SCOPE = Equality for disabled people

Independent.
Confident.
Connected.

Achieving equality for disabled people.

Ceri Smith and Simon Dixon

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Introduction

We all want to be able to live a life which is fulfilling. To set our own goals and achieve them. Put simply, to be able to live the life we choose.

But life is still harder when you're disabled than it should be. From facing negative attitudes from others, struggling to get the right care and support, facing difficulties travelling via public transport, or to getting into and staying in work.

At its starkest, this is leaving many disabled people feeling disconnected and undervalued. A third of disabled people think there is still a lot of prejudice in Britain today (**1**), and almost half of disabled people we've polled for this report say they feel excluded from society.

So, what does being able to live the life I choose mean for disabled people? And what changes are needed to enable that to happen?

We spoke to disabled people right across the country to find out about their day-to-day lives: what makes them happy, what they find frustrating, and to ask for their views on what they want to get out of life.

We wanted to start from people's experiences, not the political contexts which affect the wider disability discourse – for example the precariousness of social care provision, welfare reform, and cuts to wider public spending. Too often we ask questions about how a policy might affect disabled people's lives, when we should be doing the opposite: what do disabled people's lives mean for future policymaking?

We wanted to ascertain what the notions of equality, independent living, confidence, and aspiration mean to disabled people today.

In presenting these findings, we don't intend to – nor could we hope to – do justice to the diversity of experiences and perspectives of 14 million disabled people's lives (**2**). Not all of the factors we have identified will resonate with every disabled person. And for some disabled people, important factors will be missing. However, our findings indicate key areas where change is needed.

Over the next four years, Scope is committed to shifting expectations; working with disabled people and others from across government, business and wider society to remove barriers that get in the way of disabled people living an independent life.

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1. Scope (2018) The Disability Perception Gap. https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Documents/Publication%20Directory/Disability-Perception-Gap-report-FINAL.pdf

2. Department for Work and Pensions (2018), Family Resources Survey 2016/17. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-201617

About our research

This report is underpinned by three new pieces of primary research which aim to determine what 'living the life I choose' means to disabled people and the key enablers and barriers faced in achieving this aspiration. Throughout all of the research we wanted to speak to people about their day-to-day lives.

We worked in partnership with Britain Thinks who delivered ethnographic research with 31 disabled people with a mixture of impairments and conditions across England and Wales. The research was conducted using a mixture of face to face interviews and mobile ethnography to capture disabled people's experiences of everyday life. We wanted to define what matters most and identify the moments when the participants were able to or being prevented from living the life they choose.

Britain Thinks then conducted four workshops with a further 31 disabled people, where findings from the ethnographic research were tested and some of the specific enablers and barriers were explored in more depth.

Finally, we commissioned a poll of 2,000 disabled people from across the UK to find out what their views were on a range of the issues identified, and to test the findings from the qualitative research at scale (**3**).

Alongside this new research, we have incorporated findings from previous Scope reports including recent publications such as The Disability Perception Gap (**4**) and Let's Talk (**5**).

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3. Polling was conducted by Opinium between 18 – 30 May 2018 with 2,000 adults aged 18 – 65 in the UK with long term impairments or conditions. The survey was conducted online and the sampling was non-probability based.

4. Scope (2018), The Disability Perception Gap. https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Documents/Publication%20Directory/Disability-Perception-Gap-report-FINAL.pdf

5. Scope (2017), Let's Talk. https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Documents/Publication%20Directory/Let-s-talk-improving-conversations-about-disability-at-work-Scope.pdf

Key findings and recommendations

- Disabled people want to be able to set and achieve goals, and be seen as more than their impairment.

- Three key threads are crucial to achieving this aspiration: confidence, connectedness, and independence.

- There are five key aspects of life which can be both enablers and barriers to disabled people living the lives they choose: other people's attitudes, being able to get into and stay in work, having the right care and social connections, being able to access and use digital technology, and being able to travel on public transport how and when you want.

Other people's attitudes

Often disabled people experience negative attitudes when using public services or in the public spaces they visit. The Government has a role to play in tackling negative attitudes towards disability. The recently established inter-ministerial disability strategy group should have an explicit objective to improve attitudes and reduce prejudice towards disabled people.

Being able to get into and stay in work

Being able to get into and stay in work is crucial to many disabled people's sense of independence and self-worth, but the right support often isn't there to enable disabled people to achieve this goal. The Government has committed to supporting one million more disabled people in to work by 2027. The single, most powerful thing the government could do to realise this goal would be to remove the barriers to disabled people accessing specialist employment support, by removing sanctions and making it voluntary.

Care, support and social connections

Making and maintaining social connections is fundamental. And for disabled people who need it, care and support can be a crucial enabler to being socially connected. As well as stabilising the existing system of support, social care must be reformed to meet the needs and aspirations of disabled people so that the support received better enables the ability to have a family life, work, engage with communities, and socialise. This can only happen if disabled people are involved at every stage of service design, and if independence, confidence and connectedness become the measures of success of the support people are offered.

Access to digital technology

Digital technology has transformed many disabled people's lives. To ensure benefits are maximised it is important that action is taken on two fronts. Firstly to close the digital divide which exists today. Secondly to ensure the next wave of digital innovation – what some are calling the Fourth Industrial Revolution – includes disabled people as a core consumer group.

Inclusive public transport

Public transport has been long-identified by disabled people as a major barrier to independence. Systems need to be reformed to ensure that disabled passengers are treated fairly and equally. Alongside improvements to accessibility, disabled people should be able to travel without fear of negative attitudes from staff and other passengers, and have access to straightforward routes for recourse if things go wrong.

'Living the life I choose'

In its simplest form, this means being able to do what you want to do, when you want to do it, and being seen as more than your impairment or condition. Ultimately, it's about being treated equally and fairly, and being able to set and achieve your own goals.

However, far too often disabled people face barriers to achieving this aspiration.

49 percent of disabled people we polled said that they **feel excluded** from society. Just **23 percent** said they **feel valued** by society.

Figure 1: Thinking about your impairment or condition, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (6)
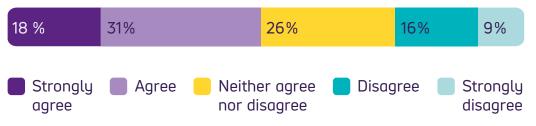
I feel valued by society

6%	17%	36%	25%	15%

I think the UK is a good place for someone with a long-term impairment or health condition

12%	30%	36%	13%	9%

I feel excluded from society because of my long-term impairment or health condition

18 %	31%	26%	16%	9%

- ■ Strongly agree
- ■ Agree
- ■ Neither agree nor disagree
- ■ Disagree
- ■ Strongly disagree

Our aim at the start of this research was to find out what success might look like – what might disabled people feel would be different if they were able to live fulfilling lives. We also wanted to understand the key enablers and barriers which can help or hinder disabled people's ability to achieve this aim.

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6. Sample: 2,000 disabled people.

Our research with Britain Thinks uncovered three threads which weave through disabled people's lives:

1. Confidence – having a sense of self-worth and the ability to set and achieve goals.

2. Independence – being in control of your life and your decisions.

3. Connectedness – feeling you have a role in society, and you are able to make and maintain relationships with others.

Our research also exposed key areas of life which are of particular importance to disabled people:

#@?!

Other people's attitudes

Being able to get into and stay in work

Care, support and social connections

Access to digital technology

Inclusive public transport

These five areas of life are not the only ones which matter to disabled people. However, these were the issues disabled people identified in this research as being of particular importance.

This report explores some of the findings from the qualitative research and polling and outlines what changes might shift disabled people's experiences. The recommendations included sit alongside, rather than replace, Scope's existing recommendations on employment, welfare, and support for families.

Other people's attitudes

Throughout our research, disabled people have been clear that the negative attitudes of others are a huge barrier to having a sense of self-worth.

This doesn't just mean incidents of clear discrimination. The accumulation of smaller incidents, which may seem inoffensive one-offs to the perpetrator, over time can have a damaging impact on an individual.

In particular, disabled people told us they want to be seen as more than their disability, and the attitudes of others often prevent this – **two thirds of disabled people said they have been stopped doing something they wanted to in the last year by other people's attitudes.**

As Figure 2 shows, there are a range of groups from which disabled people experience negative attitudes, including employers, family and the general public.
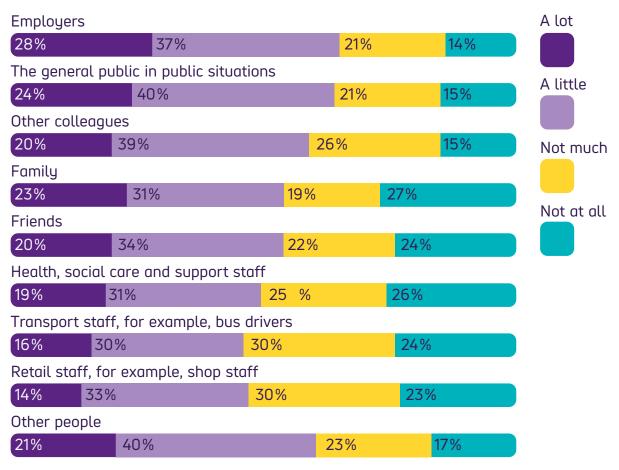
Figure 2: Have attitudes from the following groups negatively impacted on your day-to-day life? (7)

Employers
| 28% | 37% | 21% | 14% |

The general public in public situations
| 24% | 40% | 21% | 15% |

Other colleagues
| 20% | 39% | 26% | 15% |

Family
| 23% | 31% | 19% | 27% |

Friends
| 20% | 34% | 22% | 24% |

Health, social care and support staff
| 19% | 31% | 25 % | 26% |

Transport staff, for example, bus drivers
| 16% | 30% | 30% | 24% |

Retail staff, for example, shop staff
| 14% | 33% | 30% | 23% |

Other people
| 21% | 40% | 23% | 17% |

Legend:
- A lot
- A little
- Not much
- Not at all

7. Sample: Employers, 1,509 disabled people; The general public, 1,906 disabled people; Other colleagues, 1,442 disabled people; Family, 1,938 disabled people; Friends, 1,906 disabled people; Health, social care and support staff, 1,847 disabled people; Retail staff, for examle, shop staff, 1,865 disabled people; Transport staff, for example, bus drivers, 1,732 disabled people; Other people, 1,886 disabled people.

The responses show that anyone can hold negative attitudes. What we have found, however, is that they are more likely to impact on younger people. Fewer than half of 55 – 65 year old disabled people we polled said they have been stopped from doing something they wanted to do in the last year by negative attitudes, compared with over four fifths of 18 – 34 year olds.

We need more research to ascertain why different age groups have different experiences. Perhaps young disabled people experience more frequent or more hostile negative attitudes. Or perhaps older generations have different expectations.

Negative attitudes can also have more tangible – although not necessarily any less damaging – impact. Previous Scope research has found disabled people worry about sharing information about a condition or impairment at work for fear that they would be discriminated against (**8**) and three in ten people we polled for this report said negative attitudes prevented them from using public transport in the last year.

At the moment, the scale of the prejudice that disabled people face is widely misunderstood. Previous Scope research has found that the gap between disabled and non-disabled people's perception of disability prejudice has trebled since 2000 (**9**).
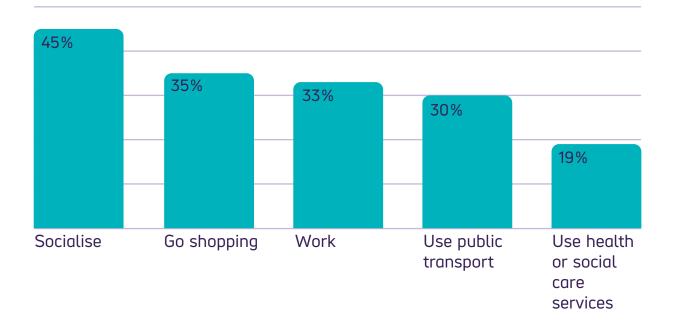
"The way they look at you when you're in a wheelchair... It's inconsiderate, patronising, ignorant."

Britain Thinks research participant

Figure 3: Have negative attitudes and behaviours from other people prevented you from doing any of the following in the last 12 months? (**10**)

Socialise	Go shopping	Work	Use public transport	Use health or social care services
45%	35%	33%	30%	19%

8. Scope (2017) Let's Talk. https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Documents/Publication%20Directory/Let-s-talk-improving-conversations-about-disability-at-work-Scope.pdf

9. Scope (2018) The Disability Perception Gap. https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Documents/Publication%20Directory/Disability-Perception-Gap-report-FINAL.pdf

10. Sample: 1,718 disabled people

It's concerning that although the public believe attitudes are improving, disabled people are not recognising this in their own lives.

One in three disabled people say there is still a lot of **disability prejudice** (**11**).

There is no silver bullet that will address this issue. Instead, it requires a concerted effort across society to tackle prejudice and negative attitudes towards disabled people. Scope is trying to change attitudes through our End The Awkward campaign, our network of story tellers, and working by promoting 'role models' with school-age children to change their perceptions around disability (**12**).

But, we feel Government action is needed to change attitudes on the scale we have identified to create a coherent and meaningful approach.

Recommendation

Often disabled people experience negative attitudes when using public services or in the public spaces they visit. The Government has a role to play in tackling negative attitudes towards disability. The recently established inter-ministerial disability strategy group should have an explicit objective to improve attitudes and reduce prejudice towards disabled people.

Gem's story

I was at work eating lunch in the cafeteria and I noticed three men looking at me. I'm used to stares so I fobbed it off, but then I noticed one of the men had his phone out and he was clearly taking photos of me and smirking at his friends. I was really upset but I acted as if I wasn't bothered.

Incidents like this might not seem like a big thing to some people but it had such an effect on me. I'm trying to get over it but I'm still nervous around people and I'm looking around me more vigilantly. It's annoying, I'm not usually like that.

People also shout at me all the time, on the street. They say, 'Oi midget', things like that, especially on nights out when people are drunk.

I've also had taxi drivers physically try to yank my wheelchair out of their taxi when I've already said to them 'Please don't touch me, please don't touch my chair'. I've got brittle bones, so I have to be careful. He wouldn't do that to someone not in a wheelchair.

11. Scope (2018) The Disability Perception Gap. https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Documents/Publication%20Directory/Disability-Perception-Gap-report-FINAL.pdf

12. More information about the Scope Role Models programme is available at: https://www.scope.org.uk/Support/Service-directory/Scope-Role-Models
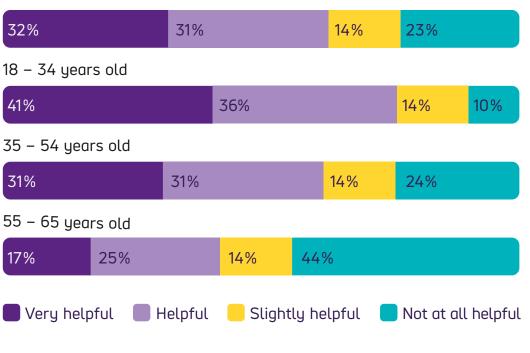
Being able to get into and stay in work

Over the past four years, Scope has campaigned hard for more disabled people to get into, stay in, and progress at work – in part because paid employment contributes to people's financial security.

This research re-reinforces the need for that campaign, but emphasises that work is not just about the money in your pocket at the end of the day. Being able to get into and stay in work is a crucial enabler to disabled people's ability to achieve confidence, connectedness and independence. It brings personal benefits and is seen by disabled people as a way to contribute to society, maintain social connections and promote self-worth.

63 percent of respondents to our polling said that paid employment is, or would be, helpful or very helpful in aiding independence. Work seems to be of particular importance to younger disabled people, with paid employment being seen as helpful to three quaters of 18 – 34 year olds, compared with just four in ten of 55 – 65 year olds.

We need to put to rest once and for all the myth that the majority of disabled people don't want to work. The reverse is true: for many, work is of fundamental importance to who they are.

Figure 4: To what extent is paid employment helpful, or would be helpful, to you in aiding you to live independently? (13)

Total

Very helpful	Helpful	Slightly helpful	Not at all helpful
32%	31%	14%	23%

18 – 34 years old

Very helpful	Helpful	Slightly helpful	Not at all helpful
41%	36%	14%	10%

35 – 54 years old

Very helpful	Helpful	Slightly helpful	Not at all helpful
31%	31%	14%	24%

55 – 65 years old

Very helpful	Helpful	Slightly helpful	Not at all helpful
17%	25%	14%	44%

■ Very helpful ■ Helpful ■ Slightly helpful ■ Not at all helpful

13. Sample: 2,000 disabled people.

While employment is identified by disabled people as being one of the biggest enablers to living the life you choose, getting into and staying in work can be a huge challenge. The disability employment gap – the difference between the employment rates of disabled people and non disabled people – has stayed stubbornly at around 30 percentage points for over a decade (**14**).

Our Let's Talk report uncovered that gaps between policies and practice are preventing businesses from supporting their disabled staff to thrive at work (**15**). There is strong evidence around specialised and individualised support for different groups of disabled people to get into and stay in work. For example The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model for people with mental health conditions (**16**) and Scope's research on employment support for disabled people with high support needs (**17**).

However, too few disabled people who want to work are able to access support provided by specialists with expertise in the barriers that disabled people face in the labour market. Where disabled people do access employment support, this is often generic and does not take account of someone's specific needs or aspirations.

Mandatory employment support programmes, where individuals could lose financial support if they do not meet requirements, have proven ineffective among disabled people. It is crucial that disabled people who want to work can access support at a stage and in a way that works for them.

Scope provides services to support disabled people to get into and stay in employment. It works because it is highly tailored, entirely voluntary, and because disabled people build up strong bonds of trust with their support workers. But this provision isn't enough alone to tackle the scale of the challenge. We need the Government to lead the way to ensure one million more disabled people can get in to work by 2027.

Recommendation

Being able to get into and stay in work is crucial to many disabled people's sense of independence and confidence, but the right support often isn't there to enable disabled people to achieve this goal. The Government has committed to supporting one million more disabled people in to work by 2027. The single, most powerful thing the government could do to realise this goal would be remove the barriers to disabled people accessing specialist employment support, by removing sanctions and making it voluntary.

14. Scope analysis of ONS (May 2018) Labour Market Statistics, table A08

15. Scope (2017), Let's Talk. https://www.scope.org.uk/Get-Involved/Campaigns/Employment/Let-s-Talk

16. Bond, Gary R.,Drake, Robert E.,Becker, Deborah R. (2008), *An update on randomized controlled trials of evidence-based supported employment*, Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, Vol 31(4), 280-290.

17. Scope (2017), Working for all? https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Documents/Publication%20Directory/WFA-report-FINAL.pdf?ext=.pdf

Care, support and social connections

Connecting with friends, family and other disabled people is seen as a strong enabler of independent living, having a sense of self-worth, and feeling valued.

When asked what things help to live independently, **80 percent** of disabled people said strong family connections, and **74 percent** said having strong network of friends were helpful or very helpful.

Likewise, being able to speak to other people with similar experiences as a disabled person has come up repeatedly across the qualitative research conducted with Britain Thinks.

Figure 5: To what extent are the following helpful, or would the following be helpful, to you in aiding you to live independently? (**18**)

Strong family network

Very helpful	Helpful	Slightly helpful	Not at all helpful
47%	33%	12%	8%

Access to digital technology such as a computer, mobile phone, tablet

| 41% | 36% | 15% | 8% |

Strong network of friends

| 36% | 38% | 17% | 8% |

Healthcare

| 33% | 41% | 18% | 8% |

Paid employment

| 32% | 31% | 14% | 23% |

Online social networks

| 20% | 30% | 24% | 26% |

Support groups

| 19% | 32% | 27% | 22% |

Social care

| 18% | 31% | 24% | 26% |

Volunteering

| 12% | 25% | 25% | 38% |

■ Very helpful   ■ Helpful   ■ Slightly helpful   ■ Not at all helpful

18. Sample: 2,000 disabled people.

There is a growing body of evidence around the need to tackle loneliness and isolation amongst different groups (**19**). Scope research has found that nearly half of disabled people are chronically lonely (**20**), and this new evidence further confirms the need for disabled people to be supported to build and maintain social connections.

For those who need it, care and support is a key aspect of disabled people being able to live in a way they want to, with both formal and informal support playing a part.

Currently 283,000 disabled people are in receipt of long-term care and there were over 500,000 requests for care support in 2016 – 17 from people aged 18 – 65 (**21**). Our research has shown that, for people who need to use care services, this has a positive impact on their lives. 49 percent of the disabled people we asked in our polling for this report said they feel social care would be helpful or very helpful to them living independently.

But social care isn't just valued by disabled people for helping them to meet the basic needs of personal care. Three quarters (75 percent) of disabled people aged 18 – 65 who use social care services say the support the receive helps them in having social contact with other people (**22**).

However, there is a huge funding gap in social care, which is set to grow unless there is urgent action taken by Government, and there is growing evidence that this is placing a strain on the services offered to disabled people (**23**).

19. Holt-Lunstad J., Smith T.B., Baker M., Harris T., Stephenson D., (2015), Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: a meta-analytic review, Perspect Psychol Sci., Vol 10(2), 227 – 37

20. Scope press release (2017), 'Nearly half of disabled people chronically lonely'. https://www.scope.org.uk/press-releases/nearly-half-of-disabled-people-chronically-lonely

21. NHS Digital (2017), Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report, England 2016 – 17. https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/adult-social-care-activity-and-finance-report/adult-social-care-activity-and-finance-report-england-2016-17

22. NHS Digital (2017), Personal Social Services Adult Social Care Survey, England 2016-17. https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/personal-social-services-adult-social-care-survey/personal-social-services-adult-social-care-survey-england-2016-17

23. The Health Foundation estimates that an additional investment of £2.5 billion will be required by 2019/20 just to keep pace with rising demand and that publicly-funded social care provision dropped by eight percent between 2009 – 2010 and 2015 – 2016. http://www.health.org.uk/sites/health/files/Election%20briefing%20NHS%20and%20social%20care%20funding.pdf

The Government needs to shore up the stability of the existing system and disabled people's broader aspirations for being socially connected and working are met through formal care and support.

Recommendation

Making and maintaining social connections is fundamental. And for disabled people who need it, care and support can be a crucial enabler to being socially connected. As well as stabilising the existing system of support, social care must be reformed to meet the needs and aspirations of disabled people. This will mean that care and support can better enable the ability to have a family life, work, engage with communities, and socialise.

Howard's story

"I have hereditary spastic paraplegia. I've had it since I was 14, and now I'm a permanent wheelchair user. I had to give up work back in 2015, due to my disability deteriorating. My GP and consultant recommended that I didn't work. It put a lot of pressure on me and my condition.

I rely on a carer for most things – to get me out of bed, wash me, to go to the toilet. I currently get three hours help per day, Monday to Sunday. Two in the morning and an hour in the evening, which is not sufficient by any means. My carer goes at 10:30 and doesn't return until 10 in the evening. In the daytime I have to rely on my mum – she's nearly 70, she lives not far away – to come across and help me go to the toilet etc and get my lunch.

And I can't go out without a carer. I've sat here for six weeks before. I haven't been out because I haven't got enough support. I'm just stuck indoors, and I've got cut off from people.

The staff are really good. They'll do anything for me. But social services don't have the budget at the moment for me to get sufficient help.

We need them to listen to the person with the disability, and to what they require, not what they think I need."
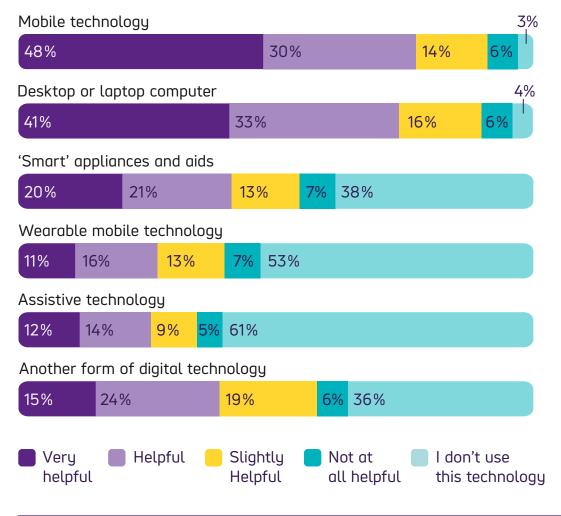
Access to digital technology

Practical aids and equipment can enable disabled people to overcome barriers and achieve independence. From crutches and wheelchairs to braille books, these have long been a feature of disabled people's everyday lives. As our society has evolved, so have independent living aids.

Digital technology has, in many cases, transformed the lives of disabled people. From navigation apps that allow people to travel independently, to online forums that allow people to stay connected, new technologies have been central in breaking down barriers across society.

> "Having that [mobile] device to help me plan and organise, that was the biggest thing for me to be independent."
>
> **Britain Thinks research participant**

78 percent of disabled people say that having **access to digital technologies is helpful** or very helpful.

Figure 6: To what extent are the following helpful to you in aiding you to live more independently? (24)

Mobile technology
| 48% | 30% | 14% | 6% | 3% |

Desktop or laptop computer
| 41% | 33% | 16% | 6% | 4% |

'Smart' appliances and aids
| 20% | 21% | 13% | 7% | 38% |

Wearable mobile technology
| 11% | 16% | 13% | 7% | 53% |

Assistive technology
| 12% | 14% | 9% | 5% | 61% |

Another form of digital technology
| 15% | 24% | 19% | 6% | 36% |

Legend: ■ Very helpful ■ Helpful ■ Slightly Helpful ■ Not at all helpful ■ I don't use this technology

24. Sample: 2,000 disabled people.

Some technologies are designed with accessibility at their heart, but as Figure 6 shows, disabled people are far less likely to use 'specialised' assistive technologies than they are more mainstream technology.

There is still a lot to be done to ensure that all disabled people are able to realise the benefits that new technologies can bring. Access to the internet can also be particularly important in reducing social isolation and connecting disabled people to their friends, families and other social groups.

Access isn't the only issue for disabled people's ability to engage with the digital world, and the Internet specifically. Frequency of use and having the five key skills – managing information, problem solving, communicating, creating, and transacting – need to be taken into account (**25**). We have found that, taking all three of these areas of internet use into account, the digital divide for disabled people is almost double that of non-disabled people (**26**).

When we are thinking about how future technology could benefit disabled people, the answer is likely to lie in technology designed for mass-market rather than specifically for disabled people. We would like to see technology companies be more mindful of the opportunity they have to improve disabled people's lives when developing new products – and the potential size of market they could be tapping in to by better serving this customer base.

Technology has already played a significant role in allowing disabled people to live independently. It's important that this progress continues, with disabled people considered as a core customer group for the technology industry – rather than accessibility being an add-on. This would ensure that the benefits of the ongoing revolution in digital technology are felt across society, acting to break down new barriers, not create new ones.

Scope is intending to tackle some of these issues through a programme of work looking at the role of digital technology in disabled people's lives – working with others already working in this space to ensure disabled people are included in the next wave of innovation. But we need other organisations, businesses and government to play their part.

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25. This is based on the definition within The Tech Partnership's 2015 Essential Digital Skills Framework: https://www.thetechpartnership.com/globalassets/pdfs/basic-digital-skills-standards/basic_digital_skills_framework.pdf

26. Scope analysis of ONS Opportunities & Lifestyle Survey 2017. We found that 28 percent of non-disabled people have access to the internet, use it frequently, and possess all five key skills, whereas this was the case for only 14 per cent of disabled people.

Hugh's Story

" There's my own wheelchair, which I sit in 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That is probably the most important thing I own. I have a button-operated electric door which lets me in and out of the house. All these things are an important part of my life, but they're also very costly.

I'm into music, films, reading and studying. That's just normal life, and I don't see why, as a disabled person, we shouldn't do that either. I was 51 when I started my first degree. I did a master's degree in cult TV and film.

[To read a book] I need to have special software so that the book can be scanned and I can read it on the TV or computer screen. I have to pay somebody to scan the book in for me. The actual software I need to do my work is very, very expensive, but it means I can do my work.

Without these things I couldn't be as independent as I am. "

Inclusive public transport

It's hugely important to people using public transport that you can travel as and when you want, and that you are treated with respect by staff and other passengers.

Over 8 billion journeys are made by public transport each year in Britain (**27**). However, a number of physical and attitudinal barriers throughout the transport system are likely reasons why disabled people make fewer journeys by public transport than non-disabled people (**28**).

Throughout our research with Britain Thinks and elsewhere, disabled people have told us that public transport acts as a microcosm for barriers they face across society.

Many of the issues frequently reported by disabled people can be remedied by ensuring accessibility is at the heart of transport design. In our polling found 40 percent of disabled people say they often experience difficulties using rail stations. An inclusive transport system does not just mean one that is physically accessible – it needs to be one that disabled people feel comfortable and confident using.

Our research with Britain Thinks showed that public transport is often an environment where negative attitudes can come to the fore.

Our polling found that **one in four** disabled people say that in the last year they have been **prevented from using public transport** by other people's attitudes (**29**).

Without a significant change in the attitudes of both staff and other passengers, many disabled people will remain uncomfortable using public transport. Transport companies should consider what they can do to promote more inclusive behaviour on their services.

The unpredictability of transport – especially when partnered with unpredictable or fluctuating conditions – presents a major barrier. For example, assistance on trains has to be booked 24 hours in advance, but one in five disabled people find help doesn't arrive (**30**).

27. Department for Transport (2017) Transport Survey Great Britain. Table TSGB0102. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/tsgb01-modal-comparisons#table-tsgb0102

28. Department for Transport (2017), Disabled people's travel behaviour and attitudes to travel. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-people-attitudes-towards-travel

29. Scope analysis of polling by Opinium.

30. Office of Rail and Road (2017) Research into Passenger Experiences of Passenger Assist. http://orr.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/25983/research-into-passenger-experiences-of-passenger-assist-november-2017.pdf

By working to ensure the system is set up to ensure everyone can travel as and when they want to, with disabled passengers being equally valued and served, disabled people can plan journeys with confidence.

All of these changes are achievable. What is required is a commitment from those running the transport system to putting inclusivity at the forefront of their decisions and looking not only at technical changes but at how the system as a whole could be reimagined.

Recommendation

Public transport systems need to be reformed to ensure that disabled passengers are treated fairly and equally. Alongside improvements to accessibility, disabled people should be able to travel without fear of negative attitudes from staff and other passengers, and have access to straightforward routes for recourse if things go wrong.

Steph's Story

As a wheelchair user, I use trains frequently to go to work and to socialise. But, of course, the one thing that I'm constantly aware of when travelling is accessibility.

I have to plan my journey before I go anywhere in ways that non-disabled people don't need to, and I rely on the services of train companies to get me to my destination without a hitch but this isn't always the reality.

There have been several times when I have booked assistance with a train company and a member of staff has failed to meet me at the station, leaving me panicked because I don't know whether they will come and take me off before the train departs.

The attitudes of staff towards disabled people who travel by train are important too. I'm not an object, so don't call me a 'wheelchair'. Instead, use the term 'wheelchair user', it's far more appropriate.

We want to feel empowered, respected and valued just like non-disabled people. There's progress that is being made, but there is so much more that needs to be done.

Conclusions and next steps

Everyone's lives are complicated, and the actions set out in this report are not meant to be seen as the panacea for achieving equality for all 14 million disabled people in the UK today.

However, we believe that addressing problems within all five of these areas of life should be the foundation of a concerted effort to ensure more disabled people are able to live independent, connected and confident lives. A modern system of support and enablement would seek to remove barriers across the board – not just through provision of personal care, but with access to transport, getting a job, maintaining social activity and digital inclusion. Success of that system of support should be explicitly measured against people's declared independence, connectedness and confidence. This is a challenge that government will face square on as it looks to reform the social care system for disabled people over the year ahead.

There are some strong indicators for how change will happen in this report: about disabled people being involved as experts in the design of the structures and systems that affect their lives, the benefits of inclusive design, and the success of any given service being measured in relation to what matters to its users.

Too often, disabled people's calls to be consulted in policymaking, to see evaluation data, and to have their say about the quality of services are shrugged off as a predictable whinge.

In fact, they are an offer to help.

We want to build a world where disabled people can genuinely enjoy being independent, confident and connected. This report shows the breadth of what needs to change.

It's time we listen, and that we accept that offer of help.

About Scope

We're Scope and we want equality for disabled people. We're a strong community of disabled and non-disabled people. We provide practical and emotional information and support when it is most needed.

We use our collective power to change attitudes and end injustice. We campaign relentlessly to create a fairer society. We won't stop until we achieve a society where all disabled people enjoy equality and fairness.

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SCOPE = Equality for disabled people