

**London
Loos**

Public toilets in London

The views of older Londoners
September 2022

**Out and
about**



Introduction

From May to July 2022 almost 600 older Londoners told Age UK London what they thought about public toilet provision in the boroughs where they lived. This paper presents the findings of the survey and sets out our recommendations for London's local authorities about how public toilet provision can be improved.

Good provision of public toilets is a hallmark of a civilised and welcoming place to be as well as an important part of public health provision. Public toilets also have a role to play in tackling social isolation.

Too many older Londoners avoid leaving their home as much as they would like because they are not confident they will be able to access a toilet if they need one. Londoners such as those with health conditions requiring more frequent visits to the toilet are among those most affected.

Age UK London's London Loos campaigning is part of the Out and About campaign to tackle social isolation by improving community infrastructure including public toilet provision, so older Londoners feel able to get out, maintain friendships and other social connections and do the things they want to do.

Unfortunately the long-term decline in the number of public toilets has accelerated in recent years. At the latest count there were around 1,500 public toilets in London to meet the needs of more than eight million people - fewer than one per 5,000 Londoners.

Methodology

637 members of the public completed our London Loos survey from May to July 2022. This was a self-selecting survey carried out online using the Survey Monkey platform. 96% of respondents lived in London with all boroughs and the City of London represented. 93% of respondents were over the age of 50 and 86% over the age of 60.



81%

say public toilets in the borough where they live are bad

Places where toilet provisions are not good enough



70% say the high street



58% say parks



30% say residential areas

Most important when it comes to public toilets



Cleanliness 48%



Opening times 25%



Accessibility 13%

52%

over half sometimes reduce the amount they drink before going to some places



Older Londoners told us

Medical conditions for both myself and my husband mean we need access to clean toilets.

Lack of clean, accessible public toilets traps people at home and prevents them getting out and about. It affects more of us than you might imagine.

If I know there are toilets at a venue, I will be confident to be out all day.

Older people use loos more often and the demographic of London is that our population is ageing so we need adequate loo facilities to cater for an ageing population.

I have bladder issues and any journey short or long I have to consider toilet provision first. I don't go out if I feel I will be caught short. I tend not to meet anyone due to this and hence feel quite isolated.

Inadequate facilities limit the ability of older people to use the public spaces we are entitled to use and is discriminatory.



9 in 10 Londoners have considered toilet provision before making a journey to a particular place.

46% of people would not be confident directing someone to the nearest public toilet if asked.



68% said signs are the best way to inform people about the location of public toilets. Paper maps that people could put in their pockets were the second most popular option.

81%

say they would be more likely to visit shops, cafes and businesses if public toilet provision were better.



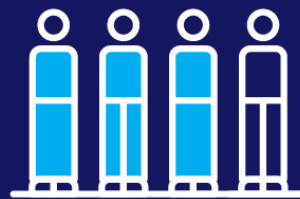
40%

of people spend less time in a place because of the lack of loos.



4 in 5 said that they would not be confident going into a shop or cafe and asking to use the toilet if they were not a paying customer.

3 in 4 said they would be somewhat or very confident asking to use the toilet in a business that was part of a Community Toilet Scheme.



Recommendations for local authorities in London

Here are our recommendations for local authorities in London based on the survey findings and existing recommendations from those campaigning for better public toilet provision.

- Develop a strategy for public toilet provision across the borough as part of the council's public health responsibilities.
- Identify a named officer responsible for developing and monitoring toilet provision (including a high standard of information about the locations of public toilets, including maps and monitoring the accessibility of toilets for disabled people) who should lead on this strategy.
- Introduce Community Toilet Schemes in designated town centres and other places of need based on meaningful consultation with older residents and learning from successful models from across the country.
- Where Community Toilet Schemes already exist, work with businesses and the wider community to strengthen provision. This should include reviewing schemes and incentivising more businesses to join schemes.
- Take steps to meet requirements set out in the London Plan where Policy S6 Public toilets requires that large-scale developments that are open to the public, such as shops, sport, leisure and health care facilities, transport hubs, cultural and civic buildings and large areas of public realm, provide and secure the future management of:
 - free publicly-accessible toilets suitable for a range of users including disabled people, families with young children, people of all gender identities; and free 'Changing Places' toilets designed in accordance with the guidance in British Standard BS8300-2:2018.

- These should be available during opening hours, or 24 hours a day where accessed from areas of public realm.
- In smaller developments, and subject to local evidence and Development Plan policy secure access to toilet facilities as part of a community toilet scheme, or secure provision of public toilets through the Community Infrastructure Levy, Section 106 agreements and other planning obligations.
- Promote public information resources, such as the [Great British Toilet Map](#) and the [Changing Places Toilet Map](#).
- Deliver a public campaign to raise awareness of toilet locations.
- Undertake a review of local signage and maps.

We would like to thank The Mercers' Company for their support.



[Age UK London](#)

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