

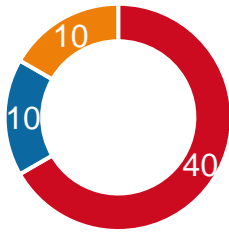


Transport User Community

Return to rail travel

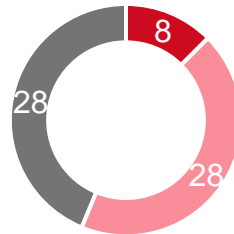
Who are the sixty members of our community?

Location



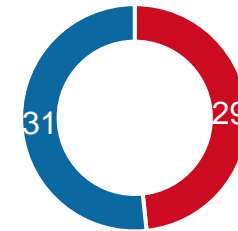
■ England ■ Scotland ■ Wales

Interchange?



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

Gender

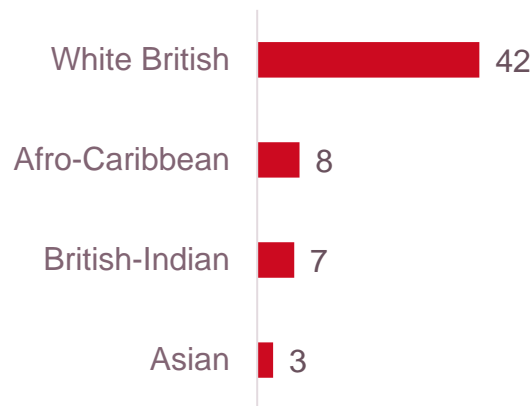


■ Male ■ Female

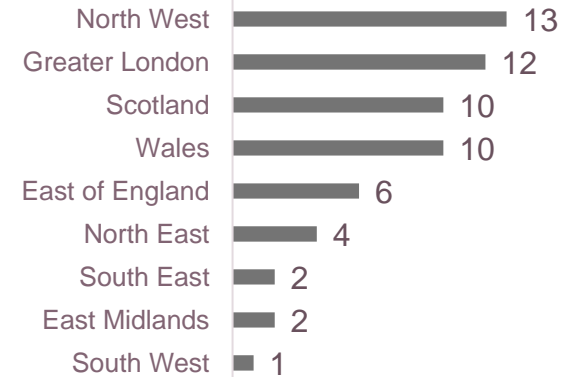
Vulnerability

- 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?

Q1: group discussion

A more deliberative and detailed group discussion about what the future of rail travel should look like once the pandemic is no longer with us. What would be different, and what do they hope would change?



Q2: employers and the workplace

A private question to understand what those members of our community who are working expect to return to in the future. Will they return to the standard nine to five, or something more flexible?

Q3: crowding and train operators

Our community highlighted that they have trouble predicting how crowded a train will be during the pandemic. This question seeks to understand how crowding should be managed in an ideal world.



Our community feels that train operators will need to significantly, and permanently, improve the cleanliness of their trains

The overwhelming assumption is that Covid-19 is not going away any time soon

In the absence of a vaccine, the community doubts that the pandemic will have passed even a year from now. The sense of discomfort around crowding or lack of cleanliness is expected to remain for the long term. In part, this discomfort is exacerbated by the fact that **respondents have never seen their trains as particularly clean**. Significant reassurances are needed that trains are 'Covid-ready'.

However, many assume that for trains to reach this point, significant fare increases would be called for.

Passengers will not return to rail if they feel they are paying extra for a standard of cleanliness and capacity they felt entitled to long before Covid-19.

Most felt that their work would, at a minimum, become more flexible and that their use of the train will reduce

Previous research has shown that commuters feel 'hostage' to rail. Covid-19 has, they argue, created a turning point where this is no longer the case. The next few months will be crucial for rail companies to demonstrate that crowding and hygiene will be tangibly and permanently enhanced.

Others argue that the post-Covid future is an opportunity to **promote public transport** as opposed to car use for a more sustainable transport system. **Passengers want to see rail succeed**, and to some extent recognise that things 'must' return to normal, but need their concerns addressed.

What do our community expect rail travel to look like in the future?

In the near future

Ad hoc, essential travel to work

Non-discretionary journeys

More necessary leisure travel (family visits)

Strict social distancing

In the next 12 months

Higher ticket prices (feared)

Masks and hand sanitiser

Discretionary journeys

Greater presence of train staff

Return to semi-regular commuting

Here to stay

Hand sanitiser only

Regular, deep cleaning of trains

Reduced, but predictable, commutes

Less crowding and loose social distancing

Ideally more carriages and greater frequency to reduce congestion

“From what the experts say COVID is going to be here for years, if not decades! I think transport companies are really going to have to up their game. Trains that are dirty, old, tired, lack of customer service on board, overcrowding are all going to have to go!”

Male, 65, North West

“God, yes! I hate all the standing over you with bags or bums in faces. Booking systems should be improved to make it easier to monitor usage and allow train companies to plan ahead and get a more accurate view of usage.”

Female, 35, South East

“Ultimately, it’s not going away. Commuting needs to change. Jobs and society need to change. There needs to be a bigger picture about the environment.”

Male, 39, Wales

A mixed approach of home working and office working is seen as ideal for most

COVID-19 has demonstrated that home working, desirable even pre-COVID, is possible and effective

Commuters in white-collar professions almost universally expect to work from home permanently, at least for some of the working week. **Some argue that this arrangement is necessary for rail to deliver to its expected standard:** they see no way for rail to be COVID-ready while dealing with pre-COVID levels of demand.

Office working will likely be reserved for:

- face-to-face client meetings
- tight deadlines
- structured, weekly catch-ups or brainstorms.

Beyond the fear of a pre-COVID style of commute, our community argue that home working allows for a greater work-life balance and better wellbeing overall.

Their employers have been fully accommodating in enabling home working, and few if any had any complaints about this system. **Many wonder why they hadn't adopted a home or mixed-working approach long ago.**

Those who have been made redundant will actively search for jobs that do not require a rail commute.

“Being made redundant would probably make me want to look for a job closer to home which avoids train travel if I can’t work from home as much.”

Female, 33, East Midlands

“I’ll continue to work but plan on buying an electric car and an e-scooter. I’ll try and avoid trains until Covid has completely blown over. I’ll urge all non-site staff to work from home as I can make a saving on office costs.”

Male, 46, South East

“I would like to continue a mixture of working from home and travelling into the office as I feel interaction is important however busy working life means working from home a few days a week will ensure more family time. We have shown that my business can function from home as a result of the pandemic.”

Male, 35, Wales

Daria C

Passengers see crowding as unmanaged and unpredictable

Solving the crowding issue is seen as a shared responsibility:



Employers must:

Implement flexible working policies to end the 'peak/off peak' dichotomy that leads to overcrowding and an unsafe train.



Passengers must:

Plan ahead to travel in less congested periods where possible, respect social distancing and respect train staff who enforce the rules.



Train operators must:

Arm passengers and employers with the information necessary to plan around the crowding – passengers expect an on-demand, technical solution to indicate how crowded their train will be.

Some felt that compulsory reservation should be enforced to manage crowds.

“This should be managed mainly by technology and then the station officers on the actual platform; then you wouldn’t need to manage numbers on the carriage itself.”

Female, 27, Scotland

“I agree – there should be electronic signage to indicate how many people are allowed on a train at any given time.”

Female, 24, North West

“It does seem like operators are trying their best to manage overcrowding. Once commuters are in the system, it’s an impossible task for them to manage. Then the onus falls on the individual. It’s a two way system.”

Male, 38, Scotland