

# Other People's Attitudes when disabled people use public transport



**An easy-read summary**

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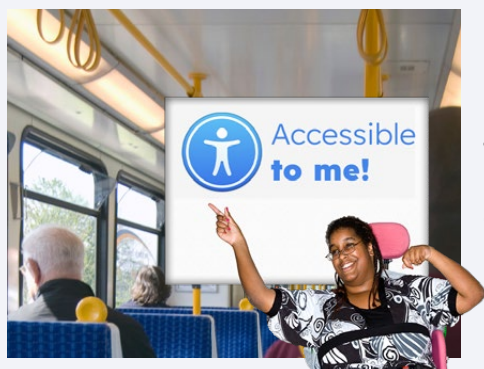
This report uses **blue words**.

When a word or phrase is difficult, we have written it in **blue writing** and explained it.

# Introduction



**We are the National Centre for Accessible Transport, called 'ncat' for short.**

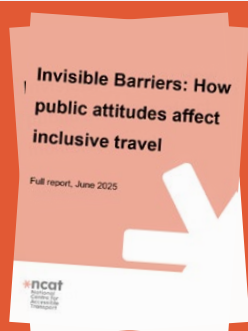


**We work to make transport more accessible for disabled people.**



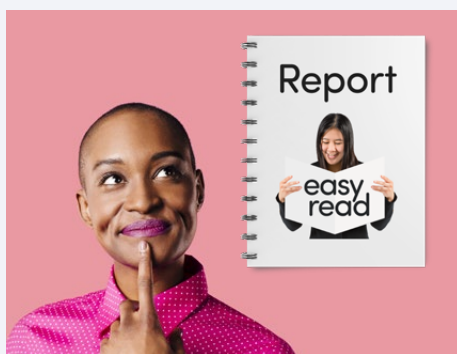
**We have written a report about:**

**Other people's attitudes when disabled people use public transport.**



**The report link is here:**

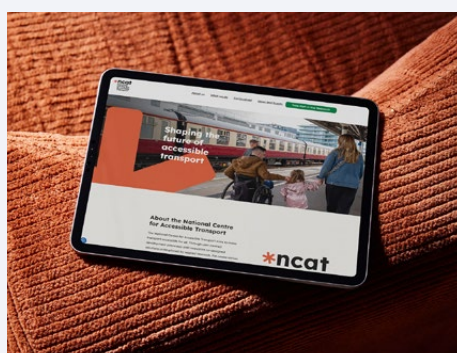
**Invisible Barriers- How public attitudes affect inclusive travel**



**This is an easy read version of the highlights report.**



**We started making disability and transport reports in 2023.**



**It is important to read these other reports as well. They are on our website:**

**[www.ncat.uk](http://www.ncat.uk)**



**ncat encourages you to use the information in this report.**



**When you use information from this report, please say it is from:**



**'ncat (2025). Invisible Barriers – How public attitudes affect inclusive travel.**

**Available at [www.ncat.uk](http://www.ncat.uk)**

# Why do we do this work?



**Disabled people make 38% fewer journeys using transport than non-disabled people.**



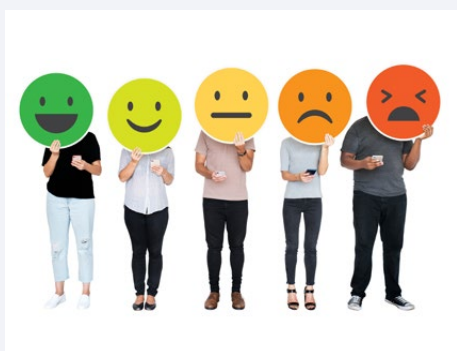
**This situation has not changed for over 10 years.**



**Disabled people come across many challenges to making a journey.**



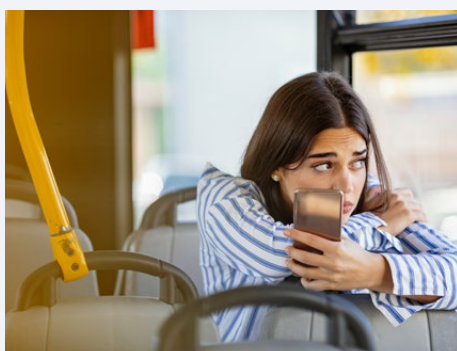
The **attitudes and behaviours** of other people are one of those challenges.



**Attitudes** are our thoughts and feelings.



**Behaviours** are what we do when we have those thoughts and feelings.



Disabled people often experience negative attitudes and behaviours while traveling.





**This can have an impact on how often they want to travel.**



**Mostly, other people are fine.**

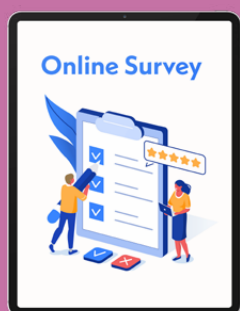


**But when they are not, it is upsetting and makes a journey more difficult.**



**We wanted to find out more about this.**





**In our survey:**



**6 out of 10 disabled people said that they experience poor attitudes or behaviours when they are travelling.**



**For people with mental health difficulties, this rose to almost 9 in 10 people.**



# What did we do and how did we do it?



**We did this project in 5 parts:**



**First part:**

**We looked at what other people had already found out.**



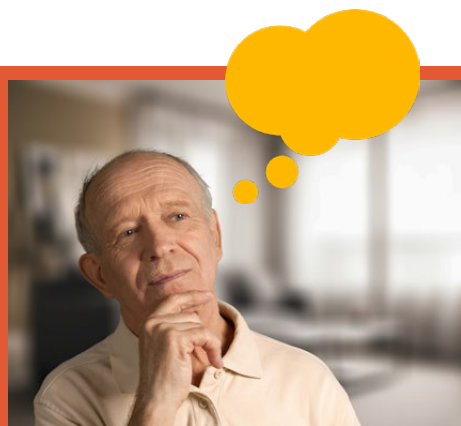
**To start with we looked at attitudes towards disabled people in everyday life.**



**Then we looked at those attitudes when disabled people were travelling.**



**We also looked at what had already been done to change how people:**



**thought about disabled people**

**and**



**acted towards disabled people.**



## Second part

**We brought disabled people together to tell us about their experiences.**



# RiDC

**We asked the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers to do this for us.**



**The group talked about the types of attitudes disabled people experience using any transport.**



**For example, walking, wheeling and cycling.**



**People talked about how poor attitudes from non-disabled people affects them.**

## Improvements



**They suggested ways to improve these poor attitudes.**



**It is interesting to see exactly what disabled people said about other people's attitudes when they are travelling.**



**You can see the easy-read report from the discussions here:**


**What disabled people said**





### Third part


In our meetings, disabled people made a list of other people's attitudes and behaviour which they found upsetting.



They described how they would like to see people behave instead.



We worked out ways non-disabled people could change their behaviour towards disabled people.

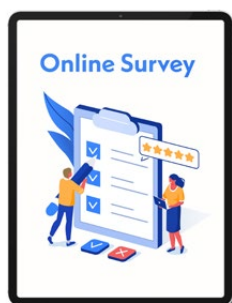


We tested these ideas. Then we put them in order of which was the most important.

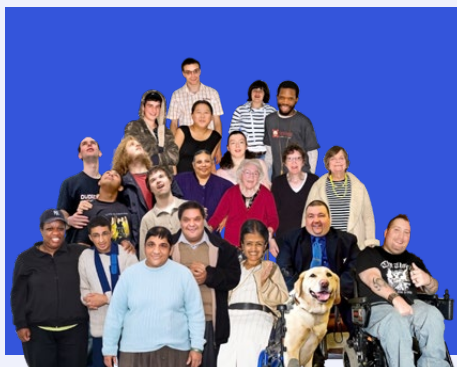




**We asked non-disabled people about their attitudes and behaviours and how they thought things could change for the better.**



**We did this using an online survey.**



**Fourth part**

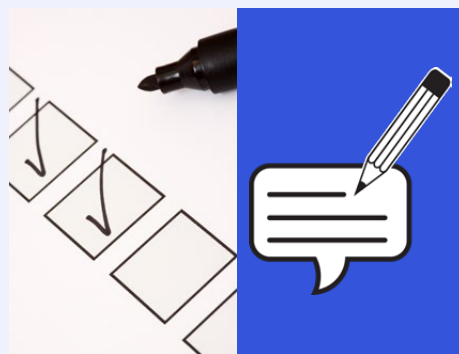
**1,464 people finished the survey.**



**Equal numbers of men and women filled in the survey.**



**However, we didn't get a good mixture of people from different backgrounds.**



**Our survey asked people to tick answers and also to write comments.**



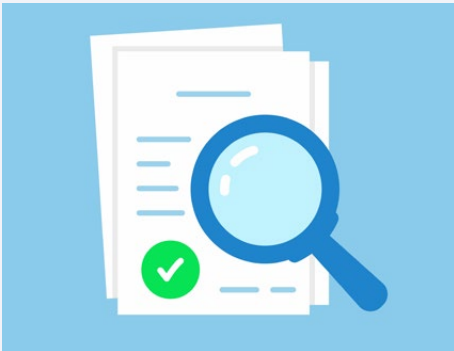
**This meant we found out quite a lot of detail about what non-disabled people were thinking about disabled people.**



## **Fifth part**

**We wrote this report to bring together what we found out.**

# What did we find out?



**What had other people already found out?**



**Here are some examples:**



**People who are not disabled have better attitudes if they already have contact with disabled people in everyday life.**



**Attitudes of non-disabled people are different depending on the disability.**



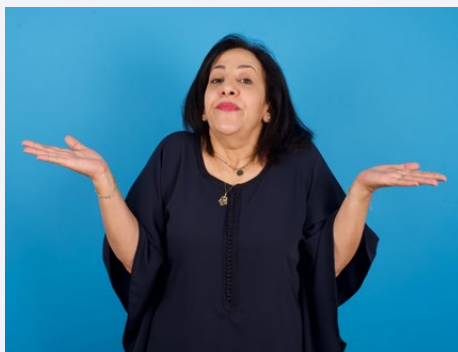
**Students from schools which encourage good attitudes behave better.**



**Non-disabled people who travel more often have a better attitude.**



**Giving up a seat**



**Knowing when to give up a seat is complicated.**

**Some things that matter are:**



**how 'disabled' the person 'looks'**



**if the train or bus is crowded**



**how awkward the non-disabled person feels**





**pretending not to notice a person in need**



**the 'Please offer me a seat' badge works well**



**good seating design helps with 'priority seating' signs.**





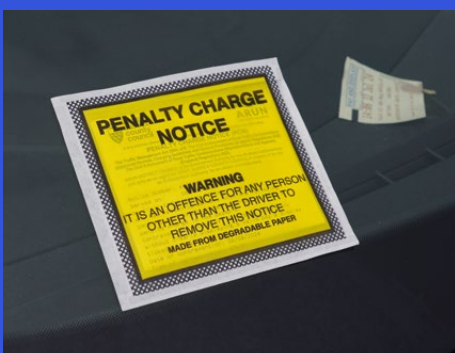
## Parking:



Finding disabled parking bays is a problem.



Non-disabled people are often using disabled bays.



Not enough fines are given out when disabled bays are not used properly.



**When fines are regularly given out, non-disabled people are less likely to use disabled bays.**



**What did disabled people tell us?**



**Disabled people told us that:**



**Non-disabled people do not understand disability.**



**Politics and news stories help to create poor attitudes towards disabled people.**



**Poor attitudes from non-disabled people knock disabled people's confidence and affects their mental health.**



**Disabled people need to help design transport and services to help make them more accessible.**



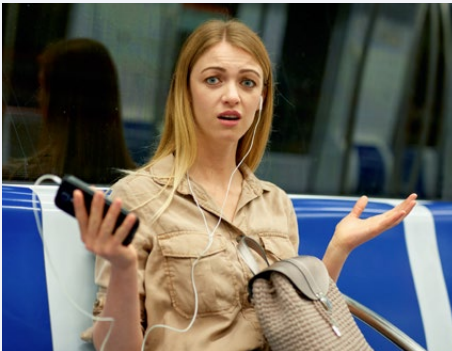
**The easy-read report about what disabled people said is here:**

**What disabled people said**





**Non-disabled people need to understand that disabilities are not always visible.**



**With seating, people who have a non-visible disability or who look young are not taken seriously.**



**Non-disabled people need to learn how to ask if they think someone would like assistance.**





**What ideas did we have about how to change people's attitudes for the better?**



**The 4 most important areas to think about are:**



**1 Seating on public transport**



**2 Wheelchair spaces**



**3**

**Street space**



**4**

**Disabled parking**



**Other areas:**



**support for carers**





**assistance animals**



**offering assistance and communicating  
with disabled people**



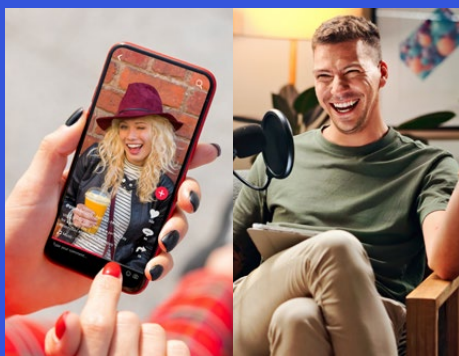
**non-visible disabilities.**



**There is a long list of ideas to  
improve things.**



**For example:**



**celebrities leading campaigns**



**making complaints systems work better**



**education in schools and community groups – make it cool to do the right thing**



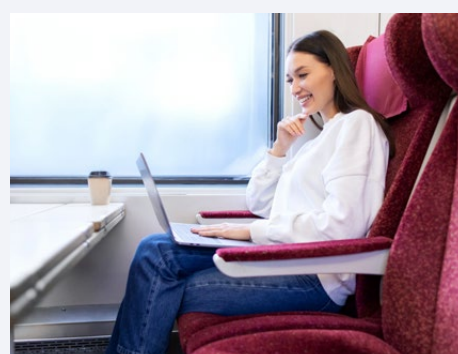
**change the words 'priority seating' to something more emotional**



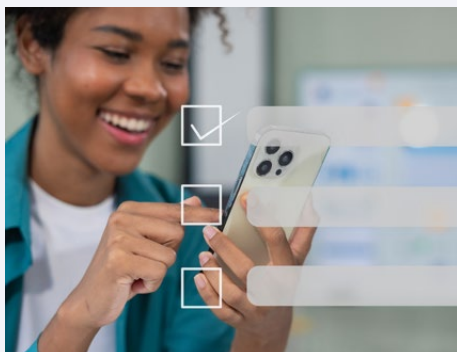
**make a 'do you want my seat?' badge for non-disabled people.**



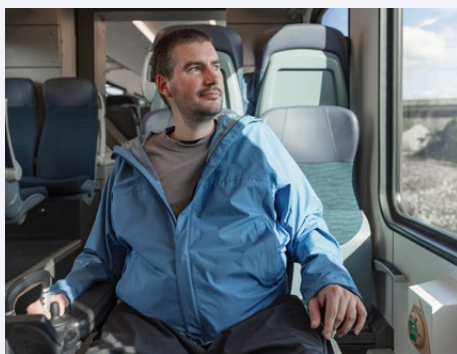
**A 'do you want my seat' badge would be similar to the 'please offer me a seat badge' but it would be worn by non-disabled people.**



**This is a free badge available to help let other people know that you need a seat.**



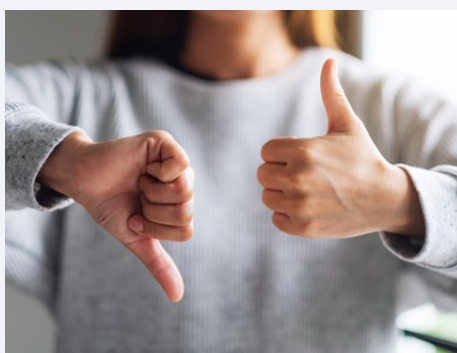
**What did non-disabled people tell us?**



**They felt it was important to make sure disabled people could travel without being upset by other people's attitudes.**



**Making sure people learned about the right attitudes when they were young was very important.**



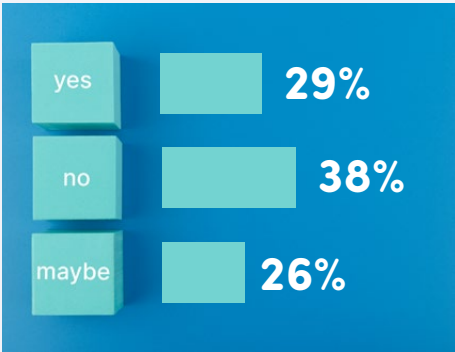
**But – not everyone felt the same about how to help.**



**For example:**



**We asked non-disabled people whether they would be willing to wear a badge saying they are happy to give up their seat.**



**Only 29% of people said yes, 38% said no and 26% said maybe.**



**They did like some of the ideas we asked them about, like:**





**having more luggage space  
when travelling**



**having good disability awareness videos  
on social media**



**better understanding of the blue badge  
and disabled bays**



**regular fines for parking in disabled bays.**

# What should happen next?



**We now understand more about poor behaviour towards disabled people when they are travelling.**



**We also know more about how to change those behaviours.**

**1****ACTION 1****2****ACTION 2****3****ACTION 3**

**Here are some of the things that need to happen...**



**People who work in transport:**



**create more luggage space for everyone**



**fine non-disabled people who use disabled parking spaces**



**keep checking that the changes they make are working.**



**People who work in government:**



**must make sure we educate young people in schools to have good attitudes towards disabled people**



**have public information campaigns about good attitudes**



**improve the law and the rules about making transport accessible**



**support transport companies when they are trying to make things better**



**make a much stronger complaints system**



**start a conversation about what to do when non-disabled people do not help disabled people.**



## Researcher

People who do research (finding out how to do things better).

They need to:



find out more about how to change public attitudes



include disabled people right from the beginning of their research



make sure disabled people are included fairly, like being paid for their time



make sure that they tell everyone what they find out.



ncat will:



  
National  
Centre for  
Accessible  
Transport

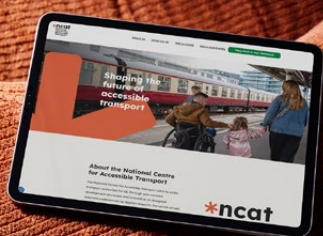
make sure everyone knows about this report



use this report to help us with funding other projects.



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