether that be to interact through work, with friends, accessing leisure pursuits or health services. Put simply, the need for accessible transport is indisputable.

The report comes out at a time when the Government in Scotland has had time to settle into its role and evaluate the policy priorities facing the nation. We would hope that ensuring that all of Scotland's citizens can travel when and where they want will be high in those priorities. There needs to be an end to divided responsibilities, leading to a true partnership which encompasses local and national government, transport operators, the business community and disabled people to bring about accessible transport for all.

We hope that our findings will trigger debate and help to bring about the essential changes that are needed in working practices, people's attitudes and the accessibility of transport providers' fleets.

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About Leonard Cheshire Disability

Leonard Cheshire Disability supports over 21,000 disabled people in the UK and works in 52 countries. We campaign for change and provide innovative services that give disabled people the opportunity to live life their way.

This report is available in alternative formats such as Braille, audio and largeprint.

Please contact us to request a copy in an alternative format.

Leonard Cheshire Disability
Murrayburgh House
17 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh EH12 6DD
Tel: 0131 346 9053
Email: research@LCDisability.org
www.LCDisability.org

The logo for Leonard Cheshire Disability, featuring the organization's name in a bold, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in three lines: "Leonard" on the top line, "Cheshire" on the middle line, and "Disability" on the bottom line. The logo is set against a white background within a dark rectangular frame.

**Leonard
Cheshire
Disability**