



# Experiences of the 20<sup>th</sup> May rail timetable changes

Research findings prepared for the Office of Rail and Road

2<sup>nd</sup> August 2018

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# Background and method

## Research background



### Background to the study

The Project Board of ORR are conducting an inquiry into the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018 timetabling changes on Northern Rail and Govia ThamesLink railway. To feed into this they wish to understand passenger experiences of the timetable changes and in particular the type of impact of any disruptions to passengers. In addition ORR wish to understand the point of view of frontline staff of these TOCs.

To explore experiences, we carried out both qualitative and quantitative research

## Method: qualitative research

4 x focus groups, each including 6-8 participants and lasting 1.5 hours. Groups took place on Monday 23 July, telephone interviews took place on Tuesday 24 July



2 x focus groups in Manchester - all Northern Rail passengers  
1 x telephone interview with 2 x staff

2 x focus groups in London - all GTR passengers  
1 x telephone interview with 2 x staff

The groups included:

- Commuters
- Leisure/ business passengers
- A range of routes typically travelled
- Passengers with a long term limiting illness or disability

Quotes and case studies included in these findings are taken from the people that we spoke to during the research. However, we have changed peoples' names for anonymity.

## Method: quantitative research

- Survey of rail passengers who have travelled since the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018
- 1,000 interviews across England and Wales only
- Internet panel survey
- Quotas set on age, gender and region
- Data is weighted
- Significance differences to the total are denoted by ←

# Setting the context

## Overall mixed satisfaction with services prior to 20<sup>th</sup> May rail timetable changes



Overall negative about existing services:  
overcrowding, delays, disruption (electrification)

“Shambolic is a complimentary word for it. Random trains not arriving, two carriages when there would normally be four.”

“I can’t remember a single journey that hasn’t been a few minutes late.”

“Even if the train arrives, it’s a bad experience because you’re crammed on”

“[If a train is stuck outside of the station and can’t get into the station there has been] no response, no one tells you what’s going on, you can be sat there for 15 minutes”



Generally positive about services; expectations of new, reliable ThamesLink trains

“There is always some type of occasional delay but no real impact to my daily plans”

“There were sometimes issues with Gatwick. It has always been a bit on and off anyway. That line is never great”

“I think everything was running fine for quite a while. It was an unusual period of everything working quite well, no delays and cancellations. It felt like it had finally figured itself out.”

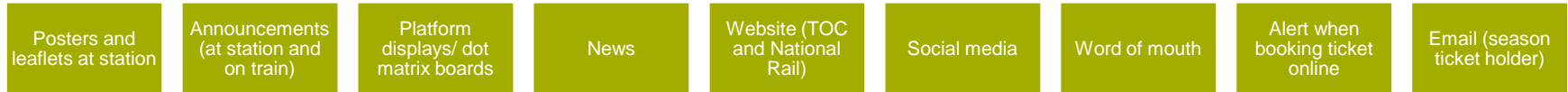
“ThamesLink is usually reliable but for the last 2 years trains have been packed, it just feels normalised”

“I do think the service dipped slightly when they changed to new trains at the end of last year. You got a lot of trains breaking down. I am guessing it was teething problems caused by the old trains. After a while it did sort itself out.”



# Setting the context

## Passengers mentioned a range of information sources for how they found out about the timetable changes



- Unclear why the changes would be beneficial, assume to improve the service (this can generate high expectations)
- Some noted that information provided on website was difficult to find or read/ complex and off-putting
- Commuters more likely to have heard about timetable changes in advance
- GTR passengers not aware of staged introduction

General sense that communications talked about a 'change' but did not convey the extent of this

"You had to make a bit of effort yourself. You had to log on, you had to look for your station, you have got to see where am I going. I found it a bit difficult to work out what I was doing so I didn't even bother with the website. I looked up the National Rail app and just checked what my future train time was."  
(GTR Commuter)

"I was expecting, normally when there's been timetable changes in the past there's been minor tweaks here and there. So I was sort of expecting, you know it might be a few minutes different...I wasn't really expecting it to be as drastic as what it was." (Commuter, Northern)

"Instead of timetable change maybe [poster should have said] timetable overhaul or complete restructure of the timetable or something along those lines. Might have made it seem like a bigger change." (Commuter, Northern)

# Setting the context

Staff mentioned a range of ways in which **information was provided to passengers** – although were not sure that these were always read



## Staff

Passengers were provided with: posters; leaflets; announcements; information in local press

However, staff were sometimes unsure whether passengers had fully read the information meaning that whilst passengers may have been aware of the changes they had perhaps not realised the extent of this.

“We tend to find that a lot of passengers take things but they don’t necessarily read them [and therefore] they get half the story.”

Whilst there had been some **internal briefings for staff**, some felt that greater staff consultation could have been valuable



## Staff

Staff mentioned internal briefings, with some noting that during this there had been discussion of expectations of services on timetable, how to manage platform crowding and foot-flow, and customer handling training.

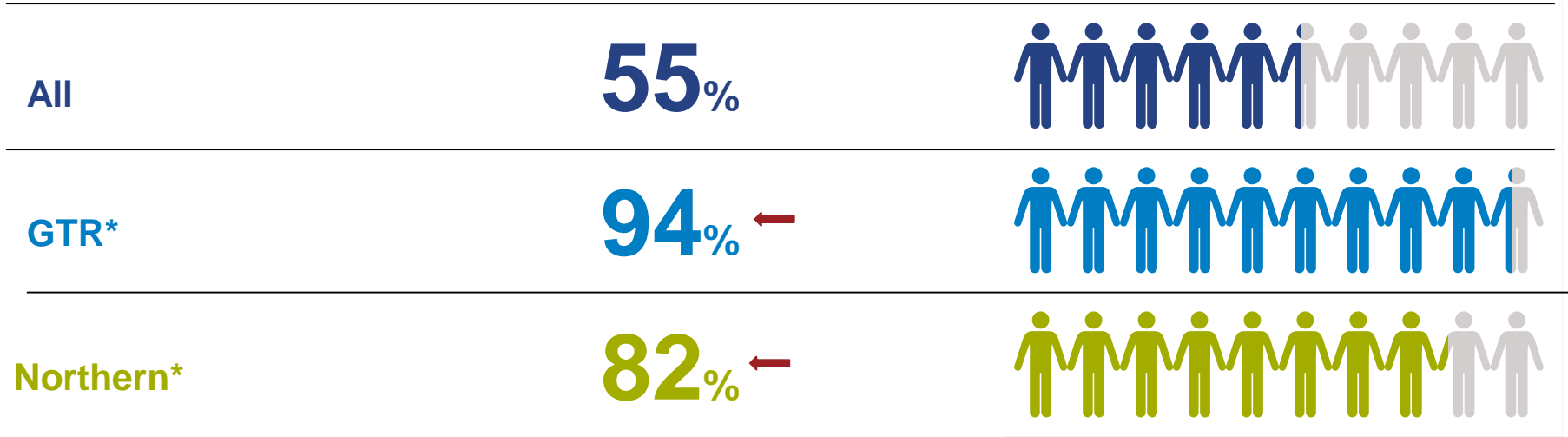
However, overall, staff felt that they did not get much information about the changes or what to expect before 20<sup>th</sup> May – although they recognised that this was probably because the TOC may not have had the final information to share.

Some suggested that greater staff consultation ahead of the changes, and the 20<sup>th</sup> May could have been helpful.

“There’s a tendency in the transport industry where decisions are taken and staff are rarely consulted, possibly until the last minute so the opportunity to highlight potential downfall doesn’t occur due to lack of consultation.”

# Travelled with TOC who had brought in a new timetable

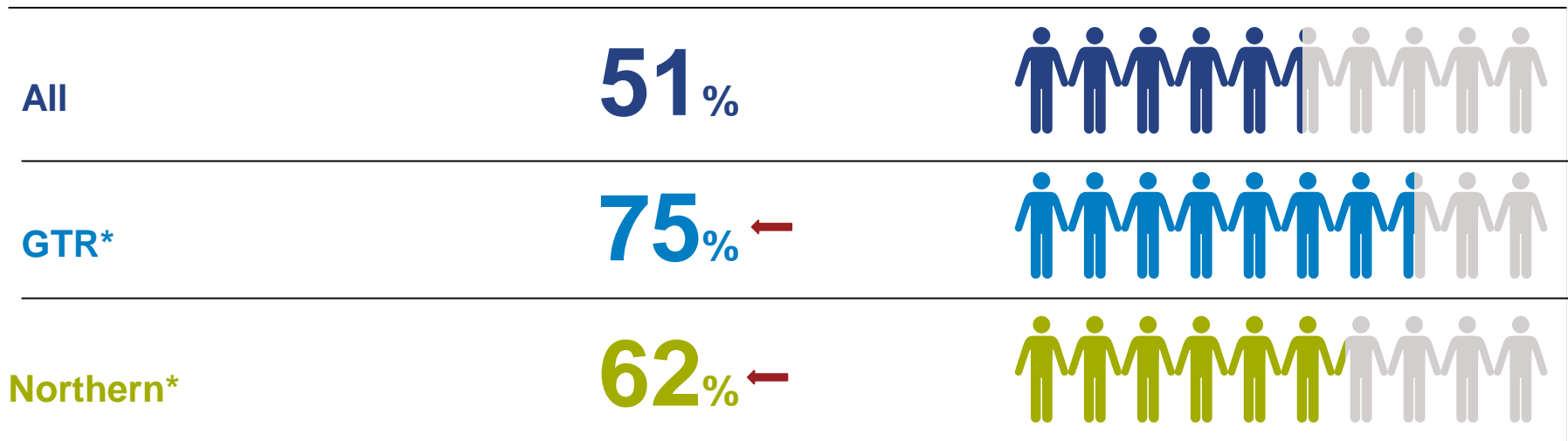
More than a half of rail passengers had travelled with a TOC that had introduced a new timetable since the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018.



A04. Some train companies, brought in new timetables on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018. Was a new timetable brought in by any of the train companies that you have travelled with, since the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018? Base: all respondents (1,000); TOC travelled with (GTR 255, Northern 126)  
 \* These respondents have travelled with specified TOC since the 20<sup>th</sup> May but they may have also travelled with other TOC's – data is therefore not entirely attributable to GTR and Northern

# Awareness of changes to timetables prior to introduction

A half of rail passengers were aware of the change to the timetables before their introduction on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018. Levels of awareness were much higher amongst GTR and Northern passengers.

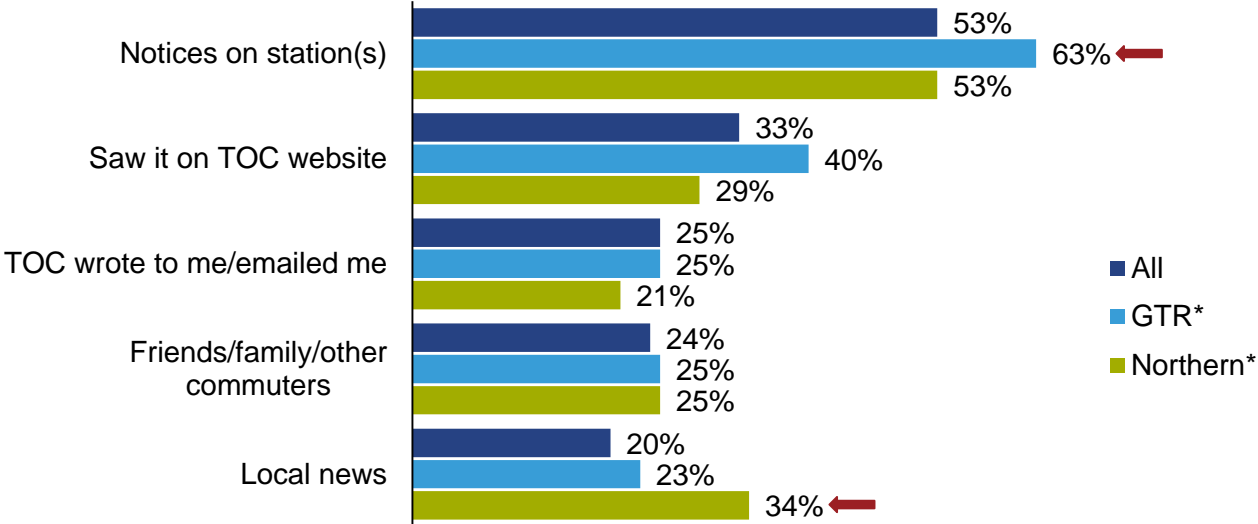


A05. Were you aware of these changes to the train timetables before their introduction on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018? Base: all respondents (1,000), TOC travelled with (GTR 255, Northern 126)

\* These respondents have travelled with specified TOC since the 20<sup>th</sup> May but they may have also travelled with other TOC's – data is therefore not entirely attributable to GTR and Northern

# How found out about new timetables

Amongst those who were aware of the change to the timetable before its introduction, notices on station(s) was the most commonly mentioned way of finding out about the change.

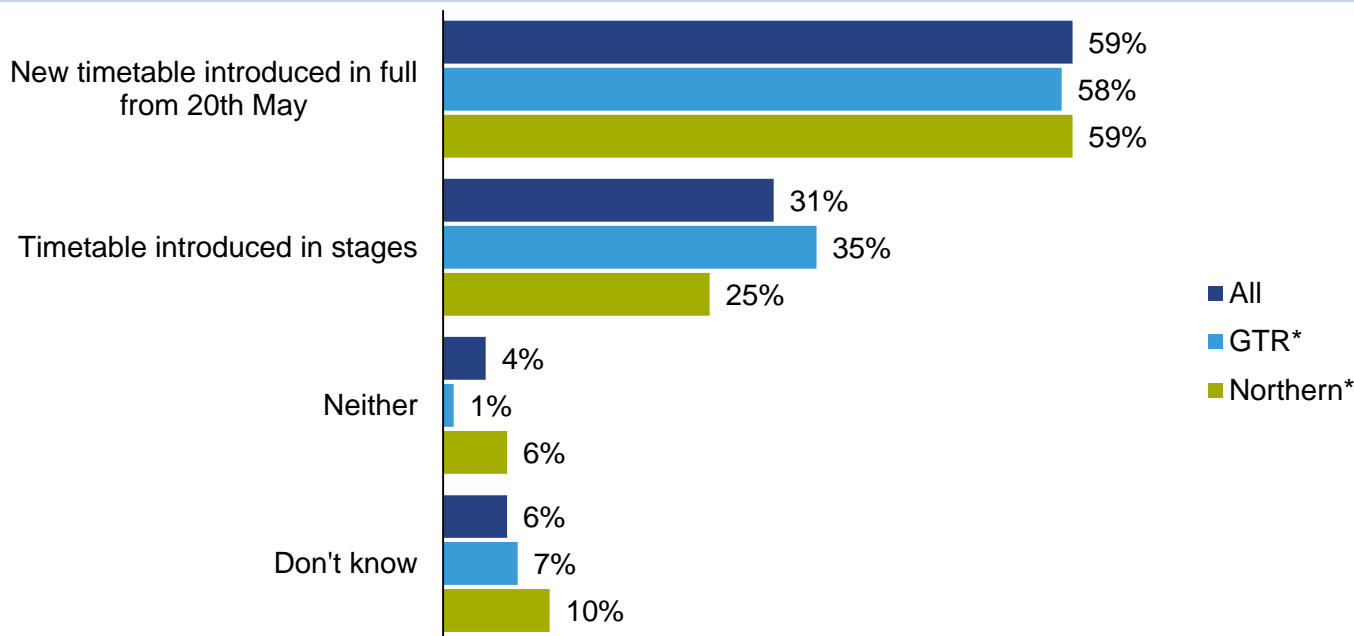


A06: How did you find out about the introduction of the new train timetables from the 20<sup>th</sup> May? Base: all those who were aware of change to the train timetable before their introduction (499); by TOC travelled with (GTR 225, Northern 126)

\* These respondents have travelled with specified TOC since the 20<sup>th</sup> May but they may have also travelled with other TOC's – data is therefore not entirely attributable to GTR and Northern  
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# Perception on introduction of timetable

Nearly two thirds of those who travelled with a train company whose timetable changed incorrectly thought that the new timetable would be introduced in full on the 20<sup>th</sup> May.

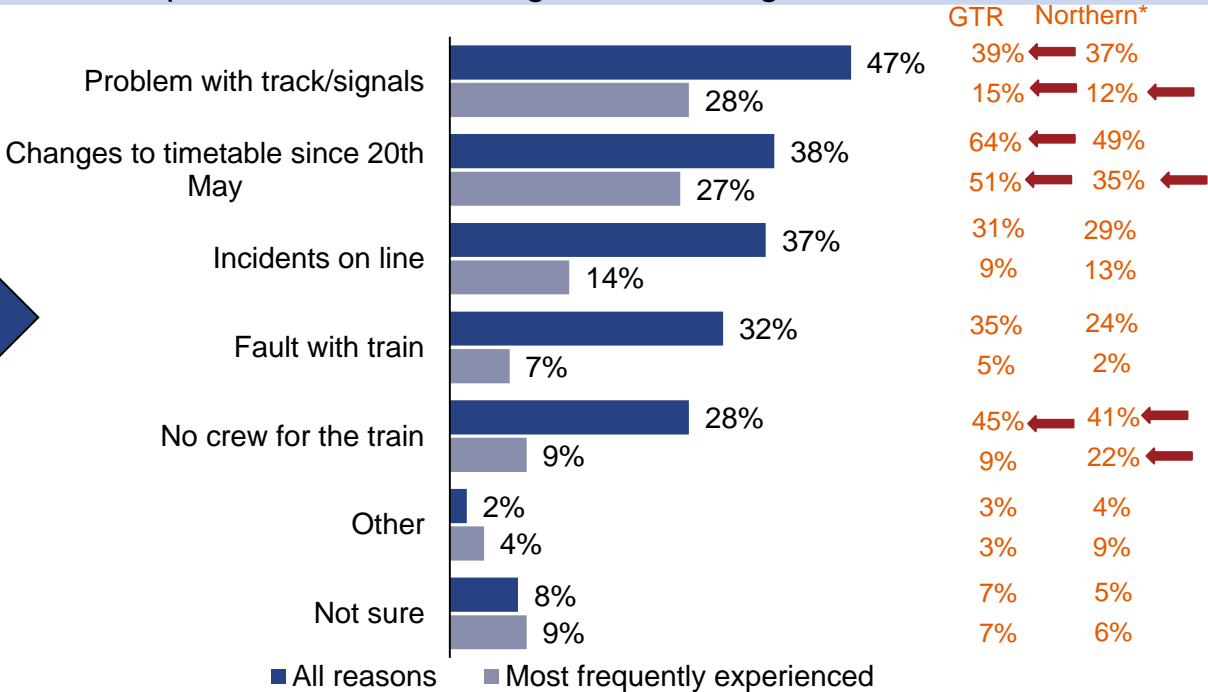
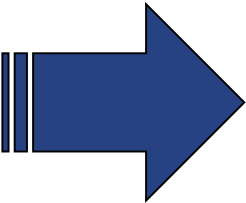
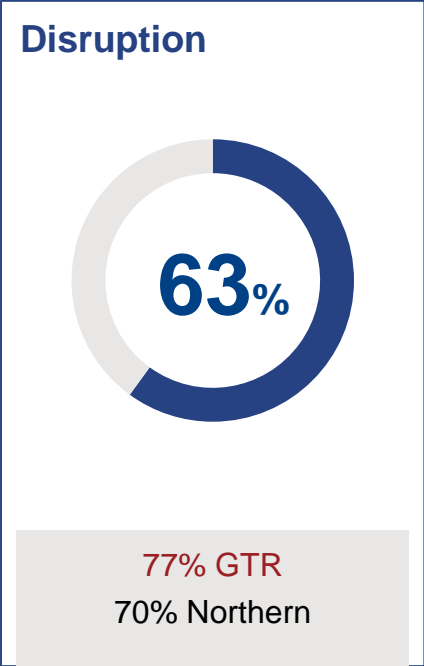


A07: Thinking about when you became aware of the change to the train timetables from the 20th May, which of the following did you think was true. Base: who travelled with a train company whose timetable changed (546); by TOC travelled with (GTR 225, Northern 126)

\* These respondents have travelled with specified TOC since the 20th May but they may have also travelled with other TOC's – data is therefore not entirely attributable to GTR and Northern

# Experience of disruption

Two thirds of rail passengers had experienced disruption since the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018. The most commonly mentioned reasons for the disruption were problems with track/signal and changes to the timetable.



A08. Since the 20th May 2018, have any of the train journey(s) you have taken been affected by disruption? Base: All respondents (1,000); by TOC travelled with (GTR 255, Northern 126)  
 A10. Thinking about all the times you experienced disruption since 20th May 2018, what were the causes of the disruption you experienced? Base: All who suffered from disruption (603); by TOC disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

# Experiences of the 20<sup>th</sup> May rail timetable changes



# Experiences of the 20<sup>th</sup> May rail timetable changes

Four key areas of experience explored across the research

Disruption  
experienced

Information  
provided

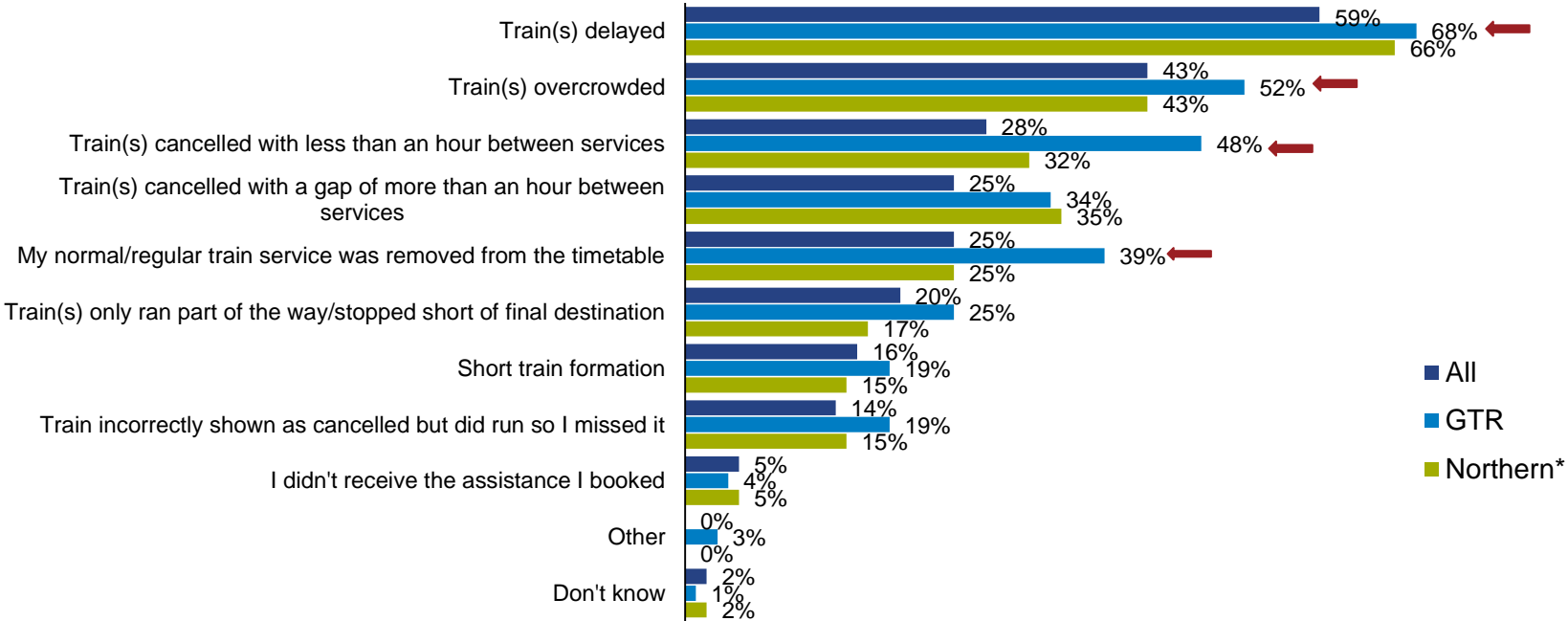
Staff  
interactions

Alternative  
transport  
options

# Disruption experienced

# Types of disruption experienced – All reasons given

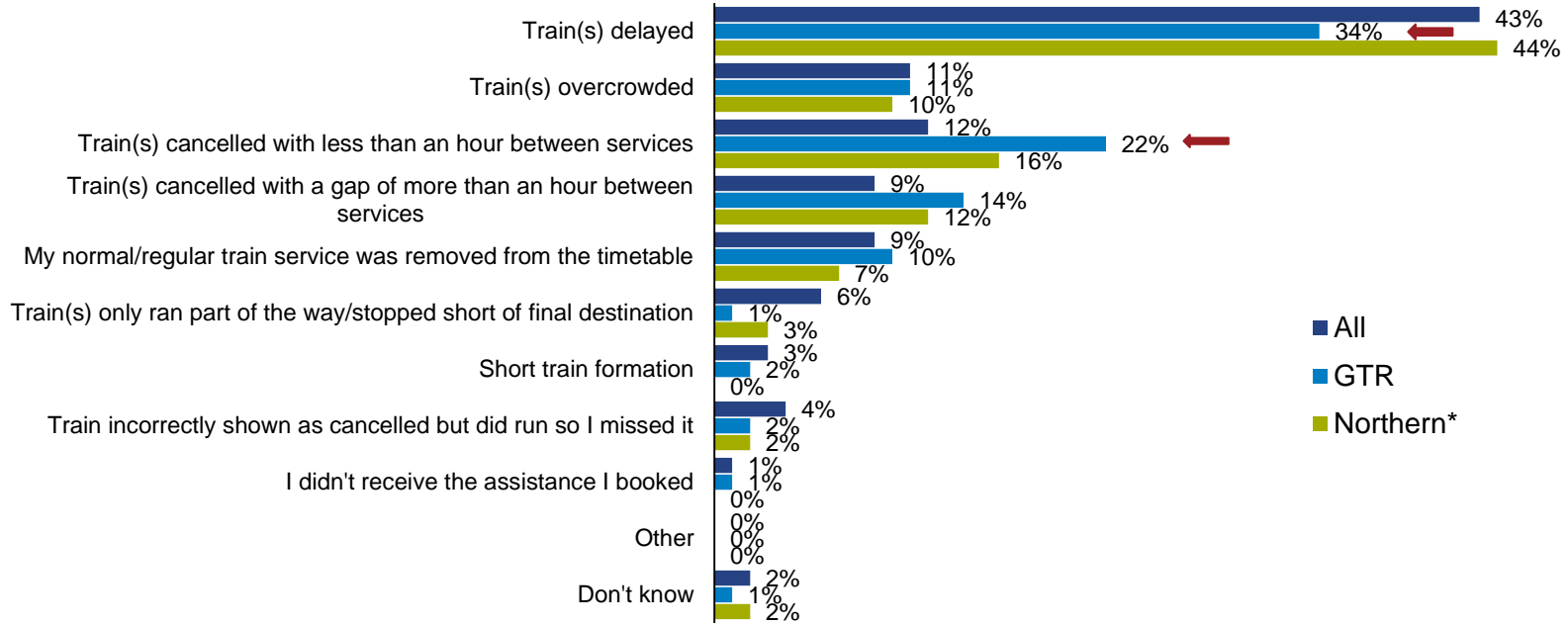
The most commonly mentioned causes of disruption were train delays, followed by over-crowding.



A12 Thinking about the times you have experienced disruption since the 20th May 2018, whilst travelling with {train operator from A11},. In what ways were your train journeys affected?  
 Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20th May (603); by TOC disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

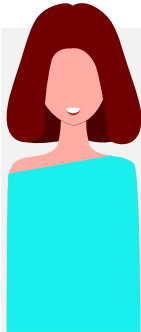
# Types of disruption experienced – most frequent reason

Train delays were the most frequently cited reason for experience disruption.



A12/A13 Thinking about the times you have experienced disruption since the 20th May 2018, whilst travelling with {train operator from A11},. In what ways were your train journeys affected? Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20th May (603); by TOC disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73)

## Significant and repeated delays



### Lucy

*Commuter, GTR, Mill Hill Broadway to St.Pauls (and sometimes travels to Gatwick for work)*

Lucy is a solicitor and regular commuter. Since the timetable changes her journeys have been significantly affected.

In the first week of the timetable changes she was disrupted most mornings and evenings, by at least half an hour and often longer because of delays and cancellations. She tried to leave work early so she could go home and continue working there but was letting clients and colleagues down because she couldn't guarantee when she would be home

“That first morning, my journey is usually 33 minutes and it took me 2 hours. As soon as you are going past West Hampstead you have got two other lines connecting and it was absolute havoc, chaos! In the evenings I was saying to my boss yes call me at 7pm I will be home by then and I just wasn't, it was appalling. It makes you really anxious because it is piling on stress added to everything else”



### Raj

*Commuter and Leisure user, GTR, St Albans to Central London*

Raj is a regular commuter. Since the timetable changes his journeys are significantly longer. His journeys to work were disrupted by delays of more than 30 minutes and journeys home were also disrupted by multiple cancellations and delays at Farringdon.

In the first week of the timetable changes he was constantly late for work and for a meeting with international clients. He was also late getting home which impacted his evening meals and amount of sleep.

“I need to get to work for 9am so am usually at the station for 7.30 but because of the changes I had to be there by 7am and I was still getting into work late. The journey home from work was worse, some trains were delayed by an hour or more and I wasn't getting home till 8 or 9pm and then getting up early to be back at the station for 7am

# Types of disruption experienced

## Delays and cancellations often compounded by lack of information and overcrowding

Frustration around delays and cancellations were exacerbated by lack of information and last minute changes

“It was horrible, more people waiting and getting frustrated, you were getting more and more stressed and didn’t know when the train was coming.” (GTR, Commuter)

Northern passengers also talked about frustration regarding short train formations and overcrowding – although felt that this was an ongoing issue for Northern train services

“They put two carriages on. There’s people rammed in with their shopping...I have never got on a train yet where I’ve sat on a seat coming back from Manchester.” (Northern, Leisure passenger)

# Types of disruption experienced

## Delays and cancellations often compounded by lack of information and overcrowding



### Jake

*Commuter, Northern, Wigan to Deansgate*

During the first week of the train timetable changes Jake had problems getting to work due to delays and he felt that the journeys home were even more difficult.

On one occasion he started by going to his usual station – Deansgate. However, he found that all of the trains were cancelled so decided to get the tram to Manchester Victoria because he knew that trains ran more regularly from that station. Once he got to Victoria it was very busy but he went to the platform he would usually use if getting a train from that station. A train pulled up so he got on it and sat down and waited for 10 minutes. There was then a tannoy announcement to say that there was not a driver for the train so to go to a different platform. Jake went to the other platform and got on the train, and waited. There was then another announcement to say that passengers should go back to the original train, so he went back to the first train. During the first week of disruption, Jake was at least an hour late home every night.

“That was a typical journey for the first week.”

## Train cancellations, delays and overcrowding were all key issues for staff



### Staff

**Overcrowding** on platforms was something that staff were very aware of as they were concerned it could easily create a safety issue. Lack of information/ last minute platform changes were identified as problems contributing to overcrowding.

“The overcrowding started to become a safety issue, we were having to keep people off the platform...and because people were getting desperate, if they thought a train was going to where they wanted to go they were running for it, regardless of whether it was safe to do so or not.”

**Cancellations and delays** were also made more complex by lack of information, and last minute information. Staff recalled examples where platform staff were informed that a train had been cancelled (and therefore did not send passengers to the train), only to be reinstated at the last minute. This meant that some trains left without being at full capacity.

“Platform staff were saying that one was cancelled, that’s why I didn’t send people over, and they’d said let it go at the last minute...that’s why we didn’t have time to get things sorted for your passengers.”

Although the reason for creating **express services** was understood by staff as a way to keep trains on track, they felt that turning a train into an express service at the last minute was detrimental to the passenger experience, and only caused further frustration.

“If a timetabled train eventually did leave, to get it back on course, they made it express and they miss all the stopping points...so you have to detrain all of the passengers that thought they were on their way home, which just fuelled the frustration.”



# Types of disruption experienced

For some, their usual service was no longer in the timetable



## Sasha

*Commuter – 2 days a week, GTR, New Cross Gate to Brighton*

Sasha used to take either a Southern or ThamesLink train to work from New Cross Gate to Brighton, via East Croydon.

Since the timetable changes she now has to go via London Bridge which not only takes longer but is also more expensive

“My old train doesn’t exist any more and I have no knowledge of it’s coming back. I don’t know if it’s a result of the timetable change. I am out of pocket twice a week by £3 because of having to go into Central London to change to a Brighton train”



## Samuel

*Commuter, GTR, Woolwich to Farringdon*

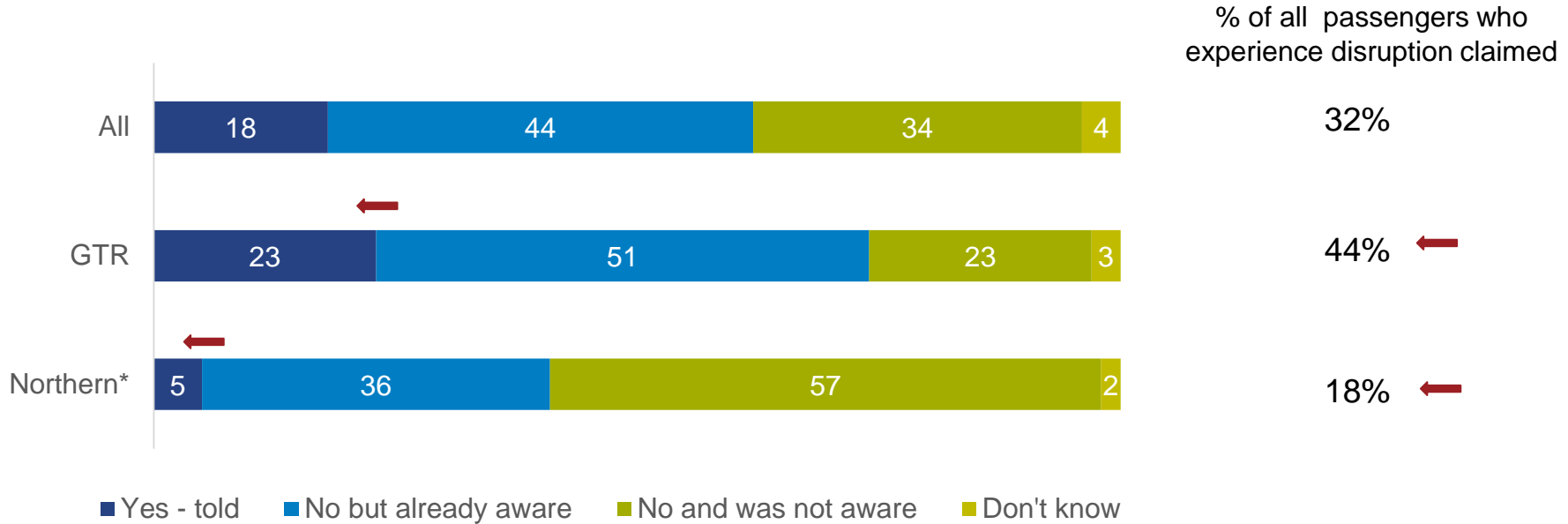
Samuel recently moved to Woolwich and works in Farringdon. Prior to the timetable change he would take a train from his nearest station Woolwich Dockyard to Cannon Street and walk to Farringdon.

Since the timetable changes he now has to catch a train via Woolwich Arsenal station for trains serving Cannon Street or Farringdon and because Woolwich Arsenal is in a different zone he pays £40 per month more for his journeys.

“If the train is delayed or cancelled you can be waiting another 20 minutes for the train to Farringdon, whereas prior to the changes I was just getting a train that was every 12 minutes to Cannon Street and walking to Farringdon which is a lot simpler.”

# Compensation

Just under a fifth of those who had experienced disruption had been told that they could claim compensation for the disruption and this figure fell to just 5% of Northern passengers who had experienced disruption.



A24. Were you told, at the time of the disruption, that you could claim compensation? A25. And did you claim compensation for the disruption?  
 Base: All who have suffered from disruption since the 20<sup>th</sup> May (603), by TOC disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

Most participants had not claimed compensation. Some had not thought about it. Others anticipated that it would be complex and time consuming

## Were passengers aware that they could claim compensation?

- Some simply hadn't considered claiming compensation
- There were queries about whether it was possible to claim for:
  - Anytime tickets
  - Loss of train from the timetable resulting in now travelling from a more expensive zone
- Most had not been informed about claiming compensation by the TOC/ staff
- A couple noted that train staff had mentioned it over a tannoy announcement

## Claiming compensation

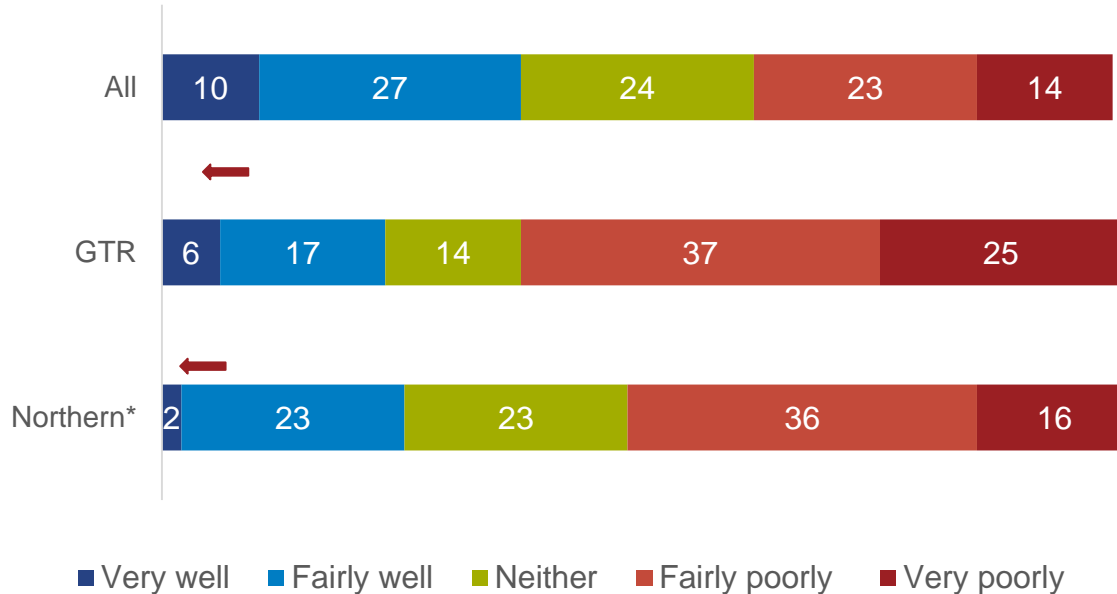
- Overall there was an assumption that claiming would be too difficult and complex
- There was some discussion around how much compensation would be paid, and the general assumption that it might be a few pounds at most, making it "not worth the effort".
- One Northern season ticket holder said that they would claim now as they had heard from a colleague that you could claim for an entire month of travel
- One GTR season ticket holder claimed for each journey they were delayed on, out of principle
- Some suggested that there should be automatic compensation

"I did [claim for compensation] every single day that I could, because even though it was just 15 minutes, it works out to be something like 50p I don't care, I'm going to do it for my 15 minutes." (Commuter, GTR)

"[Claiming compensation is] too hard, you have to go to the website, fill in a form, it should be automatic...Thameslink know you are delayed, I shouldn't have to fill in this long form. You can only claim if due to their issue, and I don't know if you can claim for a timetable issue? It takes a long time to process. It's my money, but I'm wasting time and money having to claim." (Commuter, GTR)

# How well did the TOC do?

Fewer than two fifths thought that the TOC had dealt with the disruption well and this fell to around a quarter amongst GTR and Northern passengers who had experienced disruption.



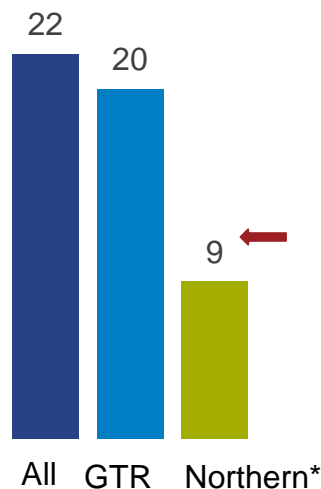
Qualitative participants often felt that there was lack of customer service from the train company during the disruption

“When trains are an hour late at the station they didn’t give us any water or food vouchers – they do on airlines, so they should on trains.” (GTR, Commuter)

A26 Overall, how well did the train company deal with the disruption(s), you have experienced since the 20th May 2018?  
Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20<sup>th</sup> May (603); by TOC disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

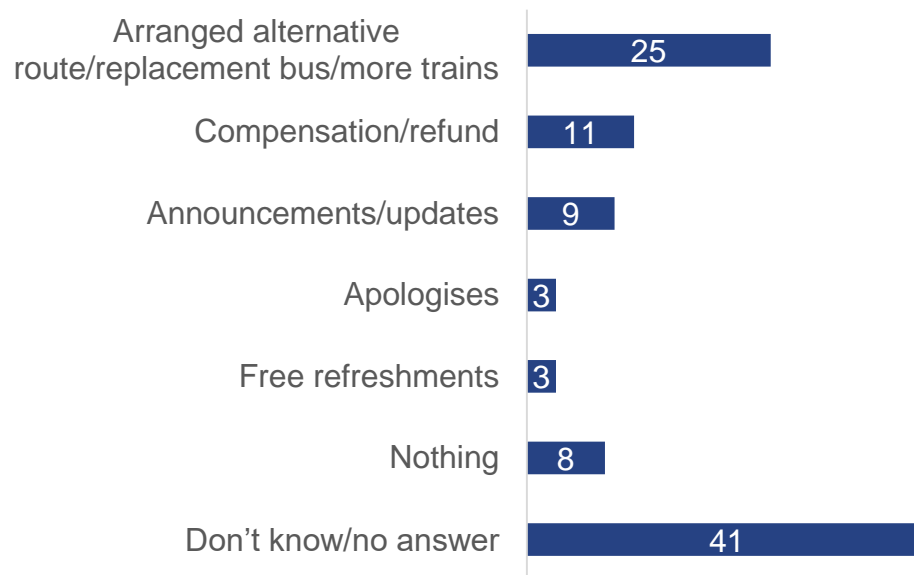
# Did the TOC take steps to lessen the impact of the disruption?

Only a fifth reported that the TOC had taken steps to lessen the impact of the disruption.



A19. Did train company do anything to lessen the impact of the disruption on you/other passengers?

Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20<sup>th</sup> May (603); by TOC disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73) \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

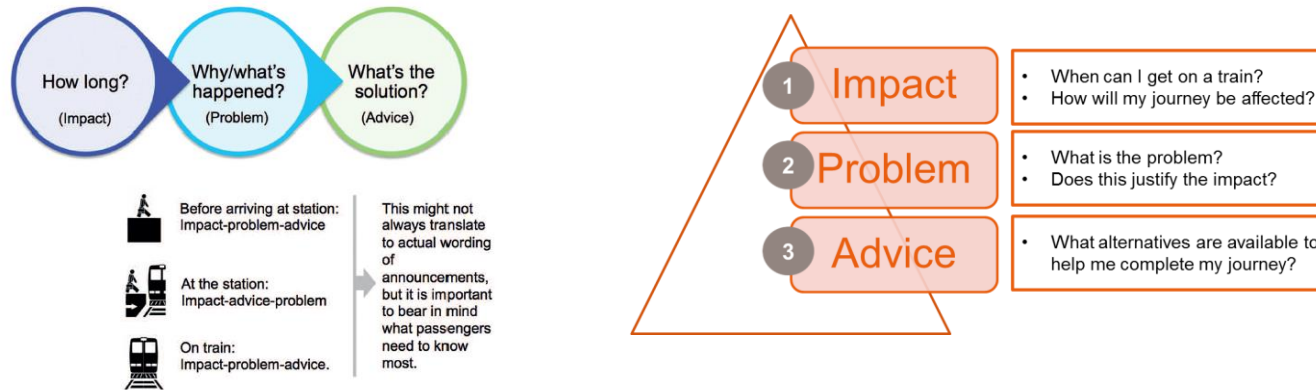


A20. What actions did train company take to lessen the impact of the disruption on you/other passengers? Base: All who said the train companies did something to lessen the disruption (137)

Information provided

# Information provided

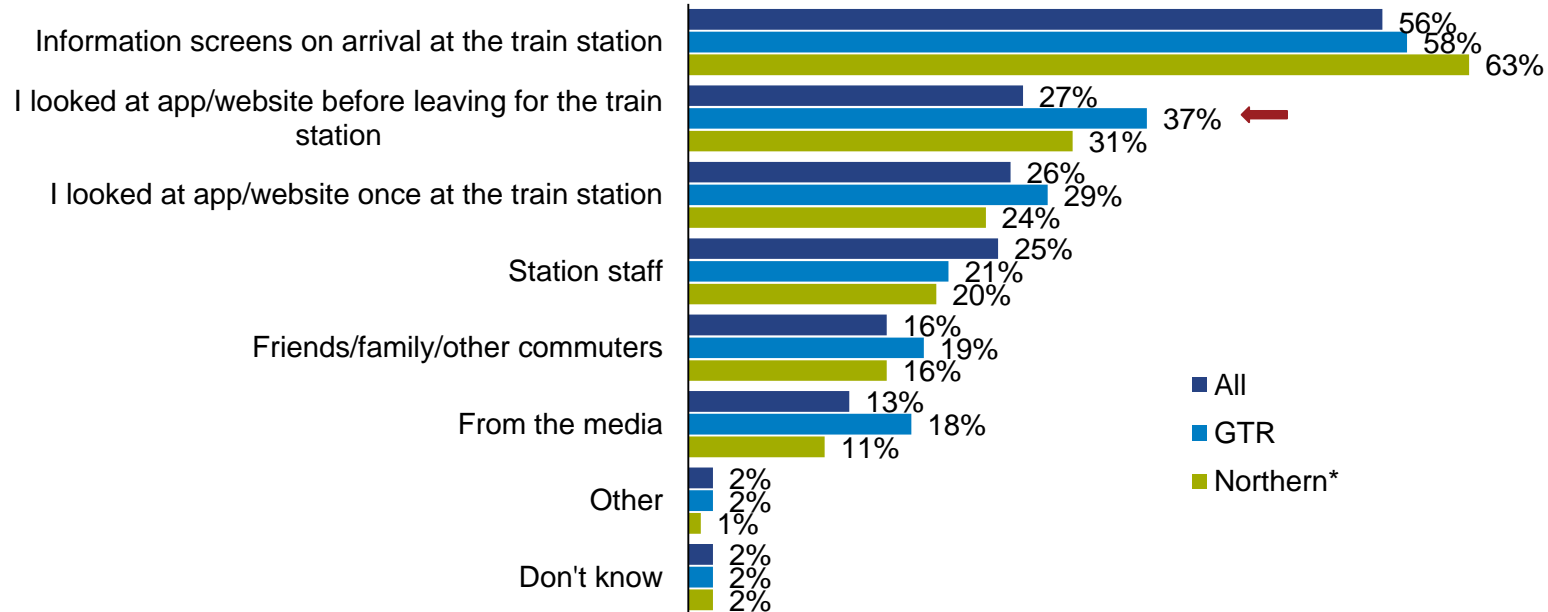
Previous Transport Focus research and ATOC PIDD ACOP guidance shows the importance of information provision during disruption



However, participants felt that there was very little information provision throughout their experiences

# Information & Communications – all channels used

The most commonly used channel for information was the information screens on arrival at the train station.



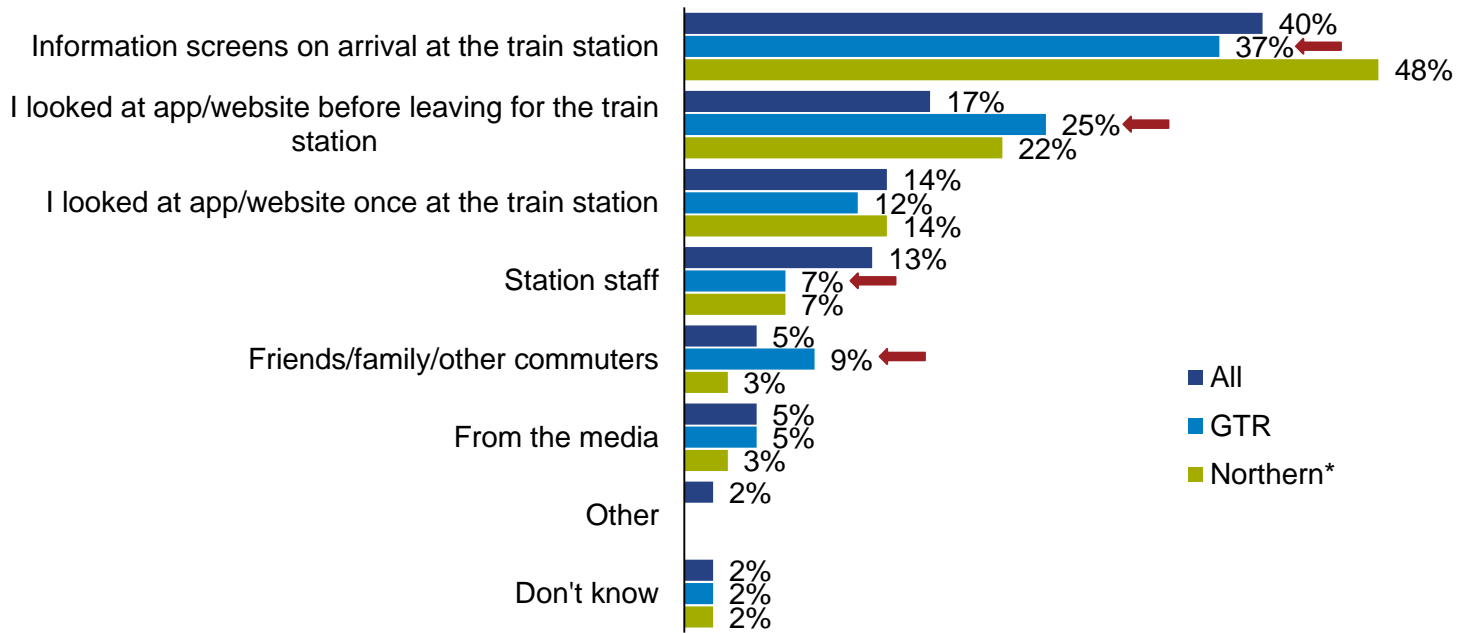
A16. Thinking about the times you have experienced disruption since the 20th May 2018, whilst travelling with {train operating company A11}. How did you find out about the disruption ?  
 Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20th May (603), TOC by disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution



# Information & Communications – channels used most frequently



Passengers who had experienced disruption on GTR and Northern were more likely to look at app/website before leaving for the train station than average.

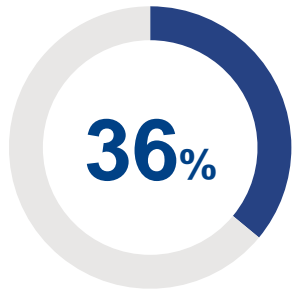


A16. Thinking about the times you have experienced disruption since the 20th May 2018, whilst travelling with {train operating company A11}. How did you find out about the disruption ?  
 Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20th May (603), TOC by disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

# Rating of TOC on information provision

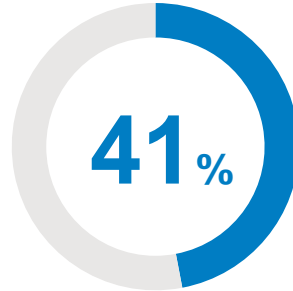
Around two fifths of passengers who experienced disruption gave the TOC a positive rating in relation to information provision. Ratings by GTR passengers were lower than average.

## Amount of information provided



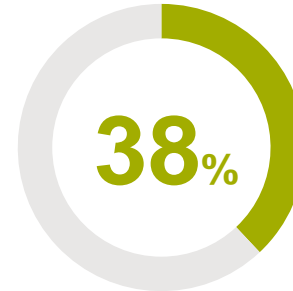
23% GTR  
27% Northern

## Accuracy of information provided



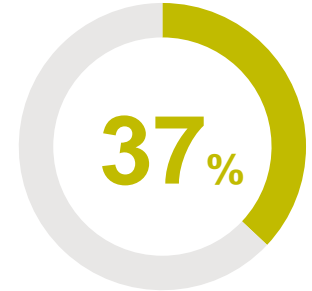
31% GTR  
32% Northern

## The usefulness of information provided



27% GTR  
24% Northern

## The speed in which information about the disruption was provided



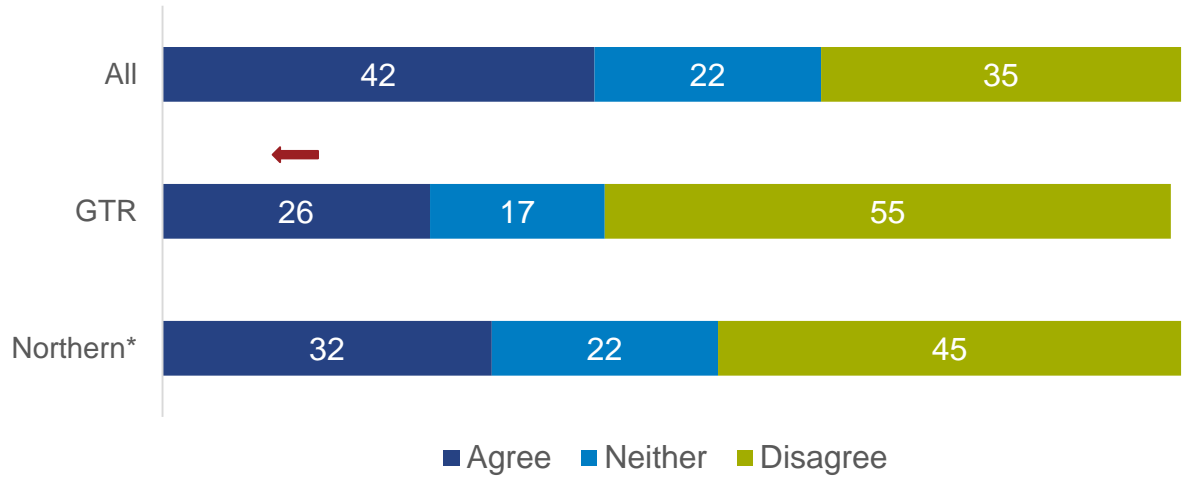
25% GTR  
34% Northern

A18. Now thinking about the times you experienced disruption, since the 20th May, how would you rate the train company on each of the aspects below? All who experienced disruption since the 20th May (603), TOC by disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

# Decision making

Overall two fifths of those who had experienced disruption reported they were provided with all the information they required to make decisions about their travel arrangements however this dropped significantly amongst GTR and Northern passengers.

I was provided with all the information that I required to make decisions about my travel arrangements



A21. Still thinking about the disruption you experienced. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20<sup>th</sup> May (603); by TOC disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

## Qualitative participants felt that there had been very limited information during the disruption

Staff had no more information than passengers could access via apps (National Rail)



- Some relied on apps to find information
- Although these were not always helpful
- One mention of Northern Fail app



“I just think I had the exact information on my app as they did in the station...I swear some of the staff were looking on the national rail line to give information out...they should probably have better information rather than just a public service app.”  
(Northern, Commuter)

“[The Trainline app just says] there might be a replacement service, I need to know that, so I can make a decision.”  
(Northern, Commuter)

Information was not consistent with mismatches between station screen information and apps



“Sometimes I am halfway to a station when I look on the app and it says your train is cancelled or still running and it doesn't actually reflect what is happening at the station. When you get there the board says something else, the train is doing something else.” (GTR, Commuter)

There was lack of clarity about the reason for the delays



- Northern passengers talked about the reasons for delays and cancellations being lack of drivers/ not knowing where drivers were
- GTR passengers talked about signal failures
- GTR commuters would have liked more detail, enabling them to use their own knowledge of transport options to decide how to continue their journey

## Qualitative participants felt that there had been very limited information during the disruption

Delays kept creeping up by 1 minute

"I will get to Deansgate for my train and it is 22 minutes past, it will say it is due at 23 minutes past, that is fine, it is only one minute. Then I will get up to say 20 past and then it gets a bit closer and before you know it, it has been 20 minutes but instead of saying there is a 20 minute delay, I know obviously they are not mind readers, but it's just seeming like that they tack a minute on every time and you are waiting and you don't know whether shall I go to another station? Or shall I wait here and hopefully it will come eventually?" (Northern, Commuter)

Information was only provided at the last minute

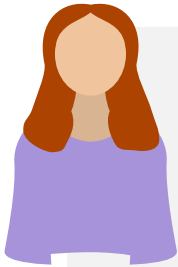
"Surely they know way before minutes before the service that they are not going to make that journey. Surely it doesn't have to be that last minute." (GTR, Commuter)

Announcements were not always heard

- Some noted that they usually used headphones on their journeys so may have missed announcements.
- A couple felt that announcements on trains were more detailed/ useful than those at station/ on platform

"They explain things on the tannoy, they are quite good at explaining things, quite apologetic, if it is going slow they will give you an inkling of why it was or why it is." (GTR, Commuter)

## Passengers were frustrated by the lack of information available feeling unable to make an informed choice about how to complete their journey



### Julie

*Leisure passenger, Northern, Bolton to Manchester*

Julie had planned a night out in Manchester with some friends to see a show. She was aware that there had been some cancellations that day, so asked the member of staff at the ticket booth if the train was running, and was told that it was. Julie bought her ticket and went to the platform.

She noticed that there were lots of people waiting but the train did not turn up. She waited for 20 minutes and during that time there was no information provided to passengers. She asked a member of staff but they were not able to confirm whether or when the train would be running.

“There was a disconnect, staff didn’t know what was going on.”

In the end Julie decided to find an alternative way to get into Manchester. She telephoned her husband to ask for a lift, but he was out with friends and had already had a drink. She decided to get a taxi to make sure that she was able to meet her friends in time. This cost her £25 and the original ticket had cost her £6.

“I ended up getting a taxi to Manchester because I couldn’t get a lift, it cost £25, and because of the delay I couldn’t have a drink before the show that I was going to see, and I was nearly late...I was so stressed by the time I got there.”

## Staff's greatest challenge during the disruption was lack of information



### Staff

- Referring to a new timetable meant that staff felt that they were slower providing information to passengers (they were not able to refer to their knowledge/ memory as they would have usually done)
- Staff struggled to get through to control room staff during the disruption, and did not receive information to update passengers. Whilst this was frustrating, they recognised that everyone was in the same boat and nobody had information.
- This meant that they often used National Rail to find information – and were aware that this meant that they had no more information than passengers could themselves access
- Whilst some staff appreciated emails, others found that this type of information was not instant enough and would have preferred verbal/ instant updates

“One of the questions that we were constantly asked was ‘how long have you known this train was cancelled, why couldn’t we have been told sooner.’”

“The worst thing, we couldn’t get any information, we were trying to find out why trains weren’t stopping at certain stations, we tried to get through to control...we couldn’t get information to give.”

“It wasn’t just that it happened, it’s that we couldn’t explain, we couldn’t give an alternative and this was down to information dissemination and I think the problem there was the people trying to sort it out...and the information dissemination wasn’t the top of their priority.”

“We found in some situations some passengers using apps had more information than we did.”

## When staff did get information this was often last minute and was not always heard



- Staff felt that getting information to passengers was difficult as the platforms were crowded and noisy, people were not listening to announcements and there was not enough board space to display all train information (given that so many were showing as delayed)
- The combination of last minute information, and the noisy environments meant that staff missed announcements, making it difficult to update passengers and meaning that in some instances trains left without being at full capacity
- It was suggested that staff could have been briefed about the current situation before going on shift to ensure they were up to date with any information available

“Our manager gave us a lot of information/ paperwork but it’s different when it comes to putting it into practice. It was hard to make decisions if you don’t know if services are running or not”

“It was so busy on the platforms, and the platform staff were so stretched, they couldn’t hear the radios, they couldn’t hear the announcements. Trains were being cancelled, and then put another train on, on another platform, and the message didn’t get through to the passengers so trains were going half empty, we could have filled with passengers if we’d had time to get them over. It was a logistical nightmare to get people on to the right train.”

“You need it before the shift, not once you’re on the shift, you need to be briefed with it before...before you’re actually turning up to work.”

“Trying to call Control was very hard because everyone was trying to get them at the same time.”

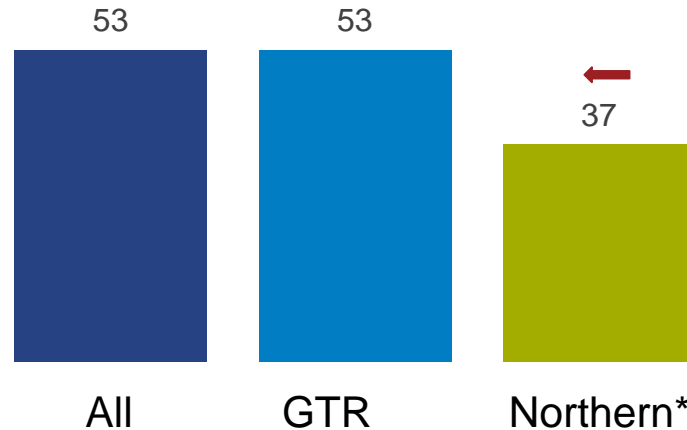


# Staff interactions

# Staff interaction

A half of passengers who experienced disruption said that staff were available to help passengers – this fell to less than two fifths of Northern passengers who had experienced disruption

## % staff available to help passengers



A22. Were station staff available to help passengers during the disruption? Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20<sup>th</sup> May (603), TOC by disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

# Staff interaction

Overall, qualitative participants were sympathetic towards staff but frustrated that staff were unable to provide information

"I felt for them I really did. People were being really rude." (GTR, Commuter)

"I felt really sorry for the staff because they were getting this flak left, right and centre." (Northern, Commuter)

I don't think it was on them. I think it was the people above them to either tell them what to say or say to them what to actually say to everyone that is asking we don't have any information." (GTR, Commuter)

Staff did not have enough information

"Anyone you did ask didn't give you any information of when trains were going to turn up, what the changes were, I went online to find out what was going on." (Northern, Commuter)

Staff not visible

- Some noted that there were not any staff at their station
- A couple already had a negative opinion of staff (Northern) and this was emphasised during the disruption
- A couple felt like more staff were at the station than usual (GTR)

"There was no more staff than what there normally is on the train and there is no more information by them, there wasn't anybody stood there saying this is happening or you know. I feel like they were a bit rude." (Northern, Business passenger)

## Some felt that staff could have been more proactive in certain situations



### Simon

*Commuter, Northern, Stockport to Manchester*

One morning during the disruption Simon needed to get the first train from Rochdale into Manchester. When he arrived, he was the only person at the station so he sat down on the concourse area for his train to arrive.

Simon noticed that there were two guards at the station.

Five minutes before the train was due to depart there was an announcement to say that the train would be delayed. Simon waited, but there was no further information. After five or ten minutes he approached the guards to ask what was happening. He was told that the driver had not got out of bed yet, and was confused because of all of the timetable changes. They were unable to tell Simon when the train would arrive.

Simon felt that as the only person at the station waiting for this train, the guards could have come to him to inform him of the delay and provide any information that they had. He felt that the guards were just talking amongst themselves rather than thinking about providing information proactively to waiting passengers.

“I waited, no one approached me to tell me what happened.”

## Some felt that staff really tried their best



### Jake

*Commuter, Northern, Wigan to Deansgate*

On one occasion Jake decided to ask a member of staff to find out about a delayed train.

The member of staff was unable to answer his query but said that they would go and try and find out. Jake thought that he probably wouldn't see that member of staff again. But they did come back and apologised that they were unable to provide any further information, but would keep checking.

I thought I wouldn't see them again, they probably are going for dinner or whatever, or coffee break, but he came back and he was like I am really sorry, I don't really know what the situation was, but I will keep checking, you know. I didn't get an answer out of him, but he did at least try and help, so I did feel a bit sorry for people like that.

## Those less familiar with alternative travel options valued this type of information from staff



### Tony

*Commuter (infrequent), GTR, Elstree/  
Borehamwood to Kings Cross*

Tony felt panicked when travelling during the disruptions, wondering whether he would be able to get to his destination.

During this time Tony felt that staff were more useful than the screens available at the station. In particular Tony felt that the more detailed information that staff were able to provide was useful. This included information that trains were 'stuck' and alternative travel options.

## Staff faced a range of passenger emotions but largely felt that passengers were sympathetic to staff's situation



### Staff

- Staff felt that all they could do was sympathise with passengers and apologise
- Being truthful about the situation (that they did not have any information to share) was considered the best policy
- Whilst some passengers were very angry (especially those who had consumed alcohol), largely, staff felt that passengers were understanding of the situation that staff were in
- Staff had not received specific training in advance of the timetable changes, but fell back on their own extensive experience

"Sympathizing and apologizing with no answers to give people."

"At the weekend we had people who had had a drop more alcohol than they should have...and they weren't sympathetic, it was almost at a physical stage then...that put us in a rather exposed situation."

"It was pretty horrendous, people were coming up literally crying because trains had been that delayed, they were going to be late at work, they were going to get the sack...it was absolute chaos."

"We were basically having to pacify the customers but you can only say sorry so many times before it starts to sound hollow."

"I think we simply fell back on the fact that we've had years of dealing with passengers...the biggest problem is dealing with a passenger but you can't tell them anything...all they want is you to be able to tell them what's happening, what's being done about it, and most importantly of all, how long until they'll get to where they want to go."

"My manager instructed me to book a taxi for any schoolkids going to exams."

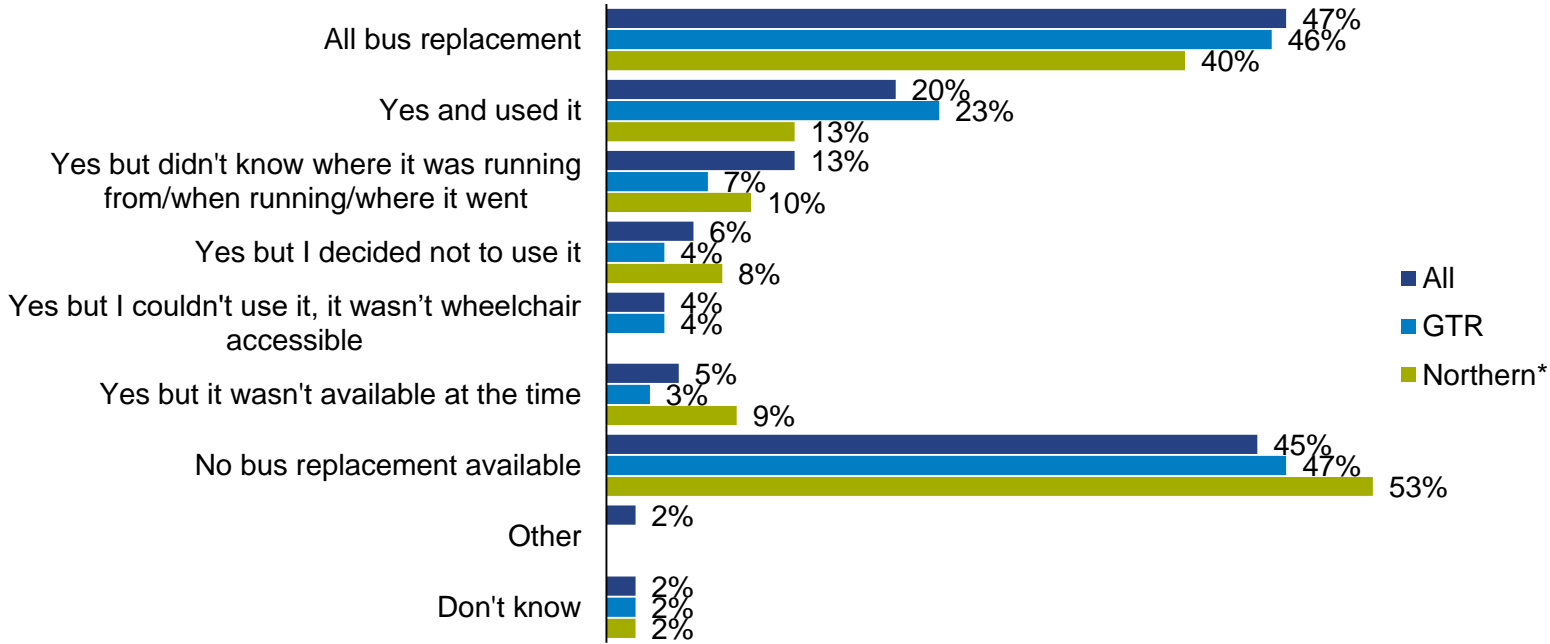
"The majority of passengers were sympathetic to us because they understand that we were doing what we could."

"One of the night shifts I had to do was the worst. It works really well with more staff around especially with 1700 people coming off a train."

# Alternative transport options

# Bus replacement service

Only a fifth of those who had experienced disruption had used a bus replacement service, although nearly a half reported that a bus replacement service had been available.



A23. During this disruption, was a bus replacement service available on your route? Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20th May (603), TOC by disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution



Bus replacements services were mentioned by Northern passengers. Whilst valued, these were considered slow and it was not always clear where these would be stopping



## Tania

*Leisure passenger, Northern, Manchester to Bolton*

Tania had been out with some friends for the evening in Manchester. She planned to get the 9.20pm train home. She arrived at the station and was told that there was a replacement bus service. A member of staff at the station asked her where she was going, and she told them that she was going to Bolton. They pointed her in the direction of the bus to take.

She got on the bus, and once they had left the station the driver announced where the first stop would be. Tania then realised that the bus would be stopping at a range of stops on the way to Bolton. She had thought that it was a direct service to Bolton.

“Nobody said anything, we had to do every stop on the way...I am like you are having a laugh, you know, I wish I had caught a flaming taxi.”

Tania was surprised that there hadn't been any staff working out how many people needed to go directly to Bolton, and how many needed other stops, and arranged the buses accordingly.

One qualitative participant had been provided with a taxi home after his train was cancelled



## Jake

*Commuter, Northern, Wigan to Deansgate*

Jake was visiting some friends in Preston at the weekend. He had planned to get the last train home. Throughout the evening he was checking the live tracker to ensure that the train was running on time. The live tracker said that the train was running on time.

Jake left his friend's house with time to get to the station for the last train. When he got to the station, just before the train was due, it was cancelled. Jake was worried that he was going to be stranded.

"I was like really annoyed at first. I thought I'm going to be stranded in Preston...sat in Preston train station not really knowing what to do, and someone just shouted anyone for Wigan go to the front of the station."

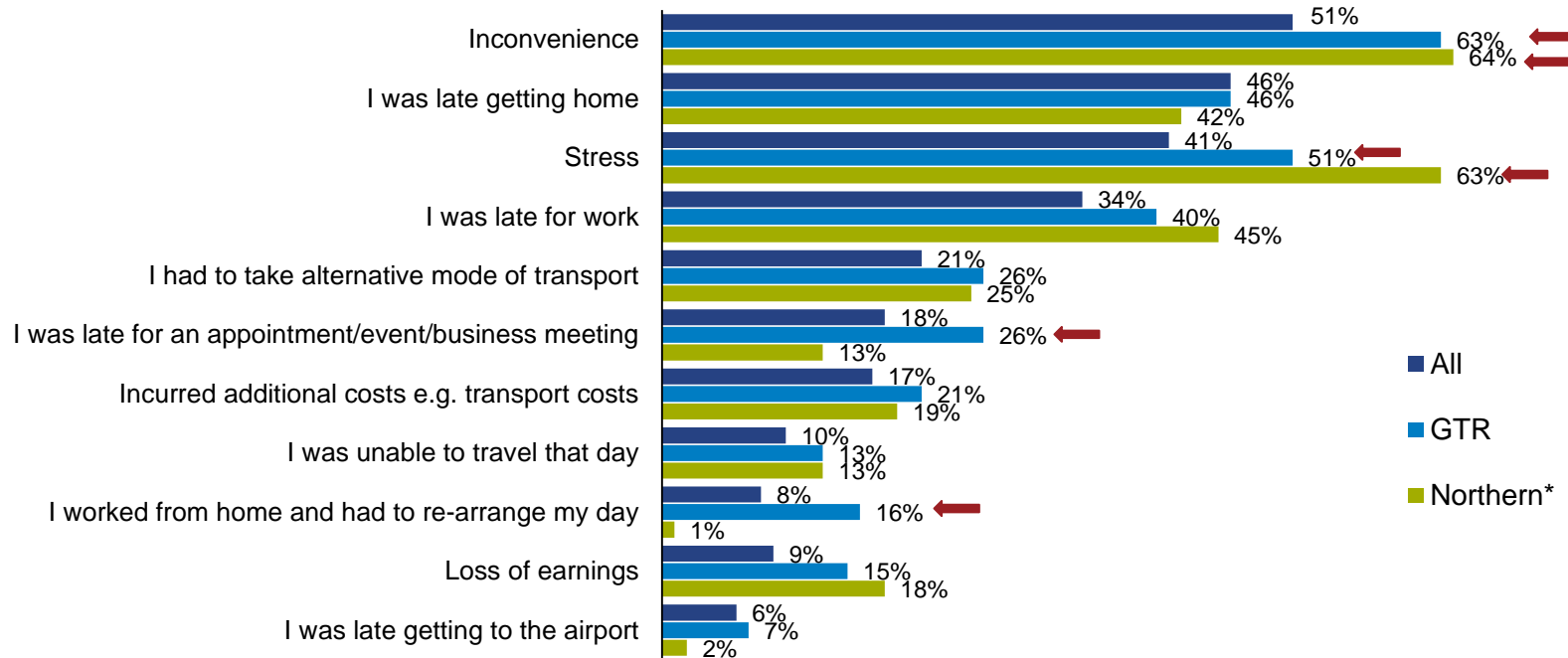
Staff told Jake that he would be given a taxi back to Wigan, and he was given a slip of paper to provide the taxi driver. Ultimately Jake was pleased that the train company had sorted out a way for him to get home.

"I was actually really impressed with how they dealt with it."

# Personal impact of the disruption

# Impact(s) of disruption – all reasons given

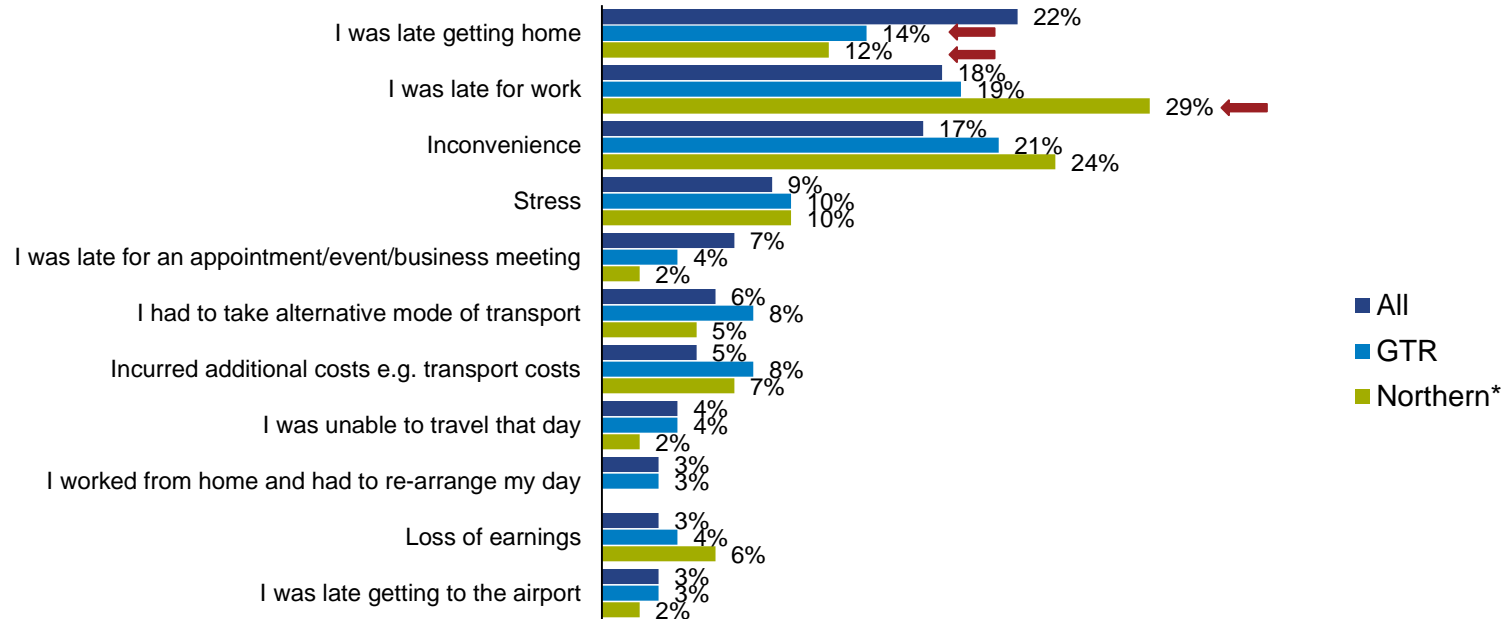
The top three most commonly mentioned impacts of the disruption were inconvenience, being late getting home and stress.



A14. Thinking about the times you have experienced disruption since the 20th May 2018, whilst travelling with {train operating company A11}, What impact(s) did this disruption have on A15: Most frequently experienced. Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20th May (603), TOC by disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

# Impact(s) of disruption – main impact

The most frequently mentioned impacts of the disruption were related to being late either getting home late or being late to work



A14. Thinking about the times you have experienced disruption since the 20th May 2018, whilst travelling with {train operating company A11}, What impact(s) did this disruption have on A15: Most frequently experienced. Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20th May (603), TOC by disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

# Personal impact of the disruption

A range of impacts were cited across the qualitative focus groups

Financial

Employment

Personal  
Safety

Stress  
&  
Inconvenience

Social  
impact

Changing  
travel  
behaviour

Trust in the  
railway

## Both long-term and one-off financial impacts were mentioned

### Short-term financial impacts

- Paying for a taxi when train cancelled/ delayed
- Buying refreshments at the station whilst waiting for a delayed train/ for your next train
- Buying dinner because home too late to cook
- Tube/ bus/ tram fare to travel to alternative stations



### Omar

*Commuter, GTR, Mill Hill Broadway to Farringdon*

Omar found that his journeys during the disruption were most difficult getting home after work. He struggled to get onto the platform at Farringdon, and often missed two trains before he was able to get on a train home.

“On the way home it really affects me. I can’t get onto the platform...it’s just an uncomfortable journey home.”

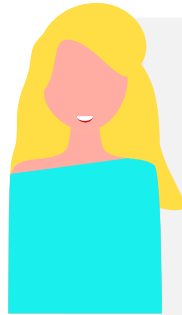
Colleagues at work were in the same position during this time, so he found that they were understanding about the delays to his journey. During the time of disruption, and since then, he has started thinking about his return journey home much earlier than he used to. Around 3pm he now starts thinking about his home journey. When he and colleagues can see that there are lots of delays and problems with the trains, they will decide to get an Uber home. This is to avoid the stress of using the train, even though it is costing money.

“Sometimes we just Uber it to avoid the stress of having to get on the train. Obviously that is incurring a higher cost than any other method of travel would incur.”

Both long-term and one-off financial impacts were mentioned

## Long-term financial impacts

- Taking a new route to work/ increased travel ticket cost
- Routinely choose to take a taxi when travelling home late at night to avoid being 'stuck' at a station late at night (often noted by females)
- Loss of earnings



### Michelle

*Commuter, Northern, Bolton to Manchester/ Bolton to Blackpool*

Michelle works for a company where she is paid based on the hours that she works, and commission. During the disruption she was late for work, and this directly impacts on her salary for the month.

“Obviously if I am two hours late, then you don’t get paid for that time.”

Michelle also felt uncomfortable about being late to work.

Yeah with work, again boss, you know you feel like you are taking advantage even though you are not, when you walk in you feel like sorry, you come up with excuses as to why you are late, when it is not good enough really when you walk in late, so yeah I do feel like it affected that.



## Some felt that being late for work and meetings had a detrimental effect on their working lives



### Jake

*Commuter, Northern, Wigan to Deansgate*

Jake was frequently late into work during the first two weeks of disruption. Whilst he felt that his boss was fairly understanding, he is worried that it may have a lasting impact on the way in which he is perceived by his boss, in a competitive work environment.

“It didn’t help that the first couple of weeks coincided with quite a busy period at work. So I mean he never shouted at me or anything, but there was passive aggressive comments and a few times I stayed late in the evening, to 6pm instead of 5pm to make up the time. Just to make it up to get the work done. So yeah things like that. Just put a bit of strain on the relationship I would say, it was quite a stressful time at work and that added to the stress, which probably could have been avoided.”



### Raj

*Commuter and Leisure passenger, GTR, St Albans to Central London*

Raj often travels to meetings. During the disruption he had a meeting scheduled with some international clients.

Due to delays on the train he turned up 45 minutes late. Not only did he miss a significant portion of the meeting, but he also felt embarrassed that international clients travelling from another country had turned up on time, but he had not.

“I got to a meeting 45 minutes late, it looks very unprofessional.”

During the second /third weeks of disruption Raj decided to work from home to avoid delays travelling into and home from work.

# Personal safety impact

Safety was also a concern, particularly for female participants who noted that they were now concerned that trains late at night would be cancelled or delayed



## Elaine

*Commuter, GTR, West Sutton to Fenchurch Street*

Elaine enjoys going out in the evening with friends after work.

“In the evenings I have a drink and I want to be able to know that I have a train [to get home].”

Elaine usually plans to get the second to last train home from Fenchurch Street, and before the change to the train timetable she knew her alternative route from another nearby station if needed.

During the disruption Elaine found that later trains were cancelled and her previous alternative route is no longer available and has been removed from the new timetable. This makes her question staying out late, as she is aware that she is travelling alone.

“Already when you are a single woman traveling alone home, you just don't really want to be chasing around London.”



## Becky

*Leisure passenger, Northern, Manchester to Blackpool*

Becky enjoys socialising with friends in the evening. Since the disruption she has started to think more about what time train she gets home and how safe the journey will be.

Becky now avoids getting the last train home because she is worried that it will be cancelled, and that she will be stranded at the train station. Also, the station is often dark and unmanned at night.

If travelling with a group of friends they will decide to get a taxi because they cannot guarantee that the trains will be running.

“You don't want to get the last train home because you don't know what's going on, we end up sharing a taxi back.”

## Many felt that they had to change their usual plans resulting in stress and inconvenience



### Cynthia

*Leisure passenger, Great Northern, travelling from Kings Cross to Baldock*

Cynthia was travelling up to Baldock to see her sister and stay with her for the weekend which she does at least twice a month.

Cynthia got on the train at Kings Cross as usual. There was no announcement on the train, but it did not stop at Baldock as indicated at Kings Cross. Cynthia had to phone her sister and tell her to come and pick her up in her car from a different station.

“It wasn’t communicated on the train that it wasn’t stopping. I had to get off at the next station after Baldock and wait for my sister so that caused a bit of inconvenience for her as she had to drive farther to get me.”



### Mark

*Commuter and leisure user, Northern, Horwich to Manchester*

On the Monday after the timetable change Mark was shocked to find that he would have to catch a train 45 minutes earlier than his normal morning train in order to get to work on time. He missed this train and there was a long wait for the next train so ended up having to cycle to another station near his home and catch a different train into Manchester which meant he was 75 minutes late for work. On the following days he had to catch the earlier train he had missed on the first day until the timetable settled down and introduced a more convenient later train.

““Now, getting on the 08.03 it’s quite quiet, probably because it’s an extra train which has suddenly been introduced, and it’s usually bang on time at my station but then towards Manchester it gets delayed by red signals so sometimes it has been 15-20 minutes late arriving”

## Getting up earlier and getting home later was a consistent story across commuters

### Added time to journeys

- Got up to get earlier train
- Got home later
- Still planning journeys on the basis that something will be cancelled/delayed → getting earlier trains in the morning

“I’m all right getting into work, it doesn’t affect my punctuality but on the way home really affects me, I can’t get on to the platform, I maybe miss 2 trains before the one I thought I would originally might get and it’s just an uncomfortable journey home.”

Commuter, Thameslink

“It’s the same old same old. They apologise but nothing changes, there’s nothing you can do, you have no options, it’s lump it or leave it”

Commuter, Northern

“After 5.15 at Farringdon it’s literally cancellation after cancellation to any destination. I think the only one that works is the one to Gatwick”

Commuter, Thameslink

## Participants also had to cancel plans or curtail socialising due to the disruption



### Adam

*Commuter, Northern, Rochdale to Manchester Victoria*

Adam was already dissatisfied with train services before the changes to the rail timetable, experiencing delays and cancellations.

Given his experiences during the timetable change disruption, he has cancelled evening plans because he feels that he cannot guarantee that he will get home in a reasonable time.

"I know how much of a hassle it is getting back, you don't want that looming over you when you're trying to get back...I wouldn't do after work drinks now."



### Paul

*Leisure passenger, Northern, Manchester to Preston*

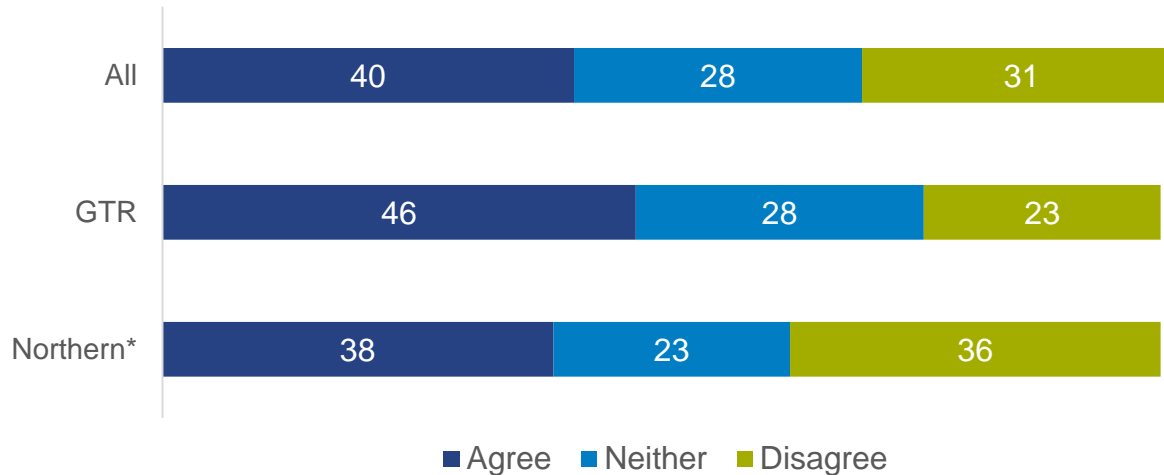
Paul has a degenerative health condition. He frequently travels by rail for socialising, travelling with a friend. Both require assistance when travelling and often book Passenger Assistance.

Paul and his friend made the decision not to travel during the first two weeks of the timetable change, having heard of the disruption. They decided to cancel their plans. This was because Paul was concerned that he would have to wait a long time for a train.

# Change in travel behaviour?

Two fifths had changed the times of the trains they catch to lessen the impact of any disruption.

Since the period of disruption, I have changed the times of the trains I catch to lessen the impact of any disruption



Commuters were more likely to agree compared with non-commuters (44% vs 31%)

A21. Still thinking about the disruption you experienced. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: All who experienced disruption since the 20<sup>th</sup> May (603); by TOC disruption (GTR 117, Northern 73). \* Base less than 100 data should be treated with caution

# Changes to travel behaviour

A range of changes to travel behaviour were mentioned across the research. Some were short-term, during the disruption, and some were considered to be longer-term changes

## Short-term changes

- Avoided using train for first couple of weeks (e.g. worked from home)
- Avoided using 'mid stations' as less likely to get a train during disruption

## Longer-term changes

- Generally avoiding late trains/ last train home
- Unlikely to risk taking the train to the airport
- Stopped using train (alternative option available)
- Using car more often
- Take taxi if travelling in a group

"He didn't go out at all for a couple of weeks because it was unreliable and trains had been cancelled, he didn't want to be stranded somewhere, and when you're thinking it could be hours and you've not got other options, it's not great is it"  
(Leisure passenger, Northern)

"I've used the train to go to Manchester airport because it goes direct, but you can't sit down, it's not worth the hassle, they've opened the railway up down there which is supposed to encourage people not to drive but you're worrying the train's late am I going to be on time at the airport" (Leisure passenger, Northern)

"Trains have become an individual means of transport, you wouldn't go on the train with a group... it's an inconvenience"  
(Leisure passenger, Northern)

# Short-term changes to travel behaviour

## Some used a different mode of transport to avoid stress or overcrowding

### Leanne

*Leisure passenger, Northern, Bolton to Manchester*

Leanne usually uses the train to go shopping in Manchester. During the disruption she travelled by train into Manchester to go shopping with her partner's Mum.

One the way home Leanne initially thought that they would take the train. However, when she saw the crowds she decided that it would be better to take the bus. She wanted to make sure that her partner's mum would be able to get a seat.

"She needs to be able to sit down. And nobody gets up and you're squashed, and you've got shopping."



### Kerry

*Leisure passenger, Northern, Kearsley to Manchester Victoria/ Swinton/ Bolton*

Kerry's daughter has a long-term health condition. Kerry usually takes the train with her daughter to hospital appointments.

Kerry decided not to use the train to get to the hospital during the disruption as she felt that the environment would be too distressing for her daughter.

"It would have been an absolute nightmare, and upsetting for my daughter, so I wouldn't take that risk."

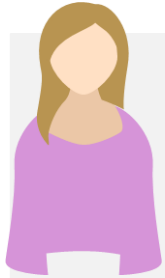
Instead, Kerry arranged a lift by car.

"I can't afford not to be there so I had lifts off people."



# Long term changes to travel behaviour

## Some have decided to use alternative modes on a long term basis



### Elaine

*Commuter, GTR, West Sutton to Fenchurch Street*

Before the rail timetable changes, Elaine travelled from West Sutton to London Bridge using Southern. She always got a seat on this journey.

On the first day of the timetable change there were no direct trains from West Sutton so she has to take a train to Sutton where she changed to a Thameslink train. This train did run on the day, but she had to stand for the journey which took an hour.

“By the time I got to work I was exhausted.”

Elaine now either drives to Sutton or Cheam, parks and takes the train, rather than going to her closest station, West Sutton. This costs her more and is having to change her season ticket to reflect the different transport modes/zones she is using.

“It’s more of an effort, it messes up your vibe, you’re thinking too much about what you need to do.”



### Adam

*Commuter, Northern, Rochdale to Manchester Victoria*

Adam was already dissatisfied with the train service, often finding that they were delayed, did not turn up or simply missed his station

During the disruptions he decided to stop using the train and now uses the tram to get to work. This means an extra 25 minutes each way. Sometimes trams do not start early enough so he uses the bus.

“The amount of times I have gone into work and said ‘the trains didn’t turn up, or the train turned up and I couldn’t get on them’ and three trains will go through the station which you can’t get on. It’s infuriating. I’m willing to trade additional time for reliability, it’s a trade off...I just sleep less now.”

# Understanding reasons for the timetable changes

Overall participants queried why changes to the timetable had been made, especially where there were no discernible benefits

## What are the benefits to the timetable changes?

- Some mentions of the 2020 Vision and assume that timetable changes part of this along with improved trains, longer trains/ more seats, security.
- However, none felt that the train company had been clear on why the timetable changes were happening or the scale of the changes
- Most felt that there had been no improvement as a result of the timetable changes

“It has to get worse before it gets better, I’m hoping it’s for the greater good either 6 months or a year down the line.” (Commuter, Northern)

“I’ve talked to loads of people and I don’t see what benefits it’s had. I didn’t speak to anyone who saw it as this being this great new change.” (Commuter, Thameslink)

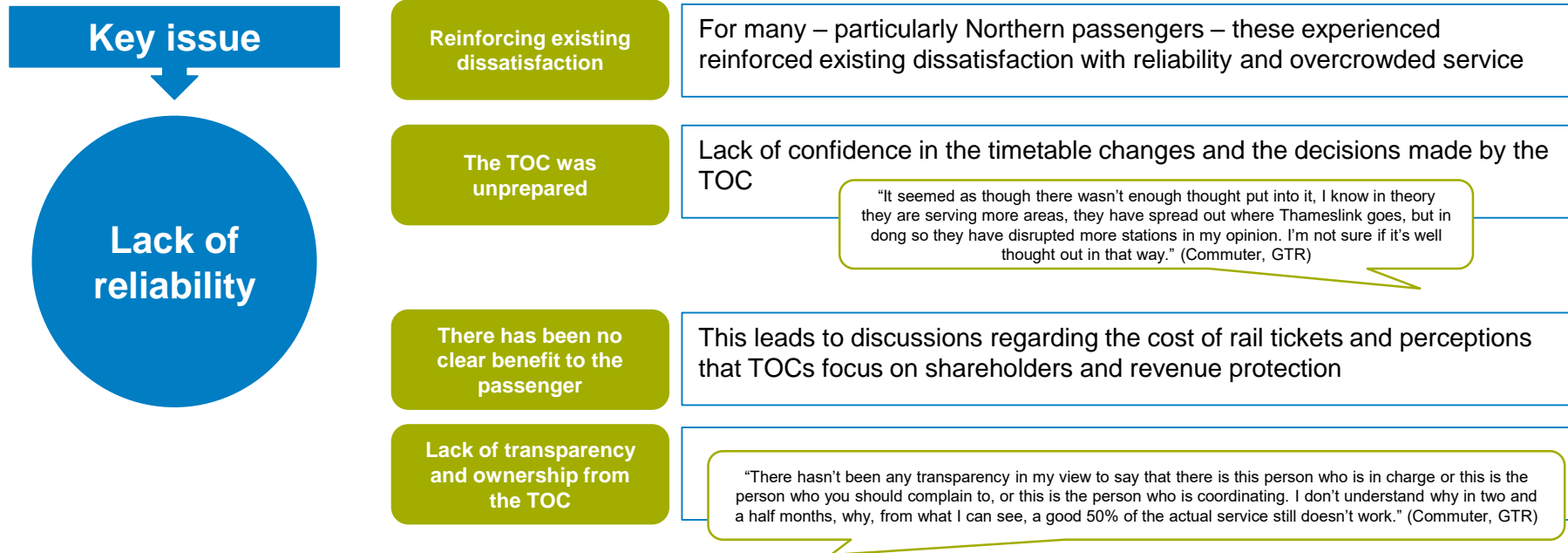
“Even now, three months later when I’m looking at how I’m going to get home and they all say cancelled, cancelled, cancelled, this is why I’m not sure what they’ve done. I don’t understand” (Commuter, GTR)

“On the improvement thing I don’t think I’ve had more trains coming. The big thing they said was more trains and I definitely haven’t had more. I’ve got the same. They might be different services, but we’ve got the same amount of trains” (Commuter, Thameslink)

“It’s not changed for me. I still want the train to be on time, I expect it to be on time. There are still delays, people are still complaining. Replacement buses aren’t good enough, it’s more stress. It’s not reliable.” (Commuter, Northern)

# Trust/ relationship with TOC impact

Overall participants felt that their experiences during the disruption caused by the rail timetable changes had a negative impact on their feeling of trust, and relationship with the TOC



# Suggested improvements

# Suggested improvements

A range of suggested improvements were given by participants across the research

More information

Clearer cancellations  
(not adding minutes  
to delays then  
cancelling)

Information at ticket  
machine

TOC social media  
alerts (e.g. TfL twitter  
alerts)

Live tracking to see  
progress/ location of  
train

More realistic/ honest/  
accurate information

Longer trains/ more  
carriages

Automatic refunds

"In terms of the apps, I use the Network Rail one, you can't set up a notification to say for example, where your station is or if you say I want to board a particular train every day there is no way of setting that notification for an alert."  
(Commuter, GTR)

"Information on the machine before booking my ticket would have been useful, it would have given me an option, they've taken my choice away."  
(Leisure passenger, Northern)

Open barriers

More bus  
replacement services  
(GTR)

"Give you more detail about reason for delay rather than just saying 'signal failure' say more about it so you can gauge length of delay and calculate whether to stay or go somewhere else."  
(Commuter, GTR)

# Suggested improvements

## Staff improvements focused on their ability to provide more and clearer information to passengers



### Staff

- Be able to turn off automatic announcements allowing tailored announcements to be made
- Have a designated individual at the station in charge of information dissemination

“We have a box in the booking office to write down customer complaints and concerns and management do take on board what we have to say but it takes ages to get direct feedback.”

“I think it would have helped if there had been a designated person put in charge of communication...to let them frontline staff know what was going on...somebody whose sole function wasn't to sort a problem out, but to let everyone know what was going on.”

“What would have helped us would have been being able to turn the automatic announcements completely off and then the announcer actually say this is going from here...it's a different tone. Somebody actually speaking and people can hear it clearer, they tend to listen to it, and it saves the announcer getting on the radio to tell us...everyone can hear it...even passengers were saying it.”

“Would be good to get a list of all trains cancelled for that day so staff can ask for additional 'stop orders' and to allow customers to use an alternative if they have got a wait of an hour till their next train. Customers don't think it's so bad if they have an idea of what else they can do.”

“It worked really well when more staff were around, especially for night shifts. And giving us more bus replacements on standby.”

# Thank you

