

LONDON
TRAVELWATCH

Left behind Londoners



MARCH 2023

Digital Exclusion
and Disadvantage
in London Transport

PREPARED BY **.YONDER**



Who we are

London TravelWatch (LTW) is the official independent transport watchdog, which campaigns to improve journeys and advocates for all people who travel in and around the capital. London TravelWatch is sponsored and funded by the London Assembly, which is part of the Greater London Authority, and is independent from transport operators.

LTW promotes integrated transport policies aimed at raising the quality, performance and accessibility of transport services, while continuing to ensure they are affordable and safe for all who use them. We liaise and work closely with transport operators, providers, regulators, and local authorities. In turn, transport operators consult us on proposed changes to services and closures of lines or stations.

We cover all forms of Transport for London (TfL) services, National Rail in and around London, and those who walk, cycle or wheel in the capital.

You can find out more about us at londontravelwatch.org.uk.

Foreword

From websites and laptops to smartphones, mobile data and apps, digital technologies are playing an increasingly important role in the way people interact with London's transport services. Where it once was the default for a paper ticket to be purchased from a ticket office or bus driver, or information for journey planning to be sought from a poster or customer advisor, now digital options are available to carry out these tasks.

While this trend brings undoubted benefits to many people who use transport, for many others it can also create barriers. For example, we already know there are 260,000 adults without bank accounts in London. They would find it difficult, if not impossible, to pay for things online where cash isn't accepted. For those who cannot or will not access the internet, the relative lack of access to information undermines their ability to travel with confidence – or, indeed, to travel at all.

At London TravelWatch, we were keen to understand the extent to which some Londoners are being left behind as transport providers in the capital pursue a digital-first approach. We commissioned Yonder Consulting to identify who are the digitally excluded and disadvantaged, how they might be affected as people who use transport in London, and what action is needed as a consequence. Their approach incorporates desk research, online and telephone interviews, as well as stakeholder and in person interviews.

Their findings make for interesting reading. Typically, digitally excluded and disadvantaged people are older, white, more likely to be Disabled people and have a lower income. Often, some or all of these characteristics can interplay, for example, in the case of someone who is both older and Disabled, in which case they face multiple barriers as people who use transport.



Worryingly, 1 in 6 Londoners who answered our online survey said they had been unable to buy a ticket without a smartphone or internet connection, which had stopped them from travelling – the equivalent of more than 1.5 million Londoners being digitally excluded from transport.

This research is very much an initial review of the problem of digital exclusion in London transport, and more work is needed to develop our collective understanding of this topic. Nevertheless, transport providers should be doing more now to provide the digitally excluded and disadvantaged with the tools and support that give them the same degree of access to fares, tickets and information as the digitally included. As the official independent watchdog for transport in London, we will be looking to operators to strengthen their commitment to tackle this important issue.

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Michael Roberts". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

MICHAEL ROBERTS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, LONDON TRAVELWATCH

Executive Summary

Who are the digitally excluded and disadvantaged?

A digitally excluded person is somebody who either is unable to, or chooses not to, ever go online, whether using mobile data, Wi-Fi or cabled internet, on any device. A digitally disadvantaged person is somebody who does fewer than five activities online and uses mobile data once a week or less: they may use some online services but be excluded from others.

Digitally disadvantaged or excluded people fall into two broad categories: those who cannot go online because of the barriers they face, and those who do not want to do so. Ofcom's Technology tracker 2022 found that most (75%) of those without internet access said they were unlikely to get access within the next 12 months: the key reason was a perception that they just do not need the internet.

Compared to Londoners overall, digitally disadvantaged or excluded people are more likely to

be older (55+), white, Disabled and have a lower income. Our qualitative research found that these elements often interplay, so a digitally excluded or disadvantaged person may be both older and Disabled, meaning they face multiple barriers.

In their 2021 UK Consumer Digital Index, Lloyds Bank estimated that 270,000 Londoners are offline (3%) and nearly 2 million (20%) have very low digital engagement.

How are they affected when using transport in London?

1 in 6 Londoners (17%) who answered our online survey said they had been unable to buy a ticket without a smartphone or internet connection, which had stopped them from travelling, the equivalent of more than 1.5 million Londoners being digitally excluded from transport.

1 in 5 Londoners (20%) who responded to our online survey said they had paid more for travel because they could not buy tickets online or digitally.

Only 1 in 5 digitally excluded and disadvantaged people agree that the increased use of technology has made it easier to get around London, and nearly 4 in 10 (37%) in that group say it has actually made things harder. Older people (27% of those 65+), people on lower incomes (18% of C2DE) and Disabled people (18%) are more likely to feel this way.

This digital exclusion and disadvantage has a negative impact on people's wellbeing, independence and confidence in managing activities in many aspects of their life, and can leave people feeling left out from society. Any resulting limitation on travel has profound consequences for the quality of life of individuals, especially those who are already excluded or already face barriers. Digitally excluded and disadvantaged people are likely to make fewer journeys across London. They mostly use the bus, walk or use the Underground to travel to their destination.

Digitally excluded and disadvantaged people have less access to tools and services which facilitate travelling around London – particularly planning information, payment platforms and up-to-date information on timetables and disruptions. Support from staff (22%) and information from

ticket offices (21%) are the top two ways that digitally excluded and disadvantaged people access help for getting around London.

Digitally excluded and disadvantaged people especially rely on TfL staff to travel confidently – be it for journey planning, purchasing tickets, advice, or the knowledge that help is there if they need it.

Even among digitally included Londoners, over half (53%) use non-digital assistance to help them when travelling – showing it is not only the digitally excluded or disadvantaged who rely on these forms of support.

What needs to be done?

Given the scale of digital exclusion and disadvantage, and the serious impact it can have on the people affected, the transport industry should take steps to tackle it as a priority, by adopting the following recommendations:

- 1** Transport providers should commit to make sure that those who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged are not financially penalised when they travel.
- 2** Train companies and TfL should make sure staff are visible and in accessible locations and are confident to support people.
- 3** Where train companies are seeking to reduce ticket office opening hours or staff levels, the impact on those who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged must be considered and published in an Equality Impact Assessment.
- 4** All train companies should implement a travel mentoring service that supports people who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged.
- 5** TfL should update and regularly assess their travel mentoring service so that it continues to support those who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged.
- 6** When planning changes, transport authorities, operators and policing bodies need to work with specialists in digital inclusion and impacted groups to make sure information is as accessible as possible.
- 7** Transport operators should make sure they are providing services and resources in a way that is easy to use and more accessible.
- 8** Transport authorities and operators should maintain non-digital options to allow freedom of travel for digitally excluded and disadvantaged Londoners, wherever possible.
- 9** Transport authorities, operators and the Department for Transport should commission more research into digital exclusion and disadvantage, to explore in more detail who is impacted by the issue and how, and what measures are needed to make sure the digital exclusion gap is closed.

Methodology and definitions

Our research programme consisted of three phases:



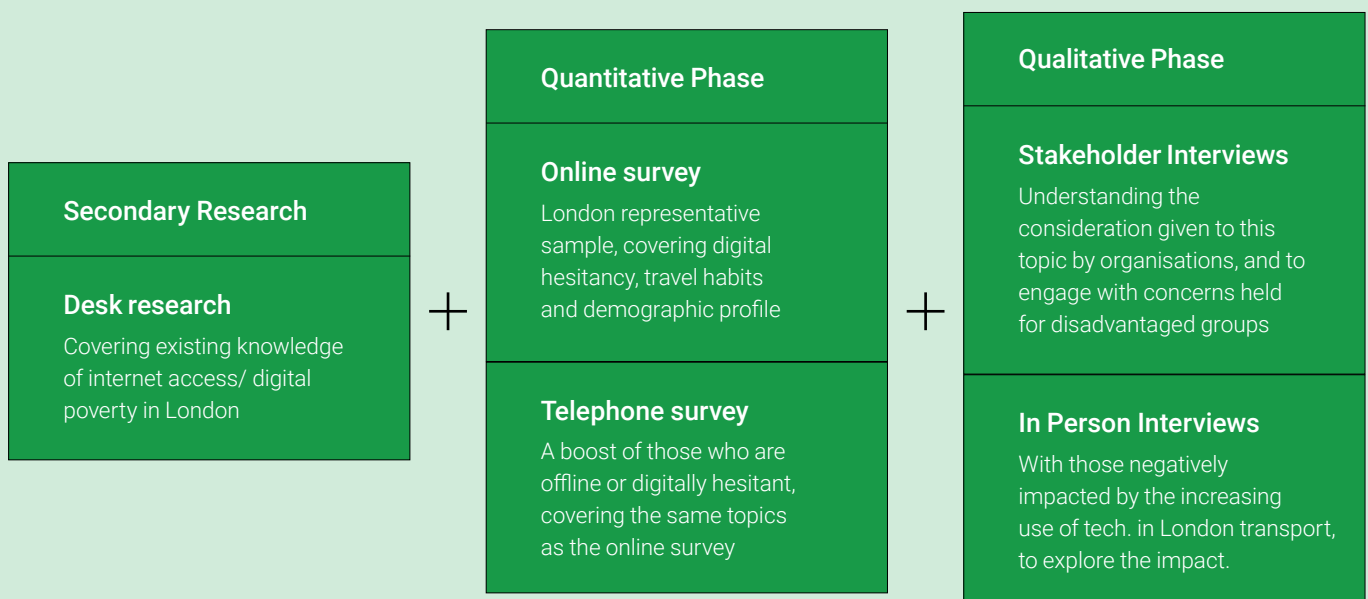
Desk research to explore existing knowledge of internet access in London and current measures of digital poverty.



Quantitative surveys both online and on the telephone to measure digital use travel habits and demographics. The online survey spoke to a London representative sample. The inherent drawback of using an online survey to explore digital exclusion and digital disadvantage is that an online sample only reaches those who are online (although they may still face barriers). The telephone survey was used specifically to access the opinions of those who are either entirely offline or digitally disadvantaged.



Qualitative interviews with both stakeholders from organisations that advocate for impacted groups, and with Londoners who feel that the increasing use of digital options in London transport has impacted them. This allowed us to explore further the barriers that the digitally excluded and disadvantaged face, and how this impacts their lives and travel around London.



Desk Research Methodology

The desk research phase focused on understanding the extent of digital exclusion and those disadvantaged within London.

Sources were evaluated before information from the source was included within the research. The evaluation criteria included analysis of the information's origin and the potential biases that may introduce to the source. The research methodologies of each source were reviewed, with only those with robust methodologies included.

Sources were compared to answer the key objective of measuring the number of people in London who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged.

Wherever data from desk research is cited, the source is clearly labelled and a link to relevant online information is provided.

Quantitative Survey Methodology

Ten question units were asked on Yonder's online London Omnibus, giving 1,009 interviews representative of the London population between the 14th and 19th September 2022. Quotas were set on London region, age, ethnicity and gender. Post-field weighting was applied to bring the sample into line with the known London population's age, gender, region, ethnicity, working status and home ownership.

A ten-minute telephone survey of Londoners who are offline or doing fewer than five activities online was conducted, giving 100 interviews. The activities used to measure online use were taken from

Ofcom's Media Use and Attitudes 2022, following the definition of a 'narrow' internet user.

The same questions were asked in the online and telephone methodologies. Online and telephone datasets were combined post-field, with the telephone boost weighted back in line with the London population.

Analysis has been done on an overall and subgroup level, calling out significant differences (at 95% confidence) between those classed as digitally excluded and disadvantaged versus those who are digitally included.

Qualitative Methodology

The first part of the qualitative phase was to conduct in depth interviews with six stakeholders between the 26th September and 7th October. These included representatives from transport organisations, digital exclusion charities and charities working with people who are disproportionately likely to be impacted by digital exclusion (i.e., older people, Disabled people and refugees). The interviews explored barriers to being online, experiences of digital exclusion, the impact of being digitally excluded and views on the accessibility of transport for impacted groups.

These expert interviews helped shape who to interview and what questions to ask in interviews with digitally excluded and digitally disadvantaged people.

We conducted 20 interviews between the 13th and 26th October with digitally excluded and digitally disadvantaged people across London. Interviews lasted 60 minutes and were conducted over the phone or in-home, depending on participants' preferences. The interviews were conversational, following a structured discussion guide which was agreed with London TravelWatch, covered people's experiences of going online and being digitally excluded and disadvantaged.

It also included how they travelled around London, and how being digitally excluded and disadvantaged impacts their travel and day-to-day life.

To ensure we captured a broad range of experiences, we recruited people through market research recruiters, using word of mouth and

community networks to target digitally excluded and disadvantaged people. All participants could decline the interview at any point and received a payment to thank them for their time and contribution to the project.

A note on terminology and definitions

A person may be digitally excluded and disadvantaged for a range of reasons. This includes a lack of interest in being online, a lack of digital skills or confidence, being unable to afford digital technologies (devices or internet access) and inaccessible services (e.g. a website not compatible with screen readers), amongst other reasons. An individual could have one or multiple reasons for being digitally excluded and disadvantaged.

For the purposes of this research, we have not differentiated between the different reasons a person may be digitally excluded to understand a broad range of experiences. Within the sample of people we spoke to, multiple barriers to going online were reported. Further research would need to be carried out to understand the impact of specific barriers which different groups experience going online.

The social model of disability

Our quantitative research found that Disabled people are more likely to be digitally excluded and disadvantaged than other Londoners. When discussing this topic, the report has been written in line with the social model of disability, rather than the medical model. The social model of disability is rooted in the concept that people with physical impairments, mental conditions or long-term conditions are Disabled because of barriers that exist within society. For example, that there are websites, apps and modes of transport that have not been designed to accommodate them.







In contrast, the medical model of disability is rooted in the idea that it is the person's physical impairment, mental condition or long-term condition that prevents them from accessing elements of society such as websites, apps and modes of transport.

Please note that where direct quotations from participants are used, the language may not reflect the social model of disability. This has been done to reflect accurately the language used by Disabled participants when talking about their own experiences.







Analysis and evidence

Lloyds Bank’s 2021 UK Consumer Digital Index estimates that 270,000 Londoners are offline (3%) and nearly 2 million (20%) have very low digital engagement.

Our survey research has found that the digitally excluded and disadvantaged people¹ in London are more likely to have the following characteristics, compared to the overall London profile:

-  older (55+) (65%)
-  retired (52%)
-  mortgage-free homeowners (32%)
-  white (68%)
-  a Disabled person (48%)
-  in the DE social grade (36%)

A similar profile emerges for those without access to a smartphone. Non-smartphone owners² over-index on being:

-  older (55+) (53%)
-  retired (44%)
-  mortgage-free homeowners (31%)
-  white (67%)
-  a Disabled person (45%)
-  in the DE social grade (31%)

The above findings are in line with the desk research, which found those without a smartphone tend to be older, poorer and be a Disabled person³.

In general, digitally excluded or disadvantaged people lack access to the devices they would need to go online⁴. Digitally disadvantaged people are also less likely to access the internet outside of their home – only 44% do, compared to 92% of those who are digitally included. Most notably, digitally disadvantaged people are less likely to use the internet while travelling (16% vs 65%) and while on public transport (8% vs 64%)⁵.

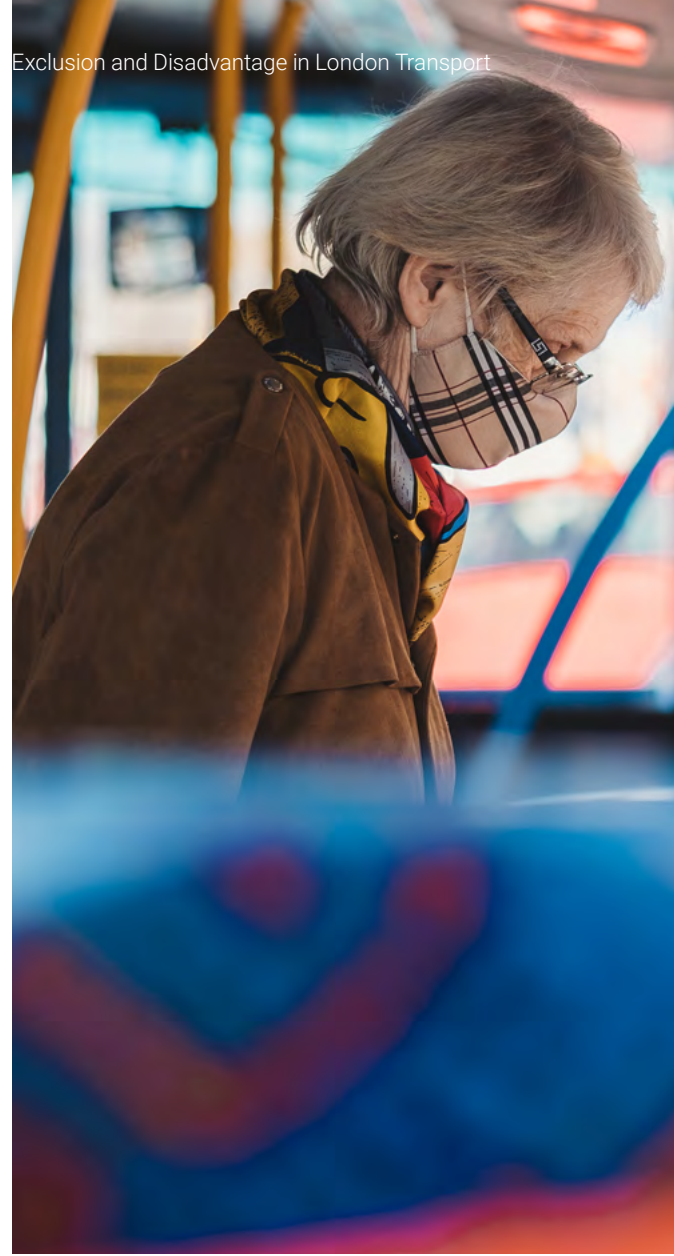
Living as a digitally excluded and disadvantaged person

Our research captured the experiences of a varied group of people living across London. Individuals at all stages of life, with a range of living situations and extent of support networks, participated in the research. The people we spoke to also differ when it came to online activity, from never going online, to doing a small number of simple activities such as messaging or reading the news, to going online on a regular basis.

Those who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged rely heavily upon others who are more digitally included to navigate a digital world. Those support networks are often partners, children, friends or carers who help in a range of ways, including essential online activities, emotional support, troubleshooting and sharing information in a more accessible format.

Two key distinctions emerged through the qualitative interviews regarding how digitally excluded and disadvantaged individuals feel about relying upon support from friends, family or services:

- Those who are conscious of their reliance on others and recognise that this reliance may not be sustainable. They can feel frustrated and worried over the need for this dependence.
- Those who are not personally concerned about their reliance on others but who have family and friends who worry. They tend to have a perception that digital services have little to offer them as they feel they have managed successfully without adapting to use them. This is not a view held by their support networks, who are concerned over how the person would cope if support was no longer available.



“

My wife does all the internet and at times she gets frustrated at how hopeless I am but I just don't have the skills! It is at a point where my family are getting a bit worried about how I will manage if she's not around.

DIGITALLY EXCLUDED PERSON

MICHAEL, DIGITALLY DISADVANTAGED

Michael, 66, is a retired person who lives in North London with his wife. Michael is registered blind and also has a hearing impairment. His access to the telephone is supported by an adapted landline phone. By contrast, he is disadvantaged by the lack of suitable technology and limits on the amount of computer support. He has a support worker who comes twice a week, for a total of six hours, to help him with his e-mails and other online needs. Outside of this time, he is reliant on his wife to help him with tasks such as emails, online meetings, keeping in touch with friends and family, organising travel, dealing with his local authority and paying for things online. As he has direct experience of services such as dial-a-ride being reduced due to funding cuts, Michael is anxious about his computer support worker hours being reduced in the future as this would have a significant negative impact upon his ability to use online services.

“

I don't have a computer and I don't have a mobile phone, I'm reliant upon the [support worker] who helps me when they come over.

ELOISE, DIGITALLY DISADVANTAGED

Eloise, 72, lives alone in Forest Hill. She is confident doing certain activities on her smartphone, like reading the news and looking at health information. However, there are other activities that she is less sure about, like online shopping, online banking and looking at transport information. Her daughter is typically the person who supports her with online activities – Eloise will call her and ask for information which she looks up for her. When it comes to transport, her daughter helps her plan journeys, especially unfamiliar or long ones.

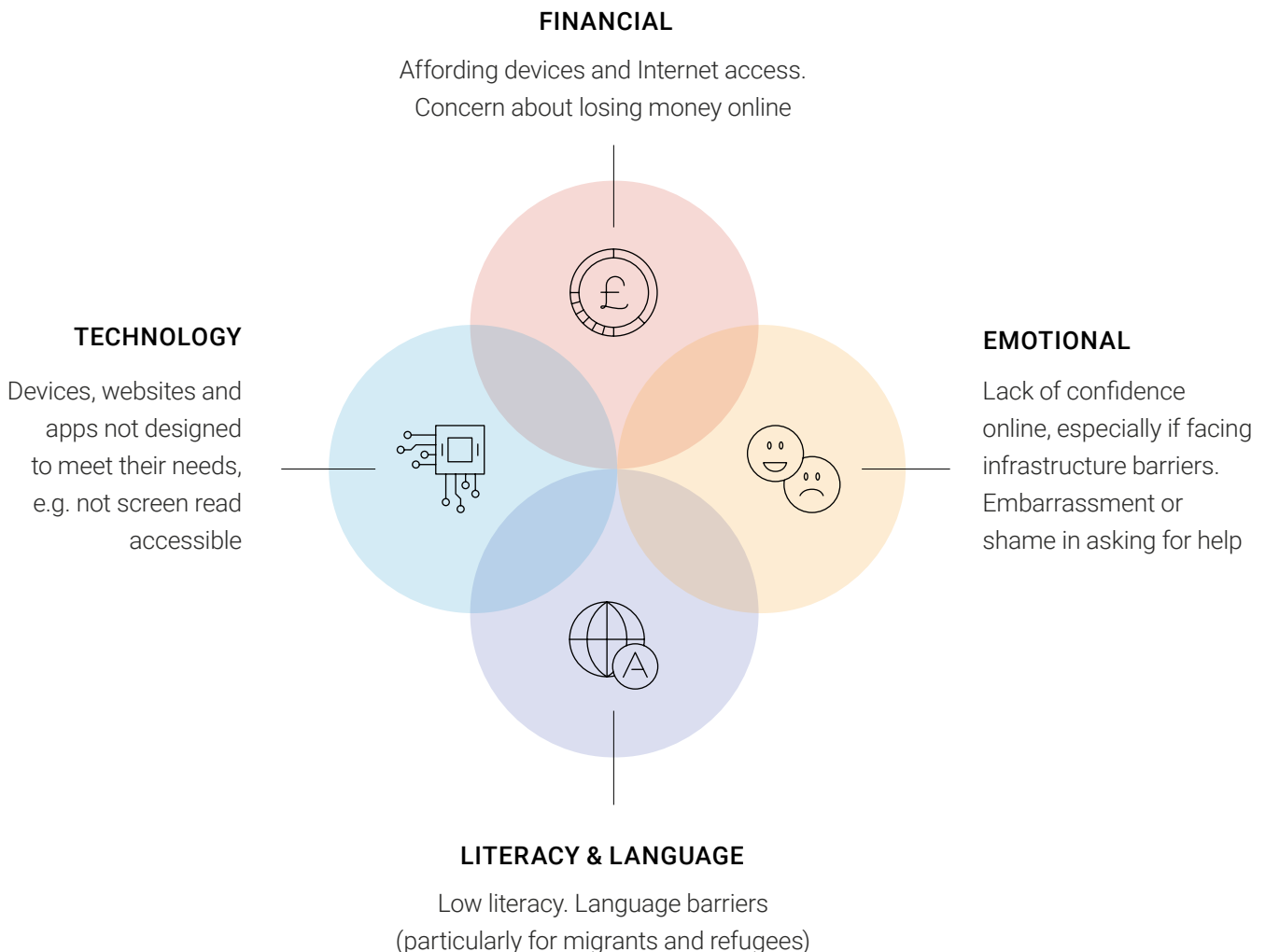
“

I don't really come across problems, if there's anything difficult, I phone [my daughter] and she will tell me what to do.

I can do lots of things. [My daughter] says I'm not your PA, and I should try and put more effort in.

Barriers to going online for individuals who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged

Within the qualitative research, several barriers emerged which impact how much engagement digitally excluded and disadvantaged individuals have with an online world. These barriers are of varying nature, and often overlap. Through our interviews with experts, digitally excluded and disadvantaged people, we found that common barriers fall across several key themes.



The impact of being digitally excluded and disadvantaged

Our research found digital exclusion and disadvantage limits activities, access to services and sometimes, social circles. For people who may already feel excluded from society, their digital exclusion and disadvantage may make them feel more vulnerable.

The people we spoke to face barriers regarding a range of fundamental activities such as managing their health, finances, parenting and banking. They report using a variety of workarounds to carry out essential activities that require online access, such as using services in person. When these alternatives are not available, it can result in them avoiding certain activities altogether.

Beyond the practical implications, digital exclusion and disadvantage can also significantly impact people's wellbeing. Being excluded from services and activities and the feeling of being left behind has

profound effects on the rest of people's lives. Digital exclusion and disadvantage can cause feelings of shame, and impact people's confidence in areas of life beyond online activities.

Digitally excluded and disadvantaged individuals also feel that they live with a constant assumption that everyone is online. In a society which they find inaccessible, they have to work hard to find solutions and alternatives and yet are still continually directed towards online services which are not suitable for them. They find that fewer services are accessible offline (such as banking), and that they have fewer options. Consequently, they feel judged and shamed as being less important than people who are digitally included, further excluding them. This is particularly challenging for younger people, since staff and people around them are more likely to assume they are online.

VICTORIA, DIGITALLY DISADVANTAGED

Victoria, 32, lives with her partner in West London and works part time in Administration. She does not have a smartphone as she does not think she can justify the cost or would use it as intended. She can use the internet on a computer but does not feel confident using it as she finds it overwhelming and 'just not for me'. In her job she prefers to make a phone call wherever possible and at home she relies heavily upon her partner who is more tech savvy. She appreciates that the world is increasingly digital but does not see herself embracing a digital lifestyle anytime soon. She hopes that accommodations for those who are less confident online will always remain but does feel self-conscious that she is an outlier, particularly in her age range.



I hope that I could change. I understand that the world is changing but it's just personally not for me, I always prefer to be able to speak to someone.

The impact of digital exclusion and disadvantage on travel

How they travel








Digitally excluded and disadvantaged people have to navigate inaccessible services in many aspects of their lives, and they told us that travelling around London is one area where additional barriers are very visible. They can experience challenges with planning journeys, finding timetables, booking travel, and paying for tickets offline. As people who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged are also likely to have other accessibility needs, these barriers together make travel around London harder than it is for digitally included people.

Consequently, the digitally excluded and disadvantaged people we spoke to mostly make short and local journeys within their borough or local area, preferring to travel to familiar locations using accessible and familiar modes of transport, or walk / wheel. This aligns with findings from the quantitative phase, that digitally excluded and disadvantaged or people (83%) are less likely to use public transport than digitally included people (96%) and are more likely to not use any transport at all (4% vs 1%)⁶.

“ I’ve never made it to visit my friends in Battersea and Wandsworth because I don’t know where I’m going and I hate getting lost. I would rather they came here.

DIGITALLY EXCLUDED PERSON



	% of digitally excluded and disadvantaged people using this mode in London	How digitally excluded and disadvantaged people feel about this mode of transport
 Walking	60%	Whenever possible, this is a preferred method of travel.
 Bus	69%	The bus is the most popular mode of transport, as it is the most accessible, and having a driver you can talk to is reassuring. On the other hand, the bus is slow, and route planning is challenging to do with only offline information.
 Underground	58%	There is a general feeling that the Underground goes wrong more often than other modes of transport, and finding information is challenging. Underground maps are often overwhelming, staff are not always nearby, and being underground with no signal most of the time means it is harder to contact people for support. Many stations are not step-free and having to use stairs or rely on lifts (which may be broken) puts many people off using the Underground without being able to research their journey first.
 Overground	33%	Being above ground means it is easier to contact people and visualise a journey. However, the Overground shares many barriers with the Underground around staff availability and clarity of information.
 Rail	21%	Rail is more likely to be used for unfamiliar journeys. Ticketing and pricing is more complicated and daunting for many, so the option to buy tickets in person is essential for digitally excluded and disadvantaged people.
 Taxis	29%	Taxis are generally accessible and being able to make a direct journey is a real positive, but the expense and the impossibility to book parking permits offline means they are rarely used by the people we spoke to.
 Personal Vehicles	13%	The cost of buying, maintaining and parking a personal vehicle is prohibitive.

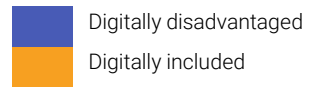
Red font = used significantly less often by digitally excluded and disadvantaged people compared to those who are digitally included
Green font = used significantly more often by digitally excluded and disadvantaged people compared to those who are digitally included

Q5. Which of the following methods of transport, if any, do you use to get around London? Base: All digitally disadvantaged or excluded respondents (153), All digitally included respondents (956)

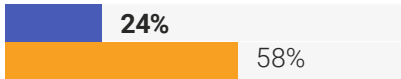
Journey planning and travel assistance

Digitally excluded and disadvantaged Londoners use fewer tools to help them travel around London than digitally included people. For instance, digitally excluded and disadvantaged people are much less likely to use apps:

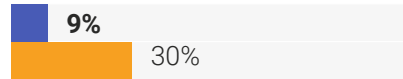
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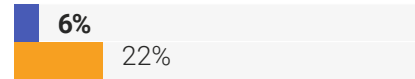
A maps app



A travel planning app



Tfl Go app



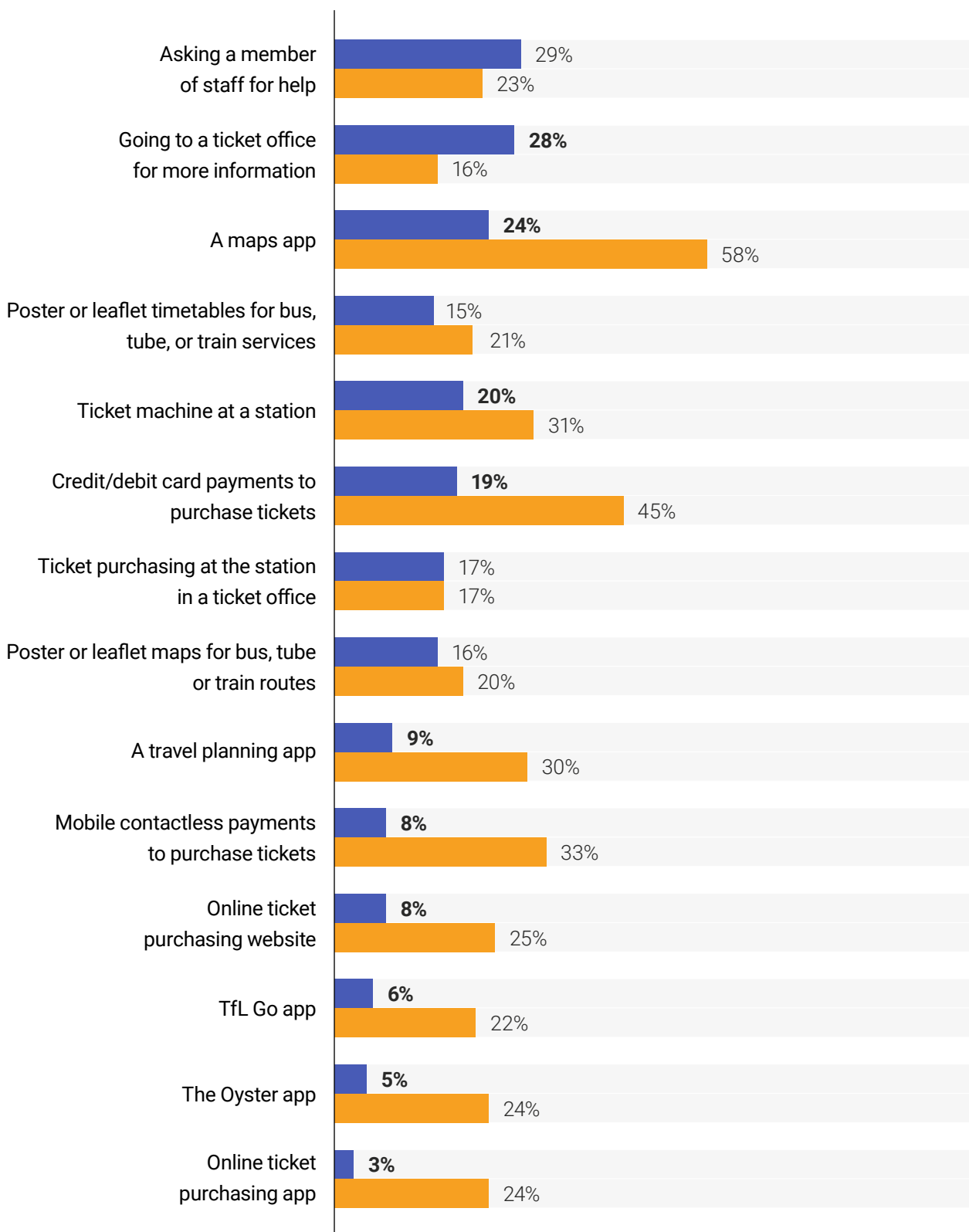
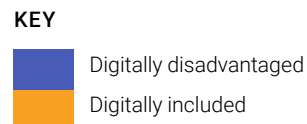
Bold numbers show significantly lower use amongst the digitally disadvantaged compared to digitally included people.

Q6. Which of the following, if any, do you use to assist in your travelling around London? Excluding those who code none of these
 Base: All digitally disadvantaged respondents (113), all digitally included respondents (923)

Consequently, offline sources of information are critical for digitally excluded and disadvantaged people. For instance, they are more likely to go to a ticket office for more information (28% vs 16% for the digitally included). It is worth noting that these offline sources are also important for digitally included people (23%) who are just as likely to ask a member of staff for help as digitally excluded and disadvantaged people (29%)⁷.



Forms of assistance used to travel around London



Bold numbers show significantly different use amongst the digitally disadvantaged compared to digitally included people.

Q6. Which of the following, if any, do you use to assist in your travelling around London? Excluding those who code none of these
 Base: All digitally disadvantaged respondents (113), all digitally included respondents (923)

However, since digitally excluded and disadvantaged people face many barriers to travel in London, they often told us they have low confidence and experience heightened stress and anxiety when travelling. This means that information needs to be provided in multiple formats to ensure accessibility for everyone. Whilst travelling, digitally excluded and disadvantaged people are likely to receive information in various ways:



TfL staff are vital in ensuring that digitally excluded and disadvantaged people have access to transport. The people we spoke to told us how various types of staff help them plan their journeys, with paying, and to stay confident whilst travelling. The staff most encountered are bus drivers, Tube station staff and staff working on accessible support services or dial-a-ride. However, staff availability can also be limited over weekends, late at night and at certain stations.



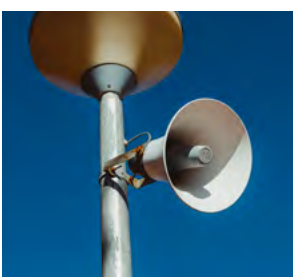
Written information at bus stops and stations is essential and is accessible for most digitally excluded and disadvantaged people. However, the information is sometimes difficult to understand since it is not consistent across modes of transport and stations. Complex information such as maps and routes are challenging for many, as the writing is small and the information is very dense.



The TfL phone line is essential as a fully offline service offering valuable guidance on route planning and payment. It is especially important for people with a limited support network. However, awareness of the service is low amongst the people we spoke to, and the potential charges can put people off calling. The helpline also does not always provide accurate accessibility information.



Tube help points act as a backup solution if there are no staff available on the platform and mean people can avoid taking lifts or stairs to access help. However, the help points are inaccessible for many Disabled people, particularly wheelchair users. The microphone and speaker are hard to use and may be at the wrong height for some. The call also does not always direct to station staff but goes to a call centre instead who can have little station specific knowledge.



Information over loudspeakers can be hard to hear and understand, and is not accessible to all. The information provided is not suitable for all passengers, and rarely includes information about accessibility which is essential for some passengers.



Those who require TfL accessible support services highlight how important these services are for them, especially if they are travelling alone. However, accessing these services is especially challenging for digitally excluded and disadvantaged people.

Most of the booking process for accessible support is done online, and the booking system is hard to use and understand with overwhelming amounts of information included.

This support is not always reliable at stations which means people have to turn to strangers, or risk getting stranded at inaccessible stations – which is especially challenging for digitally excluded and disadvantaged people who may not be able to go online to find information during their journey.

Types of journeys taken by digitally excluded and disadvantaged individuals

Shorter journeys typically feel comfortable and straightforward. These types of journeys are most often made by bus and require little to no planning. Relying upon local knowledge and memory means people are usually able to ‘turn up’ to the stop or station they want to depart from and wait. Those who are digitally disadvantaged – as opposed to excluded – may have checked for information online to plan when to leave home to reduce their waiting time.

Even on a familiar journey which goes as expected, there are points which risk impacting the experience



Walk to nearby bus stop and wait for the first bus

Feel some anxiety over the journey



Use Freedom Pass or Oyster card to pay



Travel

Need to be alert for bus stop closures or diversions



Use knowledge or visual cues to get off at the stop



Make the same journey in reverse to come home

Need to rely on memory or offline visual cues



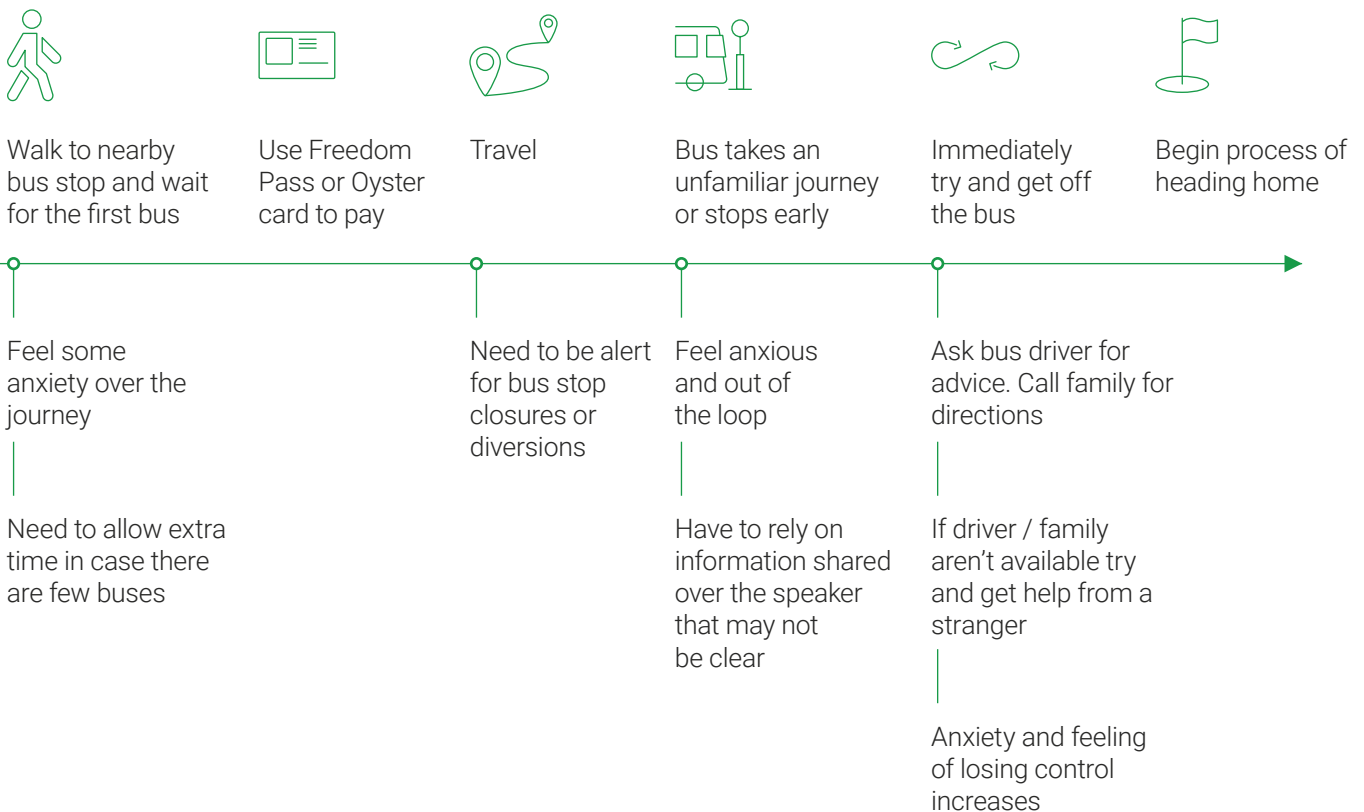
Arrive at destination

“ If I was doing a new journey I would get [my husband] to come along and help me before I had to do it alone. I would try, but I would want to go with someone else first.

DIGITALLY EXCLUDED PERSON

Longer journeys can be more daunting and require more time and preparation. This is due to the modes of transport used, available information not always being accessible and there being a greater risk of disruption. Planning an unfamiliar journey usually requires support from friends, family or TfL staff – for instance by visiting a Tube station in advance. When it comes to travelling, digitally excluded and disadvantaged people reported preferring to travel with a friend or family member rather than alone. There can also be a preference for familiar routes or modes of transport, even if it makes the journey longer – for instance, by taking multiple buses rather than a Tube journey. Throughout the journey, they rely on memorised directions, instructions shared via text messages from friends and family and advice from staff.

When the unexpected happens, it causes significant disruption and is very impactful





Disruption and changes during the journey are particularly daunting for digitally excluded and disadvantaged people. Compared to people who are more online, digitally excluded people are more likely to rely on memory or physical maps, so changes and unfamiliar surroundings are harder to navigate. With online services less accessible, being in new surroundings can make them feel vulnerable as they are so reliant on information available from staff, signposting at their current stop or platform, and members of the public.

People who need step-free access face an additional challenge as offline sources are unlikely to share up to date information about accessibility or live information on lift closures. Trying to find a new route requires talking to TfL staff, who may not

have fully accurate or up to date information and cannot always access full information on accessible routes.

For many people, disruption means turning back and giving up on their journey. This is especially the case for Disabled people and people experiencing other barriers to travel. Experiencing disruption – and the effort of getting back on track – had a long-lasting impact on the people we spoke to. Those who have experienced disruption are often put off making the same journey again or using that mode of transport. They worry that it is unreliable or that disruption (i.e., a closed bus stop or diversion) would last longer in time. As digitally excluded and disadvantaged people, information about such disruptions is not accessible or easy to find.

MALCOLM, DIGITALLY DISADVANTAGED

Malcolm, 57, travels occasionally, taking the bus to Victoria coach station to visit his family in another city. He also visits his sister in London and gets there by taking two or three different buses.

His eyes hurt when he looks at screens or small writing, so when travelling, instead he focuses on following the journey he remembers. Without accessible information to help him navigate, Malcom cannot make unfamiliar journeys. He does not remember ever making a new journey. Malcolm's main priority is his mental health, which means he will not put himself in situations that might cause him anxiety. If anything goes wrong while he travels, he heads straight home the way he came.

“ If something goes wrong, my whole world crumbles. I wouldn't know what to do [...] I would have to leave to avoid stress, so I know I wouldn't be going.

CHLOE, DIGITALLY DISADVANTAGED

Chloe, 33, uses a wheelchair. To ensure she can get around on public transport she plans ahead as much as possible. She has lived in London for the past eleven years so has a good understanding of which modes of transport and stations are accessible to her. When there is disruption – for instance, an Underground train terminating at a platform without step-free access, or a lift being broken – she finds there is rarely information available about accessibility. This requires her to find a member of staff, and as the information points are not accessible to her and staff are rarely on the platform, she often has to rely on a member of the public to help.

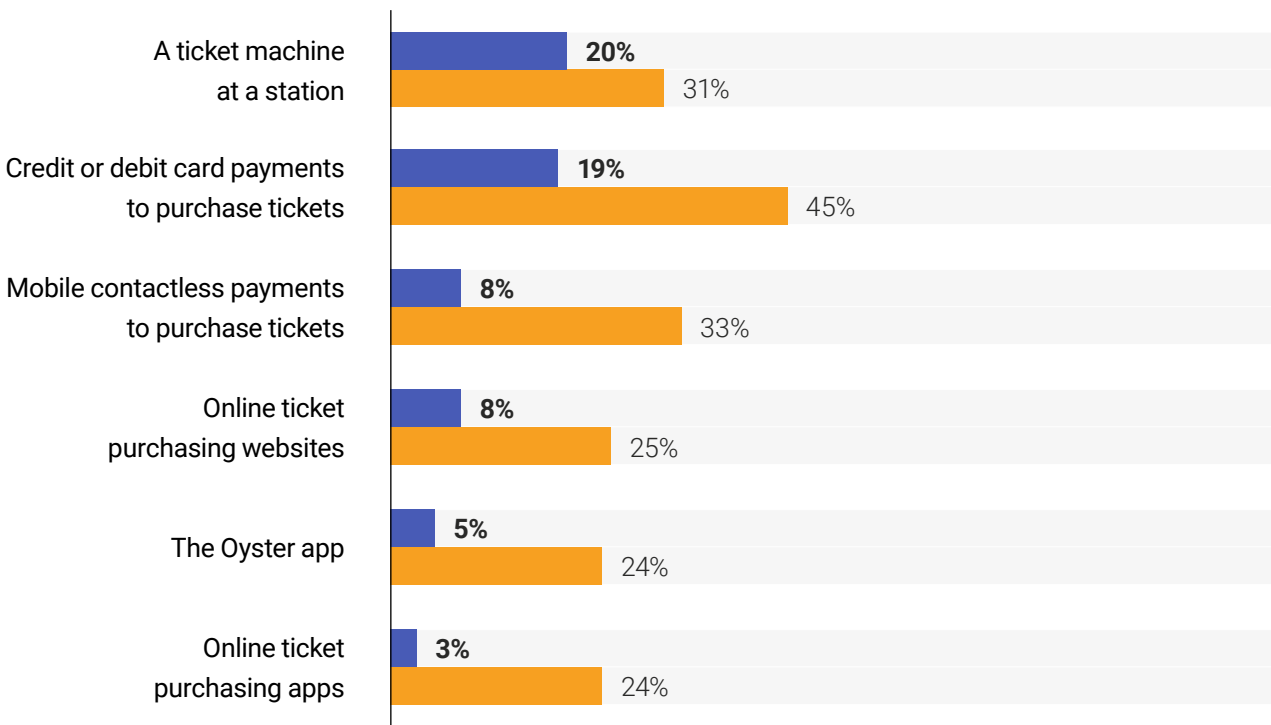
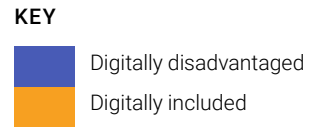
“ There's no information for me, I just have to look out for the wheelchair logo but that's it.

Paying for transport

When it comes to paying for transport, there are distinct differences between those who are digitally included and those who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged. Digitally disadvantaged people are more likely to say they do not make online payments (30%) than the digitally included (8%). As such, apps (36% vs 80%) and cashless payments (27% vs 58%) are a lot less popular with digitally excluded and disadvantaged people.

This is reflected in differences in the way people pay for public transport around London.

Forms of paying for travel around London (excluding cash)



Bold numbers show significantly lower use amongst the digitally disadvantaged compared to digitally included people.

Q6. Which of the following, if any, do you use to assist in your travelling around London? Excluding those who code none of these
 Base: All digitally disadvantaged respondents (113), all digitally included respondents (923)

Instead, the people we spoke to generally paid for public transport with their travel passes, such as Freedom Pass, 60+ Oyster or Disabled Persons Freedom Pass. Because digitally excluded and disadvantaged people are more likely to be older and Disabled, they are also likely to be eligible for travel passes.



Travel passes are an invaluable tool for many as they allowed them to travel freely without worrying about the cost of their journey. However, certain aspects of travel passes are inaccessible for digitally excluded and disadvantaged people:



Many are unsure about the limitations of their Freedom Pass or gave conflicting answers on the times they can use it, the transport methods they can use it on and the area it applies to – and are unsure where to find this information offline.



Applying for the pass can be challenging for digitally excluded and disadvantaged people as the process often requires going online, meaning support is required to complete the process.

Experiences with Oyster cards are very positive, and they allow people to be more flexible, whether they used a travel pass or not. The people we spoke to tend to top up their Oyster cards in corner shops using either cash or card. This is found to be a straightforward process and is particularly valued by those who rely heavily or exclusively on cash payments. However, there is a lack of clarity around the cost of a journey on an Oyster card, which is hard to estimate ahead of time without online information, meaning digitally excluded and disadvantaged people can find it hard to plan around.

Ticket machines are often found to be inaccessible and hard to use. The screens can be confusing and hard to use or read. People with travel concessions need to click through many screens which adds to the complexity and inaccessibility of the machines. The machines are also inaccessible for people who use wheelchairs as the screens are too high. In addition, ticket machines may require card payments, which can be a challenge for some digitally excluded and disadvantaged people who are not comfortable using cards.

CAROLINE, DIGITALLY EXCLUDED

Caroline, 65, has recently received her 65+ Freedom Pass which allows her to travel for free. This has had a positive impact on her life. However, the process meant that her daughter had to put her application in for her and needed to make multiple attempts at her application. She is responsible for paying for her grandchildren's travel payments when they go around London. She has tried to get children's Oyster cards for her grandchildren but the process is all online. She has attempted to fill them in in the past, but the online forms were too complicated and she couldn't get the help she needed from her family. For group outings with her grandchildren, she goes to the corner shop ahead of time to top up 5 adult Oyster cards, which is significantly more expensive.

I always have to pay the adult fare for them because the children's pass is all online and none of them will do it for me. So when we go for a day out, it's five adult fares.

The impact of increasing use of digital in London Transport

Digitally excluded and disadvantaged people are more likely to feel that the increasing use of technology within London transport has made it more difficult (37% vs 11%) to get around London⁸. The people we spoke to are concerned about the increasing use of technology for travel in London – they feel that as the use of digital tools increases, other alternatives are disappearing. Some are particularly concerned about this due to reports about TfL's funding being cut.

The people we spoke to want to know that offline and in-person options would remain in the long-term, so they could still be able to independently plan, pay for and make journeys around London. Offline options for payment and information are key to ensuring travel in London is accessible to digitally excluded and disadvantaged people:



Digitally disadvantaged people are more likely to agree that they prefer to buy physical tickets from a member of staff rather than using an app, website, or machine (42%) than the digitally included (24%)⁹.



Digitally disadvantaged people are more likely to agree that they prefer to ask for help from someone rather than look up information on an app or website (37%) than the digitally included (23%)¹⁰.

As the use of technology increases in transport, people told us they feel further pushed to go online and encountering barriers to going online generates feelings of inadequacy and shame. Those who feel they already face significant barriers to travel are very concerned that the loss of any offline options – and particularly the presence of staff – means their lives would be more limited. This concern is strongest for those who find transport already inaccessible, outside of digital exclusion. This is often people living with physical, sensory and mental health conditions.

On the other hand, ensuring that transport is more accessible to digitally excluded and disadvantaged people means that more people will be able to travel confidently, and more regularly. Across our interviews, the people we spoke to felt they would do more and go to more places if they knew that information, payment and support from staff would be available to them throughout their journey. The offline resources that digitally excluded and disadvantaged people rely on to get around London are also used by digitally included people, so making these tools more accessible would benefit travel in London as a whole.



Things moving online makes it harder for people, you're left in the dark and you don't know what to expect. You have to take one step at a time because you don't want to make mistakes.

DIGITALLY EXCLUDED PERSON

Recommendations

Equal fares whether purchased online or in person

- 1 Transport providers should commit, where possible, to make sure that those who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged are not financially penalised when they travel, for example by ensuring fares and tickets available online are also available to buy in other ways at the same price and on the same terms.

Staff visibility and assistance

- 2 Train companies and TfL should make sure staff are in easy to find, and accessible locations and are confident to support people. Staff are one of the main ways that digitally excluded and disadvantaged people seek assistance. This can include staff selling tickets to passengers and providing information on journeys.
- 3 Where train companies are seeking to reduce ticket office opening hours or staff levels, the impact on those who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged must be considered and published in an Equality Impact Assessment. Other tools such as the Digital Exclusion Risk Index can be used to inform decisions and gain further insight into how many people are at risk of being negatively impacted.

Providing support and mentoring services

- 4 All train companies should implement a travel mentoring service that supports people who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged. This could include running workshops and holding drop-in sessions on how to use digital travel solutions and gain the tools needed to become confident, independent travellers.
- 5 TfL should update and regularly assess their travel mentoring service so that it continues to support those who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged. This will help them understand digital travel solutions and gain the tools needed to become confident, independent travellers.

Engagement and consultation on accessibility

- 6 When planning changes, transport authorities, operators and policing bodies need to work with specialists in digital inclusion and impacted groups to make sure information is as accessible as possible. This includes:
 - a. Having a collaborative, co-production approach to finding solutions.
 - b. Consulting groups with lived experience when training staff, to help them better understand the needs of those who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged, and to help develop solutions and to support them in a non-judgmental way.
Having a collaborative, co-production approach to finding solutions.

Providing more accessible services and resources

- 7 Transport operators should make sure they are providing services and resources in a way that is easy to use and more accessible. This will reduce the risk of digital exclusion and disadvantage, and, where it does occur, mitigate the impacts. This can include:
 - a. Providing accessible ticket machines across the network that can sell all tickets.
Considerations should include the height of machines, audio-visual options, and the option to pay by cash as well as card.
 - b. Making sure physical posters, maps and timetables use accessible text that has clear information which can be easily read rather than only directing people via a QR code to a website containing the information.
 - c. Making sure all information online (website or app) is available in various accessible formats, including Braille, Audio, Large Print, Easy Read, Accessible PDFs and Word Docs, Tactile versions, and British Sign Language (BSL).
 - d. Providing free Wi-Fi at stations to allow people to access information online from their own devices when they might not have data.

Recommendations

Maintaining non-digital options before and during travel

- 8 Transport authorities and operators should maintain non digital options to allow freedom of travel for digitally excluded and disadvantaged people, wherever possible. This includes:
 - a. Maintaining cash options where they currently exist. This includes cash top ups of Oyster cards, and the option to buy tickets at the station through a member of staff or at an accessible ticket machine.
 - b. Providing travel information such as timetables, consultations and notifications of route changes in as many formats as possible, including posters, leaflets, maps and audio announcements.
 - c. Information should be placed where people would expect to find it, such as ticket offices, station entrances and exits, bus stops, and shops where people may top up their Oyster cards.
 - d. All transport authorities, operators and policing bodies should provide non-digital information and guidance on how to report a crime
 - e. Exploring providing easy-to-use, accessible machines at stations that can help people find information about their journeys, including timetables and routes, without requiring them to have their own device.

Further investigation

- 9 Transport authorities, operators and the Department of Transport should commission more research into digital exclusion and disadvantage to explore in more detail who is impacted by the issue and how, and what measures are needed to make sure the digital exclusion gap is closed. This should then be used to inform future strategy and best practice across the transport industry.



Appendix

Full list of activities used to define narrow internet usage:

1. Online banking or paying bills
2. Paying for council tax or another local council service
3. Looking for public services information on government sites
4. Finding information for work/ business/ school/ college/ university
5. Looking or applying for jobs
6. Finding information for leisure time
7. Completing government processes
8. Signing a petition or using a campaigning website
9. Using streamed audio services
10. Listening to live, catch-up or on-demand radio through a website or app
11. Watching TV programmes/ films/ content
12. Watching or posting livestream videos

References

1. Yonder Consulting Quantitative Research 2022. Base: All digitally disadvantaged or excluded respondents (153)
2. Yonder Consulting Quantitative Research 2022. Base: All respondents without a smartphone (128)
3. Ofcom Technology tracker 2022. QM2. Are any of the phones in your household a smartphone? Base: Those who have a mobile phone in the household (3865), 55+ (1,573), 65+ (882), DE (1,154), Not working (1,558), London (360), Any disability (690), Mobility (275), Vision (104), Hearing (155)
4. Yonder Consulting Quantitative Research 2022. Q4. Which of the following devices, if any, do you have access to and use? Base: All digitally disadvantaged or excluded respondents (153)
5. Yonder Consulting Quantitative Research 2022. Q2. In which locations do you access the internet? This could be on a mobile device such as a smartphone or laptop, or it could be a desktop computer. Base: All digitally disadvantaged (113), All digitally included respondents (956)
6. Yonder Consulting Quantitative Research 2022. Q5. Which of the following methods of transport, if any, do you use to get around London? Base: All digitally disadvantaged or excluded respondents (153), All digitally included respondents (956)
7. Yonder Consulting Quantitative Research 2022. Q6. Which of the following, if any, do you use to assist in your travelling around London? Excluding those who code none of these. Base: All digitally disadvantaged respondents (113), all digitally included respondents (923)
8. Yonder Consulting Quantitative Research 2022. Q8. Over the past few years there have been more options made available to use online services (e.g. apps, websites), ticket machines and digital payments when using London transport. At the same time, some non-digital options have been reduced, e.g. through ticket office closures or reduced ticket office hours. Overall, to what extent do you feel that these changes have made it easier, or more difficult, for you to get around London? Base: All digitally disadvantaged and excluded respondents (153), all digitally included respondents (956)
9. Yonder Consulting Quantitative Research 2022. Q7. [ONLINE] To what extent do you agree that the following statements apply to you? / [TELEPHONE] I'm going to read out a list of statements, can you tell me if you agree strongly.....? Please note, by 'travel app' we mean smartphone apps for ticket purchasing or journey planning: I prefer to buy physical tickets from a member of staff rather than using an app, website or machine Base: All digitally disadvantaged respondents (113)
10. Yonder Consulting Quantitative Research 2022. Q7. [ONLINE] To what extent do you agree that the following statements apply to you? / [TELEPHONE] I'm going to read out a list of statements, can you tell me if you agree strongly.....? Please note, by 'travel app' we mean smartphone apps for ticket purchasing or journey planning: I prefer to ask for help from someone rather than look up information on an app or website. Base: All digitally disadvantaged respondents (113)

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About Yonder Consulting

Yonder is a consultancy that combines research, consulting and innovation to help clients such as London TravelWatch to deliver impact.

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