



Assistance Dogs and Discrimination

Insights from UK Handlers



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Abstract

This research examines discrimination faced by UK assistance dog handlers, aiming to determine its prevalence, impact, and strategies for addressing it.

A survey-based study with 120 participants (99 eligible) revealed that a significant number of handlers experience disability-related discrimination, with 86% reporting an access challenge/refusal in the last 12 months and 90% in the last five years. Additionally, 91% reported problems relating to policies and signage. The study emphasises negative impacts on handlers and the need for action. It showed that accurate information, education, and advocacy is key in preventing and tackling discrimination. Ongoing research is advised to monitor trends and assess support available.

This study highlights the need for a more inclusive and supportive environment for disabled individuals and their assistance dogs.

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction and Literature Review

1.1.1. Assistance dogs

Assistance dogs in the UK are auxiliary aids, meaning that they help a person overcome their disability (Bremhorst et al., 2018). There is a strong history of companionship between dogs and people (Cavanaugh et al., 2008), with evidence of dogs trained to assist visually impaired humans as early as 1260 (Fisherman, 2003).

The first organisation to train guide dogs was founded in Oldenburg, Germany in 1916 (Zier, 2019). A British company called the British Guide Dog Association soon followed, founded in 1931 (Wells, 2007). Since then, numerous organisations around the world have been established to support the training and working of assistance dogs (Audrestch et al., 2015).

The prevalence of assistance dogs in the UK is unknown due to the absence of a register and the option of training without the affiliation of an organisation; however, Assistance Dogs UK state that over 7,000 people rely on assistance dogs trained by their member organisations (Assistance Dogs UK – ADUK, 2023).

Assistance dogs help reduce the impact of a person's disability in lots of different ways, depending on the individual's need. Although there are no formal classifications, often different types of assistance dogs are referred to as guide dogs (Sanders, 2000), hearing dogs (Hart et al., 1996), autism dogs (Burrows et al., 2008), medical assistance dogs (Kirton et al., 2008), mobility assistance dogs (Blanchet et al., 2013), psychiatric assistance dogs (Lloyd et al., 2019), allergen detection dogs (Byrne et al., 2018), and more.

It is important to note that service dog in the UK refers to a police or military dog, while some countries use the term to describe a disability assistance dog. Assistance dogs help people with disabilities by increasing independence, functionality, and wellbeing, providing a higher quality of life, and are therefore an essential aid. Salmon and Pachana (2022) reviewed the literature on assistance dog ownership and the impact on wellbeing and identified that assistance dogs provide both relief (of/for) the individual's disability and benefits to wellbeing.

They also found that much of the current published research had methodological weaknesses, and they highlighted the need for further research. This need for more reliable research has been remarked upon several times over the last two decades. (Rodriguez et al. 2021; Audrestch et al., 2015; Sachs-Ericsson, 2002).

Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 (Equality Act 2010, §6(1); Lockwood et al., 2018), meaning that disabled people cannot be treated less favourably due to their disability, or something relating to their disability (Fell and Dyban, 2017).

The Equality Act 2010 states that service providers are required to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people are not disadvantaged. The first and third requirements, as outlined in section 20, apply to disabled people with assistance

dogs. As assistance dogs provide support, they are an auxiliary aid (EHRC, 2011). The service provider has a duty to change their “criterion or practice”, and they have a duty to allow auxiliary aids (Heslop et al., 2019). Failure to make reasonable adjustments is unlawful discrimination (Equality Act 2010, §21).

Assistance dogs are not specifically mentioned within the Act, except in relation to taxis and private hire vehicles (Equality Act 2010, §173; Ricky et al., 2021). Here a definition is given for what constitutes an assistance dog specifically within that chapter of this act. However, other legislation, such as the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, has incorporated and applied this definition in their own provisions (Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, §10(2)). This definition clearly defines an assistance dog as a guide dog, a hearing dog, a dog trained by a prescribed charity, or a dog of a prescribed category.

Prescribed charities are listed in The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Taxis) (Carrying of Guide Dogs etc.) (England and Wales) Regulation 2000, Section 3, and include:

- ‘Dogs for the Disabled’;
- ‘Support Dogs’; and
- ‘Canine Partners for Independence.’

It is important to note that two of these charities have rebranded since the writing of these regulations.

As currently there are no prescribed categories defined under law, this provision is not applicable.

Some transport companies, such as Transport for London (2019), stipulate in their policies that all assistance dogs, regardless of disability or method of training, must be permitted, though this policy is not a legal requirement.

While this definition is clearer, it does not consider the many different types of assistance dog that disabled people can benefit from and places restrictions on training options. This highlights the potential dangers of refining the law and placing a definition on what constitutes an assistance dog.

Publications such as “Assistance dogs: a guide for all businesses” (EHRC, 2017) have been produced to help support the understanding of assistance dogs in the UK. Historically, these documents have focused purely on dogs trained by the umbrella organisation “Assistance Dogs UK” (EHRC, 2013), however, this document was corrected in 2017 to make provisions for assistance dogs trained by other organisations, or with no organisation affiliation.

While helpful, these documents are not statutory. They show that interpretation of the law changes over time.

1.1.2. Discrimination

Disabled people face discrimination throughout their lives, and assistance dog handlers are no different. The Disability Unit (2021), a research group from the UK Government, surveyed disabled people so that their lived experiences could be

documented. They documented that 90% of disabled people reported difficulty accessing some services.

Research by Scope (Moss and Frounks, 2022) showed that 26% had experienced discrimination within the last 12 months, with 72% reporting negative attitudes or behaviours due to their disability over the last five years. This shows that discrimination is prevalent amongst the disabled community.

There are many different types of discrimination outlined by the Equality Act 2010; this study will focus on discrimination arising from disability and indirect discrimination. Note that the instances discussed in this paper may also fall into failure to make reasonable adjustments.

The Equality Act 2010 states that discrimination arising from disability is when a disabled person is treated unfavourably due to something related to their disability.

Research by Guide Dogs UK (2022) states that 81% of the surveyed guide dog owners reported experiencing access refusals (refusing a disabled person access due to their assistance dog – discrimination arising from disability) and that 73% stated that those refusals occurred within the last 12 months. Though this research only considers the experiences of guide dog owners trained by this specific company, it highlights the severity and prevalence of access refusals.

This study is limited as it did not separate access refusals (complete refusal of access) with access challenges (initial refusal but access then allowed). This differentiation would help to identify the cause of access refusals. One reason could be self-advocacy highlighting a discriminatory action that is then redacted. In some instances, they may use this new knowledge to revise their policies. Note that correction of discriminatory behaviour or policy does not negate the initial discrimination.

Indirect discrimination was first introduced to UK law in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It usually involves a policy, applied to all, that disadvantages a certain group of people (Rayner, 1992; Tobler, 2005; Tobler, 2008). Court cases such as *Plymouth Community Homes Ltd v Christopher Palmer* (2021) have shown that a “no dogs” policy disproportionately impacts a disabled assistance dog handler as they cannot make use of their essential auxiliary aid (Lime Legal, 2021). A service provider is required under the Equality Act 2010 to make provisions for assistance dogs (MDU, 2019).

There are exceptional circumstances where policies refusing access to assistance dogs are reasonable, such as on a hospital ward where infection control policies need to be considered, however, the service is still required to accommodate the needs of the disabled person (Bennett and Desai, 2016).

The advertisement of a discriminatory policy, such as a sign stating “no dogs,” is also indirect discrimination.

The Equality Act 2010 makes discrimination unlawful. However, while the Act specifies the responsibility of public sectors to prevent and eliminate unlawful

discrimination (Equality Act 2010, §149), while the requirements for private bodies in preventing discrimination remains unclear.

The impacts of discrimination are far reaching, affecting many parts of the victim's life. Hackett et al. (2019) identified links between disability discrimination and poorer well-being. Although this study demonstrated the severe impact and the association with depression, it did not include individuals with existing mental health problems.

When individuals are excluded, they can experience feelings of anxiety, worthlessness, and anger (Riva and Eck, 2016), potentially leading to mental health problems including depression (Flores et al, 2008) and eating disorders (Levine, 2011). Discrimination can also result in social isolation and withdrawal from society (Wagstaff et al, 2014).

The stress of discrimination can indirectly cause loss of education or employment due to poor performance, as well as potentially reduced opportunities (Mæhlisen et al, 2018).

The study by Guide Dogs UK (2022) also highlighted that guide dog owners experience psychological harm because of access refusals. Throughout the report, there are quotes that expressed the deeply negative impact of access refusal and prospective access refusal. Also identified were behavioural adaptations that owners made to avoid the highly distressing experience of an access refusal.

1.1.3. Gaps in the literature

There is not currently any research exploring discrimination faced by assistance dog handlers that allows for the participation of those with owner trained assistance dogs.

The research into discrimination faced by assistance dog handlers in the UK is limited and focuses predominantly on guide dogs trained by Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, and therefore may not accurately represent the entire population of assistance dog handlers.

There is also no research specifically into the impacts of indirect discrimination on assistance dog handlers.

1.2. Aims and Objectives

This study aims to investigate the discrimination faced by assistance dog handlers in the UK. Studies exploring this in the past have restricted the participants to those associated with specific organisations, therefore excluding those associated with other organisations or no organisations. There are three main objectives of this study:

- Identify the prevalence of different types of discrimination experienced by assistance dog handlers in the UK.
- Explore what resources have been used or would be beneficial in tackling discrimination faced by assistance dog handlers in the UK.

- Understand the impact of discrimination on assistance dog handlers in the UK.

2. Methodology

2.1. Introduction

By reviewing the current literature, research within this field of study lacks representation for owner trained assistance dog handlers, inspiring further exploration.

This research seeks to fill this research gap by getting input from assistance dog handlers from any background.

2.2. Data collection method

A questionnaire form of data collection was used to allow for large amounts of data and wider participation. Participants voluntarily completed the anonymous questionnaire via Google Forms (see Appendix 7.2). The form was shared by posting on Facebook (www.facebook.com), Instagram (www.instagram.com), Twitter (www.twitter.com) and PAWtected CIC (www.pawtected.co.uk) websites. From there, individuals shared the content on their own social media pages and between individuals. 120 participants responded. Three participation requirements were placed:

- Be aged over 18 or have the permission from your legal guardian.
- Own a current, historic, or future assistance dog (including assistance dogs in training and puppies).
- Be located within the UK at the time of response.

Due to the nature of the survey, participants were required to be English speaking and have access to a computer with internet connection.

The survey was released on the 1st of November 2022. During this time, several advertisement campaigns involving social media were employed to enable participation. The Google Forms software collated and stored the responses. The survey was closed on the 31st of January 2023.

Before accessing the survey, participants were required to read the participation statement and research information (see Appendix 7.1). Participants had to check that they had read and understood the information before continuing to the survey. The questions were a mixture of open ended, nominal, rating scale, and yes/no questions. The survey was split into two parts.

The first, containing 5 questions to establish demographic, being for owners of any assistance dog, including dogs in training, untrained dogs, and historical ownership of assistance dogs.

The second, containing 11 questions, being only for participants who currently have or have had within the last 5 years a working assistance dog. The second section of the survey the prevalence of direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, and the impact of discrimination, as well as methods that would support individuals. 99 participants responded to part two of the survey, with (several) being partial

responses. Partial responses were included in the analysis as they will not affect the conclusions.

2.3. Ethics

Participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of their participation and that they are free to decline to answer questions. Participants were informed they were able to withdraw at any time during completion of the questionnaire, however as the responses are anonymous, once they clicked submit, the response could not be withdrawn. An email address for further questions was provided.

All participants were required to confirm that they had read and agreed to the participation statement (see Appendix 7.1).

All data collected was recorded anonymously.

2.4. Method of analysis

The data was collected and stored on the Google Forms software with responses available in three different group: First document has summary for each questions asked. The second document contained the responses for each question and the third included responses for each participant. Please see [7.2. Questionnaire](#) for sample questions.

For open questions, the responses were categorised to allow for ease of interpretation. For closed response where the respondent was required to select from given options (nominal, rating and yes/no), the results were recorded as number per response. This allowed for direct analysis and comparison of results.

Bar charts and a word cloud were used because they gave a clear visual representation of the results.

3. Results

3.1. Respondent demographics

120 people completed the survey, 99 of which were eligible to complete all questions. Around half of the respondents (55.5%) identified their current dog as an “assistance dog”, with a third (36.1%) identifying as an “assistance dog in training” and a small portion identifying the dog as an “assistance dog prospect” (7.6%) or “untrained” (0.8%).

Many of the respondents (96%) identified owner training as their training method (Assisted 44%; Independent 34%; Combined owner training 18%). Most respondents (74%) reported their current assistance dog to be their first dog. Many respondents stated that they currently own an assistance dog (74.2%) or have owned an assistance dog in the last 5 years (8.3%).

3.2. Discrimination arising from disability

Participants were asked to report when they most recently experienced access challenges and/or refusals (see Table 1). Most of the respondents (85%) reported that they had experienced an access challenge within the last year (last week 19.2%; last month 28.3%; last year 37.4%). Around half of those respondents (54.3%) reported that they had experience an access refusal in the last year (last week 5.1%; last month 19.2%; last year 30.3%).

Table 1

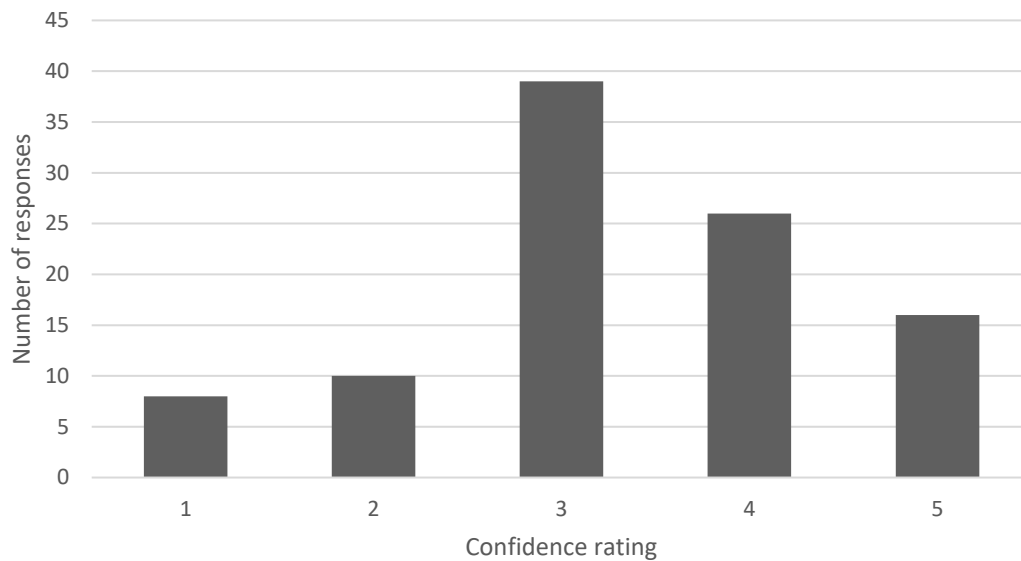
Summary of reported access challenges and refusals experienced during different time periods

	Challenge	Refusal
Within the last week	19	5
Within the last month	28	19
Within the last year	38	30
Within the last one to five years	4	5
Not experienced in the last five years	10	40

Participants were also asked to rate their confidence in communicating their rights in the event of an access challenge/refusal, with 1 being not confident and 5 being confident (see Figure 1). The average confidence in communicating their rights was 3.32 out of 5, with most reporting a score of 3 out of 5 for confidence (39.4%).

Figure 1

Confidence in communicating rights during access challenges/refusals



3.3. Indirect discrimination

Participants were asked to identify if they have avoided or felt uncomfortable accessing a service due to their assistance dog signage and/or policy (see Table 2). Of those who responded, 90 individuals answered yes to one or more of the four questions in this section. 67.7% of the respondents reported avoiding a service due to the assistance dog policy. That number rose to 84.8% when reporting if they felt uncomfortable or nervous accessing a service due to the assistance dog policy. 40.4% of respondents said they had avoided a service due to the assistance dog signage. That number nearly doubled, with 77.6% of respondents saying they felt uncomfortable or nervous accessing a service due to the assistance dog signage.

Table 2

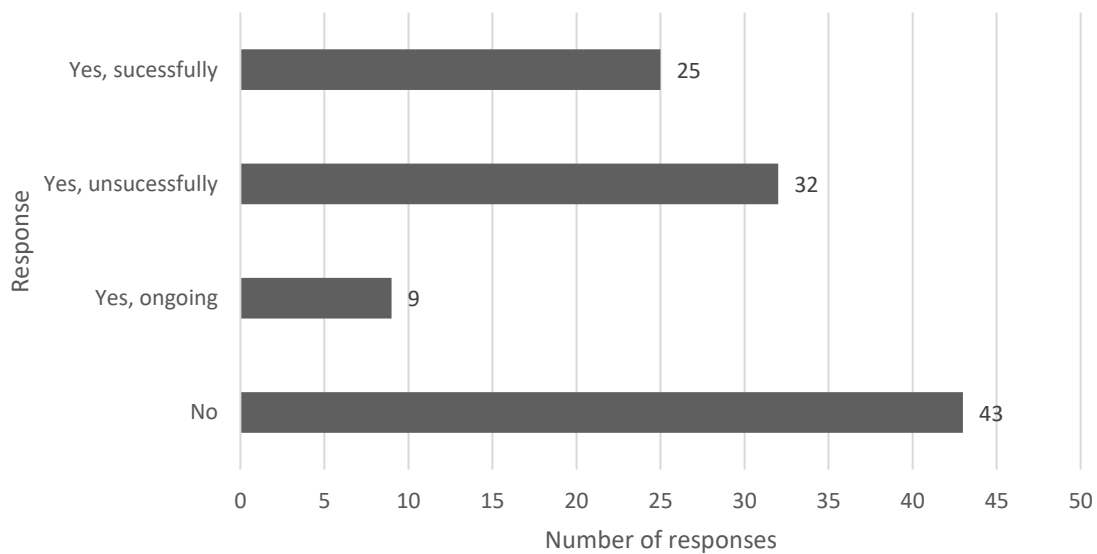
Experiences of service avoidance and discomfort due to policy and signage

	Yes	No
Avoided a service due to policy	67	32
Uncomfortable accessing a service due to policy	84	15
Avoided a service due to signage	40	59
Uncomfortable accessing a service due to signage	77	22

Participants were also surveyed on whether they had attempted to correct a service’s policy/signage (see Figure 2). They were able to choose multiple options to show the success of different attempts. From the respondents, 56 stated that they’ve attempted to change a service’s policy and/or signage (18 successful, 25 unsuccessful, 6 ongoing, and 7 mixed).

Figure 2

Participant attempts to correct service policies and signage



3.4. Tackling discrimination

Participants were surveyed on the resources that they have used to help tackle discrimination. 74 respondents identified resources that they had or would use if they experienced an access refusal. These were collated into 7 categories to allow for data processing. 26% stated using the Equality and Human Rights Commission Assistance Dog resource, 19% reported using a physical card detailing the service providers legal responsibility for adjustments, 17% stated using legislation, 14% utilised the services of an assistance dog organisation, 12% reported using online sources, 9% reported using other services and 3% were miscellaneous.

Participants were also given the opportunity to share any resources that are not currently available but would be beneficial in tackling discrimination. 55 participants responded, with 10 responses being discounted due to not answering the question, ending on a total of 45 responses. These were collated into 6 categories to allow for data processing. 33% requested universal physical resources, 23% requested public and service provider education, 8% requested a helpline, 11% requested miscellaneous resources, 6% requested online resources, 6% requested correct signage, and 13% reported non resource related support.

3.5. Impact of discrimination

Participants were given the opportunity to use up to 5 words to describe how access challenges and refusals made them feel (see Figure 3). 79 participants responded. The participants chose 99 different words to describe how access challenges/refusals made them feel (see Appendix 7.3). The highest reported words were anxious (33), upset (22), angry (20), scared (15) and embarrassed (12).

Figure 3

Word cloud of participant emotional responses to access challenges and refusals



Note – Larger words indicate higher frequency.

4. Discussion

4.1. Demographics

This survey was open to any assistance dog handlers in the UK, and 120 individuals volunteered to participate, 99 of which were eligible to answer the entire survey. Although this is smaller than other surveys, it provides a good foundation for future research to build on.

Many of the respondents utilised organisation/trainer assisted owner training and/or independent owner training, so the results do reflect the experiences of the owner trained assistance dog community. This means that the study has shared the experience and heard the voice of a group that has not previously been represented.

4.2. Discrimination arising from disability

The results indicate that a significant portion of the assistance dog population surveyed experienced discrimination arising from disability in the form of access challenges and refusals.

The overall percentage of individuals who experienced discrimination in the form of access challenges/refusals was 86% within the last 12 months and 90% in the last 5 years, which is higher than the results produced by Guide Dogs UK (2022) where they reported 73% of guide dog owners having experienced an access refusal in the last 12 months and 81% in the last 5 years. As our population was predominantly comprised of owner trained teams, this suggests that owner trained assistance dog teams experience more discrimination than individuals with dogs trained by Guide Dogs UK.

When comparing the data between those who experienced access challenges and access refusals, we see that the number of people who experienced continued problems over 12 months reduced by 46%. This demonstrates that much of the responsibility for advocating rights is falling on the disabled person. The available evidence does not demonstrate service providers' awareness of the illegality of discrimination towards assistance dog handlers.

As 56% of individuals are still experiencing access refusals, there is a significant lack of compliance by service providers of their legal obligations. This shows that there is a lack of education and/or consequences for failing to comply.

As evidenced, a strong onus is placed on assistance dog handlers to be able to advocate for their rights. Given this responsibility, only 42% of respondents answered with a confidence score of 4 or 5. This shows that 58% of assistance dog handlers surveyed felt they were not confident at communicating their rights. The responsibility of understanding legal duty should fall on the individual or service that has the duty.

Disabled people have not usually formally studied law, so accessing the information needed to be able to advocate for themselves relies on other people's interpretations, which may be incorrect. The degree at which publications contain incorrect information is unknown, however several companies have revised their publications in recent years to remove terms such as "registered assistance dogs only" and to make provisions for owner trained assistance dog teams. This ambiguity of information may play a role in why more than half of the individuals surveyed felt they lacked confidence advocating for their rights.

4.3. Indirect discrimination

This study looked at indirect discrimination in the form of policies and advertisements (signage). The results show that the impact of indirect discrimination is very high within the assistance dog community surveyed.

The results showed that 91% of respondents had experienced indirect discrimination in the last 5 years. This is a significant amount and shows the prevalence of indirect discrimination experienced. These responses were broken down into two areas, avoiding access and being uncomfortable/nervous accessing a service.

67.7% of the respondents reported avoiding a service due to their policy. 40.4% of the respondents reported avoiding a service due to their signage. This shows that having a policy or advertisement (signage) in place that restricts the access of disabled people with their assistance dogs is stopping disabled people from accessing services.

These numbers increase when asking if respondents were uncomfortable or nervous accessing a service. 84.8% of the respondents reported being uncomfortable or nervous accessing a service due to their policy. 77.8% of respondents reported being uncomfortable or nervous accessing a service due to their signage. This shows that even if individuals ignore the discriminatory policy/signage and proceed with accessing a service in accordance with their rights, they experience undue distress because of this.

Individuals are impacted by incorrect policies and signage to the extent that 57% of respondents felt a need to contact a service requesting them to review and update them. Only 38% of those who attempted to contact a service have been successful so far, with 48% refusing to acknowledge that their policy/signage is discriminatory, and 14% ongoing at the time of response. This shows that assistance dog handlers are attempting to rectify issues of indirect discrimination but are being largely unsuccessful.

4.4. Tackling discrimination

Within the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to share the resources that they've found beneficial or would find beneficial if they were available. These questions were free text, and so the responses were categorised.

There were 7 types of resource identified as being used in the event of access challenges and refusals. The most popular resource was the Assistance Dog guide produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. This suggests that accurate resources produced by a reputable organisation are the most helpful. The next most helpful was reported as a physical card with information, suggesting that a physical and readily available resource is preferable to handlers. Third most reported was legislation. This is surprising as individuals should feel protected by the legislation, however it appears difficult to understand therefore unhelpful when actively advocating for rights.

Surprisingly, only a small number reported utilising services to support them in advocating their rights, especially considering that 62.5% of respondents trained their dog with the support of an organisation/trainer. This could be due to a poor support from the services that are available, the services not providing support or the participant not feeling that there is a suitable organisation to support them. Regardless of the reason, assistance dog handlers are likely to feel isolated and unsupported when experiencing discrimination.

Moving to explore the reports of resources that would be beneficial, the majority at 78% of reported resources related to education of service providers. This shows that assistance dog handlers strongly feel that more education is needed to prevent and handle discrimination.

Another frequently reported consideration related to “universal” resources. This shows that assistance dog handlers identify the need for resources to be available to all assistance dog handlers to use.

The demonstration of severity of discrimination experienced by assistance dog handlers and the identification of producible resources shows that more can and must be done to prevent discrimination and support assistance dog handlers.

4.5. Impacts of discrimination

At the end of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to share 5 words about how access challenges/refusals made them feel.

The results of this question were overwhelmingly negative with only one participant reporting a positive emotion upon resolution of their access issue. This clearly demonstrates the detrimental impact that discrimination has on assistance dog handlers.

The severity at which individuals experienced discrimination in the form of discrimination arising from disability and indirect discrimination is too high, and the impacts of these forms of discrimination are devastating. It is clear from participants' experiences that they would benefit from more support, especially those assistance dog handlers who owner trained.

4.6. Areas for future research

While this research contributes valuable insights into the experiences of assistance dog handlers in the UK, there are opportunities for future development. The author highlights three main areas where future research could improve on this report.

Although the sample size of this research was promising, it is smaller than similar research carried out by Guide Dogs UK. Future research should aim to have a larger sample size to consider the experiences of a larger percentage of the assistance dog community. They should also aim to evenly represent the four training methods identified, as this study was not able to represent the experiences of pre-trained or residentially trained dogs.

Despite attempts to use clear and concise language, the wording on some questions in the survey may have been interpreted differently by the respondents. Future research should aim to use concise language to minimise confusion.

Future research should also develop the survey to allow for additional information to be collected and to reaffirm the responses. Suggestions include questions relating to frequency of discrimination experienced, understanding of the handlers' legal rights, the impacts of dog behaviour on access challenges and refusals, and any correlations between confidence and their success advocating for their rights.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Key findings

This research has identified the following:

1. A significant number of assistance dog handlers experience discrimination arising from disability, with 86% of 99 respondents reporting an access challenge/refusal in the last 12 months and 90% in the last 5 years.
2. Nearly all of assistance dog handlers experience indirect discrimination at 91%.
3. Assistance dog handlers are largely responsible for advocating for their own rights to access, however the success rate remains low meaning that service providers are discriminating against disabled people.
4. Resources are beneficial in preventing and tackling access refusals, but more universal resources are needed to fully support assistance dog handlers.
5. Education of the public and service providers is as an important area in the prevention and tackling of discrimination.
6. There are severe negative impacts of discrimination on assistance dog handlers, including making them feel “anxious”, “upset”, and “angry”.

5.2. Aims and objectives

The study has successfully investigated the types of discrimination faced by assistance dog handlers in the UK. It was able to meet all three of the objectives set out in section 1.2 of the Introduction above.

5.3. Recommendations

The author has three areas of recommendation for further support and research.

1. Establish a method to obtain and share accurate information regarding the discrimination against assistance dogs by service providers and the general public.
2. The creation of a services and resources to help assistance dog handlers in tackling discrimination.
3. Ongoing research, in the form of annual surveys, to evaluate effectiveness of methods and continue to exposure discrimination faced by assistance dog handlers in the UK.

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7. Appendices

7.1. Participation information and consent

Information

We would like to welcome all assistance dog handlers within the UK to participate in a research study about access to services with your assistance dog. This study is being carried out by PAWtected CIC.

To participate in this study, you must:

- Be aged over 18 or have the permission of your legal guardian.
- Own a current, historic, or future assistance dog (including assistance dogs in training and puppies).
- Be located within the UK at time of response.

There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study. There are no participation costs. The information that you provide will be used to create data showing the impact and significance of access issues faced by assistance dog handlers within the UK.

The questionnaire will take around 5-10 minutes. **Please only answer this survey ONCE** regardless of how many assistance dogs you currently or have historically owned.

This survey is anonymous. Do not write your name or any information that makes you identifiable on the survey. No one will be able to identify you or your answers and no one will know whether you have participated in the study. PAWtected CIC will review the answers and the data will be published on our website, no individual information will be disclosed in the publishing. The specific answers to the questions will be destroyed 1 year after the closing date of this survey.

Participation in this study is voluntary. By continuing with this questionnaire, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You are free to decline to answer any question for any reason. You may withdraw at any time during completion of the questionnaire, however as the answers are anonymous, once you've clicked submit (at the end of the questionnaire) we will be unable to remove your answers.

If you have any questions, please contact enquiries@pawtected.co.uk

Submissions open: 01st November 2022

Submissions close: 31st January 2023

Consent

I have read and understand the above information. (Required)

- Yes

7.2. Questionnaire

Shared link: www.pawtected.co.uk/access

Raw link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfc3RcG_MhHk0lp8L1VEMN5M1o8PsC_NGN8B7bftb-KWceEbw/viewform?usp=sf_link

About your assistance dog

1. How do you identify your **current** assistance dog? (Single select)

For the purpose of this question, we will be using the following definitions:

Assistance dog – a dog trained to mitigate their handler’s disability and behave reasonably for accessing non-pet friendly locations.

Assistance dog in training – a dog that is refining their ability to mitigate their handler’s disability and/or behave reasonably for accessing pet friendly locations.

Assistance dog prospect – a dog that is learning the skills needed to mitigate their handler’s disability and/or behave reasonably for accessing pet friendly locations.

Untrained – a young puppy or an untrained older dog.

- Assistance dog
 - Assistance dog in training
 - Assistance dog prospect
 - Untrained
2. Which of the following methods were used when training your **current** assistance dogs? (Multi select)
- Pretrained by an organisation
 - Residential training by an organisation
 - Organisation/trainer assisted owner training
 - Independent owner training
3. Have you owned any other assistance dogs in the past? (Multi select)
- Yes, assistance dog(s)
 - Yes, assistance dog(s) in training/prospect
 - No

Your assistance dog

1. Do you currently have an assistance dog or have you owned an assistance dog in the last 5 years? (Single choice)
- Yes, I currently own an assistance dog
 - Yes, I have owned an assistance dog in the last 5 years
 - No, I owned an assistance dog longer than 5 years ago (end survey)
 - No, I have only owned an assistance dog in training/prospect/untrained dog (end survey)

Access

This section will explore access challenges and refusals that you have experienced with your assistance dog.

Please only include instances from the last 5 years.

1. Have you experienced an access challenge with your current assistance dog?
An access challenge is defined as someone questioning or refusing you access that was then resolved by yourself and/or a manager.
 - Yes, within the last week.
 - Yes, within the last month.
 - Yes, within the last year.
 - Yes, longer than a year.
 - No

2. Have you experienced an access refusal with your current assistance dog?
An access refusal is defined as being completely refused access due to your assistance dog, regardless of any attempts to resolve the situation.
 - Yes, within the last week.
 - Yes, within the last month.
 - Yes, within the last year.
 - Yes, longer than a year.
 - No

3. Using the scale, indicate how confident you are at communicating your rights in the event of an access challenge/refusal.

Not confident 1 2 3 4 5 Very confident

4. Have you avoided a service due to their assistance dog policy?
 - Yes
 - No

5. Have you felt uncomfortable or nervous accessing a service due to their assistance dog policy.
 - Yes
 - No

6. Have you avoided a service due to their assistance dog signage?
 - Yes
 - No

7. Have you felt uncomfortable or nervous accessing a service due to their assistance dog signage?
 - Yes
 - No

8. Have you contacted a service requesting them to change their policy and/or signage? (Multi select)
 - Yes, successfully

- Yes, unsuccessfully
- Yes, ongoing
- No

9. Name any resources that you have used or would use if you experienced an access refusal.

(Long answer text)

10. Name any resources that would help you in the event of an access challenge/refusal that are not currently available.

(Long answer text)

11. Using 5 words, describe how access challenges/refusals made you feel.

(Long answer text)

7.3. Descriptive words

33	anxious	2	unconfident	1	imposter
22	upset	2	vulnerable	1	inhuman
20	angry	2	fearful	1	stigmatised
15	scared	2	sick	1	stereotyped
12	embarrassed	2	alone	1	unworthy
11	frustrated	1	confident	1	outsider
9	isolated	1	tactful	1	interior
9	sad	1	informed	1	limited
9	discriminated	1	inferior	1	invalid
8	humiliated	1	problematic	1	deflated
8	annoyed	1	inaccessible	1	concerned
8	stressed	1	unfair	1	invisible
7	worthless	1	outcast	1	hopeless
7	uncomfortable	1	shunned	1	targeted
5	nervous	1	othered	1	incapable
5	belittled	1	segregated	1	sadness
5	disabled	1	invalidated	1	disheartened
4	ashamed	1	demanding	1	off-put
4	panicked	1	difficult	1	powerless
4	disappointed	1	uneasy	1	packed
4	alienated	1	liar	1	lawless
3	less	1	irrelevant	1	unwelcomed
3	unimportant	1	annoying	1	trapped
3	confused	1	mocked	1	dependent
3	overwhelmed	1	unsupported	1	afraid
3	inadequate	1	rejected	1	defensive
3	hurt	1	depressed	1	excluded
2	small	1	scrutinised	1	worried
2	flustered	1	sickness	1	judged
2	unequal	1	stress	1	irritated
2	unwanted	1	threatened	1	distressed
2	mad	1	unsafe	1	defeated
2	different	1	undeserving	1	useless