



# Passenger Rail Usage

## 2017-18 Q4 Statistical Release

Publication date: 14 June 2018

Next Publication date: 04 October 2018

### Background

This release contains information on passenger rail usage. This covers:

- Passenger journeys
- Passenger kilometres
- Passenger revenue
- Passenger train kilometres

Coverage: Great Britain

Latest Quarter: 2017-18 Q4  
(January to March 2018)

### Sources:

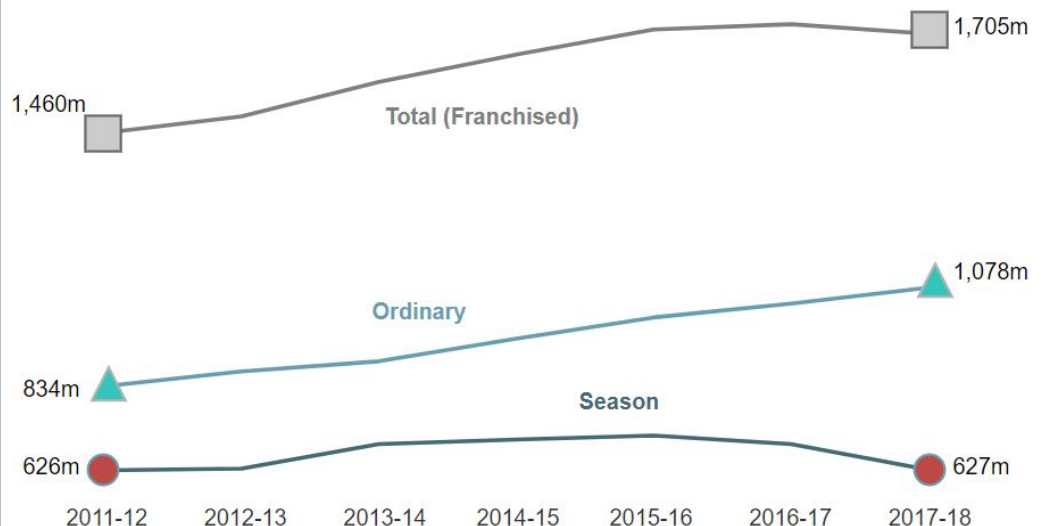
- LENNON ticketing and revenue database
- Train Operating Companies
- Network Rail

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- Passenger kilometres – p5
- Passenger revenue – p8
- Passenger train kilometres – p11
- Annexes – p13

For the first time since 2009-10 **franchised rail passenger journeys in Great Britain** fell, to 1,705m in 2017-18, driven by a 9.2% fall in Season ticket journeys. This was partially offset by a 3.8% increase in Ordinary tickets and suggests a shift in the type of tickets used by passengers.

### Passenger journeys by ticket type (franchised operators), 2011-12 to 2017-18



**Passenger journeys** in the London and South East sector fell by 2.1% whilst the Long Distance and Regional sectors showed a slowdown in growth with passenger journeys in each sector increasing by less than 1%.

The rate of growth in both **passenger kilometres** (0.3%) and **passenger revenue** (2.3%) has been at its lowest level since 2000-01.

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Website: <http://orr.gov.uk/statistics/published-stats/statistical-releases>

# 1. Passenger journeys

**Passenger journeys** are calculated based on travel from an origin station to a destination station. A train journey may include one or more changes of train, and one journey is generated for each train used.

Quarterly and annual data **by sector** are available from 1994-95 onwards in [Table 12.6](#)

Quarterly data **by ticket type** are available from 1994-95 Q1 and annual data are available from 1986-87 onwards in [Table 12.7](#).

Quarterly and annual data **by TOC** are now available from 2011-12 onwards in [Table 12.12](#).

A time series of aggregate annual data from 1950 are also available in [Table 12.5](#).

## 2017-18 Annual

- 2017-18 passenger journeys fell by 1.4% compared to last year as journeys on Season tickets in the London and South East sector dropped for the second year in succession.
- South Western Railway journey numbers saw the largest fall, decreasing by 7.9% to 212 million. This is the lowest number of journeys since 2012-13.

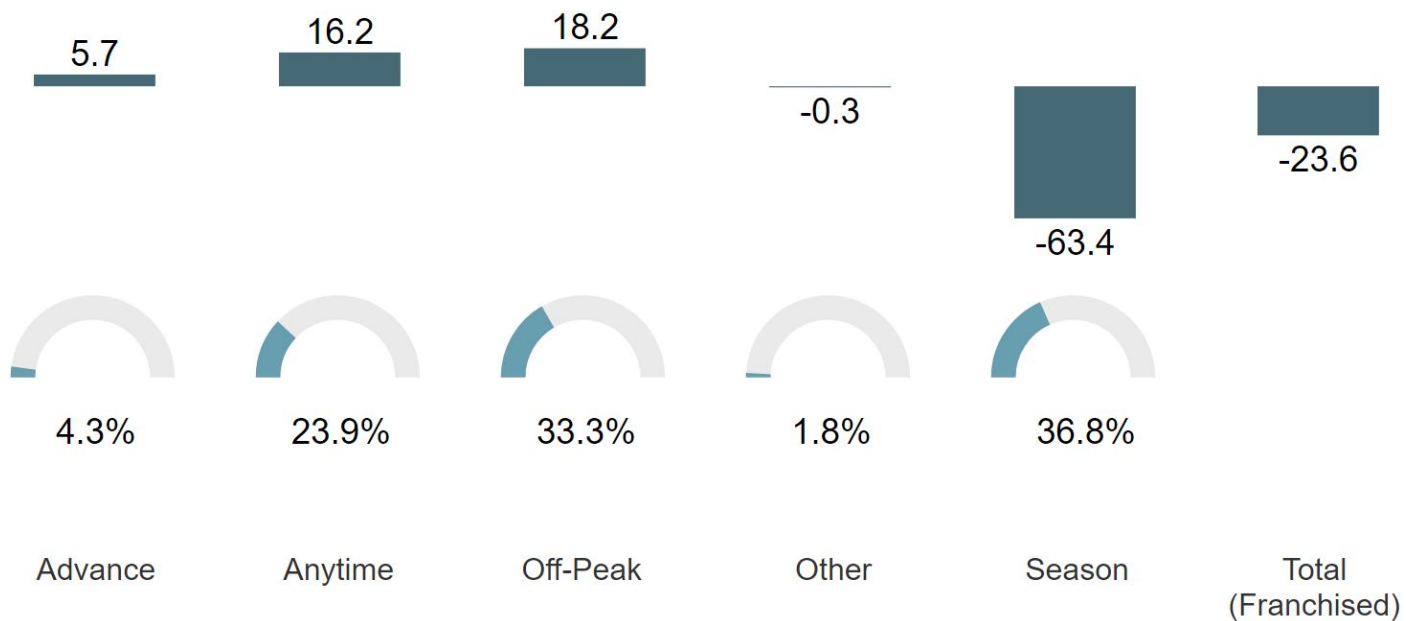
For the first time since the economic downturn in 2009-10, Great Britain's annual passenger journeys (including non-franchise) dropped to 1,708 million in 2017-18. This followed a slowing growth rate in each of the last three years. The 1.4% fall in passenger journeys is the largest decrease recorded since 1993-94. This has been driven by a record fall of 2.1% in the London and South East sector, which makes up just over two-thirds (68.7%) of the national passenger journeys.

Franchised passenger journeys in the Long Distance and Regional sectors continued to grow, albeit at a much slower rate than 2016-17. Growth in the Long Distance sector was at its lowest level since 2000-01, when rail travel was affected by the Hatfield crash. Despite this, both sectors recorded the highest volume of journeys since the beginning of the time series with 145 million journeys in the Long Distance sector and 390 million in the Regional sector.

The number of passenger journeys made using season tickets fell for the second consecutive year with a decrease of 9.2% since last year.

Market share for season ticket journeys was 37% in 2017-18, which is down from 48% a decade ago. Whilst the volume of season ticket journeys has fallen in the last two years, over the same period journeys on advanced, anytime and off-peak tickets have increased.

**Figure 1.01:** Change in passenger journeys by ticket type (millions), 2017-18 compared to previous year and market share (2017-18)



In 2017-18, Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) had the largest number of passenger journeys (319 million) of all operators. Factors such as industrial disputes, staffing issues and planned cancellations contributed to a fall of around 2 million in 2017-18. This is the second consecutive year that journey numbers have fallen.

Passenger journeys on the South Western Railway also continued to fall, recording the highest decrease in journeys of over 18 million since last year. 2017-18 saw engineering works at London Waterloo, industrial action and a transfer of franchise ownership.

Chiltern Railways, with 28 million passenger journeys, saw an increase of 6.4% since 2016-17. Their direct route between London Marylebone and Oxford City Centre opened in December 2016<sup>1</sup> and the effect of that new route was still evident throughout 2017-18.

ScotRail saw an increase of 3.5 million since last year, which was its highest growth rate (3.8%) since 2014-15. This could be attributable to the completion of improvement projects<sup>2</sup> and electrification works<sup>3</sup> in 2017-18.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.chilternrailways.co.uk/news/chiltern-railways-announces-oxford-city-centre-london-marylebone-launch-date>

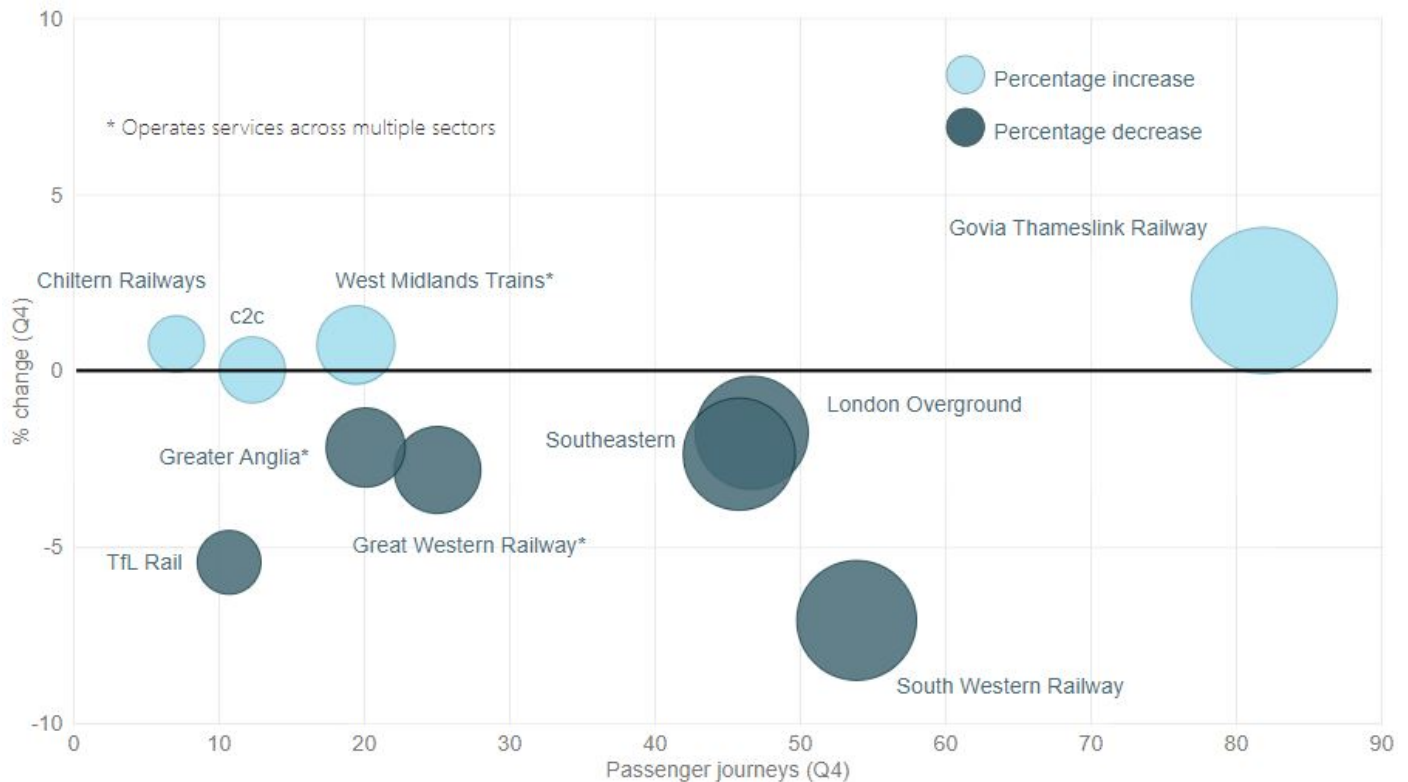
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.railjournal.com/index.php/europe/edinburgh-falkirk-glasgow-electric-services-begin.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.itv.com/news/border/2017-10-27/scotrail-increases-cross-border-train-journeys/>

## 2017-18 Q4

- The number of journeys fell by 9 million compared to the same quarter in 2016-17.
- All three sectors reported a fall in journey numbers for the first time since 2012-13 Q4.

**Figure 1.02: Passenger journeys 2017-18 Q4 and percentage change compared to 2016-17 Q4, London and South East sector**



Despite Govia Thameslink Railway reporting growth for the second time since 2016-17 Q4, journeys within the London and South East sector fell by 1.9% due to falls for six other operators.

There were four million fewer journeys on South Western Railway in 2017-18 Q4 compared to the same quarter last year. The 54 million journeys represents their lowest Q4 total since the beginning of the time series, which might have been due to industrial action<sup>4</sup> and adverse weather in late February.

Passenger journeys in the Regional sector fell for the second time since 2012-13 Q4. Northern accounts for around a quarter of journeys in this sector and reported a fall of 8.9% due to snow disruption and rail strikes<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/south-western-railway-hit-by-fresh-wave-of-industrial-action-over-role-of-guards-on-trains-a3768016.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/northern-rail-strike-dates-march-2018-latest-updates-when-where-trains-cancelled-easter-travel-a8279076.html>

## 2. Passenger kilometres

**Passenger kilometres** are calculated by multiplying the number of passenger journeys on a particular flow by the number of track kilometres between the two required stations.

Quarterly and annual data **by sector** is now available from 1994-95 onwards in [Table 12.3](#)

Quarterly data **by ticket type** is now available from 1994-95 Q1 and annual data is available from 1986-87 onwards in [Table 12.4](#)

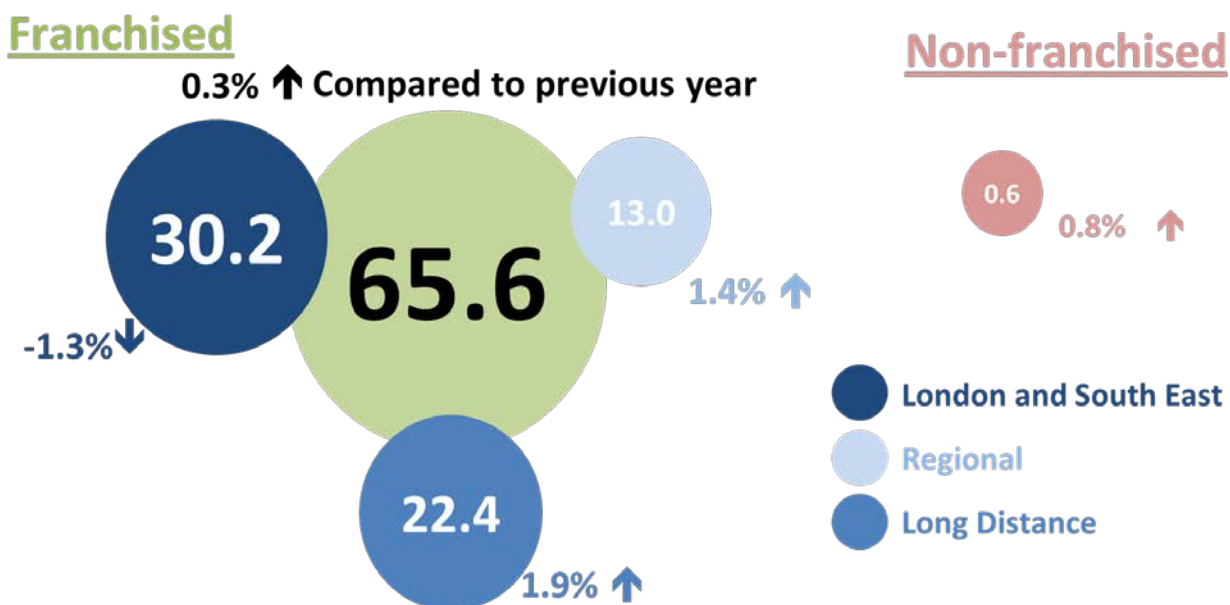
Quarterly and annual data **by TOC** is now available from 2011-12 onwards in [Table 12.11](#)

A time series of aggregate annual data from 1947 is also available in [Table 12.2](#)

### 2017-18 Annual

- Growth in passenger kilometres in 2017-18 has been at its lowest since 2000-01. This is driven by the London and South East sector which fell by 1.3%.
- Growth in the Long distance and Regional sectors slowed down in 2017-18, mirroring the trend in passenger journeys.

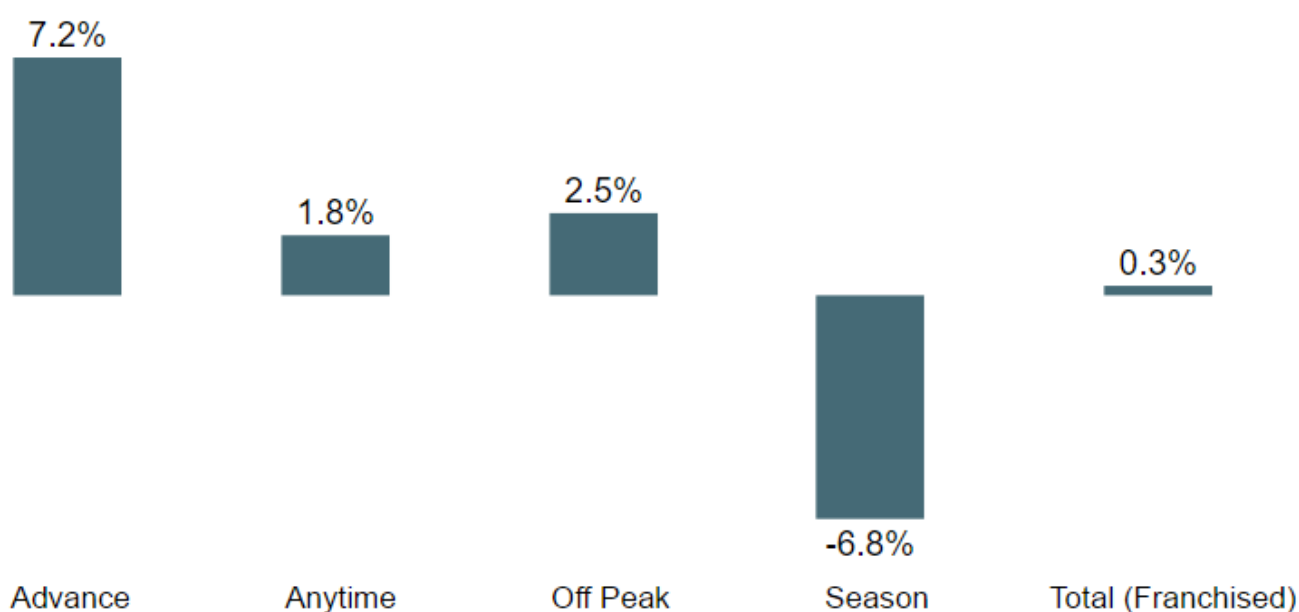
**Figure 2.01: Passenger kilometres (billion kms) by sector, 2017-18 and percentage change compared to 2016-17**



The main driver of the fall in London and South East sector was South Western Railway, which recorded the largest decrease in passenger kilometres in 2017-18 (7.4%). Engineering works and industrial action has affected South Western Railway throughout 2017-18, with all four quarters recording a decrease in passenger kilometres compared to the previous year.

Growth in the Regional sector slowed to its lowest rate since 2012-13. Industrial action contributed to passenger kilometres falling on Northern<sup>6</sup> (1.8%) and Merseyrail<sup>7</sup> (6.0%) though the effect was balanced out by an increase for ScotRail (4.1%), which accounts for over 20% of all passenger kilometres in the sector.

**Figure 2.02: Percentage change in passenger kilometres, ordinary and season tickets (excludes Other), 2017-18 compared to previous year**



As with passenger journeys, passenger kilometres from season tickets fell considerably compared to last year. In contrast, ordinary tickets, which accounted for three quarters of all passenger kilometres, increased by 2.9% compared to last year. Advance tickets have shown the largest growth rate of all ticket types and they have a market share in excess of 20% compared to 16% when the series began in 2010-11.

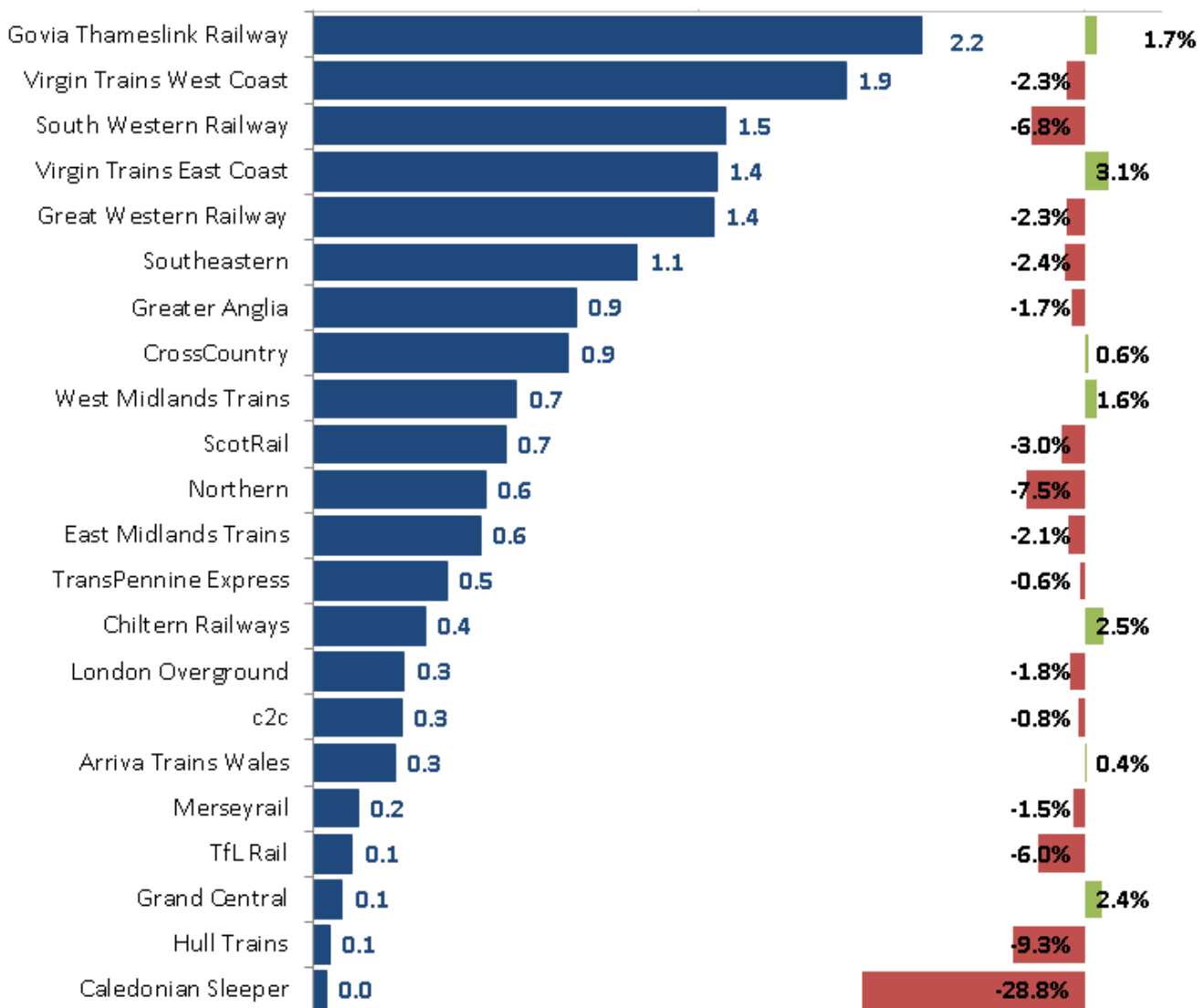
<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-41398899>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-41481821>

## 2017-18 Q4

- For the first time since 2012-13 Q4, passenger kilometres decreased (1.5%) in 2017-18 Q4.
- Similar to passenger journeys, all three sectors reported a fall in passenger kilometres for the first time since 2012-13 Q4.

**Figure 2.03: Passenger kilometres (billion kms) by operator, 2017-18 Q4 and percentage change compared to 2016-17 Q4**



Industrial action has affected South Western Railway, Northern, Greater Anglia and Merseyrail<sup>8</sup> services between January and March 2018, which contributed to a fall in their passenger kilometres in addition to the effects of the adverse weather.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-42622386>

### 3. Passenger revenue

**Passenger revenue** statistics show all ticket revenue and miscellaneous charges associated with passenger travel on national railways, but not including government support or grants.

Quarterly data **by sector** is available from 1995-96 Q1 and annual data is available from 1994-95 onwards in [Table 12.8](#)

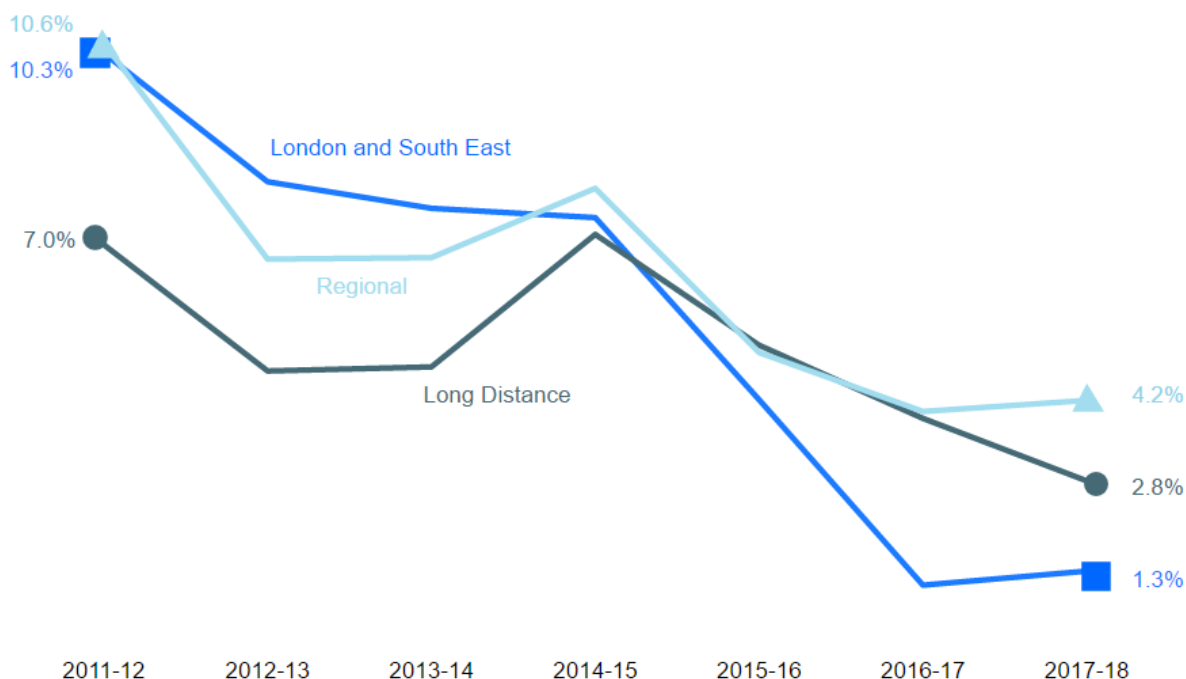
Quarterly data **by ticket type** is available from 1996-97 Q1 and annual data is available from 1986-87 onwards in [Table 12.9](#)

#### 2017-18 Annual

- Passenger revenue reached £9,728m in 2017-18
- Revenue growth at its lowest (2.3%) since 2000-01
- Season ticket revenue fell (4.6%) for the second year in a row

Compared to last year, revenue in the London and South East and Regional sectors grew at a faster rate despite the slowdown in passenger journeys. In contrast, revenue in the Long Distance sector slowed to its lowest rate since 2009-10.

**Figure 3.01: Passenger revenue by sector, percentage change compared to the same quarter the previous year, 2011-12 to 2017-18**





Revenue from season tickets decreased by 4.6% in 2017-18, and was the lowest level of revenue reported since 2013-14. With the shift in type of tickets used, revenue from ordinary tickets, which accounted for almost 80% of total revenue, recorded 4.3% growth in 2017-18. Revenue from advance tickets recorded the highest growth rate (9.0%), reflecting the growth in passenger journeys on advance tickets.

Revenue for non-franchised operators fell for the first time since 2011-12. These operators account for less than 1% of all passenger revenue.

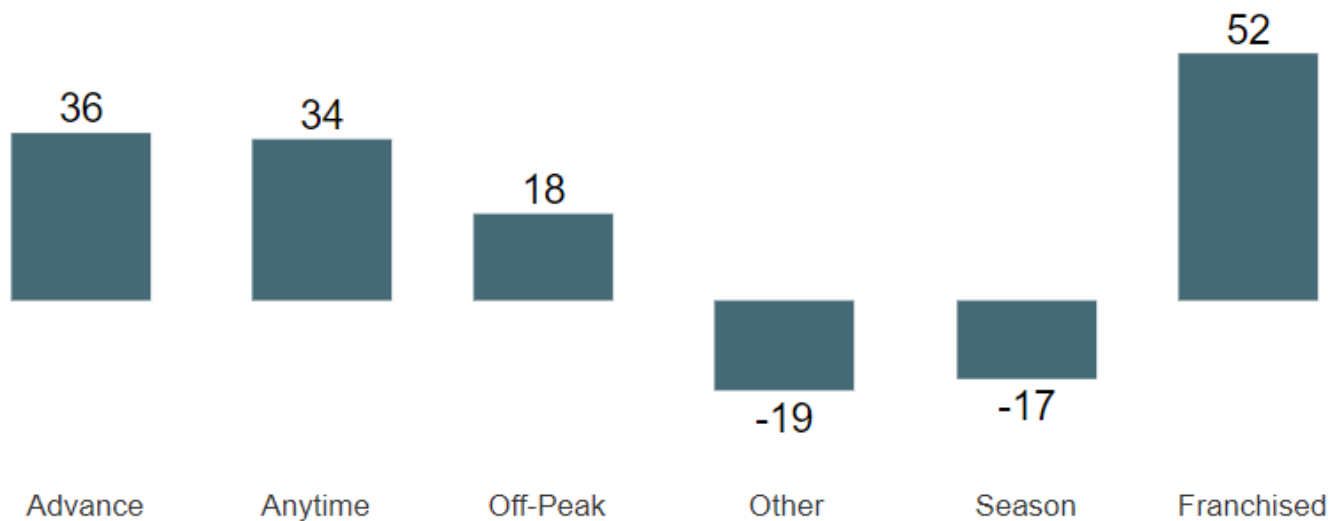
Revenue per journey in 2017-18 was £5.66, an increase of 3.7% compared to the previous year. Revenue per passenger kilometre reached 14.72p, an increase of 2.0% on 2016-17.

## 2017-18 Q4

- Passenger revenue increased by 2.2% to £2,447m in 2017-18 Q4 with revenue growth across all three franchised sectors.
- Revenue per journey up 4.3% to £5.68

Despite the number of passenger journeys falling in all three sectors in 2017-18 Q4, revenue continued to increase, though the growth rate in the Long Distance and Regional sectors slowed down. Passenger revenue in the London and South East sector increased by 2.1% compared to 2016-17 Q4, which was similar to the growth reported last quarter and represented the strongest revenue growth in the sector since 2016-17 Q1.

**Figure 3.02: Change in passenger revenue by ticket type, 2017-18 Q4 and 2016-17 Q4 (£million)**



Season ticket revenue fell by 2.8% compared to the same quarter last year and the £569m was the lowest level of revenue reported in Q4 since 2013-14. Over the same period there was strong growth for advance and anytime fares.

Revenue per passenger kilometre reached 15.15p, an increase of 3.8% compared to the same quarter last year and the highest growth rate since 2014-15 Q4.

## 4. Passenger train kilometres

**Passenger train kilometres** refers to the number of train kilometres (million) travelled by revenue earning passenger trains, sourced from Network Rail's Track Access Billing System (TABS).

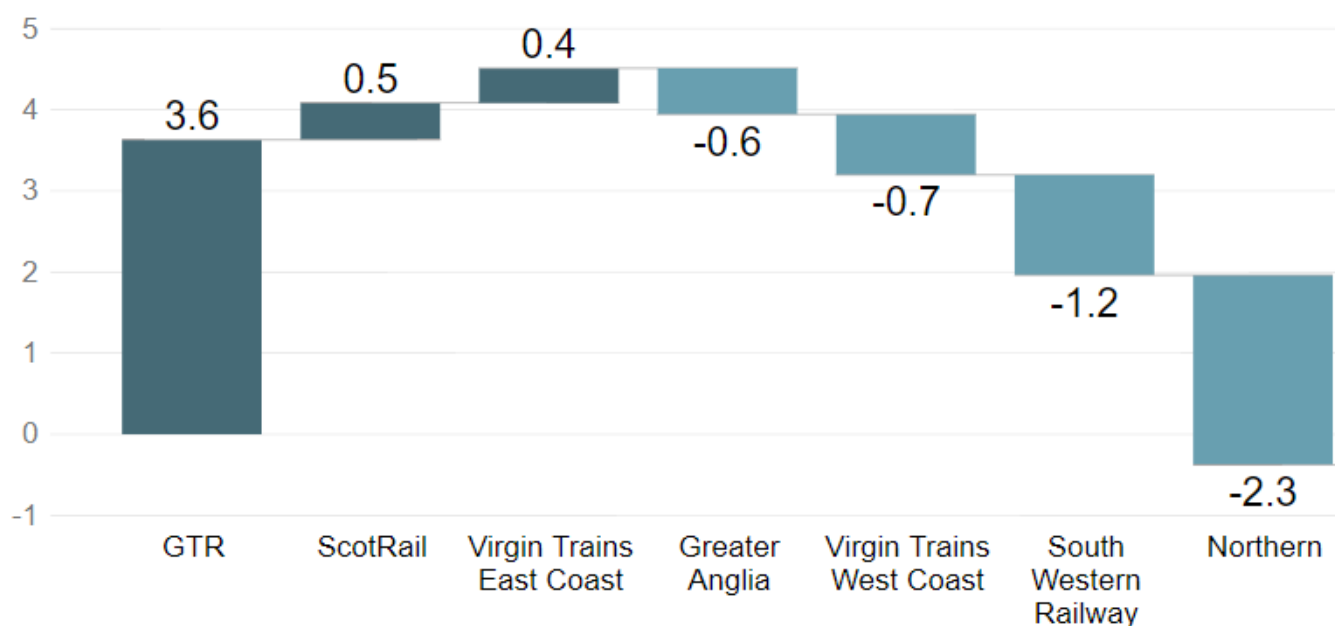
Train kilometres for Heathrow Express have been excluded from the total figures for the non-franchised operators as it is not charged through TABS.

Quarterly data for **Passenger train kilometres** is available from 2010-11 Q1 onwards and annual data for **Passenger train kilometres** is available from 2010-11.

### 2017-18 Annual

- The volume of passenger train kilometres decreased for the second consecutive year in 2017-18, falling to 520 million.

**Figure 4.01: Change in passenger train kilometres (selected operators), 2016-17 to 2017-18 (million tkms)**



Govia Thameslink Railway recorded the highest volume of passenger train kilometres in 2017-18 totalling 61.0 million kilometres. It recovered from the fall in 2016-17, which was due to planned cancellations in response to industrial action.

Northern and South Western Railway were affected by industrial action<sup>9</sup> throughout the year and have suffered the largest decreases in passenger train kilometres in 2017-18.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-41733653>

## 2017-18 Q4

- 14 of the 20 franchised operators recorded a decrease in their passenger train kilometres in 2017-18 Q4. This was most likely due to the snow disruption caused by the 'Beast from the East' at the end of February.
- The volume of passenger train kilometres between January and March was 127 million, down by 2.1 million since 2016-17 Q4.

Despite the bad weather, Govia Thameslink Railway passenger train kilometres increased by 0.7 million compared to the same quarter last year.

A number of operators were affected by industrial action between January and March 2018<sup>10</sup>. Northern, Greater Anglia, South Western Railway all reported falls of between 2% and 6%.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-42622386>

# Annex 1 – List of pre-created reports available on the ORR Data Portal

All data tables can be accessed on the data portal free of charge. 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.

## Passenger journeys

- Passenger journeys – [Table 12.5](#) (franchised only)
- Passenger journeys by sector – [Table 12.6](#)
- Passenger journeys by ticket type – [Table 12.7](#)
- Passenger journeys by train operating company – [Table 12.12](#)

## Passenger kilometres

- Passenger kilometres – [Table 12.2](#) (franchised only)
- Passenger kilometres by sector – [Table 12.3](#)
- Passenger kilometres by ticket type – [Table 12.4](#)
- Passenger kilometres by train operating company – [Table 12.11](#)

## Passenger revenue

- Passenger revenue by sector – [Table 12.8](#)
- Passenger revenue by ticket type – [Table 12.9](#)
- Revenue per passenger kilometre and per passenger journey – [Table 12.10](#) (franchised only)

## Passenger train kilometres

- Passenger train kilometres by operator – [Table 12.13](#)

We no longer publish the Timetabled Train Kilometres by train operating company table on our data portal. For historical data, please contact us at [rail.stats@orr.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rail.stats@orr.gsi.gov.uk).

**Revisions:** There have not been any revisions to the previously published tables associated with this statistical release. Further details can be found at: [Revisions Log](#)

For more information on data collection and the methodology used to calculate the statistics in this release please see the accompanying [Quality Report](#).

**Regional passenger journeys** showing rail journeys to/from and within each region or country are published in [Regional Rail Usage](#) statistical release and data portal [tables](#). These journeys are based on the origin and destination named on a ticket and do not take into account any changes of train. It therefore produces slightly lower estimates than the total journeys published in this Passenger Rail Usage statistical release.

## Annex 2

### Statistical Releases

This publication is part of the statistical releases which cover the majority of reports that were previously released through the [Data Portal](#). The statistical releases consist of four annual and four quarterly themed releases:

#### **Annual:**

- Rail Finance & Rail Fares Index;
- Key Safety Statistics;
- Rail Infrastructure, Assets and Environmental;
- Regional Rail Usage.

#### **Quarterly:**

- Passenger and Freight Rail Performance;
- Freight Rail Usage;
- Passenger Rail Usage;
- Passenger Rail Service Complaints.

A full list of publication dates for the next twelve months can be found in the [release schedule](#) on the ORR website.

## National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority 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.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is ORR's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

For more details please contact the Statistics Head of Profession Lyndsey Melbourne on 020 7282 3978 or contact [rail.stats@orr.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rail.stats@orr.gsi.gov.uk).

The Department for Transport (DfT) also publishes a range of rail statistics which can be found at [DfT Rail Statistics](#).





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