



Comments on the DRD report of the results from the Attitudes of Disabled and Older People to Public Transport Survey

(May 2015)

Imtac is committed to make information about our work accessible. Details of how we can do this and how to contact us are included on the next page.

Making our information accessible

As an organisation of and for disabled people and older people Imtac recognises that the way information is provided can be a barrier to accessing services and participation in public life. We are committed to providing information about our work in formats that best suit the needs of individuals.

All our documents are available in hard copy in 14pt type size as standard. We also provide word and pdf versions of our documents on our website – www.imtac.org.uk. In addition we will provide information in a range of other formats. These formats include:

- Large print
- Audio cassette or CD
- Daisy disc
- Braille
- Electronic copies on disc or via email in PDF or word
- Easy read

We will also provide information about our work in other languages if you require this.

If you would like this publication in any of the formats listed above or if you have any other information requirements please contact:

Michael Lorimer
Imtac
Titanic Suites
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast BT2 8FE

Telephone/Textphone: 028 9072 6020

Fax: 028 9024 5500

Email: info@imtac.org.uk

About us

Imtac is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Our role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

Our aim is to ensure that older people and disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Regional Development (DRD).

General Comments

Imtac welcomes the publication of the report presenting the results of the Attitudes of Disabled and Older People to Public Transport survey. The survey and report represents an example of positive collaboration between Imtac and the Department for Regional Development (hereafter the Department), something the Committee is keen to build on in the future. The Committee welcomes the acknowledgement in the report of the key role Imtac played in the design, distribution and collection of data in relation to the survey. Given the key role played by Imtac some members feel that Imtac's logo should have been included on the cover page of the report.

We would commend Central Statistics and Research Branch (CSRB) for producing an excellent report. The Committee also welcomes the opportunity to provide the Department with some initial comments on the report. Imtac thanks CSRB for providing further information about the survey results which has helped in developing this paper. We believe that the information provided in the report, supplemented by the comments of Imtac, provides an excellent evidence base for the Department in setting the priorities for the proposed Accessible Transport Strategy 2025.

General comments on the survey

Imtac recognises the limitations of "snowball sampling" highlighted in the report. However the report does balance this by recognising the significant challenges presented when carrying out any research involving disabled people and older people. Taking this into account the methodology represents the best available option.

The Committee is pleased with the level of response achieved through engagement with both the older and disabled people's sectors. Given the target audience of the survey was older and disabled people we are pleased that the results show a significant level of participation from both groupings. We are also pleased that responses to Q12 indicate that the respondents broadly reflect disabled people in Northern Ireland in terms of impairment. We are pleased to have received responses across a range of ages; however the Committee is concerned about lower than

expected levels of response from younger people aged under 25 and people aged over 70.

The results of the survey do show that nearly 25% of respondents were aged over 70. The results of the survey also show that 47% of these respondents indicated they had a disability/impairment. We know from other research that levels of impairment increase markedly with age, particularly in people aged 75 and over. Although on first reading the response from people aged over 70 appears adequate, reflecting the numbers of this age group in the general population, Imtac is concerned that voice of people most likely to experience barriers to travel because of impairment has not been fully heard through the survey. There are many potential reasons for this including for example the methodology used which made online responses easier. However, this mode of response is less likely to be used by people aged over 70. It may also be the case that this age grouping is more likely to experience social exclusion and therefore be “hard to reach”.

The report acknowledges that some of the age bands between 16 and 59 achieved only small samples. Imtac is aware that this applied particularly to people at the lower end of the age bands. In many ways this should not be surprising, given the prevalence of impairment/disability within the general population is lowest amongst these bands. However as with people aged over 70, people aged 25 and below are likely to have specific travel issues which may not be fully reflected in the results of the survey.

The findings of survey suggest gaps in the current research. Imtac believes more work is required to address the evidence gap relating to the travel issues for younger people aged 25 and under as well as older people aged over 75. The Committee would like to discuss with the Department whether the final ATS 2025 could include specific measures to address these gaps in our knowledge.

Comments on the survey results

Q1. What type of transport do you use most often?

There is nothing overly surprising about the findings of this question. Imtac would make the following comments:

- Like society in general many disabled people and older people do rely on the car for mobility and the continued importance of the car should be recognised in any future ATS. Unsurprisingly reliance on the car is higher in rural areas. The survey does suggest, however, that car usage is lower amongst older and disabled people than compared to the population in general. Although not directly comparable DRD statistics¹ suggest 72% of journeys made by the general population are by car compared to 49% of the survey respondents.
- The survey findings also suggest that disabled people and older people rely more on public transport than the general population. The results show that 26% of respondents rely on buses and 6% on the trains as their main form of transport. The Travel Survey indicates that only 5% and 2% of the journeys made by the general population are by bus and rail.
- The survey indicates that men are more likely to drive than women but that women are more likely to use the bus.
- The survey results also indicate that disabled and older people rely on taxis more than the general population. 5% of respondents use taxis as the main form of transport, only 2% of journeys by the general population are made by taxi.
- Finally the survey highlights that although used by a relatively small number of people, alternative services such as DAT's and rural community transport are more likely to be used by disabled people. This suggests a continued need for these services.

Q.2 How often do you use public transport?

Again there is nothing in the findings that is overly surprising. Imtac would make the following comments:

- As with the findings to the previous question the results suggest that significant numbers of disabled and older people are using

¹ Travel Survey for Northern Ireland Headline Report 2011-2013

public transport regularly. The findings should be seen as a positive indication of improvements made over the past decade with almost 50% of respondents indicating they use public transport at least once a week.

- The survey results do indicate that, unsurprisingly, rurality does restrict the frequency of public transport usage.

Q3 In the past 12 months, did any of the following reasons make it difficult for you or prevent you from using public transport?

Imtac is not surprised that when results are considered overall issues around service provision and levels were identified as most important. This would be similar to findings of similar surveys around public transport conducted amongst members of the general public, including older people and disabled people. These issues were also identified as most important for disabled people in a previous attitudinal survey² undertaken on behalf of DPTAC in England and Wales.

The results, however, do show considerable differences between the responses of disabled and non-disabled people. Figure 4 provides a breakdown of difficulties encountered by disabled people compared to non-disabled people. These figures clearly indicate that disabled people still encounter many more barriers to travel than their non-disabled counterparts. By way of example disabled people are 7 times more likely to have difficulty getting on and off vehicles than non-disabled people, 3 times more likely to have difficulty getting to public transport and twice as likely to have difficulty accessing information. Conversely non-disabled are 3 times more likely to cite nothing in response to the question.

In rural areas proximity to services, the level of service and the need to make connections are unsurprisingly bigger issues than in urban areas.

Based on the findings to this question Imtac would make the following comments:

² [Attitudes of disabled people to public transport Nov2000 - Jan 2001 \(DPTAC\)](#)

- Despite investment and the previous ATS the survey suggests disabled people (and to a lesser extent older people) continue to face significant barriers to using public transport .
- Based on the results and feedback provided in Appendix2 key barriers include physical access to infrastructure, accessing information, poor customer service and issues around confidence.
- Based on the results there is clearly a need for revised ATS focusing on addressing the above barriers.

Q4 Access to information and public transport

In the main the responses to this question are not surprising. People use a variety of ways to get information about services but mainly use the Translink website, printed timetables or the Translink Contact Centre. Imtac would make the following additional comments:

- Getting information from staff, either at stations or on vehicles is used by 37% of people who responded and is used more by disabled people. This highlights the importance of trained and knowledgeable transport staff.
- Table 4 indicates differences in how people access information depending on age. Older people aged 60 and over rely more on printed timetables than people aged 16-59. Online information is used most by people aged 16-59 and least by people aged 70 and over. These differences need to be considered in the future provision of information about public transport.
- Information in accessible formats is important to a considerable minority of respondents. Feedback from survey comments suggest improvements could be made in this area.
- Additional comments (appendix 2) highlight common problems raised with Imtac around accessing information and particular issues relating to the Translink website.

Q5. Measures that would encourage travel on public transport more frequently

As with Q3 it is unsurprising that improvements that most members of the general public would wish to see feature most prominently in survey responses. Similarly the survey is most revealing when responses of disabled people and non-disabled people are compared (Figure 8) and it is clear disabled people are much more likely to support interventions that are designed to improve access to services including better information, audio and visual information, better trained staff, vehicles that are more accessible and more priority seating. Previous comments made under Q3 are equally relevant to Q5.

Q6 & 7 Concessionary fares

Q6 indicates a high level of awareness of the Concessionary Fares Scheme and a high level of entitlement identified by respondents. A small number of people indicated that they did not know about concessionary fares. Figures supplied by CRSB to Imtac indicates that the vast majority of these people (88%) were aged under 60. Anecdotally Imtac has been told by stakeholders that awareness of Half-fare Smartpasses is lower than that of the older people's Smartpasses. Although a statistically small sample the results would appear to support this.

Q7 reflects a strong majority of respondents who felt that the Scheme encouraged them to use public transport. This is a positive vindication of the benefits of the Concessionary Fares Scheme and further reinforces the strong support for the scheme, particularly amongst older people. However around 100 people did not feel the scheme encourages them to use public transport. Figures supplied by CRSB to Imtac indicate that the majority of people who answered no to this question are disabled people (68%). People under the age of 60 were most likely to answer no (46%). Surprisingly given issues of service levels in rural areas, people who answered no to the question were more likely to live in an urban area (68%) as opposed to a rural area (32%). Feedback from

stakeholders to Imtac in the past suggests that continued problems accessing public transport experienced by disabled people limit the benefits of concessionary fares. Disabled people under the age of 60 have also told us there can be limited financial benefits using the Half-fare Smartpass.

Qs 8 & 9 Gender and age

The results of the survey in relation to gender and age are not surprising. Given the numbers of older people taking part a higher number of female respondents is not a surprise.

Qs 10, 11&12 Disability/impairment

Questions around disabled people and impairment were the most difficult to agree during discussions between CSRB and Imtac. We recommended that the Department look at a social rather a medical model approach to these questions recognising that the design of transport services, the wider environment and society excluded disabled people rather than any specific impairment. Reluctantly Imtac accepted that to be comparable with other research CSRB had to use current Office for National Statistics (ONS) Guidelines. Imtac did ask, however, that rather than respondents who responded no to Q10 being directed straight to Q13, a response was sought also Qs11&12.

Imtac accepts the methodology used by CSRB to calculate the number of disabled people who responded to the survey meets current guidelines. However we believe that this has resulted in an under-representation of the levels of response from disabled people. In coming to this conclusion we would put forward the following rationale. During the survey Imtac undertook a number of face to face and telephone surveys with disabled people and older people. During these interviews a number of respondents answered negatively to Q10 and did not respond to Q11. This was mainly due to two reasons (1) disabled people who did not feel their impairment was reflected in the wording of Q10 and (2) older and other people who do not consider themselves as disabled people. By way of example a person who has been visually impaired from a young age did not consider their impairment a condition or illness so answered Q10 negatively.

When respondents were asked Q12, specifically relating to impairment, both older people and disabled were more willing to share this information. This is born out in the results for Q12, whilst around 350 answered “yes” to Q11, 435 respondents answered Q12 indicating that they had one or more of the impairments listed. By using Q12 as a measure of the percentage of people who responded with one or more impairments is 66%, compared to the Departments calculation of 53% with a disability.

Imtac acknowledges measuring the numbers of disabled people responding to any survey is complex and difficult. We acknowledge that CRSB has used the current guidelines from the ONS and Office for Disability Issues in calculating the numbers of disabled people responding to the survey. However the Committee feels that the anomalies between responses to Qs 10,11 & 12 suggest that this calculation under-represents the number of disabled people. For Imtac this suggests that there is a need for current national guidelines to be reviewed.

Q13 Aids and Equipment

Imtac specifically asked for the inclusion of this question in the survey. The information supplied should be useful for informing the design of transport services. By way of example the survey illustrates what we suspected already that more and more disabled and older people are using powerchairs and mobility scooters. This has implications for both the design and operation of public transport services in the future.

Q14 Rural Urban split

During discussions with CSRB Imtac had raised concerns about whether respondents would be willing to provide postcode data. We are pleased that whilst some respondents didn't provide this information most did. The split seems to broadly reflect the population make-up of Northern Ireland.

Appendix2: Additional Comments

Appendix2 contains useful additional information on specific issues encountered by people using services. All of the issues raised are familiar to Imtac and should be added to the qualitative feedback already received by the Department during pre-consultation.

Conclusions – Informing the ATS 2025

Imtac believes the survey has been an extremely beneficial exercise and provides the Department with an evidence base when developing the proposed ATS 2025. The survey has told us that disabled people and older people rely more on public transport (and other forms of transport) than the wider population. The survey has also told us that, despite improvements over the past decade, disabled people (and to a lesser extent older people), still experience significant barriers to using public transport. The survey has told us key areas which need to be addressed by the ATS 2025. These include improved infrastructure (including the pedestrian environment) and physical access to public transport, improved access to information and the promotion of public transport and concessions, the need for improved customer service and better customer experiences and the need to provide better support for people to use services. Imtac believes these barriers should form the strategic framework of the ATS 2025.

Over the past few years Imtac has produced papers³ highlighting these issues and recommending solutions. We look forward to working with the Department and others to develop through the ATS 2025 achievable actions that will begin to address these barriers.

The survey has also highlighted many other issues. We already knew that many people found the Concessionary Fares Scheme in Northern Ireland beneficial. The survey has confirmed this. The survey has confirmed specific difficulties faced by people living in rural areas and also highlighted the difficulty in engaging with specific groups,

³ See for example ["All Aboard - an assessment of the current accessibility of public transport in Northern Ireland \(2013\)"](#), ["Assessing the impact of the Accessible Transport Strategy on the provision of information about transport in Northern Ireland \(2014\)"](#), ["Survey of disability training provision by transport providers in Northern Ireland \(2014\)"](#)

particularly older people most likely to have a disability and younger disabled people.

The survey has also highlighted that many people, particularly older people, have no difficulties using public transport. Imtac views this as positive development, an indication that the lives of older people in Northern Ireland are improving. It does, however, raise the question about whether the current remit of the ATS is still relevant. Should the focus of the ATS remain simply older and disabled people or should the new Strategy and subsequent action plans focus more generally on people across society who face the greatest barriers to accessing transport, recognising that disabled and older people will be two of the greatest beneficiaries?

One final lesson to be taken from the survey is the importance of engagement with older and disabled people when developing future strategy, policies and services. The survey is a good example of a government department being proactive. As part of our current work programme Imtac will develop recommendations around improving engagement in the future. We hope this will help the Department develop better and more effective solutions to issues faced by disabled people, older people and others.