



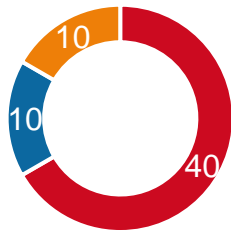
Covid-19 rail commuter community

Weeks one and two summary report

24 July

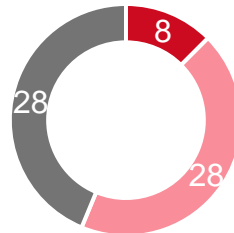
Who are the sixty members of our community?

Location



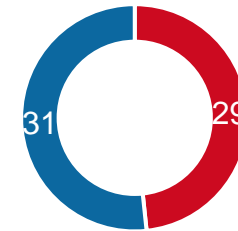
■ England ■ Scotland ■ Wales

Interchange?



■ Yes - across mode ■ Yes - within rail ■ No

Gender

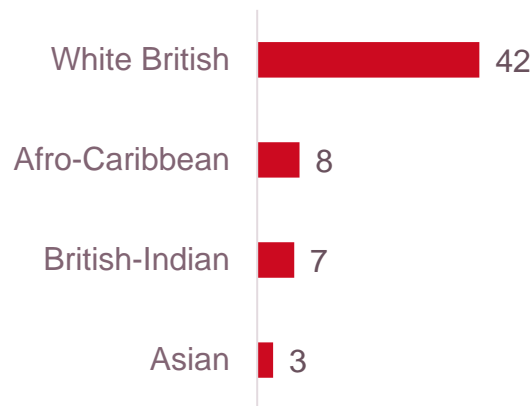


■ Male ■ Female

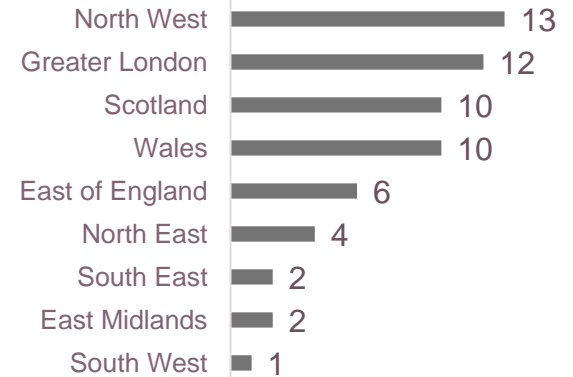
Vulnerability

- 3** Respondents have a mental health condition
- 2** Respondents have a sensory vulnerability
- 1** Respondent has a mobility issue

Ethnicity



Region



What did we ask our community in Week One?

Q1: How have you been?

An 'icebreaker' question to allow respondents to introduce themselves to us and each other, as well as gauge the impact of lockdown on the community, whether financial, health-wise or emotional.



Q2: Journeys you've taken

A question asking for broad level feedback on any rail journeys taken by the community during the pandemic. What was their emotional experience of the journey? Was the journey reliable? What would they change about it?

Q3: Essential travel

A question inviting respondents to reflect on exactly what the current guidance is around essential versus nonessential travel and how successfully that guidance has been communicated.



"I've travelled by train during the pandemic...the biggest challenge was the actual travel and the worry of catching COVID-19. And services are reduced, and not as regular."

Female, 56, Scotland

"The pandemic has completely changed my life. Putting my business into hibernation, furloughing my staff, not being able to travel to meet clients. Social distancing is extremely difficult when you have parents over 70 and can't see or hug them."

Male, 34, South East

"It's been relatively easy for me to adhere to the social distancing rules; I only find it challenging when others do not follow them."

Female, 64, South East

"To be honest, absolutely loved it. Working from home it's easy to socially distance...I work shifts, used trains, buses and occasionally car – trains on Merseyside are just horrible, dirty and damn expensive for the trip! I actually feel a total repulsion to the idea of using public transport."

Male, 65, North West

"Our office plans to open around mid-August; we have been advised it'll be a mix of office working and home working; I'll feel slightly uncomfortable if the train is as busy as it was pre-lockdown."

Female, 46, Scotland

Those respondents who have taken a journey have had positive experiences on the whole

Overwhelmingly, those taking journeys are nervous about other passengers

- Commuters want rigorous enforcement of the rules and greater visibility of staff at the station and platform. For most, this is seen as preferable to on-train enforcement because the train is a closed environment with greater potential for crowding.
- That said, some do feel that staff patrols on the train itself would be effective for challenging those not following the rules. However, one vulnerable passenger felt they were unfairly challenged for 'not looking like a key worker'.
- Passengers struggle to predict how congested the trains will be at a given time. Several felt they were 'lucky' to have boarded at a quiet time and did not quite know what the determinants of crowding are.

While the journeys themselves were mostly positive, some improvements can be made



Spacious, empty carriages are well-liked, but amenities do not yet inspire confidence that trains will be safe for the long-term.

- Some felt that there needed to be hand sanitiser onboard as well as on the platform, for instance.
- There was significant frustration that some trains are running short formations; this feels inherently unsafe.
- Awareness of train operators' sanitation systems (e.g. anti-viral fogging) was low.

"I have felt nervous on every journey because of possible contamination from other passengers and the interrogation of police. In an ideal world, the police wouldn't stereotype me."

Male, 60, Wales, vulnerable passenger

"The majority of time everyone onboard managed to social distance and all were wearing masks. Staff very pleasant and understanding. I'd want hand sanitiser on every platform and we should have the same number of carriages even though there are less passengers."

Male, 41, Yorkshire and the Humber

"Hand sanitiser at the platform. Even though there are less passengers traveling they should have the same number of carriages to allow passengers to spread out more on that service."

Male, 41, Yorkshire and the Humber

"I've used public transport several times to go to work. I've seen people not wearing gloves or masks and that's led to arguments between several passengers."

Male, 34, South East

"I definitely tried not to touch anything within the train at all, as I'm not sure when it was last cleaned."

Male, 34, South East

While our community interpreted the current guidance ‘correctly,’ they often argue it is unclear

Many feel that the guidance is silent on the issue of what modes should be used

- Some argue that as leisure industries re-open, the concept of ‘essential’ versus ‘non-essential’ travel, and the role of public transport within that dichotomy, has become **blurred and unclear**.
- Most therefore conclude that while non-essential travel is allowed by train, various ‘**nudges**’ (reduced capacity or the general undesirability of taking the train) are there to push them towards private transport.
- The ‘**one metre plus**’ rule has also caused confusion. Passengers did not always know what the ‘plus’ entailed.

Concepts of hygiene on trains (often classed as common sense) cut across most successfully

- Everyone knew that masks were compulsory on public transport, and many added **hand sanitiser and gloves** to their repertoire. Indeed, they could see no reason why this wasn’t also mandatory. Many fear that their fellow passengers are not following this element of the guidance.

Few passengers ‘blame’ TOCs or the government for this ambiguity

- Most acknowledge that unambiguous guidance must exist in written form ‘somewhere’ – they do however feel that **the subtleties of the guidance should have been put in front of them more forcefully**. Very few respondents were willing to explicitly go out and check the .gov websites for the most up to date guidance

"I confess I haven't read the Government website guidance; only read the media. I'm not aware that the guidance mentions specific modes of transport you should take."

Male, 60, Wales

"Some people wear masks, some don't. I don't think people like being given instructions and there's a passive aggressiveness behind people ignoring them."

Female, 50, South East

"There's been no clear indication that we should take any particular mode of transport just be mindful that the journey be essential in some way."

Male, 42, Scotland

"I haven't tried to read the guidance in detail but I know I could find it online if required. I expect it'll be clear but perhaps more information than I need."

Male, 33, North West

"It's just a real shame that there are people who can't follow simple requests and see them as optional. I believe those people should be flatly denied travel."

Male, 38, West Midlands

What did we ask our community in Week Two?

Q1: Imagining a Journey

A hypothetical question that focussed on those not having taken a journey during lockdown. What do they imagine such a journey would be like? What concerns would they have about taking one in the near future?



Q2: A quick poll

A more closed-ended question allowing us to quantify the community's overall sentiments. In subsequent weeks we will reveal these figures to the community and invite them to reflect on any differences of opinion.

Q3: Ticketing in the future

A question exploring the concept of carnet ticketing and whether or not it could be a viable model for rail travel in the wake of the pandemic.



Those who have not taken a rail journey generally see it as a daunting prospect



The behaviour of other passengers is unpredictable, and rail users will assume the worst

- Having to think about what other rail users are doing and how they are behaving is a complete novelty.
 - Passengers expect to have difficult or **confrontational interactions** with their fellow rail users and this adds a level of stress that, for many, is a deal-breaker.



The atmosphere of the journey is expected to be uncomfortable, febrile and tense

- Words like '**clinical**' and '**military**' were common. While passengers are generally optimistic about the punctuality and reliability of the service, they do not expect to have a relaxing experience on the train during the pandemic.
 - Likewise, rail travel has become even higher-stakes. Pre-COVID, the biggest problem commuters had to contend with was the prospect of arriving late to work.
 - During COVID, passengers explicitly talk about the possibility of catching a disease that could kill them or someone close to them.



Crowding is entirely unpredictable

- TOCs have yet to demonstrate an overall controlling force behind managing crowding on rail.
- Passengers feel that encountering an overcrowded train is now simply a matter of luck.

“The atmosphere will look very clinical and tense. I personally wouldn’t feel relaxed, constantly checking if commuters are adhering to social distancing or wearing masks.”

Female, 64, South East

“I’d be more aware of who’s around me. I’d move instantly if someone looked unwell or started coughing. I wouldn’t feel nervous, it’d just take longer to plan.”

Male, 42, West Midlands

“I think it would be an almost military operation. Checklist in hand, stopwatch prepped...Normally I’d just turn up but nowadays you’d have to check online to see what availability there is...”

Male, 65, North West

“There are nowhere near enough staff available. There’s no way they would put themselves at risk by confronting people.”

Female, 50, South East

“I expect staff are lower than usual and I have the utmost respect for them – I think they’re well equipped with information we’d need if we have any issues or questions.”

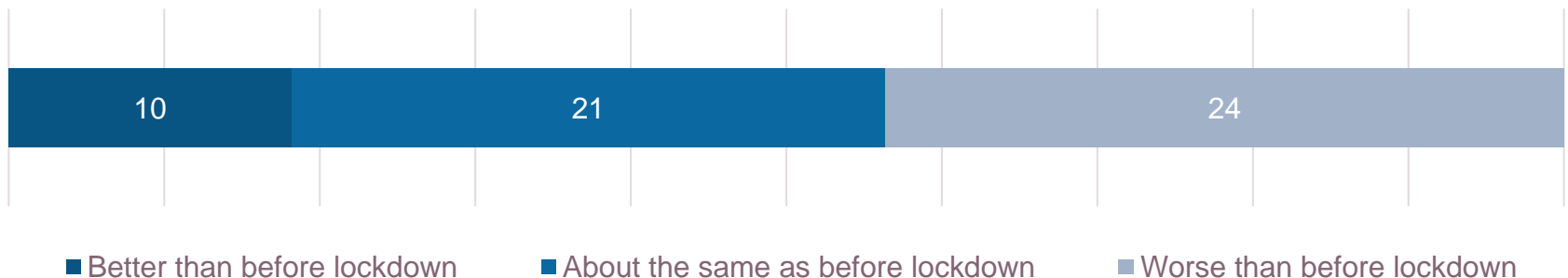
Female, 44, South East

Rail users are cautious about returning to train travel, and expect a worse service as restrictions ease

Which of the following best describes your thinking when it comes to travelling more regularly?

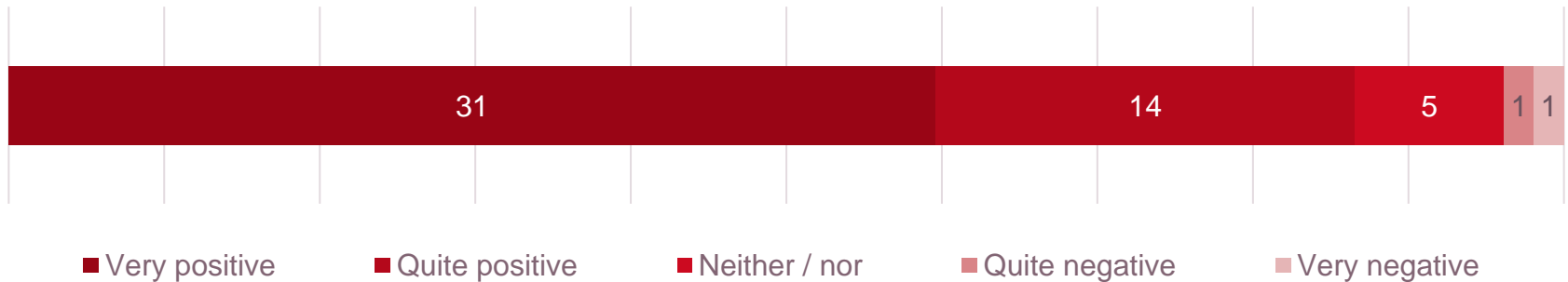


After lockdown, do you think rail travel will be...

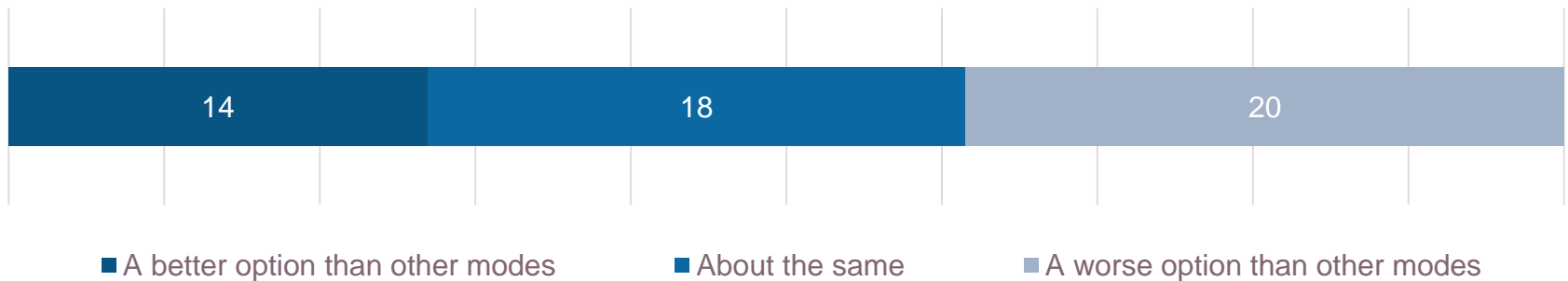


Our community is strongly in favour of face-masks, but is divided about the suitability of rail travel during COVID-19 in the first place

How do you feel about the recent guidance in England and Scotland to wear face masks?



Thinking about travel during lockdown, in your opinion, do you feel that rail is...



A significant proportion of our community expects to use rail less as lockdown eases

How do you think your usage of rail will change after lockdown, if at all?



■ More than before lockdown

■ About the same

■ Less than before lockdown

“Hopefully the trains will be more efficient and run on time, and be less packed with people.”

Male, 41, North West

“Needs be – regardless, I will use the same as one always has to.”

Male, 39, Midlands

“You are effectively stuck on the train for the whole journey, without the option of getting off. It’s not like a bus journey where you can get off and walk to your destination.”

Male, 45, Midlands

Carnets are seen as sensible and appropriate for a 'post-COVID' transport system



Many argue that the uncertain future of their commutes, and the possibility of more sporadic or ad-hoc commutes make carnets necessary

Pay-as-you-go is well liked because of features allowing you to **automatically** get the cheapest combination of tickets for the journey.

However, the option of **saving money with less commitment than a season ticket** is seen as valuable. Business travellers see them as easier to put on expenses, and in general they are seen as offering a 'best of both worlds' approach: the flexibility of pay-as-you-go with some discount, like a season ticket.

In particular, carnets are seen as a way of avoiding losing money during travel 'downtime' such as holidays or weekends. Passengers feel that they would receive a discount on only the journeys they take and are **not held to a minimum frequency of travel to save money, as with season tickets**.

"This would be of interest – I'm a season ticket holder, or I was, and thinking towards the future I may need to buy single tickets as I don't see myself going into London as much as I used to."

Male, 33, South East

Concerns remain about the flexibility of the system with regards to timings



Passengers would need **clarity** around whether the carnets they buy work on peak or off-peak, week or weekend and so forth, potentially with a degree of customisation involved (for example a 'weekend carnet' over a longer period versus a commuter carnet for an intensive series of peak journeys).

A carnet is a book of pre-paid tickets for a certain journey, cheaper than buying the same set of tickets individually

“I think this is a good idea, however, only if there were no restrictions, such as, once you start your 10 tickets they have to be used within 30 days.

If I was offered to work from home more then this would be better than an annual pass which is what I had been buying. I would buy this depending on cost. Sometimes buying annual, monthly passes work out cheaper.”

Female, 30, Scotland

“I probably would buy this if the period when I could use the tickets was extended. As said, it's unlikely I will be travelling multiple times a week anymore so if I could buy this and spread those journeys over a month/two months then if I was getting the likes of a 2 for 1 deal, I would consider this.”

Male, 39, Scotland

“I bought Carnets of tickets before via the TFW app. It is definitely something that I would do again, they are easy to buy, you can do this on line and do not need photo I'd to do it. You can just swipe your phone through the ticket stalls at the station so it is very quick to exit the station. Also, you do not have to use them in straight days . I use to have day off in the week and take the car In on a Saturday so I found the carnet was helpful as I only used the tickets that I needed. A weekly Sean's in ticket was more restricting.

Female, 52, Wales