Survey and focus group report

Understanding eco-ableism in sustainable transport

RiDC

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About RiDC

RiDC is the leading expert in inclusive research involving disabled consumers. We are an independent, national charity with over 60 years of experience in consumer research and insight in this specialist area.

It's the only type of research we do.

We are run by, and for, people with a personal experience of disability.

We always start from the perspective of disabled and older consumers.

By working with disabled and older people, listening to their needs and reflecting on their experiences, we make sure nobody is excluded, and the insights we gather are grounded in real life.

RiDC was one of the first organisations to establish a UK panel of disabled and older consumers. Our panel includes over 4,000 people and is the most extensive pan-impairment panel in the UK.

Executive summary

In the UK the transport sector is the highest emitter of greenhouse gasses and achieving net zero by 2050 will require significant levels of modal shift from all transport users towards active travel and public transport, including disabled people. Despite this, accessibility is still regularly omitted from the development of sustainable transport initiatives, systematically excluding the 16.8 million disabled people in the UK from the transition to sustainable transport. This is known as **eco-ableism**.

This study explores how eco-ableism materialises across five modes of sustainable transport: walking/wheeling, cycling/micromobility, buses/coaches, rail and community transport. Using a mixed method approach combining a survey of 531 disabled people and a focus group the project looked to understand the impact of national and local policies on disabled people's experiences of sustainable transport and the barriers to increasing disabled people's uptake of sustainable transport.

Overall, sustainable transport policies are not currently working for disabled people with **73% of respondents reporting that these policies have had no or a negative impact on their ability to use or access sustainable modes of transport**. Pavement conditions and design, reductions in services or their reliability, inaccessible vehicles, stations or bus stops, the behaviours of staff and other transport users and a lack of integration across modes meant that despite wanting to contribute to the transition to net zero many remain unable too. As a result of these ongoing barriers respondents are not only being prevented from increasing their use of sustainable transport, but some are having to increase their reliance on carbon intensive modes as they remain the only reliable form of transport.

Across the research several key findings emerged:

- **Pavements and streets are a critical barrier that must be addressed.** Despite walking and wheeling being the most frequently used mode of transport, it was reported as the most inaccessible due to poor maintenance of pavements, missing or poorly designed dropped kerbs, clutter and obstructions. All preventing respondents from walking, wheeling or reaching other forms of transport. As the first and last stage of every journey, pavements are critical to enabling access to all forms of sustainable transport.

- **Cycling and micromobility remain inaccessible.** Driven by inaccessibility in vehicle designs, inadequate parking for adaptive cycles, unsafe or missing

infrastructure and licensing requirements that exclude those who do not hold a driving licence.

- **Bus and coach accessibility is inconsistent.** Whilst there have been some notable improvements across bus services, these improvements are not widespread and often done in isolation reducing potential positive impacts. Reductions in routes and frequency, overcrowding, unreliable ramps, limited wheelchair space, inaccessible bus stops, attitudes of other passengers and inconsistent driver training all undermine confidence and reduce both respondents' ability and willingness to use these modes.

- **Rail is reported as the most accessible mode, but key barriers to increasing use remain.** Respondents welcomed improvements to passenger assistance, step-free access and information provision evidencing the positive outcomes when accessibility is embedded into service provision. However, staff reductions, other passenger behaviour, inaccessible ticketing, unreliable lifts, overcrowding, inconsistency in station accessibility and inaccessible train carriages still prevent many respondents from increasing their use of this mode.

- **Community transport is shrinking despite being essential for many.** Reduced operating hours, route coverage, booking options and reliance on older vehicles has made what was once a vital service designed specifically to serve disabled people one that is often unreliable, unavailable or inaccessible.

- **There remains a critical gap in understanding and addressing the barriers faced by those with non-visible impairments.** Respondents with dexterity impairment, stamina-related conditions, mental health conditions, bladder or bowel conditions, and neurodivergent respondents were consistently more likely to report access barriers. This illustrates a significant gap in the UK's current approach to accessibility within transport.

An accessible sustainable transport system is an integrated one designed with disabled people. Currently, **66% of respondents did not believe that their needs were being meaningfully considered in sustainable transport policies** an issue that undermines both equity and the UK's climate ambitions. This also suggests that **the current approach is not enabling UK policy makers to achieve their ambitions.** An approach driven by meaningful engagement with disabled people, that embeds accessibility as a core principle of sustainable transport is the way to achieve a just transition to net zero.

Introduction

In the UK the transport sector is the highest emitter of greenhouse gasses, responsible for 28% of emissions in 2022 (Edwards et al., 2024). As a result, the UK government has committed to decarbonising transport and reaching net zero by 2050 (Department for Transport, 2021a). To achieve this ambition, it will require changes across the entire transport ecosystem including significant levels of modal shift away from carbon intensive modes from all transport users. Despite this commitment to sustainable transport, the accessibility of public and active transport continues to be a key barrier for disabled people often informing, or even determining, the modes of transport they can use (Bromley et al., 2024).

While government policies increasingly prioritise active travel and public transport use as part of the transition to net-zero, disabled peoples' access needs have often been overlooked or not meaningfully incorporated into sustainable transport plans. This is reflected by the fact **66% of disabled respondents did not feel confident that UK sustainable transport policies meaningfully considered the needs of disabled people.** In fact, only 15% of respondents did. Reflecting an ongoing tension between well-meaning climate and sustainable policies and the inclusion of disabled people. This failure to consider accessibility and sustainability as complimentary principles, but instead competing priorities means that the 16.8 million disabled people in the UK as well as their families, friends and support networks are excluded from this modal shift and from a green transport vision. This systemic exclusion of disabled people from sustainable transport design is known as eco-ableism.

By understanding the lived experiences of disabled people this research aimed to address existing evidence gaps on the barriers to accessing sustainable transport, identify how eco-ableism materialises in the UK and how to address this. The research looked to contribute to the growing body of literature calling for accessibility to be embedded as a guiding principle to sustainable transport planning (Steen & Vey; 2024; The Motability Foundation, 2022; Transport for All, 2023).

Research Aims:
- To identify the key barriers disabled people face when using, or to using, different modes of sustainable transport

- To explore the impact of existing transport policies on disabled people's ability to use sustainable transport and identify policy gaps
- To develop case studies that outline key barriers faced by disabled people for use in a co-creation workshop aiming to develop solutions that provide an alternative to eco-ableism.

How to read this report

Audience definitions

Throughout the report, we indicate findings from the focus groups by referring to 'participants' and from the survey by referring to 'respondents'.

Quotes

Quote attributions include any impairment or condition that a respondent or participant has identified having. Quotes are respondents' or participants' own views and are not always factually correct.

Cross-references

Cross-references are included throughout this report where additional information can be found elsewhere in the document or in other supporting documents. Cross-references are hyperlinked to the relevant place in the document for ease of navigation.

Statistical analysis and reporting

Many of the questions throughout the survey were multichoice, whereby one respondent could select multiple answers. The percentages represent the proportion of respondents selecting each option and will not total 100%.

Where graphs are included the total sample size for each question is specified by n=x, with x being the total number of respondents for that question.

When interpreting sub-group differences in this report, only statistically significant differences (at a 95% confidence level) and where sample sizes allowed are reported.

Methodology

To achieve the research aims a mixed method approach was used combining a survey of disabled people and a focus group.

Survey

The focus of the survey was to understand the barriers disabled people face when using various modes of sustainable transport and how UK government policy, investment and initiatives have impacted disabled people's ability to access these modes, both positively and negatively. The research focused on the access barriers to the following transport modes:

- Walking or wheeling
- Cycling or micromobility (defined as small, low speed vehicles, usually electric powered, like e-bikes, e-scooters or segways)
- Buses or coach
- Rail
- Community transport

Whilst electric vehicles have a role to play as part of the transition to net zero, they were not explored within the context of this project.

The survey mainly engaged with individuals who had used at least one type of sustainable transport in the last two years. Those who had not used any of these modes were still encouraged to take part[1], but the findings mainly reflect the experiences of those who were already using some form of sustainable transport and not those who are currently completely excluded from these modes of transport. Whilst it is possible that the same barriers may be experienced, further research would be required to determine this with certainty.

Respondents were asked about the positive and negative impacts that UK sustainable transport policies, investment or initiatives had had on their ability to use each of the modes of transport explored. In addition, for each of these modes' respondents were presented with a list of potential access barriers to select from. These lists were developed using pre-existing research conducted by both RiDC

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[1] A total of 20 respondents reported never having used any mode of sustainable transport in the last two years.

and the National Centre for Accessible Transport (ncat) including the Transport Barriers Database (ncat, 2024), which provides a comprehensive overview of the structural, environmental and social barriers that disabled people face within transport.

The survey was sent to all members of the RiDC consumer panel. Survey links were sent by email inviting respondents to complete an online survey hosted on Qualtrics. Respondents were also offered the option to complete the survey over the phone, via a word document, or any other way that would meet their access needs by contacting the RiDC research team. The survey was open from the 5th to the 19th of August 2025. A total of 531 responses were received and analysed.

In addition to the questions asked in the survey, RiDC holds embedded data on its panellist that was provided when they joined the RiDC panel. For the purposes of this research the following embedded data was used for analysis:

- Impairment
- Gender
- Age

Open ended questions, including ones provided in multi-choice questions were analysed independently using an inductive thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a strong analytical tool allowing researchers to identify, analyse, and report patterns within a dataset. An inductive approach ensured that the findings were based entirely within the data and generated by the respondents themselves, not driven by any previous theoretical ideas (Smith, 2008).

To thank respondents for their time they were offered the opportunity to be entered into a prize draw to win one of five £20 Gift Pay shopping vouchers. Finally, respondents were asked if they would like to be re-contacted to take part in other strands of the research.

Focus group

Following the survey, a focus group was conducted with seven disabled participants with a range of impairments. The purpose of the focus group was to further explore the key barriers identified through the survey, the impact of these barriers, and identify potential solutions to improving access. The sample included:

- Respondents who had **not used** any sustainable transport in the past two years
- Respondents who **had used** sustainable transport and reported that sustainable transport policies had a **negative impact** on their ability to use these modes
- Respondents who **had used** sustainable transport and reported that sustainable transport policies had **no impact** on their ability to use these modes, but still identified **negative changes or barriers** to at least one mode of transport.
- Respondents who **had used** sustainable transport and reported that sustainable transport policies had **positive impacts** on their ability to use these modes, but still identified **negative changes or barriers** to at least one mode of transport.

This ensured representation across a range of experiences with sustainable transport and perceptions of policy impact.

After being identified through their survey responses participants were sent an email inviting them to take part in the focus group. The email included the consent form and asked for their availability. The focus group took place the 11th of September 2025 and was conducted online via Zoom with two RiDC researchers. The focus group was audio and video recorded and subsequently transcribed. Participants were offered a £50 incentive as compensation for their time. The transcripts were analysed using an inductive thematic analysis.

Findings

The impact of UK sustainable transport policy

This research focused on disabled people's experiences of sustainable transport in the UK. The questions were framed within the context of sustainable transport policy over the past decade, exploring how national and local government policies, initiatives and investment, or lack thereof, had shaped disabled people's ability to use sustainable transport. To understand these experiences, respondents were first asked to reflect on how national and local sustainable transport policies had affected them. Respondents were provided with examples of sustainable transport policies that had been implemented in the UK over the last decade.

For almost half of respondents (47%) the UK's sustainable transport policies had had no impact on their ability to use sustainable transport and for a further 26% they had had a negative[2] impact. Only 18% of respondents reported that these policies had had a positive impact[3] on their ability to use sustainable transport (see Figure 1).

[2] By negative impact we mean respondents who had reported that transport policies had a somewhat or very negative impact on their ability to use sustainable transport.
[3] By positive impact we mean respondents who reported that transport policies had a somewhat or very positive impact on their ability to use sustainable transport.
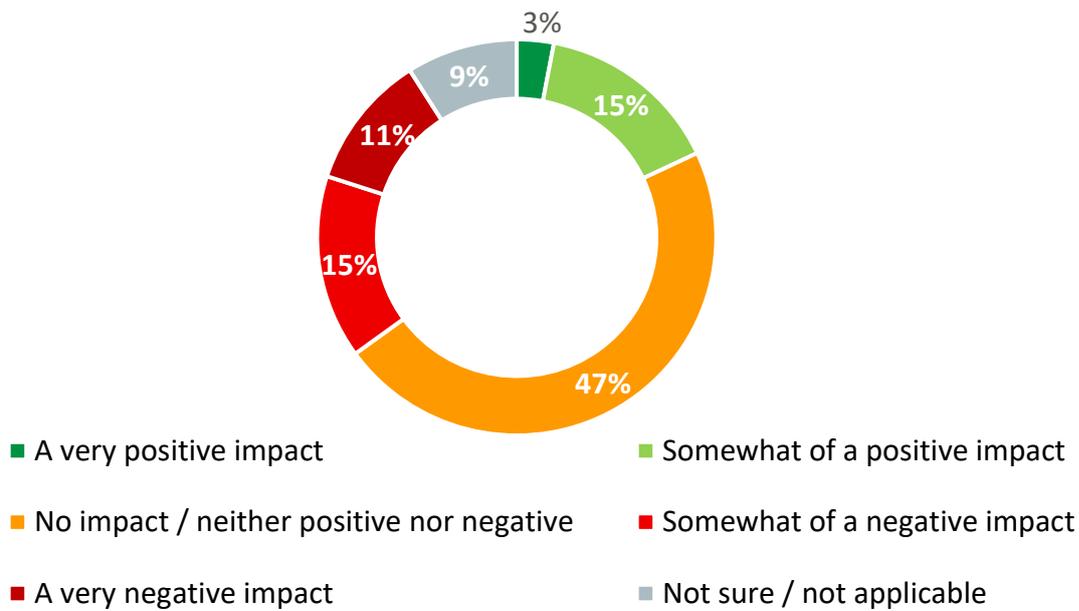
Figure 1: Impact of UK's transport policies on disabled people's ability to use sustainable transport (n=531)

Despite 47% of respondents stating that transport policies had had no impact on their ability to use sustainable transport, their responses to other questions suggest that the level of impact varied across different modes of transport. For instance, of those who reported that transport policies had had no impact on their behaviour, 44% reported that walking and wheeling initiatives had had a negative impact on their ability to use that mode. This difference could be explained by the focus of the question. If people have had varying experiences across different modes, it is likely that they will average these, translating into more neutral responses when asked about their experiences overall. On the other hand, it may be easier for them to recall specific impacts when asked to reflect on specific transport modes (also known as availability heuristic). Similarly, it is common for people to experience attribution biases when asked to reflect on national policies, often due to the proximity biases whereby it can be harder for people to attach daily experiences to national policies (Trope & Liberman, 2010).

Of those who reported positive impacts of sustainable transport policies the most frequently mentioned improvement was the increase in **information to help with journey planning** both before and during the journey. This included audio and visual announcements and travel apps. Respondents highlighted the value of audio announcements on buses, particularly for visually impaired passengers, as well as wheelchair users who often face away from the visual display due to the position of the wheelchair priority space. Respondents also valued the visual

information boards at train stations and bus stops, and the Passenger Assist app which aided in both journey planning and booking assistance.

> "Verbal announcements have increased dramatically. This is great! I can hear where I am and how far it is until I need my stop. Signs in buses have also increased in size and are much more regular in providing information. Finally, announcements by the driver of the bus or train or underground are much more frequent. Hooray!" **Respondent with visual, mobility and stamina related impairments**

> "It's much easier for me to use buses now they have the audio announcements. In my wheelchair I'm always facing backwards on the bus so it's not as easy to see when I'm approaching my stop or when I should press the bell, the announcements really help me with that, especially when it's dark outside so I can't see much at all." **Neurodivergent respondent with mobility, bladder or bowel, mental health and stamina related impairments**

Respondents also noted improvements in the **accessibility of vehicles and stations**. Buses were described by some respondents as more accessible to wheelchair users, with newer models having larger, or even two, wheelchair spaces. In addition, level access at stations and bus stops had improved as had the availability of priority seating areas on some trains and buses. **Staff assistance** was also highlighted, with respondents feeling that staff were more willing to help and aware of respondents varying access needs (e.g. drivers lowering the bus for level access). However, respondents stressed that these improvements were not consistent across the transport network nationally. Some respondents also mentioned **improvements to pavement and cycling infrastructure**, with the implementation of more cycle lanes and increased pedestrianisation, making it safer for them to walk or wheel.

> "Improved attitude of bus drivers and consideration [such as] lowering the entrance to reduce step height, taking time to watch me alight and checking when I walk away. The same goes for those few trains where a guard is provided. On two separate occasions the on-board guard has gone out of his way to wait with me to assist me to alight." **Respondent with mobility, dexterity and stamina related impairments**

Of the 26% of respondents who said that UK sustainable transport policies had a negative impact on their ability to use sustainable transport, one of the most frequently mentioned issues was that **sustainable modes of transport were being prioritised by policymakers without consideration of accessibility**.

Respondents described long-standing access barriers that they felt had not been adequately addressed by policymakers, including the accessibility of **public transport**. Issues included buses with only one wheelchair space, buses and trains being too narrow to navigate with a wheelchair, and the lack of step free access leading to reliance on staff for boarding. Some policies were described as restrictive, such as those limiting the use of some mobility scooters or mobility aids on public transport. These policies **prevented those who relied on these mobility aids** from being able to access public transport or undertake multi-modal journeys. Several respondents also noted that **staff presence had been declining**, reducing the support available at railway stations which many relied on to be able to travel independently. In addition, respondents emphasised that the broader **road and transport infrastructure was physically inaccessible**, such as missing dropped kerbs and poorly designed pavements, which made accessing stations and bus stops difficult. Reduction in bus routes, particularly in smaller towns and rural areas, was also highlighted, which led some respondents to believe that **sustainable transport policies prioritised urban areas at the expense of rural environments**.

Those who took part also reflected on their interactions with **transport staff**, expressing concern that staff members did not always understand the access needs of disabled people, especially those with non-visible impairments. In the survey, respondents were asked how often transport staff made the necessary adjustments to support them as required under UK law. Currently under the Equality Act 2010 transport providers must make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people are not at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people. Whilst what is deemed as 'reasonable' can vary across different environments, which is a barrier in itself to ensuring access, this should include installing ramps, providing step free access, providing staff assistance and ensuring information is provided in a format that is accessible to the intended user. **Only 4% of respondents reported that transport operators always made the necessary adjustments they were required to by law** (see Figure 2). One participant described feeling 'brushed aside' and that staff did not care about them.

"When you speak to them, or you try and contact them and you try and explain your issues and problems, you're just brushed aside because at the end of the day, you're just a disabled person and they, as much as they pretend to care, they don't care about us."
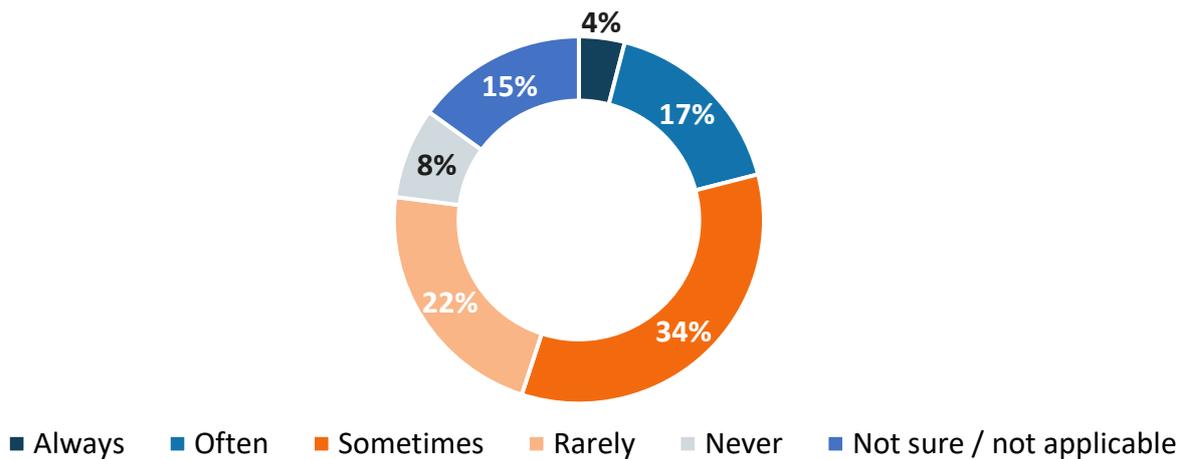**Participant with mobility impairment.**

Figure 2: How often transport staff make necessary adjustments for disabled passengers? (n=524)

Respondents also emphasised the impact of **cycling and micromobility policies** on their ability to use sustainable transport. This particularly impacted their ability to use active travel but extended to public transport as it impacted respondents' ability to reach or disembark from those modes. While acknowledging the environmental benefits of investment in active travel infrastructure (e.g. cycle lanes, pavements, shared spaces), respondents expressed safety and accessibility concerns. Those with visual impairments described the safety risks of walking near fast-moving cyclists or in shared spaces where pedestrians, cyclists and micromobility users occupy the same area increasing the risk of collisions. Others noted the difficulties of disembarking from buses near or directly into cycle lanes. Respondents also expressed frustration over micromobility vehicles, like e-scooters and e-bikes, being left on pavements. This increased street clutter made it even harder for some respondents to navigate public spaces, impacting their ability to walk, wheel and access public transport (bus and train).

Survey respondents also stressed that **micromobility vehicles** were not designed to meet the accessibility needs of many disabled people, effectively excluding them from this growing area of sustainable transport. Similarly, as existing micromobility trials require a driving licence for use this further excluded many disabled people from being able to use these modes.

Lastly, respondents reflected on the **negative attitudes and behaviours** they experience from others when using sustainable transport. The majority of respondents (64%) reported having felt rushed by others, 41% said they had been questioned or judged for their use of aids and 39% reported receiving verbal

comments or abusive behaviour. **In fact, only 12% of respondents said they had not faced negative attitudes or behaviours from other passengers**. This was reflected in one participant's account of being forcibly pushed out of a busy train by other passengers:

"Two different occasions, I have almost been physically ejected from a bus and a train. The train had been, two previous ones had been cancelled due to a rainfall. So, the train that I was on was massively overcrowded, and one gentleman in the carriage pointed out that there would be so much room for everybody else and their luggage if I was not there. So, several other gentlemen on the carriage agreed with him, and I found myself facing 8 angry men who were intent on lifting me out of the trains and onto the platform. I was rescued by the guard on the train who came down as I was being physically manhandled, and he had to stand in front of me to protect me. And that was literally because they felt that I took up more space than I should." **Neurodivergent participant with mobility, hearing, visual, dexterity, mental health and cognitive impairments.**

There were some notable differences in the experiences of respondents, particularly based on impairments. Respondents with bladder or bowel conditions were more likely to say UK transport policy negatively affected their ability to use sustainable transport (36%) than those without such conditions (21%), which may be caused by issues with toilet maintenance and availability of facilities in trains and stations (explored further in the Rail section below). Similarly, respondents with stamina, breathing, fatigue or chronic pain conditions[4] were more likely to report a negative impact (31%) compared to those without such conditions (21%). This may be caused by the introduction of policies focused on increasing the uptake of active travel modes, such as walking, wheeling, cycling and micromobility, without introducing changes to the broader environment (e.g. benches) or vehicle design to accommodate varying accessibility requirements introducing, or worsening, existing physical barriers. Respondents with dexterity impairments were also more likely to report a negative impact (33%) than those without (22%), a reflection of the various physical barriers that exist across sustainable transport.

Although not statistically significant, one indicative difference was observed. Respondents with mental health conditions or who were neurodivergent appeared more likely to report that UK transport policies negatively affected their

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[4] From now on we will refer to these as stamina related conditions.

ability to use sustainable modes of transport. This could be caused by issues of overcrowding and stress of using public transport or navigating busy pavements and roads, which is in line with existing bodies of work that show that those with mental health conditions prioritise private vehicles over other modes of transport to minimise the impact of their mental health (Posner et al., 2018). Many of these barriers will be further explored in the mode-specific sections below.

"Walking in London and getting on and off buses have become a nightmare for someone who is (a) on crutches and (b) slow. Walking, especially in the centre of town, is like taking your life in your hands every time you venture out: first because the pavements are littered with dumped e-bikes and e-bike stands which take up a lot of space, second, because e-bikes and e-scooters in particular insist on whizzing in and out of pedestrians, which is terrifying, and third, because whatever the law, a very large proportion of cyclists and [e-scooter users] ignore both traffic signals and pedestrian and zebra crossings. I want to walk when I can, but I hate it. As far as buses are concerned, most of the stops [in the area I live] mean you have to cross the cycle lane - and cyclists rarely bother to stop if a bus is pulled in. I am slow in getting on and particularly off buses (drivers often lower for me to board but never when getting off, and as I have a quiet voice—vocal cord damage—they can't hear if I ask). I have several times been yanked to safety before a cyclist hits me, which is extremely painful and frightening. Of course, cycling is important - but not at the expense of pedestrians, who come last in every transport initiative." **Respondent with mobility, stamina related impairments**

Experiences of sustainable transport

Current use of sustainable transport

Respondents were asked to reflect on their experience with accessing different forms of sustainable transport, including:

- Walking or wheeling
- Cycling or micromobility
- Buses or coach
- Rail
- Community transport

Figure 3 shows which modes of transport respondents have used in the last two years. Walking or wheeling was the most frequently used mode of transport (80%), followed by rail (73%) and bus or coach (65%). Community transport and cycling or micromobility were used far less often.
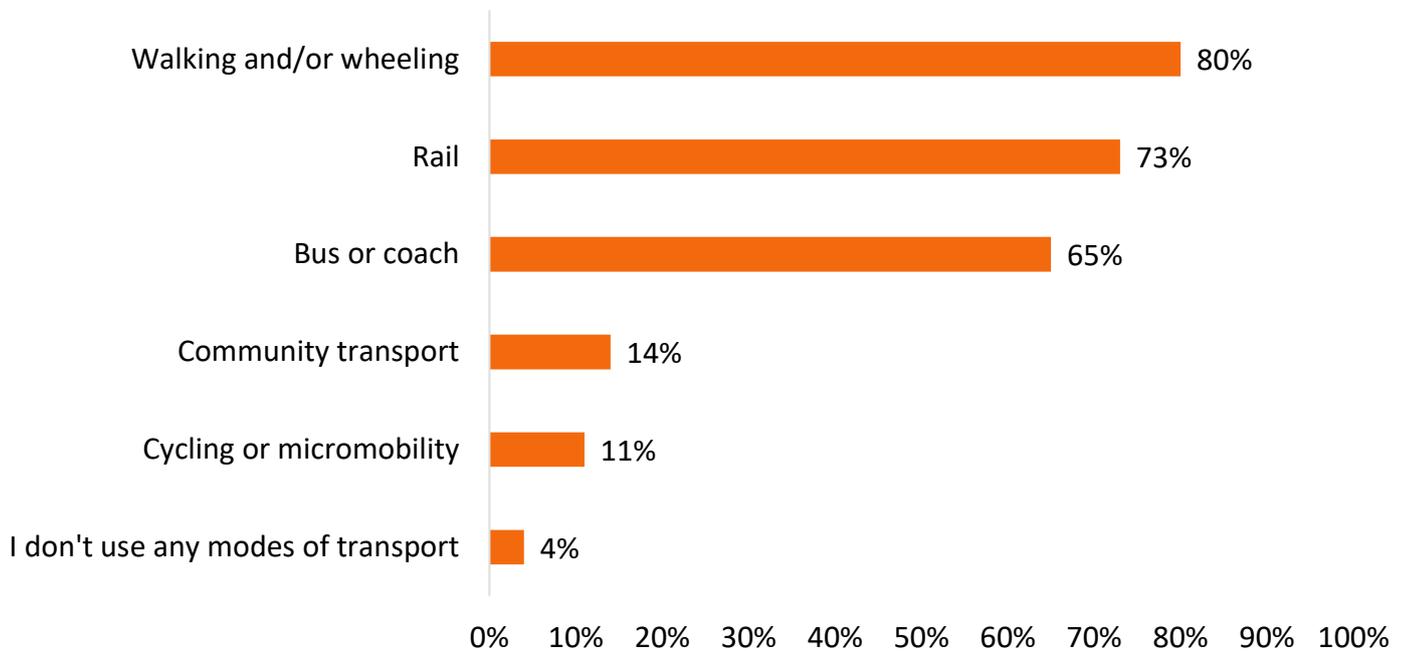

Figure 3: Which mode of transport have respondents used in the last two years (n=530)5

Overall, there were several differences in transport use across those with varying impairments or using different types of assistive aids. Respondents with visual impairments were more likely to use the bus or coach (86%) and rail (85%) than those without these impairments (61% and 70% respectively). This may be driven by the legal requirements on vision acuity to hold a driving licence in the UK, impacting people's ability to use micromobility vehicles, introducing a greater reliance on public transport as well.

Neurodivergent respondents reported using buses or coaches (77%) and rail (88%) more than respondents who were not neurodivergent (62% and 69% respectively). This reflects the broader literature that reports that neurodivergent individuals are less likely to drive regularly, and more likely to rely on public transport to travel for healthcare appointments for instance (Autistica, 2025).

5 This question was multichoice, whereby one respondent could select multiple answers. The percentages represent the proportion of respondents selecting each option and will not total 100%.

Respondents with mobility impairments were less likely to walk or wheel (79%), use buses or coaches (61%) or rail (70%) than those without mobility impairment (89%, 90% and 89% respectively). In addition, those who used mobility aids such as walking sticks and mobility scooters were also less likely to use public transport that those who did not rely on these aids. Indeed, respondents who used walking sticks were less likely to travel by bus or coach (59%) than those who did not (70%) and those who used a mobility scooter were less likely to travel by rail (59%) than those who did not use this aid (76%). These findings reflect the physical access barriers faced by those with mobility impairments or who require the use of mobility aids, often caused by the lack of step free access, insufficient or inadequate dropped kerbs on pavements, limited seating and wheelchair spaces across public transport, and restrictions on the size and weight of mobility scooters permitted on buses and trains.

Age also appeared to influence transport use, with respondents aged 60-79 being less likely to travel by bus or coach (56%) than those between the ages of 40-59 (70%). The same is true for rail, with 63% of 60–79-year-olds using rail compared to 80% of 40-59-year-olds. The declining usage of public transport as people age has been well documented in previous research and is reflective of broader changes in life that impact the types of journeys that are undertaken (Transport for London, 2012).

Lastly, those who used smart devices, such as phones or smart glasses reported using rail more regularly (84%) than respondents who didn't use these devices (69%). This could reflect the improvements to journey-planning apps, providing both real-time travel information, and smart devices facilitating rail travel through e-tickets or by improving wayfinding within railway stations through tools like GoodMaps or NaviLens.

Figure 4 outlines the reported accessibility for each of the modes of transport explored. **Despite being the most frequently used mode, walking or wheeling was reported as the least accessible**, with 50% of respondents stating that it was not accessible[6] to them. Rail was reported as being the most accessible, although it is important to note that only 53% of respondents described it as accessible[7]. Due to the low uptake of cycling, micromobility and community transport services

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[6] By not accessible we mean respondents who had reported that the mode was either not very accessible or not at all accessible

[7] By accessible we mean respondents who had reported that the mode was either very or somewhat accessible.

these modes had a large percentage of respondents select 'not sure/not applicable'. Regardless, cycling and micromobility had the largest number of respondents who selected 'not at all accessible', illustrating the broader accessibility barriers that are preventing disabled people from using these modes (which will be further explored in the cycling or micromobility section). These findings are reflective of a growing body of literature in this area (RiDC & CoMoUK, 2025).

> "Rail is by far the nicest mode of sustainable travel. They've tried really hard to help the disabled and it shows. Spaces are mostly protected, and staff are helpful." **Respondent with mobility, dexterity, cognitive, diet, stamina related conditions and bladder or bowel impairments**
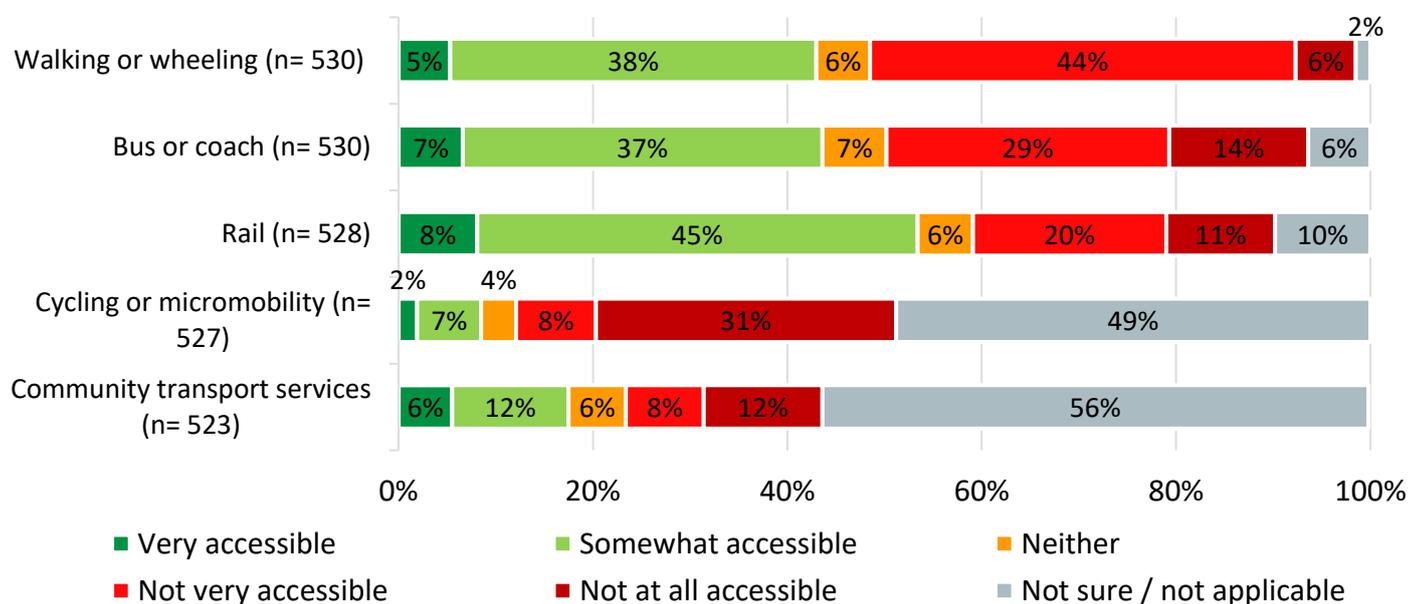
Figure 4: How accessible respondents found each mode of transport

Respondents were asked to reflect on the impacts, positive or negative, that government or council initiatives had on their experiences of using sustainable transport. As outlined in Figure 5 and Figure 6 not only did a majority of respondents not experience any positive impacts but many had also experienced negative impacts as a result of these actions. Suggesting that beyond not being effective mechanisms to enable sustainable transport use or modal shift, the current approach is introducing new barriers to use.
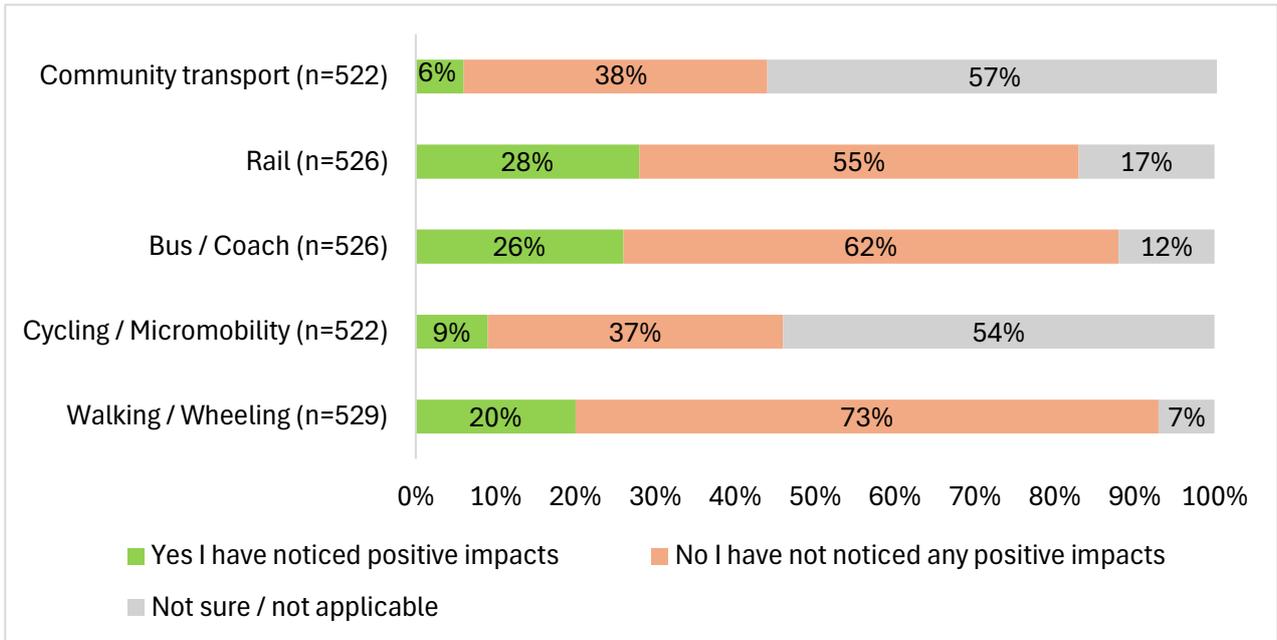
Figure 5: In the last 10 years have government and council initiatives had a positive impact on your experience of using the following modes
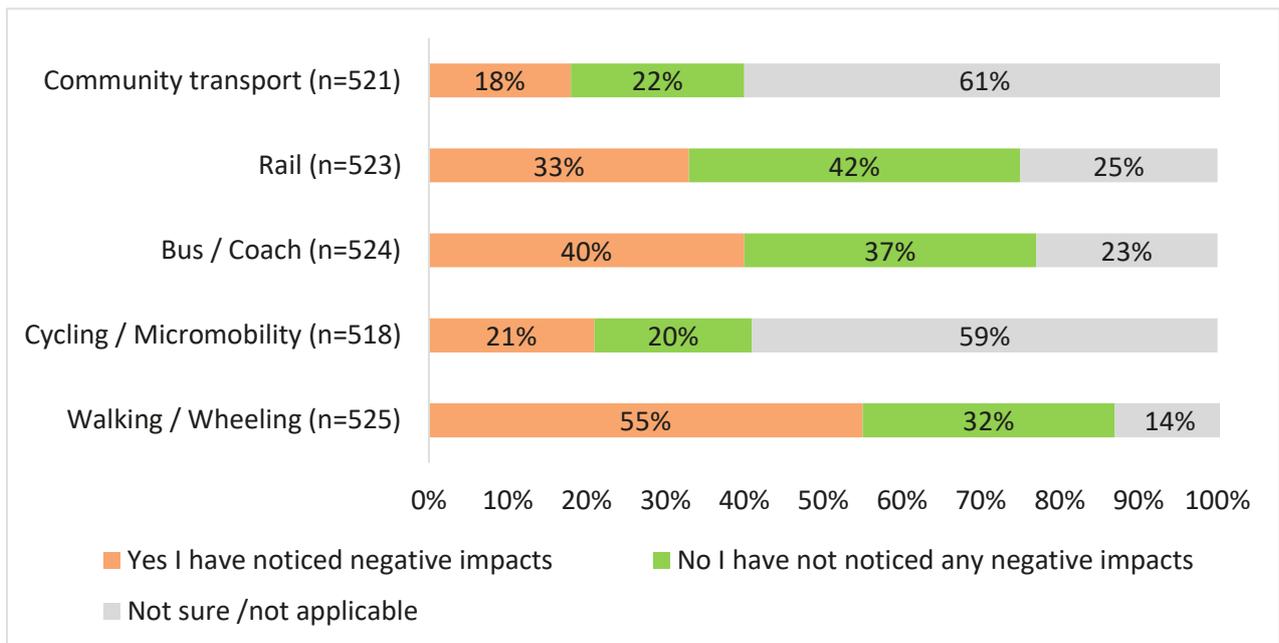
Figure 6: In the last 10 years have government and council initiatives had a positive impact on your experience of using the following modes

These impacts and experiences will be explored in more detail throughout the remainder of this section, highlighting the improvements that disabled people have experienced through government (local and national) initiatives and investment as well as the barriers that persist or have been created.

Experiences of walking or wheeling

Positive impacts and improvements

When respondents were asked whether, over the last ten years, they had noticed any government or council actions[8] that had a **positive impact** on their experience with walking or wheeling, 20% said yes. The most frequently mentioned improvements were to **pavements and crossing designs.** This suggests that although pavement infrastructure remains the biggest barrier when walking or wheeling, it is the area where respondents have observed the greatest improvement. Evidencing than when investments are made, they are having a positive impact on disabled people's experiences and ability to use this mode.

"One positive change where I live is the introduction of Swedish (dropped kerbs) crossings, which makes both walking and wheelchair, and pushchair use, much easier."
Respondent with mobility and stamina related impairments

"We have been given a series of well-lit zebra crossings in our area, crossing the road is now so much easier and safer. New dropped kerbs have been established with the sensory surfaces and colour contrast. This makes it much easier to travel around with a wheelchair and a sight impairment." **Respondent with hearing, visual, mobility, dexterity, cognitive and stamina related impairments**

Other improvements included the **implementation of low traffic neighbourhoods or the pedestrianisation of local areas, and improved cycle lanes**. Whilst some improvements were enabled through the introduction of traffic reduction measures these schemes did also introduce a range of intended consequences which will be explored further throughout this report. Respondents mentioned that whilst pedestrianisation made walking or wheeling safer it could also lead to an increase in congestion and traffic in other areas. The implementation and improvement of cycle lanes also made respondents feel safer when walking or wheeling as it enabled them to use, where permitted, their mobility scooters on cycling infrastructure and there was clearer demarcation between cycle and walking paths. This reduced the chance of conflict or interaction with other types

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8 By 'Government and council actions' we mean government or council investment or initiatives. We will use this term going forward.

of road users and any uncertainty that this anticipation may cause. Respondents also mentioned the increase in seating (e.g. benches) as an important improvement. This ability to rest and recuperate meant not only that more respondents could undertake pedestrian journeys but also undertake longer ones.

It is important to note that a significant number of respondents felt **improvements were often insufficient and not joint up**. Concerns included poor maintenance, limited rollout of new infrastructure, or improvements being introduced in isolation from other necessary changes (e.g. adding dropped kerbs but without nearby pedestrian crossings). In addition, several respondents highlighted how these **changes often came only at the demand of disabled people**. There were numerous accounts of respondents having to contact their local council and campaign for infrastructure changes in their local area. Reflecting that whilst these changes are being implemented, accessibility and inclusivity is still not embedded as part of the design of active travel initiatives but remains dependent on the advocacy of disabled people.

Negative experiences, impacts and remaining barriers

Respondents were also asked to identify what barriers they faced when, or to, walking and wheeling (See Figure 7). The main barriers centred around pavement infrastructure and the behaviours of others.

Alongside these barriers, respondents were asked whether they had noticed any government or council actions that had **negatively impacted** their experience with walking or wheeling. More than half of respondents (55%) had. The most frequently mentioned impact was the **lack of investment in the maintenance of pavements and pathways**. The decision to priorities other initiatives meant that many respondents were unable to increase their use of this mode.
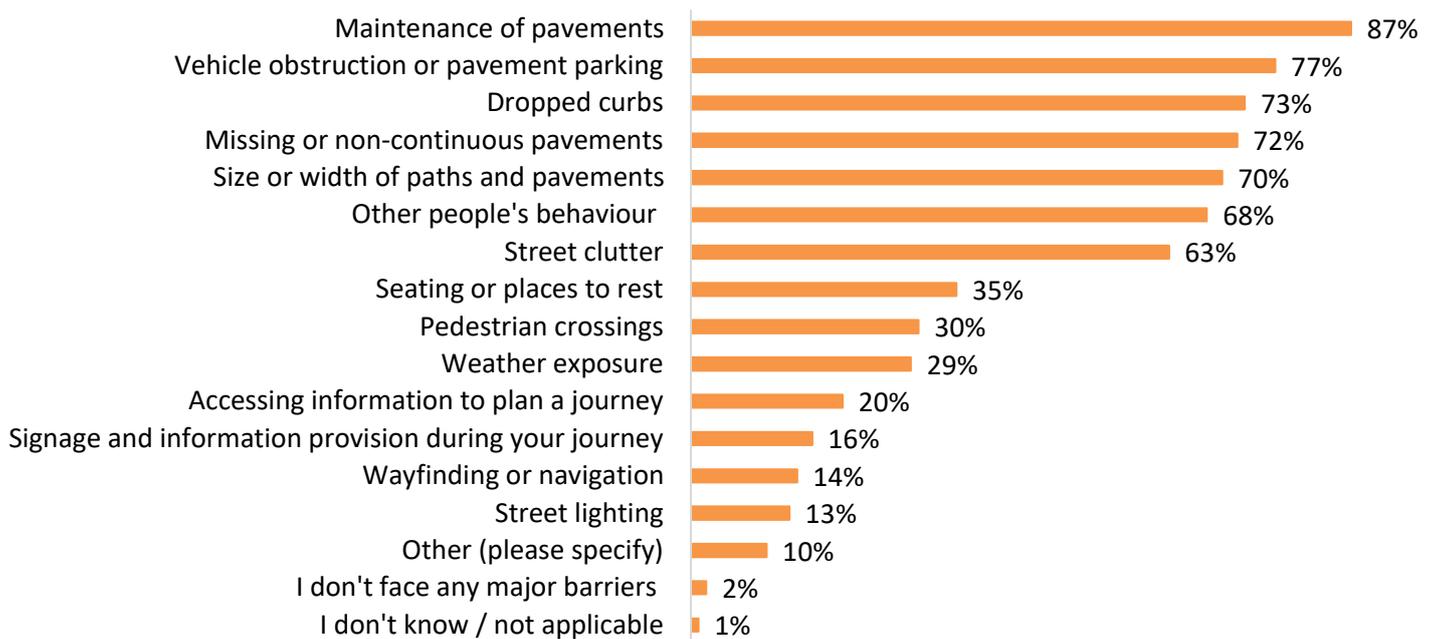
Maintenance of pavements — 87%
Vehicle obstruction or pavement parking — 77%
Dropped curbs — 73%
Missing or non-continuous pavements — 72%
Size or width of paths and pavements — 70%
Other people's behaviour — 68%
Street clutter — 63%
Seating or places to rest — 35%
Pedestrian crossings — 30%
Weather exposure — 29%
Accessing information to plan a journey — 20%
Signage and information provision during your journey — 16%
Wayfinding or navigation — 14%
Street lighting — 13%
Other (please specify) — 10%
I don't face any major barriers — 2%
I don't know / not applicable — 1%

Figure 7: What barriers do disabled people face when walking and/or wheeling in public spaces? (n=531)[9]

Respondents identified several barriers linked to government or council actions:

- Poor pavement maintenance (reported as a barrier by 87% of respondents), pavement deterioration, such as potholes, and broken / uneven pavements.
- Lack of accessible infrastructure like missing or poorly designed dropped kerbs (reported by 73% of respondents), missing or non-continuous pavements (reported by 72% of respondents), and pavements without tactile paving.
- Poorly designed infrastructure, like narrow pavements or paths (reported by 70% of respondents) and pedestrian bridges with narrow turning circles for wheelchair users.

Street clutter (reported by 63% of respondents) and obstructions (reported by 77% of respondents) were also frequently as barriers to walking and wheeling. These obstructions included overgrown greenery, dustbins, street furniture and parked vehicles (cars, cycles and micromobility vehicles). Respondents shared that pavements and footways had become increasingly hazardous and difficult to

9 This question was multichoice, whereby one respondent could select multiple answers. The percentages represent the proportion of respondents selecting each option and will not total 100%.

navigate and felt that their local councils did not prioritise accessible street design.

Those with physical impairments, such as mobility, dexterity or stamina conditions were more likely to report experiencing barriers with pavement design, obstructions, clutter, and a lack of appropriate places to sit and rest. These barriers particularly effected manual and powered wheelchair users who were more likely to report issues with dropped kerbs (87% and 94% respectively), compared to respondents did not use manual (67%) or powered wheelchairs (60%). This highlights how current pavement infrastructure is not meeting the needs of disabled people with physical impairments or who rely on mobility aids, for whom pavement deterioration and poor design can significantly restrict independent travel.

The behaviour of other road users was a barrier to walking and wheeling for 68% of respondents and whilst this was caused by all road users, regardless of mode of transport, the behaviour of cyclists and micromobility users was a key concern. Reflecting a growing tension between disabled pedestrians and cyclist or micromobility users. Respondents described how the use of e-scooters and e-bikes on pavements was dangerous, particularly since these vehicles could travel at high speeds with little noise. This was especially concerning for people with visual, hearing and mobility impairments. One participant recounted being hit by an electric micromobility vehicle, leaving the front wheel of their wheelchair damaged.

Some respondents felt there was uncertainty about where these vehicles were legally permitted, noting confusion over whether they should be ridden in cycle lanes or on roads. As per the Highway Code, only electrically assisted pedal cycles (EAPCs) are permitted on cycle tracks; all other powered micromobility vehicles should be used on roads (UK Government, n.d.). However, participants questioned how well these regulations were enforced or understood by users. A similar sentiment was shared when discussing the rising use of illegal private e-scooters in public spaces, both on roads and pavements. One participant, who lives in West Sussex, described this as a growing issue in their local area, echoed by the local police force who lists 'Illegal/antisocial use of electric scrambler bikes' as a priority issue (Sussex Police, 2025).

Respondents also expressed broader concerns about cyclists and micromobility users ignoring traffic lights or being allowed to use shared spaces such as seafront and canal paths. Overall, while those who took part in the research acknowledged that micromobility use and cycling had environmental and health benefits, there was a shared view that infrastructure and regulation had to be carefully designed to protect pedestrian safety.

"My local council has allowed cycling on park footpaths where, previously, cycling was forbidden, making the parks a no-go area for those of us who are visually impaired, nervous walkers, etc. [My borough] (and other London boroughs) have introduced dockless e-bikes and e-scooters which means they are left, dumped, on the footway, often entirely blocking the footway, making walking/wheeling often impossible in my locality. **Respondent with hearing, visual, mobility, dexterity, cognitive, mental health, speech, stamina related conditions, bowel or bladder impairments**

"The expansion of e-bikes & e-scooters is a huge benefit to the environment. The increase in bikes, scooters & shared pathways makes life very difficult for me as a visually impaired person, who does not (yet) need to use a white cane in daylight. There is no policing of these shared pathways and as I'm in the minority, I have no choice but to avoid [these spaces]. I would love to be able to walk along the promenade, like many others, but I no longer feel safe to do this because of the increase in bikes/scooters. I'm also aware that when I have an accident with a rider, I won't have anyone to help me during recovery. (It's difficult to dress wounds safely when you can't really see what you're doing!)." **Respondent with visual impairment**

Experiences of cycling or micromobility

Positive impacts and improvements

When respondents were asked whether they had noticed any government or council actions that had **positively impacted** their experience cycling or using micromobility only 9% said yes. It should be noted that 54% selected 'not sure/not applicable' which is likely due to the broader accessibility barriers to using or accessing these modes (RiDC & CoMoUK, 2025). In terms of positive impacts respondents mainly highlighted the **improvements to cycling infrastructure** and **provision of shared micromobility schemes**. This included improvements and increases in cycle lanes, signage and cycle parking dockets which allowed for safer cycling experiences. The increase of shared micromobility schemes was an

improvement for some as it provided them with greater access to different vehicle types, however, respondents noted that these were not always accessible for disabled people.

Negative experiences, impacts and remaining barriers

Respondents were asked to identify the barriers they faced to, or when, cycling or using micromobility (see Figure 8). Most respondents (53%) selected 'I don't know/not applicable'. They were also asked whether they had noticed any government or council investment actions that had **negatively impacted** their experience cycling or using micromobility. Over half of respondents (59%) selected 'not sure/not applicable' whilst 21% reported a negative impact on their ability to use these modes. These responses are likely driven by the low uptake of these modes, as supported by the broader literature (RiDC & CoMoUK, 2025) and decisions that have may disproportionately impacted disabled people's ability to use these modes (for example not introducing adapted micromobility vehicles within rental fleets).

Indeed, **difficulties accessing vehicles** (reported by 18% of respondents) **and poor service provision** (e.g. lack of available services in local areas, having to travel great distances to access an accessible vehicle, services having a high cost) and **inaccessible vehicle design** (reported by 13% of respondents) were frequently reported. Respondents felt that shared micromobility schemes did not provide adapted cycles, or vehicles that were designed with the needs of disabled people in mind. In addition, parking bays were often not suitable for adapted cycles. All of which impacted respondents' ability to use these modes, creating safety concerns and reducing overall confidence
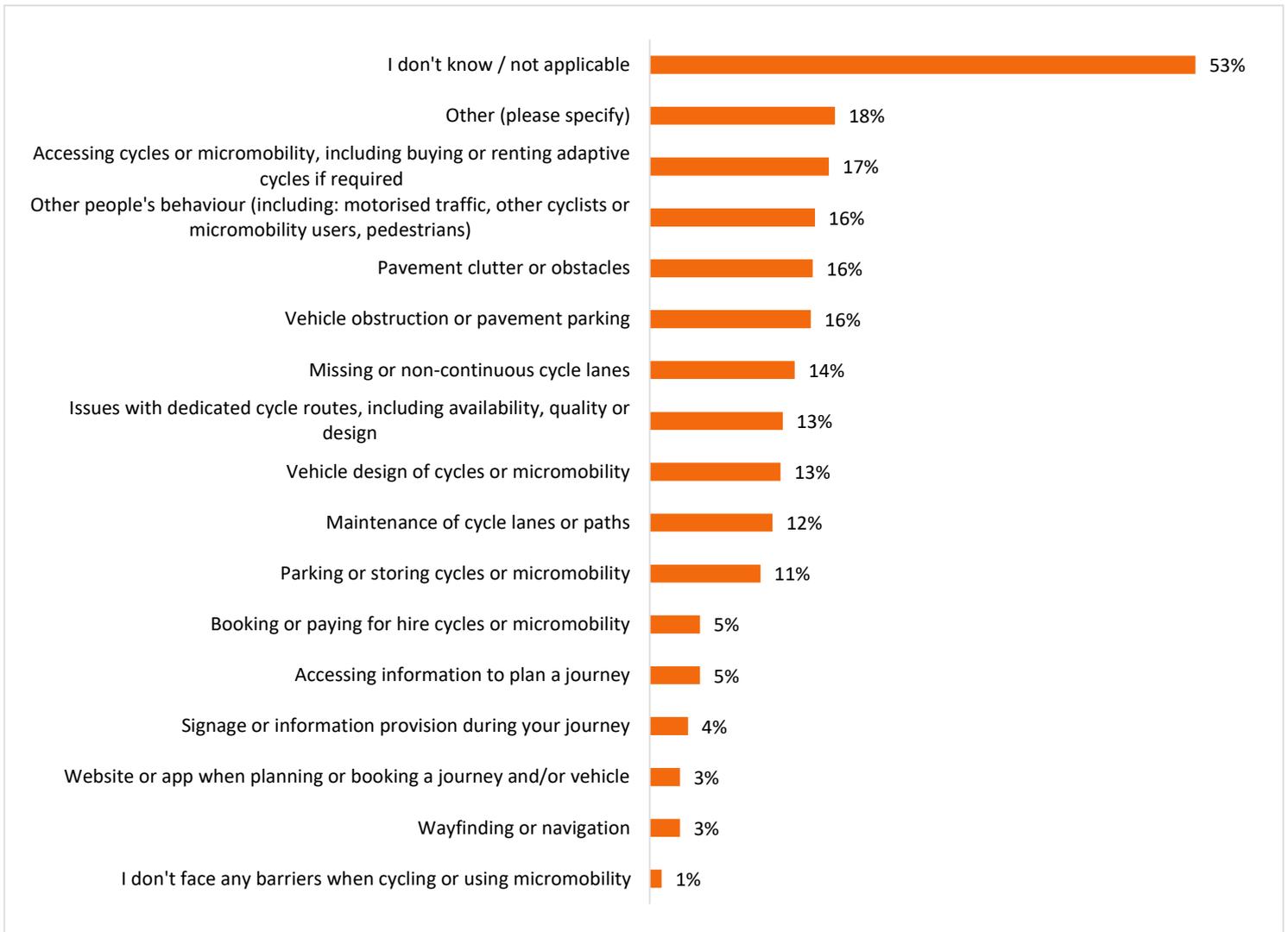
Figure 8: What barriers do disabled people face when cycling or using micromobility? (n=516)[10]

Many barriers related to poor infrastructure conditions or management. This included issues with the maintenance of cycle lanes and paths, with cycle paths described as often being uneven, poorly maintained, overgrown or too narrow for adaptive vehicles. **Pavement obstructions** were a frequently reported barrier which included, pavements being cluttered, vehicle obstructions and pavement parking. Respondents particularly referred to micromobility vehicles or cycles being left lying or poorly parked on the pavement as well as storage racks taking

up pavement space which made it harder for them to access vehicles and store them.

Whilst aspects related to service design such as booking, payment or information provision were less frequently reported barriers this could be because these tools are less frequently used and therefore that barriers have not been uncovered, rather than an absence of barriers.

Finally, the behaviour of others also impacted respondents' ability to access or increase their use of cycling and micromobility. Much like the impact on walking and wheeling, dangerous or illegal behaviour (such as inappropriate speed or riding on pavements) impacted respondent's confidence in being able to use these modes safely.

"Poor quality cycle parking facilities pretty much everywhere that are not accessible for non-standard cycles and disabled cyclists. E-bike share and e-scooter share schemes are introduced without having accessible vehicles on the fleet. Where I live the cycle infrastructure that has been built during and since the pandemic is very poor quality and not accessible. Increasing restrictions on where e-cycles and mobility devices with li-ion batteries can be used and stored is a massive worry." **Respondent with mobility impairment**

Experiences of buses or coach

Positive impacts and improvements

When asked whether government or council actions had **positively impacted** their experience using buses or coaches, 26% of respondents said yes. The most frequently mentioned improvements were to the **design of vehicles** and the **provision of audio and visual information**.

Vehicle improvements included buses or coaches being equipped with ramps, lifts and better lowering mechanisms for wheelchair users, wider wheelchair spaces that no longer had the obstruction of a pole and the introduction of two wheelchair spaces on some buses. Regarding audio and visual announcements, respondents highlighted the increasing availability of audio announcement on buses, real-time arrival information presented in a visual format at bus stops, and clear displays on buses showing upcoming stops. They did report that further

improvements could be made to audio announcements, particularly ensuring they were loud enough and were provided consistently across all buses. These improvements are likely as a result of the Public Service Vehicles (Accessible Information) Regulations 2023 that came into force in 2023, as at the time of the survey all vehicles first used after October 2019 had to provide audible and visual on-board information.

> "The audio announcements have helped massively as I know where to get off even when facing the other way in the wheelchair space. Manchester Bee network also made more and bigger wheelchair spaces so there's two on each bus which means I'm rarely unable to board." **Neurodivergent respondent with mobility, mental health, stamina related conditions, bladder or bowel impairments**

Respondents also felt that **paying for bus and coach services** had improved, with the introduction of contactless payments, some disabled bus passes being valid for a full day of traveling[11], and being able to pay for a coach via an app. Other improvements included the **attitude of bus drivers.** Some respondents felt bus drivers were becoming more proactive in meeting disabled people's accessibility needs, such as lowering the bus or using the ramps to allow those with mobility impairments to board safely, as well as asking people to move from the wheelchair space. Respondents also mentioned improvements in bus stop infrastructure, with more raised kerbs or pavements to enable level boarding.

Despite these improvements, respondents still emphasised that these changes were not widespread, with inconsistencies across services and regions, suggesting, as with other modes, that whilst changes are being implemented, accessibility is still not embedded into sustainable transport design as standard.

> "TfL recently had new accessibility training for bus drivers and since then it's been more common than bus drivers kneel the bus when I come to the door using my walking sticks. Still less than 50% of the time though!" **Neurodivergent respondent with mobility, dexterity, cognitive, mental health and stamina related impairments**

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11 It is important to note that the ability to use a disabled bus pass at any time of day is not consistently applied across all areas of the UK. Some areas limit the use of disabled bus pass to outside of peak times.

Negative experiences, impacts and remaining barriers

Respondents were asked to outline the barriers they faced to travelling or accessing buses or coach. As seen in Figure 9 these barriers are systemic and often the product of a lack of joint-up partnership across different transport stakeholders. For instance, boarding and exiting the vehicle was the most frequently reported barrier (reported by 54% of respondents) which is the product of vehicle design, infrastructure design and driver behaviour.
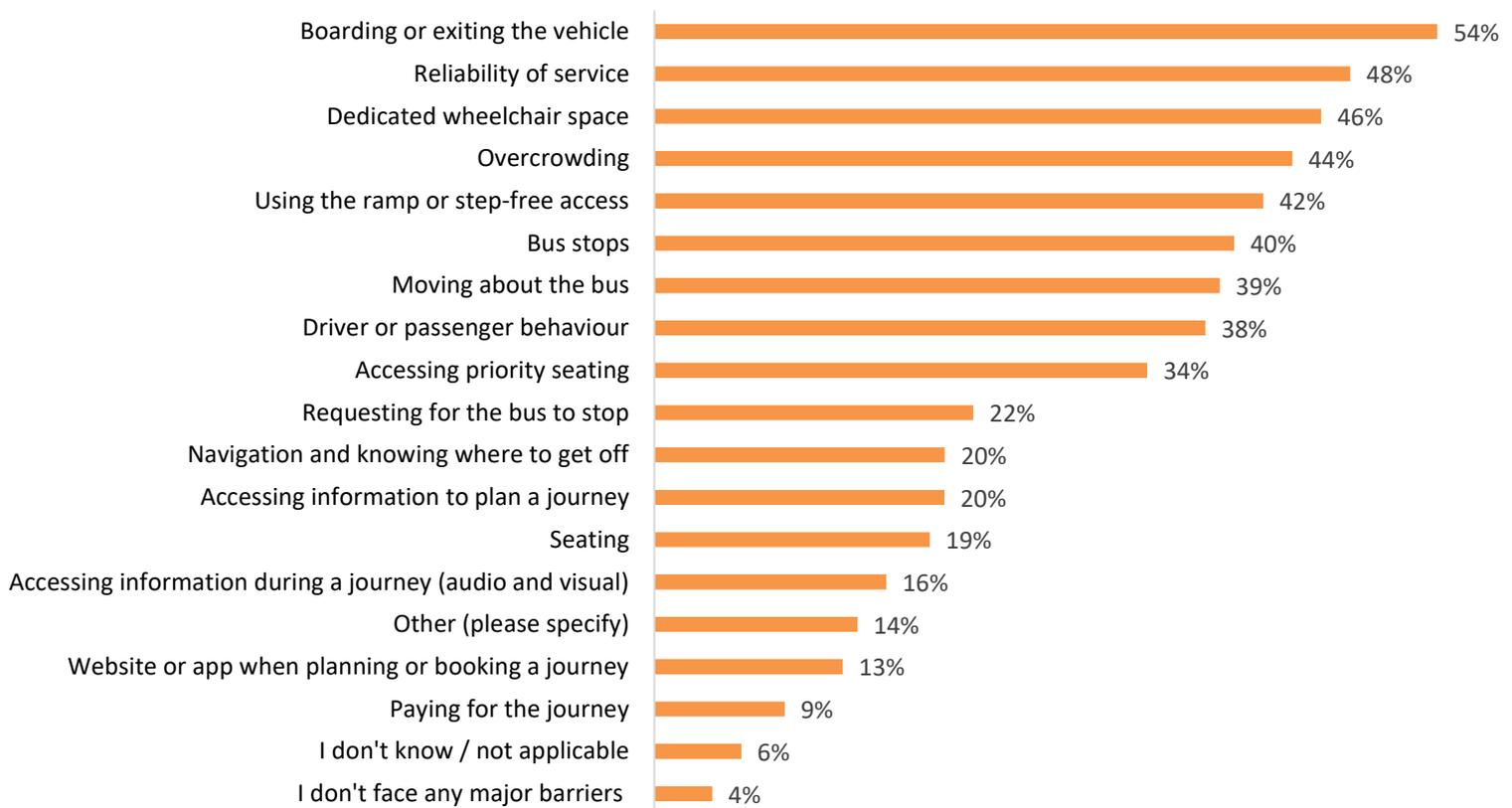
Barrier	Percentage
Boarding or exiting the vehicle	54%
Reliability of service	48%
Dedicated wheelchair space	46%
Overcrowding	44%
Using the ramp or step-free access	42%
Bus stops	40%
Moving about the bus	39%
Driver or passenger behaviour	38%
Accessing priority seating	34%
Requesting for the bus to stop	22%
Navigation and knowing where to get off	20%
Accessing information to plan a journey	20%
Seating	19%
Accessing information during a journey (audio and visual)	16%
Other (please specify)	14%
Website or app when planning or booking a journey	13%
Paying for the journey	9%
I don't know / not applicable	6%
I don't face any major barriers	4%

Figure 9: What barriers do disabled people face when using a bus or coach? (n=529)[12]

Respondents were also asked whether any government or council actions had **negatively impacted** their experience using buses or coaches, with 40% saying yes. One of the most frequently reported issues was **the reduction of services and routes** resulting in unreliable services as seen with 48% of respondents stating reliability of services was a barrier to use. Neurodivergent respondents, those with dexterity impairments, bladder or bowel conditions and mental health

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12 This question was multichoice, whereby one respondent could select multiple answers. The percentages represent the proportion of respondents selecting each option and will not total 100%.

conditions were more likely to report this issue than respondents without those conditions.

Beyond reliability of the service, those who took part in the research explained that they often encountered overcrowded bus stops and buses because of service reductions or delays. **Overcrowding**—an issue reported by 44% of respondents— often had practical implications for disabled people, who spoke about missing buses because they were unable to navigate crowds at bus stops or because there was insufficient space for them to board. Participants also spoke about the anxiety and stress that overcrowded environments could cause because of sensory overwhelm caused by noise, lights, temperatures and proximity to others. One visually impaired participant explained that when buses are full and noisy, it could be difficult to hear audio announcements, making a journey confusing and distressing. In turn, all these negative experiences, or the possibility of experiencing them, could prevent disabled people from boarding, and reduced the likelihood of them re-using buses.

Respondents also reported that routes in their local area had been reduced or entirely removed particularly in more rural areas. As a result, bus services now often lacked **the joined-up routes** needed for a connected network further impacting respondents' ability to access or use buses.

"Funding for services has been heavily cut, many local routes have been removed others have been reduced significantly in frequency which has a massive impact on my ability to go from A to B. This impacts on every aspect of life, work, social, getting to healthcare appointments et cetera." **Respondent with visual impairment**

"Further cuts to services means more overcrowding, making it even more difficult to use the buses and more time to wait for the next one. Priority seating is never abided by and it is incredibly difficult to walk through the aisle using a crutch." **Neurodivergent respondent with mobility, cognitive, mental health, stamina related conditions, bladder or bowel impairments**

Other barriers **included insufficient investment into designing and making buses and coaches accessible**. Barriers to using existing vehicles included poorly designed or broken ramps (with 42% of respondents reporting issues with using ramps and step free access), the absence of lifts for powerchairs and larger wheelchairs, and limited capacity for wheelchair users, with many buses only having one dedicated wheelchair space. These experiences were not uncommon

with 73% of manual and powered wheelchair users reporting barriers accessing the dedicated wheelchair space. The limited capacity for wheelchair users meant that when multiple wheelchair users were waiting at a bus stop, only one would be able to board, and if buses were crowded respondents described instances of not being allowed to board at all.

Accessing priority seating in general was also reported, especially by those with bladder or bowel conditions, stamina related conditions, mental health conditions and dexterity impairments. Considering these impairments may be less visible to other bus users, this may be indicative of the difficulties that those with non-visible impairments face when trying to access priority seats as their accessibility needs may not be immediately apparent to others.

There were broader reflections on the design of seating with respondents describing seats as too narrow for those with reduced mobility or who used mobility aids, and that buses often lacked adequate space for larger wheelchairs and powerchairs. Some participants and respondents expressed frustration at the fact that buses don't always accept certain powerchairs and exclude class 3 mobility scooters. Failing to recognise the varying accessibility needs of different users in vehicle design prevented disabled people from being able to use these modes more regularly. Whilst there are existing guidance and regulation on the features that must be included in buses and coaches (Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency, 2024), respondents experiences demonstrate that these are not yet widely implemented, do not address the issue of inaccessibility of older fleets and are potentially not reflective of disabled people's varying access needs.

As with other modes the **behaviour of bus drivers and other passengers** was reported as a barrier by 38% of respondents. Respondents detailed accounts of drivers who were not well trained to properly use ramps, lifts or lowering mechanisms, as well as assisting visually and hearing impaired passengers who might need guidance or instructions. Respondents experienced condescending and unhelpful behaviours from drivers, such as drivers refusing to lower the ramp preventing some users from being able to use buses, or drivers not consistently asking other passengers to vacate the wheelchair space when in use by non-wheelchair users (e.g. parents with buggies, disabled bus users with other mobility aids or those with shopping). As a result, respondents were put in conflict with those who refused to vacate a wheelchair space. One participant described an incident where they and their guide dog were on a bus when a wheelchair user

attempted to board, and although the participant had offered to move out of the priority space to make room, the driver refused to allow the wheelchair user on. This experience highlights how both vehicle design and attitudes of staff not only prevent disabled people from accessing buses but creates an unnecessary tension between users, forcing them to negotiate and adapt to overcome preventable barriers. The behaviour of other bus users was a barrier that was more likely to be reported neurodivergent respondents and those with dexterity impairments, mental health and stamina related conditions compared to respondents without these impairments or conditions. As before, considering these impairments may be less visible to others, this reflects a growing issue for those with non-visible impairments whose accessibility needs may not be immediately apparent to others. Whilst this topic has started to be explored it requires further investigation to ensure that all users are able to access public transport at the same time (ncat, 2025a).

> "Buses now have the designated wheelchair space protected in law and yet this is rarely enforced, parents with buggies want that space and are often unwilling to move, drivers also are not enforcing it and do not back wheelchair users. Drivers leave us at the bus stop if there's a buggy on." **Neurodivergent respondent with mobility, dexterity, mental health and stamina related impairments**

Bus stops and bus station design were reported as a barrier by 40% of respondents. Those with vision or dexterity impairments and mental health conditions were more likely to report this as a barrier to use, often as a result of inaccessible information increasing uncertainty and potential distress. **Floating bus stops** were frequently mentioned and were described by many as particularly challenging. As currently designed floating bus stops did not provide sufficient space for users to navigate bus stops safely especially when disembarking where they were put in direct conflict with cyclists. This was worsened if a user required a ramp where they would have to enter a cycle lane creating conflict between two sustainable user groups that could be avoided through improved infrastructure design. Floating bus stops were also a challenge for visually impaired respondents with guide dogs; one blind participant highlighted how their dog struggled to navigate and safely cross a recently implemented floating bus stop in their local area.

> "I came back to [my local area] and in that meantime they'd put like a shared cycle path in a road that I knew really well. And it's, I suddenly thought, oh, what's this tactile paving? And my support worker said, it's telling you how to get to the [floating] bus stop

and it's really difficult for the dog because the dog doesn't know whereabouts on the pavement it should be walking. Although they say on the buses, please be careful when you alight from the bus because it's a cycle lane, but you have no idea if any bike's coming along or not." **Participant with visual impairment**

More broadly there remains several design challenges linked to bus stops including a lack of designated waiting areas, preventing respondents from being able to identify where to wait for the bus, and seating, impacting respondents' ability to wait without impacting their health. The broader infrastructure also impacted their ability to access buses, including the lack of level boarding or poorly designed and maintained level access as well as missing or inaccessible information at bus stops or stations. When combined all these barriers made it particularly challenging for many disabled respondents to either access or increase their use of buses and coaches as the current experience was often one of discomfort, stress or even abuse. These experiences are consistent with the broader literature that have called for the design of accessible bus stop standards (Barrett, Goss & Williams, 2024; ncat, 2025b).

"[Referring to bus stop design] The need for extra space, to build up momentum to get up the ramp, is not accounted for. The need for extra space, to come down the ramp (as a manual wheelchair user) is also not accounted for. I can't see speeding cyclists approaching me as I try to enter or, in particular, exit the bus. My local council and the neighbouring one have taken to granting permits for tables, chairs and other barriers on the footway, which restricts the depth of the footway, well below the required minimum for a manual wheelchair user to be able to climb up, or off, the ramp of a bus (never mind allowing space for passing pedestrians using the footway). Dockless rental bikes parked on the footway and in the area surrounding the bus stop often prevents me from being able to get on a bus (or the bus driver from being able to park close to the kerb)."
Respondent with hearing, visual, mobility, dexterity, speech, mental health, cognitive and stamina related impairments

"The city bus station is incredibly busy at times – [during] the summer holidays lots of children are riding bikes & running through it, with little regard for others. It is much easier (though still difficult) for me to get on a bus at the bus station, since the buses are stationary & I can take the time I need to check if I'm getting on the correct bus. Buses often pull into different stands so I can't rely on them being at their allocated stand. There is no audio announcement service at the bus station, & visual displays are too

small to be useful to me, & all are at heights where they can't be vandalised. If bus travel is to be encouraged, there should also be a recognition that every stage of the journey should be reviewed, not just the timetable & route. I have yet to travel on a bus in my city that has audio announcements for stops." **Respondent with visual impairment**

Experiences of rail

Positive impacts and improvements

When asked whether they had noticed any government or council actions that had **positively impacted** their experience using rail 28% of respondents reported they had. The most frequently mentioned improvements related to the **passenger assistance processes** (including apps), **staff training** and **more accessible stations**. Respondents felt that passenger assistance at stations had become more reliable and readily available, with more staff presence throughout the station and improved support with boarding and exiting trains (e.g. staff putting ramps out, staff waiting at destination). Respondents shared that staff were able to assist with navigating the station and were more aware of people's varying access needs. They also mentioned that 'Turn up and Go'[13] had improved, reporting being able to access friendly and useful assistance without having to book in advance. In addition, the signposting and labelling of passenger assistance points had improved making it easier for disabled people to locate these services. One notable improvement was the passenger service app, which had made booking assistance much easier and was seen as a significant improvement from the previous system.

"When I travelled by train last week with my manual wheelchair and [personal assistant] the station staff (at both my local station and my destination) were very helpful, the ramps were put in place for me each time I arrived on the train. I get very anxious travelling and that the staff with ramps would not be there to meet the train, meaning I can't get off, but staff were very helpful in guiding me through [the station to my destination] I believe this is a result of staff training to assist disabled and wheelchair passengers." **Respondent with mobility, mental health, stamina related conditions, diet, bladder or bowel impairments**

13 Turn Up and Go is a service available to all rail passengers who need assistance but have not booked in advance. They can request support from staff when arriving at the station.

"In the last ten years, the introduction of the Passenger Assist app has been life-changing for me as a disabled person who relies on support when travelling by rail. Being able to request assistance in advance gives me more independence and helps reduce the stress of planning journeys. However, while the app works well at times, there have been several occasions where no one was there to meet me at my destination. On one particularly distressing recent journey, staff failed to notice a platform change, and I was left waiting in my wheelchair for over two hours after missing my train. Experiences like this make rail travel feel uncertain and unsafe. The app has real potential to improve accessibility, but without consistent and reliable follow-through from staff, it too often falls short." **Respondent with mobility, dexterity, mental health, stamina related conditions and bladder or bowel impairments**

When it came to station infrastructure, respondents highlighted several improvements that had enhanced accessibility. These included improved level access in stations and on platforms, increasing the use of tactile platform edging for safety, the introduction of GoodMaps to facilitate navigation within stations, and an increase in the number of lifts. Respondents also felt that toilet facilities had been improved, including greater provision of accessible and changing places toilets. Overall, respondents felt that **announcements and information** in stations and trains had improved, with more information boards and tactile mapping, improved audio announcements, braille signage on the seats, and BSL screens.

Respondents also highlighted **improvements to trains**, with more wheelchair spaces and priority seating available, open carriage layouts which made it easier to navigate through a train, better air conditioning and comfortable seating as well as increased level boarding.

However, as will be explored in the following section, these improvements were not consistent across the rail network.

Negative experiences, impacts and remaining barriers

Respondents were asked what barriers they faced when travelling or to accessing rail services. The main challenges were centred around availability of accessible facilities (both in train and station), infrastructure design both within the station and to access the station, boarding and exiting trains, carriage design and assistance (as seen in Figure 10).
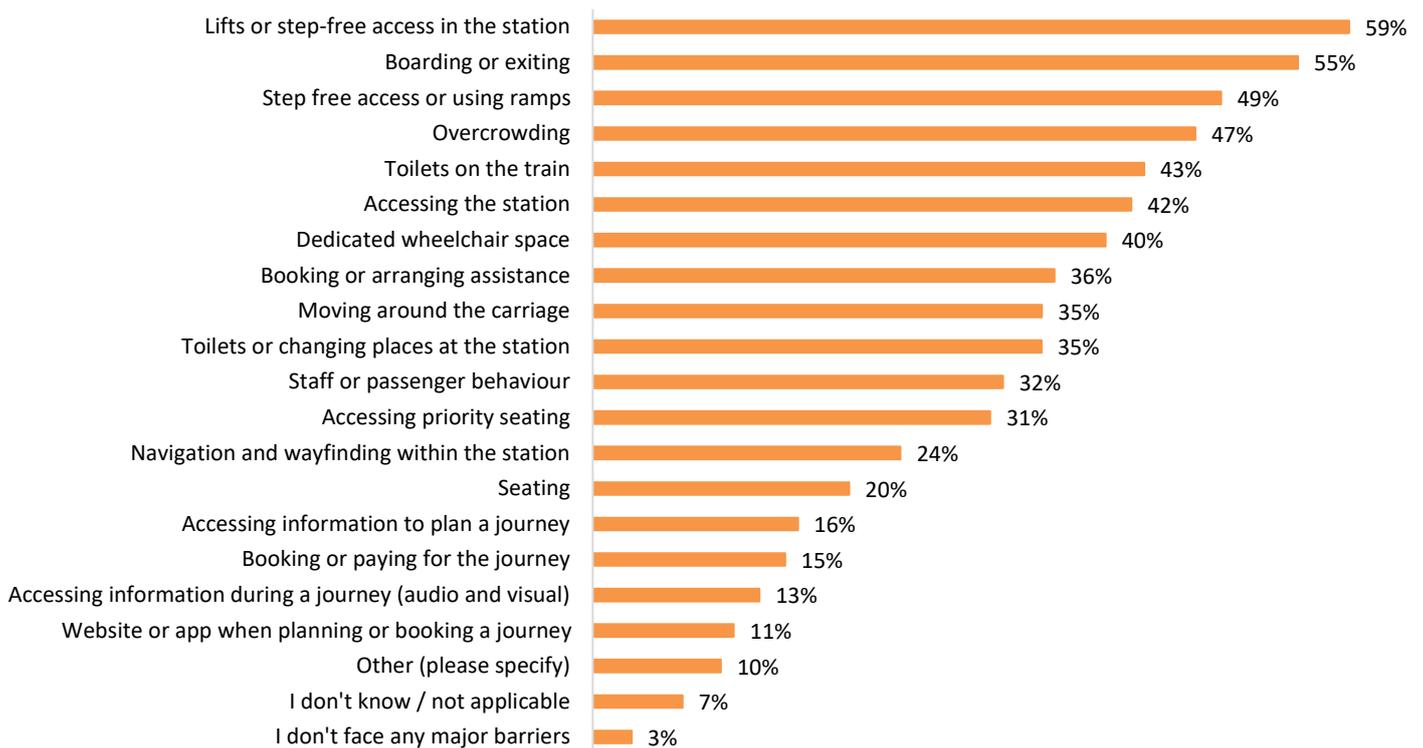
Barrier	Percentage
Lifts or step-free access in the station	59%
Boarding or exiting	55%
Step free access or using ramps	49%
Overcrowding	47%
Toilets on the train	43%
Accessing the station	42%
Dedicated wheelchair space	40%
Booking or arranging assistance	36%
Moving around the carriage	35%
Toilets or changing places at the station	35%
Staff or passenger behaviour	32%
Accessing priority seating	31%
Navigation and wayfinding within the station	24%
Seating	20%
Accessing information to plan a journey	16%
Booking or paying for the journey	15%
Accessing information during a journey (audio and visual)	13%
Website or app when planning or booking a journey	11%
Other (please specify)	10%
I don't know / not applicable	7%
I don't face any major barriers	3%

Figure 10: What barriers do disabled people face when travelling by rail? (n=528)[14]

When asked whether they had noticed any **negative impacts** on their experiences of using trains because of government or council actions 33% of respondents said yes. Compared to walking/wheeling and buses/coaches, rail had the lowest percentage of respondents reporting negative impacts from governmental actions. This reflects the findings from **Figure 4** that indicated that respondents viewed rail as the most accessible form of sustainable transport. Nonetheless, respondents still highlighted a series of barriers, mainly caused by the **reduction**

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14 This question was multichoice, whereby one respondent could select multiple answers. The percentages represent the proportion of respondents selecting each option and will not total 100%.

of staffing and **train services**, and **insufficient investment in accessible station facilities**.

Respondents expressed concern about the reduction of staff across the rail network. They felt that the replacement of booking offices and desks with ticket machines excluded people for whom these machines were not accessible or those with lower digital literacy who relied on in-person support. The lack of available staff also meant that assistance was harder to access when needed. Beyond availability, staff's knowledge and understanding of disability was also a barrier. Respondents shared that staff were not always aware of the varying accessibility needs of disabled people, where disability access doors were located, and in some cases, were rude and unhelpful. Much like on other forms of public transport, staff or passenger behaviour, was more likely to be reported by those with non-visible conditions, like bladder or bowel conditions, stamina related conditions, neurodivergence, mental health conditions and dexterity impairments. This underscores the importance of better awareness and staff training to support the access needs of people with non-visible impairments.

> "The push for removing staff from stations and replacing them with machines. Not every stage of buying a ticket at a machine is accessible. I know I take a lot longer, which frustrates the people queueing behind me (I'm not 'obviously disabled' so sometimes receive unpleasant comments about how long it takes me to use the machine). Thankfully at my station there is still often one person in the ticket office. I understand that machines do speed things up for the majority of users and of course, save on costs but it feels like yet another area of life that I'm excluded from, but because I'm on the minority, it's not going to change." **Respondent with visual impairment**

Respondents also reported issues caused by **service reliability** with last-minute cancellations and frequent delays described as major deterrents to using rail. This unreliability could also lead to overcrowding, a barrier reported by 47% of respondents, leading to feelings of distress when using rail or respondents being prevented from boarding services altogether. Neurodivergent respondents, those with dexterity impairments, stamina related conditions, bladder or bowel conditions and mental health conditions tended to report this issue more frequently than respondents without those conditions. Once again reflecting that whilst there may have been improvements in meeting the accessibility requirements of some disabled people, for many who's accessibility needs may be less understood these are still not being met, preventing them from increasing

their use of rail. **Overcrowding** and service unreliability led to respondents often missing their journeys, or being left 'stranded' at stations. This unreliability paired with the costs of train tickets led to respondents choosing not to use rail as high costs with no guarantee of a successful journey, or one without major disruption which could cause distress, did not seem worthwhile.

In addition, respondents described numerous **physical barriers within station facilities**, including a lack of step free access across many stations (reported by 59% of respondents), and unreliable or insufficient alternatives provided. Where alternatives were provided, such as lifts for instance, these were often unsuitable, with respondents sharing that lifts were often too small for some wheelchair users, or they were frequently out of order. In fact, 70% of wheelchair users (manual and powered wheelchairs) reported issues with lifts and step-free access, compared to 54% of non-wheelchair users. The availability of other accessible facilities was also a barrier; this included limited seating preventing people from being able to rest leading to fatigue or overwhelm (issues with priority seating was reported by 31% of respondents), as well as limited and poorly maintained accessible toilets, both in stations (reported by 35% of respondents) and on trains (reported by 43% of respondents).

One participant illustrated some of the barriers to accessibility in station facilities, explaining how the new Belfast Grand Central station which opened in 2024 did not have an accessible drop-off point, raising the question as to how a major national public transport station could open without such critical infrastructure for disabled people. According to Translink, Northern Ireland's public transport operator, an accessible drop-off point will be implemented in phase two of construction, along with other accessibility features including (Translink, n.d.):

- Car park with accessible parking bays (including EV-charging station and a larger space for wheelchair accessible vehicles)
- Assistance dog spending area
- Parking for people with accessible and non-standard cycles

This example illustrates both the current ways of working and the consequences of not integrating accessibility from the beginning. Currently anyone using a non-standard bike, requiring an accessible drop off, accessible parking bays or with assistance dogs is prevented from using this space. Until accessibility is built in as standard, disabled people will not be able to increase their use of these transport modes.

The **design of trains and carriages** was also a barrier. Respondents described a reduction in priority and comfortable seating and wheelchair users reported having difficulties navigating through trains due to narrow corridors that were often inaccessible, especially for powered wheelchair users (45% of powered wheelchair users reported issues with moving around the carriageways compared to 29% of those who did not use powered wheelchairs). In addition, ramps to board or exit trains were described as often being too small for larger wheelchairs. Whilst there have clearly been some improvements to the accessibility of trains in recent years, there are still many further improvements to be made particularly to meet the accessibility needs of all disabled passengers.

Lastly, those who took part in the research also described **negative interactions with other passengers** (reported by 32% of respondents) that prevented them from using this mode more regularly. As with other forms of public transport the priority seating areas were often a point of tension, as non-disabled passengers sometimes refused to move their luggage from designated wheelchair spaces, or parents occupied those accessible areas with pushchairs. Some respondents experienced hostility from others in busy trains, or when seeking assistance. Altogether, these issues created a travel environment that left many feeling excluded and stressed reducing the likelihood of using rail more regularly.

"Not enough stations are accessible and I see very few improved with lifts added, especially stations where this could be added with ease. Same for underground stations, the ones that are accessible are great, those that aren't cause major issues when travelling around the city. Passengers get angry when I am in the wheelchair space and the train is busy. I've had such awful abuse I've had to press the emergency alarm for staff help. Passengers using the space as a luggage store or pushchair area is a massive issue too and they're angry when myself or staff tell them to move. Sometimes they refuse and staff have to move me to first class (not complaining about that too much) but if they board after me and staff don't see, I get awful abuse hurled at me/ treated like a second class citizen/ a piece of luggage myself." **Neurodivergent respondent with hearing, mobility, diet and bladder or bowel impairments**

Experiences of community transport services

Positive impacts and improvements

Respondents were asked whether they had noticed any government or council actions that had a **positive impact** on their experience with using community transport services. Only 6% said yes, with most respondents (57%) reporting they were unsure, or it was not applicable to them. A few respondents mentioned improvements in the **provision of local community buses**, with **helpful staff**, and **improvements in vehicle accessibility** that were made possible through the introduction of longer ramps, had been positive initiatives.

Negative experiences, impacts and remaining barriers

Respondents were also asked to identify what barriers they faced when traveling by, or to accessing, community transport services. Half of respondents (51%) selected 'I don't know/not applicable', suggesting that this mode of transport, despite having been primarily designed to address inaccessibility in public transport, is not readily used by disabled people (only 14% of respondents reported having used this mode of transport in the last two years). The most frequently reported barrier was the availability and reliability of the service, with 30% reporting this issue. Other barriers focused on the design of the service and vehicles, as reported in Figure 11

When respondents were asked whether they had noticed any government or council actions that had **negatively impacted** their experience with using community transport service, 18% said yes. As with the positive impacts, most respondents (61%) reported being unsure, or felt that it was not applicable to them, likely driven by the low adoption rates of this mode.
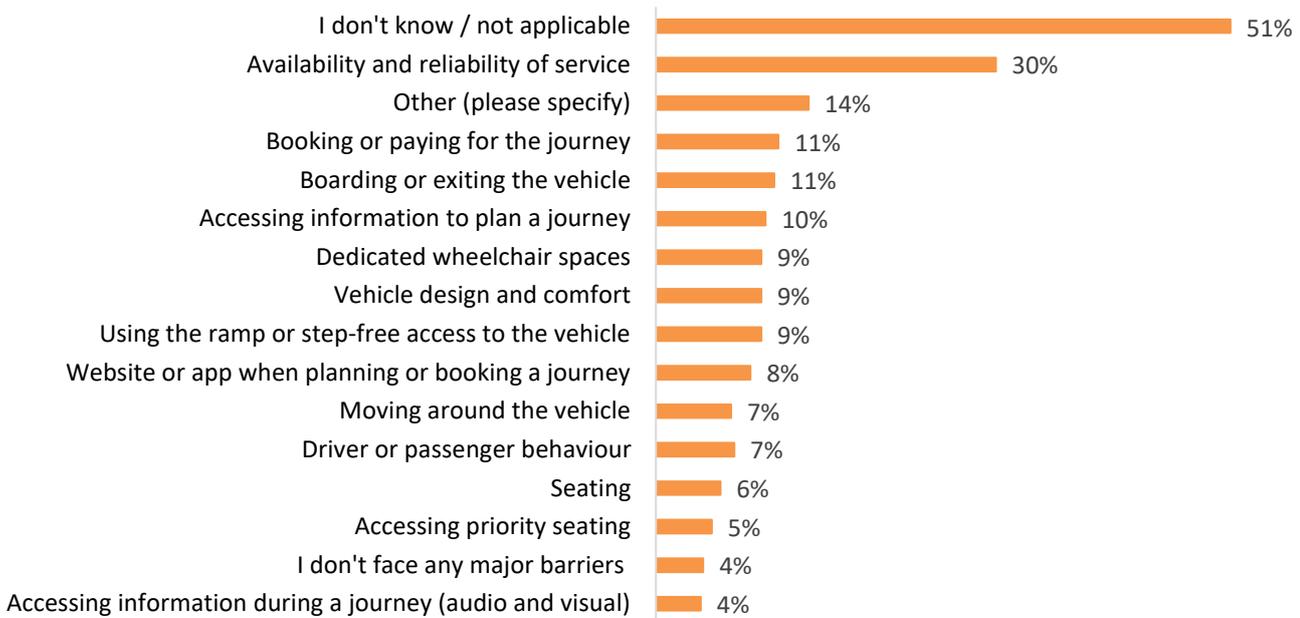
Figure 11: What barriers do disabled people face when using community transport services? (n=521)[15]

The most reported barrier, and many of the insights shared, focused on the **availability of the service**, citing cuts in funding and provision. Participants and respondents said that community transport systems like dial-a-ride now covered smaller geographic areas, had shorter operating hours and reduced services which were often delayed. One participant described how they had relied on dial-a-ride when they were a manual wheelchair user, referring to the service as a "lifesaver". However, they explained that the service had been gradually reduced over the years, having once operated seven days a week until 10pm it now only ran on weekdays from 10a.m. to 4p.m. They stressed how these hours were inadequate for anyone needing to commute for work. Other participants shared similar experiences, noting that the reduction in service hours had made the service unusable and unreliable.

This reduction in service meant that community transport was regularly fully booked, preventing respondents from being able to undertake unplanned journeys. This inability to be flexible could not only lead to disabled people having to rely on more carbon intensive modes (e.g. private cars) but reducing travel altogether leading to social isolation. Whilst some respondents were able to use public transport as an alternative for some journeys, due to the inaccessibility of those modes this was not always possible for many.

15 This question was multichoice, whereby one respondent could select multiple answers. The percentages represent the proportion of respondents selecting each option and will not total 100%.

"The service has, in my experience, become so unreliable, I no longer use it. I believe the lack of reliability is due to inadequate funding." **Respondent with hearing, visual, mobility, dexterity, cognitive, mental health, speech, stamina related conditions, speech and bladder or bowel impairments**

"My only issues are that these only operate during the week and not at weekends. Hours are limited and end at 3pm. The passenger has to book ahead which leaves no room for spontaneity. Seats can be cramped for people with disabilities." **Respondent with mobility, stamina related conditions, bladder or bowel impairments**

Those who took part in the research also felt the service had become **poorly managed**, with customers not being able to book by phone (11% of respondents reported issues with booking and paying). Where phone bookings were available, respondents noted difficulties with booking at short notice and there being a lack of volunteers to answer the phones. One participant suggested that offering online booking alongside phone booking, would make the service more accessible. Some local authorities and transport providers do allow dial-a-ride bookings via an app, as is the case with Transport for London (TfL) for instance, however it is unclear how well this information is communicated to potential users (Transport for London, n.d.).

Participants and respondents also raised concerns about the **accessibility of the vehicles used as part of these services**. They explained that the vehicles could not accommodate larger wheelchairs, with one participant being unable to use dial-a-ride because the weight of their powerchair exceeded the lift's capacity. In the survey, 9% of respondents reported issues with dedicated wheelchair spaces, feeling as though vehicles did not have enough or adequate wheelchair spaces.

Overall, those who took part expressed frustrations at the lack of investment towards such a critical mode of transport for disabled people, as this had impacts on their ability to travel and access critical locations, like health appointments. They emphasised the importance of investment in these schemes to ensure disabled people had access to an inclusive public transport option. Failure to do so could increase reliance on private vehicles or reduce the ability to undertake journeys altogether.

"In the last four years, I have not been able to access community transport services, despite trying on several occasions. I was told they would not take me to GP appointments, shopping trips, or other essential appointments like the hairdresser. I was

also told I would need to book at least two weeks in advance, which is simply not practical for medical appointments. On the three occasions either I or a family member contacted the service, we were refused help, and I was left confused about what support they actually offer. I also found the way I was spoken to by the organisers to be condescending and judgmental, which made me feel uncomfortable and reluctant to try again. As a result, I have had no access to community transport at all." **Respondent mobility, dexterity, mental health, stamina related conditions, bladder or bowel impairments**

"A community that was set up purely for a specific group to make life better has been let down and left isolated with lack of forward planning infrastructure and investment." **Respondent with mobility, dexterity, diet and stamina related impairments**

Discussion

The experiences of disabled people detailed throughout this research highlights a complex and often conflicting dynamic between sustainable transport polices and accessibility in the UK. While national and local governments have invested in creating a green transport system that encourages people to engage in active travel and use public transport, these efforts have not consistently translated into greater accessibility for disabled people. Instead, disabled people report being excluded from these sustainable initiatives, and in some cases, feel that new barriers have arisen and existing ones have been reinforced.

One of the critical tensions between accessibility and sustainability was the **development and prioritisation of active travel initiatives at the expense of accessibility**. While disabled people recognised the benefits of these active travel policies and investment, many felt that policies had not been designed with accessibility as a consideration worsening the overall accessibility of transport and even pushing disabled people into more carbon intensive modes. Poorly designed cycling infrastructure and the unregulated presence of micromobility vehicles on pavements were seen as serious safety risks for disabled pedestrians who felt increasingly unsafe having to share space with cyclists and micromobility users who often did not follow the rules of the road. Not only did these policy decisions prevent people from being able to use newer forms of micromobility, but it also impacted their ability to engage in active travel more broadly including reducing their ability and confidence to walk or wheel. A policy landscape that prioritises the maintenance and improvement of pavements, and well-designed pedestrian areas, can improve the experiences of disabled people, for whom unsafe and inaccessible pavements are a critical barrier in every-day life.

In fact, **pavements were a key barrier for disabled respondents across all modes of transport**. This reflects the fundamental role of pavements as the start and end point of every journey. Whether disabled people were walking, wheeling, cycling or accessing a bus stop or train station, the condition and design of pavements significantly shaped their travel experiences even becoming a determining factor in whether a journey could be undertaken. Throughout the research, participants and respondents highlighted key issues like uneven or cracked pavement surfaces, overgrown greenery, narrow pathways and a lack of well-designed or well-placed dropped kerbs. They noted the inconsistencies in pavement infrastructure

investment, with the implementation of isolated features without improvements in the surrounding environments (e.g. dropped kerbs without pedestrian crossings; bus stops without pavements).

Those who took part in the research also raised how they are increasingly **forced to share pavement space** not only with micromobility users and parked bikes/scooters but with cars parked on pavements, cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating, pedestrian infrastructure like planters or bollards, and general pavement clutter like bins. These challenges compounded existing pavement maintenance issues. In effect, pavements have become an obstacle course for many disabled people. Failing to reflect these varying access needs in the design of pavements and allocation of space will continue to prevent disabled people from not only being able to walk and wheel, but more broadly to access other sustainable transport modes. As a result of which they are likely to have to increase their reliance on more carbon intensive modes or reduce the numbers of journeys undertaken altogether whereby preventing disabled people from being able to carry out the journeys they need and want to do. National and local initiatives must therefore reflect the diverse needs of disabled people when developing new infrastructure or policies and when improving existing ones.

The research also illustrated the **importance of service reliability across transport systems**. Those who took part in the research described how reductions in bus routes and community transport services had severely impacted their confidence and ability to use these forms of transport. In addition, the **accessibility of public transport vehicles** was a priority for disabled people. This was particularly highlighted within the context of priority seating and dedicated wheelchair areas, where disabled and non-disabled passengers were often put in tension with each other due to limited space and poor vehicle design. A consequence of these transport barriers is that many disabled people have to rely on private cars, as it remains the only reliable way to undertake journeys and maintain their independence. Until other modes of transport can provide the same level of safety and accessibility as the car, many disabled people won't be able to use them.

It is important to note that across findings, **neurodivergent respondents, those with dexterity impairment, stamina-related conditions, mental health conditions or bladder or bowel conditions** were consistently more likely to report access barriers compared to respondents without these impairments. This pattern

highlights a persistent lack of consideration for those living with these impairments and their accessibility needs within current transport design and policy. While accessibility measures for some impairments, such as mobility and some visual impairments, are more widely acknowledged and better understood in transport planning, the needs of people with non-visible impairments remain overlooked. This design and policy gap continues to disadvantage these groups, impacting their confidence, comfort and ability to use sustainable transport. Addressing these inequalities requires a more nuanced and in-depth understanding and recognition of the diversity of disabled people's experiences when using sustainable transport.

Staff presence and assistance was another critical component for an accessible transport system, indicating how investment in sustainable transport cannot focus solely on physical design, but must also address staff training and broader societal norms to enable widespread use by disabled people. More generally, staff such as on-board supervisors, guards and bus drivers were seen as playing an important role in ensuring that those requiring priority spaces could access them (e.g. ensuring that the wheelchair area is clear when a wheelchair user is on board). Whilst the research shows that there have been improvements in staff training across some modes, this should act as evidence of the positive impact of such interventions to drive the wider implementation of training programmes and to reinforce the importance of in-person assistance.

In fact, **there were numerous areas where disabled people had noticed improvements**. Participants and respondents mentioned larger wheelchair spaces in some public transport, improvements in level boarding and entrances at stations, tactile paving and more readily available audio and visual journey information. Reflecting that when accessibility needs are met, they enable greater confidence and therefore use of sustainable transport. During the focus group, one participant discussed the many improvements in Nottingham's local transport system, particularly noting how well integrated the system was. Similarly, another participant from Portsmouth highlighted the effective integrations between ferry, bus and rail services in their area.

When reflecting on future changes all those who took part in the research emphasised the **importance of transport integration.** Participants responded positively to the idea of centralised transport hubs that linked all transport modes together, as well as centralised transport operators, like TfL, to oversee all modes.

The integration of transport was deemed as critical to enable the uptake of sustainable transport, as without it disabled people did not feel confident enough that they would be able to undertake un-disrupted multi-modal journeys. For instance, if there is no accessible cycle parking at a station, a person using an adapted cycle will not be able to reach the station by cycling. Or if the only step free route from a rail station to a bus stop is through a ten-minute diversion, a wheelchair user or someone who's mobility is impaired is less likely to use the bus to complete their journey, especially if there is no guarantee of a space on the bus. Transport integration was also seen as a way to provide passengers with clearer communication channels between service providers. Currently it could be hard for disabled people to identify who to contact when issues arose, as responsibilities, contact details and methods of communications varied between operators, local stations and transport modes. Clearer, consistent and centralised lines of communication to access information and assistance were considered a critical part of transport integration and to enable disabled people to increase their uptake of sustainable transport modes.

Those who took part in the research also stressed the importance of **clear communication and signage** to improve passenger awareness. Suggestions included audio announcements that inform passengers when a bus is busy, indicate where seats are available and remind people not to block access to priority seating and areas. Participants and respondents also wanted signage promoting awareness that not all disabilities are visible, to encourage passengers to be more considerate of those who may require assistance.

Above all, those who took part **stressed the need for meaningful engagement with disabled people**. They highlighted that local and national transport authorities need to engage disabled people not only during the implementation phase but from the very start of planning and designing transport systems with the aim of shaping not validating transport schemes. Embedding accessibility and lived experience at the heart of transport design was seen as essential, not only to address current barriers but to create transport systems that work better for everyone. **Currently 66% of respondents did not feel confident[16] that sustainable transport policies meaningfully considered the needs of disabled people reflecting that current practices are not working.** Therefore, excluding the 16.8 million disabled people and their families from being able contribute to the

16 By not confident we mean respondents who stated that they did not feel very confident or not at all confident that sustainable transport policies meaningfully considered the needs of disabled people

decarbonisation of transport. More broadly this also impacts disabled people's ability to access the benefits associated with sustainable transport and increasingly, due to the unintended consequences of sustainable transport policies that fail to embed accessibility, widely limiting their ability to undertake necessary journeys and access critical services. **A truly just transition must recognise the access barriers that disabled people face within active and public transport systems to ensure that sustainability and accessibility are not presented as competing priorities but instead complimentary principles** to enable a better and greener future.

"I just wanted to say that in theory, there shouldn't be so much of a gap between sustainability and accessibility. And it's just, it seems to be getting further apart with things getting more, decisions made micromanaged instead of the bigger picture [...] It can be brought closer together, but just needs some thought and consultation and a longer vision, not just the next 5 years or 10, but to where you want to be in 20-30 years' time." **Participant with mobility, dexterity, mental health and cognitive impairments.**

Recommendations and next steps

Based on the findings from this research a series of case studies have been developed that help illustrate how eco-ableism materialises in the UK. Using a co-creation approach bringing together disabled people and transport professionals', solutions have been developed that, if implemented, could remove these barriers to sustainable transport. These case studies aim to demonstrate, and provide a template, for an alternative approach to sustainable transport policy development, one where accessibility is a central pillar.

Bringing together the insights gathered through this programme, to enable an inclusive transition to net zero the following recommendations should be implemented:

- Implementing the solutions and interventions outlined in the co-produced case studies 'Addressing Eco-ableism in transport'
- **Disabled people must be meaningfully engaged in the development and design of transport policies, infrastructure, services and vehicles** from the point of design not just at the point of implementation or evaluation
- Accessibility and sustainability must be considered as **two founding principles of transport policies, not competing priorities**
- **The design and maintenance of pavements must be prioritised.** Ensuring pavements are accessible and free of clutter, with dedicated funding for their maintenance so that disabled people can access all forms of sustainable transport
- Accessibility **improvements must be applied consistently across transport services and regions**, including rural areas
- Transport **information must be provided in multiple formats throughout a person's journey**. Mechanisms to **integrate communication channels across different modes and services providers into one single accessible source** should be explored as a priority.
- **Dedicated research and engagement to understand and address the needs of those with non-visible impairments** must be undertaken as a priority
- **Robust and comprehensive disability awareness training** must be provided to all those who work in the transport sector, not just customer facing roles

- **Public information campaigns,** as well as broader interventions aimed at **changing attitudes and improving understanding of the varying access needs of disabled people** should be designed and implemented nationally
- **Transport integration** is necessary to drive modal shift, this includes bringing together different modes into transport hubs and centralised information provision across different modes and service providers
- **Journeys must be mapped end to end** and accessibility embedded throughout, but particular attention must be put on interchanges
- **All local authorities must commit to funding accessible and reliable community transport services** and where required support from national government should be provided
- **A review of existing transport standards and regulations**. This should be done with the aim of consolidating these into one centralised document and ensuring they are comprehensive and reflect the varying access needs of different disabled people. There should also be a review of the process for monitoring adherence to regulation.

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Appendix A – Quantitative sample

RiDC uses its own impairment grouping. Whilst there are similarities with the Impairment Harmonised Standard that is used for national statistics such as the Family Resource Survey (Department for Work and Pensions, 2025), RiDC's impairment groupings are more detailed to reflect the lived experiences and access needs of our pan-impairment consumer panel. Table 1 provides an overview of the impairments or conditions that respondents told us they live with.

Table 1 Impairments or conditions of survey respondents (n=531).

Impairment (n=531)	%[17]
Mobility (for example walking short distances or climbing stairs)	85%
Stamina, breathing, fatigue or chronic pain	52%
Dexterity (for example lifting or holding objects or opening packets)	38%
Bladder or Bowel function	36%
Getting Older	33%
Mental Health (for example, anxiety, panic attacks, depression, bipolar disorder)	32%
Hearing (for example deafness or partial hearing)	25%
Neurodivergent (for example, ADHD, autism, auditory processing disorder or Tourette's Syndrome)	20%
Requiring a certain diet or metabolic issues (such as diabetes)	17%
Vision (that is not corrected with glasses or contact lenses, for example, blindness or partial sight)	16%
Learning Differently (for example, dyslexia, dyspraxia or dyscalculia)	10%
Memory (for example, vascular dementia, Alzheimer's)	8%
Speech (for example, no speech, slurred speech or stuttered speech)	7%
Appearance (for example a scar, mark or condition that changes the appearance of your face or body)	5%
Learning Disability (for instance a reduced intellectual disability and difficulty with everyday tasks)	4%
Other disability	6%

17 This question was multichoice, whereby one respondent could select multiple answers. The percentages represent the proportion of respondents selecting each option and will not total 100%.

Table 2 provides a comparison, where possible, with the family resource survey to provide an indication of the representativeness of the sample. Where RiDC impairment groupings have been combined this has been detailed in the table.

Table 2: Respondent impairments or conditions compared to the UK disabled population (n=531)

Impairment	% of respondents n=531	UK disabled population (%) [18]
Mobility	85%	48%
Stamina, breathing, fatigue RiDC also includes chronic pain within this category and therefore is likely to get a higher proportion here compared to the Impairment Harmonised Standard	52%	36%
Dexterity	38%	25%
Mental health	32%	35%
Memory	8%	17%
Hearing	25%	13%
Learning, understanding, or concentrating This combines the following groupings from RiDC's impairment groupings: learning differently and learning disability	13%	16%
Vision	16%	13%
Social or behaviourally RiDC has renamed this grouping as Neurodivergent	20%	15%

18 Numbers have been determined based on the latest UK Family Resources Survey 2023-2024

Table 3: Assistive aids used whilst travelling (n=531)

Assistive aids used whilst travelling	%[19]
Walking sticks	41%
Powered wheelchair	37%
Manual wheelchair	26%
Smart device (such as phone or smart glasses)	24%
Mobility scooter	19%
Hearing aids	18%
Walking frame/trolley/rollator	13%
Cane	9%
I do not use assistive aids when travelling	7%
Assistance dog	4%
Guide dog	2%
Other	10%

Table 4: Age profile of survey respondents (n=496).

Age (n=496)	%[20]
Under 20	1%
20 – 29	3%
30 – 39	10%
40 – 49	11%
50 – 59	25%
60 – 69	27%
70 – 79	17%
80+	4%

19 This question was multichoice, whereby one respondent could select multiple answers. The percentages represent the proportion of respondents selecting each option and will not total 100%.

20 Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding

Table 5: Gender profile of survey respondents (n=529).

Gender (n=954)	%[21]
Woman	62%
Man	35%
Other, Prefer to self-describe, Non-binary or Prefer not to say	3%

Table 6 Regional profile of survey respondents (n=526).

Region (n=526)	%	UK disabled population %[22,23]
Greater London	16%	10%
South East	12%	13%
North West	12%	13%
South West	11%	8%
East Midlands	9%	8%
Scotland	9%	9%
West Midlands	8%	9%
East of England	7%	8%
Yorkshire and Humberside	7%	9%
Wales	4%	5%
North East	3%	5%
Northern Ireland	1%	3%
Channel Islands	<1%	N/A

21 Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding
22 Numbers have been determined based on the latest UK Family Resources Survey 2023-2024
23 Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Appendix B – Qualitative sample

Table 7: Profile of focus group participants

Impairment or access needs	Assistive aids used	Modes of sustainable transport used	Impact of sustainable transport policies
Mobility impairment and stamina conditions	Mobility scooter, walking stick	None	A very negative impact
Mobility, hearing, vision, dexterity and memory impairments, mental health and stamina conditions	Powered wheelchair; Hearing aids, Smart devices	Walking/wheeling, bus or coach and rail	Somewhat of a negative impact
Vision impairment and learning disability	Smart devices	Walking/wheeling, bus or coach, rail and community transport	Somewhat of a negative impact
Mobility and dexterity impairments and mental health and stamina conditions	Crutches	Walking/wheeling, bus or coach and rail	No impact
Vision impairment	Cane, smart devices and Sunu band obstacle detector	Walking/wheeling, bus or coach, rail and community transport	No impact
Vision impairment	Cane, guide dog and smart devices	Walking/wheeling, bus or coach, rail	Somewhat of a positive impact
Mobility, hearing and dexterity impairment, neurodivergent mental health and stamina conditions	Walking sticks, hearing aids and smart devices	Walking/wheeling, bus or coach and rail	Somewhat of a positive impact

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