

Monday 2 August 2021

Climate change still high on the agenda, but Covid-19 risks long-term reduction in green travel choices

23% say they will use public transport less about a year from now if no restrictions are in place, with 72% of those predicting a switch to car

The Covid-19 pandemic has not caused climate change to drop off the public agenda, with 73% believing it is a high priority that needs addressing, and nearly a third (30%) more worried about climate change now than before the pandemic. However, nearly three-quarters (72%) of those predicting a decline in their public transport use will replace their public transport journeys with car trips. If this happened, 17% of public transport journeys would be replaced by car journeys. Additionally, 10% have bought, or are planning on buying, a car primarily due to Covid-19. These results are from a representative survey of 1,500 adult UK residents undertaken by transport and research consultancy SYSTRA Ltd, between 20th to 25th July 2021.

- Whilst 23% predict a reduction in their public transport use, this demonstrates a bounce-back from June 2020, when 39% predicted a longer-term reduction in public transport use. Positively, over a third (35%) intend to replace their public transport journeys with walking.
- Whilst concern over catching coronavirus will influence 30% when considering using public transport about a year from now, and assuming no Covid restrictions are in place, cost of fares (39%) and concerns over crowding (35%) are predicted to play more significant roles.
- A reduction in total journeys made overall is also likely to be seen, particularly amongst commuters, with a 19% decrease in commuting days over the average month, and double the time spent working from home predicted to be the case about a year from now, compared with pre-Covid restrictions. Commuting patterns may also change, with one in five commuters (24%) willing to commute further as they can do it less frequently, and one in five (19%) having moved or considering a house move due to their reduced commute frequency.
- Changes in travel patterns are also anticipated more widely than the commute, with over a third (36%) believing they will make fewer trips into their local town/city centre compared to before Covid-19 restrictions. Whilst grocery shopping appears more likely to remain in person, other types of shopping are predicted to switch to online compared to before Covid-19 restrictions (40% agree).

Duncan Irons, SYSTRA Sector Director for Climate Emergency says: *“Whilst it’s welcome to see growing confidence in using public transport compared to earlier in the pandemic, many warning signs remain – changes to travel patterns have implications not only for future passenger numbers and how we plan our transport networks, but also underline the challenges facing our high streets; and in a year when the UK will host COP26 in Glasgow, the continued trend towards greater use of cars emphasises the need for policy choices which promote sustainable travel options if we are to deliver on our climate change targets.”*

Evelyn Robertson, SYSTRA's Research Lead, says: *"Covid-19 will have far-reaching impacts on the way we live our lives in the future. These findings highlight the importance of engagement to recognise the influences on attitudes and behaviour – only then can we understand how to best inspire green, convenient and cost-efficient transport choices."*

Link to website article:

<https://www.systra.co.uk/en/newsroom-37/latest-news/article/climate-change-still-high-on-the-agenda>

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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. The survey took place between Tuesday 20th - Sunday 25th July 2021 with a representative sample of 1,525 UK adults.
2. 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.
3. SYSTRA is undertaking further behavioural modelling to understand the wider impacts of the Covid-19 for the UK.
4. 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>
5. In June 2020, SYSTRA undertook research with the UK public to understand their attitudes and anticipated behaviours after Covid-19. The results can be found [here](#)
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.

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8. For more information on forthcoming announcements visit our web site www.systra.co.uk



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