

# Passenger information when trains are disrupted

Research report  
May 2014



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Colin Foxall CBE

# Foreword

Passengers remain concerned about the way the rail industry handles unexpected disruption to their trains. This publication sets out the findings of our latest research and makes recommendations for improvements.

I am pleased to present the findings of Passenger Focus's latest research into rail passengers' experiences and needs when trains are unexpectedly disrupted, an area we have researched extensively over a number of years. This particular work was commissioned primarily to help the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) decide whether to require a review of the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) code of practice on passenger information during disruption (known as the "PIDD ACOP"). This research, carried out independently for Passenger Focus, was largely funded by ORR.

The headline findings are that 34 per cent of passengers said the train company had dealt with the disruption well, with 29 per cent saying it was dealt with poorly. 43 per cent of passengers were given a reason for the disruption and 22 per cent of those experiencing an unscheduled stop said there was an announcement within two minutes. The research shows a very clear link between passengers' overall view of disruption handling and the information they received. The speed with which information is provided and the amount of it, together with the frequency of updates and ability for passengers to find out more, all show as areas particularly in need of improvement.

Passenger Focus is aware that the industry has put considerable effort into improving information in recent years, and many aspects are undoubtedly better. For example, the message that the timetable 'tomorrow' must be available before passengers go to bed 'today' is getting through. We welcome the industry-wide customer information strategy, including the station information (Darwin CIS) and GPS train location programmes, which will deliver improvements in the coming years.

However this research, together with repeatedly low National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) scores and the problems we continue to see through our monitoring of information quality during disruption, leads us to

conclude that the existing code of practice is not driving sufficient change. It appears that the lack of transformational improvement in handling disruption has its heart in three, linked, issues:

- Culturally, deficiencies in passenger information have persisted in a way that would not have been tolerated if they been operational or safety failures
- The code of practice seems focused largely on the mechanics of how a train company should distribute information through industry IT systems, saying little about message quality or customer service delivery
- The industry appears not to be effectively measuring the quality of information provided during disruption on a robust and ongoing basis, in terms either of 'factory gate' quality or the ultimate test of passenger opinion.

Until these fundamentals are addressed, it seems unlikely that disrupted passengers will have a significantly better experience. We therefore make four recommendations about measurement and continuous improvement to underpin the culture change that we believe is necessary.

In addition, we make recommendations in various other areas to support the long-term improvement in relevant NRPS scores. Passenger Focus has been highlighting some of these for years. It is high time the industry got on and addressed them.

I hope that this research and Passenger Focus's subsequent recommendations will be helpful to those seeking to substantially improve passengers' experiences during disruption.

Colin Foxall CBE  
Chairman  
Passenger Focus

# Research summary

## Prepared for Passenger Focus by Populus

### Background

The objective of this research project was to inform a review as to whether information provided to rail passengers under the current Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) Passenger Information During Disruption (PIDD) Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) is considered satisfactory and in what ways it might be improved. The focus of the study was unplanned disruptions.

### Methodology

A quantitative survey was designed to benchmark the experience of passengers suffering disruption, supported by a multi-stage qualitative phase, as detailed below:

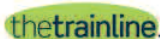
#### *Quantitative*



An online survey was conducted amongst 7225 rail passengers, to identify 1020 experiencing a delay in the past week. Fieldwork was conducted between 27 November and 11 December 2013



A Great Britain telephone omnibus was conducted to enable weighting of the 7225 online sample to be representative of rail passengers



An additional targeted sample of 257 customers of the trainline was also included. Populus worked with the trainline to extract a sample based on customers travelling on routes that were experiencing significant disruption, with all eligible customers sent a survey link

## Qualitative



Four focus groups were conducted, two each in London and Birmingham.

Respondents were given a pre-task asking about their most recent experience of disruption; this was completed on an online forum



The groups were supplemented with the experiences of those experiencing disruption 'now'; this yielded 225 responses via a mobile-app-based mini qualitative survey to capture in-the-moment experience, needs and wants, followed by an online forum follow up task for a subsample of these disrupted respondents



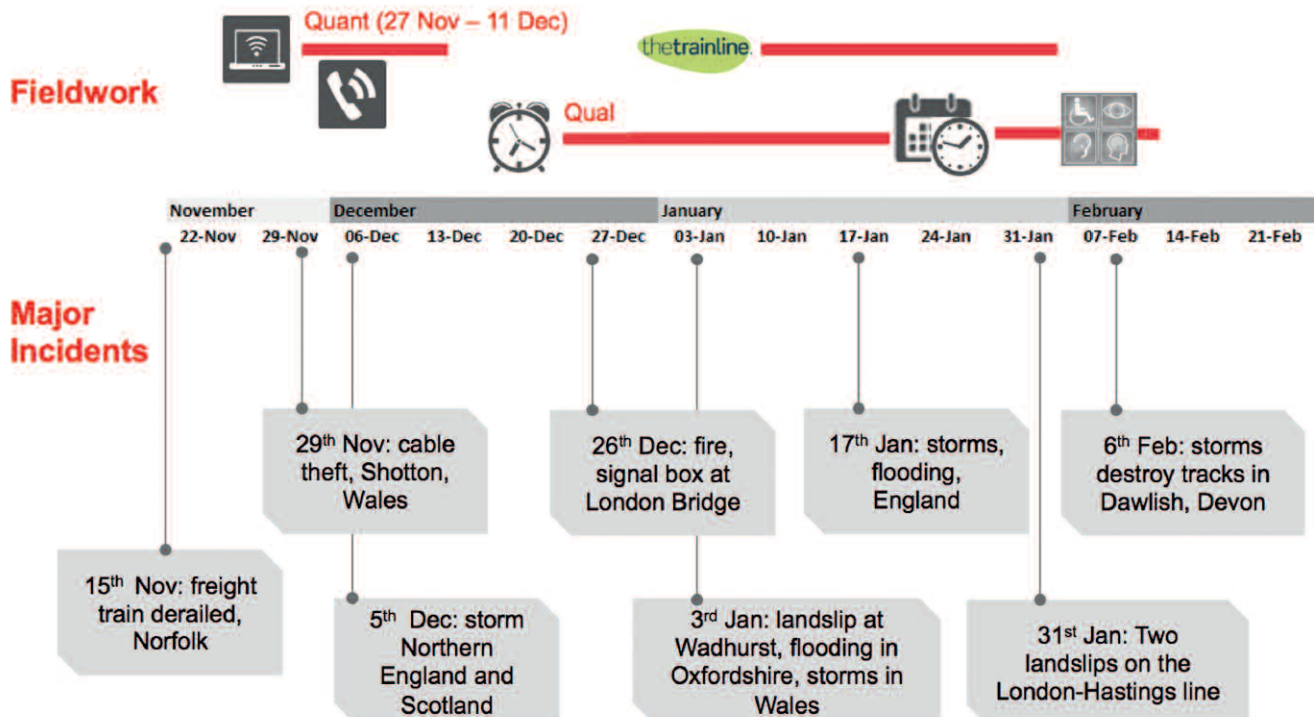
Finally, eight in-depth interviews (face to face or online) were conducted, to explore the specific needs of disabled passengers at times of disruption.

The qualitative fieldwork was carried out between 20 December 2013 and 14 February 2014.

## Timeline

The fieldwork period coincided with a series of major rail-related incidents, most of which were caused by unprecedentedly wet and stormy weather in autumn/winter 2013-14:

## Timeline of programme



## Executive summary

Overall, the most important information for delayed passengers is understanding the *impact* of a disruption, switching the emphasis of the current ATOC PIDD problem-impact-advice model.

Good handling of a disruption means explaining the reasons for it, minimising its impact, and giving frequent and accurate information. Conversely, poor handling is characterised by a lack of information, no explanation of the problem, and the train company appearing not to take responsibility. Only a minority of passengers were given a specific reason by the train company for their delay, despite the fact that this significantly increases overall ratings for disruption handling.

Different sources of information are accessed or available at different journey stages, each driving a different information experience: before arriving at the departure station, digital and broadcast media are used and are the best rated information on any step of the journey. For the minority of passengers made aware of the disruption before arriving at the station, the key information is understanding its severity. Some passengers on pre-booked tickets are keen to receive personalised messages about disruption from the train company, including a solution that will work for them.

The majority of passengers were made aware of the disruption at the station, where announcements and displays are the main sources of information, with few speaking to station staff or using digital sources. This is a stressful environment and there is frustration that displays are not always thought to be accurate, helpful or updated sufficiently frequently. There are weaker ratings here than at the pre-station stage for 'ability to find out more', which ranks lowest across all stages.

On the train, staff announcements provide the most information, but have the weakest rating. Delayed passengers on the train have a feeling of resignation and anxiety, with a loss of control. Passengers want train staff to take personal ownership of the situation, with rapid and frequent updates.

In general, staff are thought to be too often 'out of the loop', not having access to the up-to-the-minute information that some passengers have (via smartphones). This is surprising to passengers who do have the information, and they think it is likely to hamper staff's ability to be helpful when they are less informed than the passengers themselves.



Across all journey stages, key areas to improve that are important to passengers and where performance is currently weaker include the frequency, amount, and speed of information and the ability to find out more.

## **Detailed findings**

### ***Profile of disrupted passengers as surveyed***

A total of 14 per cent of rail passengers in Great Britain who were surveyed had experienced a delay or cancellation to a train journey in the previous week. Delayed passengers were younger and more frequent rail users than GB rail passengers as a whole (an average of 35 years old vs 45 years old; 68 per cent travelling weekly vs 17 per cent). A third of these delayed passengers lived in London, nearly twice as many as the typical GB rail passenger (at 16 per cent).

### ***About the journey that was disrupted***

Six in ten delayed passengers were travelling for leisure, with 19 per cent being daily work commuters. London and South East train operating companies (TOCs) accounted for 51 per cent of delayed passenger journeys (22 per cent long distance: 19 per cent regional). A similar proportion of delayed passengers had advance tickets (41 per cent) as were booking on the day (37 per cent), the majority of the remainder having a season ticket or smartcard (19 per cent).

One in four disrupted passengers was unable to complete their journey as originally planned; those who did were 38 minutes late on average. The main type of disruption occurred during the train journey (42 per cent), followed by the train being late departing (31 per cent) or being cancelled (19 per cent).

### Overall handling of the disruption

*“The train is delayed so I don’t know if I will meet my connection. It is the last train of the evening...I don’t have the ETA info required to make an informed decision.”*

Leisure passenger, in-the-moment

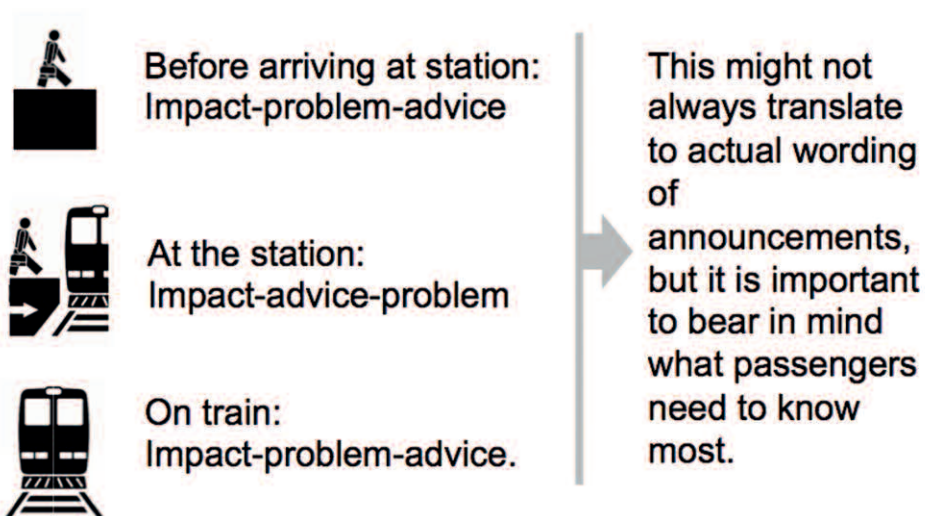
*“You cannot believe what they say – it always changes and feels like they just go down an ‘excuses list’.”*

Commuter, in-the-moment



The dominant mindset of passengers during disruption is frustration. Passengers’ experience is at its worst when the frustration of the delay is exacerbated by a poor information experience. Poor information makes them feel powerless to control their travel, change plans, inform other people, or make alternative arrangements. This leads to a sense of being a ‘hostage’. Interestingly, the ‘in-the-moment’ feedback did not necessarily identify new needs, but the emotion was heightened, the language sharper, and the experience more intense.

Specific needs fit with the ATOC PIDD ACOP guidance (problem-impact-advice) but they can change by stage. In general terms, the most important thing that passengers want to know is what the impact of the delay will be, rather than the nature of the problem. The value of information about the problem, and advice as to alternatives, depends on the stage of disruption or the passenger’s situation:



Just over four in ten delayed passengers (43 per cent) were given a reason for the disruption by the train company, the main reasons by some margin being 'Poor weather conditions' or 'A signalling problem' (both at 21 per cent).

About a third (34 per cent) of delayed passengers felt that the train company handled the disruption well, and the main reasons for giving this rating were that passengers were 'Kept updated/announcements were frequent/plentiful' (14 per cent) or 'It was a short delay/kept to a minimum/not too much disruption' (15 per cent). For those who said the disruption was dealt with poorly, the top reasons were 'Lack of communication/information' (29 per cent) or 'No explanation/reason given for the delay' (23 per cent).

Delayed passengers rated train companies more highly for 'Consistency of information provided' (46 per cent) than for 'Level of concern shown' (31 per cent) and 'Keeping you informed' (41 per cent).

### Information provided by journey stage




*“Two minutes can seem like two hours when you don’t know what’s happening.”*

Focus group, London

92 per cent of passengers were informed or made aware at some stage of their journey. Different sources of information were accessed or available at different stages, driving a different information experience by journey stage. Ratings of information sources used by journey stage vary, with stronger scores for sources used before arriving at the station:

## The usage and experience of information sources accessed by journey stage vary

### Summary by stage: Amongst all informed by stage

	 Before arriving at station	 At departure station	 On train during journey
	<b>17% informed/made aware</b>	<b>67% informed/made aware</b>	<b>40% informed/made aware</b>
<b>Sources</b>	62% using digital information sources, mainly sites, then apps Most important stage for broadcast media used by 31%	73% made aware via announcements or departure screens More limited use of digital or speaking in person to staff	69% made aware via announcement on the train 15% speak to staff on the train – with nearly as many speaking to fellow passengers. 17% use digital sources
<b>Rating</b>	Consistently higher rating of information at this stage, particularly ease of understanding, trustworthiness, relevance and usefulness	Higher ratings for ease of understanding, trustworthiness, believability, ease of reading Lowest score for ability to find out more	Comparatively weaker scores for trust, speed and frequency of updates Poorest score remains ability to find out more
<b>Info needs</b>	Need to know severity to retain control. Would like solution from TOC Impact, <u>problem</u> , advice →	Most stressful situation, with staff out of loop & announcements/screens inaccurate. Need min by min info Impact, <u>advice</u> , problem →	Loss of control and resignation. Need rapid, accurate info, with personal ownership from staff Impact, <u>problem</u> , advice →

### Before arriving at the station

Passengers are in a more rational mindset before arriving at the station, as they still have the possibility of re-planning their journey and their day. They need to know how severe the delay is likely to be so that they can retain control and make plans, so flagging early is key. They like to know what the problem is so that those plans can be informed; but they also need to hear the TOC’s solution so that they can factor that in too. Some notion of the severity of the problem is necessary also, but the requirement is for ‘early warning’ rather than detail, initially.

17 per cent of passengers in the sample were informed about their disruption before arriving at the station, with most made aware via digital sources (62 per cent) or broadcast media updates (31 per cent). For pre-booked journeys and season ticket holders, some passengers feel that as TOCs have their details, they should receive personalised communication about service disruptions.

### **At the station**

For many passengers, this is a stressful situation and a time when the information experience is often poor. There is a high degree of stress, irritation and sometimes even panic at the departure station, exacerbated by inaccurate or inadequate information, which often changes (for example, departure times constantly moving backwards). Announcements are often felt to be automated and inaccurate, and may be at odds with the display boards. Staff are thought to be too often 'out of the loop', not having access to the up-to-the-minute information that some passengers have (via smartphones). This is surprising to passengers who do have the information, and they think it is likely to hamper staff's ability to be helpful when they are less informed than the passengers themselves.

Seven out of ten of the sample (67 per cent) found out about the delay at the station, with most made aware via an announcement (44 per cent) or departure screens (39 per cent).

At this stage, accurate information is key, very frequently updated. There is a strong need to know what is happening, how long the delay will be, what the problem is, and what alternatives there might be, so that passengers can make other plans if necessary. Information needs to be (literally) up-to-the-minute, as lack of information contributes to stress and a sense of powerlessness. Passengers also worry that incomplete or inaccurate information can cause chaos or even danger, as platforms or trains become over-crowded. They would appreciate a quick and easy way of identifying if their own train is disrupted, before 'deep diving' to find out more if they need to. At this stage, the longer-term outlook is also important, so that passengers can plan return or onward journeys (although for most it is about the 'here and now' journey). All station staff must have current information.

### **On the train**

Passengers are split between resignation and frustration or powerlessness. During disruption on the train, passengers display a mixture of resignation and anxiety about loss of control over their travel. Our 'in-the-moment' work suggested that frustration is a key emotion at this stage, exacerbated by lack of communication or acknowledgement of problems. In general, commuters seem less tolerant of minor delays (probably because they add to a store of previous similar experiences).

40 per cent of disrupted passengers were informed on the train, with most made aware by staff announcements (69 per cent). Few other sources of information were mentioned at this journey stage.

A quarter (24 per cent) of delayed passengers had an unscheduled stop; 22 per cent of them estimated they received an announcement within less than two minutes (including before the train stopped), and 31 per cent between two and five minutes after stopping.

It is important that train staff take personal ownership of the situation; when this happens it is very reassuring for passengers. This should be demonstrated by an initial announcement acknowledging the problem, followed by an update (with the reason for the problem as soon as known) with a forecast of the period of delay, and then regular updates (unless there is a significant delay, in which case less frequent updates are needed just as and when there is news). Passengers expect accurate information about the expected length of delay, so that they can communicate with other people (their boss if they're going to be late for work, their friend if they were going to meet someone) and re-plan their day. The question of onwards travel and connecting trains (whether they are to be held or not) should be addressed by staff. Passengers also expect crew to walk through the train to reassure, answer questions and apologise, as much through presence and tone as content; and they don't expect 'business-as-usual' ticket inspections which do not acknowledge the situation.

Standard or recorded announcements are not acceptable in these circumstances; and compensation entitlement should be raised by the TOC, where relevant.

(It may be worth noting here that passengers often assume it is the driver making announcements, even when it is actually the guard).

### **Information at the destination/after the disruption**

At the destination, passengers are often keen to get on their way; but apology and compensation are key. An on-train apology on arrival is essential, and is often given; an on-platform apology on arrival is too late. TOCs have a perceived responsibility to advise about compensation, which is reportedly rarely experienced apart from on some East Coast trains.

Passengers making connections need support; they should not just be 'dumped' at the destination. Return or onward journey issues could also be communicated at this stage; currently passengers are generally making their own judgements.

'Day after' apology posters are only minimally effective, can be seen as tokenism, and are rarely read. For some, fuller bulletins about how disruption is being handled smack of mis-directed effort and resource; why not expend effort instead on sorting out the disruption?

## How information can be improved

*“I was given conflicting information – different stations say different things and have different excuses. The timing boards changed constantly and did not match the website or the Network Rail mobile app.”*

Commuter, in-the-moment

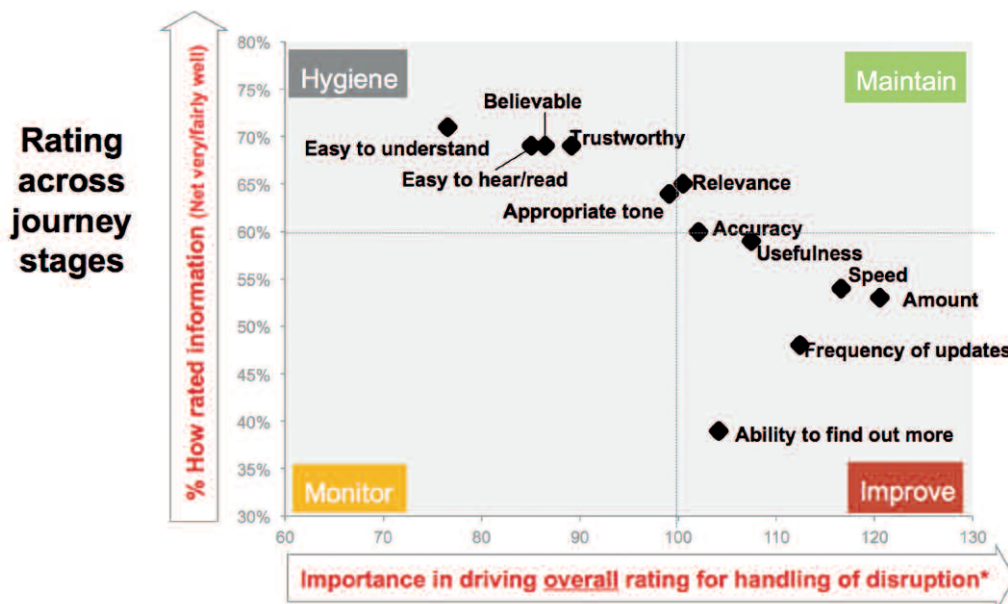
Following collection of the research data, a statistical technique called key driver analysis was applied to assist in understanding the passenger perspective further. Key driver analysis utilises linear regression to measure the strength of descriptive attributes or performance ratings in relation to a strategic characteristic; in this case, how did the information attribute ratings (for example, on believability, appropriate tone, and ease of understanding) contribute to passengers’ overall ratings of the handling of their disrupted journey? The analysis was run for all of the journey stages separately, but the picture was similar enough at each stage to allow one single overall analysis.

The story emerging from the key driver analysis (which ‘derives’ the importance of the individual attributes, rather than asking passengers to state importance explicitly) is entirely consistent with the feedback from the qualitative research components, in which passengers were asked directly what they thought was important in good disruption handling.

Across all journey stages, key areas to improve are the frequency, amount, and speed of information, and the ability to find out more:

Across all journey stages, key areas to improve are the ability to find out more, and the frequency, amount and speed of info

**Priority matrix: rating vs. drivers of performance for information across all journey stages**



The quantitative research demonstrated that text alerts and information at the station are the preferred methods to find out about disruption before travelling. Currently text alerts are mentioned as a source of information during the last disruption by six per cent of passengers before arriving, and two per cent at the departure station. The qualitative research showed that passengers like the idea of text alerts, but are not willing to pay for them. The popularity of texts is that they are 'push' communication, cutting through the passenger's routine and getting their attention about delays without the passenger having to actively seek out the information via an app or website, for example.

When asked directly in the qualitative research about what could be improved, improving the content of messages, their speed and accuracy, and the technology used to deliver them, are the main themes in the verbatim comments.

'In-the-moment' experience is driven by a key set of rules, all of which can be improved on:

1. TOCs need to tell passengers how long a disruption will take; tell them as early as possible (as soon as information is available, whether that's on Twitter or via other TOC communications) so that they can plan; and then provide regular updates
2. Ideally a 'warm body' should make announcements, and staff should be present on platforms and trains (not 'hiding away' as some passengers perceive them to do in times of crisis) helping passengers. TOCs should use a human tone of voice for all communication – professional and apologetic – and staff should personally 'own' problem management and solution
3. Station announcements should be clear; but TOCs should be aware that people wearing headphones or with hearing problems may miss even clear announcements entirely, so they should not be relied on as a single source of information
4. The reasons given for disruptions should be 'real'; 'standard excuses' are generally unhelpful and may be disbelieved. Credible information allows passengers to make alternative plans if they need to; and TOCs should actively help passengers to make and follow up those alternative plans. In addition, all channels should give the same information (announcements, departure boards, websites, Twitter, apps...).

Finally, the opportunities offered by new technology should be fully exploited, not only for their value in early warnings but also throughout a disruption. The TOC and NRE apps should be heavily promoted and all other possible electronic means investigated and used where appropriate (e.g. emails to pre-booked and season ticket holders about disruptions). However, it will be important not to forget those passengers who do not have smartphones or access to other modern technologies.



## Afterword

Finally, in passengers' words: "What else did you need to know that you weren't told?"

*"Their plan for dealing with the issue and consistent (i.e honest) reason for the problem."*

Commuter, in-the-moment

*"I need to know why a service is delayed/running late at the time. I also need a genuine apology."*

Leisure, in-the-moment

# Recommendations

## Passenger Focus's recommendations

Passenger Focus's recommendations arising from this research, drawing also on National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) and our observations of passenger information quality during Autumn and Winter 2013, are set out below, broadly in order of priority.

### 1 Measurement and continuous improvement

- **Introduce ongoing quantitative research to measure improvement in passenger satisfaction with the handling of service disruption.** There should be a common methodology and a sample size sufficient to give statistically robust results for each train company. It should be noted that the industry almost did this in 2011 under the auspices of the National Taskforce "Passenger Information During Disruption (PIDD) Workstream 4", but the plan was abandoned. We believe robust data at train company level is essential if managers are to be tasked with, and held to account for, achieving improvements in passenger experience. The research should be published.

- **Develop a measure of 'core message'<sup>1</sup> quality to complement the quantitative measures in place.** Only by measuring the quality and quantity of core message production can a meaningful picture of performance become part of a senior management Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 'dashboard'. Passenger Focus is aware that some advocate weakening the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) requirement to update a 'core message' at least every 20 minutes, arguing that it encourages a focus on quantity not quality. We believe measuring quality *as well* is the solution, not weakening the quantitative target. Research already shows frequency of update to be a weaker area of current provision.

- **Significantly boost arrangements to 'sense check' if online information is accurate, consistent and up-to-date.**

This should cover train companies' own websites, National Rail Enquiries, third party retailers and other key information providers such as the BBC. The need is not for high-end forensic analysis: it is for basic "that can't be right, what's going on here" skills that ensure inaccuracies and inconsistencies are spotted and put right. Two recent examples: i. replacement buses *and* the trains they are replacing showing simultaneously in journey planning systems and ii. two train companies running over the same track telling passengers to travel with the other, despite the line being closed entirely. The industry should consider including a 'what to look for' checklist in the ACOP.

- **Report the level of adherence within each Network Rail 'control' to the "Guidance Note for Control, Response and Station Staff: Information During Disruption"**, which covers the production and dissemination of Prioritised Plans during disruption. This must be quantitative and qualitative, becoming a regularly-reported KPI for each Network Rail Route Managing Director.

- **To supplement regular post-incident analysis, carry out an independent in-depth review of at least one Customer Service Level 2 (CSL2)<sup>2</sup> disruption incident per train company each year.** This should focus on the passenger impact, identifying what was handled well and what should have been better, including passenger information and other aspects of customer service. A transparent method of selecting incidents for review will be essential. Findings and recommendations should be published.

### 2 Trust and honesty

- **Give information controllers the tools to accurately describe the cause of disruption.** Passengers want the truth, not generalised stock descriptions some believe are intended to hide the facts. A tree across the railway is just that: don't call it "an obstruction". If a car has driven into the level crossing barriers say so: don't say "a problem at a level crossing". The term "signalling problems" is used to describe

<sup>1</sup> 'core message' is the term used in the PIDD ACOP to describe the update message to be sent by 'control' every 20 minutes during disruption

<sup>2</sup> 'CSL2' is the term used in the PIDD ACOP to describe disruption that is significant enough to trigger an enhanced level of customer service



**Flooding at Bridgwater**  
February 2014

faults that are simply not signalling problems, fuelling some passengers' suspicion that they are not being told the truth. It should be noted that in 2012 the industry agreed significant changes to address this, but they have never been implemented.

- **In seeking to improve the quality of messages during disruption, consider how to more effectively 'tell a story', or 'paint a picture', of unfolding events.** The objective should be to give passengers a continually-evolving sense of the activity going on to restore the service. Understanding what is being done helps passengers practically and emotionally. If told that the rescue locomotive has set off but is 45 minutes away, or the website shows a photograph of a tree across the railway, passengers can relate to why they are stuck.

- **To increase trust and believability the industry should make live announcements during disruption, whether at stations or on trains, in particular avoiding automated apologies.** Can an organisation be truly sorry if it uses a computer rather than a human to say so?

- **Reinvigorate efforts to ensure all passengers entitled to compensation know that they are and that it is simple to claim and receive what is due.** Smart ticketing will give the potential for automation, but in the meantime when a train is delayed by more than the compensation trigger there should be, at least, an announcement encouraging passengers to submit a claim. On trains with a guard or other onboard staff freepost claim forms should be distributed wherever possible. Passengers who have booked online on a train that is delayed by more than the trigger should be sent an email inviting them to apply online.

- **To increase transparency and accountability, each 'local plan' issued under the ACOP (as well as the ACOP itself) should be published on the relevant train company's website, accompanied by an annual progress report.** The Network Rail National Guidance document should also be published and an annual progress report provided.

### **3 Help me avoid the problem in the first place**

- **Address the low proportion (17 per cent) of passengers aware of disruption before they arrive at the station.**

Research is required to understand what is preventing a higher proportion of passengers signing up to receive some form of push alert, whether by text, email, in-app alert or Twitter. Is there an awareness problem? How well do current alerting services meet passengers' needs? What could be improved? Is the sign-up process off-putting? It is unlikely, but perhaps 83 per cent of passengers are just not interested in knowing in advance?

- **Introduce (reintroduce, in some instances) and promote free text alerts as quickly as possible.** Text was selected by more passengers than any other method as the best way to tell them about disruption before they arrive at the station.

- **Provide free alerts to passengers who have bought tickets online for trains that are cancelled, significantly delayed or where the schedule is amended after purchase.** The sentiment of passengers is "they know I was booked on it, but they couldn't be bothered to tell me".

- **Ensure critical passenger messages, such as that there is a significantly reduced service operating tomorrow, are highly prominent on websites.** Too many train companies present such information in their 'house style', resulting in vital information blending in with the rest of the webpage or feeling like a "will you accept our cookies?" message.

### **4 Accuracy and usefulness of information**

- **Significantly improve capability to estimate the delay.**

This would include the delay a passenger will encounter if they set off now; how long passengers on particular trains will be stuck; how long it will take to fix the problem; and how long it will be until the train service is fully recovered. Messages like "delays of up to 60 minutes" are backwards-looking, reporting

what has happened (i.e. that some trains are running up to 60 minutes late), not forward-looking giving an estimate of what to expect if you set off now. Not knowing, if your train has stopped in the middle of nowhere, if it will be 20 minutes or two hours causes real frustration. Too many disruption incidents go from “until further notice” to “cleared” with no estimate ever given about likely duration. Although it has improved, there is still a tendency to sound the ‘all clear’ before understanding the knock-on consequences of congestion, trains and crews being in the wrong place etc.

- **Deliver the capability, and then use it, for train company ‘control’ staff to speak directly to passengers in any train via the GSM-R system.**<sup>3</sup> We believe this change will substantially improve the quality of information provided to passengers during disruption, particularly on driver only trains.

- **Review CSL2 thresholds to ensure enhanced arrangements are triggered in line with passengers’ expectations, not playing catch-up.** We again suggest that CSL2 triggers should be consistent with the point at which 25 per cent of passengers regard a delay as “serious”. Analysis of NRPS data between Autumn 2008 and Autumn 2013 shows the tipping point between minor and serious delay to be, in passengers’ eyes, 16-20 minutes for London and South East train companies, and 21-25 minutes for long distance and regional train companies.

- **Evaluate whether ‘control’ is sufficiently resourced, in terms of humans and systems, to ensure that Darwin is always accurate, even during major disruption.** Arguably, staffing ‘control’ for the workload on a normal day will guarantee failure on a day of disruption. In an era when passengers are checking websites and apps before and during travel, making sure journey planners and live departure boards are accurate is vital. Yet too often trains continue to show as “on time” right up until, and sometimes after, the time that they should have left.

- **Develop the capability to implement a revised timetable, and revert to the normal schedule, significantly more quickly than current processes allow.** Day A for Day B<sup>4</sup> is clearly an improvement on the underlying Day A for Day C arrangements, but its limitations are significant:

- Train companies currently have to decide by 1100 on Day A if a revised timetable is required on Day B. If it becomes clear at lunchtime that horrendous weather will affect the railway tomorrow it is already too late
- If a train company has decided to run a reduced timetable, but the severe weather warning is downgraded, it is difficult to revert to the normal timetable
- The process assumes that train companies have provided a fully worked up contingency timetable to Network Rail in advance, to be implemented in its entirety. This ‘all or nothing’ approach appears insufficiently flexible to respond to weather, or anything else, affecting routes – or sections of route – in different ways
- Day A for Day B is envisaged to be available only in the winter. For example, the St. Jude storm (28 October 2013) fell outside the coverage period, although Network Rail did its best to accommodate train companies seeking to amend timetables.

- **Ensure those responsible for passenger information have the authority, and the means, at any time of day or night to refocus their website to provide information of immediate value to passengers, where necessary suppressing marketing material.** Too often we hear of interdepartmental battles and ‘out of hours’ practicalities getting in the way of giving passengers the information they need.

- **When a section of infrastructure is unexpectedly out of use for many weeks the industry must stop showing trains running normally.** The practice of bidding changes to the base timetable only a week or two ahead, and leaving the normal timetable in place beyond that, ignores T-12<sup>5</sup> information obligations and leaves tickets on sale on trains that cannot run (Dawlish and the Cambrian Coast being recent examples).

<sup>3</sup> GSM-R refers to the Global System for Mobile Communications – Railway, an international wireless communications standard

<sup>4</sup> ‘Day A for Day B’ is the phrase used to describe an enhanced process by which a train company can advise on a particular day that it wishes to operate an amended timetable the next – the normal process (Day A for Day C) requires a further day before the amended timetable will appear in passenger-facing information systems

<sup>5</sup> T-12 is shorthand for the requirement that timetable information in passenger-facing systems must be correct 12 weeks in advance

- **Work with online retailers and information providers to develop an automatic means to identify which trains are affected by a particular incident**, allowing them to be ‘flagged’ and a contextual message shown to passengers making relevant journey enquiries and/or ticket purchases.

- **The ACOP currently envisages a ‘core message’ comprising “problem, impact, advice”, but the research suggests that “impact, problem, advice” may be better-aligned with some passengers’ needs.** In essence, those passengers are saying “give me the implications for my journey, then tell me what’s wrong with the railway”.

## 5 Staff

- **Ensure staff are at least as well informed as passengers with a smartphone.** The fact staff sometimes know less than they do, baffles and frustrates passengers who cannot fathom why train companies do not equip staff with a tablet or smartphone and solve the problem. This should be a given, yet the ACOP has it only as “ideally”. Staff need appropriate equipment: the rail industry has tended to play catch-up, issuing staff with Blackberrys when passengers were buying smartphones and issuing smartphones when passengers were moving on to tablets. But it is also about training and the expectations that staff use the devices to passengers’ maximum benefit.

- **Require drivers and guards to acknowledge a halt between stations within two minutes, and measure if it is happening in practice.** Research continues to show that saying something quickly, even if it is simply “We’ve stopped at a red signal, I’m going to find out why” is powerful in demonstrating that the train company knows the train has stopped and cares enough to acknowledge it.

## 6 Fares and ticketing

- **Ensure passengers do not pay more as a result of service disruption.** Closing seat reservations because of uncertainty about the timetable does not stop passengers being sold tickets, but it often increases fares significantly (because Advance tickets cannot be sold). The industry must ensure that during sustained disruption Advance tickets are immediately available where they would normally be, even if a replacement bus is now involved.

- **Change aspects of the national ticketing rules to give passengers greater protection during disruption**, specifically:

- Passengers choosing not to travel because it is highly likely, even certain, that they will be delayed after leaving or their journey cannot be completed should have the same rights to a full refund (in other words with no administration fee) as a passenger intending to catch a train that is already delayed or cancelled
- Passengers holding out and back Advance single tickets who choose not to travel because of known or likely disruption should be refunded for both legs of the journey without an administration fee (if you couldn’t get there, you don’t need your ticket to come back)
- Passengers holding out and back Advance single tickets who are delayed on their outward journey should be permitted to return on a later train than they have booked. If you had been looking forward to four hours sightseeing somewhere, why should you cut short your day because disruption meant you arrived late?

- **Ensure industry retailing systems can reflect any temporary fares policy that is proposed.** During the Dawlish closure, systems proved incapable of reflecting CrossCountry’s laudable policy that, given the replacement bus from Exeter to Plymouth, an Advance single to Exeter was good for travel to Penzance. As a consequence it is highly likely that some passengers paid more than the policy required.

## 7 Additional recommendations

- **Train companies should continuously review how they communicate with the National Rail Communications Centre (NRCC) and online retailers during disruption, especially in relation to supplementary contextual information.** Do all relevant staff, including communications/press office staff, appreciate how vital it is to keep the NRCC and online retailers informed; understand what those organisations need to know; and have the right email addresses at their fingertips?

- **The industry should revisit its 2012 decision that the PIDD ACOP would no longer be a joint ATOC/Network Rail document.** Given that in many cases the raw material a train company uses to produce passenger information originates with Network Rail, together with the existence of many joint controls, would a single document be more effective?

# Detailed research findings

Prepared for Passenger Focus by Populus

## Background

**Objective** Assess whether information provided to rail passengers under the current ATOC (Association of Train Operating Companies) PIDD (Passenger Information During Disruption) Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) is considered satisfactory and in what ways it might be improved. The focus of the study was unplanned disruptions

**Approach** Quantitative survey to benchmark the experience of passengers suffering disruption, supported by a multi stage qualitative phase

### Quant survey stages



Online survey amongst 7,225 rail passengers, to identify 1,020 experiencing a delay in the past week. Fieldwork was conducted between 27 November and 11 December 2013



GB telephone omnibus to weight 7,225 online sample to be representative of rail passengers



Additional targeted sample of 257 customers of the trainline. The sample was selected based on identifying customers travelling on routes that were experiencing significant disruption, with all eligible customers sent a survey link via the trainline. Results are reported as a separate sample.

### Qual components



Recently Experienced Disruption - 4 x focus groups in London and Birmingham. Respondents were given a pre-task asking about their most recent experience of disruption that they completed on an online forum

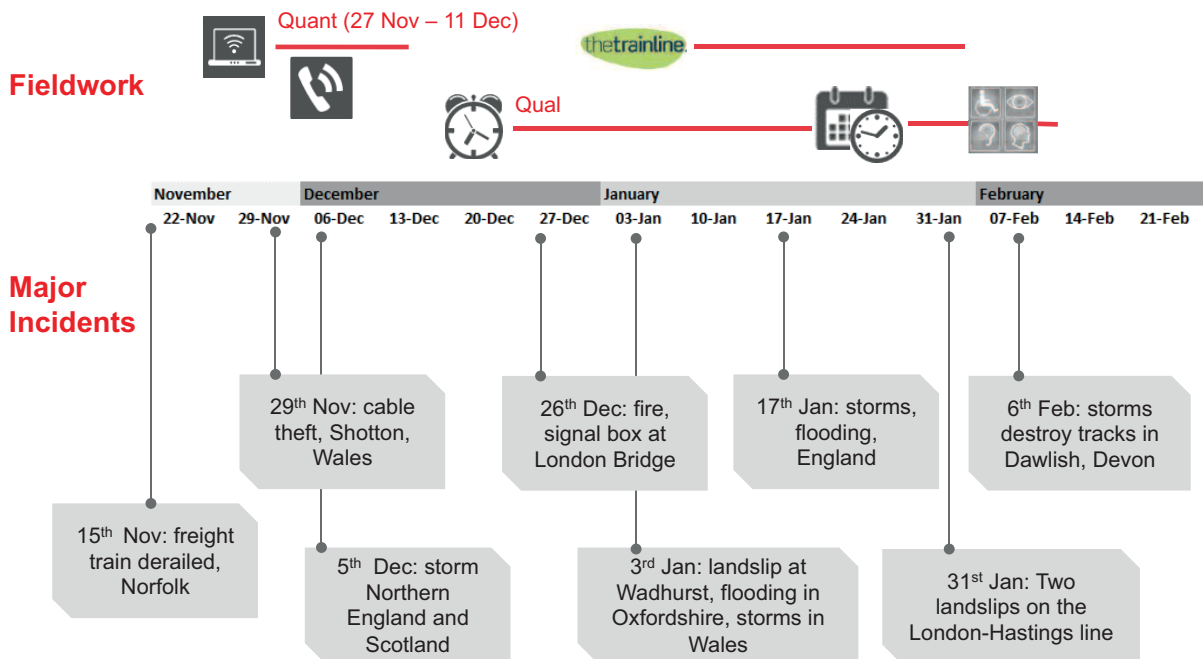


Experiencing Disruption NOW – 225 responses via mobile-app-based mini qual survey to capture in-the-moment experience, needs and wants, followed by an online forum follow up task for a sub-sample of the disrupted respondents



8 x in-depth interviews and/or online discussions and tasks to explore the specific needs of disabled passengers at times of disruption.

# Timeline of programme



## Key themes

### Control

Passenger information needs are driven by a need to stay in control of the journey

### Current

Passengers need up-to-date information

### Credible

Passengers need a real explanation

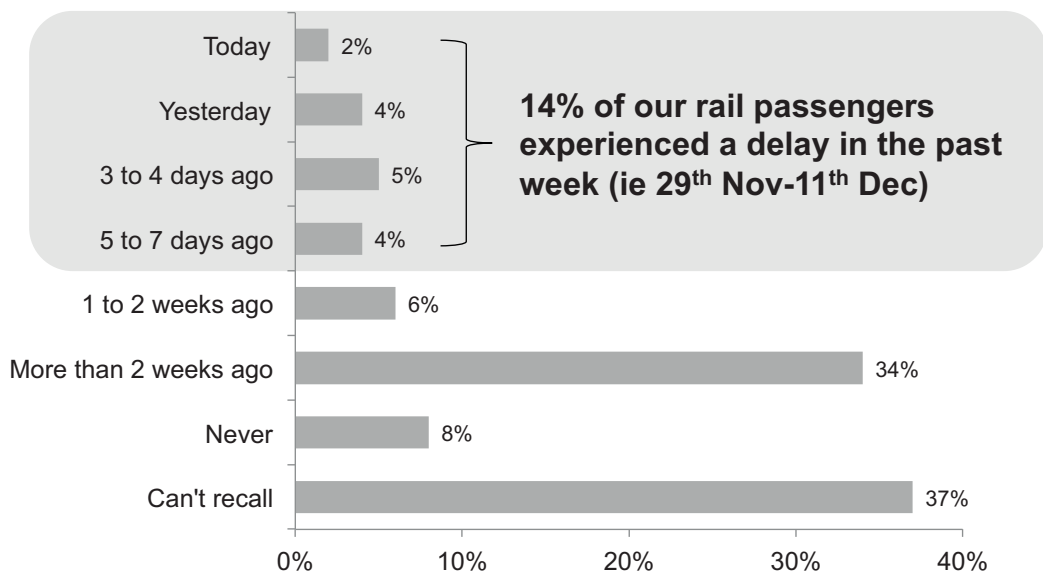
### Consistency

Passengers expect consistency of information across all sources

# Profile of our disrupted passengers

14% of rail passengers experienced a delay in the past week

*When experienced last delay to train journey: All GB rail passengers in survey period*

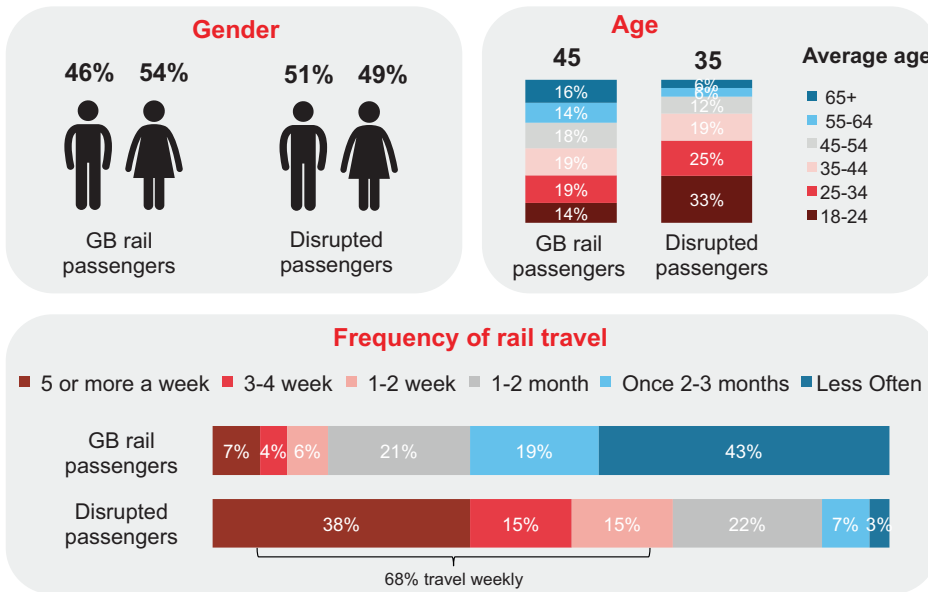


Q5 When did you last personally experience a delay or cancellation to a train journey, excluding any caused by planned engineering works?  
 Base: All GB representative rail passengers n=7225



## Delayed passengers were younger and more frequent rail users

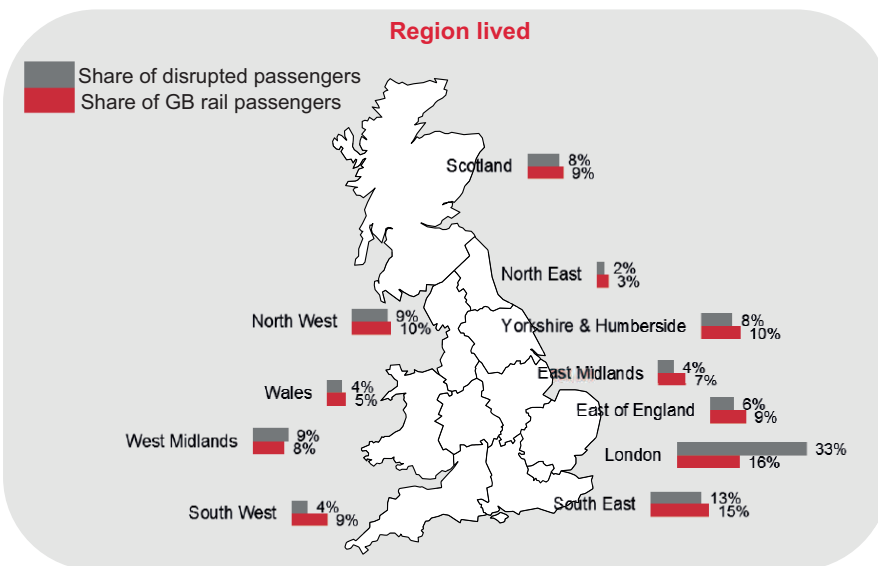
*Profile of all GB rail passengers surveyed vs. disrupted passengers: in survey period*



Q1 Gender, Q2 Age, Q4 Frequency of train travel  
Base: All GB representative rail passengers n=7225 / All respondents who have experienced delay in past week n=1020

## 33% of our rail passengers live in London – nearly twice as many as the typical GB rail passengers surveyed

*Profile of all GB rail passengers surveyed vs. disrupted passengers: in survey period*

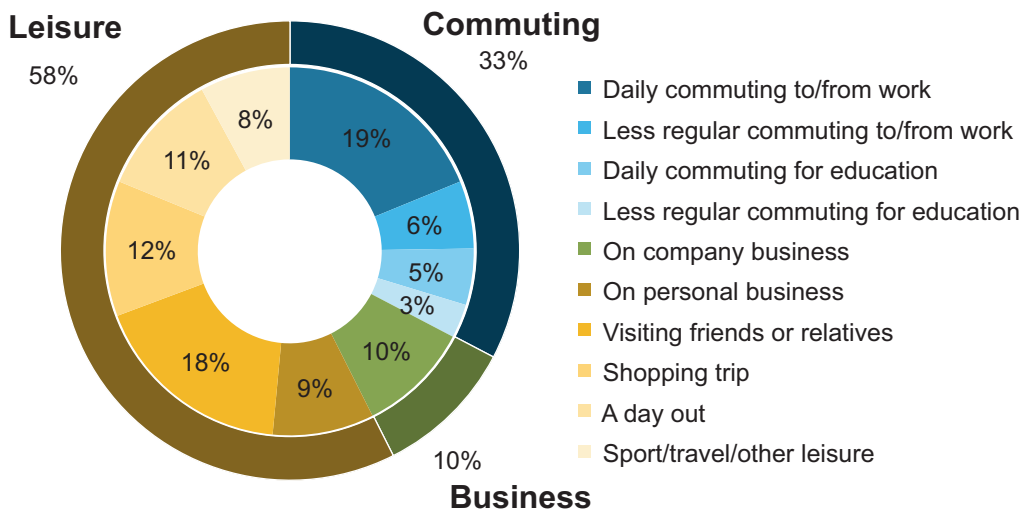


Q1 Gender, Q2 Age, Q4 Frequency of train travel (NET business, leisure, commuter)  
Base: All GB representative rail passengers n=7225/ All respondents who have experienced delay in past week n=1020

# About the journey that was disrupted

6 in 10 delayed passengers were travelling for leisure, with 19% being daily work commuters

*Purpose of journey taken that was disrupted: All disrupted passengers*

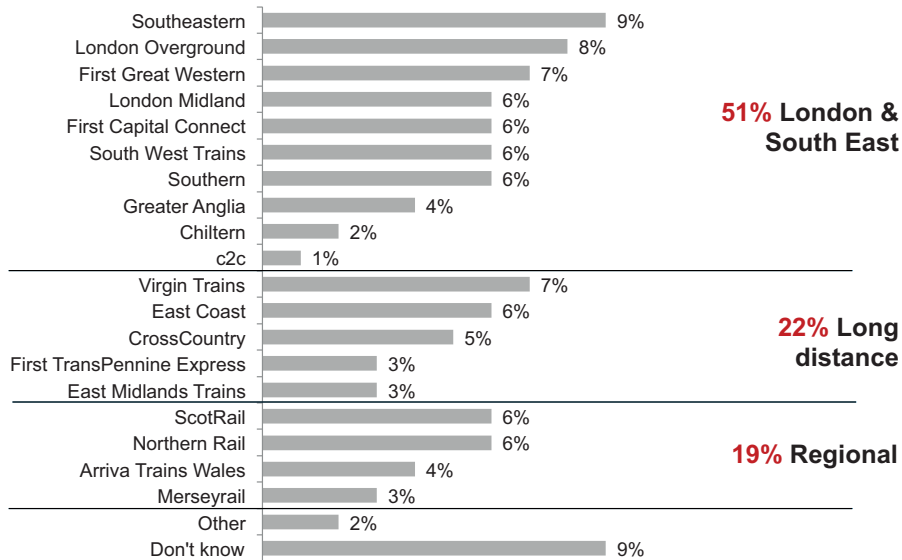


thetrainline 59% Leisure, 32% business, 9% commuting

Q15 What was the main purpose of the trip you were making/intending to make on this last specific occasion that you experienced disruption?  
 Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in the past week n=1020

## London and South East TOCs accounted for half of delayed passenger journeys

**TOC operating journey taken that was disrupted: All disrupted passengers**

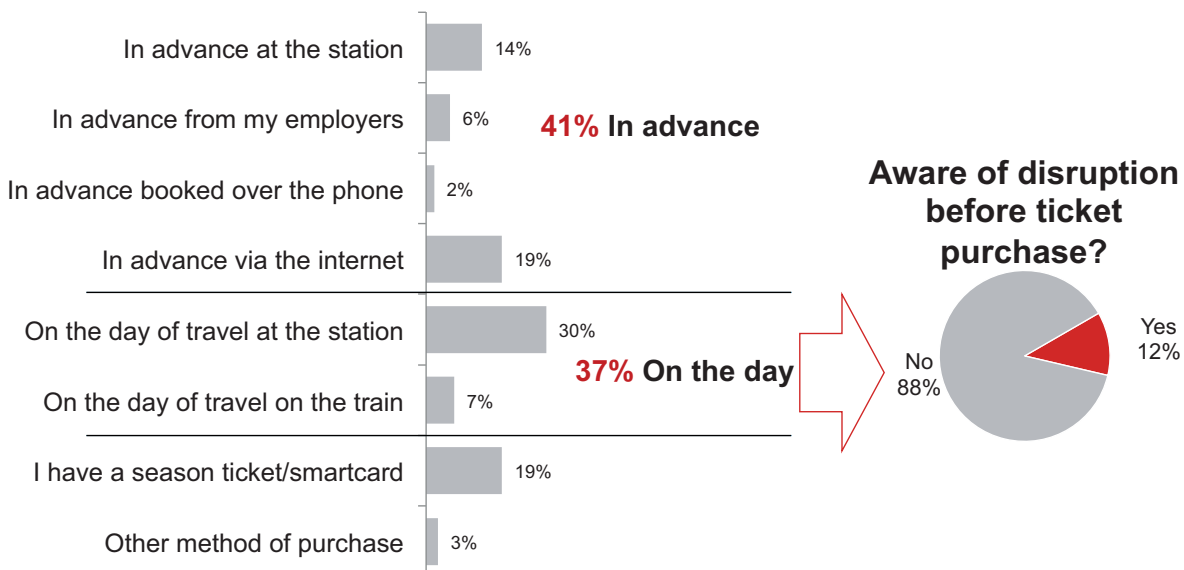


Q11 Which train company(s) operated the train service that was disrupted?  
Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in the past week n=1020

thetrainline 30% LSE, 57% Long Distance, 8% Regional

## A similar proportion of delayed passengers had advance tickets as booked on the day

**When booked tickets for disrupted journey: All disrupted passengers**



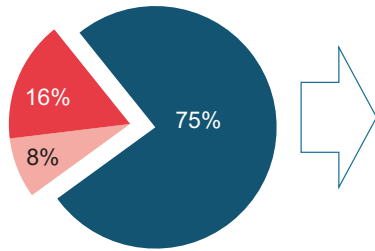
Q12 When did you book your ticket for this last journey that was disrupted? Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in the past week n=1020  
Q13 Were you aware of the disruption to the service before you purchased your ticket? Base: All booked on the day of travel n=420

1 in 4 were not able to complete their journey as originally planned. Those who did were 38 minutes late on average

**Ability to complete disrupted journey and impact: All disrupted passengers**

**Able to complete journey?**

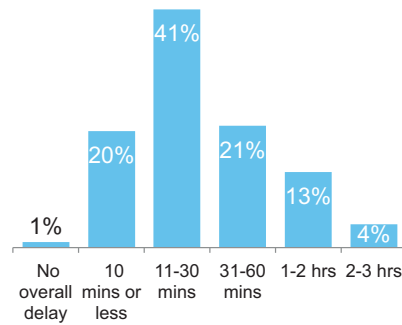
- No, I didn't start my journey
- No, I turned back or changed route into my journey
- Yes, I did complete my planned journey



	% completed journey as originally planned
Long distance TOC	69%
Regional TOC	67%
LSE TOC	79%

**How late were you arriving at destination?**

Average = 38 minutes late

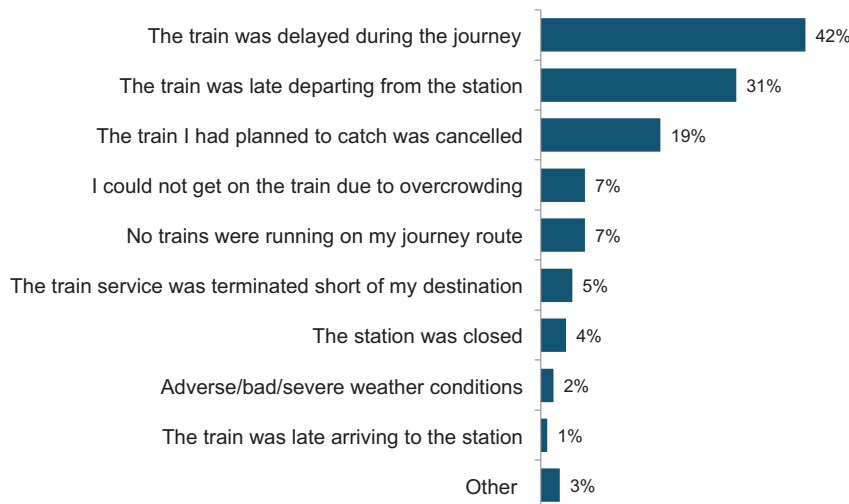


thetrainline 74%

Q8 Were you able to complete your planned journey? Q10 Approximately how late, if at all, were you arriving at your destination station? All respondents who have experienced delay in past week n=1020

In the main, disruption occurred during the journey, followed by the train being late departing or being cancelled

**Type of disruption experienced: All disrupted passengers**



thetrainline Train cancelled 34%, train delayed during journey 30%, late departing 14%

Q14 What sort of disruption was it? All respondents who have experienced delay in past week n=1020

# Overall handling of disruption

## In passengers' shoes - commuting with Marie and Stephen



**Marie**  
South West  
Trains  
commuter

Delayed  
Camberley to  
Farnham,  
16<sup>th</sup> January

### Marie's experience

*"I have to get four trains every day and each day at least one of those is delayed."  
"It's ridiculous and frustrating because I pay extortionate prices for a sub-standard service. I am loath to part with my money to then feel as if I'm being mugged."*



*"There was no information given, the estimated arrival time simply changed to a later time. Not appreciated."*

*"In the past I have been given conflicting information about why my train was delayed for over an hour and obviously I didn't know what to believe."*



*"I'd like the information given to be truthful and consistent but ideally I'd like for my trains to NOT BE DELAYED AFTER I'VE SPENT A FORTUNE ON TICKETS."*



SOURCE:  
In The  
Moment  
and  
Qual Deep  
Dive



**Stephen**  
Southeastern  
commuter

Delayed  
Belvedere to  
Euston via  
Charing Cross,  
3<sup>rd</sup> January

### Stephen's experience

*"Constantly cancelled & delayed trains for the past 2 weeks."  
"Annoyed and ignored - taken advantage where there is no competition."*



*"Information normally isn't communicated - when it is, the attitude is that the passenger is an inconvenience."*



*"Details on where the issues are so that they can be verified independently as SE customers no longer have any faith that we're being told the truth. Upload pictures of fallen trees; land slippage etc showing where they are. This can be done using a cheap mobile phone; no excuse not to."*



## In passengers' shoes – on business with Ros

  
SOURCE:  
In The  
Moment  
and  
Qual Deep  
Dive



**Ros**  
Virgin Trains  
business  
traveller

Delayed  
Manchester  
Piccadilly to  
Euston,  
14<sup>th</sup> January

### Ros's experience

*"The train was delayed from Manchester to London by 25 minutes. I feel very angry because the trains are very expensive and I do not expect delays."*



*"I was told by the train manager that the train was stopped at a red signal and there was nothing we could do but wait for the green signal to let us carry on the journey."*

*"We were informed after 5 minutes. The information was extremely clear and I trusted the train driver was trying to get as much as information as possible."*



*"I would have liked to know how long we were going to be delayed for. I would also have liked to know if we would get compensation for this delay."*

*"They should try and give an estimate for how long the train is delayed so I could make plans for when I arrive at my destination."*



## In passengers' shoes – leisure travel with David

  
SOURCE:  
In The  
Moment  
and  
Qual Deep  
Dive



**David**  
Virgin Trains  
leisure traveller

Delayed  
Lichfield Trent  
Valley to Milton  
Keynes,  
9<sup>th</sup> January

### David's experience

*"The train is delayed so I don't know if I will meet my connection. It is the last train of the evening."*



*"Anxious, don't have the ETA info required to make an informed decision. Angry, the train is packed so I can't walk around looking for a guard and don't know if one will come along."*

*"Told how many minutes the train is delayed. Have 2 minutes to get connection at Nuneaton, don't know if will make it."*



*"Via tannoy, as expected, but would expect a human being to follow up."*

*"Are connecting trains being held, what platforms they will be on? What's the reason for the delay."*



*"Get a guard to walk through the carriage apologising and offering info and assistance."*

## Dominant mindset of passengers during disruption is frustration



Passengers' experience is at its worst when the frustration of the delay is exacerbated by a poor information experience

Poor information makes them feel powerless to control their travel, change plans, inform other people, make alternative arrangements

This leads to a sense of being a "hostage"

Interestingly, the "in-the-moment" feedback did not necessarily identify new needs but the emotion was heightened, the language sharper, the experience more intense.



## While disruption is being experienced, passengers can become very emotional



*"They should have provided up-to-date information as soon as they had it. It is very frustrating to have no information."*  
(Focus group, Birmingham)

*"I saw [Twitter] reports of the delays early into my journey, but this wasn't announced over the Tannoy system until we pulled into Bolton half an hour later."*  
(Commuter, online forum)

*"They should have apologised first and foremost...I do not think it should be up to the customer to investigate why the train is delayed. It is very frustrating to have no information. The tone of the social media staff could also better managed. I have often been told that they understand my problem - frankly I find that irritating."*  
(Commuter, online forum)

*"[I wanted an] Explanation as to why the scenario couldn't have been avoided & if it could have been, why it wasn't."*  
(Leisure, in-the-moment)

## Specific needs fit with problem-impact-advice-model, but can change by stage

SOURCE:  
In The Moment and Qual Deep Dive

In general terms the most important thing that passengers want to know is what the impact of the delay will be, rather than the nature of the problem

This clarifies the problem-impact-advice model

The impact is always the most important piece of information required but the problem and advice depend on the stage of disruption/ passenger's situation.

*"Have been told how many minutes the train is delayed. Have 2 mins to get connection at Nuneaton, don't know if will make it."*  
(Leisure, in-the-moment)



Before arriving at station:  
Impact-problem-advice



At the station:  
Impact-advice-problem



On train:  
Impact-problem-advice.

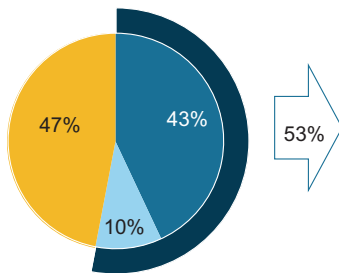
This might not always translate to actual wording of announcements, but it is important to bear in mind what passengers need to know most.

## Just over 4 in 10 delayed passengers were given a reason for the disruption by the train company

**Whether train company provided reason for disrupted journey: All disrupted passengers**

### Was a reason given for disruption?

- Yes by train company
- No found out another way
- No

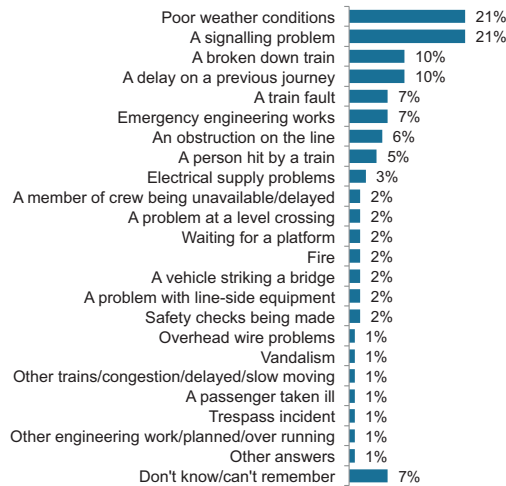


	% reason given by TOC
Long distance TOC	45%
Regional TOC	47%
LSE TOC	46%



71% (reason given by TOC)

### Reason given

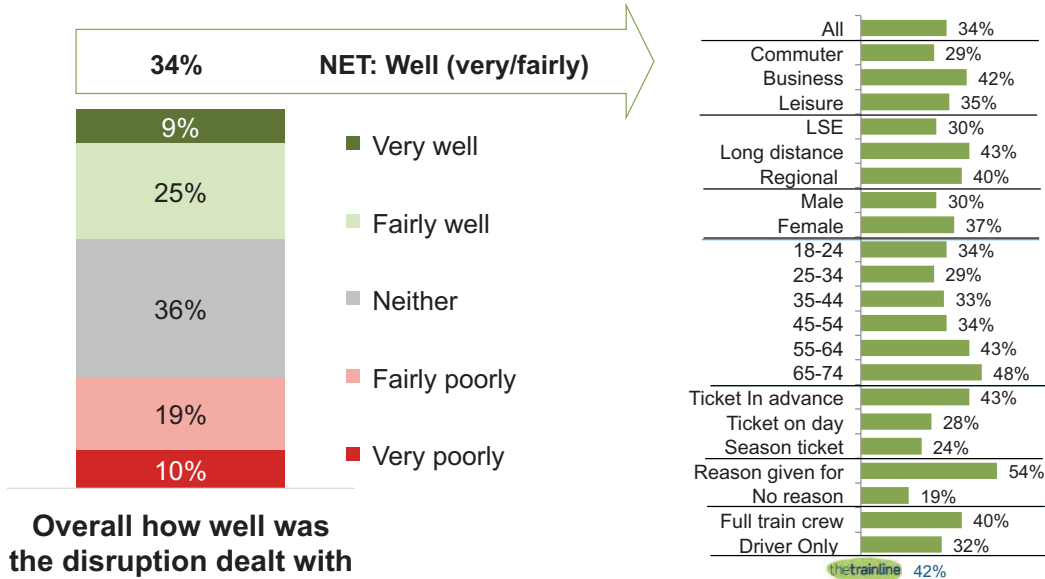


Q16 Were you given a reason for the disruption by the train company? Base: All respondents who experienced delay in the past week n=1020  
Q17 What was the reason(s) for the disruption to service on this last occasion? Base: All who found out reason for delay n=550



# About a third of delayed passengers felt the train company handled the disruption well

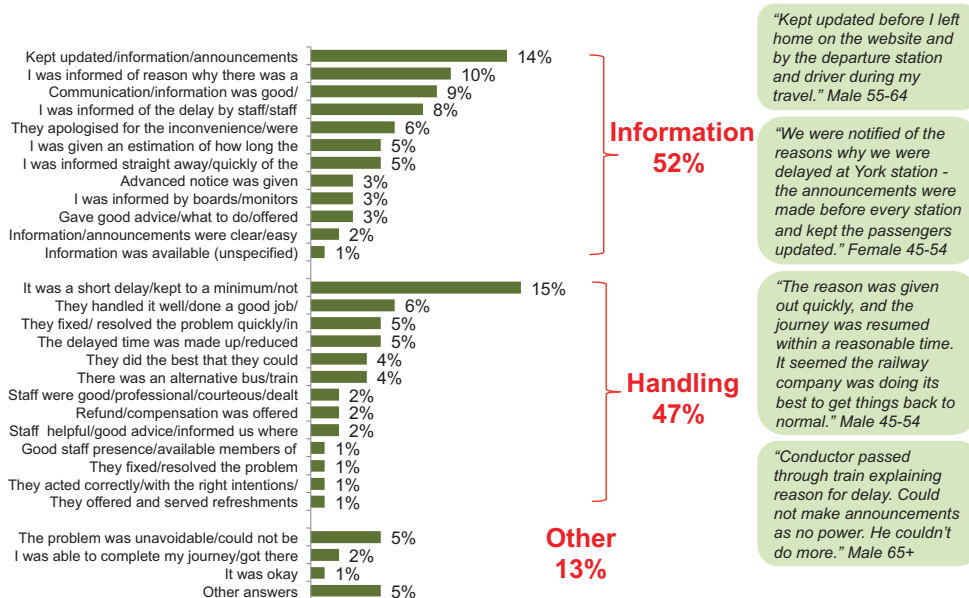
**Overall how well the disruption was dealt with: All disrupted passengers**



Q18 Overall, how well do you think the train company dealt with the disruption on this last occasion?  
Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in the past week n=1020

# A range of reasons were given for handling the disruption well, mainly to do with information provided and how it was handled

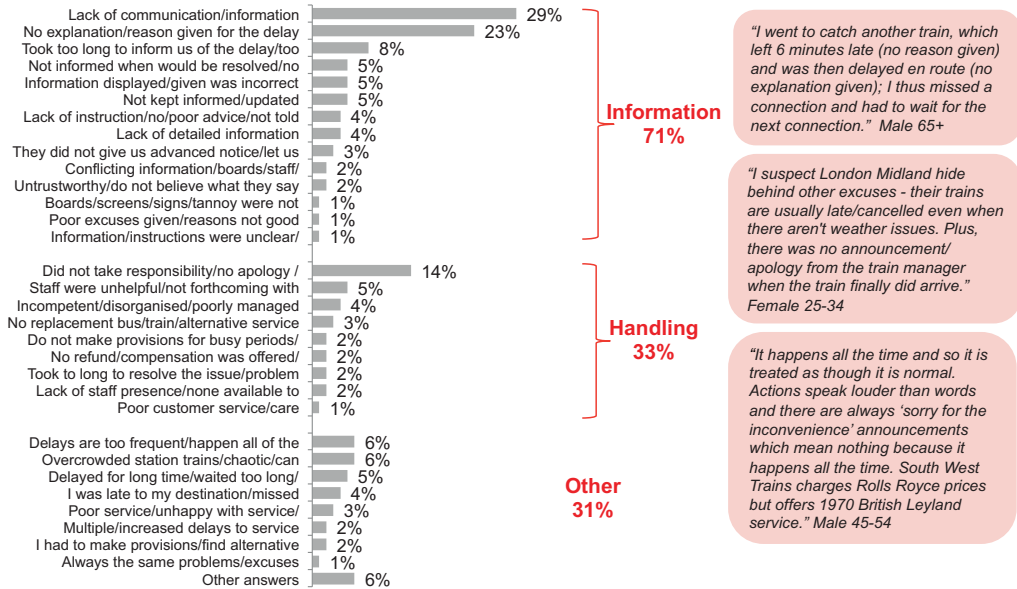
**Why was the disruption dealt with well: All disrupted passengers**



Q19a Why do you say the disruption was dealt with well? Base: All respondents stating disruption dealt with well overall n=353.  
Respondent could comment on information and/or handling and/or other, hence total sums to >100%

For those who said the disruption was dealt with poorly, the top reasons were lack of information and lack of explanation

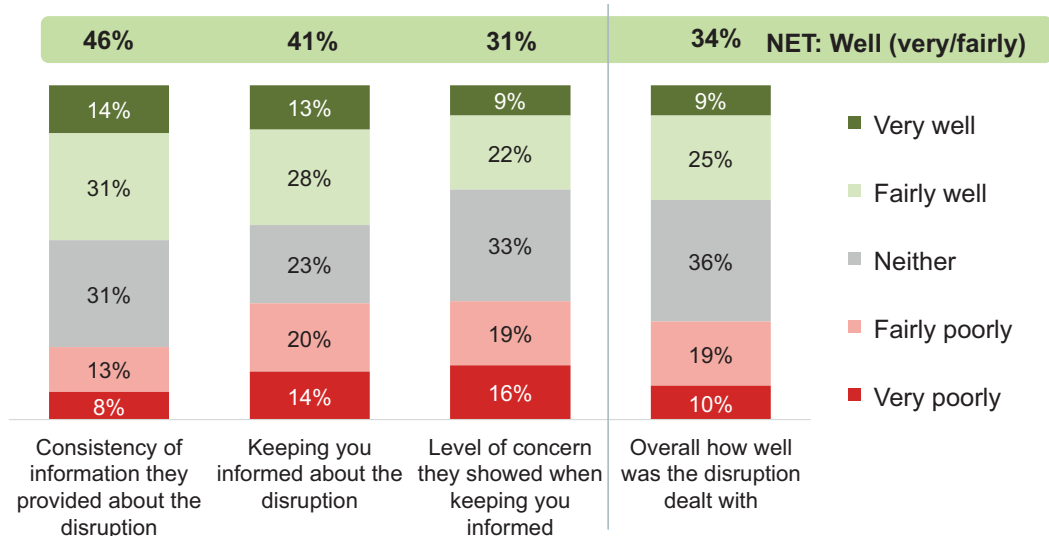
**Why was the disruption dealt with poorly: All disrupted passengers**



Q19b Why do you say the disruption was dealt with poorly? Base: All respondents stating disruption dealt with poorly overall n=318 Respondent could comment on information and/or handling and/or other, hence total sums to >100%

Delayed passengers rated the consistency of information ahead of concern shown and being kept informed

**Overall how well was the disruption dealt with in terms of...: All disrupted passengers**



Passengers on trains with a full train crew gave consistently higher ratings that driver-operated trains – see appendix p69.

Q20, Q21, Q31 Overall, how would you rate the train company in terms of ...consistency of information/keeping you informed/level of concern/how well disruption was dealt with? (See chart labels for exact question wordings). Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in the past week n=1020

# Information provided by journey stage

Most delayed passengers were informed of the disruption at the departure station

*Stages of journey where informed/made aware of disruption: All disrupted passengers*



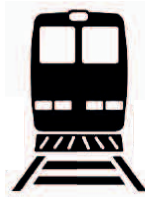
Before arriving at station

**17%**



At the departure station

**67%**



On the train during the journey

**40%**



At the destination station

**11%**

**92% of passengers informed at some stage**

Informed/made aware at 1.4 stages of journey

thetrainline

Before 5%, at station 59%, on train 50%, at destination 11%

Q22a/b At which points of your journey were you informed or made aware of the disruption?  
Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in the past week n=1020

# Before arriving at the station

Passengers are in a more rational mindset before arriving at the station – still have the possibility of re-planning



  
SOURCE:  
In The  
Moment  
and  
Qual Deep  
Dive



Before arriving at station

- Passengers need to know how severe the delay is likely to be so that they can retain control and make plans
- They like to know what the issue is so that those plans can be informed
- But they also need to hear the TOC's solution so that they can factor that in too.

*"No updates on next train so left wondering when I could get to work. And signal problems? I don't think I have ever been on a train where if it is delayed the cause is not signal problems. More details please!"*  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)

*"Need details on where the issues are so that they can be verified independently ...Upload pictures of fallen trees, land slippage etc showing where they are."*  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)

*"You want to know what you are expecting, what sort of delay."*  
(Focus group, Birmingham)

*"I think they should tweet when there are delays on trains."*  
(Business traveller, in-the-moment)

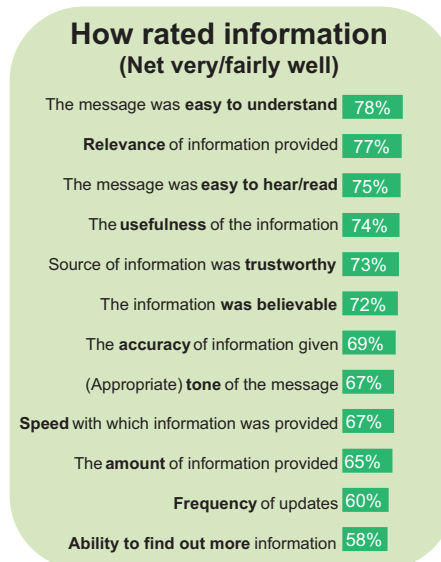
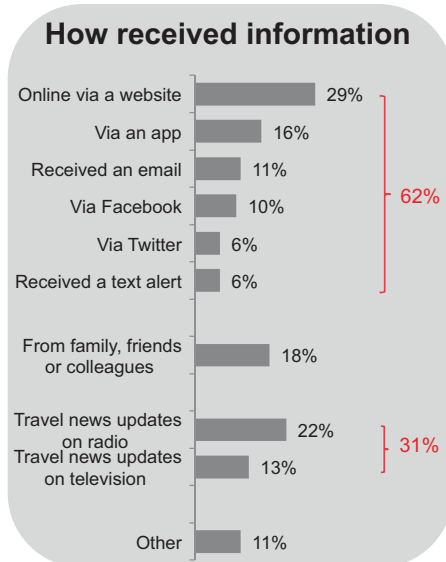
17% were informed on the way to the station, with most made aware via digital sources or broadcast media updates

**Rating and sources of information used before arriving at station: Amongst all informed**



Before arriving at station

**17%**  
informed/  
made aware



Q23 In which of the following were you informed of the disruption before you arrived at the station? Q24 how would you rate the train company on each of the following?... Base: All respondents who were informed of the disruption before they arrived at their departure station n=151

Timing is key because passengers feel there is still time to change plans

- This stage is all about being able to change plans/make alternative plans and so flagging quickly/early that there is a problem is key
- Some notion of the severity of the problem is necessary also, but about “early warning” rather than detail, initially
- Need for some idea of the nature of the disruption for those who want to make their own informed judgments about planned travel
- Online, apps (and broadcast media) are key here – fast, direct
- For business and leisure pre-booked journeys, some passengers feel that as TOCs have their details, they should expect personalised communication about service disruptions.

“At no point during the service or on the App, or on social media, was this [timetable] change even alluded to. Frankly, in this day of multi-media, having this information available on only one medium is unacceptable.”  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)

“I’d want to know by looking online. It should already be on there. If I book with CrossCountry, they have all my details and should be able to contact me if there’s a delay.”  
(Focus group, Birmingham)

“I totally agree to receiving some kind of communication prior to arriving at the station as to whether the train is running on time. That way it will relieve the stress and give you time to get your head around it before arriving at the station...”  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)



SOURCE:  
In The Moment  
and  
Qual Deep Dive

# Information at the station

For many passengers this is the most stressful situation – and a time when information experience is often poor



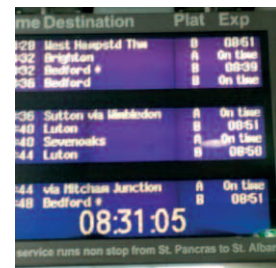
SOURCE:  
In The Moment and Qual Deep Dive



At the departure station

*"Told a train had broken down and that the delays were severe and over 30 minutes....Just a standard pre-recorded voice. No human touch. Feel like a pig in a sty."  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)*

- High degree of stress, irritation, sometimes even panic at departure station, exacerbated by inaccurate or lack of information
- Information often changes (e.g. departure time constantly increasing)
- Announcements automated, inaccurate and displays not always thought accurate or helpful or sufficiently frequent
- Passengers want to inform other people (e.g. their boss) if they're going to be late, but can be thwarted by poor information
- Staff too often "out of the loop", don't have access to up-to-date info that some passengers have (via smartphones)



*"I find out more on my app than information at the station; I trust the app from experience, it gets quicker to the app than people at station or the board."  
(Focus group, London)*

## 7 in 10 found out about the delay at the station, with most made aware via an announcement or departure screens

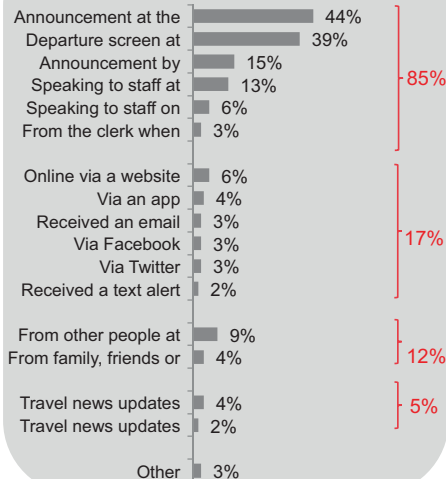
*Rating and sources of information used at the departure station: Amongst all informed*



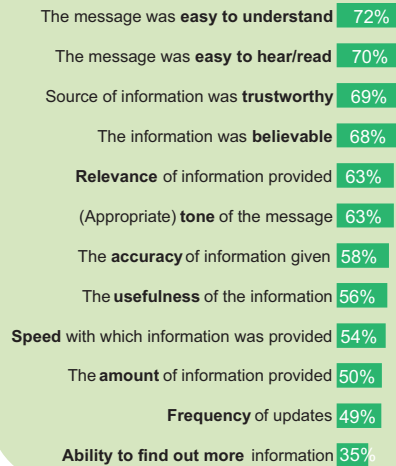
At the departure station

**67%**  
informed/  
made aware

### How received information



### How rated information (Net very/fairly well)



Q25 In which of the following ways were you informed of the disruption whilst at the station before the train departed? Q26 how would you rate the train company on each of the following?... Base: All respondents who were informed of the disruption at their departure station n=685

## Accurate information is key, very frequently updated

- Strong need to know what is happening, how long, why (to make alternative plans) and solution/alternatives
- Info needs to be up-to-date minute by minute as lack of information contributes to stress and sense of powerlessness
- Passengers are worrying that incomplete or inaccurate information can cause chaos, even danger as stations/platforms become (over)crowded
- They suggest a need for a quick/easy way of identifying if your train is disrupted (before “deep diving” to find out more)
- At this stage the longer term outlook is also important so that passengers can plan return/onward journeys (although for most it is about the “here and now” journey)
- Staff MUST be up-to-date.

*“Two minutes can seem like two hours when you don’t know what’s happening.”*  
(Focus group, London)

*“Their contact on Twitter is much more up-to-date than their station staff most of the time. Why aren’t the staff using Twitter?”*  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)

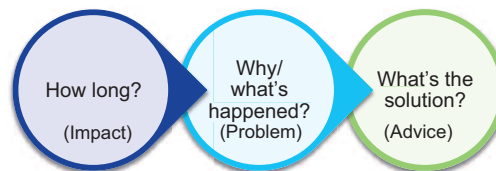
*“Sitting at Newbury station for ten minutes. I’ve received an email alert from FGW alerting me of delays but when I visit the website it directs me to, it tells me there aren’t any!”*  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)



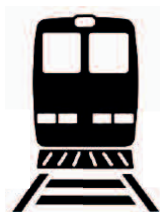
SOURCE:  
In The  
Moment  
and  
Qual Deep  
Dive

# Information on the train

Passengers split between resignation and frustration/powerlessness



  
SOURCE:  
In The  
Moment  
and  
Qual Deep  
Dive



On the train during the journey

- During disruption on train, passengers display a mixture of resignation and anxiety about loss of control over their travel
- “In-the-moment” work suggested frustration is a key emotion at this stage, exacerbated by lack of communication/acknowledgement of problems
- Commuters seem less tolerant of minor delays (probably because added to store of previous experiences).

*“I very rarely get a train that leaves/arrives exactly on time.”*  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)

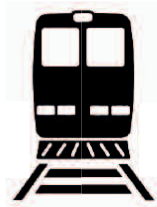
*“I’m annoyed and p\*\*\*ed off that we’ve not been told why we’re delayed. It’s usually due to a late running train on the main line but this time it’s longer than that.”*  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)

*“Delays on my regular route to work – this has been going on for nine months now and the prices have gone up too.”*  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)

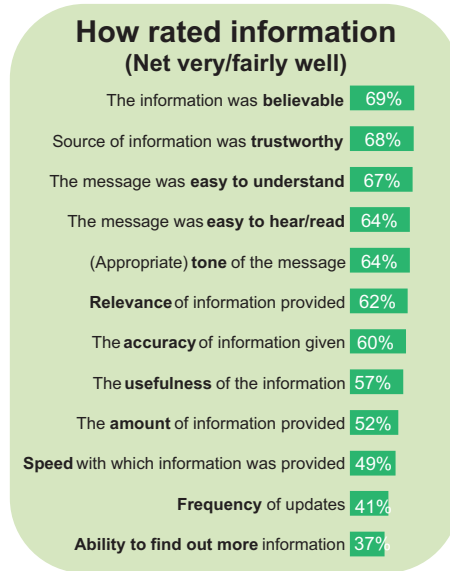
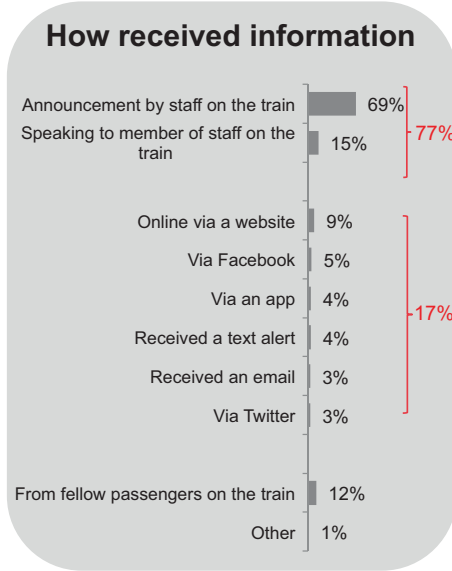


40% were informed on the train, with most made aware by announcements by staff. Few other sources mentioned

**Rating and sources of information used on the train: Amongst all informed**



On the train during the journey  
**40%** informed/made aware

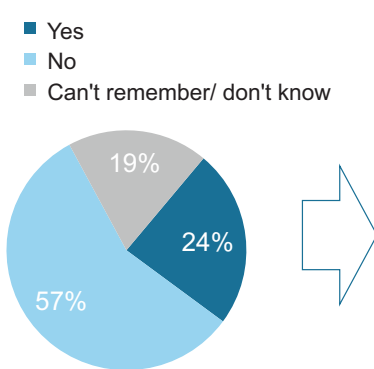


Q27 In which of the following ways were you informed of the disruption whilst on the train during your journey? Q28 how would you rate the train company on each of the following?... Base: All respondents who were informed of the disruption while on the train n=420

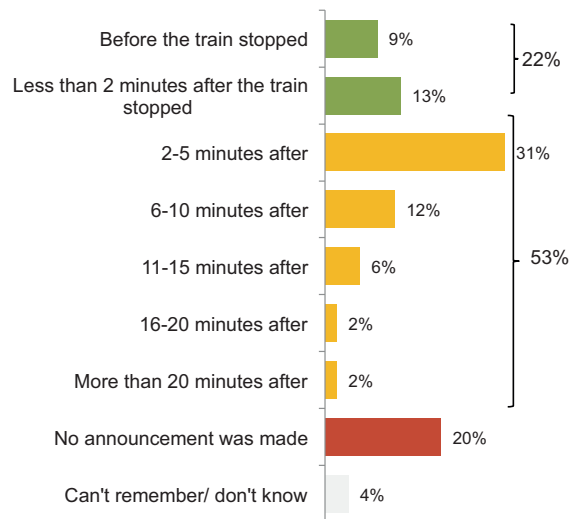
A quarter of delayed passengers had an unscheduled stop; 22% claimed they had an announcement within two minutes

**Announcements made during unscheduled stops: All disrupted passengers**

**Had an unscheduled stop**



**Time before first announcement**



Q.28b Did your train come to an unscheduled stop at any point on the disrupted journey? Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in past week n=1020 Q.29 How soon after the train stopped did the train staff first make any announcement? Base: All with unscheduled stop n=256

## Important that the train staff take personal ownership of the situation (when this happens it is very reassuring for passengers)

- Expect rapid, personal ownership from driver/train crew
  - Initial announcement acknowledging the issue
  - Update with reason as soon as is known plus prognosis for delay
  - Regular updates (unless significant delay in which case less frequent updates as and when there is news)
- Expect accurate information re expected length of delay – so that can communicate with other people, re-plan the day etc
- Onward travel/connections should be addressed by staff
- Also expect crew to walk the train to reassure, answer questions and apologise – as much through presence and tone than content (and don't do a ticket check)
- Passengers often assume it's the driver making the announcements, even when it's the guard
- Standard/recorded announcements unacceptable
- Compensation entitlement should also be raised by TOC, where applicable.

*“Are connecting trains being held? What platforms will they be on? And what is the reason for the delay?”*  
(Focus group, Birmingham)

*“Guard on train not helpful or apologetic for crowded train [due to cancellations]. Did not declassify first class to ease crowding.”*  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)



# Information at the destination/after the disruption

At destination, passengers are often keen to get on their way – but apology and compensation are key

- On train apology as arrive is essential (and often experienced) – better than on platform (which is too late)
- TOC's perceived responsibility to advise on compensation, reportedly rarely experienced (apart from on some East Coast trains)
- Passengers with connections need support – shouldn't just be "dumped" at destination
- Return/onward journey issues could also be communicated (passengers making their own judgments currently)
  
- Day-after apology posters are only minimally effective (can be seen as tokenism and rarely read)
- Fuller bulletins about how disruption is being handled smack of mis-directed effort/resource.



*"If it told me that they were doing something about it then that would make me happier I suppose."  
(Focus group, London)*

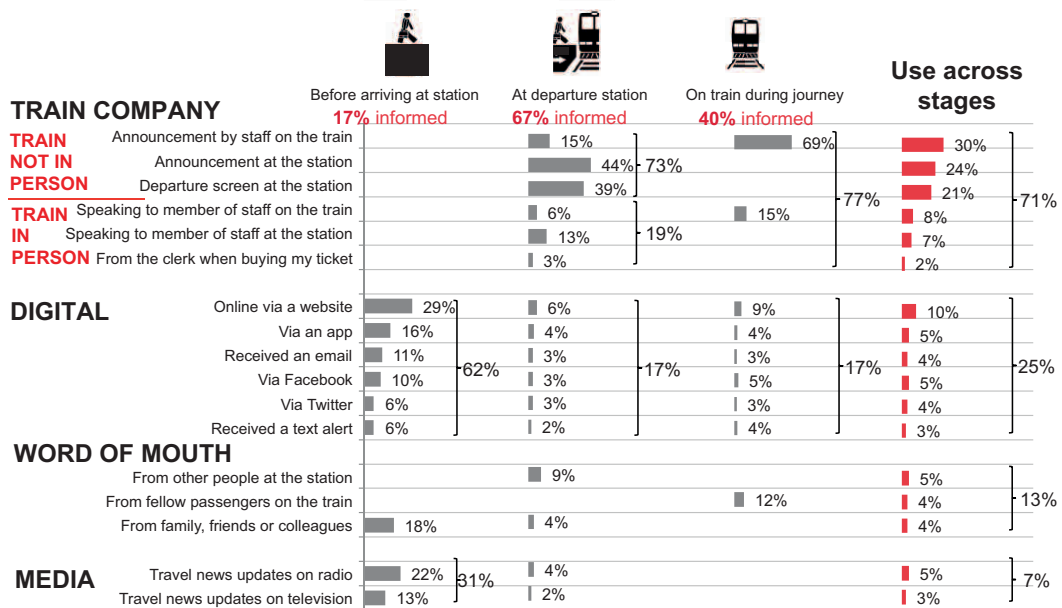
*"I'd like them to make it clear why the problems [on Southern] are so consistent. And for them to proactively suggest getting refunds and making the process easier."  
(Commuter, in-the-moment)*

  
SOURCE:  
In The  
Moment  
and  
Qual Deep  
Dive

# Information provided by journey stage

Information sources vary by journey stage: digital on the way, and non face-to-face sources at the station and on the train

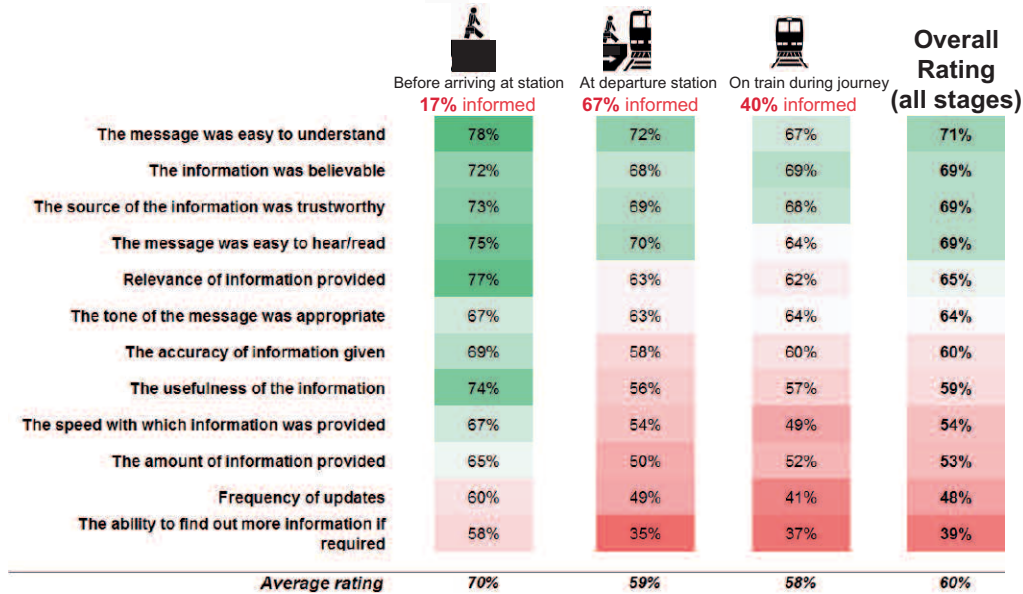
Stages of journey where information used: Amongst all informed by journey stage



Q23/25/27 In which of the following ways were you informed of the disruption before you arrived at the station/whilst at the station before the train departed/whilst on the train during your journey? Base: All accessing information at some point in journey n=1261 (mentions)

## Ratings of information sources used by journey stage vary, with stronger scores for sources used before arriving at the station

### Rating information used/accessed by journey stage: Amongst all informed by stage



Note: Fully-crewed trains consistently score higher net: well scores than driver-only operated trains for all rating measures (other than ease of understanding)

Q24/26/28 Thinking now about the information you received about the disruption [before you arrived at the station/whilst at the station before the train departed/whilst on the train during your journey] how would you rate the train company on the following? All accessing information at some point in journey n=1261 (mentions)

## The usage and experience of information sources accessed by journey stage vary

### Summary by stage: Amongst all informed by stage

	Before arriving at station 17% informed/made aware	At departure station 67% informed/made aware	On train during journey 40% informed/made aware
<b>Sources</b>	62% using digital information sources, mainly sites, then apps Most important stage for broadcast media used by 31%	73% made aware via announcements or departure screens More limited use of digital or speaking in person to staff	69% made aware via announcement on the train 15% speak to staff on the train – with nearly as many speaking to fellow passengers. 17% use digital sources
<b>Rating</b>	Consistently higher rating of information at this stage, particularly ease of understanding, trustworthiness, relevance and usefulness	Higher ratings for ease of understanding, trustworthiness, believability, ease of reading Lowest score for ability to find out more	Comparatively weaker scores for trust, speed and frequency of updates Poorest score remains ability to find out more
<b>Info needs</b>	Need to know severity to retain control. Would like solution from TOC Impact, problem, advice	Most stressful situation, with staff out of loop & announcements/screens inaccurate. Need min by min info Impact, advice, problem	Loss of control and resignation. Need rapid, accurate info, with personal ownership from staff Impact, problem, advice

## Those using broadcast media sources give consistently higher ratings than those using other sources

*Rating information by source used: Amongst all using across all journey stages*

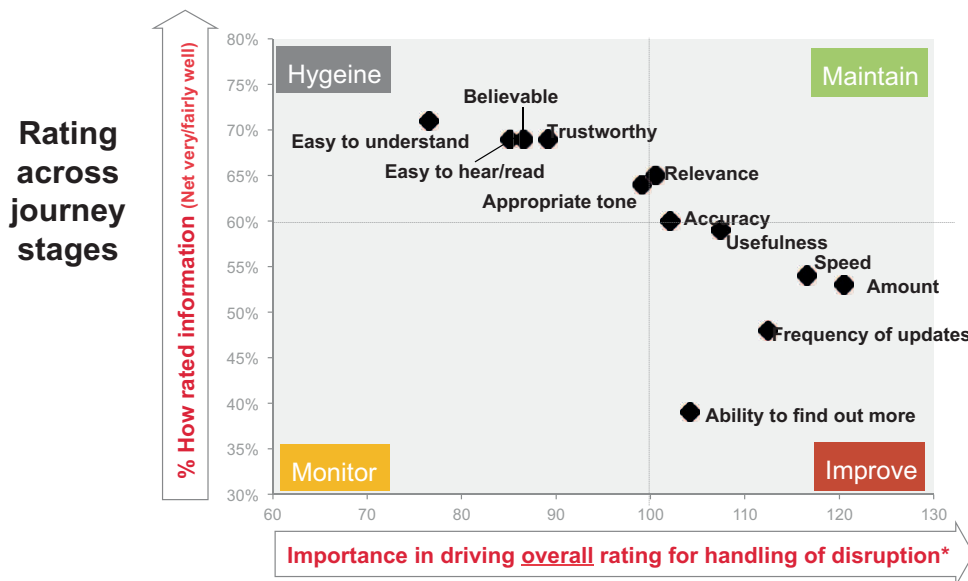
	ANY TRAIN (NET)	TRAIN NOT IN PERSON	TRAIN IN PERSON	DIGITAL	WORD OF MOUTH	BROADCAST MEDIA	OVERALL RATING (ALL STAGES)
The message was easy to understand	74%	77%	66%	65%	66%	79%	71%
The information was believable	71%	73%	68%	69%	69%	72%	69%
The source of the information was trustworthy	73%	74%	71%	65%	71%	71%	69%
The message was easy to hear/read	71%	72%	69%	68%	63%	76%	69%
Relevance of information provided	66%	67%	63%	67%	66%	76%	65%
The tone of the message was appropriate	68%	67%	67%	62%	67%	70%	64%
The accuracy of information given	61%	63%	54%	62%	63%	71%	60%
The usefulness of the information	58%	58%	57%	62%	63%	74%	59%
The speed with which information was provided	53%	52%	57%	62%	54%	68%	54%
The amount of information provided	52%	51%	55%	63%	58%	70%	53%
Frequency of updates	48%	48%	50%	55%	51%	71%	48%
The ability to find out more information if required	33%	32%	45%	56%	52%	60%	39%
<b>Average rating</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>60%</b>

Q24/26/28 Thinking now about the information you received about the disruption [before you arrived at the station/whilst at the station before the train departed/whilst on the train during your journey] how would you rate the train company on the following? Base: All accessing information at some point in journey n=1261 (mentions)

# How information can be improved

Across all journey stages, key areas to improve are the ability to find out more, and the frequency, amount and speed of info

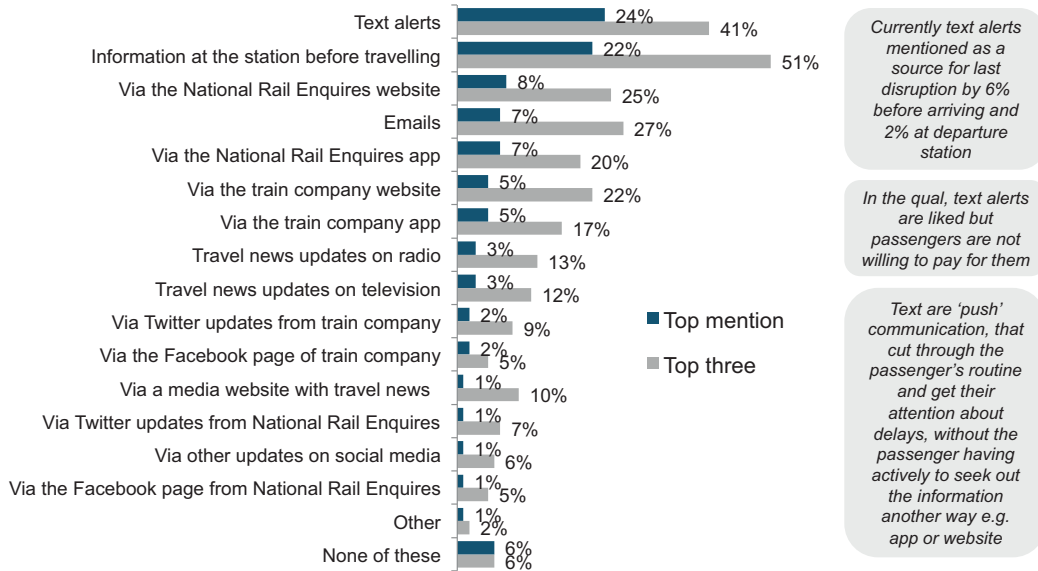
*Priority matrix: rating vs. drivers of performance for information across all journey stages*



Q24/26/28 how would you rate the train company on each of the following? \*Derived from statistical driver analysis  
Base: All accessing information at some point in journey n=1261 (mentions)

## Text alerts and information at the station are the preferred methods to find out about disruption before travelling

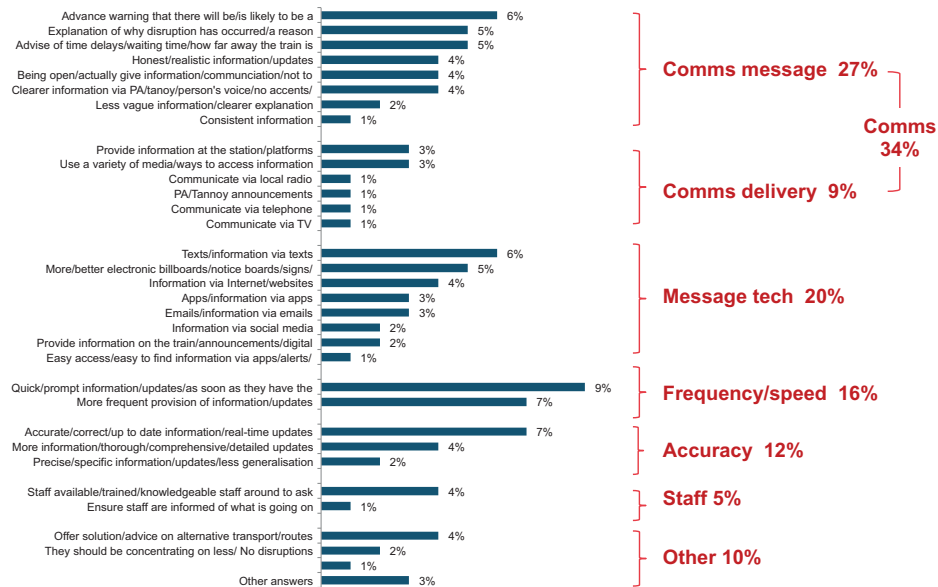
**Preferred methods of finding out about disruption in advance: All disrupted passengers**



Q.32 Now thinking more generally, how do you prefer to find out about disrupted train services in advance of travelling?  
Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in past week n=1020

## Improving the message, technology used to deliver messages, speed and accuracy, are the main themes for improvement

**General Improvements to information provided: All disrupted passengers**



Q 33 More generally, how do you think train companies might improve the information they provide to passengers about disruptions? Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in past week n=1020

Q 33 More generally, how do you think train companies might improve the information they provide to passengers about disruptions? Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in past week n=1020



## “In-the-moment” experience driven by key set of rules – all of which can be improved on



- T** **Time/timely** – quickly delivered information which focuses on time implications of the disruption
- R** **Real person** – automatic announcements are unpopular and suggest TOC doesn't care
- A** **Articulate and clear** – despite improvements in station PAs, announcements are not always clear
- I** **Informative and accurate** – passengers want to know the (real) reason for the disruption
- N** **New technology** – passengers feel that the industry should use as up-to-date technology as they do

## Forward planning is a key concern



**Time/timely** – tell me how long; tell me as early as possible so that I can plan; tell me as soon as the “railways” know (and at least as soon as I know); update me regularly

*“They should have told us sooner how long the delay was likely to be.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

*“I was frustrated that real time data was not being shared with all customers to give the real situation, rather than saying the train would be along sooner.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

*“I would have liked to have been informed whilst on the platform. There was a confusion over why we were waiting with no update by Tannoy or sign.”*  
Business traveller, in-the-moment

*“No information on train, picked up delays on Twitter.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

## Authenticity and ownership are key



**Real person** – ideally a “warm body” should make announcements and be present on platforms and trains; TOCs should use a human tone of voice in all communication; staff should personally own problem management

*“I would have liked an announcement from a human, rather than numbers on a board.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

*“It was awful, the train manager sounded bored when he told everyone that we were delayed, and offered no explanation as to why that was.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

*“Announcement was spoken in a calm, relaxed manner with a hint of being equally frustrated.”*  
Leisure, in-the-moment

## The classic complaint of difficult-to-hear station announcements...but it still happens



**Articulate and clear** – station announcements often still suffer from being unclear; “standard excuses” are unhelpfully general and thus unclear

*“You cannot believe what they say - it always changes and feels like they just go down an ‘excuses list’.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

*“Had no information about the disruption until I tweeted Southeastern. They told me there was a revised timetable and posted the link to it. The link explained that there would be cancelled services between Gravesend and Higham...but as these stations are before my station, even if I had seen this webpage I wouldn't have realised it would affect me as it was unclear.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

*“Tannoy announcements saying delays of up to 30 minutes even though it is quite clearly an hour late.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

*“Over the Tannoy there was a short announcement about the delay mentioning ‘engine’ but I didn't hear it properly.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

## “Standard excuses” lack ring of truth and thus credibility



**Informative and accurate** – provide a “real” reason so that passengers can second guess advice and “plan on”; ensure consistent information between all channels; give clear advice on alternative solutions

*“Supplied information was inaccurate compared to that I personally sourced from [traintimes.org.uk](http://traintimes.org.uk).”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

*“Just the facts - the live departure information is often just a joke. Why cannot Southeastern be honest and just say “no trains” rather than raising hopes.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

*“More detailed info in the alert email, since many trains were affected to some degree but only the one cancellation was mentioned. Sometimes websites and apps can be less up-to-date, so the email info is important.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

*“I was given conflicting information - different stations say different things and have different excuses. The timing boards changed constantly and did not match the website or the Network Rail mobile app.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

## Whilst not widely used, apps provided great interest in the groups



**New technology** – especially relevant for early warning, but also during journey – TOC and NRES apps should be heavily promoted  
Passengers in the groups demonstrated a huge appetite for these, being keen to see each others’ apps and take note of relevant URLs.

*“I’d like there to be updates on a smart phone app so that I know when exactly to leave my house so I’m not waiting in the freezing cold.”*  
Leisure, in-the-moment

*“I have seen the disruption on Twitter as I follow the National Rail account and followed the link to the website. No announcement has been made on board.”*  
Commuter, in-the-moment

# Summary of findings

## Summary of Findings (1 of 3)

- 1 Understanding the impact is the most important piece of information**  
 Delays are highly impactful, with 1 in 4 disrupted passengers not completing their journey as originally planned (i.e. not starting, starting but turning back or changing route). Those completing their planned journey were nearly 40 minutes late on average. The most important information for delayed passengers is understanding the impact, switching the emphasis of the current problem-impact-advice model
- 2 Understanding the problem followed by advice are key but change by stage**  
 After understanding the impact, those delayed at the station then require advice to understand the problem whereas for those delayed on the way to the station or on train understanding the problem is more important than advice
- 3 34% of our disrupted passengers defined the disruption as having been handled well**  
 Good handling is about the information being frequent, accurate and with a reason; and handled to minimise impact. Poor handling was given as a lack of information, no explanation and the train company not taking responsibility
- 4 Only 4 in 10 were given a specific reason by the train company for the delay**  
 43% were given a specific reason for the delay by the train company, with the main reasons provided being poor weather conditions or signalling problems. Being given a reason increases the overall rating for disruption handling significantly from 34% to 54%
- 5 92% were informed/made aware of the disruption at some point in the journey**  
 17% of disrupted passengers were informed/made aware before arriving at the station, with most (67%) made aware at the station before travelling, followed by 40% informed/made aware on the train

## Summary of Findings (2 of 3)

### 6 Different sources of information are accessed/available at different stages, driving a different information experience by stage:



#### Before arriving, digital and broadcast media are used; best rated information

For the 17% made aware of the disruption before arriving at the station, the key information is understanding the severity. Passengers on pre-booked tickets are keen to receive personalised messages from the train company, including a solution



#### At the station, announcements and displays main source. Frequency an issue

For the 67% made aware at the station, three in four are receiving information via announcements/displays, with few speaking to station staff or using digital sources. The key information needed is impact then advice. This is a stressful environment and frustration that displays not always accurate/helpful. Weaker ratings for ability to find out more



#### On the train, staff announcements provide most information. Weakest rating

For the 40% made aware on the train, most were made aware of the delay from an announcement by staff on the train. Delayed passengers on the train have a feeling of resignation and anxiety, with a loss of control. Train staff need to take personal ownership with rapid and frequent update.

## Summary of Findings (3 of 3)

### 7 Across journey stages there are consistent areas to improve information

Across all journey stages, key areas that are important to customers and where performance is currently weaker include the frequency, amount and speed of information and the ability to find out more

### 8 Before travelling, text alerts and information at the station are preferred

Despite only 6% being made aware of delays by text alerts before travelling, when prompted, text alerts are the preferred method of being informed, highlighting the preference for information being pushed to passengers

### 9 Disrupted passengers put forward a wide range of suggested improvements

Improving the message, technology used to deliver messages, speed and accuracy of information are the main themes for improvement. However, it will be important not to forget those passengers who do not have smartphones or access to other modern technologies.

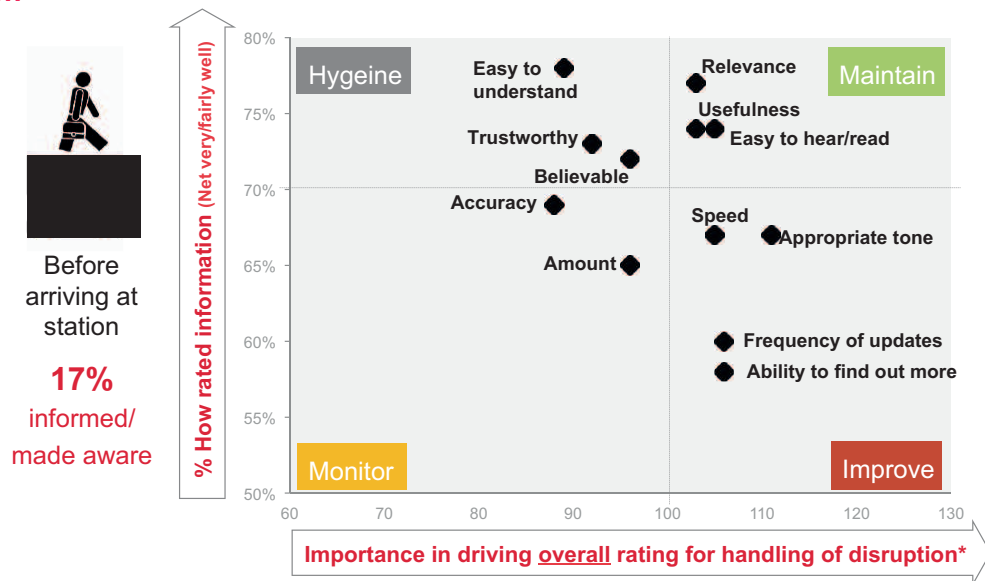
### 10 “In-the-moment” experience driven by key set of rules – all can be improved

Information needs to be: **T**ime/timely, provided by a **R**eal person, **A**rticulate and clear, **I**nformative and accurate, increasing use of **N**ew technology

# Appendix 1: additional information

Key areas to improve for information before arriving are the frequency of updates and ability to find out more

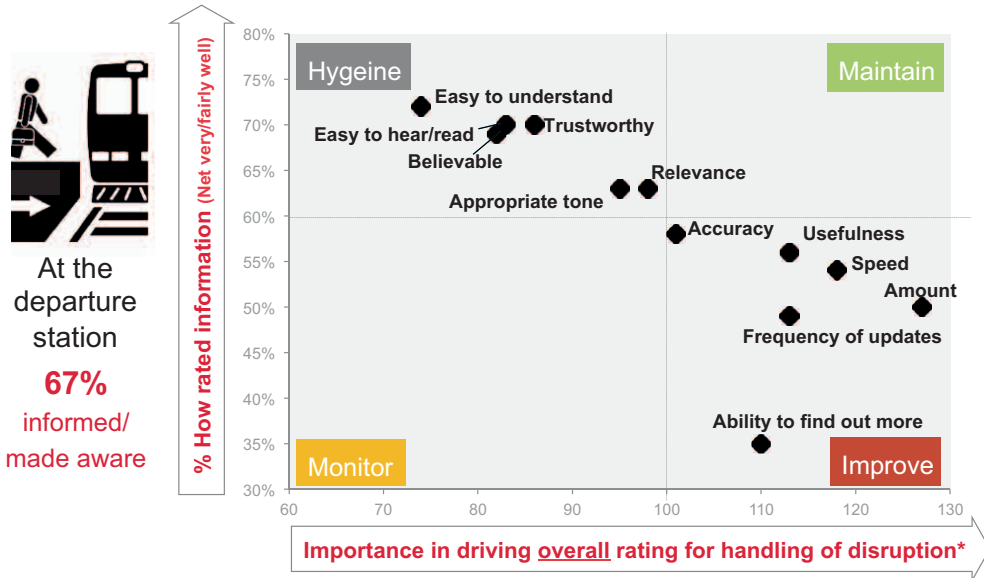
*Priority matrix: rating vs. drivers of performance for information used before arriving at station*



Q24 how would you rate the train company on each of the following? \*Derived from statistical driver analysis  
Base: All respondents who were informed of the disruption before they arrived at their departure station n=151

Key areas to improve for information at the station are the ability to find out more; the amount, speed, and frequency of updates

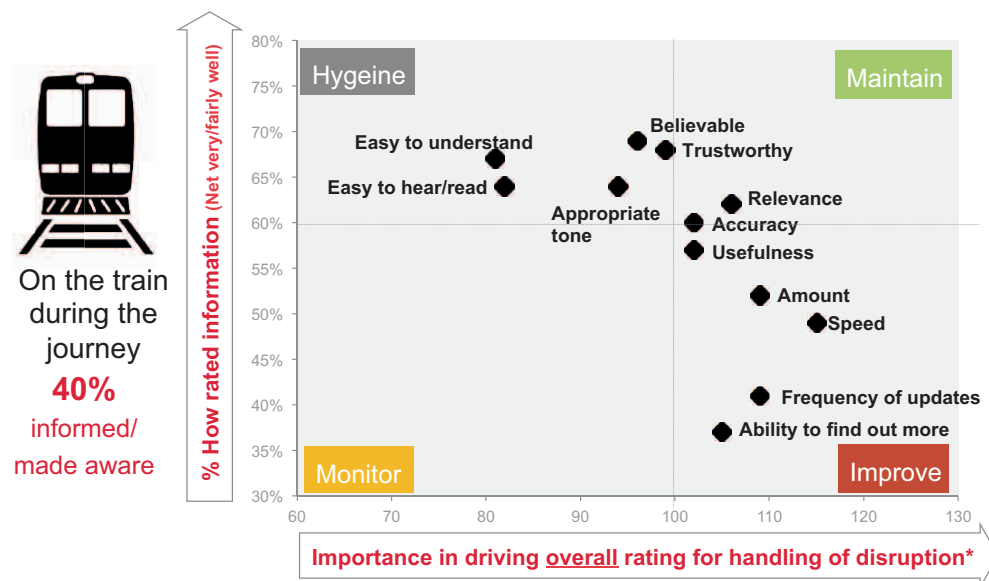
**Priority matrix: rating vs. drivers of performance for information at the departure station**



Q26 how would you rate the train company on each of the following? \*Derived from statistical driver analysis  
Base: All respondents who were informed of the disruption at their departure station n=685

Key areas to improve for information on the train are the ability to find out more; the frequency, amount and speed of updates

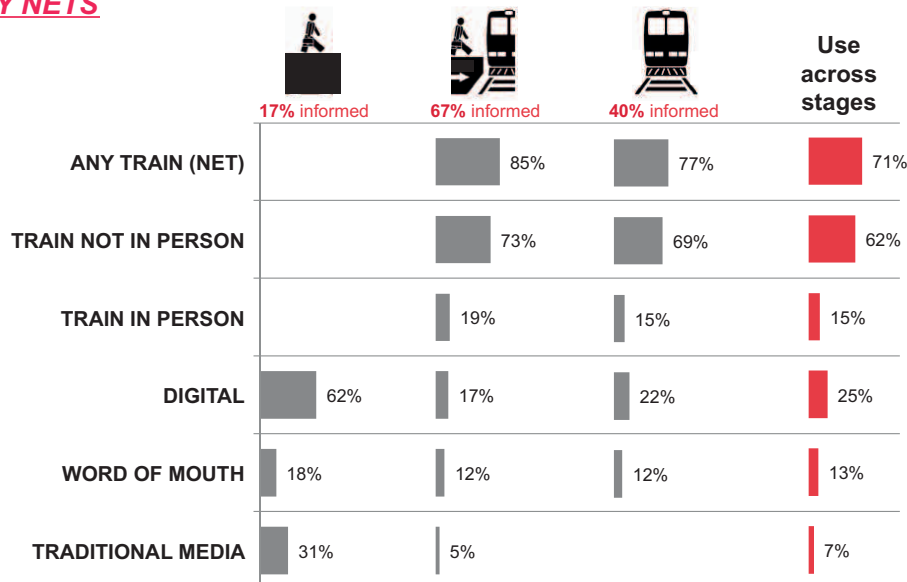
**Priority matrix: rating vs. drivers of performance for information on the train**



Q28 how would you rate the train company on each of the following? \*Derived from statistical driver analysis  
Base: All respondents who were informed of the disruption while on the train n=420

Information sources vary by journey stage, with the main source across stages being non face-to-face sources

**Stages of journey where information used: Amongst all informed by journey stage**  
**SUMMARY NETS**



Q23/25/27 In which of the following ways were you informed of the disruption before you arrived at the station/whilst at the station before the train departed/whilst on the train during your journey? Base: All accessing information at some point in journey n=1261 (mentions)

**Summary table: analysis of ratings by TOC crew type**

	TOC Crew Type		Diff
	Generally, driver and guard	Generally, driver only	
<b>OVERALL RATINGS – NET WELL</b>			
Unweighted base	557	231	
Q.18 Overall, how well do you think the train company dealt with the disruption on this last occasion?	40%	32%	8%
Q.20 Overall, how would you rate the train company on keeping you informed about the disruption ?	44%	39%	5%
Q.21 Overall, how would you rate the train company in terms of the level of concern they showed ?	35%	32%	3%
Q.31 Overall, how would you rate the train company for the consistency of information they provided?	50%	43%	7%
<b>INFORMATION RATINGS – NET WELL</b>			
Unweighted base - all mentions	687	321	
The ability to find out more information if required (Summary - All Stages)	42%	41%	1%
The tone of the message was appropriate (Summary - All Stages)	65%	65%	0%
The message was easy to understand (Summary - All Stages)	70%	73%	-3%
The message was easy to hear/read (Summary - All Stages)	70%	67%	3%
The source of the information was trustworthy (Summary - All Stages)	70%	67%	3%
Relevance of information provided (Summary - All Stages)	66%	64%	2%
Frequency of updates (Summary - All Stages)	51%	46%	5%
The speed with which information was provided (Summary - All Stages)	57%	52%	5%
The usefulness of the information (Summary - All Stages)	61%	57%	4%
The accuracy of information given (Summary - All Stages)	62%	59%	3%
The amount of information provided (Summary - All Stages)	57%	50%	7%
<b>WHERE INFORMED / MADE AWARE</b>			
Q.22/22b At which points of your journey were you informed or made aware of the disruption? (Total Mentions)	Generally, driver and guard	Generally, driver only	
Unweighted base	557	231	
NET: Any	92%	94%	-2%
Before you arrived at the departure station	20%	19%	1%
At the departure station	67%	70%	-3%
On the train during the journey	42%	45%	-3%
At your destination station	8%	15%	-7%



# Appendix 2: additional findings from sample of disrupted passengers who booked via thetrainline.com

## Headlines for the trainline sample



- 1 Disrupted passengers of the trainline were older than the main disrupted passenger sample, and use the trainline on average 17 times per year

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- 2 74% of disrupted passengers with the trainline were able to complete their planned journey (in line with the main sample), although they were more likely to be given a reason for the delay (a possible reflection of the more significant type of incident suffered by the trainline sample)

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- 3 Across main rating measures, delayed passengers of the trainline (vs. the main sample) were less likely to state 'neither', with higher NET 'well' and NET 'poor' scores. This is likely a combination of the recency of the survey to the time of incident, and that the trainline incidents were more significant and as such generated a stronger sense of handling

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- 4 Disrupted passengers of the trainline, compared to the main sample, gave lower ratings for information at the station and higher ratings for information on the train. The relative order of rating scores is consistent with the main sample, with a very low rating for 'finding out more'

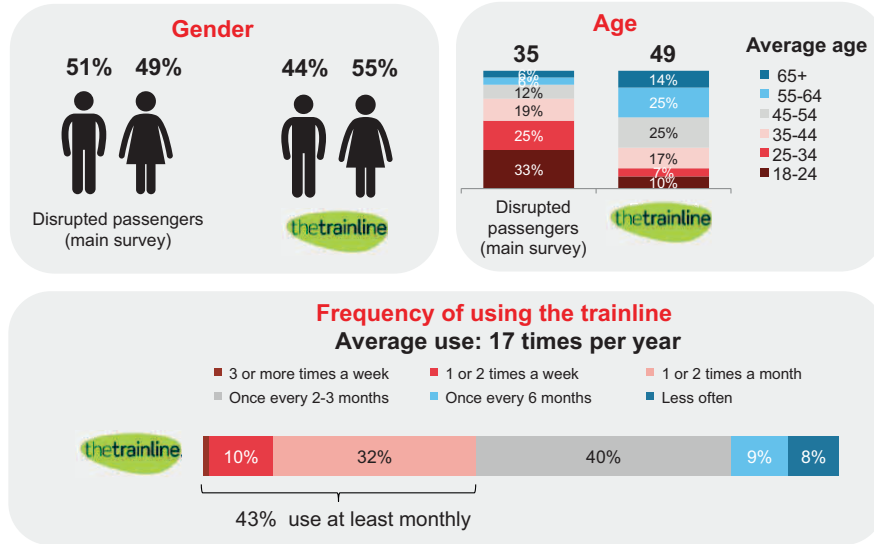
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- 5 Amongst those made aware/using information sources, passengers of the trainline have a higher use of train based sources (screens, announcements, staff) and a lower use of digital sources (web, apps twitter etc.) – likely reflecting the older average age.

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Trainline passengers were older than the general disrupted passenger sample, and use the trainline on average 17 times per year

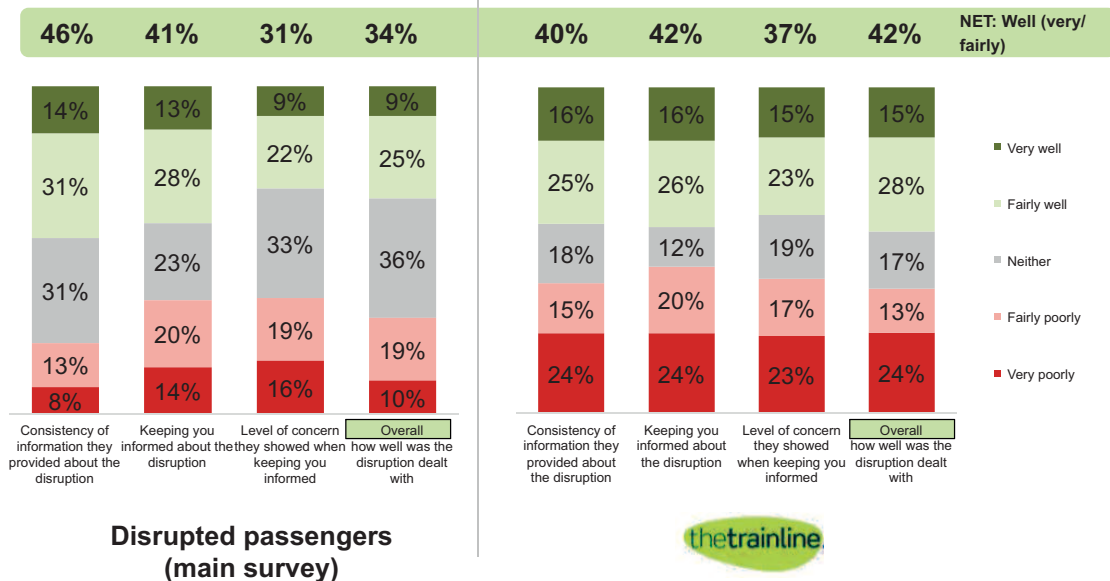
**Profile of disrupted passengers of the trainline surveyed vs. main survey disrupted passengers: in survey period**



Q1 Gender, Q2 Age, Q4 Frequency of booking train tickets with trainline (only asked of trainline respondents).  
Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in the past week n=1020/All trainline respondents n=257

Across main rating measures, delayed passengers of the trainline (vs. the main sample) were less likely to state 'neither', with higher NET 'well' and NET 'poor' scores.

**Overall how well was the disruption dealt with in terms of....:**



Q18, Q20, Q21, Q31 Overall, how well do you think the train company in terms of....?  
Base: All respondents who have experienced delay in the past week n=1020/All trainline respondents n=257

Disrupted passengers of the trainline compared to the main sample give lower ratings for information at the station and higher ratings for on the train. The relative order is consistent, with a very low rating for 'finding out more'

**Rating information used/accessed by journey stage: Amongst all informed by stage**

	17% informed Disrupted passengers (main survey)		5% informed trainline		67% informed Disrupted Passengers (main survey)		59% informed trainline		40% informed Disrupted Passengers (main survey)		50% informed trainline		Overall rating (all stages)	
The message was easy to understand	78%		72%	56%	67%	74%	71%	64%	67%	74%	71%	64%		
The information was believable	72%		68%	64%	69%	80%	68%	72%	69%	80%	68%	72%		
The source of the information was trustworthy	73%		69%	64%	68%	80%	69%	71%	68%	80%	69%	71%		
The message was easy to hear/read	75%		70%	56%	64%	70%	61%	69%	64%	70%	69%	61%		
Relevance of information provided	77%		63%	54%	62%	73%	65%	63%	62%	73%	65%	63%		
The tone of the message was appropriate	67%		63%	52%	64%	72%	64%	60%	64%	72%	64%	60%		
The accuracy of information given	69%		58%	58%	60%	67%	60%	61%	60%	67%	60%	61%		
The usefulness of the information	74%		56%	52%	57%	83%	59%	57%	57%	83%	59%	57%		
The speed with which information was provided	67%		54%	40%	49%	53%	54%	46%	49%	53%	54%	46%		
The amount of information provided	65%		50%	36%	52%	55%	53%	44%	52%	55%	53%	44%		
Frequency of updates	60%		49%	35%	41%	54%	48%	43%	41%	54%	48%	43%		
The ability to find out more information if required	58%		35%	27%	37%	30%	39%	27%	37%	30%	39%	27%		
<b>Average rating</b>	<b>70%</b>		<b>59%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>56%</b>		

Q24/26/28 Thinking now about the information you received about the disruption [before you arrived at the station/whilst at the station before the train departed/whilst on the train during your journey] how would you rate the train company on the following? Base: All accessing information at some point in journey n=1261 (mentions)/All trainline respondents n=293 (mentions) Trainline sample before arriving at station too small to report (n=14)

Amongst those made aware/using information sources, passengers of the trainline have higher use of train based sources (screens, announcements, staff) and lower use of digital sources (web, apps twitter etc.)

**Stages of journey where information used: Amongst all informed by journey stage**  
**SUMMARY NETS**

	17% informed Disrupted Passengers (main survey)		5% informed trainline		67% informed Disrupted Passengers (main survey)		59% informed trainline		40% informed Disrupted Passengers (main survey)		50% informed trainline		Overall rating (all stages)	
<b>ANY TRAIN (NET)</b>			Base too low to report		85%	91%		77%	91%		71%	87%		
<b>TRAIN NOT IN PERSON</b>					73%	72%		69%	84%		62%	73%		
<b>TRAIN IN PERSON</b>					19%	36%		15%	14%		15%	25%		
<b>DIGITAL</b>	62%				17%	3%		22%	6%		25%	6%		
<b>WORD OF MOUTH</b>	18%				12%	12%		12%	13%		13%	12%		
<b>TRADITIONAL MEDIA</b>	31%				5%	1%					7%	2%		

Q23/25/27 In which of the following ways were you informed of the disruption before you arrived at the station/whilst at the station before the train departed/whilst on the train during your journey? All accessing information at some point in journey n=1261 (mentions) All trainline respondents n=293 (mentions)



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### Contact Passenger Focus

Any enquiries regarding this report should be addressed to:

Guy Dangerfield  
Passenger Issues Team  
t 07711 319760  
e [guy.dangerfield@passengerfocus.org.uk](mailto:guy.dangerfield@passengerfocus.org.uk)

Keith Bailey  
Research Team  
t 0300 123 0822  
e [keith.bailey@passengerfocus.org.uk](mailto:keith.bailey@passengerfocus.org.uk)

Fleetbank House  
2-6 Salisbury Square  
London  
EC4Y 8JX

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