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# Impact of Covid-19 on disabled people's experiences of transport

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Research by BritainThinks on behalf of Motability

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## Foreword

At Motability, we know that inclusive transport enables critical access to work, education, family, friends, social activities, and much more. Since 2020, and as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have all experienced how it feels to be denied access to what matters the most to us. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound and disproportionate impact on disabled people in the UK and the impact for many has continued, even since restrictions have gradually been lifted.

We commissioned BritainThinks to conduct research over a ten month period to understand how Covid-19 has impacted disabled peoples' experiences of travel and what this might mean for disabled peoples' access to transport in the future. This report sits within our initiative to collect, share and act upon robust evidence, and is a part of our wider strategy to do even more to support and empower disabled people, including those with less visible disabilities, to gain the same access to public and private transport as everyone else.

To examine the transport needs and experiences of disabled people, and to understand 'what works' in inclusive transport, and therefore be able to effect change, it is imperative that we are guided by those who have lived experience of disability. In commissioning this report, we have worked closely over an extended time period with a wide range of disabled people and parents or guardians of disabled children, and heard the fluctuating experiences and continued uncertainty around risks to their health and wellbeing when leaving their homes. This is further compounded by pre-existing barriers to using both public and private modes of transport.

This report provides insights into the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on accessible transport for disabled people, including examples of how participants' independence was severely curtailed during the pandemic due to inaccessible infrastructure, unreliable information and services across public transport. Attitudes and behaviours of non-disabled passengers, motorists and transport staff were also shown to be a significant challenge throughout the pandemic too.

Our newly-launched Active Travel Grant Programme will help charities and organisations to improve and expand access to quality and affordable active travel equipment and journeys, ensuring disabled people have the same opportunities to make decisions about how they travel, their impact on the environment and can enjoy the physical and mental health benefits that active travel can provide. In addition to this, a growing number of charities are now providing travel training schemes, and through our new Travelling with Confidence Grant Programme, we hope to help them and travel providers, to make an immediate impact for disabled people.

Next year will see the launch of the Motability funded Evidence Centre for Inclusive Transport, which will work with disabled people, disabled people's organisations, transport providers and policy makers to both undertake research and develop accessible transport solutions.

With the new evidence that underpins this report, and as we move away from the pandemic, Motability will continue to work with and convene others across the disability and transport sectors, because a whole system approach is essential to improve the transport experiences of disabled people.

Barry Le Grys

**Chief Executive Officer**

## Executive summary

### Background

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound and disproportionate impact on disabled people in the UK – and the impact has continued since restrictions have gradually been lifted. The evidence suggests that many disabled people experience continued uncertainty around risks to their health and wellbeing when leaving their homes, as a result of the pandemic, compounded with pre-existing barriers to using both public and private modes of transport.

Motability commissioned BritainThinks to carry out a longitudinal mixed-methods research project to understand how experiences of travel and transport have changed for disabled people since the pandemic began and what this might mean for access to transportation in the future.

### About the research process

This research comprised of three waves of qualitative fieldwork at different stages in the pandemic and a quantitative survey – taking place between November 2021 and July 2022. The first wave of fieldwork began in December 2021, coinciding with the outbreak of the highly transmissible Omicron variant and the introduction of 'Plan B' measures in England. Wave 2 in March/April 2022 saw Covid-19 transmission rates easing relatively, with the emerging cost-of-living crisis adding to many participants' concerns. By the third and final wave in June/July 2022, the UK had no restrictions in place domestically or internationally. However, Omicron variants BA.4 and BA.5 contributed to another rise in case numbers. This context is crucial to understanding participants' experiences at each stage in the pandemic.

The research was designed to optimise engagement, accommodating disabled people with a range of needs, and providing participants with the opportunity and means to contribute meaningfully. The three qualitative waves of research offered a 'deep-dive' into disabled people's lived realities, helping to illuminate the impact of the pandemic on participants' experiences of travel and gauge the extent to which this compares to non-disabled people. 35 participants took part in the qualitative research, including disabled people and parents of disabled children. Each wave comprised of an online community, online depth interviews (completed individually, in pairs and in triads) and/or individual telephone interviews to accommodate a range of needs.

To support the validity of the qualitative findings, a total of 2133 respondents completed an online survey between 16<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (see Appendix 2 for more detail on the sample). Survey respondents included disabled people, parents or guardians of disabled children and non-disabled respondents, to provide a comparative measure. This survey coincided with the announcement of the Government's 'living with Covid' strategy, which saw freedoms expanded back to pre-pandemic norms and free testing slowly scrapped.

### Key conclusions

Reflecting on the conversations we had with participants and the discussions they had with each other across the entirety of the research programme, we have drawn out the following themes. They show the breadth and diversity of participants' experiences during the pandemic, as well as hopes for the future.

- 1. Levels of concern about Covid-19 have been mixed throughout the pandemic.**  
At the start of fieldwork in December 2021, levels of concern were high, spurred on by the emergence of the Omicron variant. As the research has progressed, levels of concern have dropped, with participants citing the successful vaccine rollout and periods where case numbers have fallen as reasons for this. However, there remains a sub-group of disabled people who are **very concerned about the risk of infection**. Seeing others no longer taking precautions against Covid-19 has been particularly difficult for this group, as they feel they are being left behind as the rest of society 'moves on' from the pandemic.
- 2. This diversity of experience means that the rate at which disabled people return to pre-pandemic travel behaviours is also likely to be varied.** During the pandemic, those who had access to an accessible private vehicle overwhelmingly chose to travel this way, due to risk of infection when interacting with others on public transport. As we have begun to emerge from the pandemic, many disabled people have chosen to continue travelling this way, feeling it is safer and more accessible for them. However, **the cost-of-living crisis threatens to disrupt participants' 'new normal' of travel**, as many have already found the rising cost of fuel making travelling by car unsustainable.
- 3. Disabled people have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.** In our quantitative research in February 2022, we found that 65% of disabled people agreed they were concerned about risk of infection, as compared to 49% of non-disabled people. Additionally, 40% of disabled people agreed their health had deteriorated due to Covid-19, as compared to 15% of non-disabled people. We also know that **disabled people are more likely to have had to make significant changes to the way they travel due to the pandemic**, with 41% who agreed they had done so, compared to 30% of non-disabled people.
- 4. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated many previously existing challenges with transport for disabled people.** Prior to the pandemic, disabled people already often faced inaccessible infrastructure, unreliable information and services and mixed experiences when interacting with non-disabled passengers, motorists and transport staff. Covid-19 intensified these challenges, with **information becoming even more unreliable, a reduction in staff meaning support was often unavailable and an increase in negative interactions with others**. This combined with the risk of infection made travelling untenable for many, as participants told us about isolating and making essential journeys only when necessary.
- 5. The attitudes and behaviours of non-disabled passengers, motorists and transport staff have been a significant challenge throughout the pandemic.** In our quantitative research in February 2022, 1 in 3 (32%) disabled people said they found the attitudes and behaviours of other passengers or motorists a challenge when travelling during the pandemic – making this the option most likely to be selected from the list of challenges presented. In our qualitative research, participants described **experiences of being challenged by others as to their support needs, having to advocate for the use of disabled spaces** (on both public transport and parking spaces) and **a lack of awareness of non-visible**

**impairments.** Earlier on in the pandemic, those who were exempt from wearing masks also experienced being challenged on this, whereas those who were continuing to wear masks in Wave 3 (June/July 2022) told us about feeling stigmatised for doing so. Personal negative experiences and hearing about these from others has a significant impact on confidence to travel.

- 6. Participants saw their independence severely curtailed during the pandemic and are looking for this to be a priority in any future interventions.** The emotional impacts of limiting one's use of transport during the pandemic have been far-reaching for participants, with the increased inaccessibility of public transport leading to feelings of a decrease in personal freedom and independence. Even among those who travel by private vehicle, **the impacts of having no other way to travel are significant.** Any future interventions to support disabled people when travelling must look to do so by empowering people to travel independently (as appropriate for individual needs).
- 7. When looking to the future, participants identify key themes as criteria for a good intervention.** Alongside promoting independence, participants are looking for interventions that are reliable, adaptable to different needs, avoid stigma and are affordable. Recognition **that there won't be a 'one size fits all' solution** is important, as participants discuss multiple interventions to address different needs. While participants are enthusiastic about ideas that meet these criteria, they also have low expectations of what will come to fruition.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Objectives of the research

#### Overall objectives

Motability wanted to understand how experiences of transport have changed for disabled people since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and what this might mean for access to transport in the future. In particular, the research sought to:

1. **Understand the impact of the pandemic on disabled people's experiences of travel, and how this compares to non-disabled people.** This includes how transport behaviours and experiences changed as a result of Covid-19, including access to private and public transport for disabled people and range of journeys undertaken.
2. **Understand changes to transport behaviours, choices and experiences over November 2021 – July 2022.** This includes identifying how the effects of future events or changes in policy impact disabled people and their transport behaviours and tracking emerging and potential future challenges to access to transport as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. **Gain insight into what the impacts of the pandemic mean for disabled people's access to transport in the future.** This includes considering which changes in behaviour might be short-term and linked to changing policy and public perceptions of safety, and which are likely to be longer-term changes to ways disabled people travel.

#### Wave objectives

Our research is split into three qualitative waves and a quantitative survey. Within the broader objectives of the study, these distinct stages of the research sought to target particular objectives:

- **The quantitative survey** sought to measure transport attitudes and behaviours among disabled people. The data provided greater confidence about the extent to which Covid-19 impacted experiences of transport among the disabled population and quantified experiences of challenges and opportunities on transport as brought about by the pandemic. It also provided a comparative measure among both disabled and non-disabled audiences in the UK.
- **Wave 1** focused on exploring disabled people's experiences of transport before, during and as we emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic to gain a baseline understanding of these experiences.
- **Wave 2** focused on exploring current travel behaviours, new policies and guidance, new challenges, opportunities and workarounds in travel/transport due to the impacts of the pandemic.
- **Wave 3** turned towards the future, exploring emerging and potential future challenges and opportunities to accessing transport. Four future interventions were also presented in this wave, for feedback and to spur further ideas on what might help to tackle some of the barriers to using transport that have emerged or increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 1.2 Context of the research and the Covid-19 landscape

The course of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK has been fast-moving and often unpredictable. The ongoing changes to Covid-19 case rates and restrictions are key context for this research, and throughout the course of the study, have changed significantly.

**Wave 1** of the qualitative research took place from **December 2021 to January 2022, as the Omicron variant began to spread rapidly across the UK**. Coinciding with the start of this wave, 'Plan B' restrictions were announced in England and **face masks became compulsory in most indoor venues** and the booster vaccine campaign was expanded significantly.

**The quantitative survey** took place **February 16-25, 2022**. Towards the end of the survey, on February 21<sup>st</sup>, the Government announced its 'Living with Covid' strategy, which saw remaining restrictions lifted over the following weeks.

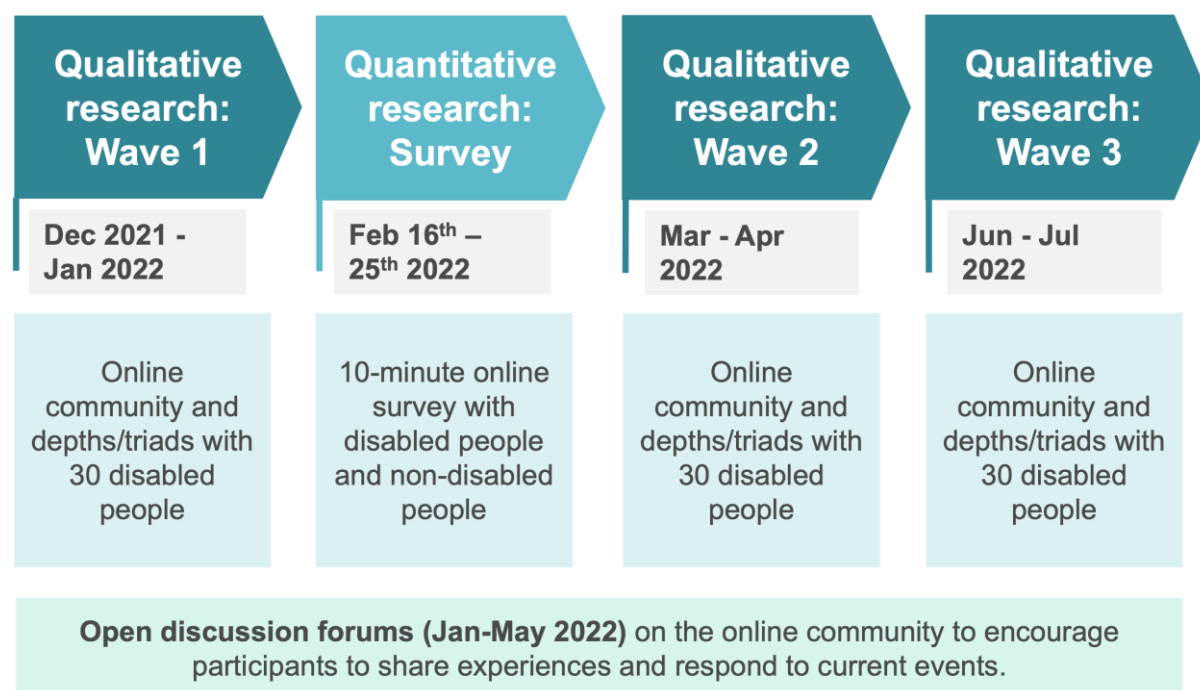
**Wave 2** of the qualitative research took place from **March to April 2022. All Covid-19 restrictions in England were lifted** in late February as case rates continued to decline from their December and January high (although mandatory face masks remained in Scotland and Wales).

**Wave 3** of the qualitative research took place between **June and July 2022**, by which point across the UK there were **no domestic or international travel restrictions**. After falling case rates during the late Spring, Omicron variants BA.4 and BA.5 contributed to an increase in case numbers during this final wave.

## 1.3 How we designed this research and who took part

This research was designed as a mixed-methods project, consisting of qualitative and quantitative components. The qualitative research took the form of a longitudinal study, engaging with the same participants at different points in time through set activities on an online community with a series of follow-up interviews. The quantitative component of the research took the form of a 10-minute survey asked to 2,133 adults across 9 days in February 2022.





### Longitudinal qualitative research

The qualitative research was conducted as a longitudinal study, with the same participants involved in all three waves. This enabled us to capture real-time experiences of travel and changes that occurred in the context of the evolving Covid-19 situation in the UK.

35 adults took part in the qualitative research (see Appendix 1 for more detail on sample). While 30 participants took part in each wave, five participants were recruited over the course of the study to replace those who were no longer able to take part. One participant was not able to complete Wave 3, resulting in 29 participants completing the final wave.

All participants either identify as being disabled, are parents of disabled children and one participant took part as a carer for their partner who is disabled. Within this sample, participants have a wide range of conditions including mobility impairments, visual and hearing impairments, mental health conditions and other long-term health conditions.

Each wave consisted of a series of activities on an online community, exploring participants' experiences of transport and the Covid-19 pandemic more broadly. The online community also included discussion boards, allowing participants to communicate with one another on a series of topics. These discussion boards were left open between waves and allowed participants to set up their own topics, enabling conversation between each wave. Participants were also offered the option to take part in the same series of activities via a phone interview or email, to ensure a range of options to take part were available.

After each wave of online community activities, a series of follow-up interviews and group discussions took place. After the Wave 1 online community, all 30 participants took place in a follow-up interview or group discussion, with each participant taking part in one further follow-up interview or discussion once more after the Wave 2 or 3 online communities. These follow-up interviews allowed researchers to explore key issues in more depth and develop individuals' stories and experiences further.

Please note that all names have been changed throughout this report, and case studies have been aggregated from multiple participants in order to protect participant anonymity. All quotes are verbatim from a participant.

### **Quantitative research**

The quantitative component of this research comprised a 10-minute online survey exploring what the Covid-19 pandemic meant for disabled people's use of transport and providing a comparative measure as to the extent to which this differs from non-disabled people.

A total of 2,133 respondents completed this online survey between the 16<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2022. This sample consisted of 970 disabled respondents, 146 parents of disabled children, 958 non-disabled respondents without disabled children and 59 respondents who did not disclose a disability status. The majority (2,023) of these participants were recruited from a panel of the general public, while 110 Motability beneficiaries who opted in also took part (see Appendix 2 for more detail).

## 2. Understanding transport attitudes and behaviours in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic

This chapter explores disabled people's attitudes and behaviours towards travelling and using transport in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. These attitudes and behaviours were often rooted in levels of concern about Covid-19 during each wave of the fieldwork. Across each wave, participants' levels of concern were mixed, alongside varied experiences with transport.

As a result, attitudes and behaviours towards traveling were varied throughout the research. However, participants cited many of the same barriers to travel, including inaccessible infrastructure, a lack of live information and/or assistance at bus and train stations, excessive time spent planning journeys, negative attitudes and behaviours of other travellers and prohibitive costs. To this end, **the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing barriers to travel** in addition to creating new challenges.

### 2.1 Attitudes towards Covid-19

During each wave of the qualitative research, participants were asked to sum up how concerned they were about Covid-19 on a scale of 0-10, with 0 being 'not concerned at all', and 10 being 'very concerned' – and to explain if this had changed over the course of the pandemic.

At the start of the research, we asked participants to reflect on how concerned they were about Covid-19 during the first lockdown in March 2020. The majority of participants described feeling '10 out of 10' in their levels of concern, with nearly all participants considering themselves to be especially vulnerable to the virus.

#### Attitudes towards Covid-19 in Wave 1 (December 2021 – January 2022)

While most participants remained consistently concerned about Covid-19 transmission since the first lockdown, some described having felt cautiously optimistic as vaccines were rolled out and case numbers were perceived to be decreasing over the summer in 2021. However, during Wave 1 of fieldwork, nearly two years into the pandemic, the emergence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant saw cases rise again.

*"We'd got over that first wave and I was allowed out again – we were shielding for so long! Over this last summer, I was still very aware of it and still taking precautions, but it wasn't something that I was worrying about – we'd had our vaccines. I felt reasonably comfortable. Then it came up again in September-October – which was really quite high, so it's been really a case of up and down."*

*(Disabled person, mobility impairment and long-term health condition, wheelchair user)*

This spike in cases meant that concern levels in Wave 1 remained relatively high – an average of 6 out of 10 across the sample (see Figure 1 below). Due to increased levels of concern about Covid-19, some participants curbed social contact and travel once again to mitigate the risk of infection.

*“I was really anxious and I’m still a bit... there are so many unknowns. It’s difficult because we were at a stage pre-Omicron where we weren’t quite getting back to normal, but the new kind of normal. We were going to travel before and we had all these plans, but now it’s kind of difficult.”*

*(Disabled person, hearing impairment)*

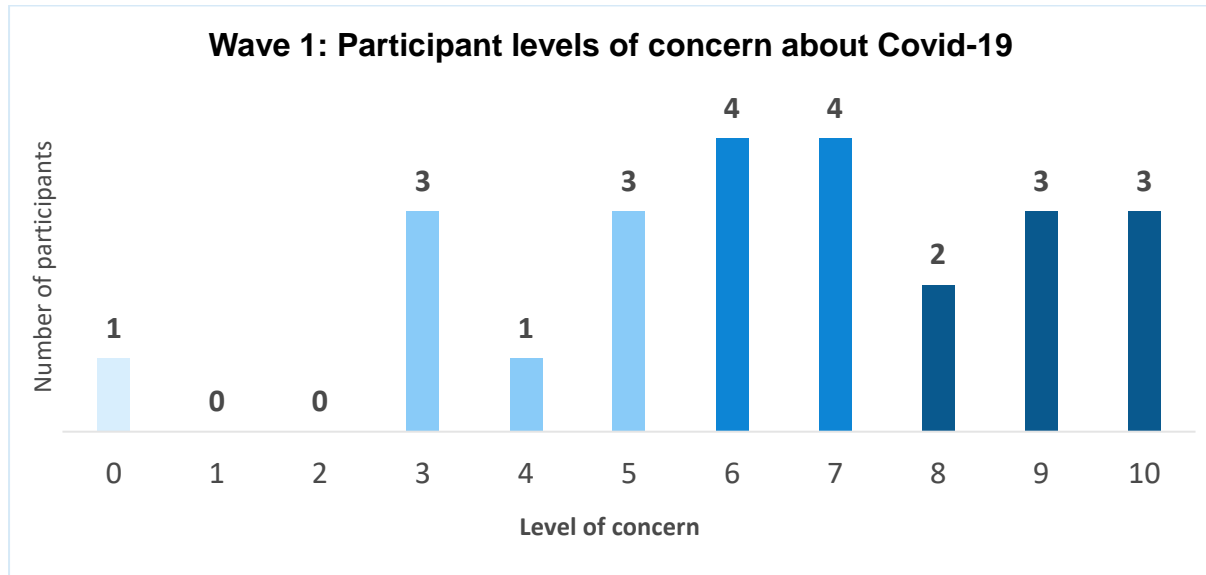


Figure 1 - Wave 1 graph depicting levels of concern about Covid-19. Q. On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not concerned at all and 10 is very concerned, how concerned are you feeling about Covid-19 this week? Base all respondents (n=24). Some participants stated a range, which is displayed on this chart rounded up (e.g., 7.5 is displayed as 8). Base: All respondents (n=24).

### Attitudes towards Covid-19 in the quantitative research (February 2022)

At the time of the survey in February 2022, following the outbreak of the Omicron variant over the winter, 65% of disabled respondents said they were concerned about the risk of infection from Covid-19, compared to 49% of non-disabled respondents. Furthermore, 40% of disabled people surveyed felt their health had deteriorated due to Covid-19 – in contrast to only 15% of non-disabled people.

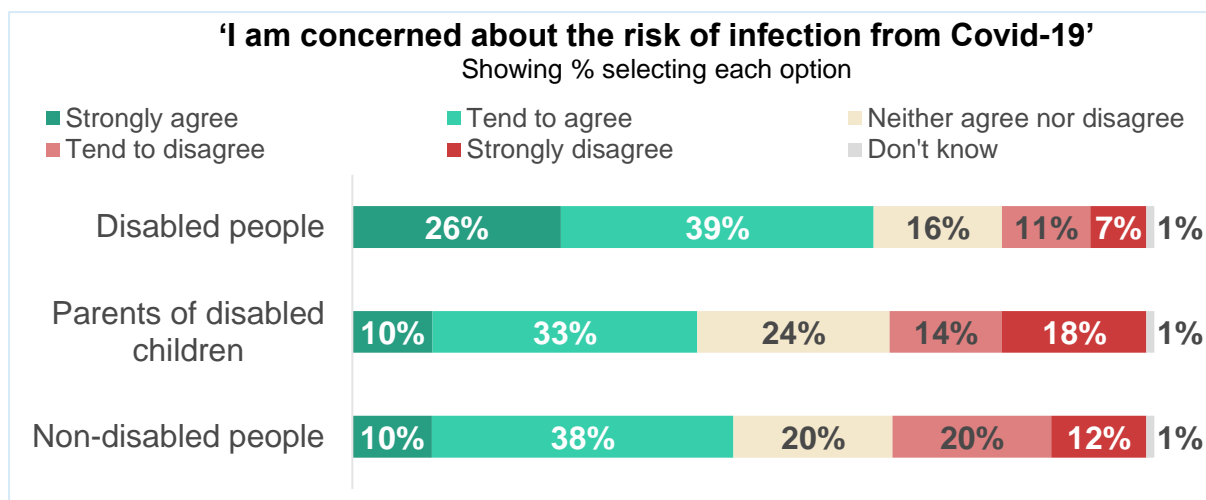


Figure 2 - graph depicting survey respondents' levels of concern about the risk of infection from Covid-19. Base: disabled people (n=989), parents of disabled children (n=127), non-disabled people (n=955)

Substantiating findings from Wave 1 (December 2021 – January 2022), the survey showed disabled people's concerns had eased since the start of the pandemic, albeit to a lesser extent than parents of disabled children and non-disabled people. Just over half (55%) of disabled respondents agreed with the statement 'I am less concerned about Covid-19 now than I was at the start of the pandemic' compared to 63% of parents of disabled children and 72% of non-disabled people.

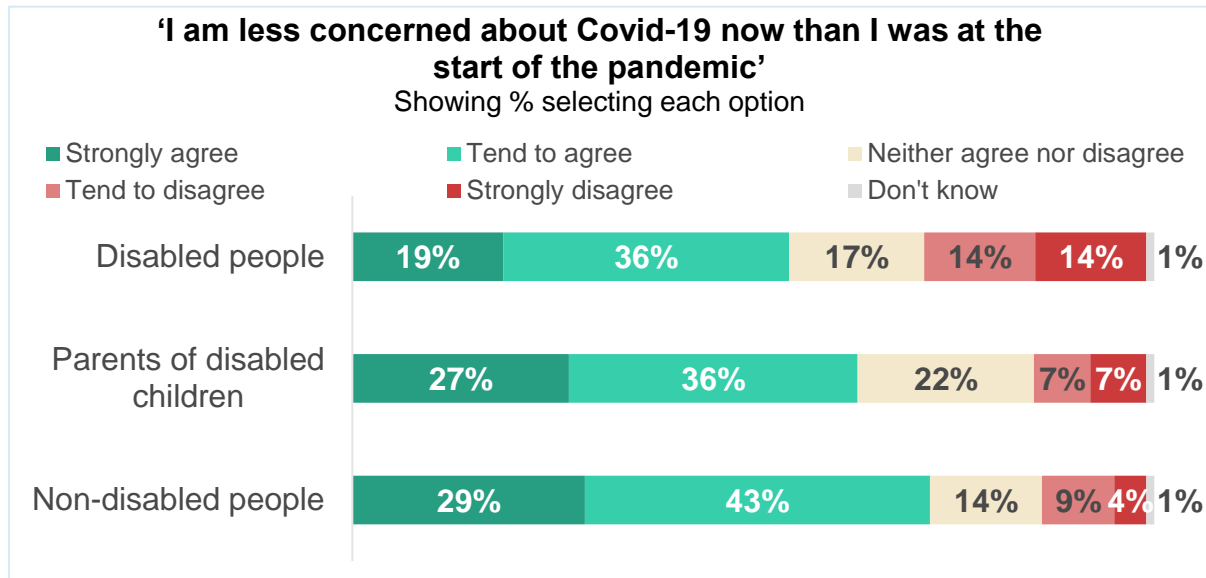


Figure 3 - graph depicting survey respondents' concern levels about Covid-19 compared with the start of the pandemic. Base: disabled people (n=989), parents of disabled children (n=127), non-disabled people (n=955),

### Attitudes towards Covid-19 in Wave 2 (March – April 2022)

In Wave 2 of the research, participants' levels of concern about Covid-19 decreased to 5. However, views became more polarised – with the most common ratings being 3 and 8 on a scale of 0-10. This pointed to an emerging 'left behind' group, who were considerably more concerned about Covid-19 than other disabled people in the sample.

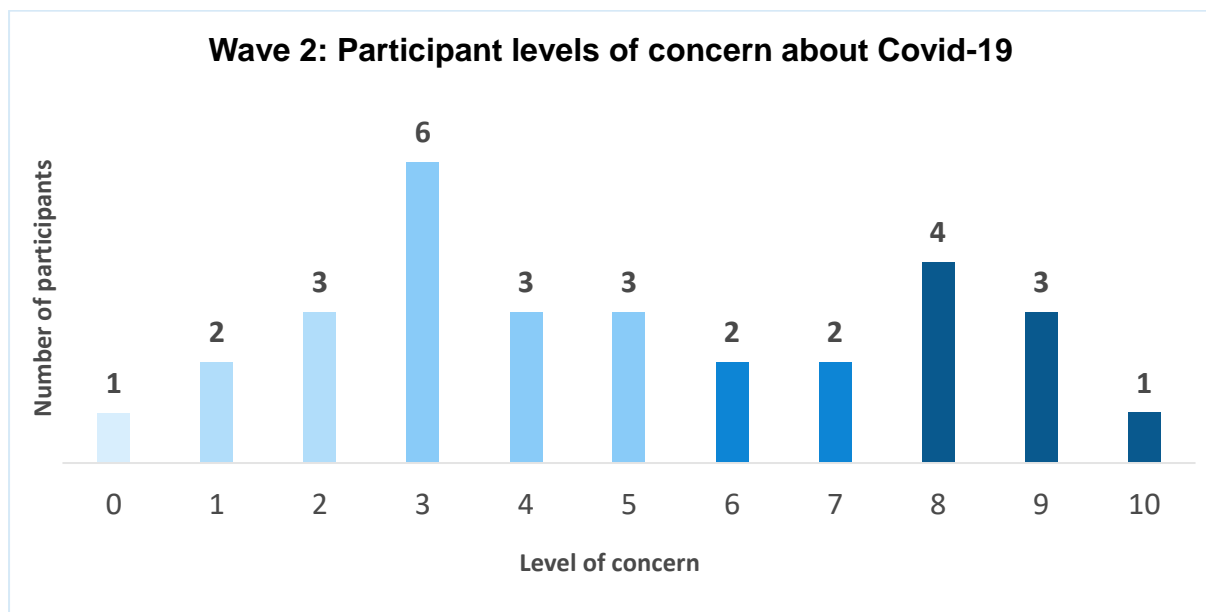


Figure 4 – Wave 2 graph depicting levels of concern about Covid-19. Q. On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not concerned at all and 10 is very concerned, how concerned are you feeling about Covid-19 this week? Base: All respondents (n=30)

Among those who were less concerned about Covid-19, there was a sense that they were taking all reasonable precautions (being vaccinated, wearing a mask, using hand sanitiser, and social distancing) and as such, they were ‘doing everything in their power’ to mitigate the risk. Some participants had also caught Covid-19 since Wave 1 which relieved their anxiety about catching the virus as it ‘wasn’t that bad’ and now they had ‘got it out the way’.

*“I just feel like we need back to normal at some point, I had my vaccines, I’m ready to move on.”*

*(Disabled person, mobility and dexterity impairment)*

Among those who were more concerned, a perceived lack of testing, and mask-wearing no longer being mandatory was a major driver of this. These participants generally felt that ‘restrictions have gone but Covid hasn’t’ and were more likely to be clinically vulnerable or work in occupations with higher rates of infection like schools and hospitals.

*“It feels like a free for all out there. I still have clinical vulnerabilities that haven’t changed.”*

*(Disabled person, mobility impairment, mental health condition, uses stick)*

### Attitudes towards Covid-19 in Wave 3 (June – July 2022)

In Wave 3 of the research, participants’ levels of concern about Covid-19 decreased slightly again, reaching the lowest point since the start of the pandemic – 4 out of 10. Notably, participants’ concern levels remain varied, with no consensus across the sample.

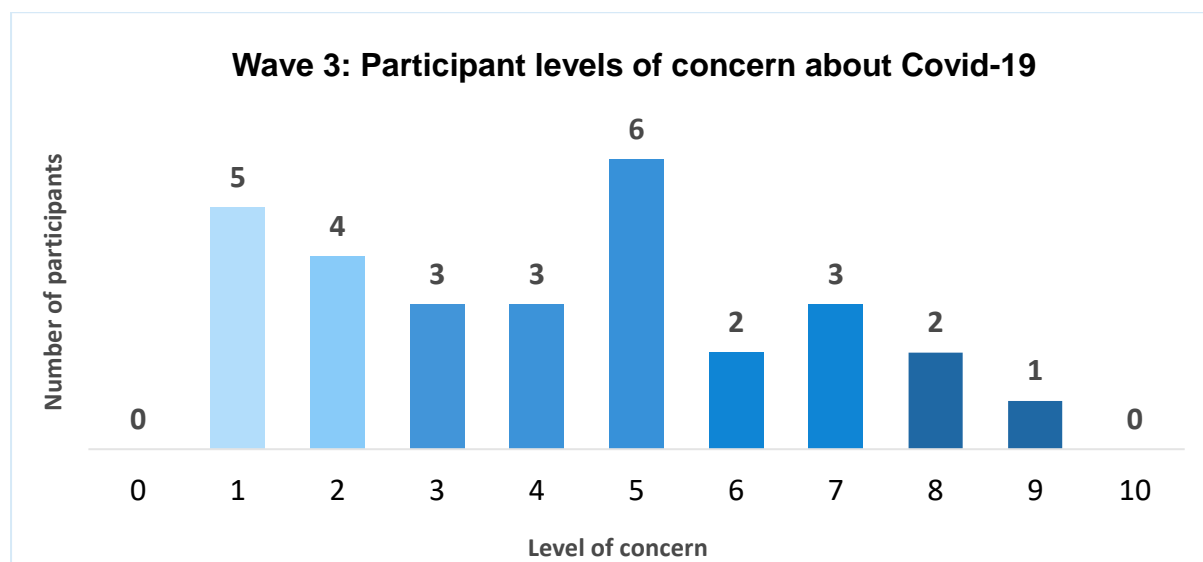


Figure 5 – Wave 3 graph depicting levels of concern about Covid-19. Q. On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not concerned at all and 10 is very concerned, how concerned are you feeling about Covid-19 this week? Base: All respondents (n=29)

As in Wave 2, participants who were less concerned about Covid-19 felt they were taking all

the precautions they could. Some no longer used public transport, and exclusively travelled by car or private vehicle, so they felt the risk of catching Covid-19 while travelling was low. Due to the warmer summer weather, some participants started using active forms of travel – such as walking, wheeling, and cycling – to stay fit, and as an alternative to public transport.

*“As long as I keep sanitised and wear a mask in certain environments, overall, I don't feel too concerned.”*

*(Disabled person, mental health condition)*

Coinciding with Wave 3, case numbers began to peak again in late June and early July. As such, participants that took part towards the end of the fieldwork period mentioned rising case numbers as increasing their levels of concern – just as they had begun to feel more comfortable. This indicates that for many participants, **this new-found assurance regarding Covid-19 transmissible is not unshakeable**, and hinges on cases being low.

*“Last time we spoke I was not over-obsessed with Covid, but this week infections are skyrocketing again, so I am feeling more concerned. About 5,000 people in hospital at present according to the news. I am definitely feeling more anxious.”*

*(Disabled person, visual impairment)*

## 2.2 Experiences of travel before and during the pandemic

Pre-pandemic, participants experienced both highs and lows when using transport. While participants' experiences of transport are highly personal and depend on local services and facilities, support systems available, and the nature of their disability – they shared common experiences of both positive aspects and pain points using transport prior to the pandemic.

*“If I travel with my car I've always felt supported. A train journey is a bit more stressful, you have to arrange assistance on and off the train. My experiences have mostly been great but I've had some pretty bad ones where I've been left on the train.”*

*(Disabled person, mobility impairment, wheelchair user)*

Participants already spent **considerable time planning journeys pre-pandemic**, but felt they had managed this, and knew what types of transport, routes, and other factors would likely make for a successful journey. However, unexpected occurrences were common, such as staff not being available to provide support, disabled seats being occupied by non-disabled people, or car parking spaces being unavailable. Many relied on private vehicles where possible, only using public transport to travel long distances or to locations where disabled parking was unlikely to be available. For some, public transport was completely inaccessible, and they described being unable to undertake journeys which they could not make by car (whether driven by themselves or someone else). For others, public transport was a lifeline, enabling them to travel independently – which was vital for those without access to a car.

*“The tube is usually the quickest, but lots of stations aren't accessible, so planning a route gets quite complicated and overwhelming.”*



*(Disabled person, mobility impairment, mental health condition, wheelchair user)*

During Wave 1 (December 2021 – January 2022), participants' use of transport had changed since before the pandemic began, with an increasing majority **preferring to travel by private vehicle where possible**. Participants who were using their cars more during the pandemic were attracted to the 'door-to-door' nature of car journeys, which offered security from Covid-19 transmission and perceived non-adherence to Covid-19 guidance from members of the public, in addition to the accessibility and reliability of a car over public transport services.

*"I like that my car gets me from my house to the destination. It is a lot easier to have a wheelchair friendly vehicle, so I don't have to carry a lot of equipment around with me."*

*(Parent of disabled child, mobility impairment, LTHC, wheelchair user)*

In addition to those participants who did not have access to an accessible, private vehicle, reliance on cars during the pandemic was limiting for some. Participants described the **small joys that were missing from their lives when public transport becomes inaccessible to them**, such as being able to take day trips to locations where parking is difficult or being able to have a drink with friends and not having to drive home afterwards.

The following composite case studies provide a snapshot into participants' varied experiences of using transport during the pandemic.

#### **Case study: Lucia, mobility impairment, uses a walking stick**

Lucia is 34 years old and lives in Long Eaton, Derbyshire. Lucia has difficulties with balance and confusion related to a head injury and uses a walking stick to help with her balance. Lucia has made significant changes to her travel habits since the onset of the pandemic. She avoids many journeys altogether, has very rarely taken public transport and pre-plans any journeys to minimise exposure to others, eroding her sense of spontaneity.

As of July 2022, Lucia's concerns about Covid-19 had not ebbed. She is frustrated by people "acting like it's disappeared" while transmission continues.

Looking to the future, Lucia feels unsure when she will be able to return completely to her pre-pandemic travel behaviours. However, she is optimistic that this will occur at some point and hopes to regain her confidence in using public transport especially.

*"I'd like to see more people take into consideration that there are disabled people using public transport and for other people to be more kind and give up their seat for a disabled person and to be more Covid friendly."*

#### **Case study: Frank, mobility impairment, wheelchair user**

Frank is 30 and lives in Stockport. Frank has paraplegia as a result of a spinal injury and uses a wheelchair as a mobility aid. Throughout the pandemic, Frank reported a very



minimal effect on his willingness to travel and a very low rate of concern about Covid-19 transmission. The only adaptation that he recalls making is wearing a mask.

Frank loves socialising and had no concerns about going out to meet friends at pubs and restaurants as soon as restrictions allowed.

While Frank acknowledges certain ongoing challenges when travelling, such as difficulty alerting train staff when assistance is required, none of these are directly related to the effects of the pandemic.

*"I don't feel that Covid-19 has changed my outlook or options for travel."*

### **Case study: Kate, carer for her partner who is disabled**

Kate is 68 and lives in the Wirral. Her husband Kevin is deafblind as the result of a long-term degenerative visual and hearing impairment. Even when travelling together, they have found public transport difficult and stressful, so tend to travel in the car.

During the early stages of the pandemic, Kate and Kevin were very anxious about the transmission of Covid-19 and continued to curb their travel behaviours beyond the lockdown period to minimise contact with others. However, after catching Covid-19 in Spring 2022 and recovering they became much more confident travelling. Kate and Kevin are now back to all of their pre-pandemic travel behaviours, which involves primarily travelling by car and occasionally active travel, when they can walk to a destination that is not far.

At this stage, Kate says she is "fairly relaxed" about Covid. She has noticed, however, that family members are still concerned and don't visit as much as they did pre-pandemic.

*"Kevin is much happier now. Lockdown closures and restrictions really impacted his quality of life and independence."*

There were also isolated positive experiences of travel during the pandemic. Some participants mentioned that at the height of lockdown roads were quieter, which eased their anxiety about making journeys by car and being able to access disabled parking at their destination. Some participants stopped commuting to work during the pandemic, which had a positive impact in their lives, as home working is more accessible for some and others felt it increased their time spent with family. However, negative experiences of travel and using transport during the pandemic far outweigh the positive experiences.

## **2.3 Challenges experienced with travel as a result of the pandemic**

For many disabled people, existing challenges using transport have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Changes to provision of services and facilities, lack of Covid-19 safety and adherence to guidelines, and negative attitudes and behaviours from members of the public were commonly cited by participants as areas of concern. It is important to note that these challenges were described **in addition to** the already significant challenges many disabled people faced travelling before the pandemic, compounding the inaccessibility of transport.

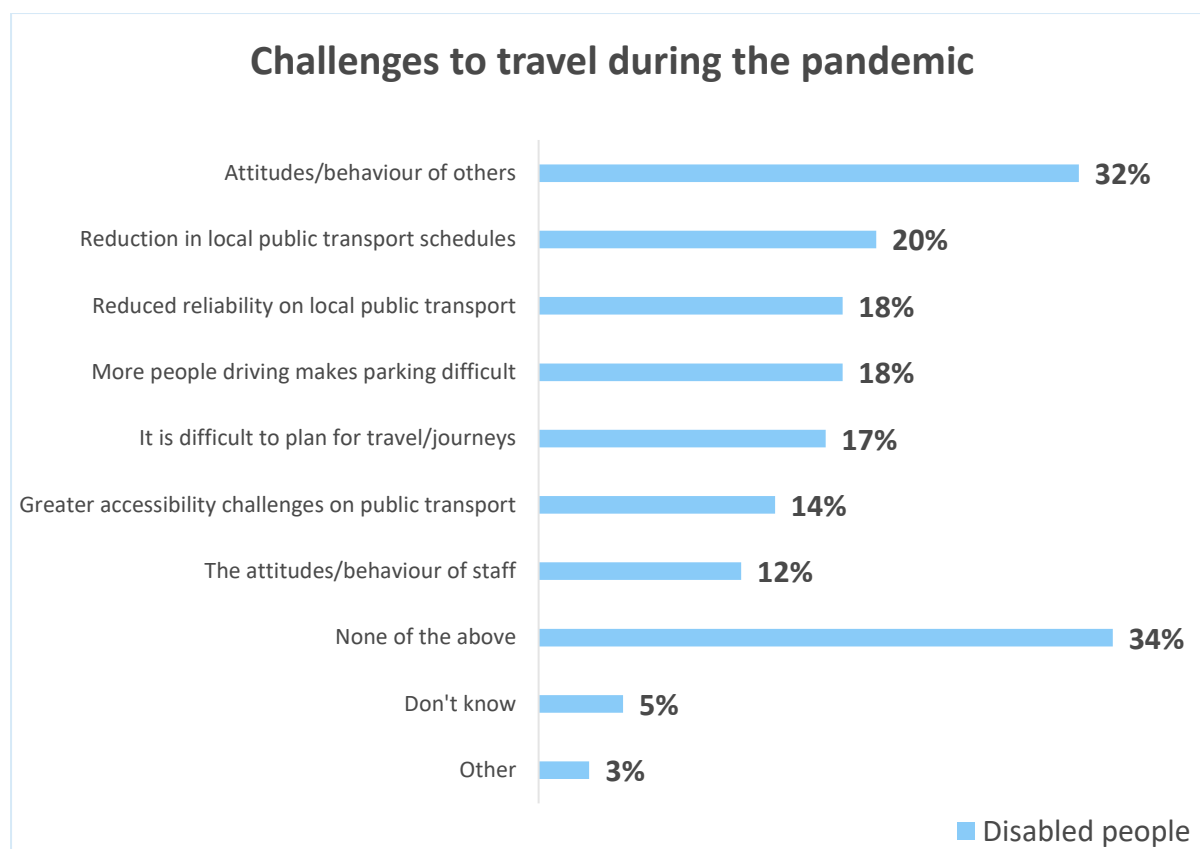


Figure 6 – A graph depicting challenges to travel disabled respondents encountered during the pandemic. Base: disabled people (n=989).

### Unreliable or disrupted services

Many participants were of the view that public transport service provision has gotten worse as a result of the pandemic – with timetables reduced, services more unreliable, and a lack of up-to-date travel information. In addition to this, the closure of accessible facilities, such as disabled toilets in stations and rest stops along motorways presented significant challenges for those managing often unpredictable conditions. Changes to the provision of services and facilities are often more than just an inconvenience to disabled people but can also have negative ramifications for the individual's health.

Unreliable or disrupted services are a significant barrier for participants with chronic pain, those who cannot stand or sit for prolonged periods of time and those with conditions in which being outside for unplanned periods of time can complicate existing health conditions. For those with conditions that require careful planning of travel, these journeys can present insurmountable challenges.

*“Overcrowded, hot trains before the pandemic made me feel faint, anxious, and stressed standing up. But now there’s nowhere to sit as passengers don’t want you seated next to them, and many toilet facilities are closed.”*

*(Disabled person, long term health condition)*

### Case study: Jed, cancer, arthritis

Undergoing chemotherapy has weakened Jed's immune system, making him more susceptible to the cold. Prior to the pandemic, Jed used to make spontaneous trips to the

supermarket by bus, as he felt confident he would never have to wait long for a bus to arrive. Now, Jed finds that his local bus timetables have been reduced and he must plan his journey to the supermarket to coincide with the reduced timetable. This also depends on the service running on time.

*"If I'm left waiting outside for a bus to come it becomes a situation where I can catch a cold and it will cause a chest infection."*

### **Adherence to Covid-19 guidance**

The relaxation of Covid-19 safety guidance caused anxiety for many participants who were concerned about risk of infection. While generally participants' levels of concern about Covid-19 decreased gradually over the course of the pandemic, many remained concerned about catching the virus and were vigilant about keeping themselves and their families safe.

For many participants, a **perceived lack of adherence to Covid-19 guidance** by other passengers on public transport and by drivers of taxis and private vehicle hire (e.g., Uber) made travel feel unsafe. Coupled with a perceived inconsistency in enforcement of guidance by transport staff, this was felt to undermine participants' feelings of safety while using public transport and reinforced the feeling that disabled people have been treated as 'second class citizens' throughout the pandemic. To overcome this, some participants opted not to use the same forms of transport as they did pre-pandemic, and for those who had no other choice but to travel this way their anxiety around catching Covid-19 was heightened.

Conversely, some participants' disabilities made it difficult or impossible for them to adhere to Covid-19 safety guidance. This challenge was especially pronounced for those with non-visible disabilities, who described feeling judged by other people for their inability to follow Covid-19 guidance. Deaf participants highlighted significant communication challenges, given that face masks prevented them from lip reading, while at the same time, not wanting others to remove their face masks due to fear of infection. This points to a need for greater disability awareness among the public and transport staff – a pre-existing challenge for disabled people that has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

*"You're always getting challenged. Even going into my doctor's surgery where they all know me, it's a small place, they ask me. I say I'm exempt; I can barely talk."*

*(Disabled person, speech and breathing condition, LTHC)*

To try and mitigate these challenges with other passengers, some participants wore sunflower lanyards, badges, or other visible indicators of disability. While for some this was helpful, others found wearing a visible marker of their disability stigmatising – because it 'singled them out' from everyone else.

### **The attitudes and behaviours of other travellers**

Disabled people are most likely to find the attitudes and behaviours of others a challenge when using transport. When identifying pandemic-specific challenges to travel in the quantitative research (February 2022), 32% of disabled survey respondents and 29% of parents of disabled children cited the attitudes and behaviours of other passengers and motorists as a challenge they had experienced during the pandemic.

Where participants saw others adhering to guidance, this made them feel safer using public transport. Some described other passengers being more conscious of giving one another space during the pandemic, which has been particularly appreciated by wheelchair users, those with mobility aids and those with guide dogs. Participants also described isolated instances of staff providing good support, particularly at train stations. However, these experiences are outnumbered by those who feel let down by a lack of available support.

While experiences with non-disabled passengers and staff are varied, and only a minority are negative for most participants, adverse interactions with non-disabled passengers, staff and motorists were felt to have a significant impact on participants' confidence to travel. Common experiences included a decrease in staff support available on public transport and challenges for participants with Covid-safety exemptions or difficulties communicating.

*"People aren't bothering, and they don't care about other people. It is a worry."*

*(Disabled person, mobility impairment, LTHC)*

The qualitative research substantiated this finding, with over two-thirds of participants agreeing that they had found the attitudes and behaviours of others to be a challenge during the pandemic in Wave 2 of the research (March – April 2022). Furthermore, just over half of participants agreed that this challenge is difficult to overcome, making it the barrier participants are most likely to find difficult to overcome of all the challenges listed.

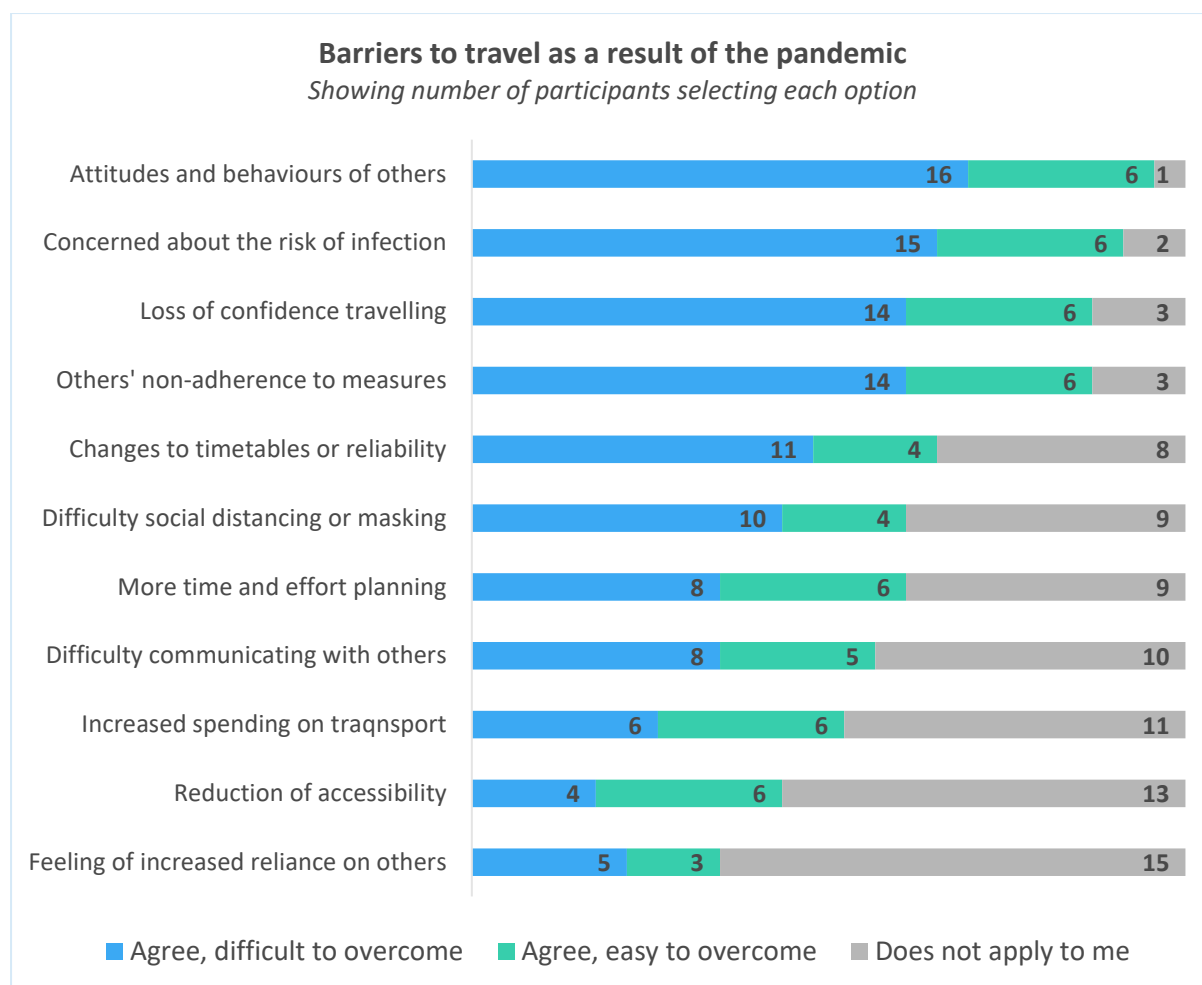


Figure 7 – Graph depicting respondents’ primary barriers to travel as a result of the pandemic. Base all respondents (n=30)

### The cost-of-living crisis

Concerns about the increasing cost-of-living, high price of fuel, and rise in public transport fares have caused participants to see cost as a key barrier to travel. Significantly, some participants described the cost of travel as a barrier during Wave 1 (December 2021 – January 2022), **before** the cost-of-living crisis was front and centre on the public agenda, and the extent of the increase was unknown.

*“Because it takes longer for me to do things due to extremely slow mobility issues, I find I pay a lot of money for parking.”*

*(Disabled person, visual dexterity and mobility impairments, wheelchair user)*

In Wave 2 (March – April 2022), the increasing cost of living began to emerge as a concern for participants, and in Wave 3 (June – July 2022), concerns about the cost of travel were most pronounced – eclipsing concerns about Covid-19 for some. Although in Wave 3 most of the participants in the qualitative sample said they were beginning to return to a ‘new normal’ when using transport, these newfound freedoms are being threatened by the cost-of-living crisis. As a result, knock on effects on mental health and reduced opportunities for socialising are prevalent for many.

**Case study: Joseph, mobility impairment, uses crutches**

Pre-pandemic, Joseph used both his car and public transport to travel. While he sometimes struggled with the accessibility of public transport, living in London meant that Joseph found using public transport a more efficient way to travel.

Since the pandemic began, Joseph has been totally reliant on his car, as this is the only mode of travel in which he feels safe from risk of infection. Joseph had intended to continue travelling this way for the foreseeable future. However, the rising cost of fuel has thrown this plan into doubt. As Joseph is reluctant to get back on public transport, he instead combines various trips into one, so he uses less fuel. This negatively affects Joseph's health condition and can trigger pain if he is out for too long or tries to do too much in a day.

*"I don't go out as much because of the cost-of-living crisis. I only make necessary journeys and have even cut back on essential journeys by trying to clump them together."*

**Case study: Ed, mobility impairment, mental health condition, wheelchair user**

Ed used both public and private transport before the pandemic, valuing the independence this gave him. Since the start of the pandemic, Ed has travelled by car wherever possible, to avoid catching Covid-19. Ed expected to continue travelling this way until there came a point where he felt public transport would be safe to use again (as would be indicated by very low case numbers).

Ed is very concerned about the increases he is seeing in fuel, utilities, and other areas of his life due to the cost-of-living crisis. Ed feels he cannot afford any additional expense and expects to begin staying in more as driving becomes unaffordable. Ed feels this will have a significant impact on his mental health and expects to feel lonelier as the year progresses.

*"The cost-of-living concerns me more than Covid. The cost of diesel is going up, it makes me worry going out by car is going to become unaffordable and I'll be stuck in the house again."*

### 3. The impact of challenges with transport as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic

While many disabled people already faced challenges travelling, the evidence suggests that **disabled people have faced disproportionate challenges as a result of the pandemic**, compared to non-disabled people. As a result, many have made changes to their transport behaviours, such as no longer using certain types of transport, reducing their journeys, and implementing 'workarounds' to make transport more accessible.

This chapter explores the changes made to transport behaviours, as well as the impacts of this on participants' mental health, wellbeing and other areas of their lives.

#### 3.1 Changes in transport behaviour

The quantitative data demonstrates that only a small minority of any audience had made no changes to their travel habits during the pandemic. But the impact of challenges with transport due to the pandemic was felt most keenly by disabled people. At the time of the survey in February 2022, 41% of disabled respondents agreed with the statement 'I feel I have had to make significant changes to the way I travel due to the pandemic' – compared to 35% of parents with disabled children and 30% of non-disabled people (see Figure 9).

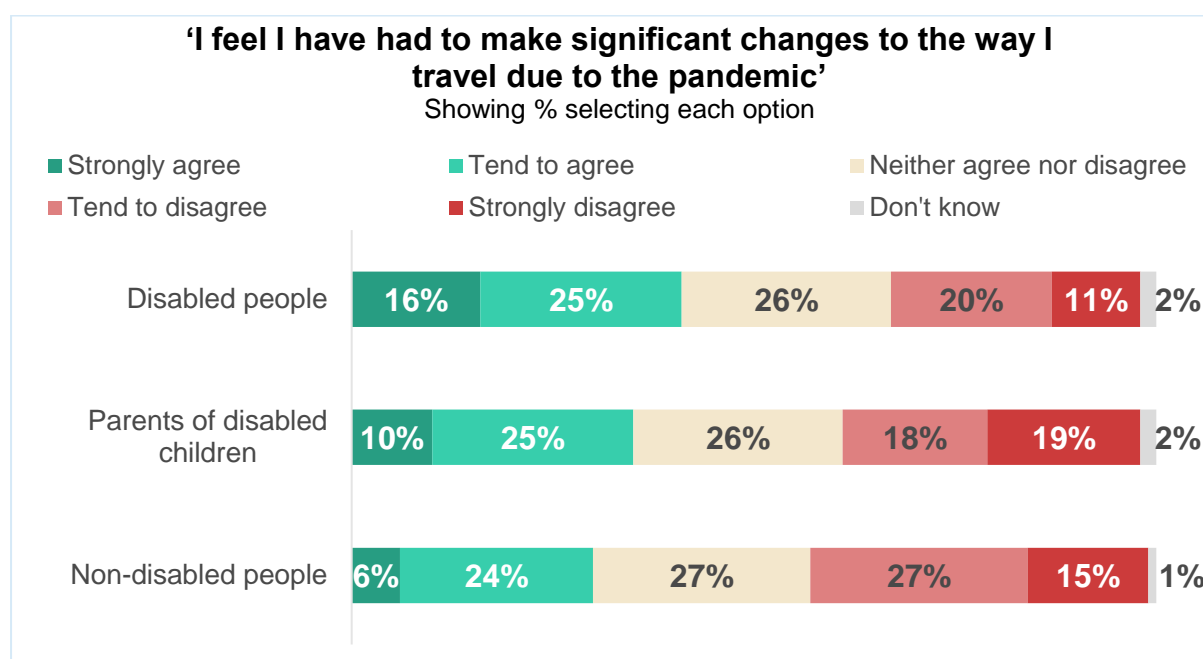


Figure 8 – Graph depicting changes respondents made to the way they travel due to the pandemic. Base: disabled people (n=989), parents of disabled children (n=127) and non-disabled people (n=955).

#### Relying on personal vehicles

Those with access to a car described avoiding using public transport wherever possible, and even avoiding using taxis or ride sharing services due to the risk of infection. Many of those who had access to a private vehicle exclusively travelled by car, as this was the only method of transport where they felt safe. However, participants with chronic pain and fatigue described increased car use as exacerbating their conditions, leading to feelings of exhaustion when reaching their destination.



*“[Pre-pandemic] I didn’t need to think about what time of the day to go out [using public transport] now I have to go in my car because I don’t feel safe on the bus because of Covid.”*

*(Disabled person, hearing, visual impairment)*

Overwhelmingly, personal vehicles (driven by participants or by someone else) were the most common mode of transport participants used across all three waves of qualitative research, followed by buses and trains. In addition, over half of disabled people (58%) who responded to the survey in February 2022 agreed that they **only** felt safe using their personal vehicle, whether driven by them or someone else. This compares to 54% of parents of disabled children and 38% of non-disabled people.

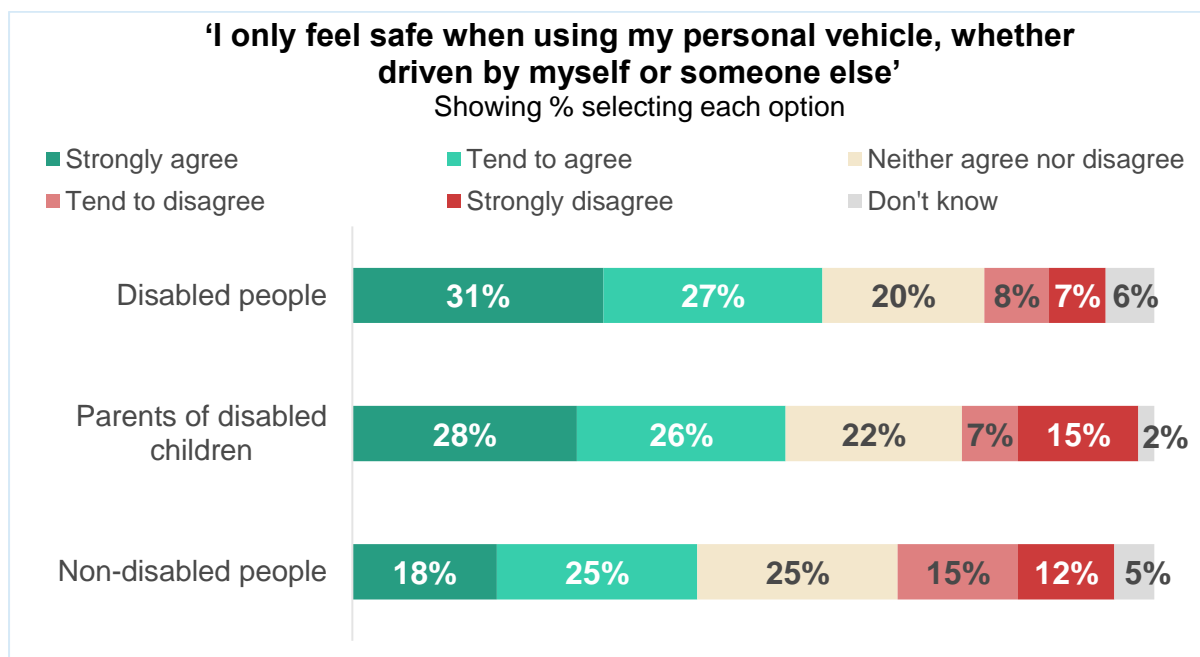


Figure 9 – Graph depicting extent to which people feel safe only in private vehicles. Base: disabled people (n=989), parents of disabled children (n=127) and non-disabled people (n=955).

The quantitative research also aligns with the findings from Wave 1 of the qualitative research (December 2021 – January 2022), when participants described no longer using public transport wherever possible, particularly the bus and train, due to concerns about Covid-19 transmission.

*“Before I would catch the bus or car share but now, I use my own car to types of transport would lead to an increased risk of Covid-19. travel to and from work. I am lucky to have this as I don’t know what I would have done without it.”*

*(Disabled person, acquired disability, LTHC)*



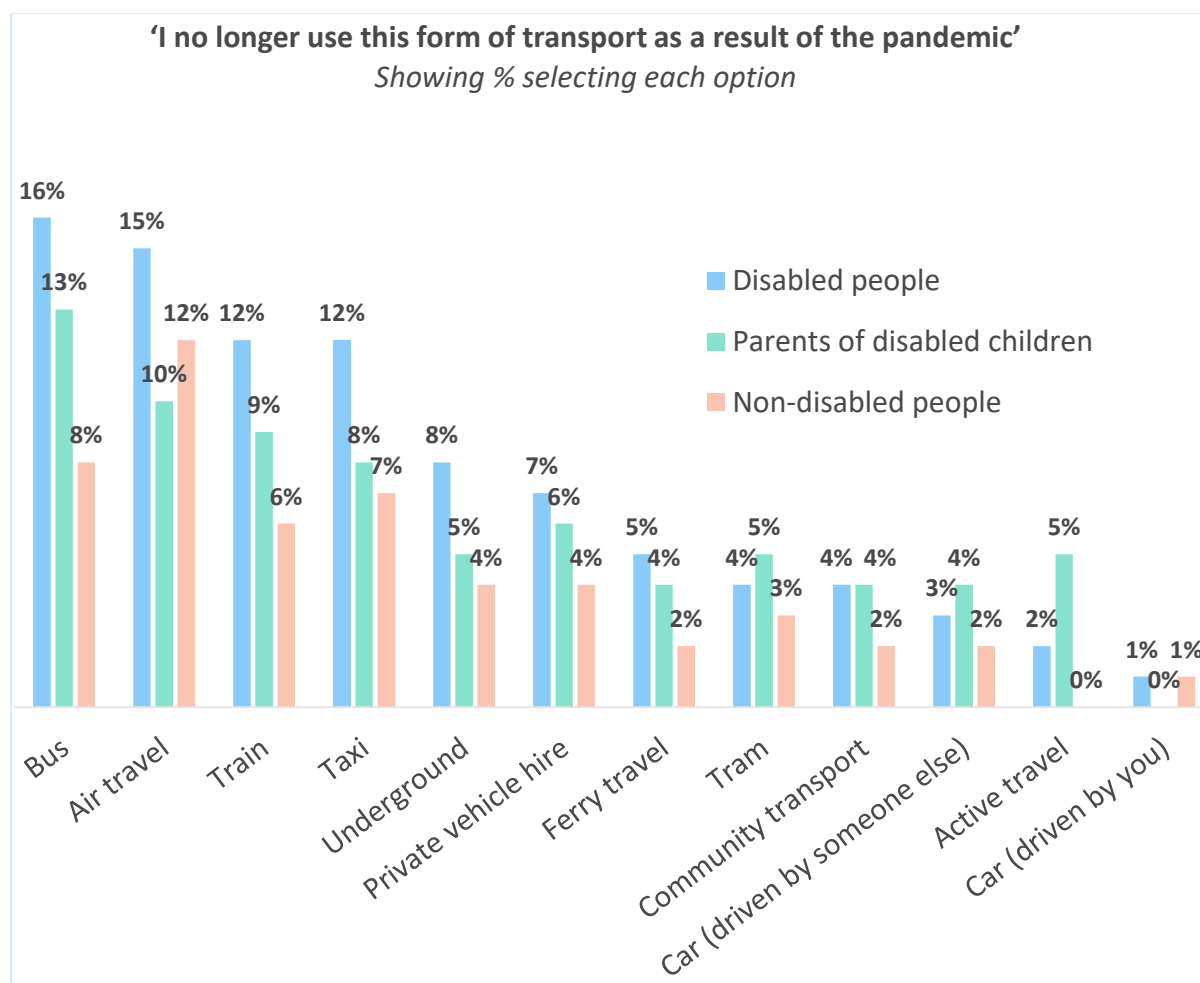


Figure 10 – Graph depicting forms of transport survey respondents no longer use as a result of the pandemic. Base: disabled people (n=989), parents of disabled children (n=127) and non-disabled people (n=955).

### Reducing travel and staying local

Across waves, participants described staying local wherever possible, making fewer trips, avoiding busy times, and combining multiple journeys into one. Some of the most vulnerable participants in the sample had cut out travel altogether – and could envision themselves doing so if Covid-19 case numbers were to rise again in the future.

In Wave 1 (December 2021 – January 2022), participants described choosing to only make essential journeys, thus missing out on time spent with friends and family, enjoying social and cultural activities, and seeing new places. As cost-of-living increases drive up the price of fuel, many participants described retreating back to these practices. In Wave 3 (June – July 2022), participants told us they were again making as few trips as possible, combining various trips into one and using active travel where possible. As a result, some participants felt they had been thrust back into isolation, having only recently begun feeling safe enough to visit family and friends and enjoy leisure activities.

The quantitative data shows that close to half of disabled people had tried not to travel at all during the pandemic, unless necessary to do so, at the time of the survey in February 2022. Participants who were unable to avoid public transport became more selective in the journeys they made, often only leaving the house when necessary, for instance to go to the supermarket or medical appointments. Even for those with access to a car, driving can be

tiring and anxiety-inducing, making journeys less enjoyable. Some participants described avoiding journeys that required multiple modes of transport, due to a fear there was a higher risk of infection or more chance of something going wrong.

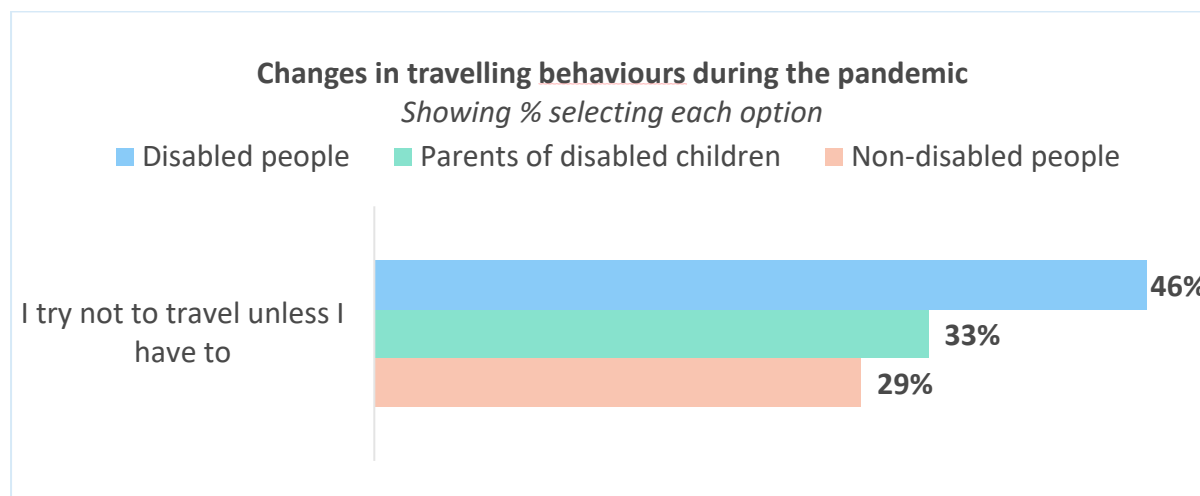


Figure 6 – Graph depicting changes in respondents travel behaviours during the pandemic. Base: disabled people (n=989), parents of disabled children (n=127) and non-disabled people (n=955).

*“I used to use taxis to go down the local club, and that’s one thing I’ve purposefully avoided since the pandemic... because it feels claustrophobic.”*

*(Disabled person, visual impairment)*

Those participants who relied on support to access all types of transport during the pandemic were most likely to make only essential journeys and feel a lack of confidence in getting back to using transport independently.

### More time planning journeys

At the time of the quantitative survey (February 2022), 38% of disabled respondents felt that they had to undertake significant planning to make a journey, compared to 37% of parents of disabled children and 25% of non-disabled people. During Wave 3 (June – July 2022), participants described undertaking increased planning ahead of making a journey and having less spontaneity when travelling as a result of the pandemic. Due to frequent changes in services and unreliability of live travel information, the increased burden of planning was felt across the qualitative sample. This is on top of often significant planning that was undertaken pre-pandemic. For example, participants described starting journeys one or two hours early, just in case there is no disabled parking available, or staff are unable to support them on public transport.

*“I do find that I’m only making shorter journeys. When it comes to long distance journeys, I’m having to really think about if I need to make a stop somewhere where would I make it, would that place be open? There’s a lot of planning around it which I struggle with anyway.”*

*(Disabled person, mobility impairment, non-visible disability, uses sticks)*

### Walking, cycling, and wheeling

Most participants had adapted their travel since the pandemic began and were likely to feel settled into their ‘new normal’ by Wave 3 (June – July 2022). Those participants who had

been travelling more by car and private vehicle during the pandemic expected to continue travelling this way in the future. Some felt they were unlikely to ever use public transport again, due to not feeling safe from infection, compounded with pre-pandemic challenges with inaccessible infrastructure.

Some also told us about taking advantage of the good weather to make use of active travel, such as walking, cycling, or using a wheelchair/mobility scooter – finding this made them feel safer, had added health benefits and was cost-effective. Some participants described using active travel for the first time and experiencing positive impacts on their mental health.

*“I can't walk for very long, but I knew walking was helpful for exercise and my mental health. I've been walking to the shops; I'm trying to take advantage of the slow pace of the society we're living in at the moment.”*

*(Disabled person, mobility impairment, mental health condition)*

However, active travel is likely to be a temporary change which will become untenable as the weather gets colder.

Overall, most participants made at least some changes to the way they travel as a result of Covid-19. While some participants are getting back to pre-pandemic travel behaviours, it can feel difficult to know what will be a temporary or long-term change. The cost-of-living crisis also threatens the sustainability of changes some participants had considered permanent, such as increased reliance on cars.

## 3.2 Emotional impacts

The emotional impacts of the pandemic on disabled people's quality of life are varied. This largely depends on the individual's disability and/or health condition, vulnerability to Covid-19, and access to transport types and services. Participants described feelings of isolation, increased anxiety, and a loss of confidence when travelling due to the pandemic.

In Wave 1 (December 2021 – January 2022), participants were asked to describe their experiences of travel before and during the pandemic using three words. While transport was often challenging pre-pandemic, the positive aspects of travel had been diminished for many during the pandemic. The below word clouds of participants' responses highlight predominantly positive experiences of travel **before** the pandemic, and overwhelming negative experiences of travel **during** the pandemic (see Figure 12 below).

Words participants used to describe experiences of travel *before* the pandemic

Words participants used to describe experiences of travel *during* the pandemic

In Wave 1, participants described significant



Figure 7 – Wave 1 word clouds portraying participants experiences of travel before and during the pandemic.

changes to the way they **feel** about travelling since before the pandemic – creating collages and diagrams to bring these emotions to life. While pre-pandemic travel was often characterised by positive or neutral words and images, travel during the pandemic was characterised by negative feelings (see Figure 13 below).

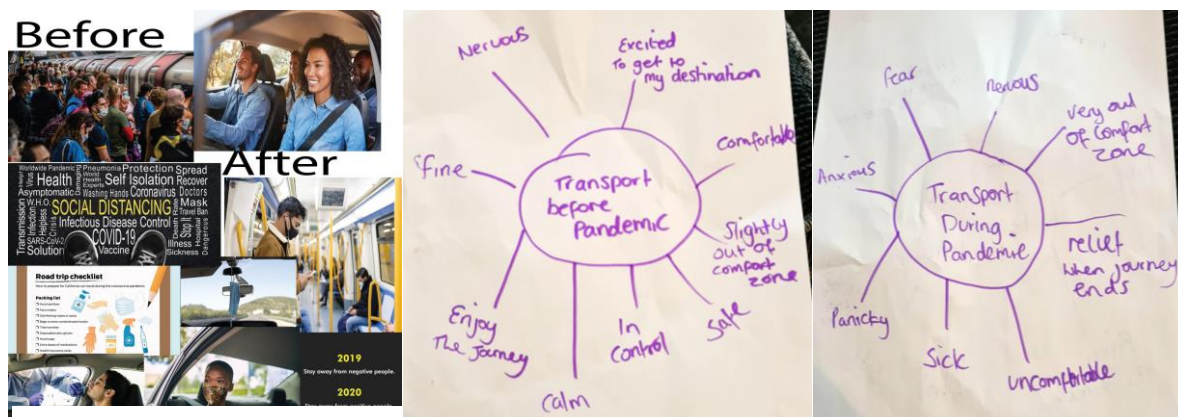


Figure 8 – Wave 1 images depicting changes in participants' feelings towards travel since the pandemic.

*“So pre pandemic I was generally OK with travelling, as long as I had my hearing aids, I'd be alright, I used to enjoy the journeys. During the pandemic - I am riddled with anxiety unless I'm with someone. Lockdown has had a massive impact of my mental health and my PTSD is at its worst. Masks and being Deaf is not good as I reply on lip reading.”*

*(Disabled person, hearing & mobility impairments, mental health condition)*

During Wave 2 (March – April 2022), participants were asked to speak to someone they knew about any changes to their travel as a result of the pandemic. When reflecting on their conversations, some felt reassured that their concerns and anxieties were similar to a non-disabled person. Others felt sad that their **lives were yet to ‘get back to normal’** as many

others had begun to, or had already, moved on with their lives. This range of different emotions are depicted in the word cloud below (see Figure 14).



Figure 9 – Wave 2 word cloud showing participants feelings following a conversation with someone they know.

Even among participants with access to a car, the increased inaccessibility of public transport had an emotional impact on their sense of personal freedom and independence. Those who relied on public transport described feeling isolated and lonely, as many chose to no longer make non-essential journeys. Others had begun to rely on others to drive them, further exacerbating feelings of dependence. The increased need to carefully plan journeys, whether by public or private means, ultimately led to a decrease in spontaneity for many. Participants described planning journeys days and weeks in advance, only to have them upended on the day due to unforeseen circumstances.

*“Although I enjoy the perks of working from home my mental health suffered and I felt trapped in the house. I have always been independent travelling and missed that freedom. Over the last month I have ventured out of the house to use public transport at least once a week. This caused me great anxiety, but I knew I had to do it for my wellbeing.”*

*(Disabled person, mobility impairment, mental health condition)*

Before the pandemic, participants planned journeys to ensure the route was accessible. In the context of Covid-19, many felt it was challenging to account for the unexpected when travelling, and that the pandemic has increased disruptions and unanticipated occurrences on their journeys. Even when having planned their journey carefully, many described **feeling overwhelmed by the number of things that could go wrong**, resulting in significant anxiety.

#### **Case study: Sophie, mobility and physical impairments, part-time wheelchair user**

Sophie travels frequently by car and by public transport when she attends a monthly training course in London. Alongside Sophie's mobility condition, she has a condition which means she often needs access to an accessible toilet at short notice. As a result, Sophie undertakes careful planning to ensure there are service stations or accessible toilets at stations or on any transport she uses.



Since the pandemic, Sophie has found it increasingly difficult to undertake journeys, due to the closure of accessible facilities, including toilets. As a result, Sophie has begun to dread attending her training course in London, an experience she used to enjoy.

*“Covid has been a nightmare as so many 'public conveniences' including accessible toilets have been closed. Despite having a radar key and a card that indicates that my disability results in the need for toilet access, employees working at bus & rail stations have been insistent that there is no access. Private car journeys resulted in the same problems as motorway services & service stations seemed to follow the same guidance. This had a huge impact on my anxiety levels and confidence in feeling able to leave home in the way that previously I had taken for granted.”*

For some, **this has led to a loss of confidence** in making certain journeys or necessitated the need to travel with a companion. Participants have implemented workarounds to overcome this loss of confidence travelling as a result of the pandemic. Some are wearing noise-cancelling headphones, listening to audiobooks, or reading to overcome their anxiety around being on (often crowded) public transport. Others are building up their confidence by starting with shorter, more manageable journeys – working their way up to longer ones.

#### **Case study: Nicola, hearing and mobility impairments, LTHC, mental health condition**

Nicola used to use public transport frequently, to go to work, run errands, and go on days out with her family. Since the start of the pandemic, Nicola hasn't used public transport unless unavoidable. Nicola communicates largely through lip reading, which she can't do when other people are wearing masks. This, combined with her concerns about catching the virus, have meant that she no longer feels safe on public transport.

Nicola does not feel comfortable driving long distances or to unfamiliar places. She often experiences auditory overload and is particularly anxious about driving with her children in the car as she is concerned she will have an accident. Nicola now relies on her husband to drive her for the majority of journeys she makes. This has led to her choosing not to make certain journeys and feeling as though she has lost some of her independence.

*“It's the extra things we're not doing. In the summer, it's quite nice to get the train to the beach but now that's something we avoid doing. We would meet up with family and friends and the kids loved it. Not that's just not an option.”*

Among those in the smaller 'left behind' group, who are considerably more concerned about Covid-19, **seeing others no longer taking precautions continues to exacerbate their anxiety**. Additionally, these participants feel stigmatised for attempts to follow guidance. As a result, this 'left behind' group are often choosing to travel only when necessary, staying local where possible, and running their errands at the same time to condense outings into one journey.

#### **Case study: Hamid, social, behavioural and learning difficulties, mental health condition**

Hamid uses public transport to travel to his university. Prior to the pandemic, Hamid would use this time to revise and read his course materials, as services were usually quiet. As restrictions have been lifted, Hamid has returned to in-person classes and has found that the

buses and trains have grown very crowded as a result of services being reduced in his area during the pandemic.

Hamid has found the experience of travelling to class extremely stressful since the pandemic. His conditions lead to him feeling anxious and experiencing sensory overload in crowds. However, Hamid has no other way to travel. He has continued attending classes but tries to no longer leave the house at any other time unless necessary.

*“With my social anxiety, it’s affected me greatly. A lot of the time it feels as if I can’t breathe. In certain instances, I’ve had panic attacks which have caused me to pass out (which is never good on a train or bus).”*

### 3.3 Impacts of changes in use of transport on other areas of participants’ lives

Across the qualitative research, participants told us about changes they had made to other areas of their lives as a result of challenges with transport due to the pandemic. The quantitative research further evidenced this, with half of disabled people (50%) saying they were not always able to visit family and friends and more than one in three (36%) saying they had to stop or reduce leisure activities due to challenges with transport.

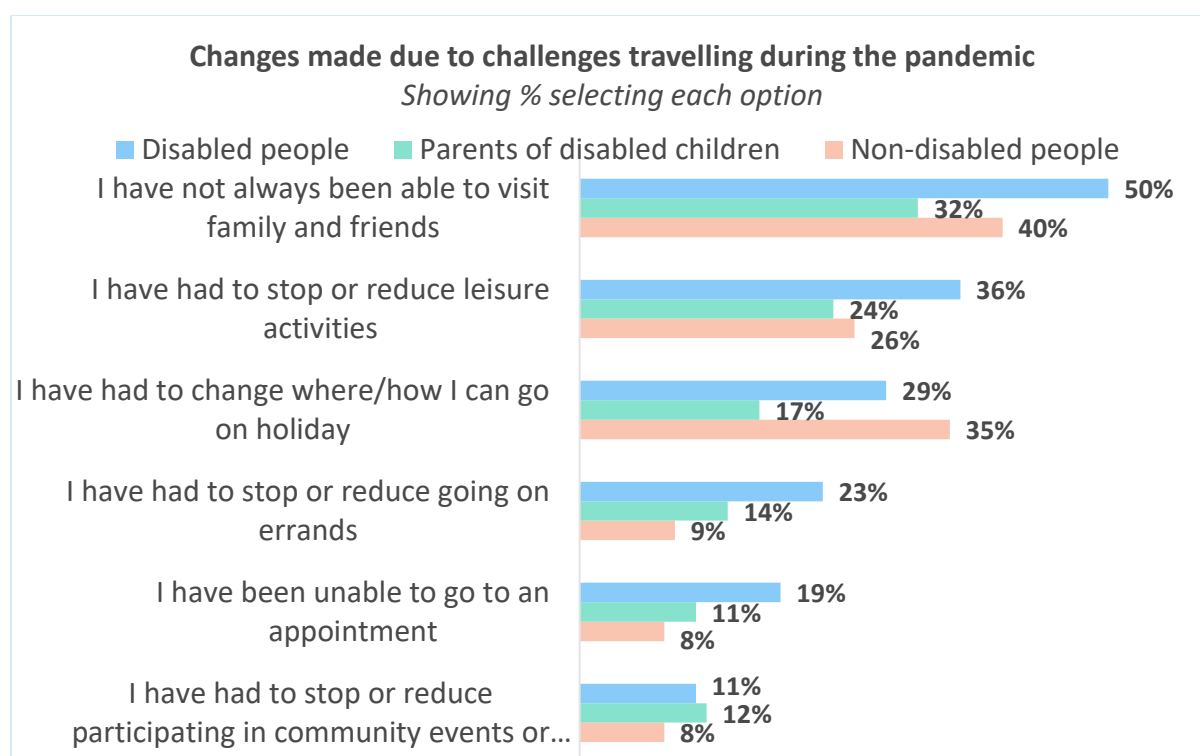


Figure 15 – graph depicting changes survey respondents made due to challenges travelling during the pandemic. Base: disabled people (n=989), parents of disabled children (n=127) and non-disabled people (n=955).

Participants often used workarounds to accommodate these changes on other areas of their lives including making local or shorter journeys, no longer commuting to work, traveling with a companion, traveling by private car and active travel where possible and avoiding busier routes, times or services.

*“Before we would use public transport. We now just drive everywhere which can be more stressful with traffic, but it's the only way I can feel safe, and it takes away the need to plan the journey.”*

*(Parent of a disabled child, physical impairment)*

While the impacts of these changes and workarounds have been largely negative and resulted in a loss of independence, as discussed in the previous section, there have been some isolated positive impacts. For those who began to work from home, no longer having to commute and navigate potentially inaccessible workplace environments has been a positive change. These participants also described positive changes to their work-life balance and spending more time with family as a result. Others have taken up walking, cycling or wheeling to their destinations where possible and have found this to be a good form of exercise that they otherwise would not have explored.

*“Walking more, especially with a wheelchair that works. That's a positive change, I like that, and we'll stick to that.”*

*(Parent of disabled child, mobility impairment, uses wheelchair)*

However, the negative impacts on participants' lives have far overwhelmed the positives. Increased isolation and challenges with travel have led to a decrease in social opportunities and leisure activities. A need to plan ahead and avoid peak times in travel has significantly curtailed spontaneity in travel, even further than pre-pandemic. The emotional and practical impacts of these challenges compound one another, and participants are spending longer planning for journeys, no longer using certain types of transport, and no longer making certain journeys altogether. Furthermore, the effects of the pandemic on wellbeing have been deeply felt – leading to a perceived loss of independence, increase in anxiety and lack of confidence to travel. While most participants display cautious optimism for the future, for many, confidence is based on case numbers being low and this confidence risks disruption should case numbers rise again.

The changes participants have made to how they travel and to other areas of their lives to accommodate these challenges are being further threatened by the cost-of-living crisis. While many participants only feel safe travelling in their personal vehicle, the cost-of-living crisis has thrown this solution into question. Those who reported an increase in travel by car as their 'new normal' in Wave 1, expressed concerns in Waves 2 and 3 that this may no longer be a sustainable option for them as the cost of fuel rises – while public transport users are also concerned about an increase in fares. For some participants, this means going back to limiting their journeys again, this time due to cost rather than solely fear of infection. The knock-on effect of cutting back on travel, is reduced social contact with friends and family – with inevitable ramifications for participants' mental health and wellbeing.

*“[The cost of fuel] is such a worry and that feeling of isolation once again.”*

*(Disabled person, LTHC, mobility impairment, electric wheelchair/scooter user)*



## 4. Looking to the future

This chapter explores how participants see themselves traveling in the future. Shaped by the varied impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, participants have very different expectations for the future as we emerge from the pandemic. Some are confident about returning to the majority of their pre-pandemic travel behaviours, if they haven't already. Others are less certain they will return to *all* of their pre-pandemic travel behaviours and expect some of the changes they made during the pandemic to become part of their new normal. A smaller group expect to continue to make significant curbs to their travel behaviours, despite the lifting of restrictions, until they see case numbers fall even lower.

Participants also explored visions of what would make them feel more confident in an 'ideal future'. This chapter explores these hopes and what participants feel will support more empowered experiences of travel for disabled people in the future.

### 4.1 What is the 'new normal' of travel?

During Wave 1 of the research (December 2021 – January 2022), most participants were cautiously optimistic about getting back to some of the forms of travel that they had cut out during the earlier stages of the pandemic. For some, this period consisted of a return to necessary journeys, or undertaking pre-planned journeys while avoiding unnecessary or spontaneous journeys. Others felt confident travelling by car or taxi but continued to avoid public transport where possible due to the risks of infection.

*"I have been reluctant to use public transport because of the risk of Covid-19 transmission and people not wearing masks. I would also occasionally use public transport including buses and taxis for work purposes, but I have minimized my use of these services."*

*(Disabled person, mobility impairment)*

Looking to the future, most participants have remained eager to return to forms of travel that have been cut out or reduced throughout the pandemic. But, owing to unpredictable infection rates and fluctuating case numbers, participants tended to be cautious about setting out ambitious or specific timeframes for returning to pre-pandemic travel behaviours.

*"In the summer, it's quite nice to get the train to the beach. That's something we usually do that we've avoided. I'd like to think that's something we'll get back to."*

*(Disabled person, mobility impairment, mental health condition, hearing impairment and LTHC)*

For many participants, adaptations and workarounds put into place during earlier phases of the pandemic have become a normal part of their daily life. While hesitant to make predictions too far into the future, in Wave 2 (March – April 2022) participants expected that the following changes they had made would last beyond the following 12 months:

- Working from home
- Beginning to get back to public transport
- Using the car or active transport more

- Travelling at quieter times
- Staying in more
- Combining journeys

### **Case study: Brian, disabled person, LTHC**

Brian is a 36-year-old from a town in South Wales. Four years ago, he recovered from cancer following a series of surgeries. Complications from this continue to affect Brian, with intermittent difficulties breathing and speaking, which has worsened recently as a surgery has been repeatedly delayed due to the pandemic.

Brian's condition has led him to feel more vulnerable throughout the pandemic and means he has been unable to wear a mask. He used to take the bus or cycle to work, but he is anxious about crowds on public transport and his worsening breathing issues mean that cycling is no longer an option for him. Brian has grown quite accustomed to his new routine using his car for most journeys, although he is very concerned about rising fuel prices.

*"I'm all jabbed and all the rest of it, but still now – we've been conditioned to feel very edgy when people get close to you. That bus felt very claustrophobic."*

Throughout the research, there is a general trend towards feeling safer and returning to pre-pandemic travel behaviours. But, within this wider trend, individuals' journeys are complex. The nature of individuals' conditions, unpredictable Covid-19 transmission rates and personal events (e.g., medical complications, changes in work patterns) can heighten or lessen concern about Covid-19 and in turn effect travel behaviour.

### **What would this 'new normal' look like in future waves of Covid-19?**

Faced with the possibility of future waves of Covid-19, participants vary by how much they are prepared for their new normal to be disrupted. The overwhelming majority of participants envision themselves at least taking less intrusive measures such as social distancing to a greater degree and, if they don't already, resuming wearing a mask in public. Some would go beyond this and would avoid public transport, substituting this for use of a private vehicle or active travel where possible.

*"Bus, train, even taxi would make me feel unsafe [if there was another wave of Covid-19] – even with distancing and masks. Walking, cycling, or my own car would make me feel safe as there is no mixing with other people."*

(Disabled person, visual impairment)

However, compared to earlier in the study, **many find it difficult to imagine making the same curbs that they made in earlier waves of the pandemic.** This is due to:

- Some participants having caught Covid-19, particularly during the Omicron wave, and having been less affected by it than they feared. As a result, these participants are less anxious about catching it again.
- Some feel that the mental health impacts of isolating at home and travelling less outweigh the impacts of the risk of contracting Covid-19.
- Others refer to the 'Partygate' scandals, voicing a sense of injustice about making certain sacrifices when those in power did not.

This feeling is not universal, however. A sub-set of participants, tending to be those who are still making only necessary journeys, are sensitive to further increases in cases and anticipate limiting their travel even further or cutting out travel completely should there be another wave of Covid-19. These participants are likely to be clinically vulnerable and/or have mental health difficulties. They are anxious about the risk of infection and are likely to have had negative experiences interacting with non-disabled people when travelling in the past, with a high proportion frustrated by others' relaxation of social distancing and mask-wearing.

*"[I would feel] panicked [if there was another wave of Covid-19]. I really don't think mentally I would go out. If I really had to I would take a taxi... I wouldn't like to make the journey. My anxiety would be through the roof."*

*(Disabled person, physical impairment and mental health condition)*

#### **Case study: Ife, disabled person, LTHC, mobility condition, uses walking stick**

Ife is in her mid-sixties and lives in London. Ife has had several strokes over the past few years which have had an impact on her mobility. As a result of her condition, Ife had started to reduce her public transport usage where possible even before the pandemic but would sometimes travel to hospital appointments or to the local shops.

Since the start of the pandemic, Ife has cut down on making journeys seen as 'unnecessary' due to the risk of infection. At this point, Ife remains concerned about making any journeys (such as to attend hospital appointments) on public transport because of exposure to others who are "constantly travelling around mingling with lots of different people".

Ife can't see herself getting back to her pre-pandemic travel routines. Some aspects she doesn't miss, and she enjoys spending more time at home, but does miss spending days out socialising with her children.

*"I don't visit friends anymore. I don't go out for pleasure in indoor spaces like I used to, such as museums, cinema, theatres... I don't feel the need to entertain going out as much as I did before."*

For this group, 'normal' still feels a long way away, while others' routines have been reshaped by the adaptations and workarounds of the pandemic. There is a growing group, however, who have **largely returned to their pre-pandemic travel habits and feel relatively unconcerned at this stage of the pandemic**. This group includes some participants who previously did not expect to regain this level of confidence.

#### **Case study: Maisie, visual impairment, mental health condition**

Maisie is a 19-year-old from a town in western Scotland. In Wave 1 (December 2021 – January 2022) Maisie thought it would be unlikely that she would ever 'get back to normal'. She was extremely uncomfortable about the prospect of using public transport, as her anxiety disorder was triggered by the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

In Spring 2022, Maisie got a new job that required her to regularly take public transport to commute. For a while, this was a nerve-wracking experience. However, over time, using public transport regularly has helped her to build confidence making this journey. This summer, she took her first flight since 2019.

Maisie is now feeling more confident due to multiple experiences of travelling on crowded transport and not having caught Covid-19. This confidence has remained steady during recent increases in infection rates. Even envisioning more dramatic increases, she does not expect to curb her travel again.

*“Life has been quite good since I last checked in. I’ve been going out more and seeing friends. I took my first flight since 2019... so that was exciting.”*

## 4.2 A travel confident future

While participants are building travel-confidence at this stage of the pandemic, this new-found confidence is not unshakeable. For many, this hinges on Covid-19 transmission rates being low. In Wave 3 of the study (June – July 2022), we presented scenarios to participants of what the future might look like and asked them to sketch out a vision of what would make them feel more confident traveling in an ‘ideal’ future.

### Visions of 2024

We set the scene in 2024 as a world in which Covid-19 cases are low and no new restrictions have been introduced. Participants described measures that would increase their travel confidence in this future as those that would empower them to avoid the negative experiences they currently face when travelling. While modest, participants tend to see these visions as unlikely to be attained any time in the near future.



#### Fewer Covid-19 cases and more Covid-safe measures

Particularly for those who remain very concerned about Covid-19, a sustained reduction in case rates is key to increasing travel confidence in the future. Some are also concerned about the lack of Covid-safe measures at this point in the pandemic, with some looking to see a return of measures including mask-wearing, enforced social distancing and regular testing.

*“I’m extremely vulnerable, I would like everyone to wear a mask when travelling in enclosed spaces just for that bit longer until we know what variants there will be. Someone that’s healthy might have it and not know it or they might have it and need to go to work. But if I got it, it would be a different story.” (Disabled person, mobility condition, LTHC, wheelchair user)*

#### Pre-pandemic public transport schedules and warnings about disruption



During the height of the pandemic, public transport schedules were cut back significantly or otherwise became less reliable due to staff shortages. This is an area that some participants feel has still not returned to pre-pandemic levels of reliability. This is particularly difficult for participants whose disabilities and long-term health conditions make long waits and crowded services difficult or hazardous. For the same reasons, participants want to be warned clearly in advance of disruptions that may affect their journey, as anxiety over disruption significantly hampers travel confidence.

*“I know I’m going to be standing around or delayed [if I use public transport], which is not good for me.” (Disabled person, mobility condition, LTHC, mental health condition)*



### Sufficient staff assistance

For participants who rely on the assistance of staff when using public transport, a tendency towards staff shortages since the start of the pandemic exacerbated long-standing issues about what happens when staff are not available. These discussions were anchored around real-world examples where a lack of staff availability had caused significant disruption to journeys, for example where train station staff were not available to help a wheelchair user with getting off a train. Participants would like to see a greater availability of staff assistance and, at the very least, clear advance communication where staff assistance is not available on any particular journey to improve confidence in receiving appropriate assistance.

*“Since I lost my sight completely I don’t use public transport be the help I have received from public transport staff has been patchy and unreliable.” (Disabled person, visual impairment)*



### More affordable transport

People with disabilities and long-term health conditions are disproportionately likely to have lower household incomes compared to non-disabled people. Against this backdrop, a cost-of-living crisis that has seen the cost of fuel and public transport increase significantly is likely to heavily affect disabled people. In recent months, the rising cost-of-living is increasingly top-of-mind for participants and influencing their travel behaviours. This is particularly concerning for those who have become more reliant on private cars as a result of the pandemic. In this context, changes to make transport more affordable is a core component of many participants' visions for a more accessible future.

*“Affordable. It’s majorly important because I have a Motability car which I still can't believe I’ve got. It’s amazing, it’s life changing. And now I’ve got this juxtaposition of I’ve got the Motability car but I’m struggling to run it.” (Disabled person, mobility condition, LTHC, mental health condition, uses walking stick)*

## Visions of 3024

In this scenario, participants were asked to envision a world more than 1,000 years into the future. The scene was set to encourage participants to think beyond what may be immediately possible and consider a world in which disabled people have been instrumental to changes to transport infrastructure. We encouraged participants to imagine some of the **technological and infrastructural changes that would make them feel most confident in this future.**



### Alerting staff ahead of time

One participant envisioned a service, imagined as a code or button at a bus stop, train station or on a phone app, that would allow a user to alert staff on public transport that they are waiting. This would ensure that staff are ready to assist as soon as they arrive at the station or the bus arrives at a stop. This participant imagined this would help avoid situations where staff do not see an individual who needs assistance, as well as having to avoid waiting for appropriate assistance to arrive with little update as to when and if support will be provided.



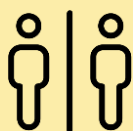
*"A piece of technology at the bus stop that if you're registered disabled you have a code that you punch into it and it lets the bus coming know that you're in a wheelchair or that you're a disabled passenger." (Disabled person, mobility condition)*



### Cheap powered equipment

The cost of powered wheelchairs, mobility scooters and other types of adaptive equipment is a deterrent for many participants. Participants are hesitant to trial equipment that is a significant financial cost, knowing they may be unable to afford it if they find it helpful or may lose money if they purchase equipment that ends up being inaccessible to them. One participant's vision for 3024 saw affordable powered equipment easily available for all disabled people, for purchase or hire.

*"I'd really like more options for personal travel, I've seen those electric scooters you can hire, if they had something like that I could use that would be really cool because they cost like £200 – and a powered wheelchair costs like £2000. It's like hang on a minute, that's not fair... For that to not cost more than what a disabled person can afford, that's my idea." (Disabled person, mobility condition, mental health condition)*



### Spacious public transport

The risk of Covid-19 transmission has made crowding on public transport a greater concern for many people. While difficulties navigating crowded spaces, risk of injury and issues fitting mobility equipment into crowded public transport were all challenges that pre-date the pandemic, the increased risk of infection when in crowds has exacerbated this challenge for many. For this reason, several participants' visions of the future involve greater space on public transport, whether through greater reserved space for those with disabilities (for example in the form of reserved carriages, although others find this idea potentially stigmatising) or through designing transport to be more spacious with an increase in dedicated spaces for mobility equipment.

*"If you could just get on a train, even if it was a wheelchair specific carriage or for people with scooters, knowing there would be enough room for you would be an ideal world." (Disabled person, mobility impairment, LTHC, wheelchair user)*

### No inaccessible stations



A recurring theme in participants' visions of the future is a frictionless form of travel where planning and preparation is not a concern and journeys can be made without running into disruptions. In this future, there would be no need to research whether a particular route or station is accessible to you, or whether the lifts at any particular station may be out of order. You would not need to rely on potentially inconsistent or unavailable staff to assist you, which some may find stressful or uncomfortable. Regardless of mode of travel, there would be no risk of encountering a situation where because of your disability you are barred from access or put at risk of harm.

*"If money was no object every station would be accessible, bus depot, train stations everything completely accessible. I would like all the busses to be curb level, so I want to be able to go on and off the bus myself, I want to be able to go on and off the train myself I don't want to have to wait for the conductor to come off. I would like to be just completely independent when I'm travelling." (Disabled person, mobility condition, wheelchair user)*

Beyond advances in technology and infrastructure, participants identify genuine social change as a key factor in supporting their confidence to travel. Participants' visions of a travel confident future are defined by a greater sense of public understanding and respect for disabled travellers.

*"I think people need to be a little bit more educated and aware. I can walk, but people don't know the pain I'm in, or the impact. Sometimes when I get on the bus I really need to sit in the disabled seat, and you can see people watching you."*

*(Disabled person, mobility impairment, mental health condition, walking stick)*

This mirrors findings in the quantitative research, when 32% said that the attitudes and behaviours of other passengers and motorists are a challenge to them when travelling during the pandemic. As such, looking to the future, greater understanding, respect and empathy coupled with changes to infrastructure, are central to hopes for a greater sense of empowerment and confidence when travelling post-pandemic.

*"[My vision is that] there is no barrier for disabled people. That disabled are not treated as second class citizens. I'd like a cultural shift in terms of transport so it's not a by-thought, that it's fully integrated."*

*(Disabled person, physical impairment, mental health condition)*

Whether discussing the near future or 1000 years from now, participants' visions are relatively modest but still felt to be a world away from that of the present. For some, a history of accessibility schemes being underfunded or withdrawn leads to scepticism about the prospects of effective, sustained interventions to tackle issues. Others see their lack of confidence when travelling as an internal issue that must be 'got over' as changes to infrastructure and society that would enable them to feel more confident when travelling appear unrealistic.

## 5. Building future interventions

Alongside participants' visions for a travel-confident future, we tested four potential interventions to help participants imagine what support could help overcome pre-pandemic and pandemic-related challenges to travel for disabled people. Prior to Wave 3 of the research (June – July 2022), we worked with Motability to design these potential interventions to test with participants. The purpose of these interventions was to give participants a starting point to think about what is important to them in a transport intervention, rather than to find the perfect 'solution'.

### 5.1 What makes a good intervention?

Participants identified five key themes as criteria that are important for an effective intervention:

- **Adaptable to different needs:** Participants were quick to point out that there is unlikely to be a 'one size fits all' solution to overcome transport challenges for disabled people. Rather, it is important that any solution be flexible in order to address people's varying needs. For example, digital solutions such as phone apps should be accompanied by dedicated phone lines to ensure they support those who may be digitally excluded or for whom digital options are inaccessible.
- **Affordable:** Concerns about affordability are twofold. Firstly, participants looked for reassurance that they would be able to afford to use any new scheme or service and emphasised that cost is a key consideration in making an intervention accessible. This is particularly poignant in the context of the cost-of-living crisis. Secondly, this is set against a wider scepticism that schemes to support disabled people will be adequately funded. Participants were looking for assurance that any scheme they may grow to depend on will be funded in the long-term, beyond the initial one or two years.
- **Avoids stigma:** It is important that any intervention supports disabled people to travel, while avoiding being patronising or for some, drawing unwanted attention. Participants cautioned against interventions that assume disabled people cannot advocate for themselves and risk speaking on behalf of the disabled person. Additionally, solutions for disabled people that are separate from travel for non-disabled people can feel stigmatising and participants instead were looking for solutions that adapt and improve transport so everyone can use it.
- **Promotes independence:** This is a key part of any solution and overwhelmingly, participants were looking for interventions that support them to travel independently where appropriate. Feelings of a lack of independence when travelling were a significant impact of inaccessible transport and participants felt travel had become more unpredictable and harder to plan for since the Covid-19 pandemic. Participants were most excited by interventions that will return autonomy to them when travelling.
- **Reliable:** Inaccurate and out-of-date information is a key barrier for many disabled people while travelling. Any solution involving information provision will only be useful if the information is accurate and up-to-date. Additionally, any intervention which provides a service, such as support staff or door-to-door transport, will need to evidence its reliability. Participants described countless previous incidents of being



let down by support services, with significant impacts. Trust will need to be built and maintained in the reliability of any new service.

## 5.2 Participants' responses to potential interventions

In Wave 3 of the qualitative research (June – July 2022), participants explored four potential interventions to help overcome barriers to travel. These ideas were designed in response to common barriers that participants discussed in Waves 1 & 2 of the research and were also present in the quantitative research.

### Intervention one: Travel planning app and phone line



Image 1 This image was shown or described to participants to bring intervention one to life

The idea for a phone app and accompanying phone line was developed in response to challenges participants described earlier in the research with planning for a journey. The phone app and dedicated phone line would have a number of features, including:

- Providing live information on departures and delays of public transport;
- Feedback and reviews from other disabled travellers of routes and infrastructure;
- A map with live information and updates on accessible infrastructure;
- Up-to-date Covid-safety guidance;
- Information on what passenger assistance is available and how to book.

Participants were overwhelmingly supportive of this idea, with the majority feeling the app or phonenumber was something they would use. Participants were looking for the app and phone line to provide live information, particularly about accessible infrastructure and support services, to help overcome the unreliability participants currently experience with transport. However, this is also participants' biggest concern with this idea and some were unsure whether it would be possible to maintain up-to-date information across transport modes and locations. Reassurance is also needed that the phonenumber would be answered in a timely way.

*“Going to a station and finding a lift out of order can be disastrous for a journey. Knowing this in advance and working round it if possible would be incredibly helpful to many.”*

*(Disabled person, LTHC, mental health condition)*

Participants suggested the following **builds to improve the idea further**:

- Wheelchair space availability indicators and the ability to book wheelchair spaces through the app;
- Text relay service for those with hearing impairments;
- Online chat function with station staff and a 'panic button'.

*"You could perhaps have a button to request a member of staff for help, which would be good for someone who was having a personal emergency or struggled to use a telephone or intercom."*

*(Disabled person, LTHC, mobility impairment, mental health condition, uses wheelchair)*

### **Intervention two: Travel companions or buddies**

The idea for the travel companions or buddies was developed in response to participants who told us they struggle with confidence when travelling independently and others who told us that travelling independently is not currently an option for them. The travel companion and buddy would provide the following support:

- A **'Travel Companion'** would be trained in supporting disabled people to travel safely and confidently. They could accompany a disabled person on their journey (whether on public or private transport) and advocate on their behalf, should the traveller not feel confident to do so, and help with planning a journey.
- A **'Travel Buddy'** would be another disabled person who is taking a similar journey to the disabled person requesting the service and with whom, one could travel together. The travel buddies would support one another during the journey.

Participants were divided over this idea, with mixed views on whether it would promote or undermine their independence when travelling. For those who feel they cannot travel independently, this idea was felt to be a way to get the support they need to travel. For others, the idea risks feeling patronising, with those who already travel independently at least some of the time feeling it implies they are unable to advocate for themselves. The travel 'buddy' was felt to be particularly unhelpful by many, with concerns about having to support another disabled person while trying to support themselves or accessing multiple wheelchair spaces on public transport for example. All participants shared concerns about the reliability of the companion or buddy turning up at the appropriate place and time.

*"On the fence with this one, in some aspects I think it's OK, it's just the thought of being matched with a stranger then being stuck on a journey with them having to look after them as well as yourself. In another light though could be great company for someone who is lonely."*

*(Disabled person, physical impairment, LTHC, hearing impairment, mental health condition)*

Participants suggested the following **builds to improve the idea further**:

- Ability to view a photo or information about the companion or buddy in advance, to reduce anxiety about travelling with a stranger;

- A social media app to meet other disabled people to socialise or travel with, without the stigma and pressure of an organised scheme;
- Training on self-advocacy when travelling so a companion or buddy is not needed to advocate on your behalf.

### Intervention three: Support for walking, cycling or wheeling to a destination



Image 2 Images shown to participants to show the types of equipment the scheme would provide and also the types of changes to infrastructure that may be needed to support the use of this equipment

This idea was developed in response to participants' increased use of active travel during the pandemic, as this is felt to be a safe way to travel as well as good exercise. However, we also know that equipment to support active travel can be very expensive. When we refer to 'active travel', we mean walking, cycling or wheeling to a destination.

In this idea, organisations such as community transport organisations and local and national charities would store and loan equipment to encourage walking, cycling or wheeling to a destination. Services offered could include:

- Holding trial sessions to help people learn how to use new equipment
- Running sessions for people to trial new types of equipment and technologies
- Arranging for a companion to accompany the user
- Delivering and collecting the equipment from the user's home

Participants were enthusiastic about this idea and felt it had the potential to support both physical and mental health of users. Participants reflected that mobility equipment is often very expensive and felt the option to hire equipment could reduce significant cost barriers and the worry of purchasing unfamiliar equipment. Parents of disabled children particularly liked this option for the flexibility it would give them as their children grow. Support when using the equipment, whether through trial sessions or accompanying the user on their journey, also had wide appeal, with participants feeling this would be important in gaining confidence while using new equipment. Some participants with multiple sensory impairments, fatigue or postural needs felt that while they would be unlikely to use the scheme themselves, it is still a positive development for others.

*"I love everything about the idea to promote active travel. Exercising with a disability can be challenging."*

*(Disabled person, physical impairment, wheelchair user)*

Participants suggested the following **builds to improve the idea further**:

- Wheeling clubs for social opportunities
- Increased public toilets available, to enable people who may need the toilet urgently to spend more time outdoors
- Local hubs available to ensure equitable access

*"It might be nice to have wheeling clubs, so you can meet others who struggle with mobility too."*

*(Disabled person, LTHC, mobility impairment, dexterity impairment, uses mobility aids)*

#### **Intervention four: Community transport and staff training**

In this idea, councils would provide end-to-end community transport in their local areas where public transport is inaccessible or insufficient. The staff for this scheme would all undergo an extensive disability awareness programme as part of their training. This programme would be delivered by disabled people and would focus on best practice in providing support to disabled people when travelling using this new scheme.

Participants in areas without accessible public transport or without access to a car were very supportive of this idea, feeling it could increase their independence to travel and fill an important gap in their current transport networks.

*"Community transport is one of the only forms of transport a deafblind person could use independently."*

*(Carer for disabled person, hearing and visual impairment)*

However, some felt that having to organise or abide by the schedule of the scheme could make it difficult to travel spontaneously and would prefer to see transport solutions that make public transport accessible to all.

*"This is good for some people but I would not like using it myself. I feel like it takes away some of the independence I am trying to gain by going out, if I am in disabled-only transportation"*

*(Disabled person, physical impairment, mental impairment, LTHC, wheelchair user)*

Whether they felt they would be likely to use the scheme or not, participants were enthusiastic about the idea of staff training delivered by disabled people. Participants discussed staff training as having the potential to be a 'tick box exercise' and felt they would be most likely to trust training they know has been delivered by disabled people.

Participants suggested the following **builds to improve the idea further**:

- Make the training for staff public, to increase confidence in the level of training staff have received
- Provide reassurance that the training covers how to provide support for various needs

- Provide opportunities to give feedback on experiences using the scheme to improve the training, reinforce positive experiences and empower the consumer to hold the scheme to account after negative experiences

*“Make the training they’ve given the staff public. Then we can say, ‘Alright, I feel confident this person might have a good idea what I need help with.’ Otherwise is it a 10 second questionnaire, or a two day hands on thing – let us see what training they’re getting.”*

*(Disabled person, mobility impairment, uses wheelchair)*

### 5.3 Participants' own ideas

After viewing the interventions above, we also asked participants what ideas they had for overcoming barriers to travel. Participants saw a particular role for technology when discussing their own solutions:

- **Online video accessibility tours:** A video or 3D interactive map of routes and transport modes to enable disabled people to accurately assess accessibility themselves. Participants told us this would help overcome the anxiety of receiving inaccurate information and ease the time burden of planning journeys.

*“A quick video would enable us to assess exactly how accessible and safe places/means of transport are – then we can make informed decisions about travel. I also think it would be great for people with autism or similar issues as it could help them be less anxious visiting new places. Lots of confidence has been lost during Covid.”*

*(Parent of disabled child, mobility & visual impairments, learning disability, wheelchair user)*

- **Accessibility trust pilot:** A mapping website where users can tag and comment on accessible infrastructure and alert others if something is broken or out of service.

*“How about a mobile app and website where disabled people can rate how accessible a place is? A sort of trust pilot for accessibility – accessibility pilot maybe? Maybe even put pressure on the big tech companies to build accessibility routing into their mapping applications.”*

*(Disabled person, visual impairment)*

- **App for Taxicard scheme:** To help reduce anxiety over wait times and hold the scheme to account for refusing to take passengers with mobility equipment.

*“The Taxi card service could be significantly improved if it adopted a similar app-based format to Uber – so you could see where your car is and how long it will be. I have a Taxi card but never use it as I don’t want to be stood waiting for a car when they feel they can fit me in... I would be much more inclined to use the service without these anxiety inducing barriers.”*

*(Disabled person, LTHC, mental health condition)*

- **Intermediary service for booking transport:** Participants with hearing impairments spoke about having to use the phone to book taxis and finding this extremely difficult. An app, website or text service would help to relieve the challenge of using inaccessible contact methods for these participants.

*“An intermediary service for those with hearing impairments to make the process [of book transport] smoother. We don't have Uber [in my local area] so I have to use the phone to book taxis.”*

*(Disabled person, hearing impairment)*

Participants also suggest ideas to improve the attitudes of others when travelling, space available on transport and feelings of safety:

- **Ideas to improve the attitudes of others:**
  - Increase numbers of staff available to provide assistance
  - Improve staff-training, especially on non-visible disabilities
  - Raise public awareness of non-visible disabilities

*“I would like them to triple the number of staff they have. I don't want to see apps; I want staff that are educated in equality and diversity. If staff are educated, they will challenge people's inappropriate behaviour.”*

*(Disabled person, LTHC, mobility impairment, dexterity impairment, vision impairment, mental health condition)*

- **Ideas to improve the space available on transport:**
  - Restore reduced public transport services to decrease the number of people on each service
  - Increase the number of dedicated wheelchair spaces on public transport

*“More wheelchair spaces on public transport. I wouldn't want to attempt to use public transport because I don't know where I would sit. I hear people saying there aren't enough room for push chairs so where would I sit?”*

*(Disabled person, LTHC mobility impairment, electric wheelchair)*

- **Ideas to increase comfort and safety when travelling:**
  - Provide more hand sanitiser stations on public transport
  - Take action against people who park on pavements
  - Ensure – and inform passengers about – a clear back-up plan for broken infrastructure, such as lifts, when travelling

*“The world is accessible to a point, but something like the lifts break and there's nothing they say they can do. We're reliant on this stuff.”*

*(Parent of disabled child, mobility impairment, uses wheelchair)*

## 6. Summary of conclusions

Reflecting on the conversations we had with participants and the discussions they had with each other across the entirety of the research programme, we have drawn out the following themes. They show the breadth and diversity of participants' experiences during the pandemic, as well as hopes for the future.

- 1. Levels of concern about Covid-19 have been mixed throughout the pandemic.** At the start of fieldwork in December 2021, levels of concern were high, spurred on by the emergence of the Omicron variant. As the research has progressed, levels of concern have dropped, with participants citing the successful vaccine rollout and periods where case numbers have fallen as reasons for this. However, there remains a sub-group of disabled people who are **very concerned about the risk of infection**. Seeing others no longer taking precautions against Covid-19 has been particularly difficult for this group, as they feel they are being left behind as the rest of society 'moves on' from the pandemic.
- 2. This diversity of experience means that the rate at which disabled people return to pre-pandemic travel behaviours is also likely to be varied.** During the pandemic, those who had access to an accessible private vehicle overwhelmingly chose to travel this way, due to risk of infection when interacting with others on public transport. As we have begun to emerge from the pandemic, many disabled people have chosen to continue travelling this way, feeling it is safer and more accessible for them. However, **the cost-of-living crisis threatens to disrupt participants' 'new normal'** of travel, as many have already found the rising cost of fuel making travelling by car unsustainable.
- 3. Disabled people have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.** In our quantitative research in February 2022, we found that 65% of disabled people agreed they were concerned about risk of infection, as compared to 49% of non-disabled people. Additionally, 40% of disabled people agreed their health had deteriorated due to Covid-19, as compared to 15% of non-disabled people. We also know that **disabled people are more likely to have had to make significant changes to the way they travel due to the pandemic**, with 41% who agreed they had done so, compared to 30% of non-disabled people.
- 4. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated many previously existing challenges with transport for disabled people.** Prior to the pandemic, disabled people already often faced inaccessible infrastructure, unreliable information and services and mixed experiences when interacting with non-disabled passengers, motorists and transport staff. Covid-19 intensified these challenges, with **information becoming even more unreliable, a reduction in staff meaning support was often unavailable and an increase in negative interactions with others**. This combined with the risk of infection made travelling untenable for many, as participants told us about isolating and making essential journeys only when necessary.
- 5. The attitudes and behaviours of non-disabled passengers, motorists and transport staff have been a significant challenge throughout the pandemic.**



In our quantitative research in February 2022, 1 in 3 (32%) disabled people said they found the attitudes and behaviours of other passengers or motorists a challenge when travelling during the pandemic – making this the option most likely to be selected from the list of challenges presented. In our qualitative research, participants described **experiences of being challenged by others as to their support needs, having to advocate for the use of disabled spaces** (on both public transport and parking spaces) and **a lack of awareness of non-visible impairments**. Earlier on in the pandemic, those who were exempt from wearing masks also experienced being challenged on this, whereas those who were continuing to wear masks in Wave 3 (June/July 2022) told us about feeling stigmatised for doing so. Personal negative experiences and hearing about these from others has a significant impact on confidence to travel.

- 6. Participants saw their independence severely curtailed during the pandemic and are looking for this to be a priority in any future interventions.** The emotional impacts of limiting one's use of transport during the pandemic have been far-reaching for participants, with the increased inaccessibility of public transport leading to feelings of a decrease in personal freedom and independence. Even among those who travel by private vehicle, **the impacts of having no other way to travel are significant**. Any future interventions to support disabled people when travelling must look to do so by empowering people to travel independently (as appropriate for individual needs).
- 7. When looking to the future, participants identify key themes as criteria for a good intervention.** Alongside promoting independence, participants are looking for interventions that are reliable, adaptable to different needs, avoid stigma and are affordable. Recognition **that there won't be a 'one size fits all' solution** is important, as participants discuss multiple interventions to address different needs. While participants are enthusiastic about ideas that meet these criteria, they also have low expectations of what will come to fruition.

## Appendix 1 – Sample frame

**35 participants were recruited to take part in the qualitative research (online community and interviews).**

- Only 30 participants took part in each wave, with five joining the research partway through to accommodate for other participants who were no longer able to take part.
- All participants are either disabled themselves, or care for a disabled child or non-verbal adult.
- Participants live in a range of areas across England, Scotland and Wales.

The demographic breakdown of the participants is shown in the tables below:

Disability status	Participants
Disabled	30
Parent of a disabled child	4
Carer of a non-verbal adult	1

Table 1. Disability status of participants in the qualitative research.

Impairment type	Participants
Physical impairment	27
Visual impairment	6
Hearing impairment	4
Mental health condition	12
Non-visible disability	4
Long-term health condition	18

Table 2. Impairment types of participants in the qualitative research.

Mobility aid(s) used	Participants
Wheelchair (full- or part-time)	13
Mobility scooter	4
Walking stick(s) or crutches	10
Guide cane	2

Mobility aid(s) used	Participants
Guide dog	2

Table 3. Impairment types of participants in the qualitative research.

Motability scheme use	Participants
Motability scheme user	12
Not a Motability scheme user	23

Table 4. Use of the Motability scheme among participants in the qualitative research.

Gender	Participants
Male	16
Female	19

Table 5. Gender of participants in the qualitative research.

Ethnicity	Participants
Asian	5
Black	3
Mixed	2
White	25

Table 6. Ethnicity of participants in the qualitative research.

Socio-economic group	Participants
ABC1	16
C2DE	19

Table 7. Socio-economic group of participants in the qualitative research.

## Appendix 2 – Key figures from the quantitative research

To support the validity of the qualitative findings, a total of **2133 respondents completed an online survey between 16<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022**. Of these, there were 888 disabled respondents, 124 parents or guardians of disabled children, and 957 non-disabled respondents – recruited through a public panel. In addition to this, 110 Motability beneficiaries, including 82 disabled respondents, 22 parents or guardians of disabled children, and one non-disabled respondent were recruited via email. This survey coincided with the announcement of the Government's 'living with Covid' strategy, which saw freedoms expanded back to pre-pandemic norms, and free lateral flow testing gradually phased out.

The quantitative sample is broken down as follows:

Disability status	Respondents
Disabled	45%
Parent of a disabled child	7%
Non-disabled respondents	45%

Table 8. Disability status of respondents in the quantitative survey.

Gender	Total sample	Disabled respondents	Parents of disabled children	Non-disabled respondents
Male	47%	47%	60%	45%
Female	53%	52%	40%	55%

Table 9. Gender of respondents in the quantitative survey.

Age	Total sample	Disabled respondents	Parents of disabled children	Non-disabled respondents
18-34	23%	28%	42%	15%
35-54	32%	37%	47%	26%
55+	44%	35%	11%	58%

Table 10. Age of respondents in the quantitative survey.

SEG	Total sample	Disabled respondents	Parents of disabled children	Non-disabled respondents
ABC1	48%	43%	41%	55%
C2DE	52%	57%	59%	45%

Table 11. Socio-economic group of respondents in the quantitative survey.

Settlement type	Total sample	Disabled respondents	Parents of disabled children	Non-disabled respondents
City	33%	34%	47%	30%
Town	44%	44%	31%	46%
Rural	23%	22%	22%	24%

Table 12. Settlement type of respondents in the quantitative survey.

Nation	Total sample	Disabled respondents	Parents of disabled children	Non-disabled respondents
England	83%	85%	86%	81%
Scotland	9%	8%	6%	10%
Wales	5%	4%	5%	6%
Northern Ireland	3%	3%	4%	3%

Table 13. Nation of respondents in the quantitative survey.

By weighting the sample by age, gender, and region – survey data is broadly representative of the UK population. By screening out certain demographics if the quota had already been reached, and fine-tuning the sample by boosting or reducing the 'weight' of each response from respondents from certain demographics, we were able to gain a representative sample. This goes some way in ensuring that the survey data is generalisable to the public at large.

The impairment types represented among disabled respondents and parents of disabled children are as follows:

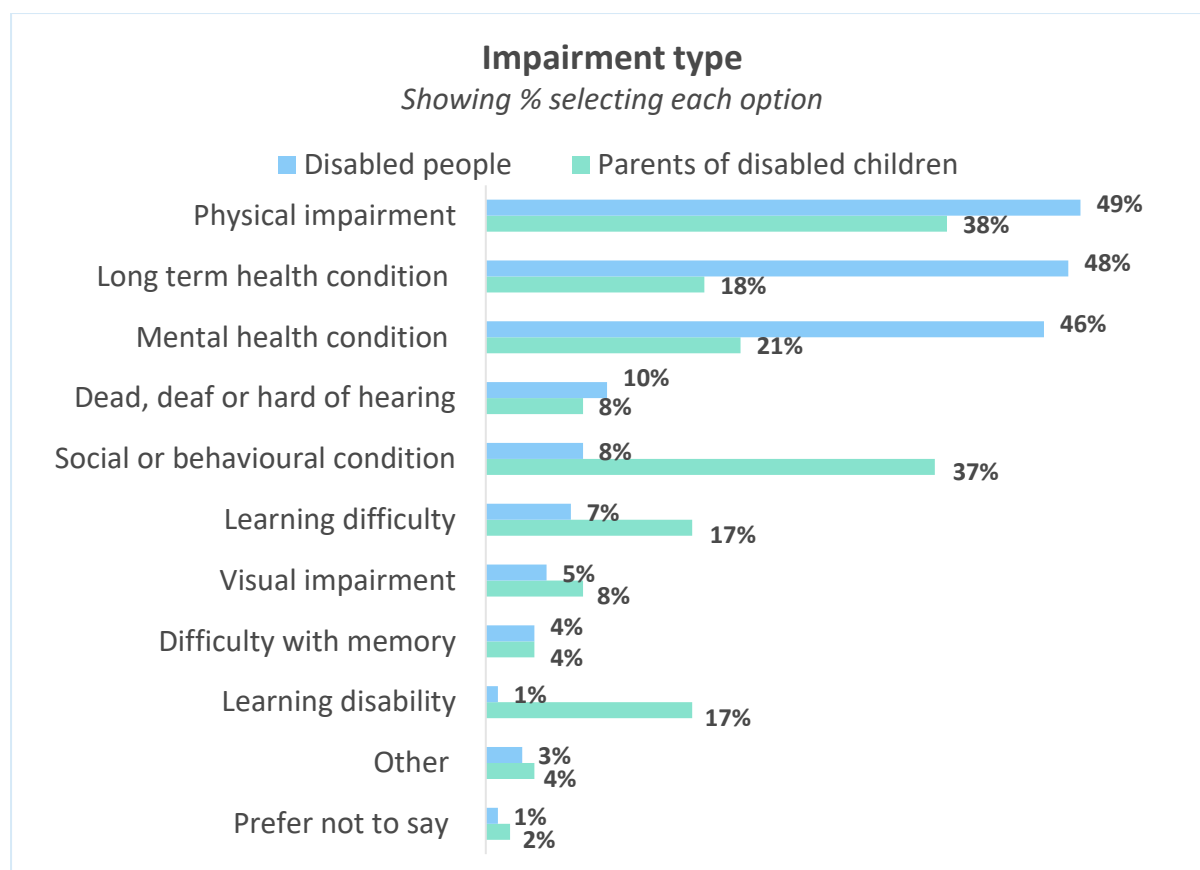


Figure 10 - Q7. Which of the following best describes your/your child's disability, impairment or long-term health condition? If you/your child have multiple disabilities or health conditions, please select all that apply. Base: disabled people (n=989) and parents of disabled children (n=127).

## Audience segmentation

In the quantitative research, we conducted a statistical analysis on the unweighted survey data to identify discrete audiences among respondents.

- This analysis involved **identifying naturally forming groups of respondents** based on their patterns of responses to the range of attitudinal questions included in the questionnaire.
- **Segments are 'discrete'**, meaning that respondents only belong to one segment, the one which best fits their range of responses to the attitudinal questions.
- Segments include the **disabled and parents/guardians of disabled children audiences** only, and do not include the non-disabled respondents.

Segments were created based on:

- Attitudes towards the **impact the pandemic has had on feelings of safety**
- Attitudes towards the **impact the pandemic has had on travel behaviours**
- Attitudes towards **returning to pre-pandemic travel behaviours**

Our research identified **six segments** among disabled people and parents of disabled children in their attitudes to travel. As a reminder, the survey was conducted February 16-25, 2022, at which point case numbers were relatively high off the back of the Omicron variant

and the Government announced its Living with Covid strategy on February 21<sup>st</sup>, with restrictions easing over the coming weeks.

We identified the following six segments:

- **Consistent travellers (9% of respondents)**
  - These respondents never changed the way they travel during the pandemic. They are mixed in terms of whether they feel safe travelling at this point in the pandemic and mixed as to whether the pandemic has had a negative impact on their experiences of travel.
- **Confident travellers (14% of respondents)**
  - These respondents have already returned to all their pre-pandemic travel behaviours. They are most likely to feel safe when travelling at this point in the pandemic and mixed as to whether the pandemic has had a negative impact on their experiences of travel.
- **Reluctant travellers (29% of respondents)**
  - Reluctant travellers have returned to some of their pre-pandemic travel behaviours. The majority do not feel safe when travelling at this point in the pandemic and feel the pandemic has had a negative impact on their experiences of travel.
- **Planning travellers (21% of respondents)**
  - These respondents are planning to return to their pre-pandemic travel behaviours in 6-12 months. The majority do not feel safe when travelling and feel the pandemic has had a negative impact on their experiences. A subset of this group plan to never return to their pre-pandemic travel behaviours.
- **Uncertain travellers (14% of respondents)**
  - Uncertain travellers hope to return to their pre-pandemic travel behaviours at some point but are unsure when this will be. The vast majority do not feel safe when travelling and nearly all feel the pandemic has had a negative impact on their experiences.
- **Unlikely travellers (13% of respondents)**
  - Unlikely travellers are unsure if they will return to their pre-pandemic travel behaviours. Least likely to feel safe when travelling and nearly all feel the pandemic has had a negative impact on their experiences.

Half of respondents were either 'reluctant travellers' (29%) or 'planning travellers' (21%), showing a desire to get back to travel. It is likely that with the right enablers and support, these audiences will be able to increase their travel and use of transport further.

## Quantitative survey questions

### 1. [ASK ALL | SINGLE CODE | FIX OPTIONS] Do you identify as...?

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Non-binary
- d. Prefer not say



**2. [ASK ALL | NUMERICAL CODE | FIX OPTIONS] Please enter your age in the box below:**

a. [OPEN TEXT]

**3. [ASK ALL | SINGLE CODE | FIX OPTIONS] Which of the following best describes where you live?**

- a. Scotland
- b. North East
- c. North West
- d. Yorkshire and the Humber
- e. West Midlands
- f. East Midlands
- g. Wales
- h. East of England
- i. London
- j. South East
- k. South West
- l. Northern Ireland
- m. I do not live in the UK [SCREEN OUT]

**4. [ASK ALL | SINGLE CODE | FIX OPTIONS] Which, if any, of the following best describes the area that you live in?**

- a. Large city
- b. Small city
- c. Town
- d. Village
- e. Rural
- f. Other (please specify) [OPEN TEXT]
- g. Don't know

**5. [ASK ALL | SINGLE CODE | FLIP ANSWER OPTIONS] The Chief Income Earner is the person with the largest income in your household, whether from employment, pensions, state benefits, investments or any other source. If two or more related people in the household have equal income, please think of this question with the oldest in mind. The Chief Income Earner can be of any gender, with no preference to either.**

**Which of the following best describes the employment status of the Chief Income Earner in your household?**

- a. Full-time employment (more than 29 hours a week)
- b. Part-time employment (8-29 hours per week)
- c. Retired
- d. Student
- e. Not working / working less than 8 hours per week

**6. [ASK ALL | SINGLE CODE | FIX OPTIONS] Which of the following best describes you?**

- a. I currently have a disability, impairment or long-term health condition
- b. I am the parent or guardian of a child with a disability, impairment or long-term health condition
- c. I do not currently have a disability, impairment or long-term health condition

**7. [ASK ALL WHO CODE OPTION A OR B AT Q6 | MULTICODE | FIX OPTIONS] Which of the following best describes your/your child's disability, impairment or long-term health condition? If you/your child have multiple disabilities or health conditions, please select all that apply.**

- a. Physical impairment (e.g. mobility issues, long term pain such as arthritis)
- b. Visual impairment (e.g. sight loss)
- c. Deaf, deaf or hard of hearing
- d. Mental health condition (e.g. anxiety, depression)
- e. Social or behavioural condition (e.g. autism)
- f. Difficulty with memory (e.g. stroke recovery, dementia)
- g. Learning disability (e.g. Downs syndrome, executive function discourse)
- h. Learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD)
- i. A long-term health condition
- j. Other (please specify if you would like) [OPEN TEXT]
- k. Prefer not to say

**8. [ASK ALL WHO CODE OPTION A OR B AT Q6 | MULTICODE | FIX OPTIONS] Which, if any, of the following forms of support do you/your child use when traveling or using transport? Please select all that apply.**

- a. Wheelchair
- b. Mobility scooter
- c. Walking stick(s), walking aid or crutches
- d. Guide cane
- e. Guide dog
- f. Assistance dog
- g. Hearing aid/cochlear implant
- h. Disabled parking permit or 'blue badge'
- i. Priority badge or symbol to wear on public transport
- j. I sometimes travel with a companion
- k. I always travel with a companion (e.g. I do not / cannot travel alone)
- l. I sometimes require assistance from staff
- m. I always require assistance from staff (e.g. I do not / cannot travel without assistance)
- n. Other (please specify) [OPEN TEXT]
- o. None of the above [EXCLUSIVE]

**9. [ASK ALL | SINGLE CODE | FIX OPTIONS] Which of the following best describes you?**

- a. I own a vehicle with no adaptations
- b. I own a vehicle with some adaptations (e.g. hand controls, steering aids etc.)
- c. I own a wheelchair accessible vehicle

- d. I do not own a vehicle
- e. Don't know

**10. [ASK ALL WHO CODE OPTION A OR B AT Q6 | SINGLE CODE | FIX OPTIONS]**

**Which, if any, of the following best applies to you/your child?**

- a. My disability/disabilities are non-visible
- b. Some/one of my disabilities are non-visible, but my other disability/disabilities are visible
- c. My disability/disabilities are non-visible until I interact with someone (as they are usually able to tell I have a disability from our interaction, even if I don't tell them)
- d. My disability/disabilities are visible
- e. Don't know
- f. Prefer not to say

**11. [ASK ALL | SINGLE CODE FOR EACH OPTION | RANDOMISE STATEMENTS]**

**Please select how far you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Please think about how you're feeling *today* when reading each statement.**

**Scale**

- 1. Strongly agree
- 2. Tend to agree
- 3. Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. Tend to disagree
- 5. Strongly disagree
- 6. Don't know

**Options**

- a. I am concerned about the risk of infection from Covid-19
- b. I do not feel I am at risk of contracting Covid-19
- c. I feel my life has gotten back to 'normal' since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic
- d. I am concerned about the possibility of a new Covid-19 variant
- e. I am less concerned about Covid-19 now than I was at the start of the pandemic
- f. I feel my health has deteriorated due to Covid-19

**Changes made to travel behaviours due to the pandemic**

**We're now going to ask you some questions about how you travelled prior to the pandemic, throughout the pandemic and how you're traveling now. Please think about all types of traveling you might do, such as seeing family and friends, going to work, doing errands, going to appointments, as well as any longer journeys you might make.**

**[SHOW TO ALL WHO CODE OPTION B AT Q6] Please think about your experiences of traveling with your child when answering the following questions.**

**12. [ASK ALL | MULTICODE PER OPTION | FIX OPTIONS] Which of the following best describes how you use the following types of transport? Please tick all that apply for each type of transport.**

Transport type	I used this form of transport <i>prior to the pandemic</i>	I used this form of transport <i>during the pandemic</i>	I <i>currently</i> use this form of transport	I no longer use this form of transport as a result of the pandemic	I do not use this form of transport for reasons other than the pandemic
a. Car (driven by you)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Car (driven by someone else)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Taxi/minicab hire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Private vehicle hire (e.g. Uber)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Tram	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Underground	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Community transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Ferry travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Air travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Active travel (e.g. walking, cycling or using a wheelchair or mobility scooter to travel)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**13. [ASK ALL | SINGLE CODE | FIX SCALE] On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is no impact and 10 is a huge impact, to what extent, if at all, do you feel the pandemic has had an impact on how you travel?**

*Sliding scale from 0 – 10; including 'Don't know' option*

*0 to be labelled 'No impact' and 10 to be labelled 'Huge impact'*

**14. [ASK ALL | MULTICODE | RANDOMISE OPTIONS, FIX J-L] Below are a list of some changes people may have made to the way they travel during the pandemic. Which, if any, of the following changes have you made to the way you travel during the pandemic? Please select all that apply.**

- a. I try not to travel unless I have to
- b. I mainly use my own personal vehicle (whether driven by me or someone else) to travel
- c. I use active travel more (e.g. walking, cycling or using a wheelchair or mobility scooter to travel)
- d. I travel with a companion whenever possible
- e. I receive support from others who make journeys on my behalf so that I do not have to make non-essential journeys
- f. I wear a face covering when traveling using public transport, taxi or private vehicle hire [ONLY SHOW TO THOSE WHO SELECT 'I used this form of transport during the pandemic' AND/OR 'I currently use this form of transport' FOR OPTIONS C-K AT Q12]
- g. I try to social distance when traveling using public transport [ONLY SHOW TO THOSE WHO SELECT 'I used this form of transport during the pandemic' AND/OR 'I currently use this form of transport' FOR OPTIONS E-K AT Q12]
- h. I try to choose a seat by an open window when traveling using public transport [ONLY SHOW TO THOSE WHO SELECT 'I used this form of transport during the pandemic' AND/OR 'I currently use this form of transport' FOR OPTIONS E-K AT Q12]
- i. I will wait for the next bus or train/tube when traveling using public transport to avoid crowds [ONLY SHOW TO THOSE WHO SELECT 'I used this form of transport during the pandemic' AND/OR 'I currently use this form of transport' FOR OPTIONS E-K AT Q12]
- j. Other, please specify [OPEN TEXT]
- k. Don't know
- l. I have not made any changes to the way I travel as a result of the pandemic [EXCLUSIVE]

## **Challenges experienced with travel due to the pandemic**

**We'd now like to ask you about the challenges of traveling during the pandemic and how, if at all, these challenges have impacted how you make journeys.**

**15. [ASK ALL | MULTICODE | RANDOMISE OPTIONS, FIX H-J] Below is a list of challenges some people may face when traveling due to the pandemic. Which, if any, of the following challenges with traveling have you experienced during the pandemic? Please select all that apply.**

- a. It is difficult to plan for travel/journeys
- b. Public transport services in my area have been reduced
- c. Public transport services in my area have become less reliable
- d. I feel that more people are driving and as a result, it has been more difficult for me to park my car (either at my destination or at my home)
- e. Public transport has become less accessible for me
- f. The attitudes/behaviour of staff
- g. The attitudes/behaviour of other passengers or motorists
- h. Other, please specify [OPEN TEXT]
- i. Don't know
- j. I have not experienced any challenges with traveling during the pandemic [EXCLUSIVE]

### **Impact of challenges due to the pandemic**

**16. [ASK ALL | MULTI CODE | RANDOMISE OPTIONS, FIX I-K] Thinking about your everyday activities, which, if any, of the following actions have you taken as a result of the challenges you've experienced when traveling during the pandemic? Please select all that apply.**

- a. I spend more time/effort planning journeys
- b. I spend more money to access transport options that are accessible to me
- c. I have stopped using certain forms of transport
- d. I avoid long journeys
- e. I avoid public transport
- f. I always travel with someone else
- g. I avoid travelling at peak travel times
- h. I only travel to familiar locations whenever possible
- i. Other (please specify) [OPEN TEXT]
- j. Don't know
- k. None of the above [EXCLUSIVE]

**17. [ASK ALL WHO SELECT OPTION A AT Q16 | FIX SCALE] You mentioned that you have spent more time planning journeys during the pandemic. What proportion of your time spent planning would you estimate you have increased?**

*Sliding scale from 0% - 100%; including 'Don't know' option*

**18. [ASK ALL WHO SELECT OPTION B AT Q16 | OPEN TEXT] You mentioned that you have spent more money accessing transport during the pandemic. In the box below, please estimate how much more in pounds you are spending on transport per month.**

**19. [ASK ALL | MULTI CODE | RANDOMISE OPTIONS, FIX L-N] As a result of challenges you have mentioned you face when traveling during the pandemic, which, if any, of the following changes have you had to make? Please think about**

**changes you made after UK Government restrictions on only making essential journeys were lifted. Please select all that apply.**

- a. I was unable to take a job
- b. I have had to stop working or reduce my hours at work
- c. I changed my working hours to avoid travelling at peak times
- d. I changed my working pattern to working from home to avoid traveling
- e. I was unable to continue with my studies
- f. I have not always been able to visit family and friends
- g. I have had to stop or reduce going on errands
- h. I have had to stop or reduce leisure activities
- i. I have had to stop or reduce participating in community events or volunteering
- j. I have been unable to go to an appointment
- k. I have had to change where/how I can go on holiday
- l. Other [OPEN TEXT]
- m. Don't know
- n. None of the above [EXCLUSIVE]

**Thank you for telling us about how the pandemic has impacted how you travel. We'd now like to ask you some final questions on how, if at all, the pandemic has impacted how you *feel* about traveling.**

**20. [ASK ALL | SINGLE CODE FOR EACH OPTION | RANDOMISE STATEMENTS]**

**Please select how far you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Please think about how you're feeling *today* when reading each statement.**

***Scale***

1. Strongly agree
2. Tend to agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Tend to disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

***Options***

- a. I feel safe using public transport
- b. I feel safe using private transport other than my own car (e.g. taxi, Uber)
- c. I feel safe using my personal vehicle, whether driven by myself or someone else
- d. I *only* feel safe when using my personal vehicle, whether driven by myself or someone else
- e. I am concerned that use of public transport will lead to higher risk of infection from Covid-19
- f. I am concerned that use of private transport other than my own car (e.g. taxi, Uber) will lead to higher risk of infection from Covid-19

**21. [ASK ALL | SINGLE CODE FOR EACH OPTION | RANDOMISE STATEMENTS]**

**Please select how far you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.**



### **Scale**

1. Strongly agree
2. Tend to agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Tend to disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

### **Options**

- a. I feel anxious when traveling, as a result of challenges from the pandemic
- b. I feel I have had to make significant changes to the way I travel due to the pandemic
- c. I feel the pandemic has limited the modes of transport I can use to travel
- d. I feel I have not been able to travel spontaneously, due to challenges from the pandemic
- e. I feel I have had to undertake significant planning in order to make a journey as a result of the pandemic
- f. I have felt more comfortable traveling during the pandemic when accompanied by someone else
- g. I feel the impacts of the pandemic on how I travel have begun to lessen
- h. I do not feel the pandemic has impacted which journeys I can and cannot make
- i. I do not feel the pandemic has had an impact on how I travel
- j. I feel a loss of independence and freedom, as a result of challenges traveling due to the pandemic

## **Attitudes towards returning to pre-pandemic travel behaviours**

**22. [ASK ALL | SINGLE CODE | FIX OPTIONS] Which of the following best describes you?**

- a. I have already returned to all of my pre-pandemic travel behaviours and I feel this is unlikely to change (e.g. in response to a new variant etc.)
- b. I have already returned to some of my pre-pandemic travel behaviours
- c. I hope to return to my pre-pandemic travel behaviours in around 6 months
- d. I hope to return to my pre-pandemic travel behaviours in around 12 months
- e. I hope to return to my pre-pandemic travel behaviours at some point, but I do not know when that will be
- f. I feel unsure if I will return to my pre-pandemic travel behaviours
- g. I never plan to return to my pre-pandemic travel behaviours
- h. I never changed the way I travelled due to the pandemic
- i. Don't know

**23. [ASK ALL | MULTICODE | RANDOMISE OPTIONS, FIX K-N] Which, if any, of the following would make you feel more confident in traveling at this point in the pandemic? Please select all that apply.**

- a. News about Covid-19 case numbers decreasing in my local area
- b. News about Covid-19 case numbers decreasing across the UK
- c. International travel restrictions being further relaxed

- d. Guidance on wearing face coverings and social distancing to be enforced on public transport
- e. Guidance on wearing face coverings and social distancing to be relaxed on public transport
- f. Greater public awareness of exemptions in adhering to Covid-19 guidance (e.g. face masks, social distancing)
- g. More reliable and up-to-date information on transport services
- h. More reliable and up-to-date information on staff support available on public transport
- i. More disabled parking bays
- j. Better enforcement of blue badges for disabled parking bays
- k. Other, please specify [OPEN TEXT]
- l. Don't know
- m. None of the above, I already feel totally confident traveling [EXCLUSIVE]
- n. None of the above, I will never feel confident traveling due to the pandemic [EXCLUSIVE]

**Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey! If you have any comments about the survey you have just completed, or if there is anything else you would like to add, please do so in the box below. [OPEN TEXT]**