Transport Focus

Train punctuality – the passenger perspective

2 March 2017

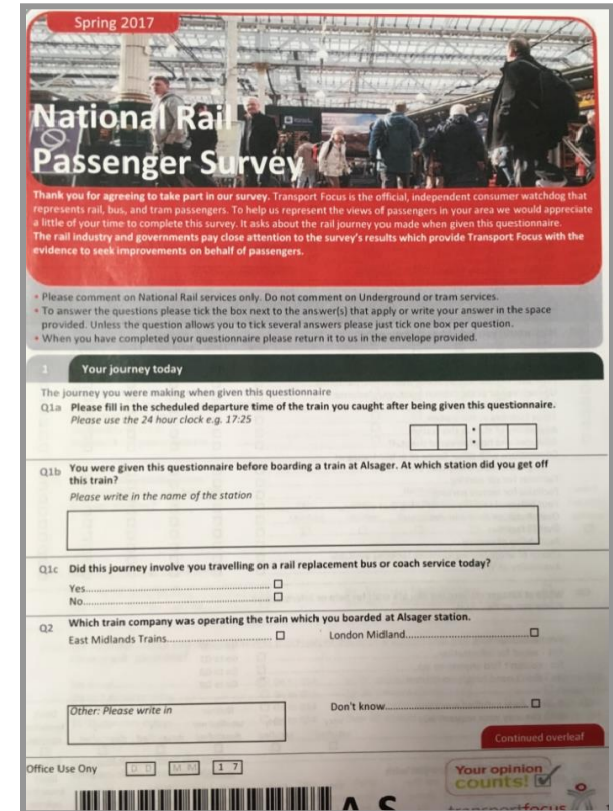Anthony Smith,

Chief Executive

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Transport Focus

- Independent transport user watchdog
- Rail passengers in Great Britain
- Bus, coach & tram passengers in England, outside London
- All users of the Strategic Road Network in England
  - All means motorcyclists, cyclists, pedestrians, freight and coach companies – plus drivers of all types of vehicle

- We are a *consumer* organisation, driven by what the transport user needs and wants
- We are *evidence-based* – what we advocate is based on research among users
- Our aim is to be *useful* to those who use, provide and fund transport services

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National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS)

- The survey has been in existence for 15 years during which time it has evolved in line with changes in the industry, passenger behaviour and stakeholder expectations.

- We survey more than 60,000 passengers a year to produce the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS).

- In our last wave Autumn 2016 we spoke to our millionth passenger.

- Passenger opinions of train services are collected twice a year from a representative sample of journeys.

- It is the largest published rail passenger satisfaction survey in the world.

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Key results by train company

Train Company	Punctuality/reliability
Arriva Trains Wales	80
c2c	83
Chiltern Railways	88
Cross Country	80
East Midlands Trains	82
Gatwick Express	73
Grand Central	82
Great Northern	64
Great Western Railway	74
Greater Anglia	73
Heathrow Connect	69
Heathrow Express	93
Hull Trains	95
London Midland	77
London Overground	82
Merseyrail	93
Northern	80
ScotRail	80
South West Trains	74
Southeastern	68
Southern	44
TfL Rail	79
Thameslink	56
TransPennine Express	81
Virgin Trains	89
Virgin Trains East Coast	89

Tabs: Overall satisf... | Value for mo... | Overall satisf... | Punctuality/r... | Room to sit o... | How well del...

NRPS Autumn 2016 wave 35

No significant improvements in satisfaction for any train operator this year.

30%

Southern passengers on peak trains were satisfied with how punctual their train was.

£ 12%

Gatwick Express passengers on peak trains thought their ticket was value for money.

6%

decline in punctuality on ScotRail.

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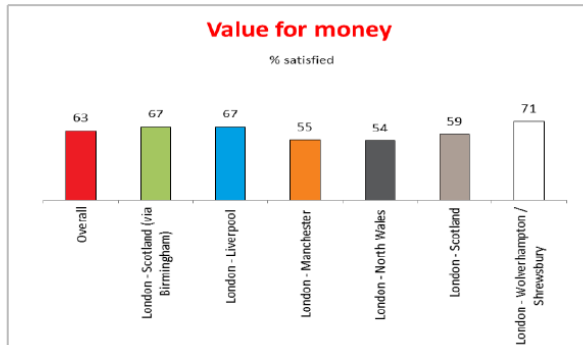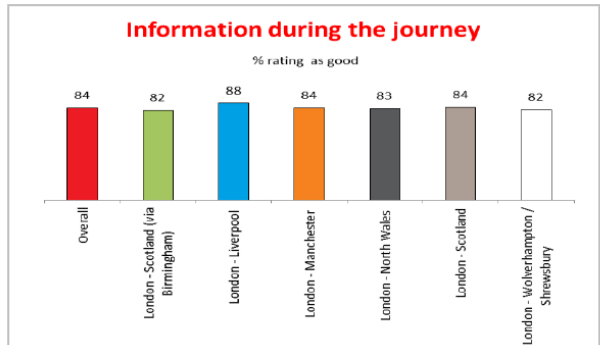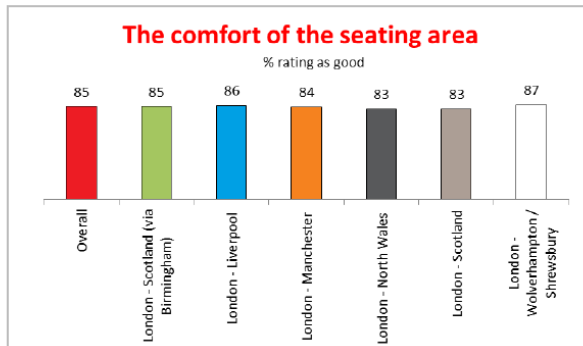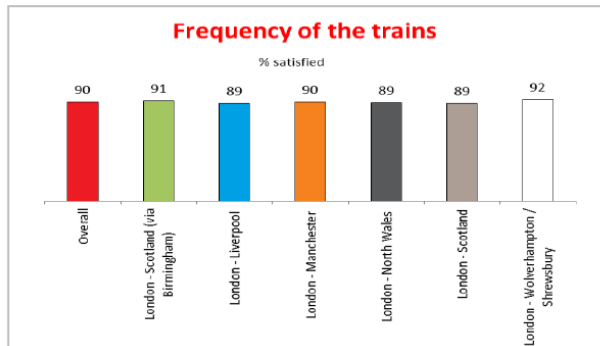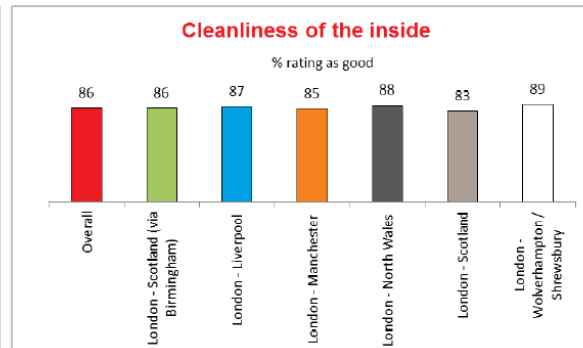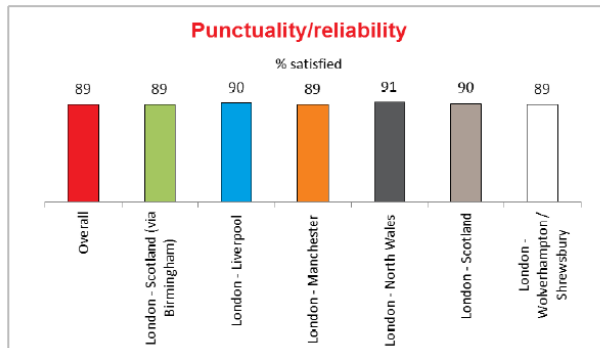
NRPS Autumn 2016 - Virgin Trains

Key drivers/multivariate analysis

Identifies which of the 33 NRPS station and train factors are most important in determining overall customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

National drivers of passenger satisfaction
(NRPS 2016, Spring & Autumn)

National drivers of passenger dissatisfaction
(NRPS 2016, Spring & Autumn)
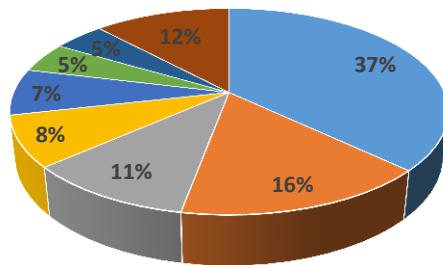
- Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)
- The cleanliness of the inside of the train
- The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)
- The frequency of the trains on that route
- The ease of being able to get on and off the train
- The comfort of the seating area
- Sufficient room for all the passengers to sit/stand on the train
- 14 individual attributes, each below 5%

Drivers of customer <u>dissatisfaction</u> – (size shows share of overall satisfaction due to factor)

- How train company dealt with these delays
- Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)
- The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)
- The ease of being able to get on and off the train
- 20 individual attributes, each below 5%

Drivers of satisfaction (% of overall satisfaction explained by each factor). NRPS autumn 2015/spring 2015

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Train punctuality:
the passenger perspective

November 2015

Train punctuality: the passenger perspective

Background

- Train performance in Britain is subject to a number of quality service targets covering a range of aspects of the service which the railways provide.

- These targets are set by a process involving the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the rail industry itself and the Westminster and Edinburgh governments.

- To help inform the development of these targets, Transport Focus and the ORR have commissioned research to ensure that passengers' priorities for train performance are clearly understood and inform the above process.

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What makes for a "successful" journey?

- Reliability is passengers' *minimum* requirement from their train service
- Passengers define reliability primarily in terms of punctuality and secondarily in terms of not being cancelled or disrupted (reflecting the frequency with which these issues are typically experienced)

Staff

Station environment

Train environment

Getting a seat

Punctual service

Quality drivers

Hygiene factors
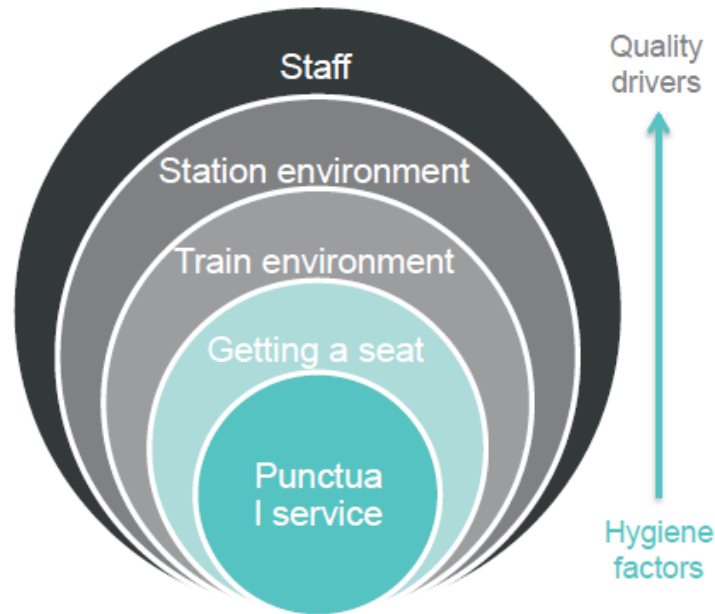
- Other than a reliable service, a range of additional factors inform passengers' assessment of what makes for a successful journey
- These factors, such as getting a seat as well as a clean and safe environment on the train and at the station, can enhance the extent to which the journey is rated positively
- But these factors alone (i.e. in the absence of a punctual service) will not result in a successful journey

- The importance of these factors of course varies by journey type
- For example on a longer distance business/leisure journey, getting a seat is almost expected and the lack of it can severely influence satisfaction
- However, on a shorter commuter trip in peak hours passengers do not necessarily expect to get a seat, so getting one can create considerable delight.

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Reliability is key to TOCs building trust

- Those satisfied with the punctuality of their train service are more likely to trust the TOC

- For commuters, punctuality is most important to building trust, given that an on-time service is most desired

- For business/leisure passengers, emotional factors are also cited as being key to establishing trust, such as staff engagement, quality of rolling stock and customer service.
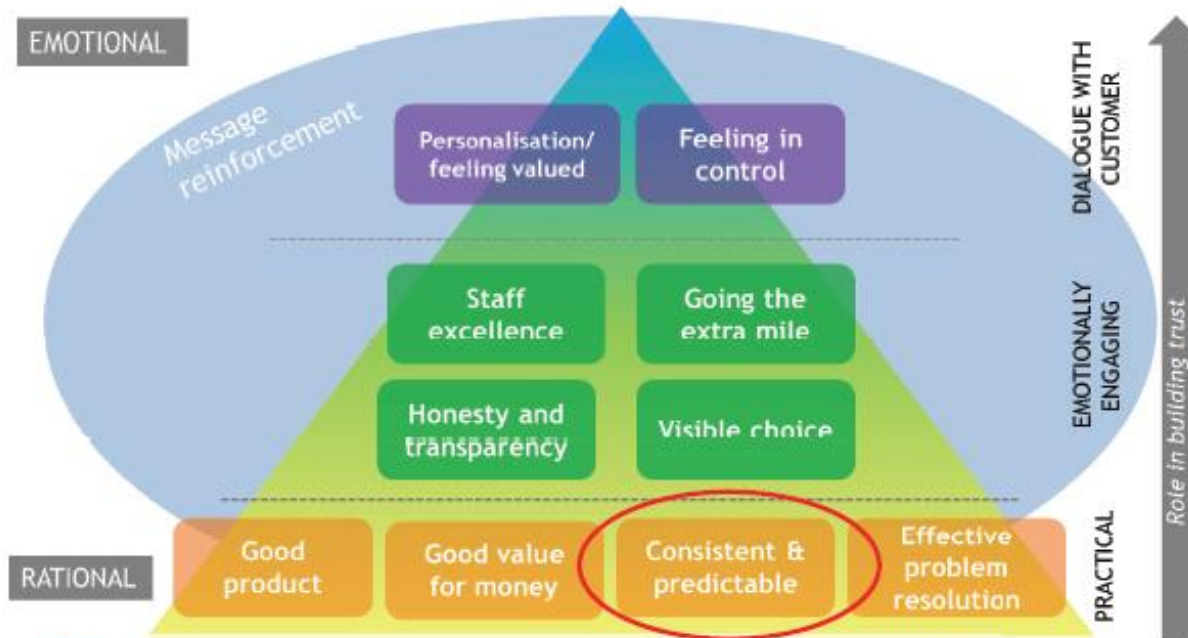
Detailed view: reaction to calculation of punctuality targets

- On balance, most passengers believe that all trains should count equally towards punctuality targets.
  - They argue that everyone has made the same contract with the TOC and each journey should have the same weight.

- There is some argument (particularly by commuters) that journeys should be weighted by passenger numbers
  - And some suspicion that targets might be massaged by operators running trains on 'easy' services to 'up' the average.

- However, also believe that weighting by passenger numbers might introduce perverse incentives
  - If targets are skewed to busy trains, it is feared that the train companies may drop service standards on quieter services and not strive to ensure optimum punctuality.

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Key findings

- 82% of passengers were satisfied with punctuality when their train arrived early or within 59 seconds of the trains public timetable.
    - This can vary depending on train purpose: 75% of commuters were satisfied with punctuality when on time or early, while 94% of leisure and 91% of business passengers were satisfied with punctuality when on time.
- A possible reason for this variation is that commuters assessment of their journey 'today' is a cumulative assessment of all past experiences of using that train service.
- For every minute of lateness, passenger satisfaction with punctuality declined by 3 percentage points.
    - This also varies by journey purpose: commuter declined by 5 percentage points per 1 minute of lateness, while leisure declined by 1 percentage point per 1 minute of lateness.
- Therefore some passenger satisfaction is 'lost' when trains are officially on time according to PPM as the train is late from the passenger perspective.
- For every minute of lateness, *overall* satisfaction declines by 1.5 percentage point per minute.
    - Among commuters the decline is steeper at 3 percentage points per minute.
- This means that *overall* satisfaction for a train that is 4mins 59 seconds late (which is on time according to PPM) will have fallen by over 6 percentage points.

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- Commuters are less tolerant of lateness than business and leisure passengers; only 74.9% of commuters are satisfied with punctuality when their train is on time.
- 94% of leisure passengers are satisfied when their train is on time.
- For every minute of lateness, commuters' satisfaction with punctuality declines by 5 percentage points which suggests that those passengers who travel more frequently are influenced by previous punctuality experiences.
- Leisure passengers satisfaction with punctuality decreases by just 1 percentage point for every minute of lateness.
- The rate of decline for leisure passengers increases at the 8 minute mark, indicating that leisure passengers have heightened awareness of lateness from this point.

Changes in satisfaction with punctuality with an increase in minutes of lateness (by journey purpose)

Changes in overall satisfaction with an increase in minutes of lateness

Y-axis: Proportion of passengers satisfied (0% – 100%)
X-axis: Lateness (minutes) (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10-11, 12-15)

NRPS respondents satisfaction with punctuality and overall satisfaction

Legend: ■ Overall satisfaction ■ Satisfaction with punctuality

Year	Overall satisfaction	Satisfaction with punctuality
2012	74%	70%
2013	78%	75%
2014	80%	76%

Y-axis: Proportion of passengers satisfied (0% – 100%)
X-axis: Year

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Example of an 'arrivals curve'

Proportion of trains vs. Lateness in minutes
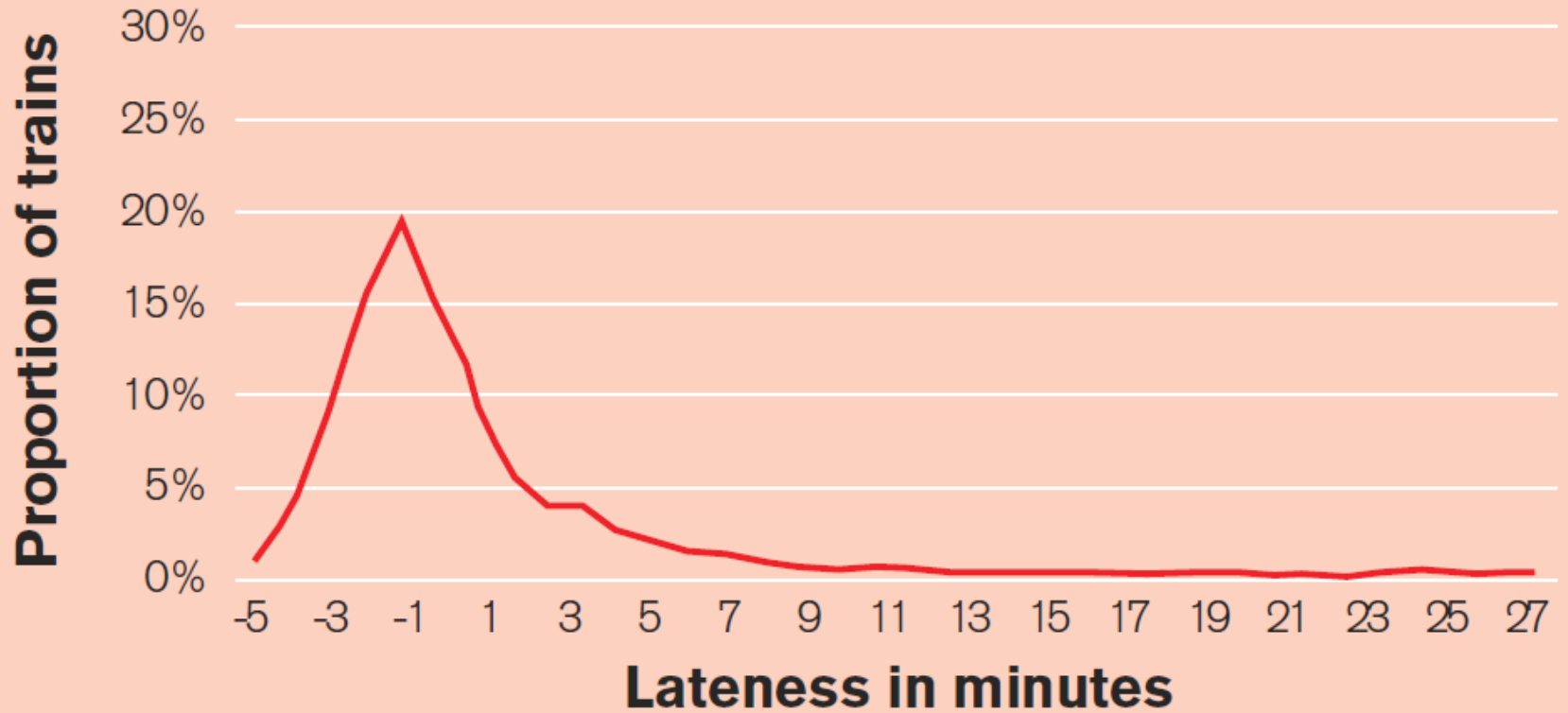
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Summary

- When it comes to performance, a main objective for 2019-2024 should be to markedly improve true 'on time' punctuality across the rail network, including at intermediate stations.

- Transport Focus advocates a move away from PPM as the sole measure of success. It is not trusted by passengers and does not drive sufficient focus on punctuality as passengers define it.

- Whatever replaces PPM must strongly incentivise 'right time' punctuality, but seek to avoid unintended consequences of having a different, more demanding, sole measure of success.

- There should be a separate punctuality target for peak services to incentivise the industry to get commuters to and from work on time.

  - Given that passengers are concerned about reducing the incentive to run off-peak trains on this, this is preferable to weighting trains by volume of passengers within punctuality statistics.

- To give a more meaningful picture, the industry should make it easy for passengers to see a graduated picture of how often their train is 'right time'.

- The industry should be more transparent and granular with all performance information.

- There should be a review of the Cancellations and Significant Lateness measure and targets with a view to reducing the definition of 'significant lateness'.

- The industry should tackle causes of distrust in statistics by: eliminating differences between the public timetable and the working timetable, reforming the system whereby cancelations made before 22:00 the day before do not count as cancelations in statistics; and being transparent about the number of days on which a formal amended timetable operated and about the number of trains involved.

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