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## Passenger experience of the Coronavirus timetable

7 April 2020

**Rail Delivery Group**



transportfocus

# Foreword

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic and government-imposed 'lockdown' rail operators introduced a reduced timetable in response to the drastically reduced number of passengers travelling. Transport Focus is pleased to have been asked to partner with the Rail Delivery Group (RDG - the alliance of companies that run Britain's railways) to seek to understand if the reduced timetable was meeting key workers' needs.

The research was conducted in a very short space of time so as the findings could inform changes to the timetable aimed at improving services for key workers. Because of lockdown, it was conducted as an online survey, and with so few people travelling it was decided the most effective means of contacting them would be through RDG's and train operators' social media channels or using their online databases.

In the event, engagement from train operators was mixed with only GWR and c2c generating a substantial number of responses. Nevertheless, the feedback from what has to be acknowledged as an unrepresentative sample, provides a good indication of where the initial timetable was falling short and what might be done to improve the situation.

Transport Focus has since been conducting a more regular and representative *Travel during Covid-19 survey* among transport users to track their behaviour in the weeks following lockdown – these results are available on our website: [www.transportfocus.org.uk](http://www.transportfocus.org.uk).

Ian Wright

Head of innovation and partnerships

**Rail Delivery Group**

# Executive summary

- Travelling for (paid) work is the primary journey purpose over the last seven days for the vast majority (87%), and is the primary travel purpose for those intending to travel in the next seven days
- The majority who travelled in the past seven days found a seat and could practice social distancing
- Almost half of passengers would like more frequent trains – particularly those passengers with a disability
- The vast majority of people are aware of and supportive of the reduced timetable. Key workers' support for the reduction is slightly weaker
- People's primary concern is for more information about timetables and what their alternatives are, particularly for shift workers. They also want to know about cleaning procedures on the railways
- There is generally a positive response to how the railways have reacted to the outbreak, with key workers and those who have travelled in the past seven days more positive than the average
- Season ticket holders are not particularly satisfied with the current refund arrangements. There is uncertainty as to what the process is, particularly with ticket offices closed
- Please note, this report is not a representative sample of the population due to its recruitment technique and is skewed towards those travelling on GWR and c2c

# Context

## AIM

The government is keen to ensure changes to the rail network timetables as a result of Coronavirus are meeting the needs of key workers in terms of their ability to get to and from work and perform their vital roles. Transport Focus and The Rail Delivery Group commissioned an online research programme to understand if these needs were being met, with the following specific research objectives:

## OBJECTIVES

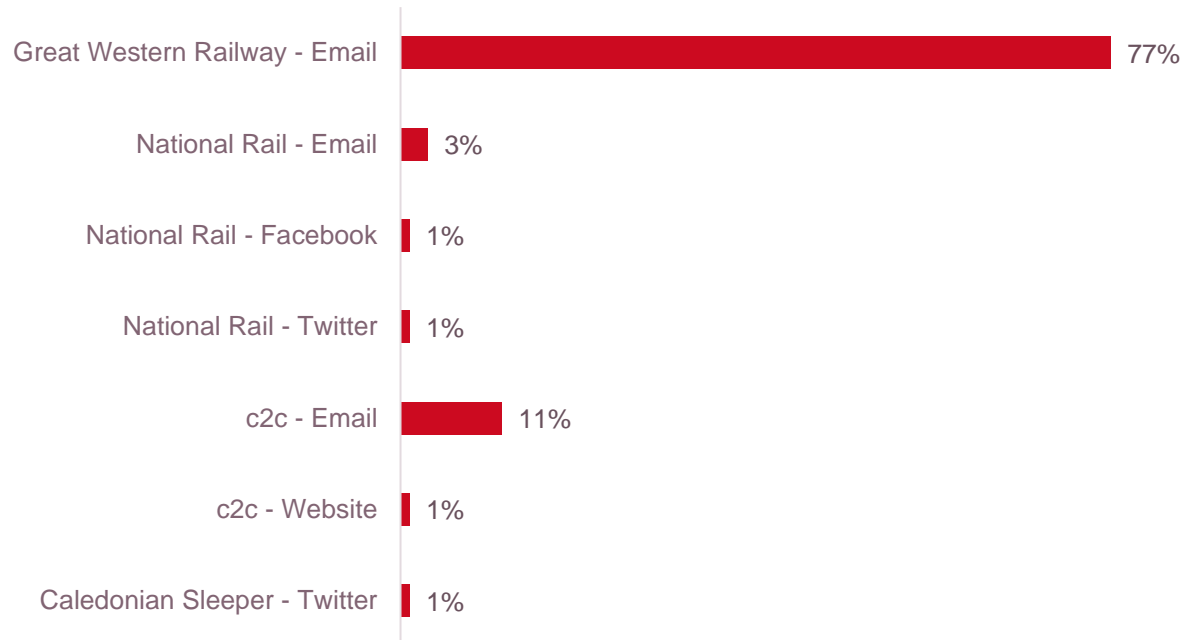
- To establish who is still travelling on the railway and at what times of day;
- To explore travel intentions for future weeks;
- To gauge passengers' attitudes towards the emergency timetable – to what extent does it meet their needs and how can it be improved;
- Where possible, to compare and contrast the behaviour and attitudes of key workers and other passengers;
- To demonstrate the industry is concerned for passengers' needs and is listening to their views.

This report contains the summary findings from the first 4,449 completed surveys conducted by Watermelon Research and received between 2 and 9 April 2020.

# Methodology

## SAMPLE SOURCE

Responses came from survey invitations promoted online by National Rail Enquiries and certain individual TOCS. Responses came from the sample sources as below:



NB. Only sources which contributed 1% or more to the response rate are mentioned above

# Content

- Who is travelling?
- How was the travel experience?
- Is the timetable fit for purpose?
- What are the travel habits of those who intend to travel (whether they have or haven't travelled in the past seven days)?
- Attitudes to the railway's handling of the situation to date
- Future train travel expectations

# Who is travelling?

# Who has travelled by train in the last seven days?

91% of those who have travelled in the last seven days used to regularly travel to and from work by train

86% of those travelling self-identify as key workers

14% of those travelling identify themselves as having a disability

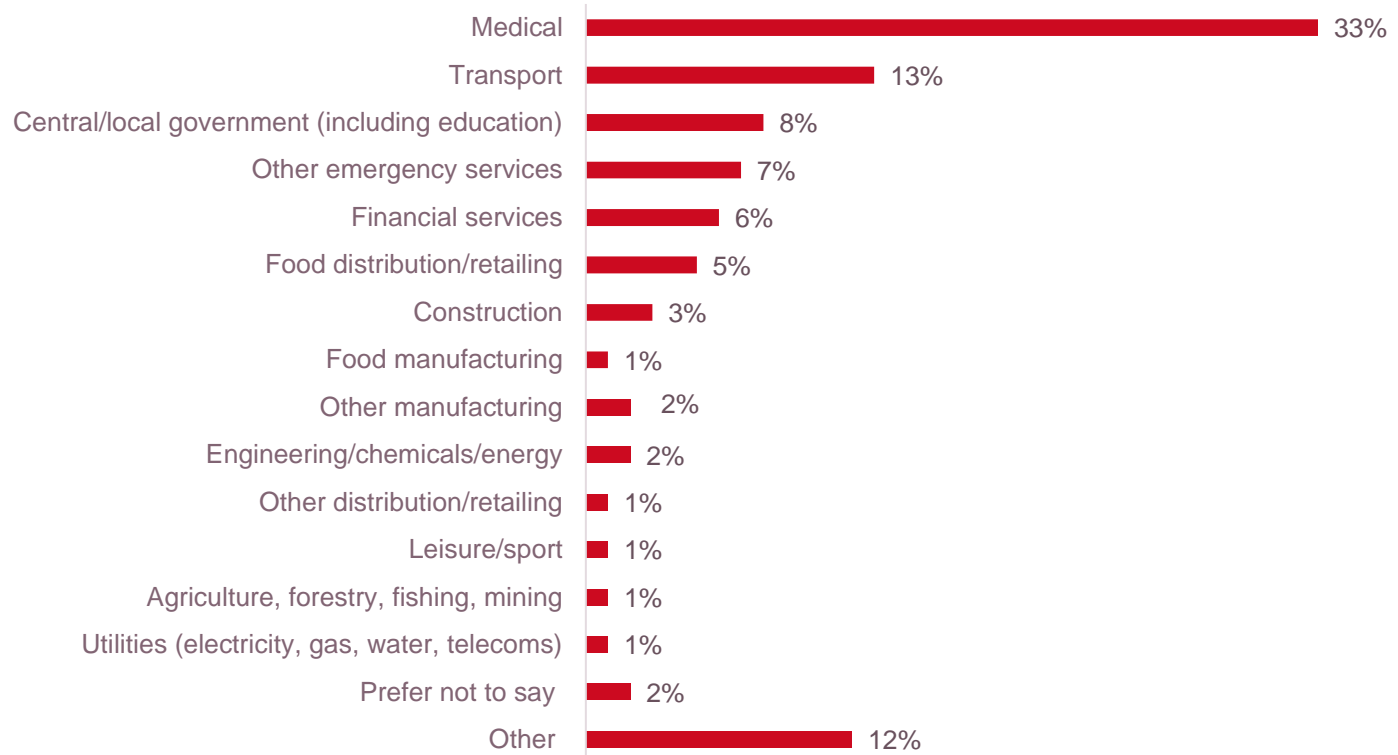
Q19 Prior to the Coronavirus outbreak, did you used to travel to and from work by train? Base: All who travelled in the last seven days and work full-time or part-time n=576

Q26 Do you believe your job falls into the category of 'key worker'? Base: All who travelled in the last seven days and work full-time or part-time n=576

Q27d Are you affected by any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more? Base: All who travelled in the last seven days n=611

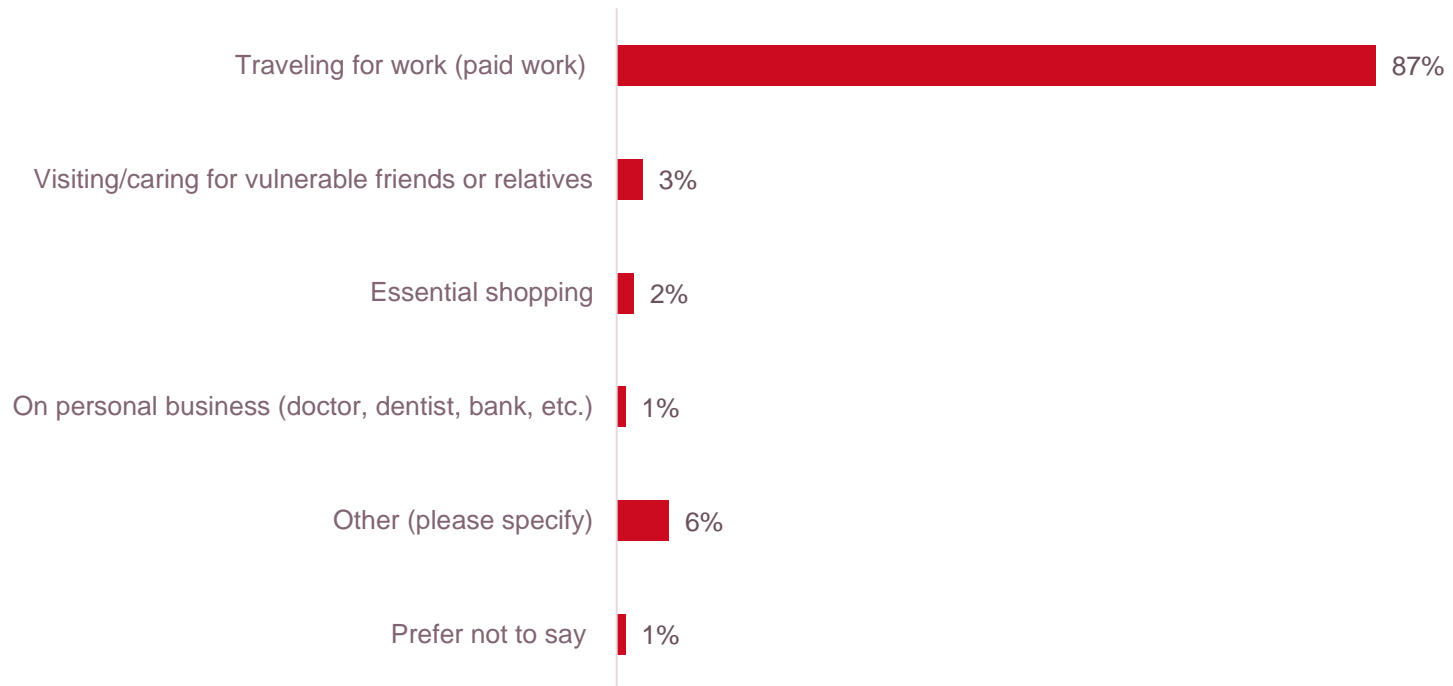


# What sectors do those still travelling work in?



Q24 What sector do you work in? If you are no longer working, please indicate what sector you were working in previously. Base: Those who have travelled in the last 7 days n=576

# Travelling for (paid) work is the primary journey purpose over the last seven days



Q9 What was the main reason for your journey? Base: Those who have travelled in the last 7 days n=602

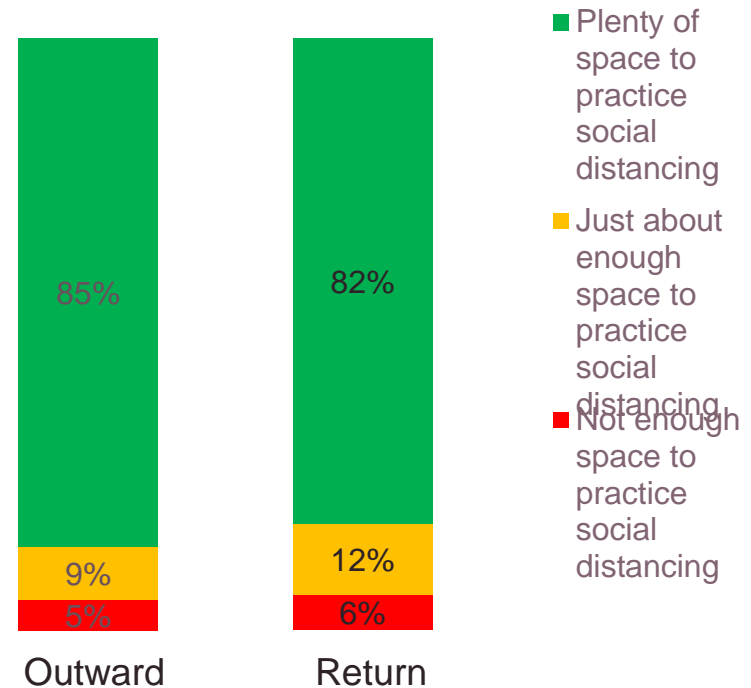
# How was the travel experience?

# The majority found a seat and could practice social distancing, although it was slightly harder on the return journey

## Getting a seat on the train

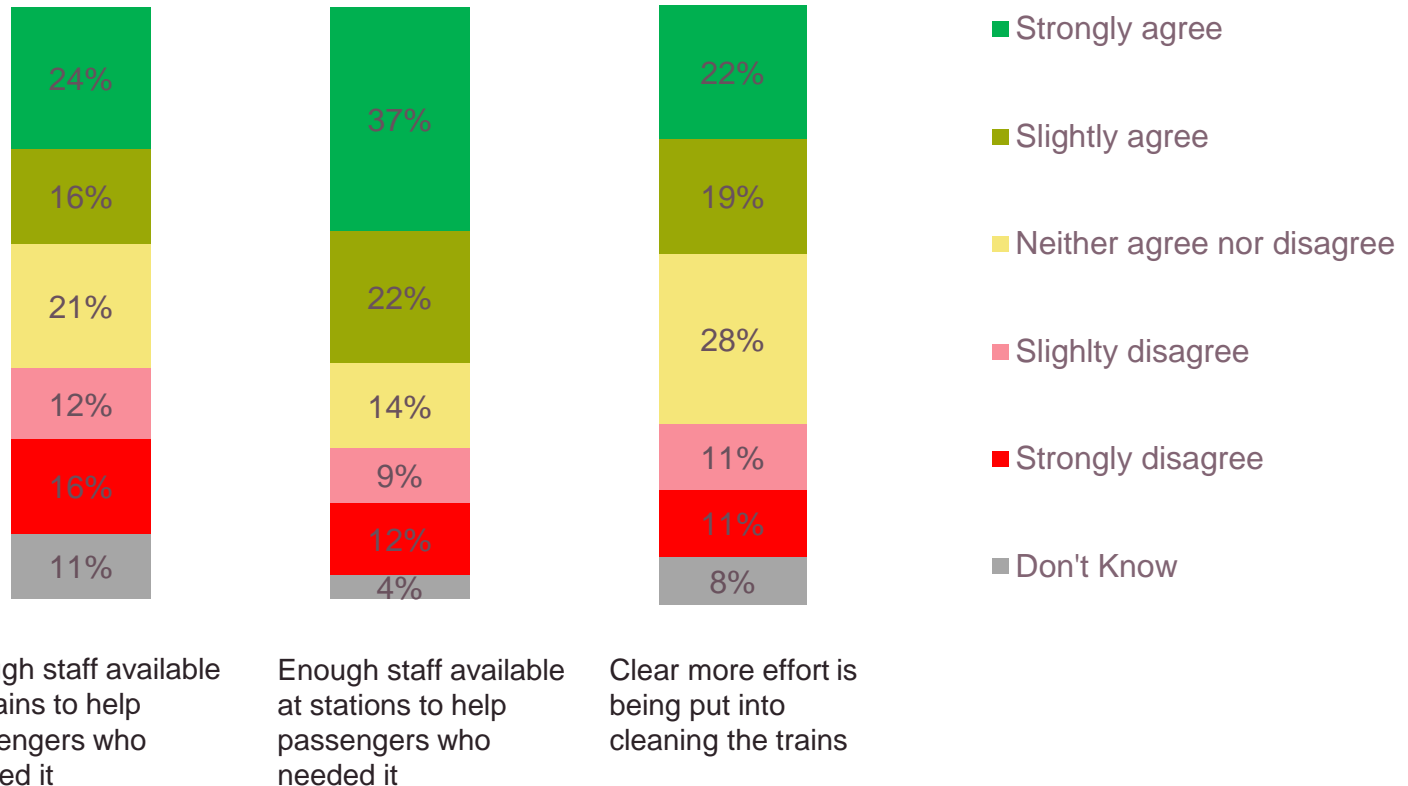
Outward	96%
Return	95%

## How crowded the train was



NB: Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding

# Around one in five passengers feel there are not enough staff nor additional effort to clean trains

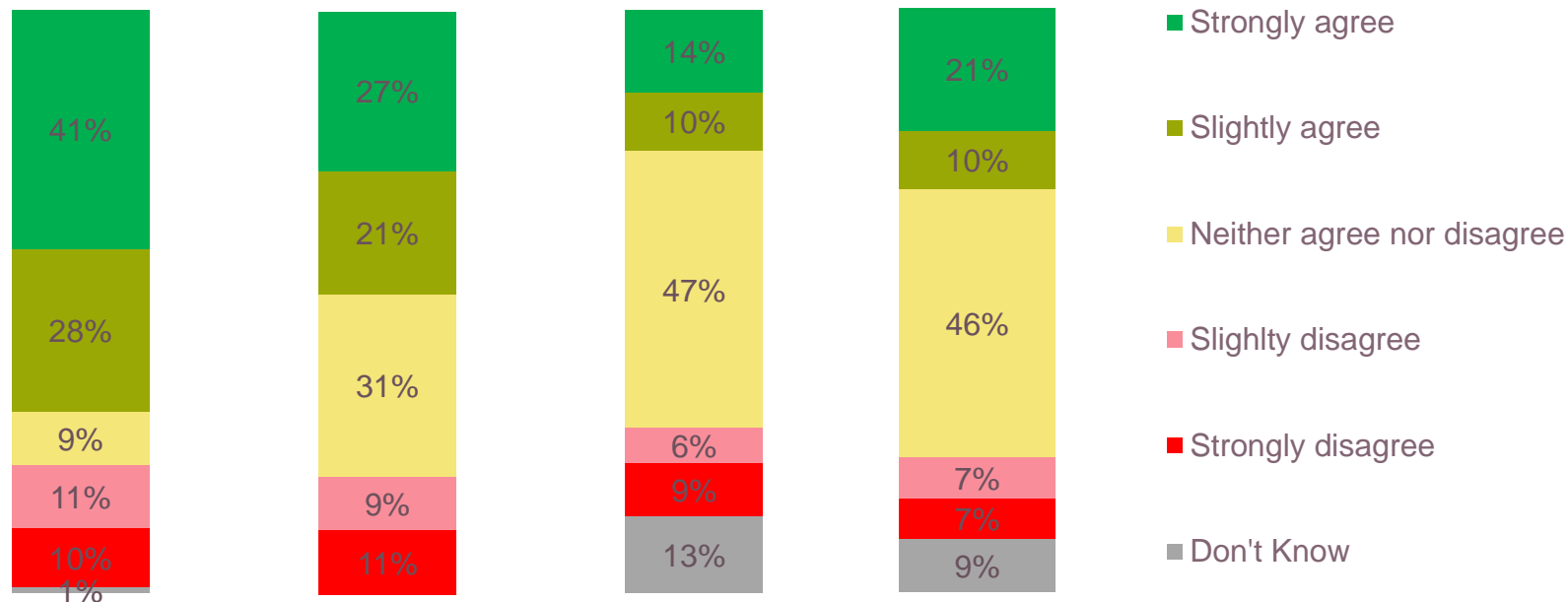


Q12a Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree about with the following statements about travelling over the last seven days? Base n=602

# Is the timetable fit for purpose?

# Almost half of all passengers would like more frequent trains – particularly passengers with a disability

Disabled passengers are more likely to strongly agree they want to see trains running more frequently (33%), the last train to be later (21%) and the first train to be earlier (30%)



There was sufficient information about which trains were running

Trains should have been more frequent

I would have liked the last train of the day to run later

I would have liked the first train of the day to run earlier

Q12a Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree about with the following statements about travelling over the last seven days? Base n=602

# Who are those NOT travelling?



# Who has not travelled by train in the past seven days and also does not intend to in the next seven?

55% of this group regularly used to travel to and from work by train

21% of this group self-identify as key workers

14% of this group identify themselves as having a disability

Q19 Prior to the Coronavirus outbreak, did you used to travel to and from work by train? Base : All who have not travelled in the last seven days AND do not intend to travel in the next seven days and work full-time or part-time n=2,661

Q26 Do you believe your job falls into the category of 'key worker'? Base: All who have not travelled in the last seven days AND do not intend to travel in the next seven days and work full-time or part-time n=2,661

Q27d Are you affected by any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more? Base: All who have not travelled in the last seven days AND do not intend to travel in the next seven days n=3,688

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# Who has not travelled by train in the past seven days but does intend to in the next seven?

65% of this group regularly used to travel to and from work by train

60% of this group self-identify as key workers

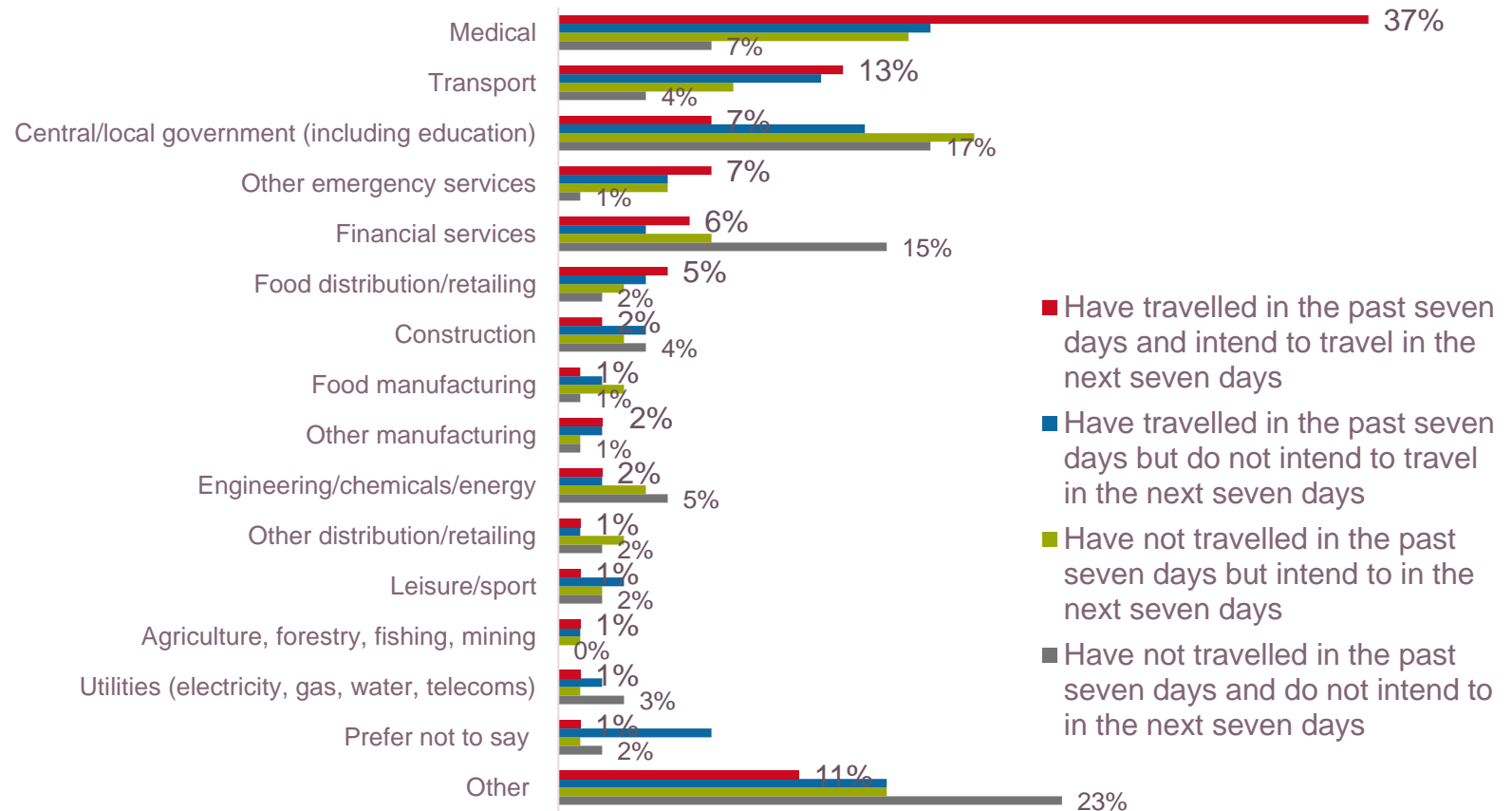
16% of this group identify themselves as having a disability

Q19 Prior to the Coronavirus outbreak, did you used to travel to and from work by train? Base: All who have not travelled in the last seven days but do intend to travel in the next seven days n=98

Q26 Do you believe your job falls into the category of 'key worker'? Base: All who have not travelled in the last seven days but do intend to travel in the next seven days n=98

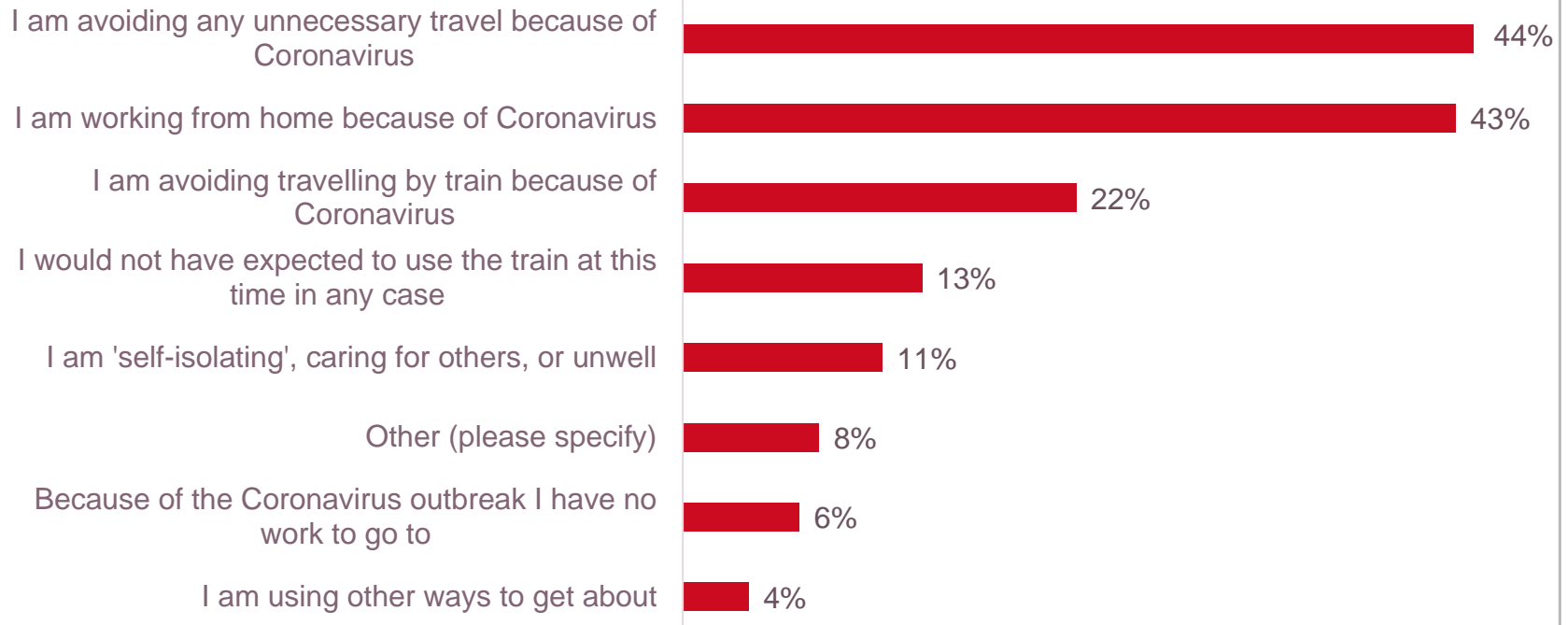
Q27d Are you affected by any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more? Base: All who have not travelled in the last seven days but do intend to travel in the next seven days n=98

# How does the profile of those still travelling compare with those who have not?



Q24 What sector do you work in? Base: Those who have travelled in the past seven days and intend to travel in the next seven days n=471, those who have travelled in the past seven days but do not intend to travel in the next seven days n=110, those who haven't travelled in the past seven days but intend to travel in the next seven days n=99, those who haven't travelled in the past seven days and do not intend to travel in the next seven days n=2,669

# The majority of those not travelling are either avoiding unnecessary travel or are working from home



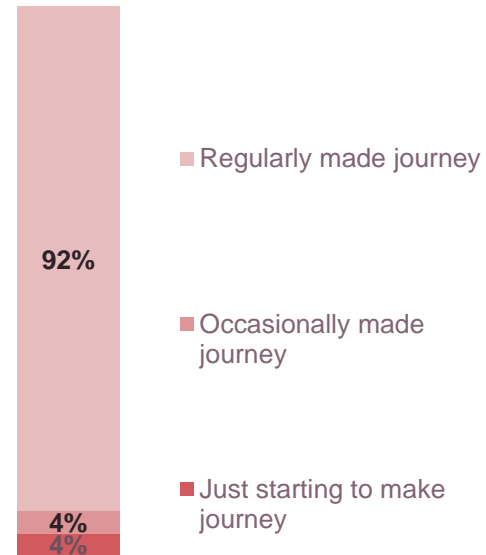
Q2 What was the reason you did not travel on these dates? Base: All who did not travel in the last seven days n=3,772

**What are the travel habits of those who intend to travel, whether they have or haven't travelled in the past seven days**

**Of those who have travelled and intend to travel in the next seven days, the majority of their previous trips were a return trip. For the majority, this was a journey they have regularly done by train before**

Return journey 91%

Single journey 9%



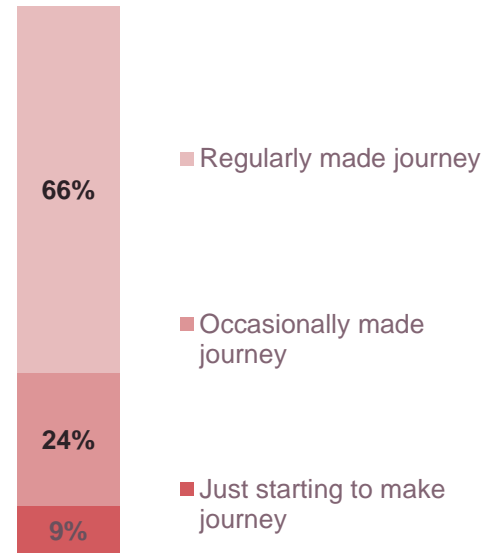
Q7 Was this a return or a single journey? Base: All who intend to travel in next seven days who have travelled in the past seven days n=486

Q10 Is this journey one that you made by train before Coronavirus, or have you only just started making this journey by train? Base: All who intend to travel in next seven days n=486

**Similarly, the majority of those planning to travel by train in the next seven days, but who haven't travelled in the past seven days will also be making a return trip on a journey they've made regularly before**

Return journey 76%

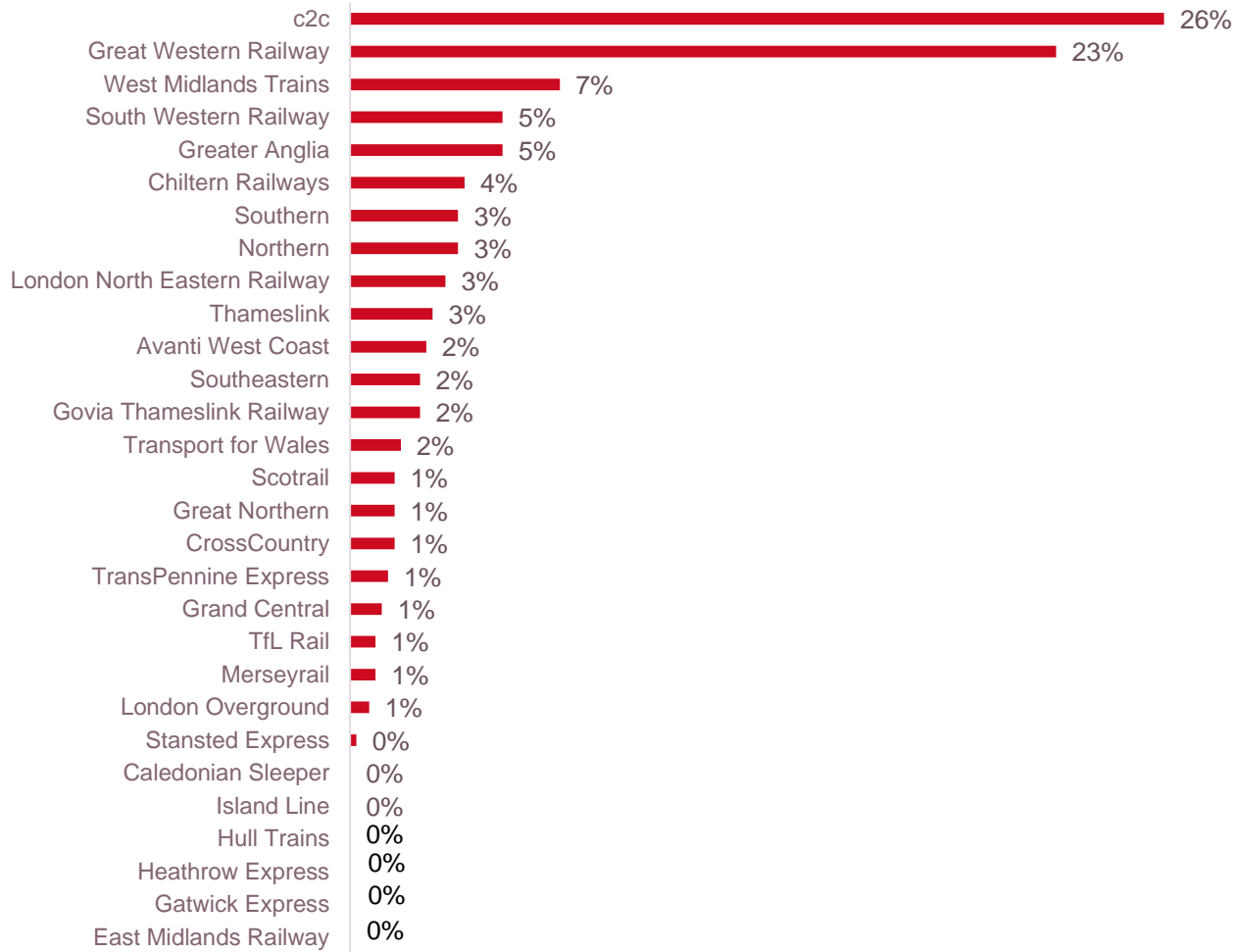
Single journey 24%



Q7\_2 Will this be a return or a single journey? Base: All who intend to travel in next seven days n=116

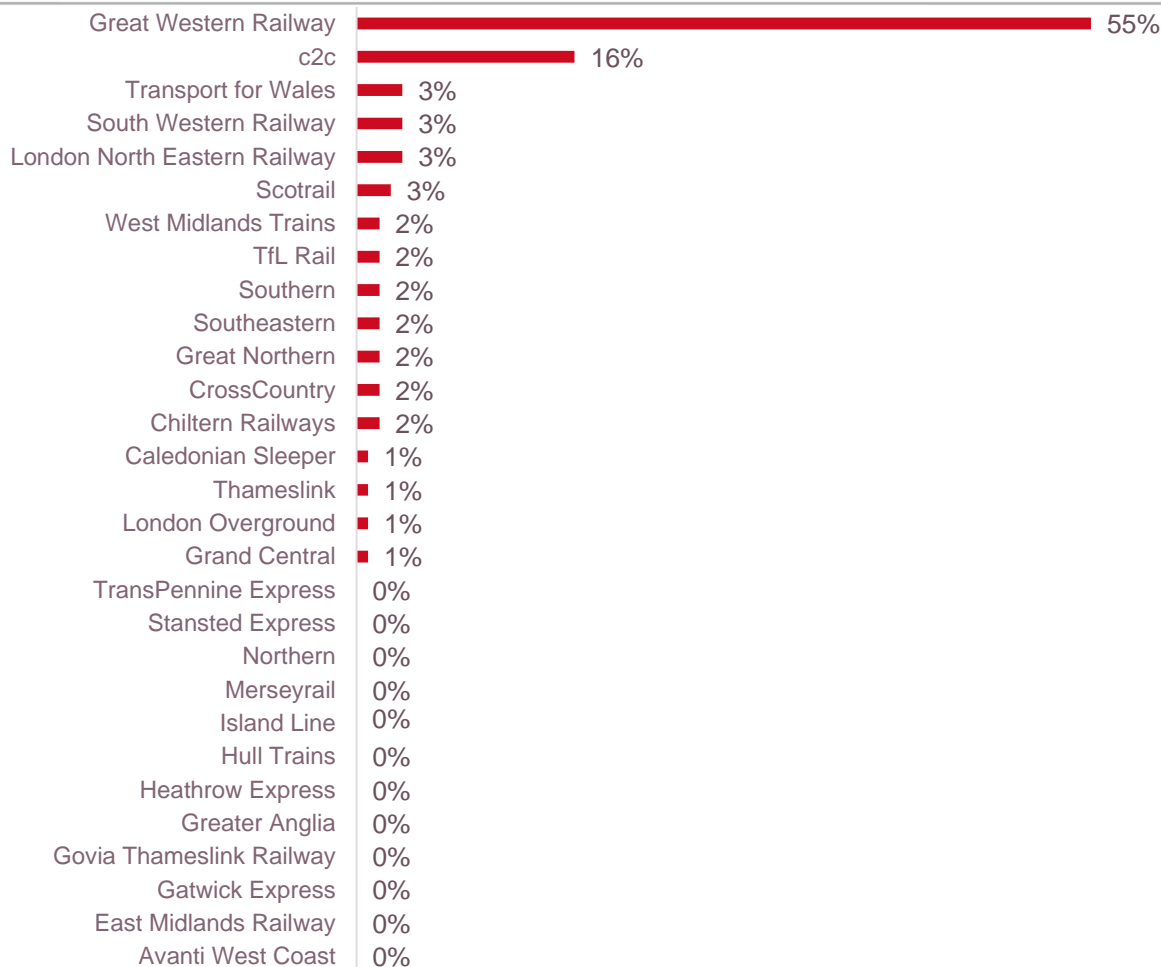
Q10\_2 Is this journey one that you made by train before Coronavirus, or have you only just started making this journey by train? BASE: All who intend to travel in next seven days n=116

## Of those who travelled in the past seven days (who also intend to travel in the next seven days) the majority travelled with c2c

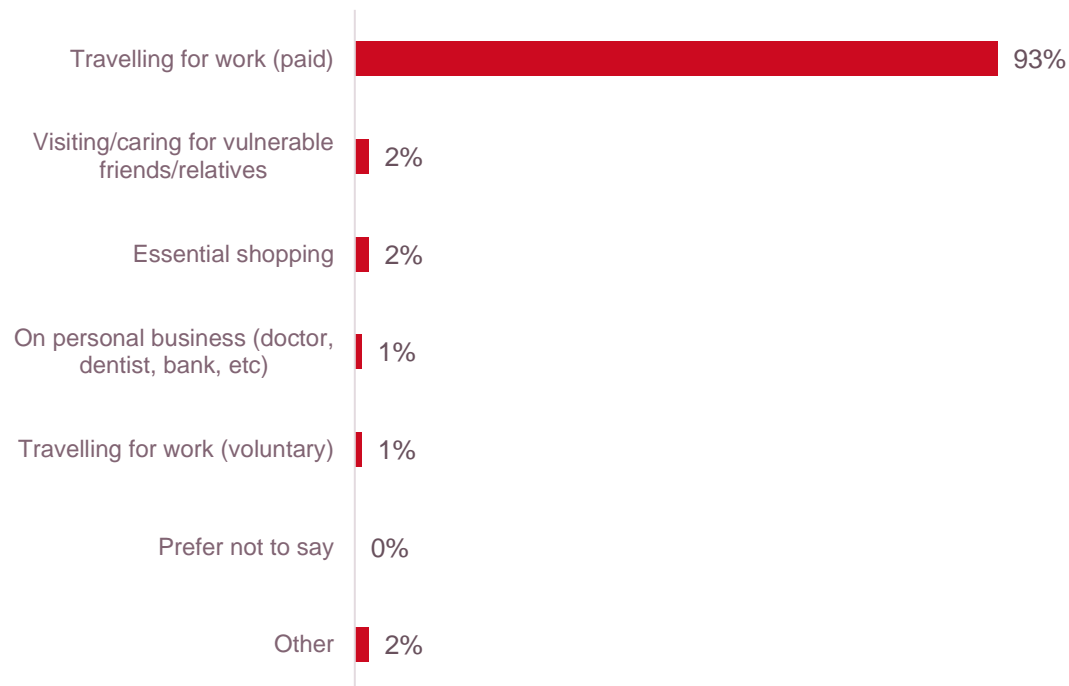




## Of those who haven't travelled but intend to, GWR was the train company they are most likely to plan to travel with over the next seven days

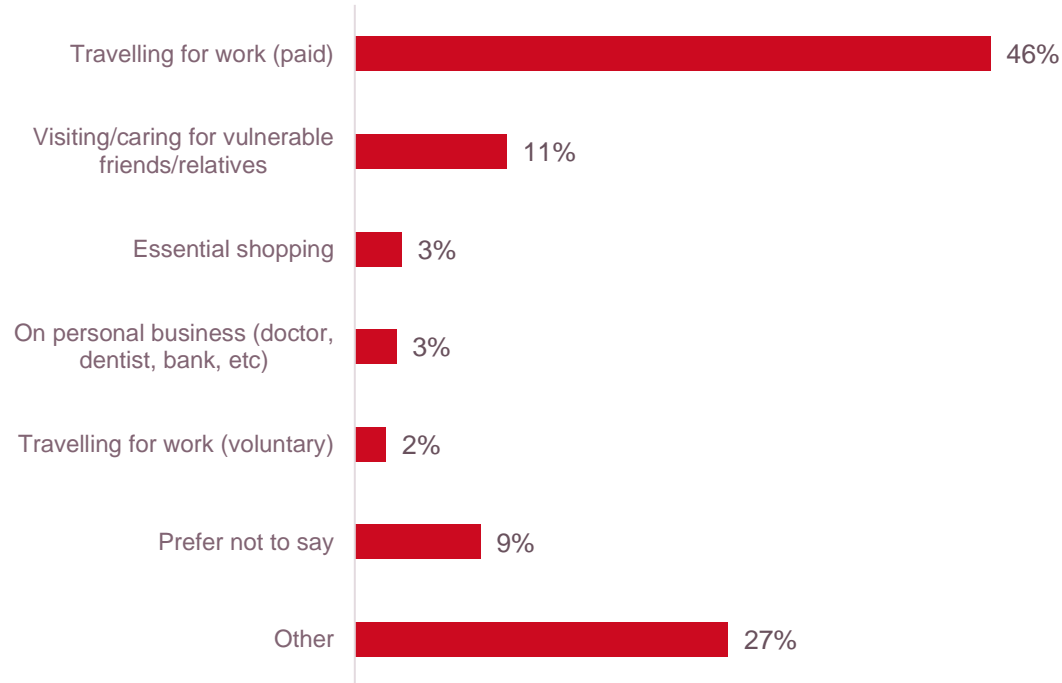


## The primary reason for those who travelled in the past seven days (and who also intend to travel in the next seven days) was for work



Q9: What was the main reason for your journey ? Base: All who intend to travel in next seven days who have travelled in the past seven days n=486

## Of those who intend to travel, but haven't travelled in the past seven days, the primary reason they plan to travel is also for work



Among 51 key workers, 40 of these say they will be travelling for work

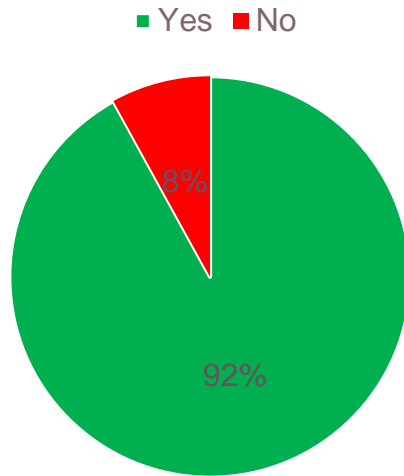
Q9\_2 What will be the **main** reason for your journey? Base: All who intend to travel in next seven days, but haven't travelled in the past seven days n=116

# Attitudes to the railway's handling of the situation to date

# The vast majority of people are aware of and supportive of the reduced timetable. Key workers' support for the reduction is slightly weaker

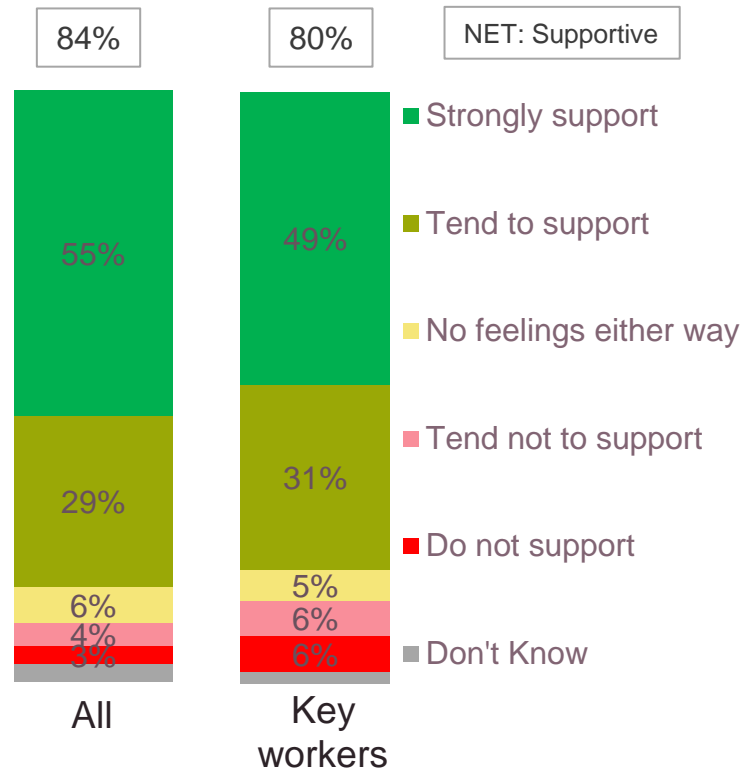
## Awareness of reduced timetable

Among those who travelled in the past seven days, 97% knew about the reduced timetable



Q16 Because of the Coronavirus outbreak and the lower number of passengers travelling, the railway is operating a reduced timetable, but with first and last trains designed to meet the needs of key workers. Before reading this, were you aware that a reduced timetable is in operation? Base: All n=4,435

## Support for reduced timetable



Q17b To what extent do you support the railway's decision to introduce a reduced timetable in response to the Coronavirus outbreak? Base: All n=4,435; Key workers n=1,127

## People's primary concern is for more information about timetables and what their alternatives are, particularly for shift workers. They also want to know about cleaning procedures on the railways

### *What more people would like to know about how railway is dealing with Coronavirus*

“Understandably, it took a while to update the timetables online. It also took too long for the train companies to agree to refund advance tickets for non-essential travel.”

“It is not clear if you can travel on an earlier train if so, many seats available and not clear if advance tickets will be refunded. No staff on the train, only at King's Cross.”

“There isn't much detail on what cleaning is taking place or what is being cleaned.”

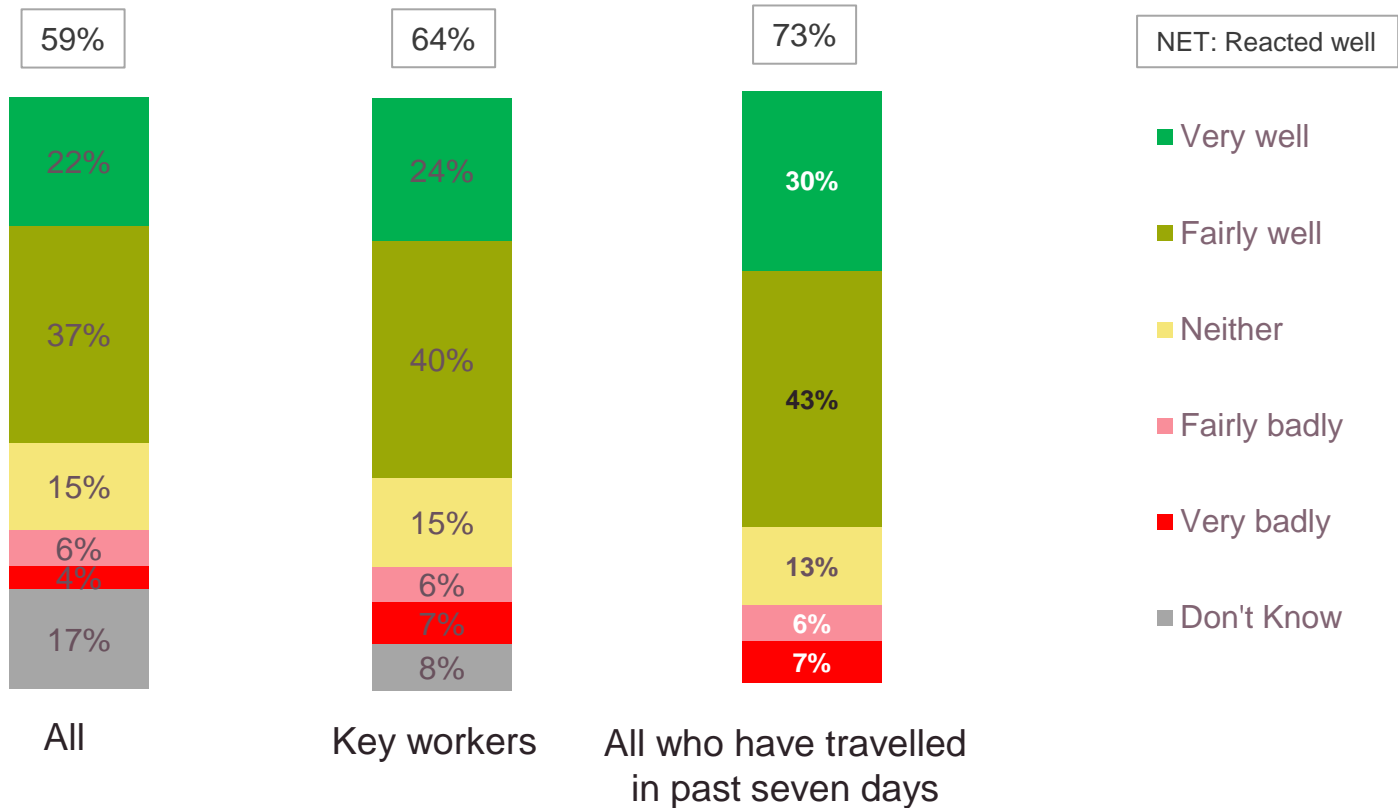
“Messages on the electronic information boards would be useful. Tape 2m apart near the doors to help people keep the appropriate social distance would be useful too.”

“I work a shift pattern of early and late. I have been able to catch a train by adjusting my journey in order that I can get to work and home again. Next week when on early shift the usual first train of the day would be 04:58, this would be early enough to get me to work however this train is not running at present so I am struggling to get to work by other means.”

“More awareness of future timetable changes. For example, GWR amended timetable expires today and no update as yet on times for tomorrow onwards.”

Q12b You indicated you are not entirely satisfied with information about how the railway is dealing with Coronavirus. What more would you like to know? Base: all who disagreed with the statement 'there was adequate information about how the railway is dealing with Coronavirus'

**There is a generally positive response to how the railways have reacted to the outbreak, with key workers and those who have travelled in the past seven days more positive than the average**



## People's priorities for other actions relate to safety/hygiene measures, refunds, concerns about station parking costs – and appreciation to all railway staff

### *Suggestions for other actions the railway could be taking*

“Staff should practice social distancing as the station staff walk around very close together.”

“Limit number of people to a carriage to keep social distancing.”

“Make sure that the trains are cleaner than they have ever been! - and stay clean!”

“I now need to drive part way because the early trains are cancelled. I'm also paying for parking. Being a key worker this is costing me extra money. I have already paid for annual Gold Card ticket without a train covering my trip. Parking alone has cost me over £50!”

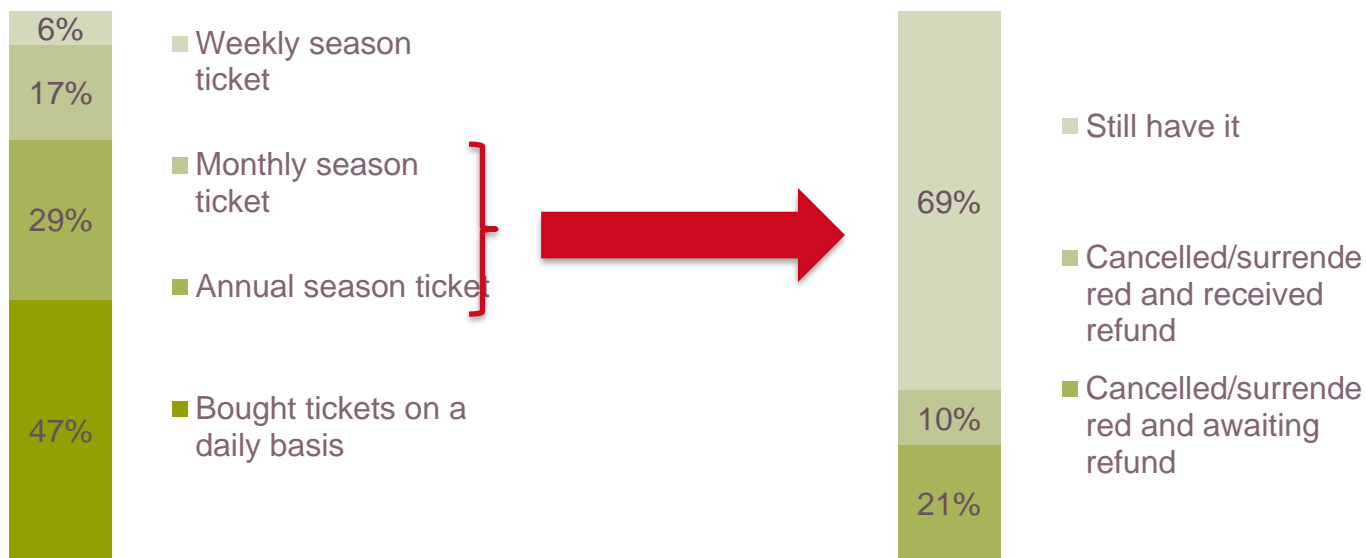
“I think there is little more to be done at this stage. If this continues for as long as is likely (which is different from the short time predicted / hoped for by the government) then refunds on season tickets and discount travel cards will need to be paid.”

“Unsure. Railway staff are doing more than enough in my personal opinion. I was thanked for travelling by a train conductor, but I thanked her back for doing her job in these trying times.”

Q15 What more could the railway do to support people who need to travel at this difficult time?



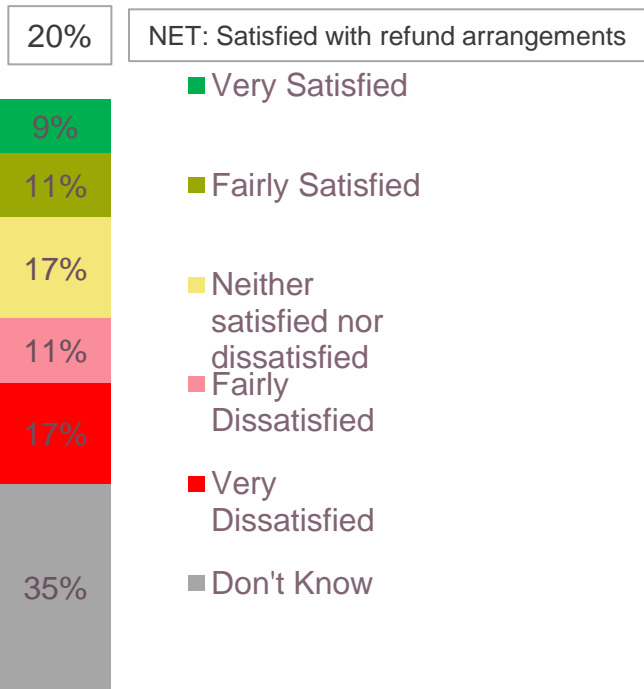
**Half of those who were travelling prior to the outbreak had some form of season ticket. The majority of those with a monthly/annual ticket still have it and have not cancelled or surrendered it**



Q20 Did you have a **season ticket** for the train (including a season ticket loaded on a smartcard) or did you buy tickets on a **daily** basis? Base: all who regularly travelled to work by train prior to the outbreak n=2,050

Q21 What have you done with your season ticket? Base: all who were travelling regularly prior to outbreak and had a monthly/annual season ticket n=962

# Season ticket holders are not particularly satisfied with the current refund arrangements. There is uncertainty as to what the process is, particularly with ticket offices closed



Q22 How satisfied are you with the refund arrangements for season tickets? Base: All who were travelling regularly prior to outbreak and had a monthly/annual season ticket n=962

## Reasons for dissatisfaction

“Because I can’t get a refund for my annual Gold Card. The ticket office is shut and you are not taking calls at your Southampton Customer Service Centre. You cannot get a refund on line so I am lost what to do.”

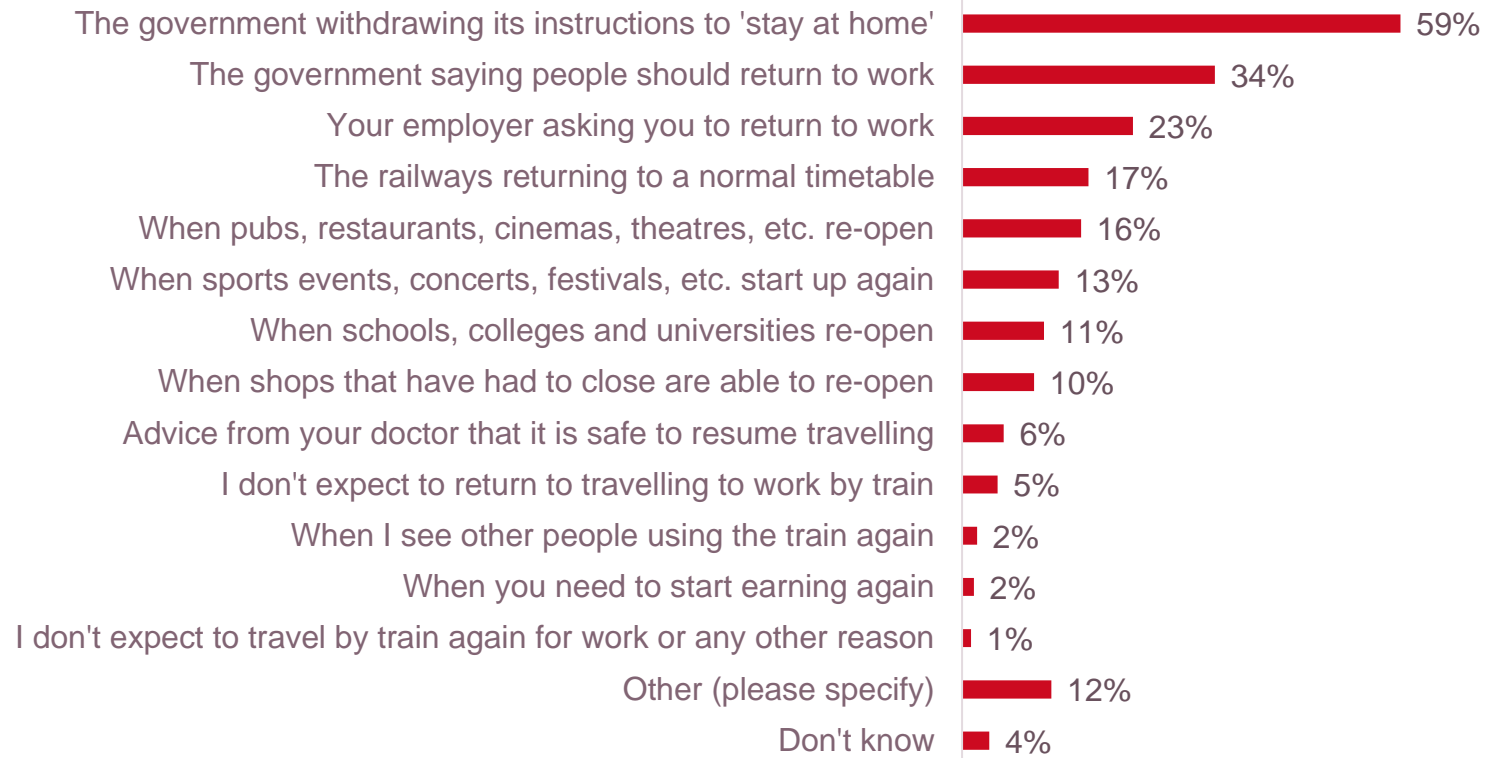
“From my rota I have whole week periods where I’m not travelling and therefore unable to use my annual season ticket. I have no recourse for a refund. I’m being penalised for being a key worker!”

“I am unable to find out how much I will be getting back and it has been made incredibly difficult to get refunds. All season tickets should be automatically refunded for this period or extended beyond.”

Q22b You indicated you are not entirely satisfied with the refund arrangements for season tickets. In what way are you dissatisfied? Base: all who were dissatisfied with the refund arrangements for season tickets

# Future train travel expectations

# The majority of people say they will resume train travel when the government indicates people can leave their homes and/or should return to work



Q25a It is difficult to know when the situation will return to 'normal', but at the present time, what would you say will influence your decision to resume travelling by train again? Base: All n=4,435

# The government removing it's 'stay at home' instruction is the primary factor that will influence people resuming train travel



Q25b And which would you say will have the greatest influence on your decision? Base: All who gave more than one response n=2,940

# Contact Transport Focus

**Ian Wright**

**Head of innovation and partnerships**

ian.wright@transportfocus.org.uk

0300 123 0832

transportfocus.org.uk

@transportfocus



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