Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling 2019-20 factsheet

Publication date: 7 July 2020

Next publication date: TBC

Background

This factsheet shows survey results on **passenger satisfaction with train operators' complaints handling processes.** You will find:

- Satisfaction with the outcome of the complaint
- 11 questions on satisfaction with how the complaints were handled
- How the passenger felt about the train company in light of how their complaint was handled

The latest 2019-20 annual data refer to April 2019 to March 2020.

In 2019-20 there were **54,573 responses.** National results are weighted by complaint volumes.

About the survey

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 Office of Rail and Road (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.

The survey is used by ORR to monitor complaints handling, as well as used by train operators to improve their own complaints handling.

Overall 30.0% of respondents were satisfied with how the train operator handled their complaint in 2019-20. This is an increase of 0.6 percentage point (pp) compared to 2017-18.

Satisfaction with the outcome of the complaint was 31.0% in 2019-20. This is an increase of 2.7 pp compared to 2017-18.

Figure 1. Overall passenger satisfaction with the handling and outcome of their complaint (%), Great Britain, 2016-17 to 2019-20
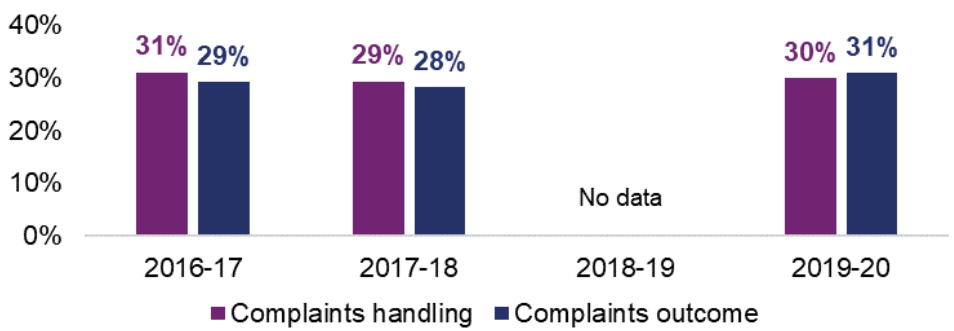
Of the people surveyed, 13.0% of passengers felt more positive about the train operator following how their complaint was handled in 2019-20. This is 1.0 pp higher than 2017-18.

Figure 2. How the passenger felt about the train company in light of how their complaint was handled (%), Great Britain, 2016-17 to 2019-20
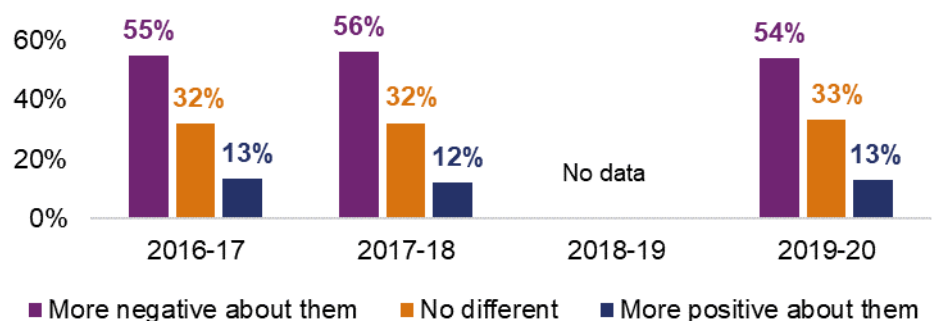
Data note: The new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect on 25 May 2018. GDPR required ORR to change the methodology for the 2018-19 survey which resulted in less robust data due to lower sample sizes. Therefore, the 2018-19 data was not published. For 2019-20 ORR managed to boost the sample size while still being compliant with GDPR. This means the 2019-20 data is comparable to 2017-18. Please see the background notes for further information.
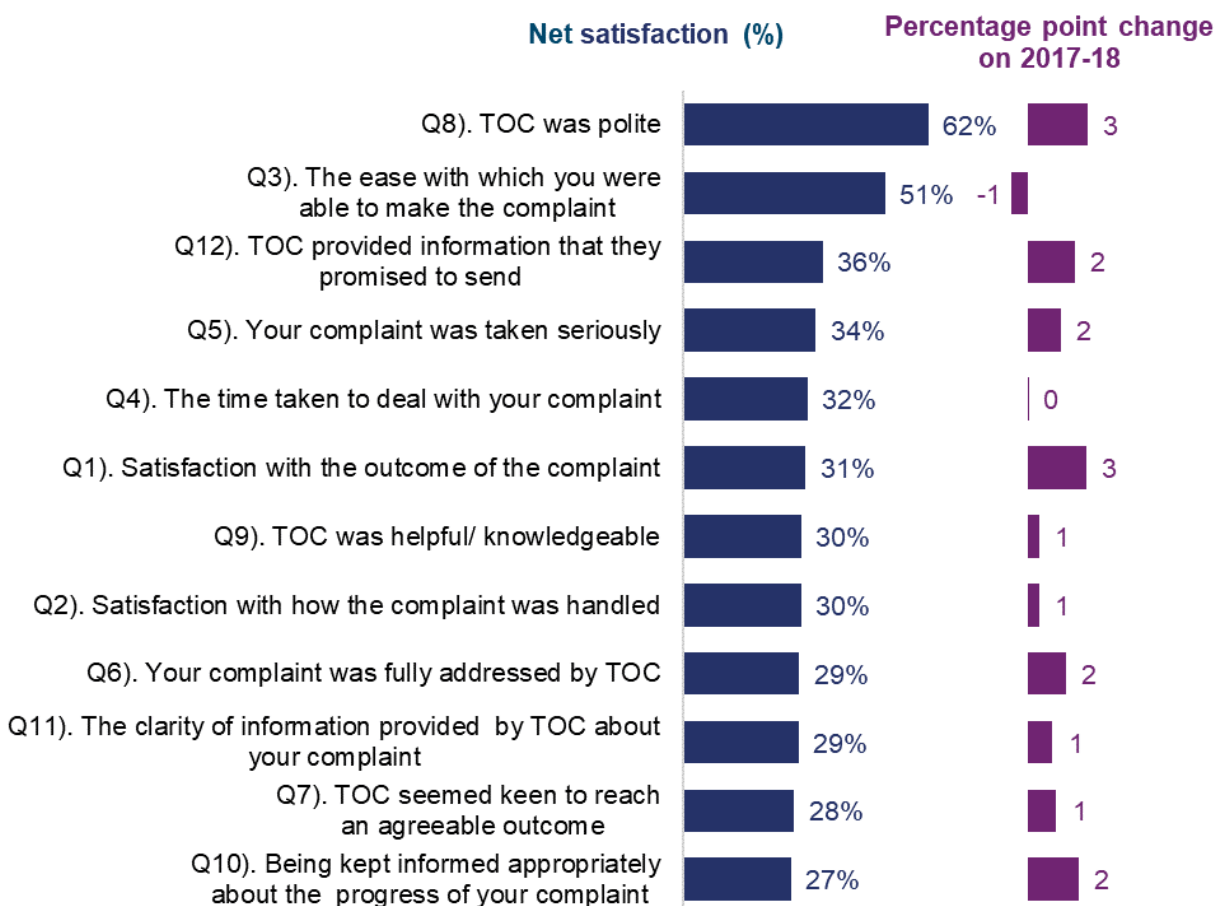
Responsible Statistician: Christopher Casanovas
Public Enquiries: E-mail: rail.stats@orr.gov.uk   **Media Enquiries**: Tel: 0207 282 2094

Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling

- The highest satisfaction was with the politeness of train operators (TOCs) when dealing with complaints. Overall, 62% of complainants were satisfied in 2019-20, a 3 pp increase compared to 2017-18.

- The lowest satisfaction was with the complainant being kept informed about the progress of their complaint. For this question 27% of complainants were satisfied, a 2 pp increase compared to 2017-18.

- All questions increased in satisfaction in 2019-20 when compared to 2017-18 except for the ease of making a complaint (a 1 pp decline compared to 2017-18). However, this question still had the second highest satisfaction in 2019-20 (51% satisfaction).

- The politeness of the TOC, and satisfaction with outcome of the complaint both had the biggest improvements in satisfaction compared to 2017-18, with both questions increasing by 3 pp.

Figure 3. Passenger satisfaction with each individual question on complaint handling, Great Britain, 2019-20

	Net satisfaction (%)	Percentage point change on 2017-18
Q8). TOC was polite	62%	3
Q3). The ease with which you were able to make the complaint	51%	-1
Q12). TOC provided information that they promised to send	36%	2
Q5). Your complaint was taken seriously	34%	2
Q4). The time taken to deal with your complaint	32%	0
Q1). Satisfaction with the outcome of the complaint	31%	3
Q9). TOC was helpful/ knowledgeable	30%	1
Q2). Satisfaction with how the complaint was handled	30%	1
Q6). Your complaint was fully addressed by TOC	29%	2
Q11). The clarity of information provided by TOC about your complaint	29%	1
Q7). TOC seemed keen to reach an agreeable outcome	28%	1
Q10). Being kept informed appropriately about the progress of your complaint	27%	2

Responses in 2019-20: 54,573

Notes:
1). Survey question numbers are shown in the brackets in the chart above.
2). Comparisons are made to 2017-18. Please see page 4 for more information.

Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling by train operator

Figure 4. Overall passenger satisfaction with the complaints handling process, by train operator, Great Britain, 2019-20
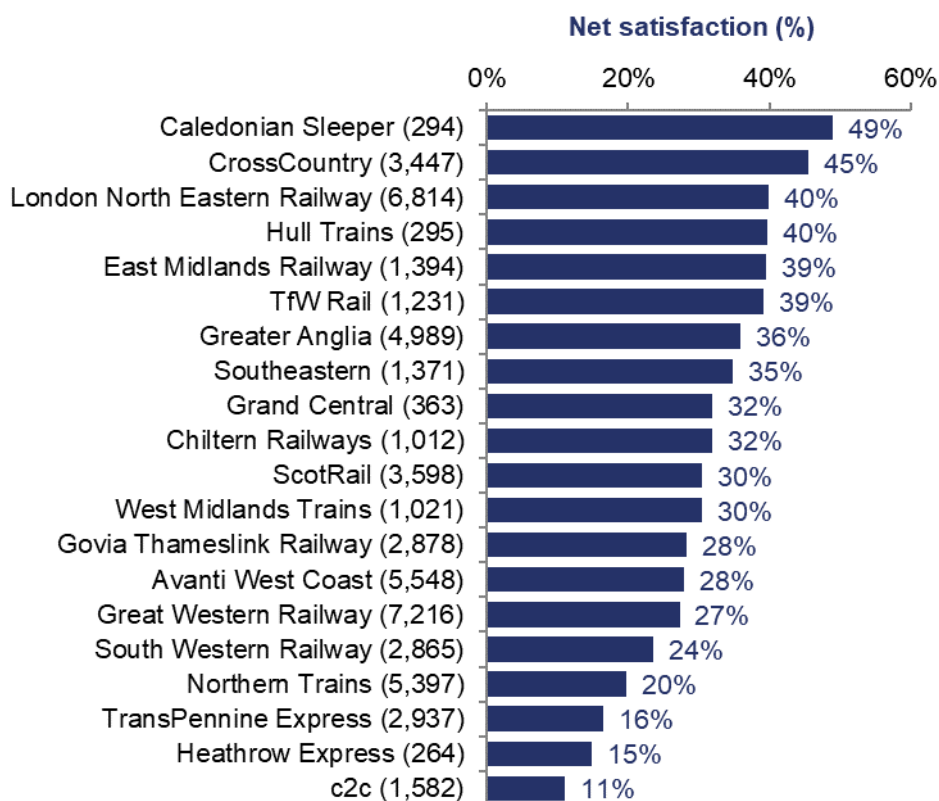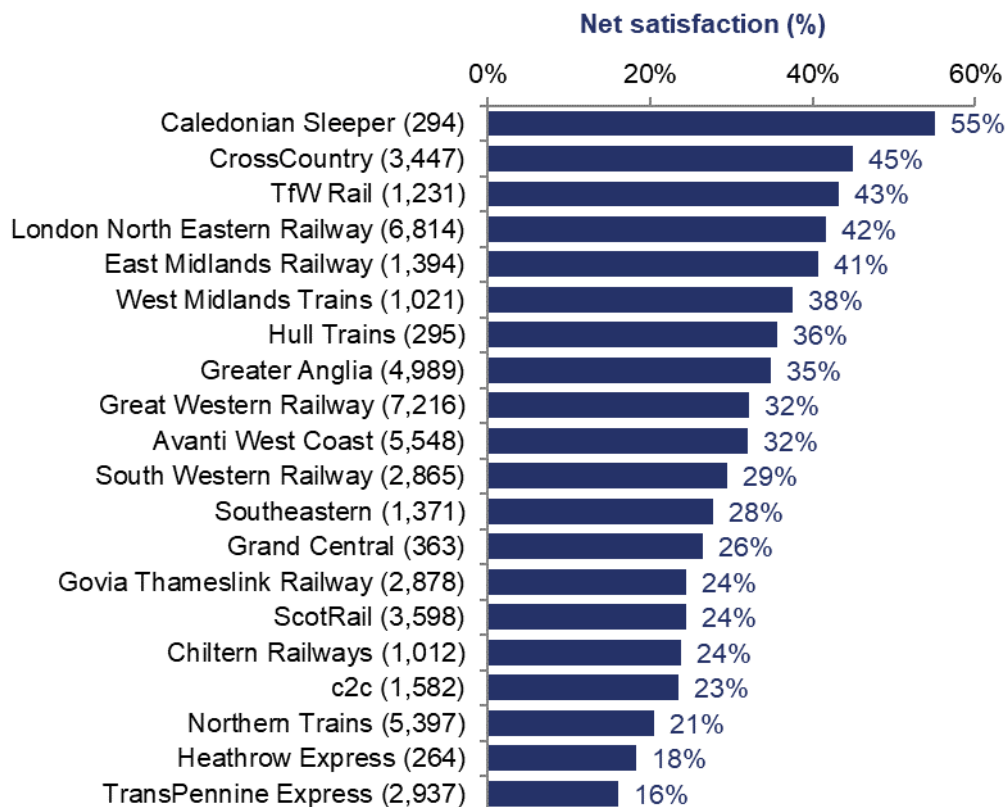
Net satisfaction (%)

Train operator	Net satisfaction
Caledonian Sleeper (294)	49%
CrossCountry (3,447)	45%
London North Eastern Railway (6,814)	40%
Hull Trains (295)	40%
East Midlands Railway (1,394)	39%
TfW Rail (1,231)	39%
Greater Anglia (4,989)	36%
Southeastern (1,371)	35%
Grand Central (363)	32%
Chiltern Railways (1,012)	32%
ScotRail (3,598)	30%
West Midlands Trains (1,021)	30%
Govia Thameslink Railway (2,878)	28%
Avanti West Coast (5,548)	28%
Great Western Railway (7,216)	27%
South Western Railway (2,865)	24%
Northern Trains (5,397)	20%
TransPennine Express (2,937)	16%
Heathrow Express (264)	15%
c2c (1,582)	11%

Figure 5. Overall passenger satisfaction with the outcome of the complaint, by train operator. Great Britain. 2019-20

Net satisfaction (%)

Train operator	Net satisfaction
Caledonian Sleeper (294)	55%
CrossCountry (3,447)	45%
TfW Rail (1,231)	43%
London North Eastern Railway (6,814)	42%
East Midlands Railway (1,394)	41%
West Midlands Trains (1,021)	38%
Hull Trains (295)	36%
Greater Anglia (4,989)	35%
Great Western Railway (7,216)	32%
Avanti West Coast (5,548)	32%
South Western Railway (2,865)	29%
Southeastern (1,371)	28%
Grand Central (363)	26%
Govia Thameslink Railway (2,878)	24%
ScotRail (3,598)	24%
Chiltern Railways (1,012)	24%
c2c (1,582)	23%
Northern Trains (5,397)	21%
Heathrow Express (264)	18%
TransPennine Express (2,937)	16%

Notes:

1). Responses to the survey for each train operator are shown in the brackets above.

2). London Overground and TfL Rail were unable to supply 2019-20 data in time for publication due to the relevant staff at TfL who generate the data reports being furloughed due to Coronavirus (Covid-19).

3). Train operators with fewer than 100 responses are not shown in the charts above.

Background notes

Methodology:

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 or, in some instances, to provide a qualitative response via an open text box. This survey allows ORR to monitor industry performance over time and improve the transparency of passengers' experiences. The survey started during October 2015. Train operators joined the survey at different points since the survey started (see quality report for further information).

The responses to the survey vary by each train operator and do not necessarily reflect the volume of complaints closed by each train operator. Therefore, the national results have been weighted by complaint volumes: weighting helps to ensure the results from the survey are representative of complaints received by train operators. The weights are produced by calculating an operator's percentage of overall responses to the passenger satisfaction survey and dividing by the percentage of all complaints that an operator is responsible for. The weighted periodic data is then apportioned into quarterly/annual data.

The new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect on 25 May 2018. GDPR required ORR to change the methodology for the 2018-19 survey which resulted in less robust data due to lower sample sizes. This caused a decrease of 91% in the sample size in 2018-19 compared to 2017-18. This resulted in many train operators having a too low sample size to report robust results on.

For 2019-20 ORR revised the methodology which resulted in an increase to the sample size while still being compliant with GDPR.   This resulted in the sample size increasing substantially from 2018-19, and creating robust data at train operator level. For further information, please see the quality and methodology report.

Response by financial year:

Financial year	Responses
2016-17	29,606
2017-18	41,789
2018-19	3,896
2019-20	54,573

Related data

ORR Rail Passenger Complaints Statistics:

ORR publish statistics about rail passenger complaints. These statistics shows complaints per 100,000 journeys, the type of complaints passengers are making and response times to those complaints.

Rail Ombudsman Statistics:

The Rail Ombudsman provide a service to help sort out unresolved customer complaints about service providers within the rail industry.   The Rail Ombudsman publish statistics on the number and type of cases they are dealing with.

National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS):

The NRPS provides a network-wide picture of passengers' satisfaction with rail travel. Passenger opinions of train services are collected twice a year from a representative sample of journeys.