

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

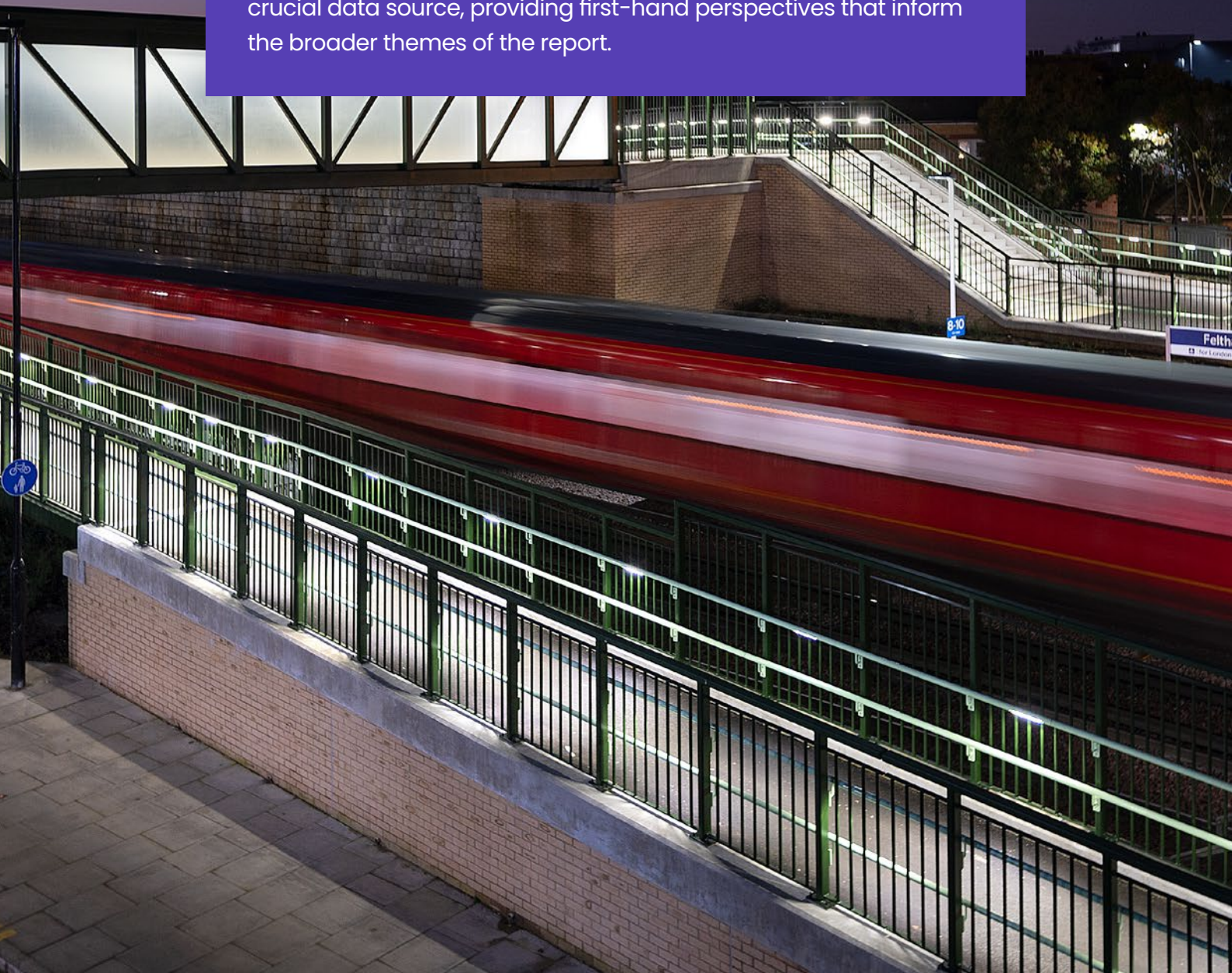
Accessible and Inclusive Rail Travel in the UK



Introduction

The 2023 Accessible and Inclusive Transport Report by Innovate UK KTN, written in March 2023 in collaboration with the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RiDC), highlights the need for accessible and inclusive transport in the UK, with a specific focus on rail travel. This precis will outline the key points related to rail travel, emphasising the barriers, innovations, and solutions needed to enhance accessibility.

The report incorporates findings from a survey conducted by the RiDC, which gathered insights from disabled and older passengers about their experiences with rail travel. The RiDC survey serves as a crucial data source, providing first-hand perspectives that inform the broader themes of the report.



Barriers to Rail Travel

Structural and Technological Barriers

The report identifies several barriers that hinder accessible rail travel for disabled and older individuals. These include:

INACCESSIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE:

Many railway stations lack adequate physical access features, such as lifts, ramps, and accessible toilets, making it difficult for people with mobility impairments to use the services.

INADEQUATE FACILITIES:

Insufficient seating, limited storage for mobility aids, and inaccessible toilets continue to pose challenges.

TECHNOLOGICAL GAPS:

Issues like inaccessible ticketing systems, lack of real-time information, and limited functionality of digital aids such as audio announcements exacerbate difficulties for disabled passengers.

User Experience and Convenience

The RiDC survey highlighted key reasons why disabled and older passengers avoid public transport:

INACCESSIBILITY (25.5%):

Physical barriers and lack of accessible infrastructure deter use.

INCONVENIENCE (22.7%):

Services lack amenities tailored to the needs of disabled passengers.

OVERWHELMING EXPERIENCE (12.6%):

The complexity and stress of navigating rail systems discourage many from using public transport.

Economic and Financial Barriers

Cost and Complexity of Ticketing: Complex ticketing systems and the need for multiple tickets across different modes of transport create additional barriers. Simplified solutions like the Disabled Person's Freedom Pass in London provide an example of how accessibility can be improved.



Societal and Systemic Barriers

🔴 LACK OF TRAINED STAFF:

Rail staff often lack adequate training to assist disabled passengers effectively, which includes understanding the diverse needs of passengers with disabilities.

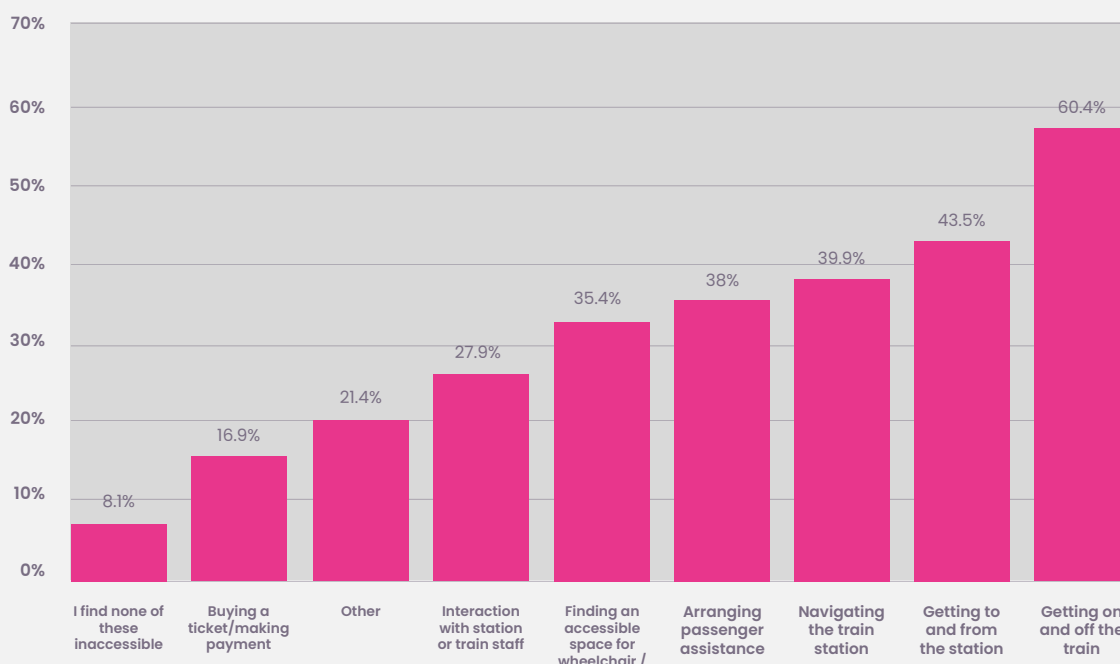
🔴 PASSENGER RIGHTS AND AWARENESS:

Many passengers are unaware of their rights or how to raise concerns and complaints, highlighting the need for better communication and transparency.

🔴 SYSTEMIC IGNORANCE:

The needs of disabled individuals are not consistently prioritised during the design and implementation of transport solutions.

What aspects of travelling by train do you find inaccessible or challenging?



Innovations and Solutions

Rail Industry Initiatives

Efforts to address accessibility barriers in rail travel include:

ACCESSIBLE STATIONS:

Ongoing improvements such as installing lifts, ramps, and step-free access are essential to meeting accessibility goals.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES:

Innovations such as real-time information systems, accessible ticketing platforms, and enhanced audio/visual aids are being implemented to improve passenger experiences.

Specific Solutions have been identified:

STAFF TRAINING:

Comprehensive training equips rail staff to better support passengers with disabilities.

REAL-TIME INFORMATION:

Accessible real-time updates, including for those with visual or hearing impairments, enhance the travel experience.

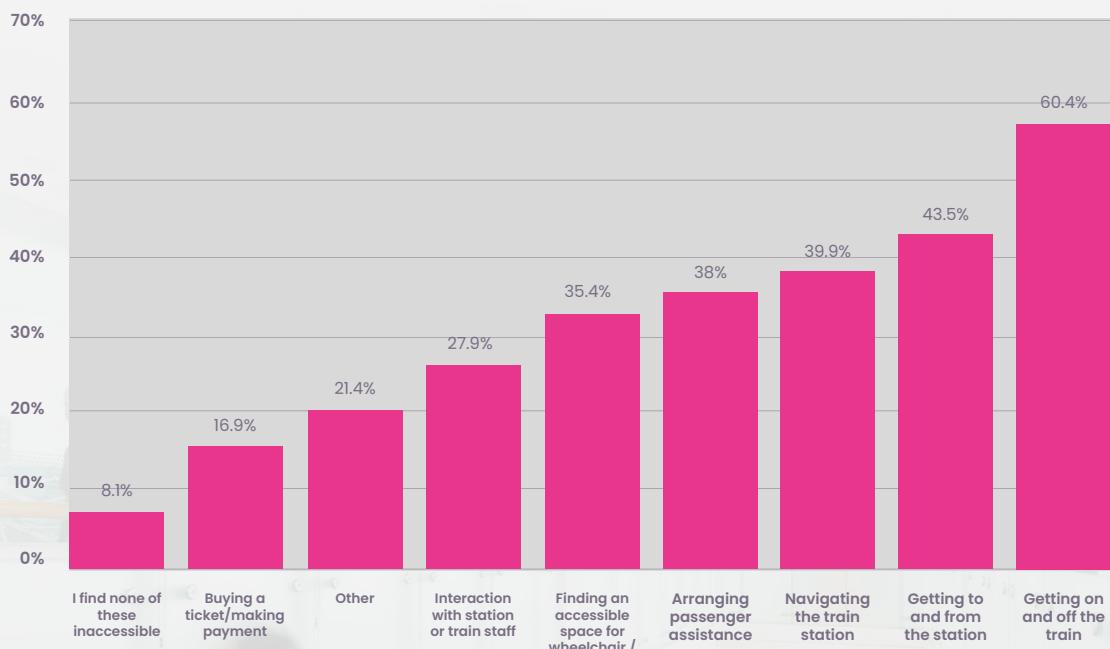
INCLUSIVE DESIGN:

Designing stations and services with accessibility in mind ensures fewer barriers in the long term. Consulting disabled passengers during the design process is critical for success.

HARRINGTON HUMP:

A cost-effective solution for raising platform heights, making it easier for passengers to board and alight trains without requiring extensive structural changes.

What aspects of travelling by train do you find inaccessible or challenging?



Economic and Social Impact

Economic Benefits

PURPLE POUND:

The spending power of disabled households is estimated at £249 billion annually. Closing the transport accessibility gap could add £72.4 billion to the UK economy each year.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES:

Inclusive transport drives innovation, sustainability, and profitability while improving employee retention and team cohesion.

SOCIAL MOBILITY:



Accessible transport networks provide equal access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, supporting equitable economic growth.

MENTAL HEALTH:

Enhanced accessibility reduces stress and improves mental health for disabled passengers. For example, 52% of RiDC respondents expressed concerns about returning to public transport post-COVID-19 due to accessibility issues.

Next Steps and Recommendations


Collaboration and Education

-  Fostering collaboration between users, businesses, and innovators is essential to holistically addressing accessibility issues.
-  Continued education for transport operators and designers ensures that the needs of disabled passengers are integrated at every stage.

Policy and Funding

-  The UK Government's commitment to making transport fully accessible by 2030 under the Inclusive Transport Strategy is a positive step, but significant funding and effort are still required.
-  Innovate UK KTN and its partners aim to connect businesses with funding opportunities to drive innovation in accessible transport.

Cross-Sector Sharing

-  Sharing best practices across different transport modes can accelerate innovation and inclusion. Solutions for buses, for instance, may also be adapted for rail and vice versa.

In conclusion, enhancing accessibility in rail travel is both a moral imperative and an economic opportunity. By addressing barriers through innovative solutions, inclusive design, and collaborative efforts, the UK can achieve its goal of fully accessible transport for all by 2030. Accessible rail networks will empower disabled individuals, strengthen communities, and drive sustainable economic growth.