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Disability and Transport

Findings from the
Scottish Household Survey

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Key findings

This publication presents transport and travel findings from the Scottish Household Survey. For the purposes of this publication, disabled people are taken as those that report a physical or mental health condition or illness that lasts or is expected to last 12 months or more, and which limits their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

On average, disabled people tend to be older, less likely to be working and more likely to be in a household with a low income than people without disabilities. These demographic factors are all likely to affect transport and travel habits in addition to any impact from disability.

- Disabled people tend to make fewer journeys than those non-disabled people (an average of 1.63 journeys per day vs 2.07) and, on average, their journeys are shorter in distance (3.2km vs 4.5km).
- In broad terms, the modes of travel used by both disabled and non-disabled people are similar. For example, car driving journeys account for by far the largest proportion of journeys for both groups.

However, there are still some differences. Disabled adults are more likely to use the bus than non-disabled adults (11% of journeys vs 7%), less likely to drive (42% vs 54%), and more likely to be a car-passenger (18% vs 12%).

- Flying is less frequent amongst disabled people, with 29% of disabled people having flown for leisure in the past year compared to 57% of non-disabled people.
- A lower percentage of disabled people possess a driving licence (51% vs 75%) and a lower percentage have access to a car (52% vs 77%).
- People who had recently used trains and buses were asked about different aspects of their experiences. Disabled people were generally slightly less positive about their experiences than people who were not disabled, although differences were small for most aspects.

The area where the difference was highest was whether individuals felt 'safe and secure on the [bus or train] at night' (58% of disabled people agreed they felt safe and secure on the bus at night compared to 73% of non-disabled people).

Another notable difference was regarding whether individuals felt that it was 'easy to change from bus to other transport' (65% of disabled people agreed, compared with 77% of non-disabled people).

- When asked why they did not use the bus more, disabled people were far more likely to quote 'health reasons' than non-disabled people were (30% compared to 1%). Difficulties in access or with stepping on/off were quoted as a reason by 4% of disabled people, and 0% of those not disabled.
- Reasons for not using the train more were not greatly different between disabled and non-disabled people, although 'cost' was named by more disabled people

than non-disabled people (16% compared to 12%). 'Health reasons' were given by 3% of disabled people compared to 0% of non-disabled people.

The Scottish Household Survey and its disability questions

The Scottish Household Survey

The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) is a continuous survey based on a sample of the general population in private residences in Scotland. The survey has been conducted annually since 1999. It has around 10,000 respondents each year.

More information on the SHS can be found on the [Scottish Government website](#).

Some general questions about the household are asked to the highest income householder or their partner. The survey also includes questions asked of one randomly selected adult (aged 16 or over) in the household. This part of the survey includes questions on the individual's general travel patterns, as well as a travel diary which asks that adult details about every journey they took the previous day.

The survey asks these two questions relevant to disability to the 'Random Adult' in each household:

Question RG5A

Do you have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Refusal

Question RG5B

Does your condition or illness reduce your ability to carry-out day-to-day activities?

- Yes, a lot
- Yes, a little
- Not at all

If a person answers 'Yes' to the first question and 'Yes, a lot' or 'Yes, a little' to the second, then they are considered disabled, in line with the Equality Act 2010 definition and most large-scale surveys in Scotland and the UK.

The below two questions relevant to disability are asked of the Highest Income Householder about all the members of the household:

Question HF1A

Could you tell me whether any of the people in the household has any physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

Question HF2A

Which of the conditions listed on this card best describes the physical or mental health condition that (name) has?

- (1) Arthritis
- (2) A speech impairment
- (3) Chest or breathing problems (asthma/ bronchitis)
- (4) Diabetes
- (5) Difficulty hearing
- (6) Difficulty seeing (even when wearing spectacles/ contact lenses)
- (7) Dyslexia
- (8) Epilepsy
- (9) Heart, blood pressure or circulation problems
- (10) Learning or behavioural problems (e.g. autism, Down's Syndrome)
- (11) Mental health problems
- (12) Problems or disabilities related to arms or hands
- (13) Problems or disabilities related to legs or feet
- (14) Problems or disabilities related to back or neck
- (15) Severe disfigurement, skin condition or allergies
- (16) Severe stomach, liver, kidney or digestive problem
- (17) Some other progressive disability or illness
- (18) Difficulty understanding spoken and/or written word [only available since 2019]
- (19) Some other health problem or disability
- (20) Refused

The Highest Income Householder and Random Adult are sometimes different people, and there can be discrepancies as to whether they consider the Random Adult to have a condition. Therefore, some disabled Random Adults do not have any particular condition recorded.

There is no question asking how much children's day to day activities are affected by their condition. When looking at children, we can only determine whether they have a health condition and what it is. We do not know whether their day-to-day activities are limited or not.

The full Scottish Household Survey questionnaire can be found [here](#).

In this report, figures have usually been averaged over the 5 years from 2015-2019. There tends to be relatively little change to travel patterns over this time period, and using five years provides a larger sample with more reliable percentages than a single year's data would.

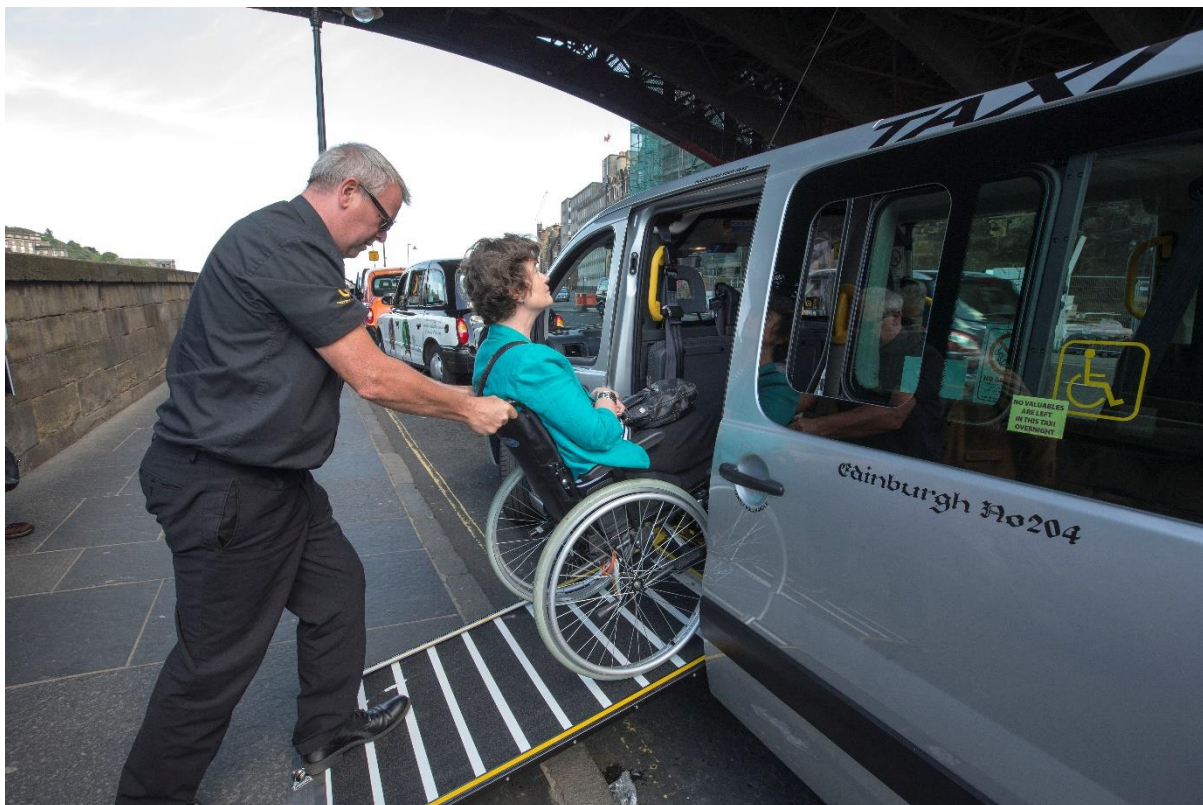
Demographic characteristics of disabled people in the survey

Overview

As well as the particular issues relating to how their disability affects travel, disabled people's travel will be affected by factors such as age, employment status, and income. There are substantial differences between the disabled and non-disabled population for these three particular factors.

Our analysis for this publication generally does not control for these differences. This is a potential area for future analysis.

Whether someone lives in an urban or rural location will also affect travel, although the same proportion of disabled and non-disabled people live in urban areas.



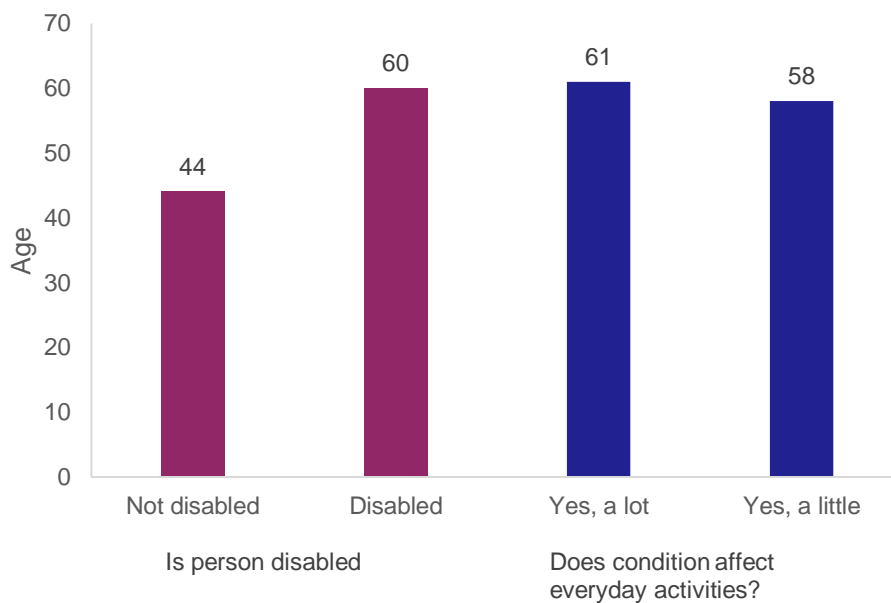
Age

The [Transport and Travel in Scotland](#) statistics publication, which summarises transport findings from the Scottish Household Survey, shows that beyond the age of 60, people start to travel less frequently and become less likely to drive.

Disabled people are, on average, noticeably older than those who are not disabled (median age 60 compared to 44). [Figure 1] Fewer disabled people will be of working age, which will affect travel patterns.

There is much less difference in age between those whose condition reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks a lot and those whose condition does not (61 to 58). [Figure 1]

Figure 1: Median age, by whether adult is disabled and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



For most conditions, average age is greater than for the non-disabled population, although those with learning or behavioural problems (30) and dyslexia (40) are younger. The oldest median ages are for people with hearing difficulties (73), difficulty seeing (70), heart, blood pressure or circulation problems (69) and arthritis (68).

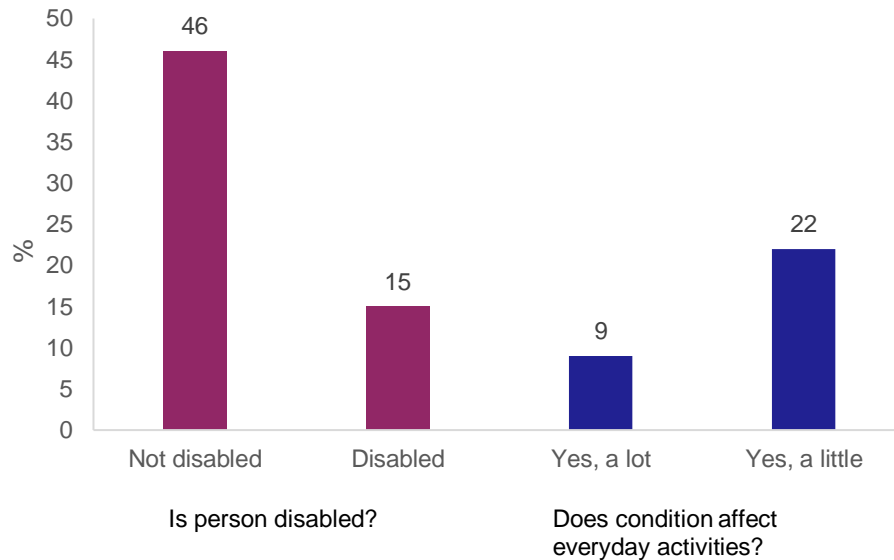
Employment status

People in full-time employment are more likely to make commuting journeys (certainly prior to the COVID-19 pandemic), and are more likely to be able to afford a car.

Disabled people are only around a third as likely to have a job as a full-time employee as those who are not disabled (15% compared to 46%). [Figure 2]

Those whose condition affects day-to-day activities a lot are far less likely to be a full-time employee than those whose activities are affected a little (9% compared to 22%). [Figure 2]

Figure 2: Percentage of people who are full-time employees, by whether they are disabled and how much their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



Full-time employment is lowest for people with a speech impairment (1%), difficulty seeing (5%), difficulty hearing (5%) and learning or behavioural problems (7%).

Household income

The [Transport and Travel in Scotland](#) publication shows that people from higher income households are more likely to have a driving licence and to drive.

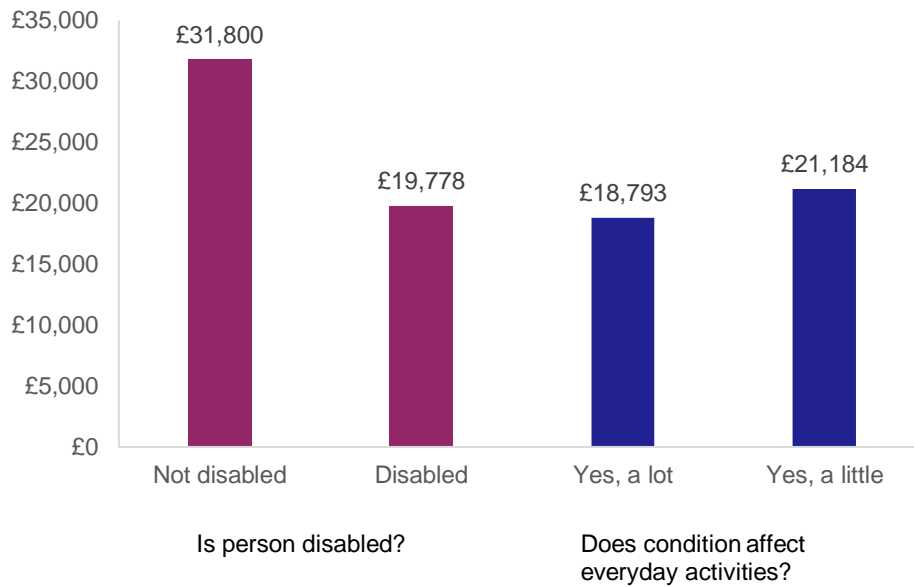
Average household incomes for disabled people tend to be lower than for those who are not (median £19,778 compared to £31,800). [Figure 3]

Those whose condition affects their ability to carry out activities a lot have lower household incomes than those whose condition affects everyday activities a little (£18,793 compared to £21,184). [Figure 3]

For all conditions, household incomes of disabled people are noticeably lower than for those who are not disabled. Average household incomes are lowest for people with mental health problems (£16,861). Those with severe disfigurement, skin conditions or allergies have higher average household incomes than any of the other types of condition (£20,488).

The income figures presented here are adjusted to 2019 prices using the Retail Price Index.

Figure 3: Median income, by whether adult has a disability and whether their condition limits the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



Urban or rural location

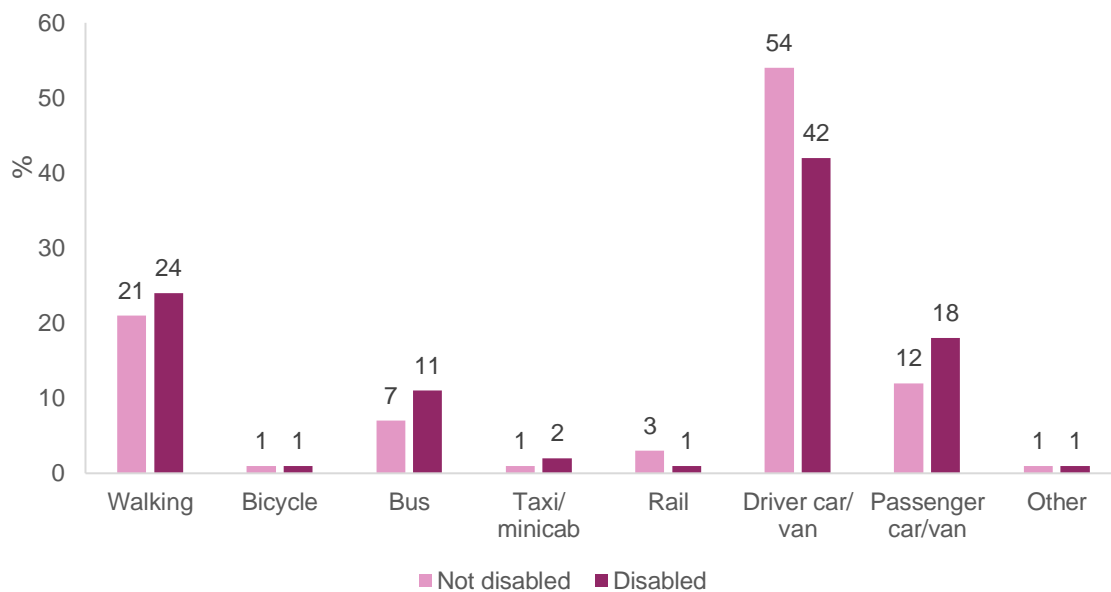
The proportion of disabled and non-disabled people living in urban areas was equal at 83%.

Method of travel

Modal share of all journeys

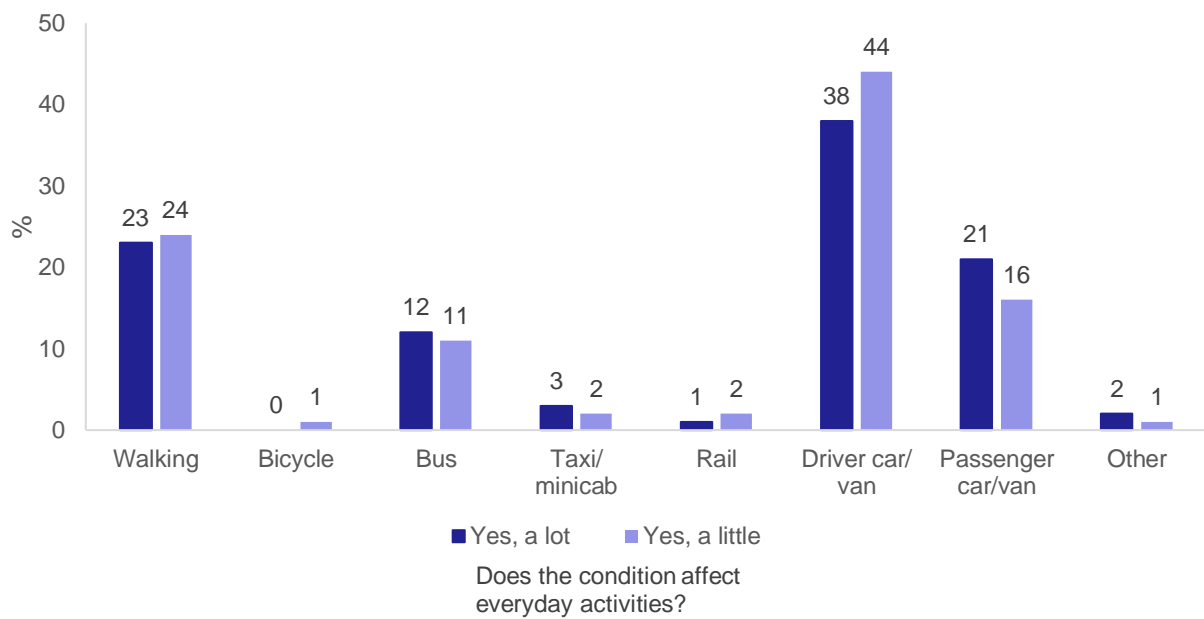
When disabled people are compared to those who are not disabled, they are less likely to drive (42% to 54%), and more likely to be a car or van passenger (18% to 12%), take the bus (11% to 7%), or walk (24% to 21%). [Figure 4]

Figure 4: Main mode of travel (selected), by whether adult is disabled, 2015-2019 (combined)



Those whose disability reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities were less likely to drive than those whose ability to carry out activities was reduced a little (38% compared to 44%), and more likely to be a passenger in a car (21% to 16%). Walking levels were similar (23% to 24%). [Figure 5]

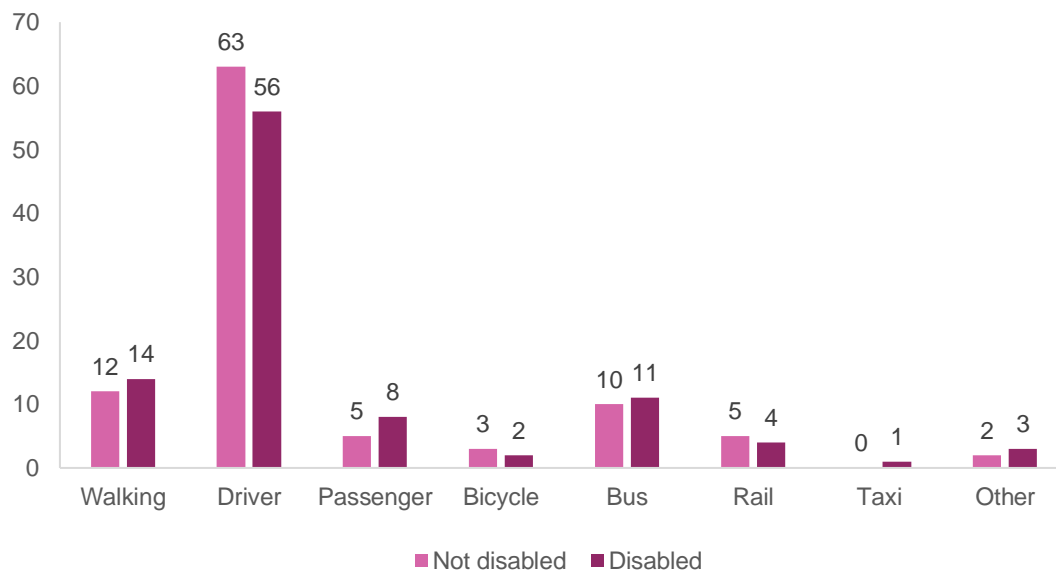
Figure 5: Main mode of travel for people with a disability, by whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



Method of travel to work

Fewer disabled people drove to work than non-disabled people (59% compared to 63%), and more were passengers in a car (8% to 5%). [Figure 6]

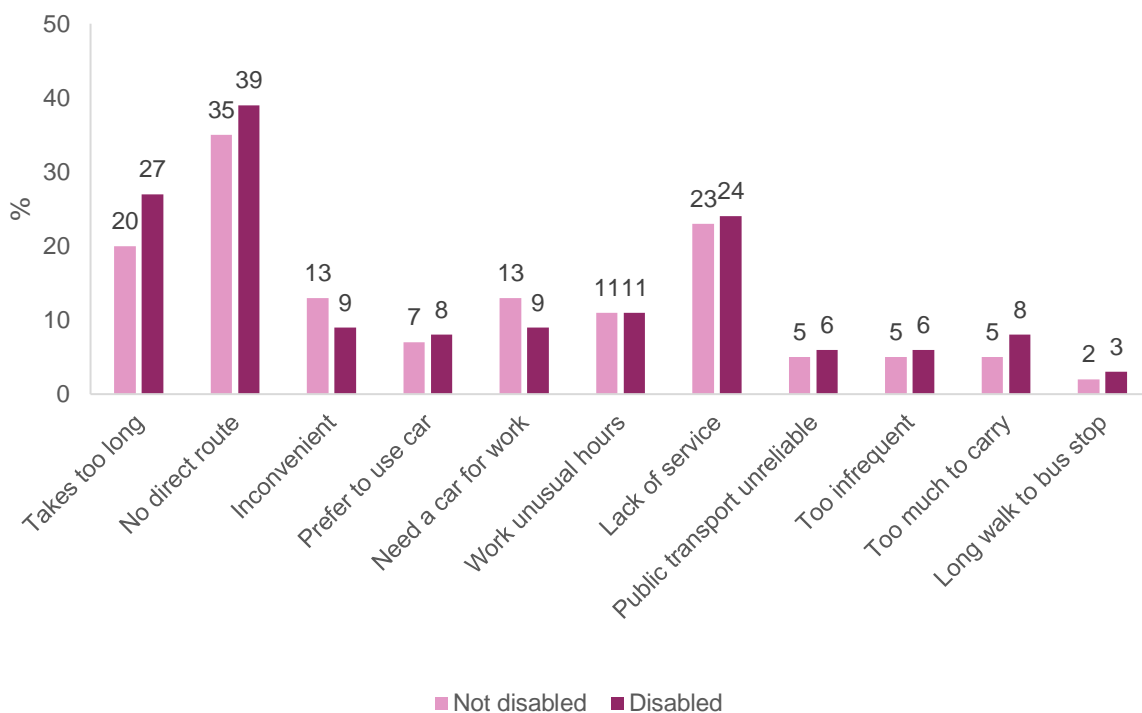
Figure 6: Method of travel to work, by whether adult has a disability, 2015-2019 (combined)



Reasons for not using public transport to work

Responses for disabled people and those who were not disabled were fairly similar. The most common reasons were ‘no direct route’ (39% for disabled people, and 35% for those not disabled), ‘lack of service’ (24% and 23%) and takes too long (27% and 20%). Numbers were very low for ‘health reasons’, ‘uncomfortable’ and ‘difficult access’ (not included on chart). [Figure 7]

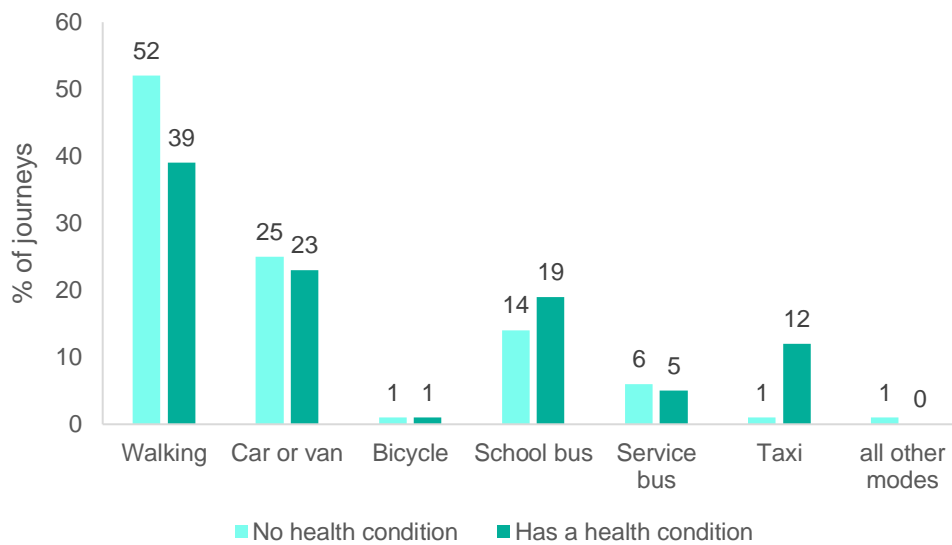
Figure 7: Reasons for not using public transport (selected), by whether adult is disabled, 2014, 2016, 2018 (combined)



Travel to school

School children with a long-term condition are less likely to walk than those without a condition (39% compared to 52%). Those with a long term condition use a school bus more often (19% compared to 14%) and a taxi far more often (12% compared to 1%). [Figure 8]

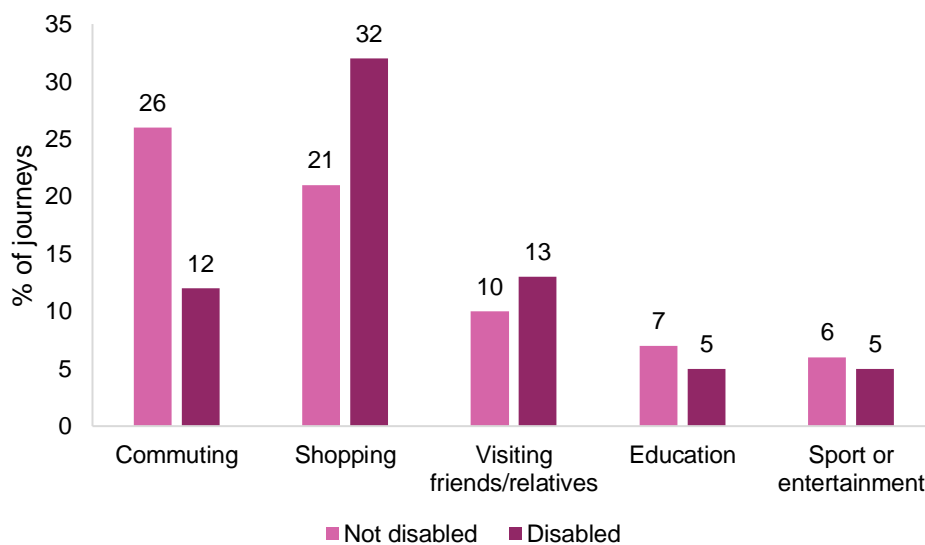
Figure 8: Method of travel to school (selected), by whether child has a long-term condition, 2015-2019 (combined)



Purpose of journey

A smaller percentage of the journeys of disabled people were to work (12%, compared to 26% for those who are not disabled) and greater percentage of the journeys of disabled people were to the shops (32% compared to 21%). [Figure 10]

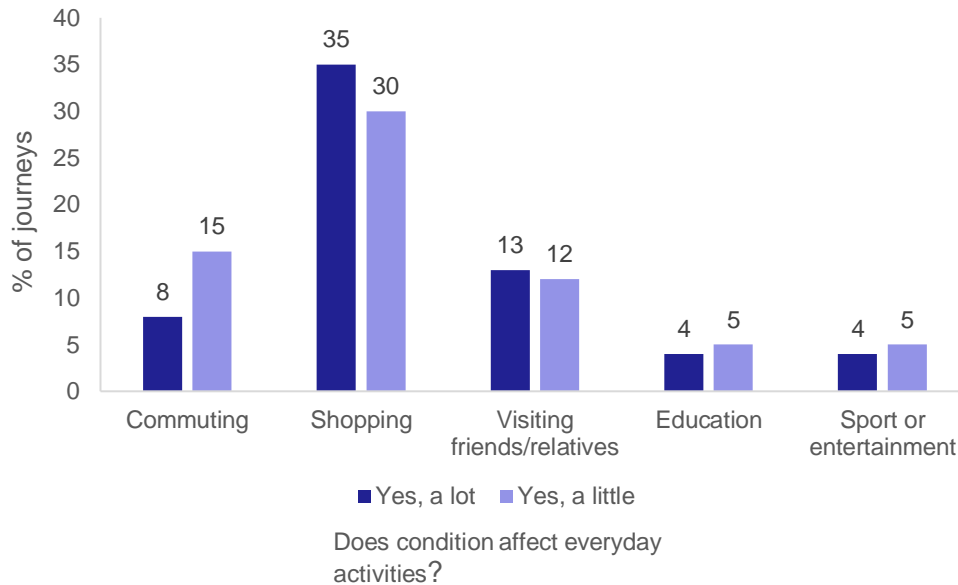
Figure 9: Purpose of journey (selected categories), by whether adult has a disability, 2015-2019 (combined)



For those whose disabilities reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities a lot, these discrepancies were greater (8% of journeys were to work and 35% to the

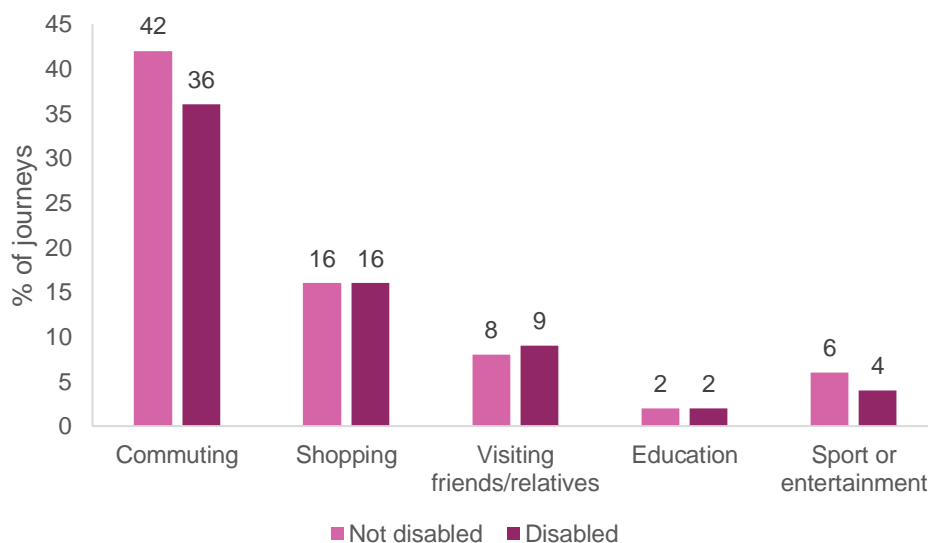
shops), whereas those disabled people with no difficulty carrying out day-to-day activities, these figures were closer to those of people without a limiting condition (15% to work and 30% to the shops). [Figure 10]

Figure 10: Purpose of journey (selected categories), by whether disabled adult’s condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks (combined)



When looking at only those in full-time work, there was greater similarity between disabled and non-disabled people. The percentage of journeys for commuting was 42% for disabled adults compared to 36% for non-disabled adults, and shopping was equal at 16% for both groups. [Figure 11]

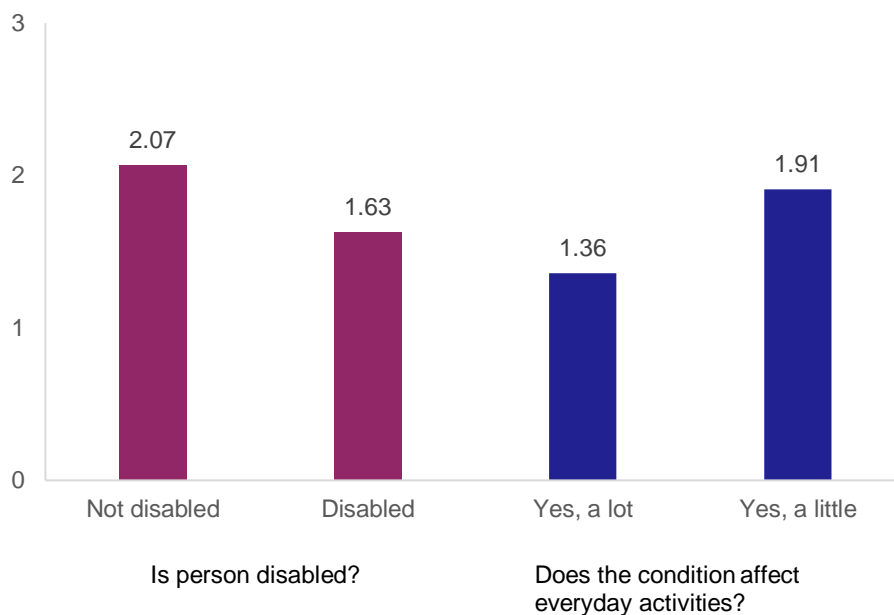
Figure 11: Purpose of journey (selected categories) for people in full-time work, by whether adult is disabled, 2015-2019 (combined)



Frequency of travel

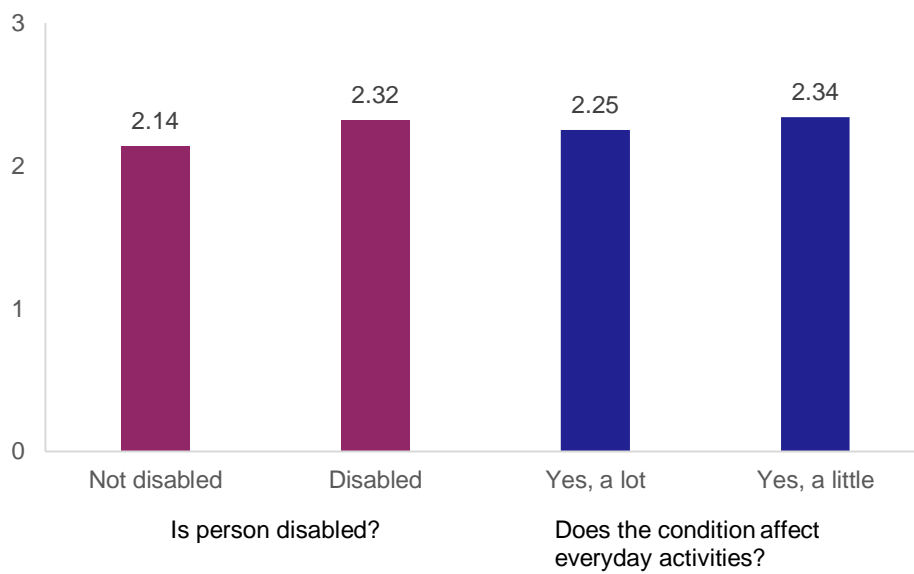
The average (mean) number of journeys taken per day by disabled people (1.63) is less than that for people who are not disabled (2.07). Those whose condition reduces their ability to carry out everyday activities a lot have an even lower average number of journeys (1.36). [Figure 12]

Figure 12: Mean number of journeys per day, by whether adult is disabled and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



When only those working full-time are considered, disabled people take a higher average number of journeys (2.32 compared to 2.14 for those not disabled), even if their condition affects everyday activities a lot. [Figure 13]

Figure 13: Mean number of journeys per day for full-time employees, by whether adult is disabled and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



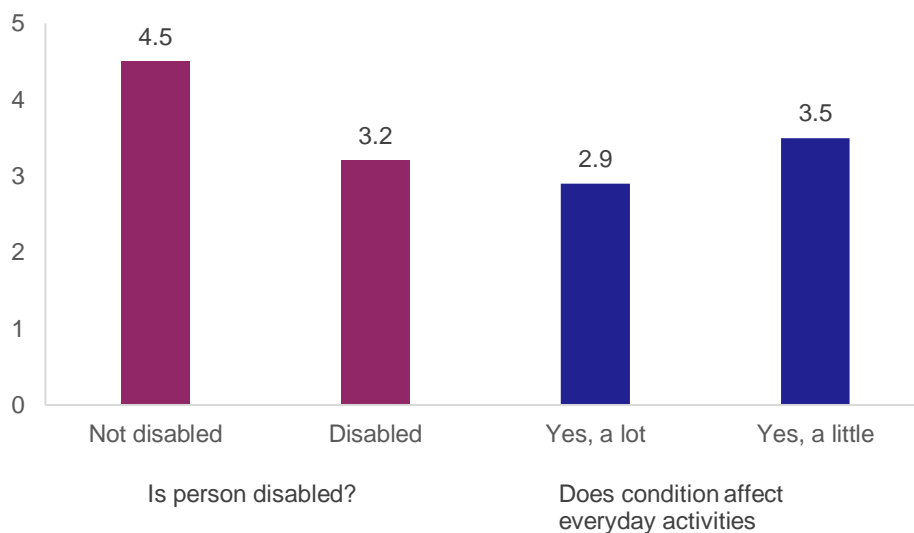
Distance travelled

All journeys

Disabled adults had a shorter average (median) journey (3.2 km), than those who were not (4.5 km). [Figure 14]

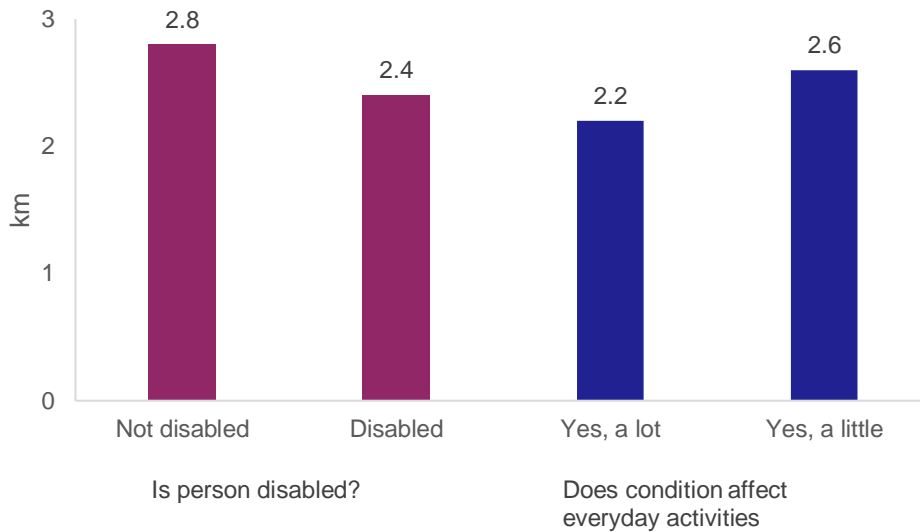
Those disabled people whose ability to carry out day-to-day activities was reduced a lot had a shorter median journey (2.9 km) than those whose ability to carry out activities was reduced a little (3.5 km). [Figure 14]

Figure 14: Average (median) journey length, by whether adult is disabled and whether their condition limits the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



When only people not employed and aged under 60 are considered, journeys are slightly shorter for disabled people than for non-disabled people (2.4 km compared to 2.8 km), Those whose condition affected day-to-day activities a lot travelled least far, at 2.2km. [Figure 15]

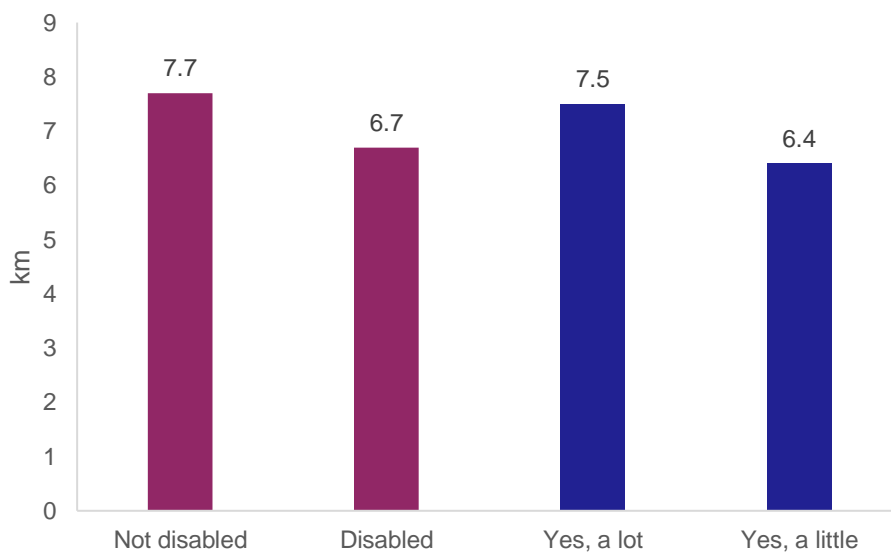
Figure 15: Average (median) journey length for adults not employed (either full- or part- time) and aged under 60, by whether adult is disabled and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



Journey to work

Median distance to work was lower for disabled than non-disabled people (6.7 km and 7.7 km respectively). [Figure 16]

Figure 16: Average (median) length of journey to work, by whether adult is disabled and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



Time of travel

On weekdays a greater proportion of disabled people's journeys are in the middle of the day, and fewer before 9:30am and after 4:30pm. For those whose disability limits activities a lot, there is an even greater proportion of travel between 9:30 and 4:30. [Figures 17 and 18]

Figure 17: Percentage of journeys made on weekdays by start time of journey, by whether adult is disabled, 2015-2019

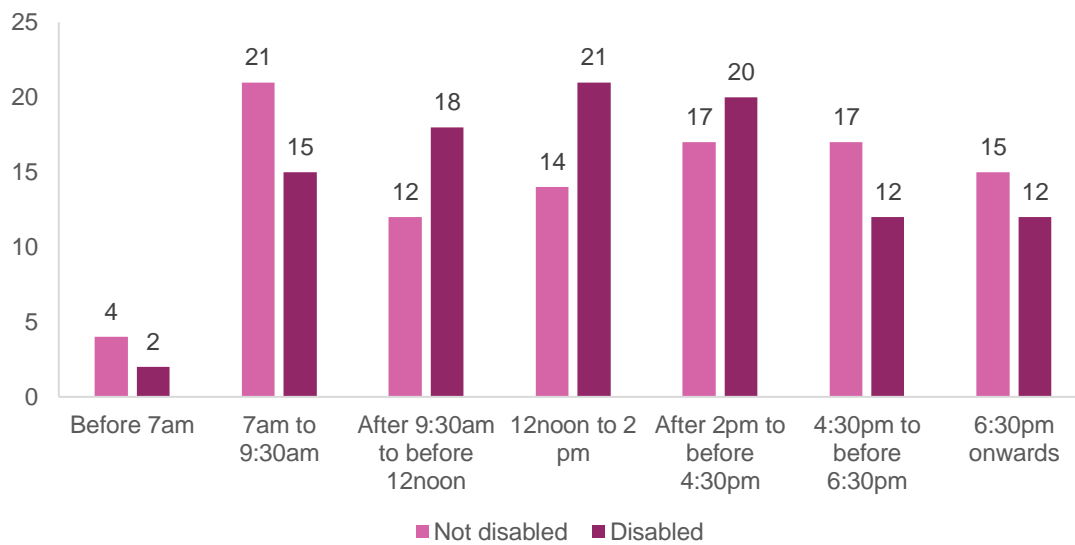
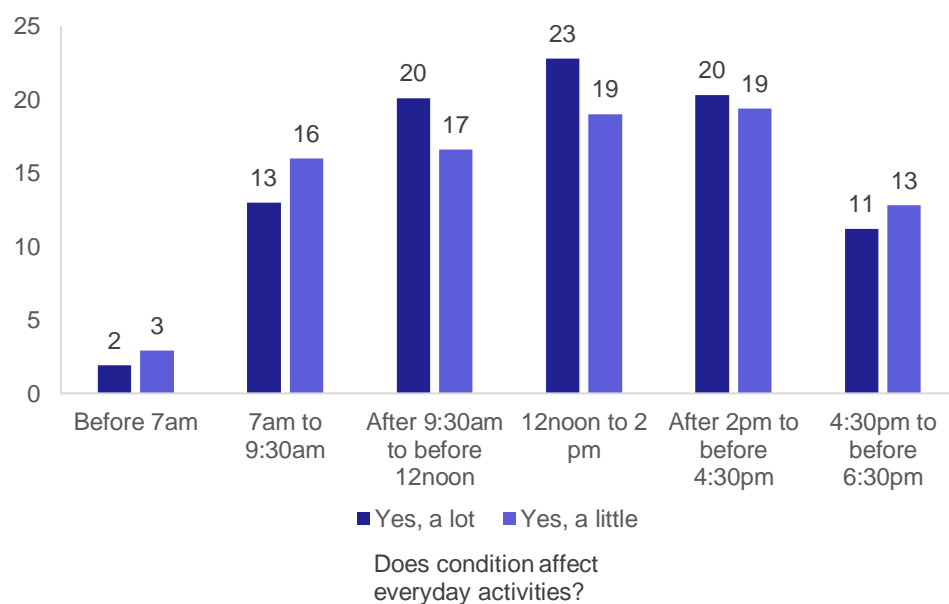
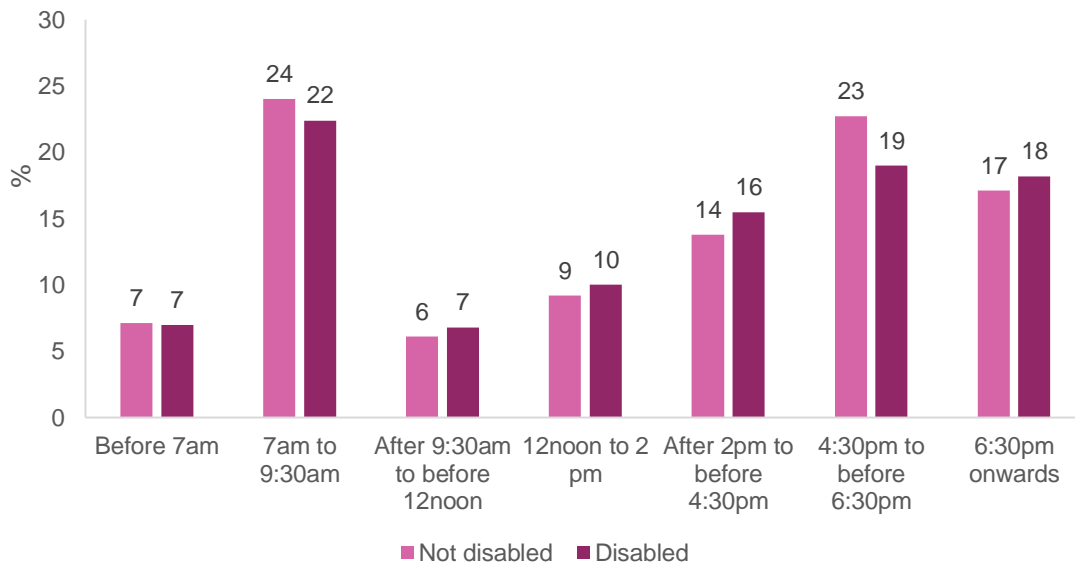


Figure 18: Percentage of journeys made on weekdays by start time of journey for disabled adults, by whether the condition affects day-to-day activities, 2015-2019



For people working full-time, there was less difference, although disabled people were still slightly less likely to travel at the 7-9:30 am and 4:30 to 6 peak times. [Figure 19]

Figure 19: Percentage of journeys on weekdays by start time of journey for people working full-time, by whether they have a long-term condition, 2015-2019



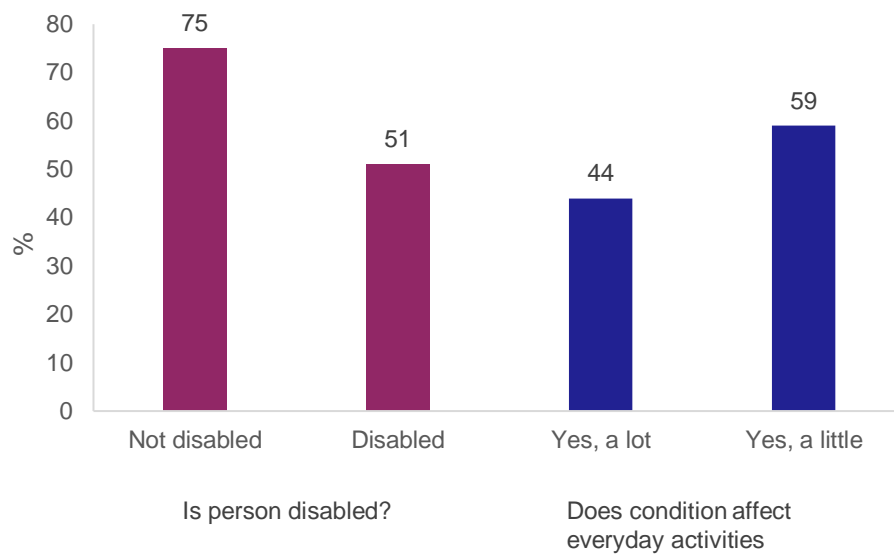
Car Travel

Driving Licence

Disabled people are less likely to possess a driving licence drive than those who are not disabled. (51% compared to 75%). [Figure 20]

Those whose condition reduces their ability to carry out day to day activities a lot are less likely to have a licence than those whose condition affects activities a little (44% compared to 59%). [Figure 20]

Figure 20: Driving licence possession, by whether adult is disabled and whether the condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



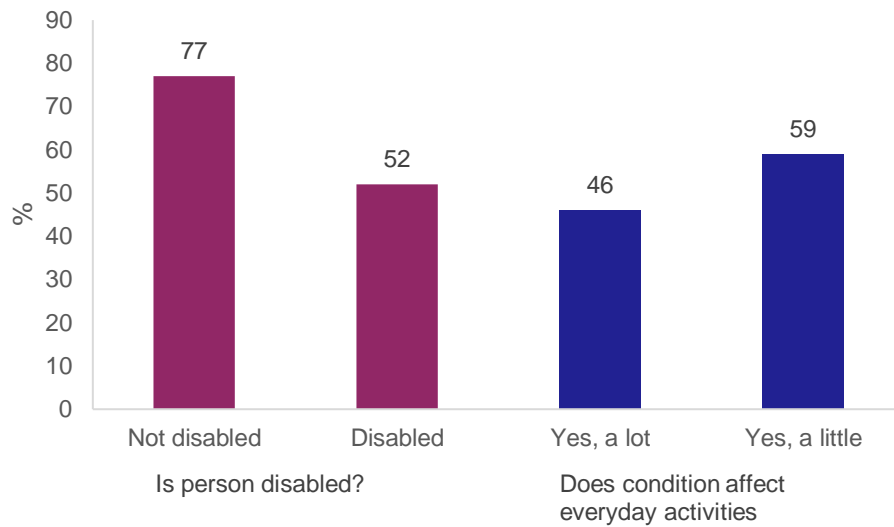
There are fewer licence holders for disabled people with all particular conditions than for those not disabled. Driving licence ownership was particularly low for disabled people with learning or behavioural problems (14%), epilepsy (21%), difficulty seeing (26%) and speech impairment (26%).

Household car access

Disabled people are less likely to have a car available to their household than non-disabled people (52% compared to 77%). [Figure 21]

46% of those whose condition reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks a lot have no access to a car, compared to 59% of those whose ability to carry out day-to-day tasks is affected a little. [Figure 21]

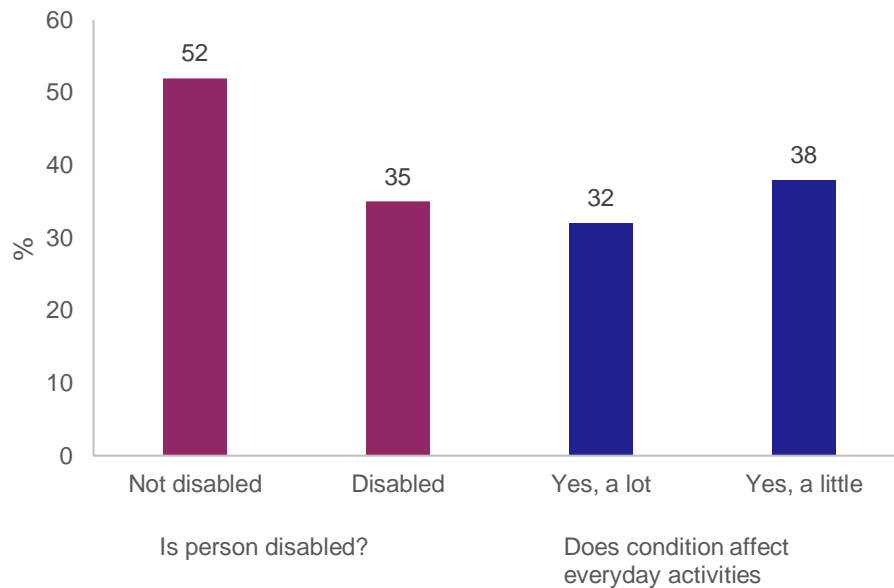
Figure 21: Household access to a car, by whether is disabled and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



Age and income are likely to be factors in whether someone owns a car. But even when comparing only people in a household on a low income (in the lowest 30 per cent of incomes) and aged under 60, disabled people are less likely to have access to a car (35%) than those not disabled (52%).

Those with a condition that affects everyday activities a lot on low household incomes are least likely to have access to a car (32%), compared to 38% of those whose everyday activities were affected a little.

Figure 22: Household access to a car for adults aged under 60 in a low household income, by whether adult has disability and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



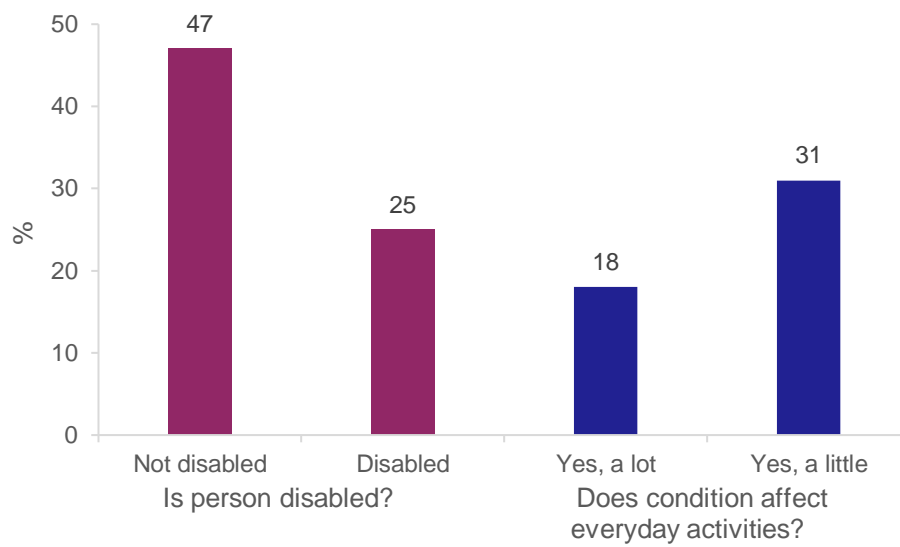
Frequency of driving

People who are disabled are less likely to drive every day than those who are not (25% compared to 47%). [Figure 23]

Those whose condition reduces their ability to carry out day to day activities a lot are less likely to drive every day than those whose disability only affects activities a little (18% compared to 31%). [Figure 23]

For all limiting health conditions, daily driving is less frequent than for people without a limiting health condition. The least frequent drivers are disabled people with learning or behavioural difficulties (6%), a speech impairment (7%), difficulty seeing (8%) and epilepsy (9%).

Figure 23: Driving every day, by whether adult is disabled and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



Public transport

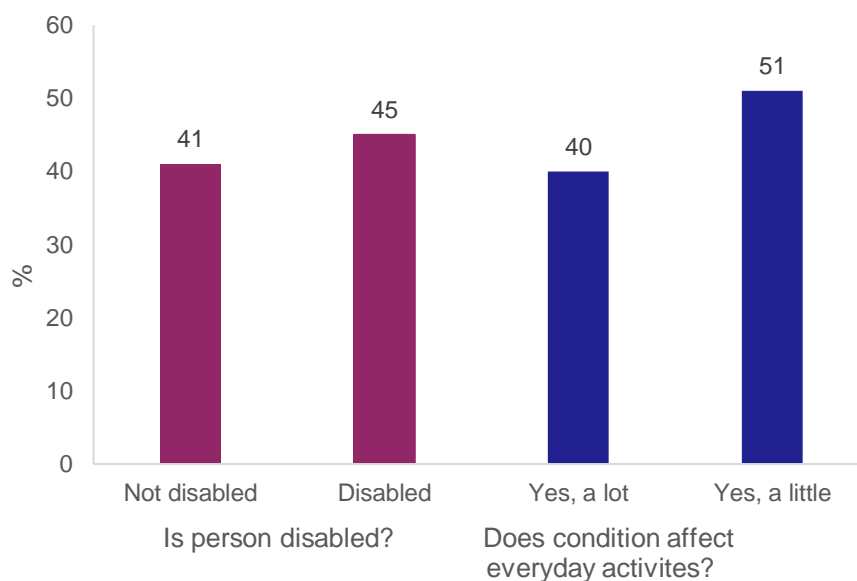


Bus use

There was not a great difference in frequency of bus use between those who are disabled and those who are not, with 45% of disabled people having used the bus in the past month compared to 41% of those not disabled. 10% of both groups used the bus every day or almost every day. [Figure 24]

Of disabled people, those whose condition reduced their ability to carry out everyday tasks a little were the most frequent bus users, with 51% using the bus at least once a month, and 12% most days. People whose day-to-day activities were restricted a lot used the bus least, with 40% using it monthly or more, and 8% most days. [Figure 24]

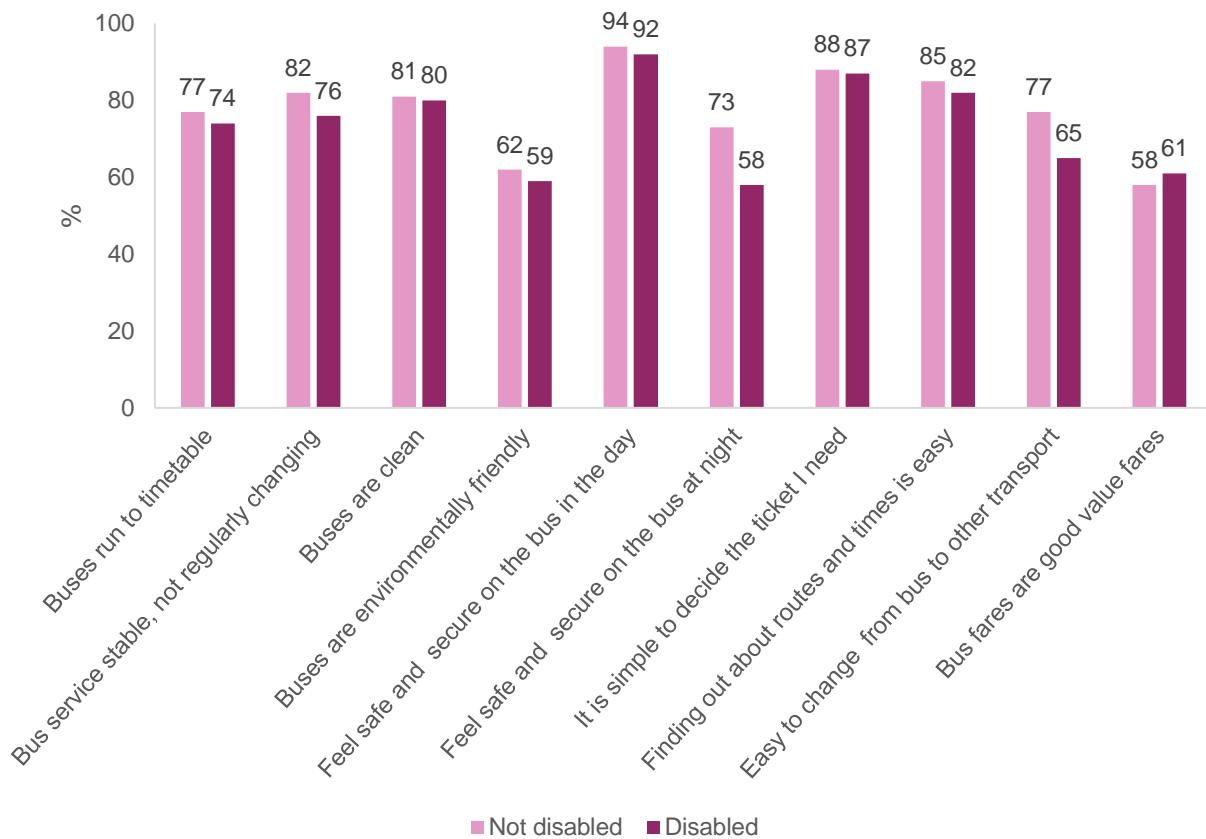
Figure 24: Whether has taken a bus journey in past month, by whether adult is disabled and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



Views about bus services

When people who had used the bus in the previous month were asked views on bus services, disabled people were generally slightly less content than people who were not disabled, although differences were small for most areas. The area where the difference was highest was 'Feel safe and secure on the bus at night', where 58% of disabled people agreed compared to 73% of non-disabled people. The second greatest difference was for 'Easy to change from bus to other transport', where the figures were 65% and 77%. [Figure 25]

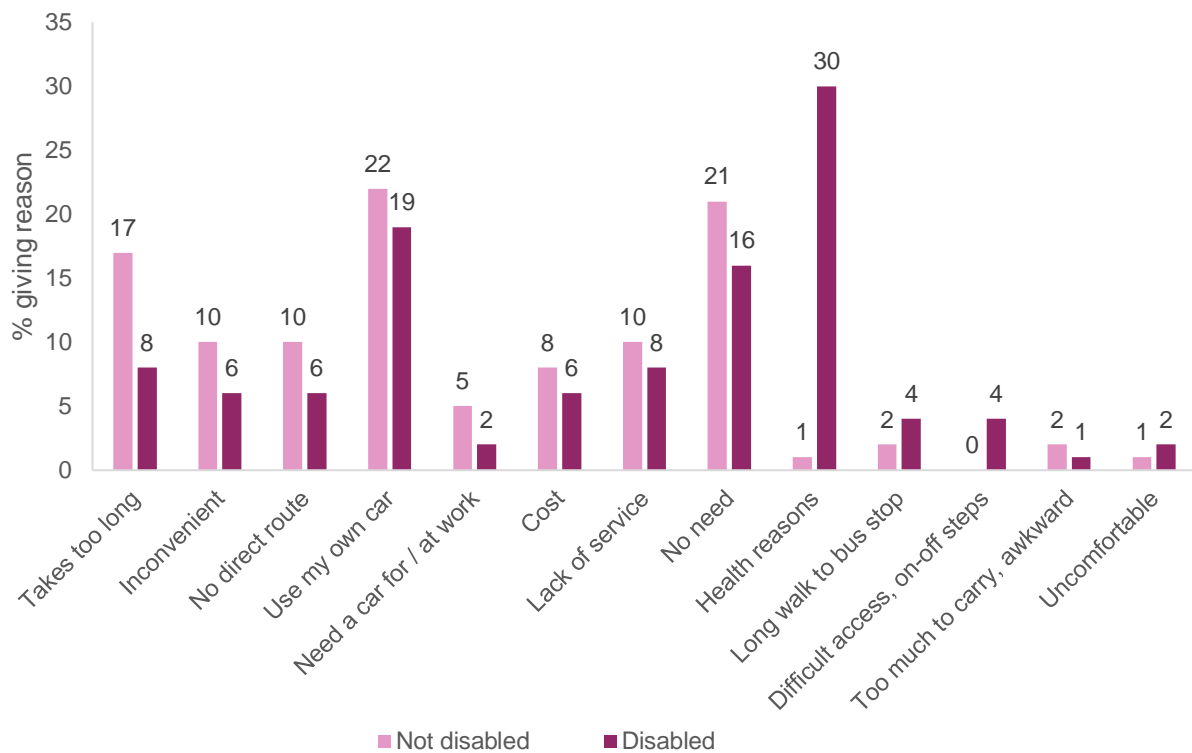
Figure 25: Percentage who had used bus in past month agreeing with statements about bus services, by whether adult is disabled, and whether their disability affects their day-to-day activities, 2014, 2016 and 2019 (combined)



Reasons for not using bus more

Disabled people were far more likely to say ‘health reasons’ discouraged them from using the bus than non-disabled people were (30% compared to 1%). Disabled people were less likely to say ‘Takes too long’ (8% compared to 17% of those not disabled). ‘Difficult access/on-off steps’ was given by 4% of disabled people, and 0% of those not disabled. (The percentage of buses that are disability accessible or low floor has risen from 94% in 2015 to 100% in 2020 (Source: Scottish Transport Statistics), so it is possible that this reason would be given less now.) [Figure 26]

Figure 26: Reasons (selected) for not using the bus more, by whether adult is disabled, 2015-2019 (combined)

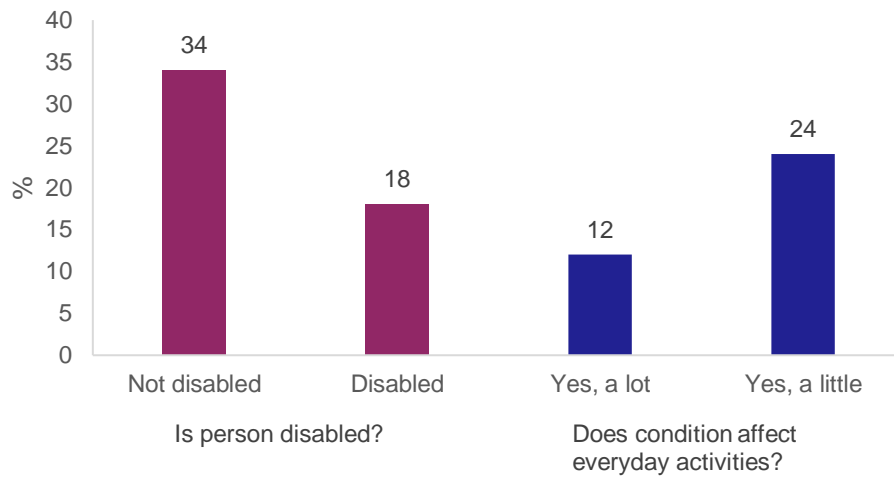


Train use

18% of disabled people used the train in the past month, compared to 34% of those not disabled. For use at least once a week, the figures are 5% and 11% respectively. [Figure 27]

Those whose disability affected everyday activities a lot used the train less frequently than those whose activities were only affected a little, with the number using the train in the past month 12% and 24% respectively. [Figure 27]

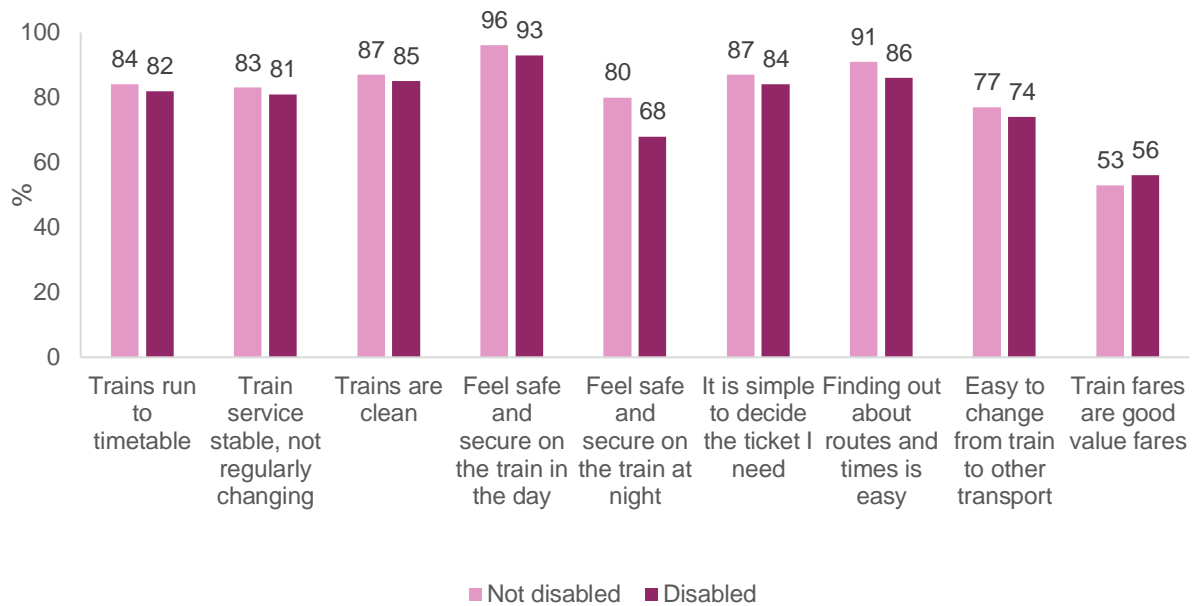
Figure 27: Train journey in past month, by whether adult is disabled and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



Views about rail services

When people who had used the train in the previous month were asked views on rail services, disabled people were generally slightly less content than people who were not disabled, although differences were small for most areas. The area where the difference was highest was 'Feel safe and secure on the train at night', where 68% of disabled people agreed compared to 80% of non-disabled people. [Figure 28]

Figure 28: Percentage who had used train in past month agreeing with statements about train services, by whether adult is disabled, and whether their disability affects their day-to-day activities, 2014, 2016 and 2019 (combined)



Reasons for not using train more

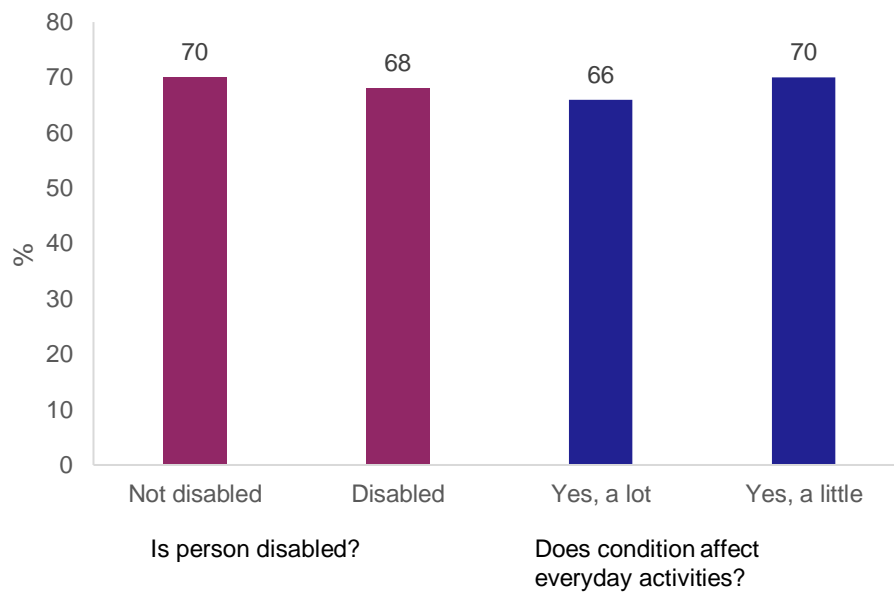
Reasons for not using the train more were not greatly different between disabled and non-disabled people, although ‘cost’ was named by more disabled people than non-disabled people (16% compared to 12%). ‘Health reasons’ was given by 3% of disabled people compared to 0% of non-disabled people.

Satisfaction with public transport

68% of disabled adults were very or fairly satisfied with public transport, compared to 70% of those who were not disabled. [Figure 29]

Of disabled people, those whose activities were reduced a lot were least satisfied (66% very or fairly satisfied), compared to 70% for people whose ability to carry out activities was reduce a little. [Figure 29]

Figure 29: Percentage very or fairly satisfied with public transport, by whether disabled, and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2015-2019 (combined)



Aviation

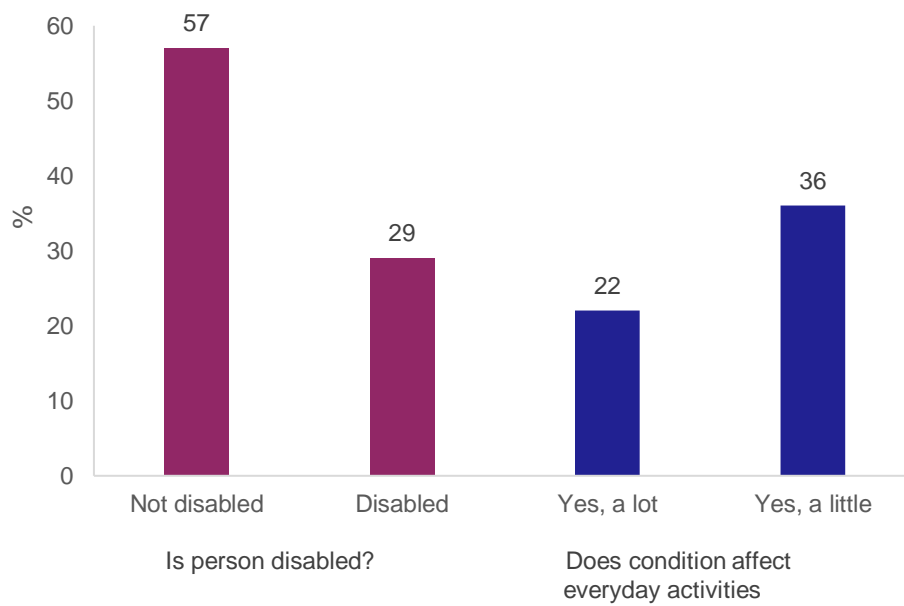
Flying for leisure

29% of disabled people flew for leisure in the previous year, compared to 57% of the non-disabled population. [Figure 30]

Only 22% of people with a long-term condition that limited their day-to-day activities a lot flew, compared to 36% whose activities were limited a little. [Figure 30]

For all limiting long-term conditions, flying for leisure was less frequent than for those with no limiting condition. Those with learning or behavioural problems (16%), a speech impairment (16%), mental health problems (17%) and difficulty seeing (18%) flew least.

Figure 30: Flight for leisure in past year, by whether adult has a disability and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019 (combined)

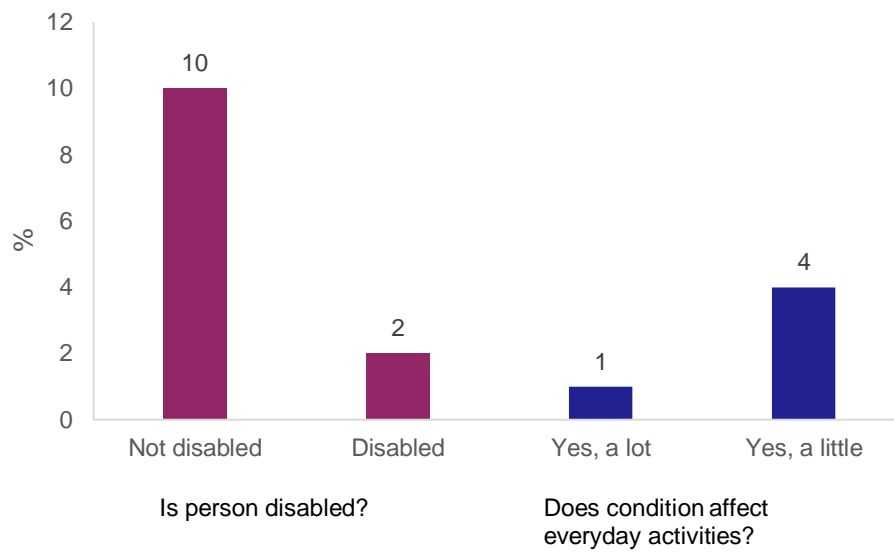


Flying for business

Business flights were substantially less common for disabled people (2%) than for those not disabled. (10%). [Figure 31]

Only 1% of those whose condition affected day-to-day activities a lot flew on business, compared to 4% of people with a condition whose everyday activities were affected a little. [Figure 31]

Figure 31: Flight for business in past month, by whether adult is disabled and whether their condition limits their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019 (combined)



Publication feedback

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) is currently conducting a project reviewing available statistics about the accessibility of transport across the UK. The review will help guide future analysis and will focus on three main questions:

- Do the existing statistics reflect the lived experiences of those relying on transport to be accessible?
- Do the existing statistics help answer the key questions of those with an interest in understanding the accessibility of transport networks?
- Do the statistics provide a comprehensive and reliable evidence base to inform decision making of everyone with the responsibility to make improvements to the accessibility of our transport networks?

If you are interested in statistics about the accessibility of transport networks, OSR would value your input. More information on the project, including how to take part, can be found on the [project page](#).

Contact the Project Lead, [Louisa McCutcheon](#), for more information.



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