

# Rail accessibility

- Passenger assistance (Rail passenger assists and bookings)
- Disabled Persons Railcards

# Quality and Methodology Report

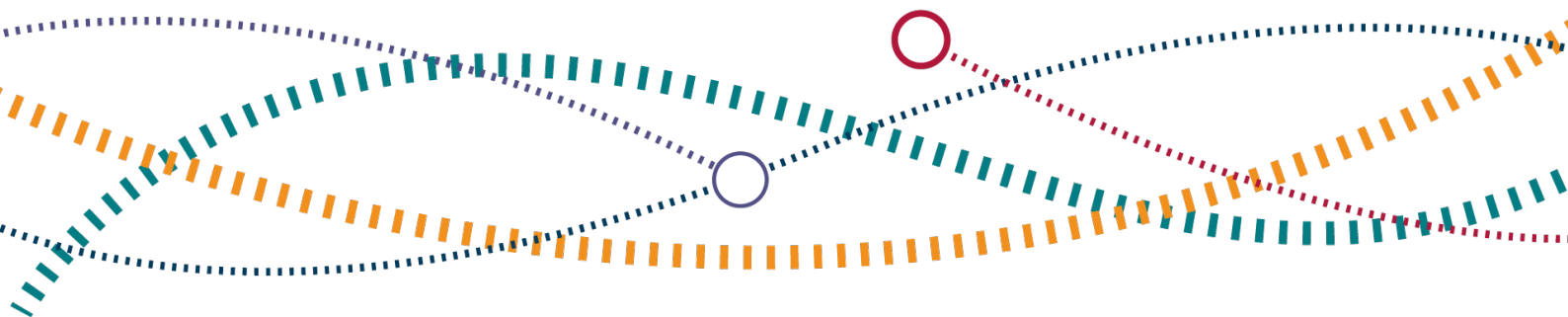
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# Introduction

This is a report on the quality and methodology of statistics for the following passenger experience statistical factsheets and associated data tables:

1. Passenger assistance (Rail passenger assists and bookings)
2. Disabled Persons Railcards (DPRC)

This report helps users to understand the quality of our statistics, and also ensures we are compliant with the three quality principles in [the Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) –

Q1: Suitable data sources,

Q2: Sound methods, and

Q3: Assured quality.

This report also provides information on the methodology and data sources used to produce the statistics.

This report covers the following areas:

- Data sources, methodology and definitions – detail on the various data sources, methodology used to compile the statistics and key definitions;
- Relevance to users – the users of the statistics, and our engagement;
- Accuracy and reliability – the accuracy, data coverage and quality assurance of the statistics;
- Timeliness and punctuality – our timescales for the production and publication of the statistics;
- Accessibility and clarity – the format of our statistics and where they can be found;
- Coherence and comparability – similar statistics published elsewhere and the degree in which the statistics can be compared over time.

# Data sources, methodology and definitions

## 1. Passenger assistance

### Data sources

The data contained within the Rail passenger assists and bookings factsheet and data tables are provided to ORR by Rail Delivery Group (RDG). Rail passenger assists and bookings data are collected through the National Passenger Assistance Booking System which is managed by RDG.

### Data governance

We have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with RDG detailing the scope and timeliness of each dataset supplied. This ensures consistent and timely data are received.

### Methodology

[Passenger Assist](#) is a free service offered by operators providing passengers with disabilities or anyone else who may require help to enable them to make their journey. Passenger Assist is open to anyone in need of assistance and no proof is required to demonstrate eligibility to use the service. Assistance can range from being assisted into the station and help getting on and off the train, to help with luggage and while moving around the station. The responsibility for the assistance at each station is with the designated operator of each station, known as the Station Facility Owner (SFO). Passenger Assist is intended to make rail travel accessible to everyone, regardless of their circumstances.

We began collecting rail passenger assists and booking data in 2012 as part of our [accessible travel policy](#) (ATP, previously Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP)) compliance monitoring. A condition of the operating licences that we grant to mainline train and station operators requires them to establish and comply with an ATP, which must be approved by us. One of the main requirements of the ATP is that the train and station operators must participate in Passenger Assist.

## **Definitions**

### **Passenger assists**

The number of assists that have been requested through the National Passenger Assistance Booking System. This includes assists that were booked and then subsequently cancelled or not fulfilled. An assist is the help provided at one station. This may include assistance getting on or off the train or help with luggage. The data from April 2020 to March 2021 Period 7 onwards are based on journey leg information. Two assists are recorded per journey leg. One assist is counted at the origin station and one assist is counted at the destination station. Where a change of trains is required, two assists are counted at the interchange station. This results in the total number of assists always being an even number. Where an operator offers booked assistance less than two hours prior to travel the system treats this as unbooked and therefore these are not included in the booked assistance data presented in this factsheet.

### **Passenger bookings**

The number of bookings made through the National Passenger Assistance Booking System. One booking will have at least one journey leg and, therefore, at least two assists. The data presented here are the number of bookings that had assists requested for a given period or year. A booking made on 30 March 2023 for a journey taking place on 2 April 2023 will be counted in the data for 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 rather than the data for 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. The annual number of bookings for a year cannot be calculated from the period data as bookings can relate to assists in more than one period. The number of bookings does not equate to the number of journeys as one booking can include a return journey, while passengers may make separate bookings for individual journey legs.

## 2. Disabled Persons Railcards (DPRC)

### Data sources

The data contained within the DPRC factsheet and data tables are provided to ORR by RDG. The number of DPRC sold in each period are sourced from the rail industry's LENNON (Latest Earning Networked Nationally Over Night) ticketing and revenue system.

### Methodology

The [disabled persons railcard](#) provides a discount on rail tickets for people with a disability that makes travelling by train difficult. It is administered by RDG on behalf of operators. Data on DPRC issued and in circulation are provided to us by RDG. We began collecting this data in 2012 as part of our [accessible travel policy](#) (ATP, previously Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP)) compliance monitoring.

### Definitions

#### DPRC in circulation

The number of disabled persons railcards in circulation which are valid to use for a discount on rail fares. This includes both one-year and three-year railcards.

#### DPRC issued

The number of disabled persons railcards that have been issued during the year. These can be either for one year or three years in length.

# Relevance to users

The degree to which the statistical product meets the user needs in both coverage and content.

Some of the users and uses of our passenger assistance and DPRC statistics are as follows:

<b>Train operators</b>	Train operators use the published data to make comparisons to other train operators and to provide transparency to their customers.
<b>Office of Rail and Road (ORR)</b>	These data are used internally at ORR to monitor train operators' obligations to passengers in relation to their ATP licence. It is also used to inform policy decisions on operators' consumer-facing activities.
<b>Department for Transport (DfT)</b>	The data informs policy at DfT regarding the accessibility of the industry at train operator level and for the industry as a whole, as well as for planning and monitoring purposes.
<b>Rail passengers</b>	Passenger assistance and DPRC data help to inform rail passengers of the existence of both passenger assistance and discounted travel for disabled passengers.
<b>"Inquiring citizen"</b>	This group of users may want to access the data for unbiased facts on the volume of passenger assistance and disabled persons railcards. These users may want to use our interactive tools, infographics and clear high-level summaries to help make informed decisions.
<b>Technical users</b>	Technical users will often want to use the data published within our data tables. Data tables for all releases are available free of charge on the data portal.
<b>"Information foragers"</b>	These users will often want local data about their rail journey. They often want official data from reliable sources with a clear methodology they can trust. The data portal is presented by theme in order to see data organised in a structured way and therefore make it easily accessible.

## User satisfaction

ORR's last [user survey](#) took place from mid-January to mid-April 2020. The aim of the survey was to gather feedback on ORR's new data portal; this includes statistical releases, data tables and other supplementary material. There were 42 responses to the survey. ORR created an [implementation plan](#) following the 2020 user survey.

More detailed information on users of ORR statistics and meeting the needs of users is available on our [user engagement webpage](#).



# Accuracy and reliability

The proximity between an estimate and the unknown true value.

## Passenger Assistance – data coverage

The data cover all station facility owners (SFOs) in Great Britain. This includes 19 mainline passenger train operators and other SFOs including Network Rail. Grand Central, Lumo, Hull Trains, Caledonian Sleeper and CrossCountry are excluded as they do not manage any stations.

Our Passenger assistance data only cover booked assistance. They are not intended to include data for passengers who request assistance once they have arrived at the station (also known as turn up and go (TUAG)). The recording of unbooked assistance has improved since April 2023 with more SFOs using the Passenger Assistance App. ORR will continue to monitor the coverage and reliability of the unbooked data; however, this is not published.

Our passenger assistance data also do not include whether the passenger actually made the trip (e.g. they do not account for “no shows”). Our data present the number of bookings made for assistance and the number of assists requested, not the number of assists made.

## Revisions published 11 July 2024

Ahead of the scheduled publication of April 2023 to March 2024 rail periods 5 to 7 data, it was identified that the data supplied contained unbooked assists. Since then, ORR has worked closely with Rail Delivery Group (RDG) to correct the data and to ensure ORR better understands the system and process for producing the passenger assist data. The following changes have been made to the data from April 2021 to March 2022 period 1:

1. Unbooked assists have been removed from the data.
2. Assists relating to journey legs that do not involve the use of a mainline train have been removed. This includes journeys on London Underground and particularly affects assists at Network Rail managed stations.
3. The method for calculating the annual number of bookings has been revised. Previously, the total was the sum of the bookings for each period in the year; however, bookings can relate to assists in more than period. The annual bookings data since April 2021 have been recalculated to prevent double counting.

4. Improvements have been made to RDG's data extraction process resulting in an increase in assists for April 2021 to March 2022 periods 1 to 7. This increase partly offsets the decreases described above.

Overall, the largest revision to previously published data is for April 2023 to March 2024 periods 1 to 4. This is due to the number of SFOs using the Passenger Assist App for recording unbooked assists increasing considerably from April 2023.

Nationally, the largest revision for a single period is for April 2023 to March 2024 period 4 where there are 57,920 fewer assists and 24,807 fewer bookings. For the year April 2022 to March 2023, there are 219,706 fewer assists and 147,594 fewer bookings. The largest revision for a single period and SFO is for April 2023 to March 2024 period 4 where there are 19,117 fewer assists at Network Rail managed stations. For the year April 2022 to March 2023, assists at Network Rail managed stations have been revised down by 85,033.

## **Interaction with other booking systems**

RDG identified that 768 bookings and associated assists made across rail periods 5, 6 and 7 of April 2024 to March 2025 may have been duplicated. This was due to an anomaly in the configuration of the passenger assist system with a seat management system. This issue has since been rectified.

## **DPRC – data coverage**

Our DPRC data cover the national disabled persons railcards administered by RDG for Great Britain. Some operators offer their own disabled persons railcards; however, these are not included in our statistics.

Estimates of the total number of DPRC in circulation at any one time are subject to possible sources of over-estimation. One reason for this is that applications to renew a DPRC can be made up to one month before the existing one expires. Also, when a DPRC holder dies, the record is not removed from the system. However, the impact of these factors is considered to be relatively small.

A further potential source of inaccuracy is that it is not possible to identify where an individual holds more than one DPRC. Fraudulent use of DPRC, where an individual applies for more than one railcard, is mitigated as the card can only be used by the named individual. The card has photographic identification that should be checked and validated by staff at platform entries and exits, or onboard the train.

The impact of these limitations is expected to be broadly stable over time and therefore is unlikely to affect trends showing overall growth or decline in DPRC holding over time.

## Quality assurance

All data supplied to ORR are subject to an extensive quality assurance process, including a suite of validation checks to ensure the data meets the required specification and is in line with previous trends. Any arising issues are highlighted with RDG who must confirm the anomalies or correct the data and re-submit. RDG and ORR conducted an extensive review of the passenger assistance data in 2024 from which a number of revisions were made to the data (see above). RDG are producing a technical specification and quality assurance document to ensure accurate and consistent data extraction every quarter and appropriate internal sign-off.

These data are then prepared for publication. The process includes quality assuring the tables and charts produced and providing supporting commentary regarding the key trends, methodology and quality measures. These reports are subject to peer review. The final stage of the quality assurance process is a sign off by the statistics Head of Profession confirming the data meets the quality standards and are fit for publication.

## Revisions policy

Our statement on [orderly release and revisions policy](#) outlines ORR's revision policy. Details of any revisions are available in the [revisions log](#). Further information on revisions and data series breaks can also be found in the data tables.

# Timeliness and punctuality

Timeliness refers to the time gap between publication and the reference period.  
Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.

This data is reported periodically (4-weekly) but supplied to us on a quarterly basis, at the end of rail periods 4, 7, 10 and 13. Generally, these statistics are published two to three months after the end of the aforementioned rail periods.

The [publication schedule](#) available on the data portal outlines the publication dates for 'accredited official statistics' quarterly and annual statistical releases and other official statistics up to 12 months in advance.

We are committed to releasing our statistics in an open and transparent manner that promotes confidence.

# Accessibility and clarity

Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice.

All rail statistics data tables can be accessed free of charge on the [Data Portal](#). Commentary about the statistics and trends are provided in the factsheets. Interactive dashboards (PowerBI) are also available on the [Passenger assistance](#) and [Disabled Persons Railcards](#) theme pages of the Data Portal.

The tables currently published on the data portal are:

## Passenger assistance

- Passenger assists and bookings – Table 4210
- Passenger assists by station operator – Table 4213

## Disabled Persons Railcards

- Disabled Persons Railcards (DPRC) in circulation and issued – Table 4310

# Coherence and comparability

Coherence is the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain.

## Passenger assistance

There have been changes over time which affect the comparability of the passenger assist data. These are:

- From April 2020 to March 2021 period 1, requirements were introduced to allow passengers to book assistance up until 22:00 the day before travel. Prior to April 2020, operators could require a notice period of up to 24 hours before travel.
- From April 2020 to March 2021 period 7, there was a change of booking system. Prior to this an existing booking could not be amended; any changes required a new booking to be created resulting in duplication. In addition, the data from the new system are based on journey leg information which results in two assists recorded per journey leg meaning that the total assist numbers are even.
- From April 2021 to March 2022 period 1, requirements were introduced to allow passengers to book assistance up until six hours prior to travel. In addition, the passenger assistance app was launched.
- From April 2022 to March 2023 period 1, requirements were introduced to allow passengers to book assistance up until two hours prior to travel.

## Related data

### ORR research: Experiences of Passenger Assist

We commissioned [research](#) on the passenger experience of booked assistance to investigate the extent to which Passenger Assist is meeting users' needs and expectations overall and how well individual operators are performing in terms of meeting their Passenger Assist obligations.

### ORR research: Passenger awareness of assisted travel services

In 2017 we published [research](#) on passenger awareness of the available assisted travel services.

## DfT: Disability and Accessibility Statistics

DfT publish information annually on transport related [disability and accessibility statistics](#) in England, drawn from a variety of data sources and covering all modes of transport.

## DWP: Family Resources Survey

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) publish data on the results from their [Family Resources Survey](#); a continuous household survey providing information on income and circumstances of UK households, including the number of people reporting having a disability.

## Transport Focus: National Rail Passenger Survey

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 was paused. The Great British Railways Transition Team are developing a new rail customer experience survey. This is planned to go live in the first half of 2025.

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.

## Length of comparable time series

### Passenger assistance

Measures	Start of time series	Any break in time series
Passenger assists and bookings (table 4210)	April 2012	From April 2020 to March 2021 period 1, requirements were introduced to allow passengers to book assistance up until 22:00 the day before travel.
Passenger assists by station operator (table 4213)		From April 2020 to March 2021 period 7, there was a change of booking system. Prior to this an existing booking could not be amended; any changes required a new booking to be created resulting in duplication. In addition, the data from the new system are based on journey leg information which results in two assists recorded

Measures	Start of time series	Any break in time series
		<p>per journey leg meaning that the total assist numbers are even.</p> <p>From April 2021 to March 2022 period 1, requirements were introduced to allow passengers to book assistance up until six hours prior to travel. In addition, the passenger assistance app was launched.</p> <p>From April 2022 to March 2023 period 1, requirements were introduced to allow passengers to book assistance up until two hours prior to travel.</p>

### Disabled Persons Railcards

Measures	Start of time series	Any break in time series
Disabled persons railcards (DPRC) in circulation and issued (table 4310)	April 2012	-





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