



# Transport User Community

The vaccine and travel

January 2020

# What did we ask our communities?

## Coronavirus, the vaccine and your travel

Week commencing 23 November 2020



Given the news about recent trials for a coronavirus vaccine that have shown some promise, we asked our communities about their immediate reaction to the news.

What will life look like once the vaccine is rolled out? Are passengers confident that it will be effective?

And, how do the communities feel about the prospect of using public transport once a vaccine is in place? How long after the vaccine is introduced would they need to wait before they travel with confidence?

# Who is in our rail and bus communities?

## 60|60

60 people using rail to commute and 60 using bus, prior to Covid-19



Across England, Scotland and Wales



Mix of payment methods



Mix of those currently using public transport and those not



A spread of age, gender and ethnicity



Some have disabilities

## **The community is relieved to see a vaccine being rolled out, although few want to be ‘first in line’ to take the jab**

### **The vaccine raises hopes of life returning to ‘normal’ in the near future**

Most have confidence that the vaccine will be effective, though a minority are more skeptical.

### **The community is waiting to ‘see results’ – though few know what this will look like**

Some point out that they need to see case numbers drop to near zero before they can travel with confidence, vaccine or not. This is the most acceptable evidence of the vaccine ‘working’ – but of course it may take months to see this reduction.

### **A new concern has emerged – that the public will become complacent**

Respondents expect that the most vulnerable will receive the vaccine first, but this leaves a window for significant transmission and illness among those who are less vulnerable. They do not want to see standards of social distancing slip, least of all on public transport.

One respondent even argued that lax standards of hygiene could lead to a second pandemic altogether – Covid-19 may fundamentally change our attitudes to illness, disease and transport. Confidence to take public transport means avoiding a return to old standards of cleanliness and crowding.

*“Obviously the vaccine is fantastic news. I suspect it will 80-90% effective so things should slowly get back to normal. This time next year, I would say. Once a vaccine is in place, I would have no concerns using public transport. I think when the government advise we no longer have to wear masks, I'd believe it to be safe. My only concern would be do we know how long the vaccine will be effective for? The vaccine news doesn't change my current feelings about public transport. Still very wary about using it. I think things will gradually get back to normal as more and more people are vaccinated, and hospital admissions and deaths fall dramatically.”*

**Male, 39, East England, bus**

*“I feel confident about the vaccine and its efficacy. How happy I feel on public transport would depend on how fast the vaccine is rolled out and the uptake of it. As I'm not in any at-risk group, I would assume that I wouldn't have access to the vaccine for a while so would probably feel vulnerable on public transport until then. However, if rates of the virus start decreasing, I would feel more confident on public transport.”*

**Female, 37, Scotland, bus**

*“I don't trust a vaccine that has only been tested for a few months and long-term side effects have not been diagnosed. I don't think it will be effective and I expect another strain of Covid will miraculously appear anyway. I use public transport regardless, but think there will be more passengers after they get the vaccine and think they are immune.”*

**Female, 50, London, rail**

# While the impending vaccine is viewed positively, people will want reassurance and clarification around it

What if there are side-effects?

"I don't think that enough has been done to prove to me that it's effective. They don't know if it will prevent spreading of Covid or guarantees immunity from it or what it will do to your body and for that reason, I will not be getting it despite having health issues. Until the data has been collated and examined very closely and for an extended period of time, then I will continue to go out only when necessary and will continue to follow current hygiene guidelines. I won't be travelling on public transport either until such times as we are fully assured that the vaccine is completely reliable."

**Female, 63, Scotland, bus**

How long will it take to 'work' in my body?

"With regards to public transport I am hoping it will change but I think people who have taken the vaccine should at least wait until two days so that can any side affect can pass and then they should be allowed to travel."

**Male, 34, North West, rail**

Has it been tested enough?

"I want to see a long-term vaccine working effectively, on other people. I'm not going to be a guinea pig for vaccine testing."

**Male, 57, South East, rail**

Could I still spread the coronavirus?

"I'm a little bit uneducated about how vaccines work. Could I still spread the virus even if I don't get sick myself? If I'm on a bus I'd want to know that I'm not posing a risk to anyone else who maybe didn't get vaccinated yet. How would I even know who those people are? In the film Contagion everyone had wristbands."

**Male, 37, North West, bus**

## **Passengers have become more accustomed to the status quo, particularly those who are still travelling**

Some are perfectly comfortable using public transport with or without a vaccine – they have been doing it for a while and no longer feel anxious. This was a particularly common feeling amongst the bus community.

### **While others do not want to see too swift a return to normality on public transport**

They would rather see the vaccine working and let general immunity run its full course before making a return to public transport. Those who do work from home enjoy doing so and some would be reluctant to go back even if it were safe to do so.

### **There is hope that social distancing and strong sanitation habits will remain the norm even in a post-Covid environment, especially while using public transport**

Covid has awakened many to the potential consequences, both small and large, of spreading germs. There is some fear that hygiene standards will peter out to pre-Covid levels, causing concern for what others are or are not doing e.g. washing hands. Thus, social norms such as shaking hands and standing close to strangers on public transport will likely be a source of anxiety for many for the foreseeable future.

*"I would have the vaccine as soon as I am able to. I am confident with the vaccine. My concern about getting a bus is, the people that have said they wouldn't have the vaccine. But they will still be going on buses and going out as if everything is back to normal."*

**Female, 30, Scotland, bus**

*"I hope that passengers will still continue to hand sanitise to minimise the spread of germs in general and respect the rules of the public transport. I hope that this pandemic has taught people a few life lessons."*

**Female, 40, East England, bus**

*"I am not overly cautious of using public transport. I would rather more distance, but I have felt this way even prior to the pandemic. I think sanitisation should still be available. I think it is positive that there is a vaccine but I am sceptical about how quickly it has been made. Regardless of vaccine or not, I still think some distancing should be incorporated such as it is in some Scandinavian countries. I'm not sure there will be a 'normal' again. However I think the implementation of the vaccine will make the wider public feel more confident about going back to a usual way of living."*

**Female, 28, North West, bus**

*"Nothing will ever be normal again to be honest. Especially with my employer, they have said working full-time in the office is a thing of the past. We will have the opportunity to work partly from home."*

**Female, 46, North West, bus**



## There is significant work to do to ensure that bus and rail do not feel in some way 'different' to the other activities respondents will take up once the 'new normal' sets in

In previous weeks, the community has argued that public transport feels 'least safe' out of the different activities they could do such as going to the pub or shops, though feels safer than air travel

Therefore, for those not currently travelling, it is likely that public transport will be one of the last activities adopted after a vaccine.

Many in the community are likely to pursue other activities like visiting friends and family locally, going to leisure venues and shopping before adopting public transport regularly.

There is a widespread expectation that transport will be the last thing to return to normal, and that *everything else needs to feel normal* before finally returning to bus or rail.

*"I was pleased to hear about the various vaccines, but it seems will take some time for everyone to have the vaccine, so there will still be a risk on public transport for another year, I think. I don't think I will be doing anything different or taking public transport yet for sometime to come."*

**Male, 49, East England, bus**

*"I used the train for the first time since March on the weekend, and it will be last time until the virus is tackled - zero social distancing, standing room only. I ended up wearing three masks on top of each other."*

**Male, 39, Wales, rail**