

Other People's Attitudes when disabled people use public transport

What disabled people said



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.



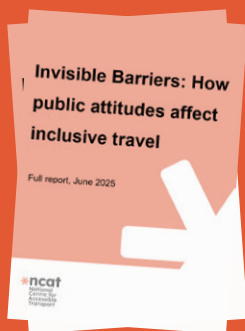
We work to make transport more accessible for disabled people.



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



The easy-read version of the full report is here:

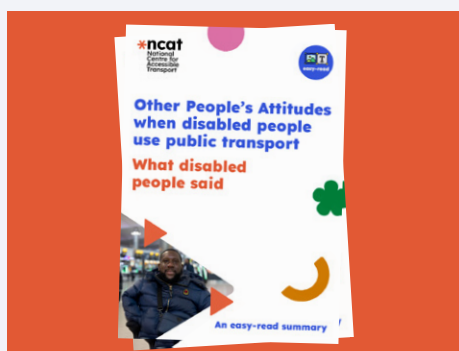
Other People's Attitudes when disabled people use public transport



Our full report includes some of what disabled said about other people's attitudes.



This is a second report about public attitudes. It explains more about what disabled people themselves said.



It is called:

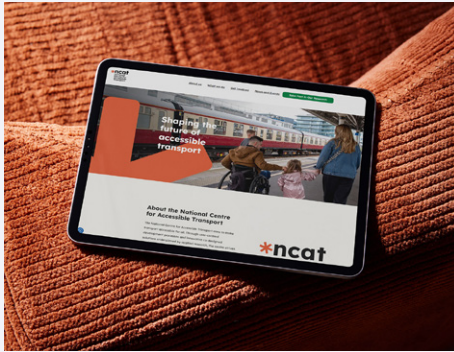
'Other People's Attitudes when disabled people use public transport: what disabled people said'



This is the easy-read version.



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



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



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



**'ncat (2025). 'Other people's attitudes when disabled people use public transport: what disabled people said
Available at 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.



Mostly, other people are fine.



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



This can be:



verbal abuse from other passengers



transport staff not believing disabled people when they ask for what they need



This can happen anywhere and on any kind of journey.



We found that: Almost every disabled person who has mental health difficulties said they find travelling unpleasant because of other people's attitudes.



We wanted to find out more about what travel problems disabled people face from other people.



Our report makes suggestions on how to improve things.



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



This report is about what they said.

What did we do and how did we do it?



ncat has a Community of Accessible Transport Panel. The members of this panel have a disability.



They are all interested in making public transport easier for disabled people to use.



They help ncat plan what to do.

14



We brought 14 panel members together to discuss their experiences.



We split them into groups of 3-6 people.

Each group had people who:



shared the same or similar disability



came across similar difficulties when travelling



Their disabilities were:



mobility, **cognitive, sensory, visible and non-visible.**



****Cognitive** means how to think and to make decisions.**



They had different ages, ethnicity and gender. They lived in different places in the UK.



The three groups met on Zoom for 90 minutes.



They talked about the poor attitudes they came across from other people.



This was when they were on any kind of transport - as well as walking, wheeling and cycling.



They suggested how things could be better.



We recorded the meetings.



We separated what people talked about into different areas.



Then we wrote it all down in our report.



In our report, we have been very careful to make sure no one can be recognised from what they said.

What did we find out?

Our experiences



The groups explained about their experiences.

These are:



Understanding disability



The public and transport staff do not understand disability.



They have a narrow idea of who a disabled person is.



They do not understand that there are many different disabilities - and that they have many different needs.



When the public cannot 'see' a disability, the person gets less help and is often not believed.



Young disabled people experience this a lot!

Quote from someone in the group: **"Oh, you're a bit too young to be disabled."**

Why are you using a walking stick? It's like you're giving up, and it's just, it's really disheartening."



Abuse



Other passengers are sometimes abusive towards disabled people.



Many people in our groups had been upset by verbal abuse when travelling.



Many had been threatened with physical violence.



People said they had:



been sworn at or laughed at



been forced off a train



had their carers threatened and made to feel frightened



been called really unpleasant and **dehumanising** names



Dehumanising means being treated as if you are not a human being.

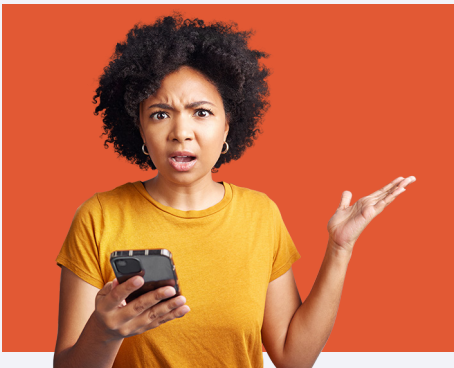
Quote from someone in the group:

"And these elderly ladies come up to me and said, we're gonna be fking late for work because of you."**

"And then I had another, a mother with a child in buggy and I said, 'there was no space' and she said, you're gonna make me late for picking my f**king daughter up from school."



Politics and news media



People in our groups felt that politicians talked about disabled people as "scroungers" and as "**society's baggage**"



When someone says disabled people are "**society's baggage**" they mean disabled people make life difficult for everyone else.



This meant that the public, other people, then felt it was OK to feel and say the same.



Our groups said that the media was unfair about disabled people and that it had got worse in recent years.

“I think one of the biggest problems we all face right now is the fact that the media (describe) disabled people as scroungers, as to be hangers-on, you know, things like that..... where disabled people seem to have a handout, that they always want more, which is complete nonsense.

All we want is an independent life.”



Damage to mental health when travelling



The damage to disabled people's mental health when travelling is a big worry!



Transport staff and other passengers can be so rude and unpleasant.



Our groups told us that they feel scared and anxious when travelling.



They explained that they:



have panic attacks



withdraw into themselves



cut off from their feelings



struggle to just be themselves



feel they want to die



become less confident about going on public transport.

"I've been refused to get on the bus before because the driver wouldn't lower the ramp...just the attitude and it makes you so anxious.

You know, you want to get on the bus... you've got a bus pass, so you don't have to pay. But the anxiety and the butterflies I get at just the thought of me going on a bus."



People said they leave the house less because they did not want to face those unpleasant attitudes alone.



Or - they stop travelling alone.

What should happen next?



Our groups described many ways that other people's attitudes could change for the better.

1 ACTION 1 

2 ACTION 2 

3 ACTION 3 

Here are just 3 suggestions about what we need to do.



1

Working together



Ideas for changing attitudes will not work unless disabled people are involved in making them.



2 Education



Both the public and transport staff need more and better education about disability.



Disabled people need to be among the teachers.



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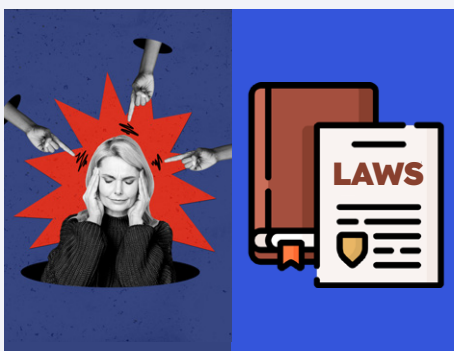
The Law



Government organisations must take responsibility for improving attitudes towards disabled people.



Better laws are needed to stop people using abusive language.



Better laws are needed to stop bad behaviour.

What ncat will now do



ncat promises to:



share what our report says in other research

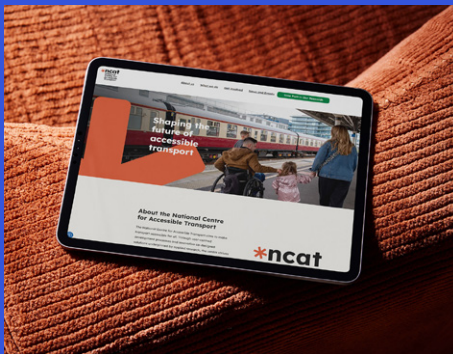
and



make sure our report is used by everyone who wants to make public transport accessible for disabled people.



For more information about ncat:



visit our website:

www.ncat.uk



send an email to this address

info@ncat.uk



follow us on LinkedIn:

linkedin.com/company/ncat-uk

The information in this booklet was adapted from an original written by ncat.

This easy-read version has been created with the help of the people below who use easy-read materials themselves.



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