

RESEARCH SUMMARY (RS0502)

- Title:** Passenger requirements of rail fares (Qualitative).
- Objective:** To explore passenger awareness and views on the range of tickets available, determine what constitutes value for money, understand awareness of and attitudes towards Saver tickets and the availability to book tickets nine weeks in advance.
- Sponsor:** Passenger Focus **Date:** March 2006
- Methodology:** 14 discussion groups amongst rail users and non-users in GB.

Key Facts

- The rail fare structure is perceived as complex and confusing particularly for business and leisure passengers making longer journeys. Passengers are concerned that they may choose the wrong ticket and want help to ensure that they get the best deal. Often passengers do not trust staff to give them the best deal and new initiatives such as two single tickets sometimes being cheaper than a return are felt to have made the decision on which ticket to buy even more confusing.
- Benefits of Saver ticket and ability to reserve tickets from nine weeks in advance of travel are largely unknown. However it is clear that passengers do not favour a wider range of tickets than already exists.
- Advance booking discounts are important for some long distance passengers but are not always available if they require flexibility which is particularly the case for day trips.
- Commuters are the least confused about the range of ticket options available and don't think the choice is too great, however even in this group there is very low awareness of the levels of discount available for weekly, monthly and annual season tickets which results in some not taking advantage of the best deal available to them.
- Commuters on lower incomes feel that they are penalised by current fares structure because they have no choice but to travel in the peak (inflexible employers) and can not afford to buy period season tickets which offer the best discounts because they are paid weekly. In many cases commuters are using more expensive daily tickets.
- Some commuters travel to work for only 2 or 3 days a week and therefore have to rely on daily tickets with no 'carnets' or period tickets currently available for them.
- Those who commute by coach to work where the train would be an option perceive that the coach has benefits over the train outside of cost. These benefits include a

guaranteed seat, safety, comfort and a more convenient end point.

- Older leisure passengers are very receptive to deals or promotions on tickets whilst some younger passengers often pay full fares even when eligible for a railcard. The up front cost and hassle of buying a railcard make them unpopular for some younger passengers.
- First class business passengers place a high premium on flexibility and do not focus on the details of ticket type or fare. Standard class business passengers balance fares alongside flexibility and do sometimes book restricted discounted fares between 1- 2 weeks in advance of travel.
- Those who currently use the car rather than rail do so for a wide variety of reasons and fares are only one of these reasons. The 'up front' cost of rail travel compares unfavourably with the more hidden costs of maintaining a car and parking etc. which are not top of mind.
- Railcard holders are generally happy with the level of discount that they receive.
- A national railcard that offered 50% discount in the off peak is popular amongst some passengers as it is inclusive and available for all passengers rather than just those who currently qualify for railcards.

Agency: Outlook Research Limited

Contact: Passenger Focus, Policy and Research, Peter Thompson,
0870 336 6032