



UNITED KINGDOM KEY FINDINGS 2022

Exploring barriers to travel
among disabled people





BOOKING AND PLANNING TRIPS

Three in ten say they shouldn't have to book their trip with a specialist travel agency or provider.

Half (52%) of disabled people in the UK tend to book their holidays directly with the travel provider, making this more common than through a travel agent (20%) or a mixture of both (15%).

One in ten (10%) say they use travel agents or providers that specialise in holidays for disabled people when booking their holiday. Three in five (58%) say they use travel agents or providers that do not specialise in holidays for disabled people and the remaining three in ten (31%) use both.



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Booking and Planning Trips

The reasons for not using disabled specialist agents or providers are more likely to be due to not feeling like they should have to, rather than anything to do with the service they offer.

Of those who don't use specialist agents or providers, almost half (45%) say this is because they don't need to.

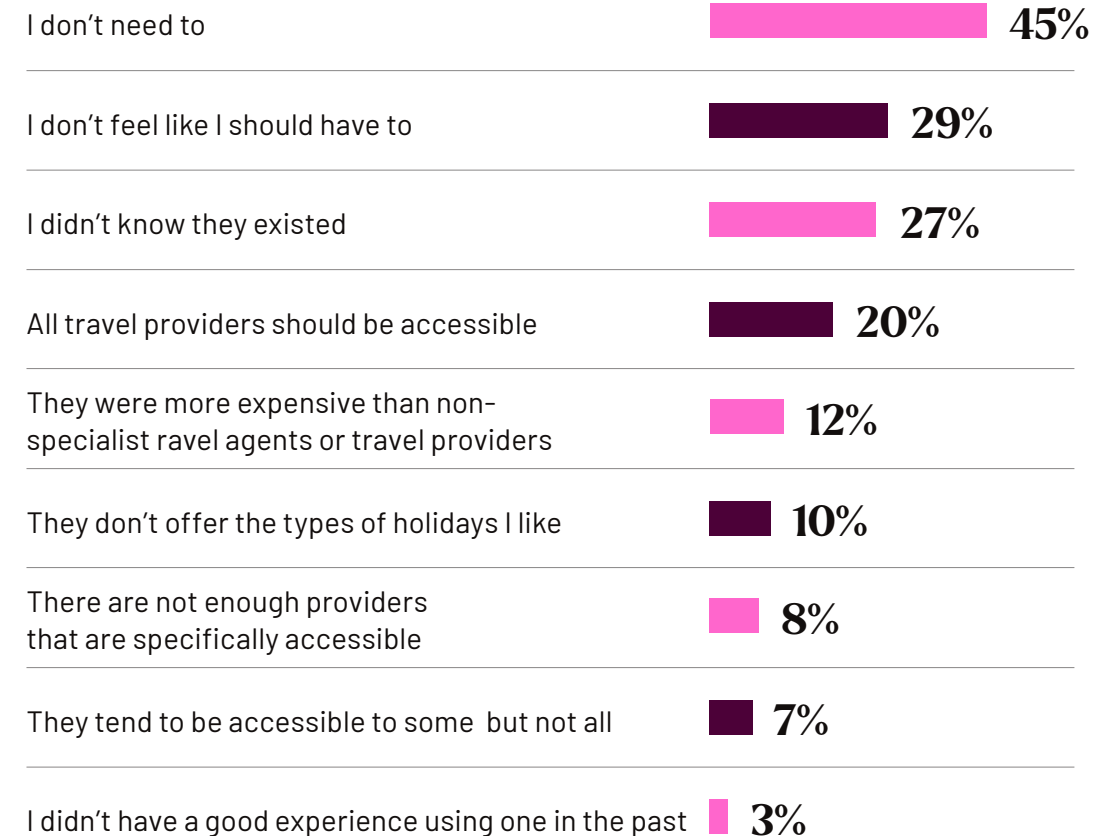
However, three in ten (29%) say they don't feel like they should have to and a fifth (20%) say they don't use them because all travel providers should be accessible to disabled people or people with long-term health conditions or impairments.

Only 10% said it's because they don't offer the types of holidays they like and just 3% said they've had a bad experience using them in the past.

Interestingly, over a quarter (27%) of those who don't use specialists say this is because they didn't know they existed, which is higher among younger aged disabled people (33% of both those aged 18 to 34 and 35 to 54).

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Reasons for not using travel agents or providers that specialise in holidays for disabled people, among those who don't use them.





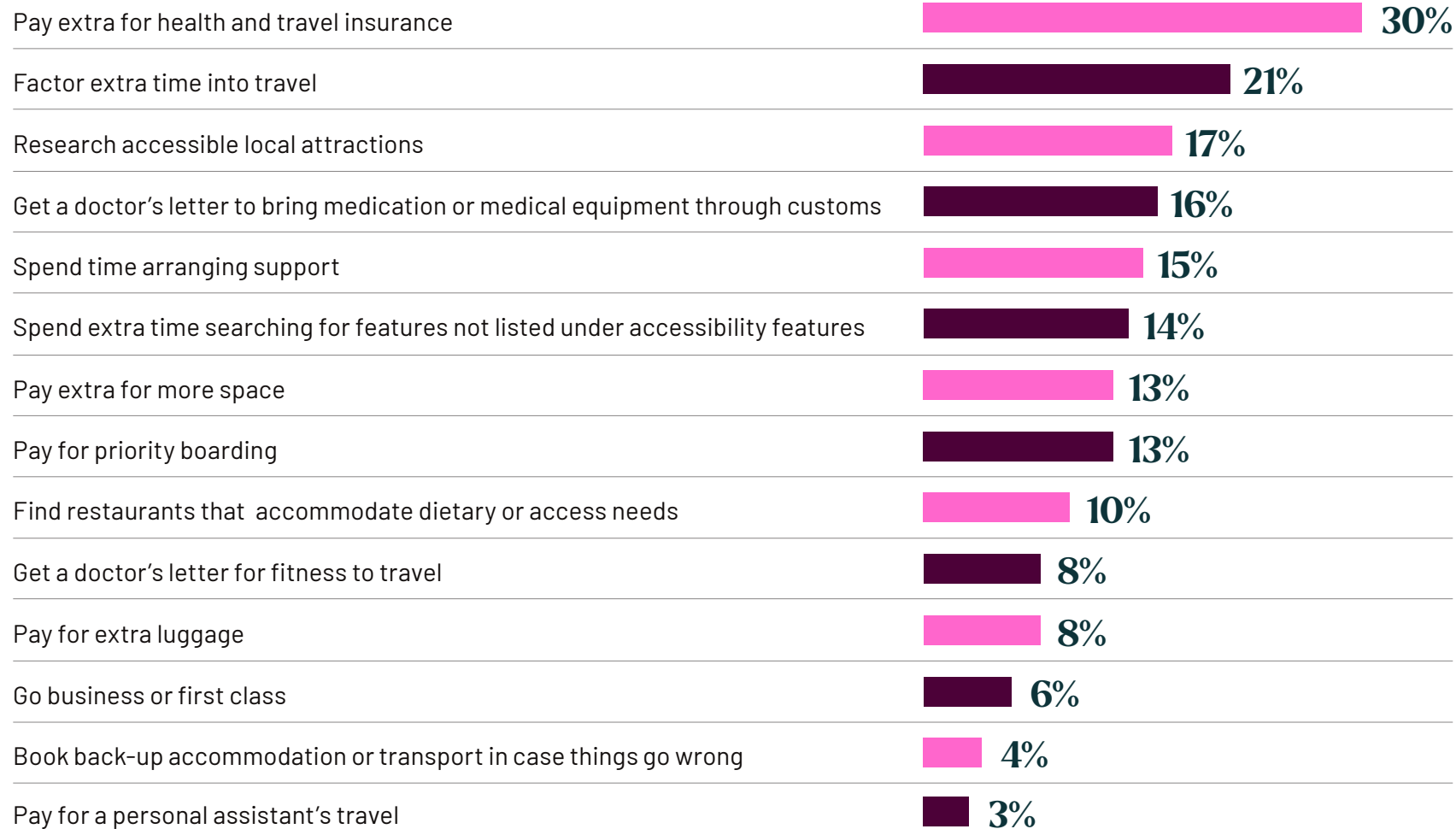
Booking and Planning Trips

Three in ten find booking a holiday on a smart device difficult.

Booking a holiday online via a smartphone is reported to be the most difficult way to book a holiday among disabled people with 28% reporting this.

This is compared to booking online using a computer (12% said this was difficult), booking over the phone (24% said this was difficult) and booking in person (17% said this was difficult).

Extra steps taken to ensure trips are as accessible.





Booking and Planning Trips

Three in ten disabled people have to pay extra for their travel insurance.

Over two in three (67%) disabled people in the UK said they have to do extra planning before a holiday to make sure it is accessible for them.

For disabled people, this most commonly involves having to factor extra costs and extra time into their trip.

“Travel insurance is a pain for people with a disability. The treatment is not equal at all, and I pay a very high premium because I have an autistic spectrum condition and anxiety/depression, even though these don’t in my particular case make me that much more likely to claim.”

Three in ten (30%) said they have to pay extra for health and travel insurance, paying on average £242 to ensure they’re covered. One in eight (16%) also have to arrange a doctor’s letter to bring medication or medical equipment through customs.



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said they have to pay extra for health and travel insurance, paying on average £242 to ensure they’re covered.

“Firstly, listen to the person’s needs, as everyone is different. Explain properly about travel and insurance.”

A fifth (21%) said they have to factor extra time into travel and 15% spend time arranging support (for example, assistance on and off the plane) before their trip.

“As someone who suffers from anxiety and depression, I need to know that my stay will be completely organised before I leave and that my surroundings will be peaceful.”



Booking and Planning Trips

A holiday costs a disabled person £916 on average.

A disabled person in the UK spends on average £916 on a single holiday. Respondents called upon travel agents and providers to make their services accessible without having to pay more. “Booking flights that allow extra leg room without costing the earth”. However, some respondents said they’d be happy to pay more if it meant their accessibility needs were met.

London considered the most accessible city.

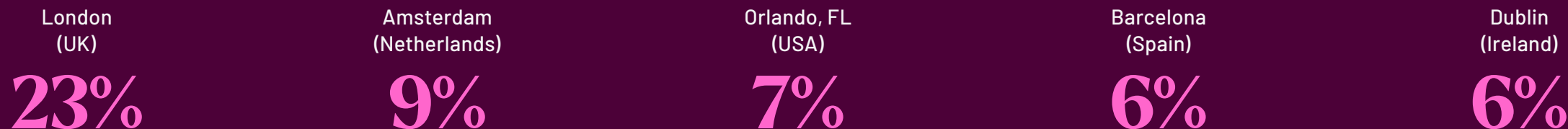
Of those who have visited the most travelled cities in the world, disabled people in the UK said that London was the most accessible. Of those who selected London, 57% said this is because it has accessible transport links, while 40% said it has accommodation that is close to cultural attractions, shops, and restaurants.

Over two in five (45%) said information is easily accessible, and a similar proportion (48%) said it is because museums and other cultural attractions have good accessibility support and facilities. However, as it is one of the most popular destinations in the world, London visitors cannot avoid the city crowds, and only 2% said they think it is accessible because it has fewer crowds than other cities.

The top five accessible cities, as voted by the survey participants of the UK are listed below.

- London (UK) – 23%
- Amsterdam (Netherlands) – 9%
- Orlando, FL (USA) – 7%
- Barcelona (Spain) – 6%
- Dublin (Ireland) – 6%

The top five accessible cities are listed below:





Booking and Planning Trips

Two in five have been left in a difficult situation while travelling, causing stress and discomfort.

Two in five (41%) listed at least one challenge they faced while travelling due to the agent or provider they were using not being accessible to disabled people.

Over one in ten (12%) said they have ended up in a situation while on holiday where staff have not been told about their accessibility needs. The same proportion (12%) said transport or accommodation was not as accessible as expected.

Almost half (45%) of those who experienced something happening to them due to the travel agent or provider not being accessible, said this caused them stress. A third (35%) said it made them

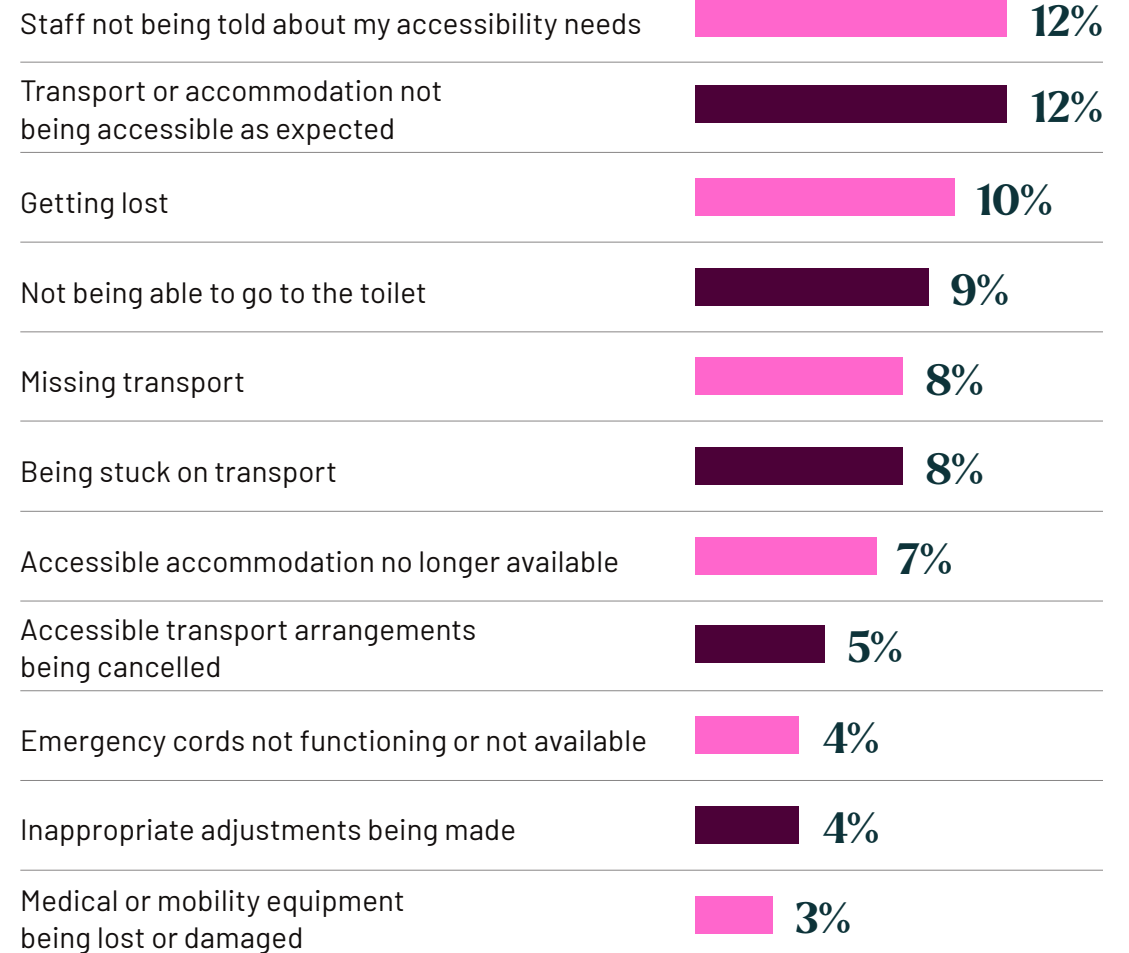
uncomfortable. Feelings of embarrassment, isolation and being disregarded were also felt by a quarter (24%), while a little less than a quarter (23%) felt ignored. Concerningly, a fifth (19%) reported feeling unsafe and 16% scared. Positive emotions such as feeling relaxed or satisfied were only felt by 4% who went through the experience of travelling.

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Situations that have occurred due to travel agents or providers not being accessible to disabled people.





Booking and Planning Trips

A fifth said a stranger helped them out of a difficult situation.

Two-fifths (37%) of those who had a bad experience had to get out of the situation on their own, while one in four (27%) had to call upon a friend or family member to help. A similar proportion said that someone travelling with them helped them out of the situation. However, for a fifth (19%), a stranger had to intervene.

Of those who said they experienced something due to a provider or agent not being accessible 28% said it was not resolved. A third (34%) said it was resolved, albeit slowly, and only 16% said it was resolved quickly. Furthermore, a third (35%) of those who said the situation was resolved, said they were unhappy with the outcome, including 10% who were very unhappy.

27%

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33%

of those who've had bad experiences with travel agents or providers have told other people about their experiences, and three in ten (29%) stopped using the provider altogether.

Two-fifths affected (41%) complained to the provider directly. Of those affected that didn't, the main reasons were because they didn't feel comfortable (26%) and/or thought that the provider wasn't likely to change (23%).

These findings suggest a clear need for travel providers and agents to make improvements to not only resolve but also prevent situations occurring that cause stress and discomfort to disabled people.

This is ever more important given that a third (33%) of those who've had bad experiences with travel agents or providers have told other people about their experiences, and three in ten (29%) have stopped using the provider altogether.



MAKING IMPROVEMENTS

Being treated with respect is the most important consideration for disabled people, but they also expect travel agents and providers to improve accessibility.

While accessibility factors, such as having a range of accessible transport or accommodation, or an accessible website, are important to three in ten disabled people when choosing a travel agent or provider (30% and 29% respectively), the most important factors influencing choice are more centred around how they're treated.

“Treat ALL travellers with dignity. Don't treat disabled passengers in a way that makes them feel like they are in some way different than other travellers, and don't bring attention to them in such a way as to make them feel singled out and uncomfortable.”



Making Improvements

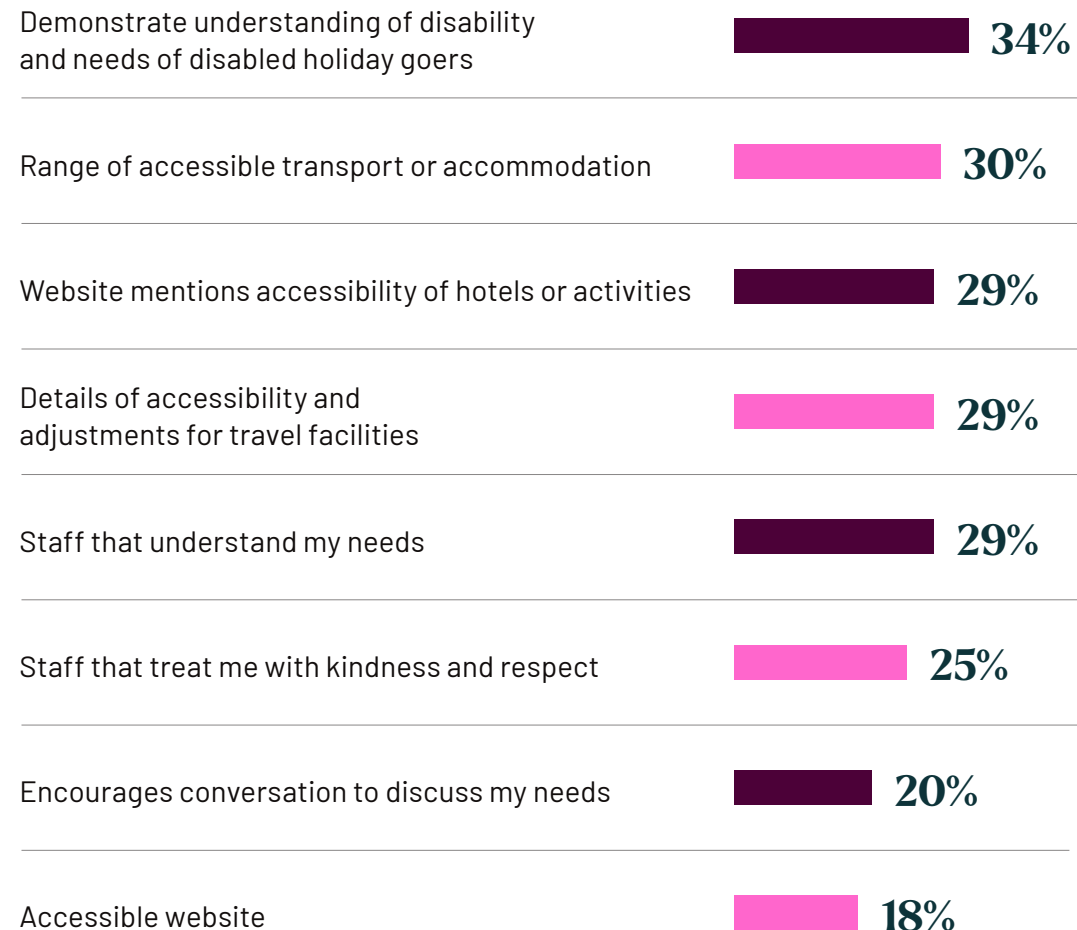
A half (47%) of disabled people say they choose a travel agent or provider based on whether they treat disabled people with kindness and respect. Furthermore, two-fifths (39%) say they choose based on whether they understand their needs.

These findings echo the advice disabled people gave travel agents or brands to be more accessible. Forty-five respondents said they need to listen to their needs in their open text answers.

“Listen carefully to the needs of each individual. Be honest about provision, or not, of support. Show understanding and sympathy. Be patient.”

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Be honest about provision, or not, of support.
Show understanding and sympathy. Be patient.

Factors travel agencies and providers need to improve on.





Making Improvements

However, while these factors are important when choosing a travel agent or provider, they're not necessarily the areas travel agents need to improve on the most. While 47% said they choose a provider based on whether the staff treat them with kindness and respect, only 25% said they need to improve on this.

Respondents were more concerned with travel agents and providers showing a demonstrated understanding of the disability and needs of disabled holiday goers (34%) and having a better range of accessible transport or accommodation (30%). A similar proportion also said they need to improve on having a website that mentions accessibility of hotels or activities and has details of accessibility and adjustments for travel facilities (both 29%).

Travel providers need to provide better accessibility contact information on their websites.

While disabled people found accessing websites the easiest platform for booking a holiday (66% said it was easy) it's important that adjustments are made to ensure the process is accessible for all.

Of those who said it was difficult booking a holiday online, 45% said this was due to there being limited or no contact options to ask questions. Three in ten (29%) said there was a lack of accessibility information for the travel facilities.

A further three in ten (31%) said there was a lack of clear instructions on how to book or reserve the trip, and the same proportion (31%) said they were redirected to other web pages to access accessibility information. A quarter (23%) said they were being directed to accessibility helplines that are not in use.

"In an online chat, don't have drop down choices that take you round in a circle".



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Making Improvements

Accommodation providers need to improve on making their ground floor facilities more accessible.

Three-quarters (74%) of disabled people think that accommodation providers need to improve on at least one feature to be more accessible to disabled people.

This most commonly included improving ground floor facilities (30%), which was closely followed by a fifth (18%) that said accommodation providers need to improve on installing fixed grab rails. A similar proportion said that travel providers need to improve on accessible transport links (17%).

However, with disabled people's needs varying significantly, respondents called for travel providers to take a personalised approach to accessibility.

One way to truly understand the varying needs would be to employ a disabled person, suggested one respondent.



There are a range of disabilities so one size doesn't fit all. And not all disabilities are visible.



74%
of disabled people think that accommodation providers need to improve on at least one feature to be more accessible to disabled people.

“Employ a disabled person (e.g. in a wheelchair) to make sure all the adaptations are working as they should and the place is truly accessible and to train the staff”.

Respondents also raised concerns that travel agents are not always clear about what they mean when they use the term ‘accessible’, calling for more clarity.

“For me, it’s about accessible bathrooms. I don’t find it easy to raise my leg to get into a ‘low’ sided bath, so a walk-in shower is preferred to make my experience easier. Travel agents need to be clear about what is meant by accessible bathrooms. Even a shower that has a step can be difficult to navigate. Clarity on this facility needs to be crystal clear.”



Making Improvements

Features accommodation providers need to improve on to be more accessible to disabled people.

