

Reducing travel anxiety by making infrastructure and services more accessible

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This presentation

- The information presented here was displayed in a poster presented at the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting held In Washington DC in January 2020.
- The findings are from a survey on ‘Mental health and travel’ carried out by the author in the Summer of 2018.
- This presentation focuses on the impact of interventions to make infrastructure and services more accessible and so reduce travel anxiety.
- Further information can be obtained from the report shown on the final slide or by contacting the author.

Mental health

- Mental illnesses are health conditions that involve changes in emotion, thinking or behaviour (or a combination of these).
- They include anxiety, depression, agoraphobia and bipolar disorder.
- 26% of all adults in England have at least one mental illness according to the Health Survey for England 2014.
- A further 18% have experienced mental illness without being diagnosed.

The survey

- The questionnaire had 42 questions and used Opinio software.
- The survey was approved by UCL Research Ethics Committee.
- The link to the questionnaire was distributed using social media (mainly Twitter), websites and newsletters by 18 organisations and 3 individuals.
- 385 valid responses were received.
- There was reasonable representation of the population of England with mental illness in terms of age, gender and mental health condition.

The mental health of the respondents

Mental health condition	% of respondents
Anxiety	90
Depression	68
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	22
Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)	18
Agoraphobia	14
Bipolar disorder	8
Other	22

Number of respondents: 385.

Average number of conditions per respondent: 2.6.

Travel anxiety

- Because 90% of the respondents have one or more anxieties, this presentation will focus on ways of reducing travel anxiety by making infrastructure and services more accessible.
- The respondents were given a list of possible anxieties and asked to indicate which of these affected them.
- The percentages of respondents affected by each anxiety are shown on the next slide, grouped under five headings.

Causes of anxiety when traveling

% of respondents

Wayfinding and obtaining help	Feeling disorientated	48%
	Having to take decisions about where to go	37%
	Remembering where they are going to	20%
	Getting lost	39%
	Not being able to obtain help	35%
Interacting with staff and purchasing tickets	Having to talk to staff such as bus drivers	46%
	Using ticket machines	18%
	Handling money	14%
The nature of the journey	Failure of the bus, train or car	47%
	Finding suitable toilet facilities	40%
Interacting with fellow travelers	What other people think about me	69%
	Having to mix with strangers	67%
	How other people behave	52%
Internal feelings	Feeling claustrophobic and unable to escape	58%
	Feeling out of control	67%

Interventions to help reduce travel anxiety

- Various interventions can be used to make infrastructure and services more accessible and so reduce travel anxiety.
- In the survey, the respondents were asked whether some interventions would encourage them to travel more.
- Where the interventions apply to more than one mode, the numbers have been aggregated over the modes, with double counting removed to show the total increase in the numbers traveling.

The effects of the interventions

- The next ten slides show examples of interventions that might help address the anxiety for each of the five groups of travel anxieties and, in the following slide, the percentage of respondents who said that the intervention would encourage them to travel more.
- Interventions that may be relevant that were not included in questions about increasing travel are shown in *italics*.
- Many of the interventions would address several of the anxieties.

Interventions for improving wayfinding and obtaining help

Cause of anxiety	Transport intervention to address the anxiety
Feeling disorientated	Travel training Clearer bus or rail timetables and maps
Having to take decisions about where to go	Clearer websites Clearer information screens on board trains and buses
Remembering where they are going to	Better signposting on the street Better trained bus and railway staff <i>Wayfinding apps</i> <i>Passenger Assist schemes at railway stations</i>
Getting lost	More places to ask for help
Not being able to obtain help	Better trained bus and railway staff Better signposting on the street Being able to contact a member of staff in person when on the train

% of respondents who say they will travel more in response to interventions to improve wayfinding and obtaining help

	Bus	Train	Walk	Bus, train & walk
Clearer information screens on board trains and buses	50	37		57
Clearer bus or rail timetables and maps	47	36		52
Better trained bus and railway staff	32	41		48
Being able to contact a member of staff in person when on the train		43		43
Travel training				38
Clearer websites	30	25		36
Better signposting on the street			23	23
More places to ask for help			18	18

Interventions for improving interactions with staff and purchasing tickets

Cause of anxiety	Transport intervention to address the anxiety
Having to talk to staff such as bus drivers	Better trained bus and railway staff
Handling money	Travel Assistance Cards Travel training
Using ticket machines	Travel training <i>Staffed ticket offices</i> <i>Better design of ticket machines</i>

% of respondents who say they will travel more in response to interventions to improve interactions with staff and purchasing tickets

	Bus	Train	Walk	Bus, train & walk
Better trained bus and railway staff	32	41		48
Travel training				38
Travel Assistance Cards	36			36

Interventions for addressing issues concerning the nature of the journey

Cause of anxiety	Transport intervention to address the anxiety
Failure of the bus, train or car	Better trained bus and railway staff Providing clear, relevant information
Finding suitable toilet facilities	Providing more toilet facilities <i>Better signposting of toilet facilities</i>

% of respondents who say they will travel more in response to interventions to improve the nature of the journey (transport failure and lack of toilets**)**

	Bus	Train	Walk	Bus, train & walk
Clearer information screens on board trains and buses	50	37		57
Better trained bus and railway staff	32	41		48
Being able to contact a member of staff in person when on the train		43		43
More toilet facilities	27	33	25	45

Interventions for improving interactions with fellow travelers

Cause of anxiety	Transport intervention to address the anxiety
What other people think about me	-
How other people behave	Better behavior by other travelers
Having to mix with strangers	<p>‘Please offer me a seat’ badge</p> <p><i>Providing more seats on trains and buses</i></p> <p><i>Reducing overcrowding</i></p>

% of respondents who say they will travel more in response to interventions to improve interactions with fellow travelers

	Bus	Train	Walk	Bus, train & walk
Better behavior by other travelers	51	49	43	67
'Please offer me a seat' badge				22

Interventions for addressing issues concerning internal feelings

Cause of anxiety	Transport intervention to address the anxiety
Feeling claustrophobic and unable to escape	Travel training Better trained bus and railway staff
Feeling out of control	More places to ask for help

% of respondents who say they will travel more in response to interventions to address issues concerning internal feelings

	Bus	Train	Walk	Bus, train & walk
Better trained bus and railway staff	32	41		48
Travel training				38
More places to ask for help			18	18

The impact of the interventions

- Providing clear information before and during travel would generate more travel by people with mental health conditions.
- Having well-trained staff on the system would also do so, because they could provide information, give reassurance and assist if the train or bus fails.
- The biggest area of anxiety when traveling is the need to interact with fellow travelers. If the behavior of other travelers could be improved this would encourage many more people to travel.

Conclusions

- A large proportion of travelers have anxieties when traveling caused by a range of factors.
- There are a range of interventions that would make infrastructure and services more accessible that could address these.
- The results of a survey show that these would increase the amount of travel.
- They may also increase revenue for operators.
- They should improve the quality of life for many people.

The results presented here are based on evidence in this report

It is available from:
<https://bit.ly/2lviXbs>

