

“More to do” as majority underestimate rail’s cost and environmental benefits

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Just a quarter of people see rail as the cheapest mode of transport when booked four weeks in advance – and less than 10 per cent appreciate the degree to which rail is better for the environment, compared with aviation and car travel.

The figures were compiled after LNER asked independent researchers OnePoll to quiz 2,000 people in London and Edinburgh about their perceptions of rail, aviation and car travel.

OnePoll asked, out of the three modes of transport, what respondents thought would be the best for price, environmental impact, speed and reliability when travelling between Edinburgh and London. The survey asked people to imagine they were travelling alone, in four weeks, with luggage and between city centres, meaning they would need to use connecting transport for a flight.

When the results came in and were independently analysed by consultants Steer, it was found that 75 per cent of people were unaware that rail travel was the cheapest option when compared to aviation and car travel. The average price of aviation travel and the connecting transport to and from the city centres was found to be £105, compared to an LNER service that, on average, was only £72 when booked four weeks in

advance.

Car travel, despite 49 per cent believing it to be the cheapest, averages £86 a journey.

The gap between perception and reality is widest when comparing the carbon emissions of rail with other ways to travel. LNER says its Azuma trains emit 97 per cent fewer emissions than a typical aircraft used on domestic routes. However, less than 10 per cent were able to identify the extent to which this was the case.

When asked what mode of transport would be the fastest, 78 per cent of people did not realise that an LNER service would get you to your central city destination within an hour of an airline, when taking into account the connecting transport required between the airports and city centres.

The survey results revealed further discrepancies between what respondents thought would be the most reliable mode of transport. Analysis, using CAA statistics to compare aviation and car using TomTom profiles, found that respondents did not realise that rail was the most reliable mode of transport. More than half (52 per cent) wrongly identified aviation as the most reliable and 29 per cent believed rail to be the least reliable out of the three modes of transport, when in fact car travel is least reliable.

David Horne, Managing Director of LNER, said: "This is important research for guiding how we can all encourage more people to choose the most environmentally responsible way to travel – by rail. We know that train travel is affordable, fast, reliable and the greenest way to travel, yet this independent analysis has revealed that too few people are aware of this reality. The rail industry certainly has more to do to make people aware of the reality, but this is also a job for wider society too, to help the UK reach its net zero targets.

"We hope that by promoting the reality of rail travel we can encourage more people to choose and think rail. By doing so, we will reduce our carbon footprint and collectively make a real difference as we all strive to reach net zero."

Mike Goggin, managing director at Steer, said: "This comparison between the three main modes of domestic transport shows a clear gap between potential customers' perception of travel between London and Edinburgh and the reality. It demonstrates that the consumer does not have a good understanding of how well rail performs in terms of price, journey time and reliability, and while there is some recognition that LNER clearly performs best in terms of carbon emissions, most are not aware of the magnitude of the difference. A better understanding will help improve modal shift and a reduction in overall emissions from transport."

Picture credit: LNER