



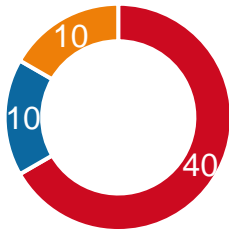
Transport User Community

Rail leisure travel and urban travel

August 2020

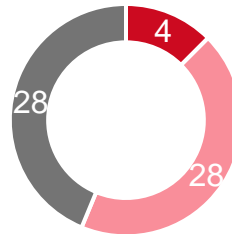
Who are the sixty members of our community?

Location



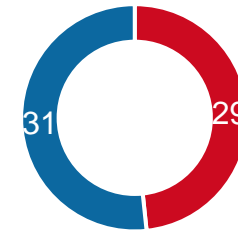
■ England ■ Scotland ■ Wales

Interchange?



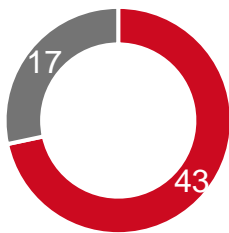
■ Yes - across mode ■ Yes - within rail ■ No

Gender



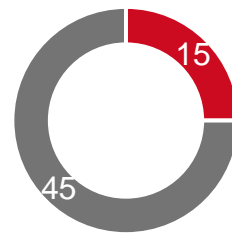
■ Male ■ Female

Access to a car?



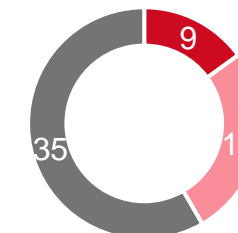
■ Yes ■ No

Currently commuting?



■ Yes ■ No

Season ticket?



■ Yes - Current ■ Yes - Cancelled ■ No

What has our community been talking about recently?

Q1: Leisure journeys

A group discussion to see what the role of travelling for leisure is at the moment, and in the future. How do passengers feel about making discretionary journeys and how can they be implemented effectively?



Q2: the Safer Travel Pledge

How do passengers respond to the commitment made by train operating companies to keep rail travel safe during the pandemic? Is it believable, encouraging, appropriate? Do passengers see it put into practice?

Q3: Urban travel

How have passengers felt about trips into their city centre? What was the impact of making an interchange, if anything, and how would they feel about traveling more into the city centre in the future?



Leisure journeys by rail have declined sharply among our community members



While most recognise that the rules allow for discretionary rail travel, concerns remain

Images in the media of overcrowded beaches and parks have led to a renewed fear of making day trips. Our community does not want to contribute to overcrowding or the spread of the virus and are therefore keeping their leisure trips **local and small-scale**.



Rail users value car travel as a more flexible and socially distanced mode for leisure

Many argue that rail journeys for leisure inevitably take passengers to the most 'popular' (and therefore crowded) locations. This is not necessarily a problem with rail travel as a mode, but with the sense that it directs passengers to hotspots for crowding. Where holidays were taken, car travel took precedence over rail.

Car travel is seen as allowing drivers to visit leisure venues that are 'off the beaten track' and therefore less crowded. In a pandemic context, **safety is a function of flexibility**, and our community values:

- Being able to **abandon the journey** without wasting money
- Being able to travel to and from the destination **isolated from other people**
- Being able to travel at **peak times** but without a risk of spreading the virus.

“Quite simply, I’m not even thinking about leisure trips. You just look at the rising incidence of hotspots and how they all seem to revolve around pubs. I’m putting my life on hold, and when there’s a vaccine, let’s party!”

Male, 65, North West

“The only way I’d consider rail is if it worked out as financially beneficial or reduced the travel time – I’m still not sure if trains are reliable at the moment, as I’ve experienced delays previously.”

Female, 30, South East

“I’ve been out three times since restrictions were lifted – I’ve only used taxis or the car. I did go on a train for a very short journey to visit a friends but it was quiet enough, maybe because it was off-peak.”

Female, 30, Scotland

“I don’t think there are any restrictions on using trains for leisure journeys – in fact I’m certain there aren’t after all the photos of crowded trains with everyone heading to the beaches. That’s enough to put me off.”

Female, 35, Midlands

The Safer Travel Pledge is something of a revelation among rail users, but standards of proof are high

Is it believable?

Is it valued?

Maximising Space

Passengers struggle to believe this. Maximising space is linked to the more conventional measures of frequency, carriage numbers and punctuality, and passengers do not score trains highly here.

Maximising space is the primary goal for rail, according to our community. These passengers will not return to rail unless space is maximised.

Boosting Cleaning

A new development over the course of the community is that rail users are starting to concede that **trains 'feel' cleaner**. This has been successfully proven.

Boosting cleaning is highly valued. Making for a safer and more pleasant journey, passengers want to see this implemented **beyond the pandemic**.

Helping with Hygiene

A fairly straightforward claim that the community happily accepts. Hand sanitiser stations are readily **visible** and there is broad recognition that it can enable passengers to keep themselves safe.

The community regularly brings their own hand sanitiser with them, and argues that helping with hygiene is less important than **enforcing it**.

Improving Information

This claim is readily accepted. Passengers recognise that train operators are relatively good at providing up-to-the-minute information even pre-COVID, so the claim is uncontroversial.

Our community was arguing strongly for a **technological solution** to help predict crowding even before seeing the Safer Travel Pledge.

“If you were to ask me what I’d want from train companies, this is very much in the spirit of what I would suggest. But the extent to which it’s being carried out, and uptake of these behaviours from passengers is contestable.”

Male, 25, Wales

“I think the pledges tick all the right boxes. I like the alert system for overcrowding...but it doesn’t change how I feel about travelling by train – people seem to be the problem more than the trains themselves.”

Male, 35, Wales

“I think these are a load of hot air. More trains? More space? The track between Guildford and Waterloo is at capacity. How are they going to put more trains on? This is lip service; if they couldn’t increase capacity before the virus, how can they do it now?”

Male, 57, South East

Few saw anything 'different' about travelling into the city, and the benefits and drawback largely match other forms of train travel

Positive experiences of urban travel

High standards of cleanliness

Presence of staff on-board

Reduced congestion

"I only ever travel into the city, and I'll continue to do so."

Female, 53, North West

"The two previous trains were cancelled so it was crammed."

Female, 53, North West

Negative experiences of urban travel

Cancellations leading to overcrowding

Lack of mask wearing

As 'unsafe' as any other train journey

"I travelled into the city centre and I was delighted with the standards, the number of staff on board and the cleanliness of the train. I was pleasantly surprised.."

Female, 46, Scotland

Interchanges are disliked. For some they feel unsafe, but for most they are simply a hassle

Interchanges create problems for rail users during the pandemic in terms of:

- ‘Doubling’ the likelihood of encountering an overcrowded train or bus
- Crowded throughways, stairwells and escalators in stations
- Increasing the total number of people encountered on the journey
- Increasing journey time and adding in risk of delay or cancellation
 - Note: This is recognised as having a ‘knock on’ effect on the crowdedness of a subsequent train.

“My journey was straight to Croydon. If it had any interchanges I wouldn’t have taken the journey.”

Male, 46, London

“It’s just an increased risk, I’m doubling the risk I feel boarding one train. Is the next train going to be clean? Are they going to be wearing masks?”

Male, 46, London