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Disabled rail passengers research: prepared for  
Transport Focus and the Department for Transport

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# Executive summary

# Executive summary

Disabled people use and enjoy trains for much the same reasons as non-disabled people; they are quick and *often* an easy form of travel

But on a day to day basis many practical and emotional barriers to travelling by train are experienced

- from start to finish, a passenger’s journey can be fraught with potential problems; not only putting their journey into question, but sometimes posing a threat to their health
- the consequences of failed or disrupted journeys can be physically and emotionally damaging, putting disabled people off train travel for a long time

As well as practical issues, the extent to which a passenger experiences barriers to travel often depends on their own and others’ perceptions of their disability

- there is a perceived ‘hierarchy of deservedness’, whereby people with certain disabilities are seen as (and sometimes see themselves as) being less ‘deserving’ of help than others

Assistance services are often very effective when used. However, standards of assistance can vary quite markedly. In addition, many who could use assistance are not aware of what is available

**The research highlights three key action points:**

Clearly there are many practical barriers to travel, such as the design and layout of stations and rolling stock, which need to be addressed

Perceptual barriers, such as differing definitions and lack of awareness of disability, are engrained not only within the rail industry and other passengers, but also amongst disabled passengers themselves

The barrier of ‘deservedness’ conceals the inequalities in travel experienced by disabled passengers







# Background and method

# Background

**A four stage research programme has been carried out by Illuminas on behalf of Transport Focus and the Department for Transport.**

The research concerns understanding disabled passengers' end-to-end experiences of rail travel. The study identifies the challenges that disabled passengers face in making rail journeys and the barriers that may inhibit them from making as many journeys as they would like or prevent them from making rail journeys at all

The four stage research programme includes:

- literature review
- expert interviews
- quantitative online survey
- qualitative interviews

**Using these methodologies in a chronological order allows one method to inform the other, constructing a knowledge base that holds high levels of reliability, validity and robustness**



# Overview of research approach







# The social model of disability

# The research was informed by the social model of disability rather than the medical model of disability

The charity Scope has outlined the social model of disability:

*Disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. [The social model of disability] looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people. When barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.*

*The social model of disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organised. The medical model of disability says people are disabled by their impairments or differences.*

*Under the medical model, these impairments or differences should be 'fixed' or changed by medical and other treatments, even when the impairment or difference does not cause pain or illness.*

*The medical model looks at what is 'wrong' with the person, not what the person needs. It creates low expectations and leads to people losing independence, choice and control in their own lives*

**Using the social model of disability allows the research to focus on systemic and structural barriers that disabled people face when using or considering using the rail network, rather than focusing on how medical impairments can be 'fixed' or 'cured' in order to enable disabled people to use the rail network**

For example, someone with a severe mobility impairment cannot board a train. The social model of disability would suggest that the problem is the gap between the platform and the train or the lack of assistance that person has to board the train. On the contrary, the medical model of disability would suggest that the problem is the disabled person and their impairment





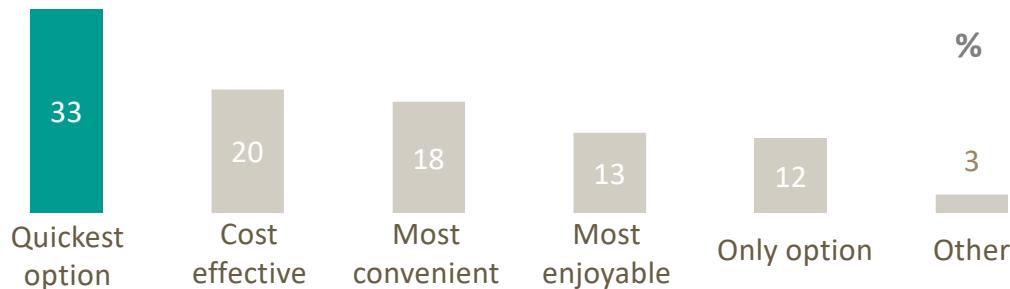
The five key  
points to take  
away from the  
research

# Rail is perceived as a great way to get around... but not always for disabled people

## Most passengers believe that...

- access to rail for disabled people has improved over time
- improvements are being made and overall the industry is progressing
- and for many, rail is the preferred mode of travel (if challenges and barriers are not overbearing)

## Disabled passengers use train for much the same reasons as other passengers: it is quick, convenient and enjoyable



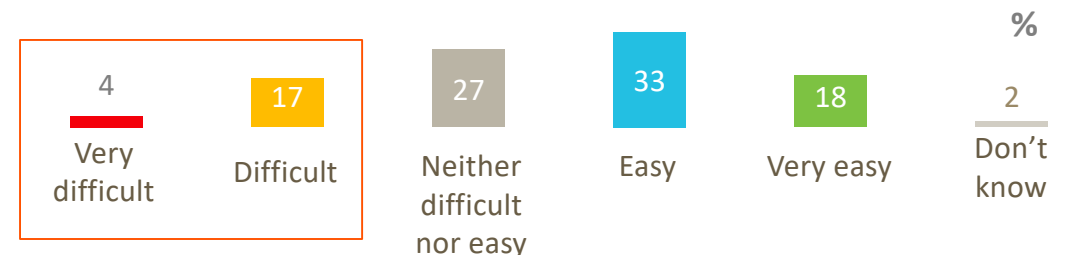
## However, many passengers have experienced significant challenges as a result of making rail journeys

## The outcome of facing barriers and challenges to the rail network are some negative beliefs, such as...

- 'the industry does not have the resources to support disabled people'
- 'disabled people are not provided for because they are viewed as not profitable'
- 'there is a lack of understanding amongst engineers and management due to rolling stock designs that are at odds with disabled passengers' needs'

I recently lost the feeling in the right side of my body because of my fall, and I was a healthcare professional so I thought I knew the difficulties people faced... but my word I didn't think it was this bad. I've been in tears.  
Mobility, 57

## 21% of disabled passengers find train travel difficult



# The perceptions of disability that passengers have of themselves and others informs a hierarchy of 'deservedness'

Of interest is how passengers define the disability universe, as a whole, and their place within it

**45% of passengers surveyed do not define themselves as disabled**

- for passengers, the definition of disability is a narrow one
- those perceived as *disabled* and in need of assistance are those in a wheelchair, missing a limb, need crutches to walk, or are blind
- those with visible conditions tend to be viewed, by those with a less visible condition, as heroic, *severely disabled* and more deserving of assistance and of the rail network's resources

People who need help are those with blind dogs and in wheelchairs. I struggle, but it must be hard for them. I can do things for myself although nowadays I always travel with my wife  
Physical, 62

Proportion self-defining as disabled

Mobility	77%
Dexterity	74%
Memory	70%
Learning	69%
Hearing	67%
Stamina	64%
Vision	63%
Social	62%
Mental Health	54%

The consequence of feeling baseless in their disability/condition is that many passengers do not then feel justified to appeal or even feel aggrieved by barriers and challenges faced to rail travel

Almost half of all disabled passengers **agree** with the statement:

*I accept difficulties with travel is part of having an impairment*



**Grievances are voiced by organisations instead of passengers themselves; experts at charities related to disabilities champion the needs of their members**

- they argue that a base of knowledge about all disabilities would provide the rail industry and the public with resources to remove barriers to use, as well as **empower those that have conditions to feel vindicated, right, reasonable and justified**



# Passengers with hidden disabilities often do not feel justified in exercising their rights when travelling, however upon reflection, stoicism dissipates and grievances emerge

## Passengers that have hidden disabilities experience many problems

- not offered priority seating
- questioned about legitimacy of freedom passes/DPRCs
- staff skeptical and unwilling to assist
- other passengers skeptical and unwilling to be helpful

Passengers feel that the help they require is not perceived as justified by other staff and passengers

### This can make passengers feel:

- isolated, discriminated against, anxious, guilty, angry

**Passengers with hidden disabilities argue that this is because staff and passengers can be unaware, uneducated and sometimes ignorant of their disabilities and/or impairments**

At the moment I have to take photos of each of the information boards and enlarge it on my phone so I can get the platform number  
Sensory, 33

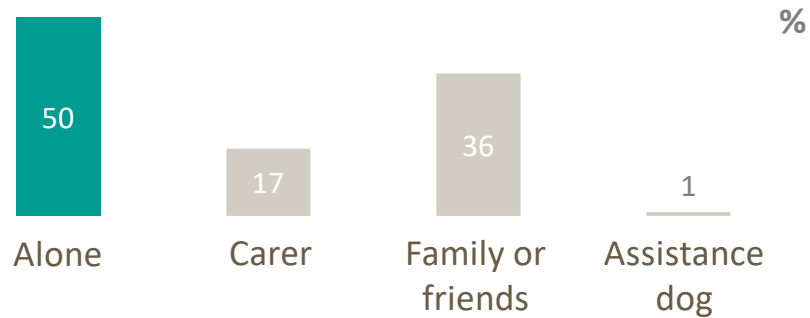
## Case study

*A woman, 33, has a visual impairment. She neither wears glasses or has a guide dog. She travels to work by train and holds a freedom pass, but is frequently stopped by members of staff to check if it is valid. In order to find out which platform her train is on, she photographs every information board and enlarges the image on her phone until she finds her train. Passengers occasionally help her, but she cannot rely on others for every journey. She feels that trains are a difficult but necessary way to travel*

It would be useful if train companies could send platform information and other announcements to my phone so I can read it off my own screen in a size I can read  
Sensory, 33

# Those that travel alone have different experiences to those travelling in a group or with a partner

**50%** of disabled passengers travel alone



Most passengers ideally prefer to travel with other people for practical and emotional support

- family/friends/carers can provide the support and assistance that passengers would otherwise require from staff

Some passengers *always* travel with someone

- and they would not consider independent travel

**Some passengers are confident travellers when with family, friends or carers, but this can change with the prospect of travelling alone**

## Case study

*A man in his 50s has a hearing impairment. He is unable to hear announcements on the train and relies on travel companions to know when to get off the train. His wife travels with him on social occasions 'in to town'. Initially he does not report any barriers to travel because 'he just gets off when his wife does'. However when he thinks about the prospect of travelling alone, the emotions and nature of the journey change completely. He becomes anxious and questions his ability to make that journey without his wife.*

Thinking about it... I've mentioned my wife an awful lot. So I must rely on my wife a lot more than I think helping me out with not hearing things.  
Sensory, 55



# Passengers experience a range of emotions across the end to end journey

## Passengers emphasise the importance of managing emotions when travelling in order to complete their journey

- those suffering with anxiety/panic attacks have coping mechanisms that they use where possible
- those with respiratory conditions have to monitor stress levels in order to keep breathing regular
- when under stress, those with mobility impairments/disabilities expend much needed energy

## Problems along the journey can lead to traumatic experiences, leading to emotions that alter perceptions of travel in the long term; **frightened, scared** and **embarrassed**

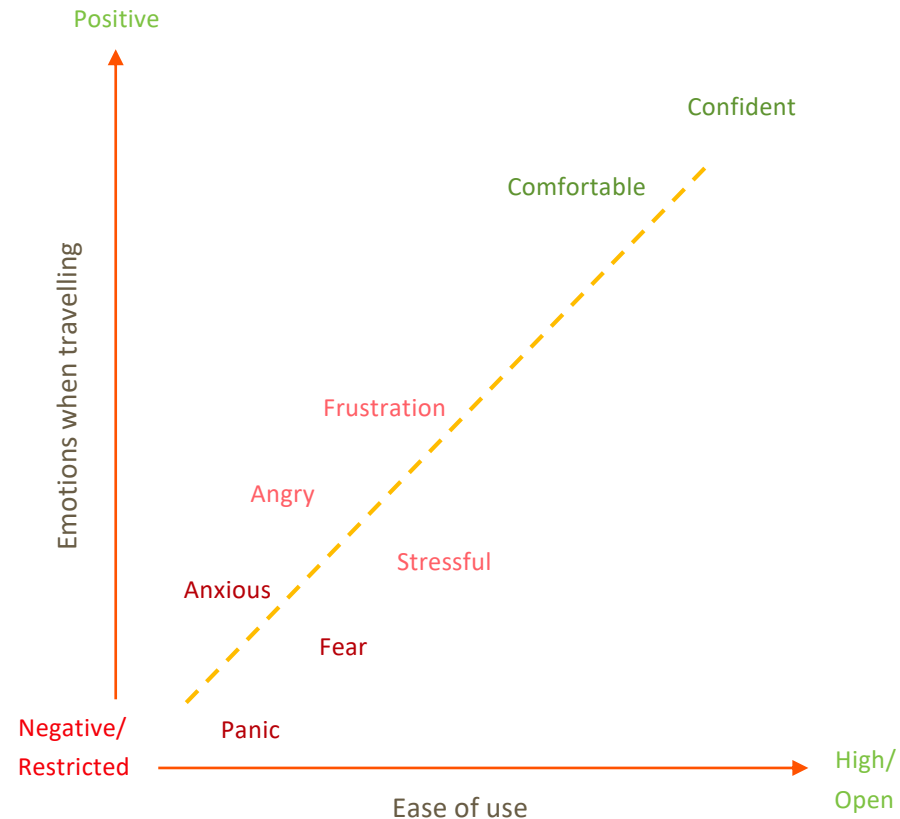
## Discrimination and anti-social behaviour can prompt the strongest negative emotions

*I have experienced discrimination or anti-social behaviour from other passengers*



■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree

## The more restricted a passenger's use of the rail network, the more likely they are to experience negative emotions



Q9. To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements about travelling by train...  
Base: all respondents (n=1061)

*It is important to note that emotions vary along a passenger's end to end journey, but that the model is still relevant at different stages of the journey*

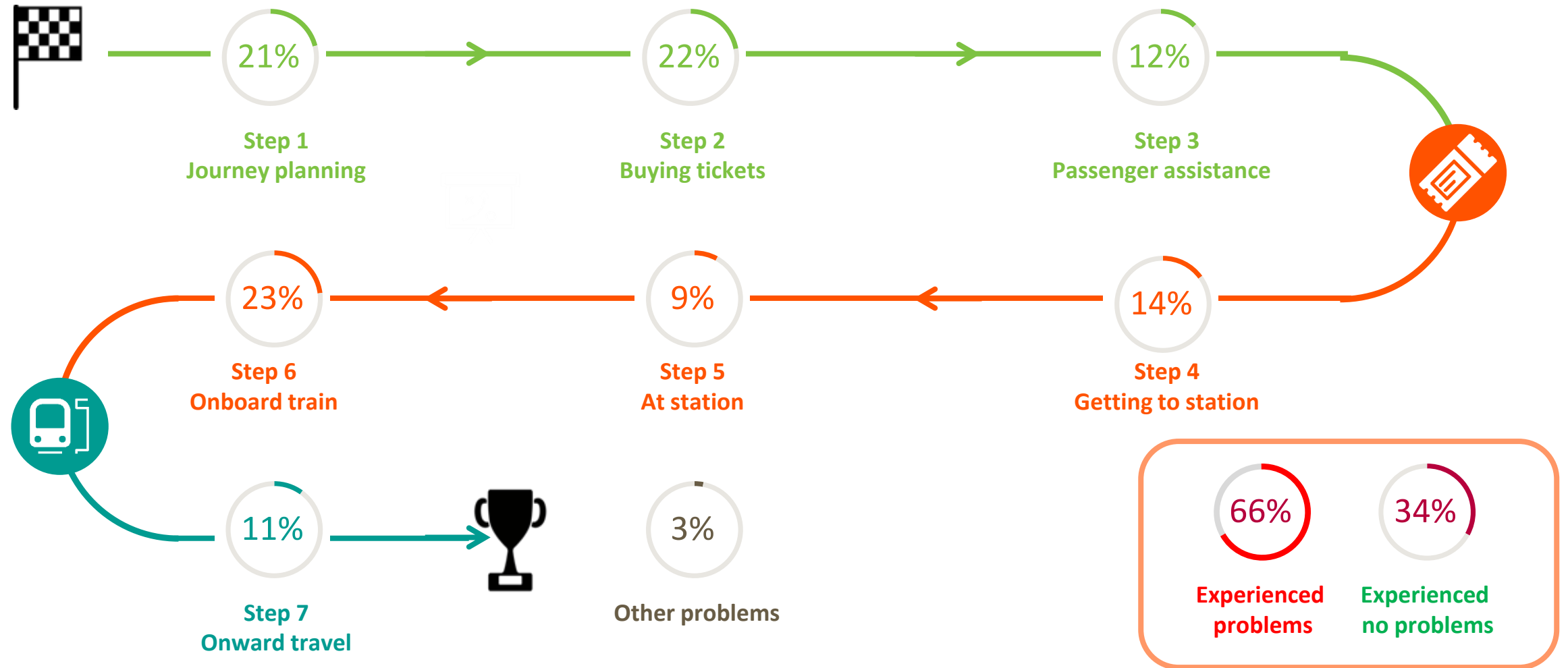
We had arranged assistance but they didn't come. We worried that the train might move with us on it. My wife had to help me off. It was hard but we managed it. As I sat on the suitcase they started turning the lights out. It was completely deserted. Luckily, a guy spotted us and got a wheelchair and took us to the taxi rank. Laugh about it now, and these things do happen, but my wife was very upset  
Physical, 68





# Barriers to travel on the End to End Journey

One third of disabled passengers do not experience problems at any journey stage, but two thirds of passengers do

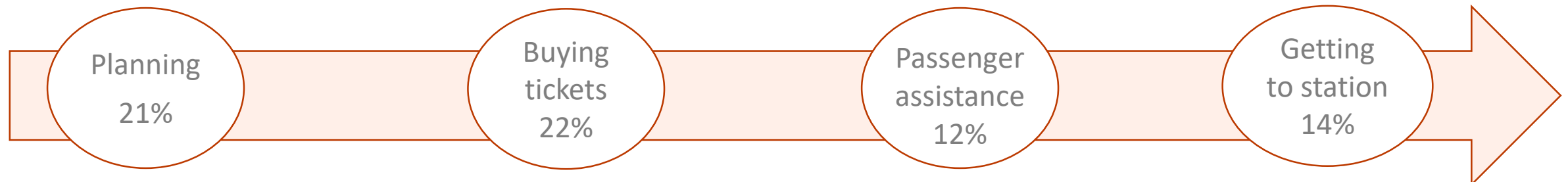


\*The Literature Review and the Expert Interviews informed the end to end journey and its incorporated stages tested in the quantitative research phase

Q3 - We are interested in problems you may or may not experience when travelling by rail. When travelling by train in the last 12 months, have you experienced problems at any of the following journey stages?

Base : all with disabilities (877)

# The extent to which a particular journey stage is a problem varies by disability type...



Vision	42%	↑
Learning	34%	↑
Memory	34%	↑
Social	31%	
Hearing	30%	↑
Dexterity	25%	
Mental health	23%	
Stamina	15%	
Mobility	14%	↓

Learning	40%	↑
Vision	39%	↑
Hearing	33%	↑
Memory	32%	
Social	27%	
Mental health	24%	
Dexterity	23%	
Mobility	20%	
Stamina	18%	

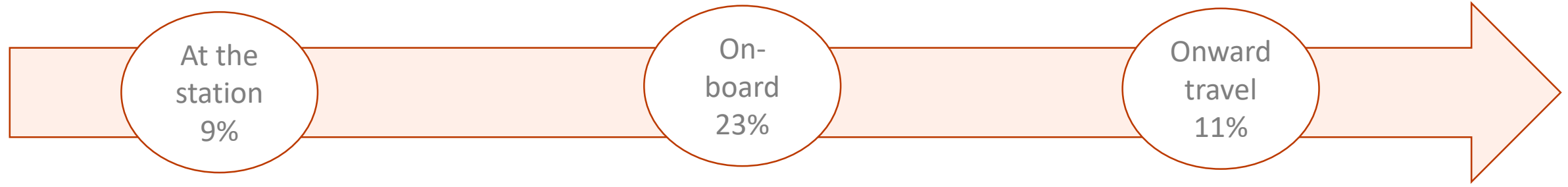
Learning	24%	↑
Dexterity	23%	↑
Vision	23%	↑
Social	22%	
Memory	21%	↑
Stamina	19%	↑
Mobility	17%	↑
Mental health	13%	
Hearing	13%	

Learning	27%	↑
Memory	26%	↑
Dexterity	20%	
Stamina	19%	
Mobility	19%	
Social	19%	
Vision	19%	
Hearing	16%	
Mental health	15%	

Q3 - We are interested in problems you may or may not experience when travelling by rail. When travelling by train in the last 12 months, have you experienced problems at any of the following journey stages?  
Base : all with disabilities (877)



# The extent to which a particular journey stage is a problem varies by disability type...



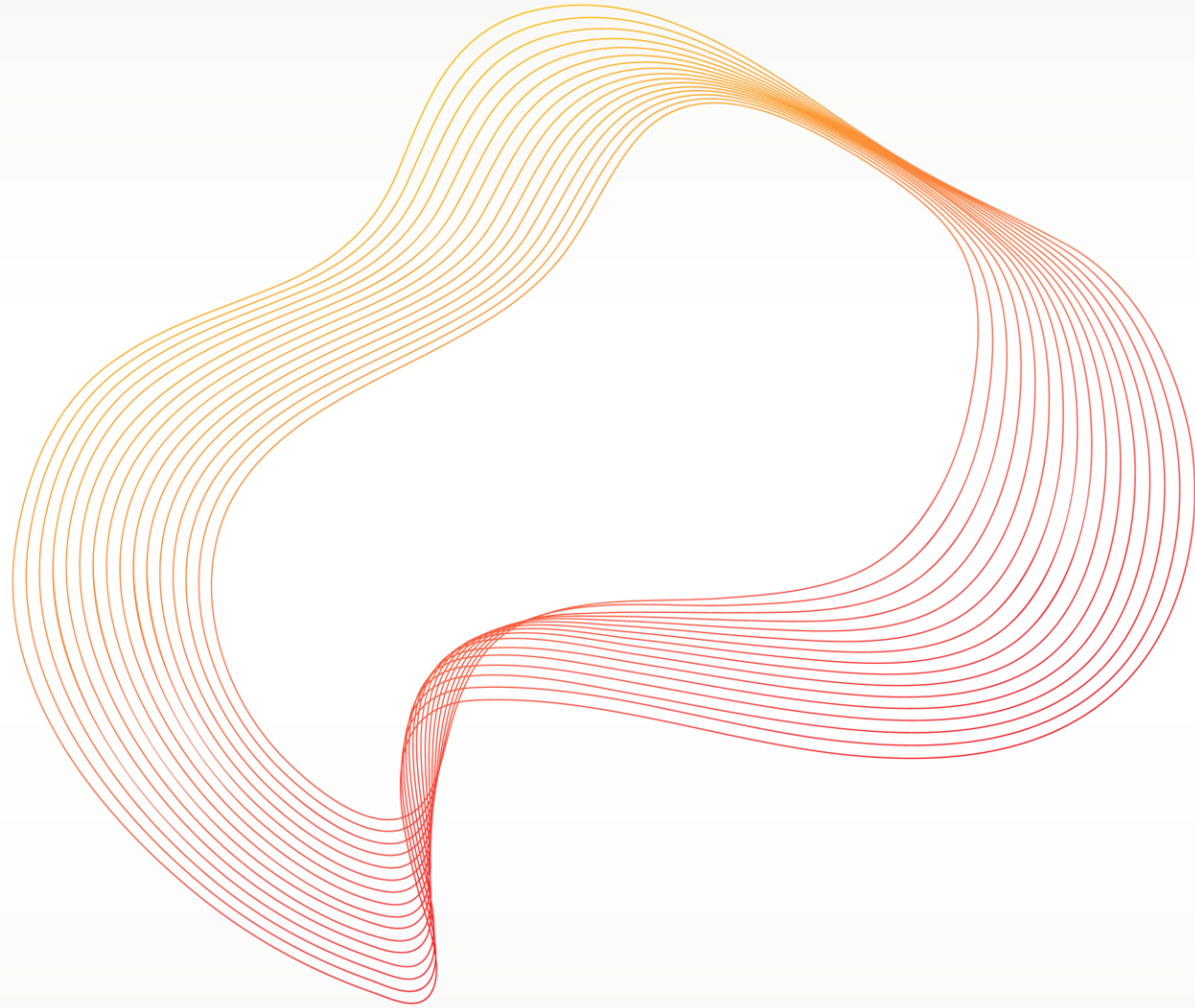
Social	16%
Vision	15%
Stamina	13%
Hearing	12%
Mobility	11%
Dexterity	11%
Learning	10%
Memory	10%
Mental health	8%

Vision	40%
Memory	31%
Dexterity	29%
Learning	28%
Stamina	28%
Mobility	25%
Social	23%
Mental health	23%
Hearing	21%



Social	19%
Vision	15%
Mobility	15%
Stamina	15%
Dexterity	14%
Learning	14%
Hearing	14%
Memory	13%
Mental health	10%

Q3 - We are interested in problems you may or may not experience when travelling by rail. When travelling by train in the last 12 months, have you experienced problems at any of the following journey stages?  
Base : all with disabilities (877)



# Journey planning

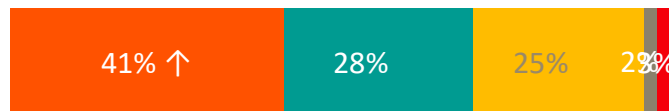
# A lack of confidence is the barrier most commonly and frequently experienced when journey planning

**12%** Of all respondents surveyed had a lack of confidence when journey planning

Base: all respondents (877)



Of those experiencing a lack of confidence when journey planning, **94%** experience it at least half the time



Legend:   
■ Everytime (orange)   
■ More than half (teal)   
■ Half (yellow)   
■ Less than half (grey)   
■ Rarely/once (red)

Base: all respondents (103)

Journeys are planned, often meticulously, to ensure that the passenger has enough energy, resources, time and medication to complete them successfully

If trips are not planned, passengers must make journeys without the following:

- guaranteed accessible stations
- assistance
- pre-booked ticket
- reserved seating
- organised transport to and from the station

Passengers recognise the ramifications of not planning their journey

- encounter an inaccessible station (have to plan to avoid these stations)
- there is no priority seating on-board if passengers have not reserved
- passengers put at medical risk by not having a seat or assistance
- Can get stranded at certain junctures along the journey

For many passengers, if the journey is unplanned or goes awry, they are put in medical danger

- certain trip times need to be planned to coincide with the taking of medication
- if too much energy is drained, some passengers will need medical assistance

## Case study

*A woman, 70, has Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. She travels for 5 hours to visit her grandchildren once a month. She always books in advance to ensure she has a seat. She is unaware that an assistance service exists but she cannot carry her luggage through the station and on to the train. She must be on the train at 10.30am to take her prescribed inhaler. If there are untoward circumstances, she may miss her inhaler schedule and suffer severe respiratory problems*



# Passengers employ a number of strategies to plan journeys in order to mitigate any potential pitfalls

Our Literature Review found that, according to Transport Focus' report *Experiences of Disabled Passengers (2012)*, those with disabilities travelled less at peak times

Reasons for this were found when conducting interviews:

- those with anxiety attacks related to packed carriages/stations/platforms
- some passengers with mobility impairments feel travelling at peak times is too risky
- those requiring a seat due to fatigue or heart conditions must have access to a seat

I would only ever travel at off-peak - too busy, people pressed up against you and I have a phobia of germs so the less people the better

Cognitive, 40

## Booking ahead

- some passengers recognise that reserving seats (or in some cases booking assistance) is one way of guaranteeing a safe journey

Some lack the information to plan, and this ranks amongst the biggest impact on passengers' journeys

Top three problems encountered when journey planning	Average impact ranked (1 to 3)*
Lack of confidence	1.4
Not aware of accessible stations	1.4
Cannot find information	1.5

\*1-Biggest Impact

2-Second biggest impact

3-Third biggest impact

## Ensure ample time is available for any eventualities

- broken down lifts/unavailable staff
- toilet/refreshment trips
- changing at stations can be deemed a 'showstopper'

## Technology can help facilitate successful journeys

- apps used include:



- these apps give passengers a live feed of information at their fingertips, which allows passengers to keep on top of their journey
- used for platform information for visually impaired (who cannot see the screens)

**Although some passengers feel that these contingencies are part of 'being disabled/impaired', many are frustrated to be forced to take extra precautions**

## Journey planning: summary

Many disabled passengers report a **lack of confidence** as regards journey planning.

This reflects the range of **potentially significant challenges that can face disabled travellers in unplanned journeys** (e.g. problems with station accessibility, availability of assistance, availability of seating etc.).

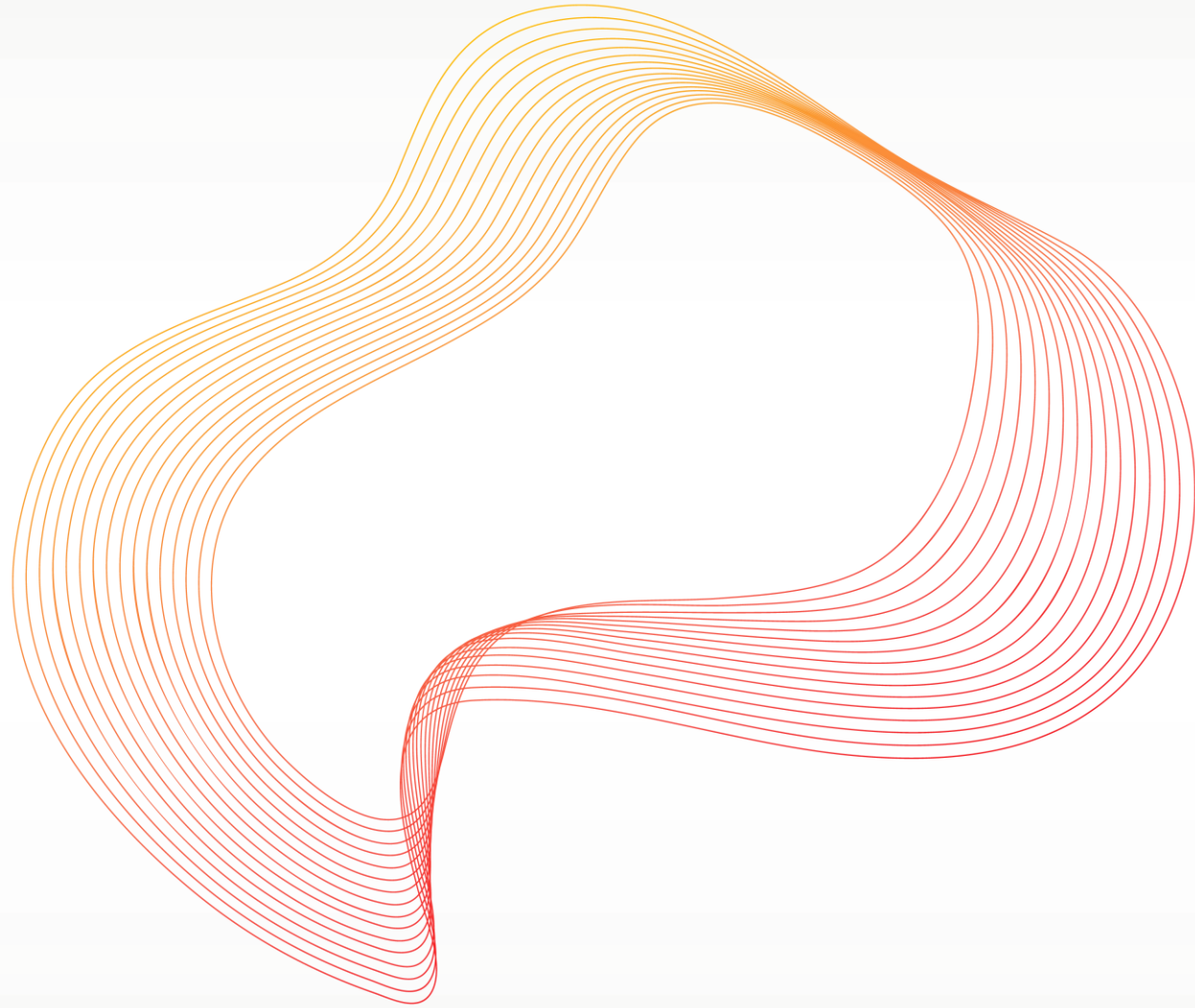
To mitigate these challenges, **disabled passengers typically devote considerable time and effort to planning their journeys** (more so than passengers without an impairment) and **employ a range of strategies to help ensure a seamless journey**. These include travelling outside peak hours, booking ahead, ensuring ample time is available for any eventualities (changing trains, getting to and from the station etc) and use of apps for 'real time' and detailed information.

"I would always travel when it is not busy, so not during rush hour. I could never get on the train with all those people. I can't bear the thought of all those bodies and germs".  
Anxiety, 34 y/o

"As a carer I think it would cause us quite a lot of anxiety planning a long journey on a train just because you would have to do a lot of planning. You would have to find out if the train station is accessible. If they are a wheelchair user, can they get onto the platform? If the [station] you are travelling to, are you going to be able to get off there? Is there going to be someone to let you off the train because that is an issue sometimes, you can't even find someone to get the ramp up for you".  
Expert

"I book a seat and assistance by the website but also ring to check they know about it. I have the National Rail app to check on train arrival etc. I have a taxi booked to get me to the station, like military manoeuvres"  
Mobility cognitive, 53 y/o

"I have it down to a fine art, the planning. I even go online and look at images of stations if I have never been there before so I can figure out obstacles, look at the length of the platform. It helps with my anxiety".  
Cognitive, 26 y/o



# Passenger Assistance

# Many disabled passengers are not aware of assistance services

The qualitative phase of research found that many passengers are unaware an assistance service exists

- none aware of turn up and go services; think booking in advance is only option

This is supported by previous literature

- a survey by the ORR in 2014 found that 70% of disabled rail passengers were unaware of any specific scheme to help disabled people on their train journey

Among those that had problems with assistance services...

**61%** could not find turn up and go services without booking in advance

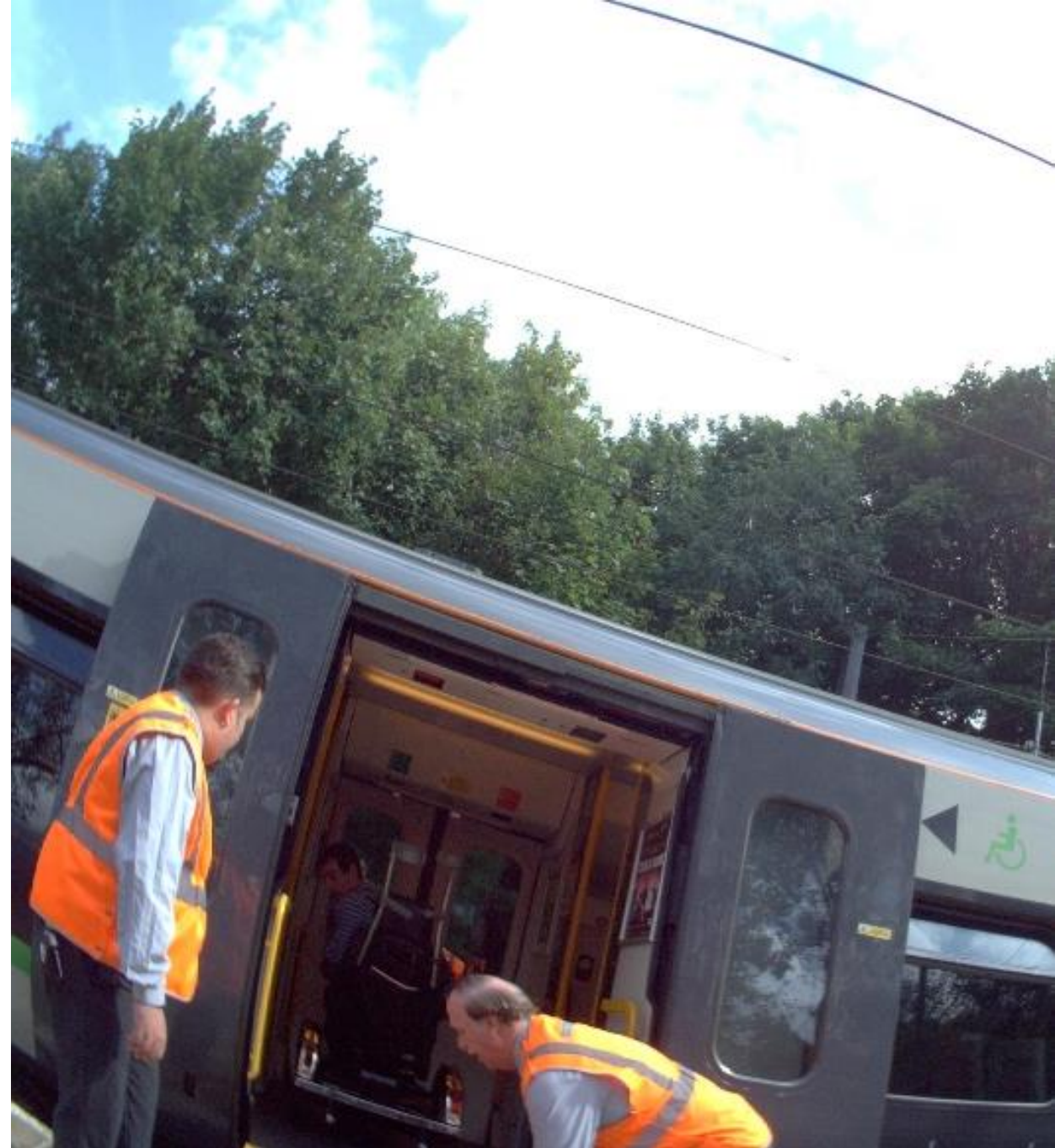
Base: all respondents (109)

**60%** said assistance services were not available to them or they didn't know they were

Base: all respondents (109)

Not being able to turn up and go is just a blatant inequality in rights to travel  
*Expert*

Some experts suggested that some passengers/potential passengers may be unaware of certain train services at all, not just assistance services





# Those that are aware of assistance services find that when it works well, it greatly increases confidence to travel, but when it doesn't work it can be emotionally damaging

When assistance services are explained to passengers, they often find it appealing and want to use it

**53%** Of those that use assistance services every time they travel, travel for business

Base: all respondents (178)

Failures of the assistance service can be traumatic and deter passengers from using the service for a long time

Examples include:

- being left on the train at a terminus
- not being met at a station where they need to alight
- not being met at the station of departure
- experiencing rude and discriminatory staff

Passengers require assurances and 'guarantees' that the service will work across the whole of their journey

## Case study

*A woman travels up to Nottingham from London for business and requires assistance services to get on and off the train. She is in a wheelchair but can walk short distances, for example to use the toilet in the train. A staff member refused to help her off the train, claiming that he had seen her walk and therefore did not need assistance.*

Oh it's terrible the anxiety it causes when I get off at Kings Cross and no one is there to help me. The customer service is awful. I ask how I can get down to the tube using a lift and they just say 'no you can't do that'. Instead of saying no, please just find me someone who can help me.  
Stamina/fatigue, 60

## Perceived lack of staff training

- staff can adopt the wrong tone when speaking to passengers;
- staff can fail to deliver assistance appropriately

There are also positive experiences of assistance where staff have 'gone the extra mile' and been particularly helpful to passengers

# If passengers are aware of the Assistance service, propensity to use depends on two criteria

## 1. How qualified they feel to use it

The way that passengers view their own disability in the context of the disability universe

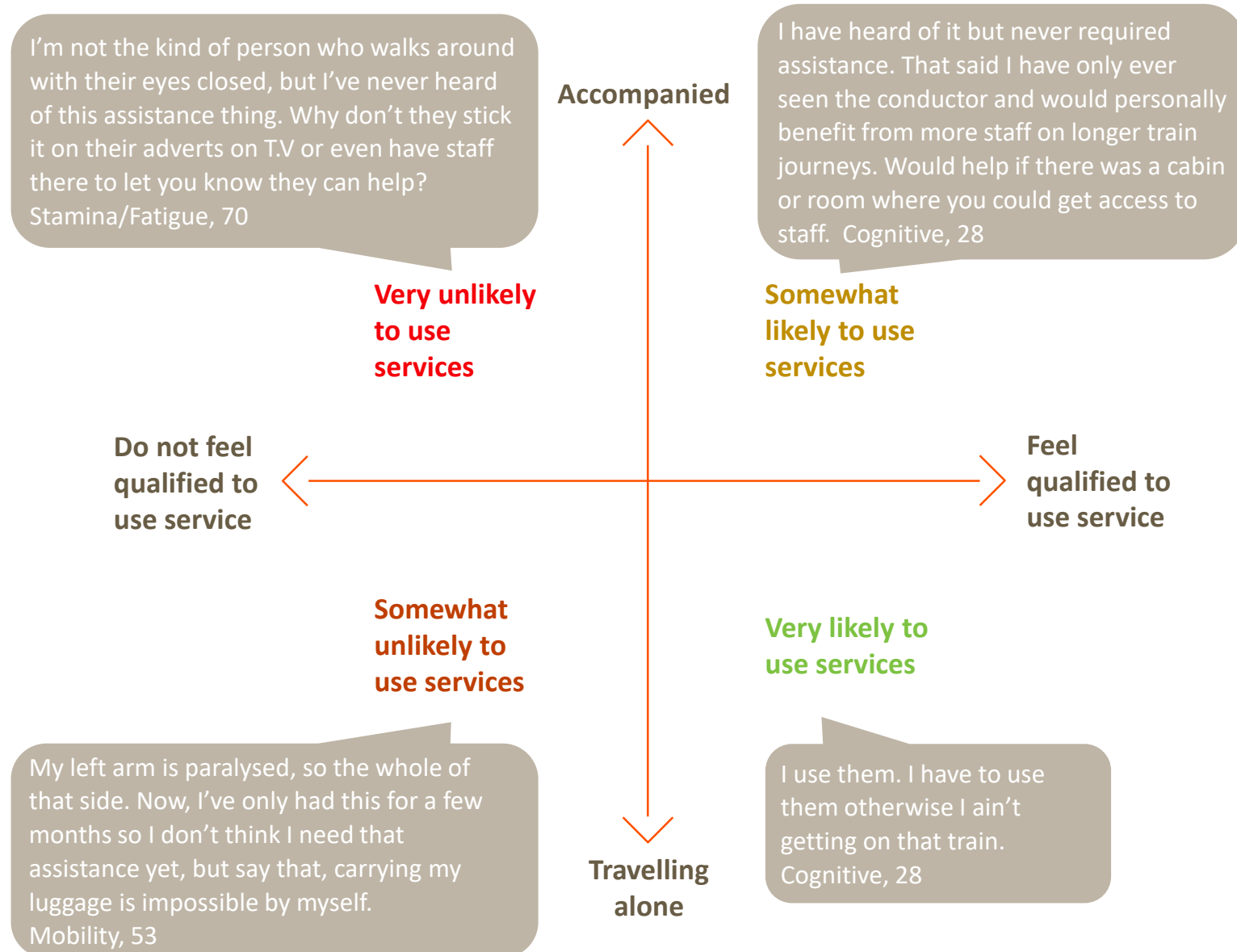
- those with hidden disabilities are reluctant to use assistance because they feel unjustified
- those with ‘visible’ disabilities that would be perceived by other passengers and staff as ‘legitimate’ are more likely to use assistance services

Many passengers assume that there are not enough staff to help individual passengers and they themselves feel guilty if they were to use that resource

## 2. Whether they are travelling alone or with company

If passengers are travelling with company, there is practical and emotional support along the journey

- this is particularly the case if said passenger is with friends, family or carer
- company that know the needs of that passenger are a valuable source of help and can suffice to act as the assistance service for a journey

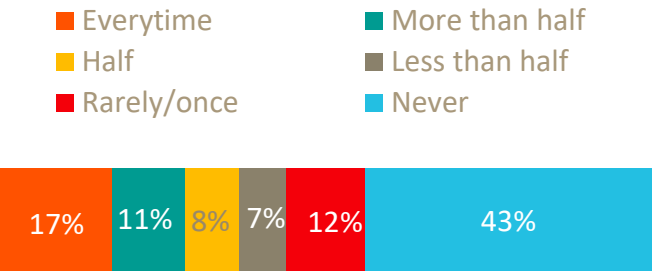


# This trend also plays out quantitatively in other indicators

**43%** Of those that do not define as disabled never use assistance services

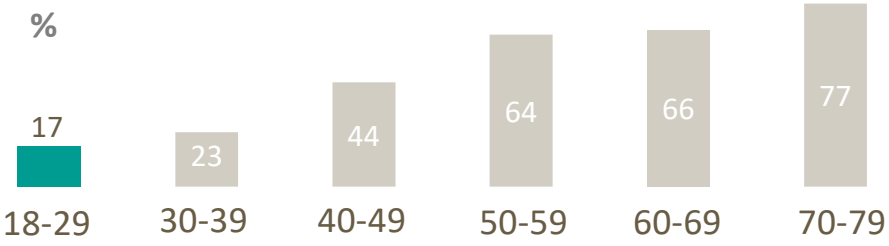
Base: all respondents (336)

**Accompanied** 43% of those travelling with family or friends never use assistance services



Do not feel qualified to use service

**Older people are far less likely to use assistance services**



% of respondents in age bracket that never use assistance services

Feel qualified to use service

**48%** Of those that travel alone and self define as disabled use assistance service half the time or more

Base: all respondents (104)

**Travelling alone**

# Passenger Assistance: summary

Assistance Services can make a very positive impact on disabled passengers' journey experience and individuals' confidence about travelling by train.

There are many reports of Assistance staff (and indeed, staff more generally) being supportive, helpful and 'going the extra mile.' That said, there are (thankfully rare) examples of Passenger Assistance failing, leaving disabled passengers in difficult and sometimes distressing circumstances (e.g. being left on the train at a terminus, not being met at a station when booked).

There are also instances of staff behaving insensitively e.g. adopting an inappropriate tone of voice or not knowing how to deliver assistance effectively. These were seen as primarily a result of lack of training. There were, however, also one or two reports of rude and discriminatory staff.

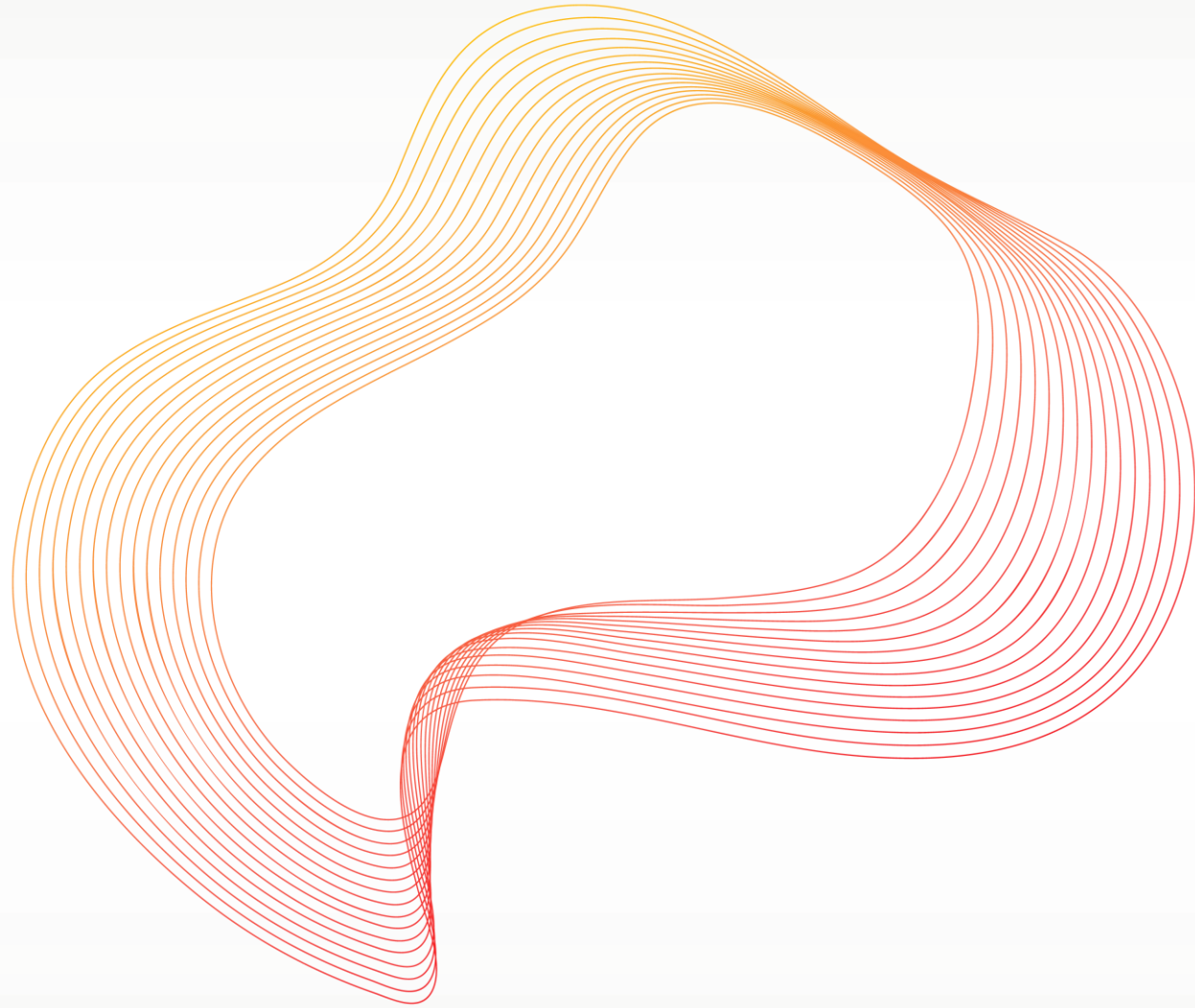
Moreover, while Assistance Services work well for the most part, many disabled passengers are not aware of the existence of these services. In addition, it is clear that many disabled passengers do not feel entitled to use Assistance Services. In particular, those with hidden disabilities are reluctant to use assistance because they feel unjustified in doing so. Other individuals feel guilty about using Assistance Services, believing that resources should be reserved for 'more deserving' cases.

It makes me feel incredibly safe and stress free using passenger assistance. The only thing is that sometimes they seem to cut putting you on the buggy and going to the platform a bit fine. I love going underneath Euston station, it is like a mystery tour!  
Mobility, cognitive 44 y/o

I know it is hard for people to understand but part of dealing with my condition is "doing it for myself" so I tend to use props such as a suitcase to aid my walking. I really appreciate when staff ask me if I need help and can accept when I refuse and say I am ok. Sometimes, they just swoop in regardless and try and wrestle the case off me! They need to listen.  
Mobility, fatigue, 40 y/o

So I could get help with getting onto the train? Someone would take me down and there would be someone to help me get off?  
Would they see me to my seat?  
Physical, cognitive 53y/o





## Accessibility of the network

# Parking and drop off

## Parking

Parking marks the first stage post in the journey. Availability, or lack of, can be a determinant as to choice of transport

Smaller, local stations provide the greater opportunity to park with passengers referencing number of bays and closeness to station entrance

## Key to choice of train as transport, particularly for those commuting

- proximity of parking to station
- number of available bays
- closeness to entrance/ required platform (local stations in particular with no lift)
- steps/road to navigate
- cost of parking
- length of permitted stay

## Drop off/set down

Particularly problematic at larger stations and anxiety inducing for all

## Issues

- invariably busy
- often situated at side or across the road from station
- can be some distance from station entrance/alighting platforms
- obstacles such as parking facility size and maintenance works

The local station is brilliant, good amount of parking bays and close to the entrance of the station. Mobility, 52

Birmingham now has a huge paved area in front of the station and the drop off is down the side. Not going to attempt that  
Mobility, 62



# Those who cannot drive or have given up driving may then be reliant on a bus service or friends and family to get to the station

In itself, the barrier to driving can be an emotive issue

Therefore when confronted with barriers to public transport, passengers can be upset

And often the whole issue around driving is a very emotive issue because there aren't loads of alternatives available, or the things that are available are very inconvenient. Although you may have a sort of bus, mini bus service in a village it may be you know it only runs twice a day or at inconvenient times. So that's the concern; that people get stuck.  
*Expert*

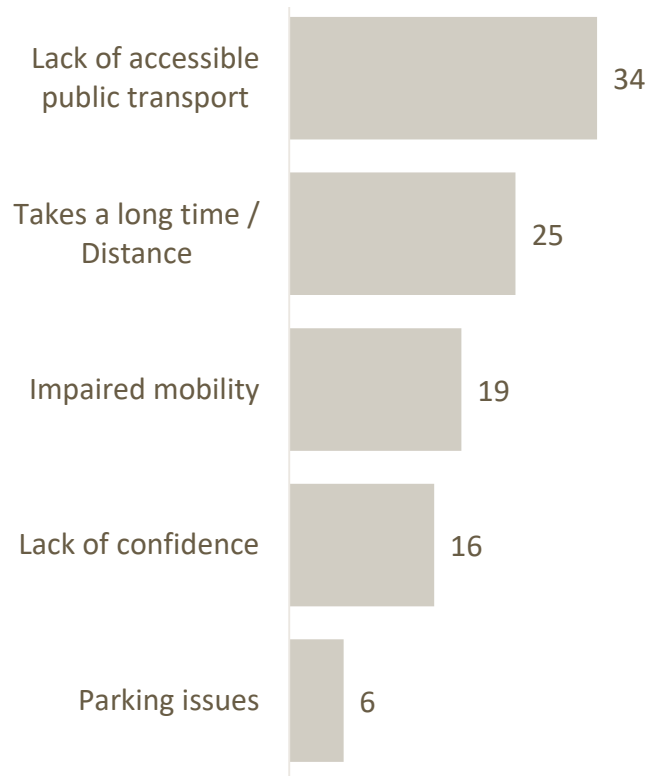
**9%** Of all passengers say they experience a problem with the cost of getting to the station

Base: all respondents (877)

**6%** Of all passengers say they experience a problem with the frequency and reliability of taxis and public transport

Base: all respondents (877)

## Anticipated problems with getting to the station



Q8. You mentioned you anticipated problems with getting to the station you usually start from when travelling by train. More specifically, what is the nature of these problems? Base: (n= 97)



## Accessibility of the network: summary

The **ability to get and from the train station** is a **key factor** in individuals' choice of train as transport mode.

As such, the **availability and accessibility of parking** at stations and the proximity of parking places to the station itself can present challenges to disabled passengers.

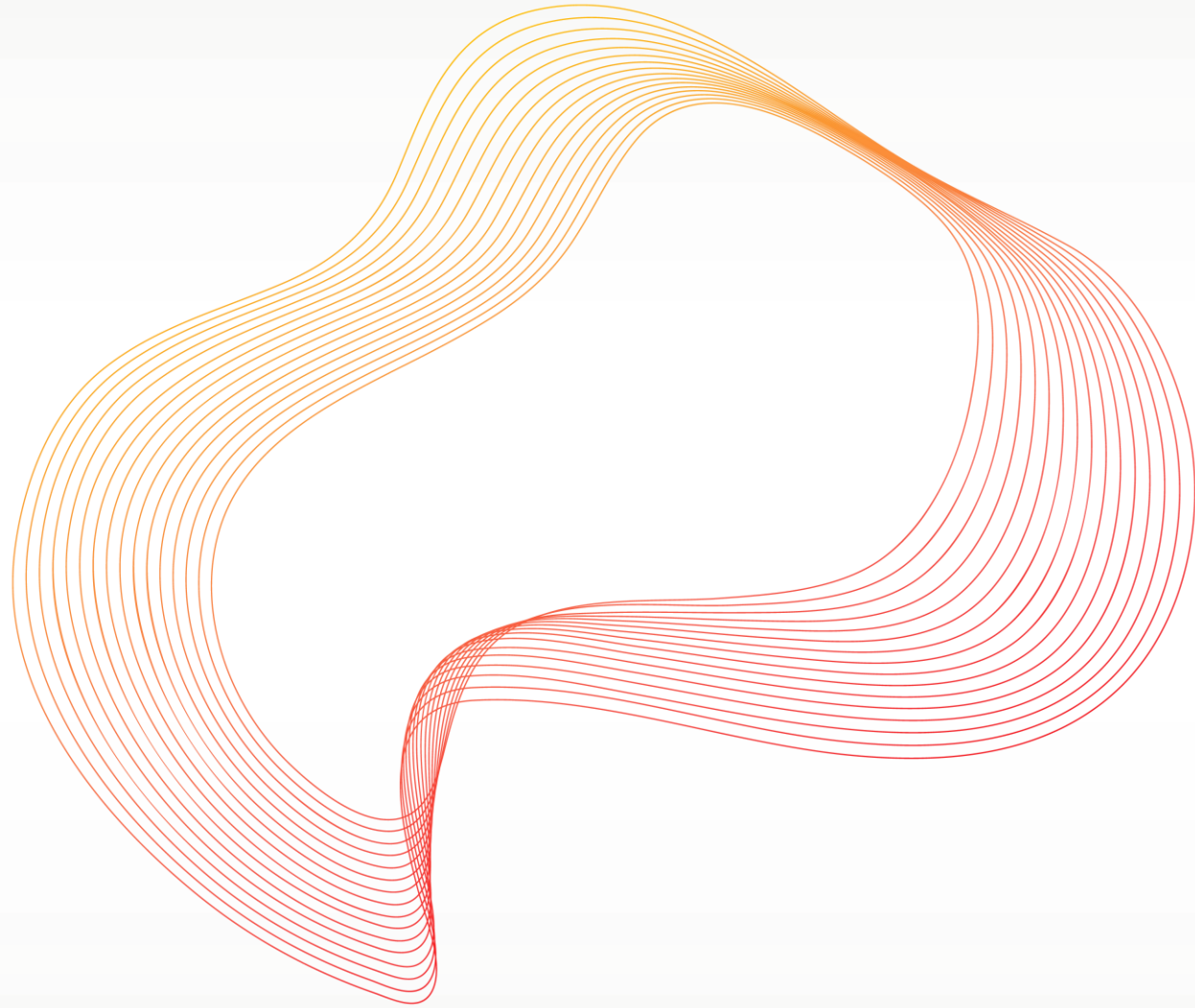
Similarly, the **availability and accessibility (or lack thereof) of public transport** to/ from railway stations is often seen as a barrier to train use

The taxi drop off point is fraught and pretty small area. I really panic thinking about how close we will get to the drop off point and if we are going to hold up the traffic.  
*Anxiety, mobility, 52 Y/O*

I would love to use my local station but there is no bus to it and there is only a drop off point at one side of the station, so I can only access one of the platforms. I just go to Leeds.  
*Mobility, 28 y/o*

If you don't know the drop off points you can find yourself walking for ages. At Euston they drop you by steps up the side of the station. It took me ages to realise that you can be dropped underneath the station. Getting to the taxi rank at Leeds or Birmingham is also difficult - lots of walking to get to them.  
*Mobility, 52 y/o*





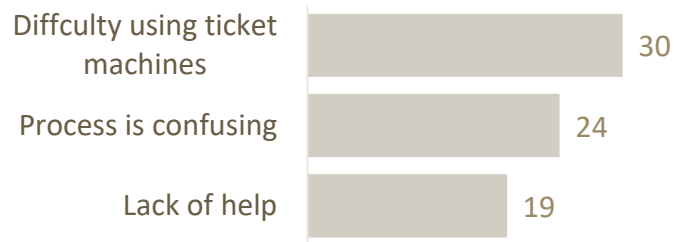
# Ticketing

# Ticket machines present the greatest challenges for disabled passengers, with ticket offices being the 'default option'

## Ticket machine

Can be very difficult or impossible for some passengers to use.

### Top three anticipated problems when buying tickets (%)



Ticket machines often not appropriate for those in wheelchairs, those with dexterity impairments, dyslexia, learning disabilities, vision impairments

It is difficult balancing with crutches, getting card out of your bag, finding phone with code details, conscious that people are waiting to use  
Mobility, 28

## Ticket office

- often seen as the default option, particularly for older passengers
- staff members in ticket offices typically seen as helpful and can answer any questions

However...

- ticket offices often not at wheelchair height
- lack of space/a shelf to leave luggage or mobility assistance
- presence of security screens can be a sound barrier for hearing impaired
- and not always open

## Online purchase

Passengers tend to be savvy and use comparison sites to purchase tickets

- have own techniques of booking online and using computers, tablets etc.
- less stressful due to no queues etc.
- cheaper deals can be found
- part of planning process whereby passengers can organise travel in advance

# 8%

**Of all passengers said they experienced a problem with the ticket office not being open**

Base: all respondents (877)

I would always go to the ticket office because they know what's what and they will write things down for you. Just provides that element of reassurance. Can be difficult to make yourself heard though. Also, the queue can be long and those rope things get in the way. Often my daughter just buys them (tickets) online and posts them to us  
Physical, 68

# Tickets themselves can be confusing

In common with the generality of passengers, those with impairments/disabilities suggest there are too many tickets:

- outbound
- return
- Receipt
- seat reservations

Text on the tickets is too small and close together

- those with vision impairments cannot read tickets (of those with vision impairments that had an issue with tickets, 95% said tickets were too confusing)
- those with dyslexia cannot distinguish between different information on tickets

Content of text on ticket can be confusing

- jargon such as 'refundable'/'exchangeable' can be confusing for those with learning difficulties
- key information can be unclear

## Case study

*A 32 year old woman with ADHD and dyslexia travels regularly to visit friends and make business trips for work. Her ADHD means her brain is very active and she can process information very quickly. But when faced with a large number of tickets containing a great deal of information, her mind becomes overwhelmed and she is unable to decipher the correct ticket needed for different legs of the journey.*

How many tickets do you need ? They take an age to print and often leave one behind as difficult to retrieve. Using them (ticket machine) always leaves me hot and flustered  
Sensory, 21

# 17%

**Of all passengers said they experienced a problem with tickets being confusing**

Base: all respondents (877)



# Value for money is achieved when a journey is completed with barriers to travel removed

Disabled passengers view value for money in much the same way as non-disabled passengers; if things go wrong they become aggrieved to have paid for the service

- the difference being that things are more likely to go wrong on a disabled passengers' journey

There is seldom a situation whereby a passenger has an inaccessible journey but accepts it for a cheap price

## Railcards and freedom passes



Of disabled passengers have owned a railcard in the last 12 months

And of those who describe themselves as disabled...

34%

Have owned a railcard in the last 12 months

Base: all respondents (1,494)

- some passengers held a TfL 'Freedom Pass'
- many passengers were surprised to find a Disabled Person's Railcard existed
- although experts were aware of disabled railcards and discounts, they said that many disabled people were not, in particular older people
- this is seen as being exacerbated by online information and booking systems

## Discrimination can occur at ticket checking

- there are incidences of ticket checkers 'not believing' that someone is disabled
- this causes trauma for the passenger and is viewed as totally unacceptable

## Case study

*A young woman commutes into Central London on a daily basis. She suffers with anxiety and frequently has panic attacks on the train. She has a TfL Freedom Pass that she uses on the national rail network in London. She is asked to show her ticket by a member of staff. She shows her freedom pass. The staff member questions her about her need for the pass.*

I have my freedom pass and I was going from Balham to Kew Bridge. The ticket inspector asked to see my freedom pass and said 'what is that for then?' and looked me up and down. I should have said 'none of your \*\*\*\*\* business'.

Cognitive, 24

## Ticketing: summary

As is the case for many passengers without an impairment, **disabled passengers often find the number and variety of tickets available confusing** but this problem can be exacerbated for disabled passengers. For example, those with cognitive or intellectual impairments can find the range of choices particularly difficult to understand and the language of ticketing difficult to penetrate (refundable/'exchangeable').

Similarly, **ticket machines can be challenging for disabled passengers**. Ticket machines present difficulties for people with a range of impairments; they often not accessible for those in wheelchairs, those with dexterity impairments, dyslexia, learning disabilities, vision impairments. (That said, and again in common with the generality of passengers, disabled passengers make extensive use of on line ticket purchasing and journey planning).

Given the above, **many disabled passengers prefer to use the ticket office**, with staff in ticket offices typically seen as helpful and informative, albeit ticket offices are not always easily accessible e.g. often not at wheelchair height.

**Disabled passengers view value for money in much the same way as non-disabled passengers**; if things go wrong they become aggrieved to have paid for the service. The difference being that things are more likely to go wrong on a disabled passengers' journey.

**Many disabled passengers are not aware of the existence of the Disabled Person's Railcard**. In addition there are incidences of ticket checkers 'not believing' that a person one is disabled and questioning their entitlement to a Disabled Person's Railcard.



## Ticketing: users' comments

Things like ticket machines at train stations can be really confusing to use. I know when I have tried to go to machines to buy tickets, and it gives you all the options of all the tickets that you might need and it is like, 'Which one do I press. Do I press that one, do I press that one?' So they can be really confusing. Then I just end up going to a ticket desk and asking a human because it is easier for me.

Cognitive, 26 y/o

The ticket machines are quite often in the middle of the station floor and here is nothing to balance against or put your bag on. They are touch screen so that is difficult for balance and to get the right amount of pressure for it to register

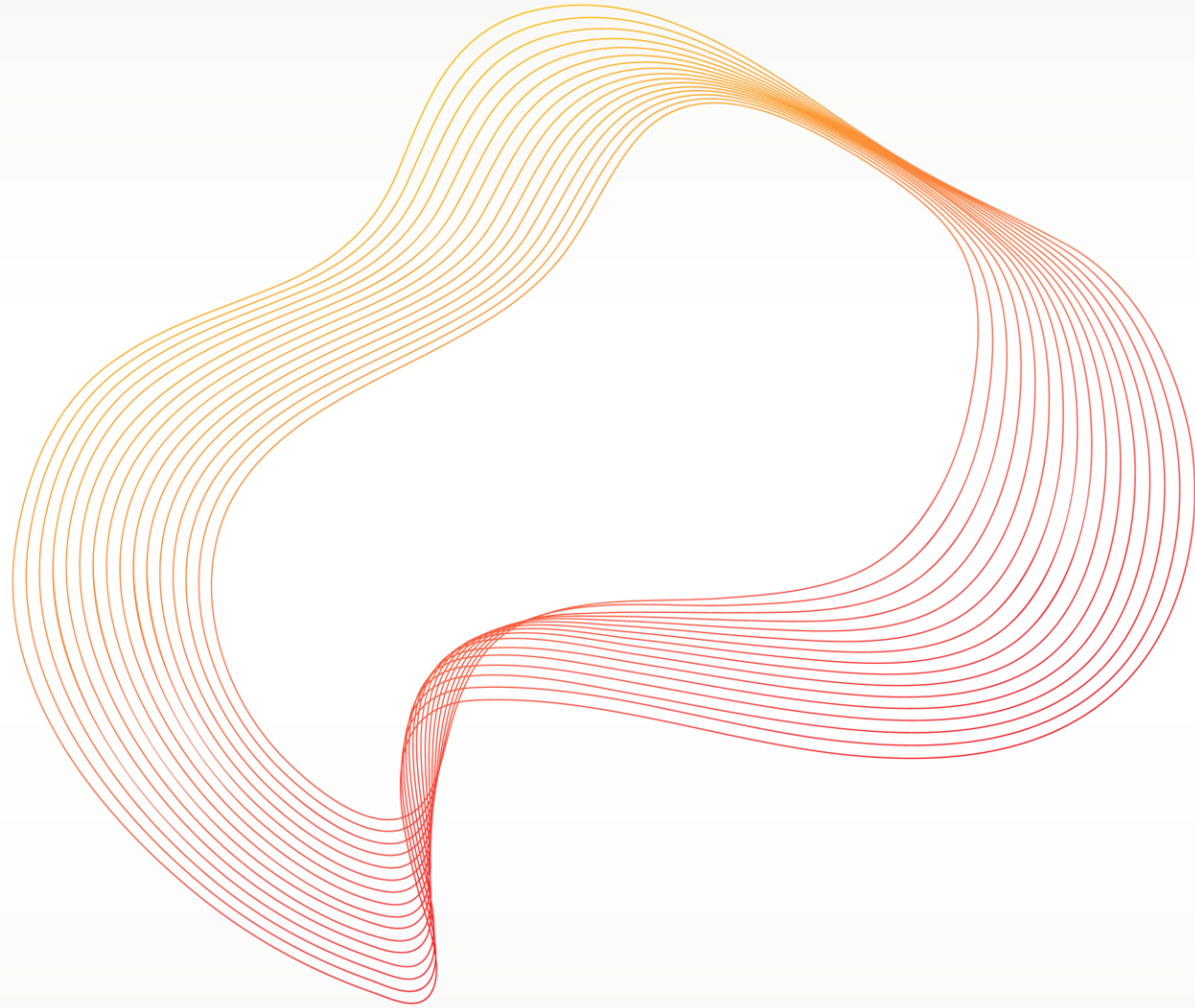
Mobility, 70 y/o

I didn't even know there was a disabled persons rail pass although when you think of it, it makes sense. They should advertise that at stations and online. Being disabled is expensive, everything is at a premium so a railcard is a bonus

Mobility 52 y/o

I go to the ticket office to ensure I have the best ticket and the best route. Particularly if using local services as they are the best to ask and they will tell you the platform before it comes up on the announcement boards.

Cognitive, anxiety 50 y/o



# Stations

# Being at the station is the journey stage where barriers to travel can appear all-pervading

Stations are where challenges are most often anticipated because of the amount of 'things that can go wrong'

However this does **not mean** that things often go wrong, rather that many things can potentially go wrong



Of disabled passengers **have experienced** problems at a station

However...



**Anticipate** experiencing a problem at a train station

Therefore barriers here are ubiquitous but not necessarily persistent

# Passengers can spend needed time and energy navigating around the station

Knowing how to **get around** the station is crucial for passengers. Without the necessary aids, assistance and guidance, passengers can get lost, exhausted, confused and panicked.

32%

**Of those experiencing problems at stations, think that signs and instructions are difficult to follow, making it the joint most common problem encountered at stations**

Base: all respondents (877)

Getting lost, exhausted, panicked and confused can result in passengers **not completing** their journey.

Some passengers need highly visible directional cues, which are not available often enough

Passengers always look for staff members in times of uncertainty – but sometimes cannot find them

**Message/platform display boards and announcements are not suitable for some passengers**

- Platform display screens are too small at most stations – these are illegible for those with visual impairments, dyslexia and ADHD
- Announcements, although said to have improved greatly, are still lacking clarity
- Announcements often overlap with other announcements or station/train noise

**Major redesigns of stations (e.g. Birmingham New Street) can present issues for passengers with mobility impairments**

- Sheer scale of stations and distance to walk
- Vast open spaces with nothing to hold on to
- Walls have been replaced by shops

48%

**Of those anticipating problems at stations, see the problems being associated with accessibility and mobility**

Base: all respondents (877)

## Case study

*A man in his 30s travels into London for work 2-3 times a week. He has a condition whereby parts of his vision are intermittently blanked out. This affects his orientation, and obstacles can present themselves at the last minute. For example, he might not see there is a bollard in front of him until the last moment. When travelling by train he requires brightly coloured rails to hold onto in case of tripping over obstacles (the most common being other people's luggage).*

The yellow hand rails are really useful because otherwise a step or a person will just jump out of nowhere!

Sensory, 35

I appreciate that it is now a lovely space and cleaner, brighter, who doesn't love Oliver Bonas? Appears to have been planned with little thought to passengers such as myself. I wanted to cry because it was lovely but the distance to walk and the effort ....

Physical, 50

# Being comfortable, having accessible toilets and refreshments is vital for passenger emotional wellbeing, energy levels and comfort

Disabled passengers often arrive to the station **early** to offset any anticipated barriers they might encounter – passengers are therefore likely to **spend time** in the station

## Lack of seating in many stations

Having somewhere to rest is crucial for a wide range of passengers with disabilities:

- those with respiratory conditions, mobility impairments and stamina/fatigue conditions must regularly recoup energy
- those with anxiety and other mental health impairments find sitting down can prepare them for the journey ahead

As well as seating, many passengers would benefit from **leaning points**, or rails to hold on to

It just means the person with the disability has a sense of pride, not feeling I am a burden. We feel changing places is ideal in that way

Expert

Fully accessible disabled toilets in stations often not available

32%

Of those experiencing problems at stations, find a lack of good/any toilets

Base: all respondents (75)

A lack of accessible toilets can be degrading for those that require them

- toilets need to include the full range of facilities (including changing places) at every station

## Case study

*A man in his late 20s with learning disabilities travels from London to other parts of the country infrequently for business, travelling with his carer. When using the toilet he requires a hoist that his carer operates. When travelling from Kings Cross he found that the disabled toilets did not have a hoist. This leaves the passenger in some discomfort and has detrimental impacts on his confidence to travel again using the rail network.*

Refreshments available at larger stations but not smaller ones

- passengers waiting at the station can enjoy refreshments, this can relax passengers and provide an energy boost before a journey

If I need the toilet and can't use, but it's like anyone else can, then that's not fair is it? It's what they can call de-humanising.

Cognitive, 28



# Inappropriate station layout and large numbers of passengers in the station can be a barrier to travel

**48%** Of those experiencing problems at stations, find issues with regard to step-free access

Base: all respondents (75)

## Lifts

- not available at all multi-level stations, out of order, or nonsensically placed

There's no point in having a lift if it's miles away  
Mobility, 43

## Ramps

- not available at all multi-level stations, too steep, or nonsensically placed

## Crowding

- particularly busy stations can be difficult for passengers to manage

## Hand rails not available throughout the station

- needed for a range of impairments for guidance and support

## Escalators

- getting on and off can be a frightening prospect for many with mobility disabilities

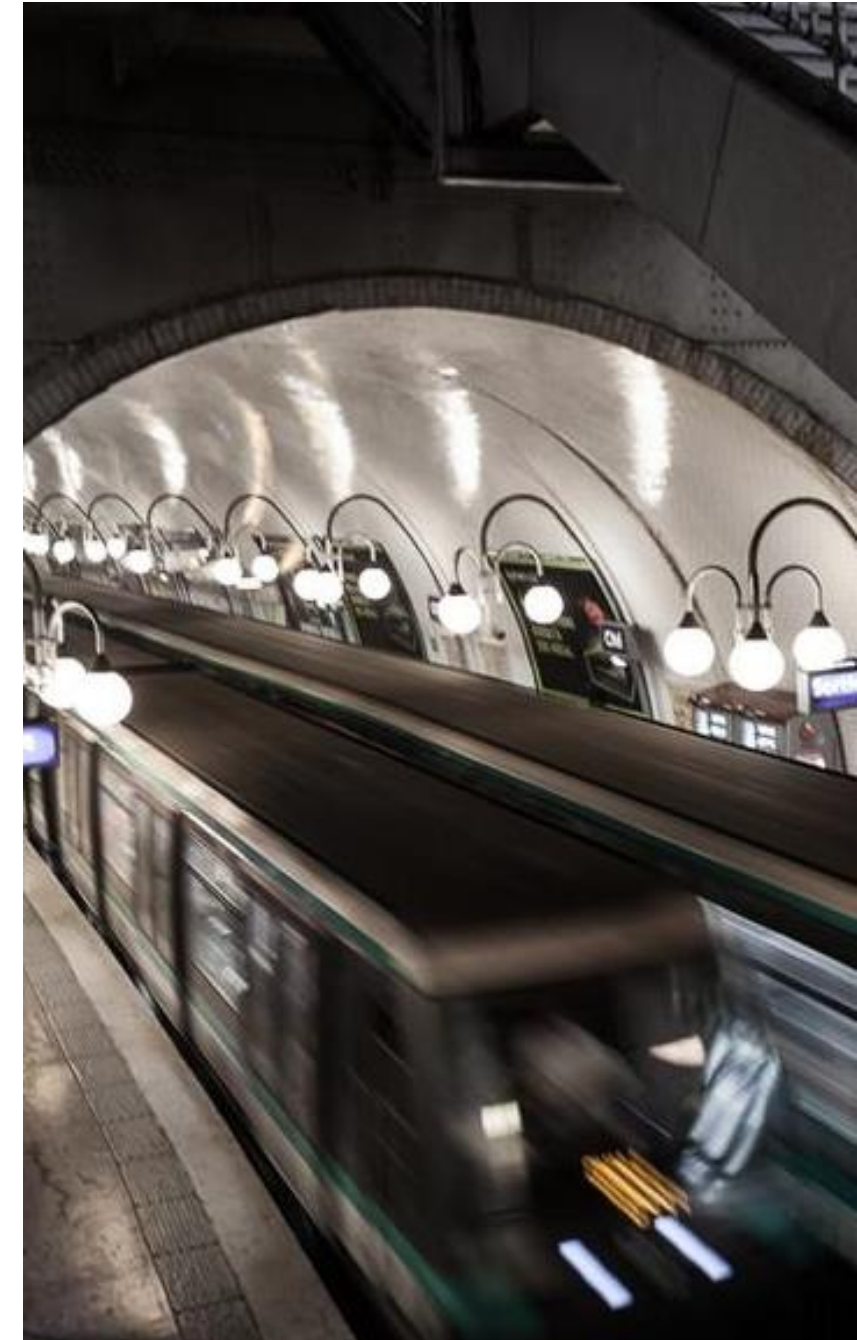
## Local stations are often worse than larger stations for the array and quality of accessibility facilities

- at stations where there are no lifts, passengers are pushed across the tracks in a makeshift wheelchair
- this can be embarrassing for passengers

## Case study

*A woman in her 40s has recently been paralysed on the right side of her body. She can still walk slowly with crutches and needs to use the ramp in her local station. However the ramp is so long and far away from the platform that walking up it is exhausting.*

Stations like Birmingham New Street – just vast. It's just now a vast open space. Mobility, 55



## Stations: summary

Many disabled passengers *anticipate* problems at railway stations, even if things do not often go wrong.

Navigating and traversing stations (particularly large, major stations) can be difficult and can involve expending considerable emotional and physical energy. Without the necessary aids, assistance and guidance, passengers can get lost, exhausted, confused and panicked.

Reflecting the fact that disabled passengers often meticulously plan their journeys, they often arrive at the station **early** and as such may **spend** more **time** in the station than many other passengers. Given this, the availability of amenities including seating, refreshments and accessible toilets are particularly important.

The **sheer size of stations**, the **number of people** using them and **physical characteristics** such as stairs, escalators and (the lack of) lifts and ramps can also **make using stations challenging** for many disabled passengers.

I look at Kings Cross and it reinforces all of my fears and resentments at being disabled. It represents the equivalent of a marathon for me. I would love to go in the shops and cafes but there is nowhere for me to hang on to. It is exhausting.

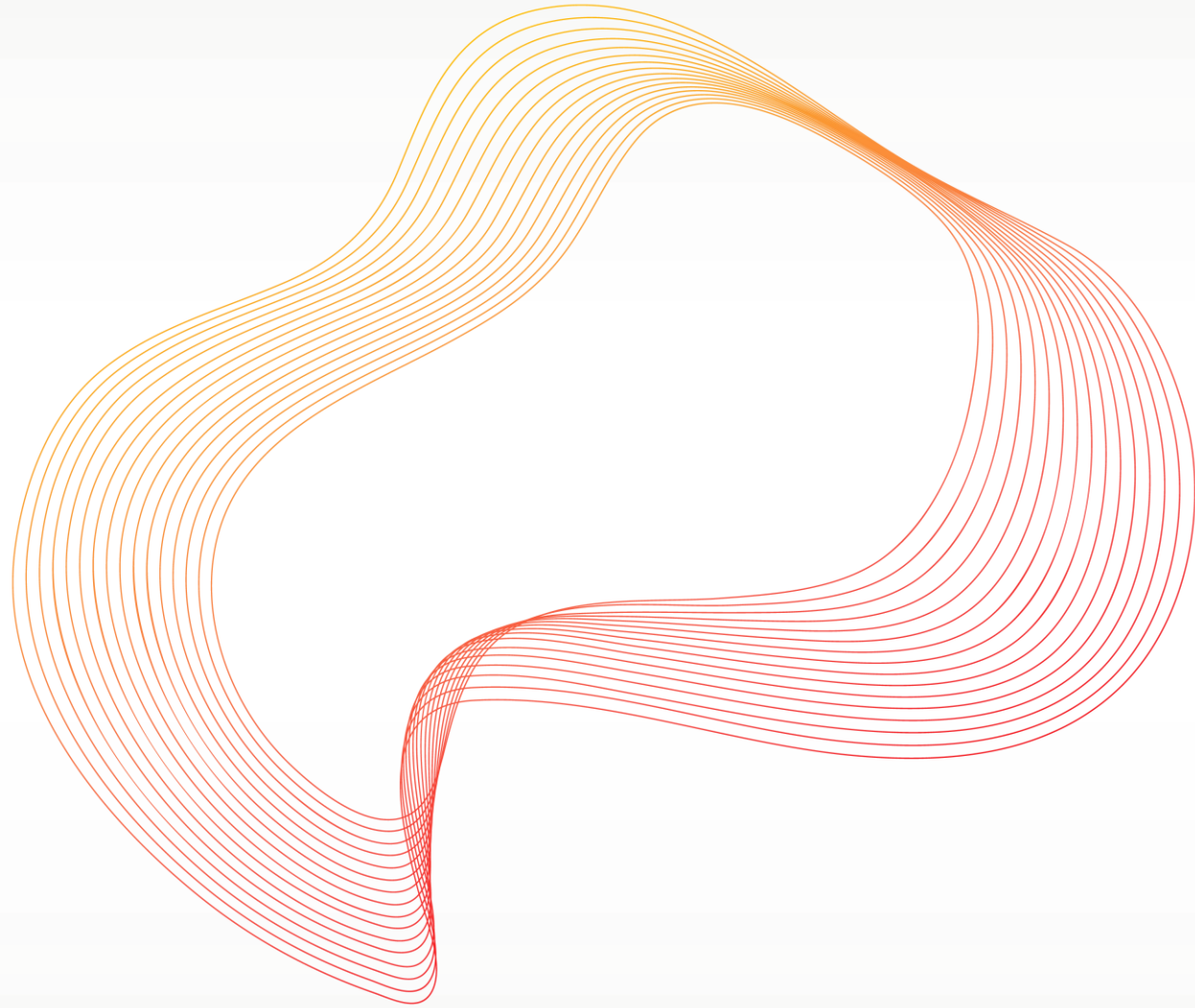
Mobility, 35 y/o

I get there at least two hours before my train and spend the time hovering near the announcement boards, constantly asking the staff what platform, so I am best placed to limp down. I would love to get a coffee, paper but I cant carry a drink, as I am on crutches, and I don't want to ask staff to help me as they are busy.

Mobility, cognitive 54 y/o

Lifts are always right at the furthest end of the platform from where I alight the train. Every time. Always full of people with kids in prams and suitcases. Leeds has escalators but I cant get on them and stairs are impossible.

Mobility, 52 y/o



On the platform  
and boarding



# Boarding the train can be a complex process

Those boarding the train in wheelchairs/mobility scooters are subject to arbitrary rules and regulations

- some passengers believe it is the staff not wanting to do their job, suggesting they create fictional rules and regulations as an excuse not to help passengers

The gap...

- can be a nerve wracking experience
- passengers attempting this alone may fall

**47%** Of those experiencing problems at stations, have difficulty negotiating 'the gap' with no staff to help

Base: all respondents (75)

Platform displays and message boards are often out of sight or not visible to visually impaired passengers

- some passengers require such information to be at eye level and close enough to see

Platforms require seating for those having to wait for a long time, which is not always available

- when there are no walls between platforms, passengers lose an important place to lean

## Case study

*A 30 year old man relies on his local train service to visit friends and family as well as go shopping. He has cerebral palsy and uses a mobility scooter when he feels it necessary. Some days he is able to board the train in his scooter, but sometimes he is rejected, with staff claiming that the scooter is too large. He knows that his scooter is accepted on the rail network, yet staff can be insistent that he is not allowed on the train.*

*I've got my mobility scooter that I like to take with me on days out, like when we went to the air show, but it's always *oh you can't take that on here* – when I know that you can because I done it last week. It means I have to take a chair with me 'cos I can't walk or stand up for the whole day.*  
Mobility, 30



## Boarding: users' comments

The information boards on the platforms are always placed at the beginning or the top of the stairs so the minute you move along the platform you lose sight of them and have to keep walking back to them.

Sensory, cognitive 40 y/o

A lot of those stations are unmanned so you can't rely on the staff at the station and now that trains can run with no other staff member on board there is no way to get on or off the train.

Expert

The gap is pretty scary sometimes. Quite often I have to go to the next station in order to get off the train. I am terrified of falling or slipping. Other passengers try and help but that often makes me even more anxious.

Mobility, anxiety 38 y/o

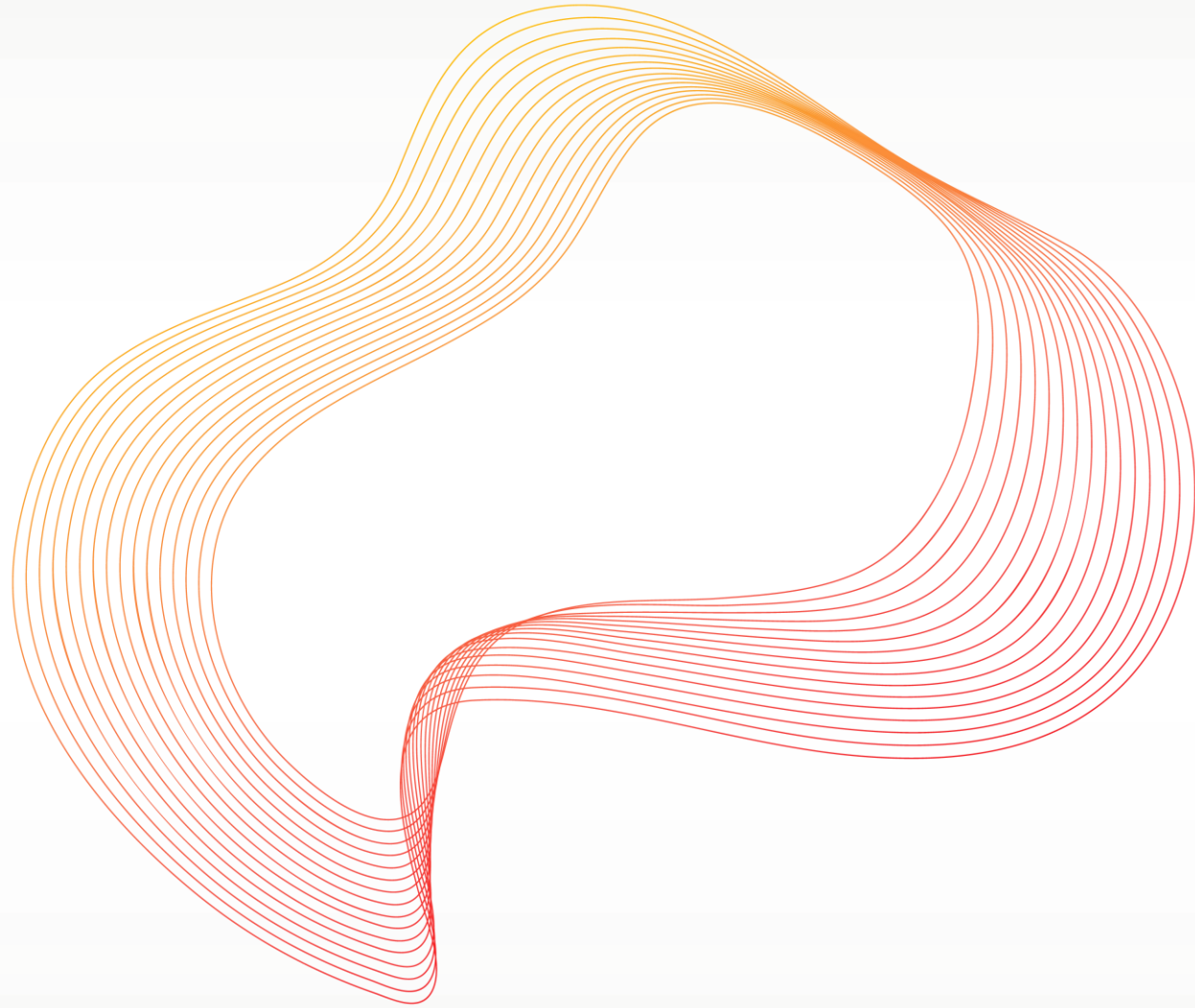
You do get the odd jobsworth who do lots of puffing and tutting when you ask them to get the ramp.

Mobility, 60 y/o

The platforms are long and I ask the staff where is the best place to be in order to get on the right carriage for my seat reservation. The problem is that there is very little seating which is a real pain and a frustration as I need to rest having invariably walked the length of the platform.

Mobility, cognition 52 y/o





Punctuality and  
reliability

# Although cancelled and delayed trains are of great inconvenience to all passengers, for those with disabilities and/or impairments it can be disastrous

Journeys are planned, often meticulously, to ensure that a passenger has enough energy, resources, time and medication to complete a journey

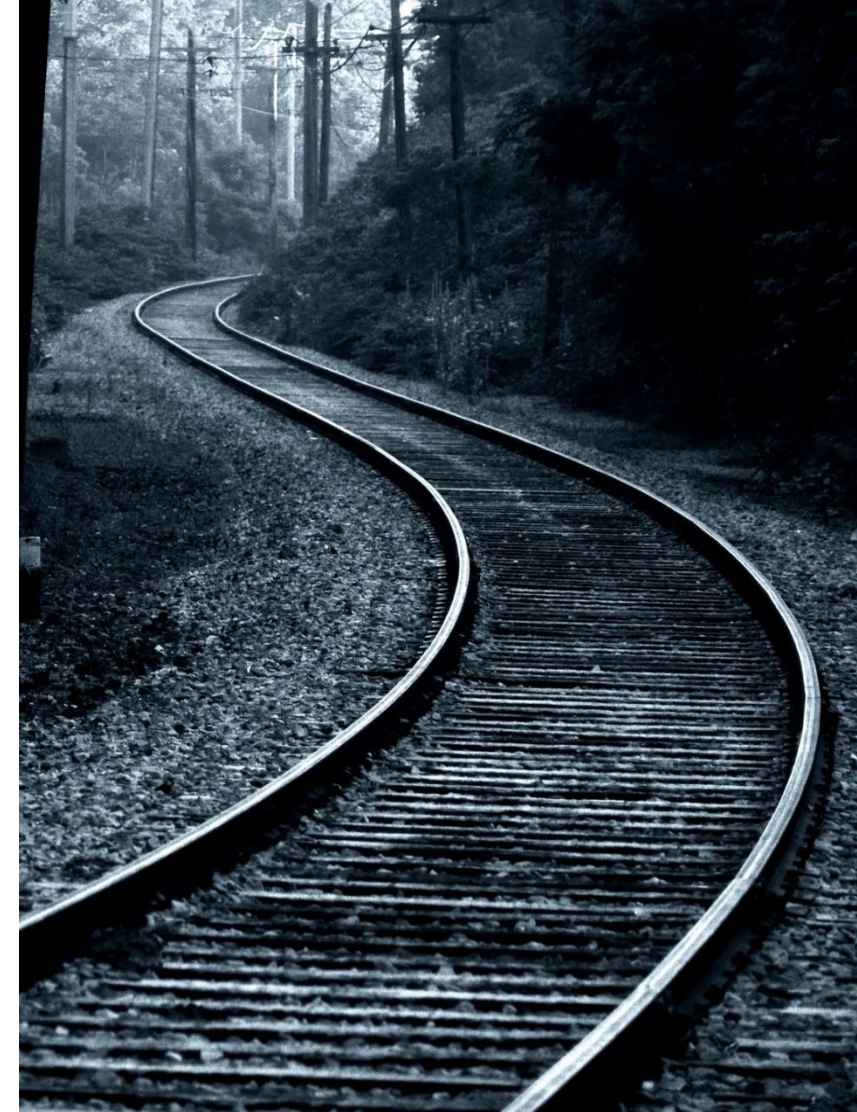
If a train is delayed/cancelled all the plans that have been made and often timetabled are put in jeopardy

## The consequences:

- passengers' energy is expended on stress and time
- any booked assistance at destination station is put into doubt
- if priority seat was secured, there is anxiety that this is no longer secured
- medication timetables can be missed
- onward travel arrangements can be missed
- an example of the consequences of the lack of flexibility in travel is provided by Muscular Dystrophy UK:

The lifts in my local station get switched off in the evenings when the station is unmanned, so I have to get off the train at a station further away from my home. If I call in advance, the rail company will provide a taxi for me. But taxis have not turned up. This has happened on more than one occasion  
Muscular Dystrophy: Trailblazers (2016)

Listen, if the train gets cancelled or something then I feel like that's it for me. What do I do? I can't stand up for too long or I will just faint. I just have to accept that I'm going to faint and see what happens I suppose.  
Stamina/fatigue, 32



# There are however examples of where staff have been pro-active in solving issues

## Action taken

- assistance is often rescheduled after cancellations and delays
- in extreme circumstances a taxi is called to take passengers to the nearest functioning station

## Case study

*A 79 year old woman has stamina/breathing and mobility impairments. She went on a two week tour of Scotland with her husband, travelling by rail between different regions and cities. She is unable to climb steps. There was an incident where a train to Sterling was cancelled. She began to panic in this situation until a staff member helped her and reassured her that a taxi would be organised for her. She was escorted to the taxi and shown how to complete her journey to Sterling.*

## Over half of passengers think station staff are polite and friendly

*Station staff are polite and friendly*



■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree

Now I know that there is a staff member there who will help me, it's great. It really stops me panicking when I use the trains now. The knowledge of that in your head is great.  
Mobility, 79





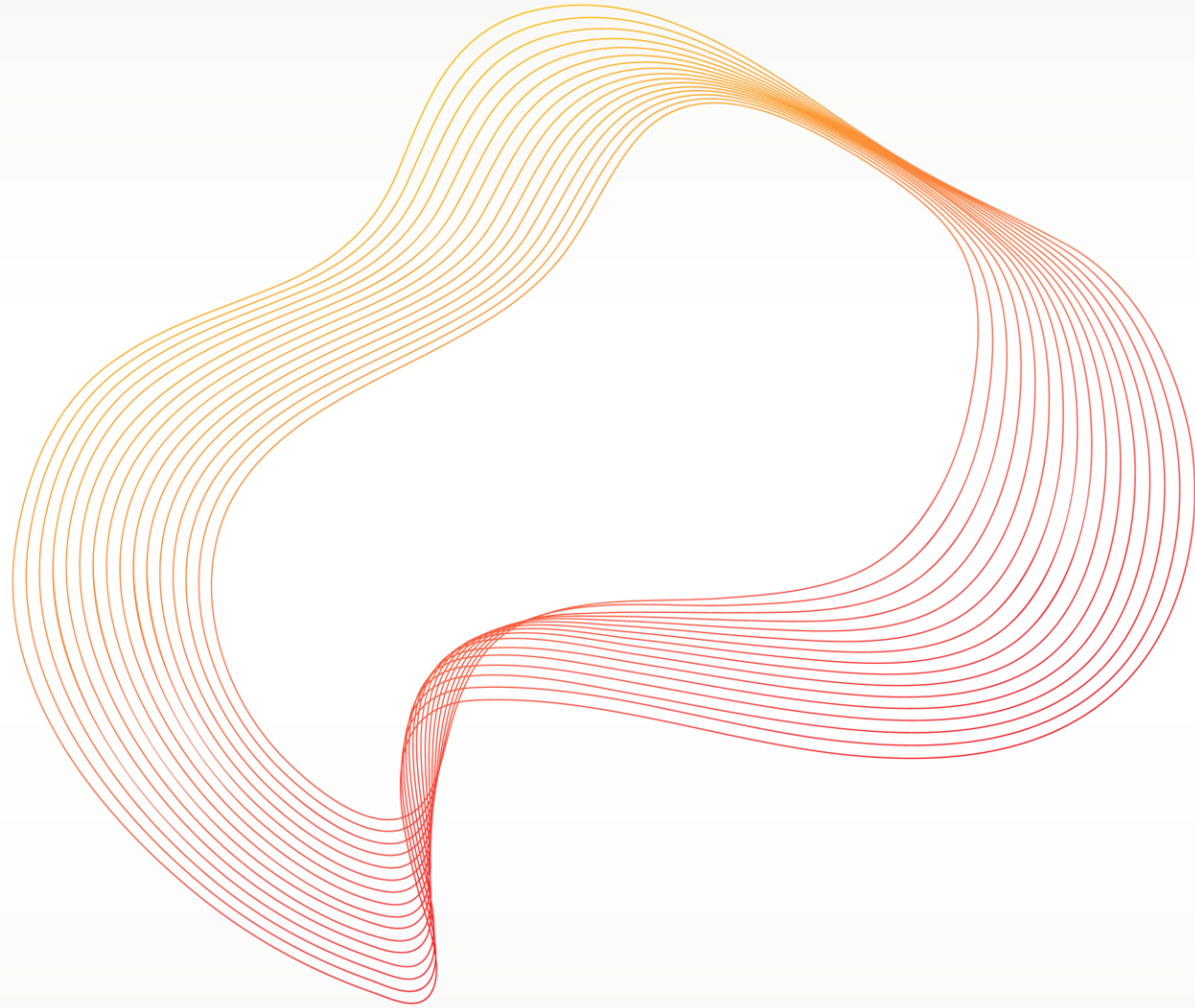
## Punctuality & reliability: summary

**Journey disruption** can cause great inconvenience to all passengers, but **for those with disabilities and/or impairments it can be disastrous**. Consequences can **include**: additional stress and expended, booked assistance or priority seat reservations jeopardised, medication timetables can be missed and onward travel arrangements can be missed.

In mitigation there are examples of staff being proactive and resourceful to help solve problems caused by **disruption**. For example, rescheduling assistance or arranging taxis for onward journeys.

If there are delays then I worry that the guy with the ramp won't be there to help me off the train and the passenger assist won't have gone home or forgotten about me  
Mobility, 32 y/o

I was delayed and the station staff were excellent. They took me to the platform I needed to be on to get the next train I needed and waited with me. I was so grateful. Even put me on the train and made sure I got a seat. I could have cried as I was getting really worried about what I would do  
Mobility, 53 y/o



On board



# Passengers require more priority seating, clarity on its usage and enforcement of its purpose

## Priority seating

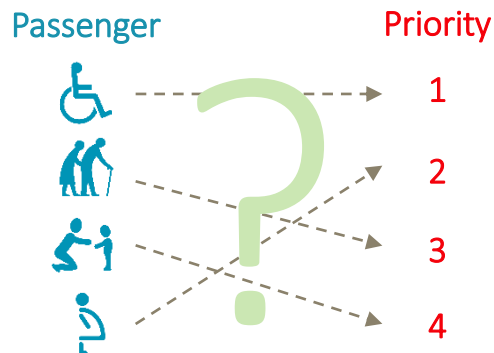
Needed for a range of passengers with disabilities:

- those with mobility impairments require rest and often cannot stand up for lengths of time
- some passengers with anxiety conditions require a seat to keep calm

Many passengers that require priority seating think that there is not enough of it

## The priority seating hierarchy debate

There is a debate surrounding which passengers should first sit in priority seating:



Who sits where? I've been on the train and there is me, a pregnant lady, an elderly couple and then that's only the people I've seen. There might be someone with other disabilities you know?  
Mobility, 76

This picture becomes more complex when we take into account the many different types of disabilities:

- those with hidden disabilities feel at the bottom of this hierarchy, but also need to sit down
- disabilities are viewed as more common than priority seating suggests
- there are many people who need a seat that do not sit down because they feel they are at the bottom of this hierarchy (e.g. someone with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)

Often when disabled/impaired passengers ask to sit in priority seats they are faced with blank or aggressive responses

- there are no means of enforcing priority seating – i.e. it is only up to the passengers themselves

## Quiet carriage

- the quiet carriage can be a safe space for those with anxiety as it is calming
- the best place for some people with hearing impairments because there is less background noise (which often distorts the sounds they want to hear, e.g. announcements)

Although it is noted that not everybody abides by quiet carriage rules

I book a seat in the quiet carriage as I struggle with stimulus and want to have a peaceful haven. People will sit in my seat and then think you are being a pain if you ask them to move – if indeed I am brave enough to ask them to move  
Cognitive/Sensory, 26

# The space for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and passengers to move around the train is vitally important but often in competition with other passengers and their paraphernalia

Space on a carriage is important for many passengers that:

- use mobility assistance (e.g. wheelchair)
- have a guide dog
- need to be supported by a handle or partition
- become anxious in crowded places

## Hierarchy for space

In a similar fashion to the competition for priority seating, there is some dispute over the use of space on the train (most often located by the doors)



Who has priority of the space?

Luggage, bicycles, scooters, prams and other passengers...

- occupy space that is required for a passenger to make their journey

## Space for mobility scooters/ storage

- it is crucial for those with mobility scooters or wheelchairs that there is space for them to board
- it is not certain that a passenger in a wheelchair or mobility scooter is able to board a carriage as it depends on the space on that carriage
- this becomes ‘a lottery’ for those passengers who have to guess which carriages are free to board

## Overcrowding

- peak times are often avoided altogether for those with wheelchairs, mobility scooters and mobility impairments
- not enough room on busy commuter trains for wheelchairs/mobility scooters

Limited wheelchair spaces prevent travel altogether for some

- Multiple wheelchair users cannot travel together

## Case study

*Within a community of disabled people in Hampshire, many have become friends and therefore do a lot of activities together such as shopping. They have a mini-bus service that takes a group of friends to their local town. However, this group of friends is unable to go to other nearby cities or towns that are reached by train because they cannot all travel together due to the limited number of wheelchair spaces on the train. If they were to make this journey they would instead have to each catch separate trains one after the other.*

# Although vast majority of journeys are uneventful, a single anti-social incident can put off passengers for a long time

## Vulnerability

- those with mobility impairments/disabilities can feel they have limited means of defending themselves
- older passengers can feel particularly vulnerable in areas of confrontation

## Passengers can experience discriminatory behaviour from other passengers

## Passenger needs can conflict with other passengers' comfort

- for example, someone with anxiety may require the window open due to nausea and panic, but this may be at odds with someone that is cold

## Nearly a third of passengers have experienced discrimination or anti-social behaviour

*I have experienced discrimination or anti-social behaviour from other passengers*



■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree

# 28%

**Of those experiencing problems on-board the train, have a problem with the attitude of other passengers**

Base: all respondents (75)

I'm trying to explain to you what it's like... being old. You get this vulnerability. If something starts or there is some trouble you can't just jump out the way of it. Yes – I feel vulnerable.  
Mobility, 76

I can't stand it when people stare. I had it the other day on the train – this kid comes up to me and says *excuse me sir what's wrong with you?* See, I don't mind that because I can then explain to him; *well, it's this thing called Cerebral Palsy* and then he knows. That's OK. But what I can't stand is the starers.  
Mobility, 30

I've got some paranoia you see. So when I think someone's starting because I'm acting funny or whatever, I get agitated and sometimes I fight back because you see I've got a short temper because of my psychosis  
Cognitive, 27



# Comfort

## Refreshments

- only viable for mobility impaired passengers travelling with someone else
- some passengers want to avoid using toilets so avoid drinking anything

## Lack of handrails inside rolling stock

## Air conditioning

- can be particularly important for those with anxiety issues
- air conditioned carriages can offer relief to those that suffer in conditions that are too hot and stuffy

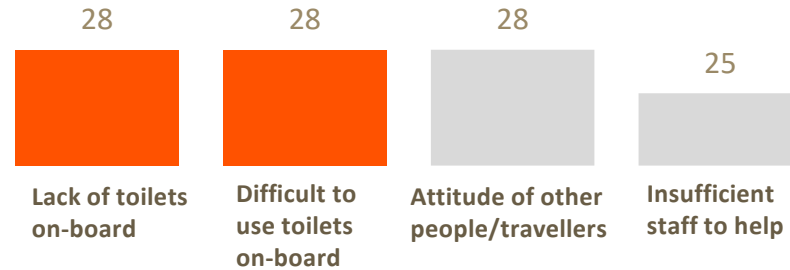
I carry a towel because I sweat in the carriage. If I get really anxious I start sweating and there's nothing I can do about it.

Cognitive, 28

## On-board toilets

- research conducted in Northern Ireland found that spaces near the toilets is 'off-putting' for disabled passengers for hygienic reasons as well as experiencing the continual flow of people requiring access to the toilet

## Top four problems experienced on-board trains



## Case study

A 28 year old man suffers with anxiety and travels to work everyday commuting across central London. A symptom of his anxiety is to sweat. This is such a regular occurrence that the man carries a towel with him everyday. Hot and busy carriages are the worst conditions for his anxiety. Therefore he travels at off peak times, staying late at work every night.



## On board: summary

Priority seating can be problematic for disabled passengers. Many argue that there is insufficient priority seating. There are also questions about which passengers should have precedence for priority seating since not just disabled people, but those with small children, pregnant women and the elderly also have a claim to priority seating.

There is also the problem of there being no means of enforcing priority seating with reports of impaired passengers facing a hostile response when trying to enforce their right to priority seating. There are similar issues of lack of observance of the rules with regard to the quiet carriage, which is often sought out by certain vulnerable passengers e.g. those with anxiety issues.

Space for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and passengers to move around the train is also vitally important but often in competition with other passengers and their paraphernalia. In a similar fashion to the competition for priority seating, there is some dispute over precedence for use of space on the train, especially around the doors.

There are additional challenges for disabled passengers in using toilets and getting refreshments on trains that can cause discomfort on the journey .

Although the vast majority of journeys are uneventful, a single anti-social incident can be very distressing and can strongly deter disabled passengers from using the railway. Passengers can experience discriminatory and/ or anti-social behaviour from other passengers and because of their impairment, may feel particularly vulnerable.



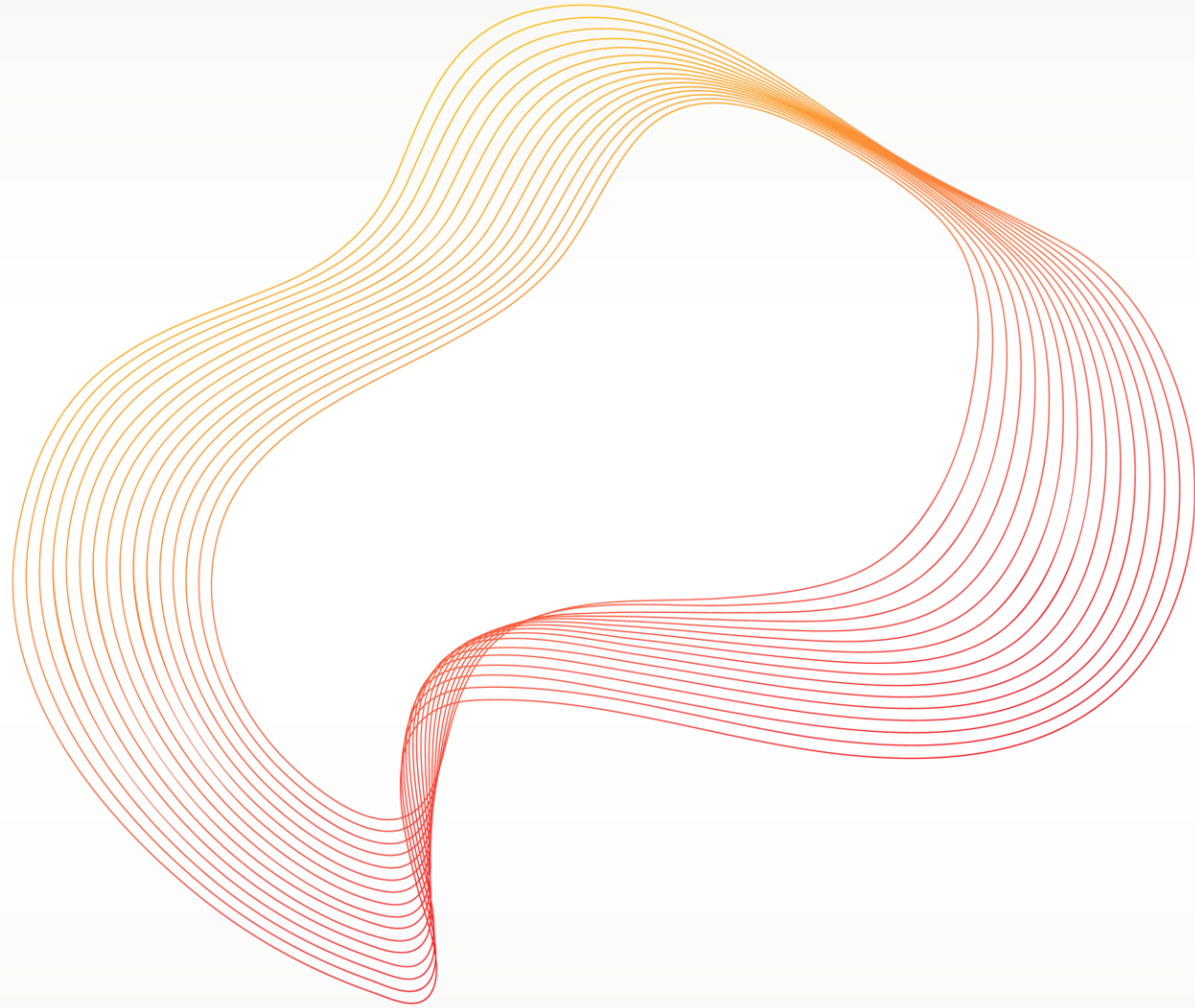
## On board: users' comments

There is very little space for wheelchairs and they are often near the toilets and doors or luggage racks which means the area is busy, draughty and when the train is packed always rammed  
Mobility, 52 y/o

We have heard from disabled people who have had groups of drunk people really harassing them and using disablist language against them and that would put people off. And of course with less guards on trains, who do you go to if you were being harassed? And you can't even get off the train-if you are in a wheelchair you can't just pop off and avoid the situation. You are stuck  
Expert

Unless there is a trolley service and they are becoming thin on the ground, there is no way I am going to go down a swaying and speeding train to the buffet car. Sometimes I think about asking a fellow passenger....it would be nice if the ticket collector asked if anyone wanted anything from the buffet like the do in first class  
Mobility, 60 y/o

I have an invisible disability and I am young so asking people to give up their seat is often like a red rag to a bull. People can be very abusive and experience has taught me not to go there  
Fatigue, cognitive, 26 y/o



Onward travel

# Passengers plan for onward journeys to ensure safe and anxiety free arrival at end destination

## Onward journeys

Those who make journeys on a regular basis, meticulously plan and have mechanisms in place to make onward journey a safe one

- aware of platform likely to be alighting from
- know distance or route to onward travel options such as bus or taxi
- know where potential rest areas are
- many have an established relationship with station staff

## For those less familiar or unfamiliarity with end station:

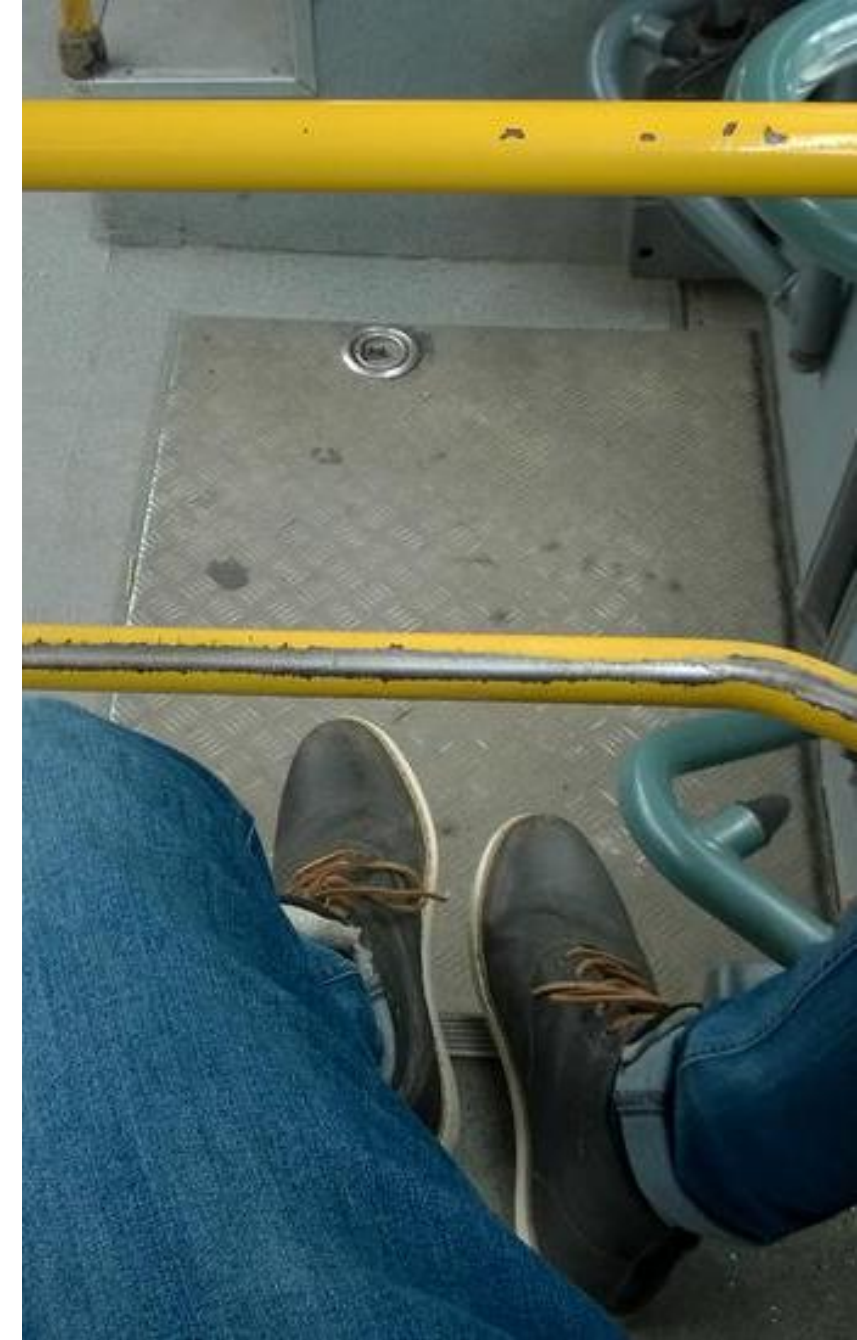
- barriers to travel are more likely as they have not been planned against

## Top three problems experienced with onward travel



Makes you realise the Victorian nature of the network. I had to make a connection and there were no lifts so they had to wheel me across the tracks in a wheelchair whilst everyone looked on. It was humiliating, scary and pissing down with rain. Never again. I felt so sorry for the guy who had to take me  
Mobility, Cognitive, 52

The guy at Glasgow collects me in a wheelchair and then he wheels me across the road to the taxi rank and makes sure I get in ok. He even brings an umbrella! I am so grateful because otherwise it would be like crossing the Rubicon  
Mobility/Cognitive,/sensory 62



## Onward travel: users' comments

I know where the train is going to come in, which platform and what is the shortest route to the taxi rank. I know most of the staff and they will often help me across the road to the rank and help me into a taxi  
Mobility, 60 y/o

If you haven't been to the station before then finding exits and where the taxi rank is can be really difficult. Signage is not always great and if you are trying to conserve energy that is frustrating. I want the quickest route from A to B.  
Mobility, anxiety, 40y/o

Because I make the journey on a regular basis the guard and the station staff all know me and my dog. They will make sure that I get priority when leaving the train or passing through the ticket gates and they protect me from the mad rush of people. Always have time for a chat and to acknowledge me  
Sensory, 50 y/o

If I don't know a station then getting off and where to go make me really anxious. The thought of it makes me panic and freeze, I can't move, my eyesight gets all blurry.  
Cognitive, anxiety, 26y/o



# Challenges for the industry



# Bridging the knowledge gap between the rail industry and disabled passengers

**Description and analysis of a disabled passengers' journey and the barriers they might face were largely similar between charities, the passengers themselves and the industry.**

For experts in the rail industry:

- disabled passengers' interests are a priority
- an emphasis placed on consolidating and making progress where possible against a backdrop of pressure on resourcing levels: company costs, resources and franchise agreements
- nonetheless, there is a motivation amongst those that work in accessibility in the rail industry to achieve a fully accessible network for disabled passengers

It's about one in five people roughly in the UK have got some form of disability, but of course the spectrum is this big and we're trying to cater for everybody so it's just going to take some time.

*Expert*

One notable difference between charities and rail industry experts is the lens in which both groups discussed definitions of disability

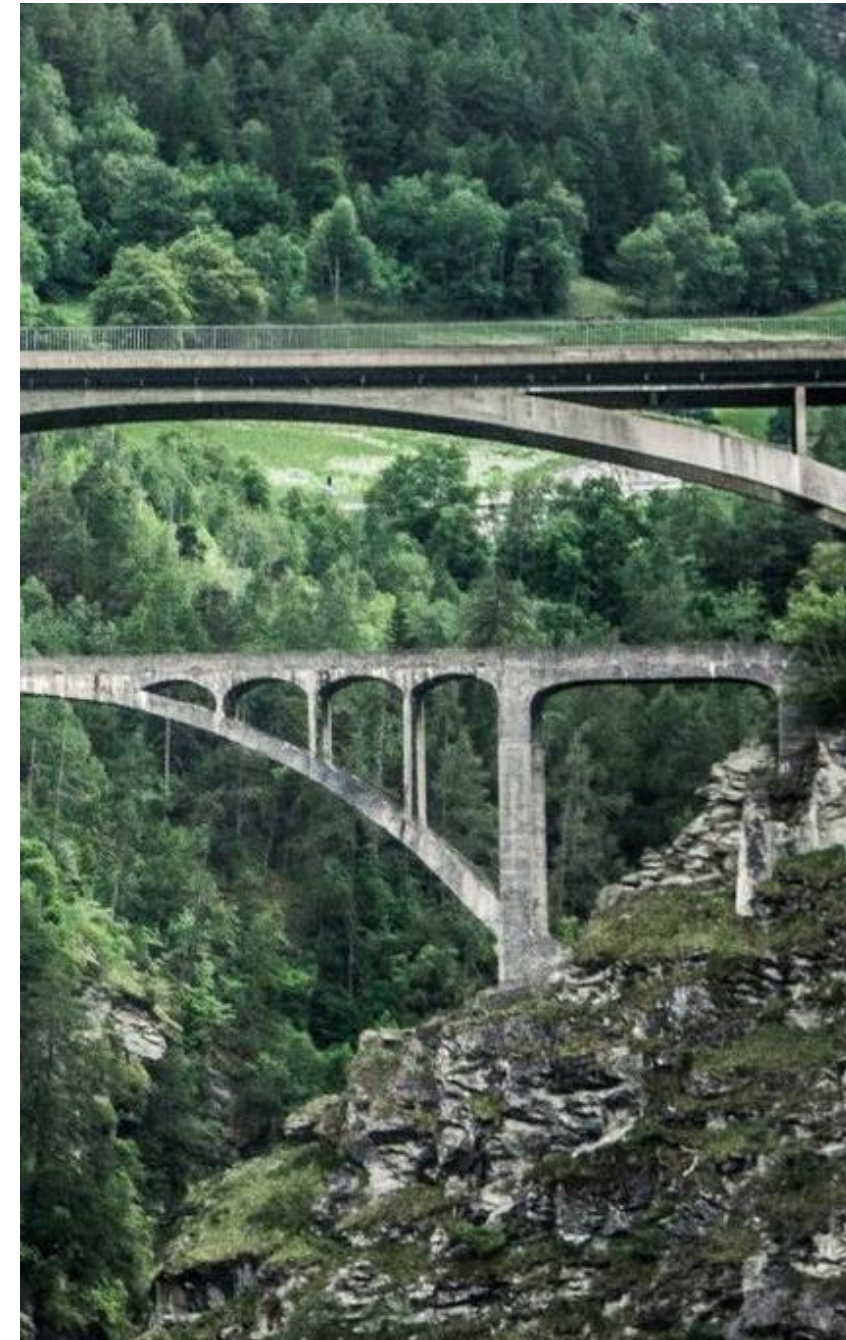
- charities and passengers able to discuss specific needs for people with specific impairments in detail
- whereas rail industry experts able to provide a broad perspective on the rail travel needs of disabled people *in general*...
- but little specific detail on the needs of people with specific types of impairments

An easy thing to think about is just somebody who's got mobility problems, so if you're in a wheelchair, if the train and platform's not level then it's no good.

*Expert*

Something that we do struggle with is the hidden disabilities and that's not really been focussed on very much, so mental health and then the learning disabilities.

*Expert*



# For passengers, the removal of barriers within the rail industry seen as part of a wider societal mission

## Passengers suggest the rail industry takes inspiration from other industries that are moving forward

- for example, a bank loops in announcements and information to hearing aids when customers enter the bank

It's great, they just loop into my hearing aid which is great. And I can then understand what they're saying and what's going on.  
Sensory, 33 y/o

## Passengers highlight campaigns in other industries that appear to remove barriers to use

- an example shared on a few occasions is the sign on the ASDA disabled toilets, which reads *Not every disability is visible*
- provides those with non-visible disabilities assurances to use the toilet
- perceived to be particularly effective because it challenges prejudices at point of contact

Have you heard about this ASDA campaign? It's really good, it really works. They have this sign or notice I suppose on the door of the disabled toilets. It says 'not every disability is visible'. That makes me feel so much better going into those toilets now.  
Stamina/fatigue/mobility, 27 y/o

# For experts, a positive change in the general attitudes towards disability of non-disabled people is required

**Although this issue is somewhat sweeping across many industries, it still has a negative impact on disabled passengers' journeys**

- passengers with impairments can experience abuse
- when help and/or compassion is required from the public, disabled people may not receive it
- staff are involved in this milieu of apathy

People around people with a disability. They just don't understand. They treat you like you are stupid... we know at [...] the public don't really understand what a learning disability is.

*Expert*

**Passengers and experts question why the rail industry cannot be a pioneer of progressive attitudes towards disability**

- a suggested way of dismantling this attitudinal barrier is for rail companies to hire people with disabilities
- they could then teach other members of staff and passengers what it is to be disabled





## Challenges for the industry: summary

Views on the barriers faced by disabled passengers were largely similar between charities, the passengers themselves and the industry. That said, while charities and passengers are able to discuss the *specific* needs for people with *particular* impairments, the rail industry experts tend to provide a broad perspective on the rail travel needs of disabled people *in general*.

For passengers, the removal of barriers within the rail industry seen as part of a wider societal mission. It is suggested that the rail industry should learn from other sectors that are demonstrating best practice in meeting disabled passengers' needs.

Indeed, passengers and experts question why the rail industry cannot be a pioneer of progressive attitudes towards disability.

Something that we do struggle with is the hidden disabilities and that's not really been focussed on very much, so mental health and then the learning disabilities.

Expert

I think the railways could do a lot more and sort of champion disabilities and set the benchmark for services. Match the service to the sparkly new stations

Stamina/fatigue/mobility, 27 y/o

I feel positive towards the rail industry as passenger assist has been a godsend for me but it would be great if it was more end to end so maybe meeting you as you get to the station instead of having to find the passenger assist lounge

Mobility, 32 y/o



# The future of train travel for disabled people



Almost as many disabled passengers anticipate barriers to future rail travel as not

**Anticipated challenges – all journey types**



Yes 45% No 55%

**Anticipated challenges by journey types**

	Commuter	Short leisure	Long leisure	Short business	Long business
Yes	54	42	46	38	46

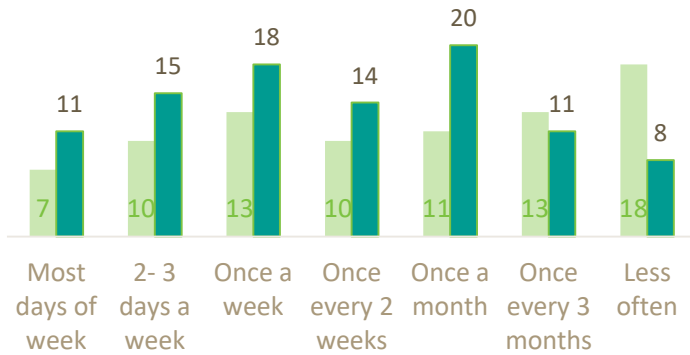
**Commuters more likely to anticipate challenges**

**Short business trips anticipated as being the least problematic**

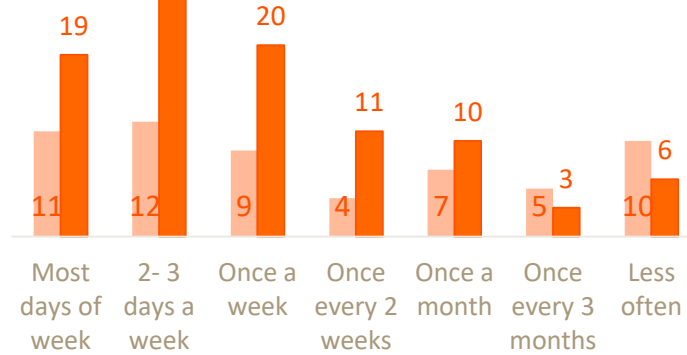
Q6a - Do you anticipate that any challenges or barriers might limit you using the train more often  
 Base: All excluding no need to travel 1064 Commuter (574) short leisure (905) long leisure (894) short business(577) long business(564)

# Disabled travellers would ideally like to travel more frequently than they currently do, on all journey types

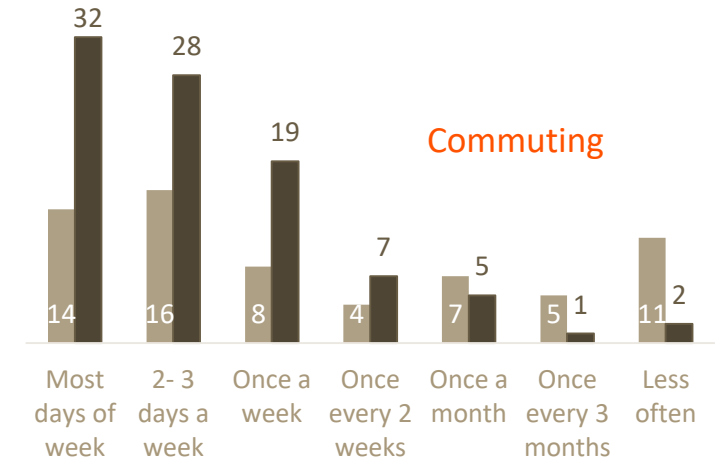
## Short leisure



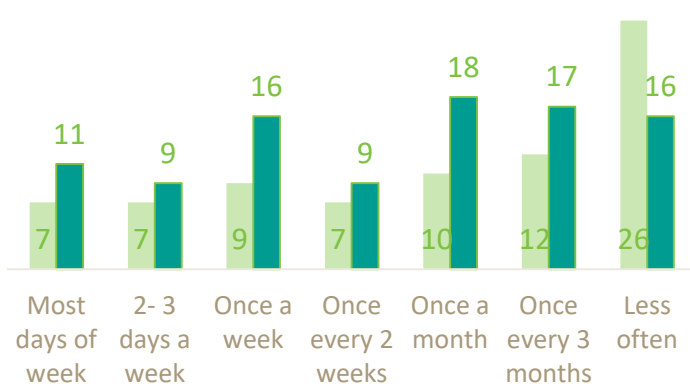
## Short business



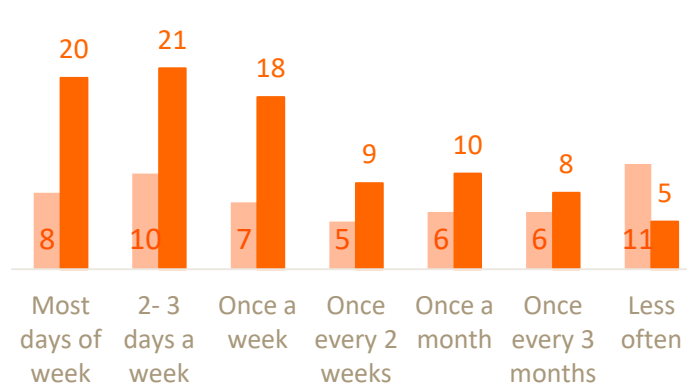
## Commuting



## Long leisure



## Long business



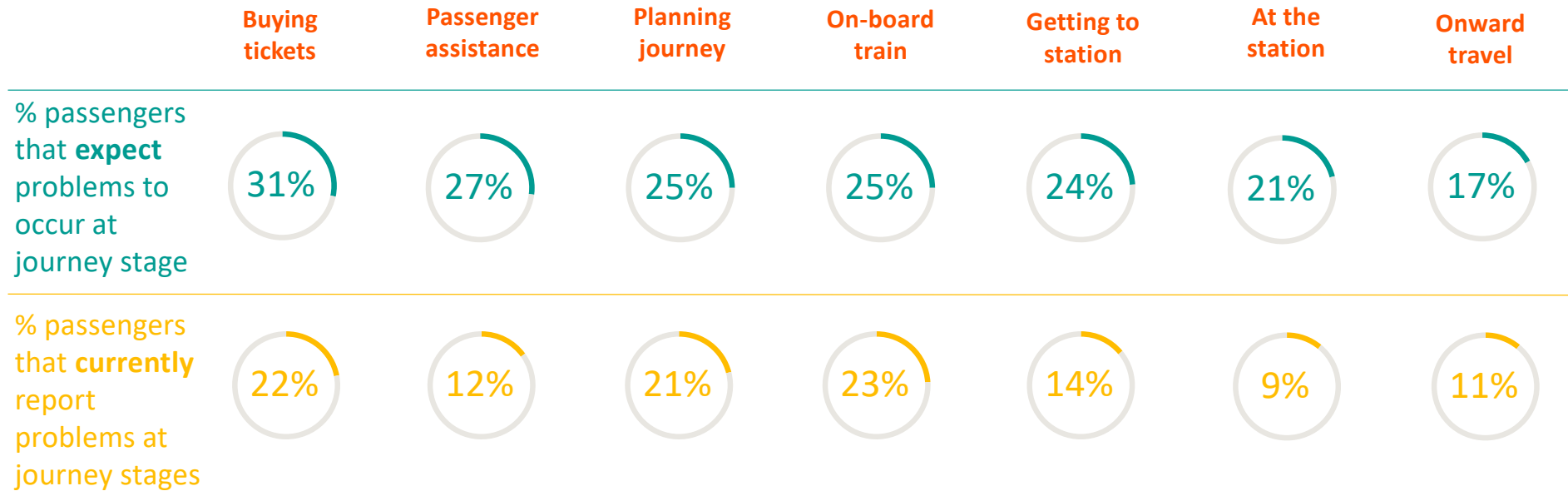
Most ideal travel frequency for leisure is monthly, though similar proportions would ideally be travelling on a weekly basis

Most ideal travel frequency for business is on a weekly, or more frequent basis

Most ideal commuting frequency is daily or every 2-3 days

Lighter shade – current use  
Darker shade – desired frequency

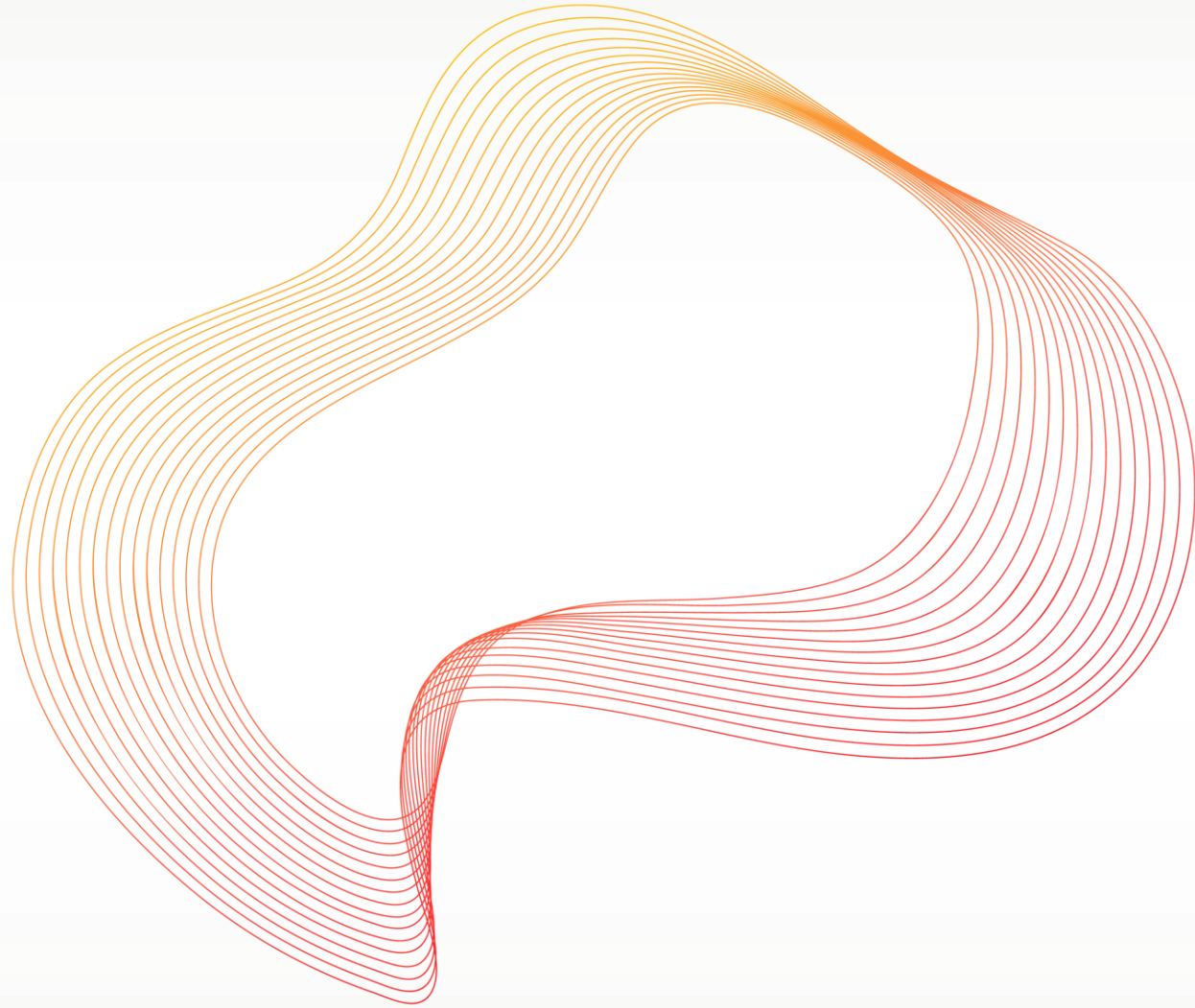
# For all journey stages, a greater proportion of disabled passengers expect to experience problems in the future than they do currently



**Journey stages whereby proportion of disabled passengers anticipating problems are greater than current problems** →



# Appendix



# Methods



# Literature review method

**Literature Review is based on sources and research conducted or published by transport regulatory bodies, government bodies, charities and campaign groups, transport watchdogs and academic institutions**

**The search for literature followed a number of procedures:**

- once the researcher identified the relevant transport watchdogs, campaign groups and charities, the researcher acquired publications from those websites
- governmental documents and national surveys were found on the online government collections
- the researcher worked from a number of key sources and followed relevant references made by the authors of reports and articles
- the researcher used relevant online academic search engines, principally The British Library and Jstor
- the researcher was advised through word of mouth on a number of sources provided by other people involved in the project, for example data sources such as Department for Transport (2016) *Proportion of Rail Fleet that is Accessible*

**The researcher kept the search for literature within certain parameters in order to avoid the risk of the search becoming uncontrolled, not relevant to the objectives and to avoid using less relevant source materials. These parameters included the following:**

- source materials must refer to the rail network and not other forms of public transport, for example buses, taxis, light-rail and London Underground
- source materials must refer to either the challenges and barriers that disabled passengers face, or the challenges and barriers that disabled people that are not currently using the rail network might face if they were to use the rail network
- if challenges and barriers to travel are not mentioned, source materials can also refer specifically to the end to end journey experience of disabled passengers using the rail network
- source materials must refer to the above criteria in the United Kingdom
- cross-country studies, for example by the European Commission, are within the parameters of the review if one of those countries is the United Kingdom

# Expert interviews method

## In-depth interviews were conducted with experts by researchers

The interviews were qualitative and exploratory in nature and broadly followed a topic guide that can be found in the appendix

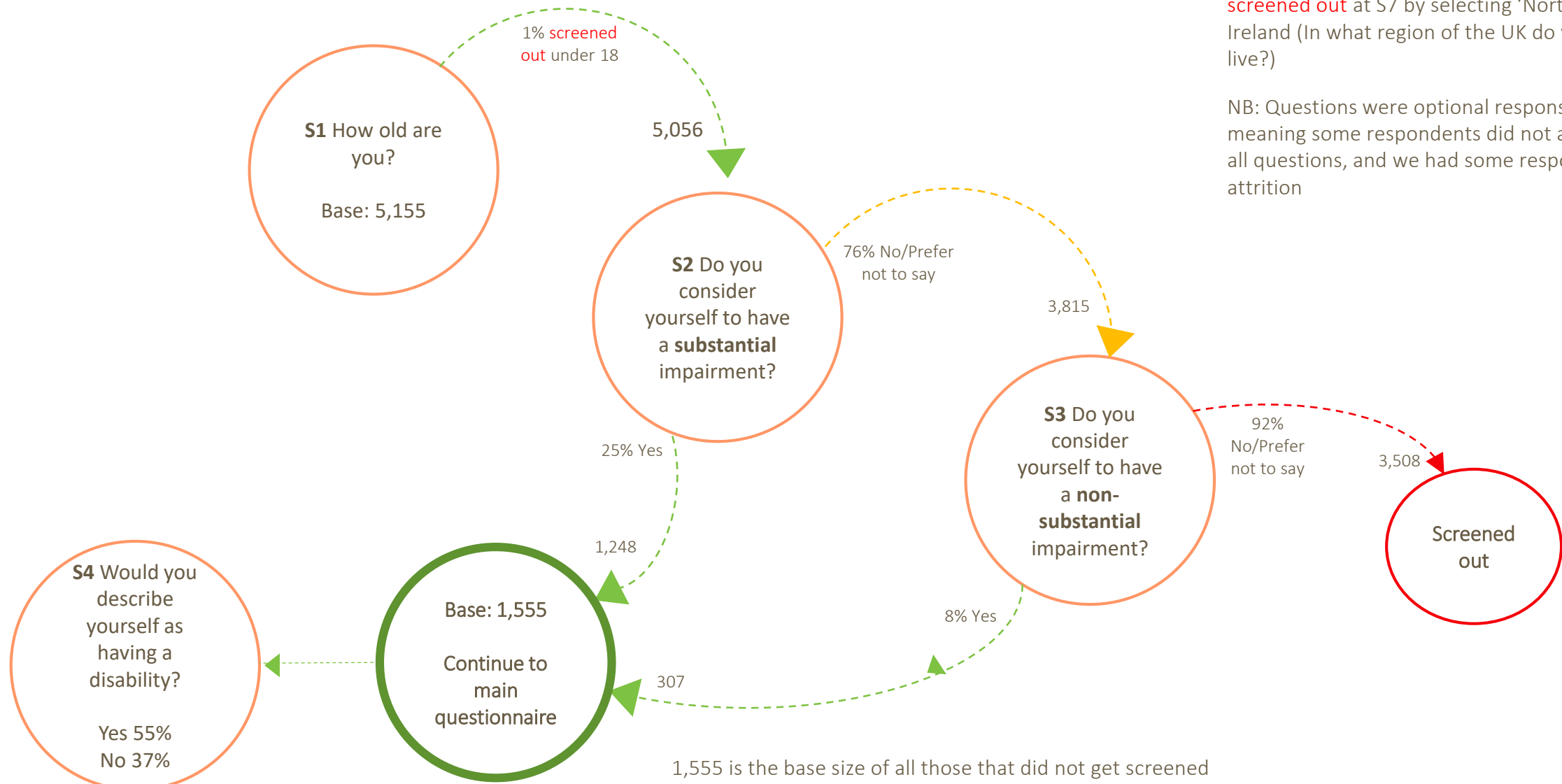
- the interviews typically lasted one hour with eight interviews conducted face to face and four conducted over the phone
- experts were recruited through contacts within the industry and the process was aided by the cooperation of the charities, rail industry and the advisory non-departmental public body that we spoke to
- the topics covered were different for charities representing disabled people and rail industry/ the advisory non-departmental public body
- the Topic Guide can be found in the appendix

## Who we spoke to:

We conducted 12 interviews with senior representatives across a cross-section of organisations shown below

Charities and campaign groups representing:	Learning disabilities Visual disabilities Disabilities in general Alzheimer's Mental health Disabilities associated with ageing The rights of disabled people Muscular dystrophy
Rail industry:	Three senior representatives working in the rail industry
Advisory non-departmental public body	Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee

# Quantitative screening process



NB: 2% [base: 37] of respondents later **screened out** at S7 by selecting 'Northern Ireland (In what region of the UK do you live?)

NB: Questions were optional response, meaning some respondents did not answer all questions, and we had some respondent attrition

1,555 is the base size of all those that did not get screened out. Specifically, they include those that consider themselves to have a substantial and/or a non-substantial impairment

# Qualitative interviews method

## Approach

This stage of the research process consisted of **50 in-depth interviews**

We conducted a total of 38 interviews via telephone with a geographical spread including Leeds, Birmingham, Essex, Scotland and Cambridge with a further 12 depth interviews (6 each) in London and Birmingham. All of the respondents were free found

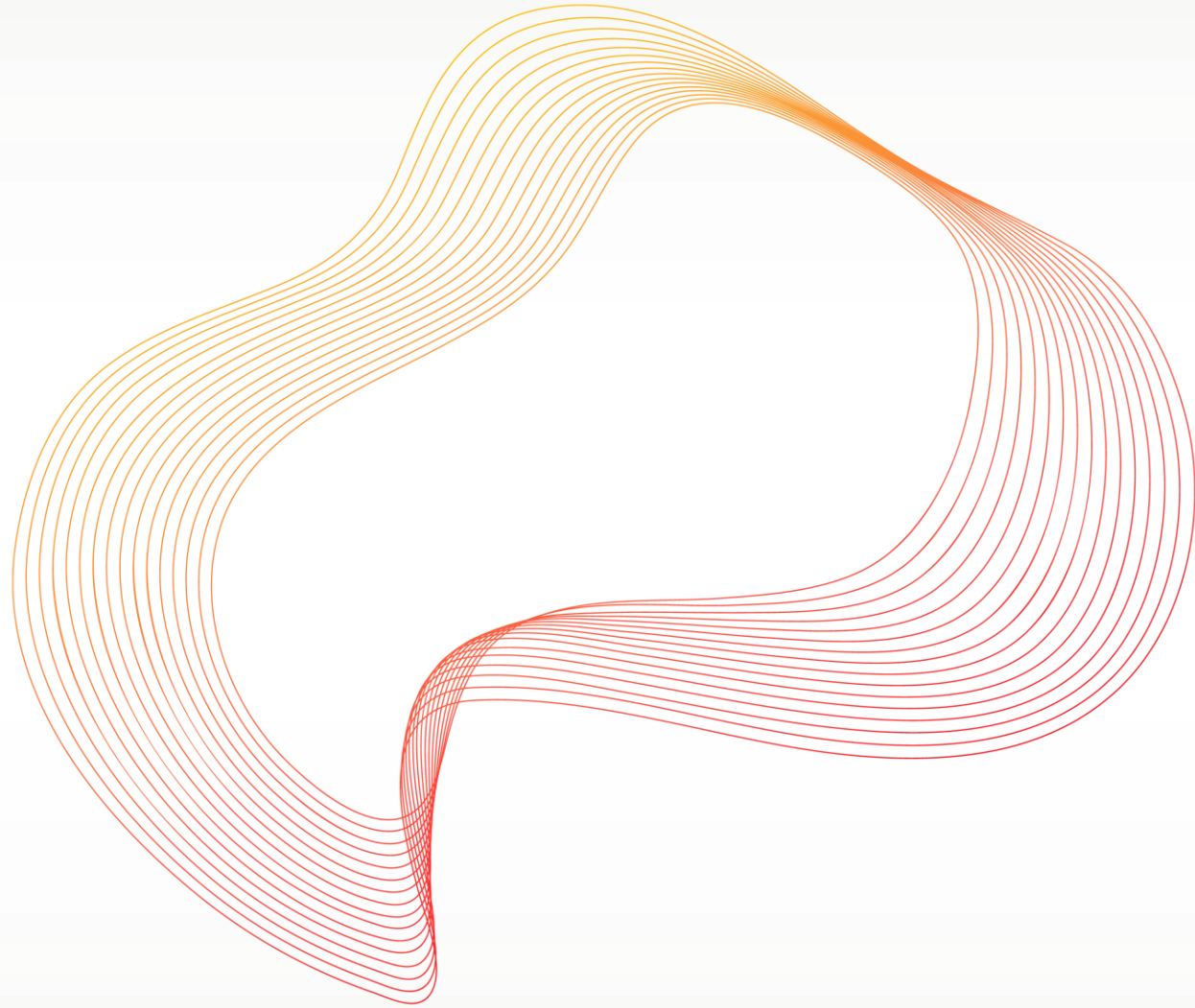
**Fifteen of 50** respondents completed a train journey prior to their interview, wearing an *autographer* (a small wearable camera that can be worn around the neck or fastened to lapel) around their neck. The autographer automatically takes a picture every 10 seconds, thus recoding the journey experience.

Passengers completed either a journey they make on a regular basis or one that they were unfamiliar with and have not made before

On completing the journey, the passenger returned the camera to enable an assessment of the images collected on their journey. At this stage we asked them to talk us through the key stages of the journey and any problems that they encountered

**All respondents were interviewed for 45 minutes / one hour**






# Qualitative discussion guide




# Topic Guide - User




Disabled Passengers' Research  
Discussion Guide V1.0

Prepared for



July 2017

 Illuminas

35228 Disabled Passengers  
Discussion Guide V1.0

## 1. Welcome and Introduction

- ❑ **Introduce Illuminas:** an independent market research company.
- ❑ **MRS Code of Conduct:**
  - ⊙ All information remains ~~absolutely confidential~~ and no individuals will be mentioned in our findings.
  - ⊙ The session will be audio (and possibly video) recorded for our reference – nothing will be attributed to an individual and the recordings will not be used in the future.
  - ⊙ **IF IN STUDIO:** Some of our clients may be viewing today's session. They're interested in hearing about your experiences, but will simply be listening.
  - ⊙ There will be no sales follow-up.
- ❑ We are undertaking a research study on behalf of Transport Focus (the independent body responsible for protecting the interests of Britain's rail passengers) . They wish to know more about your experiences when travelling by train and any difficulties people might face at various stages of their journeys. The results will be used to help inform future developments in train travel.
- ❑ The aim of this piece of research is to better understand your experiences of rail travel in the UK


## 2. Background

- ❑ Respondent background: age; family structure; occupation / employment status; any carer relationship
- ❑ Nature (and as appropriate history) of disability

## 3. Rail use


- ❑ **Pattern of rail use:**
  - ⊙ Purpose(s) (leisure, business, commute)
  - ⊙ Distance/ duration of journeys
  - ⊙ Frequency
  - ⊙ Travel alone or with others (or where appropriate, with assistance dog)
  - ⊙ Use of Passenger Assistance (How frequently? In what circumstances?)
  - ⊙ Extent of 'turn up and go' versus planned travel
  - ⊙ Any changes in pattern of rail use over time? What has driven this?

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 Illuminas

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# Topic Guide - User



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Discussion Guide V1.0

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- ☐ Explore access to/ use of other modes of transport (public and private)
  - ⊙ Comparisons with rail travel
  - ⊙ How trade off benefits and drawbacks of each option?
  - ⊙ How trade-offs vary according to journey type (length/ purpose etc.)

#### 4. Overall attitudes to rail


- ☐ Overall assessment of rail travel:
  - ⊙ Positives/ benefits
  - ⊙ Negatives/ drawbacks
  - ⊙ Any challenges barriers to using rail
  - ⊙ How varies by journey type
- ☐ Feelings when travelling by train: Confident? Secure? Happy? Worried? Nervous? Afraid?
- ☐ Journeys you would like to make by rail but feel you can't? Which? Why
- ☐ Overall, has train travel improved/ got worse in recent years? Examples?

#### 5. Detailed assessment of rail travel

- ☐ For each of the following areas establish:
  - ⊙ Range of experiences (positive and negative)
  - ⊙ Extent to which area presents any challenges
    - Extent to which these challenges inhibit rail travel
  - ⊙ Required improvements
  - ⊙ Variation by journey type
- ☐ **PLANNING A JOURNEY**
  - ⊙ Service schedules and frequencies
  - ⊙ Amount/ accessibility of information to help you plan (explore role of different channels/ media – web, phone, face-to-face, print etc.)
  - ⊙ Are journey's always planned?

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Discussion Guide V1.0

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- Is it possible to make 'turn up and go' [journeys](#)
- Views on need for/ extent of planning

#### ☐ PASSENGER ASSISTANCE

- ⊙ Awareness of assistance
- ⊙ Booking assistance
- ⊙ Availability of staff when booked
- ⊙ Accuracy/ reliability of services
- ⊙ Availability of 'turn up and go' help/ assistance

#### ☐ ACCESSIBILITY OF THE NETWORK

- ⊙ Getting to/ from rail services
- ⊙ Integration with other forms of transport

#### ☐ TICKETING

- ⊙ What tickets bought? Why?
- ⊙ Availability/ accessibility of information about tickets (across channels and different media)
- ⊙ Range and types of tickets available
- ⊙ Knowing one has the 'right' ticket
- ⊙ Purchase process and fulfilment at station via machine/ ticket office, websites/ apps, phone; any other channels e.g. phone
- ⊙ Use of/ awareness of Disabled Person's Railcard (and if appropriate Senior Railcard)
- ⊙ Price and value for money


#### ☐ STATIONS

- ⊙ Arrival: parking; linkage with other transport modes; general accessibility; costs
- ⊙ Availability/ quality of assistance
- ⊙ Availability/ quality of staff generally
- ⊙ Accessibility and getting around within the station
- ⊙ Signage, lighting and navigation within the station
- ⊙ Information and announcements

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# Topic Guide - User



35228 Disabled Passengers  
Discussion Guide V1.0

- ⊗ Station facilities: toilets; shelter/seating; shops/eating; other facilities (e.g. Wi-Fi, cashpoints etc.)
- ⊗ Feelings of safety and security
- ⊗ Any issues with other passengers
- ⊗ Getting to and from platforms
- ⊗ Boarding and alighting trains

⊗ **PUNCTUALITY AND RELIABILITY:**

- ⊗ Any experiences of delay or cancellation? How dealt with?
  - Impacts of delay or cancellation
- ⊗ Examples of help and assistance required/ provided


⊗ **ON-TRAIN AMENITY**

- ⊗ Overall accessibility
- ⊗ Level of comfort (seating, space available)
- ⊗ Overall carriage environment (crowding, cleanliness, temperature)
- ⊗ Facilities: toilets, refreshments, Wi-Fi, power points, tables, Wi-Fi, phone signal, luggage storage
- ⊗ On-board information and announcements
- ⊗ Availability/ quality of staff/ assistance if required
- ⊗ Feelings of safety and security
- ⊗ Any issues with other passengers
- ⊗ Probe variation: by rolling stock, route

⊗ **COMMUNICATIONS**

- ⊗ Experiences of communication with train companies/ other parts of the rail industry e. g. Network Rail
  - Day-to-day queries
  - Dealing with problems or complaints
  - During periods of service disruption
  - Across different communication channels

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35228 Disabled Passengers  
Discussion Guide V1.0

- ⊗ Positives/ negatives; example of good/ poor practice
- ⊗ Any examples of pro-active communication from the rail industry

⊗ **ONWARD TRAVEL**

- ⊗ Exiting station
- ⊗ Finding information for onward travel
- ⊗ Public transport systems

Taxi services


**6. Future travel**

- ⊗ Sum up on Likelihood of using train more/ less in future. Reasons why
  - ⊗ Desire to use the train more
  - ⊗ Key barriers to train use
  - ⊗ Journeys you would like to make by rail but feel you can't
  - ⊗ Priorities for improvement
- ⊗ Anything else you would like to add about your experiences of rail travel

On behalf of Illuminas, Transport Focus and DfT, thank you very much for your time.


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# Topic Guide - Non-User




Disabled Passengers' Research  
Discussion Guide V1.2  
Non-User

Prepared for



July 2017



35228 Disabled Passengers  
Non-user  
Discussion Guide V1.2

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

- 🔗 **Introduce Illuminas:** an independent market research company.
- 🔗 **MRS Code of Conduct:**
  - 🕒 All information remains ~~absolutely confidential~~ and no individuals will be mentioned in our findings.
  - 🕒 The session will be audio (and possibly video) recorded to save writing notes as we speak, before being destroyed – nothing will be attributed to an individual and the recordings will not be used in the future.
  - 🕒 There will be no sales follow-up.
- 🔗 We are undertaking a research study on behalf of Transport Focus (the independent body responsible for protecting the interests of Britain's rail passengers) and Department for Transport. They wish to know more about your experiences when travelling by train and any difficulties people might face at various stages of their journeys. The results will be used to help inform future developments in train travel.
- 🔗 When answering, please think only about the national rail network, not Underground, Metro or Tram services.

### 2. Background

Note facilities should be available to help participants with certain disabilities/impairments (but maybe covered in recruitment guide)


- 🔗 Respondent background: age; family structure; occupation / employment status; any carer relationship
- 🔗 Nature (and as appropriate history) of disability

### 3. Non-Rail use

- 🔗 Any previous rail use:
  - 🕒 Ever used or never used?
- 🔗 If never used, why?
- 🔗 If did use, when stopped using rail?
  - 🕒 Why?

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# Topic Guide - Non-User



35228 Disabled Passengers  
Non-user  
Discussion Guide V1.2

⊙

#### 4. Other transport modes:

- ⊙ Other modes of transport used (car, bus, taxi etc.)
  - Purpose(s) (leisure, business, commute)
- ⊙ Distance/ duration of journeys
- ⊙ Frequency
- ⊙ Travel alone or with others (or where appropriate, with assistance dog)
- ⊕ Comparisons with rail travel
  - ⊙ Trade off benefits and drawbacks of each option
  - ⊙ Trade-offs according to journey type (length/ purpose etc.)


#### 5. How many more train journeys could be made

- ⊕ Overall assessment of reasons preventing (more) rail travel:
  - ⊙ How often issues related to your disability affect travel choice
  - ⊙ Key negatives
  - ⊙ Specific challenges/barriers to using rail
  - ⊙ How challenges/barriers varies by journey type/time of day/distance etc

#### 6. Overall attitudes to rail and rail industry

- ⊕ Thoughts about the rail industry as a whole
  - ⊙ Attitudes towards disability and accessibility
    - In comparison with other industries
  - ⊙ How could they improve
- ⊕ Overall assessment of rail travel:
  - ⊙ Positives/benefits
  - ⊙ Negatives/drawbacks
  - ⊙ Any challenges/barriers to using rail

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35228 Disabled Passengers  
Non-user  
Discussion Guide V1.2

- ⊙ Discuss any potential 'work arounds' to any challenges/barriers
- ⊙ How varies by journey type

- ⊕ Emotion when thinking of travelling by train: Confident? Secure? Happy? Worried? Nervous? Afraid?
- ⊕ Journeys would like to make by rail but feel you can't? Which? Why

#### 7. Detailed assessment of rail travel

- ⊕ For each of the following areas establish:
  - ⊙ Summative recollection of experiences (if applicable)
  - ⊙ To what extent this had an impact on stopping train use
  - ⊙ Suggestions for improvements
    - How can this be prevented in future
    - Ways of solving issues
  - ⊙ Which journey stages are thought to be particularly inhibiting
    - Variation by journey type
  - ⊙ Probe in relation to disability

##### ⊕ PLANNING A JOURNEY

- ⊙ Service schedules and frequencies
- ⊙ Amount/accessibility of information
- ⊙ How would a train journey be planned?

##### ⊕ PASSENGER ASSISTANCE

- ⊙ Awareness of assistance
  - Expectations around the service
- ⊙ Thoughts on 'turn up and go' help/assistance vs. booked


##### ⊕ TICKETING

- ⊙ Availability/accessibility of information about tickets, knowing what tickets to buy
- ⊙ Anticipated purchase process and fulfilment at station via machine/ticket office, websites/apps, phone; any other channels e.g. phone

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# Topic Guide - Non-User

 35228 Disabled Passengers  
Non-user  
Discussion Guide V1.2

- ⊗ Awareness of Disabled Person's Railcard (and if appropriate Senior Railcard)
- ⊗ Price and value for money
- ⊗ **STATIONS**
  - ⊗ Arrival: parking; linkage with other transport modes; general accessibility; costs
  - ⊗ Probe on anticipated issues with:
    - Getting round the station (including platform switches)
    - Signage, lighting and navigation within the station
    - Information and announcements
    - Suitability of station facilities: toilets; shelter/seating; shops/eating; other facilities (e.g. Wi-Fi, cashpoints etc.)
  - ⊗ Expected/anticipated issues with boarding and alighting trains
- ⊗ **PUNCTUALITY AND RELIABILITY:**
  - ⊗ Impacts of delay or cancellation
  - ⊗ How could the effect of impacts be alleviated
- ⊗ **ON-TRAIN AMENITIES**
  - ⊗ Awareness of different on-board amenities: toilets, refreshments, Wi-Fi, power points, tables, Wi-Fi, phone signal, luggage storage
  - ⊗ What amenities are needed and anticipated to be available on a train journey
  - ⊗ Level of comfort (availability and suitability of seating, other passengers attitudes to making room)
  - ⊗ Overall carriage environment (crowding, cleanliness, temperature, noise, visuals)
  - ⊗ On-board information and announcements
  - ⊗ Anticipated availability/ quality of staff/ assistance if required
  - ⊗ Feelings of safety and security/issues with other passengers
  - ⊗ Probe variation: by train type, route, time of day
- ⊗ **COMMUNICATIONS**
  - ⊗ Any required communication with train companies/rail industry
    - Before setting off for travel – extent of support info already written, customer help/support/enquiry lines, willingness to help

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 35228 Disabled Passengers  
Non-user  
Discussion Guide V1.2

- Whilst actually travelling – including is there is disruption
- Dealing with problems or complaints
- ⊗ **ONWARD TRAVEL**
  - ⊗ What required for exiting station
  - ⊗ Finding information for onward travel
  - ⊗ Public transport systems
  - ⊗ Taxi services

## 8. Opinion of rail company's attitudes to disability and industry set up

- ⊗ Opinions how train companies approach disability
- ⊗ The industry as a whole

## 9. Summary

- ⊗ Sum up on the key issues impacting travel
- ⊗ How could rail travel be made easier for someone with your type of disability/impairment

On behalf of [Illuminas](#), [Transport Focus](#) and [DfT](#), thank you very much for your time.

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