



Season ticket refunds - follow-up survey

May 2020

Survey background

- In April 2020 Transport Focus carried out research among members of its Transport User Panel* which found that many who usually held season tickets had not attempted to claim a refund for these tickets despite not currently using them.
- We decided to recontact these panellists to see if the rate of claiming had increased, and to ask about the experience of claiming in more detail. On May 6 a new questionnaire was emailed to 1172 panellists who had told us previously that they held a season ticket. This survey was closed on May 13 with 674 having completed the questionnaire.
- This report summarises the findings from this research, concentrating in the main on those panellists who usually hold rail season tickets. This is because it is this group which offers the largest number of completed questionnaires from which to analyse results.
- 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.

[*https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/coronavirus-travel-survey/](https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/coronavirus-travel-survey/)

Key findings

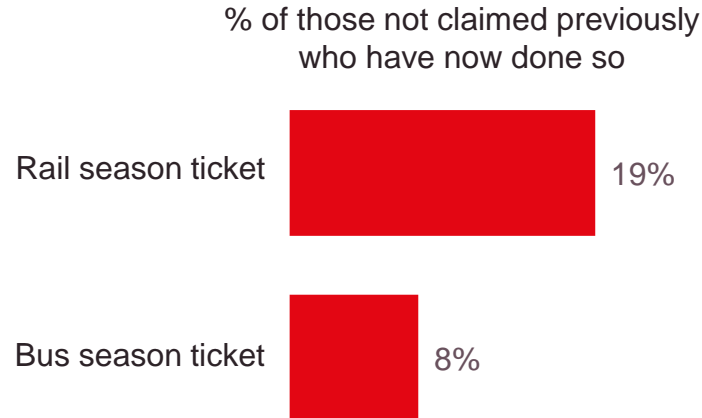
- A small proportion of panellists who told us that they had not made a claim for a refund on their season ticket last time have now done so.
- Almost six in ten rail season ticket holders who submitted a claim say that they received some level of refund. Around a third say that they are still waiting for a decision to be made. Some say that they have been waiting for six weeks or more. The majority of these panellists say they have not been kept informed how long they may have to wait
- For around two in five rail season ticket holders who have received compensation, the level of this matched their expectation. A similar proportion say that they received less than they expected. Many who say that they are satisfied with the way in which their claim was handled mention the speed of the response, while those who are unhappy mention the time taken and the lack of updates.
- While many expect to buy a season ticket in the future, there is some uncertainty about how much they may travel in the future and the way in which a season ticket might meet their needs.

A small number of rail and bus season ticket holders who had not claimed previously have now done so

Previously 31 per cent of rail season ticket holders, and 10 per cent of bus season ticket holders told us that they had claimed a refund.

Of those had not claimed previously 19 per cent of those holding a rail season ticket and 8 per cent of those holding a bus season ticket have now done so.

*Previously you told us that you had not attempted to claim a refund on your season ticket.
Have you now attempted to claim a refund?*

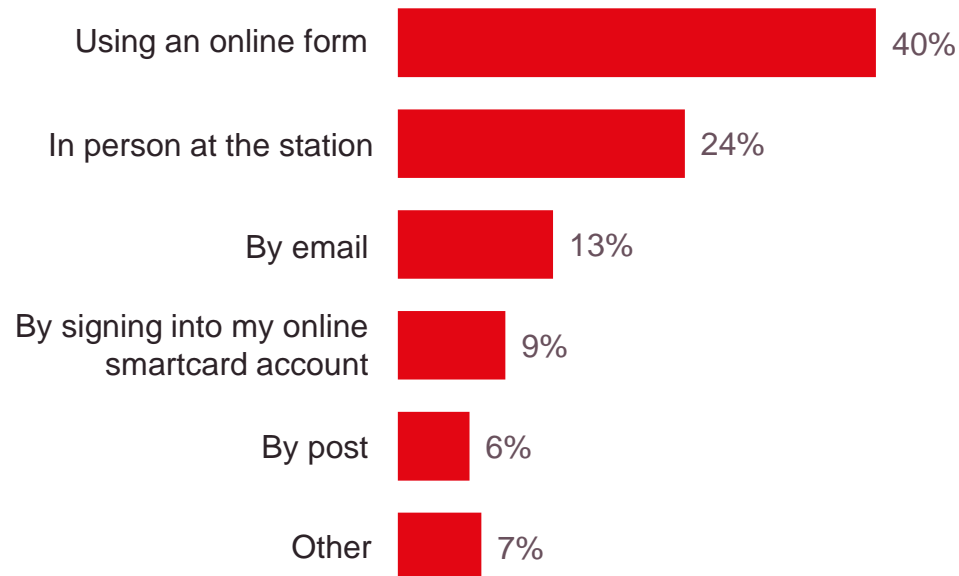


Base: Transport user panellists holding season tickets to travel by train (240), bus (100).

Most claims on rail season tickets were made via an online form

40 per cent of all panellists holding a rail season ticket who told us that they have submitted a claim, say that they made this claim using an online form, while 24 per cent made a claim in person at the station.

How did you submit your refund claim?

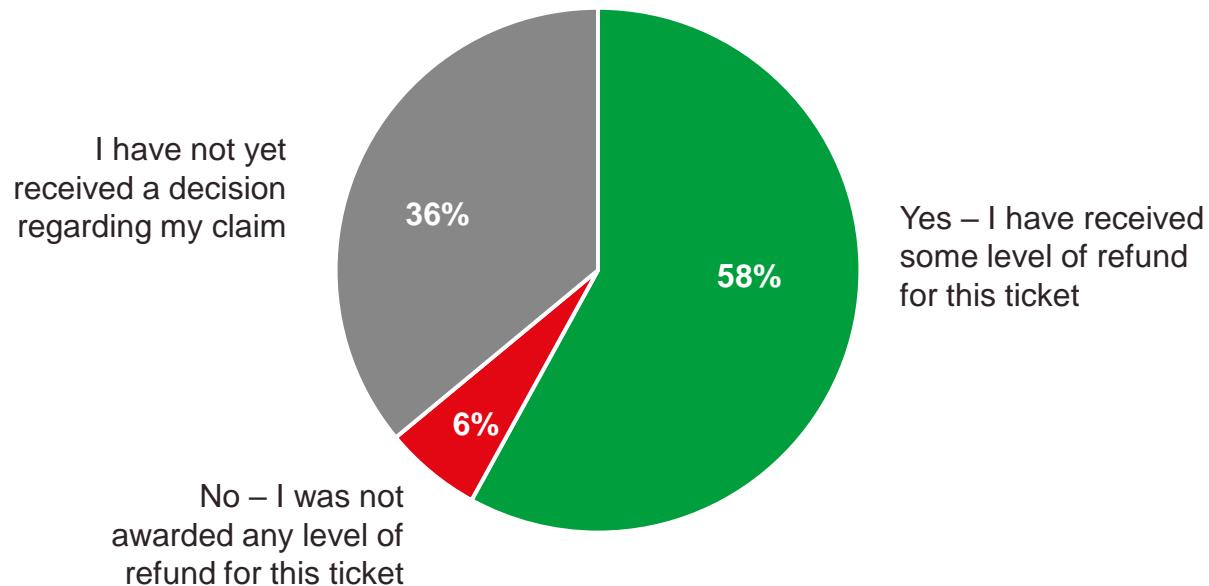


Base: Transport user panellists holding a rail season ticket who have submitted a claim for a refund (161)

Many rail season ticket holders who submitted a claim have received a refund, while many are still waiting for a decision

58 per cent of rail season ticket holders who submitted an application have now received some level of refund for their season ticket, while 36 per cent are still waiting for a decision to be made.

Have you received a refund for the season ticket on which you submitted your claim?

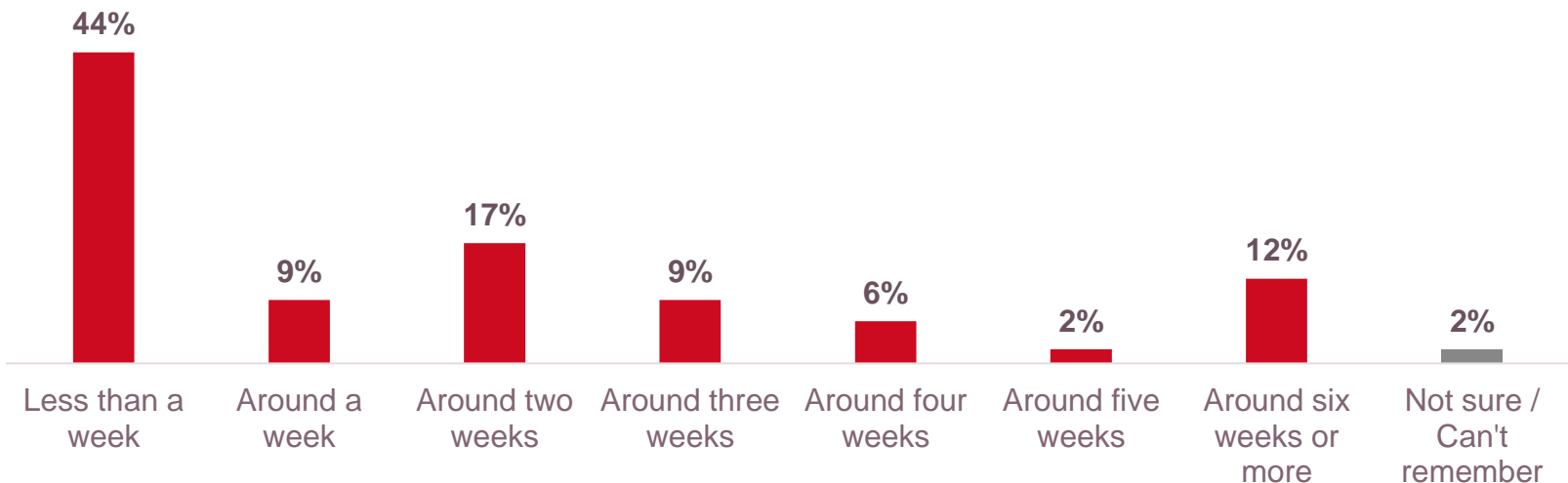


Base: Transport user panellists holding a rail season ticket who have now submitted a claim for a refund; includes those who were previously waiting for a decision (161).

44 per cent of rail season ticket holders that received a decision about their claim waited less than a week

44 per cent of those holding a rail season ticket who submitted a claim for a refund and received a decision (whether this was positive or negative) waited less than a week to get this.

You told us that you had received a decision regarding your claim for a refund for your season ticket. From the time that you submitted your claim, approximately how long did it take for you to receive this decision?

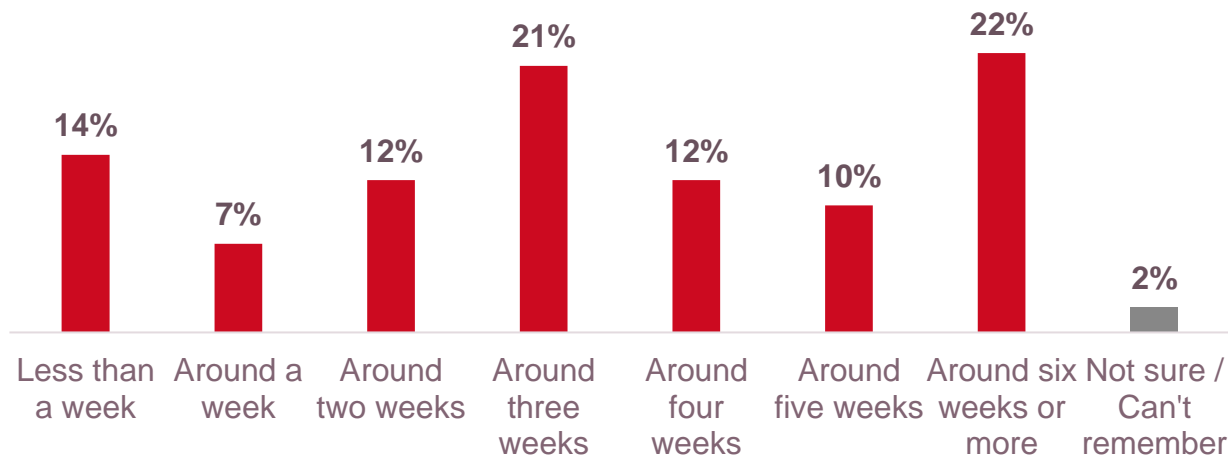


Base: Transport user panellists holding a rail season ticket who received a decision regarding their claim for a refund (103).

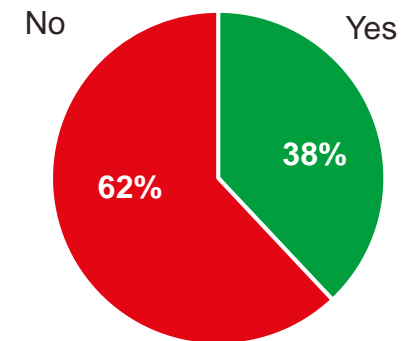
Some have been waiting more than six weeks and many have not been kept informed about how long to expect to wait

22 per cent of those making a claim on their rail season ticket who are waiting for a decision on their claim have been waiting for six weeks or more. 62 per cent have not been told how long they can expect to wait.

For approximately how long have you been waiting for a decision about your claim?



And have you been kept informed as to how long you might have to wait for a refund on your season ticket?

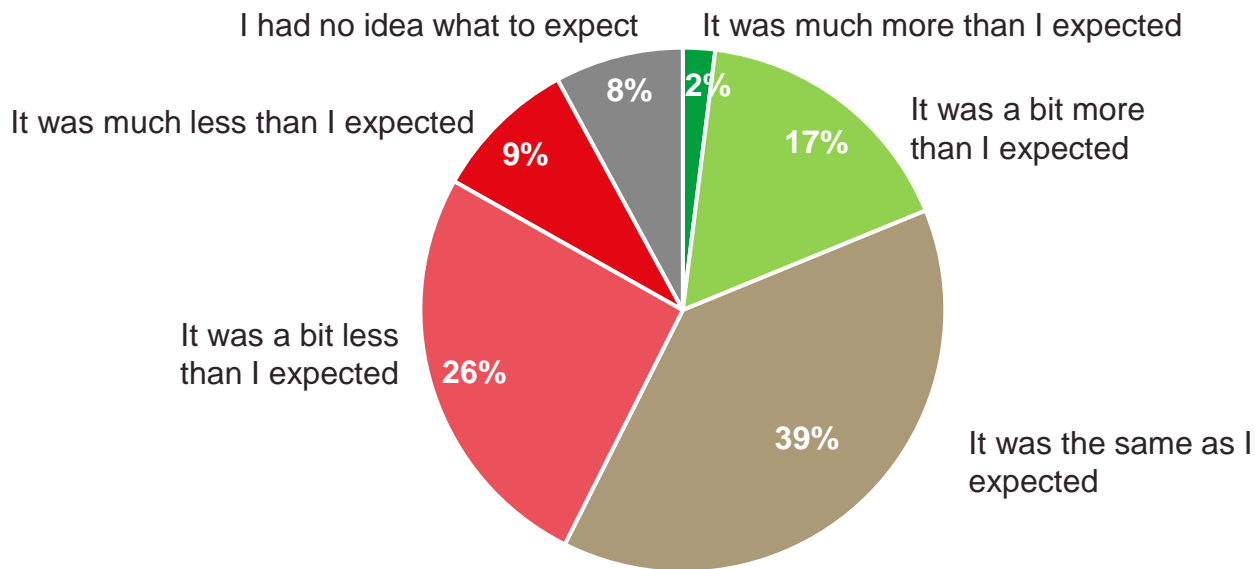


Base: Transport user panellists holding a rail season ticket who are still awaiting for a decision regarding their claim (58).

For around two in five, the level of refund received matched expectation

39 per cent of rail season ticket holders who received some level of refund were awarded what they expected to receive. For 35 per cent the level of refund was less than expected. 19 per cent got more than they expected while 8 per cent had no expectations regarding what they would receive.

Thinking again about your season ticket, for which you received a refund, to what extent did the level of this refund match what you thought you would be awarded when you submitted this claim?

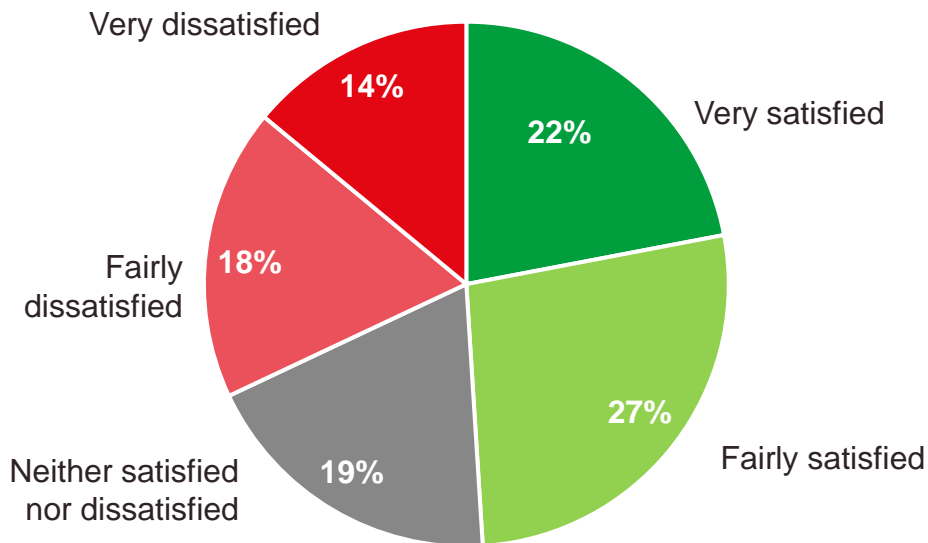


Base: Transport user panellists who received a refund for the rail season ticket on which they submitted their claim (93).

A half of rail season ticket holders submitting a claim are satisfied with the way in which this has been handled

49 per cent of rail season ticket holders who submitted a claim for a refund are satisfied with the way in which their claim was handled. 32 per cent disagree. The level of satisfaction increases for those who were awarded a refund and where this was more or the same as expected.

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way in which your claim for a refund on your season ticket has been handled?



	Received a refund	Waiting for a refund
% satisfied	73%	17%

	Awarded more / the same as expected	Awarded less than expected
% satisfied	83%	56%

Base: Transport user panellists holding a rail season ticket who have submitted a claim for a refund (161).

Many of those satisfied with the way their claim has been handled received a refund quickly and had their expectations met

"The process of claiming could have been easier however claim was processed extremely quickly. Decision within 24hrs and payment received within 5 days."
Annual ticket, Southern

"It was as expected, website explained would take a bit longer than normal due to Covid-19."
Annual ticket, ScotRail

"It was simple, efficient and the refund was received very quickly."
Annual ticket, Southeastern

"My online account indicated what I could expect to get and this was indeed what was replaced in my bank account."
Monthly ticket, Southeastern

"It was extremely quick and clear and straightforward, and had the funds back in my account within days – also, they were immediately able to tell me the redemption value of my ticket."
Annual ticket, Thameslink

"Got an email logging the request and advising on the challenges of refunding me so I knew it would take a while but then got a personal email with details of the amount and approximate date to be refunded. Was impressed."
Weekly ticket, ScotRail

"The station staff handled the refund on the spot."
Annual ticket, Great Western Railway

"The turnaround time, by GWR, was much quicker than I had expected. Especially given the automated e-mail from GWR noting that the process may take 28-days to complete, given the volume of queries it is dealing with relating to the Covid-19 travel situation."
Annual ticket, Great Western Railway

Many of those not satisfied with the way their claim had been handled were frustrated at the time taken and a lack of updates

"Zero communication for that period I was waiting. I wasn't expecting nightly updates, but an ETA would have been good. They must have processed the refunds in the order received, so must have known how many they were processing a day and therefore where your approx position 'in the queue' was.."

Annual ticket, Chiltern Railways

"I appreciate they will be busy, but just an occasional email to say it's still in the process would have been more professional."

Monthly ticket, Northern

"Still haven't seen my refund despite claim having been submitted 6 weeks ago."

Annual ticket, South Western Railway

"Having to go to station to claim refund. Absolutely zero transparency in how the refund is calculated. Delay in receiving money back to my account."

Annual ticket, South Western Railway

"No communication, appreciate the difficult circumstances but would like info even if it's we're still looking at your claim."

Monthly ticket, Great Western Railway

"Doubling the amount of time to process the claim in the current situation is understandable if annoying but repeatedly declining to confirm the amount of the refund is beyond frustrating."

Annual ticket, TransPennine Express

"Have been slow at providing the refund- they did suggest it would take a month due to current high demand but is now beyond that. Due to reduced income the refund is very important and so that I can plan for the future if we do return to work."

Annual ticket, TransPennine Express

"There's been no updates, forthcoming and have continually been chasing, when usually got, if anything, a 'we are busy email'. Finally got something constructive after roughly five weeks which suggested they were looking at but asking for copy of ticket - when company already has all my details."

Annual ticket, South Western Railway

"I understand the time taken at this time but I have had no correspondence and I am still out of pocket for my annual season ticket."

Annual ticket, ScotRail

Others are disappointed with the level of refund received or objected to being charged an administration fee

"They told me as I only had 4 weeks left I was entitled to nothing... We are not able to travel through no fault of our own so I still think with 4 weeks left I should have been entitled to something rather than nothing."

Annual ticket, South Western Railway

"I appreciate that refunds for CV19 are taking longer to process but I was very disappointed with the amount of refund for over 3.5 months remaining on my smart card."

Annual ticket, South Western Railway

"The process was fairly straightforward and I know how much refund I will be getting, though the calculation process was not explained. Considering that 7.5 months of validity remained, it was a little disappointing that the refund was less than half the face value."

Annual ticket, Northern

"...I seem to have paid a lot of money for the one month and ten days that I actually used... Feel like I was charged about two months of travel. Also I paid a £10 admin fee when I went in person to the station and was refunded immediately by a member of staff who was already being paid to do that work. I wasn't causing any extra work to Southern Rail so why the £10 admin fee?"

Annual ticket, Southern

"I was still charged a £10 admin fee which I would have expected to be waived in the circumstances."

Annual ticket, Southern

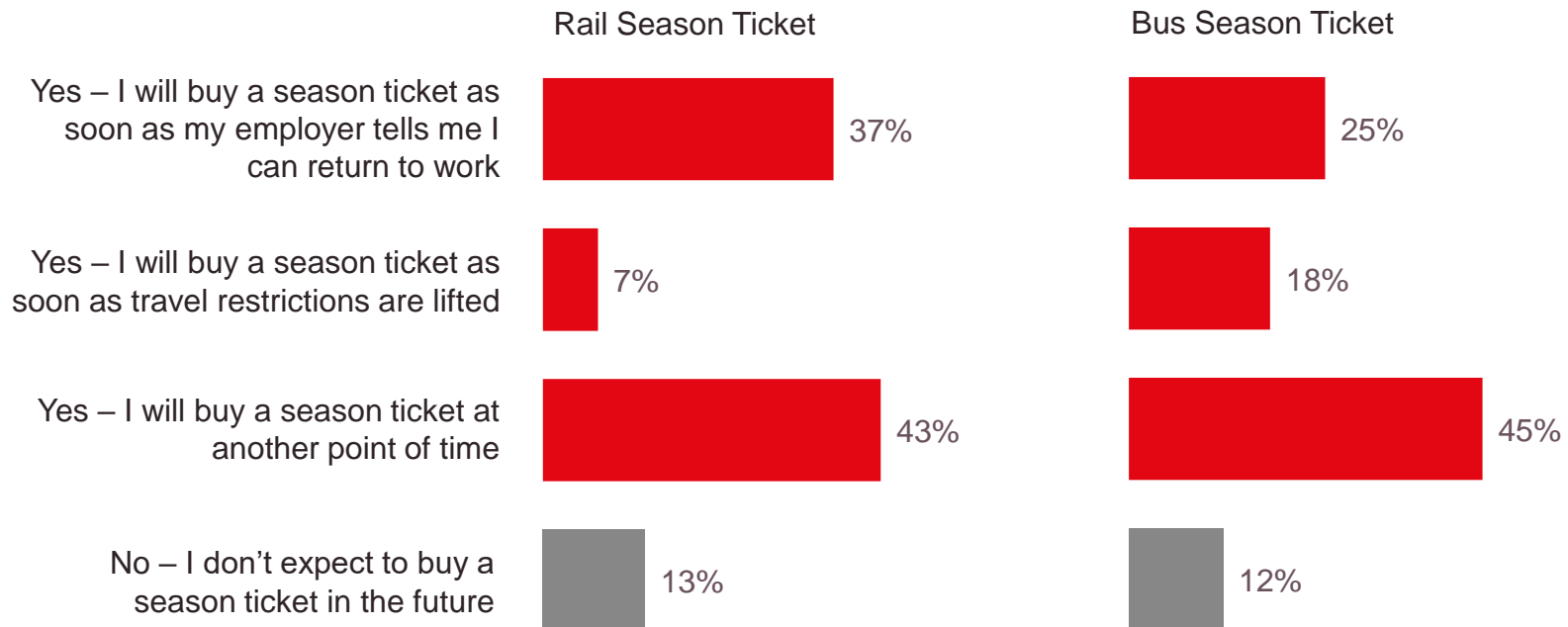
"The process at the station was lengthy and the amount I was refunded was different to the amount I was quoted at the station. That said, I was glad to get a refund. I've seen comments that a ticket freeze would have been a good option for many, and I agree with that. I would have taken that option rather than pay over the odds for the portion I'd used, and now have to pay more when I re-buy my ticket because it'll start in a new calendar year."

Annual ticket, London Northwestern Railway

The majority of season ticket holders expect to buy a season ticket again

87 per cent of panellists who usually hold a rail season ticket, and 88 per cent who usually hold a bus season ticket expect to buy a season ticket again at some point in the future.

Do you expect to buy a season ticket again, and if so when?

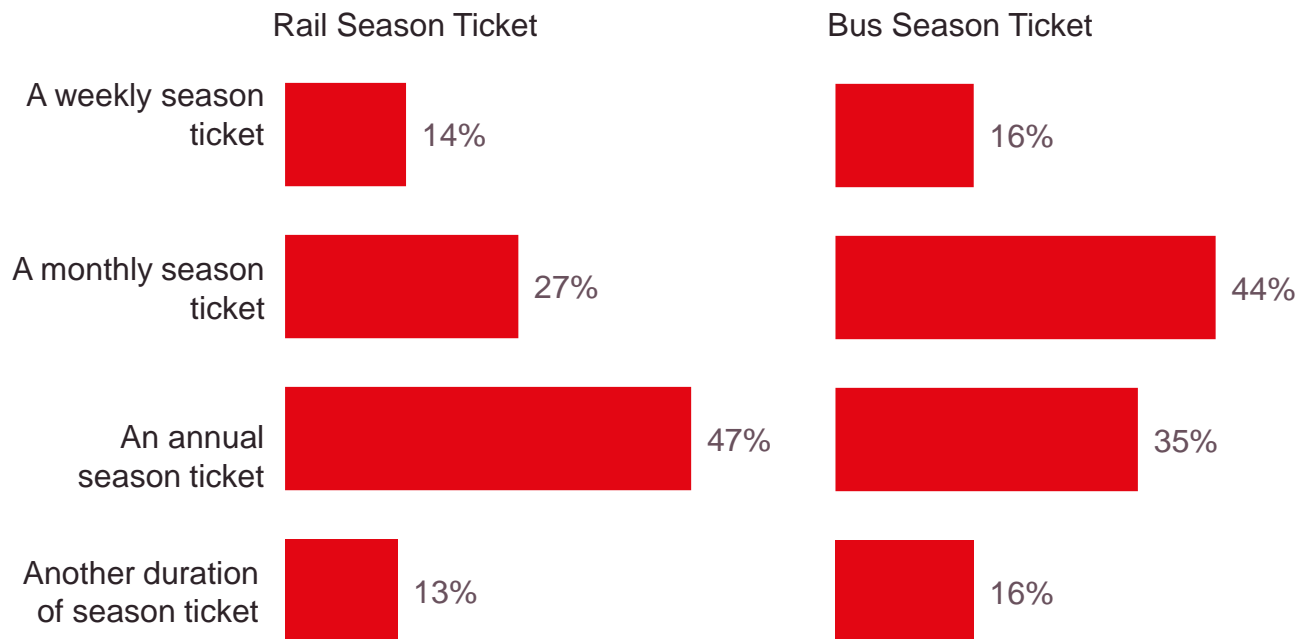


Base: Transport user panellists who usually hold a season ticket for rail (355), for bus (114).

And the majority expect to buy a season ticket of a similar duration to the one they held previously

Those travelling by rail are more likely than bus users to buy an annual season ticket when they buy this again. While there is a small degree of variation, in general three quarters or more expect to buy a season ticket of a similar duration to the one that they held previously.

And what length season ticket do you expect to buy?



Base: Transport user panellists who expect to buy a season ticket in the future for rail (310), for bus (100).

However, many are uncertain about how much they will travel in future and whether a season ticket will still meet their needs

"If my employer insists that I have to return to working in the office then I'll need a season ticket for travel. I'd rather work from home as I am now, but my employer doesn't like homeworking and will want us all back in the office as soon as possible and then I'll need a season ticket."

Annual ticket, Greater Anglia

"Changing work patterns will probably result in most of my job being based from home and trips to the office will be too infrequent to make a season ticket financially beneficial."

Monthly ticket, South Western Railway

"It really depends on what my new working patterns will be as to when I purchase a season ticket. I hope this motivates the industry to offer season tickets for part-time workers/commuters."

Annual ticket, South Western Railway

"Given that we have proven working from home to be effective, I wonder if my company might encourage it more. In which case I would love to see a product made available that is a better way to travel, flexibly and cost effectively, on any 3 days in a week for example."

Annual ticket, London Northwestern Railway

"I am not sure yet when I will return to work and for how many days a week. A season ticket may not be best value for future purpose but I will need to make some calculations.."

Annual ticket, Great Northern

"Circumstances are so fluid at the moment - I want the plan for carnet type tickets to be brought forward with some urgency - not much point buying a season type ticket when we might be hotdesking or indeed working more from home."

Annual ticket, Southeastern

"My job may change to require more home working so I might not need to travel each day."

Annual ticket, East Midlands Railway

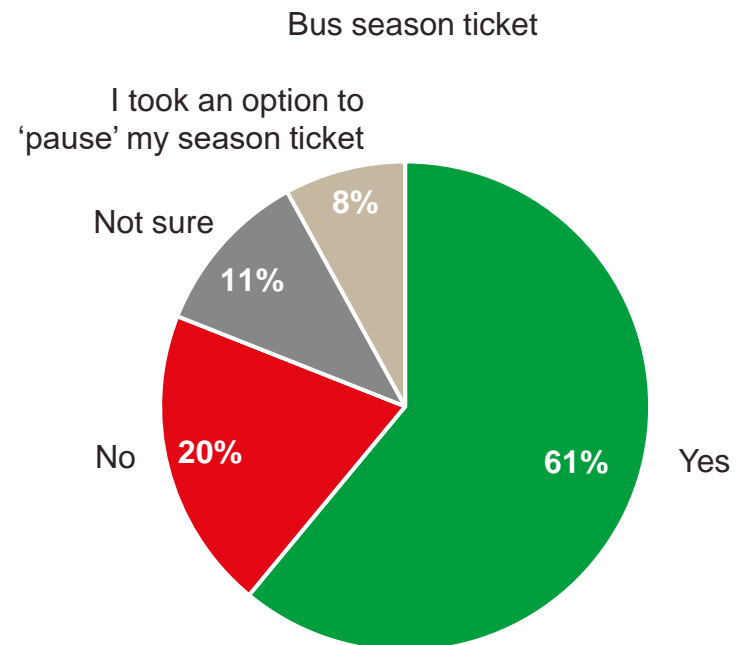
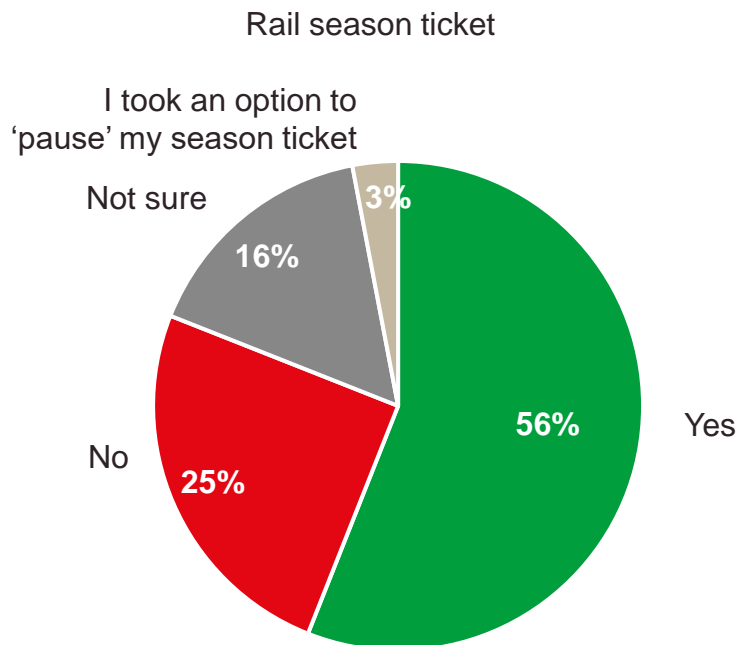
"But I will not purchase a season ticket if I can work from home more regularly."

Monthly ticket, Greater Anglia

There is some support for the option to 'pause' a season ticket rather than claim a refund

56 per cent of those who hold rail season tickets and 61 per cent of those who hold bus season tickets say that they would have preferred an option to 'pause' their season ticket rather than claim a refund. 3 per cent and 8 per cent respectively say they have taken this option.

Rather than a refund would you have preferred the option to 'pause' your season ticket until you returned to travel again?



Base: Transport user panellists holding season tickets to travel by train (355), bus (144).

Rail and bus season ticket holders have a range of views on the option to 'pause' a season ticket rather than claim a refund

"I would rather that the cash sat in my bank account... and who knows what the future holds and if a season ticket is going to be required again."

Annual ticket, Chiltern Railways

"Not sure what my travel will look like in the future. I'd rather receive back the money I've already spent and buy a new ticket when the time comes."

Monthly ticket, National Express West Midlands

"Because a bird in the hand..."

Monthly ticket, Avanti West Coast

"With the refund levels offered it would have been better for me to put the ticket on hold."

Annual ticket, Great Western Railway

"I would not have lost a number of days, on my four week ticket."

Monthly ticket, Arriva

"It was cleaner to cancel the season ticket (which is what I requested). I am happy that the decision about when to go back to normal (an annual ticket / 5 days per week commuting) is mine to make, when I decide it is ok."

Annual ticket, ScotRail

"This would have been an excellent option as I still need to travel when the restrictions are lifted. This would have avoided the massive reduction in refund value... I am overall having to pay more money than if I had just been able to pause."

Monthly ticket, ScotRail

"Would help delay the inevitable purchase of an increased price ticket but at the same time just wanted the money back for other priorities as it is my largest payout per month other than my mortgage"

Monthly ticket, Greater Anglia

"That would have been really useful and matched my requirements perfectly."

Annual ticket, Great Northern

"Need the money!"

Weekly ticket, ScotRail

"Because on returning to work I may have to stagger timings. It may be cheaper to buy daily."

Annual ticket, Greater Anglia