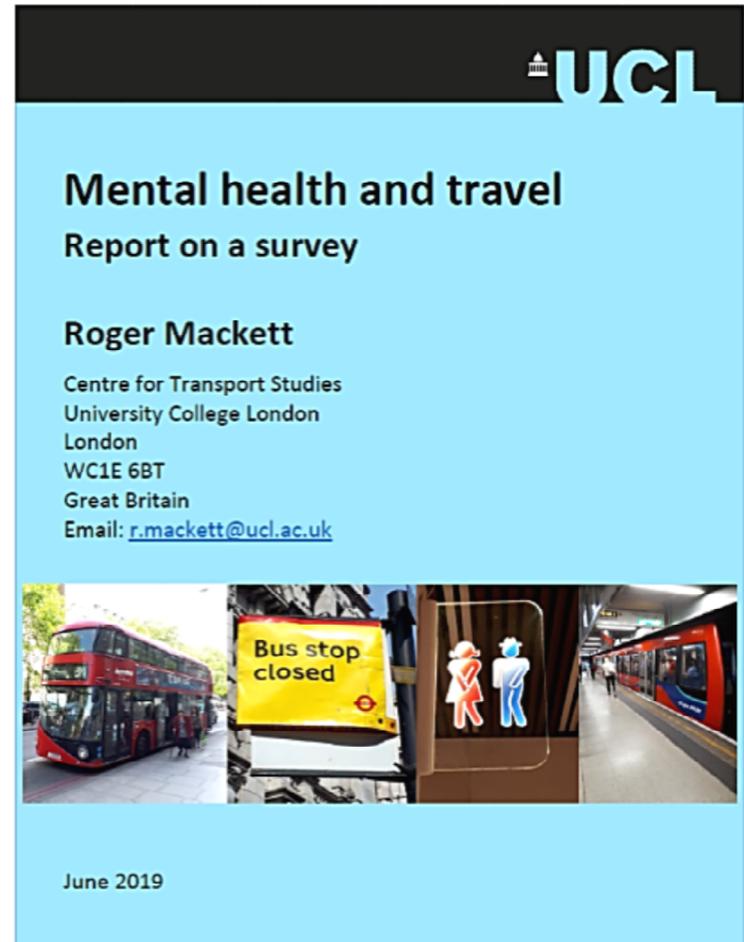


Travel anxiety

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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.
- Approval from UCL Research Ethics Committee.
- Link to questionnaire distributed in summer 2018 using social media (mainly Twitter), websites and newsletters by 18 organisations and 3 individuals.
- 385 valid responses.
- 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.

	% of respondents
What other people think about me	69%
Feeling out of control	67%
Having to mix with strangers	67%
Feeling claustrophobic and unable to escape	58%
How other people behave	52%
Feeling disorientated	48%
Failure of the bus, train or car	47%
Having to talk to staff such as bus drivers	46%
Finding suitable toilet facilities	40%
Getting lost	39%
Having to take decisions about where to go	37%
Not being able to obtain help	35%
Remembering where I am going to	20%
Using ticket machines	18%
Handling money	14%
Something else	14%
Number of respondents	381

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‘What other people think about me’

- *“I’m constantly afraid of being laughed at or humiliated by people in public. I think people are judging me and laughing at how awful I look”* (Woman aged 31-40).
- *“On days I’m anxious and stressed, I can’t cope with people being near me, as I feel they are staring at me and talking about me and laughing at me”* (Woman aged 18-30).
- *“People look at me, laugh, they won’t serve me in shops, people point and laugh when I’m out, walking to the bus”* (Woman aged 61-70).

The reactions of other people vary

- Some are good:
“Someone kindly offered me a seat when my legs buckled. Someone else gave me a bottle of water” (Female aged 41-50).
- And some aren't:
“I have offered people money to give up their seat for me. Last time it cost me £30” (Female aged 41-50).



Getting lost

- *“I was ‘lost’ in my local town. I didn’t know where I was or how to get home” (Woman aged 51-60).*
- *“It’s happened so many times! Most recently I lost half an hour of time and was rescued from wandering by a homeless man who took me back to the train station” (Woman aged 31-40).*
- *“My PTSD was triggered and I ran away. I had no idea where I was and too scared to ask someone” (Woman aged 41-50).*
- *“When I get lost I panic and cry. A lot. And when I panic I lose the ability to speak, which makes things worse” (Woman aged 31-40).*

Changes from normal journeys

- *“The **bus took a diversion**. I was stressed. I tried to blank the outside out. I kept trying to reassure myself it will be back to normal soon. I missed my stop. Thinking we were still on the diversion I continued on the bus till they said it was end of route. I was so stressed and confused” (Woman aged 18-30).*
- *“My **train broke down** and I was extremely anxious because I had to quickly figure out which replacement train to get. I became even more anxious because I thought I would get stuck at the station” (Woman aged 18-30).*

What can be done?

Improve interactions with others

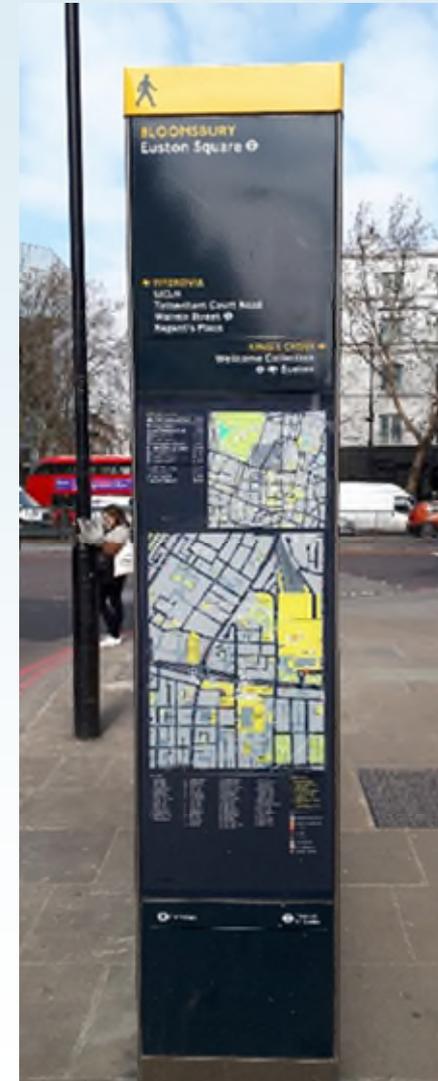
- Improve the attitudes and behaviour of the public
- Make employers more aware of mental illness
- Better staff training
- Cards to ask taxi drivers not to chat



What can be done?

Make wayfinding simpler

- Clearer, more consistent, maps, websites and signposts
- Information screens on all buses and trains
- Improve design of mobile phone wayfinding apps
 - more guidance about how to use them
 - more public transport route options



What can be done?

Increase confidence when travelling

- Travel training
- More 'Safe places'
- Wider use of 'Please offer me a seat' badge scheme



What can be done?

Make travelling more comfortable

- More public toilets
- Develop 'Quiet streets'
- More seating at bus stops and stations
- 'Quiet places' on stations
- More off-street cycle lanes



Some final thoughts

- A large proportion of the population feel anxious when travelling.
- Some of your friends and family may have travel anxiety even if you do not know about it.
- Those of us who are not anxious now could become so, e.g. through PTSD.
- A better understanding of travel anxiety might help explain apparently irrational travel behaviour.
- Addressing these issues may increase the numbers travelling and the revenue received.
- Making travel less confusing and less stressful would benefit everyone.

The report

- Available from: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/civil-environmental-geomatic-engineering/mental-health-and-travel-report>

