



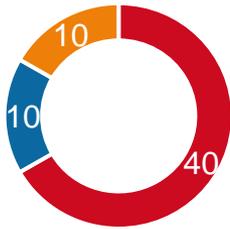
Transport User Community

Rail reservations and virus risk

September 2020

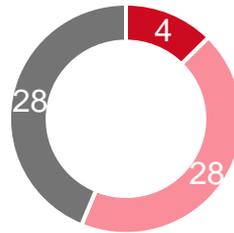
Who are the sixty members of our community?

Location



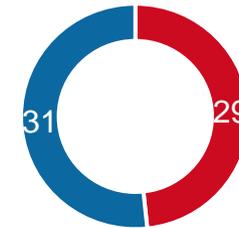
■ England ■ Scotland ■ Wales

Interchange?



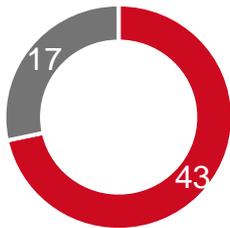
■ Yes - across mode ■ Yes - within rail ■ No

Gender



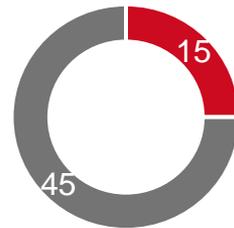
■ Male ■ Female

Access to a car?



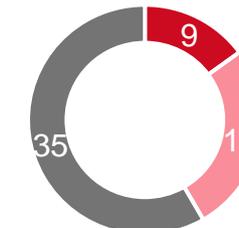
■ Yes ■ No

Currently commuting?



■ Yes ■ No

Season ticket?



■ Yes - Current ■ Yes - Cancelled ■ No

What have we asked our community lately?

Q1 Reserving a seat

How do passengers feel about the idea of mandatory reservation of space on commuter trains? What would the benefits and drawbacks be, and what if it were a strongly-advised guideline, rather than mandatory?



Q2: Trains and coronavirus risk

A question to understand individual passengers' sense of the risk on trains relative to other activities, and other modes of transport. Is there anything uniquely 'risky' about train travel, and how could it be reduced?

Q3: Travelling again

A more explicit question to reference the problems that our community have identified and probe on possible solutions. What would it take to get passengers travelling again, if anything?



There are significant concerns as to how mandatory reservation would work in practice, although in a Covid-19 context the concept has some appeal



Those with unpredictable or short-notice commutes see significant issues

Several respondents said they have to make journeys to clients during peak hours and having to reserve a seat for these less planned journeys would negatively impact their work.

Many assume this involves reserving a seat not just a place, which is appealing in terms of comfort as it would eliminate standing, but feel it is impractical given the sheer number of commuters.

In a Covid-19 context, many see that it could be a way (perhaps the only way) to ensure social distancing on trains

The balance of opinion is that for it to work reservations would need to be mandatory and enforced – if just ‘strong advice’ it would be ignored by many.

Significant concern about:

- How would it be enforced? Could it in practice be enforced?
- Admin headache. Could spaces be booked for more than one journey/the whole week?
- Inflexibility. What happens if you miss the train? What about ‘no shows’?

Also, many wonder why train operators can’t just increase capacity rather than restrict demand.

“More trains and more carriages. At large football games they use human traffic lights to control the flow of people – this could be a regular thing within stations.”

Male, 32, East Midlands

“Wouldn’t work for me as I have to travel at short notice for urgent meetings or clients. It’s at a moment’s notice, so reservation would hamper my interactions with the workplace.”

Male, 45, North West

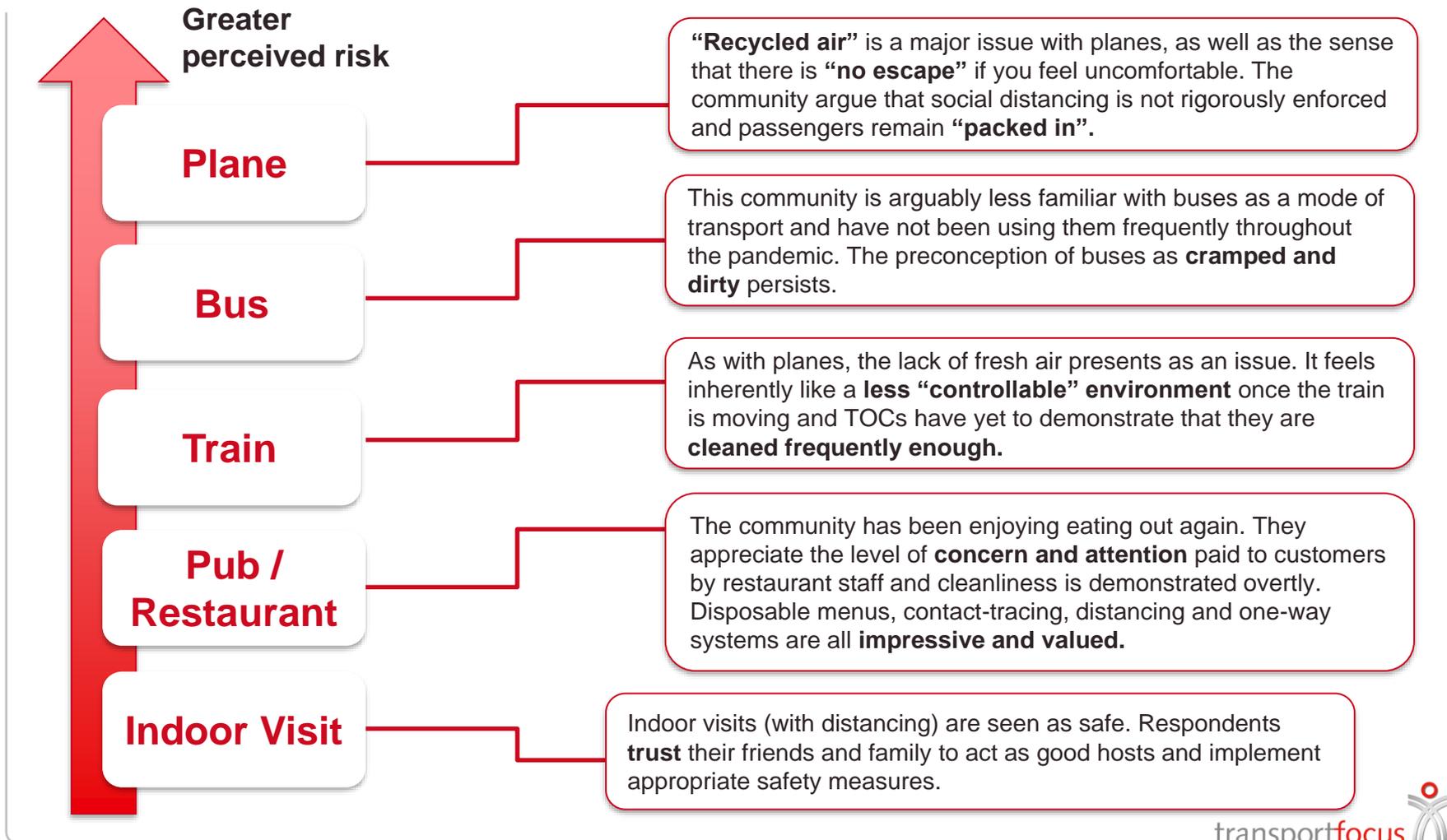
“It’d be fantastic if I could reserve a seat on my train in the morning and coming back, but with the amount of people on board I don’t think this would work as sometimes people don’t give up their seats.”

Male, 34, East England

“The downside is that travel at short notice would not be guaranteed in terms of space. Would prices increase to make up for the shortfall in passengers?”

Male, 39, Wales

Public transport is usually seen as one of the 'riskiest' activities, second only to plane usage



“No intention of travelling, going to pubs or restaurants until I get my job.”

Male, 65, North West

“Visiting another household, it’s a known environment, known people, and no restriction on where you sit; you can move as necessary.”

Male, 57, South East

“I would feel safer on a long-distance train because there’s more seating and less moving around. Commuter trains are more crowded with more people boarding and leaving.”

Male, 53, London



Our community is still seeing litter from previous passengers left on the train when they board, undermining confidence in a clean (and therefore safe) service.

Our community feels that train companies need to be more visible in their safety planning

Over the last seven weeks, our community has been made aware of the various efforts TOCs have taken to ensure a safe service. The key issues are now **visibility** and **accountability**. However, most feel that they will only return to the trains in a regular way when 'told to' by their employer.

They do not feel as though these safety measures have been announced clearly (or loudly) enough. The KPIs feel unclear, and it is by no means obvious who exactly they are supposed to complain to if the measures do not stack up.

The idea of a 'head out to help out' scheme does not address the **fundamental safety concerns** but is a positive nudge for people who are already travelling or considering travelling. It must be **implemented in tandem with explicit, enforced and accountable safety measures**.

"I'd like to see a more visual effort from public transport services. I'd like to see more promotional material around social distancing and such."

Male, 32, East Midlands

"I haven't really seen anything that's made me feel optimistic. Many of the measures in place make me feel like travelling would be very complicated and time consuming."

Male, 53, London