

# Guide Dogs on Holiday

Guide dog owner experiences in the travel and tourism sector



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## Executive summary

This report presents findings from research on the user experience of travelling with a guide dog. Working in collaboration with The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, the objectives of the project are to investigate guide dog owner confidence in travel situations and to examine the relationship of guide dog ownership to travel behaviour and decision-making. More broadly, the project aims to identify areas of success, as well as key challenges and opportunities for improvement in the travel and tourism sector, and facilitate the exchange of knowledge on practical and legislative/policy issues for travel and tourism providers.

While research suggests that guide dogs increase the mobility of visually impaired users within their local communities (e.g. Audrestch et al., 2015), much less is known about the relationship of guide dog ownership to travel and tourism behaviour. In particular, the confidence of guide dog owners in using the services provided by this sector and the likelihood of encountering challenges, barriers, lack of knowledge and/or negative attitudes regarding guide dogs are under-examined in the current research.

Considering this gap in knowledge and the implications it has for improving the accessibility of the travel and tourism sector, data was collected from guide dog owners via an online survey and telephone-based interviews. The findings extended our current understanding of local mobility by suggesting that guide dog ownership contributes to increased travel and mobility beyond local communities. Additionally:

- For 40% of guide dog owners, travel has increased since getting a guide dog.
- 93% of guide dog owners take their guide dogs with them on overnight trips either “always” or “fairly often”.
- 96% of guide dog owners have taken a trip with their guide dog within the UK during the last 12 months (43% have taken six or more trips).
- 19% of guide dog owners have taken a foreign trip with their guide dog in the last 12 months (3% have taken six or more trips).

Further, any negative experiences during travel with a guide dog were focussed on lack of staff knowledge about accessibility services and products/services for guide dogs and lack of staff knowledge about rights to reasonable adjustment. Relatedly, guide dog owners expressed differences in confidence in specific spaces and settings. They are *most* confident about being guided safely in unfamiliar places, keeping the dog focussed in distracting spaces, and keeping the dog safe in unfamiliar spaces. However, navigating new environments, obtaining veterinary care away from home, and finding relief/spending areas for the guide dog (both in unfamiliar places and when using transportation services) are the scenarios in which they are *least* confident. In terms of specific travel modes, guide dog owners are *least* confident that their dogs will be welcomed into taxis. They are *most* confident that their guide dog will be welcomed at train stations and airports, on trains and buses, and in shops and parks/open spaces.

Further, guide dog owners stated that even though they are away from their home environments when travelling, they do work their dogs while on holiday:

- 90% stated they work their dogs “always” or “usually” when on holiday in the UK.
- 73% “always” or “usually” work their dogs during foreign trips. However, 15% say they “never” do.

Finally, analysis of demographic characteristics in relation to travel behaviour reveals three distinct clusters of guide dog owners: infrequent, moderate and frequent domestic travellers.

## Introduction

Current research suggests that guide dogs increase the mobility of visually impaired users within their local communities (e.g. Audrestch et al., 2015). However, there is insufficient research regarding the relationship of guide dog ownership to travel and tourism behaviour more broadly. Moreover, much less is known about the confidence of guide dog owners in the travel and tourism sector, as well as the likelihood of encountering challenges, barriers, lack of knowledge and/or negative attitudes regarding guide dogs.

This limited knowledge of guide dog user experience is set against the backdrop of present and foreseeable systemic challenges within the accessible tourism market of Europe. In 2015, a European Commission study found that people accompanied by a service animal, which includes guide dogs, are amongst the least catered for across the European accessible tourism market, and specifically, the UK ranked 8th out of 14 countries examined (European Commission, 2015). The European Network for Accessible Tourism defines accessible tourism as "tourism that caters to the needs of a full range of consumers including persons with disabilities, older persons and cross-generational families. It entails removal of attitudinal and institutional barriers in society, and encompasses accessibility in the physical environment, in transportation, information and communications and other facilities and services. It encompasses publicly and privately owned tourist locations" (The European Network for Accessible Tourism, 2019). This research suggests that, in agreement with the European Commission (2015) study, guide dog owners are not properly accommodated and encounter barriers throughout the industry, and therefore it does not meet the standards encouraged by the Network for Accessible Tourism.

The accessible tourism market across Europe is comprised of potentially 138 million people. While only half of these are regular travellers, they contribute an estimated €150 billion in revenue annually (European Commission, 2015). Thus, the European Commission (2015) estimates that there will be a shortfall in accessible tourism services by 2020, as currently over 3 million tourism

businesses do not adequately serve the disabled market. Similarly, Visit England found that disabled visitors make up 14% of all overnight trips and 20% of day visits within the domestic tourism market, contributing £12.4 billion to total visitor expenditure (GBTS, 2016). The former Minister for Disabled People, Esther McVey (2013) warned councils that they risk missing out on a largely untapped market if proper accessibility accommodations are not made at tourism attractions.

This project aims to investigate the user experience of travelling with a guide dog in order to identify areas of success, as well as key challenges and opportunities for improvement in the travel and tourism sector, and to exchange knowledge on practical and legislative/policy issues for travel and tourism providers. Considering the three themes of accessible tourism – independence, equity and dignity (Darcy, 2006) – this research places particular emphasis on the experiences of travelling with a guide dog, guide dog owner confidence in travel situations, and the relationship of guide dog ownership to travel behaviour and decision-making.

Consequently, this research contributes to two key areas of Guide Dogs' Psychosocial Research Strategy:

- Promotes high quality research relating to the preservation and enhancement of mobility in those who are blind and partially sighted.
- Leads to a practical application or service intervention within a reasonable timeframe.

It also supports all three of Guide Dogs' Psychosocial Research Objectives:

- To identify the social, environmental and psychological factors that affect the mobility of people who are blind or partially sighted.
- To feed research results back into the guide dogs programme to maximise effectiveness for the benefit of our clients.
- To disseminate our research results to other professionals and to the wider scientific community.



Funding for this project comes from ESRC Small Steps-Small Business Fund, ESRC Business Boost Small Grants and ESRC Business Boost Small Grants Follow on Funds.

## Approach

Our research began by collaborating with Guide Dogs, which is a working name of The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association – a British charitable organisation that helps blind and partially sighted people across the UK through the provision of guide dogs, mobility and other rehabilitation services. This research involved gathering survey and interview data from guide dog owners. We worked with Guide Dogs over the course of several months (October 2018 – February 2019) to design a survey, which was pre-tested with a focus group of three guide dog owners, each with different travel experiences. Following feedback from the focus group, we revised the survey and created a version that was delivered online using the survey tool SurveyMonkey.

The survey consisted of 29 questions (see Appendix 2). Questions 1 to 9 asked general demographic questions and questions regarding dog ownership. Question 10 asked about the benefits of having a guide dog. Questions 11 to 14 asked about visual impairment and additional disabilities. Questions 15 to 16 asked about confidence that the dog would be welcomed by certain service providers and that the dog could carry out certain tasks away from its home environment. Questions 17 to 25 asked more specifically about travel behaviour during the last 12 months, including trip frequency, types of trip taken and information sources used. Questions 26 to 29 asked respondents how much they worked their dog and experiences of travelling with their dog on overnight trips in the UK and abroad.

The online survey was tested by the research team and by members of Guide Dogs. It was then submitted to the Guide Dogs' accessibility team for further testing and to assess user-friendliness of the survey and compatibility with screen readers and voice command software typically used by the visually impaired. Once approved, an invitation to participate in the survey, including a link to it, was emailed to members via the Guide Dogs Communications Team on 22 February 2019. A reminder was included in a newsletter emailed to members on 26 March 2019. The survey was open until 7 April 2019.

Participation in the survey was incentivised with a prize draw for a £100 Marks & Spencer or John Lewis gift voucher. Those who completed the survey were given the opportunity to provide contact details to be included amongst the prize draw participants. Two names were chosen at random following the closing of the survey.

After the initial invitation was sent out, we learned that while the survey was accessible by most screen readers and voice command software used by the visually impaired, some of the more basic software packages presented difficulties, and as a result we also offered a telephone survey option in the reminder. Five respondents selected this option, and telephone surveys were conducted during March 2019.

Upon completion of the survey, respondents were asked if they were willing to be contacted for a short interview regarding experiences of travelling with their guide dog. The 144 participants who opted to take part in an interview were then contacted via email. We received 27 responses to the emailed interview request and these were conducted on a first-come first-served basis at the scheduling convenience of the participant. The interviewer called the participants via Skype and digitally recorded conversations with the participants' permission. Following this, the digital recordings were transcribed, then coded for analysis. Originally, it had been anticipated that interviews would last approximately 30 minutes; yet, some lasted over 1.5 hours, with the average interview lasting approximately 45 minutes.

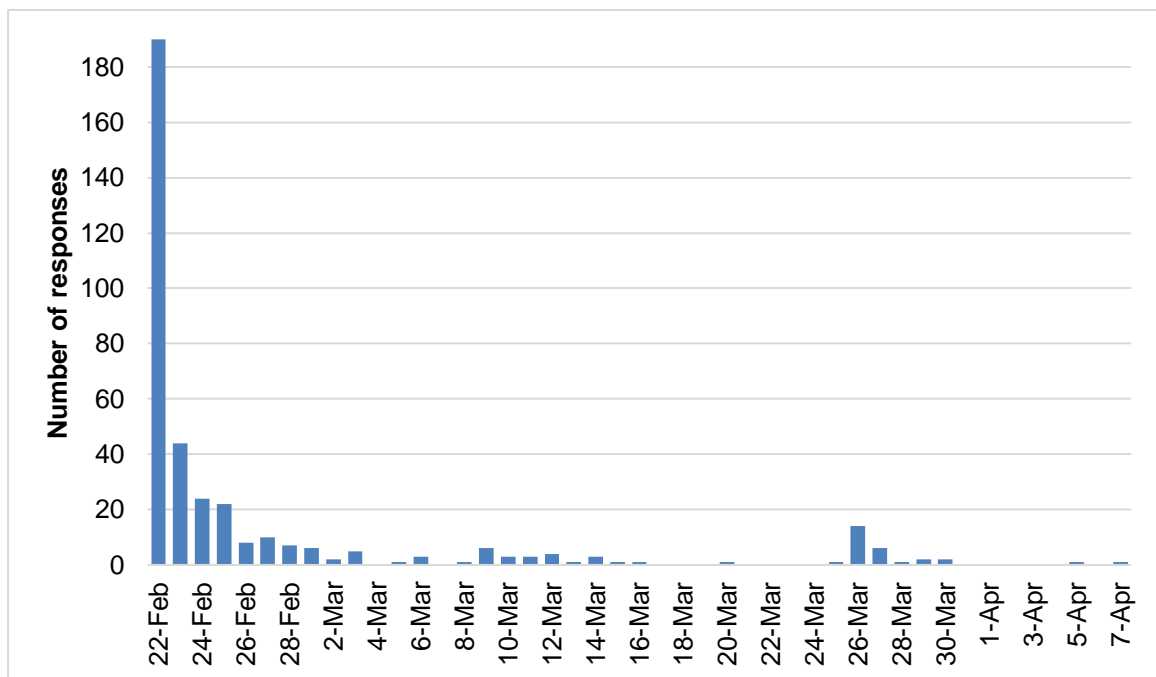
The interview consisted of five sections and used a semi-structured design to allow for a more conversation-like interview (see Appendix 3), which enabled participants to tell their "stories" in a relatively free manner. The interview guide asked questions about the respondent's local travel behaviour, travel outside their local area, a recent trip outside their local area, and a more general final section on travel preferences and experiences.

The findings presented in this report are based on responses from 244 participants that completed the survey and 27 interviews with guide dog owners.

## Sample characteristics

### Survey sample characteristics

We received 374 responses to the survey (51% on day 1 of the initial mailing of the survey invitation, and 82% within the first 7 days). A second small spike in responses was received on 26 March following the repeat mailing (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Timing of survey responses**

Despite testing by the research team and by the Guide Dogs' assessment team, many respondents experienced technical issues when completing the survey. The final number of completed survey responses is therefore much lower than the number of attempted responses, with 244 completed surveys. A further 127 agreed to complete the survey but did not do so (possibly due to technical issues) and three declined to take part in the survey. This analysis is therefore based on 244 responses.

In terms of survey validity and representativeness of the results, Guide Dogs membership as of 1st March 2019 was comprised of 4,797 qualified guide dog users. Of these, approximately 3,500 had email addresses, thus reducing the number of potential participants. Further, the survey was focused on current guide dog users, so all participants either have a guide dog at the moment or have very recently retired their dog and are on the waiting list for another. Assuming a population size of between 3,000 to 5,000 and a 95% confidence level, our sample size of 244 respondents provides a 6% margin of error. This means that if the survey was conducted 100 times, we would expect the results to be within +/-6% of the results reported in 95 of the 100 surveys.

A snapshot of the sample of respondents is provided in Table 1. A larger proportion of respondents in the sample are female. While almost a quarter of all respondents are of retirement age, the majority is of working age. However, only a third of respondents are actively working. Despite fairly high levels of education, 60% reported a total annual household income of £25,000 or less. Almost 85% of respondents have attained onward education to at least further level, while almost 45% have higher education. Nearly 20% have a postgraduate degree. Most respondents are in a relationship (married, in a domestic partnership or civil union, or single – but cohabiting with a significant other). Participants had the option “prefer not to say” to all demographic questions. As a result, the sample size varies across these questions.

**Table 1. Survey sample characteristics – demographics**

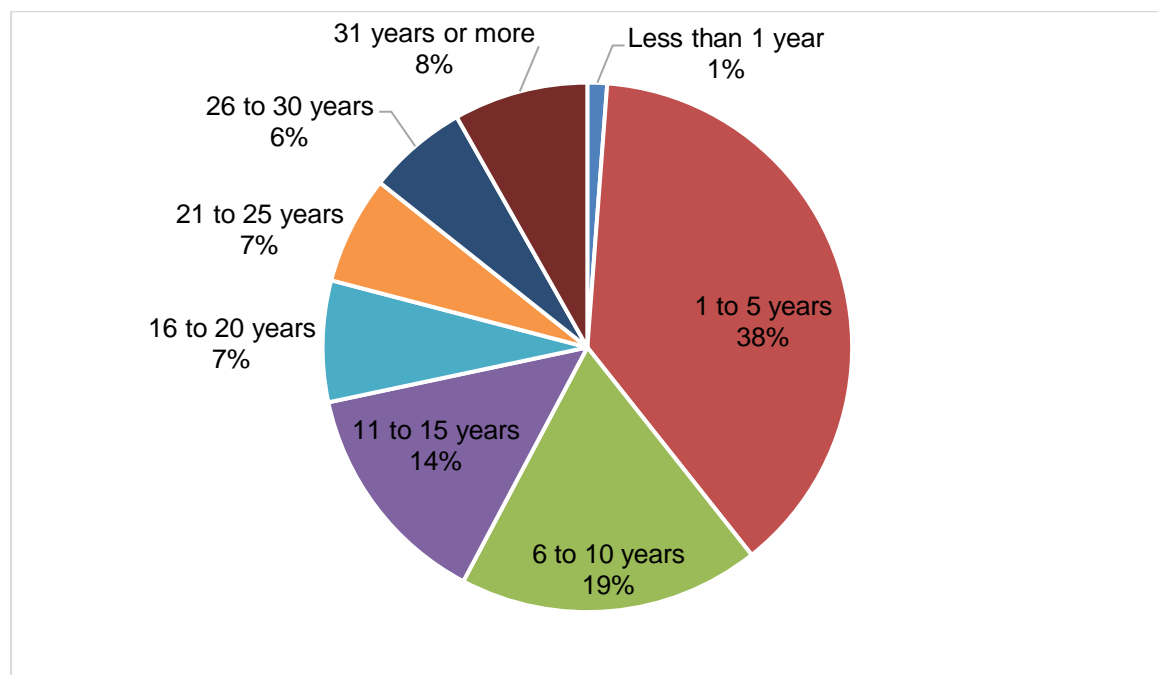
| <b>Characteristic</b>      | <b>Category</b>                                 | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Valid percent</b> |
|----------------------------|---|------------------|----------------------|
| Gender (n242)              | Female  | 140              | 57.9                 |
|                            | Male  | 102              | 42.1                 |
| Age group (n243)           | 25 years or less                                | 8                | 3.3                  |
|                            | 25-34 years                                     | 22               | 9.1                  |
|                            | 35-44 years                                     | 29               | 11.9                 |
|                            | 45-54 years                                     | 60               | 24.7                 |
|                            | 55-64 years                                     | 66               | 27.2                 |
|                            | 65 years or more                                | 58               | 23.9                 |
| Household income (n198)    | Less than £10,000                               | 30               | 15.2                 |
|                            | £10,001-£25,000                                 | 90               | 45.5                 |
|                            | £25,001-£50,000                                 | 57               | 28.8                 |
|                            | More than £50,000                               | 21               | 10.6                 |
| Education (n244)           | No formal education                             | 8                | 3.3                  |
|                            | Secondary school                                | 32               | 13.1                 |
|                            | Further education                               | 100              | 41.0                 |
|                            | Undergraduate higher education                  | 60               | 24.6                 |
|                            | Postgraduate higher education                   | 44               | 18.0                 |
| Employment status (n244)   | Employed, working full-time                     | 52               | 21.3                 |
|                            | Employed, working part-time                     | 10               | 4.1                  |
|                            | Self-employed                                   | 18               | 7.4                  |
|                            | Not employed, looking for work                  | 14               | 5.7                  |
|                            | Not employed, not looking for work              | 12               | 4.9                  |
|                            | Retired   | 63               | 25.8                 |
|                            | Regular volunteer                               | 14               | 5.7                  |
|                            | Student   | 10               | 4.1                  |
|                            | Homemaker/stay at home parent                   | 3                | 1.2                  |
|                            | Disabled, not able to work                      | 48               | 19.7                 |
| Relationship status (n244) | Married   | 132              | 54.1                 |
|                            | In a domestic partnership or civil union        | 11               | 4.5                  |
|                            | Divorced  | 17               | 7.0                  |
|                            | Single, but cohabiting with a significant other | 11               | 4.5                  |
|                            | Single, never married                           | 45               | 18.4                 |
|                            | Widowed   | 13               | 5.3                  |
|                            | Separated                                       | 8                | 3.3                  |

On average, respondents have been visually impaired for over 60% of their lifetime, while 73% have some vision with 56% of those having vision that assists with their mobility. Almost 40% have an additional disability with a further 10% preferring not to say (Table 2). For the respondents who stated their additional disability, the most common types include: impaired hearing, arthritis, diabetes and epilepsy.

**Table 2. Survey sample characteristics – visual impairment and disability**

| Characteristic                 | Category                 | Frequency | Valid percent |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Visual impairment (n242)       | Less than 25% of my life | 49        | 20.2          |
|                                | 25 to 49% of my life     | 48        | 19.8          |
|                                | 50 to 74% of my life     | 38        | 15.7          |
|                                | 75 to 99% of my life     | 29        | 12.0          |
|                                | All my life              | 78        | 32.2          |
| Some vision (n244)             | Yes                      | 177       | 72.5          |
|                                | No                       | 67        | 27.5          |
| Vision assists mobility (n244) | Yes                      | 137       | 56.1          |
|                                | No                       | 40        | 16.4          |
|                                | No vision                | 67        | 27.5          |
| Additional disability (n244)   | Yes                      | 90        | 36.9          |
|                                | No                       | 129       | 52.9          |
|                                | Prefer not to say        | 24        | 10.2          |

All the respondents currently use a guide dog to assist with their mobility, or they have very recently retired their guide dog and are on the waiting list for another. They have an average guide dog user experience of 12 years, ranging from a minimum of one year to a maximum of 44 years (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Approximately how long have you been using a guide dog (including past and current dogs)?**



### *Interview participant characteristics*

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they could be contacted for a short interview regarding experiences of travelling with their guide dog. Of the 144 participants who opted to take part in an interview, 27 responded to the follow-up email interview request. Interviews lasted an average of approximately 45 minutes in length.

Similar to the survey respondents, over half the interview participants are female and the majority are 50 years old and above (Table 3). The time with guide dog ranged from two to 42 years, suggesting that some have only recently acquired a guide dog, whereas others have had one their entire adult life.

**Table 3. Interview sample characteristics**

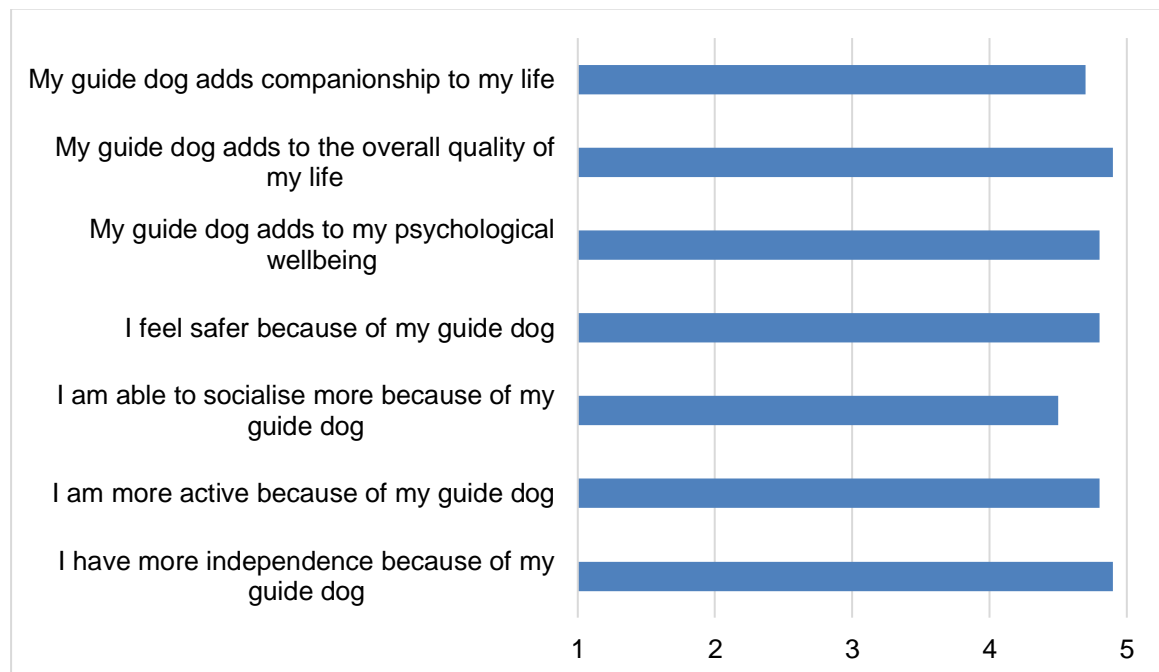
| <b>Interviewee</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age-range</b> | <b>Years with a guide dog</b> |
|--------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Participant 1      | M             | 60s              | 37                            |
| Participant 2      | F             | 30s              | 17                            |
| Participant 3      | F             | 60s              | 39                            |
| Participant 4      | F             | 60s              | 22                            |
| Participant 5      | F             | 50s              | 14                            |
| Participant 6      | M             | 50s              | 6                             |
| Participant 7      | M             | 70s              | 10                            |
| Participant 8      | F             | 50s              | 7                             |
| Participant 9      | F             | 60s              | 35                            |
| Participant 10     | M             | 20s              | 10                            |
| Participant 11     | M             | 40s              | 4                             |
| Participant 12     | F             | 60s              | 21                            |
| Participant 13     | F             | 50s              | 2                             |
| Participant 14     | F             | 30s              | 14                            |
| Participant 15     | F             | 50s              | 12                            |
| Participant 16     | F             | 40s              | 25                            |
| Participant 17     | F             | 30s              | 6                             |
| Participant 18     | M             | 30s              | 3                             |
| Participant 19     | M             | 60s              | 11                            |
| Participant 20     | F             | 60s              | 42                            |
| Participant 21     | M             | 60s              | 9                             |
| Participant 22     | F             | 50s              | 18                            |
| Participant 23     | M             | 50s              | 14                            |
| Participant 24     | M             | 60s              | 21                            |
| Participant 25     | M             | 70s              | 5                             |
| Participant 26     | F             | 40s              | 10                            |
| Participant 27     | F             | 50s              | 30                            |

## Findings

### Benefits of having a guide dog

There is a considerable amount of research on the benefits guide dogs bring to the overall quality of life for the visually impaired (Lane et al., 1998; Lloyd et al., 2008; Wigget-Barnard & Steele, 2008; Higgin, 2012; Audrestch et al., 2015) Our findings are in agreement with much of this research.

Respondents were asked about the benefits of having a guide dog (Figure 3). All the benefits are highly rated with an average value of 5 “Strongly agree” (when rounded up). However, subtle differences exist, with “I have more independence because of my dog” being most highly rated (mean 4.88), followed by “My guide dog adds to the overall quality of my life” (mean 4.85) and “I feel safer because of my guide dog” (mean 4.84). “I am able to socialise more because of my guide dog” is ranked lowest of the benefits (mean 4.45).



**Figure 3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?** Mean response on a scale of 1 Strongly disagree, 2 Tend to disagree, 3 Neither agree nor disagree, 4 Tend to agree, 5 Strongly agree.

The nuances of the benefits of having a guide dog were also relayed in the interviews. In particular, Participant 2, a guide dog owner of 17 years, spoke of the freedom having a guide dog has added to their life, particularly in comparison to using a white stick. They further benefitted from an improved ease of movement as a result:

“Freedom and independence to get out and about and move around, do everything that you want to do and you know, walk [...] to me she’s a lifeline because without her as I said I can’t leave the house. I’m not using my white stick. I’m far, far slower with a white stick. A dog, I’m much, much faster. I can just enjoy walking”.

Likewise, Participant 16, a guide dog owner of 25 years, spoke of how having a guide dog provided confidence to explore new areas, such as the London Underground, and how this increased their independence as a result:

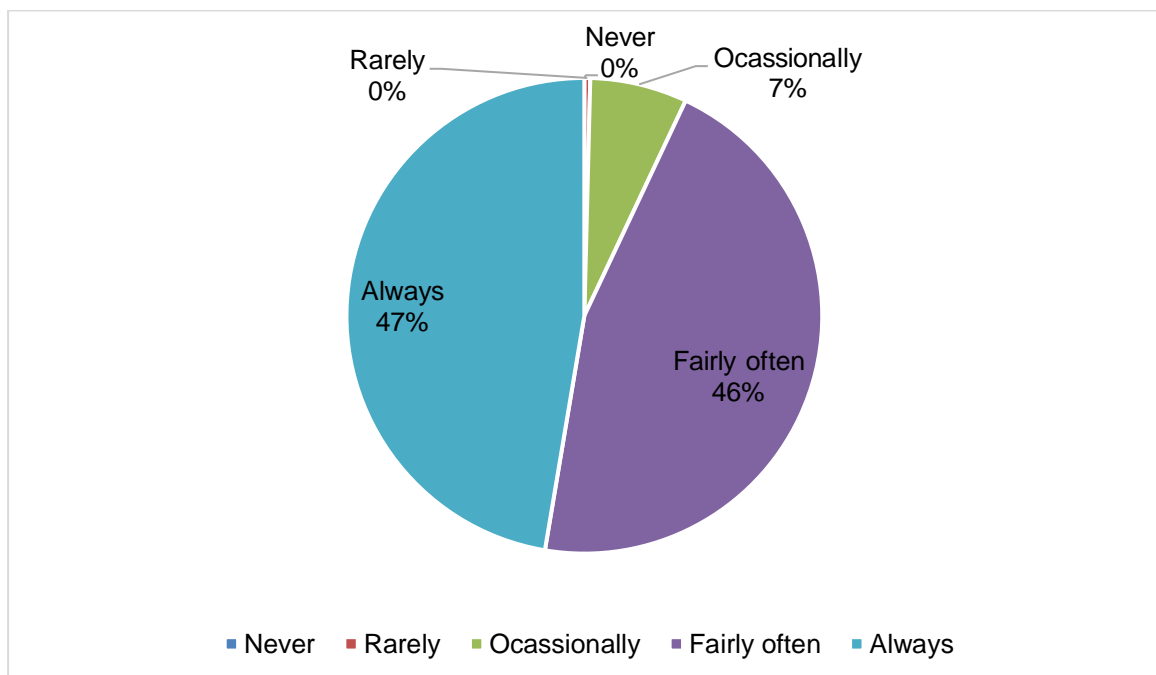
“It certainly gave me a lot of independence to have a really well-trained guide dog that could cope with a city centre. So I could go to new areas, I didn’t need to worry about how the dog would cope with it. He was quite relaxed and really capable and that made a real difference to my confidence”.

This corresponds with current research on the benefits of guide dog ownership. For example, Lane et al. (1998) found that 93% of assistance dog owners valued their dog as a family member and that for 72% of participants it was their most important relationship. Further, both Wigget-Barnard and Steele (2008) and Audrestch et al. (2015) report that the majority of guide dog owners they surveyed noted significant improvements in their lives, including increased positive social interactions, both within their personal lives and in public settings, as well as increased independence, higher self-esteem, confidence and assertiveness. Based on research in New Zealand, Lloyd et al. (2008) found that access to public spaces was improved with the

acquisition of a guide dog. However, guide dog owners experienced an increase in periodic difficulties when attempting to enter pubs, hotels or public transport, despite legal requirements that allow for access.

### Travel behaviour with a guide dog

Almost all (95%) of guide dog users have travelled away from home overnight with their guide dog and 93% say they take their guide dog with them on overnight trips “fairly often” or “always” (Figure 4). However, if they chose not to take their dog with them, the preferred option is for the dog to stay with a friend or relative (42%) or a boarder (17%). For the 9% of respondents who selected “other”, they noted mainly a puppy walker or stated multiple options instead – “take it with them”, “use a friend or relative”, or “a boarder”.



**Figure 4. When you travel away from home overnight, how often do you take your guide dog?**

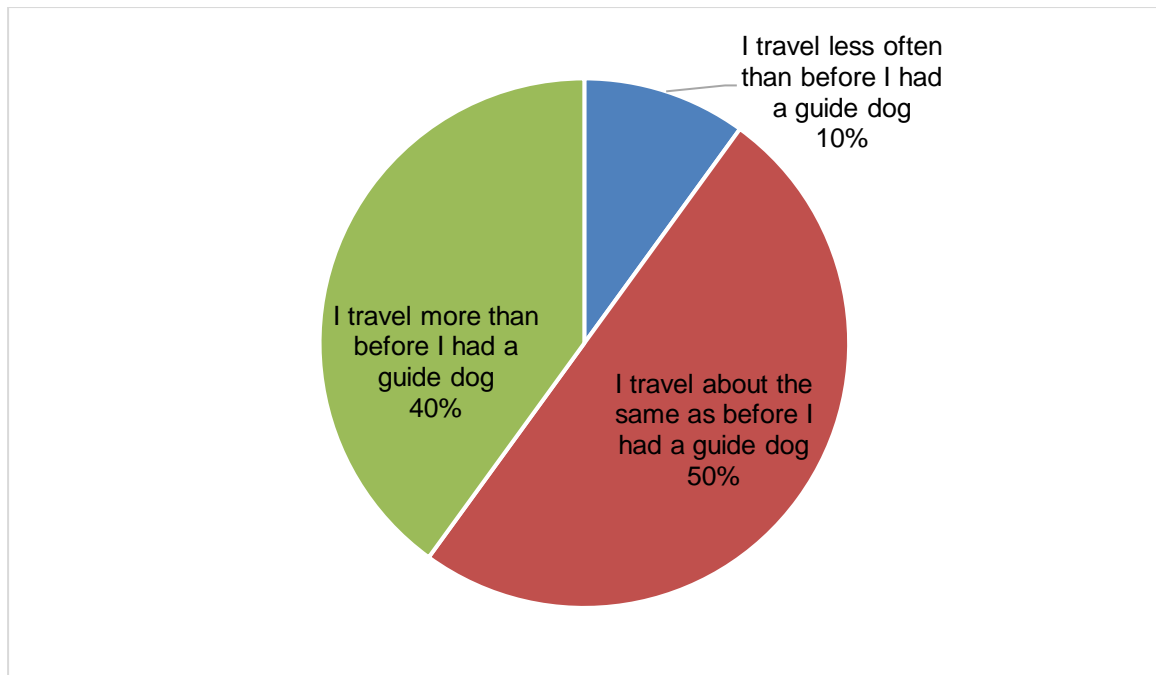
Expanding on the benefits of guide dog ownership discussed previously, research in New Zealand by Lloyd et al. (2008) observes that once a guide

dog was obtained, intensity of travel within local communities increased for 88% of their participants, with 80% of those stating that this increased intensity was “mainly due to wanting to travel more often and/or further, as they felt more confident and that travel was easier and faster” (p. 44). “10% who did not experience a change in travel intensity claimed to have good long cane skills, but that travel was considered easier, faster and more enjoyable with a dog” (p. 44).

This was similar to our findings. Participant 20, a guide dog owner of 42 years, felt that having a guide dog increased their levels of travel and independence in general, not wanting to rely on the cane nor their partner for mobility. Seemingly, with their guide dog, they felt less visually impaired as well:

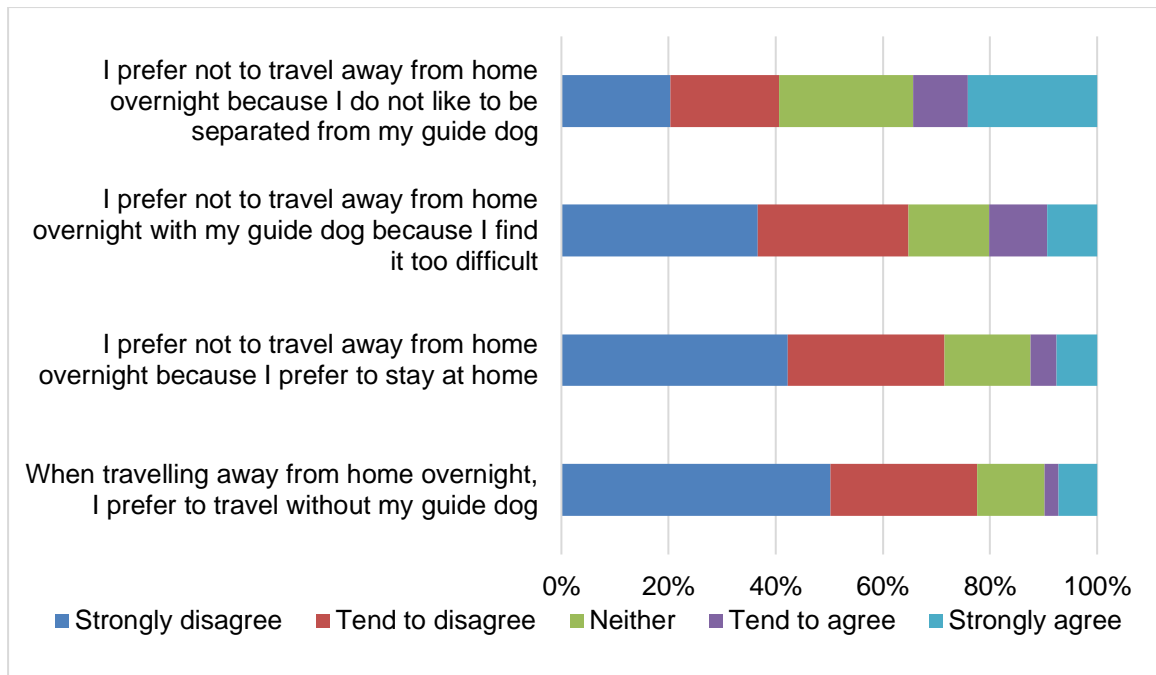
“Yeah, it’s definitely given me more mobility. And plus the fact you don’t feel as blind when you’re walking with a dog, you just feel as if you’re walking with a dog. I don’t want to be one of these women that you know if [husband] laid up for whatever reason I’m stuck in the house”.

Further, we find that holiday travel has increased since obtaining a guide dog, as 40% of participants travel more than before they had a dog and 50% travel about the same as before they had a dog. Only 10% travel less (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. Thinking specifically now about your holiday travel: how has this changed since getting a guide dog?**

Investigating the link between lack of a desire to travel and separation from their dog, we asked participants a series of questions related their reasons for *not* travelling with their guide dog, the difficulty of travel and general preferences (Figure 6). A small proportion of respondents (12%) prefer to stay at home and 20% prefer not to take overnight trips with their guide dog because they find it too difficult. It is obvious that when travelling away from home overnight, guide dog owners prefer to have their guide dog with them (that is also clear from Figure 4), and that the fear of separation is fairly low. However, there is a small proportion of respondents that appear to be concerned about separation. Research by Kwong and Bartholomew (2011) suggests that attachment theory helps to explain the separation anxiety that prevents some guide dog owners from travelling without their dog. Table 5 shows that those who *always* take their guide dog with them (from Figure 4) are significantly more concerned about separation and are significantly less likely to travel without their guide dog (from Figure 6).



**Figure 6. For the following statements regarding travel away from your home for more than one night with your guide dog, please choose your level of agreement.**

**Table 5. Comparing mean responses in Figure 6 with responses in Figure 4**

| From Figure 6                           | From Figure 4 | Group statistics |      |           | Independent Samples t-test for Equality of Means |        |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
|---|---------------|------------------|------|-----------|--|--------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
|   |               | N                | Mean | Std. Dev. | Std. Error Mean                                  | t      | df  | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |  |
| I do not like to be separated           | Not always    | 113              | 2.63 | 1.226     | .115   | -3.570 | 146 | .000            | -.757           | .212                  |  |
|   | Always        | 83               | 3.39 | 1.622     | .178   |        |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| I find it too difficult                 | Not always    | 118              | 2.32 | 1.233     | .113   | .679   | 212 | .498            | .124            | .183                  |  |
|   | Always        | 96               | 2.20 | 1.441     | .147   |        |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| I prefer to stay at home                | Not always    | 117              | 2.02 | 1.167     | .108   | .042   | 212 | .967            | .007            | .161                  |  |
|   | Always        | 97               | 2.01 | 1.186     | .120   |        |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| I prefer to travel without my guide dog | Not always    | 118              | 2.05 | 1.061     | .098   | 2.798  | 211 | .006            | .430            | .154                  |  |
|   | Always        | 95               | 1.62 | 1.178     | .121   |        |     |                 |                 |                       |  |

Note: If Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is significant ( $p < .005$ ), the t-test assumes unequal variances.

For the interview participants who do not bring their guide dog when travelling, they spoke of their reluctance to do so for a number of reasons that are in addition to those noted in Figure 6. The welfare and wellbeing of the guide dog was a subject often discussed and something all participants felt very strongly about. Indeed, when discussing fair treatment of their dogs, it became apparent that they are not merely working animals, but also very loved pets and companions, and as a result are sometimes treated almost like children. Thus, bringing a guide dog to warmer climates and unfamiliar environments that could cause it distress meant some interview participants simply do not see a benefit to bringing their guide dog on holiday.

According to Participant 10, a guide dog owner of 10 years:

“The main reason [for not bringing dog abroad] is I don’t know how much value they would offer abroad. I think it’s a good chance for them and me to have a rest”.

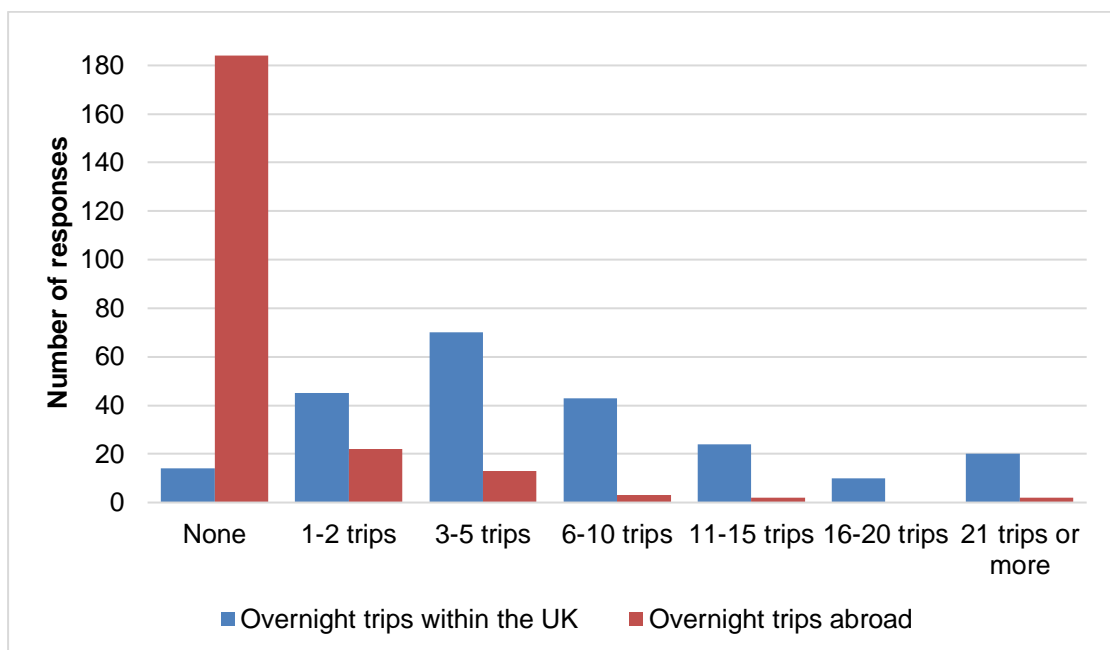
Similarly, Participant 14, a guide dog owner of 14 years, explained that they are able to travel as a family and, as a result, felt that their guide dog would be just another dog and not used for guiding. They also expressed concern that the unfamiliar surroundings would cause too much unnecessary stress for their dog:

“I think it’s unfair. She would get worried and stressed and she is a guide dog, she wouldn’t be of any value to me in foreign parts because she wouldn’t understand where she’s supposed to be going. She very much likes her routines and the places she usually goes and if she goes to somewhere new, she’s not very good (laughs). So I would take her and have this dog that is just a dog, she would not be very valuable”.

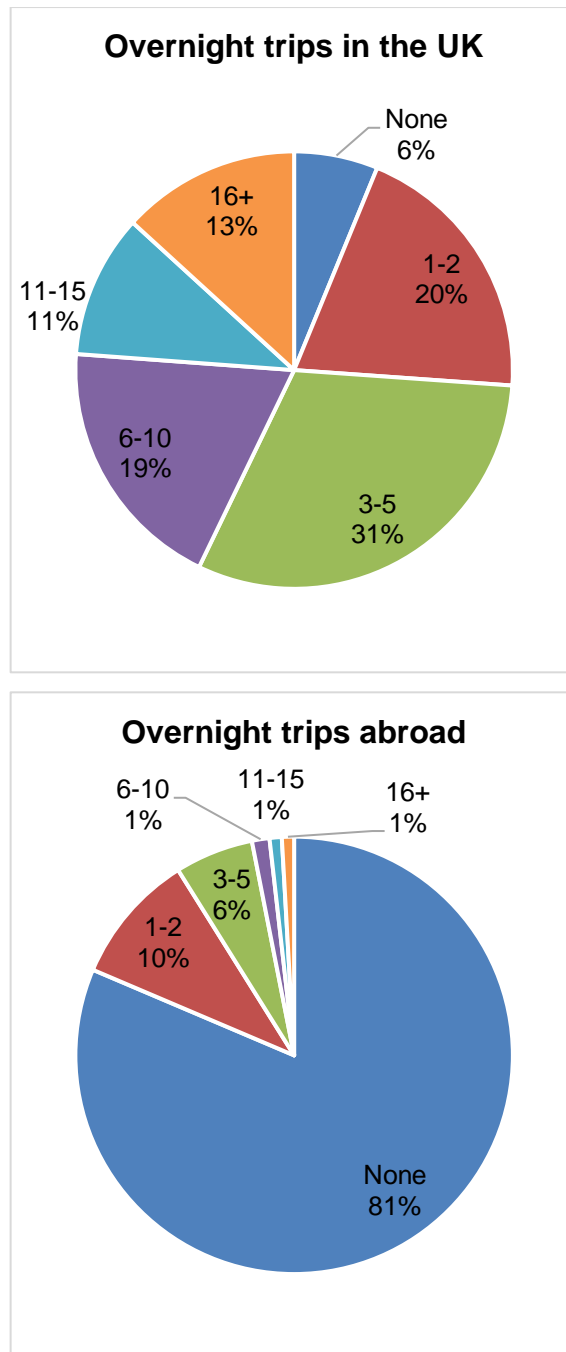


## Travel experience with a guide dog

Examining the effects of these travel preferences, we find that overnight trip frequency with their guide dogs is much higher amongst respondents for domestic versus foreign trips (Figure 7a and 7b). For instance, while 96% of respondents have taken a trip in the UK during the last 12 months (43% taking six or more trips), only 19% (42 respondents) have taken a foreign trip (3% taking six or more trips).



**Figure 7a. How many overnight trips within the UK or abroad have you taken with your guide dog in the last 12 months?** Displayed as comparison of number of trips.



**Figure 7b. How many overnight trips within the UK or abroad have you taken with your guide dog in the last 12 months? Displayed as breakdown of type of trip – UK or abroad.**

Those that take overnight trips abroad with their guide dog tend to be more frequent travellers overall. For instance, if we add UK and foreign trip responses (whereby a value of 1=0 trips, 2=1-2 trips, 3=3-5 trips, 4=6-10 trips,

5=11-15 trips, 6=15-20 trips, 7=21+ trips), the average total for all respondents is 4.93 – equivalent to 11-15 trips when rounded up. For those that have been on a foreign trip it is 6.52 compared to 4.54 for those that have not, and the difference is significant (Table 6).

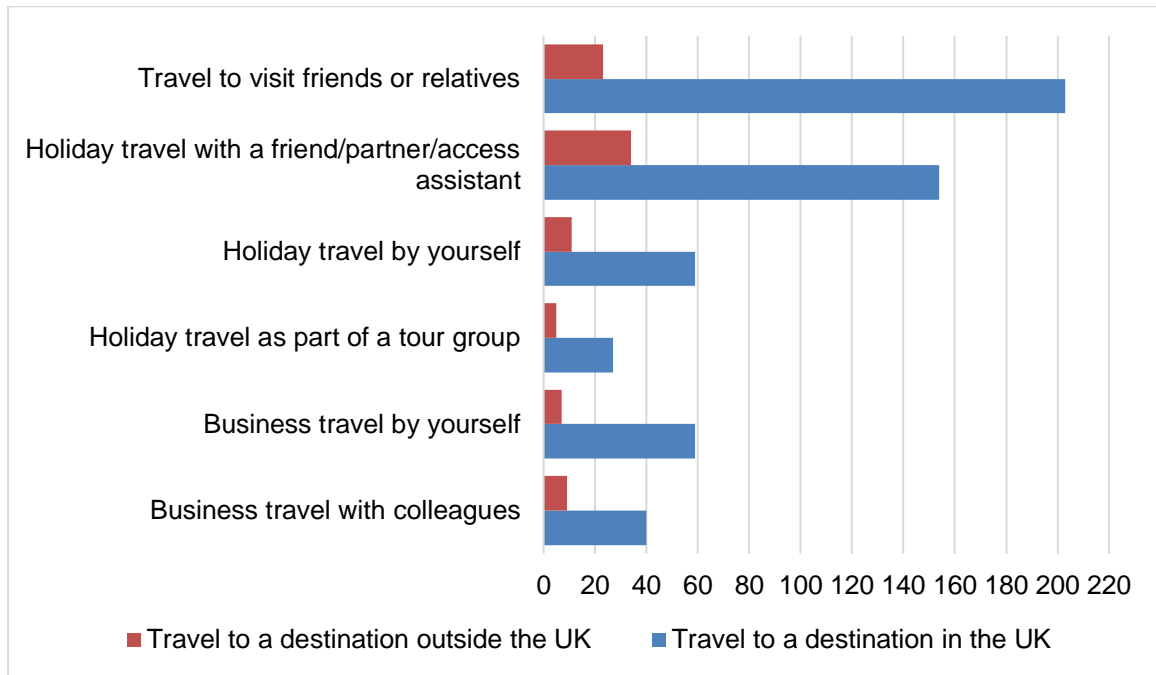
**Table 6. Overnight trips with the guide dog during the last 12 months according to whether they have been on a foreign overnight trip**

| Total overnight trips | Been on a foreign trip | Group statistics |      |           | Independent Samples t-test for Equality of Means |        |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|------|-----------|--|--------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
|                       |                        | N                | Mean | Std. Dev. | Std. Error Mean                                  | t      | Df  | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |  |
| UK                    | No                     | 184              | 3.54 | 1.554     | .115   | -.556  | 224 | .579            | -.152           | .274                  |  |
|                       | Yes                    | 42               | 3.69 | 1.814     | .280   |        |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Foreign               | No                     | 184              | 1.00 | .000      | .000   | -9.522 | 41  | .000            | -1.833          | .193                  |  |
|                       | Yes                    | 42               | 2.83 | 1.248     | .193   |        |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Total                 | No                     | 184              | 4.54 | 1.554     | .115   | -4.628 | 48  | .000            | -1.986          | .429                  |  |
|                       | Yes                    | 42               | 6.52 | 2.680     | .414   |        |     |                 |                 |                       |  |

Note: If Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is significant ( $p < .005$ ), the t-test assumes unequal variances.

## Types of trips

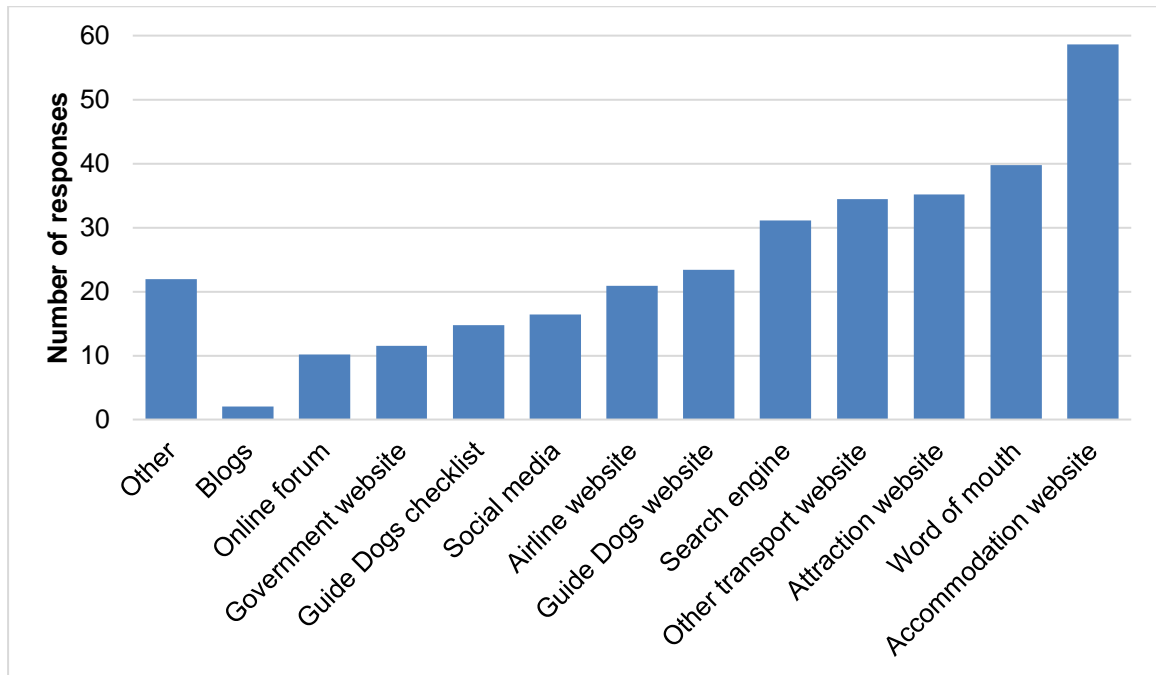
The most common reasons for travel in the UK and abroad are to visit friends and relatives and holiday travel with a friend/partner/access assistant (Figure 8). The largest proportion of all trips to a destination within the UK are to visit friends or relatives (38%) followed by holiday with a friend/partner/access assistant (28%), while it is the other way around for all trips to a destination outside of the UK, where the largest proportion are for a holiday with a friend/partner/access assistant (38%) followed by travel to visit friends or relatives (26%).



**Figure 8. Which of these describes the travel you have undertaken with your guide dog during the last 12 months?** Note: Respondents could choose as many as apply.

### Information sources

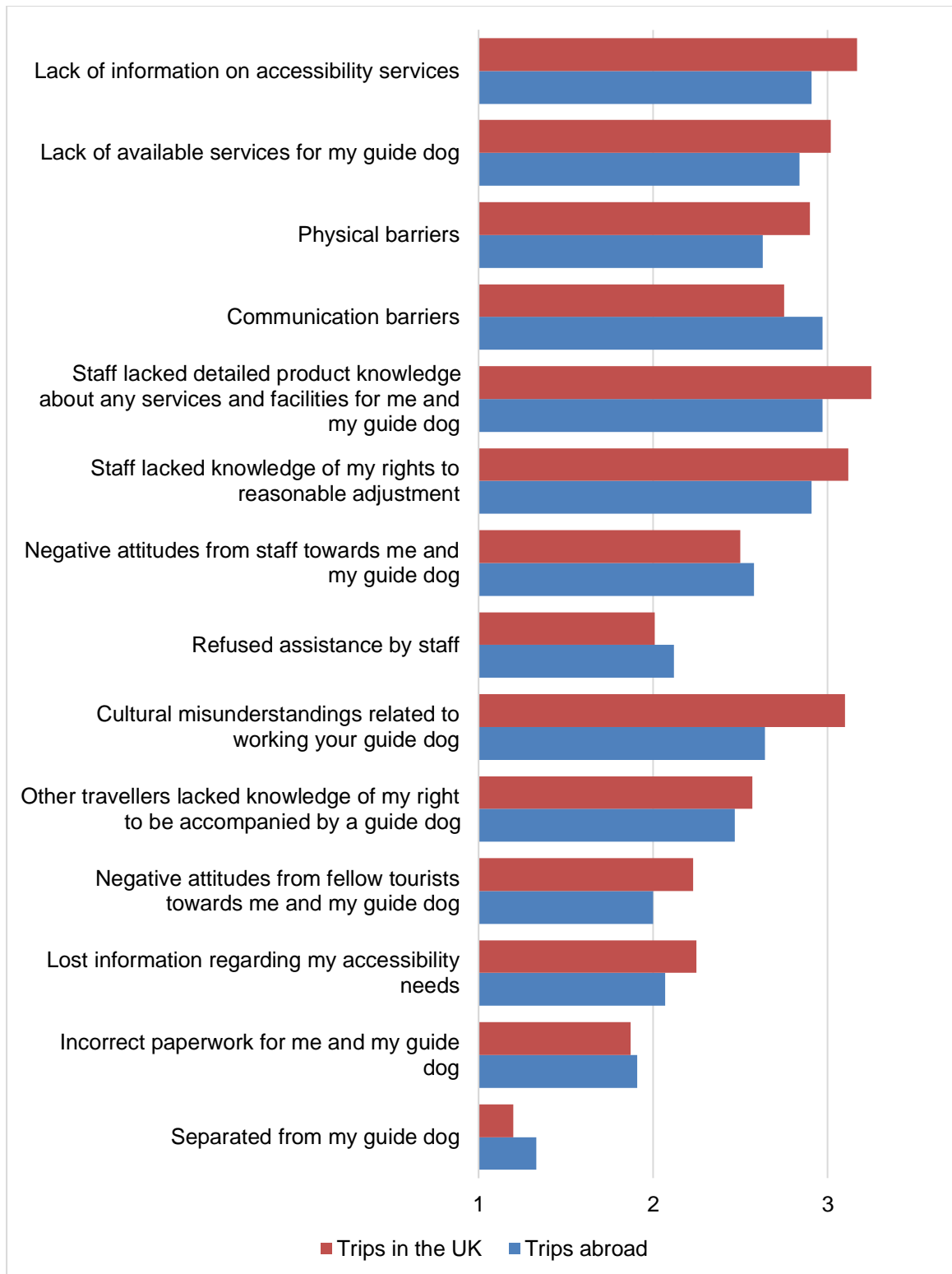
Current research suggests that people with disabilities (PwD) travel at a lower rate than the general public. Nearly 50% of PwD do not travel, or travel less frequently than they would like, due to lack of reliable information, lack of funds and previous bad experiences (Darcy, 2010) The information sources that are typically used by guide dog owners regarding accessibility services for trips both within the UK and abroad in the last 12 months are listed in Figure 9. The most used sources for accessibility information are specific accommodation websites. This is followed by word of mouth, then specific attractions and transportation websites, and search engines more broadly. Respondents were also offered an “other” category, in which sources included “assisted travel” for transport companies, vet, or telephone to transport, accommodation, travel agents, destination website or amenities.



**Figure 9. For trips taken (within the UK and abroad) in the last 12 months with your guide dog, what information sources do you typically use regarding accessibility services?** Note: Respondents could choose as many as apply.

### Experience of travelling in the UK versus abroad

The most frequently cited negative experiences for *UK travel* are: staff lacked detailed product knowledge about any services and facilities for me and my guide dog, staff lacked knowledge of my rights to reasonable adjustment, lack of information on accessibility services, cultural misunderstandings related to working your guide dog, and lack of available services for my guide dog. Comparing the experiences of holiday travel in the UK to travel abroad (Figure 10a), it is worth noting that the negative experiences occurred at a greater frequency for domestic trips.



**Figure 10a. How often have you encountered the following personal experiences of travelling with a guide dog on overnight trips in the UK or abroad?**

In particular, themes related to lack of staff knowledge, lack of appropriate services and lack of awareness of the right to reasonable adjustment were common in the interview data as well, pointing to the need for better staff training throughout the sector.

As examples of a **lack of staff knowledge**, participants spoke of front-line staff, who often had to defer to management staff in order to solve basic access requirement issues. Participant 15, a guide dog owner of 12 years, commented on their challenges when travelling abroad with a guide dog, which included airport staff asking for paperwork but not knowing what type of paperwork they required:

“it’s poor training where not enough emphasis is given within training them in relation to people with sight loss. [...] easyJet they did keep telling me I didn’t have the right paperwork. But when I asked them what paperwork I needed they couldn’t tell me”

Similar comments were made by Participant 18, a guide dog owner of three years, in reference to transport services:

“There doesn’t seem to be much awareness by the people who are supposed to be doing disability stuff. So I’d like you know when you ask a question of someone, like for example if I want to know about the airline’s policy for guide dogs, then when I ring the people who are specialist assistance up, I want them to know that policy”.

Such experiences led Participant 4, a guide dog owner of 22 years, to express the following observation of the ways staff often stereotype and generalise accessibility needs:

“I would like it to be that all staff in hotels had disability awareness training [...] people tend to think if you’re disabled, then it’s mobility”.

More specifically, guide dog owners encountered staff that are not aware of the role of a guide dog, seeing it simply as a dog. Participant 19, a guide dog owner of 11 years, commented on this misconception:

“Everybody has this concept that a guide dog is a dog, so it can operate in fairly small spaces, which they can at a push. But both of my guide dogs have weighed over 40 kilograms and people don’t realise the actual size of a guide dog you know, you see them walking around and you think oh that’s cute and what have you. But actually when you physically have to live and operate with a guide dog, they are beasts, they need space, the same as you and I do”.

In addition to a lack of staff knowledge, a **lack of appropriate services** has resulted in unpleasant experiences at airports. Indeed, Participant 15, a guide dog owner of 12 years, commented on being abandoned in an airport with their guide dog:

“I had another incident as well coming back from I think it was the airport where the plane was early and they dumped me and left me in the [...] arrivals hall [...] all my fellow passengers had gone and I got lost in there and couldn’t find my way out.”

Conversely, appropriate levels of awareness and staff training have the potential to greatly influence more positive travel experiences. Participant 5, a guide dog owner of 14 years, for example, spoke highly of the special assistance staff at Faro International Airport, Portugal, who were specially trained to assist people with disabilities (PwD):

“I can never have enough praise for Faro Airport [...] from the minute you arrive and the same coming back through when you’re going home [...] they talk you through everything. They go through step by step. They meet you off the plane. And then they literally took me right outside to Arrivals, to the person I was being picked up with”.



In regard to **lack of awareness of the right to reasonable adjustment**, the most common issue was related to discrimination in taxis, a point that will be discussed later in the report as well. For some this discrimination has resulted in specific efforts to alter their travel behaviour, including Participant 9, a guide dog owner of 35 years, who spoke of taxis simply refusing to pick them up, despite being reminded of the law:

“I phoned for a taxi and I said the normal spiel you know and the woman said ‘Oh no, we can’t give you a taxi, the driver won’t take a guide dog’. And I said ‘You are breaking the law’, ‘Well I don’t care, the driver won’t take a dog’ [...] I really, really will do anything to avoid using a taxi [...] there are lots of problems for guide dog owners with taxis”.

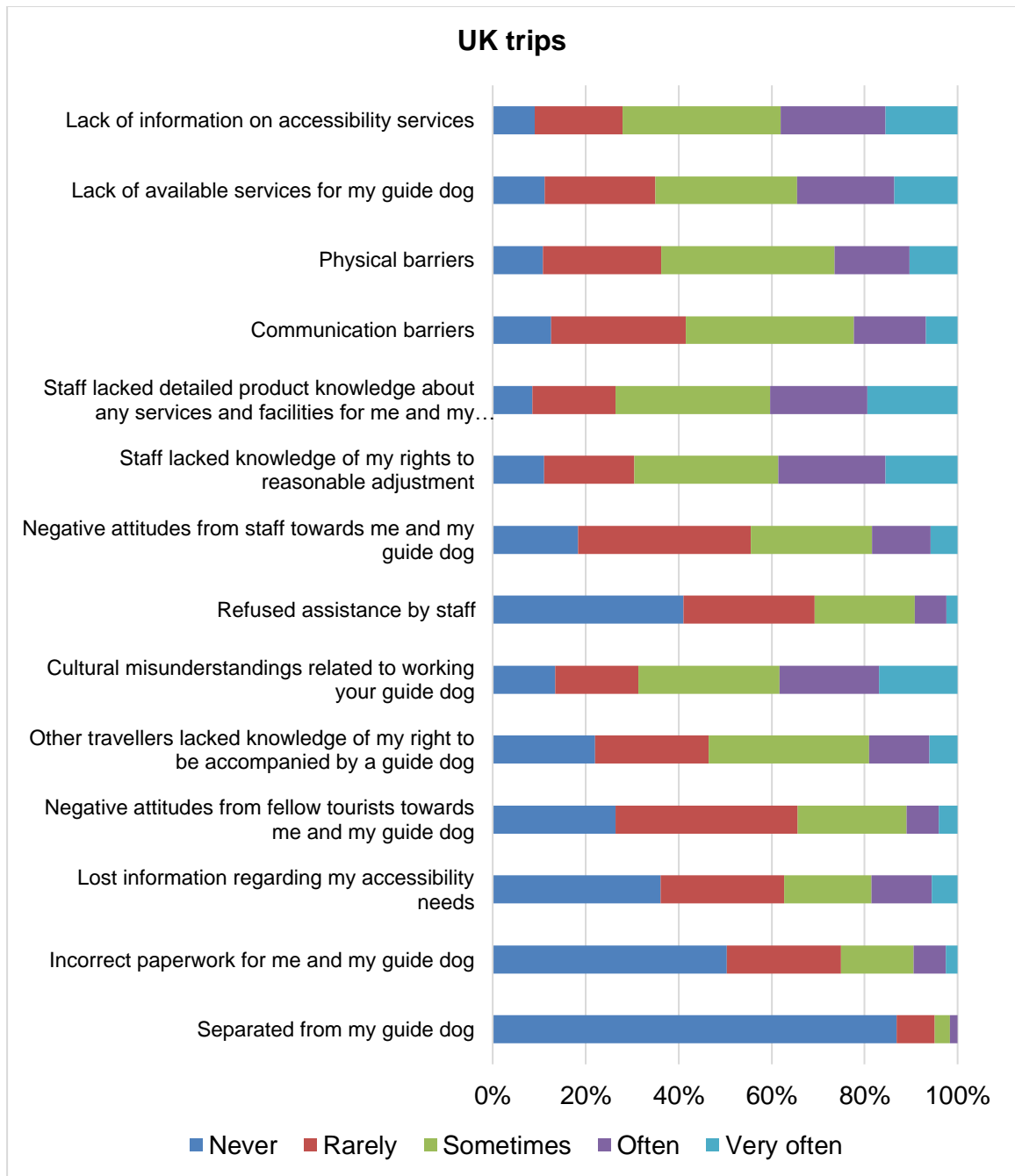
The negative experiences that occurred more frequently in holiday *travel abroad* include: communication barriers, negative attitudes from staff towards the guide dog, refused assistance by staff, incorrect paperwork for owner and guide dog, and being separated from the guide dog. However, as noted above, most problems reportedly occurred more often in UK based travel. A potential explanation for this is that the number of participants who have travelled abroad is quite a small subset of the sample (only 42 of the 244 participants). As seen in Table 6, those who are travelling abroad with their guide dog are more experienced in travelling, and may therefore be more prepared for potential challenges, and because of that preparedness, encounter fewer problems overall.

In fact, the interview data seemed to indicate those that did travel abroad with their guide dogs found some foreign destinations more accessible as compared to within the UK. Some argued this was due to a different approach to providing accessible services, where in the US, for example, it was observed they had a better understanding of the social model of disability compared to the UK. For Participant 8, a guide dog owner of seven years, the increased independence from the guide dog combined with a supportive

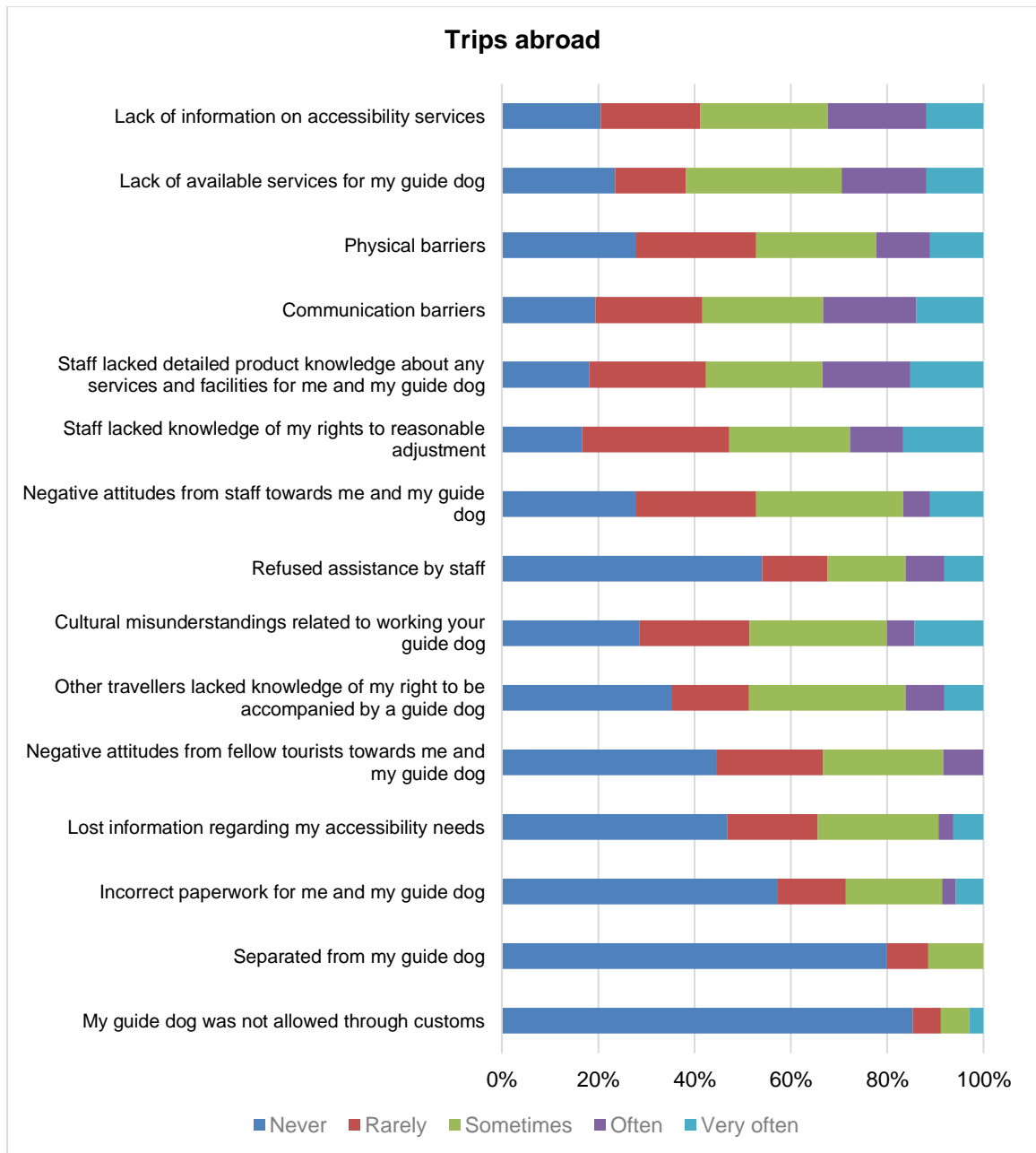
environment, meant that they were able to fully enjoy New York City and a number of activities while there:

“They [service providers] just looked after us. So from end to end you know, I organised us a series of events and activities and it just ran so smoothly because you know, we knew what we were doing and they were accommodating. And because of that not only did it make it a sort of pain-free experience but it also meant that we had the opportunity to do some quite amazing things on that trip because people pushed the boat out for us [...] And I wouldn't have been able to do that if I hadn't had [guide dog] and we hadn't just gone out and done it”.

Therefore, when we breakdown the responses to how often these problems are encountered (Figures 10b and 10c), we can more clearly decipher which issues occur very often versus rarely/never.



**Figure 10b. How often have you encountered the following personal experiences of travelling with a guide dog on trips in the UK?**



**Figure 10c. How often have you encountered the following personal experiences of travelling with a guide dog on trips abroad?**

Table 7 compares mean differences for experience of travelling in the UK versus abroad. None of the differences are significant at the 5% level. “Cultural misunderstandings” is significant but only at the 10% level.

**Table 7. How often have you encountered the following personal experiences of travelling with a guide dog on overnight trips in the UK or abroad?**

|                                   | Type of trip | Group statistics |      |                |                 | Independent Samples t-test for Equality of Means |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------|------|----------------|-----------------|--|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
|                                   |              | N                | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t  | df  | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |  |
| Lack of info                      | UK           | 200              | 3.17 | 1.172          | .083            | 1.141  | 230 | .255            | .259            | .227                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 32               | 2.91 | 1.304          | .231            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Lack of services                  | UK           | 206              | 3.02 | 1.201          | .084            | .759   | 236 | .449            | .176            | .231                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 32               | 2.84 | 1.322          | .234            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Physical barriers                 | UK           | 204              | 2.90 | 1.120          | .078            | 1.314  | 236 | .190            | .279            | .213                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 34               | 2.62 | 1.303          | .223            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Communication barriers            | UK           | 207              | 2.75 | 1.077          | .075            | -1.081   | 239 | .281            | -.222           | .205                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 34               | 2.97 | 1.291          | .221            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Staff lacked product knowledge    | UK           | 201              | 3.25 | 1.203          | .085            | 1.193  | 230 | .234            | .281            | .235                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 31               | 2.97 | 1.329          | .239            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Staff lacked rights knowledge     | UK           | 200              | 3.13 | 1.215          | .086            | .935   | 231 | .351            | .216            | .231                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 33               | 2.91 | 1.308          | .228            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Negative staff attitudes          | UK           | 207              | 2.50 | 1.105          | .077            | -.346  | 238 | .729            | -.073           | .212                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 33               | 2.58 | 1.275          | .222            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Refused assistance                | UK           | 205              | 2.01 | 1.059          | .074            | -.419  | 40  | .677            | -.103           | .246                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 34               | 2.12 | 1.365          | .234            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Cultural misunderstandings        | UK           | 201              | 3.10 | 1.267          | .089            | 1.951  | 232 | .052            | .468            | .240                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 33               | 2.64 | 1.342          | .234            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Other travellers lacked knowledge | UK           | 200              | 2.57 | 1.146          | .081            | .436   | 232 | .663            | .094            | .216                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 34               | 2.47 | 1.285          | .220            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Negative tourists                 | UK           | 201              | 2.23 | 1.043          | .074            | 1.183  | 233 | .238            | .229            | .193                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 34               | 2.00 | 1.044          | .179            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Lost info                         | UK           | 177              | 2.25 | 1.233          | .093            | .751   | 204 | .454            | .185            | .247                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 29               | 2.07 | 1.223          | .227            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Incorrect paperwork               | UK           | 159              | 1.87 | 1.074          | .085            | -.196  | 190 | .845            | -.041           | .210                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 33               | 1.91 | 1.208          | .210            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |
| Separated from dog                | UK           | 183              | 1.20 | .569           | .042            | -1.070   | 40  | .291            | -.137           | .128                  |  |
|                                   | Foreign      | 33               | 1.33 | .692           | .120            |  |     |                 |                 |                       |  |

Note: Mean response on a scale of: 1 Never, 2 Rarely, 3 Sometimes, 4 Often, 5 Very often.

Note: If Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is significant ( $p < .005$ ), the t-test assumes unequal variances.

## Confidence of travelling with a guide dog

Research in New Zealand finds several reasons guide dog owners avoid specific spaces. These include crowded social situations (18%), places that they perceived guide dogs would not be welcome (8%), dog-populated areas due to potential distractions (6%), and areas with busy motorway traffic (6%) (Lloyd et al., 2008). Further, the authors found that 12% of their participants travelled only familiar routes with their guide dogs and would only use human guides in new places. In related research, Matsunaka and Koda (2008) examine the acceptance of guide dogs in public spaces in Japan, finding that refusals of access are quite common in ryokan (Japanese-style hotels), restaurants, and public transportation, despite legal right to access.

This, too, was evident during our interviews. As an example, Participant 7, a guide dog owner of 10 years, gave a number of examples of being denied access to hotels, or charged extra, because they were travelling with a guide dog. One notable example was of initially being denied service at the entrance to a hotel in Brussels, only to be accepted later by a member of staff who had specific training in accessibility:

“They saw the dog. And the lady who was helping with the bags said ‘Oh, did you tell us you were bringing a dog?’ I said ‘No’, she said ‘Well we don’t take dogs’. I said ‘Well it’s not a dog, it’s a guide dog’ [...] Anyway, we got into reception and the senior receptionist said ‘Oh it’s not a problem, I’ve just been on an accessible tourism course’.

Thus, building upon this previous research, we aimed to develop a more in-depth understanding of the experiential dimensions of travelling with a guide dog, particularly holiday travel. Understanding the experiences of travelling with a guide dog necessitates investigation of a number of experiential variables including confidence of working a guide dog in a variety of situations, perceptions of welcomeness for guide dogs, and the extent to which the dog works while on holiday. In this respect, guide dog owners were asked about their perceived confidence in working their guide dog in various situations and environments away from their home and local communities (Figure 11). It is noteworthy that they are most confident about domestic UK

holiday travel and that they are least confident about foreign holiday travel. This is an expected result due to the greater potential for cultural and linguistic differences that might occur with foreign travel. Indeed, as shown in Figure 10a, communication barriers are reported to be more frequent in foreign travel compared to domestic travel.

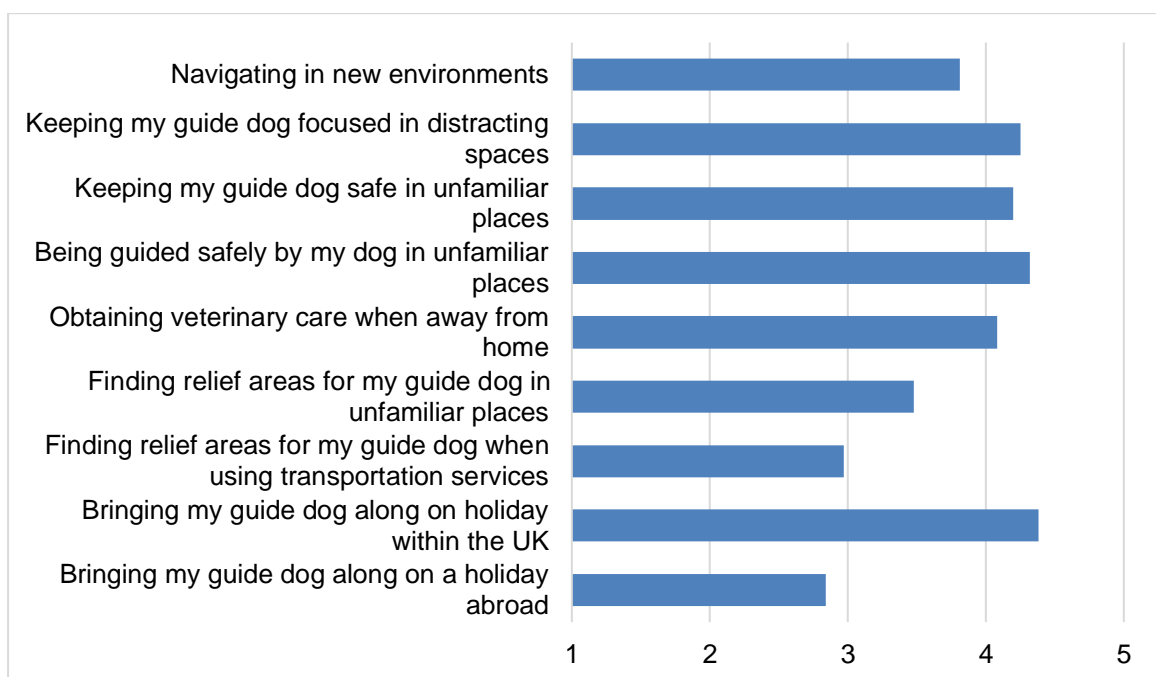
Further, in terms of confidence, the elements most related to everyday experiences of working a guide dog elicited generally more confident attitudes from participants, such as being guided safely in unfamiliar places, keeping the dog focussed in distracting spaces, and keeping the dog safe in unfamiliar spaces. However, navigating new environments, obtaining veterinary care away from home, and finding relief areas for the guide dog (both in unfamiliar places and when using transportation services) were noted to be the least confident scenarios.

In the case of working a guide dog in crowded spaces, it was not so much a matter of confidence that the dog would be welcomed or could perform its job, but rather issues with awareness amongst the public as to the job of the guide dog and how their actions can affect or distract the dog that result in challenges in unfamiliar environments. Participant 21, a guide dog owner of nine years, explained:

“It’s that whole public awareness that these are working dogs, these are not pets, they’re actually working dogs. And therefore what others do may affect them quite significantly. So ask about whether or not you can stroke the dog or whatever, interact with the dog. And I think the other thing really is that if the public awareness bit [...] we’re going to do things a specific way and they just need to give us some space in terms of getting on and off things or walking down areas of crowded pavements [...] unfortunately more and more people are just totally unaware of anything other than themselves you know, their environment is above about three feet around them and that’s it. And they almost block off. So it’s just trying to get people to be more aware, so try and expand that bubble that they’re walking in or living in”

Indeed, the everyday challenges of navigating public spaces and misperceptions about guide dogs has inspired Participant 8, a guide dog owner of seven years, to feel more confident outside of the UK, or at least outside London:

“travelling abroad is actually much more straightforward than being in the UK funnily enough [...] my biggest challenge is just travelling round London and the sheer ignorance and rudeness of people”.



**Figure 11. Confidence in carrying out the following tasks away from your home environment with a guide dog.** Mean response on a scale of: 1 Not confident at all, 2 Not very confident, 3 Neither confident not unconfident, 4 Fairly confident, 5 Very confident.

From the interview data, it was the issue of **relief areas**, or spending areas, that participants most spoke about in terms of stress and lack of confidence. Indeed, a lack of such services would often result in a change in travel behaviour, as poorly designed, inaccessible or unavailable spending areas for guide dogs simply made some travel hubs unusable. Participants spoke about



this problem in a variety of travel spaces, including airports, railways and destinations.

The common perception is that most airports lack specific spending areas and instead expect the dog to use a spending area on the tarmac near the airplanes, which can be a particularly stressful environment for some dogs. As a result, it was specifically noted that a lack of such basic facilities made it difficult for many to partake in longer journeys. Participant 13, a guide dog owner of two years, referred to how the lack of spending areas influence their travel decisions and how complex it can make a journey, particularly when in unfamiliar areas:

“I think the toileting is one of the bigger issues because you’ve got to find it yourself [...] when you fly with a dog [...] the airports don’t cater that well for spending for them prior to the flight [...] they don’t have a spending area. [...] they like you to check-in two and a half hours in advance [...] I think that is a bit of an issue that they ought to really resolve”.

These thoughts were echoed by Participant 17, a guide dog owner of six years, who spoke of the challenges of travelling on the train. Birmingham New Street station is, seemingly, the only train station with a relief area, meaning they could not rely on spending areas being conveniently placed upon arriving at their destination. This, in turn, caused some levels of discomfort and anxiety:

“Another thing that I’m conscious of is that most train stations don’t have anywhere to spend your dog. [...] London Paddington is where I go if I go to London and there’s nowhere there that is really suitable”.

By more specifically inquiring about the confidence that a guide dog would be welcomed into various places (Figure 12), we can identify some important areas worth further exploration. Notably, most guide dog owners we have spoken to have taken their guide dog in a taxi on numerous occasions. Yet,

the overall confidence that their guide dog will be welcomed into a taxi is quite low compared to all other environments. This is especially interesting when compared to greater levels of confidence when using buses, coaches, trains, and train stations.

In fact, the issue of **taxis** was a popular topic of conversation amongst the interview participants as they relayed many stories of being denied service by taxis. Participant 10, a guide dog owner of 10 years, commented on the lack of understanding taxi drivers present toward their guide dog:

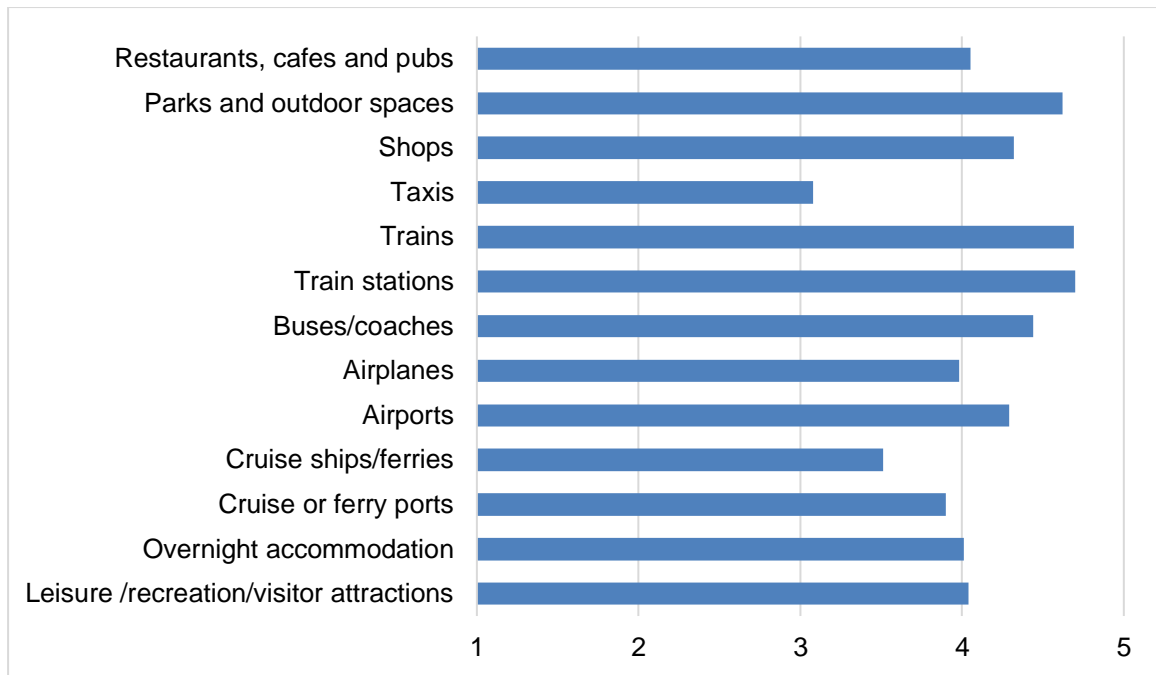
“Taxi refusals is quite a big thing. [...] the non-refusal rule really needs to be sort of enforced because I know that thing goes on. But it’s almost the awareness of I suppose how important a guide dog is [...] I think there’s a cultural situation with some taxi drivers.”

As a result of such scenarios, Participant 16, guide dog owner of 25 years, simply refuses to use certain taxi companies, as they do not have confidence that they will receive the service:

“Taxis, I don’t use black cabs unless I absolutely have to because it’s just a lottery you know, turning up at the rank knowing whether they’re going to pick me up or not”.

Similarly, Participant 17, a guide dog owner of 6 years in their 30s, asserted:

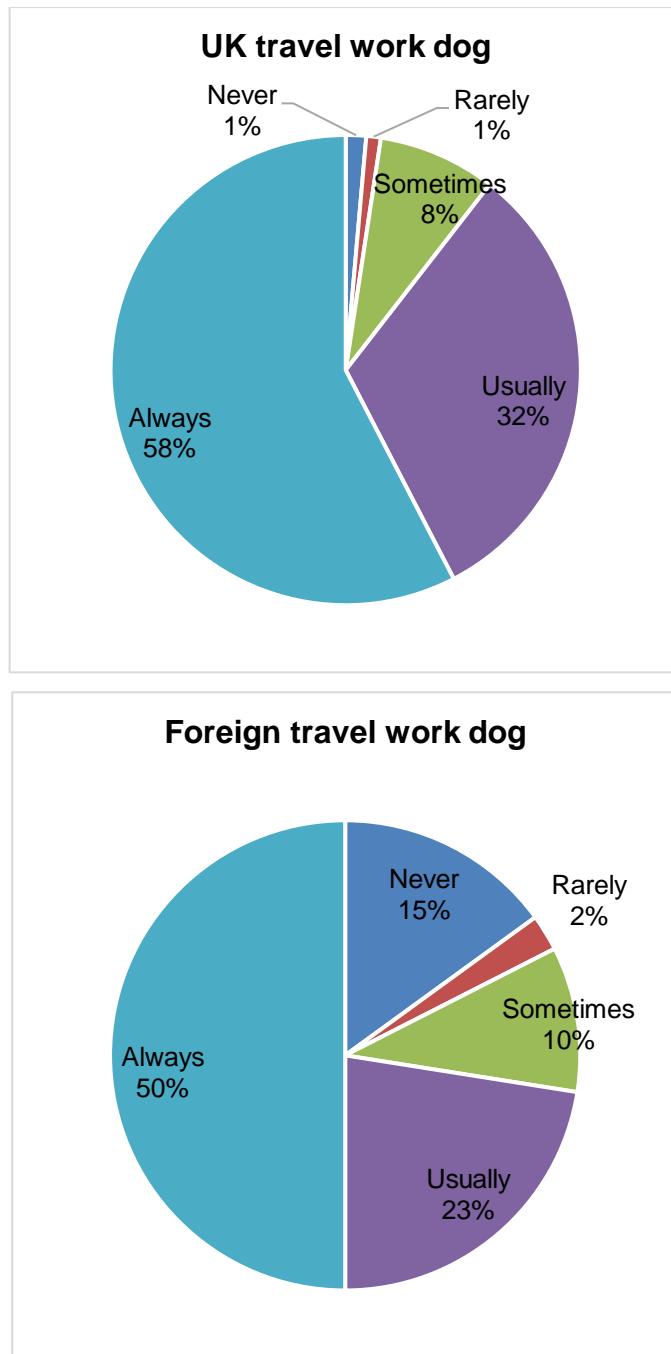
“I only get a taxi if I need to get [guide dog] to the vets in an emergency, I would just try my best not to ever get a taxi”.



**Figure 12. In general, within the UK, how confident do you feel that your guide dog would be welcomed in the following places? Mean response on a scale of: 1 Not confident at all, 2 Not very confident, 3 Neither confident not unconfident, 4 Fairly confident, 5 Very confident.**

### Working a guide dog on holiday

While 93% of guide dog owners say they take their guide dogs with them on overnight trips either “always” or “fairly often” (Figure 4), the degree to which a guide dog works while on holiday varies depending on if it is a UK or a foreign trip (Figure 13). 90% of participants state they work their dogs “always” or “usually” in UK based travel. However, 73% work their dogs in foreign trips, with a distinct 15% saying they “never” do so. This is particularly interesting when we reflect upon the overnight travel preferences discussed previously (Figure 4), as very few respondents prefer to travel on overnight trips without their guide dog.



**Figure 13. For the overnight trips taken within the UK or abroad with your guide dog in the last 12 months, how much did you work your guide dog?**

For those that do take their guide dogs on holiday, several interview participants explained that the basic skills of a guide dog are still applicable in unfamiliar environments and that they can modify how they work their dogs when on holiday. Participant 2, a guide dog owner of 17 years, spoke of how

they rely on staff, in particular, when first learning an unfamiliar environment, such as a hotel or resort. Basic tasks, such as finding relief areas for their guide dog or even just making their way to and from the hotel room, were initial challenges requiring assistance from staff. However, the dog can learn routes within the hotel or resort or to nearby shops. According to Participant 2:

“Well if we’re in an unfamiliar area, you don’t know your routes, the dog doesn’t know the routes, I have to then rely on asking people to maybe show you where something is or saying to you where the bar is or explain to you where’s the toilet or where’s the restaurant or ... but what we do is we’ll say would you mind if we ring down to reception when we’re ready to come down for our dinner and would you mind then just helping us to come down? And then what we do is instead of holding onto them, we work the dog. So then what that means for my partner and I is that we then know which way we’re going”.

Thus, even in unfamiliar travel environments, guide dog owners spoke about working their dogs and appreciating their flexibility:

Participant 8, a guide dog owner of 7 years:

“I mean he’s quite adaptable and he has to be because you know, as I said we’re not really creatures of habit in terms of our routine. We can be all over the place in our days. No two days are ever the same. So you know he’s got familiar places but yeah, we’re not sort of 9 to 5 that route to the office every day. So we are out and about a lot. And he’s very flexible with all of that”.

Participant 26, a guide dog owner of 10 years in their 40s:

“He’s the kind of dog that loves something different [new environments]. So he was selected because of that, he loves a new challenge [...] He’s actually very quick at getting familiar. As guide dogs go, I mean all guide dogs ... he’s got a memory for routes. So once he’s done something once, he tends to be able to reverse that”.

## Cluster profiles

When analysing survey sample characteristics in relation to travel behaviour, there appeared to be several groups of respondents with demographic similarities. Cluster analysis helps to identify these distinct segments according to demographic characteristics and travel behaviour, which can then be used by organisations to encourage policy and/or service interventions that target distinct groups. They also can be used to develop a deeper understanding of who the different user groups are and their interests.

To complete a cluster analysis on our survey sample, we used a TwoStep Cluster Analysis technique because it is capable of handling categorical and continuous variables. We entered a reduced “Employment status” variable as a categorical variable with three options: “not employed” (includes unemployed and looking for work, unemployed and not looking for work, student, regular volunteer, homemaker/stay at home parent, long-term illness/unable to work), “employed” (includes employed full-time, employed part-time, self-employed) and “retired”. As standardised continuous variables, we included age (average age in years), household income (1= Less than £10,000, 2=£10,001-£25,000, 3=£25,001-£50,000, 4=More than £50,000) and highest completed education (1=no formal completed education, 2=secondary education, 3=further education, 4=undergraduate higher education, 5=postgraduate higher education).

Overnight trips taken in the UK and abroad during the last 12 months were used as evaluation fields where a score of 1=none, 2=1-2 trips, 3=3-5 trips, 4=6-10 trips, 5=11-15 trips, 6=16-20 trips, 7=21 or more trips. Cluster profiles are shown in Table 8, and Figure 14 shows the average number of trips taken according to the cluster profiles.

Respondents in **Cluster 1: Infrequent domestic travellers** are not employed. They typically have an average age of 49 years, household income of £10,001 to 25,000 and further education as their highest completed level of education. On average, they tend to have the *lowest* number of overnight trips taken with their dog during the last 12 months with a score of 3.3 for overnight trips in the UK and 1.3 for abroad.

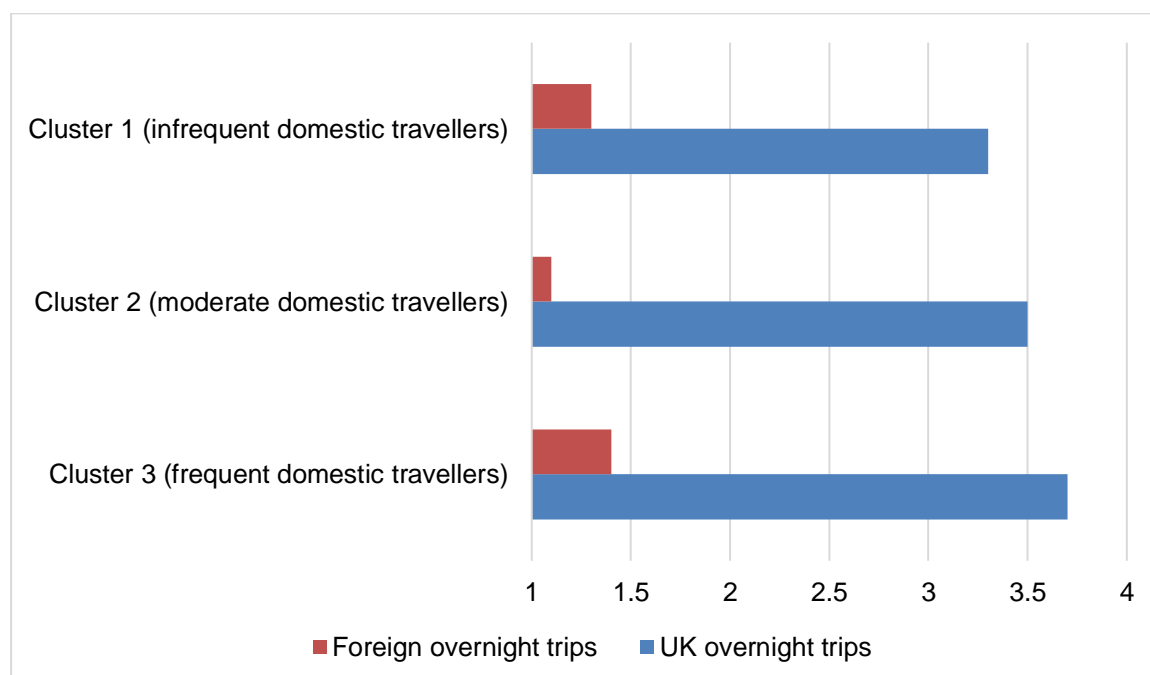
Respondents in **Cluster 2: Moderate domestic travellers** are retired. They typically have an average age of 68 years, household income of £10,001 to 25,000 and further education as their highest completed level of education. Their average score for UK overnight trips sits between that of respondents in Cluster 1 and 2 with 3.5, while their average score for foreign overnight trips (1.1) is lowest of all three clusters.

Respondents in **Cluster 3: Frequent domestic travellers** are employed. They typically have an average age of 47 years, household income of £25,001 to 50,000 and undergraduate higher education as their highest completed level of education. On average, they tend to have the *highest* number of overnight trips taken with their dog during the last 12 months with a score of 3.7 for overnight trips in the UK. Their average score for foreign overnights is 1.4, which is higher than for the other clusters.

Despite the differences between clusters in Figure 14, statistical analysis using One-Way ANOVA tests finds that differences in overnight trips taken according to the three clusters are not significant. The test for differences between clusters according to UK overnight trips results in an F value of .944(2), p.372, while for foreign overnight trips it is 1.050(2), p.352. Differences are however significant according to income, especially for foreign overnight trips (Figure 15). The One-Way ANOVA test for differences in UK overnight trips by income results in an F value of 2.525(3), p.0.59, while for foreign overnight trips it is 3.671(3), p.013. Differences according to highest level of education are also significant. However, education is correlated with income ( $r=.314$ ,  $p.000$ ). Differences according to other sample characteristics listed in Tables 1 and 2 are not significant.

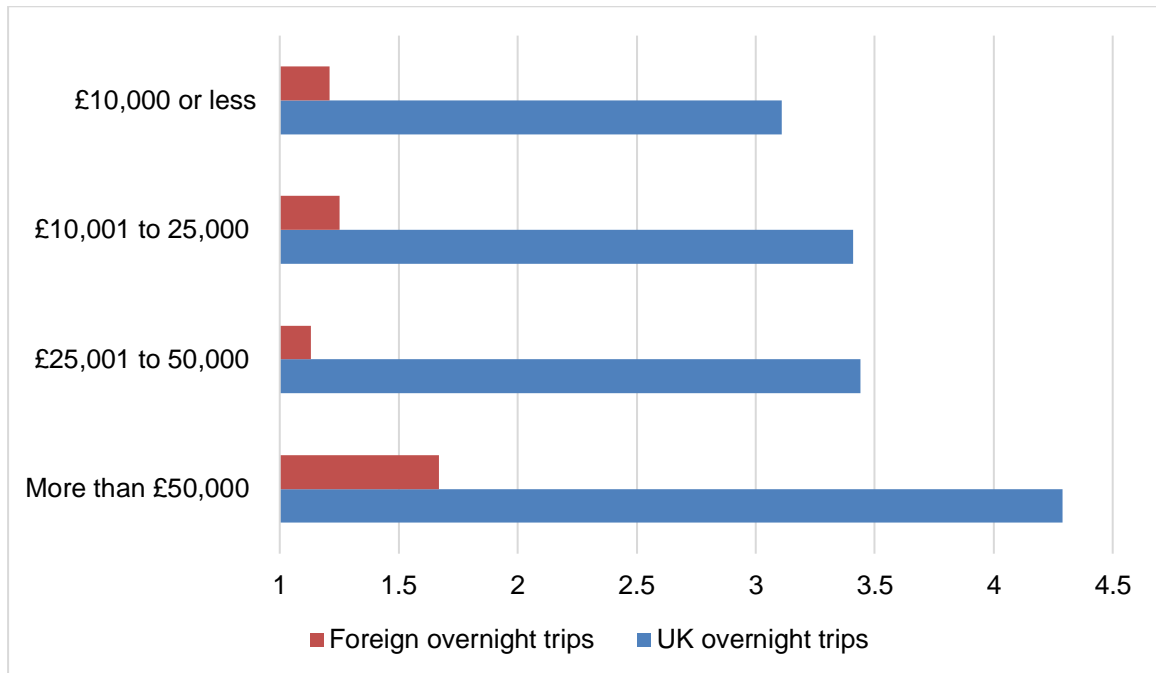
**Table 8. Cluster profiles**

|                                    | <b>Cluster 1<br/>(Infrequent<br/>domestic<br/>travellers)</b> | <b>Cluster 2<br/>(Moderate<br/>domestic<br/>travellers)</b> | <b>Cluster 3<br/>(Frequent<br/>domestic<br/>travellers)</b> |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Employment status                  | Not employed<br>Frequency: 100%                               | Retired<br>Frequency: 100%                                  | Employed<br>Frequency: 100%                                 |
| Average age                        | 49 years<br>Mean 48.92  | 68 years<br>Mean 68.25                                      | 47 years<br>Mean 47.27                                      |
| Household income                   | £10,001 to<br>25,000<br>Mean 1.91                             | £10,001 to<br>25,000<br>Mean 2.39                           | £25,001 to<br>50,000<br>Mean 3.01                           |
| Highest completed<br>education     | Further education<br>Mean 3.23                                | Further education<br>Mean 3.22                              | Undergraduate<br>higher education<br>Mean 3.93              |
| Overnight trips taken<br>(UK)      | Mean 3.3  | Mean 3.5  | Mean 3.7  |
| Overnight trips taken<br>(Foreign) | Mean 1.3  | Mean 1.1  | Mean 1.4  |



**Figure 14. Overnight trips taken with your guide dog during the last 12 months?** Mean score whereby 1=none, 2=1-2 trips, 3=3-5 trips, 4=6-10 trips





**Figure 15. Overnight trips taken with your guide dog during the last 12 months?** Mean score whereby 1=none, 2=1-2 trips, 3=3-5 trips, 4=6-10 trips

Therefore, the primary determining factor in travel frequency amongst these clusters is income. As such, service providers might be able to influence the moderate travellers and infrequent travellers to travel more, if better price-points were offered, alongside more detailed information about the accessibility of the service. However, readers should note that the cluster names denoting “infrequent”, “moderate” and “frequent” are relative, and that the difference in travel frequency between cluster 2 and 3 is small.

### Additional interview findings

In addition to the interview data that supports the survey findings presented above, there were three themes that were also derived from the interviews and relate to travelling with a guide dog. These themes speak about broader

challenges around improving social knowledge of disability, accountability for violations of legal rights and the consistency of messages regarding travel with guide dogs.

First, while all interview participants noted how important the guide dog was to their own confidence and mobility, they also spoke about their guide dog as only part of the equation towards accessibility. Providing accessible services is about more than transport and hospitality, as participants were keen to explain the importance of **improving broader social knowledge** about the value of independence for those with impairments.

Participant 8, a guide dog owner of 7 years, commented:

“What I find interesting is we talk a lot about the social model of disability and about disabled people being independent and having the facilities that they need to be independent. But nobody’s actually trained society in the social model of disability”.

Moreover, when there are distinct efforts towards accessibility, such as the creation of shared spaces, there seems to be a lack of consideration for the diversity of barriers PwD encounter. In other words, for some participants, efforts at creating enabling environments or employing universal design seemed more akin to a box-ticking exercise.

Indeed, for Participant 16, a guide dog owner of 25 years, the increased prevalence of shared spaces in city centres, which include the removal of the delineating features of the streetscape such as curbs, actually make working a guide dog or using a cane more difficult, as they are trained on these features. According to Participant 16:

“Shared spaces are really difficult for people with a guide dog or a cane to navigate. [...] Because you don’t have the usual clues that help, such as a pavement edge or you know any tactile clues that are going to help you. You’ve got cars that are maybe going down a street [...]

it's happened in quite a lot of places up and down the country [...] they do have a duty to make reasonable adjustments at the start of any project”.

Thus, it would seem that barriers to travelling with a guide dog are not simply due to staff training and available services, but may indeed go deeper than that and be a sign of lack of awareness and understanding among society in general. This is particularly salient in regard to guide dog owners' perceptions of their right to reasonable adjustment, as well as the ways information about the capabilities and limitations of guide dogs is communicated.

Second, following on from frustrations about the limited social knowledge of disability, several participants noted experiences of clear **violation of their rights to reasonable adjustment** while also not receiving support from local councils to reconcile the matter. This is particularly related to offenses made by taxi drivers.

Participant 18, a guide dog owner of 3 years, spoke about a lack of accountability towards taxi drivers who denied service to guide dog owners. They explained how they would complain to their local council upon being refused a taxi, yet the council failed to act upon it, even when presented with evidence. According to Participant 18 commented:

“It's frustrating, it's very frustrating because you want some sort of punitive damages [...] everyone says that it's illegal, you can't do it, it's illegal but what's the point in having a law if you're not going to enforce it?”.

Similarly, Participant 22, a guide dog owner of 18 years, presented the local council with evidence of a taxi violating their rights, but was not supported:

“I regularly have taxi refusals [...] So I try and report every taxi refusal I have [...] I've had a couple of very serious incidents where I don't think their reaction has been appropriate [...] I actually pulled the CCTV

footage from the train company with the taxi refusal at the train station  
[...] I think my local authority watched it with their eyes closed”

Third, some interview participants explained encountering **unclear or inconsistent messages** from travel organisations, guide dog charities, and accessible tourism training programmes about whether to travel with their guide dog and what their guide was capable of in particular situations.

Participant 2, a guide dog owner for 17 years, for example, described their confidence when travelling with their guide dog and their plans for taking it abroad as well. They explained that they would personally feel more confident about travelling abroad if they were able to take their guide dog but decided against it when they learned that Guide Dogs discourages it. This created some confusion as to the extent of travel that is acceptable.

“I would be more confident [travelling abroad], I would be more myself but Guide Dogs said to us, ‘oh but it’s a different environment, different pavements, the traffic [...] it’s a different environment [...] they’re not going to know the routes”.

Similarly, Participant 7, a guide dog owner for 10 years, described a trip to a distillery where they were initially not allowed entrance due to their guide dog. While explaining their right to reasonable adjustment, they learned that in fact Guide Dogs had advised the distillery against access due to the noise and smells of the space. This created an inconsistency in the mind of Participant 7 who felt they needed their guide dog in order to independently tour the facility, while also trying to understand the potential harm to their dog. According to Participant 7:

“I had a row with a distillery in Northern Ireland where they said you couldn’t bring your guide dog and I said ‘Why?’ They said ‘Well it’s noisy, there’s lots of smells, odd smells and lots of steps’. Well that’s why I have him to get up and down steps. He does strange smells. I’m sure the noise isn’t that bad, even though we’re talking about the

bottling plant. So I talked them through it and they changed their mind [...] But they'd been advised by Guide Dogs in Northern Ireland that they shouldn't allow guide dogs in there, it's totally ridiculous".

Thus, the themes of broader challenges around improving social knowledge of disability, accountability for violations of legal rights and the consistency of messages regarding travel with guide dogs, could benefit from further investigation.

## Summary

- Respondents overwhelming “strongly agreed” to the following benefits of guide dog ownership: “I have more independence because of my dog”, “My guide dog adds to the overall quality of my life”, “I feel safer because of my guide dog”, “I am able to socialise more because of my guide dog”.
- 93% of guide dog owners take their guide dogs with them on overnight trips either “always” or “fairly often”.
- For 40% of guide dog owners, travel has increased since getting a guide dog.
- 96% of guide dog owners have taken a trip with their guide dog within the UK during the last 12 months (43% have taken six or more trips).
- 19% have taken a foreign trip with their guide dog in the last 12 months (3% have taken six or more trips).
- The largest proportion of all trips to UK destinations are to visit friends or relatives (38%), followed by a holiday with a friend/partner/access assistant (28%).
- For all trips to a destination outside of the UK, the largest proportion are for a holiday with a friend/partner/access assistant (38%), followed by travel to visit friends or relatives (26%).
- Guide dog owners are more confident about domestic UK holiday travel than foreign holiday travel.
- The most commonly used accessible travel information sources are specific accommodation websites, followed by word of mouth, then specific attractions and transportation websites, and search engines.
- Lack of staff knowledge about accessibility services and products/services for guide dogs and lack of staff knowledge about rights to reasonable adjustment were the most often encountered negative experiences for both UK and foreign travel.
- Among interview participants, lack of staff knowledge, lack of appropriate services and lack of awareness of the right to reasonable

adjustment were the mostly commonly discussed barriers to travelling with a guide dog.

- Guide dog owners are most confident about being guided safely in unfamiliar places, keeping the dog focussed in distracting spaces, and keeping the dog safe in unfamiliar spaces.
- However, navigating new environments, obtaining veterinary care away from home, and finding relief areas for the guide dog (both in unfamiliar places and when using transportation services) were noted to be the least confident scenarios.
- In terms of specific travel modes and spaces, guide dog owners are least confident that their dogs will be welcomed into taxis.
- They are most confident that their guide dog will be welcomed at train stations, on trains and buses, at airports, in shops and in parks/open spaces.
- 90% stated they work their dogs “always” or “usually” when on holiday in the UK.
- 73% “always” or “usually” work their dogs during foreign trips, with a distinct 15% saying they “never” do so.
- Additional interview findings suggest the need for additional research into the themes: broader social knowledge of disability, accountability for violations of legal rights and the consistency of messages regarding travel with guide dogs.

## Conclusions

We can draw some preliminary conclusions based on the findings presented above. First, our findings support existing research on the benefits of guide dog ownership to the overall quality of life, independence and mobility of the visually impaired. We have been able to expand upon this current research regarding the relationship of guide dogs to improved mobility, specifically, by providing new insights on the experience of travelling with a guide dog, particularly in relation to holiday travel.

Second, the number of guide dog owners travelling overnight with their guide dogs was more common than anticipated, particularly for domestic travel. While other research suggests that guide dogs do improve the mobility of visually impaired users within their local communities, it was interesting to find that for many guide dog owners, overnight travel away from their home environment has also increased.

Third, guide dog owners are fairly confident in working their guide dogs in new environments and taking them on domestic holidays. And similarly, they are fairly confident that their guide dogs will be welcomed in most environments, including buses, coaches, trains, and train stations. Yet, fourth, in looking at the findings overall, we can see some potential systemic challenges for guide dog owners, and presumably assistance dog users more broadly, as their confidence is much lower at finding relief/spending for their guide dogs on transportation and their confidence about international travel is quite low. More specifically, taxis present a real challenge to guide dog owners, despite the greater frequency of using this transportation mode.

Fifth, we can identify key barriers encountered when travelling with a guide dog. In particular, lack of staff knowledge about accessibility services and products/services for guide dogs and lack of staff knowledge about rights to reasonable adjustment were the most often encountered negative experiences of travelling in both the UK and abroad. This suggests barriers



are encountered throughout the travel experience and are, indeed, systemic across the travel and tourism sector. Moreover, it suggests that staff training on accessibility rights and the principles of accessible tourism, more broadly, might have considerable implications to improved experiential outcomes in the sector.

Sixth, while the vast majority of guide dog owners say they take their guide dogs with them on overnight trips either “always” or “fairly often”, the degree to which they work their dogs when on holiday varies. They are more likely to work their dogs, even in more limited fashion, on domestic holidays than on foreign trips.

Finally, it should be noted that this research is currently limited to the UK context and that we have only surveyed and interviewed British guide dog owners who are members of The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. As a result, we cannot yet generalize to other guide dog users of other countries, but certainly aim to expand the research in the future to include other groups of assistance dog users, as well as guide dog users outside of the UK.

## Future work

Service animal users are amongst the least catered market segment in the EU accessible tourism market (European Commission, 2015). Relatedly, our understanding of assistance dogs, generally, in the travel and tourism sector is severely lacking. This research is considered Phase I of a larger project titled “Assistance Dogs on Holiday”, which engages a number of assistance dog organisations to better understand the experiences of travelling with an assistance dog. Having completed data collection and analysis with Guide Dogs, we have now initiated Phase II of the project. Following a meeting of the Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK) board members in June 2019, we received confirmation from the majority of its members to act as partners in this research. These include: Canine Partners, Dog AID, Dogs for Good, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, Medical Detection Dogs and Support Dogs.

To date we have met with Canine Partners, with upcoming meetings with Dogs for Good and Dog AID. Meetings with the other project partners are confirmed. Following these meetings, the research team will adapt the survey designed for Guide Dogs to suit the members of each organisation. Each of the partner organisations has agreed to assist in distributing the survey amongst their members. Similar to the research design for Guide Dogs, we will solicit interview participants during the online survey.

The results of each survey and set of interviews will be compiled into individual reports for each project partner. Then comparative analysis of all data will be compiled into one larger report to be shared with all project partners. The findings will also be shared with industry representatives at a networking event, to be hosted at the University of Nottingham.

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## Appendix 1: Interview analysis – major themes

**Table 1. Interview codes and demographics**

| Code Name      | Gender | Age-range | Years with a guide dog |
|----------------|--------|-----------|------------------------|
| Participant 1  | M      | 60s       | 37                     |
| Participant 2  | F      | 30s       | 17                     |
| Participant 3  | F      | 60s       | 39                     |
| Participant 4  | F      | 60s       | 22                     |
| Participant 5  | F      | 50s       | 14                     |
| Participant 6  | M      | 50s       | 6                      |
| Participant 7  | M      | 70s       | 10                     |
| Participant 8  | F      | 50s       | 7                      |
| Participant 9  | F      | 60s       | 35                     |
| Participant 10 | M      | 20s       | 10                     |
| Participant 11 | M      | 40s       | 4                      |
| Participant 12 | F      | 60s       | 21                     |
| Participant 13 | F      | 50s       | 2                      |
| Participant 14 | F      | 30s       | 14                     |
| Participant 15 | F      | 50s       | 12                     |
| Participant 16 | F      | 40s       | 25                     |
| Participant 17 | F      | 30s       | 6                      |
| Participant 18 | M      | 30s       | 3                      |
| Participant 19 | M      | 60s       | 11                     |
| Participant 20 | F      | 60s       | 42                     |
| Participant 21 | M      | 60s       | 9                      |
| Participant 22 | F      | 50s       | 18                     |
| Participant 23 | M      | 50s       | 14                     |
| Participant 24 | M      | 60s       | 21                     |
| Participant 25 | M      | 70s       | 5                      |
| Participant 26 | F      | 40s       | 10                     |
| Participant 27 | F      | 50s       | 30                     |

### **Three values of accessible tourism – independence, equity and dignity**

The literature on accessible tourism recognises three core values: independence, equity and dignity (Darcy, 2006). These values were applied as themes in the analysis of interview data, yielding evidence that each is of importance to guide dog owners in relationship to having a guide dog and more specifically when travelling with their guide dog. Additionally, sub-themes within each of these three values were also identified. Further, transportation specific themes were used in the analysis, and as such these are delineated below.

The interview findings are organised as follows:

1. Independence
  - 1.1 Dependence on the guide dog
  - 1.2 Limitations of the guide dog

- 1.3 Confidence
  - 1.3.1 Effect of the guide dog's confidence on independence
  - 1.3.2 Lack of confidence
- 2. Equity
  - 2.1 Need for specific training
  - 2.2 The dog's welfare
    - 2.2.1 Preparations for travel with guide dog
    - 2.2.2 Reasons not to bring the guide dog
    - 2.2.3 Spending areas
- 3. Dignity
  - 3.1 Lack of service provider training
  - 3.2 Lack of public awareness about people with visual impairment and working their dogs
  - 3.3 Need for appropriate facilities
- 4. Transportation specific experiences
  - 4.1 Taxis and private hire cars
  - 4.2 Buses
  - 4.3 Trains and rail stations
    - 4.3.1 The guide dog's safety and welfare
    - 4.3.2 Lack of or inappropriate accessibility services
  - 4.4 Airplanes and airports
    - 4.4.1 Positive experiences and praise
    - 4.4.2 Inadequate staff training
    - 4.4.3 Challenges when booking
    - 4.4.4 Lack of dog specific services

## 1. Independence

The data indicated one of the greatest benefits of having a guide dog is the subsequent improvement to an individual's independence. Interview participants spoke of feeling freer and less reliant on others for getting to and from work and in their daily lives in general, even referring to their dog as a lifeline. Once acquired, the guide dog becomes a primary feature of their mobility, whether travelling to work or away from home overnight.

Participant 11, a guide dog owner for 4 years in their 40s, for example described an average day:

"an average weekday is a morning of sport and an afternoon of volunteering. So we would walk to the gym, walk home and then depending on whether it was a meeting, a bit of travel and a site audit or whatever, we will then go out

and do that piece of work together. So it's quite normal for her [dog] to be out of the house from what, 9 in the morning, til 4/5 o'clock with me all day".

Participant 2, a guide dog owner for 17 years in their 30s, spoke of the freedom having a guide dog has added to their life, particularly in comparison to using the white stick:

"freedom and independence to get out and about and move around, do everything that you want to do and you know, walk you know. [...] to me she's a lifeline because without her as I said I can't leave the house. I'm not using my white stick. I'm far, far slower with a white stick. A dog, I'm much, much faster. I can just enjoy walking".

Similarly, participant 20, a guide dog owner for over 40 years in their 60s, felt that having a guide dog increased their levels of independence, not wanting to rely on the cane nor their partner for mobility. They felt less visually impaired as well:

"Yeah, it's definitely given me more mobility. And plus the fact you don't feel as blind when you're walking with a dog, you just feel as if you're walking with a dog. I don't want to be one of these women that you know if [partner] is laid up for whatever reason I'm stuck in the house".

Participant 25, a guide dog owner of 5 years in their 70s, spoke of how having a guide dog had changed their life, increasing confidence, mobility and independence, thereby allowing them to lead a more complete life:

"I've had [guide dog] now five years and she has changed my life you know, she has enabled me to be independent and confident and given me freedom and all that"

Others specifically explained how well-paired their guide dog was to them, particularly in terms of the dog's adaptability as it relates to the person's independence.

Participant 26, a guide dog owner of 10 years in their 40s, spoke at length of how their guide dog thrived in unfamiliar environment, almost relishing the challenge of something new and getting bored of the daily routine:

"He's the kind of dog that loves something different [new environments]. So he was selected because of that, he loves a new challenge [...] He's actually very quick at getting familiar. As guide dogs go, I mean all guide dogs ... he's

got a memory for routes. So once he's done something once, he tends to be able to reverse that".

Participant 13, a guide dog owner of 2 years in their 50s, similarly commented:

"The thing to say about guide dogs to be honest is they are quite adaptable and it's the owner that's sort of the key thing really. I think if they're with you, generally it doesn't much matter the place. I mean I fairly frequently stay in hotels. Now this weekend I'm going to Bath for the weekend. [...] And I'm taking her there. So I routinely take her to hotels. I'm taking her to New York in November

Participant 8, a guide dog owner of 7 years in their 50s, explained how their guide dog had to be adaptable to new environments, due to their lifestyle, which meant they would often traverse through unfamiliar environments:

"I mean he's quite adaptable and he has to be because you know, as I said we're not really creatures of habit in terms of our routine. We can be all over the place in our days. No two days are ever the same. So you know he's got familiar places but yeah, we're not sort of 9 to 5 that route to the office every day. So we are out and about a lot. And he's very flexible with all of that".

### **1.1 Dependence on the guide dog**

While owning a guide dog increases levels of independence, some participants also observed the increasing levels of dependence they developed in relation to the guide dog itself.

Participant 21, a guide dog owner of 9 years in their 60s, commented on the dependent/independent relationship with their guide dog:

"At school they were very good at teaching me to be independent. What they didn't really give me any lessons on is how to be dependent but without it then detracting from my own sort of personal self-worth [...] Because dependency is difficult, relying on others and it not somehow diminishing you is a hard lesson to learn [...] And in some ways that's an interesting sort of reverse side of getting a guide dog because you want to be independent but you're totally dependent on the dog".



As an example, Participant 21, a guide dog owner of 9 years in their 60s, observed how changes to the built-up environment create challenges. Through lack of planning, basic elements such as walking on the pavement, made them more reliant on a guide dog:

“I think the environment’s gradually got worse and worse and worse over the last 10/15 years [...] Here we’ve got things like telephone masts and things [...] it narrows the pavement down to sort of two or three feet. [...] Yesterday we found someone was digging up cabling in the road and they dug a ditch from the edge of the pavement through to halfway across the pavement but hadn’t put any barriers up. So if I’d have been on my own we could have just walked up onto the thing and straight into the ditch. And it is just lack of thought really on so many situations”.

## **1.2 Limitations of the guide dog**

Yet, some interview participants acknowledged the limitations of their guide dog to adapt to situations and to add independence to their lives, particularly when in unfamiliar destinations.

Participant 9, a guide dog owner for 35 years in their 60s, for example, described the role of a guide dog in unfamiliar surroundings:

“what they’re [the guide dogs] really trained for is to stop at steps, stop at the kerbs, guide you round you know like benches, pillars, posts, [...] Guide you round that and to keep a straight line”.

Participant 13, a guide dog owner of 2 years in their 50s, also argued that, while guide dogs add independence to PwD, they are not the solution and that barriers still exist nevertheless:

“you’ve got to accept if you’ve got a guide dog they’re not the solution to everything. [...] you’ve got to take your cane with you and be prepared to get stuck in and do what’s needed, your dog will help you so much but you’ve got to use that when necessary. [...] I don’t think the guide dog is the solution just on its own really. Especially if you’re going to be going to places you’re not familiar with”.

Participant 1, a guide dog owner for 42 years, spoke of their need for assistance when in unfamiliar destinations, even with their guide dog.

“unfamiliar [territory], this is what it’s all about, if I need to go to London and it’s all unfamiliar to me, I should be able to do that if I organise all the help in place. But if that help’s not going to be there, I can’t function”.

Further, Participant 23, a guide dog owner of 14 years in their 50s, argued that the differences in environments abroad made them question whether it would be safe to bring their guide dog. While the guide dog did increase their independence, this did not stretch to a trip abroad:

“it’s always seemed to me the case that it would be theoretically fine to take him [guide dog] to New Zealand because it’s left-hand drive. To go to Holland, to go to France, where you’ve got right-hand driver, I always wondered how does the dog cope? Because they are your emergency mechanism if you decide to cross the road when the bus is coming or whatever”

Similarly, Participant 6, guide dog owner of 6 years in their 50s, spoke of their reliance on railway staff when travelling on connecting routes. Despite booking assistance on the various stations, if one connection was delayed it could impact the entire journey as assistance staff were unable to wait for them. They commented:

“if I book assistance say so I go from my home town of Peterborough to Birmingham, and then say I’m going to Preston, if for any reason I have to take a different train to get to Preston, because it’ll come in at a different time, there won’t be somebody waiting for me to give me assistance you know because they’ve only got the original booking”.

### **1.3 Confidence**

During the interviews, participants would often refer to confidence when discussing their decision-making, be it in a positive or negative connotation. It was, for example, argued that the independence afforded by having a guide dog, as opposed to having a cane or no assistance at all, also increased their levels of confidence in relation to other activities, such as travelling.

Participant 5, a guide dog owner of 14 years in their 50s, described how their guide dog made travelling on airplanes more comfortable and gave them the confidence to fly. When asked what their most memorable travel experience with their guide dog was, they commented:

“I think it probably is when we go on the plane because it’s such ... she’s just so good. She actually makes me feel better because I never used to be very

good on a plane, so she's actually ... yeah, she's actually really, really quite good".

Similarly, Participant 2, guide dog owner of 15 years in their 30s, argued their movement would be much more restricted without their guide dog. Since getting a guide dog, they had the confidence to venture out on more and longer trips.

"Without her as I said I can't leave the house, I don't have the confidence [...] when I was in Dublin with the tennis group, I took my dog and yeah I got lost a few times but I had her, so I didn't mind. [...] But if I was to get lost with a cane or the white stick, I wouldn't have liked that. And I probably wouldn't have ventured as far anyway because I wouldn't have had that confidence".

Participant 13, guide dog owner of 2 years in their 50s, also referred to the increased levels of independence and confidence they had as a result of having a guide dog, compared to when they used a cane, referring specifically to a recent cruise holiday:

"I want to walk, I want to get some exercise, [...] and I just went up in the lift, came out and said come on then, let's go and we just walked. And it was great because I could just walk around the ship independently you know. Every now and again I'd have a little stop and it was great. And you wouldn't do that as a cane user".

### **1.3.1 The effect of the guide dog's confidence**

However, the dog's personality and its confidence have an effect on the guide dog owner's confidence.

Participant 16, guide dog owner of 25 years in their 40s, spoke of how having a guide dog provided confidence to explore new areas, such as the London Underground, and how this increased their independence as a result.

However, their current guide dog did not have the ability to do so and as a result they suffered a lack of confidence:

"It's not something that I could do with my dog now I don't think but it certainly gave me a lot of independence to have a really well-trained guide dog that could cope with a city centre. So I could go to new areas, I didn't need to worry about how the dog would cope with it. He was quite relaxed and really capable and that made a real difference to my confidence".

Similarly, Participant 23, a guide dog owner of 14 years in their 50s, spoke of how their guide dog, in general, lacked confidence. This, in turn, had an impact on their travel behaviour, meaning travelling at night, for example, was an issue. They commented:

“in a sense [the guide dog] was not the easiest of dogs to start with because he’s not confident, which is not what you want to know when you’re relying on it to guide you and so on. But as you work with it you find that the dog begins to get confidence from you, which is fine in daylight but when it’s night then I lose more confidence because I see nothing. [...] And so roles are very much reversed at that point”.

### **1.3.2 Lack of confidence**

On the other hand, some interview participants expressed a lack of confidence in travelling abroad with their guide dogs, due to uncertainties of strange environments.

Participant 3, guide dog owner of 39 years in their 60s, pointed out that while their guide dog did improve their confidence during everyday life, it was not sufficiently so to travel abroad.

“It [the guide dog] will stop you banging into things but the dog doesn’t ... it can’t work unless you give it instructions [...] And if you can’t support that dog through that process then it’s going to be very confused and wonder what the heck to do, and you can’t tell it”.

Others spoke of a lack of confidence in exploring new locations due to anxiety of the unknown, having had negative experiences at numerous locations. Instead, they preferred to vacation in the same spot every year as they knew what to expect. As such, comfort seemed paramount to many interview participants. Participant 11, guide dog owner of 4 years in their 40s, for example, argued:

“We increasingly now go back to the same places or very similar places, where we know we’re going to have less problems. I would much prefer to be exploring new places every time but [...] we know what we’re getting, we know we’re going to enjoy it, we know the beach is going to be beautiful, we know all the staff”.

Similarly, Participant 20, a guide dog owner of 42 years in their 60s argued that, while in everyday life having the guide dog increased their confidence, they would rarely venture out into unknown environments on their own with the dog due to a lack of confidence. Seemingly, having the guide dog was not sufficient:

“It’s very rare I will go anywhere new on my own for the first time, even with a dog, I don’t have the confidence now to do that. I don’t have the sight either and I’m not brilliant with these GPS things”.

## **2. Equity**

Related to independence, equity is distinct in that it speaks to the accessibility of travel and tourism in line with other users. Thus, barriers, training, information, and so on all influence perceptions of equity in this sector.

For example, Participant 8, a guide dog owner of 7 years in her 50s, provided a positive example of how, through the increased independence from the guide dog combined with a supportive environment, they were able to fully enjoy New York City and a number of activities while there:

“They [service providers] just looked after us. So from end to end you know, I organised us a series of events and activities and it just ran so smoothly because you know, we knew what we were doing and they were accommodating. And because of that not only did it make it a sort of pain-free experience but it also meant that we had the opportunity to do some quite amazing things on that trip because people pushed the boat out for us [...] And I wouldn’t have been able to do that if I hadn’t had [guide dog] and we hadn’t just gone out and done it”.

### **2.1 Need for specific training**

Despite all the training, some guide dog owners spoke about the need for more specialised training based on where they live and/or travel to frequently. In particular, guide dog owners in London are escalator trained, meaning people living outside of London might not have dogs trained in navigating escalators. This has resulted in parts of London being difficult to navigate with their guide dog.

Participant 22, a guide dog owner of 18 years in their 50s, commented that a mobility officer had suggested their dog be escalator trained due to their frequent trips to London. Such training would have reduced the individual's financial cost and made London more accessible, however, the request for training was denied by Guide Dogs. They commented:

"I'd like to have escalator training. [...] Because now I'm regularly going to London, and he's regularly going on the underground. [...] So that would make life very different being escalator trained. [...] it was suggested a few years ago by one of the mobility officers [...] And then they said no. [...] Because you don't live in London you know. But it would be a lot cheaper for us if we could use escalators".

## **2.2 The dog's welfare**

The welfare of the guide dog was the most prominent theme related to equity within the tourism and travel sector. Many interviewees spoke of attending to their dog's needs before their own.

### **2.2.1 Preparations for travel with guide dog**

Fair treatment of the guide dog was a subject often discussed during the interviews, and something all participants felt very strongly about. Indeed, when discussing fair treatment of the guide dogs, it became apparent that the dogs were not merely mobility aids, but also beloved companions.

Participant 2, a guide dog owner of 17 years in their 30s, commented on preparing for an overnight trip:

"I always make sure that I have her bowls, her water bowl, her food bowl. And we always make sure we have dog beds [...] We make sure that their food routine is the same. We even bring a couple of toys with us [...] you know they're like our kids I suppose".

Participant 11, a guide dog owner of 4 years in their 40s, for example, described how their decisions are made with their dog's welfare in mind, beyond their own desires and needs:

"selecting [holiday destinations] with her in mind as a member of the family just as much as anyone else [...] it's like a Northern European thing, those

kind of holidays where it's not going to be too hot and there's going to be things for her to do you know".

Participant 19, a guide dog owner of 11 years in their 60s, spoke of how they would meticulously plan overnight trips beforehand to make sure their guide dog would be comfortable while away from home. As an example, they spoke of a lengthy research process behind choosing their hotels, to ensure the disabled rooms were large enough and to ensure there were grounds on-site or nearby for the guide dog to stretch its legs and spend. Their argument for such an extensive planning effort was succinctly summed up as follows: "To my mind, my guide dog's important and he comes first and I come second".

### **2.2.2 Reasons not to bring the guide dog**

Keeping the dog's welfare in mind, some of the interview participants spoke of the reasons not to bring their guide dog on holiday, particularly related to weather, cultural differences, the unfamiliar environment and the importance of giving their dog a break from working. This was particularly evident in conversations on the subject of travelling abroad, where it was felt more appropriate to leave the dog with a friend/relative or other carer, than bringing them along to an unknown location.

Participant 15, a guide dog owner of 15 years in their 50s, apparently, did not care for bringing their dog abroad due to fear of the dog's wellbeing: "I don't take her abroad because I haven't got a pet passport for her. I don't think it's fair anyway to take her to loads of places that are hot or that are unfamiliar".

Such thoughts were echoed by Participant 23, a guide dog owner of 14 years in their 50s, who felt the pet passports were too difficult to get a hold of and did not see the need to bring their guide dog with them, when travelling abroad:

"Because it's more hassle than it's worth. In principle I think if pet passports were A/ cheaper and B/ easier [...] We had a family wedding in Holland a year ago, [...] and each time I just thought it wasn't worth taking [...] I just said to some puppy walkers are you happy to take him for the day? Which is what they did. [...] So you know, I think my feeling is with a guide dog, is there any point in taking it if you're not going to get any real benefit?"

Participant 2, a guide dog owner of 17 years in their 30s, also argued that while they would, personally, feel more comfortable at the destination if their guide dog was present, but they did not see the benefit from the dog's perspective and pointed out that the Guide Dogs also advised against it: "I would be more confident, I would be more myself but Guide Dogs said to us oh but it's a different environment, different pavements, the traffic [...] it's a different environment [...] they're not going to know the routes. The other thing is the weather, the heat [...] it [leaving the dog behind] doesn't hurt because you know it gives them a break as well".

Participant 26, a guide dog owner of 10 years in their 40s, argued that it was good for their guide dog to get a break while they travelled abroad. They felt such a break was healthy for the dog as it would not be working for the length of time they would be travelling:

"So when I go away abroad I tend to leave [guide dog] with the family that looked after him when he was very small. So he gets a holiday as well. And I think it's important for him to have his own downtime, his own rest from being a working dog".

Participant 4, a guide dog owner of 22 years in their 60s, refused to bring her dog on a cruise, despite being offered space by the cruise liner, also arguing that their dog needed a holiday too, while also questioning the purpose of bringing their guide dog abroad to an unfamiliar environment:

"If I was going abroad I wouldn't take the dog with me, I always feel my dog deserves a holiday".

This was also pointed out by Participant 3, a guide dog owner of 39 years in their 60s, who argued that it may be better for the guide dog to remain at home, being looked after, rather than be brought along to an event where it won't be working.

"It [the guide dog] can have a good time, it can have a break from you, you can have a break from it, because as much as we love each other and all the rest of it, it's nice for them to have a change".

Similarly, Participant 10, a guide dog owner of 10 years in their 20s, spoke of the lack of need for bringing their guide dog, further pointing out that not all countries are as welcoming to guide dogs as others:



“The main reason [for not bringing dog abroad] is so a guide dog sort you’re taught main routes with them, and I don’t know how much value they would offer abroad. I think it’s a good chance for them and me to have a rest. And also some of the countries I go to, they wouldn’t really like.”

Likewise, Participant 7, a guide dog owner of 10 years in their 70s, felt that while they would, and have, taken their guide dog abroad, there were certain countries they would avoid bringing their guide dog. They commented: “I went to Egypt last year though, I didn’t take him to Egypt. [...] Well there’s not a culture of guide dogs, so you might have access problems and there’s probably no legislation to protect you against that. [...] a lot of stray dogs on the street, rabies is endemic. And so it’s not so much that you know, my dogs are injected against rabies but you might get bitten yourself if they get into a fracas”.

Participant 14, a guide dog owner of 14 years in their 30s, did not see a need for bringing their guide dog abroad either. They were able to travel as a family and, as a result, argued that their guide dog would be just another dog. They also argued the unfamiliar surroundings would cause too much unnecessary stress for their dog: “I think it’s unfair. She would get worried and stressed and she as a guide dog, she wouldn’t be of any value to me in foreign parts because she wouldn’t understand where she’s supposed to be going. She very much likes her routines and the places she usually goes and if she goes to somewhere new, she’s not very good (laughs). So I would take her and have this dog that is just a dog, she would not be very valuable”.

On the other hand, Participant 9, a guide dog owner of 35 years in their 60s, did not travel abroad with their guide dog, because the dog was scared of flying. A past experience had meant they felt it was not in the interest of the dog’s well-being to travel abroad: “And I don’t do [travel abroad] because trying to take [dog]... trying to fly to Cornwall and I mean the airline company were fine [...] the cabin staff were very excited (laughs) because there was a dog getting on. [...] but the poor dog was too nervous and she shook all the way. Thank goodness it was only Cornwall, so it was 40 minutes. Oh I thought she was going to have a heart attack (laughs)”.

Participant 11, a guide dog owner of 4 years in their 40s, also argued that while they felt much more comfortable and relaxed when with their dog, they

would not bring it when travelling to hot destinations, out of consideration for the dog. However, this seemed to affect them emotionally in a negative way: “we do it [leave the dog behind] occasionally when we’re going somewhere really, really hot, when we’re going on a very beach holiday, she would be bored, it would be too hot. She’s a black Lab. And so we do occasionally leave her with friends or family when we’re doing that kind of holiday for a week [...] But I really miss her and I get a bit anxious.”

### **2.2.3 Spending areas**

A particularly prominent topic during the interviews related to finding spending areas (also referred to as relief areas or simply toilets) for the guide dogs while in unfamiliar places. Participants most spoke of issues at transportations hubs, particularly airports and rail stations. Indeed, it seemed that a lack of such basic facilities made it difficult for many to partake in longer journeys.

Participant 7, guide dog owner of 10 years in their 70s, explained: “The only thing that’s daunting is toileting procedures en-route. [...] we are pressing at the European Guide Dog Federation for all airports to have toilets after security, so that you can take your dog to the toilet before it jumps on the plane. [...] In terms of dog toilets, there’s one in Dublin Airport [...] as far as I know there’s probably only one other airport in Europe with dog toilets”.

Likewise, Participant 5, a guide dog owner of 14 years in their 50s, expressed a need for designated spending areas for guide dogs at airports. They described the environment at a particular airport where guide dogs had to spend on the tarmac, making it a stressful experience for the dog. Such environments, it was argued, meant the dog might not be comfortable enough to spend:

“I think it would be good to actually see sort of designated relief areas at airports [...] I know at Liverpool John Lennon Airport, it’s either where the people go for a cigarette or [...] on the runway. They probably should have a designated area for the dogs really shouldn’t they”.

Participant 6, a guide dog owner of 6 years in their 50s, similarly commented on the lack of facilities at airports:

“if for example you were in an airport and your plane was delayed for a while you know, I’m not confident that I could ... that there would be somewhere for the dog to go and have a wee if he needed to you know. I think that could be

a challenge. Apart from that you know, the whole infrastructure around train travel is difficult”.

Participant 8, a guide dog owner of 7 years in their 50s, commented on the lack of spending areas at UK airports. They instead argued that most hub airports in the US had spending areas for guide dogs. However, these were typically found to be too clean, meaning the dog found it uncomfortable to spend and thus still did not go:

“They do have in the major hubs, particularly in the USA, indoor relief areas, which is basically a room where it’s all laid out and the dog can go. But the problem that I have with those is that [guide dog] won’t use them because they’re over-cleaned [...] rather than a very highly-bleached floor because it just puts him off going”

Indeed, the type of spending areas available seemed problematic as well, with some guide dogs trained to spend on concrete, while other were trained to spend on grass. Apparently, many spending areas did not incorporate both, meaning that even if spending areas were available, they might not be sufficient.

Participant 21, a guide dog owner of 9 years in their 60s, for example, observed the following on spending areas:

“It can be [challenging to find a spending area], because sometimes dogs like grass and therefore if there’s any grass around that tends to be slightly easier. [...] Concrete areas then what you would try and do is either find a gutter because some of them are trained to spend in the kerb. Others will just do it you know, near a wall or in a quiet sort of non-main road. But if you’re in a busy built-up area then that can be quite difficult as well”.

Participant 13, a guide dog owner of 2 years in their 50s, also referred to how the lack of spending areas influence their travel decisions and how complex it makes their journey, particularly when in unfamiliar areas:

“I think the toileting is one of the bigger issues because you’ve got to find it yourself [...] when you fly with a dog [...] the airports don’t cater that well for spending for them prior to the flight [...] they don’t have a spending area. [...] they like you to check-in two and a half hours in advance [...] I think that is a bit of an issue that they ought to really resolve”.

Further, Participant 2, a guide dog owner of 17 years in their 30s, spoke of their travels in general and the issues they had in finding spending areas when in unfamiliar locations:

“It can be difficult in some places trying to find areas for the dog to spend, to go to the toilet. [...] My partner and I stayed in Derry for two nights and we were trying to find somewhere for our dogs to go to the toilet. There was one night we stayed over in Dublin [...] And again we had the issue of trying to find somewhere to spend the dogs”.

### **3. Dignity**

Building upon independence and equity, dignity suggests that guide dog owners feel comfortable travelling with their dogs, without disproportionate frustration or embarrassment in the process. The treatment of both dog and owner was a subject that kept appearing during the interviews, particularly in regard to respect. Many interview participants argued that discrimination was a common occurrence, although seemingly not deliberately. The data suggest a lack of awareness, education and training among service providers, particularly front-line staff, but also broader societal ideas as well.

#### **3.1 Lack of service provider training**

According to the data, service providers fail to recognise various disabilities, with a focus mainly on being wheelchair accessible, thus neglecting the wider spectrum of disability.

Participant 4, a guide dog owner of 22 years in their 60s, explained:

“I would like it to be that all staff in hotels had disability awareness training [...] people tend to think if you’re disabled, then it’s mobility”.

Similar comments were made by Participant 18, a guide dog owner of 3 years in their 30s, but in reference to transport services in general:

“There doesn’t seem to be much awareness by the people who are supposed to be doing disability stuff. So I’d like you know when you ask a question of someone, like for example if I want to know about the airline’s policy for guide dogs, then when I ring the people who are specialist assistance up, I want them to know that policy”.

In that same regard, Participant 3, a guide dog owner of 39 years in their 60s, also argued that their issues on public transport were simply due to a lack of awareness from the front-line staff, seemingly due to not coming across guide dogs on a regular basis. When asked if the challenges experienced on public transport arose from a lack of awareness, they commented:

“Yes I do, I don’t think they’re being awkward, I just think they’re not aware of the problems. Because they haven’t encountered them, they don’t travel with the guide dogs, so you know they don’t think of the problems that it could cause”.

In a similar sense, Participant 15, a guide dog owner of 12 years in their 50s, also spoke of how transport staff would seem unaware of how to guide and assist them. Often staff would ask if they wanted a wheelchair, which led them to suffer a loss of dignity:

“They’re not always aware really because quite often they’ll say do you want to go in a wheelchair and there’s nothing wrong with my legs. I don’t know what they expect me to do with the dog then”.

Participant 19, a guide dog owner of 11 years in their 60s, commented on the misconception many service providers lacked understanding of guide dogs and their purpose, often viewing them solely as a standard dog. Such an attitude in itself may lead to access barriers.

“Everybody has this concept that a guide dog is a dog, so it can operate in fairly small spaces, which they can at a push. But both of my guide dogs have weighed over 40 kilograms and people don’t realise the actual size of a guide dog you know, you see them walking around and you think oh that’s cute and what have you. But actually when you physically have to live and operate with a guide dog, they are beasties, they need space, the same as you and I do”.

### **3.2 Lack of public awareness about people with visual impairment and working their dogs**

Yet, from the interviews, one got the impression that lack of awareness did not simply stem from the staff, but from society in general.

Participant 21, a guide dog owner of 9 years in their 60s, discussed how challenging it can be to navigate through crowded areas in an unfamiliar

environment, once again, relying on the behaviour of others, but in this case the general public, as opposed to staff:

“It’s that whole public awareness that these are working dogs, these are not pets, they’re actually working dogs. And therefore what others do may affect them quite significantly. So ask about whether or not you can stroke the dog or whatever, interact with the dog. And I think the other thing really is that if the public awareness bit [...] we’re going to do things a specific way and they just need to give us some space in terms of getting on and off things or walking down areas of crowded pavements [...] unfortunately more and more people are just totally unaware of anything other than themselves you know, their environment is above about three feet around them and that’s it. And they almost block off. So it’s just trying to get people to be more aware, so try and expand that bubble that they’re walking in or living in”.

Participant 16, a guide dog owner of 25 years in their 40s, also argued for better education of the public in regards to the role of guide dogs and their use. They argued that organisations had a responsibility to improve awareness among the public on the differences between a regular dog and a working dog:

“I think there’s a lack of understanding on the part of the general public about what guide dogs are for and do [...] one of the problems is that the Guide Dogs Association itself tends to market itself on the cute puppy image rather than the dog being an animal that is a working animal and something that’s necessary for somebody who can’t see”.

Participant 8, a guide dog owner of 7 years in their 50s, described how a seemingly presence of ignorance and a lack of awareness made their trips somewhat distressing at times and potentially dangerous:

“I think my biggest challenge is just travelling round London and the sheer ignorance and rudeness of people [...] I think the general public just don’t understand that it’s not okay to put your hand on a visually impaired person and push them [...] I think it’s a lack of awareness”.

Participant 25, a guide dog owner of 5 years in their 70s, explained a broader lack of public understanding when using public transit, as people try to help but actually cause potential harm:

“The number of times when I’m trying to step into the tube train where it’s actually important that I follow [guide dog], I sometimes have somebody grab me, either on the tube or somebody on the platform grabbing me if they see me getting off or on. And that tends to overbalance me you know. I’ve never had a problem getting onto a train on my own. Where I have had a problem is

where someone grabs me and my foot goes down the gap between the train and the platform. [...] And it's awful; yeah, yeah. But it is down to other people. [...] Because they think that they're being helpful you know. The number of times they say you would have fallen and I'm like no, I wouldn't have fallen. Yeah, getting off and on trains, getting off and on buses, particularly on tube trains, people feel that they have to do that. And people just feel they have to".

So while data indicates that having a guide dog has many benefits and improves the overall quality of life of the participants, it also presented them with new challenges, particularly before, during and after travelling.

Participant 8, a guide dog owner of 7 years in their 50s, commented: "What I find interesting is we talk a lot about the social model of disability and about disabled people being independent and having the facilities that they need to be independent. But nobody's actually trained society in the social model of disability".

In a similar sense, Participant 16, a guide dog owner of 25 years in their 40s, spoke of the need to consider accessibility when making changes to the built environment, a point that seemed more akin to a box-ticking exercise to them. Their argument was in particular reference to the development of shared spaces, a concern brought up by other participants as well, in city centres which they argue removed all the delineating features of the streetscape that they rely on with their guide dog. The removal of curbs, for example, seemed to make travel particularly difficult. They commented: "Shared spaces are really difficult for people with a guide dog or a cane to navigate. [...] Because you don't have the usual clues that help, such as a pavement edge or you know any tactile clues that are going to help you. You've got cars that are maybe going down a street [...] it's happened in quite a lot of places up and down the country [...] they do have a duty to make reasonable adjustments at the start of any project".

### **3.3 Need for appropriate facilities**

More specifically, participants spoke about the need not only for disability-friendly spaces, but those designed with visual impairment and guide dogs in mind.

Participant 4, a guide dog owner of 22 years in their 60s, for example, commented:

“I’m yet to find a visually-impaired accessible public toilet. I’m talking about disabled toilets. Because disabled toilets obviously have to be big because somebody might need to take a carer in with them. You can get lost in disabled toilets”.

Similarly, Participant 3, a guide dog owner of 39 years in their 60s, spoke of the challenge of finding toilets large enough for them and the dog, often having to rely on strangers to look after their guide dog instead. As such, the toilets were not necessarily accessible:

“The other problem when you’re travelling, if you go to the loo and there’s nowhere to take the dog, that can be a problem and you have to then trust somebody to look after it. If it’s a disabled loo you can take them in but if it’s a small toilet, then you need somebody to look after it. [...] because sometimes the toilets just aren’t big enough for you and the dog to go in”.

## **4. Transportation specific experiences**

### **4.1 Taxis and private hire cars**

Amongst the various transportation experiences described by interviewees, taxis were notorious for reports of negative encounters and a lack of confidence generated amongst guide dog owners.

Participant 9, a guide dog owner of 35 years in their 60s, spoke of taxis simply refusing to pick them, despite being reminded of the law:

“I phoned for a taxi and I said the normal spiel you know and the woman said ‘Oh no, we can’t give you a taxi, the driver won’t take a guide dog’. And I said ‘You are breaking the law’, ‘Well I don’t care, the driver won’t take a dog’ [...] I really, really will do anything to avoid using a taxi [...] there are lots of problems for guide dog owners with taxis”.

Participant 10, a guide dog owner of 10 years in their 20s, likewise, commented on their struggles:

“Taxi refusals is quite a big thing. [...] the non-refusal rule really needs to be sort of enforced because I know that thing goes on. But it’s almost the



awareness of I suppose how important a guide dog is [...] I think there's a cultural situation with some taxi drivers."

Similarly, Participant 13, a guide dog owner of 2 years in their 50s, explains their experience with using Uber:

"I used to use Uber before [...] when I got my guide dog, the minute they see the dog in 75% of the time it's a problem. [...] all of a sudden I started having problems with Uber over cancelling. And what I found was the Uber driver would pull up, see I'd got a guide dog and just cancel and drive off. And of course I wouldn't know they'd turned up".

Because of such scenarios, Participant 16, a guide dog owner of 25 years in their 40s, simply refuses to use certain taxis, as they did not have confidence they will receive the service:

"Taxis, I don't use black cabs unless I absolutely have to because it's just a lottery you know, turning up at the rank knowing whether they're going to pick me up or not".

However, Participant 17, a guide dog owner of 6 years in their 30s, described how they had once been asked to vacate a taxi en route to the vet, with the driver accusing the guide dog of bad behaviour as it had become unwell from eating something. As a result, they would only use taxi services in emergency:

"I only get a taxi if I need to get [guide dog] to the vets in an emergency, I would just try my best not to ever get a taxi".

Participant 18, a guide dog owner of 3 years in their 30s, told their story at length regarding refusal and council response:

"So I've been refused taxis on several occasions [...] The people don't tend to give a reason. One of the people said they just couldn't, he couldn't. One of them said ... one of them tried to refuse but I got in the taxi anyway because he told me that he was going to put the dog in the boot because I didn't need the dog in the car with me. [...] But I got I the front seat and I sat there and I sat there until he actually sorted himself out and drove. But I've been told that they can't do it, they just can't, someone actually said because they're Muslim and it's ... they're usually vague or they usually seem to be panicking. They don't actually listen to me when I'm telling them look, it's a guide dog, they're normally just oh no they can't come in, they can't come in, they can't get in, they can't come in. So it's never a pleasant or easy thing to explain to them. [...] So it's happened to me three times. It's happened recently to a friend of

mine twice in two weeks. [...] So yeah, like I say some companies are known for it, they've become sort of renowned for it happening.

I think one of the big issues is that despite the fact it's part of their licence, it's part of their licence that they have to accept it, councils don't tend to enforce it. [...] Cheltenham Borough Council haven't enforced it once, despite the fact that I've reported it to them, they don't enforce it. [...] They say that they've taken the matter in hand but it will never be able to go to court or they've given them a written warning or the person has turned up ... they've told me before ... they said we're going to have a tribunal and I said do you want me to turn up and they said no, you don't need to. And then it turns out that the person that I said had refused me, turned up with a lawyer and the reason it went sort of their way is because I wasn't there to defend it. When I was told that I didn't have to be there. So yeah, it makes me a bit cross. [...] And they're a bit useless. Because you go to other councils and they seem to enforce it much more vigorously you know, their response to this sort of thing is more robust. Whereas Cheltenham just seems to be a joke really. [...] It's frustrating, it's very frustrating because you want some sort of punitive damages [...] everyone says that it's illegal, you can't do it, it's illegal but what's the point in having a law if you're not going to enforce it? [...]

I try not to use taxis at a taxi rank because I just don't want the tension [...] there should be more backlash for taxis refusing to take a dog [...] I mean personally I think ... and I don't think the fine should go to the council either, I think that if these people have breached you know ... for example if a taxi driver doesn't pick up someone or refuses someone, it should be a £1,500 fine at the very least and that money should go to Guide Dogs. [...] Because at the end of the day then Guide Dogs can use that money to fund legal action or to fund research, fund awareness. It shouldn't go to a council; what's the council going to do with it? [...] But it means that there's an incentive for Guide Dogs ... first of all there's an incentive for Guide Dogs to get involved because ... if they do get the money. But also there's more of a deterrent to taxi drivers from doing it in the first place because there is actually ... and the fact that it seems to be whichever council ... you know, the repercussions are dependent from council to council.

But I rely on taxis to help me get around. So when something that ... if I'm in an unfamiliar neighbourhood and I've rung up a taxi and they suddenly say that they refuse me, then I tell ... and I report it to the council and the council does nothing. You think well who ... you know, why is that? It is illegal and yet these people have done nothing about it. [...] And also what they often say is oh well we can't take their licence away from them because it's their ... it would endanger their livelihood. Which is a valid argument but when you sign up to be a taxi driver, you sign a licence, you read ... there's a piece of paper and a test, both which state about you know service dogs. So to refuse a dog and then say oh I didn't realise and then you can't take my licence from me because it would endanger my livelihood."

Participant 22, a guide dog owner of 18 years in their 50s, also observed poor levels of support from their local council, even when provided with proof of an incident:

“I regularly have taxi refusals [...] So I try and report every taxi refusal I have [...] I’ve had a couple of very serious incidents where I don’t think their reaction has been appropriate [...] I actually pulled the CCTV footage from the train company with the taxi refusal at the train station [...] I think my local authority watched it with their eyes closed”.

Similarly, for Participant 18, a guide dog owner of 3 years in their 30s:

“It’s frustrating, it’s very frustrating because you want some sort of punitive damages [...] everyone says that it’s illegal, you can’t do it, it’s illegal but what’s the point in having a law if you’re not going to enforce it?”.

However, such cases seemed to be specific to certain councils or areas. Some participants argued that London, for example, was quite capable of holding drivers accountable for such offenses, particular Uber drivers. Often, participants would describe how taxi drivers would claim the customer was not present upon their arrival, hence why they drove off again. Yet, it seemed that Uber was perhaps “easier” to hold accountable, due to the GPS-tracking capabilities of the app, meaning, in this case, Transport for London, were able to gain access to stronger evidence of the offense. Participant 26, guide dog owner of 10 years in their 40s, explained:

“going to some places I take taxis, I take Ubers and other taxis from time to time with [guide dog]. So yes with Uber drivers. I’ve had several refusals with [dog]. Many through TfL, Transport for London, have actually crossed drivers, several have resulted in a guilty ... in a conviction, well sort of ... well prosecution and driver’s pleaded guilty. And recently, well about a month ago, I went to court because a driver pleaded not guilty but was found guilty in the end for refusing. So I’ve had you know, over the years I’ve had about probably 10/12 refusals by taxi drivers. [...] With Uber they can’t do that [claim customer was not present] because obviously with Uber they’ve got the app and the app will show the actual GPS location. [...] Transport for London are very hot on prosecuting Uber drivers. [...] they can see exactly timings [...] with the case which went to court, they had down to the minute, down to the second how long each different stage of the process [...] so it’s actually quite thorough in London, you have to just take the time to report the refusal and then it gets investigated”.

Further, Participant 22, a guide dog owner of 18 years in their 50s, observed a local council had revoked all taxi licenses until the drivers underwent accessibility training. This had, in turn, resulted in fewer refusals. For this participant, in particular, who uses taxis up to 10 times per week, this made a considerable difference:

“In this area you would never get a taxi refusal [...] Because the borough investigates properly and would take action [...] for example they evoked all taxi drivers’ licences and take them on an NVQ course and say we’ll help you get through the course and once you’ve take this equality training, we’ll give you back your licence. So all their drivers have had disability equality training and they have an NVQ in taxi driving or something. So that’s a different attitude you know”.

## **4.2 Buses**

In regard to buses, specifically, interviewees spoke about drivers that did not realise or recognise issues that create barriers to bus use and cause stress when using this transportation mode. This includes, in particular, pulling away before the person has found a seat and not using the audio to announce the next stop.

Participant 10, a guide dog owner of 10 years in their 20s, also commented on their experience on buses, where drivers were seemingly unhelpful and lacked understanding of their disability and did not use the audio announcements of stops:

“It can be very hit and miss. And in Bristol our [bus] drivers are not particularly helpful either. So yes, very miserable the drivers. [...] So in Bristol we are meant to have talking buses. [...] it’s probably about three quarters of the time the voice isn’t working. So you know, it’s not really a very reliable ... certainly I wouldn’t have the confidence to go on my own on a bus. [...] They’re definitely equipped. Apparently it’s controlled from the depot and for some reason they don’t seem to bother to turn it on or something goes wrong with it”.

Further, Participant 23, a guide dog owner of 14 years in their 50s, observed how unhelpful bus drivers were at times. With audio on the buses often not working, they were naturally reliant on help from drivers. However, such help was not always available:

“Well the big challenge is I don’t know where I am [...] I’ve missed bus-stops and I think just about every other guide dog owner I know has missed bus-stops because perhaps the driver hasn’t told them [...] that is the big issue”.

Likewise, Participant 14, a guide dog owner of 14 years in their 30s, found travelling on the bus a struggle. This seemed a particular issue, given they had to use the bus daily. The main issue was apparently finding a seat, with other passengers struggling to offer the appropriate help:

“It’s the only way I can get about unless I want to pay a taxi fee. But the reason why I don’t enjoy the bus, it’s just finding a seat, that’s my main worry. [...] I don’t mind asking people and I’ll say ‘Is there anywhere to sit?; and they’ll go ‘Yes, here dear’ or something like that. And ‘here’, I don’t know where ‘here’ is [...] they could just take my hand and just put it on the seat or someone could get up and say ... and just guide me ”.

Interestingly, technology seemingly offered an option to improve the accessibility levels of the environment. Unfortunately, this was not discussed regularly during the interviews, but the participants who did discuss their thoughts on this, were predominantly positive. Apps on smart phones presumably removed some of the disabling aspects of the bus environment, as some buses offer apps which notify the user if the bus is nearby, meaning the participants were able to signal for the bus to stop.

Participant 25, a guide dog owner of 5 years in their 70s, for example, commented:

“I have got an app on my phone called [intentionally left blank] and that will tell me when the bus is coming. I find that really, really useful, it’s brilliant. So I get ready, I stand right by the kerb, put my hand out and wait for the bus”.

Similarly, Participant 11, a guide dog owner of 4 years in their 40s, spoke of their issues on trains and buses in Birmingham, which has inspired them to use GPS based apps for assistance:

“[in] Birmingham, we’re still only about 10% talking announcements on buses. And we still have large sections of our train networks that don’t speak automatically and it’s generally the guards who can be quite muffled and quite difficult to hear. [...] If I’m on a bus going to a meeting where I don’t know where I’m going, I’ve normally got a couple of GPSs running to try and work out which bus stop to get off at. That’s the only way I can do it these days”.

As a result of trouble on buses, Participant 8, a guide dog owner of 7 years in their 50s, described preferring taxis to buses, despite the frustration of taxi drivers not stopping:

“I experience issues all the time. So starting with the buses. Actually getting to the bus stop would be quite nice. Getting it to stop at the bus stop and getting the driver to wait until I have a seat before he pulls away [...] I will always take a black cab as opposed to a mini cab because they tend to be more understanding and accessible. I’ve had situations where I’ve pre-booked a cab and they’ve just seen the dog and pulled away”.

### **4.3 Trains and rail stations**

#### **4.3.1 The guide dog’s safety and welfare**

Participant 15, a guide dog owner of 12 years in their 50s, spoke of how their dog had once fallen onto the train tracks, due to a large gap between the train and the platform, a type of incident also mentioned by other interview participants:

“I had an incident a long time ago where my first guide dog fell between the platform and the train. [...] the gap is too big and then they just don’t make it. And because quite often it’s slippery floors, so they just slide off”.

Participant 17, a guide dog owner of 6 years in their 30s, spoke the challenge of finding spending areas at rail stations:

“Another thing that I’m conscious of is that most train stations don’t have anywhere to spend your dog. [...] London Paddington is where I go if I go to London and there’s nowhere there that is really suitable”.

Further, Participant 18, a guide dog owner of 3 years in their 30s, explained a lack of understanding about the needs of the dog in regard to seating arrangements:

“Usually on the train it can be a pain because when I’ve got special assistance for example, they think that they’re going to give me more room by putting me on a seat where there’s a table in front of me. But the way the tables are is you’ve got two legs in front of the table, which means the dog can’t lie underneath it [...] but you can’t just spontaneously go for a trip on the train anymore, I mean not with the dog. [...] When I go on a train I want the people to know that they shouldn’t put me on a place where there’s a table because the dog needs to lie underneath it. Or I want them to know that they shouldn’t be touching the dog. It’s all about the interaction with these people because you basically have to go [...] every time I travel, I mean I’m pretty vocal about what I want them and do not want them to do.”

### 4.3.2 Lack of or inappropriate accessibility services

Many interviewees described experiences of lack of accessibility services when using the rail network, in particular, booked assistance not showing up on their arrival or not waiting for their delayed train, as well as not understanding the needs of the guide dog when booking a seat for the person.

Participant 6, a guide dog owner of 6 years in their 50s, commented on the poor level of service they have received on trains and how it leaves them feeling anxious at times. They suggested it was a down to a lack of training: “If I book assistance say so I go from my home town of Peterborough to Birmingham, and then say I’m going to Preston, if for any reason I have to take a different train to get to Preston, because it’ll come in at a different time, there won’t be somebody waiting for me to give me assistance you know because they’ve only got the original booking [...] What causes me problems when I travel on trains specifically is quality of actual guiding. So physically being guided off a train, within the station and onto another train or whatever, the quality of that is so hit and miss [...] the actual quality of the physical guiding is not always good [...] I don’t want to feel that I ... you know, feel anxiety all the time about these things. And you know, the truth is I do [...] totally a training issue”.

Relatedly, Participant 14, a guide dog owner of 14 years in their 30s, argued that the lack of service led to very stressful situations, especially at larger and busier stations:

“Clapham Junction, crikey, that’s hard (laughs), I don’t know is there 16 platforms or something ridiculous like that? [...] when I’ve booked assistance there no-one ever turned up, ever. And it was just not on because it was a place you really, really needed it because it’s just so busy. And you’d wait and wait and wait and think I can’t wait much longer I’ve got to get another train. And they should be there when you get off the train but no”.

Participant 18, guide dog owner of 3 years in their 30s, emphasised the importance assistance at connections:

“We needed a connection and then I got my aunt to pick me up. So the connection is usually the only assistance and where the assistance normally breaks down. So the connections are the most important part of any journey because you need to get from one train to the other in an unfamiliar station.

But unfortunately the connections is where the weakest part of the assistance is. [...] I rely on the assistance because I can't always see platform numbers. If it's a station that I'm familiar with it's different but often times I'm not in a station long enough in order to make a mental map of it."

Participant 13, a guide dog owner of 2 years in their 50s, argued that, when attempting to book ahead on trains, issues have arisen due to their guide dog. Transport staff would prioritise wheelchairs over the guide dog and as a result refuse booking of two seats, thereby refusing access to the participant.

Participant 13 explained:

"They'll say oh no we can't reserve this seat for you and your guide dog because there might be a person coming on with a wheelchair who cannot get out of their wheelchair and we have to consider them first. Well I can understand that to a degree, however I also think well hang on, my guide dog is a living thing, it doesn't need to be in the middle of the aisle where everyone's going to kick it and it's going to have to keep getting up".

Related to problems identified with buses, Participant 25, a guide dog owner of 5 years in their 70s, explained the need for audio announcements:

"I would say as well it's [biggest challenge] but inconsistent announcements on transport. So like the station when I leave work, the main station I go to, tube station, they don't announce the destination of all the trains coming into the platform. So sometimes they announce them, sometimes they don't and there's like four different destinations for people to be going to. So that's a challenge."

## **4.4 Airplanes and airports**

When speaking about air travel, participants noted a number of challenges related to staff training, booking processes and facilities for their dog en route. However, one did describe a positive experience as well.

### **4.4.1 Positive experiences and praise**

Appropriate levels of awareness and staff training have the potential to greatly influence the travel experience.



Participant 5, a guide dog owner of 14 years in their 50s, for example, spoke highly of the special assistance staff at Faro International Airport, who were specially trained:

“I can never have enough praise for Faro Airport [...] from the minute you arrive and the same coming back through when you’re going home [...] they talk you through everything. They go through step by step. they meet you off the plane. And then they literally took me right outside to Arrivals, to the person I was being picked up with”.

#### **4.4.2 Inadequate staff training**

Despite the praise of Faro’s airport, most other guide dog owners with air travel experience explained the many ways that staff training was inadequate to deal with their situation.

Participant 18, a guide dog owner of 3 years in their 30s, described their first flight abroad with their guide dog in a particularly negative way:

“the airport the check-in lady [...] tried to charge me for the dog’s bag. When I told her I didn’t have to pay for it, she then said I just need to ring. So she rang up someone and had a whispered conversation, then turned to me and said can you show me the dog’s documentation. And I said well what would you like to see? And then she goes I don’t know. [...] the fact the security didn’t know what the hell was going on, the fact that the person helping me kept touching the dog”.

Similarly, Participant 15, a guide dog owner of 12 years in their 50s, commented on their challenges when travelling with a guide dog, specifically related to paperwork:

“it’s pure training where not enough emphasis is given within training them in relation to people with sight loss. [...] easyJet they did keep telling me I didn’t have the right paperwork. But when I asked them what paperwork I needed they couldn’t tell me [...] I had another incident as well coming back from I think it was the airport where the plane was early and they dumped me and left me in the [...] arrivals hall”.

Participant 19, a guide dog owner of 11 years in their 60s, encountered issues where staff seemingly did not understand their own rules and regulations.

According to participant 19, the airline had a policy stating the guide dog has to occupy the same space as its handler and so were offered an exit seat.

However, they refused to accept this seat, as it would have violated aviation regulation:

“I said no, you don’t know your air law and anybody who sits in one of those lines of seats by the emergency exit has to be fully-able. Because if they’re not, you’re breaking air law. It’s lack of knowledge you know. But it’s up to the industries to educate their staff to the best of their ability in dealing with situations like this. And there should be processes in place”.

While Participant 7, a guide dog owner for 10 years in their 70s, had only experienced very minor problems with taxis, buses and trains, they, instead, found the main issues to be with air travel:

“The only problems I’ve ever encountered in transport modes have been getting in aircraft. Yeah because they don’t understand. The agents they employ don’t understand the rules of the airline and vis-à-vis dogs. Or the airline invents some rules that are out of line with reasonable standards. So for example we were asked at Amsterdam Airport by KLM flying to City of London Airport, if we had a diaper for the dog, a nappy”.

Further, Participant 7, a guide dog owner for 10 years in their 70s, spoke at length about front-line staff who often lacked the required training and did not understand the concept of guide dogs, seeing them rather as pets:

“Well I think really it’s the education and training of the front of house or contact staff. [...] the biggest burden and the biggest negative to travelling is airport staff who are not properly trained. And because of that two things happen; one, you arrive at the desk and they say ‘Oh, never seen a guide dog before, I’ll just go and check with my supervisor’ and they disappear, leaving you standing there for half an hour. Which in itself is discrimination [...] The only problems I’ve ever encountered in transport modes have been getting in aircraft. Yeah because they don’t understand. The agents they employ don’t understand the rules of the airline and vis-à-vis dogs. Or the airline invents some rules that are out of line with reasonable standards. So for example we were asked at Amsterdam Airport by KLM flying to City of London Airport, if we had a diaper for the dog, a nappy.”

More broadly, Participant 15, a guide dog owner of 12 years in their 50s, argued that they had experienced issues with most travel providers, in one way or another:

“In some ways I probably have had problems with all forms of transport in some way [...] The actual crew staff tend to be a lot more aware than sort of desk staff”.

#### **4.4.3 Challenges when booking**

Interviewees repeatedly explained the challenges of simply booking airline travel with a guide dog.

Participant 6, a guide dog owner of 6 years in their 50s, spoke of their challenges when trying to arrange travel online:

“You can’t just phone them [airline] up and say look, I’m on this flight and I’ve got an assistance dog [...] you’ve got to find specific kind of forms on their website and fill in all the details and you’ve got to do it at least two weeks in advance [...] they could just have a line for people who have wheelchairs, dogs, whatever you know. It could be easier [...] I don’t know what you’d do if you didn’t have internet access, it wouldn’t be possible to travel I don’t think”.

Again, Participant 7, a guide dog owner for 10 years in their 70s, explained:

“The worst one is booking the guide dog because you know, you can go online and you can book your travel arrangements for you and your partner [...] nobody’s got an online booking process for a guide dog or an assistance dog. So you’re faced then with phoning them up and telling them. It takes at least half an hour extra [...] I think with British Airways you have to call them back once you’ve done the booking to make sure they’ve allocated a seat or something like that or to get the seat allocated.”

Similarly, Participant 11, a guide dog owner of 4 years in their 40s, found the booking process problematic:

“So under reasonable adjustment they block out the seat next to you at zero cost [...] Different airlines have different setups. And for a lot of them you end up with a separate reservation for the dog compared to you, which means that you cannot do online check-in in advance. [...] But where more and more people check-in online so many days in advance, most of the plane seating has already been given out. So that bit is still quite challenging and I’ve known them actually have to stop people at the gate to move people and change people’s tickets at the gate, which has delayed everyone”.

#### **4.4.4 Lack of dog specific services**

In addition to the above challenges of air travel, the issue of finding spending areas was specifically addressed.

Participant 6, a guide dog owner of 6 years in their 50s:

If for example you were in an airport and your plane was delayed for a while you know, I'm not confident that I could ... that there would be somewhere for the dog to go and have a wee if he needed to you know. I think that could be a challenge. Apart from that you know, the whole infrastructure around train travel is difficult".

Participant 7, a guide dog owner for 10 years in their 70s:

"The only thing that's daunting is toileting procedures en-route. [...] It's pressing [...] for all airports to have toilets after security, so that you can take your dog to the toilet before it jumps on the plane. [...] In terms of dog toilets, there's one in Dublin Airport [...] as far as I know there's probably only one other airport in Europe with dog toilets".

## Appendix 2: Survey instrument

### Please read the four statements below:

1. I agree to take part in this research about tourism and travel with assistance dogs through the completion of this questionnaire.
2. I know who to contact with any queries or comments.
3. I know what the research is about and how I will be involved.
4. I understand that I can withdraw my participation any time before or during the data collection. However, once that data is submitted, I understand that withdrawal will not be possible as the data is not connected to my personal details.

Please use the radio buttons below to indicate whether or not you give consent to participate in this questionnaire.

Yes, I agree to participate in this questionnaire

No, I do not agree to participate in this questionnaire

Upon completion of this survey, you will be invited to enter your contact details for the opportunity to win a **£100 gift card to John Lewis or Marks & Spencer**.

### General demographics

1. What gender do you identify with?  
Male  
Female  
Prefer not to say
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your household income?  
Less than 10,000  
10,001 to 25,000  
25,001 to 50,000  
50,001 to 75,000  
75,001 to 100,000  
100,001+  
Prefer not to say
4. What is your highest completed level of education?  
Primary school/secondary school (GCSE)  
Further education (e.g. A-levels, vocational or professional)  
Undergraduate higher education (e.g. Bachelor's degree)  
Postgraduate higher education (e.g. Master's degree or Doctorate)

No formal education

5. Which of the following best describes your employment status?  
Employed full time  
Employed part time  
Self-employed  
Unemployed and looking for work  
Unemployed and not looking for work  
Student  
Regular volunteer  
Retired  
Homemaker/stay at home parent  
Long-term illness/unable to work
6. What is your marital status?  
Single  
Married/domestic partnership  
Separated/divorced  
Widowed  
Prefer not to say
7. Do you currently use a guide dog?  
Yes  
No
8. Approximately how long have you been using a guide dog? (including past and current dogs) \_\_\_\_\_
9. If you have had a break between dogs, approximately how long passed between your current and previous dog? \_\_\_\_\_
10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:  
(choose one answer for each statement: 1 = strongly agree; 2 = tend to agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = tend to disagree; 5 = strongly disagree; 0 = don't know/not relevant)

|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know/ Not relevant |
|--|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| I have more independence because of my guide dog | 1              | 2             | 3                          | 4                | 5                 | 0                        |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am more active because of my guide dog            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| I am able to socialise more because of my guide dog | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| I feel safer with my guide dog                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| My guide dog adds to my psychological wellbeing     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| My guide dog adds to the quality of my life overall | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| My guide dog adds companionship to my life          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |

11. Do you have any vision?

Yes

No (proceed to Q13)

12. If yes, do you use that vision to assist in your mobility:

Yes

No

13. Do you have an additional disability?

No

Yes, please list \_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to say

14. Approximately (in years) how long have you been visually impaired?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. In general, within the UK, how confident do you feel that your guide dog would be welcomed in the following places:

Select one answer for each statement: 1 = very confident, 2 = fairly confident, 3 = neither, 4 = not very confident, 5 = not confident at all; 0 = don't know/not relevant

|  | Very Confident | Fairly Confident | Neither confident nor unconfident | Not very confident | Not confident at all | Don't know/not relevant |
|--|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Restaurants, cafes and pubs            | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Parks and outdoor spaces               | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Shops                                  | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Taxis                                  | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Trains                                 | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Train stations                         | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Buses/coaches                          | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Bus/coach stations                     | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Airplanes                              | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Airports                               | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Cruise ships/ferries                   | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Cruise or ferry ports                  | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Overnight accommodation                | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Leisure/recreation/visitor attractions | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |



16. In general, how confident do you feel that you could carry out the following tasks away from your home environment with a guide dog?

Select one answer for each statement: 1 = very confident, 2 = fairly confident, 3 = neither confident nor unconfident, 4 = not very confident, 5 = not confident at all; 0 = don't know/not relevant

|   | Very Confident | Fairly Confident | Neither confident nor unconfident | Not very confident | Not confident at all | Don't know/not relevant |
|---|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Working my guide dog</b>                         |                |                  |                                   |                    |                      |                         |
| Navigating in new environments                      | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Keeping my guide dog focussed in distracting spaces | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| <b>Welfare &amp; Safety</b>                         |                |                  |                                   |                    |                      |                         |
| Keeping my guide dog safe in unfamiliar places      | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Being guided safely by my dog in unfamiliar places  | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |
| Obtaining veterinary care when away from home       | 1              | 2                | 3                                 | 4                  | 5                    | 0                       |

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Finding relief areas for my guide dog in unfamiliar places               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Finding relief areas for my guide dog when using transportation services | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| <b>Holiday travel</b>  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Bringing my guide dog along on holiday within the UK                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Bringing my guide dog along on a holiday abroad                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |

17. Have you ever travelled away from home for more than one night with your guide dog?

Yes

No (If no, stop after Q19)

18. If you do **not** take your guide dog with you on holiday, how is it normally cared for? (*choose all that apply*)

Stays with a friend or relative

Stays with a boarder

I always take my guide dog on holiday

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

19. For the following statements regarding travel away from home for more than one night with your guide dog, please choose your level of

agreement. (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree, 0 = don't know/not relevant)

|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't know/not relevant |
|--|----------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| I prefer not to travel away from home overnight because I do not like to be separated from my guide dog.         | 1              | 2     | 3                          | 4        | 5                 | 0                       |
| I prefer not to travel away from home for more than one night with my guide dog because I find it too difficult. | 1              | 2     | 3                          | 4        | 5                 | 0                       |
| I prefer not to travel away from home overnight because I prefer to stay at home.                                | 1              | 2     | 3                          | 4        | 5                 | 0                       |
| When travelling away from home overnight, I prefer to travel without my guide dog.                               | 1              | 2     | 3                          | 4        | 5                 | 0                       |

20. When you travel away from home overnight, how often do you take your guide dog?  
 Very often  
 Fairly often  
 Occasionally  
 Rarely  
 Very rarely

21. Thinking specifically now about your holiday travel: how has this changed since getting a guide dog?
- I travel more than before I had a guide dog
  - I travel about the same as before I had a guide dog
  - I travel less often than before I had a guide dog
22. Which of these describes the travel you have undertaken with your guide dog during the last 12 months: (*choose as many as apply*)
- Travel to visit friends or relatives within the UK
  - Travel abroad to visit friends or relatives
  - Holiday travel as part of a tour group within the UK
  - Holiday travel abroad as part of a tour group
  - Holiday travel with a friend/partner/access assistant within the UK
  - Holiday travel abroad with a friend/partner/access assistant
  - Holiday travel by yourself only within the UK
  - Holiday travel abroad by yourself only
  - Business travel by yourself only within the UK
  - Business travel abroad by yourself only
  - Business travel with colleagues within the UK
  - Business travel abroad with colleagues
23. How many overnight trips within the UK have you taken with your guide dog in the last 12 months?
- \_\_\_\_\_
24. How many overnight trips abroad have you taken with your guide dog in the last 12 months? (if 0, stop after Q27)
- \_\_\_\_\_
25. For the trips taken (within the UK and abroad) in the last 12 months with your guide dog, what information sources do you typically use regarding accessibility services? (*choose all that apply*)
- Guide Dogs website
  - Guide Dogs travel checklist
  - Airline website
  - Other transportation websites
  - Accommodation website
  - Government website
  - Attraction website
  - Online forums
  - Blogs
  - Search engine
  - Social media
  - Word of mouth

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

26. For overnight trips taken with your guide dog within the UK in the last 12 months, how much did you work your guide dog?

- Always
- Very often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

27. How often have you encountered the following personal experiences of travelling with a guide dog on overnight trips in the UK? (1 = Very often, 2 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Rarely, 5 = Never, 0 = Don't know/not relevant)

|   | Very often | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never | Don't know/not relevant |
|---|------------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|-------------------------|
| Lack of information on accessibility services   | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4      | 5     | 0                       |
| Lack of available services for my guide dog   | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4      | 5     | 0                       |
| Physical barriers   | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4      | 5     | 0                       |
| Communication barriers  | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4      | 5     | 0                       |
| Staff lacked detailed product knowledge about any services and facilities for me and my guide dog | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4      | 5     | 0                       |
| Staff lacked knowledge of my rights to reasonable adjustment                                      | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4      | 5     | 0                       |
| Negative attitudes from staff towards me and my guide dog   | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4      | 5     | 0                       |
| Refused assistance by   | 1          | 2     | 3         | 4      | 5     | 0                       |

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| staff  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Cultural misunderstandings related to working your guide dog                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Other travellers lacked knowledge of my right to be accompanied by a guide dog | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Negative attitudes from fellow tourists towards me and my guide dog            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Lost information regarding my accessibility needs                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Incorrect paperwork for me and my guide dog                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Separated from my guide dog  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| My guide dog was not allowed through customs                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |

28. For the overnight trips taken abroad with your guide dog in the last 12 months, how much did you work your guide dog?

- Always
- Very often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

29. How often have you encountered the following personal experiences of travelling with a guide dog on foreign overnight trips? (1 = Very often, 2 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Rarely, 5 = Never, 0 = Don't know/not relevant)

|  |            |       |           |        |       |                         |
|--|------------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|-------------------------|
|  | Very often | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never | Don't know/not relevant |
|--|------------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|-------------------------|

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lack of information on accessibility services   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Lack of available services for my guide dog   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Physical barriers   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Communication barriers  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Staff lacked detailed product knowledge about any services and facilities for me and my guide dog | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Staff lacked knowledge of my rights to reasonable adjustment                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Negative attitudes from staff towards me and my guide dog   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Refused assistance by staff   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Cultural misunderstandings related to working your guide dog                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Other travellers lacked knowledge of my right to be accompanied by a guide dog                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Negative attitudes from fellow tourists towards me and/or my guide dog                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Lost information regarding my accessibility needs   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Incorrect paperwork for my guide dog         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Separated from my guide dog                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| My guide dog was not allowed through customs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |

Thank you for completing this survey. Your responses will help us to better understand the experience of travelling with a guide dog and will be part of our on-going efforts towards more accessible and inclusive travel and tourism.

Would you be interested in participating further with this research by taking part in an interview (approximately 20-minutes) about your travel and tourism experiences with your guide dog? Interviews may take place either over the phone or face-to-face, depending upon the circumstances. If so, please tick the box below and a member of the research team will be use your contact details provided for the prize draw to reach you. Thank you!

I agree to be contacted for a short interview about my experiences of travelling with a guide dog.

If you would like to be part of the free prize draw and have the chance to win a £100 gift certificate to M&S or John Lewis, please leave your contact details below (name, phone number, address and/or e-mail address). Your contact details will only be used for the prize draw and will not kept in relation to the information provided in the survey. All entry's contact details will be destroyed following the prize draw. By entering your contact details in this box, you agree to the [terms and conditions of the prize draw](#).

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## Appendix 3: Interview guide

### Interview questions

#### ABOUT YOU

Can you tell me about your...?

- Guide dog (current and past, number of years with a guide dog)
- Work/employment situation
- Visual impairment (duration and extent to which it affects mobility)
- Any additional disability that affects mobility

#### YOUR LOCAL TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR

Can you describe...?

- Typical daily routine with your guide dog
- Some of the best practices of your local service providers (bus, train, taxi, etc...) when travelling with your dog
- The most common barriers and/or challenges you face when travelling locally with your dog

#### TRAVEL OUTSIDE YOUR LOCAL AREA

Can you tell me about... ?

- How often you travel outside of your local area with your guide dog?
  - Purpose: holiday/recreation/work
  - Destinations: UK/overseas
  - Duration: day trips/overnight stays
  - Travel party: typically accompanied by others or not
- Any change over time. Do you travel more/less frequently, why?
- How having a guide dog influences your travel decisions and behaviour?
  - What are some benefits of travelling with your guide dog?
  - What are some barriers and/or challenges to travelling with your guide dog?
  - Are there places or situations you actively avoid taking your guide dog?
- A trip that you left your guide dog at home. Why did you decide to travel without her/him?

#### A RECENT TRIP OUTSIDE YOUR LOCAL AREA

Can you describe...?

- A recent trip with your guide dog.
  - Trip characteristics: Purpose / Destination / Duration / Travel party
  - Planning and preparations for taking your guide dog, including ease of access to information and booking and any dog-related issues such as with well-being or the pet passport
  - Actual memorable experiences (positive or negative) with certain destinations or service providers (e.g. transport, attractions, accommodation, restaurants/bars/cafes, indoor or outdoor leisure, people – staff, locals, other travellers)

#### FINALLY

When you think about previous travel experiences with your guide dog:

- What changes would you most like to see (in and/or outside your local area)?
- Would it encourage you to travel more with your guide dog (respondents may be uninterested in travel regardless of any changes that are made)?
- What would be the benefits of such changes?