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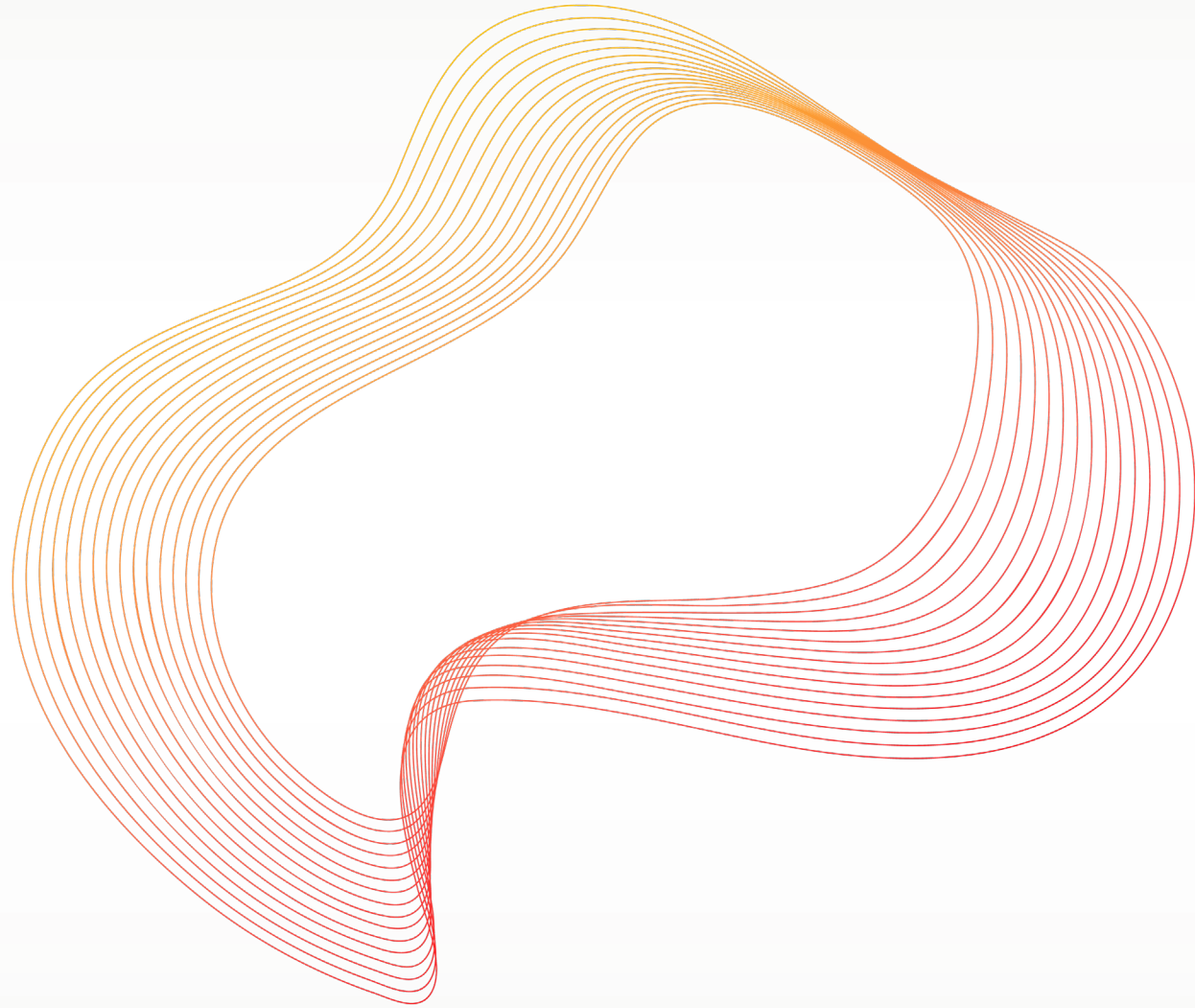
Fare Evasion and Revenue Protection
Research Debrief
Prepared for Transport Focus

March 2024

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Research background and approach

Fare evasion on the railway is a significant problem

On trains in Great Britain it has long been the case that some people will try to travel without a valid ticket. **The costs of fare evasion for the rail industry are huge**; estimated as being at least £240 million per annum. Fare evasion impacts the railway and its users in various ways:

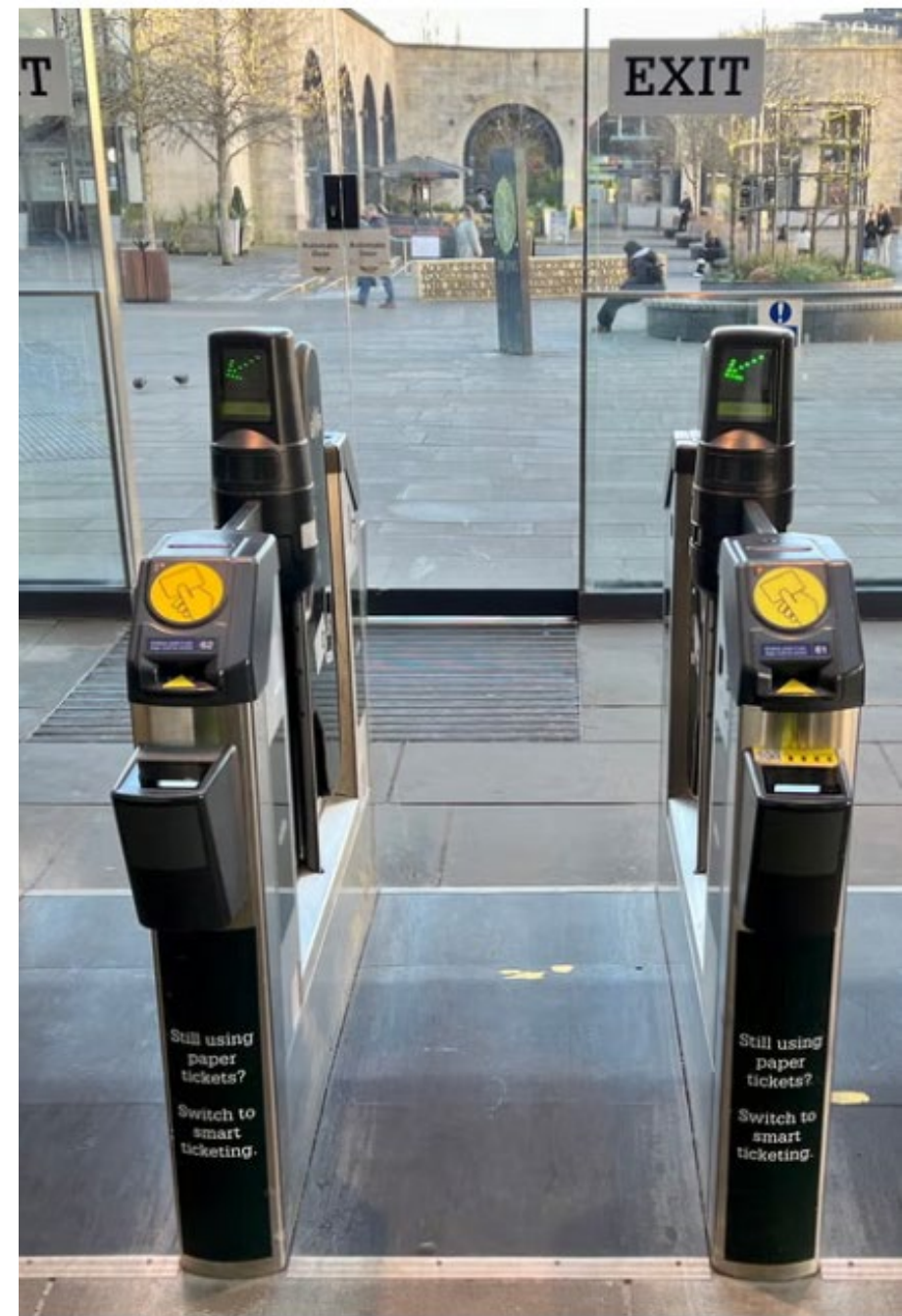
- Lost revenue undermines the financial sustainability of the railway, contributing to increased fares and/ or increased taxpayer support
- Fare evasion can create a negative public perception of the railway and can engender a sense of unfairness among those who pay for their tickets
- Fare evaders can disrupt the smooth operation of the railway system.

Relatively few people actively condone fare evasion. That said, a number of arguments are advanced if not wholly in defence of fare evasion, at least as an explanation of it, including:

- **That rail fares often seem complicated and opaque**
- **Buying a ticket is not always straightforward**
- **individuals may not have the necessary funds to buy tickets**
- **Fare evasion can seem like a victimless crime**
- **People might choose to not pay (or rationalise not paying) as a form of protest** against what they perceive as unfair fare structures or poor quality of service
- **Fare evasion may become a 'cultural norm' among certain sub-groups.**

In sum, **not everyone who does not pay their correct fare does so intentionally** or due to a lack of ethical considerations, but for others **there is a degree of moral ambivalence about rail fares** that makes evasion more acceptable or at least understandable.

Against the above backdrop, research is required to understand passenger attitudes and experiences related to the issue of fare evasion and the revenue protection measures employed by the rail industry.



The research objectives can be summarised as follows

Research was needed to understand passenger attitudes towards and experiences of fare evasion and their views on the railway's approach to revenue protection. Within this, specific issues to be explored included:

- To what extent do passengers see fare evasion as a problem and is it an issue they care about? Where does revenue protection sit in relation to passengers' other priorities for the railway?
- How do passengers' experiences of researching fares and buying tickets impact their views on paying the correct fare? Does the railway do enough to make it easy for passengers to 'do the right thing?'
- Do some passengers feel that fare evasion is justifiable or excusable? Why or in what circumstances?
- Do passengers feel that the railway operates revenue protection policies effectively and fairly (in terms, for example of security measures, penalties imposed, the chances of transgressors being caught etc.)?
- How could the railway operate more effectively to address fare evasion/ revenue protection? What practical measures and/ or communications would help?

Underlying all of the above: how do views vary by passenger type in terms of patterns of railway use, demographics, vulnerability etc.



The image shows a warning sign with a blue top section and a yellow bottom section. In the top left, there is a red triangular warning sign with a white border containing a black and white ticket icon and the text 'PENALTY FARES'. To the right of this icon, the word 'WARNING' is written in large white capital letters, and below it, the question 'Have you paid?' is written in white. The main body of the sign is yellow and contains the following text in blue and black: 'Please buy your ticket before you travel, otherwise you may have to pay a Penalty Fare of at least £100'. Below this, a horizontal line separates the main message from a detailed explanation: 'A Penalty Fare is £100 plus the price of the full single fare applicable for your intended journey. However, if it is paid within 21 days, the Penalty Fare is reduced to £50 plus the price of the single fare applicable'. Another horizontal line follows. At the bottom, there are two columns of text. The left column is titled 'Buying your ticket' and explains how to purchase a ticket from a machine or online, and what to do if the machine is closed. The right column is titled 'A Penalty Fare may be charged if you:' and lists five conditions under which a penalty fare might be applied: travel without a valid ticket, travel in First Class with a Standard Class ticket, inability to produce an appropriate Railcard for a discounted ticket, being aged 16 or over and traveling on a child rate ticket, and traveling beyond the destination on a ticket or train service where the ticket is not valid.

WARNING
Have you paid?

Please buy your ticket before you travel, otherwise you may have to pay a Penalty Fare of at least £100

A Penalty Fare is £100 plus the price of the full single fare applicable for your intended journey. However, if it is paid within 21 days, the Penalty Fare is reduced to £50 plus the price of the single fare applicable

Buying your ticket
Please buy your ticket from the ticket office, a ticket machine, or online. If you are using pay as you go or a smartcard ticket, please ensure you touch in to start your journey as required.
If the ticket office is closed and you cannot buy the ticket you want from a ticket machine or online, you must obtain a Permit to Travel (where there is a machine available) or, where signs indicate, a Promise to Pay from a ticket machine.
The ticket machine and/or the Permit to Travel machine are normally in the ticket office area or the main station area.

A Penalty Fare may be charged if you:

- travel without a valid ticket
- travel in First Class with a Standard Class ticket
- are unable to produce an appropriate Railcard for a discounted ticket
- are aged 16 or over and travel on a child rate ticket
- travel beyond the destination on your ticket or on a train service where your ticket is not valid

The research programme: group discussions

The research programme aimed to provide coverage of a broad range of locations, rail use categories and demographics. Respondents were also screened to establish their attitudes towards fare evasion.

West Midlands

Operators	Journey length	Journey frequency	Age	SEG	Fare evasion tolerance
West Midlands Trains	Shorter	Frequent	18 – 30	C1C2DE	Mixed
Avanti/ Cross Country	Longer	Infrequent	31 – 50	ABC1	Mixed
West Midlands Trains	Shorter	Frequent	50 +	ABC1	Mixed
Avanti/Cross Country	Longer	Frequent	31 – 50	ABC1	Mixed

London

Operators	Journey length	Journey frequency	Age	SEG	Fare evasion tolerance
Southeastern/ Southern/ Thameslink/ C2C	Shorter	Frequent	18 – 30	ABC1	Mixed
Avanti/ Great Western/ LNER/ EMR	Longer	Infrequent	31 – 50	C1C2DE	Mixed
Southeastern/ Southern/ Thameslink/ C2C	Longer	Frequent	50 +	ABC1	Mixed

East of England

Operators	Journey length	Journey frequency	Age	SEG	Fare evasion tolerance
Greater Anglia	Shorter	Infrequent	31 – 50	C1C2DE	Mixed
Greater Anglia EMR	Shorter	Frequent	50 +	ABC1	Mixed
Greater Anglia	Longer	Frequent	18 - 30	C1C2DE	Mixed

North West of England

Operators	Journey length	Journey frequency	Age	SEG	Fare evasion tolerance
Northern / TransPennine Express	Longer	Infrequent	18 – 30	C1C2DE	Mixed
Northern / TransPennine Express	Shorter	Infrequent	50 +	C1C2DE	Mixed

Additional criteria

- Mix of genders: no more than 4 of any one gender per group
- Frequent defined as using the railway least twice a month and infrequent as using the railway at least once every three months
- Across the sample, minimum 20% from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Across the sample, minimum of 15% to have a disability
- Aim to include respondents who have mistakenly not paid/ paid incorrect fare for a journey

The research programme: depth interviews

Intentional Fare Evaders:

Journey Length	Fare Evasion		Total
	Opportunistic	Habitual	
Shorter	5	5	10
Longer	4	4	8
Total	9	9	18

Digitally Excluded:

- 8 depth interviews
- All to code as 'digitally excluded'
- Spread in region, journey length, and journey frequency

Disabled Passengers:

- 8 depth interviews
- Maximum 2 respondents to have a mobility related disability
- Minimum 4 respondents to face cognitive disabilities
- Spread in region, journey length, and journey frequency

The research programme: omnibus survey

In addition to the qualitative research conducted by Illuminas, this presentation highlights findings from an omnibus survey commissioned by Transport Focus

This survey achieved 4,069 individual responses. However, in order to ensure the data from this survey is comparable with the qualitative research conducted by Illuminas, we have excluded respondents who use the rail less than 'once every few months.' The base size for the quantitative data presented is therefore $n = 1,665$

In addition to rebasing for frequency of travel, we have removed respondents who answered 'I don't know' or 'Don't know' for individual questions. Each individual base size is listed at the bottom of slide 13.

Finally, the data has been weighted to ensure it is representative of the wider population

The bar charts and statistics quoted in this document are drawn from the omnibus survey and have been used to support the qualitative findings which are the key focus of the report

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Researching fares and buying tickets



Passengers' attitudes to fare evasion and revenue protection



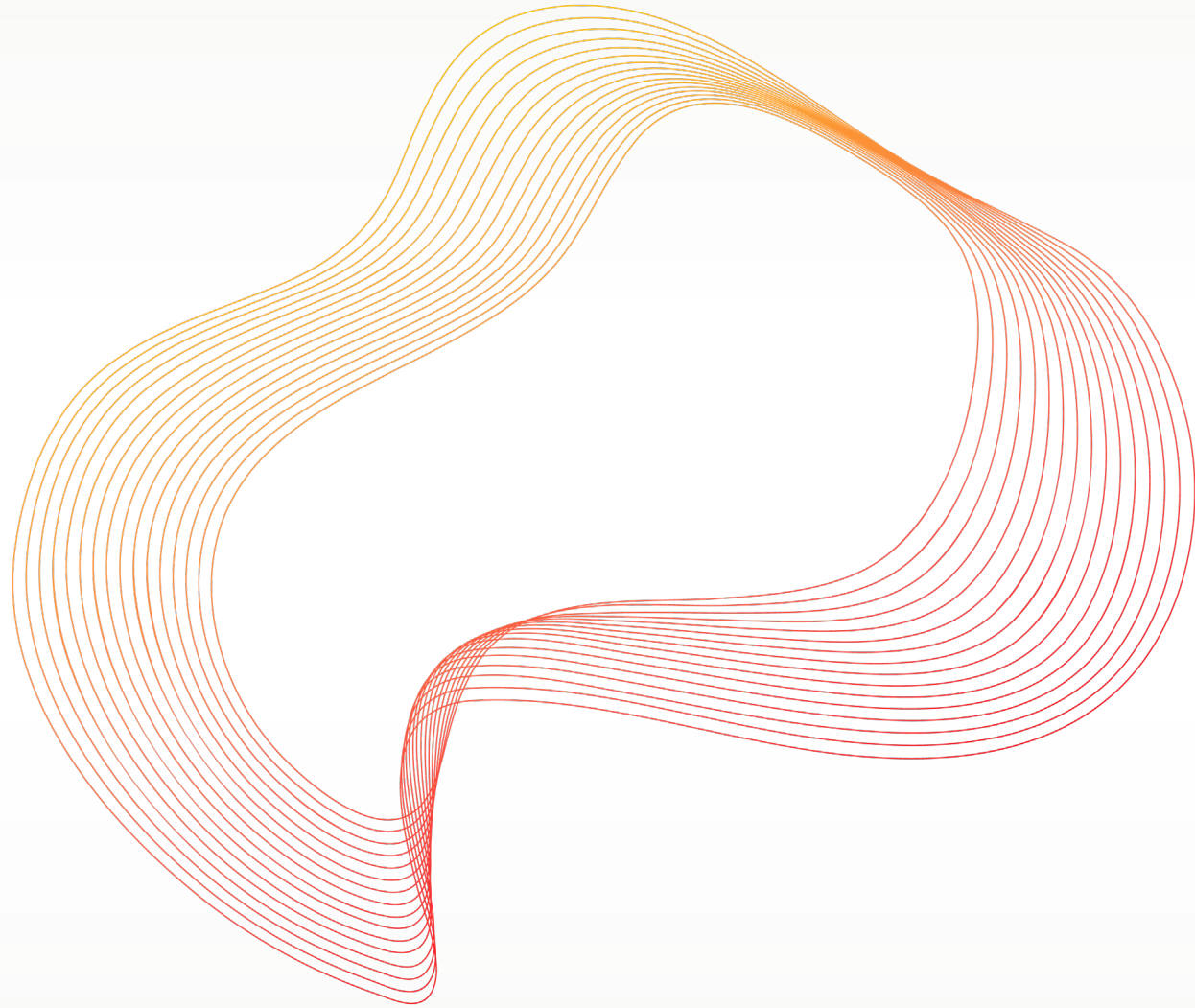
Passengers' experience of fare evasion and revenue protection



What should be done about fare evasion - and the role of revenue protection



Conclusions



Researching fares and buying tickets

For even the most experienced rail users, the fare structure can sometimes feel complicated and opaque; for less frequent users this can often be the case

Many journeys are routine or at least familiar (commuting, regular leisure trips etc.) and passengers feel little need to plan and research their options, especially for shorter distance journeys

Unfamiliar journeys (especially longer distance) are seen as requiring effort to get both the right ticket and a good fare

- Even frequent users feel the need to research and carefully review their options
- For those less familiar with rail travel, the system can feel very complex

The absolute level of fares can seem surprising when compared to other modes. Moreover, passengers struggle to identify an underpinning logic governing rail fares

- Not always an **obvious relationship between distance and cost**
- How the same journey can have so many **different fare options**
- How there can be **such large differences in price for the same journey**
- **Split ticketing** (which relatively few are aware of) **feels counter-intuitive** even if it enables a good price
- Two singles can be cheaper than a return

Passengers are generally not well-informed about the different types of ticket available

- Single, return and season tickets are understood
- The concept of peak vs. off-peak also makes sense, but few understand **when it applies and whether it applies consistently** to all journeys/ operators
- Most understand that advance purchase can be cheaper, but there is much **confusion around time periods, restrictions on number of seats etc.**
- **Much terminology is confusing:** off peak v. super off-peak vs. flexible vs. anytime etc.

Ultimately, many passengers worry about two issues:

- What 'strategy' can I/ should I adopt to get *the best fare*?
- How can I be sure that I have bought *the correct ticket*?

"There's been instances where I'll look at the price of a train ticket, like a week before a trip it's considerably cheaper than like the day before traveling. I understand the whole premise of the earlier you book, the cheaper it will be. But in some cases, the price has tripled or quadrupled, which is ridiculous because it's still the same journey, you know?"

London, Longer, Infrequent, 31 - 50

56% agree it is easy to find the *right ticket*; **24%** disagree

45% agree it is easy to find the *best value ticket*; **33%** disagree

"One thing that I sometimes find a bit confusing is the off-peak and on-peak times because they can change. One day I'll do the exact same route and go home at the same time and it's off-peak and then the next day it's on-peak – so then I've got the wrong ticket."

West Mids., Shorter, Frequent, 50+

The process of researching fares and buying tickets is also not always straightforward

For shorter, regular/ familiar journeys at station purchase (via ticket office or machine) is relatively common although online is the preference for some, particularly younger passengers

- Passengers have an established method for buying tickets for these journeys, so the process is mostly problem free
- That said, queues (at ticket offices or machines) can be a problem as can the lack of staff or machines not working

Again, longer, less familiar journeys are more likely to be seen as challenging, reflecting the perceived higher risk of buying the wrong or a poor value ticket

Online is the default route for many, particularly younger passengers, to both research fares and buy tickets. Increasingly, digitally confident passengers prefer to download tickets rather than print them out or collect from a machine

- Apps (both TOC specific and generic e.g. Trainline) are valued by users as an easily accessible way to investigate fares and buy tickets
- Some question why different fares are available on different apps and not all are comfortable with the booking fees charged by some apps

Ticket machines are seen as useful for buying 'straightforward' tickets; fares bought before, or simple and low cost singles/ returns, especially. Machines are seen as less useful for buying more complex tickets (e.g. advance fares, split tickets etc.)

- Some suggest that the full range of fares does not always appear on ticket machines
- Some feel 'flustered' when buying from a machine where there is a queue, and fear they may be pressured into buying the wrong or a poor value ticket

"It can sometimes be quite difficult. I check on my National Rail app first, but sometimes you can't get the correct information. So then I'll Google it and then all of the different companies come up, and then you've got to go into every single one, put in all your details, who's traveling, when, what time...it's just quite time consuming looking for the best deal on there and at times I just get so fed up."

London, Longer, Infrequent, 31 - 50

"The app is quite straightforward. You choose your train, it shows you the list, then you buy it. So it's not really difficult. I mean, if I asked my dad to do it, he would probably struggle. But I mean, if you know how to work a phone, it's pretty straightforward. But it does start to get a bit difficult when you start planning journeys ahead and you have to look at times etc."

West Mids., Shorter, Frequent, 18- 30

Researching fares and buying tickets can present particular challenges to passengers with additional needs

Digitally excluded passengers (because of an impairment, because they are not digitally confident or because they do not have access to the internet) will sometimes rely on friends and family to help them navigate online research and purchase

- Perhaps unsurprisingly, even if bought online, these passengers typically prefer the ‘reassurance’ of a paper rather than digital ticket

If not, buying from a staffed ticket office is preferred to provide reassurance that they are getting the right ticket and a good fare

- Others will go online for initial research but still prefer to buy from a staffed ticket office to validate their choice
- Given the additional challenges that some disabled people face, reassurance about such things as seat availability, whether a change of train will need to be made etc. are particularly important
- Many passengers of all types express concerns about the lack of staff at stations, but these concerns are particularly acute for some of those who are digitally excluded

As with passengers more generally, individuals with additional needs find the fare structure complicated and sometimes confusing, but the system can be particularly challenging for those with cognitive impairments

“I’ve overpaid for tickets and gotten tickets to the wrong station. So in Birmingham you have two stations with very similar names. If you don’t really know which one to get off at, you could end up walking an extra 45 minutes. So I’ve had issues before where I purchased one for one further away station, got off and have had to come back and get back on the train. On the app it shows you your route and the stops so I can doublecheck it, but not on the machine so I make far more mistakes.”

Disability, West Midlands, Longer, Infrequent

“I think I like the security of knowing that I’ve got a physical ticket rather than like if my phone runs out of battery.”

Digitally Excluded, East Anglia, Shorter, Infrequent

“With trains I like to go to the ticket office and ask which ones to get. I like to get these straight ones with no stops, no changes. I always go to Victoria because of the ticket office there and the people are really helpful. I think the machines are too complicated and I always worry about getting the wrong ticket.”

Digitally Excluded, North West, Longer, Infrequent

“I wouldn’t use the ticket machines. I would always want to buy from a person. I’m old school. I think the machines are too complicated and I always worry about getting the wrong ticket. And then you’ll have someone behind you in a hurry and I feel pressured.”

Digitally Excluded, East Anglia, Shorter, Infrequent

“I think for me as someone who has a disability, it’s too complicated. What makes the difference between ticket A versus ticket B when it’s exactly the same service? I think too much is bad and I think there’s just too much. The information is just like way overloading.”

Disability, London, Longer, Infrequent

Some passengers fear they are missing out on good value fares because of the challenges involved in buying tickets

Ticket machines can be very challenging for some individuals (typically older or with vulnerabilities such as cognitive or visual impairment) who find the machines too complex/ confusing to use at all

- Others worry about buying the ‘wrong’ ticket from a machine

Passengers who prefer to buy their tickets from a booking office are more likely to **buy their tickets on the day of travel rather than in advance**, to avoid making two trips to the railway stations

- Some are aware (or at least suspect) that they are unlikely to be getting the best value ticket for their journey

However, digital can be the preferred medium for some with disabilities

- For example, some with cognitive challenges prefer online as they can ‘go at their own pace’ in the research and purchase process while they can feel more pressured purchasing face-to-face or from a machine
- Of course, by no means do all of those with disabilities struggle with digital methods. Indeed, some disabled passengers mention the importance of carefully planning their journey (e.g. to minimise the number of changes) and feel that online gives them the ability to fully explore all their options in their own time

“Yeah, you know, they’re gearing everything to online and if you want to cancel the ticket, you have to go online and I can’t be bothered dealing with that. I just prefer to buy the ticket when I know I’m travelling. I’m probably paying more because I’m buying it on the day, but it’s easier for me to do it that way.”

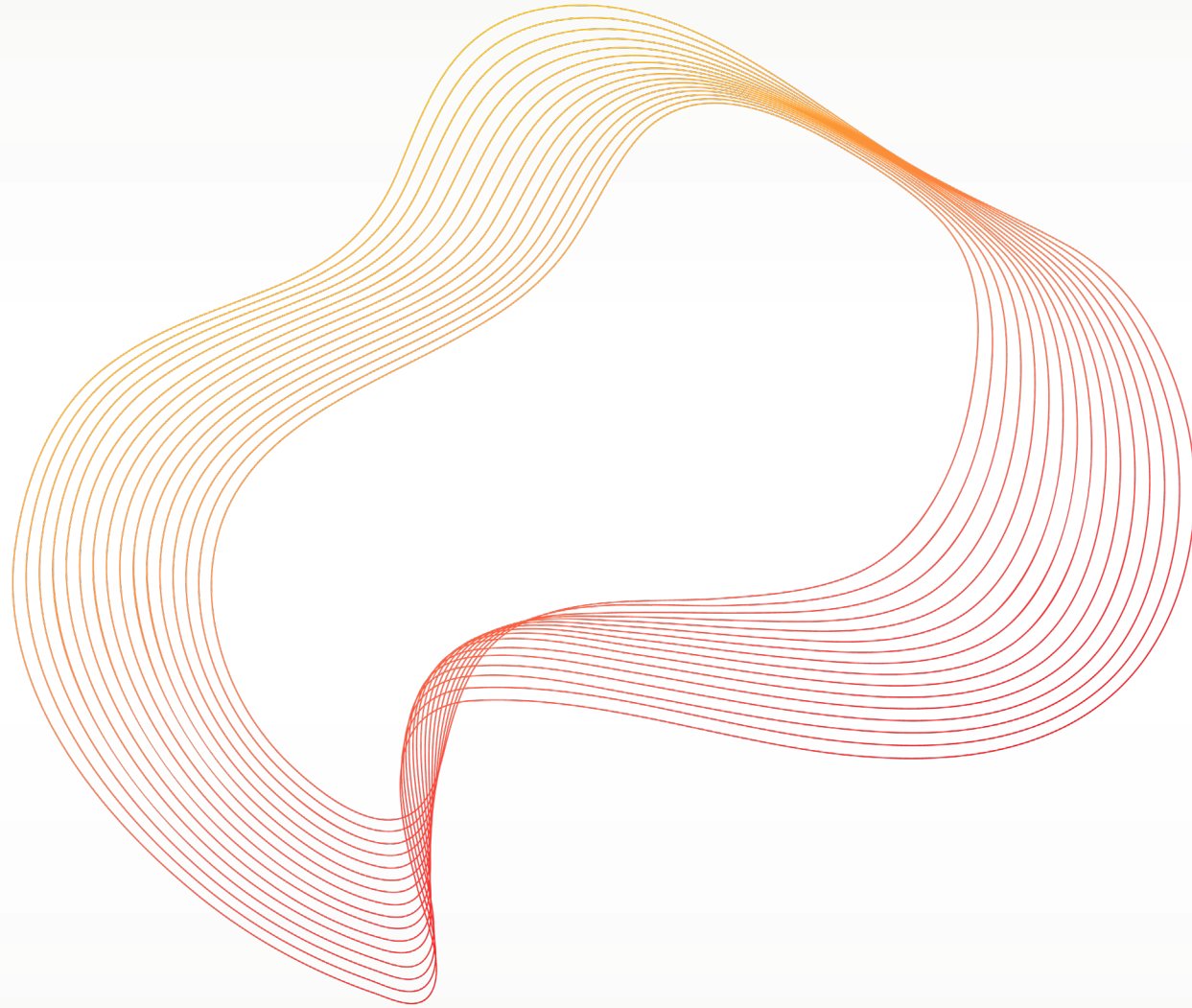
Digitally Excluded, London, Longer, Infrequent

“If it was half price, I might learn how to do it online. But I like someone to say, ‘You need this train’ and to tell me what platform to go to, ask me what time and which day I want to come back and they go through it all for me. For me, there’s just more comfort dealing with a person even if it’s costing me more.”

Digitally Excluded, Manchester, Longer, Infrequent

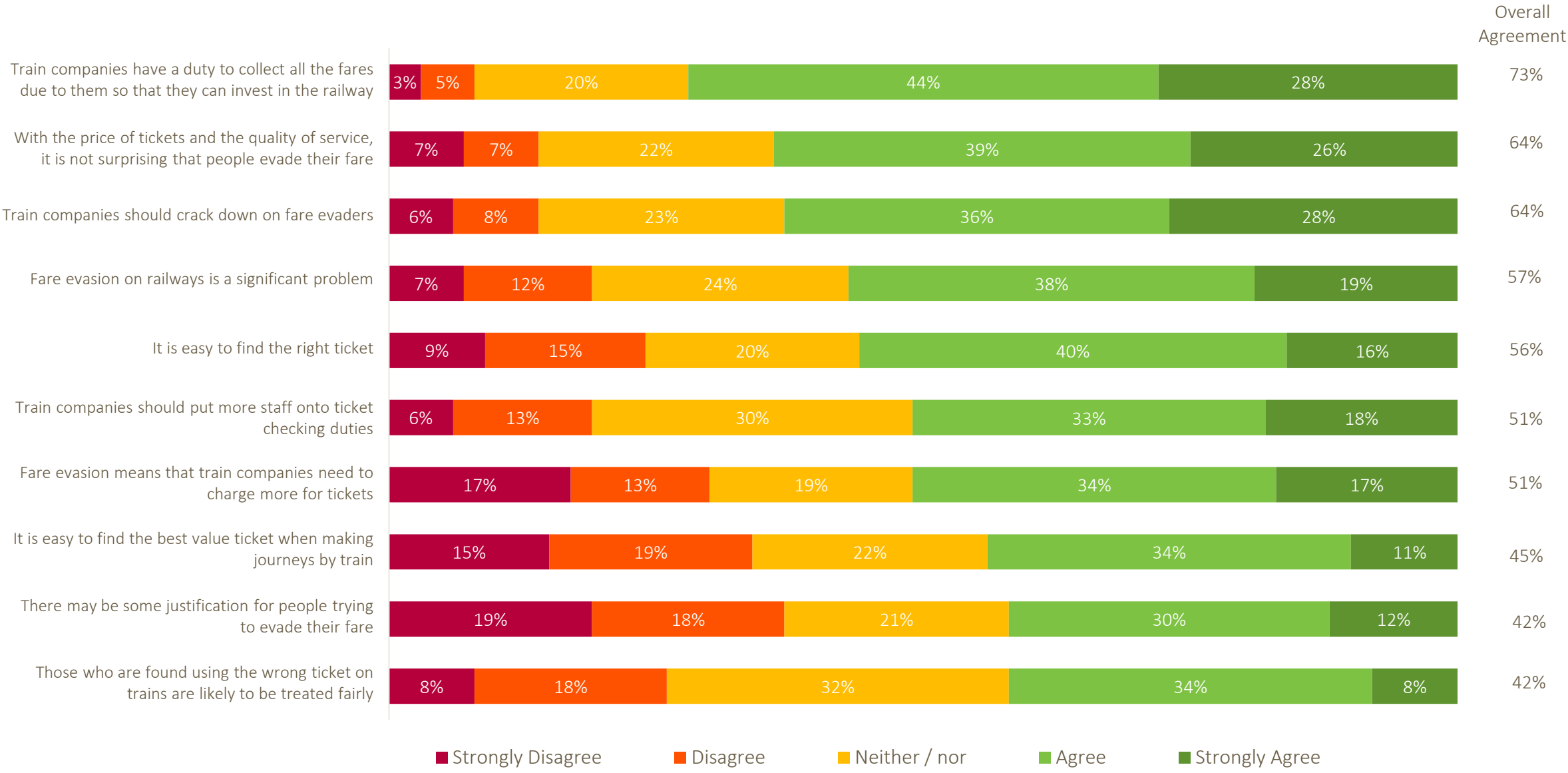
“I’ve tried to use the ticket machine at my local station. I had friends visiting from abroad and we’ve gone into my local station to buy a ticket and you got this machine and you’re thinking, ‘What do I buy?’ You worry about what if you get it wrong there’s no one around to help you.”

Digitally excluded, London, Shorter, infrequent



Passengers' attitudes to fare evasion and revenue protection

While a majority of respondents believe train companies should collect all fares (73%) and crack down on fare evaders (64%), they are also not surprised that people evade fares (64%), and some even think there is justification in doing so (42%)



Overall, the survey data corroborates our findings that age and frequency of travel can play a role in passengers' perceptions of fare evasion and train travel in general

When it comes to finding the *right* ticket and finding the *best value* ticket, age and frequency of travel play a big role

- A majority of respondents (62%) aged 18-34 agree it is easy to find the **right ticket**, compared to 51% of respondents 55 years of age and older
- Similarly, younger respondents (28%) are less likely to have difficulty finding the **best value** ticket for their journey compared to older respondents (37%)
- Unsurprisingly, daily rail users (61%) are more likely have an easy time finding the best value ticket than those who travel at least once or twice every few months (41%)

Age and frequency of travel also impact views towards fare evasion

- Older respondents (76%) and daily rail users (69%) are more likely to agree that fare evasion is a **significant problem**, compared to younger respondents (48%) and those who travel once or twice every few months (54%)
- Interestingly, daily rail users (54%) are also more likely to agree there may be some **justification** for fare evasion than those who travel at least once or twice every few months (34%)
- Younger respondents (72%) are also less likely to be surprised by fare evasion given the **price and quality** of service and are more likely to believe there may be some justification for fare evasion (57%) in comparison to older respondents (52%, 17%)

Finally, age and frequency of travel impact individuals' views of the rail companies

- Older respondents are more likely to agree that train companies have a **duty** to collect fares (91%), should **crack down** on fare evasion (83%) and should hire more **staff** to check tickets (64%), in comparison to younger respondents (60%, 51%, 45%)
- Interestingly, daily rail users are more likely to agree that fare evaders are likely to be **treated fairly** (59%), in comparison to those who travel once or twice every few months (37%)

"I always go on the train line website or the app and that shows you all the different trains, different times, different prices. I don't think I ever buy a ticket from anywhere else, to be honest."

West Mids., Birmingham, Longer, Frequent, 31 - 50



Fare paying passengers have seldom given the topic of fare evasion much consideration, but it is generally agreed to be wrong

They are aware that it happens and many have witnessed examples of it on occasion, but few have any view on its prevalence

Most fare paying passengers' initial reference point for fare evasion are its most egregious and obvious manifestations – jumping or barging through ticket barriers

On reflection, passengers identify other examples:

- Boarding a train without a ticket
- Hiding in the toilets on a train to avoid ticketing staff
- Large crowds e.g. at football matches barging or being allowed through ticket gates
- Individuals found without a ticket by staff on trains

There is general agreement that fare evasion is characterised by *a deliberate intention to avoid buying a ticket (or deliberately and knowingly buying the wrong ticket)*

- Against this definition there is a **strong consensus that fare evasion is wrong** (and even many fare evaders agree that it is wrong)
- Most (non-fare evaders) see **fare evasion as a crime** comparable with something like shoplifting
 - A deliberate attempt to get something for nothing, but not a crime against an individual and not something that endangers others, as for example speeding

"It's not big theft, but if in a shop someone went and nicked something, and you're there in a queue waiting to pay for it - it's kind of that feeling that other people are just getting away with it and it's not ideal. At the end of the day services are what you pay for. Other people are paying for it, and they're working hard for it. And then you've got people that jump on, and don't pay for it."

London, Shorter, Frequent, 18 - 30

"I can imagine it probably is a problem. I mean, just anecdotally, I know a lot of my friends have done it."

London, Shorter, Frequent,
18 - 30



Most fare paying passengers accept the railway's definition of liability, at least initially

At first sight, most passengers see the definition of liability (see box right) as perhaps stricter than anticipated but as not unreasonable

- Not all are aware that fare evasion is a criminal offence, but generally seen (at least by non-fare evaders) as expected
- The exceptions to travelling without a ticket are also in line with expectations

There is some concern about liability applying to passengers *inadvertently* travelling without a ticket

- For some this raises the possibility of 'honest mistakes' being treated overly harshly
- But the counter argument is also advanced
 - Is it possible for the railway to judge what constitutes an honest mistake?
 - Some will inevitably take advantage if the railway makes allowances for passengers inadvertently evading their fare

Many agree that it is perfectly fair to expect individuals to take personal responsibility for ensuring they have the correct ticket

Views on fare evasion become more nuanced as passengers reflect on scenarios beyond the more obvious examples and a hierarchy emerges in terms of perceived passenger culpability. (To help explore the issues, a number of fare evasion scenarios were shared with passengers, and these appear on some of the following slides. These were drawn from press reports and cases highlighted in Transport Focus's 2015 report 'Ticket to Ride – an update')

Fare evasion on the railway, is a criminal offence whether **deliberately** or **inadvertently**. The **onus on the passenger to have with them (and be able to produce on demand) a valid ticket** or other form of authority to travel for the train they are on. The only exceptions are:

- where there are **no facilities** to buy a ticket before boarding
- if the **train company advertises that you can buy one on board** or,
- if a **member of staff has given permission** for passengers to travel without a valid ticket.

Apart from these instances, **liability rests with the passenger**. The rail industry does not have to prove that you set out to evade payment, nor consider why you did not, or could not, buy a ticket.

"I think the only example that's justifiable to let someone off is if they have lost or forgotten their Railcard because they can always send a photocopy of that to the authorities. The rest of them I consider to be - if not deliberate - careless on the part of the passenger, which they should accept liability for."

London, Longer, Infrequent, 31 – 50

Deliberate Fare Evasion seems obviously wrong and as deserving punishment, but there are some mitigating factors

These are instances that fit with passengers' initial definition of fare evasion: *deliberate* intention to avoid buying a ticket (or *deliberately and knowingly* buying the wrong ticket)

That said, while such behaviour is seen as wrong, there is seen as a spectrum of opinion in terms of the perceived seriousness of different fare evasion incidents

- Opportunistically dodging a small fare for a local journey being in a different register to a sustained and planned long-term fraud (and an expectation that **the response of the railway should be proportionate**)
- **Extreme situations** such as someone genuinely without funds needing to board a train for safety reasons, might be justified

In addition, while not excusing deliberate fare evasion, some passengers argue that the behaviour of **the railway contributes to the problem**

- **Very high fares and poor service** are seen as potentially 'encouraging' fare evasion
- Some argue that because of very high fares individuals might be 'forced' to evade their fares because of **cost of living pressures**
- Similarly, **lack of enforcement** of revenue collection is seen as making fare evasion more likely
- Younger passengers, particularly more frequent rail users, are more likely to support these arguments

The screenshot shows a BBC News article. The headline is "Barrister Peter Barnett sentenced for two-year fare dodge". The sub-headline reads: "A barrister who commuted by train for two years without paying has been given a suspended 16-week prison sentence." The article text states: "Peter Barnett, 44, travelled from Haddenham and Thame Parkway to London Marylebone, but dodged the full fare by claiming his journey began at Wembley in north-west London. Chiltern Railways had argued he should pay back nearly £20,000 but the defence said the true value was £6,000. Barnett, from Oxford, admitted fraud by false representation."

64% agree that it is not surprising that some people evade their fare given the price of tickets and the quality of rail service

"I think it makes it a bit more understandable when the service from the train company is really poor, like the amount of times that I've been on journeys that have been severely delayed or they've oversold tickets and there's no seats for a 45-minute journey. It just feels like, 'Why would I bother paying when I'm not even getting value from that ticket?'"

London, Longer, Infrequent, 31 - 50

Mistakes with no loss for the railway should not be treated as fare evasion

These are instances where the passenger has made a mistake that fits the ‘technical’ definition of fare evasion, but which does not involve any loss for the railway

Given **lack of intent and where there is no harm to the railway**, these cases **are not seen as fare evasion**. **Forgotten/ lost Railcards**, travelling on a **train that wasn’t the booked service** (but priced as per the booked service) and **lost tickets where there is proof of purchase** are seen as falling into this category

While it is accepted that the passenger is at fault, **few can see any justification for ‘punishment’**

For Railcard errors, many suggest that passengers should be charged the full fare, but with a refund once proof of ownership can be established. This would fairly protect the interests of both the Railway and the passenger.

- Often argued that **Railcard issues should be resolved by technology** i.e. an accessible database to establish individuals’ bona fides. Charging passengers a nominal fee (£5 or £10) to cover the railway’s admin costs would be seen as reasonable by some

Passengers acknowledge **that fraud could potentially be involved in cases of lost tickets with proof of purchase** (e.g. giving the ‘lost’ ticket to another passenger). However, having proof of purchase is generally seen as signalling no intentional deception

- Argued that in other contexts (e.g. retail) proof of purchase is generally sufficient to avoid any problems

Example: Scenario A

The passenger bought a ticket with a Railcard reduction but left the Railcard at home when travelling; despite paying the difference on the train he was sent a letter warning about criminal prosecution. He replied enclosing proof that he had a valid Railcard at the time but was still sent a further letter threatening criminal prosecution unless he paid an additional £229. The train company acknowledged that he had a Railcard and that there was no fraud involved but this simply did not matter – his ‘crime’ was that he could not produce a valid ticket at the time of the ticket check.

“I don't agree with this at all. They've made a mistake and they've settled it, but even after proving they have the Railcard, they've ended up paying even more, some people can be struggling and this financial situation could be quite detrimental to them and I just think that if they've shown they have a Railcard, they haven't caused harm and they have paid the difference.”

West Mids., Shorter, Frequent, 18 - 30

“They should have a database that they can check a person's name on...like I have physical and digital cards on my phone but what happens if you lose your stuff? It seems like British Rail needs to up their game on the digital side of things rather than blame the passengers, I think.”

London, Longer, Infrequent, 31 - 50

(Possible) mistakes that may involve loss for the railway are a grey area

These are instances where the railway suffers loss, but which might (or might not) be a genuine mistake

For passengers, these may or may not be fare evasion, **depending on intent**

Getting on the 'wrong' (unbooked) train/ having the wrong ticket for the service travelling on etc., are seen as falling into this category

Passengers acknowledge that **intentional fraud undoubtedly plays a part** in some of these cases

However, many argue that **the railway contributes to the problem** and as such, passengers often (perhaps mostly) deserve the benefit of the doubt.

- **Complicated** and sometimes **counter-intuitive fares**, organisational structures that are hard to understand (e.g. different TOCs), and **rules that seem inconsistent** (e.g. when it is permissible to buy ticket on the train) are all seen as having the potential to catch out passengers

"I think it can be accident. Like it can be easy to make a mistake with, for example, the off peak and on peak. That's not intentional, but it can happen. And obviously I think if you're buying a child ticket and you're an adult etc. that is different. But I do think there are times when it's not done on purpose."

West Mids., Shorter, Frequent, 50+

"I try and buy my tickets in advance to get a cheaper fare and so I feel like if I had made an honest mistake and then was charged the full fare on that day, I'd be so upset because I've tried to buy the cheapest fare possible in an honest way and then you know that ticket to London could be over £100 on the day."

Northwest, Longer, Infrequent, 18 - 30

£107 LNER 'penalty' ... for getting on wrong train by mistake

It pulled in five minutes earlier, on the same platform, going to the same destination



▶ The ticket was for Hull Trains ... but an LNER train departed from the same place, to the same destination.. Photograph: Robert Stainforth/Alamy

"I think getting on the wrong train is incredibly easy to do, depending what station you're at and whether there's multiple things going through and for somebody to be fined because they've made a mistake and then on appeal for it not to be allowed. I personally think that's incredibly harsh."

East Anglia, Shorter, Infrequent, 31 - 50

Fare evaders' views on fare evasion share many similarities with those of fare payers

Again, fare evaders have seldom given detailed consideration to the subject before and while some justify their behaviour on the grounds that 'everyone does it' few have any firm views on its prevalence

For the most part fare evasion seems to be a solitary activity

- Indeed, even habitual fare evaders often reported paying for their fare when travelling with others

Most started fare evading opportunistically (or even by accident) but having succeeded once, tend to repeat the behaviour and become more calculated

- Fare evaders **have typically mastered a successful 'technique'** that they use repeatedly, often on the same route/ journey

While accepting different degrees of responsibility for their behaviours, they largely agree that fare evasion is a victimless crime, or even that the 'victim' i.e. the railway, deserves it!

- Possibly comparable to shoplifting from a large supermarket, but not a corner shop

As with other passengers, fare evaders see fare evasion falling into different categories involving different degrees of culpability on the part of the passenger

Our fare evader sample was a diverse group with a mix across age, gender and social class but broadly speaking fell into three groups

"I don't do it when I'm with the kids, you know. I feel I have to set an example then."

Fare Evader, West Mids., Shorter, Frequent

"I suppose it is wrong but really, these train companies are just huge corporations, and the cost of tickets is just outrageous and I pay a lot of the time, but I know on that route there's nobody to check, so I think, 'Why not? They've had a drink on me, so I'm going to have a drink on them.'"

Fare Evader, North West, Longer, Infrequent

"It would be mainly knowing where there's barriers, but also knowing where to sit in a particular location in the carriage where you can see if someone's coming. What I used to do quite frequently was have the ticket basically ready to buy in case I needed it. If no conductor came, I just wouldn't buy the ticket, so you have that literally ready on the app ready to go and then if you see a conductor come in."

Fare Evader, East Anglia, Shorter, Frequent

Types of fare evader: mercenary thrill seekers

These individuals regularly evade fares and offer little justification/ excuse for doing so

- The chance to **save money** and for some, the simple thrill of ‘getting away with it’ are the key motivations

Acknowledge that their activity is a crime, but are mostly sanguine about it, even though they may attempt to post-rationalise their behaviour

- In common with other types of fare evader, this group sees fare evasion as a **victimless crime**
- The high cost of fares is sometimes cited as a justification, but individuals in this group will also typically **admit that they can afford to pay if need be**

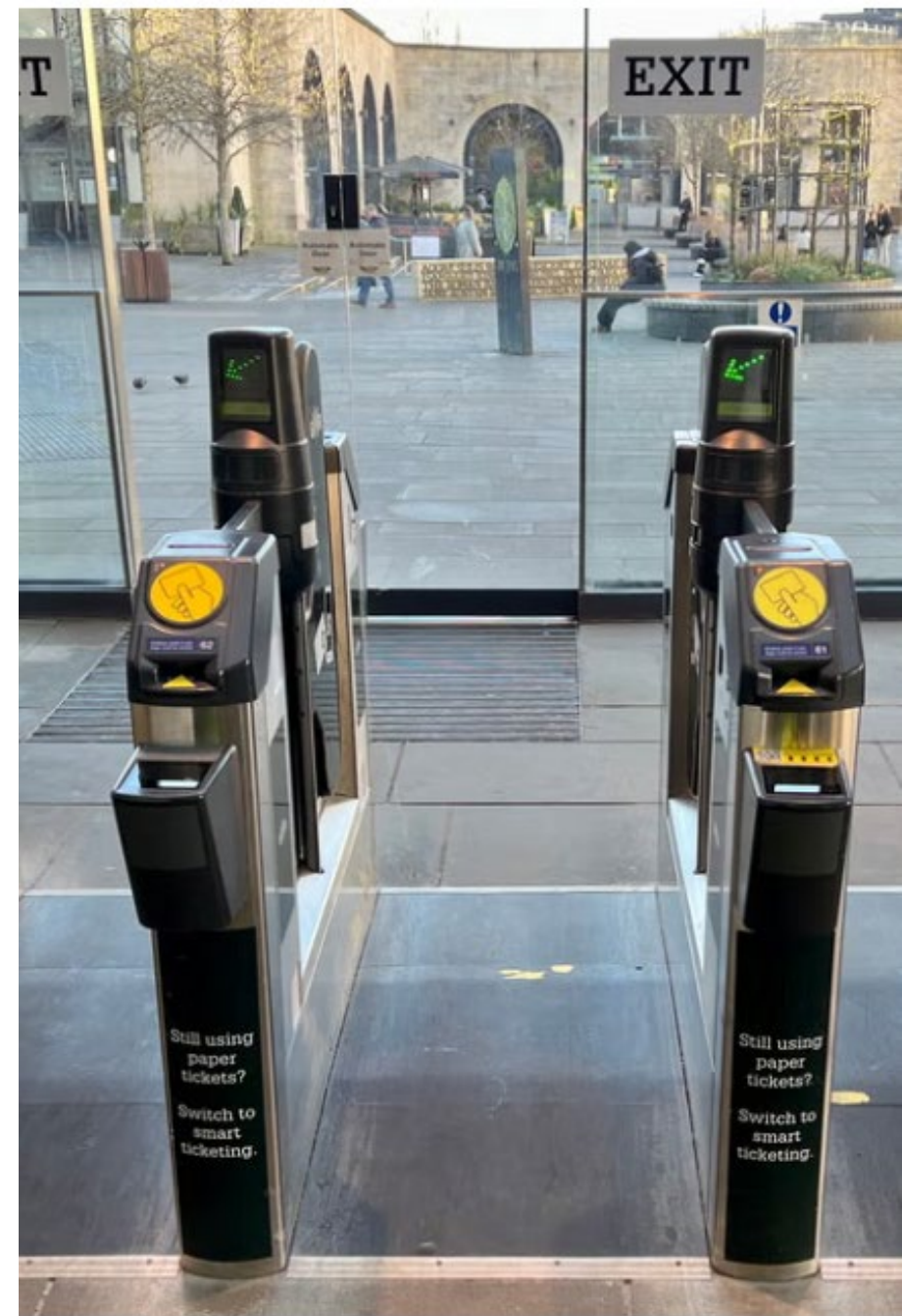
Getting caught/ penalty fares are seen in straightforward transactional terms, with the money saved from frequent fare evasion outweighing any potential penalty

“I guess I do it probably just to save money. Then I guess it's a bit of a challenge as well. It's kind of you know, how far can I go before I cave in and buy it?”

Fare Evader, London, Shorter, Frequent

“I mean, you've got to take a chance once in a while – just have a go. A crime would be smoking on a train or being a nuisance, because you're affecting other people. It's not like I'm playing up or drunk or anything like that. I've jumped on the train to get up the road, and I mean, if a ticket inspector comes, I will pay for the ticket.”

Fare Evader, East Anglia, Shorter, Frequent



Types of fare evader: opportunists

A mix of occasional and more frequent fare evaders, largely dependent on individual travel patterns and situational factors

Have typically spotted an opportunity to evade that they have subsequently exploited

- Sometimes this occurred accidentally e.g. made a journey intending to pay the fare but found no facilities to buy a ticket and no effort at enforcement
- Are typically **exploiting gaps in revenue protection measures** – unstaffed stations, open gates, unstaffed trains etc. - and as such, more likely on non-mainline routes/ stations

Generally accept their behaviour is morally wrong, but reluctant to concede that it is a crime. They justify their behaviour by minimising its perceived consequences

- A victimless crime
- **Amounts involved are trivial** in the context of the scale of the railway
- Argue that the **lack of revenue protection measures** (open gates, no staff on trains) shows the railway 'doesn't care' about fare evasion
- Often **appeal to supposed social norms** 'everyone does it' (or would do it given the opportunity)

Penalty fares seen in terms of the likelihood of getting caught

- Experience typically suggests **fare evasion is a calculated risk** with the odds in favour of the evader
- If caught (some have been) offering to pay the full fare usually resolves the issue

"I probably wouldn't have done it until I started using the trains a little bit more and kind of got to know where, you know, what stations needs tickets to get out, what stations don't need tickets. So I think as I was doing the one train journey, I got to know all the stops and got that knowledge."

Fare Evader, West Mids., Shorter, Frequent

"If you're shoplifting, I don't think it's comparable. Say I take a bar of chocolate off the shelf, the shop has lost that bar of chocolate. But me jumping on a train without a ticket, that train hasn't lost anything. Because I could have driven that day. I didn't have to be on that train. So it's not like they've lost anything."

Fare Evader, North West, Longer, Frequent

"I'm saving myself a tenner once a week, so if I can get away with that for you know, 10 weeks in a row, and I have to pay one penalty fare then I've not lost anything."

Fare Evader, West Mids., Shorter, Infrequent

Types of fare evader: 'natural justice' campaigners

A mix of occasional and more frequent fare evaders, dependent on individual travel patterns and situational factors

As with others, have typically identified an opportunity to exploit a weakness in the revenue protection system, but tend to then take a more calculated and planned approach to fare evasion

This group accept their behaviour is 'technically' a crime but are reluctant to concede that it is morally wrong and advance various arguments in support of this. Many see fare evasion in terms of 'natural justice'

- Argue that with what they see as **unjustifiably high fares and poor service**, fare evasion is simply a way of evening things up
- Some see fare evasion **as a way of 'taking revenge'** for the poor treatment they have received from the railway
- See fare evasion as a victimless crime, but go beyond this to argue that **the railway exploits passengers**, with very high fares, particularly given the cost of living crisis. As such, evading fares is a just response to the railway's behaviour
- Some take a **more explicitly political stance** and advance arguments against the perceived iniquities and inefficiency of the rail structure, TOC operators etc. as justification for fare evasion

Again, propensity to evade fares is calculated against the likelihood of getting caught, but this group is more likely to see getting caught and Penalty Fares in more emotional terms and as unjust

"The rides can be quite unpleasant, like sometimes they're absolutely rammed, you get those people that sit on the four seats determined not to let anyone else sit there and it's like a battleground on every carriage, just trying to get a nice seat...the toilets are always in appalling condition, just pretty vile - often there's never any soap in the toilets and things like this. So I'm often sat there thinking, 'What on earth am I paying for?'"

Fare Evader, London, Longer, Infrequent

*"I don't feel guilty about it at all. I mean, the train companies in this country are having a laugh, frankly. The amount of times I've paid a massive fare and then you're late, or you don't get a seat, or it's cancelled. And it's not like you have a choice. That's the only train that goes there. So they're taking the p*ss, so if I get something back now and again, I really don't care."*

Fare Evader, North West, Longer, Infrequent

Attitudes to fare evasion are not black and white but are distributed across a spectrum



Fare evasion is never justified

- Small number of mostly older, infrequent rail users
- Accept there may be examples of 'honest mistakes'
- But fear that giving the benefit of the doubt to the passenger will lead to abuse

Fare evasion is unjustified but flexibility needs to be applied to 'honest mistakes'

- Most fare paying passengers fall into this category
- Little sympathy for deliberate fare evasion but believe that honest mistakes happen (and that the railway's policies can contribute to this)
- **Intent is the key** and should be considered in applying the rules

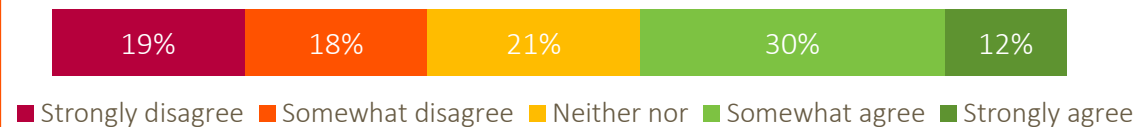
Fare Evasion justified on occasion

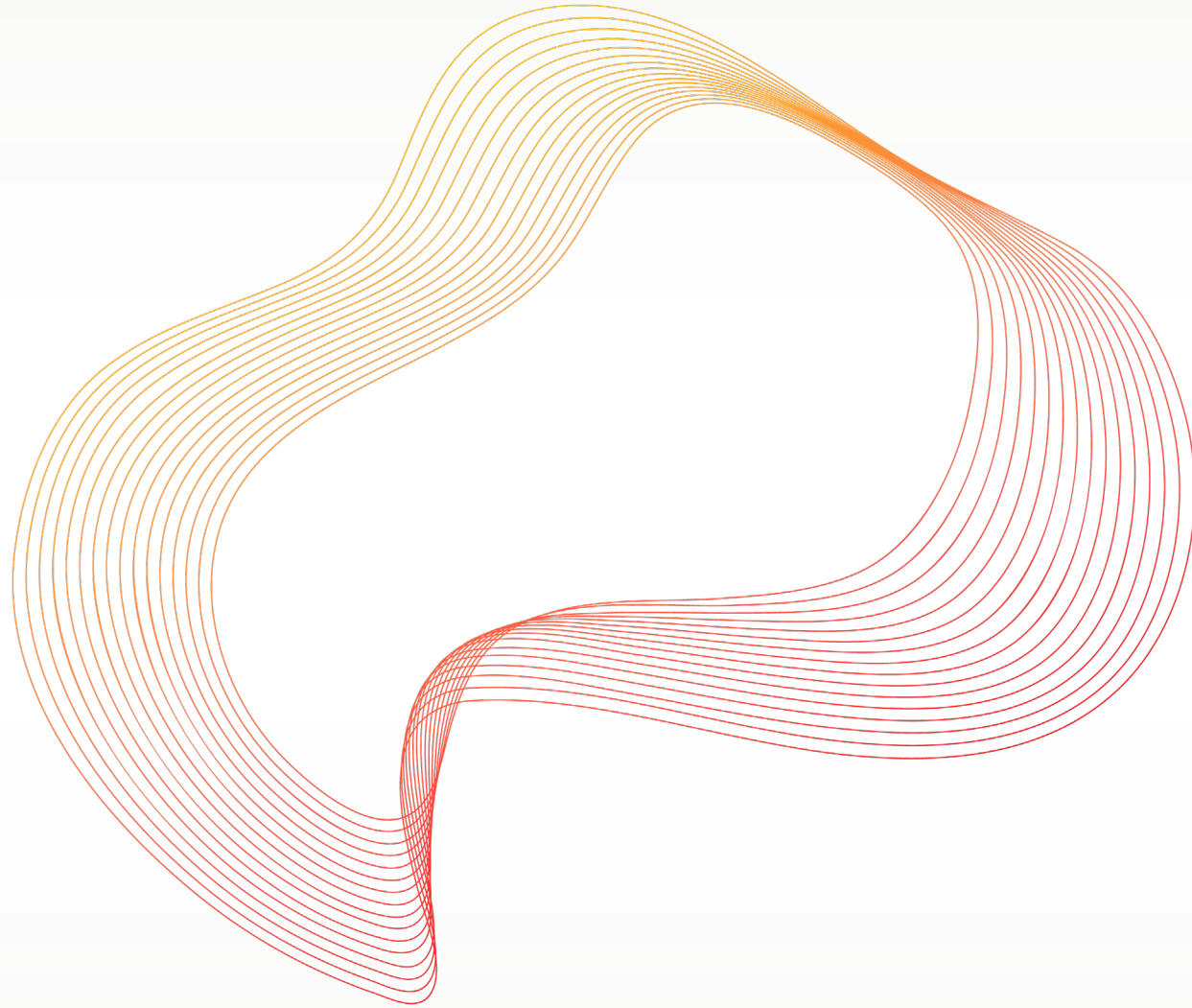
- This includes **deliberate** fare evasion, not just 'honest mistakes'
- Most fare evaders fall into this category
- But also includes fare paying passengers, particularly younger who have sympathy with 'natural justice' arguments
- More likely to be regular rail users

Fare evasion mostly justified

- Some but not all fare evaders, mostly those in the 'natural justice' group and a few fare payers

There may be some justification for people trying to evade their fare





Passengers'
experience of
fare evasion
and revenue
protection

Many passengers (both fare payers and fare evaders) have personal experience of being found without a ticket or with the wrong ticket

Passengers described a number of examples of personal experiences of fare evasion. Most fell within what (fare paying) passengers identified as the 'grey area' of honest mistakes (although some fare payers admitted to having deliberately dodged fares, usually when younger)

- Some scenarios involve what passengers see as inconsistent application of the rules e.g. whether is it permissible to buy a ticket on the train or not
- In other cases, passengers blame the error on a complicated / illogical fare system or confusing 'T&Cs' meaning they had inadvertently bought an incorrect ticket or travelled on the wrong train

The experience of being found with an incorrect ticket is often somewhat upsetting, even when seen as handled fairly/ sympathetically by staff

- Most accept that they were at fault, but many argue that while they were 'technically' in breach of the rules, their 'offence' does **not align with general principles of fairness**
 - Passengers can **feel that their integrity is being unjustly questioned**, leaving them embarrassed or affronted
 - They are also often annoyed at having been 'caught out' by what they see as **unnecessarily convoluted railway rules**

While there is undoubtedly an element of post-rationalisation and self-justification in some passengers' accounts, it is clear that many feel they have been unfairly treated

"I would say there is a general lack of humanity. They're making it difficult for people to travel. It's difficult to buy tickets and if you genuinely make a mistake, you're penalised for it."

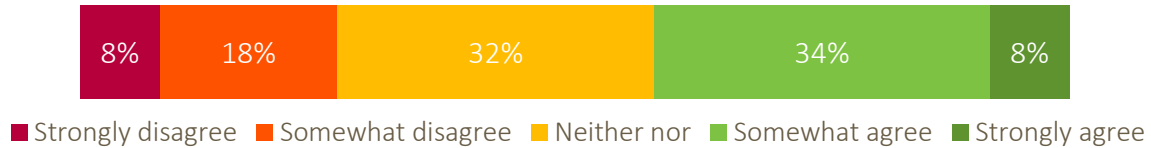
Digitally Excluded, London. Shorter, Infrequent

"My phone died on the train from Sheffield once. The tickets and my card were also on my phone and the ticket inspector at the gate had scanned my ticket before it died on the train. The man at the gate was like, 'You need to buy a new ticket.' And I was like, 'Well my card's on my phone and my phone's dead.' And he was like, 'Well, you can't go through.' And I was like, 'Well, I don't really understand how I'm meant to solve this problem?' Luckily the train guy walked past who had scanned my ticket initially, so he let me through in the end. But I was just like, 'How am I going to resolve this issue?'"

North West, Longer, Infrequent, 18 - 30

In general, passengers feel that fare evasion is handled appropriately by rail staff

Those who are found using the wrong ticket on trains are likely to be fairly treated



“There was a lady with a couple of children who had just bought a ticket and the guy questioned her saying, ‘You’ve bought a ticket using your Railcard. I need to see the Railcard.’ and she refused to show it to him. And I was kind of thinking, ‘OK, yeah, she might have tried to get away with something.’ But then I was thinking, ‘The kids!’ Like, she’s obviously done it because she’s, maybe a little bit desperate. She’s paid something. She has bought a ticket. And maybe you know to just sort of use a bit of discretion and maybe in that kind of sense, sort of let her off with a warning.”

Digitally Excluded, London, Longer, Infrequent

Even if not experienced personally, almost all passengers had witnessed fare evasion incidents

On balance the view is that staff behave reasonably and fairly. (Even fare evaders who have been caught typically feel that staff are ‘only doing their job’)

- But examples are also cited of **staff being overly-harsh/ unsympathetic**, particularly in cases that fall into the ‘mistakes’ area of fare evasion where passengers may deserve the benefit of the doubt
- **Inconsistent behaviour by staff** can also rankle e.g. being told one thing by station staff and another by on-train personnel

Passengers accept that staff have a challenging job to do with difficult judgement calls to make and there is much sympathy for staff who are faced with belligerent passengers.

- They believe that staff mostly get it right but there **are concerns about rules being applied inconsistently** and worries about being faced with **disproportionate consequences for ‘honest mistakes’**
- Some argue that there **should be a standardised approach** for staff to deal with passengers found with no/ the wrong ticket, but with a higher body to adjudicate guilt/ penalties beyond this
 - Argued that an approach like this would ensure greater consistency and remove the ‘heat’ from customer-staff interactions

The consequences of fare evasion can feel unjust to the ‘innocent’ but may not deter the guilty

Most passengers (fare payers and evaders) are aware that Penalty Fares exist, but many are vague about the level of penalty (and the recent increase) and the circumstances under which it applies

- A few think that simply paying the full fare is the only penalty

Most (generally) fare paying passengers caught with no/ an incorrect ticket report having to pay the full fare

- This can still rankle but is not usually seen as overly punitive (albeit, given the absolute cost of fares it often re-ignites the debate about the difficulty of securing a good value fare)
- Those who received a Penalty Fare were typically angry about a perceived injustice

Fare evaders also report often just getting charged the full ticket price when caught. For some, especially those using lines without staffed/ gated stations, this is part of their calculation i.e. an element of ‘reasonable doubt’ can be claimed in such circumstances if confronted by staff

- As noted, **fare evaders tend to view Penalty Fares as an ‘occupational hazard’** and if caught, tend to accept the penalty with a reasonable degree of equanimity
- Those who defend fare evasion on moral/ political grounds are less sanguine about Penalty Fares (or even having to pay the full fare)

“I have been caught and I was like, ‘Yes. Fair enough.’ I would always just put my hands up and pay the full fare or the fine. I wouldn’t cause any trouble because, you know, you’re in the wrong. But even the £100 fine, in the scheme of things, I’m still a lot better off.”

Fare Evader, London, Shorter, Frequent

“The fine is only a problem if you get caught. I wouldn’t do it if I thought I was going to get caught. I do it because I’m not going to get caught.”

Fare Evader, West Mids., Shorter, Frequent

Fare paying passengers generally agree with the principle of the Penalty Fare

Passengers see a role for both 'punishment' and deterrence for deliberate fare evasion

However, there is no clear consensus about the effectiveness of Penalty Fares

- Most see the increase from £20 to £100 as appropriate and **some argue for a much higher level**
- Others fear that **the penalty may be disproportionate** to the offence, particularly where honest mistakes might be involved
- Some suggest the penalty should be proportionate to the level of fare evaded and/or to the resources of the individual fare evader
 - £100 might be effective as a deterrent if applied to £10 fare but perhaps not against a £300 fare

For many fare evaders, the level of the penalty is a secondary consideration to the likelihood of getting caught

- Many **believe they are unlikely to get caught**, and as such the penalty has limited deterrent effect, with some arguing that even a much higher penalty would make little difference
- Others take a more utilitarian view, weighing up the level of the penalty against the amount of fare evaded. As such, they concede that **a higher penalty could be a deterrent**, but again set against the probability of detection and enforcement

The Penalty Fare is £100 plus the price of the full single fare applicable for your intended journey. However, if it is paid within 21 days, the Penalty Fare is reduced to £50 plus the price of the single fare applicable. The Penalty Fare was recently increased from £20.

"I think it's only good if it's enforced. If it's not enforced, what is the point? Because people are still going to keep fare evading - it doesn't matter if it's £20, £100, £1,000, it doesn't matter because it's never enforced, so I don't think the increase necessarily matters. And because people who take the train the same way all the time, they're aware of the journeys, they know what they can and can't get away with."

Fare Evader, London, Shorter, Infrequent

"I think it might have a small effect, but I think that people that can't afford the train, I don't think it really matters to them. I think majority of people don't really think about the fine. They care more about the fact that they can't afford the fare."

North West, Longer, Infrequent, 18 - 30

What passengers observe of revenue protection measures is not always reassuring

Fare evaders often use the absence of revenue protection measures to post-rationalise their behaviour, but fare paying passengers are also often dismayed by the lack of (or inconsistent application of) steps to collect fares

- Passengers understand that they may not be aware of all the steps the railway takes regarding fare evasion, but **what they see is often discouraging**
 - Unsurprisingly, **the focus tends to be on the obvious manifestations of security: gates and staff**. Passengers often note gates left open and/ or no staff to check tickets on trains or at stations, particularly at smaller rural/ suburban stations and routes
 - Some feel **frustrated that rail staff are not proactive enough** (e.g. pursuing 'gate-jumpers', confronting football crowds) but most are understanding of the potential dangers for staff in such situations
- While not excusing fare evasion, **many see lack of security as likely to tempt** those inclined not to pay and as **illustrating a lack of will on the part of the railway** to tackle the problem

A lack of staff is a key issue for many respondents

- Passengers understand that for safety reasons gates must left open at times, but suggest that **more staffed stations and/ or trains would therefore reduce fare evasion**
- Also often argued that **staff presence would help minimise the risk of honest mistakes** occurring when people are buying a ticket or starting their journey
- Passengers understand that there are resource constraints on staffing stations, but wonder if railway therefore treats **fare evasion as just an (acceptable) business overhead**

"The train company needs to put more staff around to watch people going through the train barriers. I don't think it's difficult. Sometimes there's no one there, sometimes no staff at all. Sometimes I even see the barriers are completely open, and no staff around. It's so easy for people to just pass through without a ticket."

Digitally Excluded, London, Shorter, Infrequent

Fewer than half (**44%**) *always* have to pass through a ticket barrier or show their ticket to a member of staff

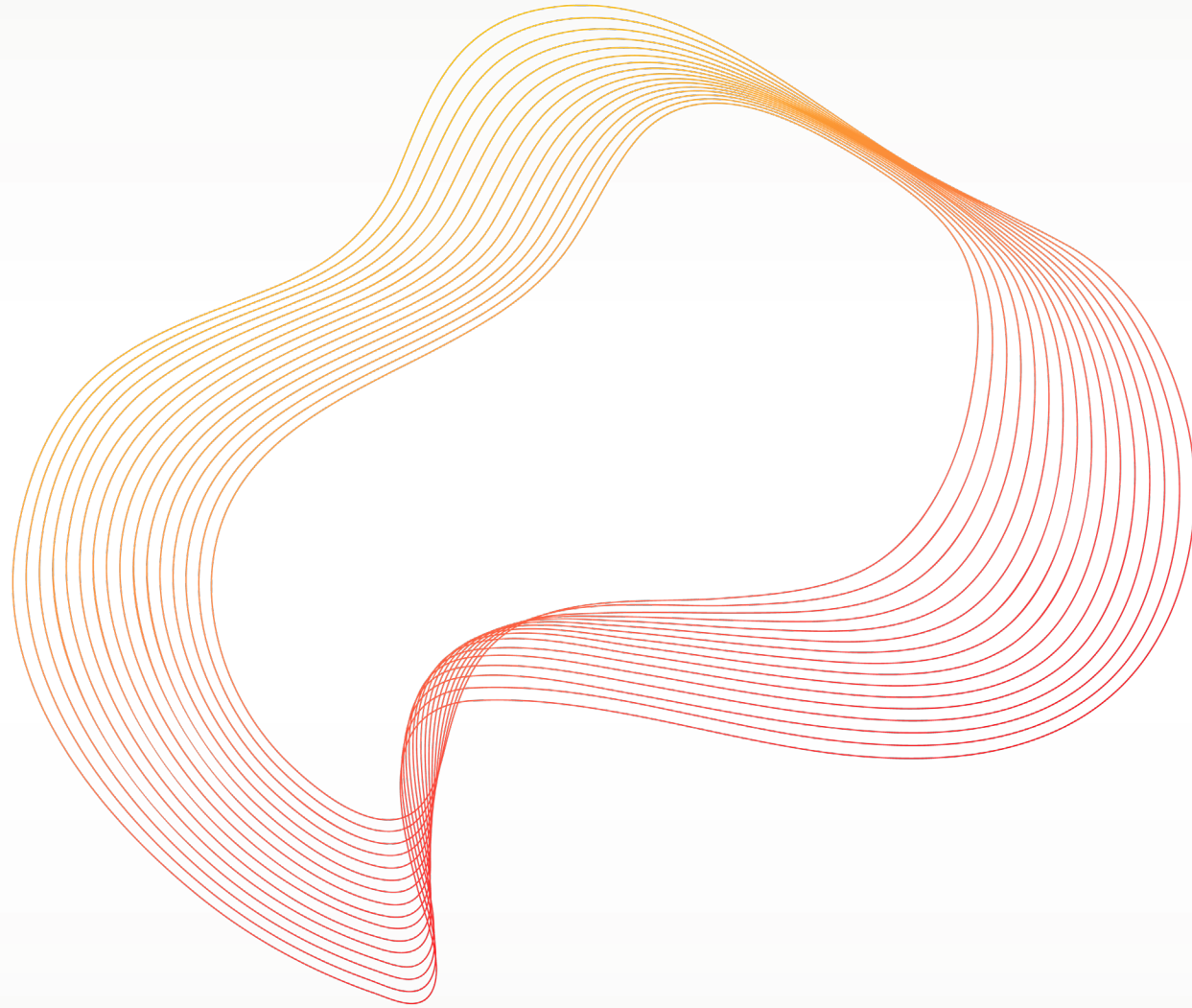
51% agree that train companies should put more staff onto ticket checking duties

"They have no ticket offices open, machines that people aren't sure how to use, barriers that are always open. What do they expect?"

Digitally Excluded, East Anglia, Shorter, Infrequent

"Yeah, I think 100% if you had to jump the barriers rather than walk through open gates, there would be less fare evasion...you're more likely to buy a ticket because at the end of the day, you know you're going to be stopped."

West Mids., Shorter, Frequent, 18 - 30



What should be done about fare evasion - and the role of revenue protection

There is no clear consensus about the impact that fare evasion has on the railway

Given that passengers have seldom given much consideration to the scale of fare evasion, they are unsurprisingly unsure about its impact on the railway

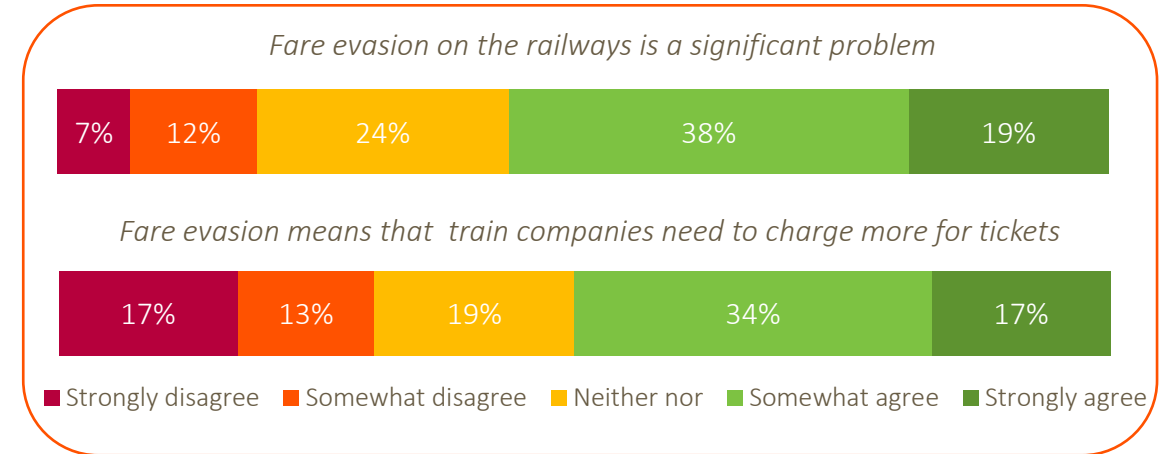
- Agreed in principle that fare evasion is **unfair to honest passengers and may increase fares**
- Similarly, accepted that the **loss of revenue might impact the amounts available for investment** in the railway

However, not all are convinced by these arguments in the context of what is seen as a complex system of funding the railway

- For some, questions around high fares, taxpayer subsidy, TOC profits etc. make it **hard to see a straight-line correlation between fares and costs**
- These arguments are also often employed by fare evaders to minimise the impact of their behaviour

Obvious and confrontational fare evasion (jumping gates, aggression towards railway staff) is seen as creating a potentially unsafe environment

- But is also seen as just one aspect of wider anti-social behaviour on the railway



“It kind of creates an unlawful situation, where people just kind of do what they want. Which I guess on the face of it financially, is frustrating for people that do pay. I guess it's frustrating for train companies. But then it also creates, you know, a safety issue thing where people are running around stations trying to dodge the ticket barrier workers.”

Digitally Excluded, West Mids., Shorter, Infrequent

“If the train's packed, then they're making their money, aren't they? They're a multi-million pound company...people are using the trains every day, average law-abiding citizens are using the trains every single day, paying extortionate prices every single day. And as far as I'm concerned, Greater Anglia haven't even noticed that I've been on their train.”

East Anglia, Shorter, Infrequent, 31 - 50

Passengers believe that the railway has a responsibility to protect its revenues but often argue that other issues are higher priority

Given limited understanding of the scale of fare evasion, passengers are not sure how important a priority addressing it should be

- That said, it is generally agreed that the railway **has a duty to tackle deliberate fare evasion** on the grounds that anti-social/ criminal behaviour should be discouraged
- Also (particularly given ticket prices) **the railway needs to ensure it is not wasting money by** failing to protect its revenues

Understandably passengers find it difficult to contextualise the amounts involved ('Around £240m a year is lost through fare evasion on Great Britain's railways')

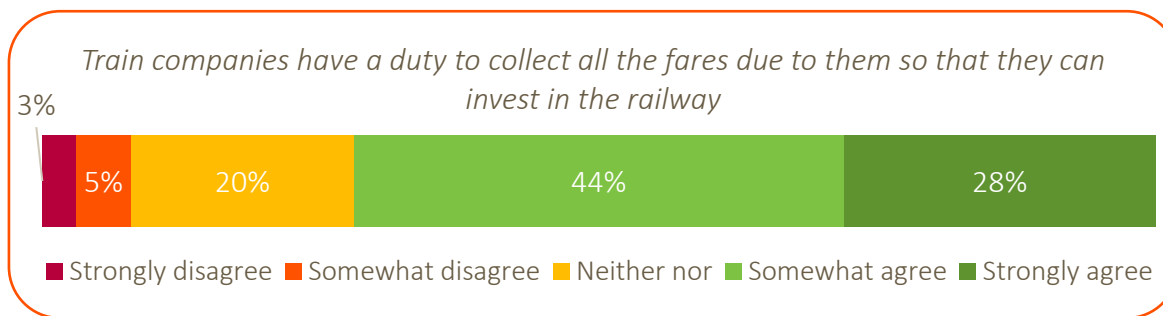
- While the absolute figure seems large, many wonder whether it is **truly significant** in the wider context of the railway's funding and revenues
- In addition, the **perceived lack of enforcement activity** can signal some complacency about fare evasion on the part of the railway
- Some wonder whether **the revenue raised through Penalty Fares outweighs that lost through evasion**

Passengers also question how much of what the railway classes as fare evasion includes the sort of 'mistakes' which they feel are not 'true' fare evasion

- Indeed, some argue that the railway is at least in part at fault in these situations

Against the above backdrop, many see addressing fare evasion as a second order priority compared to issues that more directly affect their journey experience such as reliability and the cost of tickets

- It is suggested that **a better railway would generate more revenue**
- Some also argue (including fare evaders themselves) that better services would encourage **passengers to be better disposed towards the railway and less likely to evade fares**



"Maybe the reason why people aren't paying for tickets is because it's already a massive problem, like the delays and stuff. It is just not a great service that's provided."

Fare Evader, East Anglia, Longer, Infrequent

"Maybe you need to revisit the prices of your fares. Like the reason why so many people do it is because they just can't justify paying the ticket prices. Some people really struggle and maybe the only way for them to get to work is by paying an incorrect fare or even just not paying at all. I think of course people do it without a justified reason - but I think especially given the cost-of-living crisis and every year the train fares are getting higher and higher, maybe a question for those companies to ask themselves is why is it increasing when fare evasion rates are going up."

Fare Evader, North West, Infrequent, Longer

Harsher penalties and more rigorous enforcement of revenue protection measures are top of mind when it comes to how to address deliberate fare evasion

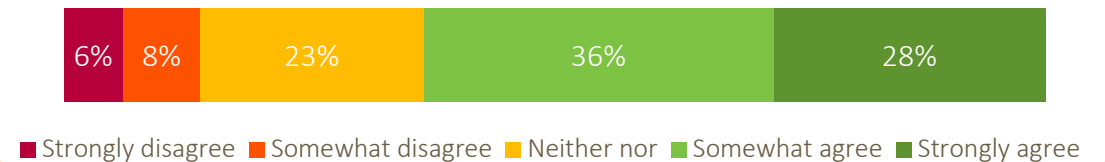
Few believe that appeals to wider social responsibility (e.g. unfairness to other passengers, costs to the railway) are likely to achieve much in addressing fare evasion

- As such, **tougher penalties and more rigorous enforcement** tend to be seen as the key tools at the railway's disposal
- But note that in calling for firmer action, passengers are thinking again about **deliberate fare evasion**

As with other passengers, fare evaders are resistant to their behaviour being challenged on pro-social grounds; there is little guilt to tap into as the 'crime' is seen as victimless

- They see **higher penalties as potentially having a deterrent effect**
- But they see **closing the security loopholes** that they exploit and **increasing the chances of being caught** as more likely to discourage them

Train companies should crack down on fare evaders



"I think people focus more on whether they think they're likely to be caught, generally you can suss out before you board a train, whether there's someone going up and down the carriage or on certain routes you take, we can weed out and know that nobody ever comes and checks....increased staff presence would definitely deter people when they know there's not a huge chance they're going to get away with it."

Fare Evader, East Anglia, Shorter, Infrequent

"I do find it's annoying when you get there and the barriers are open. You have bought a ticket. You haven't been asked for it and it's like, 'How many people are getting away with not buying a ticket when you bought a ticket?' You could go all the way to London and not get asked."

West Mids., Shorter, Frequent, 50+

On reflection, many passengers see enforcement as only addressing the obvious causes of fare evasion, but neglecting more fundamental issues

More enforcement might deter deliberate fare evaders but might also result in disproportionate punishment for those making an honest mistake

Moreover, looking at fare evasion in solely 'legal' terms is seen as potentially letting the railway off too lightly

- As noted, not all fare evasion is seen in the same way:
 - 'No-loss' issues which passengers believe **should not be treated as fare evasion at all**
 - Grey areas where **customers should sometimes (perhaps more often than not) be given the benefit of the doubt**
 - And some can see **mitigation for even deliberate acts of fare evasion** (price of tickets, economic necessity etc.)

The railway is seen as having at least some responsibility for setting the conditions within which fare evasion occurs

"If people steal from the big man like Tesco or Asda or Sainsbury's and they can't eat, then in my in my mind, that's OK. Well, not OK, but it's more acceptable than robbing from a small business because they're independent and they don't have any help from an outside source, but the big business is profiting from people's hard labour and keep bumping the prices up every year. So I see that as the same for the railway. So honestly, mate, if someone's dodging their fare, I will just pretend I didn't see anything."

North West, Longer, Infrequent, 18 - 30

"These rail companies are being subsidised by the government, through taxpayers and they're extortionate prices, extortionate! A fiver to go a mile down the road, when the bus is £2. They've been on strike...they do things like just not turn up. So why should I, a taxpaying member of the public, subsidise a big multi-million pound company?"

West Mids., Shorter, Frequent, 50+

"They just need to realise that some people are not there to defraud you, but anyone can make a genuine mistake. Everything is online. Everything is digital. Not everyone is able to use it. So, you know, be considerate."

Digitally Excluded, East Anglia, Shorter, Infrequent

Passengers identify improvement across a range of areas that they believe are necessary to help address the fare evasion problem

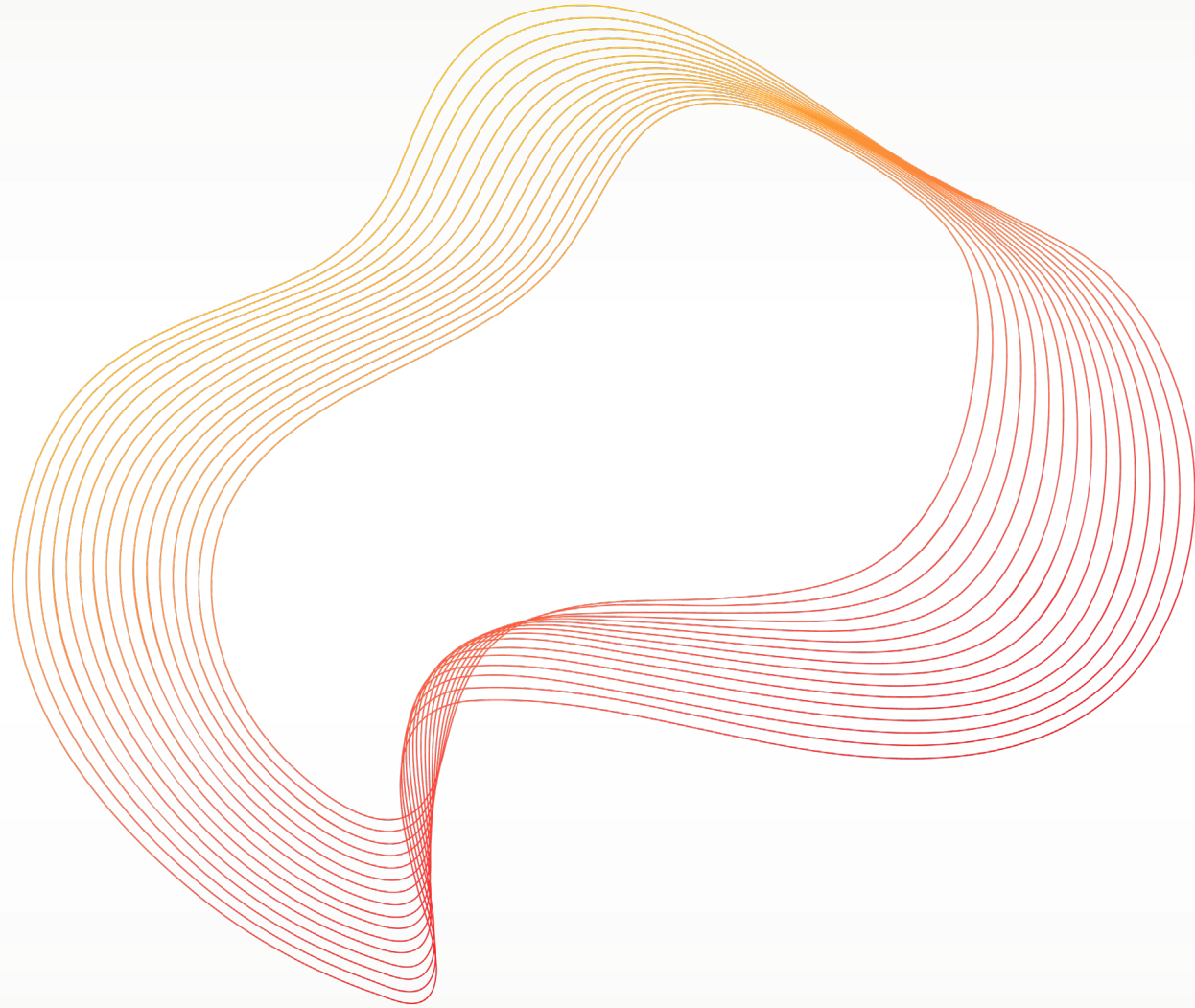
- **A simpler fares system:** Fares are seen as complicated by even very experienced rail users and are a source of confusion and anxiety for many people, particularly less frequent users and certain vulnerable groups. Passengers believe that a simpler and more intuitive fare system would avoid many of the ‘honest mistakes’ that passengers make and for rail staff, would remove much of the ambiguity about what were/ were not genuine errors
- **Ensuring everyone can easily buy a ticket:** Buying the right ticket can also be a challenge, again particularly for those not comfortable with digital channels or using machines (some older people, the digitally excluded and those with certain impairments). Staff are critical in this respect. Without them, some are excluded from buying a ticket while others may be able to buy a ticket but are fearful of making a mistake
- **More staff:** Staff can help people buy a ticket or provide reassurance that people have got the correct ticket. The presence of staff at stations and on trains is also seen as a deterrent to fare evasion and indeed, other types of anti-social behaviour
- **Better use of technology:** Passengers suggest that some of the problems of fare evasion can be addressed through better use of technology. For example, passengers struggle to understand why there is not a database of Railcard users to establish individuals’ bona fides. Similarly, could not card transaction data be better utilised to establish proof of purchase in lost ticket situations or when a phone is out of charge?
- **Closing the gaps:** Passengers can be tempted to think that the railway is happy to tolerate fare evasion when they see open ticket barriers or when tickets are not checked on trains. They suspect (and fare evaders confirm they are correct) that this is an ‘open invitation’ for some to dodge fares. While understanding that the railway has resource constraints, claims by the railway to be concerned about fare evasion can sound hollow against this backdrop
- **A better (and better value) service:** Passengers identify some quite fundamental problems with the railway: high prices, poor service, complicated fares, a lack of staff etc. Few see these as reasons to deliberately evade their fare. But many feel that these issues undermine passengers’ confidence in the railway. A better service would build more trust and affinity between the passenger and the railway, and it is believed that this could be significant in reducing fare evasion

“There needs to be someone to give you advice on what to do if you’re unsure. You go into the station and you think, ‘There’s no one here.’ Are you going to try and buy the ticket yourself, and possibly make a genuine mistake? You have to have staff there who can help you.”

Digitally Excluded, East Anglia,
Shorter, Infrequent

“So with one of the tickets, it’s straightforward going but coming back they kind of suggested it’s going to be a split ticket and it was a bit complicated with the fares and the differences in prices and I really don’t find it easy to work out whether you are getting a good deal and balancing that with convenience and then I worry that I might make mistake and get caught out.”

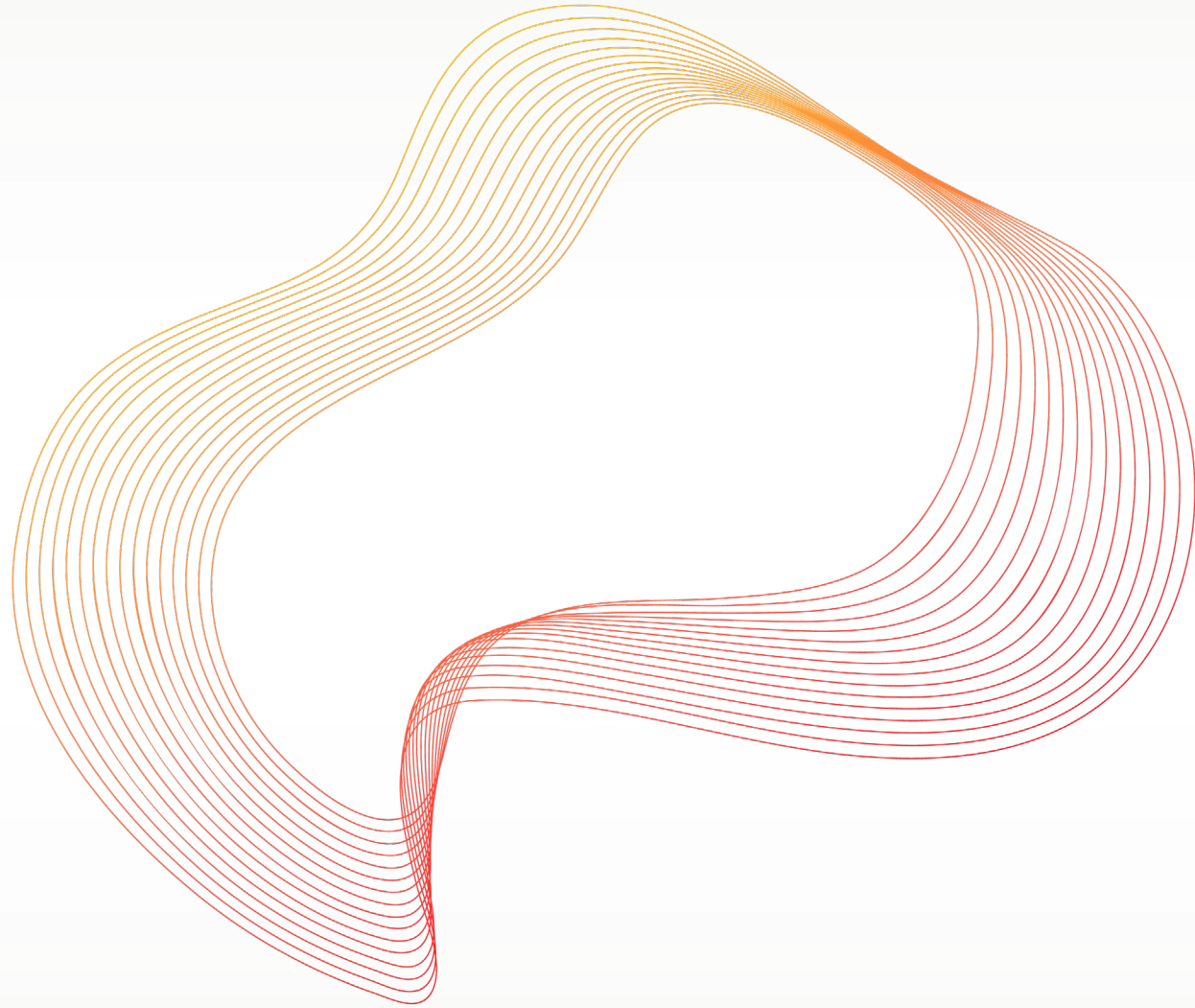
London, Longer, Frequent, 50+



Conclusions

Conclusions

- Passengers are unsure about the scale and impact of fare evasion, but they recognise that it is a problem that the railway should address to challenge antisocial behaviour and to protect its revenues. That said, many see fare evasion as a second order priority compared to issues that more directly affect their journey experience such as reliability and the cost of tickets
- Passengers' definition of fare evasion is not the same as the railway's:
 - Passengers see intent as key in determining what qualifies as fare evasion and/ or how seriously it should be treated. Deliberately not paying for a ticket or knowingly buying an incorrect ticket is accepted as wrong and something that should be tackled. Passengers also largely acknowledge that individuals have a responsibility to ensure they are buying a ticket and paying the correct fare. But at the same time, it is argued that those who make 'honest mistakes' should be treated sympathetically
- The railway is seen as contributing to passengers making mistakes when buying tickets. Researching fares and buying tickets is seen as complex. This is exacerbated by hard to understand organisational structures, and regulations that seem to be applied inconsistently. What are seen as unnecessarily convoluted railway rules are thought to make it easy for passengers to get caught out. Some go further and argue that the railway's poor performance (high prices, service shortfalls) may even 'encourage' fare evasion
- Fare evaders see fare evasion as a victimless crime, but motives for fare evasion vary. For some, fare evasion is simply way of exploiting weaknesses in railway security for financial advantage and they admit that is morally wrong (even if they downplay its seriousness). Others see fare evasion in terms of 'natural justice', arguing that with unjustifiably high fares and poor service, evading fares is simply a way of 'evening things up' for the passenger
- Passengers are often dismayed by the perceived lack of (or inconsistent application of) steps to collect fares which they feel undermines the rule that all must pay for a ticket. They observe gates left open and/ or no staff to check tickets on trains or at stations and see lack of security as likely to tempt those inclined not to pay and as illustrating a lack of will on the part of the railway to tackle the problem. A lack of staff is a key issue for many respondents who suggest that more staffed stations and/ or trains would reduce fare evasion
- Passengers see tougher penalties and more rigorous revenue protection policies as important in tackling fare evasion. However, the railway is seen as having at least some responsibility for setting the conditions within which fare evasion occurs. As such, passengers feel that improvements are needed if the railway is to effectively address fare evasion and revenue protection. Passenger priorities include simplifying fares and making ticket purchase easier; employing more staff at stations and on trains to deter fare evasion and help people buy the right tickets; better use of technology to address issues such as lost Railcards; applying more resources to address security loopholes such as frequently open ticket gates; and ultimately, delivering a better service that builds more trust and affinity between the passenger and the railway



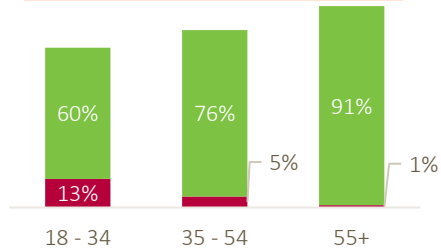
Appendix

Age has a strong correlation to attitudes towards fare evasion, with a majority (57%) of younger respondents agreeing that there may be justification for fare evasion. Other factors, such as frequency of travel, distance traveled, and the gender of the respondent also inform attitudes towards rail companies and fare evasion

Train companies have a duty to collect fares so they can invest in the railway

Agree = 73% Disagree = 8%

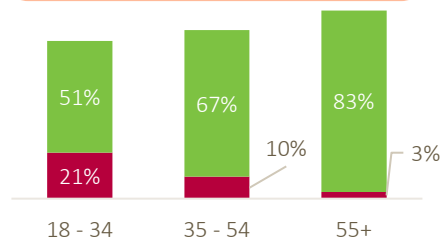
Younger respondents are less likely to agree that train companies have a duty to collect fares in comparison with older respondents



Train companies should crack down on fare evaders

Agree = 64% Disagree = 13%

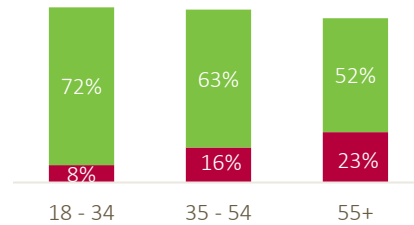
Younger respondents are less likely to agree that train companies should crack down on fare evaders in comparison with older respondents



Given the price and quality of service, it's not surprising people evade fares

Agree = 64% Disagree = 14%

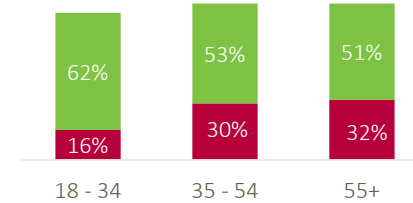
Younger respondents are less likely to be surprised by fare evasion in comparison with older respondents



It is easy to find the right ticket

Agree = 56% Disagree = 24%

Older respondents are more likely to have difficulty finding the right ticket

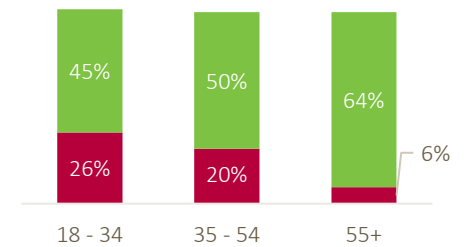


Those making journeys of over two hours (28%) and those who travel once every few months (29%) are also more likely to have difficulty finding the right ticket

Train companies should put more staff onto ticket checking duties

Agree = 51% Disagree = 19%

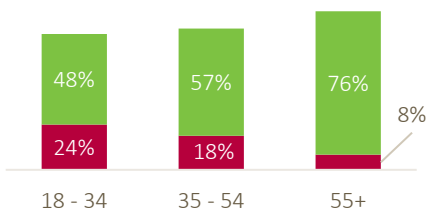
Older respondents are more likely to agree there should be more staff checking tickets



Fare evasion on railways is a significant problem

Agree = 57% Disagree = 24%

Older respondents are more likely to believe fare evasion is a problem

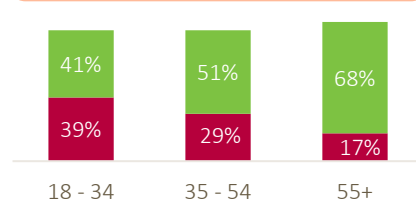


Those who travel daily (69%) are also more likely to believe fare evasion is a problem than those who travel once or twice every few months (54%)

Fare evasion means train companies need to charge more for tickets

Agree = 51% Disagree = 30%

Older respondents are more likely to agree that fare evasion causes train companies to charge more for tickets

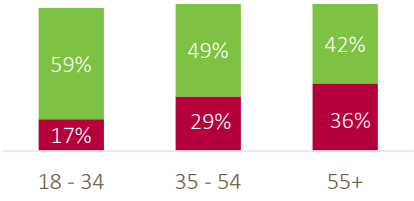


Those who travel daily (66%) are also more likely to believe that train companies need to charge more than those who travel once or twice every few months (51%)

It is easy to find the best value ticket when making journeys by train

Agree = 45% Disagree = 33%

Age does not appear to have a correlation with ease of finding the best value ticket

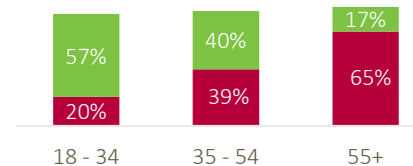


Unsurprisingly, daily rail users (61%) are more likely to have an easier time finding the best value ticket than those who travel once or twice every few months (41%)

There may be some justification for people trying to evade their fare

Agree = 42% Disagree = 37%

Younger respondents are more likely to agree that there can be justification for fare evasion



Daily rail users (54%) are more likely to agree that there can be justification than those who once or twice every few months (34%). Similarly, men (41%) are more likely to disagree that there can be justification than women (33%)

Those who are found using the wrong ticket are likely to be treated fairly

Agree = 42% Disagree = 26%

Age does not appear to have a correlation with the belief that fare evaders are treated fairly

Daily rail users (59%) are more likely to agree that fare evaders are treated fairly than those who once or twice every few months (37%)

Researching and buying tickets

"I feel like when you're going shorter distance, it's a lot easier than longer. If I was like going to London and back, I find a bit more confusing, or the times are a bit less convenient."

London, Longer, Infrequent, 31 - 50

"I don't know enough about pricing or business, but it's just for me, how can any commodity vary that much in price?"

Fare Evader, West Mids., Shorter, Frequent

"I think trainline answers all those questions for you because it tells you how many changes you've got. You put where you want to go from, even if it's not a main station and it tells you how many changes. So I think it's quite foolproof really. I think queuing up and speaking to someone, I suppose if I was of the elderly generation then maybe speaking to somebody when I was a bit unsure about using an app then yes, that would be needed, but not in this day and age, not with my age group."

West Mids., Longer, Infrequent, 31 - 50

"I do go onto the platform if there's somebody there as well and the ticket booth, but I've been on the trainline app and the only thing with that is sometimes when you go to get a return, trying to find the open return, that little box at the top of it - you can sometimes miss that, and then they've all of a sudden started bringing this split save thing as well. And just it's mind boggling."

West Mids. Longer, Frequent, 31-50

"Like 90% of the time I'll go to the ticket office. Otherwise, my daughter can sort this out. I'm not very good with computer."

Digitally excluded, London, Longer, Infrequent

Experiences without a valid ticket

"Yeah, I got caught once in Kings Cross. I went through the barriers behind someone. I didn't see the undercover revenue inspectors. They pulled me over. I got a fine and I paid it a couple days later because I didn't want to prolong it. I didn't want to avoid paying the fine because that would come back and bite me eventually."

Fare Evader, Greater Anglia, Longer, Infrequent

"I once said I had Railcard when I didn't and then I got caught. But then having heard the ticket person coming down the carriage and asking everyone to show them their tickets, like he didn't ask anybody else whether they had a Railcard but then specifically asked me about it. It just felt pretty unfair."

Fare Evader, London, Longer, Frequent

"I've had it where I've gotten onto the next train because it's been cancelled and been told by the ticket officer to do it. And then when I get on the train, the person complains and says that this ticket isn't for this train because he hasn't been told by the other person. So there is that chaos as well."

London, Longer, Frequent, 50+

"I was caught with the wrong ticket going down to Brighton and mistakenly because I go down there quite often, only bought a ticket to Gatwick and then went on to Brighton. I explained the situation and I think he'd had a good day. He was quite a reasonable character and told me to pay the extra fare, which I did."

London, Longer, Frequent, 50+

"Unfortunately, got caught about probably about a year ago, which really stopped me from doing it. I got caught because I had a code, not a barcode. So when I got to the station at London, I couldn't get through the gate and they knew what I've done. So they took me round and I nearly got fined, but they the guy was kind enough to let me off because I, you know, apologised and you know, ever since I actually have been have been quite good."

Fare Evader, Greater Anglia, Longer, Frequent

"I bought a ticket and it was for the wrong date. I literally bought it online and within five minutes I went up to the ticket counter and said, 'I bought the wrong ticket, I need it for today' and they basically said, 'Tough, you're going to have to buy another ticket.' And I just thought, 'All right, great. I've got this ticket I'm not going to use and now I've got to buy another ticket.' I can see why people would then turn around and go, 'No, I'm not buying a ticket, I've already got one. I've paid my money.' And you know, I paid £27 to use a train on a day I know I'm not going to use, so why can't I just transfer that to now? So, yes, I think in terms of buying the incorrect ticket, there needs to be a bit of leniency there. Equally, you don't want people to take advantage of it, but mistakes genuinely do happen."

Fare Evader, Greater Anglia, Longer, Infrequent

Fare evasion: attitudes and perceptions

"I don't think it's a very big problem, but it is a problem. I just think it's not fair for other people, because everyone spends their money to buy the ticket and other people don't just get away with it and travel for free."

East Anglia, Shorter, Infrequent, 31 - 50

"I would say it's probably quite big because I know of certain stations that I can get on and there's no ticket barriers and get off at a certain stage and there's no ticket barriers. It's only if you get caught with somebody on the train that you would get caught out."

West Mids., Shorter, Frequent, 18-30

"I really do think it puts fares up and I think a lot of passengers that do pay get frustrated as well because they can see it happening or they believe it happens even if they don't see it going on."

London, Longer, Frequent, 50+

"Well, I think it's quite common. Yeah, I think it always has been and probably now with the cost of living, I would think it's even more so."

North West, Longer, Infrequent, 18 - 30

"It can become a problem when people keep not buying tickets because it can influence other people to then go ahead and do it as well."

West Mids., Shorter, Frequent, 18-30

"I suppose just the revenue that they lose out on it means that they can't like upgrade the network, maybe as much as they would like to."

West Mids., Shorter, Frequent, 50+

Fare evasion: attitudes and perceptions

"No, I wouldn't say it is a crime to be honest, because if they're genuinely trying to work out what ticket to buy, what zone, etcetera, what time to travel. So you know, they're genuinely not sure, and if there's no one there to assist them or to help you to show you what to do."

Digitally Excluded, London, Longer, Infrequent

"They just need to realise that some people are not there to defraud you, but anyone can make a genuine mistake. Everything is online. Everything is digital. Not everyone is able to use it. So, you know, be considerate."

Digitally Excluded, East Anglia, Shorter, Infrequent

"One thing that frustrates me is how the accessibility gates at stations which you can just push through. There's a little alarm that goes, but unless someone is prepared to, chase this person down, it's very unlikely that you'll catch them."

Digitally Excluded, East Anglia, Shorter, Infrequent

"The ones who buy the ticket, they're the ones who pay. Because you know the company has to make their money somewhere. So we'll have to pay for it in the end anyway."

London, Longer, Infrequent, 31 - 50

Fare evaders' views

"What I do understand is the unfairness of those who pay for their tickets, especially if someone who's doing it regularly or if it's an expensive ticket. When I'm answering this, the maximum train ticket I've probably bought in the last year was maybe £30, so it's not a huge amount of money."

Fare Evader, London, Longer, Infrequent

"I think it comes down to the person. Ultimately there is a risk that you get caught having not paid your fare and then I think there's a penalty on top of the fare. So if that's a risk that you're willing to take, then that's down to you. If you feel comfortable doing that, then crack on!"

Fare Evader, North West, Longer, Infrequent

"Unfortunately, got caught about probably about a year ago. I got caught because I had a code, not a barcode. So when I got to the dodging station at London, I couldn't get through the gate and they knew what I've done. So they took me round and I nearly got fined, but the guy was kind enough to let me off because I apologised and you know, it's fair enough."

Fare evader, London, Longer, Infrequent

"It was usually just knowing where the barriers are. If the stop has a barrier. I frequently used to sit in toilets when I met my mates and we would go to Norwich for a weekend and do like a day out. We just, sit in the toilet or and not buy a ticket."

Fare Evader, East Anglia, Shorter, Frequent

"I think shoplifting is worse. I guess it's because of the negative connotations with people that actually shoplift. I mean, you know, you see programmes about shoplifters and police and, you know, shopping malls, searching for them. You don't see the same about people evading trains. That's why I wouldn't put them in the same category."

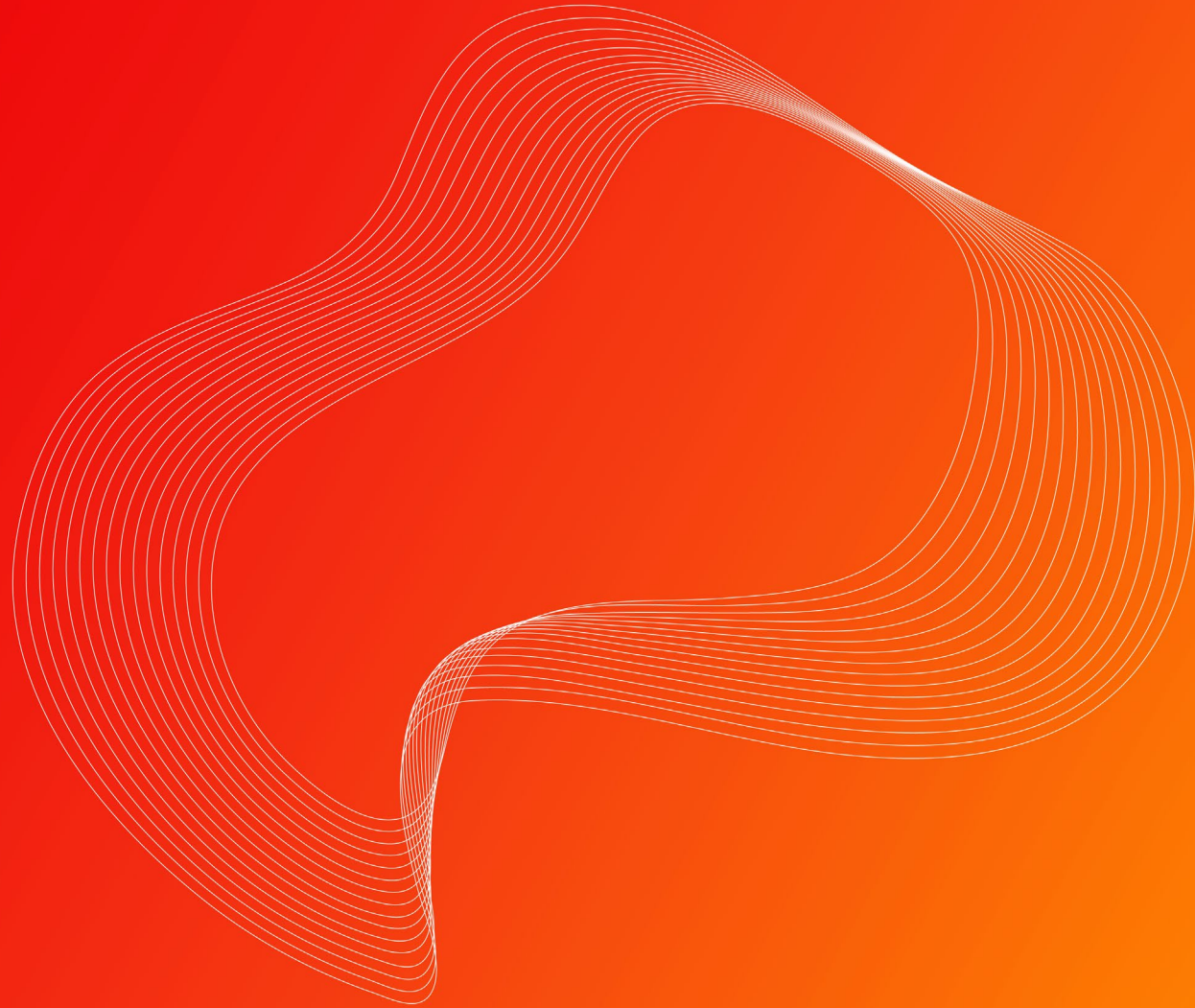
Fare Evader, West Mids., Shorter, Frequent,

"It's more whether you think you are likely to be caught. I think generally you can suss out before you board a train. You can see whether there's someone going up and down the carriage or there's like certain routes, like if it's a route you take week in and week out, you know that nobody ever comes and checks and then I would risk it."

Fare Evader, London, Shorter, Frequent

"It's been like a few stops as opposed to a really long journey where I just think I may as well just try and chance it and if I get caught, then I'll just buy one from the ticket person on the train."

Fare Evader, West Mids., Shorter, Frequent



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Research Debrief
Prepared for Transport Focus

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