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Two-in-five young adults' Christmas travel plans disrupted by rail strikes

Nearly two-in-five people aged 18 to 24 (39%) say their festive travel plans have been disrupted as a result of the rail strikes – more than any other age group – with the majority of these instead turning to the car, new RAC research has found.*

The survey, conducted this week among 2,000 people, found that young adults are far more likely to be affected by the latest industrial action than those in other age groups. The almost four-in-10 18 to 24s who say they have

had their Christmas plans thrown into disarray compares to an average of 21% across all age groups, with just 12% of respondents aged 65 and over saying they've been affected.

Of those 18 to 24-year-olds whose plans have been upset by the strikes, the majority are turning to the private car with 28% of this group planning to drive themselves and a further 23% getting a lift from someone else. Fifteen per cent say they will travel by other means – such as by coach – with just 10% rebooking onto another train on a non-strike day. The remaining 23%, however, do not yet know how they will get to their intended destinations in time for Christmas.

Dependency on using the car in the absence of the trains running is also prevalent among most other age groups – 52% of those affected by the strikes aged 25 to 34 will be driving or getting a lift instead, a figure which is similar to those aged 45 to 54 (53%) and aged 55 to 64 (54%). Across all ages, relatively few people say they will either book onto a different train or catch a coach instead.

Perhaps most stark of all, however, is the proportion of people who face having their Christmas travel plans ruined by the strikes altogether. More than a quarter of people (27%) whose plans have been affected don't yet have an alternative means of travelling arranged with as many as a third (33%) in the 65 and older age group saying this is the case.

RAC spokesman Rod Dennis said:

“With just over a week until the big day, so many people's plans have been thrown into disarray as a result of the industrial action affecting vast swathes of the railway. While some people do intend to rebook onto different trains, the proportion is relatively small and, as our research shows, it's once again the private car that is coming to the rescue of so many people this Christmas.

“But it's those with access to a car who are the lucky ones. Things are distinctly less rosy for people who don't, with a large proportion of these currently without a plan for how they'll make their Christmas getaways this year. Short of booking an urgent coach ticket or cancelling their plans altogether, we have to hope that friends or family members are in a position to help them out with a last-minute offer of a lift.

“There’s no question that the strikes are going to make this year’s Christmas getaway on the roads busier than normal this year with. Our advice is to plan ahead and avoid travelling at peak times of the day if possible.”

* Research conducted for the RAC among 2,007 UK adults on 12 December 2022. A nationally representative survey. Proportions who said they are affected by the strikes as follows: All age groups 21%; 18-24 39%; 25-34 28%; 35-44 19%; 45-54 19%; 55-64 16%; 65+ 13%

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