



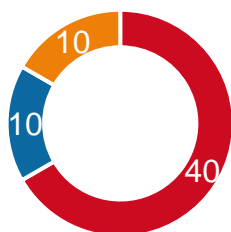
# Transport User Community

Rail fares and flexible ticketing

August 2020

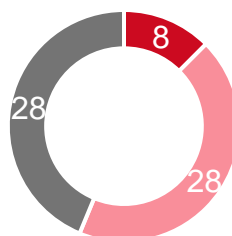
# Who are the sixty members of our community?

## Location



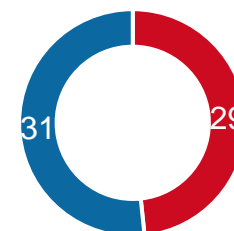
■ England ■ Scotland ■ Wales

## Interchange?



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

## Gender

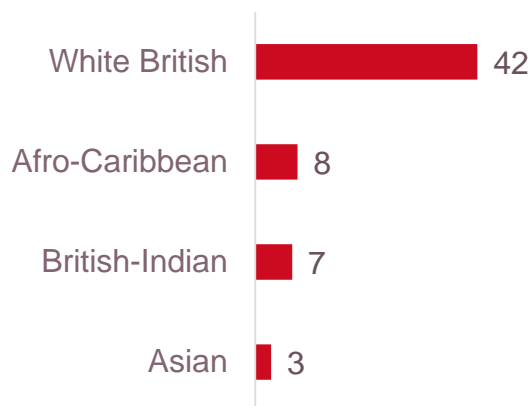


■ Male ■ Female

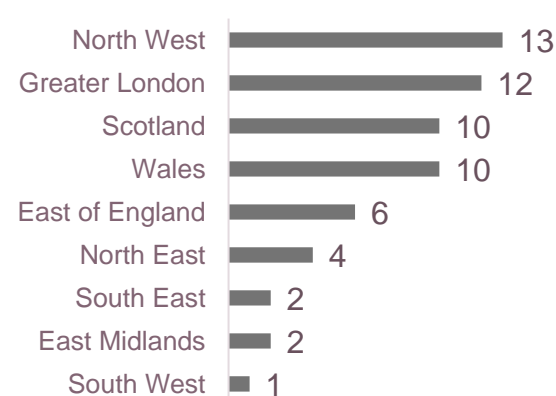
## Vulnerability

- 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: Detail on carnets (part one)

- How much of a discount would a book of carnets need to be enticing to rail users?
- Do commuters prefer bundles of single tickets or return carnets?
- What is the ideal balance of length of validity and the size of the book of carnets?



## Q2: Detail on carnets (part two)

- Would an additional discount on off-peak journeys be attractive, and would it spur behaviour change?
- What would a fair refund system look like in the context of carnet ticketing?
- What will your commute look like post-COVID? Will you commute more or less?

# For carnets to be attractive in a post-crisis transport system, the discount needs to be substantial

While some commuters are philosophical about the financial pressures train operators are under, ten tickets for the price of nine is not attractive



Ten for **nine**

Reasonable, acceptable, unexciting

*"Seems reasonable given the restrictions operators are under."*

**Male, 43 North West**



Ten for **eight or fewer**

Appealing, exciting, valued for the long-term

*"I'd expect a larger discount to bring people on board with the idea."*

**Female, 20, Yorks and Humber**

**Carnets needs to be understood in light of the fact that rail users already find discounts on tickets**

Rail cards, season tickets or off-peak travel are already understood to offer a greater discount on travel. Commuters are unclear whether they can 'stack' these discounts on top of the carnet, but there is a strong assumption that the carnet discount needs to **match or exceed their current ways of saving money on fares.**

**Some argue that in the first few months after the pandemic, a highly discounted period would be useful**

Again, this community feels they need to be **enticed back into rail use.** A period of three months with a discount of (for some) ten for the price of seven, would be seen as both a goodwill gesture and an invitation to trial public transport beyond the crisis.

## The value of single tickets was largely on the margins – our community expects to need return tickets

While few can see any downsides to singles (which you could use in either direction for your commute) return carnets are what respondents expect

Most feel that while their frequency of travel post-COVID would be unpredictable, the 'A to B' of the journeys would be fairly routine. As a result, return tickets allow for flexibility on frequency but accommodate the to-and-from of the commute, however often it may be.

Older respondents with more unpredictable leisure journeys may benefit from bi-directional singles but these are relatively isolated use cases. Some may find themselves taking a train into town to meet a relative, but receive a lift home by car, for instance.

*"Singles are much better for me – in fact I wouldn't buy a return set. I often get lifts in one direction and only find out at the last minute so returns would be a waste for me."*

**Male, 59, Scotland**

*"I'd absolutely want and expect these to be bi-directional. But I assume you'd either be able to buy singles or returns for that flexibility."*

**Male, 39, Scotland**

*"An open return would be best for me as I'm likely to stay in my city of work for one or two nights per week rather than commute daily."*

**Female, 29, North West**

## Given the uncertainty around continuing transport usage, carnets need a long eligibility period, at least initially



**Recent discussions around the possibility of a second wave has knocked confidence in the prospect of a speedy or regular return to work**

As a result, our community fears that they could purchase a book of tickets only to discover they cannot use them effectively.



**A 60 to 90-day eligibility period is seen as ideal, for now**

There are some indications from rail users that they would be willing to accept a shorter eligibility period if the pandemic is brought under control. However, even within a 60 to 90-day window, our community would be unwilling to purchase more than 10 tickets in a carnet. The trade-off is evaluated in terms of a **worst case scenario** of 'potential money wasted' and therefore the desired number of tickets is low.

*"It needs to be 90 days for me; with the current climate and talk of a second wave I can't imagine investing in something which could potentially be of no use very quickly."*

**Female, 33, East Midlands**

## Commuters will only travel into the office when they have to. Incentivising off peak travel does not feel feasible

### Discounted off-peak carnets implies a level of discretion that commuters do not expect to enjoy

Few if any members of the rail community expect to choose when and how they commute to work, and while off-peak discounts feels like the right thing to do in terms of reducing congestion, they did not feel this would be useful for their day-to-day journeys. **Most commuters in our community expect to work at least two days a week from home in future, but with the '9 to 5' remaining largely static. The introduction of carnets would not influence commuter travel patterns, because most people anticipate travelling when they have to.**

### Discounts could incentivise greater planning in terms of leisure journeys

Most would be willing to vary their journey pattern for discretionary leisure journeys (although many would travel off peak for these journeys regardless).

Generally, off-peak discounts feels like a benefit at the margins. It would not necessarily alter user behaviour but feels appropriate and valuable.

*"If I could plan my commute to be off-peak, I would, but I don't think that would give me enough hours to fulfil my role at the bank."*

Female, 52, Wales

*"I already have a 26-30 railcard and already try to book in advance to choose the cheapest train possible."*

Female, 29, North West

## Refunds will be a vital proof-point for carnets, given the uncertainty of the current situation

**Our community devised a range of solutions for refunds to be implemented fairly:**

- **‘Roll-over’ tickets** – A finite number of tickets can be carried over to the next carnet purchased
- **An initial, generous refund policy** until the pandemic is managed
- **Ad-hoc refunds** during periods of sudden, local lockdown or other exceptional circumstances

Ultimately, refunds will be seen as a valuable gesture of understanding and flexibility during a deeply uncertain period in rail users’ lives. Our community is pragmatic, and recognise that to earn the discount, some commitment to rail would be needed, but argue that a second wave or lockdown would override this commitment.

*“A non-refundable approach would be fine by me because it would be a hassle trying to get a refund anyway.”*

**Male, 45, North West**

*“If there’s a quarantine or enforced lockdown and you have a ticket with no refund, that seems wholly unfair.”*

**Male, 39, Scotland**