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French business travellers clearly prefer trains to other means of transport

The majority of business travellers believe that their company should make rail their preferred means of transport, for trips of up to 8 hours, according to a new survey from the Travel Smart campaign conducted by Corporate Mobilities and Opinion Way.

1. Summary

Travel Smart, a global campaign coordinated by T&E, encourages companies to reduce the emissions associated with their business travel. To better understand their employees' behavior, the campaign commissioned a survey from Corporate Mobilities and OpinionWay in November 2024, on the opinions of French business travellers regarding their use of the train and their company's policies as a quick and efficient way to reduce emissions from business flights.

The results, gathered from a representative sample of 510 respondents, show a clear preference for rail over other means of transport:

1. According to half of travellers, their company, whatever its size, is deploying initiatives to limit carbon emissions from business travel.

50% of business travellers say their company has implemented the government's energy savings plan, which asks companies to use the train by default for journeys of up to 4 hours. Companies are also deploying other initiatives, such as a sustainable travel policy, CO2 reduction targets and a carbon budget, all of which encourage the use of trains.

2. The majority of business travellers believe that their company should make rail travel the required means of transport, for trips of up to 8 hours.

More than 80% of business travellers are either completely in favour or in favour of travel policies that require them to take the train for up to 4 hours. This proportion rises to 64% between 4 hours and 6 hours' travel time, and 54% between 6 hours and 8 hours. Even for journeys of more than 8 hours, the percentage of travellers who are completely in favor or in favor is 45%.

3. For 81% of business travellers, the train is considered a more productive means of transport than other modes.

81% of business travellers say they are more productive while in the train than by other means of transport. This proportion rises to 85% for international business travellers.

2. Survey methodology

The survey was commissioned by the Travel Smart campaign, and carried out by Corporate Mobilities in association with the opinion and market research institute OpinionWay:

- Survey carried out online, via Access Panel, from 13 to 28 November 2024, among 510 business travellers employed full-time in an organisation with at least 250 employees and having made business trips of more than 200 km round trip over the past 12 months, regardless of the timing (weekday or weekend).
 - 368 travellers working for a medium-sized enterprise (250 to 4999 employees)
 - 142 travellers working for a large enterprise (5,000 employees or more)
- The representativeness of the sample was ensured using the quota method on the basis of gender, age and region.
- This survey, with a specific focus on train use, is part of a wider programme, the Observatoire des Mobilités Professionnelles, conducted since 2020 by Corporate Mobilities and OpinionWay.

3. Main results of the survey

The results of the survey reveal that French business travellers support their employer's initiatives to limit the carbon impact of business travel, but are also looking for more significant advances.

For example, 86% of business travellers think that their company should set a target to reduce emissions from business travel, and 79% say they would personally ask their company to set a target to reduce emissions from business travel.

At the same time, companies are deploying numerous solutions to reduce their business travel emissions:

- 36% of travellers say their company has implemented a policy that favours the use of modes of transport that save energy and CO2 (train);
- 32% of travellers say their company has put into place systems that show the total journey time, door-to-door and including requirements to be in advance, so that they can compare travel modes;
- 28% of travellers say their company has put into place systems that allow them to choose between different travel alternatives based on the overall cost, carbon footprint and door-to-door travel time of each trip;
- 24% of travellers say their company uses a carbon budget.

3.1 For more than ¾ of business travellers, the train combines a number of advantages.

- A very large majority (81%) consider that they have greater peace of mind (punctuality, absence of transfers, etc.), more efficient means of communication (83%), a greater sense of security (79%) and a more quiet environment (79%) than in other means of transport.
- All these factors contribute to train journeys being more “relaxed” (85%) and more productive (81%) than in other means of transport.

NB : the % figures shown here include “completely agree” and “tend to agree” opinions.

3.2 ⅔ of business travellers devote their travel time in the train exclusively or mostly to their work.

- Train journeys are exclusively devoted to business activities for 16% of passengers, and as a priority for 49% of them.
- 24% of travellers devote their travel time to primarily personal activities (resting, reading, viewing...) while keeping a little time for professional activities.
- 6% of travellers spend their journey time on strictly personal activities.

3.3 Business travellers are asking for incentives from their employers to privilege the train.

The vast majority of business travellers are inclined to use the train, and consider that the following measures by their company would encourage them to take the train more often for their business trips:

- Ability to have a larger train travel budget (82% “very interested” and “rather interested”)
- Ability to travel in first class as an incentive to change modes of transport (77% “very interested” and “rather interested”)
- Ability to travel by train even if the fare is more expensive (73% “very interested” and “rather interested”)

In addition to their expectations of their employer, 86% of passengers are also “very interested” and “rather interested” in the possibility of easily booking a single ticket for cross-border rail travel.

3.4 Finally, international travellers and travellers working for companies committed to responsible business practices are even more likely to use the train.

For the vast majority of items analysed, the study reveals two accelerating factors.

- Passengers who travel both internationally as well as domestically are more “clear-cut” in their opinions than purely domestic travellers. For example, 86% of them are ready to ask their company to set a target to reduce their travel-related CO2 emissions (vs. 73% for domestic travellers).
These same travellers are in favor of easy booking of cross-border tickets, the possibility of travelling by train even if the journey is more expensive, or in first class, with a difference of at least 8 points compared to strictly domestic travellers.
- Passengers whose companies have implemented a sustainable mobility policy, an energy savings plan, CO2 reduction targets or a carbon budget have structurally higher opinions than those of the entire surveyed base. For example, the results of travellers working for this type of company are systematically 8 to 10 points higher than the overall results on using the train as the default means of transport, whatever the journey time, or on the establishment of a carbon budget.

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About T&E:

T&E is an organisation based in Brussels that promotes clean transport and energy. The organisation's vision for the coming years is to establish a zero-emission transportation and energy system that is affordable, circular and has minimal impacts on our health and the environment.

About Travel Smart:

Travel Smart is a global campaign led by T&E within a coalition of partners across Europe, North America and Asia aiming at reducing corporate air travel emissions, as the most effective way to significantly reduce aviation's climate impacts in the present decade.

Find out more on [Travel Smart](#) or follow us on [LinkedIn](#)

About Corporate Mobilities:

As a Mobility Management Company, we help:

- providers of mobility to better understand the practices of end-users of their products or services, in order to adapt their offers, create content and solve operational problems.
- companies using mobility services, to design and deploy responsible mobility strategies.

Our unique approach is based on 360° expertise in the 3 areas of corporate mobility: day-to-day travel, business travel and vehicle fleets.

Our solutions are based on an exclusive combination of data science, behavioral science and expertise in the mobility sector.

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About OpinionWay:

Founded in 2000 and a pioneer in the digitalisation of research, OpinionWay has been a forerunner in renewing the practices of the marketing and opinion research profession. Our mission: to make the world intelligible so that we can act today and imagine tomorrow.

With continuous growth since its creation, the company has never stopped opening up to new horizons to better address all marketing and societal issues, BtoC & BtoB, by integrating Social Media Intelligence, smart data exploitation, creative co-construction dynamics, community approaches, text mining and storytelling into its methodologies.

OpinionWay received two awards in recognition of this dynamic innovation at the Trophées Etudes & Innovations 2023: the GOLD award in the “Consumer Satisfaction/Customer Journey and Experience” category, and the SILVER award in the “Trends and Foresight” category. The Group operates on all five continents, with offices in France (Paris, Bordeaux), North Africa (Morocco), Eastern Europe (Poland), Sub-Saharan Africa (Ivory Coast) and more recently in Belgium with Polling Europe. An active member of Esomar, the group has been ISO 20252 certified by AFNOR since 2009 (with the aim of improving customer satisfaction and employee development).