



Coronavirus travel survey

April 2020

Survey background

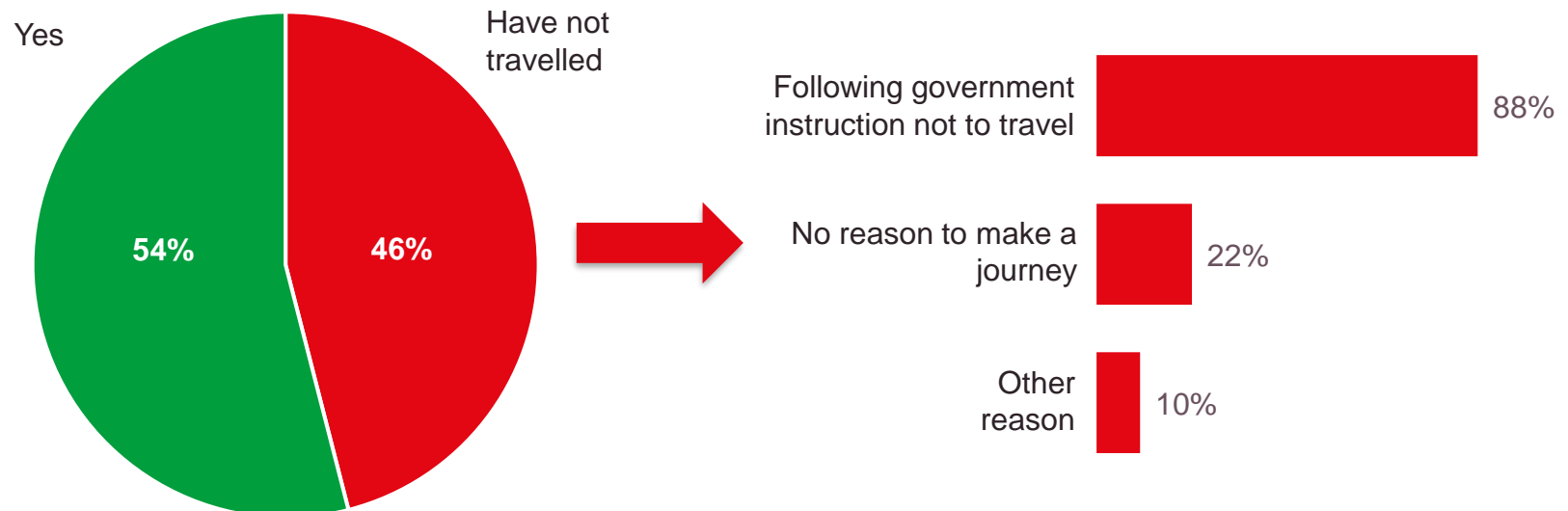
- On 2 April Transport Focus sent an email to 15,808 people on our Transport User Panel asking them to complete a survey regarding their travel in the previous seven days (since 26 March 2020). The survey also asked panellists about their recent experience in attempting to claim a refund on previously purchased season tickets.
- The survey was closed on Tuesday 7 April with 5791 panellists having completed the questionnaire.
- This report summarises the findings from this research. Please note that data is unweighted and has been collected from those who have agreed to undertake surveys for Transport Focus. Findings should therefore be seen as indicative rather than statistically representative of transport users generally.

People have been following government advice not to travel

Almost half of panellists say that they had not made a journey in the seven days prior to completing the survey. The majority saying that one of the reasons they did not travel was that they were following current government instructions.

Over the past 7 days have you made a journey using the following modes of transport?

Reason for not travelling:

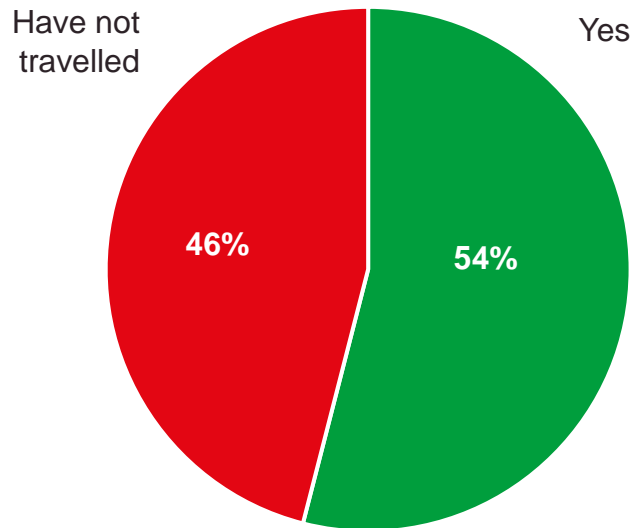


Base: 5791 Transport User Panellists; 2684 not making a journey

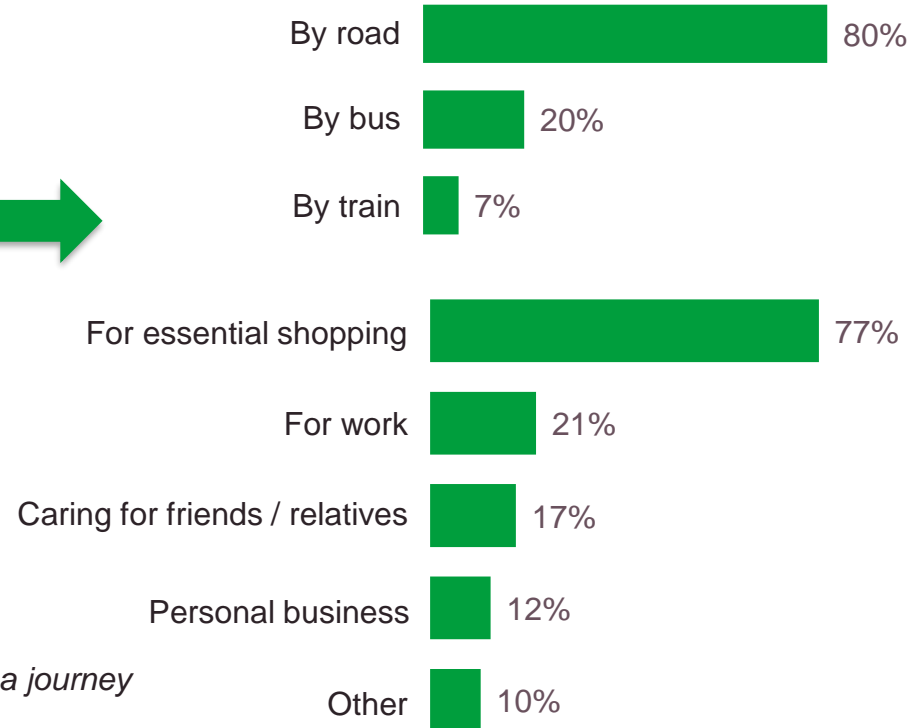
Where journeys have been made they have been made by road

Just over half of panellists say that they had travelled in the seven days prior to completing the survey. In the main journeys were made by road and one of the main reasons for travelling was to undertake essential shopping.

Over the past 7 days have you made a journey using the following modes of transport?



Mode / purpose of journey:



Base: 5791 Transport User Panellists; 3107 making a journey

Panellists generally report that roads and public transport have been quiet

"It was easier because there was so little traffic."

Road user

"I needed to pick up papers from my office in the City in central London. The train was almost empty, and I walked to office rather getting bus. A strange experience given the absence of other passengers. I should not need to return to the office until the shutdown comes to an end."

Train user

"By car, to The supermarket, roads were quiet, By foot to the local store, I live in a fairly rural place, so easy to stay 2 meters away from others."

Road user

"Earlier in the pandemic, there were a frustrating number of non-essential journeys being made, but this was much improved later. Closure of the Circle line was a pain, but understandable."

London Underground user

"No problem; only one other passenger outwards, none on the return. Bus was clean and the front seats were taped off to keep people away from the driver."

Bus user

"Drive to supermarket to get essential foods for ourselves and older neighbours. Quite apprehensive about being out near others. Roads quiet."

Road user

"Very quiet trains, immediately after the stay at home was announced the trains were initially a shorter configuration but passenger numbers hadn't dropped much, now nearly nobody is travelling the trains have gone back to the usual longer length. Made no sense at the time."

Train user

Panellists generally report that roads and public transport have been quiet

"Journey from Oxford Parkway to Churchill Hospital on 2 occasions. Double-Decker bus with never more than 6 people on board including 2 of us. Used Oxfordshire travel-pass to pay - easy to do, and no person-to-person contact."

Bus user

"Very happy with the service provided by both companies. The carriages were clean, and passengers were encouraged to maintain social distancing and did so."

Train user

"On the train journey, there only three others in the carriage, so there were no problems."

Train user

"Due to Covid-19 the train has stopped running at certain times. I have to get to work as a keyworker and so for reliability I had to switch to using my car about 10 days ago."

Road user

"Slightly unnerving, but the trains have been sparsely attended and it meant you could socially distance the required amount."

Train user

"Buses running more frequently than usual, and almost completely empty. Loads of free seats and very short waiting times. Much better than previously."

Bus user

"The roads were much quieter with much less traffic."

Road user

"I went to a supermarket once for a weekly supply of food because I could not secure a home delivery."

Road user

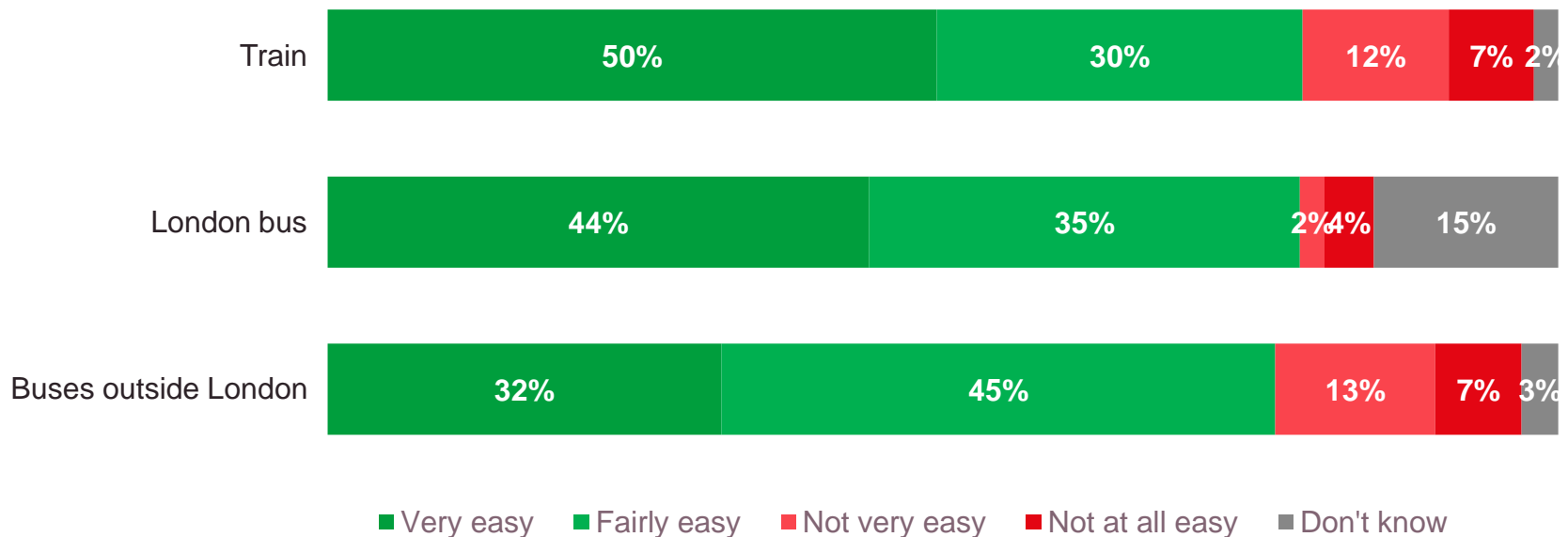
"The journeys were fine and the buses not very crowded. It was possible to maintain a reasonable distance from other passengers and the drivers have been screened off (from irate passengers) for a long time now."

Bus user

Those who travelled by public transport found it easy to find information on what services were running

80 per cent of those who made journeys by train found it easy to find information on what was running. Those who made journeys by bus found it similarly easy.

Generally, how easy or difficult was it to get information on what services were running before you made your journey by..?



Base: Transport user panellists making journeys by train (230), London bus (163), Bus outside London (472)

Panellists experiences of finding information about services

"All necessary information available easily on company's website. Could be difficult without internet access.
Bus user

"Although, as expected, a restricted service was in operation the information was very good.."
London underground user

"More up to date and accessible time-tabling information is needed.."
Train user

"I want to commend the bus drivers. They are really friendly despite the pandemic. The front was cordoned off to keep the driver safe . Posters ask passengers to keep their distance [when] sitting. The timetable is posted on the website and is running accurately every hour. I thank them because I need to get to work . Walking would be really difficult. I don't drive.."
Bus user

"The tannoy or the conductor voice over gave me everything I needed to know. I always felt it useful to remind passengers to check the TOC website for changes to services. Which I think all passengers should be doing in any instance."
Train user

"Got caught out by bus. Timetable had changed to hourly without me knowing. Meant a wait.."
Bus user

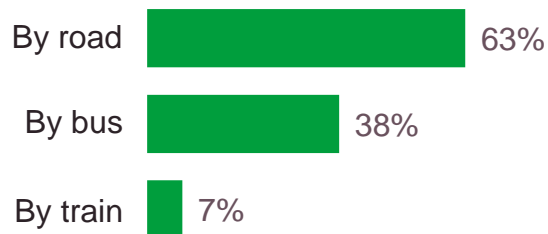
"Relatively short journey by bus to nearest big town taken on 27th March. Restricted timetable found online. No problem with travelling on bus. Customers staying well apart. Driver welcoming. 1st April walked to town - amended timetables changed and only found this out by observing buses in town (fewer customers) and then found new timetable on return home.."
Bus user

Panellists with a disability are more likely to have made journeys by bus

Those panellists with a disability are less likely to have made a journey by road and more likely to have made a journey by bus in the days before completing the questionnaire than panellists generally.

Those making journeys by train are less likely than others to say that it was easy to find information about which services were running.

Mode of journey:



"The train journey was on a reduced timetable and got cancelled yet again. More information and updates would be helpful, rather than just sat not knowing anything."
Disabled train user

"As I do not have a car and cannot drive, the one return journey from Ruislip to Uxbridge was for essential food supplies only. The bus was almost empty. 3 people max load on entire journey."
Disabled bus user

"Actual travel was fine, practically had the train to myself. What wasn't so good was the difficulty in finding the Coronavirus altered timetable for my route online. It gave me the normal timetable, but I found it to be very difficult to get the altered one."
Disabled train user

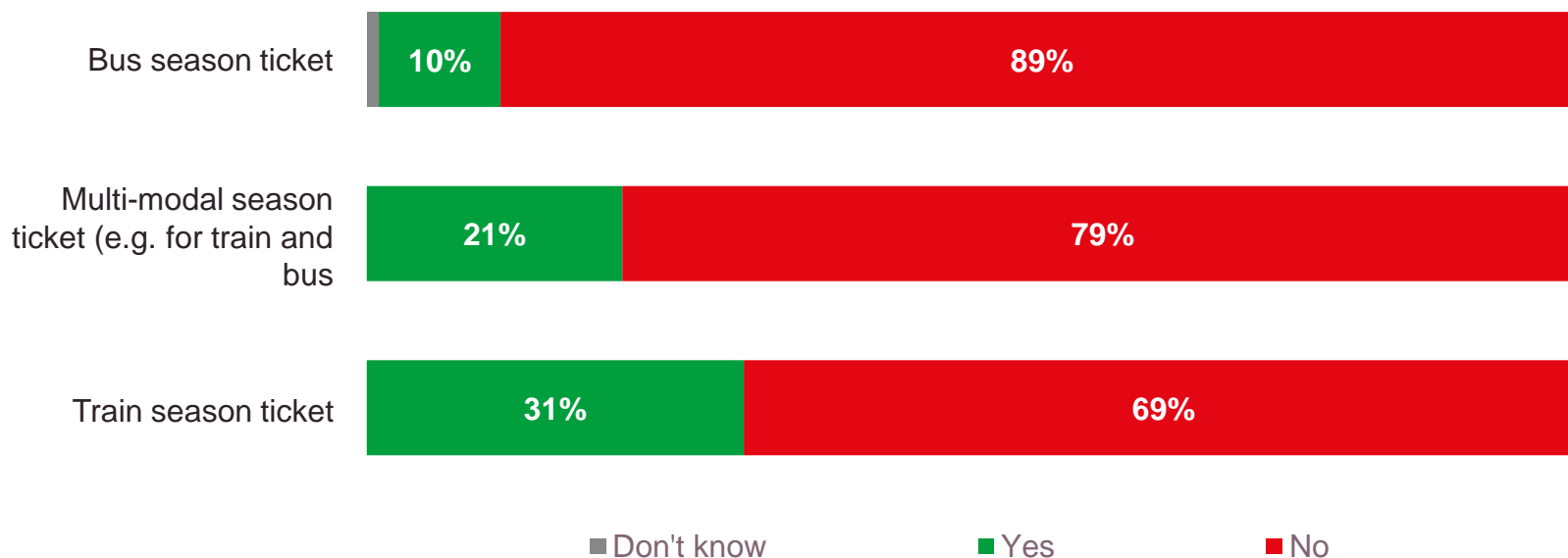
"The bus times have been rescheduled but information is available on-line. Very few travelling. At times I am the only passenger. I am dependant on public transport having recently suffered from Cancer."
Disabled bus user

Base: 336 Transport User Panellists with a disability making a journey

Few season ticket holders have attempted to claim a refund

A majority of panellists who usually hold a season ticket and who usually work full or part time, or who are students (i.e. those that are most likely to commute) have not attempted to make a claim for a refund.

Have you attempted to claim a refund on the season tickets that you told us you currently or usually hold because you are following government instruction not to travel?

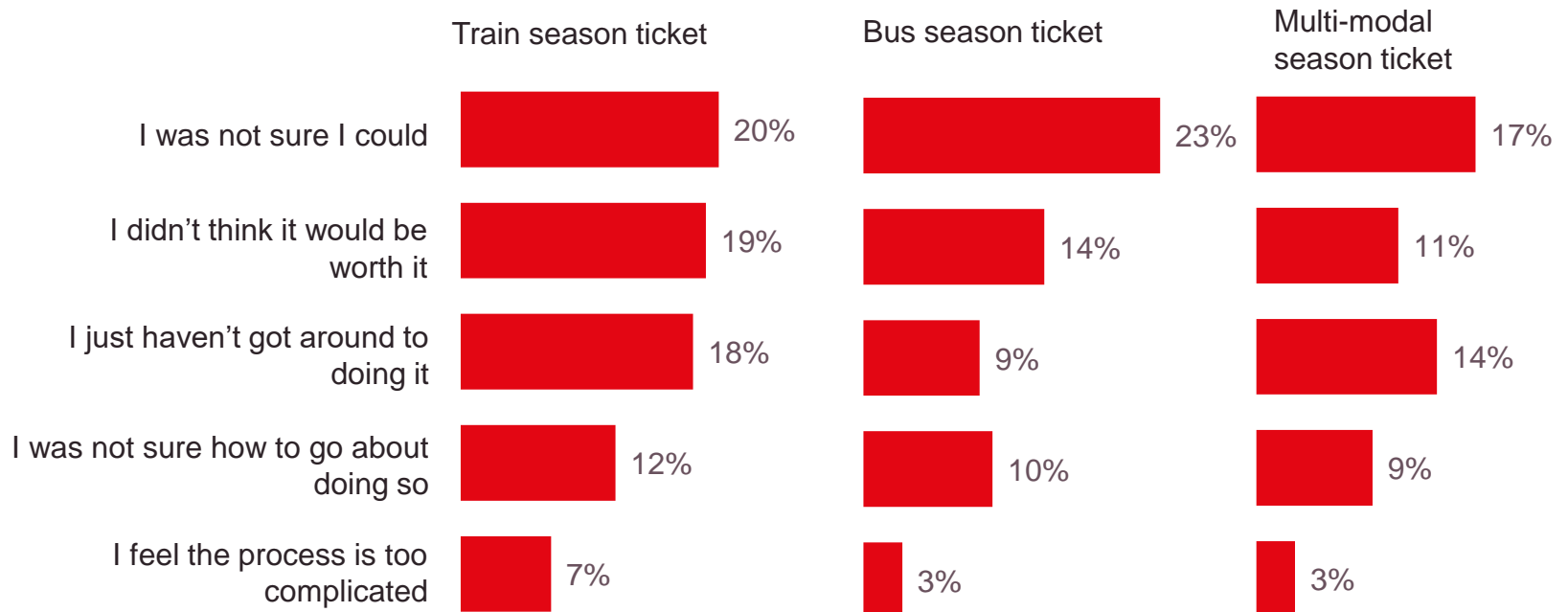


Base: Transport user panellists holding season tickets to travel by train (547), bus (249), across modes (298). Panellists working full or part time, or who are students only.

Transport operators can help more passengers claim a refund by providing better information

Panellists indicate several reasons for not attempting to claim a refund. Around 20 per cent generally say that they were not sure that they could, while around 10 per cent are not sure how to go about doing so. In each case these are issues that could be resolved by the transport operator.

For which, if any, of the following reasons did you decide not to make a claim for a refund?



Base: Transport user panellists (working full or part time or who are students) who have not made a claim for a refund on their season ticket allowing them to travel by train (444), bus (371), across several modes (348).

The minority of bus passengers who have attempted to claim a refund for their season ticket have had a range of experiences

"It hasn't been advertised. Found out by chance. Also it's a pause rather than refund... Just sent photo of cut up card. It was easy, but it's mad to think they can't remotely stop the card so I can use it again instead of ordering a new one once this is all over"

Stagecoach annual season ticket

"No information online, had to email to ask, wait for a reply, which I have now received... I do not expect a positive outcome. I would like to know why bus companies have not already offered this to season ticket holders like the train providers."

Annual ticket, First Bus

"They tell me their terms and conditions don't allow refunds, and the fact they are providing a very limited service that I am not allowed to use does not change their terms and conditions."

Annual ticket, First Bus

"Saw on social media a refund was possible ,it referred me to the website and clear instructions how to contact customer services to resolve. Customer services came up with a satisfactory resolution to save wasting my annual pass. No quibble they just sorted it within the hour of contacting"

Annual ticket, Reading Buses

"I know operators will be under intense pressure but so are travellers. Refund and deferment options should be more visible on websites"

Monthly ticket, First Bus West of England

"I looked up coronavirus on the Stagecoach Bus website, found an email address and got in touch. I've emailed and had a response that I can have a refund (my new ticket was due to start 3/4/20), I just need to send in the ticket to claim it. I only emailed yesterday!"

Annual ticket, Stagecoach South

"I have my annual pass through my workplace, and pay through my salary. I had to contact my workplace, and they asked Nottingham City transport to pause my pass, and they will stop taking payments."

Annual ticket, Nottingham City Transport

"Although I could not get a refund for March, I was shown how to cancel my payments going forward and how to rejoin the scheme when I wish to."

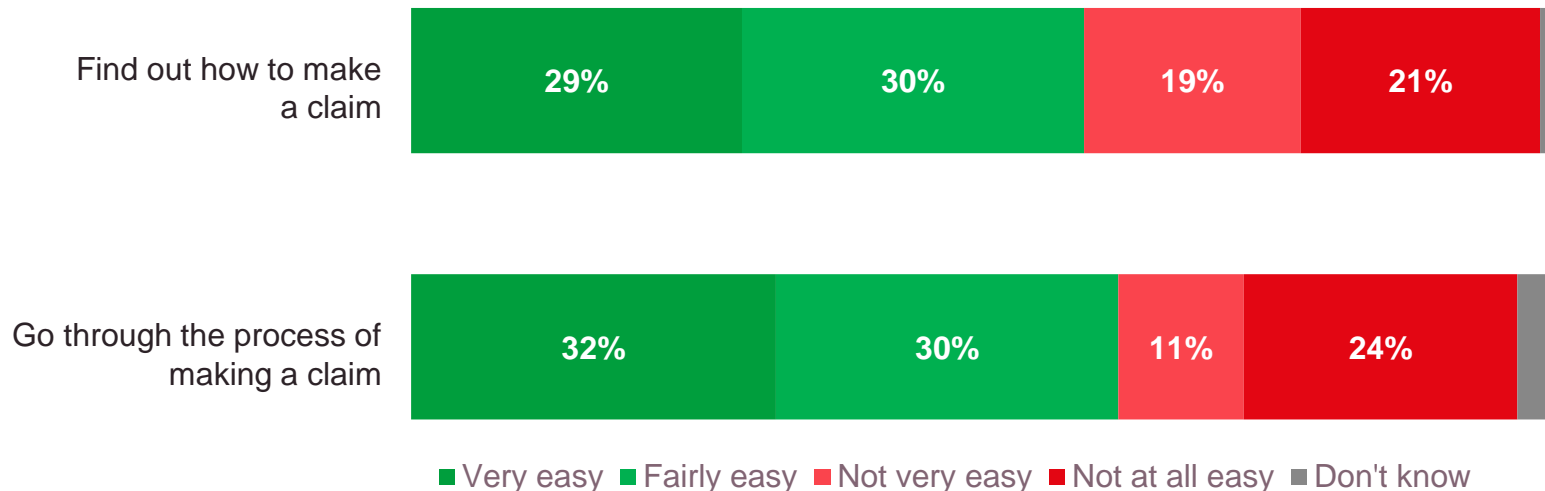
Monthly ticket, First Norfolk and Suffolk

Those who have attempted to claim a refund for their rail season ticket have had a mixed experience

40 per cent of panellists who are most likely to be commuters and who have attempted to make a claim for a refund on their rail season ticket say that they have been awarded some level of refund. 10 per cent say they have not been awarded compensation, while 50 per cent are awaiting a decision.

Whether they received a refund or not, findings indicate that these panellists have had a somewhat mixed experience when making a claim.

Thinking about the season ticket which allows you to travel by train, how easy or difficult was it to..?



Base: Transport user panellists (working full or part time or who are students) who made a claim for a refund on their season ticket allowing them to travel by train (168)

Many who found obtaining a rail season ticket refund easy visited the station, completed an online form or held a smartcard

"I have a Key Smartcard and so I logged in and followed the instructions online. It took around 5 minutes."

Annual ticket, Southern

"logged in to bring up my details, just a few clicks, and an upload of my season ticket submitted created my application for a refund, really easy."

Annual ticket, Greater Anglia

"I trotted down to Glossop railway station (3 minutes' walk), spoke to my friend Dave the ticket clerk, who took my 'smart' season ticket, put it through the reader and cancelled it."

Annual ticket, Northern

"Clear instructions in the website and excellent service at the railway station... The company waived its normal administration charge which I thought was very helpful."

Annual ticket, ScotRail

"Southeastern have my details so they know what ticket I hold. When I visited their website and logged in the website showed me how much I could expect to receive... This was then automatically refunded into my account."

Monthly ticket, Southeastern

"Just had to put smart card number & email address ... Easy."

Monthly ticket, Great Western Railway

"Scotrail had set up a dedicated page to enable this... Straightforward application form to complete."

Weekly ticket, ScotRail

"I knew I would be working from home before lockdown so on my last journey I asked in the ticket office and the staff member gave me a form."

Monthly ticket, LNER

"Their website had a link to a refund page. I filled that in and a few days later was issued a refund."

Weekly ticket, GWR

"Carried out the instructions given on the EMR website. Went to the issuing station, surrendered my ticket and they processed the refund in 7 days."

Annual ticket, East Midlands Railway

Some rail season ticket holders had problems finding information about how to claim or the value of the refund they may receive

"The SWR website was not very clear. I thought I had to complete an online form, but as I have a smart card that was not correct. I phoned to find out what to do. I then had to send an email with details to a refund email address. I have no idea how much refund I will get, and no indication how long it will take to receive this. I had expected an online calculator to enable me to make an informed decision."

Annual ticket, South Western Railway

"I found it took me quite a while to find the section where I could ask for a refund, and when I did find it the explanation was not very clear at all. Also, the level of detail needed was excessive in my view, considering I have a "smart" card, so they should be able to get all the details they need (e.g. when was it last used, what was the price of the ticket) from their own systems. "

Annual ticket, Greater Anglia

"I have not found a way of claiming a refund for my season ticket which is loaded onto my Smart Card and purchased through TPEXpress' website. TPEXpress directs to National Rail, and National Rail directs back to TPEXpress website."

Annual ticket, TransPennine Express

"It hasn't been clear on whether a refund should be applied for. I asked how much refund I'd get and was told I had to go through the claim process to find out, I couldn't find out in advance. I've just assumed I'd be working from home for a minimum of 3 months so applied"

Annual ticket, Greater Anglia

"I was told to file online as I had a smartcard, but the process requested I print the claim and mail with the physical ticket which for obvious reasons I was unable to do. Customer services on the phone told me they couldn't help but to email the address available online, but there was no email. I submitted to an old SWT address with no response. I have submitted a random online form. No response. I have submitted an enquiry to Facebook chat. No response. I haven't received any response to any of my enquiries."

Monthly ticket, South Western Railway

Some rail season ticket holders were concerned about needing to make visit a station or post tickets despite Government advice

"The guidance says I have to get a refund from the station but I am worried about going out because of social distancing. I emailed SWR for advice but they have not got back to me yet."

Annual ticket, South Western Railway

"...I had to print, sign and post my smart card back recorded delivery at post office. For safety reasons, why couldn't this be suspended? I was actually of breach of government guidelines.... I will have to go through process of reapplying at short notice when allowed to travel again. Suspension would have been easier"

Annual ticket, Northern

"The website wasn't easy to navigate to the correct area (I work in IT so not baffled by computers) phone lines were overloaded and at the end of it all you were expected to post your ticket to them - I'm isolating due to immunosuppressed /at risk group."

Annual ticket, TransPennine Express

"I could not claim a refund at my local station. It had to be done at the station I had purchased it. Unusually I had bought my renewal in Edinburgh. I would have had to make a non essential journey to reclaim... Didn't bother in the end."

Monthly ticket, ScotRail

"I had to go in person to the ticket office. This was difficult as government advice is to not go out for unnecessary reasons. The process of actually obtaining the refund took a very long time. Furthermore the refund was of very low value for a monthly season ticket that costs £230, and I had two weeks left on it, I only received £40."

Monthly ticket, ScotRail

"I should stay in, medical at risk and live alone, yet rail company want me to post it back ideally by registered post due to value via a post office. But the risk of infection and the possible consequences are simply not worth the risk. Not been thought through."

Annual ticket, Great Western Railway

Some season ticket holders are disappointed by the refund calculation and value or object to paying an admin fee

"I was not impressed when told I had claimed too late for a refund. The ticket still had 8 days to go, which is about a quarter of the travel time left."

Monthly ticket, Great Northern

"I think even if you only have a month left you should still be entitled to some money back. They say it is the free part of the ticket but what is the point of buying a yearly ticket and not being able to use the last month and getting nothing."

Annual ticket, South Western Railway

"I have 5 weeks left in my annual season ticket and have not been able to get any refund because of the 12 weeks free. You do not get 12 weeks free, it's just a discounted to take price, but rather than either allow a partial refund or the ability to pause the season ticket the train companies are not willing to help."

Annual ticket, Thameslink

"...It was unreasonable to charge an admin fee when I was told not to travel by government - they should have allowed us to pause our tickets"

Annual ticket, Southeastern

"There was a £10.00 'administration fee'. Wasn't too happy about that!!!"

Monthly ticket, Greater Anglia

"As there are only 2 months left to run on the ticket it is unlikely I will get any rebate despite still having to pay a season ticket loan to my employer. SWR should refund on a pro-rata basis, it is appalling that they treat their primary customers in this way!"

Annual ticket, South Western Railway

Some rail season ticket holders would have preferred a 'pause and resume' option instead of a refund

"I think it would be fair if I could claim the proportionate amount of my ticket remaining (9 months) from when my office closed, on 18 March. Or to be able to suspend the ticket from 18 March and restart it when I can go back to work..."

Annual ticket,
Southern

"I am not happy about the level of the repayment. I have been given half of the value of my season ticket back, but I still have 7 months left to run. I would have preferred to suspend my season ticket until I could travel again."

Annual ticket, Thameslink

"Don't understand why smart ticket can't be deactivated & then reactivated, don't understand why I have to return the ticket. I need ticket when I return to work & don't want this to be a difficult process."

Annual ticket, Northern

"I'm slightly nervous that I'll end up losing out to some extent if the travel lockdown is raised quickly, as I'll have to repurchase the ticket at the new higher price (I have been buying season tickets on 31st December for a couple of years, so I always feel I get a 'cheaper' ticket that way – partly psychological, I realise. Given the annual price hike, that will swallow up easily a month of the amount I would have paid anyway on the old ticket."

Annual ticket, Thameslink

"It would be useful to have system to suspend season tickets... With modern technology it should be easy to tell if an ITSO [smart] card has been used during a suspension period."

Annual ticket, South Western Railway

"There wasn't an option to pause my train annual season ticket so I had to cancel it which was a shame."

Annual ticket, East Midlands Railway