



Transport User Community

Recent bus and rail journeys

September 2020

What did we ask our communities?



Recent journeys

A 'refresher' task to see how users' experience of bus and rail has changed over the course of the pandemic. We asked a similar question in July and, recognising that the situation has changed significantly since then, felt it valuable to 'check in' and see how travel has been serving its passengers.

Who is in our bus community?

60

people using bus prior
to Covid-19



Across England,
Scotland and Wales



Mix of payment
methods



Mix of those currently
using bus and not
using bus



A spread of age,
gender and ethnicity



Some have
disabilities

The community remains uneasy around bus travel and will continue to take only the most necessary journeys by bus

More experienced bus users can feel that some members of the community are overreacting

- While other passengers may not adhere to mask-wearing and social distancing as much as they would like, the consensus from continuous bus passengers is that bus travel is 'not that bad', and they want to reassure their fellow participants about the safety of the bus.
- The risk is that those who have been avoiding bus travel for the past six months may begin to build up fears that are out of line with the real experience.
- For non-travellers, however, reading the experiences of their fellow participants who have been travelling is largely reassuring. They are happy to see that social distancing is largely being adhered to, and that the eerie, 'ghost-like' atmosphere of lockdown travel has dissipated.

The greatest change since lockdown has been the return of schoolchildren to bus travel

Most are pragmatic about this. Bus services tend to divide their services cleanly between 'school buses' and 'non-school buses', meaning that passengers can simply alter their travel patterns to accommodate the change.



“I’d advise anyone that hasn’t been travelling to try and make the effort to get out, if you can. Do what makes you feel safe, but at least try and get out and about.”

Female, 44, South East

“Although I’ve seen a few people’s journeys may be quiet, it doesn’t reassure me as I know that there are a few school and college children on my routes – so children being at school and cramming into buses puts me off at the moment.”

Male, 49, South East

“It’s horrible that people won’t respect others’ wishes in regards to social distancing and I’m sorry to read that even when asked repeatedly other passengers have refused to move away from you.”

Female, 24, Yorks and Humber

The bus community expects more progress to have been made on addressing passenger behaviour and cleanliness by now

While very few see a decline in mask-wearing and social distancing, there is a strong sense that passenger behaviour needs to be impeccable

- **Lapses in behaviour**, including, in one instance, a case of the bus driver not wearing a face mask, are causing more frustration amongst the community than they were even two months ago.
- Fears of a second wave and rising case numbers, coupled with a sense that passengers still aren't 'getting the message,' leave the community wondering whether bus travel is a viable mode. **Many in our community have not used public transport** and stories from those who have do not inspire confidence.
- Some continue to wonder **why hand sanitiser isn't being offered on board the bus**. Again, while it is hard to judge whether passenger behaviour is definitively improving or declining based on the community's commentary, it is clear that enforcement of the rules does not yet pass muster.



“The second bus I took today had just a few passengers and only one person was wearing a mask. I’m very surprised, with the rising cases. I’d have hoped people would be more sensible.”

Female, 22, South East

“There’s been no difference in my experience since the start of lockdown, just following the rules and regulations set out by the government. Initially it all looked strange but now you just watch, listen, read the signs and do as directed.”

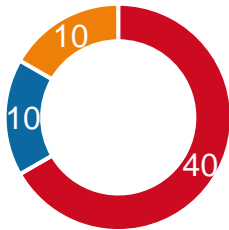
Male, 64, Scotland

“I think it’s fair that there would be hand sanitiser on buses because there seems to be hand sanitiser everywhere else like shops, gyms and so on, so I’d be more reassured with hand sanitiser on the bus.”

Female, 29, North West

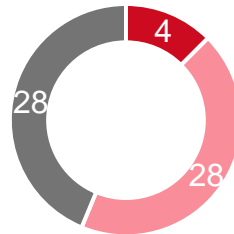
Who are the sixty members of our rail community?

Location



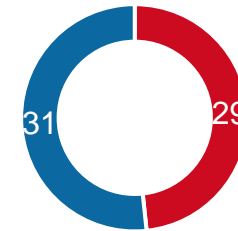
■ England ■ Scotland ■ Wales

Interchange?



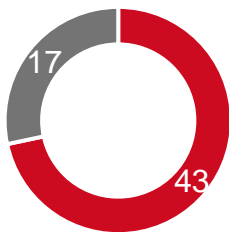
■ Yes - across mode ■ Yes - within rail ■ No

Gender



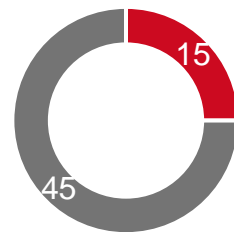
■ Male ■ Female

Access to a car?



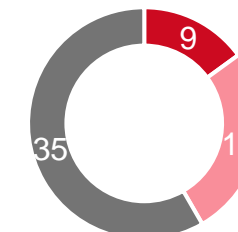
■ Yes ■ No

Currently commuting?



■ Yes ■ No

Season ticket?



■ Yes - Current ■ Yes - Cancelled ■ No




Checking in with the rail community revealed that many of the anxieties about the pandemic, and rail, remain unchanged

The increased circulation of the virus has renewed and reinforced many fears around safety

For many, the rising 'R' number came just at the point when they were beginning to consider a return to rail, and quickly forestalled those plans. Many see their fellow passengers acting complacently with regards to social distancing, but note that for the majority, the rules have simply become par for the course - they feel less 'strange.'

Rising infection rates and diminishing compliance with the rules represent the worst of both worlds. Several respondents have left their jobs due to concerns around the commute. However, seasoned travellers who have been travelling since lockdown do not notice a change in the quality or safety of the journey.

What else has the community noticed?

-  Increases in rail fares
-  Increasing passenger numbers
-  A calmer atmosphere (for some)



“It surprises me how reluctant to travel our community is – maybe the difference with me is that I just can’t work from home – I have to work, and I’ve changed my mindset accordingly.”

Female, 53, North West

“Unfortunately I’ve had to resign from my job as it’s just too far to travel – two buses, two overground trains, two tubes and two DLRs for the round trip. I’m heartbroken to do it but I can’t take the risk of travelling during these times, especially as COVID infections are on the rise.”

Female, 50, South East

“What a difference a news conference makes. On Friday I genuinely believed I was seeing a difference in the commute but now the trains are empty, like a ghost train, and you can see that people are worried.”

Male, 38, Scotland

The rail community has not seen a significant change in other passengers' behaviour – but they expect one

Mis-use (or non-use) of facemasks is a persistent issue

Again, while this hasn't worsened per se, the expectation is that train operators' enforcement of the rules would have ramped up in line with the prospect of a second wave. Passengers have not seen a change in tone or messaging from rail companies since cases began to rise again, and are left with an **underlying anxiety** that passenger behaviour is not up to the task of coping with the increased transmission rate.

Train passengers are held to a high standard of behaviour by their fellow passengers. Their journeys are longer, planned in advance and often high-stakes, with less opportunity to exit the train if they feel uncomfortable. Even compared to other public transport modes, passengers have high expectations here.

It should be noted that many rail users in our community have not yet taken a journey

As a result, news of passenger misbehaviour comes second hand and may be subject to hearsay; indeed, young people in the community are quick to point out that not all young passengers are abusing the rules. A shift in tone from rail companies to match what many see as a **second crisis point** in the pandemic could reassure would-be passengers that other passengers' behaviour is being closely monitored and corrected where necessary.



“I see a lot of young people not social distancing and not wearing masks so I’d avoid trains where schoolchildren are travelling. Things are going to get worse before they get better.”

Female, 46, Scotland

“A friend of mine took the train from Walton-on-Thames to Waterloo and said she felt very intimidated and concerned by a group of younger people who seemed to be deliberately standing close to other people in a bid to scare them.”

Male, 53, South East

“I get the sense that train companies don’t feel the need to drive the message home, which I don’t really agree with. There have been fewer announcements about wearing a mask.”

Male, 33, North West