



GB Passenger Rail Service Complaints 2017-18 Q2 Statistical Release

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Key Findings











Background

This release contains information on **complaints** made by passengers regarding rail services in Great Britain with the latest quarterly data referring to July, August and September 2017. You will find:

- A complaints rate per 100,000 journeys for each train operating company (TOC).
- What people are complaining about
- Response time to complaints
- Contact method used to complain
- Appeals made to passenger watchdogs
- Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling
- Number of calls to National Rail Enquiries

Complaints per 100,000 journeys decreased by 2.2% in 2017-18 Q2 for franchised operators compared to the same period last year. This was partly due to a lower proportion of complaints about performance. Although this quarter shows a decline it remains the second highest Q2 complaints rate since 2013-14 Q2.

Top five areas of complaint in 2017-18 Q2 (franchised operators)

Type of complaint	% of all complaints	Percentage Point (pp) change to last year
 Punctuality/reliability	 23%	↓ -4 pp
 Facilities on board	 5%	↑ 2 pp
 Ticket buying facilities	 8%	↑ 1pp
 Online ticket sales	 7%	↓ -3 pp
 Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	 6%	↑ 1 pp

Response times to complaints in 2017-18 Q2. Nationally 94% of complaints were closed within 20 working days, this was 1 percentage point higher than Q2 last year.

Complaint appeals closed by passenger watchdogs in 2017 18 Q2. The passenger bodies closed 1,422 appeals during 2017-18 Q2, this was 73% higher than 2016-17 Q2.

The majority of complainants were not satisfied with the handling of their complaint or the complaint outcome. 27% of people surveyed were satisfied with complaint outcome. 30% of people surveyed were satisfied with complaint handling

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1. Rail complaints

A **complaint** in the rail industry is any expression of dissatisfaction by a customer or potential customer about service delivery or about company or industry policy.

All the complaints data contained within this release are sourced directly from the train operating companies

Complaints rate: the volume of complaint correspondence closed per 100,000 passenger journeys.

We do this because each operator carries out different number of journeys. To make a standardised comparison between operators we look at complaints per 100,000

Social media comments are excluded from these statistics.

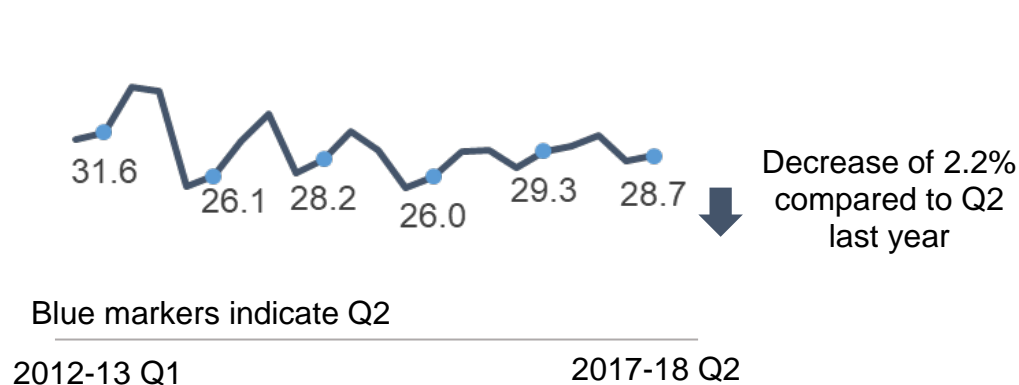
The number of complaints received via such sources, the definition of a ‘complaint’ and the resources that each train operator allocates to these social platforms vary significantly, and therefore they are excluded from the published figures.

For further information see this [report](#):

2017-18 Q2

- There were **28.7 complaints per 100,000 journeys** in 2017-18 Q2 for franchised operators. This is 2.2% lower than Q2 the previous year.
- Despite the 2.2% decrease, the complaints rate in 2017-18 Q2 is the second highest since 2012-13 Q2

Complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys (franchised operators), Great Britain, 2012-13 Q1 to 2017-18 Q2 ([Table 14.8](#))



Long term trend

There has been a long-term decline in the complaints rate since the time series began in 1998-99. For 2016-17 there were 29.4 complaints per 100,000 journeys, this was a 75% decline since 1998-99. For further information on the long-term trend, please see the [2016-17 Q4 release](#).

Factors that influenced the franchised complaints rate in 2017-18 Q2

The proportion of complaints about train service performance continues to decline. Overall 22.6% of all complaints were about punctuality, a 3.9pp decline since Q2 the previous year. This is the lowest proportion of complaints about punctuality recorded since the time series began in 2013-14. The decline may be due to:

- The punctuality of trains, as measured by the Public Performance Measure (PPM), increased in 2017-18 Q2 compared to the same quarter last year. 89.5% of trains were 'on time' in 2017-18 Q2, this was a 1.5 pp increase compared to Q2 2016-17¹.
- New complaints categories introduced in 2016-17 may mean fewer complaints about delay compensation were classified as complaints about punctuality

A decline in the complaints rate for some TOCs caused the national complaints rate to decline.

- Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR) complaints rate was 19 complaints per 100,000 journeys, this was a 39% decrease compared to Q2 last year. Industrial action throughout 2016-17 contributed to an increase in GTR's complaints rate last year. GTR were responsible for 14% of all complaints in 2017-18 Q2 compared to 23% the year before.
- Arriva Train Wales (ATW) complaints rate was 46 complaints per 100,000 journeys, this was a 38% decrease compared to Q2 last year. ATW may have had a higher complaints rate for Q2 last year as they had a backlog of complaints from Q1 2016-17, which were subsequently answered in Q2. ATW's PPM also improved since Q2 last year by 1.2pp to 93.0%¹.

Top 10 complaint categories with percentage point change compared to the previous year (franchised operators), Great Britain, 2017-18 Q2 (Table 14.9)

Percentage of all complaints during 2017-18 Q2		Percentage Point (PP) change to 2016-17 Q2
17.9%	Punctuality / Reliability	3.9 pp
8.8%	Facilities on board	0.8pp
7.5%	Ticket buying facilities	1.3 pp
6.6%	Online ticket buying facilities	3.0 pp
6.3%	Sufficient room for passengers to sit/stand	1.0 pp
5.7%	Tickets and refunds policy	0.2 pp
4.3%	Smartcards	2.0 pp
4.2%	The attitudes and helpfulness of the staff at station	0.4 pp
3.3%	The attitudes and helpfulness of staff on train	0.5 pp
2.4%	Other policy	0.3 pp

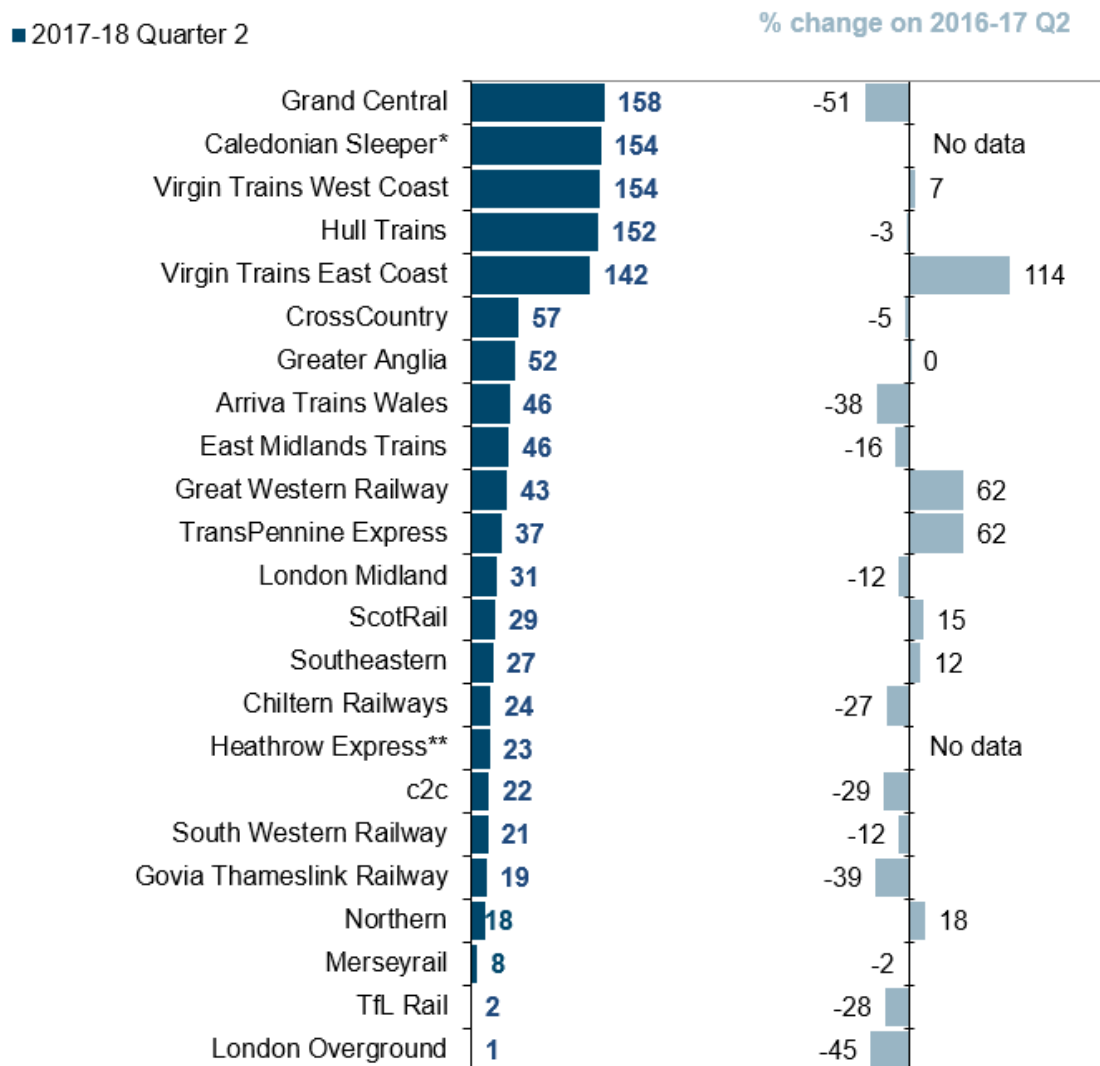
¹ http://orr.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0013/26212/passenger-freight-performance-2017-18-q2.pdf

Complaints rate by train operating company

2017-18 Q2

- Overall 13 train operators had a lower complaints rate than last year, and eight train operators had a higher complaints rate than last year.

Complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys by train operating company, Great Britain, 2017-18 Q2 ([Table 14.9](#))



Complaints rate by TOC (per 100,000 journeys)

* Caledonian Sleeper provided data for the first time in 2016-17 Q3 so no comparisons to the previous year can be made. Please note, Caledonian Sleeper only operate around 7 journeys per day, so the complaints rate will be more volatile due to low number of journeys. Caledonian Sleeper received fewer than 200 complaints, which makes up less than 0.1% of all complaints.

** Heathrow Express provided us with all correspondence rather than complaints only in 2016-17. From 2017-18 Q1 Heathrow Express correctly provided us with complaints only data. Therefore, no comparisons have been made to the previous year.

Complaints answered within 20 working days

2017-18 Q2

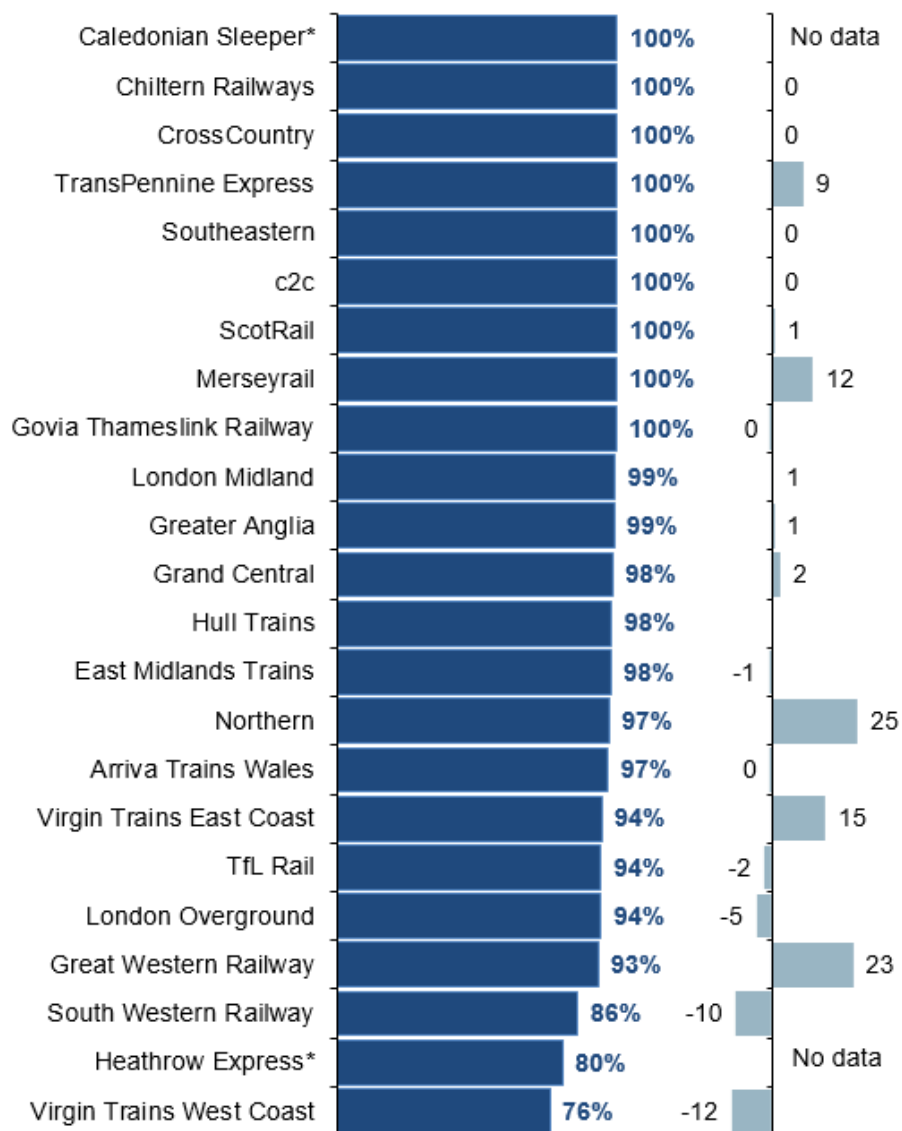
- Nationally 94% of complaints were closed within 20 working days, this is an increase of 0.7pp compared to Q2 last year.
- Overall 16 operators responded to 95% of complaints within 20 working days, and 7 operators responded to fewer than 95% of complaints within 20 working days.

Percentage of complaints answered within 20 working days by train operating company, Great Britain, 2017-18 Q2 [\(Table 14.2\)](#)

Percentage point change on 2016-17 Q2

The percentage of complaints closed within 20 working days. This is when the TOC has given full response to the complaint and considers there to be no outstanding actions.

The standard industry target is to close 95% of complaints within 20 working days.



Response rate within 20 working days

* Please see page 4 for notes on Caledonian Sleeper and Heathrow Express

Key changes for selected operators during 2017-18 Q2

ATW's complaints rate declined by 38% in 2017-18 Q2 compared to Q2 last year.

The proportion of complaints about punctuality saw the biggest decline. Overall 29% of complaints were about performance in 2017-18 Q2, this was at 54% in Q2 the year before. Over the same period ATW's PPM was 93.0%, a 1.2pp improvement.

GTR's complaints rate decreased by 39% in 2017-18 Q2 compared to Q2 last year.

Due to industrial action throughout 2016-17 GTR's complaints rate increased last year (there was a 292% increase in complaints rate between 2015-16 Q2 and 2016-17 Q2). Despite the decrease this year, GTR's complaints rate in 2017-18 Q2 is 139% higher than two years ago (2015-16 Q2).

Punctuality complaints had the largest proportion decrease in 2017-18 Q2. Overall 13% of complaints were about punctuality in 2017-18 Q2, this was at 31% in Q2 the year before. During 2017-18 Q2 GTR's PPM was 83.0%, a 9.9pp increase.

Great Western Railway (GWR) had a 62% increase in their complaints rate in 2017-18 Q2 compared to Q2 last year. The increase may be explained by GWR answering 70% of their complaints within 20 days during Q2 last year, which meant complaints received in Q2 last year were answered in the following quarters.

Complaints about ticket buying facilities and sufficient room for passengers were two areas that received a higher proportion of complaints compared to Q2 last year, an increase of 5.9pp and 5.3pp respectively.

Northern's complaints rate increased by 18% and complaints answered within 20 days increased by 25% when compared to last year. This has mainly been driven by the complaints about performance which saw an increase from 21% to 29% of all complaints to Northern. Punctuality (PPM) in Q2 was 91.0%. This is a decrease of 1.5 pp compared with Q2 in 2016-17, which is the lowest Q2 punctuality since the time series began in 2009-10.

TransPennine Express complaints rate increased by 62% in 2017-18 Q2 compared to Q2 last year. This is mainly due to the volume of complaints increasing when compared to Q2 last year. Complaints about sufficient room for passengers and complaints not being fully addressed are the main drivers behind this increasing by 5.2pp and 7.3pp respectively

VTEC complaints rate increased by 114% compared to Q2 last year. However, Q2 last year was VTEC's lowest complaints rate in the time series (since it began in 2008-09). When compared to two years ago, the complaints rate is 3% lower (147 complaints per 100,000 journeys in 2015-16 Q2 compared to 142 complaints per 100,000 journeys in 2017-18 Q2). The lower complaints rate last year may be due to VTEC responding to 79% of complaints within 20 working days, so complaints received during this period were closed in following quarters.

Virgin Train West Coast (VTWC) complaints rate increased by 7% in 2017-18 Q2 compared to Q2 last year. An increase in punctuality complaints was the main driver for this increase. Overall 19% of complaints were about punctuality, it was at 6% in Q2 last year. VTWC's PPM for 2017-18 Q2 was 87.6%, a decline of 2.1 pp compared with Q2 last year.

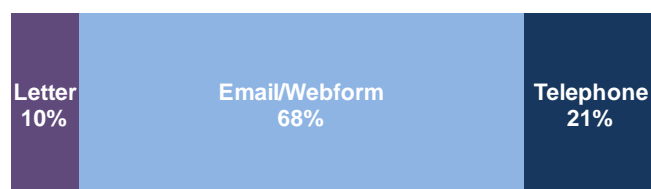
Complaints by contact method

2017-18 Q2

Complaints by contact method:
the method of communication passengers use to complain.

- Nationally 68% of complaints were made via email or webforms, a 4 pp increase from Q2 last year. This continues the trend for more complaints to be made via email/webform, and fewer by letter.

Percentage of complaints by contact method, Great Britain, 2017-18 Q2 ([Table 14.6](#))



Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling

2017-18 Q2

This survey data shows passenger satisfaction with train operators' complaints handling.

After a passenger makes a complaint to a train operator, they are invited to participate in a follow up survey by an independent research company, commissioned by ORR, about their experience of how the complaint was handled.

The survey asks questions relating to the complaints process and resulting outcome. The complainant is asked to rank their satisfaction with each on a five point scale.

Operators joined the survey at different stages throughout 2016-17. Therefore, comparisons with 2016-17 should be treated with caution. See the [quality and methodology document](#) for further details

- The majority of complainants were not satisfied with the handling of their complaint or the complaint outcome
- When asked about the outcome of the complaint 27% of people surveyed were satisfied. For the handling of the complaint, 30% of people asked were satisfied.

Overall passenger satisfaction with the handling and outcome of their complaint, Great Britain, 2017-18 Q2 ([Table 14.20](#))



- When asked about how they felt about the train company 12% of complainants felt more positive about the train company, and 56% more negative.

How the passenger felt about the train company in light of how their complaint was handled (%), Great Britain, 2017-18 Q2 ([Table 14.20](#))



2. Appeals

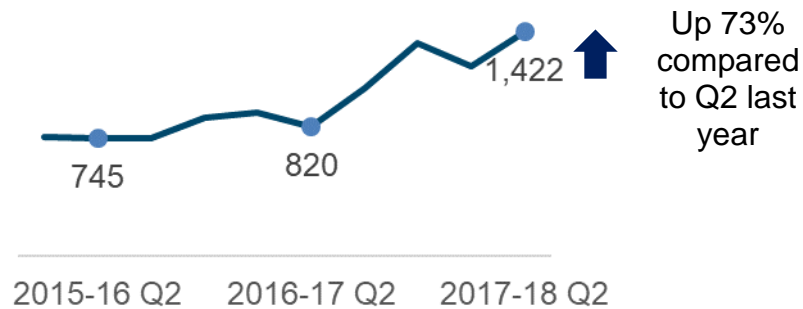
2017-18 Q2

Appeals closed: the number of complaint appeals closed by the independent passenger watchdogs, Transport Focus or London TravelWatch (LTW)

The passenger watchdogs 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.

- The passenger bodies closed 1,422 appeals during 2017-18 Q2, this was 73% higher than 2016-17 Q2.

Appeals closed by passenger bodies, Great Britain, 2017-18 Q2 ([Table 14.15](#))



Appeals may be increasing as ORR started to collect data from operators on the number of complainants who were sign-posted to the passenger bodies since 2016-17. This may be driving the operators to ensure more complainants are sign-posted, and therefore more complainants are appealing.

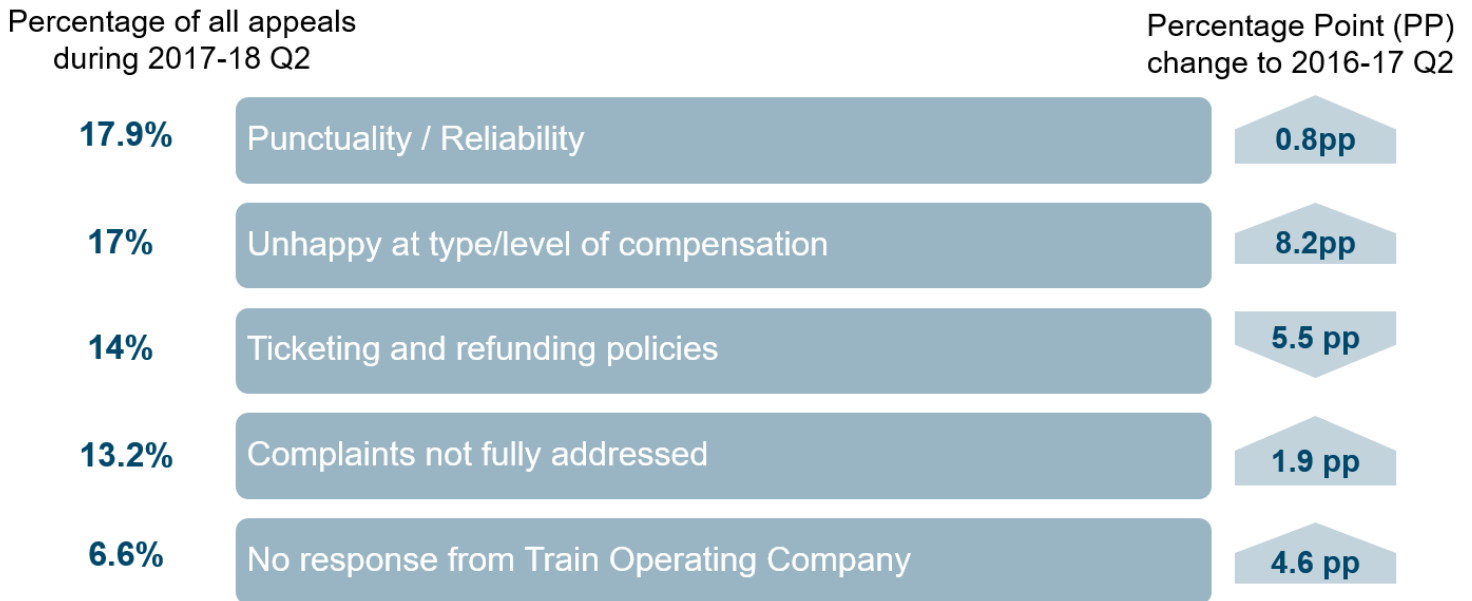
Transport Focus closed 1,079 appeals during 2017-18 Q2, 139% higher than the same time last year. This is the highest number of appeals closed since the time series began in 2013-14. London Travel Watch closed 343 appeals, 7% lower than Q2 last year, however, this is still 60% higher than two years ago (2015-16 Q2).

Appeals made against both GWR and VTWC helped to contribute towards the national increase. GWR had 302 appeals during 2017-18 Q2, a 763% increase from Q2 last year. VTWC had 195 appeals during 2017-18 Q2, a 364% increase from Q2 last year.

What people are appealing about

- Appeals made about the type or level of compensation had the biggest percentage point increase out of all appeals during 2017-18 Q2 compared to Q2 last year. Overall 17% of appeals were about this category, an 8pp increase compared to Q2 last year.
- Appeals made about the handling of complaints made up one in five appeals. This includes appeals about the complaint not being fully addressed (13% of appeals in 2017-18 Q2, a 2pp increase from the year before), and no response from the TOC (7% of appeals in 2017-18 Q2, a 5pp increase from Q2 the year before).

Top appeal categories (Transport Focus and London TravelWatch), Great Britain, 2017-18 Q2 ([Table 14.16](#))



3. National Rail Enquiries telephone service

2017-18 Q2

- There were 880,556 calls made to the National Rail Enquiries telephone service during 2017-18 Q2, this is an increase of 7% compared to Q2 the previous year. This is the first Q2 increase since the time series began in 2002-03 Q2

National Rail Enquiries (NRE): the total number of calls made to National Rail Enquiries (NRE).

National Rail Enquiries is part of the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), who provide the data for this section of the release. Enquiries to NRE can be made through numerous different channels, however the data presented in this statistical release relates to enquiries made through the NRE telephone service only.

Quarterly data is available from 1997-98 Q2.

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.

Complaints

- Complaints rate – [Table 14.8](#);
- Complaints rate by TOC – [Table 14.9](#);
- Praise rate by TOC - [Table 14.17](#);
- Complaints by category – [Table 14.3](#);
- Complaints by category and TOC – [Table 14.5](#)
- Complaints responded to within 10 and 20 working days by TOC – [Table 14.2](#); and
- Complaints by contact method and TOC – [Table 14.6](#)
- Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling by TOC and Quarter - [Table 14.20](#)

Appeals

- Appeals closed by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch by TOC - [Table 14.15](#);
- Complaint categories for appeals closed by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch - [Table 14.16](#); and
- Complaint appeals opened by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch - [Table 14.14](#) (*data available until 2012-13 Q4 only*)

National Rail Enquiries

- National Rail Enquiries (telephone enquiries received) – [Table 14.13](#)

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;
- Rail 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.

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



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