Passenger Rail Service Complaints
2016-17 Q1 Statistical Release

Background

This release contains information on **complaints** made by passengers regarding rail services in Great Britain with the latest quarterly data referring to April, May and June of 2016.

A complaints rate per 100,000 journeys is calculated for each train operating company (TOC). Complaints data for each TOC are provided by complaint category and by contact method. Also presented are the percentages of complaints answered within 20 days, a praise rate, the number of **complaint appeals closed** by industry watchdogs (Transport Focus and London TravelWatch) and the number of **calls to the National Rail Enquiries** telephone service.

Contents

Key results (2016-17 Q1)

Complaints rate:

27.3 complaints per 100,000 journeys

What passengers complained about:

Percentage of all complaints

25.6%	Punctuality/Reliability
8.3%	Facilities on board
7.3%	Ticket buying facilities - other
6.9%	Sufficient room for passengers to sit/stand
6.7%	Ticketing and refunds policy

95% of complaints answered within 20 working day target:

14 out of 21 train operating companies

How passengers complain:

63.6% of complaints are made via email/webform.

Complaint appeals closed by passenger watchdogs:
(increased compared to 2015-16 Q1)

874 by Transport Focus (64% increase)

363 by London TravelWatch (67% increase)

Note: From Q1 2016-17 there have been improvements to the quality and consistency of these complaints statistics. Consequently many of the metrics presented are not directly comparable to previous quarters/years.

1. Complaints

Complaints (national)

> **Complaints rate:** the number of complaint correspondence received per 100,000 passenger journeys. Complaints are normalised by passenger journeys to allow effective comparison of data between time periods and train operating companies
>
> 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. In the complaints rate statistics each communication is counted as a single complaint, regardless of how many topics are covered in the communication.
>
> **Complaints by category:** the type of complaint received by the train operator. For 2016-17 there are 65 detailed categories, mainly based on National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) satisfaction categories, which make up 14 high level complaint categories. Praise is also recorded.
>
> Each complaint within a communication should be recorded. For example, a letter covering two topics is counted as two complaints categories. However, this would only be recorded as one complaint within the complaints rate.
>
> **Data available:** Complaints rate data is available from 1998-99 nationally (franchised operators), and from 2007-08 by individual TOC. Complaint category data is available from 2007-08 nationally, and from 2010-11 by individual TOC.

Data quality

For 2016-17 ORR has worked with the train operators to improve the consistency and quality of complaints reporting. This has led to some changes in methodology in both data collected from the operators and reporting by ORR in this statistical release. Consequently many of the metrics presented are not directly comparable to those presented for previous years. For further information please refer to Annex 3 and the Quality Report.

This statistical release focuses on the data for quarter 1 of 2016-17. For a detailed overview of the 2015-16 annual data please refer to the ORR's Passenger Rail Service Complaints 2015-16 Quarter 4 statistical release.

2016-17 Quarter 1 Results

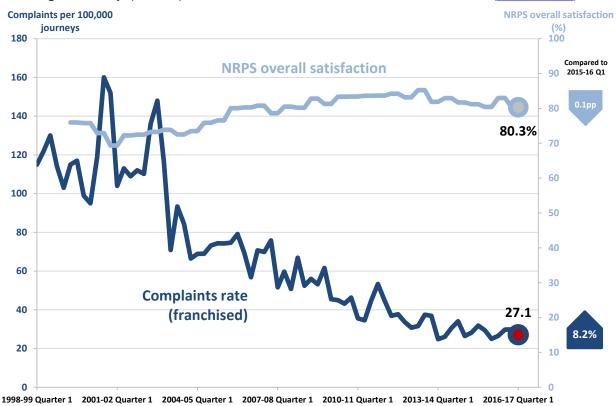#### *National (all operators)*

During 2016-17 Q1 the national complaints rate across all operators (franchised and non-franchised combined) was 27.3 complaints per 100,000 journeys.

Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time) was the most common complaint nationally during 2016-17 Q1, with 25.6% of complaints falling under this category.

For 2016-17 ORR has introduced six new categories to capture complaints related to delay compensation schemes (see Quality Report for more detail). In 2016-17 Q1 these new categories accounted for approximately 1.9% of all complaints. It is likely that complaints in these new categories would previously have been classified under the ticketing and refunds policy category, which in 2016-17 Q1 was the fifth most common category for complaints with a 6.7% share of the total. Previously this category has ranked more highly in the categories for complaints. The introduction of the new categories for delay compensation may have contributed to a decrease in the share of complaints under the ticketing and refunds policy category compared to previous years.

Franchised operators

Complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys (franchised operators) and National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS), Great Britain, 1998-99 Q1 to 2016-17 Q1 (Table 14.8)

Since the start of the time series in the 1997-98 Q3 there has been a long-term downward trend in the complaints rate[1]. Since the start of 2013-14 the complaints rate has begun to stabilise at around 25-30 complaints per 100,000 journeys.

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[1] Some have attributed this downward trend to passengers moving towards other contact methods to submit complaints, in particular social media in recent years. ORR has previously published a report on the challenges in capturing social media complaints data (*Social media - How to tweet your customers' right*). Social media data is not captured within the complaint statistics; however TOCs will direct passengers complaining on social media to their official complaint channels. Therefore some complaints originating on social media will be reflected in the complaints rate statistics

The complaints rate for franchised operators increased by 8.5% to 27.1 complaints per 100,000 for 2016-17 Q1[2]. This is the highest complaints rate seen in a first quarter since 2012-13 Q1. The increase in complaints rate for 2016-17 Q1 coincides with a fall in the national Public Performance Measure (PPM)[3] for 2016-17 Q1, which at 89.2%, was the lowest Q1 PPM since 2005-06[4]. The fall in performance during the quarter is also likely to be a contributing factor to the high percentage share of complaints regarding punctuality/reliability, which at 25.5% was the most complained about category to franchised operators.

Non-franchised operators

Non-franchised operators had a complaints rate of 147.2 complaints per 100,000 journeys in 2016-17 Q1. The non-franchised operators generally have a higher complaints rate than the franchised operators. This may be because both non-franchised operators that report data are long-distance operators; this type of service typically has a higher complaints rate compared to other services such as regional and commuter services.

Punctuality/reliability was also the most commonly complained about category for non-franchised operators, accounting for 28.1% of all complaints. For the non-franchised operators quality on train complaint categories take up a higher proportion of the total compared to franchised operators; in general, long-distance services tend to generate a higher number of complaints in these categories. Facilities on board and sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand accounted for 23.0% and 12.4% of complaints in 2016-17 Q1; these were the second and third most common complaints categories for non-franchised operators.

■ Complaints rate quarterly and annual data are available on the data portal in: Table 14.8

■ Complaints by category quarterly and annual data are available on the data portal in: Table 14.3

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[2] Methodology changes mean 2016-17 data are not directly comparable with previous years. However the changes made would most likely reduce the complaints rate, and therefore without the change the increase compared to 2015-16 would be greater

[3] The Public Performance Measure (PPM) measures the percentage of trains that arrive at their final destination within five minutes of their scheduled arrival time (10 minutes for long-distance services)

[4] Passenger and Freight Rail Performance 2016-17 Q1 Statistical Release

Complaints by train operating company

Following methodology improvements implemented by ORR in 2016-17 the reporting of data between operators is more consistent compared to previous years. For example, all TOCs have agreed to report complaints to ORR based on complaints *closed* within a period, and many operators have changed their customer relationship management (CRM) systems to ensure multiple complaint categories from a single correspondence can be recorded. In addition ORR has worked to ensure praise communications are not included within the complaints statistics (which they may have been for some operators previously). Therefore the data presented here is not directly comparable to that from previous years. Further information on the methodology changes can be found in Annex 3 and the Quality Report.

However there are some unavoidable differences between the operators, for example frequency and level of advertising of methods for making a complaint. These types of practices will affect the number of complaints received by a TOC and therefore should be considered when interpreting these statistics.
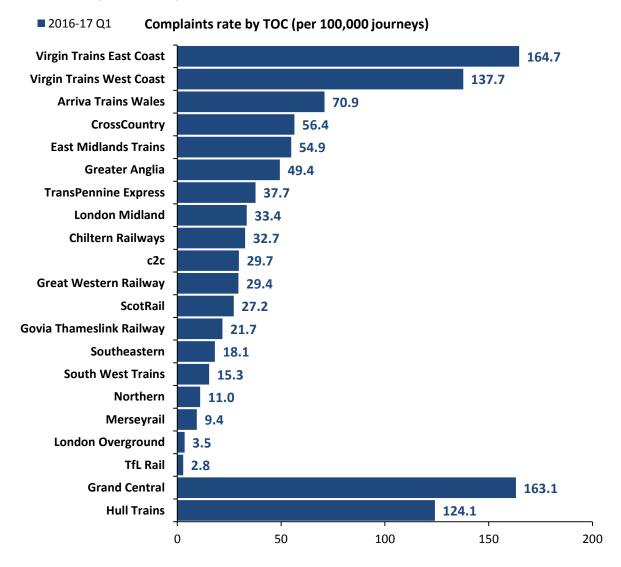
Changes to TOCs

On 31 May 2015 a new franchise known as TfL Rail began operating services into and out of London Liverpool Street. This operator is the precursor to Crossrail and the services were transferred from Greater Anglia. At the same time, a number of Greater Anglia services were transferred to London Overground. Complaints data for TfL Rail has been collected from 2015-16 Q2 onwards. We are not able to remap historical complaints data for Greater Anglia and London Overground therefore for this quarter the data for these TOCs are not fully comparable with data from previous years.

The new Northern and TransPennine Express (TPE) franchises commenced operation on 1 April 2016. As part of this services between Manchester Airport and Blackpool North/Barrow-in-Furness and between Oxenholme and Windermere were transferred from TPE to Northern. Therefore, as these two operators run slightly different services, the data presented are not fully comparable with data from previous years.

2016-17 Quarter 1 Results

Complaints rate

Complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys by train operating company, Great Britain, 2016-17 Q1 ([Table 14.9](#))

■ 2016-17 Q1   **Complaints rate by TOC (per 100,000 journeys)**

TOC	Rate
Virgin Trains East Coast	164.7
Virgin Trains West Coast	137.7
Arriva Trains Wales	70.9
CrossCountry	56.4
East Midlands Trains	54.9
Greater Anglia	49.4
TransPennine Express	37.7
London Midland	33.4
Chiltern Railways	32.7
c2c	29.7
Great Western Railway	29.4
ScotRail	27.2
Govia Thameslink Railway	21.7
Southeastern	18.1
South West Trains	15.3
Northern	11.0
Merseyrail	9.4
London Overground	3.5
TfL Rail	2.8
Grand Central	163.1
Hull Trains	124.1

Of the franchised operators the two with the highest complaints rates were Virgin Trains West Coast and Virgin Trains East Coast. These are both long distance operators for which there is typically a higher complaints rate. This is also shown in the complaints rates for the two non-franchised operators, Grand Central and Hull Trains, who also operate services in the long distance sector.

The two operators with the lowest complaints rates are TfL Rail and London Overground. Both of these operators run similar metro style services into and around London and fall under the responsibility of Transport for London (TfL). The lower complaints rate for these operators may be due to the regularity with which passengers on these routes travel, which may mean passengers are less likely to complain than passengers on long distance routes on which there will be a higher proportion of leisure travellers.

Complaints by category

Complaints regarding the punctuality/reliability of services are the main cause for complaints to all but three of the TOCs. For those operators with punctuality/reliability as the main cause for complaint, the percentage regarding this category ranges from 13.5% for Great Western Railway to 48.4% for London Midland. The National Rail Passenger Survey[5] (NRPS) published by Transport Focus shows punctuality/reliability has the biggest impact on a passenger's overall satisfaction[6]. It would therefore be expected that this category would account for a high share of the overall complaints to operators.

Both Virgin Trains East Coast and Virgin Trains West Coast had facilities on board as their most commonly complained about topic. This category accounted for 22.7% and 21.8% of complaints respectively. Both of these TOCs operate long-distance services, on which passengers may expect better facilities, which may explain the relatively high proportion of complaints in this category.

The only other operator to not have punctuality/reliability as the top cause for complaint is c2c. For this operator smartcards was the most commonly complained about category, accounting for 23.7% of all complaints. Smartcards have featured prominently in the complaints to c2c since the introduction of c2c's smartcard in November 2014.

■ Complaints rate by train operating company quarter data are available on the data portal in: Table 14.9

■ Complaints by NRPS category and train operating company quarter data are available on the data portal in: Table 14.5

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[5] National Rail Passenger Survey Spring 2016

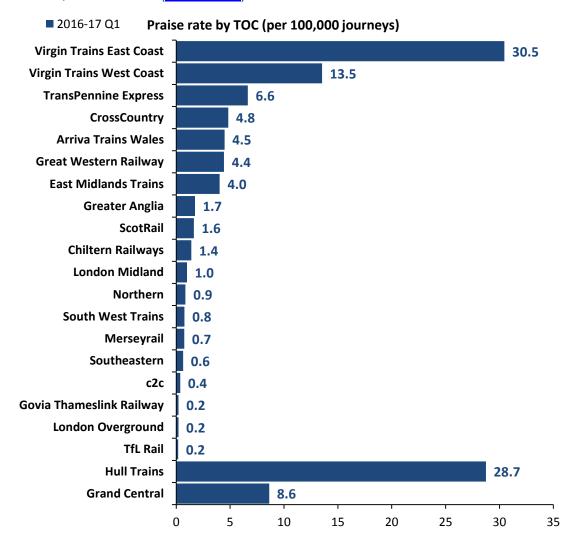[6] The biggest driver for dissatisfaction in the NRPS is how train companies deal with delays. Dissatisfaction with how delays are dealt with could fall under many of the complaint categories, such as punctuality/reliability, provision of information and helpfulness of staff. Therefore it is harder to correlate how well this driver for dissatisfaction matches the complaints received by TOCs.

Praise comments received by train operating company

Praise is presented (for the first time in this release) as the number of praise comments received per 100,000 passenger journeys. Using the same methodology as for the complaints rate; praise comments are normalised by passenger journeys to allow effective comparison of data between time periods and train operating companies

2016-17 Quarter 1 Results

Praise comments per 100,000 passenger journeys by train operating company, Great Britain, 2016-17 Q1 (Table 14.9)

Praise rate by TOC (per 100,000 journeys)

■ 2016-17 Q1

Train Operating Company	Rate
Virgin Trains East Coast	30.5
Virgin Trains West Coast	13.5
TransPennine Express	6.6
CrossCountry	4.8
Arriva Trains Wales	4.5
Great Western Railway	4.4
East Midlands Trains	4.0
Greater Anglia	1.7
ScotRail	1.6
Chiltern Railways	1.4
London Midland	1.0
Northern	0.9
South West Trains	0.8
Merseyrail	0.7
Southeastern	0.6
c2c	0.4
Govia Thameslink Railway	0.2
London Overground	0.2
TfL Rail	0.2
Hull Trains	28.7
Grand Central	8.6

Similar to complaints rate there is a high degree of variation between the volume of praise received by operators. With 30.5 praise comments per 100,000 journeys Virgin Trains East Coast had the highest rate of praise of any of the franchised operators in 2016-17 Q1. This is more than double the volume of praise per 100,000 journeys compared to the franchised operator with the next highest rate of praise, which was Virgin Trains West Coast with 13.5 praise comments per 100,000 journeys. The non-franchised operator Hull Trains also had a relatively high rate of praise, with 28.7 praise comments per 100,000 journeys.

All three of the operators above are long distance operators. These operators also had some of the highest complaints rates. It may be that these type of services encourage a higher rate of customer correspondence (both good and bad), and also generate more active engagement with customers before and after the journey (for example e-mail communication and marketing follow advanced ticket purchasing).

Of the 17 remaining franchised operators, 12 had a praise rate between zero and two praise comments per 100,000 journeys; TransPennine Express had the third highest rate of praise with 6.6 praise comments per 100,000 journeys.

■ Praise rate by train operating company quarterly data are available on the data portal in: Table 14.17 (*This is a new table for 2016-17 Q1*).

Complaints by contact method and train operating company

For 2016-17 the complaints by contact method measure is calculated using a different method to previous years. Previously contact method data was derived from the categories of complaints made by passengers. The data is now derived from the actual complaint correspondence received. For this each communication received is counted once, regardless of the number of topics covered by the complainant. Previously the figures were skewed by contact methods where there were more likely to be multiple complaints. For more information see Annex 3 and the Quality Report.
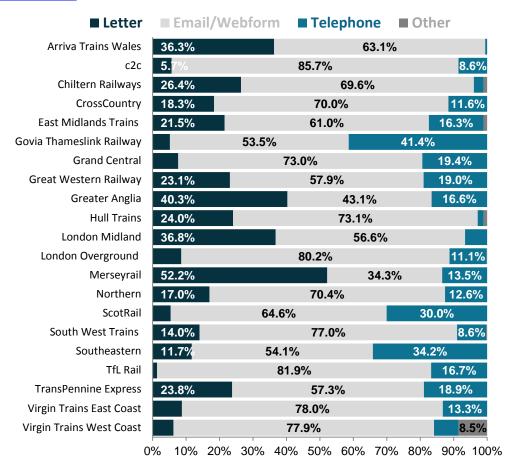
Complaints by contact method: the method passengers use to complain.

Quarterly data is available from 2010-11 Q1.

2016-17 Quarter 1 Results

Percentage of complaints by contact method and train operating company, Great Britain, 2016-17 Q1 (Table 14.6)

	■ Letter	■ Email/Webform	■ Telephone	■ Other
Arriva Trains Wales	36.3%	63.1%		
c2c	5.7%	85.7%	8.6%	
Chiltern Railways	26.4%	69.6%		
CrossCountry	18.3%	70.0%	11.6%	
East Midlands Trains	21.5%	61.0%	16.3%	
Govia Thameslink Railway		53.5%	41.4%	
Grand Central		73.0%	19.4%	
Great Western Railway	23.1%	57.9%	19.0%	
Greater Anglia	40.3%	43.1%	16.6%	
Hull Trains	24.0%	73.1%		
London Midland	36.8%	56.6%		
London Overground		80.2%	11.1%	
Merseyrail	52.2%	34.3%	13.5%	
Northern	17.0%	70.4%	12.6%	
ScotRail		64.6%	30.0%	
South West Trains	14.0%	77.0%	8.6%	
Southeastern	11.7%	54.1%	34.2%	
TfL Rail		81.9%	16.7%	
TransPennine Express	23.8%	57.3%	18.9%	
Virgin Trains East Coast		78.0%	13.3%	
Virgin Trains West Coast		77.9%	8.5%	

With the exception of Merseyrail, every train operator in Great Britain had email/webform as the most common contact method used by their passengers to express their dissatisfaction.

The total share of email/webform complaints nationally in 2016-17 Q1 was 63.6%. At the start of the time series (2010-11) letter was the most common method for complaints for all but three of the train operators. In 2016-17 Q1 the national share of complaints received via letter was 16.9%, and this contact method was the third most common behind telephone complaints with an 18.5% share. This shift away from letters to other forms of communication is likely to be reflection of both the changing communication habits of the population and also the contact methods offered and promoted by operators.
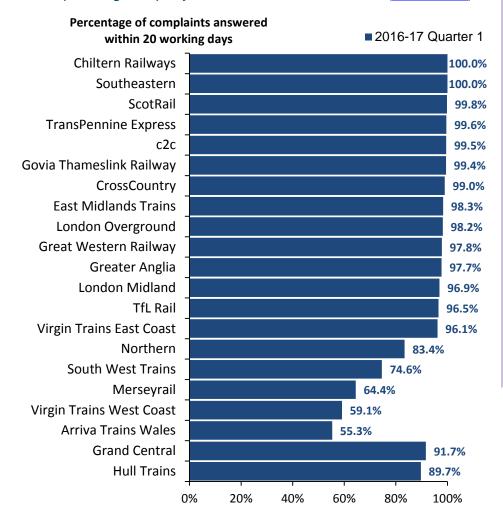
■ Complaints by contact method and train operating company by quarter data are available on the data portal in: Table 14.6

Complaints responded to within 20 working days

2016-17 Quarter 1 Results

During Quarter 1 of 2016-17 14 of the 21 train operating companies responded to greater than 95% of complaints within 20 working days. The highest response rates were achieved by Chiltern Trains and Southeastern, both of which responded to 100% of complaints within this time frame during the quarter.

Percentage of complaints answered within 20 working days by train operating company, Great Britain, 2016-17 Q1 (Table 14.2)

Percentage of complaints answered within 20 working days

■ 2016-17 Quarter 1

Train operating company	%
Chiltern Railways	100.0%
Southeastern	100.0%
ScotRail	99.8%
TransPennine Express	99.6%
c2c	99.5%
Govia Thameslink Railway	99.4%
CrossCountry	99.0%
East Midlands Trains	98.3%
London Overground	98.2%
Great Western Railway	97.8%
Greater Anglia	97.7%
London Midland	96.9%
TfL Rail	96.5%
Virgin Trains East Coast	96.1%
Northern	83.4%
South West Trains	74.6%
Merseyrail	64.4%
Virgin Trains West Coast	59.1%
Arriva Trains Wales	55.3%
Grand Central	91.7%
Hull Trains	89.7%

Complaints responded to within 20 working days by train operating company: the percentage of complaints answered within 20 working days for each train operating company.

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

Quarterly data is available from 2007-08 Q4.

Data on complaints responded to within 10 working days and within TOCs own targets are also available on the data portal in Table 14.2

■ Complaints answered within 20 days by quarter data are available on the data portal in: Table 14.2

2. Appeals

Annual 2015-16

In 2015-16 Transport Focus closed a total of 2,034 appeals, 342 fewer than the previous year, while London TravelWatch closed a total of 1,000. When the total appeals closed from both passenger watchdogs are combined, Govia Thameslink Railway and South West Trains had the highest number of appeals closed in 2015-16, accounting for 13.6% and 10.8% of the total respectively.

2016-17 Quarter 1 Results

During 2016-17 Quarter 1 Transport Focus closed 874 appeals. This is 64% higher than the equivalent quarter last year, and is the highest number of appeals closed in a single quarter since the start of the time series in 2013-14 Q1[7].

London TravelWatch saw a similar trend of increased appeals closed, closing a total of 363, a 67% rise compared to last year.

Of the total appeals closed from both of the passenger watchdogs Govia Thameslink Railway has the highest number of appeals closed with 260, this is 21.0% of all the appeals closed during 2016-17 Q1. South West Trains had the next highest number of appeals closed, accounting for 11.9% of the total number (147 appeals closed) followed by Greater Anglia with 7.8% of the total (96 appeals closed).

Across both of the passenger watchdogs, of the 20 franchised operators covered by the appeals data, 18 had more appeals closed in 2016-17 Q1 compared to last year. The only operators to have fewer appeals closed in this for 2016-17 Q1 compared to 2015-16 Q1 were East Midlands Trains and Virgin Trains East Coast. Of these 18, 16 had

Appeals closed: the number of complaint appeals closed by Transport Focus or London TravelWatch for each train operating company (including all non-franchised), ATOC and Network Rail, and the number of complaints categories for appeals closed.

The independent passenger watchdogs, Transport Focus and London TravelWatch, 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.
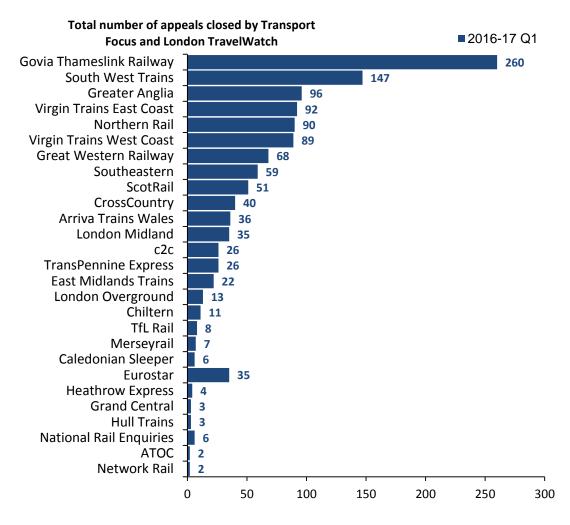
Quarterly data on appeals closed is available from 2013-14 Q1 for Transport Focus and 2015-16 Q1 for LTW.

Quarterly data on appeals categories is available from 2014-15 Q1 for Transport Focus and 2015-16 Q1 for LTW.

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[7] If a TOC has to provide a second substantive response to a complainant (for example if the first response is deemed unsatisfactory) the operator should inform passengers of their right to appeal to one if the industry watchdogs. As part of ORR's monitoring of complaints handling procedures, TOCs are now required to submit to ORR the number of second substantive responses sent to complainants, and the number which have contained a sign post to an appeals body. The introduction of this reporting may be encouraging TOCs to provide more direction to appeals bodies, which in turn may be driving an increase in appeals made (and therefore closed). However, given the time taken for an appeal to be made and then closed it may be that the effect of this is not fully seen until at least 2016-17 Q2 and therefore an increase in appeals may become an emerging trend over the course of 2016-17.

more than double the number of appeals closed in 2016-17 Q1 compared to 2015-16 Q1.

Number of appeals closed by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch, Great Britain, 2016-17 Q1 (Table 14.15)

Total number of appeals closed by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch ■ 2016-17 Q1

Operator	2016-17 Q1
Govia Thameslink Railway	260
South West Trains	147
Greater Anglia	96
Virgin Trains East Coast	92
Northern Rail	90
Virgin Trains West Coast	89
Great Western Railway	68
Southeastern	59
ScotRail	51
CrossCountry	40
Arriva Trains Wales	36
London Midland	35
c2c	26
TransPennine Express	26
East Midlands Trains	22
London Overground	13
Chiltern	11
TfL Rail	8
Merseyrail	7
Caledonian Sleeper	6
Eurostar	35
Heathrow Express	4
Grand Central	3
Hull Trains	3
National Rail Enquiries	6
ATOC	2
Network Rail	2

The most common complaints category for appeals closed by Transport Focus was punctuality/reliability which accounted for 24.5% of all appeals closed, followed by ticketing and refunds policy with 16.9% of all appeals closed. For Transport Focus the category with the third highest share of appeals closed was unhappy at the type/level of compensation with 13.7%[8].

London TravelWatch had a similar trend in the categories for appeals closed during 2016-17 Q1. Ticketing and refunds policy accounted for 25.0% of the appeals closed by this watchdog, while level of compensation (a new category introduced under delay

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[8] For 2016-17 ORR has introduced new complaints categories for appeals closed to cover complaints relating to delay compensation schemes. For Q1 Transport Focus has not yet updated their processes to include these categories. However they will be implementing these categories from 2016-17 Q2. Therefore in the next statistical release (due for publication on 16th December 2016) it is likely that the data will be revised and some of the appeals currently categorised under unhappy at the type/level of compensation will be reclassified under the new delay compensation schemes categories.

compensation schemes for 2016-17) accounted for 19.8% of the total appeals closed by London TravelWatch.

■ Appeals closed by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch by TOC quarterly data are available on the data portal in: Table 14.15

■ Complaint categories for appeals closed by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch quarterly data are available on the data portal in: Table 14.16

3. National Rail Enquiries telephone service

Annual 2015-16

There were 3.1 million calls made to the NRE telephone service during 2015-16, a decrease of 5.5% compared to the previous year. This is a reduction of 95.0% since the start of the time series in 1998-99, when 61.7 million calls were made. The decline in the number of calls made to the NRE telephone service is mainly due to the introduction of more ways of accessing train information and the increasing use of these methods, such as self-service channels like websites and apps.

Of the calls made during 2015-16, 96.9% were answered whilst 3.1% were abandoned. This is almost unchanged from 2014-15 when 97.0% of calls were answered

2016-17 Quarter 1 Results

The National Rail Enquiry telephone services received 743,869 enquiries in 2016-17 Q1, a decrease of 5.7% compared to 2015-16 Q1. Of the calls received 96.7% were answered while 3.3% were abandoned.

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

National Rail Enquiries is part of the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), 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.

National Rail Enquiry telephone services (calls received and percentage of calls answered), Great Britain, 2004-05 Q1 to 2016-17 Q1 (Table 14.13)

- National Rail Enquiries telephone service quarterly data is available on the data portal in: Table 14.13

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

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

Revisions: Annual data for TfL Rail has been revised to include all data from when TfL Rail was in existence (periods 3-13), as opposed to the full quarters in which TfL Rail was in operation (Q2-Q4).

Further details on historic revisions to the data set can be found at: Revisions Log

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.

Annex 3 – Effect of methodology changes

In 2016-17 ORR introduced some improvements to the way it which collects complaints data from the train operators. Because of this the methodologies for how a number of the metrics in this statistical release are calculated have been updated. In this annex the effect of these changes are discussed, and where possible measured by comparing the old and new methodology. For further information on the changes to data collection for this year please see the Quality Report.

Complaints rate

Train operators report the complaints data to ORR after each railway period (every 28 days). In general there are two ways by which this can be done:

1. Complaints received: i.e. complaints received by the operators within a period and handled either within that period or at a later date
2. Complaints closed: i.e. complaints fully closed by the operators within a period, which were received either earlier in that period or in previous periods

Prior to 2016-17 there was a mix of the two different reporting methods across the different operators, partly because of differing internal reporting needs by the operators and partly because of lack of clarity in the guidance provided by ORR. For 2016-17 all operators agreed to provide data based on the complaints closed methodology[9,10].

Over long time periods (particularly quarterly and annually), this change is unlikely to have any substantial impact on the complaints rate, as ultimately the same number of complaints would be received and closed, and therefore recorded by each method. The most likely impact is the introduction of a time lag in reporting of complaints. For example, if a TOC received a large number of complaints in January, but didn't close the majority of these until March, these would be reported in the March data rather than January. However, with the aggregation to quarterly and then annual data the impact of this should be minimised.

There is a chance that for those operators who changed methodology some complaints could have been double counted in our statistics. For example a complaint received in March and recorded under complaints opened (and thus recorded under 2015-16 Q4) and closed in April (and thus recorded under 2016-17 Q1). However, because the TOCs implemented this change at the start of the year, there should be no double counting within the 2016-17 Q1 results.

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[9] This method was chosen as it was favoured by the majority of TOCs and the most commonly used in previous years

[10] Merseyrail were unable to implement this change until after 2016-17 Q1. Therefore there will be a slight discontinuity in the data for that operator for this year.

A further refinement to the data collection guidance for 2016-17 was emphasizing that praise related communications should not be counted under the complaint statistics. Previously some TOCs had included these communications, which would have inflated the complaints rate.

It is difficult to quantify the number of praise comments included previously in complaints statistics because ORR does not receive the number of unique praise correspondence. Therefore we cannot quantify the effect of this methodology change. However, for those operators for which praise communications were being included in the complaints rate, the removal of praise would lead to a reduction in the complaints rate.

Complaints by category

For 2016-17 praise has been removed as a category within the complaints by category tables. This is due to the introduction of a new praise rate table (see below) and methodology change described above which ensures praise is not counted as a complaint.

The impact of this is to increase the percentage share of every other complaint category because praise is now excluded. The table below presents the 2016-17 Q1 data using both the old and new methodology. The table below shows the percentage point change for the top 10 complaints categories following the removal of praise. The relative difference between the complaint categories remains unchanged between the different methods.

Complaint category (top 10)	Previous methodology (with praise included)	2016-17 methodology (without praise)	Percentage point increase per category
Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	24.1%	25.6%	1.5pp
Facilities on board	7.8%	8.3%	0.5pp
Ticket buying facilities - other	6.9%	7.3%	0.4pp
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	6.5%	6.9%	0.4pp
Ticketing and refunds policy	6.3%	6.7%	0.4pp
Ticket buying facilities	6.1%	6.4%	0.4pp
Praise	6.1%	-	-
The attitudes and helpfulness of the staff at station	3.5%	3.7%	0.2pp
Other policy	2.9%	3.1%	0.2pp
The helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	2.7%	2.9%	0.2pp
Provision of information about train times/platforms	1.8%	1.9%	0.1pp

The general effect of the methodology changed described above is consistent for all TOCs, however the size of the increase in percentage share varies between operators depending on the volume of praise they receive.

Praise rate

Following the removal of the praise comments from the two measures discussed above, ORR has introduced a new metric of praise rate. This is calculated using a similar methodology for the complaints rate. Praise is normalised by per 100,000 passenger

journeys. This provides a praise rate metric that is comparable between operators. This metric has been back calculated to the start of 2015-16 in order to provide a short time-series. This can be found on the data portal in Praise rate by TOC - Table 14.17.

Complaints by contact method

Prior to 2016-17 complaints by contact method was calculated using complaints category data. In this each topic covered in a communication would be assigned as a single complaint by that contact method.

For 2016-17 we have adjusted the methodology for this to use complaint correspondence data; i.e. each communication (e.g. letter, email) is counted only once, regardless of the number of topics covered. This change was implemented because it is considered that this is a more accurate representation of the frequency by which operators are contacted by the different methods. Under the previous method results were skewed by those contact types more likely to include multiple complaint categories.

The table below shows the 2016-17 Q1 national data using both methodologies. The new methodology slightly increases the percentage share of telephone complaints, while reducing the share for email/webform and letter. Emails and letters are the types of communication that are more likely to include multiple topics of complaint, hence why their share reduces after the methodology change.

	Email/Webform	Letter	Meet the Manager	Online Forums	Telephone
2016-17 methodology	63.6%	16.9%	0.0%	1.0%	18.5%
Previous methodology	64.8%	17.1%	0.0%	0.9%	17.2%

Complaints responded to within 20 working days

As discussed above, ORR has taken measures to ensure that praise related communications are not included within the complaints rate data for 2016-17. This may have a slight effect on the complaints responded to within 20 working days statistics. However we cannot quantify the effect of this as we do not know how praise communications were being considered responded to in the previous data. However the effect is likely to be minimal as relatively few praise comments are received compared to complaints (in 2016-17 Q1 there was approximately one praise comment for every 16 complaint comments).