

Research shows Brits lead the way in choosing train over plane for long-distance travel

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A new global survey, commissioned by [Hitachi Rail](#) and carried out by [Savanta ComRes](#), shows that British people are the most likely in the world to choose to travel by train over car or plane for long-distance journeys.

The December 2023 study found that 46 per cent of Londoners prefer to travel long-distance by train (versus a global average of 34 per cent), compared to 41 per cent by car and just 10 per cent via short haul flights.

Respondents also indicated that train travel will play an increasingly important role in their future travel. More than a third (38 per cent) believe that they will travel more by train over the next five years, far outstripping the figures for car travel (18 per cent) and short haul flights (3 per cent). This data is important in the context of the return and growth of the UK inter-city leisure market.[1]

The survey collected data from 12,000 people in 12 different cities around the world, including London, Milan, Berlin, Paris, Washington D.C., San Francisco, Singapore, Dubai and Sydney. It asked respondents to share their sentiment towards a range of travel options for journeys taking longer than two and a half

hours. By focusing the UK data collection on London, the study captures the views of users where a significant amount of intercity routes either begin or end their journeys at London stations.

The study found a substantial majority (60 per cent) of Londoners would even support banning short-haul flights where high-speed rail alternatives exist. A similar policy was introduced in France last year, as European countries increasingly explore how to promote green sustainable travel.

The survey also revealed the factors in determining long-distance travel choices to be cost, convenience, and comfort, with most car or plane users willing to switch to train if it was faster or cheaper. Those who already prefer long-distance travel by train said they were likely to stick to their preference even if presented with cheaper or quicker alternatives.

When asked to consider funding models, a majority (51%) of Londoners supported the idea of increased air taxes if they helped grow high speed rail options in the UK.

Where high speed routes compete to deliver intercity leisure and business travel in the UK, there is great evidence of success. For example, only a year into the running of the Hitachi Rail-manufactured Lumo fleet, operated by FirstGroup, between London and Edinburgh, the service had attracted one million passengers and overtaken air travel.

Hitachi Rail manufactured high speed intercity fleets span key business and leisure routes across much of the UK and are renowned for their reliability and excellence. In 2023, Hitachi Rail's fleets achieved three different awards at the Golden Spanner Awards, recognising reliability.

Jim Brewin, Chief Director of UK & Ireland at Hitachi Rail, said: "Today's research underlines the incredible value of reliable, high speed intercity rail travel in the UK. We know that a major shift to rail is required if we are to meet our Net Zero targets and so it is fantastic to see the UK lead the way globally for people choosing to travel by train, rather than by plane or car for long distance journeys.

"The data also tells us that more and more people expect to make the transition to more long-distance train travel in the next five years. There are clear signs that there is consumer appetite for rail. Matching that appetite with investment in rail will deliver the seamless and sustainable transport that passengers demand."

Darren Caplan, [Railway Industry Association](#) Chief Executive, said: "It is encouraging that so many in the UK want to travel long distance by rail, and points to the fact that intercity trains provide quality time to work, rest or play as part of the journey. It is also positive that more than a third of those in this survey intend to travel more by train in the future. This, alongside a positive passenger bounceback following the pandemic and recent figures on UK population growth, mean that future demand for rail travel is going to be strong. And it is another reminder that we need to invest today to build the network capacity for tomorrow."

[1] UK leisure market was responsible for 12 per cent revenue growth on Britain's railways in 2023, Britain's railways experience 10 per cent year-on-year revenue growth (gbrrtt.co.uk)