

Wednesday 24 June 2020

Passenger confidence in public transport post-COVID continues to decline, with journeys expected to be replaced by the car

39% say they will use public transport less once all restrictions are lifted, with 65% of those predicting a switch to car

The current advice to avoid public transport could have far-reaching implications on the way we travel, long after the Covid-19 lockdown ends. Carbon emissions would increase if people avoid public transport due to ongoing safety concerns and permanently switch to car usage instead. These results are from a representative survey of 1,500 adult UK residents undertaken by transport and research consultancy SYSTRA, between 4th-12th June 2021.

Key findings include:

- 39% predict they will make fewer public transport trips once all Covid-19 travel restrictions are lifted than before lockdown.
 - This increases to 59% of those who commute by rail or bus.
 - Londoners are more likely to predict making fewer public transport journeys with 62% saying they will use public transport less.
 - When the same question was asked in April this year, 20% of the public predicted a decline in their public transport use.
- 65% of those predicting a decline in use say they will replace their public transport trips with the car (either as a driver or passenger); 46% say they will walk more, 12% will cycle more and 11% will no longer make the journey.
- The introduction of a vaccine would reassure 37% of those who are predicting a decline in usage, who would go back to using public transport as before.
- Over the next month, the use of safety measures would make 68% feel safer to travel on public transport, with the most reassuring being: limiting the number of people that can board, access to hand sanitizer at stations/stops, deep-cleaning of the interiors of vehicles, stations and bus stops, and mandatory wearing of face coverings.

When appropriate, public transport operators and government will need to reassure passengers that public transport is a safe and environmentally friendly way of travelling. The recent change to social distancing guidelines to 1 metre may influence passenger perceptions of safety on public transport further.

Katie Hall, SYSTRA's Director of Transport Planning, says: *"The scale of the challenge facing government and public transport operators should not be underestimated. Action must be taken now to prevent a potentially devastating impact on climate change should this switch from public transport to car happen. We must understand what people need to restore their confidence in public transport to get us on the path to net zero emissions."*

Evelyn Robertson, SYSTRA's Research Lead, says: *"Passenger intentions to stop using public transport even when safe to travel does not mean this future is set in stone. These*

findings highlight the importance of engaging with passengers to recognise the influences on their attitudes and behaviour – only then can we understand how to best inspire environmentally-friendly, convenient and safe transport choices.”

<https://www.systra.co.uk/en/newsroom-37/latest-news/article/passenger-confidence-in-public-transport-post-covid-continues-to-decline-with>

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ABOUT SYSTRA

SYSTRA keeps the world moving through connecting people and places. By enabling mobility, our work strengthens communities, increases social inclusion and improves people's access to employment, education and leisure opportunities. Our specialist social and market research team undertake evidence-based transport research to provide consumer and stakeholder insights, supporting policy developments and developing transport solutions that enhance movement, places and the quality of people's lives.

Notes to Editor:

1. Of those predicting a decline in public transport use, the introduction of a vaccine would reassure 37% to use public transport as before, 51% would use public transport but not as much as before, and 13% would still not use public transport.
2. The survey took place between Wednesday 4th - Tuesday 12th June 2020 with a representative sample of 1,504 UK adults.
3. The survey covered the following regions: London, South East (excluding London), South West, West Midlands, East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside, North West, North East, East, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.
4. SYSTRA is undertaking further behavioural modelling to understand the wider impacts of the Covid-19 for the UK.
5. In April 2020, SYSTRA undertook research with the UK public to understand their attitudes and anticipated behaviours after Covid-19. The results can be found here <https://www.systra.co.uk/en/newsroom-37/latest-news/article/public-transport-passengers-say-they-could-make-fewer-trips-after-pandemic>
6. In the UK, SYSTRA provides Transport Planning Consultancy and Rail and Urban Transport engineering services. We work with our clients to think through complex issues concerning the location and movement of people, goods and services – as well as helping them maximise the potential of their own businesses. We have been providing Transport Consultancy services in the UK for over 50 years and have an excellent reputation for the provision of high quality, robust and independent advice to our clients. SYSTRA is a UK registered subsidiary of SYSTRA Group.
7. In 2019, SYSTRA doubled the size of its UK & Ireland operations through the acquisition of TSP Projects, a multidisciplinary engineering firm formed in 1987 with a rich heritage in rail. The combined company provides clients with a complete end-to-end service spanning every aspect of rail projects, as well as specialist understanding of mobility and complex infrastructure. We deliver expertise across the full project lifecycle, from strategic advisory and design to systems integration, programme/construction management, testing & commissioning, and asset management. This expertise will be delivered through a significantly expanded UK footprint, providing clients with a highly localised service.
8. SYSTRA led [BP's Future of Transport Study](#) published October, 2019.
9. For more information on forthcoming announcements visit our web site www.systra.co.uk



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