



OFFICE OF RAIL REGULATION

Passenger Rail Service Satisfaction quality report

Complaints, appeals and National Rail Enquiries (NRE)

Release date: 17 October 2013

C o n t e n t s

Introduction	3
Historical background	5
Relevance	9
Accuracy	10
Timeliness and punctuality	12
Accessibility and clarity	13
Coherence and comparability	15
Trade-offs between output quality components	16
Assessment of user needs and perceptions	17
Performance, cost and respondent burden	19
Confidentiality, transparency and security	20
Summary of methods used to compile the output	21
Quality performance indicators table	22

Introduction

This report is part of a series of thematic quality reports for the rail statistics data, introduced by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) to comply with principle 4 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics¹.

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

These quality reports pull together the key qualitative information on relevance, accuracy and reliability, timeliness and punctuality, accessibility and clarity and coherence and comparability. It also includes information on some additional quality principles on user needs and perceptions, confidentiality, transparency and security of data. Where possible we have also included some quantitative quality performance indicators within each report.

Passenger rail service satisfaction is measured using three metrics:

Complaints – any expression of dissatisfaction by a customer or potential customer about service delivery or about company or industry policy. Train operating companies record and report complaints made by letter, fax, e-mail, pre-printed forms, telephone meet the manager and online forums. Complaints data are presented by rate, category and train operating company.

Appeals – appeals taken up by the independent passenger watchdogs, Passenger Focus or London TravelWatch, on behalf of passengers whose initial complaint to the train operating company was not resolved to their satisfaction. Appeals data are presented by category and train operating company.

¹ Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality. Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices. The Code of Practice can be accessed here <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

National Rail Enquiries (NRE) - provides information primarily on train times and fares through either telephone enquiries or through their website. National Rail Enquiries telephone service data are presented as the volume of calls received and the response rate.

Historical background

Complaints data

Prior to 2010, the Department for Transport (DfT) was responsible for collecting complaints data from each of the franchised train operating companies before supplying the information to us. Following an agreement with DfT, we took responsibility for collecting the complaints data directly from the train operating companies. Some of the benefits of the change in process were:

- We received the data on a more frequent basis so were able to carry out more quality assurance on the data;
- We were able to identify any data quality issues earlier in the process and liaise directly with train operating companies (TOCs) to clarify these rather than contact them through DfT;
- We provided TOCs with guidelines on how complaints data should be collected and processed, ensuring any methodological inconsistencies between TOCs were addressed;
- We were aware of any delays in the data supply chain and could contact TOCs directly to ensure data would be delivered and there would be no delay to the publication of the National Statistics.

For further information on the transfer of responsibility, please see the project initiation document (PID) <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.2979>

In addition, as part of this transfer, we agreed to be responsible for undertaking a project with the aim of improving the quality of complaints statistics we publish. We are actively working with the TOCs to achieve this through focus groups with the data producers and visits to TOCs to get a better understanding of their systems and processes.

Projects to improve the data quality and comparability include producing guidance documentation and clarifying the method and type of complaint included in the ORR statistics.

In 2011 we were asked to publish more disaggregated complaints data by the Prime Minister in his letter on transparency and open data (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/letter-to-cabinet-ministers-on-transparency-and-open-data>)

As part of this process, from 1 April 2013, the list of complaint categories was extended to align with the Passenger Focus National Passenger Survey (NPS)² categories, helping to create a consistent industry wide set of complaints categories which will allow users of the statistics to directly track complaints data with NPS satisfaction scores. We engaged with the train operating companies to ensure their full support for these changes and are continuing to work with them to improve the quality and comparability of the complaints data.

Further details on the complaints data and the alignment to the NPS categories can be accessed on the ORR website <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.2946>

We also publish data on the complaint method by train operating company. This shows the different contact methods for each train operator and the proportion of complaints they receive via each source.

Furthermore we publish data on the proportion of complaints responded to within 20 working days. This is the industry target for providing a response to the customer's complaint but some train operating companies have their own internal targets for response time, which are equal to or less than 20 working days. The initial response to the customer's complaint may not result in the closure of the case as the operator may require additional information to progress the case.

Appeals data

Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch³ may open an appeal on behalf of a rail passenger whose initial complaint to the train operating company has not been resolved to their satisfaction.

Passenger Focus are the independent public body which protects the interest of rail passengers in Great Britain, excluding the London area. London TravelWatch are the official watchdog

² Passenger Focus National Passenger Survey - <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/national-passenger-survey-introduction>

³ London TravelWatch - <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/home/>

organisation representing the interest of transport users; focusing on the London and South East area⁴.

The appeals data are based on appeals opened and for Passenger Focus only include those pursued by the passenger (where responses are received from correspondence with the passenger). London TravelWatch include data on all appeals, whether they are subsequently pursued by the passenger or not. Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch do not take up all appeal cases they receive.

Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch also provide data on the number of complaint comments they receive. This data is based on all passenger contact and includes passenger complaints which are both pursued or not pursued. The number of complaint comments received by Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch should always be higher than the number of appeals opened as one complaint can refer to more than one category.

Due to differences in methodology between London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus for the appeals opened and complaint comments data, from 2013-14 we will not publish the data for the foreseeable future. Passenger Focus intend to publish statistics on the number of appeals resolved and we will be signposting to their data tool on their website once published.

We are continuing to work with Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch to improve the quality and comparability of the appeals data. For further information on the appeals opened or complaint comments data please contact rstats@orr.gsi.gov.uk

National Rail Enquiries data (NRE)

The National Rail Enquiry Service (NRES) is a telephone enquiry service that provides information primarily on train times and fares.

NRES is regulated by DfT and its minimum performance standards are set out in the NRES Agreement. The agreement is for 93% of all calls in a financial year to be answered, and for no less than 90% of all calls in any four-week railway period to be answered. It also introduces a formal quality regime, which includes monitoring through mystery shopping surveys.

⁴ Map of area covered http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/about/london_travelwatch_area

The data are compiled using network statistics provided by Cable & Wireless and include the number of calls answered, calls engaged and calls abandoned by the customer before they are answered in the contact centre. The data are collected at a daily level and provided to ORR after the end of each railway period.

NRES is always susceptible to volatile demand. Some aspects affecting demand can be predicted, such as time of day or sporting events, whereas others are very hard to predict, for example, weather.

Since 2012-13 quarter 2 figures for self-service channels and mystery shoppers have been removed from the data publication as the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) no longer supplies ORR with this data.

More information on NRES can be found on their website: <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/about/>

Relevance

The degree to which the statistical product meets the user in both coverage and content.

Complaints and appeals data are key measures of service satisfaction and aligning this data to the NPS categories creates a consistent industry-wide set of complaints categories which will allow users of the statistics to directly track complaints data with NPS satisfaction scores.

Service satisfaction data published on our data portal are used by a range of individuals for planning, analysis, decision making and data validation. Analysis of the registered users of the data portal identified the key users of service satisfaction data to include:

- Government organisations such as DfT for franchise specification and monitoring;
- ORR for supporting evidence for the development of the consumer programme;
- Businesses including train operating companies to understand service issues and compare against other operators;
- Media organisations – for press releases and news articles;
- Academic institutions such as Universities – for dissertations and research purposes; and
- Personal users.

In September 2011 we also conducted a data portal survey which highlighted similar results. Other results from the portal survey identified:

- 56% of respondents felt the statistics available on the data portal met their needs very well or well.
- 80% of respondents felt that the indicators/datasets on the portal were relevant to their requirements in terms of being essential, mostly important or important.

Accuracy

The proximity between an estimate and the unknown true value.

Complaints data

The recording of complaints data are not generic across all of the train operating companies. Each train operator has their own customer relationship management (CRM) system to log and update complaints received. Therefore, the categorisation of complaints may differ slightly in some instances. Furthermore, each train operator will provide their staff with their own internal training, which may differ between operators. To help overcome any issues around the categorisation and comparability of complaints data across the train operators, we have produced guidance regarding the scope and categorisation of complaints. In addition to this, as part of the move to align the complaints categories to the NPS categories, we produced a mapping document to improve consistency in complaints categorisation⁵.

During the year, train operators may review their complaints practices to ensure consistency in categorisation and outcomes/resolutions. Based on this, the complaints data can be subject to revisions. In such instances, the train operator provides refreshed data as soon as possible.

Appeals data

Appeals data provided by Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch are also subject to similar issues regarding the CRM system and staff training. We are working with these data suppliers to improve the consistency and comparability of the data.

During the year, Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch may review their complaint appeals practices to ensure consistency in categorisation and outcomes/resolutions. Based on this, the complaint appeals data can be subject to revisions. In such instances, Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch provide refreshed data as soon as possible.

⁵ <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.2946>

All data that are received from the train operating companies, Passenger Focus, London TravelWatch and Association of Train Operating Companies are subject to a series of quality assurance checks before publication. We check the data are provided in the correct format, there are no inconsistencies in the data and trends over time are similar, to ensure accurate data are published.

Timeliness and punctuality

Timeliness refers to the time gap between publication and the reference period. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.

Quarterly service satisfaction data are, on average, published 82 days after the quarter ends.

The publication schedule outlines the publication dates for National Statistics and other statistics up to 12 months in advance <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1862> .

These publication dates are determined by the availability of the data and are the earliest possible dates which we can publish the information. Sufficient time is required to collect, process, quality assure and sign off the data and to prepare the data report itself.

In previous years, the pre-announced release dates for the complaints and NRE outputs have always been met. Due to concerns over data quality and comparability, the appeals data was removed from the data portal and data for 2012-13 quarter 3 and 4 were not published. Attention was drawn to this on the data portal in advance of the publication date, together with a full explanation of the reason for the change. The outstanding appeals opened data for 2012-13 was published on 17 October 2013. We still have concerns over the data quality for the complaints received by Passenger Focus or London TravelWatch table and will not be publishing this data.

Due to differences in methodology between London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus for the appeals opened and complaint comments data, from 2013-14 we will not publish the data for the foreseeable future. Passenger Focus intend to publish statistics on the number of appeals resolved and we will be signposting to their data tool on their website once published.

Feedback from the data portal survey conducted in September 2011 indicated that 46% of individuals were very satisfied or satisfied with the timeliness of the statistics. 56% of respondents felt the statistics available on the portal met their needs very well or well.

Accessibility and clarity

Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice.

All rail statistics data tables can be accessed on the data portal free of charge <http://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/>. Details of any revisions are provided in the reports via a link to the revisions log.

The ORR data portal provides on screen data reports, as well as the facility to download data in Excel format and print the report. We can provide data in csv format on request.

We have changed our publication process to a series of statistical releases published each quarter. Data are released under themes, such as performance or rail usage and provide charts of the data and more detailed commentary about the data and trends. The statistical releases are available on the ORR website <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.3016>

The complaints reports currently published on the portal are:

- Complaints by category
- Complaints by category and TOC
- Complaints answered within 20 working days
- Complaints rate
- Complaints rate by TOC
- Complaints by TOC and contact method

The appeals reports currently published on the portal are:

- Appeals opened by Passenger Focus or London TravelWatch (data only available up to 2012-13 quarter 4)

NRES reports currently published on the portal are:

- National Rail Enquiry Services (telephone enquiries received)

Complaints rate by TOC and complaints answered within 20 working days by TOC data can also be accessed in the TOC Key Stats publication on the portal.

No additional service satisfaction data are available on the data portal wizard.

The publication schedule for when data are published on the data portal can be found on the ORR website <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1862>

Passenger Focus intend to begin publishing complaints data on their website through their own data tool. The Passenger Focus website can be accessed through <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/>.

For further information about service satisfaction statistics please contact the rail statistics team at rstats@orr.gsi.gov.uk

Coherence and comparability

Coherence is the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain.

We publish complaints data normalised by passenger journeys, showing the number of complaints rail passengers make about their journey. As some TOCs carry more passengers than others, we present the data as a rate per 100,000 passenger journeys. Unlike other system-based measures, the number of complaints reflects direct feedback from passengers. Used in conjunction with other performance measures, such as the PPM, a more comprehensive description of rail industry service and passenger satisfaction can be reported. This is a superior measure to a ratio against passenger kilometres as, no matter how long the trip, a dissatisfied customer will only complain once.

From 2013-14 quarter 1 we began publishing more disaggregated complaints data by contact method. A total of five contact methods are recorded, including email/webform, telephone and meet the manager. These complaints by source categories are not comparable to data prior to 2012-13, which are based on only three contact methods - letter, pre-printed form and telephone.

Complaints submitted via social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, are not currently included within the complaints statistics. The number of complaints received via such sources, the definition of a 'complaint' and the resources that each train operator allocates to these social media mediums varies significantly, and therefore they are excluded from the published figures. We are currently investigating including complaints via social media.

Trade-offs between output quality components

Trade-offs are the extent to which different aspects of quality are balanced against each other.

We work to publish the service satisfaction data as soon as possible and currently work to a tight timeline based on when the period ends and the data are received from the data suppliers.

We recently reviewed the timescales associated with the publication process and identified that bringing forward the quarterly service satisfaction publication date could impact the quality and accuracy of the statistics published.

We have changed our publication process to a series of statistical releases through the year. Data is released under themes, such as rail performance or rail usage and published each quarter or annually. All data for a given theme is released at one time and these releases provide charts of the data and more detailed commentary about the data and trends. The statistical releases can be accessed on the ORR website <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.3016>

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

For further information on the Code of Practice and National Statistics accreditation, please visit <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

Assessment of user needs and perceptions

The processes for finding out about users and uses, and their views on the statistical products.

Official Statistics on the ORR data portal are diverse and there are many different reasons people will use the data we release. From this, we have identified five groups that use our data for various purposes. These are:

1. Policy makers including briefing and local government use the data to inform ministerial briefing, answer ad hoc queries and include in their publications.
2. Funders of the rail industry use these data to make informed decisions about where public money should be targeted in order to improve punctuality on the rail network. They also use these data in briefings and publications.
3. Findings from joint research between ORR and Passenger Focus showed that passengers value more rail data being brought into the public domain. This would help increase the transparency of the rail industry and enable greater scrutiny. This research also showed that some passengers use these data to inform them when making life choices, such as choosing the location of their home.
4. Activists need access to a wide variety of data to provide evidence to challenge the status quo.
5. Rail enthusiasts potentially have no limit to the data they wish to explore.

From May 2012 ORR asked users to complete a survey asking what they used each rail statistics table for. ORR communicated the survey through the data portal and notes within each rail statistics report.

The results of this survey identified that individuals use complaints data for a range of reasons including understanding service issues, comparing complaints rates between train operators and government decision making such as franchise specification.

National rail enquiries service data is used for a variety of reasons including providing supporting evidence for the development of the ORR consumer programme and government decision making such as franchise specification.

The last data portal focus group for registered users took place on 5 March 2013 and reviewed the improvements and changes we are planning to make to the data portal. The main objectives of the re-design were to focus on transparency, user experience, increased patronage and gaining UKSA accreditation. The findings from the focus group are published on the user engagement page of our website <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.2256>

A series of public focus groups facilitated by the market research and consultancy company Research Works took place over the summer. These focus groups had the same objectives as the focus group on 5 March 2013. The findings from this research will be published on the user engagement page of our website <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.2256>

If you would like to provide feedback about the data portal please email dataportal@orr.gsi.gov.uk

Performance, cost and respondent burden

The effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the statistical output.

Following a project in 2008 to establish the best way to store rail data and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of ORR outputs, a number of changes were made to the data publication process. As a result of these changes, amendments have been made to the processes for the publication of Official Statistics. The introduction of the data warehouse has allowed ORR to automate a number of processes used to check the quality and accuracy of the data we receive, reducing the staff resource required to produce these publications.

Through regular meetings of the complaints focus group and visits to data suppliers we have developed a better understanding of the service satisfaction data and the systems and processes involved in the production of the data. Furthermore, these focus groups have helped build strong working relationships with the train operating companies, ATOC, Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch to work towards improving the quality and comparability of the service satisfaction data. We are continuing to work with the data suppliers to achieve this.

Memorandums of understanding (MoUs) are in place with the train operating companies, Passenger Focus, London TravelWatch and ATOC and the service satisfaction data is typically provided around 4 weeks of the period ending.

Approximately 3 days are required each quarter to load and quality assure the data and prepare and publish the reports on the data portal. A maximum of 7 staff are involved in this process. These estimates exclude the time taken to undertake changes to the underlying data, structured query language (SQL) used to create the reports or the re-design of the reports. Such changes are relatively infrequent but can occur.

Confidentiality, transparency and security

The procedures and policy used to ensure sound confidentiality, security and transparent practices.

ORR is fully compliant with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2008 and principle 4 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

ORR receives service satisfaction data from the train operating companies, ATOC, Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch. The data are supplied electronically and stored in a data warehouse (ORRbit). Only selected members of staff in ORR have access to the data warehouse and access is password protected. The data provision and storage processes have been independently assessed by external consultants Amour Group to ensure they are secure. Internal and external IT vendors also conduct periodic assessments of our systems.

ORR has systems and processes in place to safeguard personal identities/details and commercially restricted data. Data are internally validated by two teams before it is granted a 'publication' status and viewable on the data portal. Connections to remotely hosted databases are within a secure network and penetration testing has confirmed that the data portal is secure against external attacks.

ORR wants the rail industry to be more open and transparent. We have established a transparency programme to drive our ambitious vision for the industry, and govern a number of projects to support our aims and objectives.

Summary of methods used to compile the output

Service satisfaction data are supplied by the train operating companies, ATOC, Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch and stored in a secure data warehouse maintained by ORR. The data supplied are subject to an extensive quality assurance process, including a suite of validation checks to ensure the data meets the required specification and is in line with previous trends. Any arising issues are flagged with the data suppliers who must confirm the anomalies or correct the data and re-submit.

Explanations from the data suppliers regarding data anomalies are included within our commentary to explain the data and trends.

This data are then prepared for publication. The process includes quality assuring the tables and charts produced and providing supporting commentary regarding the key trends, methodology and quality measures. These reports are subject to peer review.

The final stage of the quality assurance process is a sign off by the statistics Head of Profession confirming the data meets the quality standards and are fit for onward use.

Methodology

The rail industry reports figures in periods, rather than months for example. Some daily and quarterly datasets require apportionment of these data.

The standard method for apportionment is based on the number of days within the period that fall into the relevant quarter. For example, the dates in period 4 cover both Q1 and Q2. When the quarterly data are calculated, 7/28 of the data are assigned to Q1 (covering 24 June to 30 June) and 21/28 of the data are assigned to Q2 (covering 1 July to 21 July). The breakdown of the calculations used for 2013-14 are as follows:

Quarter	Calculation
2012-13 Quarter 1	Period 1 + Period 2 + Period 3 + 8/28 of Period 4
2012-13 Quarter 2	20/28 of Period 4 + Period 5 + Period 6 + 16/28 of Period 7
2012-13 Quarter 3	12/28 of Period 7 + Period 8 + Period 9 + 24/28 of Period 10
2012-13 Quarter 4	4/28 of Period 10 + Period 11 + Period 12 + Period 13

Quality performance indicators table

Quality measure	Indicator	Description	Value
Accuracy	Number of mistakes made, by type since the time series began	The number of serious mistakes in calculation or presentation of aggregates that are not found until after publication.	Complaints, appeals and NRES: 0
Accuracy	Average size of revisions	The average of the difference between a later and an earlier estimate expressed as the average revision, the average absolute revision, and/or the corresponding relative quantity(ies).	Complaints, appeals and NRES: 0
Timeliness and punctuality	Time lag between the end of the reference period and date of final results	Average number of days from the last day of the reference period to the day of publication of final results	82 days for all publications
Timeliness and punctuality	Punctuality of publication	The number of days separating a previously announced date of publication and the actual date.	0 days for complaints, appeals and NRES
Accessibility and clarity	Number of subscriptions/purchases of each of the key paper reports	Average number of users who access the data portal on publication day. Please note other reports are also published on each date.	Quarter 1: TBC
Coherence and comparability	Lengths of comparable time series	Number of reference periods in time series from last break.	Complaints: From 2002-03 Appeals: From 2009-10 (up to 2012-13) NRES: 2002-03 onwards

Assessment of user needs and perceptions	Length of time since most recent user satisfaction survey	Length of time since most recent user satisfaction survey	<p>Use of rail statistics survey: ongoing (since May 2012)</p> <p>Data portal survey: September 2011</p> <p>Data portal focus groups: Spring/Summer 2013</p>
Performance cost and respondent burden	Number of days a month taken to produce the reports and number of staff required for this	Average number of days and maximum number of staff involved in loading and quality assuring the data, preparing the reports and publishing them on the data portal.	3 days with a maximum of 7 staff

© Crown copyright 2013

You may reuse this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/2/ or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

