

Passenger rail service complaints January to March 2023






29 June 2023

There were **83,984** passenger rail service **complaints closed** in the latest quarter (1 January to 31 March 2023), an increase of 4% on the same quarter in the previous year. This gives a rate of **22 complaints per 100,000 journeys**, which was down 26% compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

There were **346,758 complaints closed** by train operators in the latest year (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023), an increase of 23% on the previous year. However, [passenger journeys](#) increased by 46% compared with the previous year. This gives a rate of **24 complaints per 100,000 journeys**, which was down 16% compared with the previous year.

Figure 1 Punctuality/reliability was the most complained about category in the latest year

Top complaint categories by percentage, Great Britain, April 2022 to March 2023

Type of complaint	Percentage of all complaints
 Punctuality/reliability	18%
 Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	11%
 Ticketing and refunds policy	9%
 Facilities on board	8%
 Delay compensation claim rejected	5%

In the latest year, **94.2% of complaints were closed within 20 working days**. Twenty out of 24 train operators met industry requirements to make a full response to 95% of complaints within 20 working days. Overall, **81% of complaints were made by email or webform**.

All data tables, a quality and methodology report and an interactive dashboard associated with this release are published on the [passenger rail service complaints page](#) of the data portal. Key definitions are in annex 1 of this release.

Background:

This quarterly statistical release contains information on complaints made by passengers regarding rail services in Great Britain.

These statistics cover: **complaint rates, complaint volumes, complaint categories and complaint response time** within 20 working days.

Sources: Train operators, Transport Focus, London TravelWatch, and RDG.

Latest quarter: 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023

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Next publication:

26 October 2023

1. Complaint volumes closed

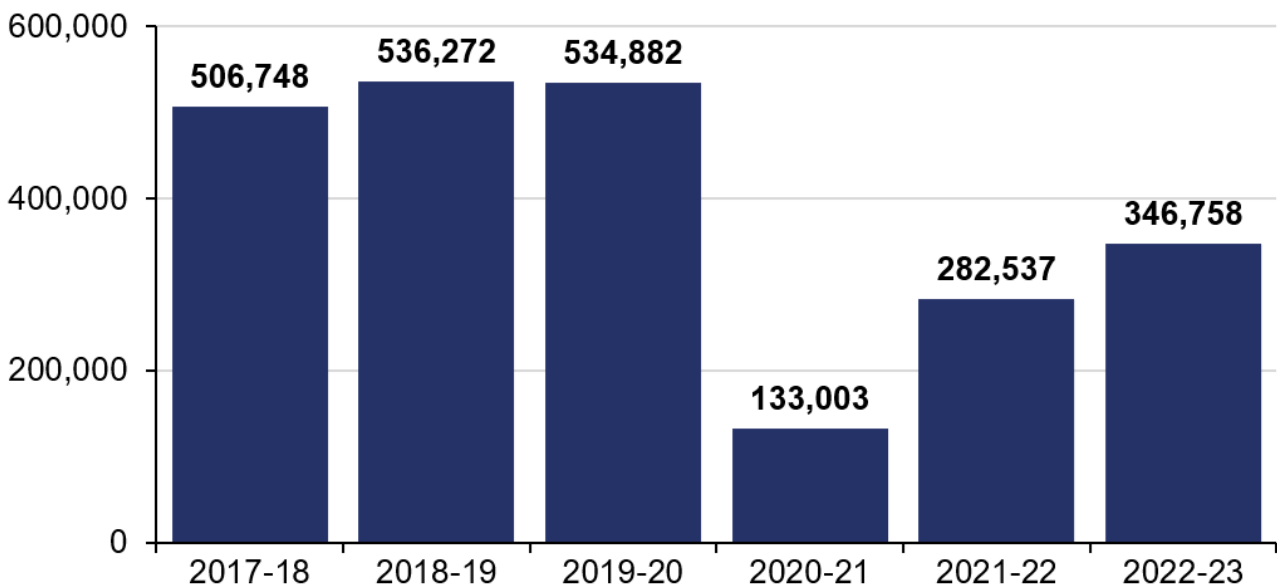
Comparisons of complaint volumes between train operators should be treated with caution because the number of passenger journeys by each operator varies. This is why complaint rates are more suitable for comparing operators.

April 2022 to March 2023 annual

Overall, there were 346,758 complaints closed by train operators in the latest year (1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022). This is up 23% on the previous year's total.

Figure 1.1 Complaint volumes increased for the second year in a row

Complaint volumes closed, Great Britain, annual data, April 2017 to March 2023 (Table 4100)



January to March 2023 quarter

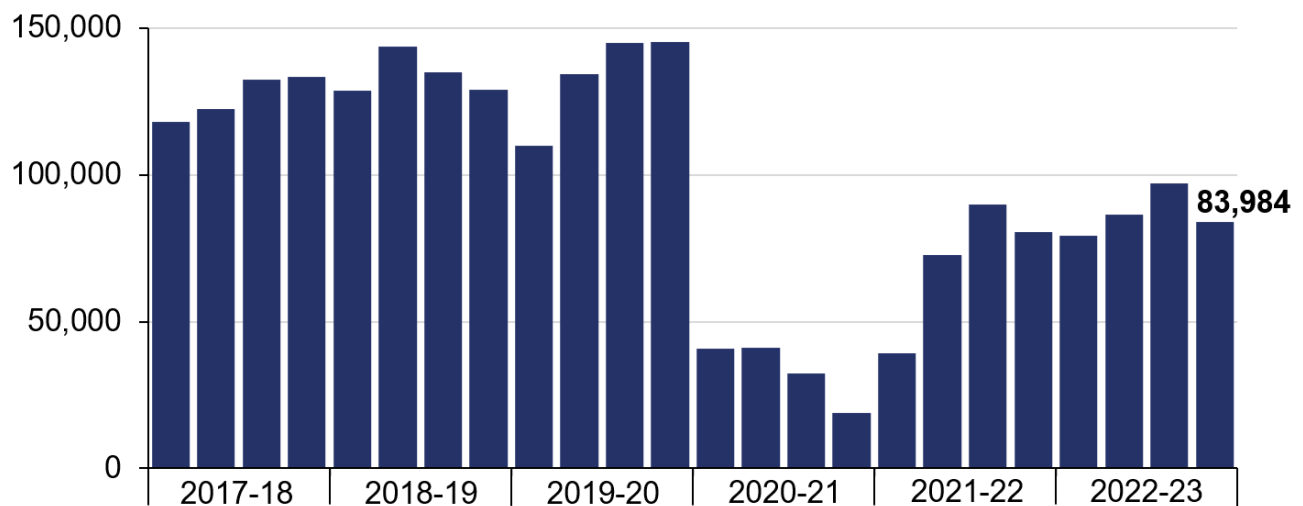
Overall, there were 83,984 complaints closed by train operators in the latest quarter (1 January to 31 March 2023), an increase of 4% on the same quarter in the previous year.

Following increases in quarterly complaint volumes during the year, the most recent data showed a 13% decrease between the third and fourth (latest) quarters.

The most complaints closed in a single quarter was 145,442 in January to March 2020.

Figure 1.2 Complaint volumes decreased in the latest quarter

Complaint volumes closed, Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2017 to March 2023 (Table 4100)



2. Complaint volumes closed by train operator

April 2022 to March 2023 annual

Comparisons with the previous year for individual train operators should be treated with caution. This is because passenger usage has increased during the latest year. The rates of increase have varied by operator and resulted in some large annual changes in complaint volumes.

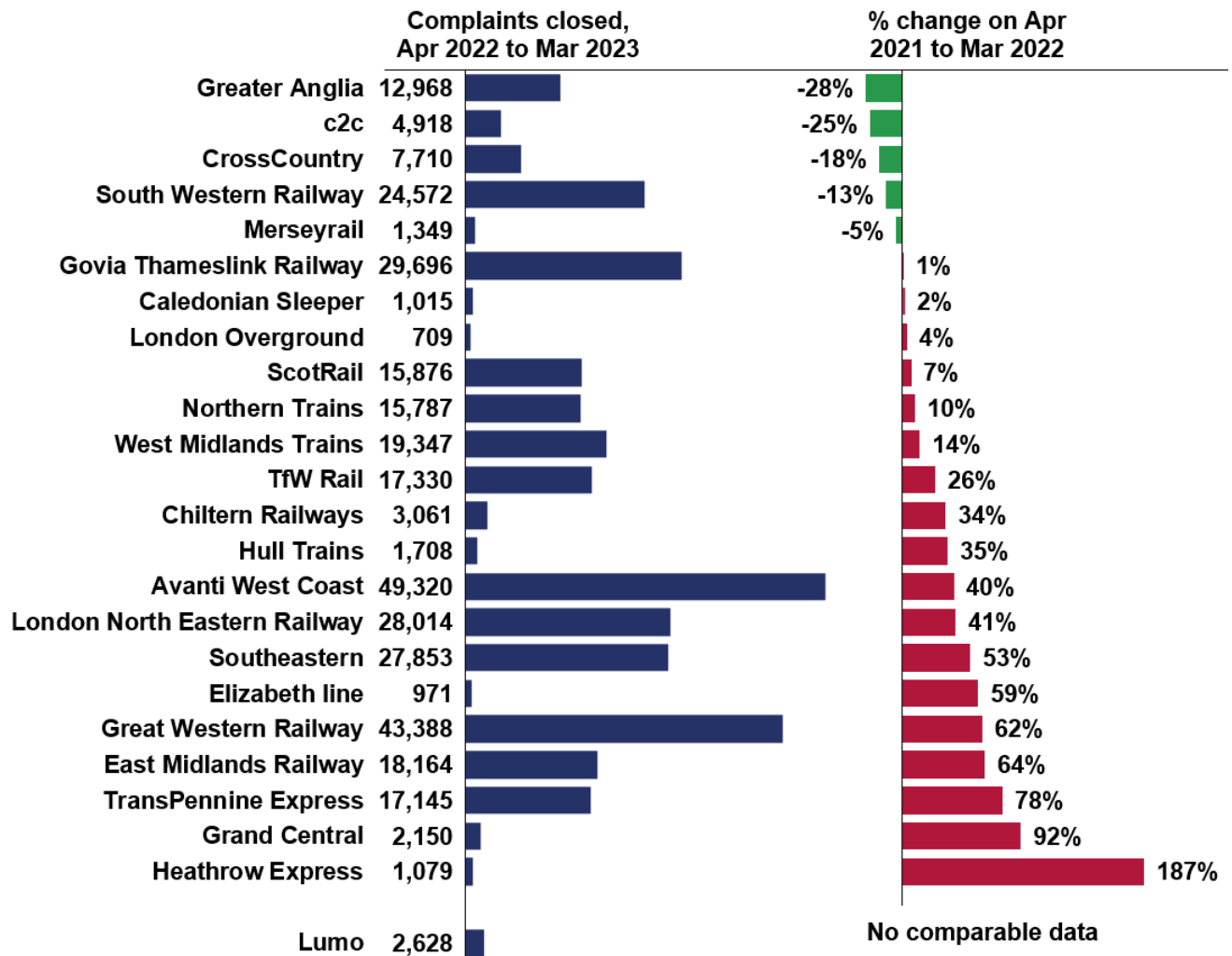
For example, the largest increase in complaint volumes is for Heathrow Express (up 187% compared with the previous year). This operator also recorded a 164% increase in passenger journeys over the same time period.

Strike action affected large parts of the network during the year. There were 29 days in total, beginning on 21 June 2022. Reduced timetables were put in place on the strike days and for some of the days in between and after the strike days. A reduced timetable means fewer trains were planned. The strike action dates and estimates of the reduction in trains planned on each of the strike days are shown in the [Passenger rail performance](#) statistical release.

Lumo began running services on 25 October 2021, which is why no comparison to the previous year is possible for that operator.

Figure 2.1 Complaint volumes increased for most operators

Complaint volumes closed by train operator, April 2022 to March 2023 and change compared with previous year (Table 4100)



January to March 2023 quarter

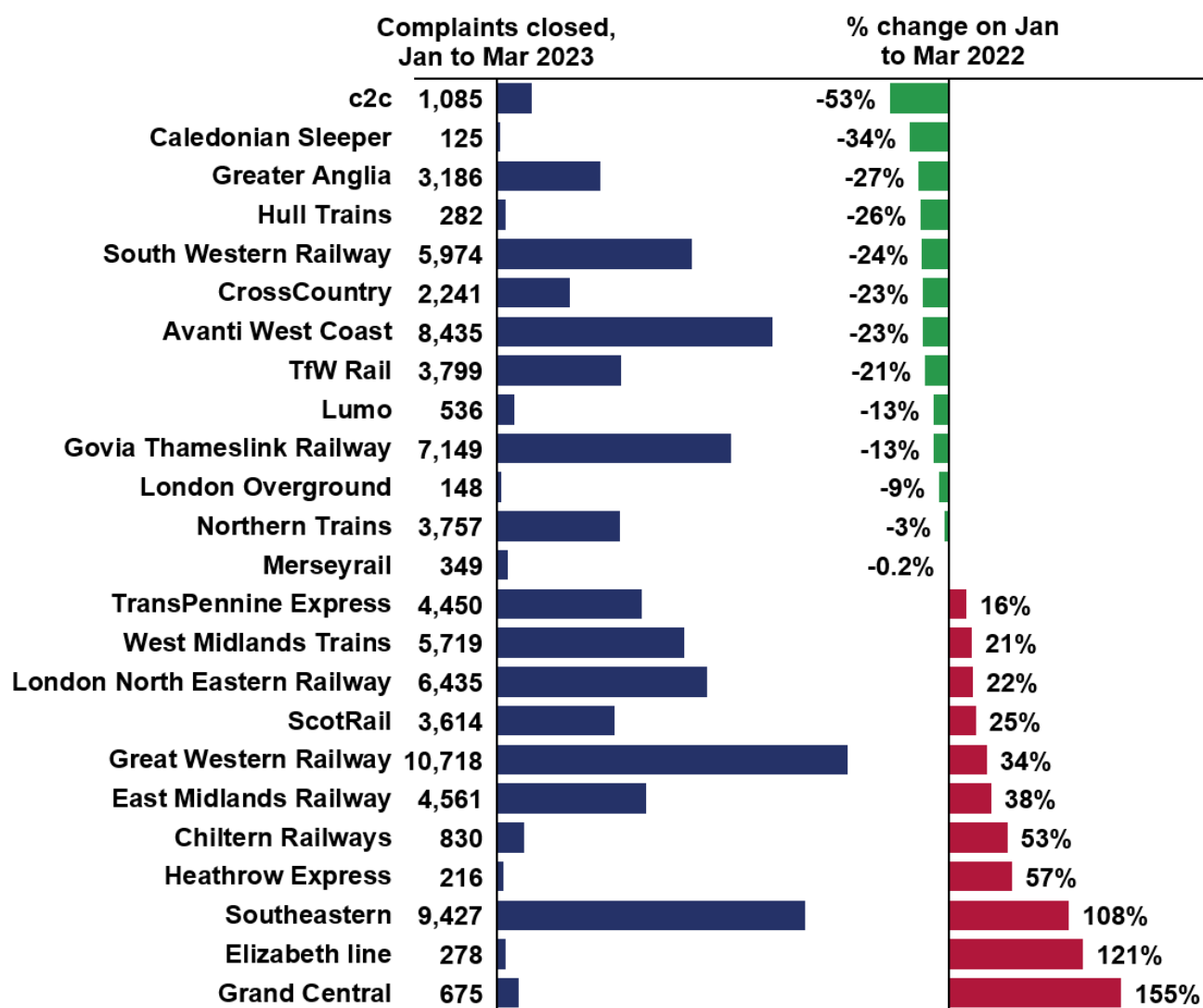
Complaint volumes increased for 11 train operators and decreased for 13 operators in the latest quarter (1 January to 31 March 2023) compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Grand Central (up 155%) recorded the greatest percentage increase in complaints closed, with the Elizabeth line (up 121%) and Southeastern (up 108%) also seeing their volumes more than double compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

c2c (down 53%) recorded the greatest percentage decrease in complaints closed compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Figure 2.2 Complaint volumes increased for 11 train operators

Complaint volumes closed by train operator, January to March 2023 and change compared with the same quarter in the previous year (Table 4100)



3. Complaint rates

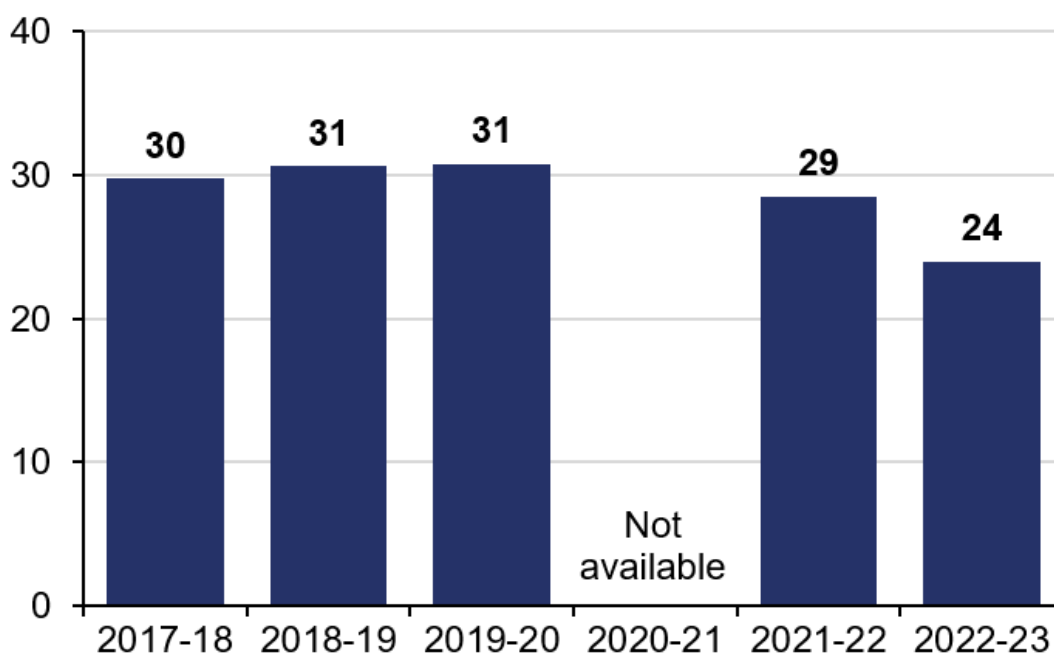
A technical issue in LENNON (the data source for passenger journeys) has resulted in overestimates for Elizabeth line passenger journeys. Consequently, this has resulted in an underestimate in the number of complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys. From initial analysis using data provided by TfL (which is unaffected), the impact of the issue has worsened over the year as more services were introduced on the Elizabeth line with an underestimate of the operator’s complaints rate of up to 25% for the first half of the year and up to 60% for the second half. This consequently underestimates the national complaints rate by up to 4% for the whole year. Therefore, complaints rates for the Elizabeth line and nationally are shown as provisional and should be treated with caution. We hope to make appropriate revisions to historic data when the next set of statistics are published. See the [Passenger rail usage release](#) for more information.

April 2022 to March 2023 annual

Overall, there were provisionally 24 complaints per 100,000 journeys in the latest year (April 2022 to March 2023), a decrease of 16% on the rate from the previous year and the lowest level recorded since the time series began in 2015. However, [passenger journeys](#) increased by 46% compared with the previous year.

Figure 3.1 Complaint rates have decreased and were at the lowest level recorded

Complaint rate per 100,000 journeys, Great Britain, annual data, April 2015 to March 2023 (Table 4110)



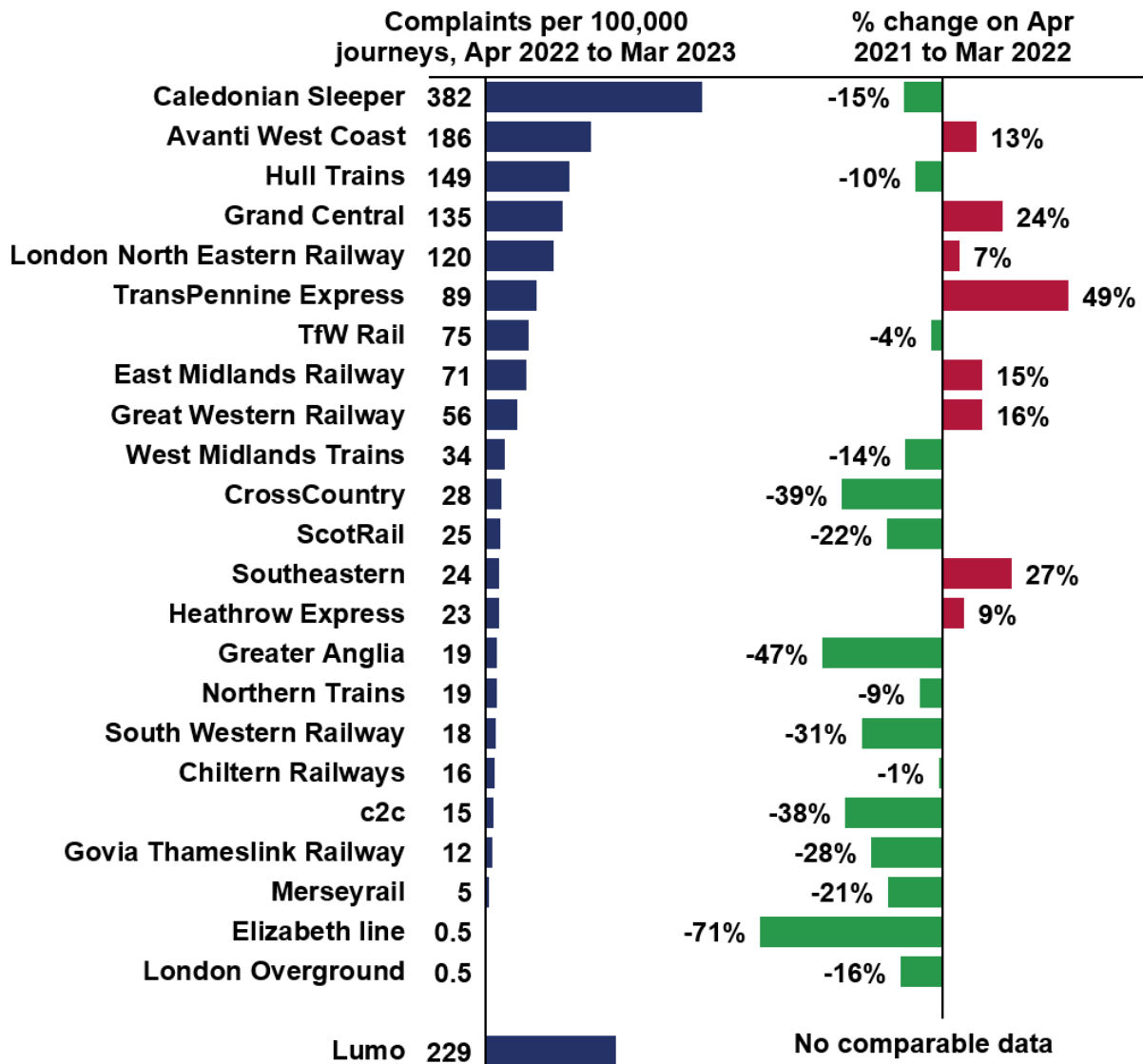
Data for individual train operators show that 15 operators recorded a decrease in their complaints closed per 100,000 journeys, with eight recording an increase. TransPennine Express (89 per 100,000 journeys, up 49%) saw the largest increase in complaint rate on the previous year. Caledonian Sleeper had the highest complaint rate (382), a decrease of 15% on the previous year.

The Elizabeth line (0.5, down 71%) recorded the greatest decrease. This was partly due to the overestimate of passenger journeys as described above. However, it also reflects the change in services operated with the central section of the Elizabeth line opening this year. Greater Anglia (19, down 47%) and CrossCountry (28, down 39%) also recorded large decreases.

Lumo began running services on 25 October 2021, which is why no comparison is possible with previous years for that operator.

Figure 3.2 Complaint rates decreased for most operators this year

Complaint rates by train operator, April 2022 to March 2023 and change compared with previous year (Table 4113)

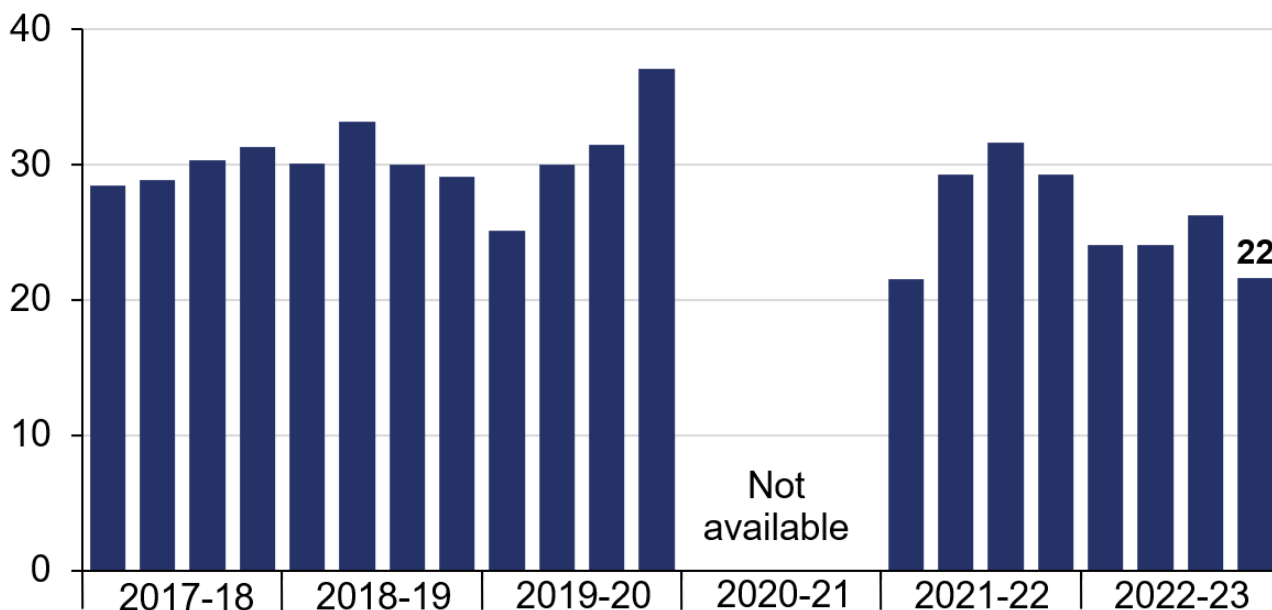


January to March 2023 quarter

Overall, there were provisionally 22 complaints per 100,000 journeys in the latest quarter (1 January to 31 March 2022), a decrease of 26% on the rate from the same quarter in the previous year.

Figure 3.3 Complaint rates decreased in the latest quarter

Complaint rates, Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2017 to March 2023 (Table 4110)



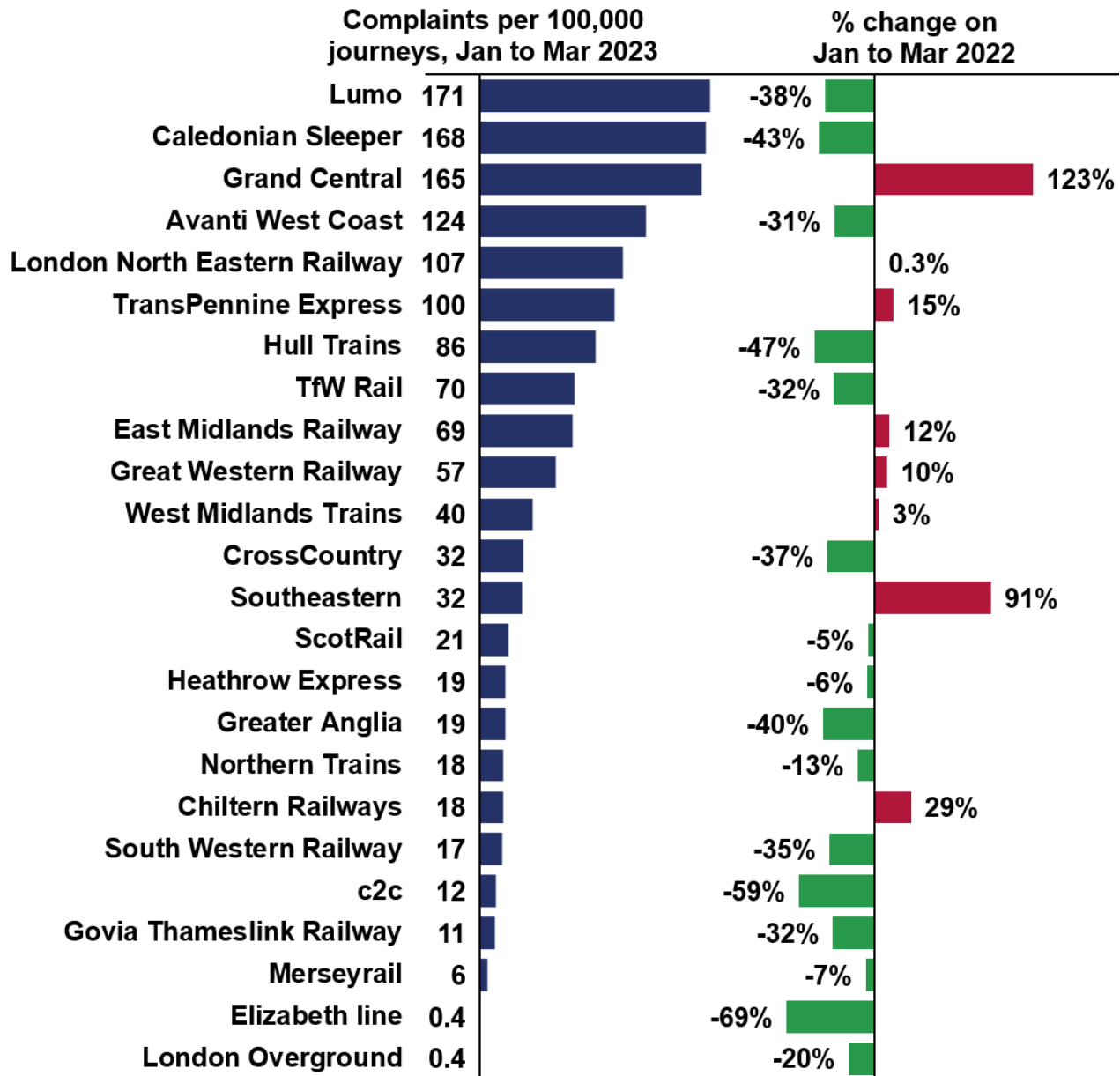
Complaint rates decreased for 16 operators and increased for eight operators. Grand Central (up 123%) and Southeastern (up 91%) saw the greatest increase in their complaint rates compared to the previous year.

Eleven operators recorded decreases of more than 30% in their complaint rates, with the Elizabeth line (down 69%) and c2c (down 59%) recording the greatest decrease of all operators.

Lumo had the highest complaint rate (171), a decrease of 38% on the previous year.

Figure 3.4 Complaint rates decreased for 16 operators

Complaint rates by train operator, January to March 2023 and change compared with the same quarter two years ago (Table 4113)



4. Complaints by category

April 2022 to March 2023 annual

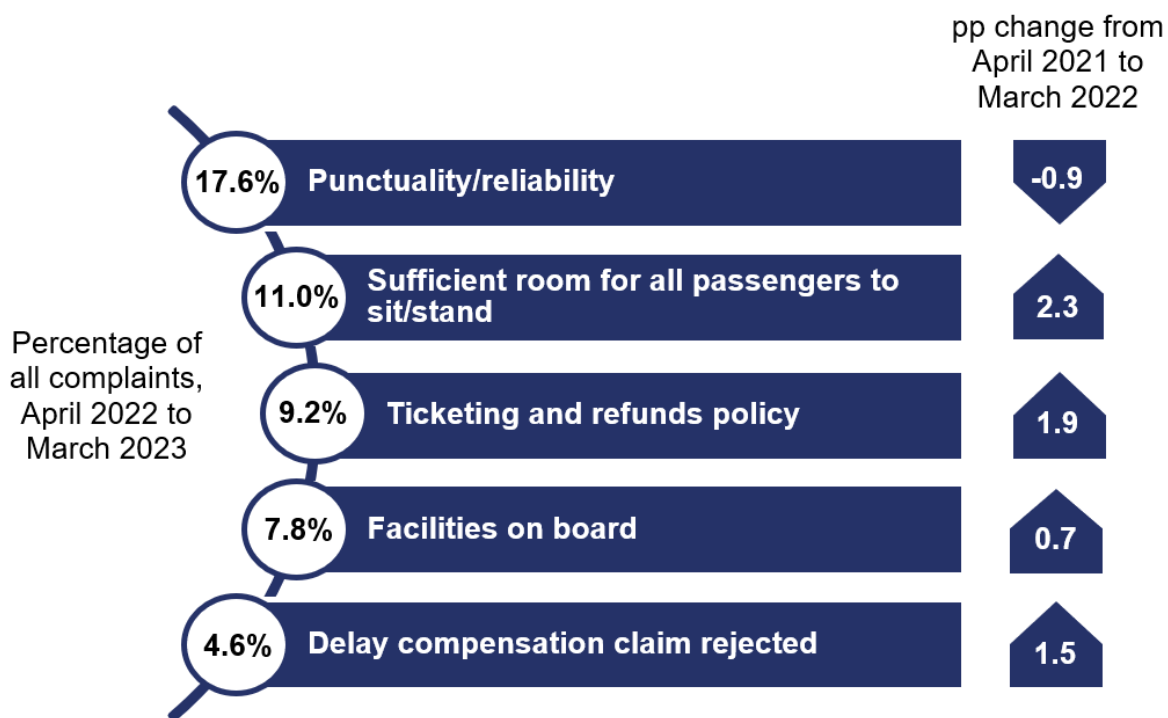
Punctuality/reliability was the most common cause to complain to train operators in the latest year (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023), accounting for 17.6% of all complaints closed (down 0.9 percentage points (pp) compared with the previous year). Punctuality/reliability has historically been the most common cause to complain to train operators, although during the year April 2020 to March 2021 it was overtaken by complaints regarding ticketing and refunds policy due to passengers applying for refunds caused by restrictions on travel due to the pandemic.

Complaints about sufficient room for all passengers to sit or stand was the second most common cause of complaint, with 11.0% of all complaints (up 2.3pp compared with the previous year).

The third most common cause of complaint in the latest year was regarding ticketing and refunds policy, accounting for 9.2% of all complaints (up 1.9pp compared with the previous year).













Figure 4.1 Punctuality/reliability was the top complaint category in the latest year

Top five complaint categories by percentage, Great Britain, April 2022 to March 2023 and change compared with the previous year (Table 4130)



Largest changes in complaint categories

Table 4.2 Top three increases and decreases in complaint categories in the latest year (April 2022 to March 2023) compared with the previous year (Table 4130)

Top 3 Increases		Percentage of all complaints, April 2022 to March 2023	pp change from April 2021 to March 2022
	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	11.0%	 2.3
	Ticketing and refunds policy	9.2%	 1.9
	Delay compensation claim rejected	4.6%	 1.5
Top 3 Decreases		Percentage of all complaints, April 2022 to March 2023	pp change from April 2021 to March 2022
	Your personal security on board	2.2%	 -2.5
	Punctuality/reliability	17.6%	 -0.9
	Other ticket buying facilities (online ticket sales)	3.5%	 -0.9

January to March 2023 quarter

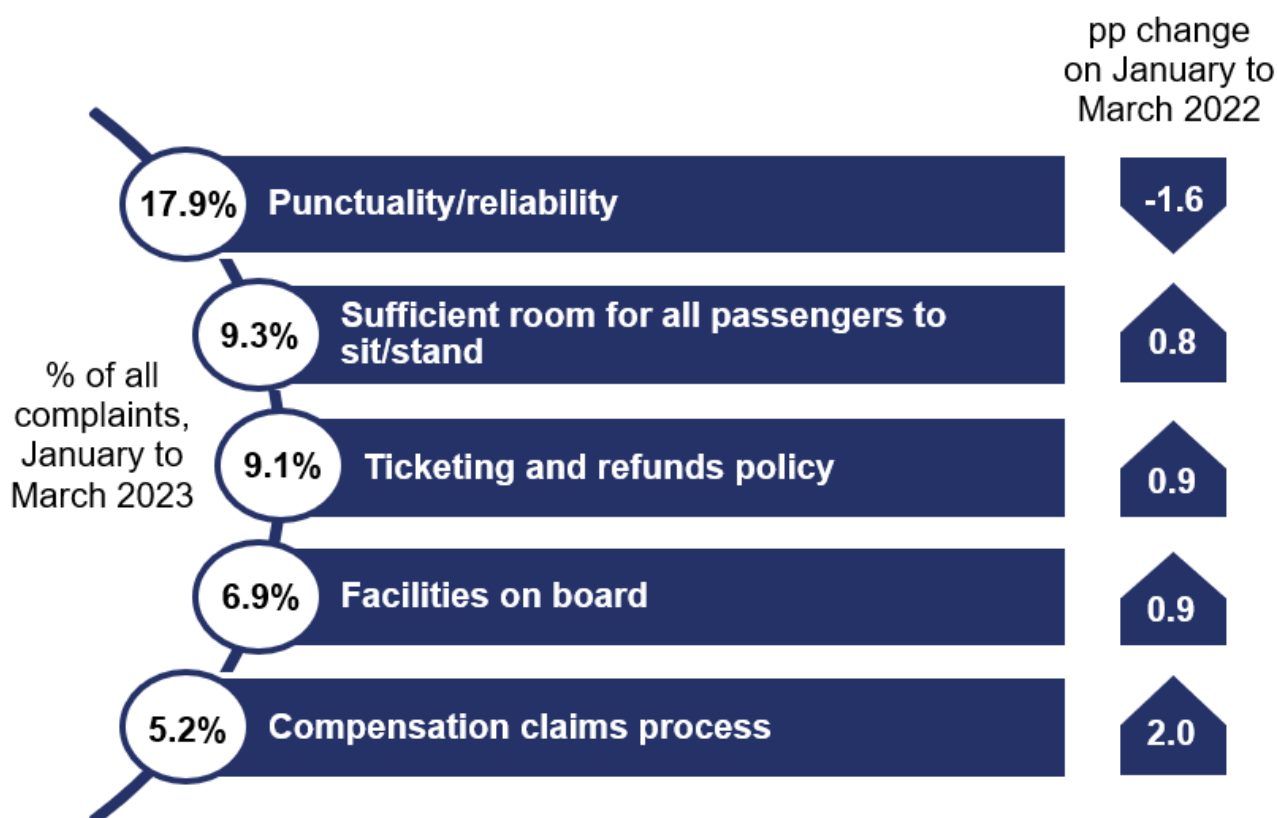
Punctuality/reliability was the most common cause to complain to train operators in the latest quarter (1 January to 31 March 2022), accounting for 17.9% of all complaints. This was 1.6pp lower than the same quarter in the previous year.

Complaints about sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand was the second most common cause of complaint, with 9.3% of all complaints (up 0.8pp compared with the same quarter in the previous year).

The third most common cause of complaint in the latest quarter was regarding ticketing and refunds policy, accounting for 9.1% of all complaints (up 0.9pp compared with the same quarter in the previous year).

Figure 4.3 Punctuality/reliability was the top complaint category in the latest quarter

Top five complaint categories by percentage, Great Britain, January to March 2023 and change compared with the previous year (Table 4130)



5. Complaints responded to within 20 working days

April 2022 to March 2023 annual

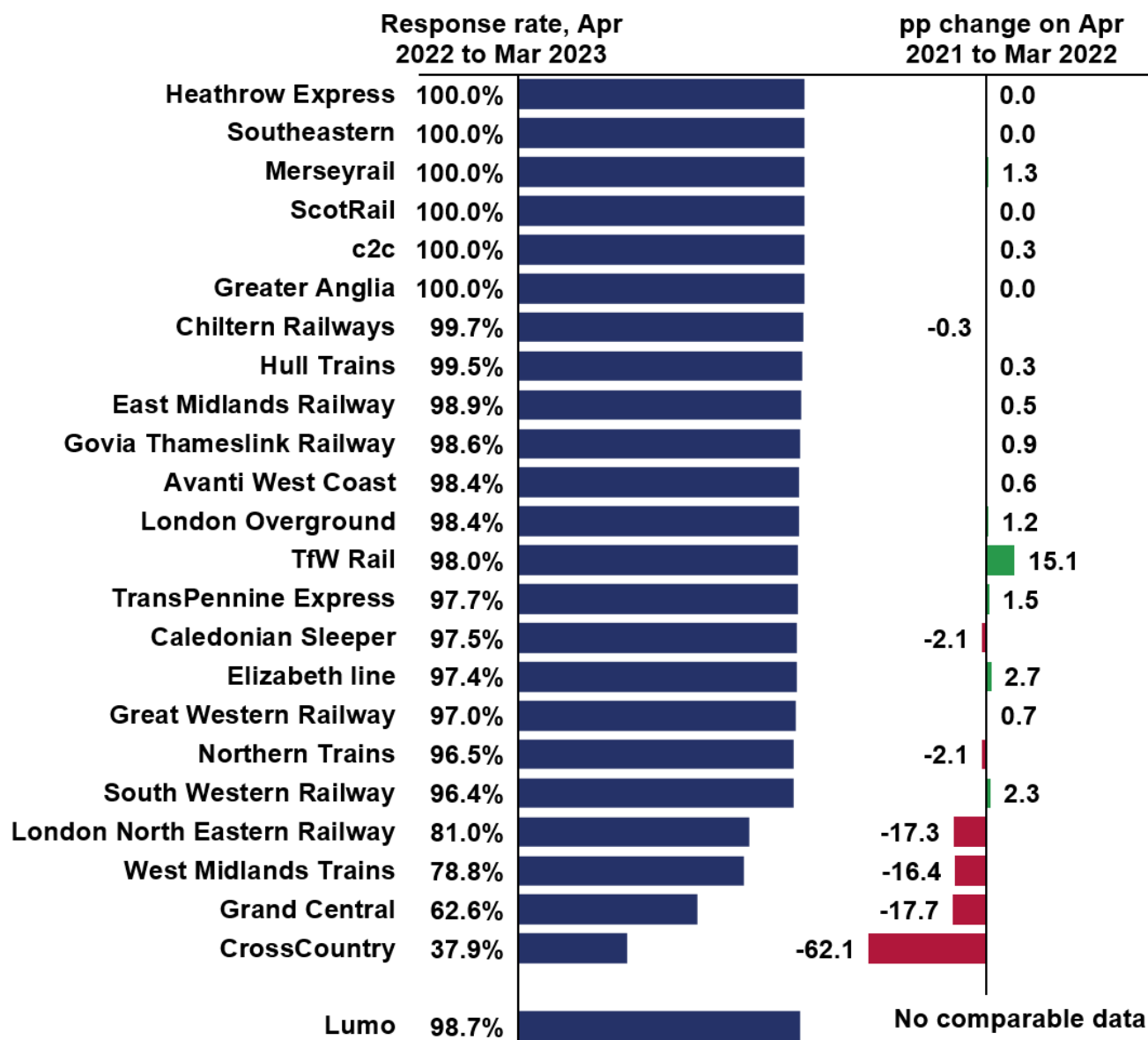
Overall, 94.2% of complaints met the industry requirement to make a full response within 20 working days in the latest year (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023). This is a decrease of 2.7pp compared with the previous year.

Response rates increased for 14 operators, with TfW Rail seeing the greatest increase (up 15.1pp), to reach 98.0%. CrossCountry had the biggest decrease in response rate in the latest year, down 62.1pp to 37.9%.

Lumo began running services on 25 October 2021, which is why no comparison is possible with previous years for that operator.

Figure 5.1 Twenty out of 24 train operators responded to 95% of complaints within 20 working days

Percentage of complaints responded to within 20 working days by train operator, April 2022 to March 2023 and change compared with the previous year (Table 4153)



January to March 2023 quarter

Overall, 92.2% of complaints were responded to within 20 working days in the latest quarter (1 January to 31 March 2023). This represents a decrease of 2.4pp compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

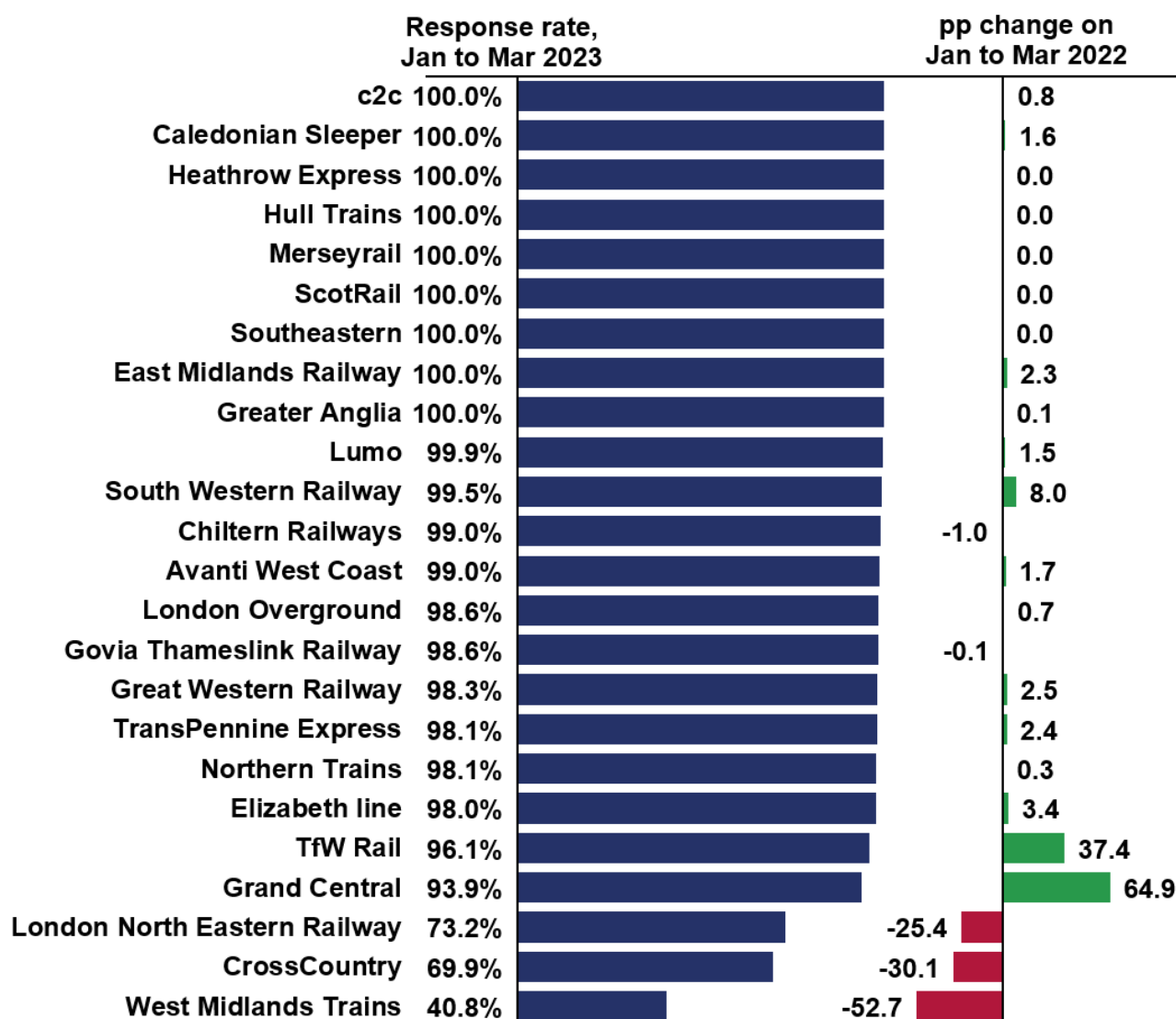
Twenty out of 24 train operators met the industry requirement to respond to 95% of complaints within 20 working days in the latest quarter. Nine operators recorded a response rate of 100%.

Response rates declined for five operators, with West Midlands Trains (down 52.7pp to 40.8%) recording the greatest decrease and the lowest response rate. CrossCountry (down 30.1pp to 69.9%) recorded the second greatest decrease and second lowest response rate whilst London North East Railway (down 25.4pp to 73.2%) recorded the third greatest decrease and third lowest response rate.

Grand Central saw the greatest increase in response rate (up 64.9pp to 93.9%) compared with the previous year, with TfW Rail (up 37.4pp to 96.1%) also recording a large increase.

Figure 5.2 Four operators did not meet the response time requirement

Percentage of complaints responded to within 20 working days by train operator, January to March 2023 and change compared with the same quarter in the previous year (Table 4153)



6. Complaints by contact method

April 2022 to March 2023 annual

Overall, 81.4% of complaints were made by email or by using a webform in the latest year (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023), a decrease of 0.5pp compared with the previous year. In the five years since April 2017 to March 2018, correspondence using e-mail/webform has increased by 9.8pp, from 71.6%.

Correspondence using letters fell from 10.1% five years ago to 2.6% in the latest year. Over the same period, correspondence using telephones decreased from 17.6% to 15.5%.

Figure 6.1 Most complaints were made by email/webform

Percentage of complaints by contact method, Great Britain, April 2022 to March 2023 and change compared with previous year (Table 4143)



Email/Webform

81.4%



Telephone

15.5%



Letter

2.6%



Other*

0.4%

pp change compared to April 2021 to March 2022:

↓ -0.5pp

↑ 0.6pp

↓ -0.2pp

↑ 0.2pp

Note: Other includes 'meet the manager' sessions and online forums

7. Annexes

Annex 1 – Definitions

- **Complaints:** In the rail industry a complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by a customer or potential customer about service delivery or about company or industry policy.
- **Complaint volumes:** The volume of complaint correspondences closed. Each communication with the customer is counted as a single complaint, regardless of how many topics are covered in the communication. Complaint volumes are based on complaints which have had a first full substantive response only.
- **First full substantive response:** The rail company's first substantive response which in its view, reasonably provides a full response to the consumer's complaint. This does not include an acknowledgement or holding response.
- **Complaints rate:** The volume of complaint correspondences closed per 100,000 passenger journeys. Each communication with the customer is counted as a single complaint, regardless of how many topics are covered in the communication.
- **Complaints by category:** The type of complaint received, where each complaint category within the correspondence should be recorded. For example, a letter covering two complaints is counted as two complaints categories. However, this would only be recorded as one complaint correspondence within the complaints volumes and complaints rate.
- **Appeals:** When a customer is unhappy with a train operators' response, they can appeal against their operators' decisions to a passenger watchdog (Transport Focus or London TravelWatch). For information on the [Rail Ombudsman](#), please see the [quality and methodology report](#).

Annex 2 – Quality and Methodology

Data sources

The complaints data contained within the Passenger rail service complaints statistical release and data tables are sourced from administrative data submitted by train operators. Appeals data is sourced from passenger watchdogs (Transport Focus and London TravelWatch) and National Rail Enquiries data is sourced from the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), these are included in the data tables only.

Train operators record information on complaints they receive within their own internal complaints management systems. ORR collects this aggregated data every rail period (i.e. every 4 weeks). In order to ensure consistency between train operators we issue technical guidance and a standard data collection template which can both be found on the [core complaints data page](#).

Social media comments

Social media comments are excluded from these statistics. However, there may be circumstances in which the feedback on social media lends itself to further investigation. The train operator will then assist the complainant in making a formal complaint which will then be dealt with in accordance with the licence holder's Complaints Handling Procedures (CHP). For example, this may involve signposting the complainant to a webform or providing an email address at which they can log a formal complaint. This complaint will then be in scope to be included within these statistics.

Complaints by category

There are 73 detailed categories, mainly based on National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) satisfaction categories, which make up 14 high-level complaint categories. A full list of all complaint categories and the percentages attributed to each is available on the [data portal](#) in Table 4130. This data is available by individual train operator in Table 4133.

Response times to complaints

For each rail period train operators provide ORR with the percentage of complaint correspondences they have closed within 20 working days. The CHP licence requirement is for train operators to close 95% of complaints within 20 working days. From April 2015, we have also collected data on the percentage of complaints responded to within 10 working days, as well as the percentage responded to within the operators' internal target. The response times reported are based on the first full substantive response only.

Complaints per 100,000 journeys

Complaint rates were not published for the year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. This was due to the impact of the pandemic on [passenger rail usage](#) which meant that passenger journeys were not a suitable normaliser for complaint volumes. An alternative measure of complaint volumes was provided and continues to be published.

As highlighted on page 7, a technical issue in LENNON (the data source for passenger journeys) has resulted in overestimates for Elizabeth line passenger journeys. Consequently, this has resulted in an underestimate in the number of complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys for the Elizabeth line and nationally so this data is provisional and should be treated with caution. See the [Passenger rail usage release](#) for more information.

Appeals

This data provides the number of complaint appeals closed by Transport Focus or London TravelWatch for each train operator and some other rail bodies.

The independent passenger watchdogs may open an appeal on behalf of a rail passenger whose initial complaint to the train operator has not been resolved to their satisfaction. This data does not include appeals made to the Rail Ombudsman.

The type of appeals dealt with by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch have changed since the Rail Ombudsman was introduced. For example, appeals regarding ticketing and refunds policies are 'out of scope' for the Rail Ombudsman so are dealt with by Transport Focus or London TravelWatch, but appeals about the complainant being unhappy at type/level of compensation are 'in scope' for the Rail Ombudsman. Therefore, comparisons on appeal categories with previous years should be treated with caution.

A full list of all appeal categories and the percentage attributed to each is available on the [data portal](#) in Table 4160. This table is updated annually with the final quarter of the financial year (January to March) releases only, although the data is presented by quarter.

Revisions

- For the three quarters between April and December 2022, the complaint rates for CrossCountry and London Overground have been revised. For CrossCountry, this was due to the number of complaints recorded being revised down. For London Overground, this was due to the number of journeys recorded being revised down.

Details of previous revisions can be found in the [Revisions log](#).

How these statistics can and cannot be used



- Comparing complaint volumes over time
- Comparing complaint rates by train operators and over time
- Comparing the proportion of complaints responded to within 20 and 10 working days by train operator and over time
- Comparing complaint contact methods by train operators and over time
- Comparing what rail passengers complain about over time



- Comparing complaint volumes by train operators (due to differences in passenger usage)
- Comparing appeal volumes by train operators (due to differences in passenger usage)
- Using complaints rate for April 2020 to March 2021 (due to the pandemic's effect on [rail usage](#))

Annex 3 – List of data tables associated with this release and other related statistics

Data tables

All data tables can be accessed on the [data portal](#) free of charge in OpenDocument Spreadsheet (.ods) format. We can also provide data in csv format on request.

All tables associated with this release can be found under the Data tables heading at the bottom of the [Passenger rail service complaints page](#).

Complaint volumes

- Complaints closed by operator – Table 4100

Complaints per 100,000 journeys

- Complaints per 100,000 journeys – Table 4110
- Complaints per 100,000 journeys by operator – Table 4113

Complaint categories

- Complaints categories – Table 4130
- Complaints categories by operator – Table 4133

Complaint response rate

- Complaints responded to within 10 and 20 working days – Table 4150
- Complaints responded to within 10 and 20 working days by operator – Table 4153

Complaints by contact method

- Complaints by contact method and train operator – Table 4143 (updated annually)

National Rail Enquiries

- National Rail Enquiry telephone service – Table 4180 (updated annually)

Appeals

- Appeals categories closed by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch – Table 4160 (updated annually)
- Appeals closed by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch by operator – Table 4163 (updated annually)

Other related statistics

Delay compensation claims

One of the complaint categories in this release relates to delay compensation schemes. Statistics on [delay compensation claims](#) were collected from April 2018, and are published in a factsheet and data table alongside this statistical release each quarter.

The statistics include the volume of delay compensation claims received, closed and approved, as well as the percentage of claims which were responded to within 20 working days. All these measures are provided at national (Great Britain) level as well as by each individual train operator.

Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling

ORR also publish statistics annually about [passenger satisfaction with complaints handling](#).

Rail Ombudsman

The [Rail Ombudsman](#) provide a service to help sort out unresolved customer complaints about service providers within the rail industry.

Transport Focus - National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS)

The National Rail Passenger Survey ([NRPS](#)) provides a network-wide picture of passengers' satisfaction with rail travel. Before the pandemic, passenger opinions of train services were collected twice a year from a representative sample of journeys. The [latest wave of the survey](#) was published on 2 July 2020. Due to the pandemic and a significant drop in the numbers of people using public transport, NRPS has been paused.

Transport Focus run a [Rail User Survey](#) asking passenger about their experiences of travelling by rail and how satisfied they were with their most recent train journey.

The Great British Railways Transition Team is currently leading the development of a [new industry-wide customer survey](#) that is expected to replace NRPS. It is expected to go live at some point in 2024.

Annex 4 – ORR’s statistical publications

Statistical Releases

This publication is part of ORR’s [National Statistics](#) accredited releases, which consist of seven annual publications: **Estimates of station usage; Rail industry finance (UK); Rail fares index; Rail safety statistics; Rail infrastructure and assets; Rail emissions; Regional rail usage;** and four quarterly publications: **Passenger rail performance; Freight rail usage and performance; Passenger rail usage; Passenger rail service complaints.**

In addition, ORR also publishes a number of Official Statistics, which consist of five annual publications: **Common Safety Indicators; Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling; Train operating company key statistics; Occupational health; Rail statistics compendium;** and four quarterly publications: **Signals passed at danger (SPADS); Delay compensation claims; Disabled Persons Railcards (DPRC); Passenger assistance.**

All the above publications are available on the [data portal](#) along with a list of [publication dates](#) for the next 12 months.

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**.

The majority of our [statistical releases were assessed in 2012](#) and hold National Statistics status. Since this assessment we have improved the content, presentation and quality of our statistical releases. In addition, in July 2019 we launched our new data portal. Therefore, in late 2019 we worked with the [Office for Statistics Regulation](#) (OSR) to conduct a compliance check to ensure we are still meeting the standards of the Code. On 4 November 2019, [OSR published a letter](#) confirming that ORR’s statistics should continue to be designated as National Statistics. OSR found many positive aspects in the way that we produce and present our statistics and welcomed the range of improvements made since the statistics were last assessed. [Estimates of Station Usage statistics were assessed in 2020](#).

For more information on how we adhere to the Code please see our [compliance statements](#). For more details or to provide feedback, please contact the Statistics Head of Profession (Lyndsey Melbourne) at rail.stats@orr.gov.uk.



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