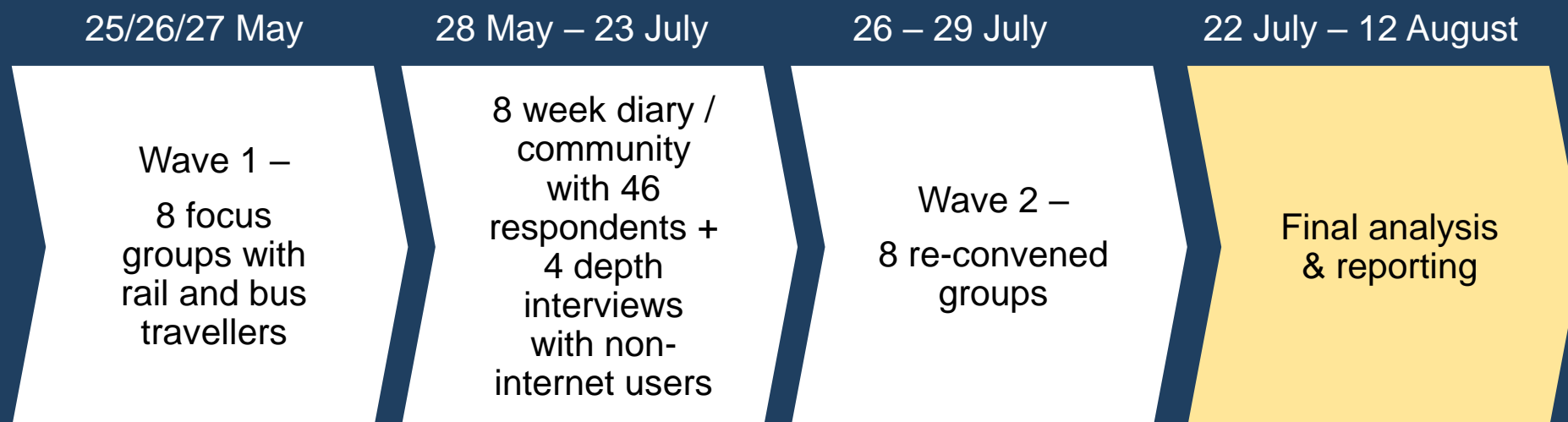


UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDES TO SOCIAL DISTANCING AND FACE COVERINGS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

September 2021 – final research agency report



THE RESEARCH OUTLINE



OBJECTIVES

1. What has their experience been during Covid when travelling generally? What about experiences of social distancing and face coverings?
2. Would people still want/expect to wear face coverings even after restrictions are lifted?
3. How would people feel if social distancing was removed and whether this would affect their willingness to travel?
4. How would people feel if they had to sit next to someone on public transport?
5. Does journey length and purpose change these attitudes?
6. Attitudes towards 'vaccine passports' on public transport
7. If passengers are not comfortable removing rules, what might be necessary conditions for doing so?
8. How important is ventilation if social distancing and/or face covering rule are not in place?
9. What is the impact of relaxing the rules on how people feel about other passenger behaviour, and how would people respond to this?
10. Are attitudes towards public transport different to other public places such as restaurants, gyms, shops and pubs? Why?
11. What is the impact of statistics showing the level of risk of catching Covid?
- 12. What can operators do to encourage people to use public transport?**
- 13. What are passenger expectations around the future / 'new normal'?**

WHO WE HAVE SPOKEN TO

	Lockdown travel habits	Life stage	Usual mode of travel	Reason for travel	Demography
Group 1	Not travelled	Younger	Mix of bus & train	Mix of commuters (min 3 per group), business & leisure travel (min 2 per group)	Mix of gender, location (urban/rural) , region (England, Scotland and Wales) home ownership Min 1-2 BAME per group Minimum 6 disabled people across all groups
Group 2	Not travelled	Older	Mix of bus & train		
Group 3	Some travel	Younger	Mostly bus		
Group 4	Some travel	Older	Mostly bus		
Group 5	Some travel	Mix	Mostly train		
Group 6	Regular travel	Younger	Mostly bus		
Group 7	Regular travel	Older	Mostly bus		
Group 8	Regular travel	Mix	Mostly train		

People are instinctively conducting their own personal risk assessments about use of public spaces – including public transport – this would continue if restrictions are lifted but most will travel if they need to (even if changes in lifestyle e.g. increased WFH means this is less necessary). However, they also expect some restrictions to remain in place for some time, such as the use of face masks.

1. **The wide spectrum of behaviours and attitudes towards the pandemic** are often based on personality alongside demographics
2. **People are starting to take control** - making judgements on the risks / importance of social norms and making-up their own minds as to how to behave
3. **Behaviours are primarily associated with self-preservation or social norms rather than social conscience**
4. **Guidance is valued where it is clear but data should be local** and relevant to their specific journey / area
5. **There is a desire for some restrictions to remain in place**, with an expectation that masks are here to stay for some time
6. **But there is also a sense of realism** around the ability to social distance on public transport in the future

Interim report delivered in June 2021

Behaviours and attitudes towards travelling during Covid are complex and dynamic, they are on a continuum rather than binary. People navigate through their conflicting beliefs, needs and actions on a day-to-day basis – individual reactions can differ depending on beliefs, other people, environment and society.

1. The easing of restrictions prompted a range of reactions – on one end of the spectrum, people feel it is time to get back to 'normal' where as it was too soon for others. People continued to travel if the need was there and there were no other options, but some adjusted their travel to avoid busy times.

2. The risk and consequences of catching Covid on public transport have shifted since May – catching Covid is now seen as an inconvenience for some relaxed passengers. The consequence has shifted from serious illness and death to isolation. Vaccine programme has had a large role to play.

3. People weigh up the risks before travelling and make a judgement if it is *worth it*. Assessing Covid risk, travelling experience and personal sacrifice e.g. time, effort and cost. But decision making isn't always rational, it can be emotional or impulsive – so we see inconsistencies in what people say they believe and actually do.

4. Most people still want mask use to remain compulsory on public transport but accept social distancing is difficult to implement as life gets back to normal. They expect operators to implement visual nudges to encourage other passengers to be Covid safe – they're confident they will take their own personal measures.

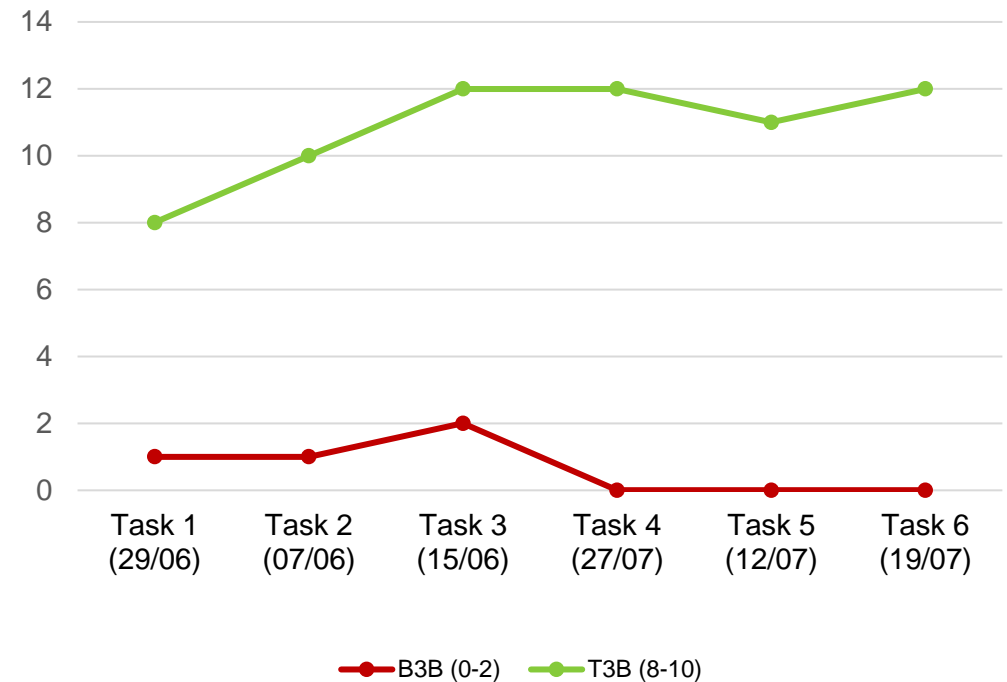
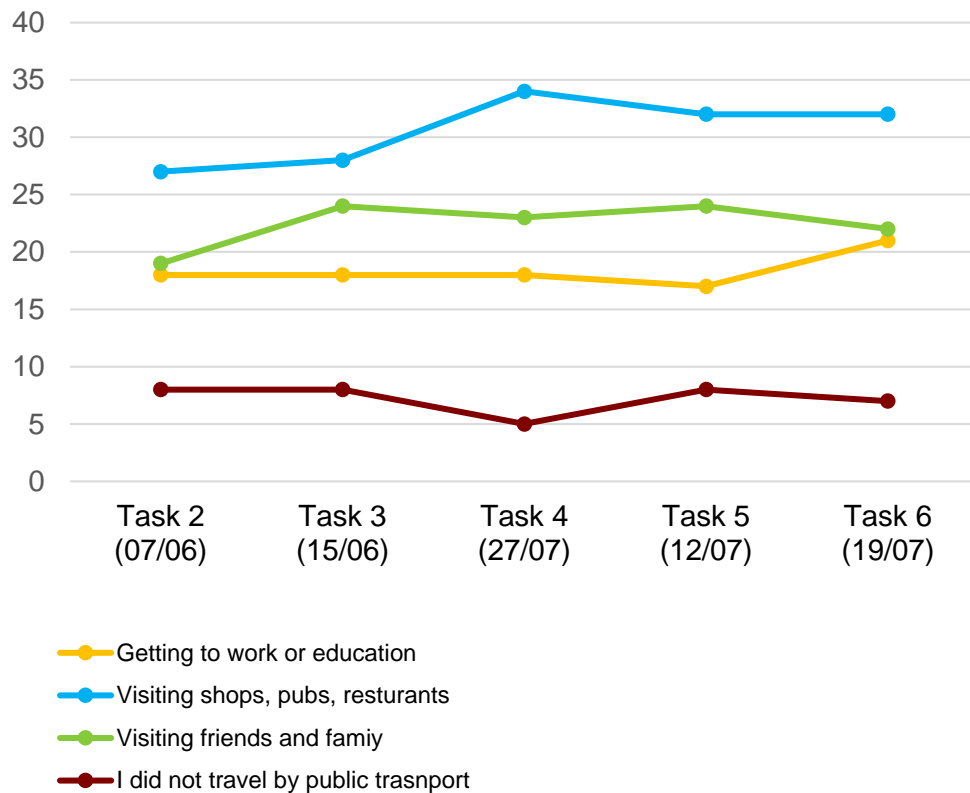
5. People are fed up with Government guidance and are looking for clarity, reassurance and confidence. People can accept there will be different rules across different spaces but would appreciate a consistent approach on public transport – this would reduce anxiety and fears around travelling.

6. There is a unified sense we're emerging into a 'new normal' where Covid is managed like the flu. But people can't put a date on when we'll change to a 'new normal' – given up on thinking long-term.



Over the eight weeks of the community, we saw people start to travel more (especially for leisure), and report improving travel experiences – a microcosm of wider trends.

How many trips people are taking on transport as opposed to driving... How people rate their travelling experience...



N.B. Data is captured qualitatively from 46 respondents.

B3B = Bottom three box score: (0-2)

T3B = Top three box score: (8-10)

There are two main groups of thought – but overall, reactions to the easing of restrictions clearly show how perceived Covid risk is still a strong influence on public transport decision-making.

It is time to get back to normal...

A small group of people agreed that it's time to get back to normal – because if not now, when? This group thinks opening now means people can make the most of summer, before a possible winter wave. They've also moved on from Covid as an immediate threat, turning their attention to other (personal) worries.

- **They have continued to travel as and when they need because they just want to 'get on with it' and are happy with the level of Covid risk – especially because most people are vaccinated.**

*"If people still want to wear their masks & avoid crowded places, they have every right to do that but the rest of us need to be **allowed to get back to our new normal** (whatever that will be), people's lives & mental health are being torn apart & it cannot go on."*

61, Female, London

Restrictions were lifted too soon...

The concept of 'Freedom Day', where everything would suddenly go back to 'normal', didn't sit well with most people. Regardless of individual Covid concerns, this group wants a gradual change rather than a sudden shift overnight.

- **Some of these people avoided public transport during the immediate easing – anticipating increased risk, at least initially**
- **Others need to continue travelling but take personal measures to keep safe.**
- **Many appreciate individual operators and staff requiring mask use – it's seen as safer, but the inconsistency is confusing.**

*"I think I sort of understand why they've done it now... But **they could have phased it out**, but they seem to have phased everything in... **seems a bit like falling off the edge of a cliff, doesn't it?**"*

31, Male, Nottingham

Underlying this thinking is the changing risk profile of Covid in the UK.

Some remain worried about the risk of hospitalisation, death and long term impact; but widespread vaccination (and lower death rates) means more people now see Covid as 'flu-like' and requiring only the inconvenience of isolation.

Behavioural science tells us people's perception of risk is influenced by their motives; they **rationalise what they want or need against the perceived risk**. As Government restrictions lift and activities begin again, people's level of concern is changing too.

‘NORMALITY’ ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE FOR MOST



Positive experiences show the human side of public transport and help put people back in touch with each other – creating a shared social atmosphere.

People lost a sense of shared humanity during lockdown – and public transport offers a chance to reconnect with strangers in a fundamentally human way.

And as life ‘restarts’ again, public transport offers people a way to participate in normal life and enjoy the sense of celebration as activities resume.



While the midst of the pandemic was difficult, the rules and regulations were widespread and clear. Today, people are trying to navigate through a complex landscape and not just on public transport.

- People found rules and guidance easier to navigate when there was a top-down approach. Now, the different rules across region, mode of travel or operator have created a murky landscape.
- Ideally, many want consistency, and some people would still like a blanket approach to public transport – even when they accept that rules will differ in leisure spaces like the pub, cinema, or hairdresser.
- Unlike those, public transport gathers a lot of different people into a small area and then disperses them across the country; proximity to strangers and the lack of control over the shared space mean that public transport is perceived to be a riskier environment.
- People are sympathetic to transport operators but overall want more clarity in order to be reassured and confident about their own safety.

*"I think there's a **lack of overall strategy** about how to manage this. So, some things are being left to employees to ask like, 'are you exempt from wearing a mask?'... And that seems a bit unfair because **I don't think it's really their responsibility** to be doing that. And they, you know, I've heard drivers get a bit of abuse when they've been asked. So, I think there's an overall strategy missing."*

Female, 71, Nottingham

*"I think the **transport companies have done their best** with communication with the public but have been gravely **let down by the mixed messages and lack of guidance** from the people in power"*

Male, 38, Edinburgh

The contrast between 'Freedom Day' and continued mask regulations is creating **cognitive dissonance** for transport users (where belief or information is at odds with behaviours).

The contradiction adds to the sense of fear (for some) and confusion, which means people are more likely to either ignore Government messaging about 'freedom' or stop wearing a mask.

Dissonance can be overcome by concrete guidelines and an explanation for why people need to follow them – there is an opportunity for operators to fill in the gaps.

In the past 18 months, continued mask use has become an easy way for people to feel Covid safe. It has become an engrained behaviour, and people now feel abnormal not wearing one (even if they're relaxed about catching Covid).

Reasons for wearing a mask are threefold:

1. Reduces the chance of catching Covid (more focus on personal protection than on keeping others safe)
2. It is the 'new normal' – it is hard to change habits
3. Social pressure – feels like people are judging you for not wearing a mask

People initially struggled with the **cognitive dissonance** of compulsory mask use (i.e. struggled to adapt to the introduction of mask use) – it was a completely new behaviour at odds with our usual habits.

But now the reverse is true – we're allowed *not to wear a mask*, but have a strong belief in their effectiveness and necessity.

However, the easing of **social distancing** feels more natural and gradual. As public transport has become busier, social distancing has become gradually phased out.

Social distancing is also at odds with other parts of life, where social contact is being re-introduced. Some people are practicing social distancing 'if possible' rather than always, and are becoming more relaxed about how much it's needed across all contexts.

*"I think these guidelines have been **drilled into society** for so long that even when the guidelines change (and they have done repeatedly) and the government states that it's safe to relax restrictions, I still, personally don't feel safe enough to **adapt**."*

25, Female, Glasgow

*"I forgot my mask and needed to go in a shop, and I felt awkward about going in the shop without it... you know when people have dreams about running naked in the street, I felt a bit like that. Nobody was looking at me or judging me for not wearing a mask, but I just felt really awkward without it being on... maybe **I feel conditioned to still wear it and feel naked without it**."*

49, Female, Hull

Instead, a range of other factors are coming into play:



Need to go on public transport – the need to go to work vs luxury to drive or travel off peak



Vaccinations – reduced the difference in views between the old and the young.



Attitude towards the government and rule abiding – some are fed up with following the Government's rules and restrictions (especially when broken by those who implement them)



Doubts and questions on Covid measure effectiveness - if it was based on science, the rules would be consistent



Attitude towards easing of restrictions – too soon to open social spaces vs support government road map



Covid experience – whether had Covid or not, lost loved ones to Covid or not



Health status – those who have underlying health conditions (including long-Covid) are more cautious



Attitude towards getting back to normal – patience is slipping, and people want to get on with life

"I have been double jabbed so I'm happy to travel on public transport without a mask on... it makes a big difference"

47, Male, Cardiff

"The problem is, nobody listens to the advice and frankly why should they if the government themselves aren't following their own rules?"

39, Female, Newcastle

*"I haven't been using public transport regularly as we have had a lot of cases near us and as I **have health problems**, I would prefer not to take a chance. I think it is silly that different companies are all doing different things, and nobody knows what they should be doing, so it does put me off using public transport as I still feel the need to distance and wear a mask and I don't want someone just getting on and sitting next to me"*

36, Female, Hull

A RANGE OF ATTITUDES ARE EMERGING

We can use the Transport Focus [segmentation](#) to further explore passenger attitudes.

Frequent travel, few Covid concerns



Carefree and Carrying on

- Fatigued with government and Covid rules
- Used to travelling during Covid – I have no other options
- Not concerned about catching Covid risk
- Strong believer of personal responsibility over rules
- Transport is a means to an end

Infrequent travel, few Covid concerns



Spring-back Socialisers

- Able to choose other means of transport
- Happy to follow rules for other passengers e.g. courtesy mask use, no serious concerns about catching Covid
- Willing to get on with life now

Infrequent travel, some Covid concerns



Rethinking Reducers

- Reduced public transport but still need to use it going forward
- Comfortable travelling but still some underlying concerns which will likely stay e.g. more aware of germs and other people's hygiene
- Will continue to take personal measures

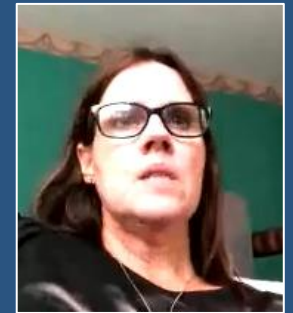
Infrequent travel, strong Covid concerns



Anxious and Affected

- Reduced public transport but still need to use it
- Strong views towards Covid safety – take many personal measures
- Concerned about other people complying with the rules
- Want the government and operators to enforce rules going forward

Avoid travel, strong Covid concerns



Cautious Car Choosers

- Too nervous and anxious to travel
- Have a choice not to use public transport
- Avoid travel for personal reasons e.g. new mother, underlying health conditions.
- Still cautious in other parts of life i.e. avoid busy spaces.

Little to no changes to travel

Avoid travelling completely



PEOPLE ARE EVALUATING THREE AREAS OF RISK WHEN DECIDING TO USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Our perception of risk is dependent on our individual beliefs, about Covid but also based on our expectations of the public transport experience.

Covid specific risk

People are weighing up the risk of catching Covid and the potential consequences.

- **Health risk of Covid (for the first time or again) – flu-like symptoms, hospitalisation, death**
- **Need to self isolate (whether from being pinged or being infected) and potential financial and social consequences (missing work, a holiday, or events)**
- **Passing Covid on to vulnerable loved ones**
- **Feeling obliged to follow new social norms (mask wearing, distancing)**

Travel experience

Beyond Covid, people are assessing their overall travel experience and how comfortable it is.

- **Ability to have a comfortable journey e.g. refreshments**
- **Discomfort when wearing a mask, especially in hot weather**
- **Inconvenience of wearing a mask e.g. wearing make-up**

Re-evaluating choices

The pandemic has given people a pause point, and an opportunity to re-evaluate if the travel they make is worth it.

- **Finances – is it worth the cost?**
- **Time – is it worth my time?**
- **Effort – is it worth the effort?**

“I think I will continue to wear a mask for a little while longer, although I’m on the trains this week for work and I just get too hot so have been brazen and taken it off, don’t want to get dripping with sweat before I get to work”

50, Male, Nottingham

“I need a good reason to want to spend £25 to work and back, when the other option is to spend nothing and work from home.”

31, Male, Nottingham

PEOPLE WILL USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IF THE REWARD IS HIGH ENOUGH TO OUTWEIGH THE UNCERTAINTY

There are a wide range of rational and emotional factors underlying decision-making.

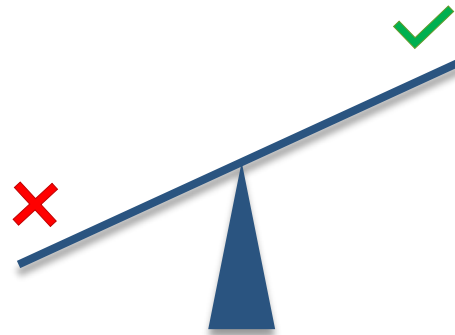
LOW certainty/control

How much control do I have over the risk?

How do I perceive the risk? How bad are the consequences?

E.g.

- Not knowing what type of passenger will be on the train/ bus e.g. rowdy teenagers
- Not knowing how busy the transport will be
- Not being able to get a seat
- Another passenger coming to sit down in the spare seat
- Operators not enforcing mask use (where relevant)
- Transport cleanliness



HIGH reward

How rewarding is it to take the risk?

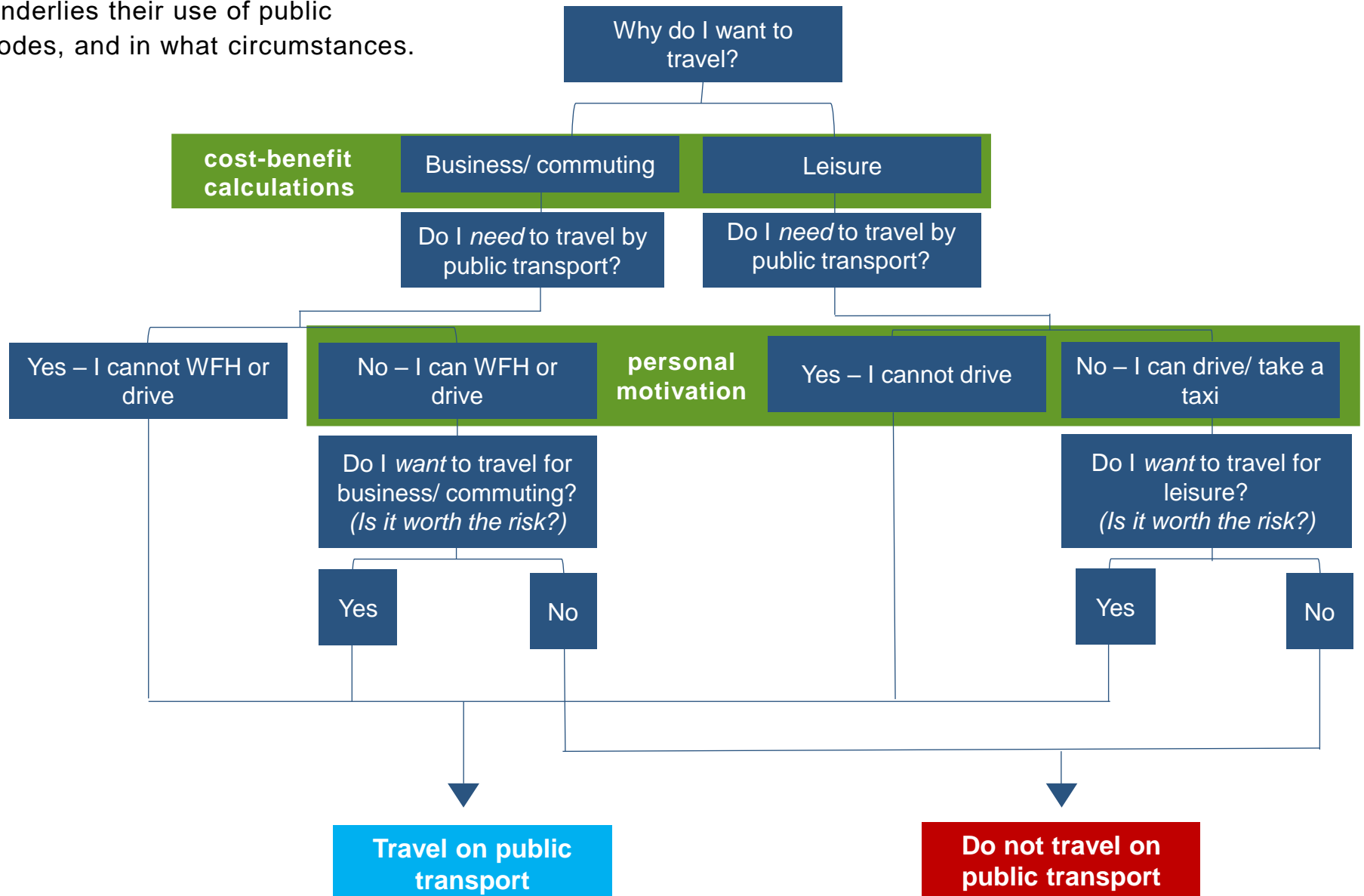
How worth it is the risk?

E.g.

- Visiting friends or family
- Choosing to travel for work
- (For some) travelling to a space with relaxed measures e.g. club, bar
- Travelling to an appointment
- Travelling for a social event e.g. sport, concert etc.
- Travelling for a day trip or holidays

DECISION-MAKING IS EASY TO DESCRIBE...

People are combining cost-benefit calculations with personal motivations to create a personal 'framework' that underlies their use of public transport, what modes, and in what circumstances.



BUT WHAT PEOPLE SAY THEY BELIEVE AND WHAT THEY DO IS INCONSISTENT quadrangle

But people's decisions are not always rational; emotion and impulse affect what we do – and we know people's attitudes to public transport are sometimes inconsistent with their actions in other places.

Decision-making is complex and people have different ways of rationalising situations and different spaces.

The **theory of reasoned action** tells us that attitudes do not simply lead to behaviours – there are a range of other factors at play:


- social norms (many people are doing X)
- situational beliefs (is X doable?)
- normative beliefs (what is right or wrong?)
- subjective norms (what others think about X)

We can use these factors to influence Covid-safe behaviours. For example, reinforce subjective norms for someone who doesn't think they need a mask, but thinks other people on the bus want them to wear one.





Opportunity to increase
travel frequency



Frequent travellers

Reduced travellers

Lapsed travellers

Who are they?

This group *need* to travel and cannot choose to reduce their travel i.e. they have travelling needs and responsibilities

This group have reduced their travelling since before Covid, but are still comfortable or need to make some trips.

Our most nervous and cautious travellers, could have had one bad experience which has turned them off travelling.

What are their needs?

Improve current travelling *experience* rather than incentivising this group to travel more frequently – they're already travelling as much as they need to

Improve current travelling experience and incentivise to increase travelling in two ways:

1. Frequency
2. Length

Break down travel barriers – fear of the unknown, anxiety, nervousness

Provide one good experience to reassure passengers

For some only time and a reduced number of Covid cases will be enough. But for others, there may be an opportunity to incentivise travel

PASSENGERS KNOW THEY CAN TAKE STEPS TO DE-RISK THEIR TRAVELLING EXPERIENCE – WHETHER FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY OR TO CONFORM TO NEW SOCIAL NORMS

Personal measures allow passengers to feel in **control of their public transport experience** – they understand they cannot control other people or environment around them but they can take their own measures...

Some people want autonomy and autonomous regulation (being in control and ignoring social norms) while others find it more reassuring to be told what to do in anxious or uncertain situations.



Hand sanitiser has remained popular despite some recognising there is science behind Covid being airborne – the act of carrying a physical bottle and applying hand sanitiser gives people reassurance and control

*"I know **I will use hand sanitiser on public transport for the rest of my life**... people who are selfish and don't want to put a mask on or use sanitiser that's fine but respect those who do... it does annoy me and I would love to say something but its not my place to tell others to conform... as long as I can keep myself and my family safe as much as I can I will.*

62, Female, Manchester



Mask use has gone beyond a practical measure, it is now a visual sign to show other passengers feelings towards Covid safety – sending a signal to keep at a distance.

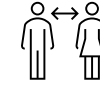
Equally, no mask use signifies a passenger is comfortable...

However those who are relatively relaxed about Covid continue to wear masks after easing of restrictions to avoid being *judged* by other passengers.

They are worried about being confronted, even though they wouldn't challenge other people – fear of conflict.

*"When it first came in that we didn't have to wear a mask I went to my local store and all the staff had to wear them... **I felt really guilty** that I didn't wear it... so since then I've been carrying on wearing masks."*

34, Female, Newcastle



Socially distancing (where possible) – most people want to try and protect their personal space going forward.

Those with travel choices will avoid busy times to maintain social distancing.

*"To keep myself safe I will continue to use my mask, personal hand sanitiser and **avoiding crowded public transport (where possible)**."*

34, Male, Edinburgh

MASKS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING CONTINUE TO DOMINATE THE PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS BUT VISUAL FACTORS ARE ALSO IMPORTANT

What do passengers want operators to put in place going forward?

Past regulations

Mandatory mask use
(in England)

Social Distancing

Staff enforcing rules

While many people want these measures to remain in place, mask-use and social distancing are likely moving to the personal responsibility area.

Many accept social distancing will be near impossible when life gets back to normal.

Visual Factors

Ventilation

Signs & posters

Tannoy/ loud-speaker
announcement

Hand sanitiser on
buses/ carriages

Free mask station

Cleaning rota chart

Increased staff
visibility

Potential areas to provide **visual or audio** reassurance. Measures may not prevent Covid in practice, but give the sense that the operator is proactive.

Unrealistic & costly

Mask & non-mask
carriages

Change timeline

More carriages

Vaccine passports

Passengers are quick to suggest costly and timely solutions – so suggestions are unrealistic



A heated topic where passengers sit over 3 broad outlooks:

1. Strongly against - discriminatory and unfair
2. Impartial – 'I'm double jabbed so wouldn't affect me'
3. Strongly for – anti-vaxxers shouldn't be allowed to participate in society and put others at risk

All outlooks recognise the practical issues.

VISIBLE COVID MEASURES MAKE PASSENGERS FEEL SAFE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Feeling safe on public transport is much emotional as it is practical. People want to feel operators are doing as much as they can to ensure the environment is safe in practice, and create clear social guidelines.

For example, cleaning the train/bus isn't powerful within itself... people need to see evidence of the act to feel reassured e.g., see staff cleaning or see a cleaning rota.

People respond well to clear rules and nudges, even if they do not agree with the rule. For example, if others were standing in clearly marked boxes in a line people are more likely to respect the distance and stay in their own box. Decision making is dynamic and people assess their environment before acting.

The same idea can be applied for other visual measures...

- Provide hand sanitiser instead of trusting other passengers are sanitizing
- Displaying signs and posters for keeping distance and mask use instead of trusting passengers to do so

Although some recognise that the 'hygiene theatre' isn't effective in reducing the likelihood of catching Covid, it still makes most feel better about travelling.

*"I am not convinced mask wearing is very protective, but people **feel better psychologically** if everyone wears them."*

69, Male, London

*"I would like companies to **continue supplying cleaning supplies like hand sanitiser** to passengers, and reinforcing the need to be safe, despite social distancing going away."*

21, Male, London

*"I think they will need to keep up the **cleaning** so they show they are **doing their part to keep us safe.**"*

41, Female, Newcastle

*"It's not always possible to distance on public transport and that can't be helped but **good ventilation, sanitisers** on board and perhaps more **notices about wearing masks** will remind people what they should be doing."*

37, Female, Nottingham

*"An automatic hand sanitiser next to the bus ticket scanner could be put in place if masks are no longer mandatory. I would also like the train sprayed with **aerosol disinfectant** at the beginning and end of each journey."*

25, Female, Cardiff

THINKING BEYOND PRACTICAL MEASURES, HOW CAN WE INCENTIVISE PASSENGERS TO USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT MORE?

There could be an opportunity to deliver:

- 1. A service promise**
- 2. Travelling rewards**
- 3. Destination incentives**

A service promise, rewards & discounts and destination incentives could encourage some lapsed passengers back onto public transport. But some wouldn't be persuaded by incentives and would still choose the most efficient / cheaper route.

N.B. Areas were discussed during some focus groups and are areas to develop further rather than conclusive results.

A service promise

Covid has taught people that they want a better travelling experience.

Some are wary of the unknown – they want to know what measures will be put in place and how busy the carriage will be.

One negative experience can turn a person off travelling, so it will take a *guaranteed* positive experience to encourage them back on.

Opportunity to reassure customers before they book their journey e.g., email comms to set journey expectations.

Rewards & discounts

Rewards and discounts linked to travel frequency (e.g., free coffee, money off tickets) may *'take the edge off'* traveling for some people.

Passengers who travel as much as they need would appreciate the rewards and discounts, but the outcome is likely to be emotional rather than an increase in use.

Potential opportunity to improve experience for future business, commuter and leisure travel.

Destination incentives

The destination usually drives travel decisions rather than the transport itself i.e. people choose to go on public transport because they want to go somewhere.

Potential opportunity to increase leisure trips for lapsed or infrequent passengers.

Off peak travel + destination incentive = increased use?

MANY COVID STATISTICS AND FIGURES HAVE RUN THEIR COURSE – PEOPLE ARE STARTING TO THINK ABOUT A COVID-FREE WORLD

People have reached **fatigue** around being bombarded with Covid stats and figures – they are not engaged with or excited about statistics anymore.

In general, statistics have lost some of their importance:

- The 'pingdemic' has added to the **cynicism** around government announcements and providing Covid statistics – even some of the most Covid safe people have removed the Covid app
- Covid stats often feel **abstract**, people don't know how to interpret the numbers – what makes for a 'good' or bad' statistic?
- People imagine a Covid statistic free life will be a sign that Covid has passed – a welcome scenario

In the context of public transport, in order for statistics to have any value for public transport or influence behaviour, they would need to be properly explained, to be put into context, and be relevant to 'my journey/area'.

Otherwise, they could add to the already deeply rooted confusion and be unlikely to be understood or affect behaviour or perceptions.

- People question the relevance of public transport statistics – for example, a bus in London is very different to a bus in rural Wales.
- Some feel the wider stats around Covid rates will change the way they travel – but more waiting for Covid to pass to start using public transport again rather than micro changes

"If I got to go on public transport to get to work, I've not got any other option. So stats wouldn't make a difference, but it might make a difference if it wasn't my choice, say if it was leisurely."

47, Female, Edinburgh

*"Where we say like 1 in 30, I'd probably get a bit hesitant because, you got about 30 people on the bus. So, one of you is going to get it. **But it depends on the statistic, doesn't it?** If you said like one in 10,000, **I'd probably question is that all bus journeys or bus journeys just in London or my local?** Cause you know, if it's in, Wales where there's one person on bus every week. It's not, it's not the same as it."*

36, Male, London



“Normal is an evolutionary notion. You think back to the 90s when you didn’t have a camera on your phone, but now it is normal... there will be existential changes to how our society acts. That’s the case in every generation and Covid has probably made some of these changes happen quicker”

36, Male, Manchester

MOST BELIEVE WE'RE ENTERING A 'NEW NORMAL', BUT THIS ISN'T NECESSARILY A BAD CHANGE

While there is a belief we're transitioning into a 'new normal', people struggle to fix a date to the change.

There is fatigue around guessing the unknown – 'normal' could be next year, 5 years or 10.

Trying to guess Covid milestones leads to disappointment – people are now thinking about the short term rather than long term because anything could happen e.g., new Covid variant.

Most cannot see how or why we'd go back to the way we were...

But there is a difference in how quickly people want some form of normality to return:

1. Patience is slipping for some; they believe it is time to get back to normal – comparing Covid to the flu '*just another illness to live with*'
2. Whereas others are more cautious, and would prefer a gradual process back to normality – Covid is still prevalent and there is still a chance of catching Covid

*"If people still want to wear their masks & avoid crowded places, they have every right to do that but the rest of us **need to be allowed to get back to our new normal (whatever that will be)**, people's lives & mental health are being torn apart & it cannot go on."*

61, Female, London

While most struggle to articulate what the 'new normal' will look like, most believe it will include some form of Covid – it is something which we must learn to live with

The 'new normal' may be a time where people still contract Covid but there are **very few deaths**, and Covid deaths and infections are not news headlines

Many feel the **vaccine roll out** will play a large part in achieving some form of normality – we may only achieve the 'new normal' when almost everyone in the population are double vaccinated

*"I think that with the vaccine roll out being such a success there is no need for these measures and **the vaccine is showing it is working as positive cases are going up, but nobody is dying** which is the great news."*

33, Male, Newcastle

*"I think part of the problem is **we're all striving to be as we were before Covid, and I don't think we'll ever be there**. I think we're going to be changed and I think it's a good thing because I haven't had a cold, or sore throat or in the past year and a half. So, I think the wearing a mask, keeping a distance and sanitizing, it's a good thing, so why would you stop it?"*

61, Female, Edinburgh



People are fairly optimistic about what the 'new normal' will look like – a world where we have left the frustrating aspects of pre-Covid traveling behind and adopted the positive changes from the pandemic.

Covid has re-set the norms around social etiquette on public transport:

- There is now an unwritten rule that people must try to keep their distance – welcomed by many
- Some people have a new level of respect for other passengers – especially if they can see other people wearing mask which signals their attitudes towards Covid
- Some believe we will approach travelling with a mild illness (e.g. a cold) like Southeast Asia cultures – wearing a mask to protect other people

While the pandemic has been a difficult time, people can see a silver lining with the new norms we will be taking forward.

Some believe change is inevitable and the pandemic has only accelerated the shift in both transport and other aspects of life – especially **working life**. The 'new normal' of public transport is intrinsically linked to new flexible ways of working (for those who can work from home).

Pre-Covid	'New Normal'
Crammed on transport 'like sardines'	Less crowded transport – people WFH and flexible working hours
Unclean trains & buses	Improved cleaning on trains & buses
Little social boundaries around personal space	Re-set boundaries around personal space – people try to keep their distance
Passengers travelling freely with colds & flus	Passengers reducing travel or wearing a mask when unwell



What do passengers need?

1. Some people are ready to get back to normal while others still feel restrictions were eased too soon. It felt like a sudden change when it should have been gradual – people struggle to adapt to change.
2. Attitudes and behaviours towards Covid are changing – people are becoming more relaxed and are willing to take the risk
3. People weigh up the risks before traveling and if they are worth it
4. Mask use and social distancing are still top of mind but personal measures such as hand sanitiser are key to feeling in control of a journey – people can't control other people or their environment but they can control their own behaviours
5. People are beginning to tune out of government announcements. There is an opportunity for operators to fill in the gap as a trusted source of guidance
6. Finally, as we travel into a 'new normal' people are happy to leave behind the old, uncomfortable transport habits and continue to adopt the positive changes (e.g. personal space) which we re-set through the pandemic.

Areas to explore further

1. Understand passenger types to best to satisfy both ends of the Covid behaviour and attitudes spectrum
2. Develop a 'service promise' to reassure customers back into public transport
3. Explore potential incentives and rewards for both business and leisure travel by passenger type
4. Explore the most effective visual nudges to reassure passengers the operators are being proactive in keeping the environment Covid safe and encouraging other passengers