



Passenger Rail Service Complaints

2017-18 Q1 Statistical Release

Publication date: 26 October 2017

Next publication date: 11 January 2018

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 2017.
















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.

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Complaints per 100,000 journeys increased by 3.2% in 2017-18 Q1 for franchised operators compared to the same time last year. This was driven by a higher proportion of complaints about fares and retailing and delay compensation schemes.

Top five areas of complaint in 2017-18 Q1 (franchised operators)

Type of complaint	% of all complaints	Percentage Point (pp) change to last year
 Punctuality/reliability	 21%	 -4 pp
 Ticket buying facilities	 8%	 2 pp
 Facilities on board	 7%	 -1 pp
 Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	 7%	 No change
 Online ticket sales	 6%	 -1 pp

Response times to complaints in 2017-18 Q1

Nationally 90% of complaints were closed within 20 working days, 3 percentage points higher than last Q1 last year.

Complaint appeals closed by passenger watchdogs in 2017-18 Q1

The passenger bodies closed 1,199 appeals during 2017-18 Q1, this was 32% higher than 2016-17 Q1.

For detail on the time series going back to 1998-99 see the [2016-17 Q4](#) annual statistics release

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

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 fair comparison between operators we look at complaints per 100,000 journeys.

Social media comments are excluded from these statistics.

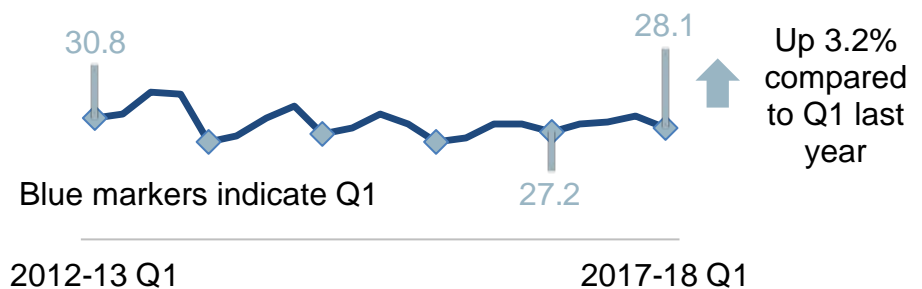
The number of complaints received via such sources, the definition of a 'complaint' and the resources that each train operator allocates to these social platforms vary significantly, and therefore they are excluded from the published figures.

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

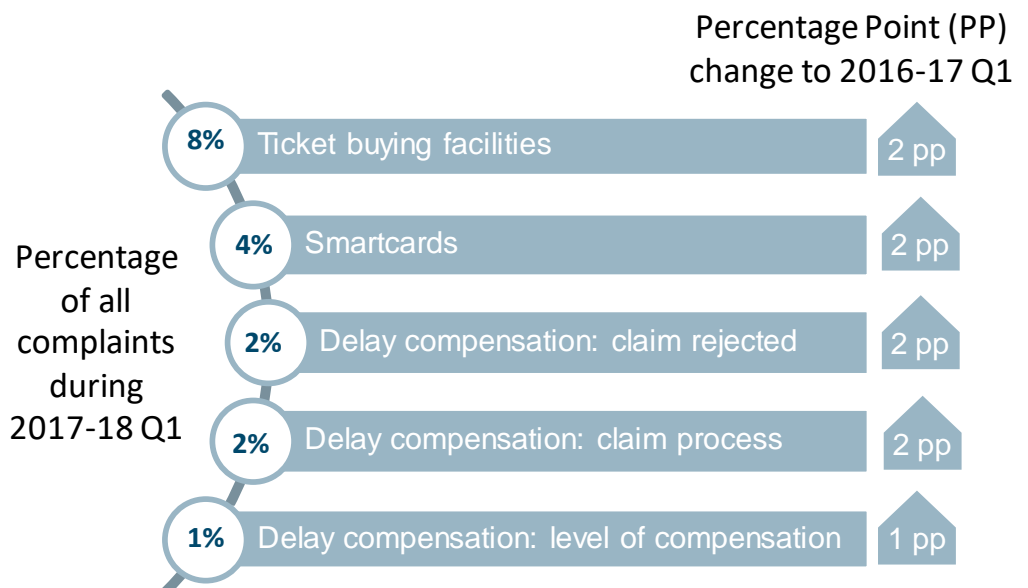
2017-18 Q1

- There were **28.1 complaints per 100,000 journeys** in 2017-18 Q1 for franchised operators. This is 3.2% higher than Q1 the previous year.
- The complaints rate is the highest Q1 since 2012-13 Q1 (where there were 30.8 complaints per 100,000 journeys).

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



Complaint categories with the biggest percentage point change compared to the previous year (franchised operators), Great Britain, 2017-18 Q1 ([Table 14.9](#))



Factors that influenced the complaints rate in 2017-18 Q1 (franchised operators only)



Ticket buying facilities complaints made up 8% of complaints in 2017-18 Q1, an increase of 2 pp compared to last year. Four operators in particular contributed towards this increase. GTR's complaints about this category increased by 6 percentage points (pp) compared to last year, South West Trains by 2 pp, Virgin Trains West Coast by 2 pp and Great Western Railway by 1 pp.



Smartcard complaints accounted for 4% of complaints in 2017-18 Q1, an increase of 2 pp compared to Q1 last year. Southeastern received 18% of its complaints about smartcards. This could be due to Southeastern releasing The Key smartcard during 2016-17 so is a new area of complaint. C2C has the highest proportion of complaints about smartcards out of all operators with 39% of complaints, a 15 pp increase compared to Q1 last year. Greater Anglia and South West Trains also received more smartcard complaints, both experienced a 2 pp increase compared to Q1 last year.



The proportion of complaints about delay compensation increased. Since the introduction of these categories at the start of 2016-17 more operators have started to record complaints against this category. In addition, complaints may be growing in this area as passenger awareness of their rights to claim compensation grows. The operators with the highest proportion of complaints about delay compensation schemes were: Greater Anglia (25% of complaints were about delay compensation), GTR (22%) and Southeastern (13%).



The proportion of complaints about train service performance declined. During 2017-18 Q1 21% of complaints were about train service performance, a 4 pp decline since Q1 the previous year. This is the lowest proportion of complaints about performance in the time series (back to 2007-08 Q4). The majority of TOCs received fewer complaints about punctuality compared to Q1 last year. In particular, East Midland Trains had a 21 pp decline in complaints about punctuality, Southeastern a 14 pp decline and GTR 13 pp decline. Performance of trains, as measured by the Public Performance Measure, improved in 2017-18 Q1 compared to the same quarter last year. 90.7% were 'on time' in 2017-18 Q1, a 1.5 pp increase compared to Q1 2016-17¹.

Complaint by category: the type of complaint received by the train operator. There are 65 detailed categories, which make up 14 high-level complaint categories.

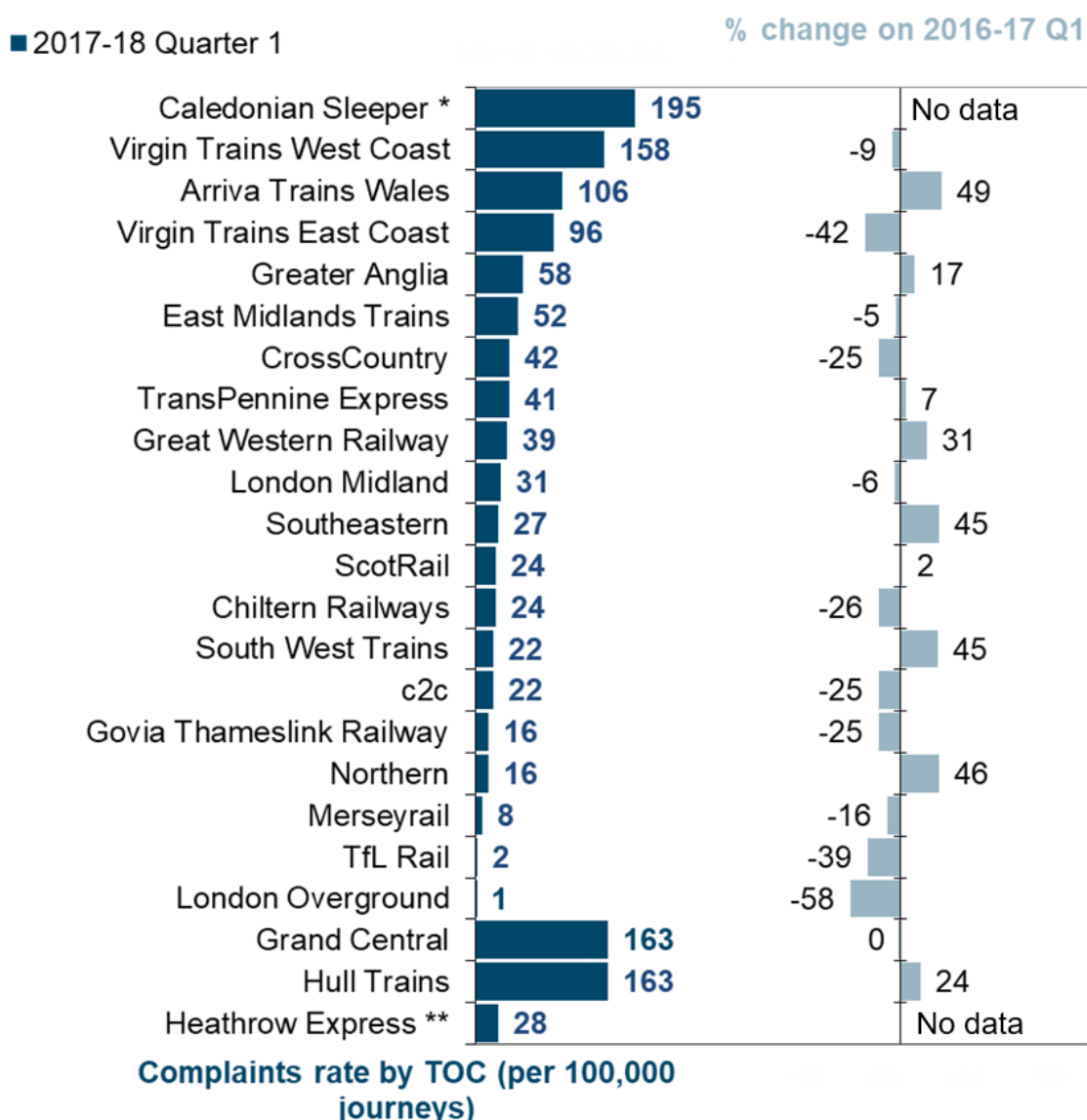
¹ http://orr.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/25591/passenger-freight-performance-2017-18-q1.pdf

Complaints rate by train operating company

2017-18 Q1

Overall 12 train operators had a lower complaints rate than last year, and 9 train operators had a higher complaints rate than last year.

Complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys by train operating company, Great Britain, 2017-18 Q1 ([Table 14.9](#))



* 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 higher 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.

Selected key changes in complaints rates for 2017-18 Q1

Arriva Train Wales had a higher proportion of complaints about sufficient room on the train and complaints handling. Complaints about insufficient room on the train made up 13% of complaints in 2017-18 Q1, an increase of 5 pp compared to Q1 last year. Complaints about no response to a complaint and response time to the complaint both increased by 2 pp compared to Q1 last year. This could be due to passengers not being satisfied with ATW's response time to previous complaints (as shown by ATW responding to 63% of complaints within 20 working days in 2016-17).

South West Trains proportion of complaints about fares and retailing increased. Complaints about smartcards increased by 2 pp, ticket buying facilities by 2 pp and online ticket sales ('ticket buying facilities – other') by 6 pp.

Great Western Railway complaints about company policy accounted for 26% of complaints, a 13 pp increase compared to last year. Complaints about performance were responsible for 5% of complaints, an 8 pp decrease since Q1 the year before.

Virgin Trains East Coast complaints about company policy and on board policy both declined, by 7 pp and 2 pp respectively. Complaints about sufficient room on the train also declined by 3 pp compared to Q1 last year.

Complaints by contact method

2017-18 Q1

- Nationally 69% of complaints were made via email or webforms, a 2 pp increase from Q1 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 and train operating company, Great Britain, 2017-18 Q1 ([Table 14.6](#))



Complaints answered within 20 working days

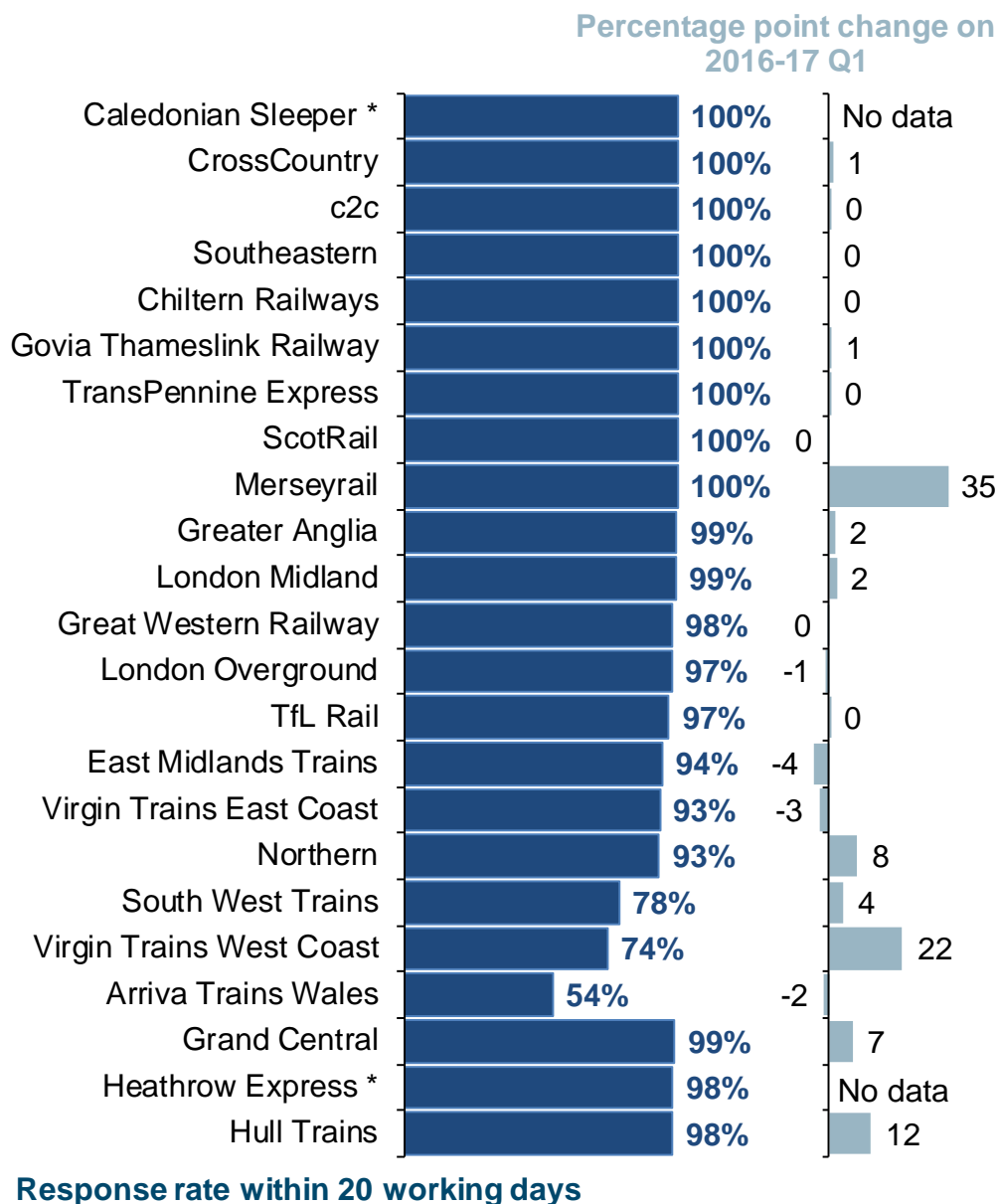
2017-18 Q1

- Nationally 90% of complaints were closed within 20 working days, a 3 pp increase since Q1 last year.
- Overall 17 operators responded to 95% of complaints within 20 working days, and six 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 Q1 [\(Table 14.2\)](#)

The percentage of complaints closed within 20 working days. This is when the TOC has given a 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.



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

Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling

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.

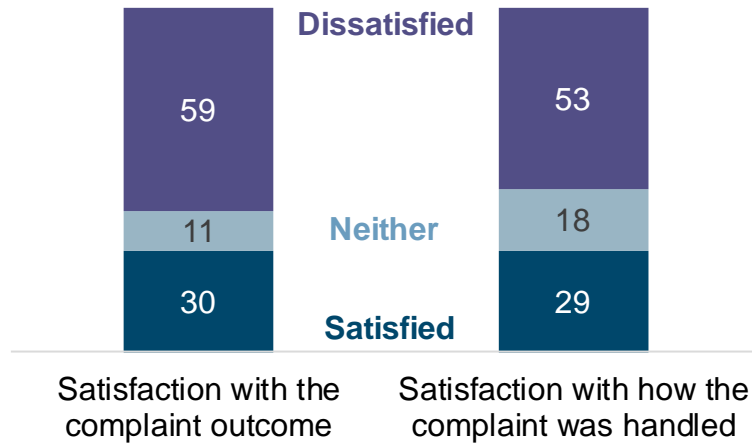
The survey asks questions relating to the complaints process and resulting outcome. The complainant is asked to rank their satisfaction with each on a five point scale.

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

2017-18 Q1

- 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 30% of people surveyed were satisfied. For the handling of the complaint, 29% of people asked were satisfied.

Overall passenger satisfaction with the handling and outcome of their complaint, Great Britain, 2017-18 Q1 ([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 Q1 ([Table 14.20](#))



2. Appeals

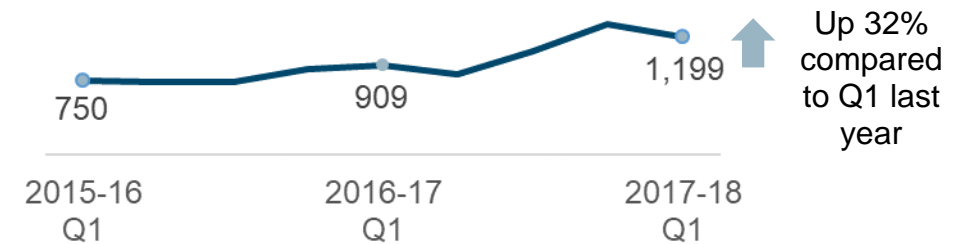
Appeals closed: the number of complaint appeals closed by the independent passenger watchdogs, Transport Focus or London TravelWatch (LTW)

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.

2017-18 Q1

■ The passenger bodies closed 1,199 appeals during 2017-18 Q1, this was 32% higher than 2016-17 Q1.

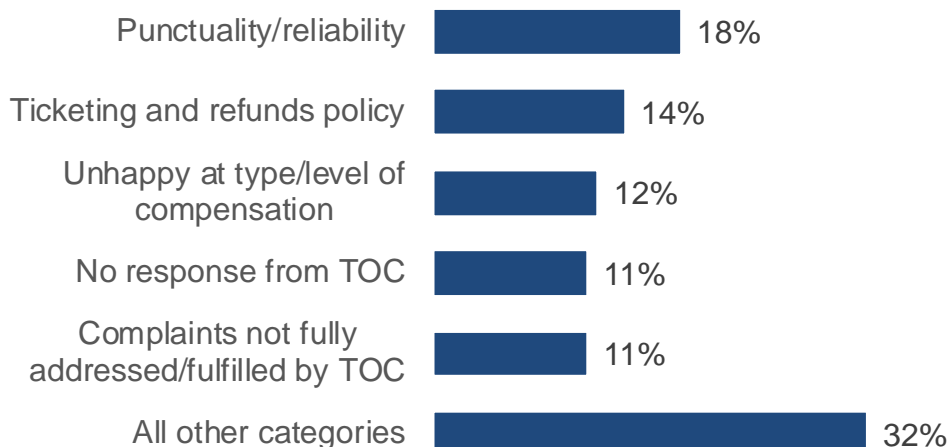
Appeals closed by passenger bodies, Great Britain, 2017-18 Q1 ([Table 14.5](#))



Transport Focus closed 850 appeals during 2017-18 Q1, 56% higher than the same time last year. This is the second highest number of appeals closed since the time series began in 2013-14 Q1. London Travel Watch closed 349 appeals, 4% lower than Q1 last year, however, this is still 60% higher than two years ago (2015-16 Q1).

Three operators saw a large increase in appeals throughout 2017-18 Q1 which contributed towards the total number of appeals increasing. Great Western Railway had 221 appeals during 2017-18 Q1, a 402% increase from Q1 last year. Virgin Trains West Coast had 128 appeals during 2017-18 Q1, a 276% increase from Q1 last year. Northern had 137 appeals during 2017-18 Q1, a 114% increase from Q1 last year.

Top appeal categories (Transport Focus and London TravelWatch), Great Britain, 2017-18 Q1 ([Table 14.16](#))



3. National Rail Enquiries telephone service

2017-18 Q1

- There were 639,255 calls made to the National Rail Enquiries telephone service during 2017-18 Q1, a decrease of 14% compared to Q1 in the previous year. This continues the trend of declining calls to the National Rail Enquiries telephone service.

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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