



Let's Open Doors

A report into the impact of access refusals on guide dog owners in 2022



Executive Summary

An access refusal is when a guide dog owner is told that they cannot enter a business, access a service or is challenged about their entry because they have their dog with them. Refusals are nearly always against the law but they happen frequently. Inclusive practice around disability needs to be part of everyone's daily life. It's not just about access refusals themselves; it's about being made to feel welcome in society.

Note: links to references are within the document

A photograph showing a man in a light blue shirt and jeans walking a white guide dog on a leash on a city street. The scene is viewed through the open door of a car, with the car's interior and door frame visible in the foreground. The text "Open Doors for guide dogs. It's the law." is overlaid on the right side of the image.

*Open Doors
for guide dogs.
It's the law.*

Key messages

New research by Guide Dogs shows:

- Of 242 guide dog owners surveyed, **81%** report having experienced an access refusal
- Of those guide dog owners who report having had an access refusal, **73%** said that it occurred in the past 12 months¹
- 33 guide dog owners said they had experienced a refusal in a healthcare setting in the last 12 months
- Almost **50%** of guide dog owners responding to a question report changing their plans or restricting visits to some places because they are worried about being refused access²
- The majority of guide dog owners say that access refusals make them feel 'discriminated against', 'unsafe' and 'rejected'
- Attitudes towards the prospect of being refused access are mixed; the majority of guide dog owners said they are apprehensive but others said they felt confident to challenge refusals. However, they reported having to go to great lengths to educate businesses or try and avoid an access refusal
- Guide dog owners said that they often avoid places where they have experienced access refusals in the past; many report sticking to places which feel familiar
- Food and drink outlets were the most common sources of access refusals reported in our survey in the past 12 months³
- Covid introduced more barriers for people with sight loss. Many guide dog owners still feel anxious about using public services following the pandemic

**"My Guide dog is a working dog not a pet. I need her.
She is my eyes."**

Recommendations

Recommendations for government

The Government should legislate to end access refusals once and for all and ensure people with assistance dogs are able to live the lives they choose. Any new law on access refusals should:

- Have a clear process and be easy to follow;
- Have a meaningful penalty when access refusals do happen; and
- Include clear requirements for businesses.

Recommendations for businesses

In order to ensure that businesses do not illegally refuse access we recommend they:

- Ensure staff are trained to recognise assistance dogs;
- Have a good understanding of current equality legislation; and
- Have a policy in place that demonstrates their compliance with the current law. They must have a process in place for what to do in the event of an access refusal

Open Doors: guide dogs, access and inclusive public space

In England, Scotland and Wales, the Equality Act gives guide dog owners the right to enter most services, premises and vehicles with their dog. Legislation in Northern Ireland grants comparable rights.

Despite this, guide dog owners are being refused entry to many different public places. The consequences for guide dog owners are overwhelmingly negative: curtailed social lives, missed opportunities for healthcare and disheartening experiences of marginalisation.

Since 2015, Guide Dogs has been campaigning to make sure guide dog owners are treated fairly by businesses and public services. The 'Open Doors' campaign aims to end access refusals for people with guide dogs. We aim to educate the public, strengthen the law and empower guide dog owners to put an end to this form of discrimination.

In 2019, Guide Dogs published 'Access Denied: A report into the frequency and impact of access refusals on assistance dog owners in 2019'. In July 2022, we updated the research with 259 guide dog owners who participated in a survey to share their more recent experiences.

The research generated statistics that help to illustrate the extent of the discrimination owners face. The inclusion of additional qualitative data from surveys will bring human consequences of the exclusion we have discovered to life, better reflecting the way in which people's quality of life is adversely affected.

Guide Dogs also explored the role played by the pandemic in changing behaviour. 61% of respondents said they had made changes to their usual pattern of accessing public spaces as a result of the pandemic; many cited the lack of public transport as being particularly problematic during this time.⁴

A large majority of guide dog owners have told us that even a single access refusal knocks their confidence and can lead to them becoming isolated and anxious.

"[Access refusals] make me feel like I've done something wrong losing my vision."

Data limitations

Not all of these questions were compulsory and therefore some had more responses than others. When we refer to 'respondents' in this report we are describing the people who responded to a specific question rather than the full sample of guide dog owners who took part in the research.

The results which appear as percentages, whilst helpful in illustrating where key problems lie, cannot be compared with results from other questions.

Taking into account the total number of guide dog owners in the UK verses this subset of respondents, we are confident that this data is broadly reflective of overall guide dog owners' experiences and is a reliable way of capturing these.



Where and when are guide dogs owners refused access?

As part of this survey, participants were asked how frequently they had been refused access over the past 12 months.⁵

All respondents to these questions had reported an access refusal(s) in the past 12 months. These results illustrate where these access refusals took place.⁶

Refusals over the past 12 months

Table 1: the numbers of guide dog owners that reported experiencing an access refusal between July 2021 and July 2022 from each sector

The table is made up of two columns and nine rows. Headings are 'place that refused access' and 'number of guide dog owners reported that they were refused access between July 2021 and July 2022'.

Place that refused access	Number of guide dog owners reported that they were refused access between July 2021 and July 2022
Food/drink outlet e.g. restaurant, café, and pubs	103
Taxi or private hire vehicles	88
Retail e.g. supermarket, clothes shop, department store	72
Leisure e.g. theatre, cinema, beauty parlour, hairdressers, zoo	28
Healthcare settings e.g. GP surgery, inpatient hospital, outpatient hospital, dentist	33
Accommodation e.g. hotel, B&B, holiday rentals	49
Transport e.g. bus, coach, train, plane (excluding taxis and private hire vehicles)	16
Health and fitness e.g. gym or swimming pool area	22

1) Food and drink

74% of respondents reported being refused access to a food/drink outlet in the past 12 months and 2% experienced refusal over 11 times during that period.⁷ Several people described attending 'dog friendly' restaurants and being asked to sit in the dog friendly areas. These venues are misunderstanding the role of a guide dog as an essential mobility aid, rather than a pet.⁸

Some guide dog owners try to minimise the likelihood of a refusal by calling ahead to let restaurants know they will be bringing a guide dog, with some experiencing telephone refusals at the point of booking because they mention bringing their guide dog with them. Many respondents said that they had been told that the dog was not hygienic and that because of this they could not enter a restaurant.

One guide dog owner explained:

"Even when I've been allowed into some of the cafes after being questioned it does not make the experience pleasant so I may avoid that environment again."

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the Royal Environmental Health Institute Scotland confirm that guide dogs should be allowed entry to businesses selling food. The dogs' training means that they are unlikely to be a risk to hygiene.

2) Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs)

It is illegal for a taxi or PHV to refuse access to a guide dog owner unless the driver has a valid medical exemption certificate.⁹ Refusing an assistance dog owner is a criminal offence, which can be enforced by the local licensing authority. Despite this, almost 63% of respondents said they have been refused access to a taxi or PHV in the past 12 months.¹⁰ 7% said it had happened to them between six and 10 times. None of the respondents indicated that they were presented with an exemption certificate when they were refused.

The likelihood of being refused access by a taxi or PHV driver affects the way in which guide dog owners approach going out and limits their ability to live independently.

"...unless it's an emergency I will not use a taxi. I now absolutely dread getting on a bus as the driver will not help. You are made to feel very unwelcome..."

Several guide dog owners talked about the safety implications of being refused access to a taxi, particularly at night.

"I have stopped socialising in the evening due to refusal getting a taxi home when it's dark as the bus service in the area is poor."

Sometimes drivers see the guide dog and drive off leaving guide dog owners waiting for a long time before a car arrives.

3) Retail

53% of respondents who have experienced a refusal in the past year said that this had happened when they visited a shop; 5% reported that this had happened to them 6-10 times in the past year.¹¹

More encouragingly, other respondents reported that certain shops have gone above and beyond to support them and make them feel welcome, especially in local shops where retailers know the dog.

Staff training across the country can be inconsistent. Guide Dogs are calling for the Government and retail associations to work together to introduce mandatory training to all staff so that staff are able to recognise an assistance dog and allow guide dog owners to enter without challenge.

“Sometimes the establishment is great, staff are very helpful and offer to guide you to your table, read the menu and give the dog water, however, on a second visit the experience is totally different [with] different staff.”

Even if guide dog owners don't experience a refusal, many describe receiving different treatment to other customers in a retail environment. One guide dog owner said that they were followed by shop staff whilst they walked around the shop and felt as though they were being checked up on and watched.

“People seem to be unaware of the law regarding guide dog access. I previously would have assumed that it was a well known and enforced law. It concerns me that it appears not to be.”

4) Leisure

21% of respondents said they had experienced an access refusal at a leisure facility such as hairdressers, cinema or theatre in the past year.¹² Fewer (17%) reported that they had experienced a refusal at a health and fitness centre in the last 12 months.

“the local gym tells me to take my dog and fix him by lead to a post in the foyer (by the doors) - they will keep an eye on him from a distance from the reception and they then walk me into the swimming pool - I cannot take the dog in with me to the swimming pool (to sit by the side) or into the gym to sit next to me.”

More than one guide dog owner told us that theatres have been very accommodating.

“[the theatre staff] always welcome me and my dog in the auditorium (guide dog laid snugly at my feet).”

5) Healthcare¹³

18% of respondents reported healthcare refusals had happened to them once and 5% said it had happened to them between two and five times in the last year.¹⁴ Guide dog owners reported experiencing refusals in pharmacies and being prohibited from using lifts in public buildings. One guide dog owner told us that staff at the GP surgery were unaware that guide dogs were allowed in.

“My dentist has a debate each time about my guide dog as the dog doesn't like to be put far away and closed into a little closet. I have to leave him at home and have someone guide me so have to wait for them to have a day off work.”

The potential impact of these types of refusals was outlined by one guide dog owner. When attending an urgent hospital appointment they were told to wait in the corridor, rather than in the waiting room, because their guide dog was with them. As a result, they did not hear their name called and missed their appointment. They couldn't be seen that day and it transpired that they had broken their foot. The refusal delayed their treatment and they consider that this contributed to their foot being permanently damaged.

6) Accommodation

Just over 37% of respondents said they had experienced a refusal at overnight accommodation, such as a hotel, campsite or B&B.¹⁵

Aside from direct refusals, guide dog owners also reported being charged extra fees for cleaning when leaving holiday accommodation and being refused access to certain parts of accommodation complexes, such as the swimming pool area.

“I booked into a [hotel name removed] and informed them that I would be accompanied by my guide dog. When I arrived the staff member attempted to charge me extra for a “pet”. I had a somewhat heated discussion about their duties under the Equality Act and refused to pay.”

Other guide dog owners reported excellent service at hotels:

“A spa hotel provided a towel for the dog and were happy to look after the dog whilst I was swimming.”

“Hotels have given me ground floor rooms and, where possible, near to a patch of grass for the dog.”

7) Transport¹⁶

12% of respondents said they had experienced at least one access refusal from public transport in the past 12 months, despite significant reduction in transport use during COVID.¹⁷ Many train stations don't have any spending areas for the dogs.

8) Other businesses

Guide dog owners reported having experienced refusals at the beach, public toilets, children's play parks, local council buildings, workplaces, lifts in public buildings, pharmacies and garden centres.

One respondent said they had to find a new job because their employer would not accept the guide dog.

"I have either not attended or not taken my dog I had to find a new job as I was told I could not work with my dog on site."

Another had faced refusals at a wedding.

"I've even not gone to a wedding because I have had a refusal at wedding venues."



What is the impact of access refusals on guide dog owners?

"After building confidence to actually go out to get a refusal is soul crushing and confidence breaking."

Many guide dog owners report refusals being based on public health/hygiene concerns. Guide dog owners have questioned whether this might correlate with an increased focus on public health over the past three years attributable to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I have been asked not to enter shops or restaurants as my dog may be carrying germs. I have been told to sanitise my Guide Dog's paws when I sanitise my hands."

Refusals are not always as clear as being instructed to leave. Sometimes there might be a different type of challenge or receiving sub-par treatment because owners have their dog with them.

We asked guide dog owners to explain how frequently they have experienced different ways of being refused access in the past 12 months. Most respondents said that they had been frequently challenged about why their dog is with them. The other most common scenario was for a guide dog owner to be refused and then have a discussion around their rights before being welcomed in. The majority of respondents said that they had experienced an access refusal where they had then explained their legal rights of entry but once inside the premises received second class service.

"At one cafe the waitress wouldn't allow me in and rang her boss to make sure. Whilst we were waiting for 15 minutes, my husband saw a sticker in their window that showed they allowed guide dogs! It turned out that the waitress was scared of dogs and didn't want us there. She kept her distance and wouldn't come close to our table."

Most often, owners were challenged to explain why they were being accompanied by their dog.

"When you've been refused access it puts you off wanting to go out. Some people do not realise the damage they are doing to those just trying to live an independent life with the little sight they have left."

Some guide dog owners reported that they felt confident in challenging businesses which refused them access, perhaps partly because they had already experienced so many refusals.

"I have had to become far more assertive as [...] it is only when I have raised my voice that I get listened to."

"I speak very calmly and just ask them whether they know that I have a guide dog and I am blind and will ask them to imagine how blindness could impact on them."

The majority of guide dog owners reported that refusals make them feel anxious. 21% of respondents said that they feel discriminated against and 20% feel angry or frustrated. 19% reported feeling embarrassed or humiliated when they are refused access.¹⁸ Others reported feeling rejected, saddened, disappointed and isolated. Some people are not just worried about the emotional impact of refusals on themselves but also the people that they spend time with, such as friends and family.

There was a pattern of guide dog owners saying refusals mean they become more reliant on family and friends to support them to access places and have to change their day to day lives in a bid to avoid the confrontation that goes along with a refusal. This undermines their motivation for having a guide dog in the first place.

“I have decided not to have a guide dog when my existing one retires because I’m sick of the fear I feel when approaching restaurants, taxis, hotels and shops. I’ve been challenged so many times that I just expect it.”

“To save myself and others any embarrassment of being refused I didn’t take my dog, this meant that I had to rely on my sighted friends to guide me, I felt I had lost some of my independence.”

An owner explained that she now restricts shopping to when she has a member of family visiting so that they can support her. Many guide dog owners also used language akin to a ‘fight’ or a ‘conflict’ when describing how they feel about refusals;

“I just don’t want to fight...with places anymore, so if I’m going somewhere I think they will have an issue with my guide dog I often leave him at home and go with a friend or family.”

Respondents used words such as feeling ‘embarrassed’, ‘disappointed’ and ‘isolated’ to describe their feelings after a refusal.

“Feeling like a second class citizen... always having to stick up for my rights under the Equality Act 2010 which can be burdensome and exhausting at times but ALWAYS necessary to re-educate/train the relative companies and/or staff.”

Several respondents said that they would think twice about going somewhere if it meant relying on a taxi to get there.

“The main problem is with taxis, so I will learn a very long walk if practical rather than take a taxi even in the rain or cold. That isn’t always possible, particularly at night.”

Lack of transport (or fear of not being able to get home) can lead to social isolation.

“I plan to do something, and then get really anxious about what might happen, and cancel my plans. Bad experiences with taxis is my major worry at the moment.”

Refusals have a wider impact upon family and friends who are with the guide dog owner;

“I avoid going to places I have previously been rejected or challenged. It spoils our day especially for the children.”

Anticipating and avoiding access refusals

Many guide dog owners change their plans because of concerns around being refused access. Guide dog owners have reported various ways in which they try to avoid access refusals

- Phoning ahead to explain they are bringing a guide dog
- Booking taxis earlier to allow time to book a few, in the hope of one of them agreeing to accept them and their dog
- Walking instead of dealing with taxis and avoidance of taxi services unless there is an emergency
- Using companies/services they trust
- Using the ID book/card which states guide dogs are allowed access
- Making sure they know their rights and are ready to explain them
- Ensuring the dog's harness is visible
- Wearing dark glasses in shops to make it obvious they have a vision impairment
- Leaving their guide dog behind when going to places where they anticipate a refusal. For some this leads to an overreliance on friends for sighted assistance, leading to less independence
- Using a long cane instead of a dog
- Only visiting new places with other people (friends/family) fear of facing a refusal alone

Some guide dog owners employ specific strategies:

- **Informing people of their rights:** including the Equality Act 2010, bringing along documentation such as their yellow book/new guide dog app/access card/dogs ID card/ADUK booklet/ yellow Assistance Dog UK card
- **Challenging the refusal:** assertively challenging, refusing to leave, asking taxi drivers for exemption certificates, asking to speak to the manager, acting confident about their rights, telling person refusing access that they can call the police
- **Educating:** explaining disability, reasonable adjustment and the need for their guide dog
- **Attempts to diffuse situations:** keeping calm, smiling, considering effect of body language on person refusing access
- **Involving others:** involving other customers to support them, letting others challenge the access refusal on their behalf, asking a companion to go in and ask if they are allowed in, letting friends and family advocate on their behalf
- **Exiting situation:** not employing strategies, or leaving the situation

Others said that they don't try to avoid refusals; they refuse to leave if they are unlawfully prohibited from entering.

Similarly, many guide dog owners told us that they are apprehensive when visiting new places, not only about navigating a new place but also whether they will be challenged or refused access.

Dealing with access refusals when they occur

Of those guide dog owners who had been refused at any time a large number reported doing things such as making a complaint to the company and seeking advice from Guide Dogs or another assistance dog charity. A small number of respondents said that they had contacted their local MP or the media. Some respondents advised others not to use the company.

Most of the guide dog owners who reported taking an action said that the outcome was unsatisfactory albeit some have received apologies, promises of change and other compensation.

"I reported a taxi company to the council they said they took action but never informed me what it was."

"I was once refused access to a Tesco near work. I was thrown out of the store with my dog. I contacted the company and complained but they didn't offer any compensation and were unsympathetic."

Others reported that even though the outcome was satisfactory, the process of challenging was 'traumatic'. Guide Dogs believes that access refusals should be handled through a clear process that is proportionate and victim-centred.



What next?

Many guide dog owners told us about positive experiences they have had, with businesses not only allowing them in without any questions but assisting them and their guide dog. Other businesses could do a lot more to make guide dog owners feel welcome by learning how to be better accommodating for those with sight loss and also those living with wider disabilities through reviewing their practices.

What can businesses do?

Education, training and awareness:

- Provide mandatory training for all staff

Policy and adjustments:

- Make it clear to all customers that guide dogs are welcome by publishing a clear policy statement on their website, telling customers

Behaviour:

- Display a 'guide dogs welcome' window sticker at the front of the premises
- Welcoming all guide dog owners courteously

Respondents highlighted good practice they have experienced from some businesses:

- Some businesses have clear, workable accessibility policies meaning that this is just part of the service provided e.g. some airlines
- Some deliver great assistance, for example local shops helping with their shopping and packing shopping bags
- Restaurants reserving tables that guide dog owner's request
- Providing a bowl of water for the dog

- Saying 'hello' and acknowledging the owner and their dog
- Reading menus and assisting customers with choices
- People asking how they can help

One guide dog owner described how a Chinese restaurant had a shiny stairs which the dog didn't like; staff helped the guide dog owner use the wheelchair lift so that the dog would feel more comfortable

"A new cafe opened locally, I went in with a friend to try it, nervous about having my dog with me. The lady behind the counter approached us; I thought the worst, however she welcomed us, showed us to a table with plenty of space for my dog and said, 'Before I take your order would your dog like some water'. the whole visit was lovely and though they normally only allow dogs at their outdoor seating, they were more than happy to have my guide dog inside and made us most welcome."

In cases where it is not appropriate for the dog to enter the premises (for animal health reasons, for example), the service provider still should make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the assistance dog owners visit.

Conclusion

Under the Equality Act, assistance dog owners have the right to go into most places, accompanied by their dog. Nevertheless, refusals remain a regular part of guide dog ownership, with 81% of owners saying they had received a refusal in the past.

Refusals are not only a problem because they are against the law, or because businesses miss out on the opportunity to serve these customers. They cause real harm to guide dog owners, both because of psychological effects of the rejection (or concern about future rejections), but also because they might miss out on essential healthcare, or the opportunity to spend time with family and friends.

Guide Dogs exists to help people live the life they choose. Refusals are standing in the way of owners having the chance to flourish in their social and professional lives, and it is vital that swift action is taken to prevent them.

Our recommendations are:

Recommendations for government

The Government should legislate to end access refusals once and for all and ensure people with assistance dogs are able to live the lives they choose. Any new law on access refusals should:

- Have a clear process and be easy to follow;
- Have a meaningful penalty when access refusals do happen; and
- Include clear requirements for businesses.

Recommendations for businesses

In order to ensure that businesses do not illegally refuse access we recommend they:

- Ensure staff are trained to recognise assistance dogs;
- Have a good understanding of current equality legislation; and
- Have a policy in place that demonstrates their compliance with the current law. They must have a process in place for what to do in the event of an access refusal.

References and Endnotes

1. 73% of 196 respondents
2. 49% of 239 respondents
3. This does not include supermarkets or food shops; it looks only at cafes, pubs, restaurants
4. 256 guide dog owners answered this question
5. Only guide dog owners were able to complete this survey and 259 confirmed they were guide dog owners. The questions were optional and so response rates varied- this has been recorded in the footnotes accompanying each statistic. Only those who reported having experienced an access refusal in the past 12 months were asked to provide further detail and each was asked to explain how commonly they had experienced a refusal (if ever) in each business.
6. Reference to 'respondents' in this report describes the people who responded to the specific question rather than the full sample of guide dog owners who took part in the research
7. 75% of 138 respondents who answered this question; relates only to places where food/drink is served, such as restaurants, cafes and not supermarkets
8. As defined within Sections 20-22 of the Equality Act 2010
9. S166 Equality Act 2010
10. 63% of 140 guide dog owners who answered this question
11. Both stats relate to 136 guide dog owners who had received an access refusal in the past year and who opted to answer this question
12. 21% of 132 guide dog owners who said they had experienced a refusal in the past 12 months and then opted to answer this question
13. Including GP surgery, hospital (inpatient and outpatient), ambulance, health clinics
14. Of 134 guide dog owners who said they had received a refusal in the past 12 months and then opted to answer this question; Reported refusals which occurred because a guide dog was present; there were strict guidelines and policies around accessing medical centres during the height of the pandemic which mean that many members of the public were prohibited from doing so. The reported refusals are not attributed to this.
15. Of 133 guide dog owners who had a refusal in the past 12 months and opted to answer this question
16. Including, but not limited to, buses, coaches, ferry, train, aircraft. Not including taxis or private hire vehicles
17. Of 134 guide dog owners who had a refusal in the past 12 months and opted to answer this question
18. This question was asked to all guide dog owners who said they had experienced an access refusal at some point; the sample size for this question was 145 guide dog owners

Appendix 1: Methodology

The survey questionnaire was designed by Guide Dogs' Campaigns Team. The online survey included questions around frequency of refusals and how they impact guide dog owners (see Appendix A). The questionnaire comprised of 33 questions not all questions were compulsory. Guide dog owners were invited to complete the questionnaire online via Qualtrics. All responses were anonymized. The final version of the survey was hosted on Qualtrics and remained live for four weeks, from 1 July 2022 to 1 August 2022. The study collected data from 259 guide dog owners via an online survey.

For more information about the methodology please contact campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk.

Appendix 2: Access Survey Questions

This is a list of questions asked to participants. The number of respondents for each is included in square brackets after each question.

We want to hear about your experiences of going out with your guide dog to help us ensure that guide dogs are welcomed in as many places as possible.

We are asking guide dog owners to answer questions in our survey so that we can tell the Government and businesses about the current situation and challenges via evidence-based research.

Our goal is to demonstrate the scale of the problem and make a change to end access refusals. We are mindful that the world has changed a lot in the last few years owing to the Covid pandemic and that this may have changed your day-to-day activities. However, where relevant please answer the questions based on the last 12 month period to give us an up-to-date picture of your experiences.

At the end of the survey you will have a chance to tell us if you want to talk to us in more detail about your experiences.

[accessibility instructions – screen readers]

About you

We would like to know about you so that we can tell whether experiences of access are different for certain groups of people. We are also asking for your contact details in case you tell us you would like us to keep in touch with you later in the survey. If you would like to find out more about how your data might be used, please see Guide Dogs' Privacy Policy via this link: [Privacy Statement | Guide Dogs](#) . Please note that your data will not be stored on your customer profile.

1. Tell us about you and where you live

Name:

*Post Code:

2. How old are you?[286]

Under 18 (go to this question: If you have any personal experiences you'd like to share about access refusals you have experienced, please comment below. The more specific you can be the better. In particular we are interested to hear how (if at all) the potential for refusals makes you adapt your day to day plans.) [0]

18 to 30

31 to 50

51 to 65

Over 65

Prefer not to say - please note that you must be over 18 to complete this survey

3. What ethnicity are you?[282]

Arab

Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi

Asian or Asian British: Indian

Asian or Asian British: Pakistani

Asian or Asian British: Any other Asian/Asian British background (specify below)

Black or Black British/Caribbean

Chinese

Mixed: White and Asian

Mixed: White and Black British/Caribbean

Mixed: Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background (specify below)

White: English/Welsh/Scottish/NI/British

White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller

White: Irish

White: Other

Any other ethnic group - please specify (free text)

Prefer not to say

4. Which of the following apply to you (Check all that apply) [286]

I am a guide dog owner

I have another type of assistance dog (go to thank you page)

I have another disability but do not have an assistance dog (go to thank you page)

None of the above statements apply to me (go to thank you page)

Your experiences of access refusals

Guide Dogs defines an access refusal as when you have been refused access from a premises because you have an assistance dog with you. This term is used to include occasions when you have initially been refused access and then been later allowed entry, when you have been challenged/questioned about your dog entering the premises and those occasions when you have not been allowed entry at all.

We understand that these experiences can be traumatic and it may be difficult to recall such occurrences, however this data will be very useful in developing a campaign to make the situation better in the future. If you would like to talk to someone because you are emotionally affected by the survey you can call 0345 143 0199 or email safeguarding@guidedogs.org.uk

5. Tell us about your experiences. Has your usual pattern of accessing public places (e.g. shops, transport, restaurants) been impacted by Covid in the past 12 months? If so, please explain how [256]

Yes

No

6. If yes, please explain how:

7. In the last 12 months have you been refused access to somewhere because you had an assistance dog with you?

As above this includes where you have initially been refused access and then been later allowed entry, when you have been challenged/questioned about your dog entering the premises and

those occasions when you have not been allowed entry at all. [243]

Yes I've had refusal/s

No I haven't had a refusal

(if no takes to question 'have you ever experienced an access refusal because you had your guide dog with you? [95])

Not sure

7a. If yes, please tell us how many times you have been refused access from the following places in the last twelve months because you had your guide dog with you?

Taxi or private hire vehicle [140]

Once, 2-5, 6-10, 11+

Retail e.g. Supermarket, clothes shop, department store [136]

Once, 2-5, 6-10, 11+

Food and drink e.g. café, pub, restaurant [138]

Once, 2-5, 6-10, 11+

Leisure facilities e.g.

Beauty parlour or hairdressers, cinema, theatre, zoo [132]

Once, 2-5, 6-10, 11+

Health settings e.g. Ambulance, GP, hospital as a patient or outpatient , hospital as a visitor[134]

Once, 2-5, 6-10, 11+

Health and fitness

Eg. Gym, swimming[133]

Once, 2-5, 6-10, 11+

Accommodation e.g.

Campsite, hotel, B&B[133]

Once, 2-5, 6-10, 11+

Transport e.g. aircraft, bus, ferry, train [134]

Once, 2-5, 6-10, 11+

Other (please specify as many as you like) (free text)

8. Do you ever change your plans or restrict visits to certain places because you are worried about being refused access or challenged? [239]

Yes

No

If yes, please provide more information:

9. Please explain how you change your plans using the text box below (free text)

10. If you've been refused access to an establishment that has security guards present, is it the shop staff or security staff that have refused/challenged you? [30]

Shop staff

Security staff

Both

Not sure

10. How do you feel when visiting somewhere new with your guide dog? (free text)

11. Do you use any strategies to try and prevent an access refusal? If so, what? (free text)

12. On how many occasions has the following happened in the last 12 months?

[boxes beside each option: Once, 2-5, 6-10, 11+]

13. You have been refused access, had a discussion, then are welcomed in [137]

14. You have been refused access, had a discussion, then entered the premises but 15. feel you get second class service [136]

16. You have been refused access, had a discussion, you are still not allowed into the premises [134]

17. You have not been refused outright but have been challenged about why your dog is with you [134]

18. You have been refused access and have left without further discussion [135]

19. Other situation [27]

19a. I'm unsure whether I've experienced an access refusal in the last 12 months

b. Another situation has occurred- please provide further detail below (free text)

20. Following an access refusal have you ever taken any of the following actions?(please tick any that apply) [282]

Made a complaint to the company

Contacted my local MP

Contacted local media

Contacted Guide Dogs or another assistance dog charity

Advised others not to use the company's services

Written on social media about it

None of the above

Other: (please specify)

We'd be interested to hear what the outcome was: (free text)

21. If you have taken any action in response to an access refusal, we'd be interested to know what the outcome was. Please use the text box below to expand

(free text)

22. What is the most common reason you have heard for being refused access or challenged in the last 12 months?

(free text)

23. How do access refusals make you feel?

(select as many as apply- there is an opportunity to expand upon your answer in the next question) [145]

Confused

Embarrassed or humiliated

Angry or frustrated

Sad

Discriminated

Powerless

Calm

Accepting

Empowered

24. Is there anything else you want to tell us about how access refusals make you feel:

25. If you are aware that a business has a poster or window sticker or a statement on their website confirming guide dogs are welcome would you feel more confident going in? [219]

Yes

No

Unsure

26. What else could companies do to make you feel more welcome and less fearful about potential access refusals?

Free text:

Examples of businesses

27. Do you have any examples of places that have made you feel particularly welcome as an assistance dog owner? [222]

Yes

No

Not sure

28. Please provide examples of places that have made you feel particularly welcome

Free text:

29. Guide Dogs is launching a new app so that guide dog owners can quickly and easily report access refusals, get support or educate the business on access rights. In addition, we're working to raise awareness of the law with businesses, and seeking to strengthen the law too. Is there anything else you think Guide Dogs could do to support guide dog owners who experience access refusals?

30. We will be using the results from this survey to create a report that we

will be presenting to politicians, the media, businesses and the general public. We need personal stories to bring this work to life. We may like to call you to discuss your experiences, would you be happy to speak to a member of the Guide Dogs team about your personal experiences of access refusals?

Yes, I am happy for Guide Dogs to contact me to discuss my experiences in greater detail

No thanks

Email Address:

Phone Number:

31. If you have any further personal experiences you'd like to share about access refusals you have experienced, please comment below. The more specific you can be the better. In particular we are interested to hear how (if at all) the potential for refusals makes you adapt your day to day plans.

Thank You

Thank you for taking part in our access refusals survey. We will be releasing the full results of this survey later in the year. If you have any questions about the survey please email campaigns@guidedogs.org.uk or call **0800 0284348**.

Guide Dogs is launching a new app where you will be able to document refusals and seek advice about how you can respond to these.

You can also take action with the Guide Dogs campaigns team by signing up to the Campaigns team emails - Sign now: [Blind and partially sighted people deserve an equal chance in life. \(e-activist.com\)](https://www.e-activist.com)

End of survey

Thank you for taking part in our #OpenDoors survey. If you would like to keep up to date with what the Guide Dogs Campaign team are doing please sign up to join our mailing list [Sign now: Blind and partially sighted people deserve an equal chance in life. \(e-activist.com\)](https://www.e-activist.com)