

Tests show no traces of COVID-19 at four major railway stations

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Passengers can travel in confidence after university academics found no traces of the COVID-19 virus during two rounds of testing at four of the country's largest railway stations.

Places passengers touch regularly like escalator handrails, ticket machines, and benches were swabbed, and hour-long air samples taken on station concourses at London Euston, Birmingham New Street, Liverpool Lime Street and Manchester Piccadilly stations in January and June.

The same tests were repeated on several inter-city train routes*.

Between the testing dates passenger numbers across all four stations rose by 287%.

All lab tests by Imperial College London showed no Covid-19 contamination of any surface tested or airborne particles of the virus in station or on trains.

The conclusions from the independent report commissioned by Network Rail say enhanced cleaning methods across the rail industry and widespread wearing of face coverings by passengers are key reasons

for the negative results.

Rob Mole, senior programme manager for Network Rail's COVID response, said: "Station cleaning teams and train staff have made it their mission to keep passengers safe during the pandemic and this is proof their dedicated approach works.

"We want all passengers to travel in confidence on the railway network and we will keep doing our part by rigorously cleaning trains and stations. We ask passengers to do their bit too by wearing face coverings while travelling out of respect for others so we can all stop the spread of Covid-19."

David Green, senior research fellow at Imperial College London, said: "In the same way that a swab is used to take a COVID-19 test in the nose and throat and sent to the lab, we use a filter to collect any virus particles in the air and swabs to collect viruses on surfaces.

"This approach provides a way of quantifying the amount of virus circulating in these public environments and the effect of mitigation strategies like cleaning and wearing face coverings. This is part of a wider programme of work with the public transport sector to understand where this virus is most prevalent so that we can return to pre-pandemic activities as safely as possible."

Enhanced cleaning procedures will remain in place with hand sanitiser and face masks available at stations to stop the spread of Covid-19.

Passengers who can are expected to wear a face covering in stations and on trains so everyone can travel in confidence.

People should continue to plan ahead, sanitise their hands regularly and open a train window while travelling if possible.

To find out more about what Network Rail is doing to stop the spread of COVID-19 visit:

<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/coronavirus/>.

*Full list of train services tested

January

12 January 2021 - Avanti West Coast service from London Euston to Birmingham

14 January 2021 - Northern service from Manchester Piccadilly to Liverpool Lime Street

June

7 June 2021 - Avanti West Coast service from London Euston to Birmingham

8 June 2021 - CrossCountry service from Birmingham New Street to Manchester

10 June 2021 – Avanti West Coast service from Liverpool Lime Street to London Euston

The testing explained

Surface testing

Each swab covered an area of approximately 25cm² which was then placed in a vial containing virus transportation medium.

Air samples

Filter samples were taken using a high-volume sampler for 1 hour on the station concourse, or the duration of the train journey. After sampling the filters were placed in a vial containing virus transportation medium.

Samples were kept cold following sampling and transported via refrigerated transport to the laboratory overnight.

Photo credit: Network Rail