

***railfuture***

Webinar

“Attracting passengers back to rail”

Saturday 3 October 2020

**Responses to poll questions during webinar**

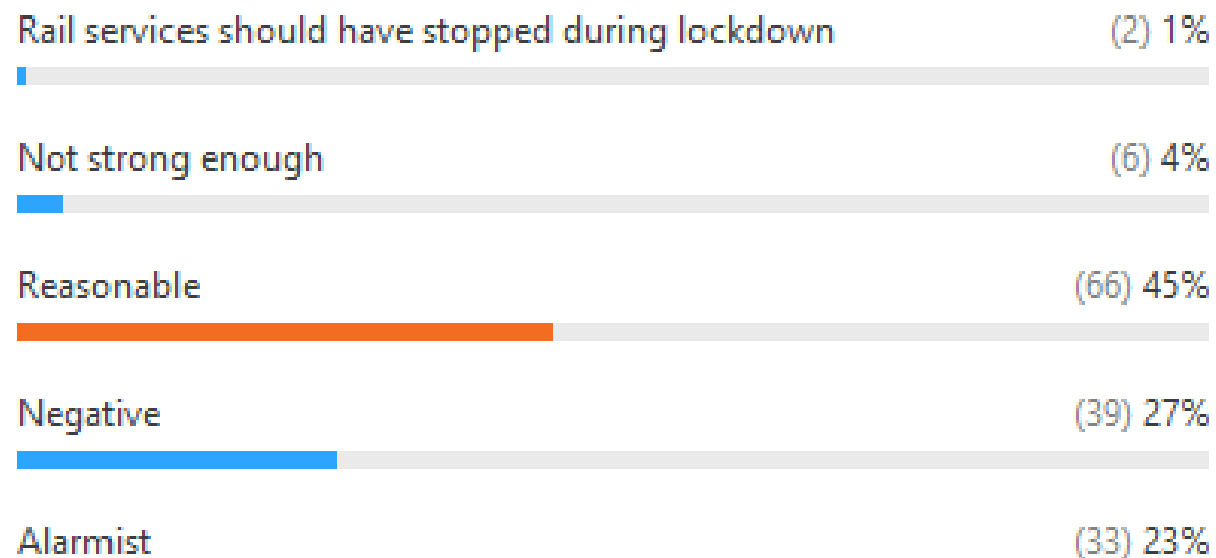
Around 300 Railfuture members, rail user group representatives, rail users and railway staff had registered, but approximately 200 attended. Not everyone voted in every poll question.

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# Results of poll questions at start

## Q1 – Single answer

### 1. How appropriate was the government advice to avoid using public transport?



Railfuture’s official view, based on understanding of the railway and having looked at government and railway behaviour in other European countries, was that the government advice in Britain to use cars rather than take public transport was excessive and unnecessary.

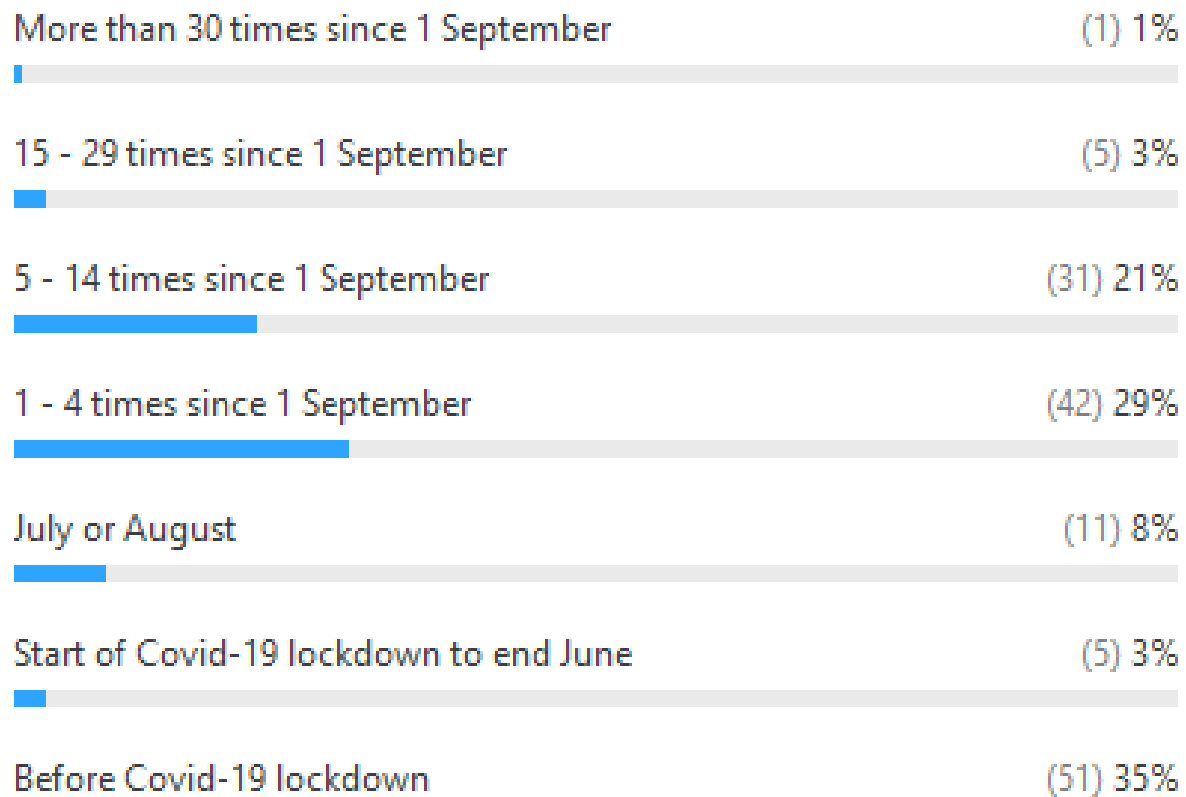
Clearly not all of the webinar attendees felt this strongly.

There was not a question asking if the sustained negative messages were likely to do long-term damage to the railway industry, but many believe that it has.

# Results of poll questions at start

## Q2 – Single answer

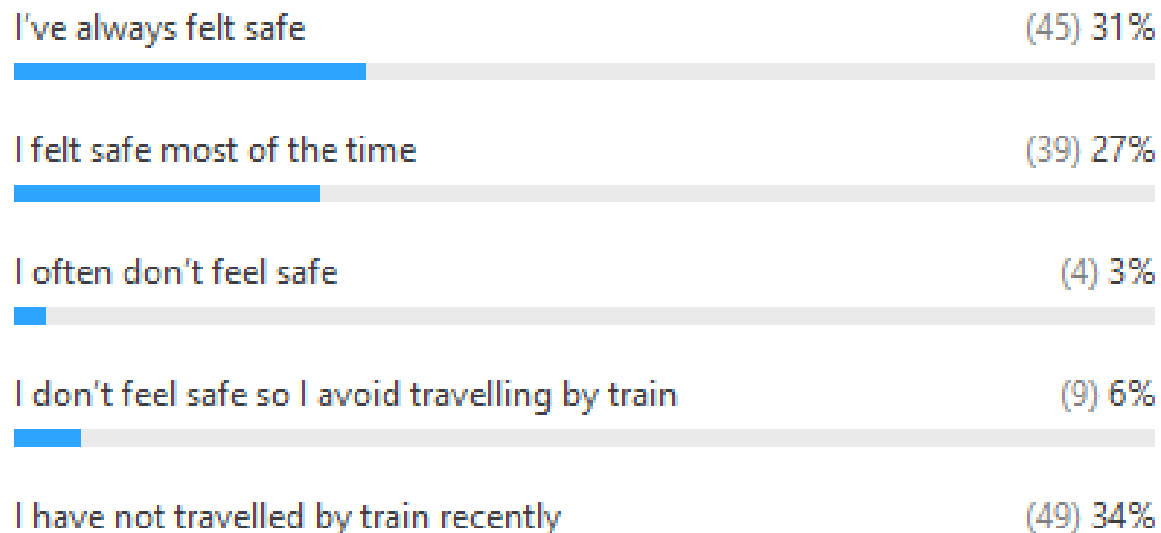
### 2. When did you last travel by train / tube / tram / light rail (in the UK)?



Of those who answered, 54% had been on a train (or other rail system) in the last month (34 days). This is encouraging, although it will be substantially higher than the general population, of course.

More than a third had not taken a journey on a rail-based transport system since the COVID-19 lockdown on 23 March 2020, when people were initially not allowed to leave their homes except for a very limited number of reasons. In England, these restrictions were relaxed in May, although leisure travel was discouraged by government especially on public transport. By 4 July a wide range of shops, along with pubs, cafés and restaurants, had reopened. Scotland and Wales had different rules (including a five-mile travel limit).

### 3. How safe have you felt travelling by train in these times of Covid-19?



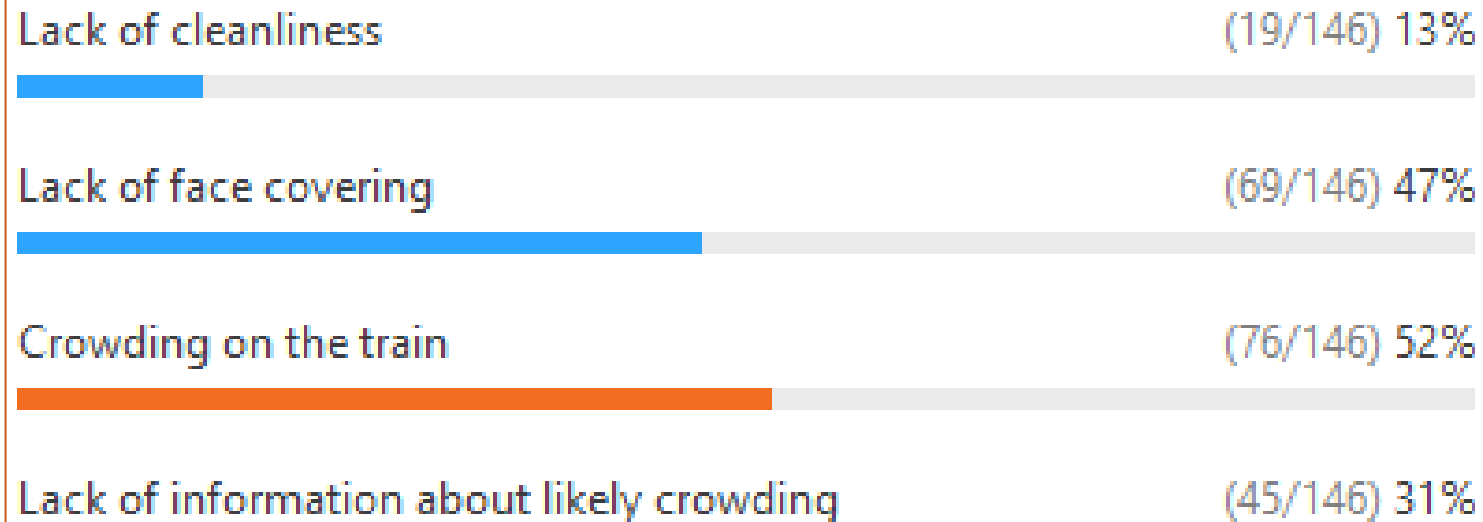
Of those who had travelled by train a clear majority (58%) had felt safe (from catching COVID-19) at all times or most time. This is good news, and presumably shows the success of the rail industry's messages about the changes it has made to encourage/enforce social distancing and enhanced cleaning.

Only 6% appear have say they deliberately avoided the train because of a fear of COVID-19. Of the third who had not travelled by train recently (which probably means since lockdown, based on responses to question 2) many will have had little reason to travel (e.g. working from home or lack of social events), whilst some may have been shielding.

# Results of poll questions at start

## Q4 - Multiple selection answer

### 4. What are your main concerns when travelling by train in these times of Covid-19? (Multiple choice)

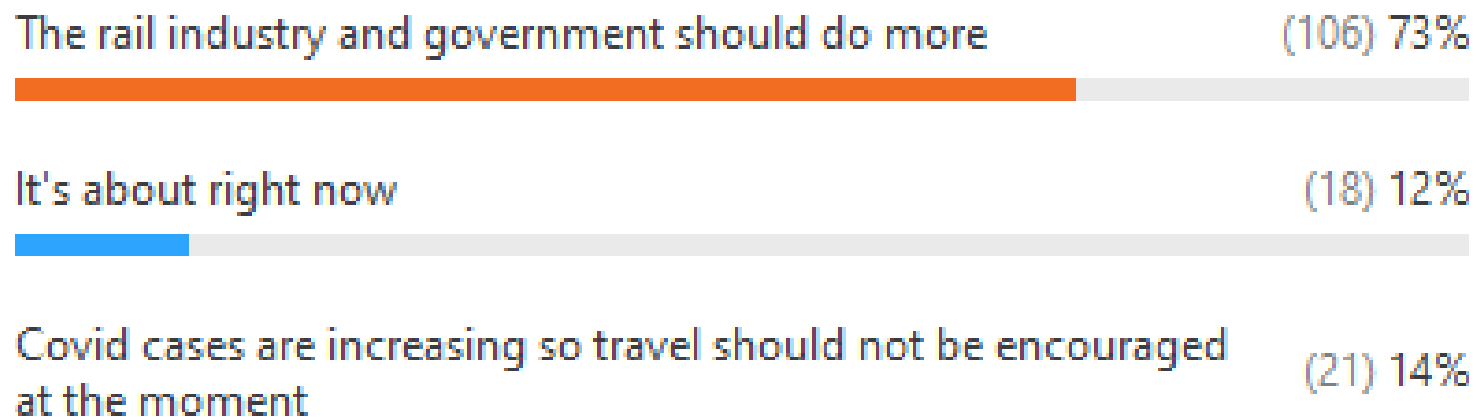


Passengers are clearly concerned about other passengers (and people at stations) not wearing face coverings, which are mandatory (unless exempted based on age or medical condition).

Responses imply that there is a concern about being close to other people on board trains. The operators have been running longer trains, where possible, to create more space.

Lack of cleanliness, such as train exteriors and windows not having been recently cleaned and stained carpets or seats, does not necessarily imply that there is a risk of catching COVID-19.

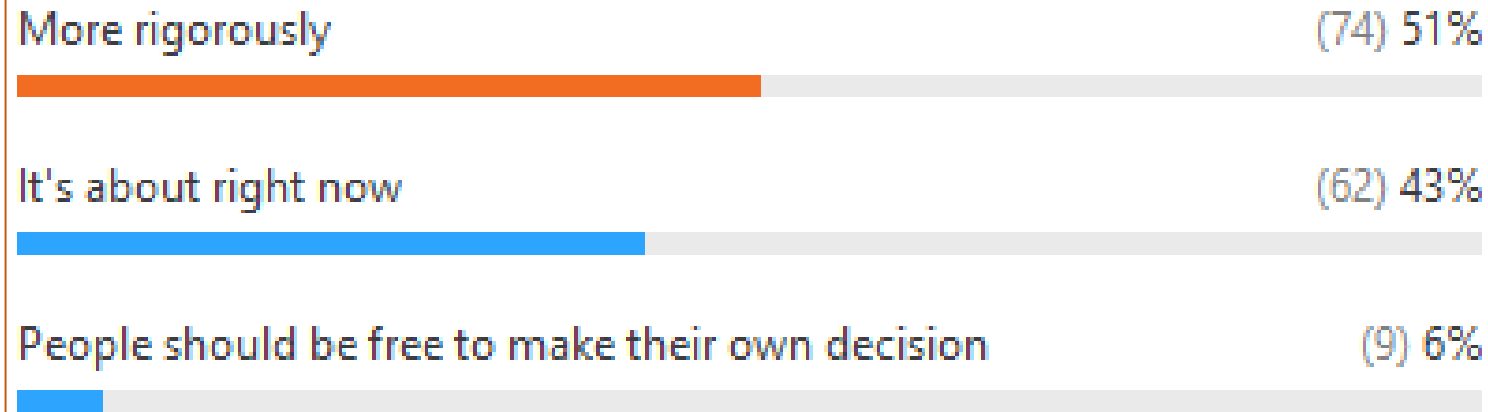
### 1. How much should be done now to attract passengers back to rail?



Unsurprisingly, given the title of the webinar – and around half of the attendees being Railfuture members, who naturally support the railway – the vast majority of people want the government and/or rail industry to do more to promote rail travel, although the question did not ask how soon this should be done.

However, there are clear concerns that encouraging many more people onto trains may risk spreading COVID-19. This is a little disturbing given how much effort is made to make the railway safe, and that a significant cause of infections is in the home.

### 2. How should face covering be policed on trains and stations?



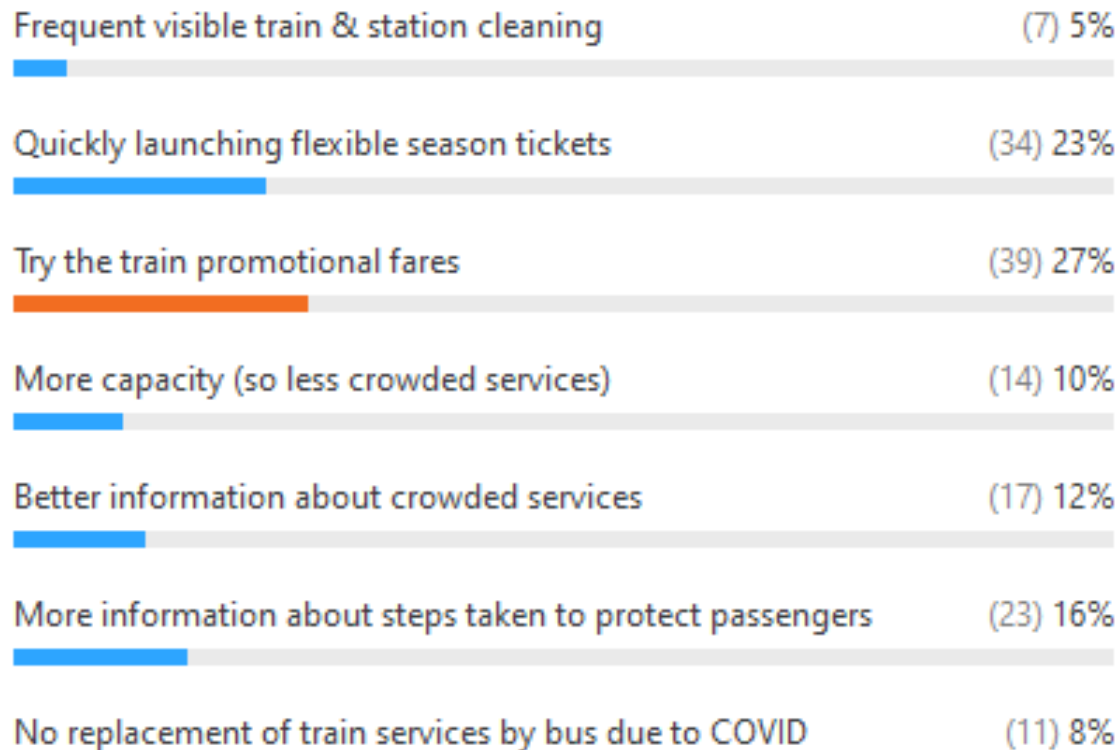
A small majority believe that the wearing of face coverings on the railway should be enforced more strongly. This implies that passengers find the use of face covering to be reassuring and that it protects people. Generally it protects other people from the person wearing it more than the wearer.

There is little support for making face coverings optional or withdrawing their use.

# Results of poll questions at end

## Q3 – Single answer

### 3. What one thing could the rail industry and government do to attract people back to rail?



The audience were asked what they felt should be done (the one most important thing) to attract passengers back to rail so that Railfuture could decide what to ask both the government and rail industry to do.

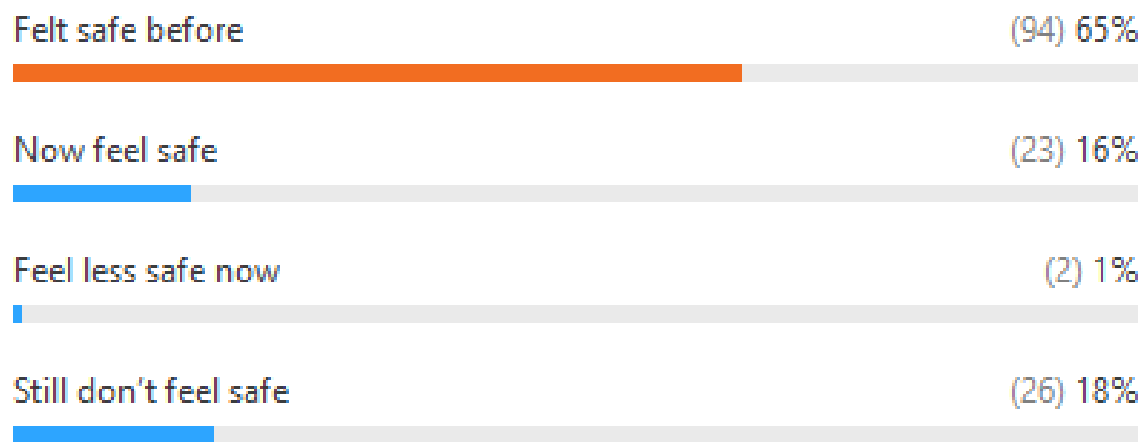
It was no surprise that flexible (probably part-week) season tickets were seen as important for when people stop working from home all week. Railfuture's concern is that the car must not become a cheaper option than rail travel if people travel to work less often.

Leisure travel was seen as vital to the future of the railway, hence the need for promotional fares, perhaps similar to the Eat Out to Help Out scheme run by the government.

The answers convey a lingering fear of catching COVID-19 on trains.



### 4. Has the webinar reassured you that it is safe to travel by train?



Railfuture was eager to know whether attending the webinar had changed anyone's attitude about COVID-19 and the railway.

Several of the presenters, particularly Network Rail, had explained what was being done to make the railway as safe as possible, and Ali Chegini of the RSSB explained that the chance of being infected on a train or at a station is very low.

Around one in six of the audience had been reassured and now felt safe. The railway has been effective at telling rail users that the railway is safe but does not appear to be reaching out to the rest of the population (i.e. those not using trains).



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