

ncat Report: what we've achieved over the last 3 years



An easy-read summary

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About this report



Reading speed is different for everybody, but we think it will take about 12 minutes to read this report.



This report uses **blue words**.

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

Summary



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



We work to make transport more accessible for disabled people.

Funded by



**Motability
Foundation**

**ncat is funded by the
Motability Foundation.**



Since 2023, ncat has worked 17 research topics.



They have been about lots of different things, including:



streets and pavements



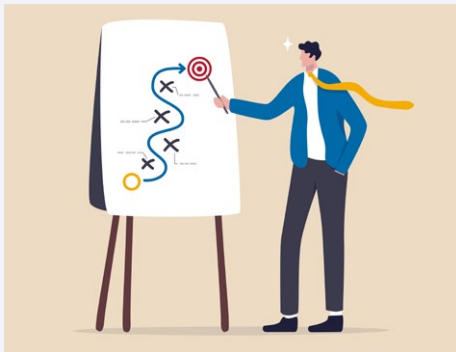
vehicles and stations



travel information



other people's attitudes.



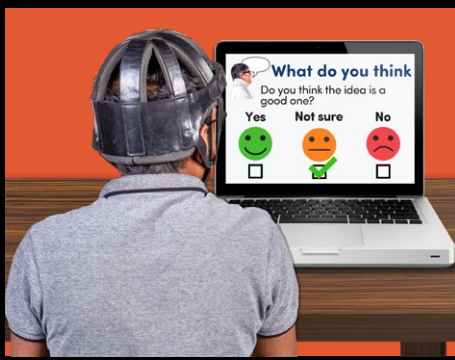
All of these research projects have helped ncat to better understand what makes travel difficult.



Disabled people's experiences have helped design this work.

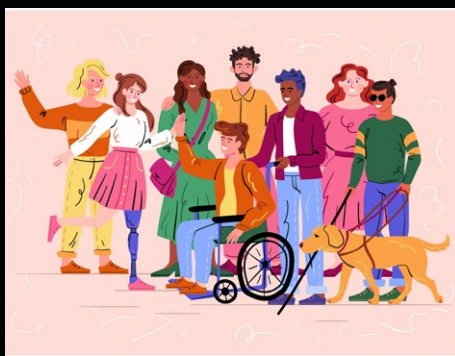


Over 3 years we have:

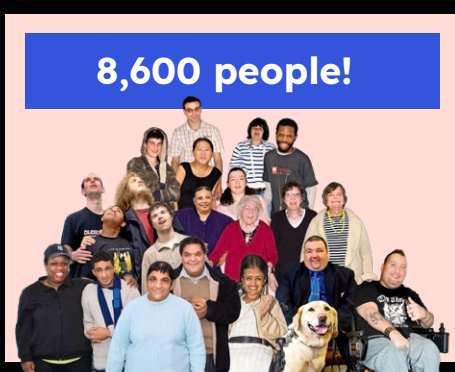


shared 19 national surveys

7,733 people responded to our surveys



supported our Community of Accessible Transport (CAT) panel, which now has more than 3,300 members



In total 8,600 people have been involved in our research and engagement work.



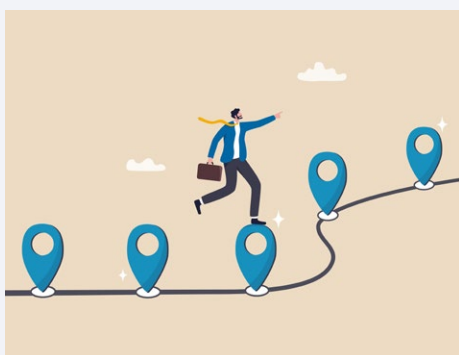
A message from our CEO, Emma Partlow



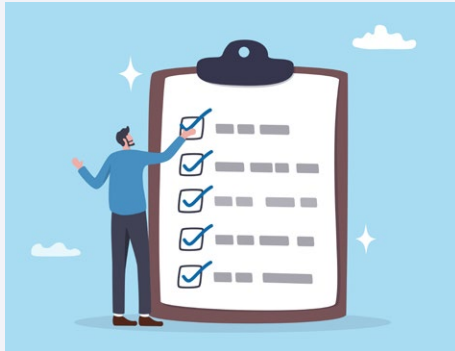
Transport connects us and helps people to be independent.



Over the last 3 years ncat has brought together disabled people, researchers and people who work in the transport industry.



Our work shows that accessibility affects every part of the journey.

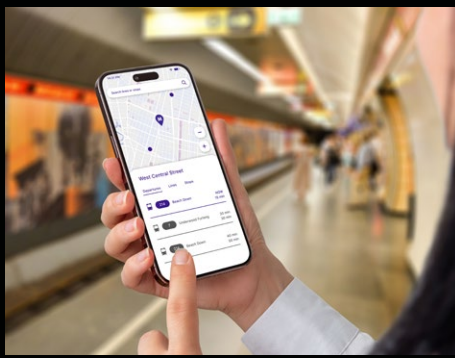


There are lots of barriers to accessibility.

They include:



streets and stations



having accurate information



the way transport services are designed



other people's attitudes.



A mix of these barriers can make journeys less predictable, more complicated



For many people, barriers make journeys not possible at all.



Accessible transport is really important to people in everyday life.



Reliable journeys help people to:



go to work



go to medical appointments



meet up with friends



go to events in the community.



Transport barriers also stop disabled people spending money out and about.





A message from our chair of the Governance Board, OBE Keith Richards



I am immensely proud of what ncat has achieved in a brief period, bringing together the expertise of its consortium partners, governance board, expert panel and growing Community of Accessible Transport.



This report reflects the strength of that collective approach.

Disabled



It shows how sustained collaboration and co-creation with disabled people can generate insight that is both credible and practical.



As ncat moves into its next phase, our focus is on ensuring this work drives real change.



That means supporting decision-makers across government, industry and the wider sector to apply this evidence in practice, embedding accessibility into policy, design and delivery.



Our ambition is clear: to see accessibility considered consistently, not exceptionally, and to ensure that the progress made so far translates into lasting impact across the transport system.

Language and approach



We understand that people are disabled because barriers in society make things harder.



Disabled people are experts by experience.



We listen to disabled people who use transport regularly.



People's experience with transport helps to tell us about issues and barriers across the whole transport system.



A small team of disabled people worked together to make this easy-read report.

Steven from the group said:

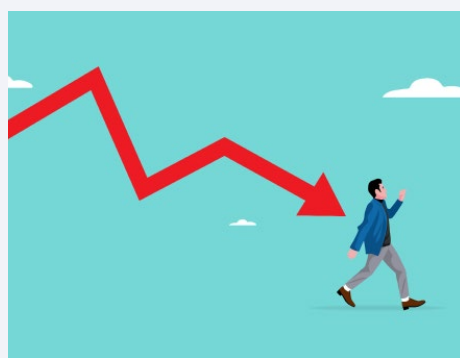
A man in a blue plaid shirt is looking at a document. Above him are two thought bubbles: one containing the word "Simple" and another containing the words "Language".

"We work to make it simpler and t help people understand the words and sentences."

A woman with glasses is smiling and holding a large white card that says "easy read" in black text.

"Sometimes I have trouble understanding all the words, so easy-read with less words helps explain things clearly to me."

About ncat



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



This is called the **transport accessibility gap.**



In this document, we talk about **access barriers.**



Access barriers (often called 'barriers' in this report) are the things that make it difficult for disabled people to access services, information, or physical spaces.



These barriers affect people with all types of disabilities.



This means that disabled people make less journeys because of the difficulties they face while travelling.

10 years!

When ncat started in 2023 this had not changed for the past 10 years.

About our funder: the Motability Foundation

Funded by



**Motability
Foundation**

The Motability Foundation is a charity that improves access to transport for disabled people.



The Motability Foundation works to help give people freedom and independence.



The Motability Foundation gave ncat a £20 million grant that lasts for 7 years.



**CEO of the Motability Foundation,
Nigel Fletcher, said:**



“Our work is driven by a simple but powerful aim: to build transport equity by addressing the significant travel barriers disabled people face that limit choice, confidence and freedom.”

Accessible
to all



“This is why we fund, support and invest in innovation and research to close the accessibility gap that remains.”

The organisations that are part of ncat



ncat is supported and delivered by a team of different organisations.



This includes staff from Coventry University and:



Connected Places Catapult who help us with clever ideas and expertise



designability

Designability who help us with inclusive design that helps people



Policy Connect

Policy Connect who help with policies and connections to Parliament



RiDC

Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RiDC) who us help us with inclusive research



WSP

WSP who help us with technical expertise about transport.

Lived experiences



The Community of Accessible Transport (CAT) panel helps us to listen to disabled people.



Panel members are experts in their own experience.



Members get paid for their time and input.



The CAT panel helps us to hear people's real experiences using transport.

“I joined the CAT Panel because it’s the best way to make things better and contribute as a person with a disability.

I would suggest to people who are struggling, come and share your experiences. Contribute and make everything better for everyone.”

Adnan, CAT Panel Member

“The CAT Panel is important because it’s about grounding the project in issues. It would be great if more disabled people sign up because everyone’s experiences are different.”

Shail, CAT Panel Member

ncat impact

Our experiences



ncat has worked with disabled people and the transport industry to better understand disabled people's experiences.



In our work:

Research Output

17 major research outputs

19 national surveys

Implementation & Policy Impact

Transport Barriers Database

Resource collection of 650+ papers and projects

8 Design Opportunities

Accessibility Dataset Toolkit

Depth of Participation

2,036 active contributors to research and engagement

97 qualitative research participants

32 Experts by Experience

Scale of Engagement

7,733 survey participants

3,400+ CAT panel members



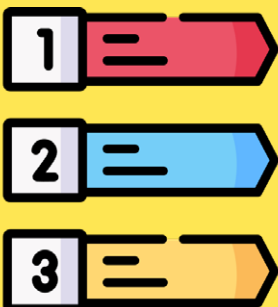
Supporting transport ideas



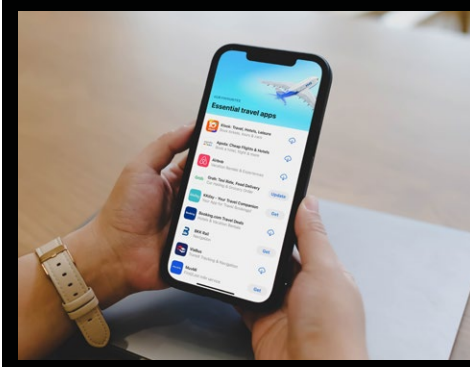
ncat supports good and new ideas about transport.



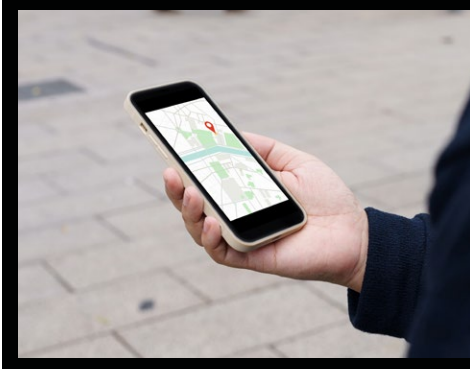
ncat gave funding to organisations that had good ideas about making transport more accessible.



These ideas include things like:



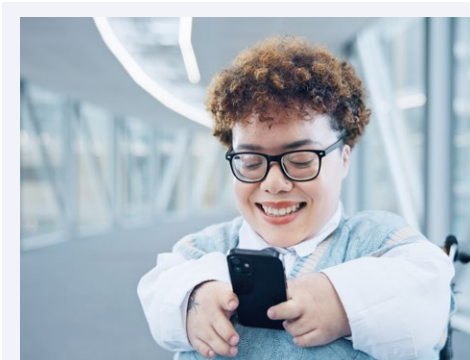
online accessibility (phone apps and services)



technology that helps people find their way around



better passenger information.



These projects are developed with disabled people and tested in real life.

92% of disabled people report experiencing barriers on at least one mode of transport

'Understanding and identifying barriers to accessing transport. The experiences of disabled people in the UK'. November 2024



Journeys across the transport system



Transport journeys are usually not just one step.



Instead, journeys involve lots of different steps.

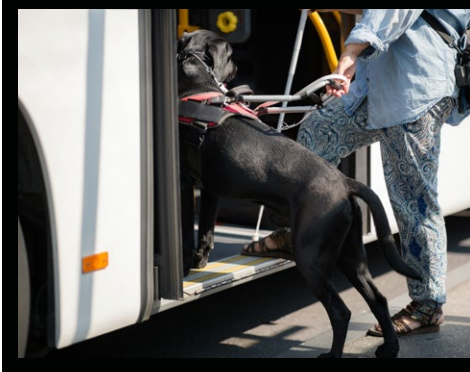
Things like:



moving around local streets



getting to transport stations



getting on and off vehicles



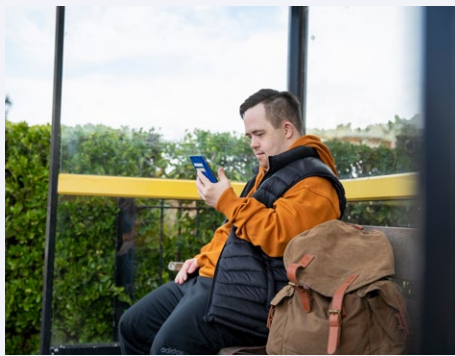
understanding information



getting help when you need it.



It is really important that these steps are easy.



For many disabled people these steps are not easy.



79% of disabled people travel less often because of these barriers



Lots of people avoid unfamiliar or last minute journeys.

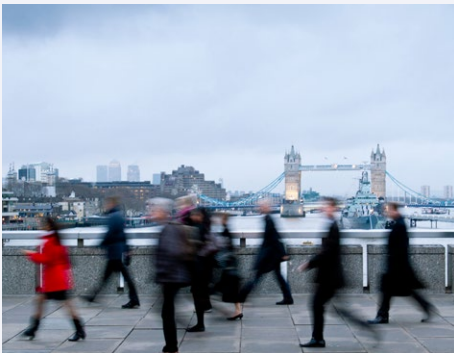


A lot of journeys are longer and more expensive.

“You are excited to go and be like your friends, but you keep hitting obstacles, and with each one it ruins your day and that smile goes away.”

Survey participant, November 2024

Streetscapes as a barrier to accessible travel



The 'streetscape' includes pavements, crossings and public spaces.



Streets and pavements are often a big barrier to accessible travel.



They are the starting point of most journeys.



**If this first bit is not accessible,
it can stop people travelling.**



**People talk a lot about
physical barriers such as:**



uneven and damaged pavements



cars parked on the pavement



street clutter

For example, tables and chairs



diversions

These are temporary routes designed for traffic to get around a closed or blocked section of road



street design that different in different places

This makes it more difficult to navigate



Disabled people said navigating streets is exhausting and not easy to predict.

97% of disabled people report being forced to travel in the road because pavements are inaccessible

The barriers to streetscape access. November 2024

Vehicles, stations and assistance



Accessibility challenges happen at all stages of the journey.



Barriers include getting on and off vehicles, at stations and on different modes of transport:


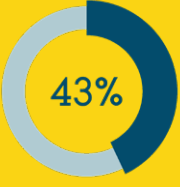


44% of disabled people report difficulties getting in and out of vehicles.


For example, a train, plane or a bus.



56% experience barriers when getting in and out of taxis or private vehicles



43% of people said that step-free access at stations is not reliable or unavailable



Barriers also continue once people are on board and at destinations.



33% of people report challenges caused by moving vehicles.

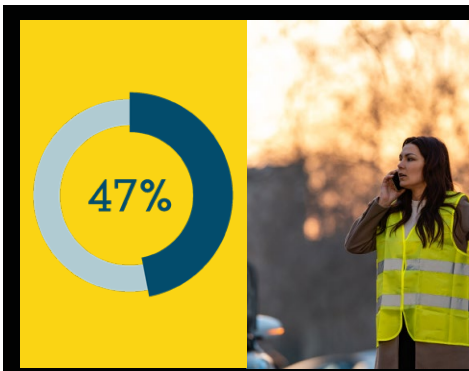
For example lack of handrails or not enough time to get on and off safely.



32% of people talked about difficulties finding accessible parking



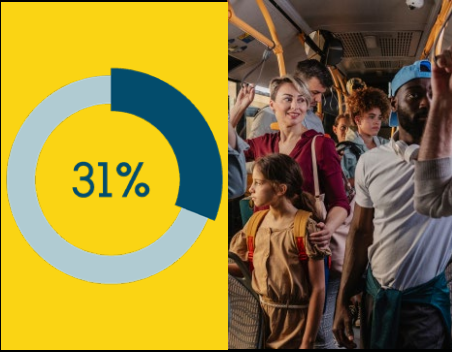
Passenger assistance systems do not always offer the help they should do:



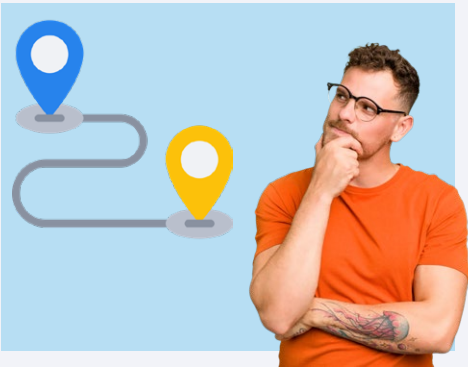
47% report that staff assistance is unavailable, even when it has been booked in advance



Accessibility is also about other people's behaviour, awareness and culture.



31% report negative attitudes of behaviours from staff or other passengers



All of this makes journeys harder to plan!

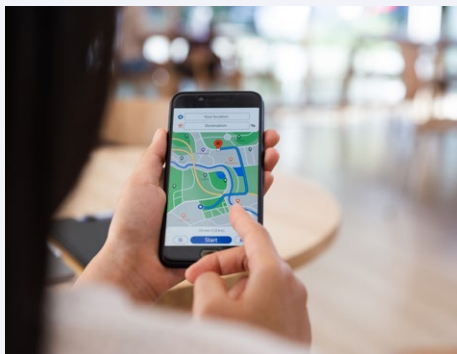
“Many of the ‘step free’ platforms still have huge gaps or a small step up to the trains which can cause a lot of anxiety and not all wheelchairs can manage.”

An anonymous research participants experience.

Information and data



Access to reliable information is a really important part of accessible travel.



Digital tools are used by lots of people but do not always meet people's accessibility needs:



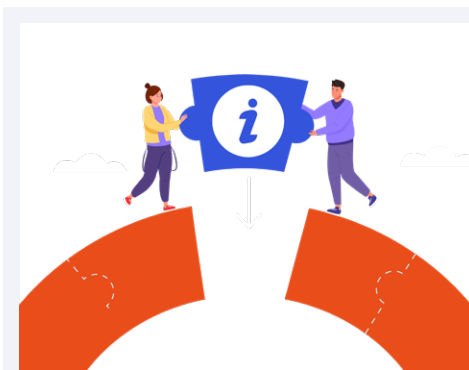
62% of disabled people use websites to plan journeys



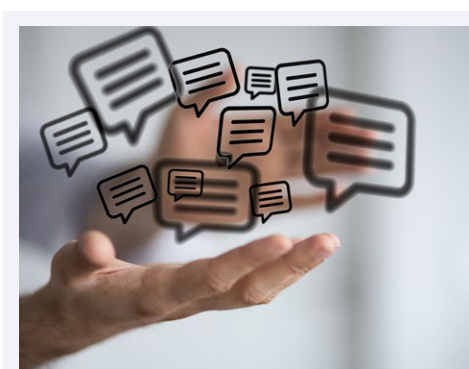
57% of people use mobile apps



30% of people rely on friends, family, carers or personal assistants for planning.



People told us that accessibility information is often missing or not accurate.



Lots of people told us about things like:



live announcements that are not accessible or unclear



screens that are difficult to read



delayed or poor information about things like cancellations.



Some people talked about the need for up-to-date information on things like:



staff to help people



priority seating



crowded vehicles

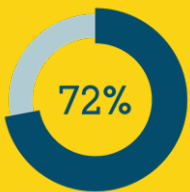


accessible toilets.

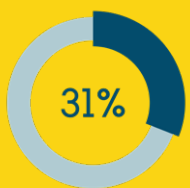
Attitudes and behaviour



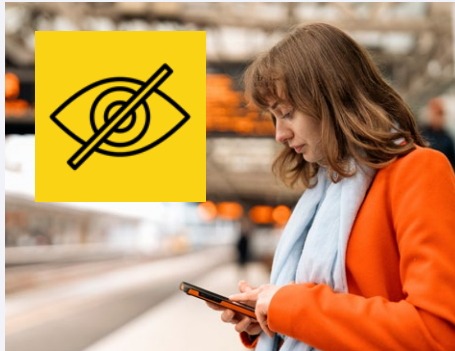
Negative attitudes are big barriers to travel, especially for people with non-visible impairments.



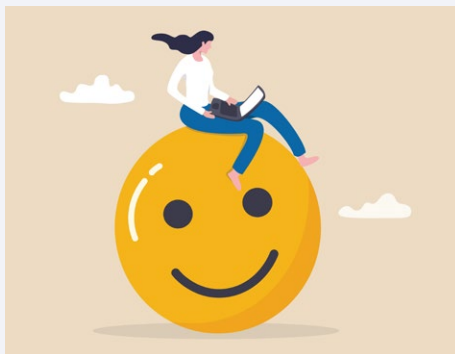
72% of disabled people have experienced negative attitudes or behaviour in the past 5 years



31% of disabled people report being negatively affected by staff attitudes while travelling.



This contributes to “invisible barriers” — where non-visible disabilities are not very well understood.



There is a link between inaccessible transport and wellbeing:



77% of people said that transport barriers affect their physical or mental health



75% experience stress when travelling.

59% of disabled people experience negative attitudes while travelling

Invisible barriers report. How public attitudes affect inclusive travel. June 2025.

Looking ahead



Our research highlights both accessibility challenges and the opportunities for improvements.



ncat brings together research, lived experience and the transport sector.

We now have a much better understanding of accessible transport.



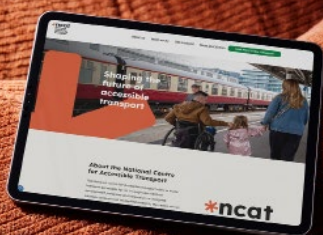
Accessible transport is shaped by many different people working together.

For more information about ncat



***ncat**
national
centre for
accessible
transport

For more information about ncat:



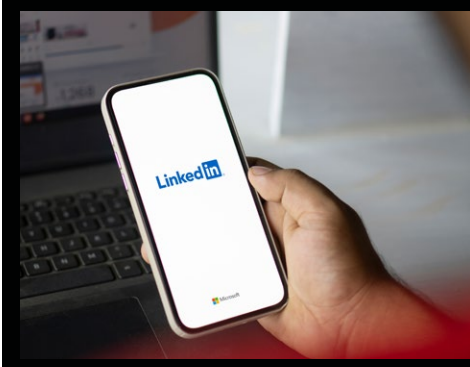
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For news and updates
scan here



Join the CAT Panel
www.ncat.uk/get-involved

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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Thinklusive