



## A passenger perspective on the Northern franchise

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# Passenger Focus

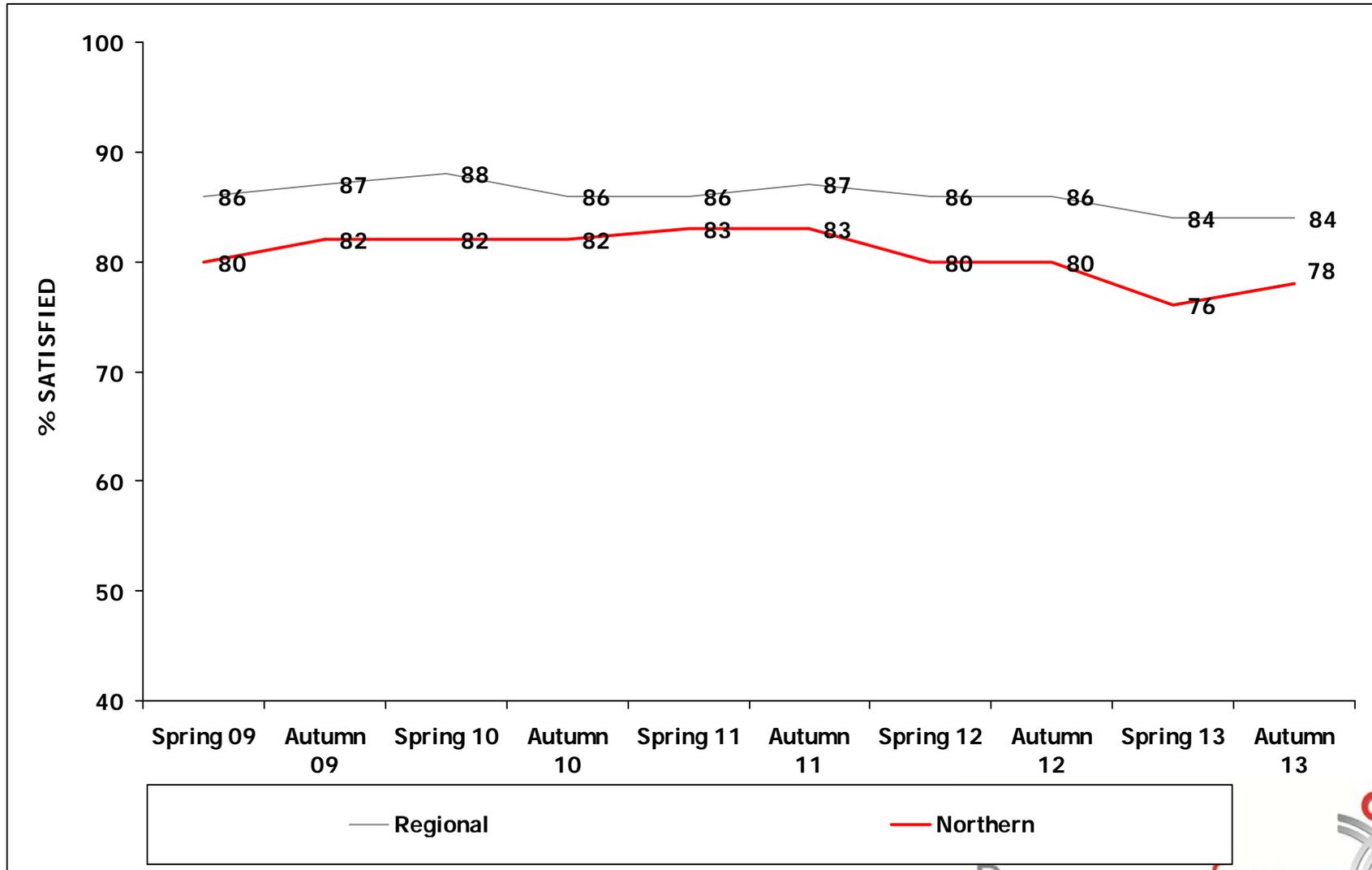
- Independent watchdog for Britain's rail passengers\*
- Extensive research to inform evidence-based campaigning
- Aim to influence decisions on behalf of passengers
- Work with DfT and industry to encourage passenger interests to be placed at heart of franchise specification and bid proposals

\* Also bus, coach and tram passenger representation in England outside of London. New role proposed for road users.

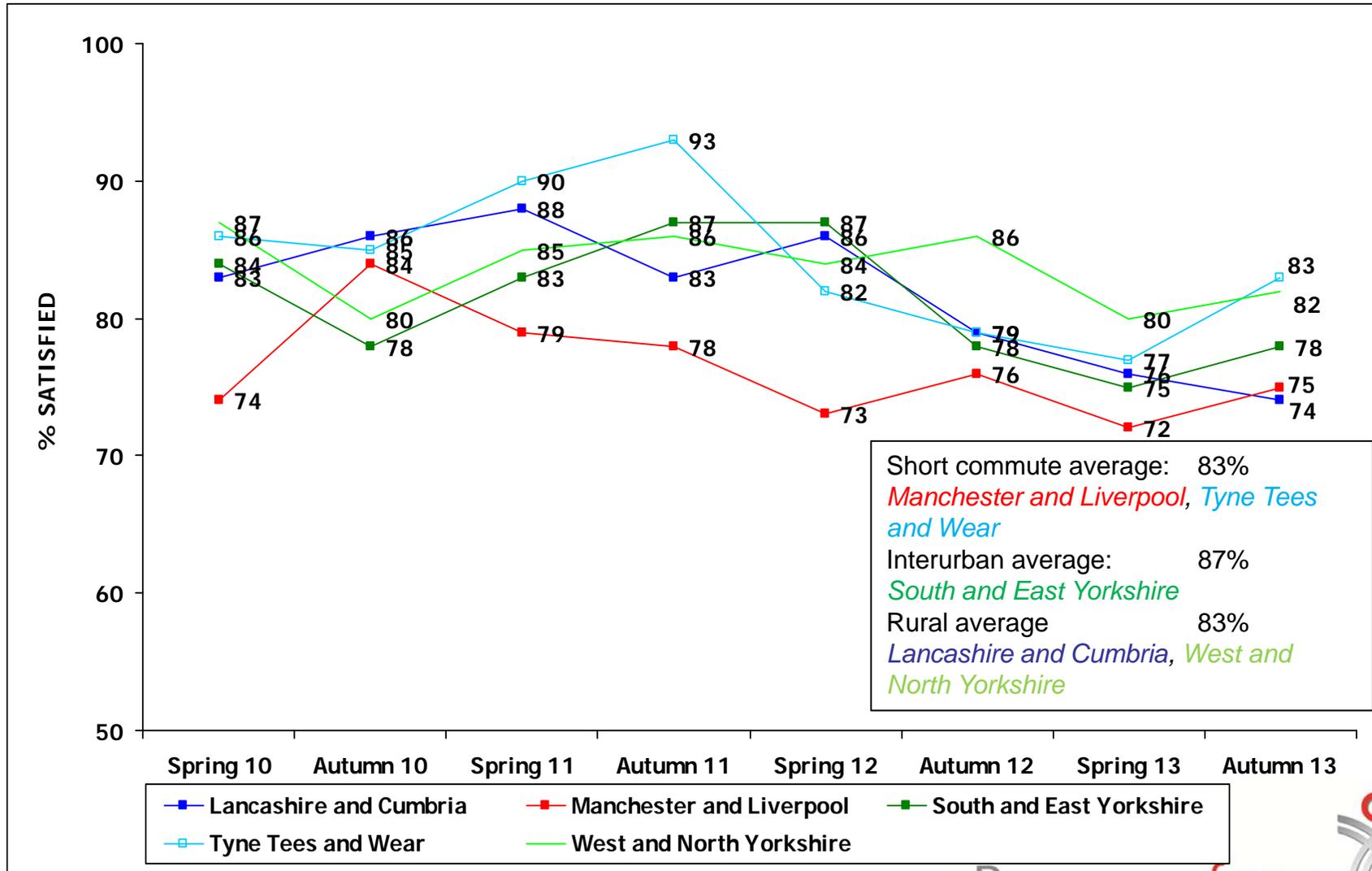
# Topics:

- National Rail Passenger Survey results
- Passenger priorities for improvement
- Qualitative research conducted with Northern and TPE passengers
- Transparency and passenger engagement
- High level recommendations for franchise

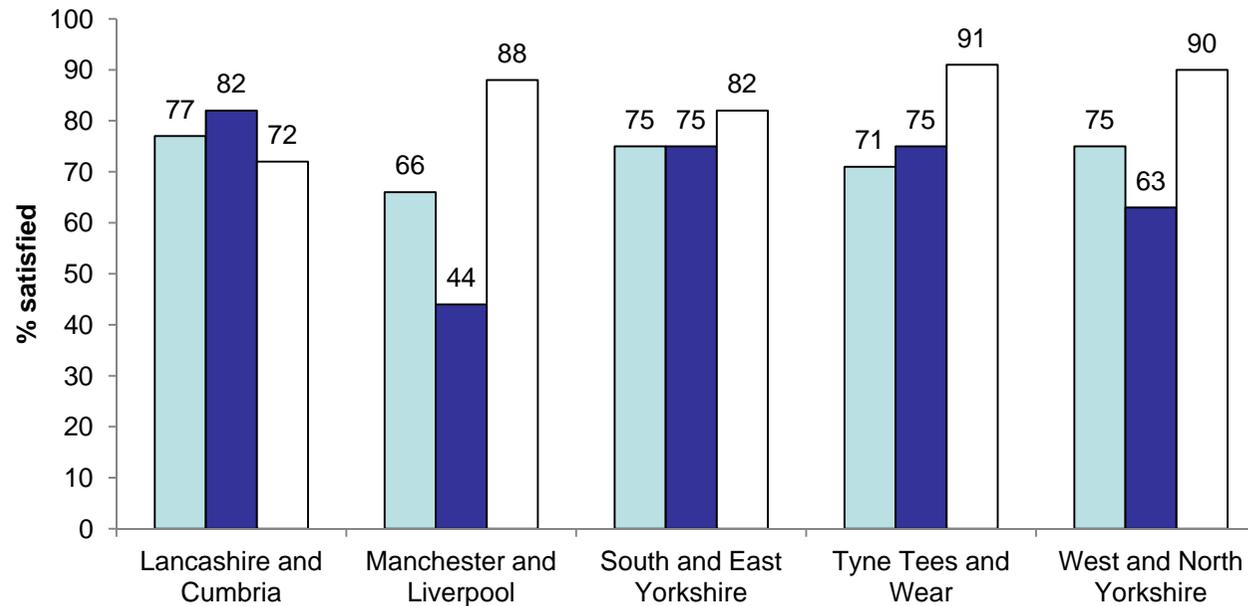
## TREND IN OVERALL SATISFACTION



## TREND IN OVERALL SATISFACTION: NORTHERN BY ROUTE

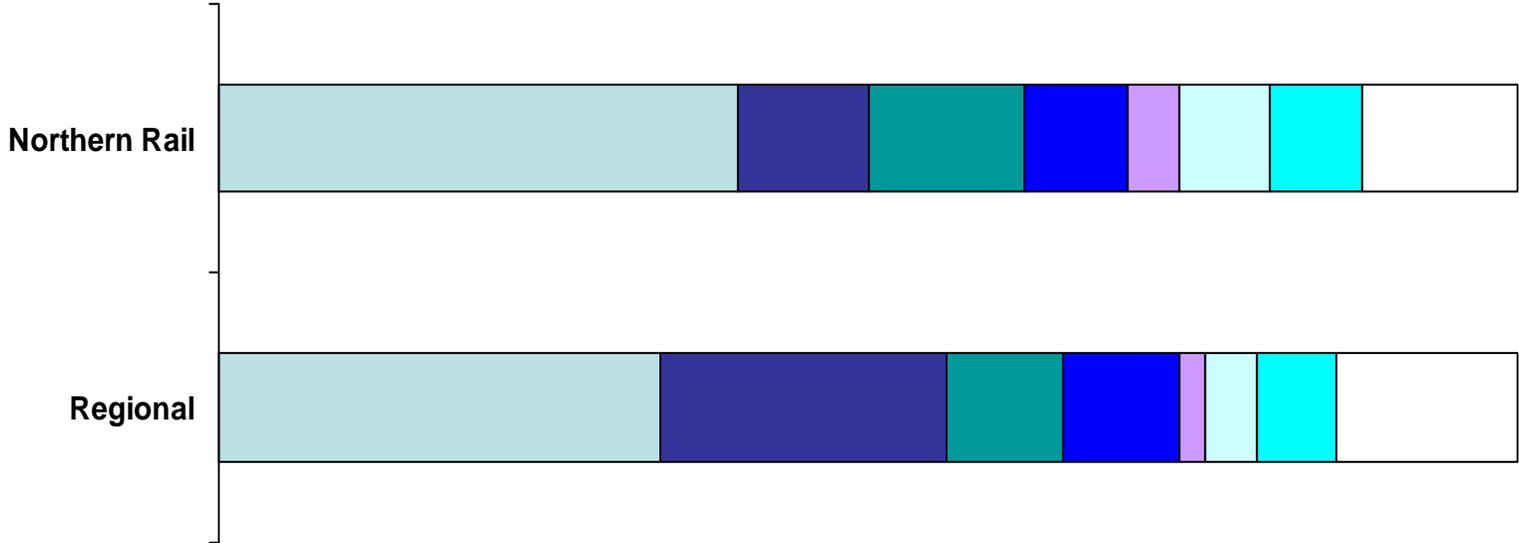


## Northern: overall satisfaction by route and journey type (autumn 2013)



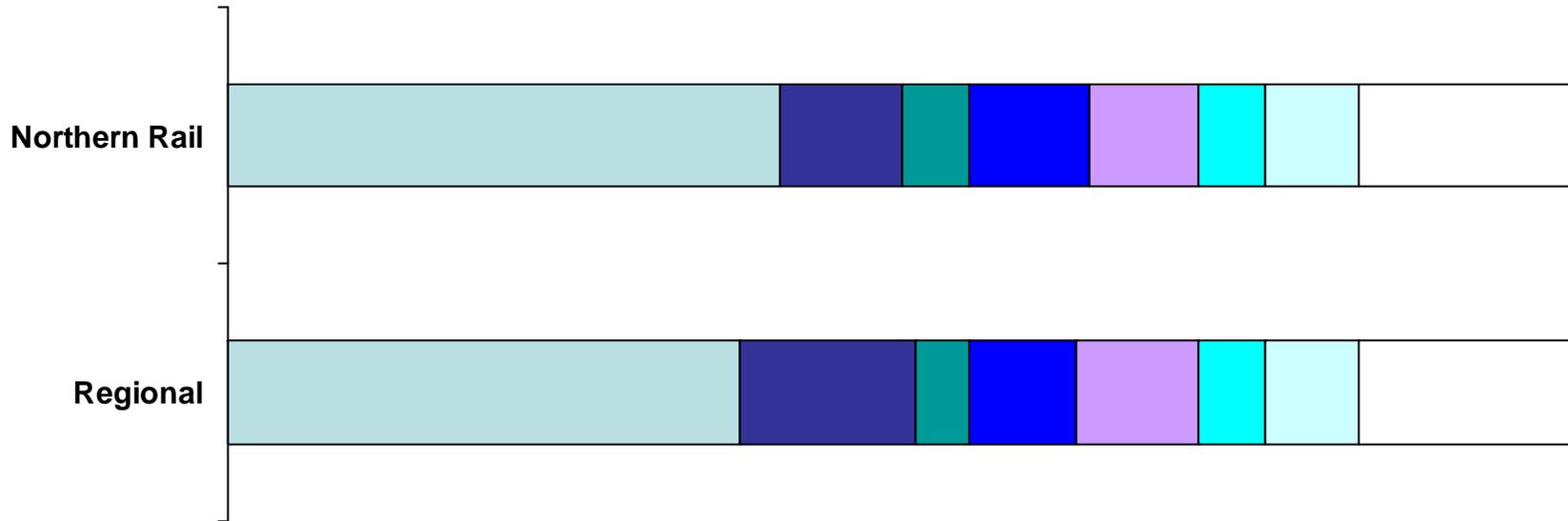
■ Commute ■ Business □ Leisure

Drivers of customer satisfaction – Spring 2013/ Autumn 2013  
 (bar size shows share of overall satisfaction due to factor)



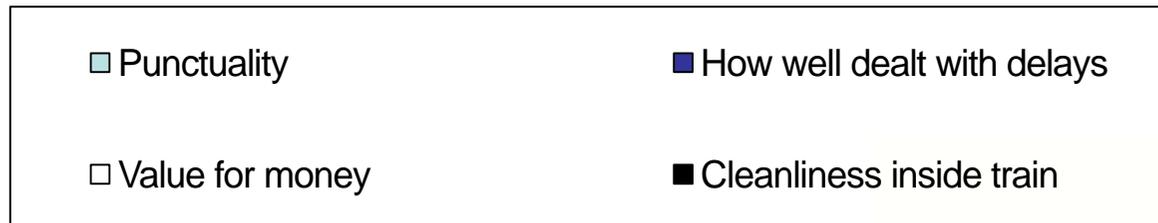
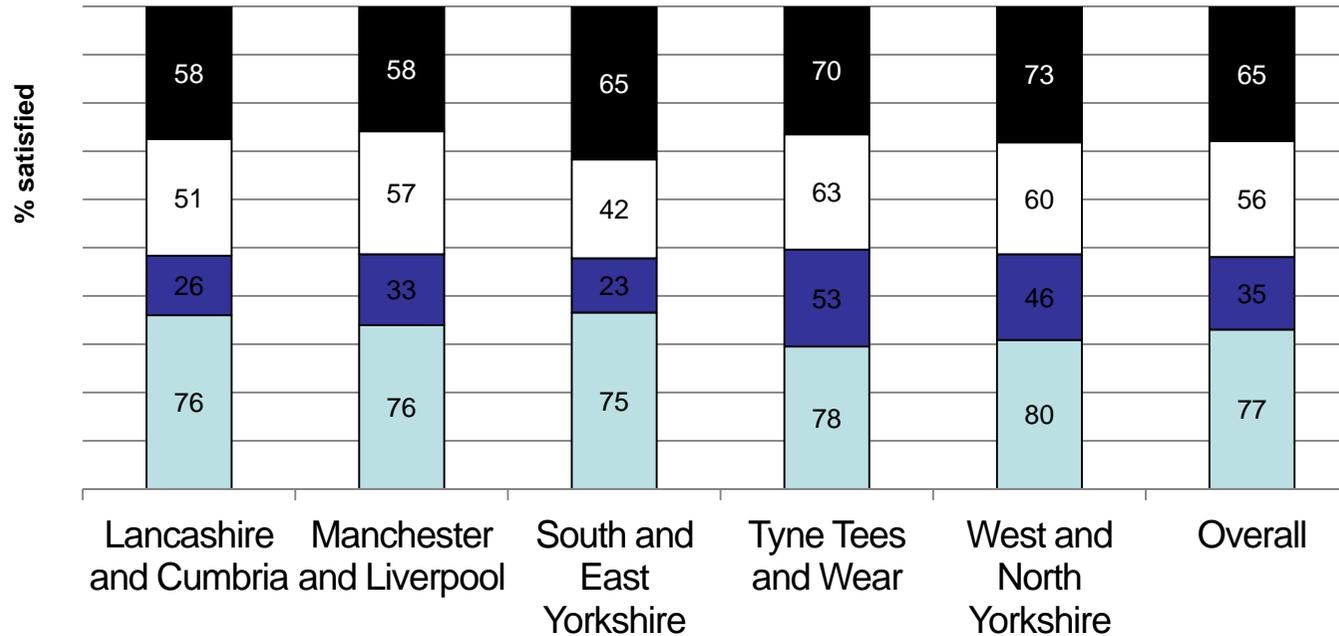
- Punctuality/reliability
- Cleanliness inside train
- The ease of being able to get on/off the train
- Comfort of the seating area
- Provision of information about train times/platforms
- Value for money
- Overall station environment
- Others

Drivers of customer dissatisfaction – Autumn 2012/ Spring 2013  
(bar size shows share of overall satisfaction due to factor)

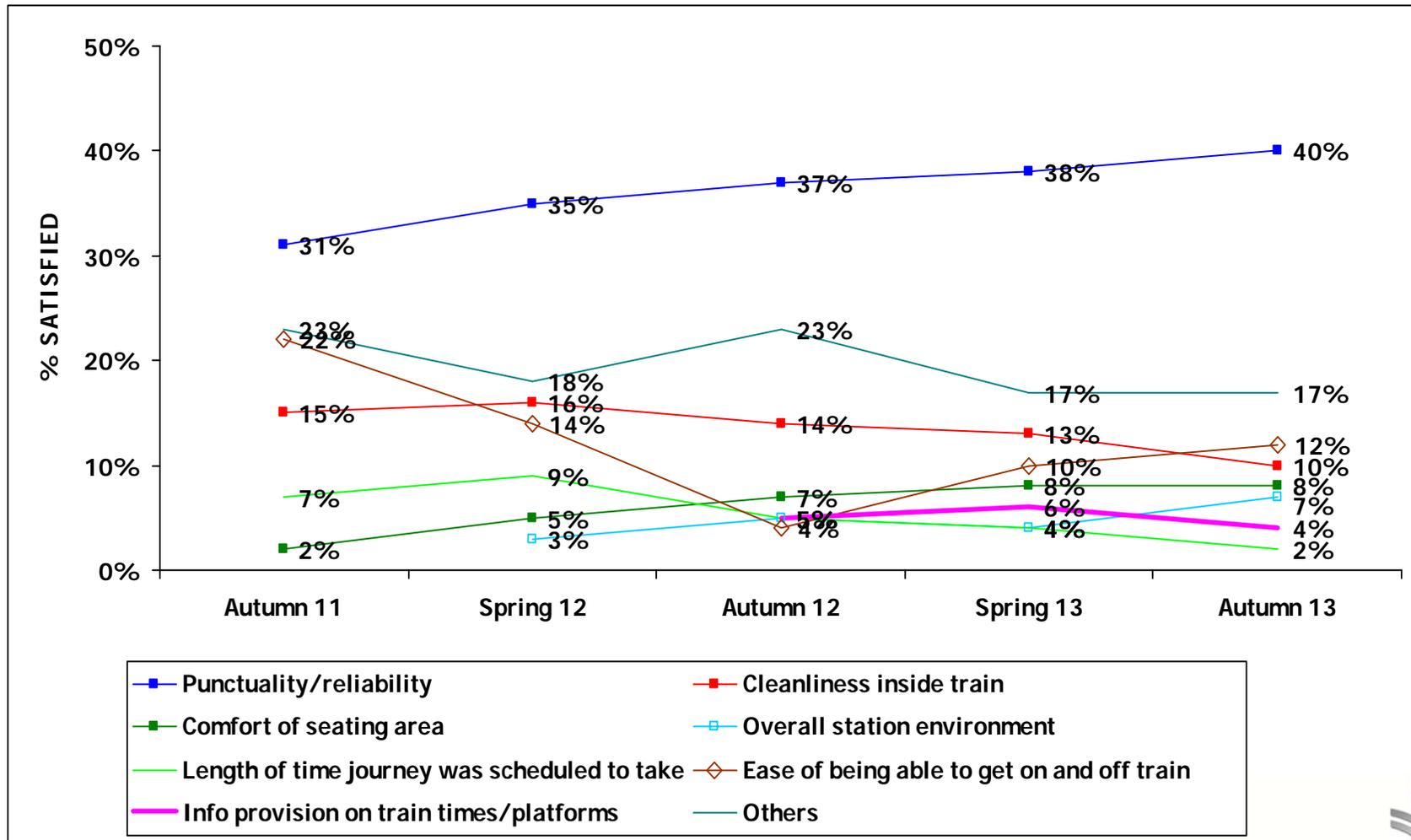


- How train company dealt with delays
- Punctuality/reliability
- Length of time journey was scheduled to take
- Cleanliness inside train
- How request to station staff was handled
- Comfort of the seating area
- Ease of being able to get on and off the train
- Others

## Northern: satisfaction by route (autumn 2013)

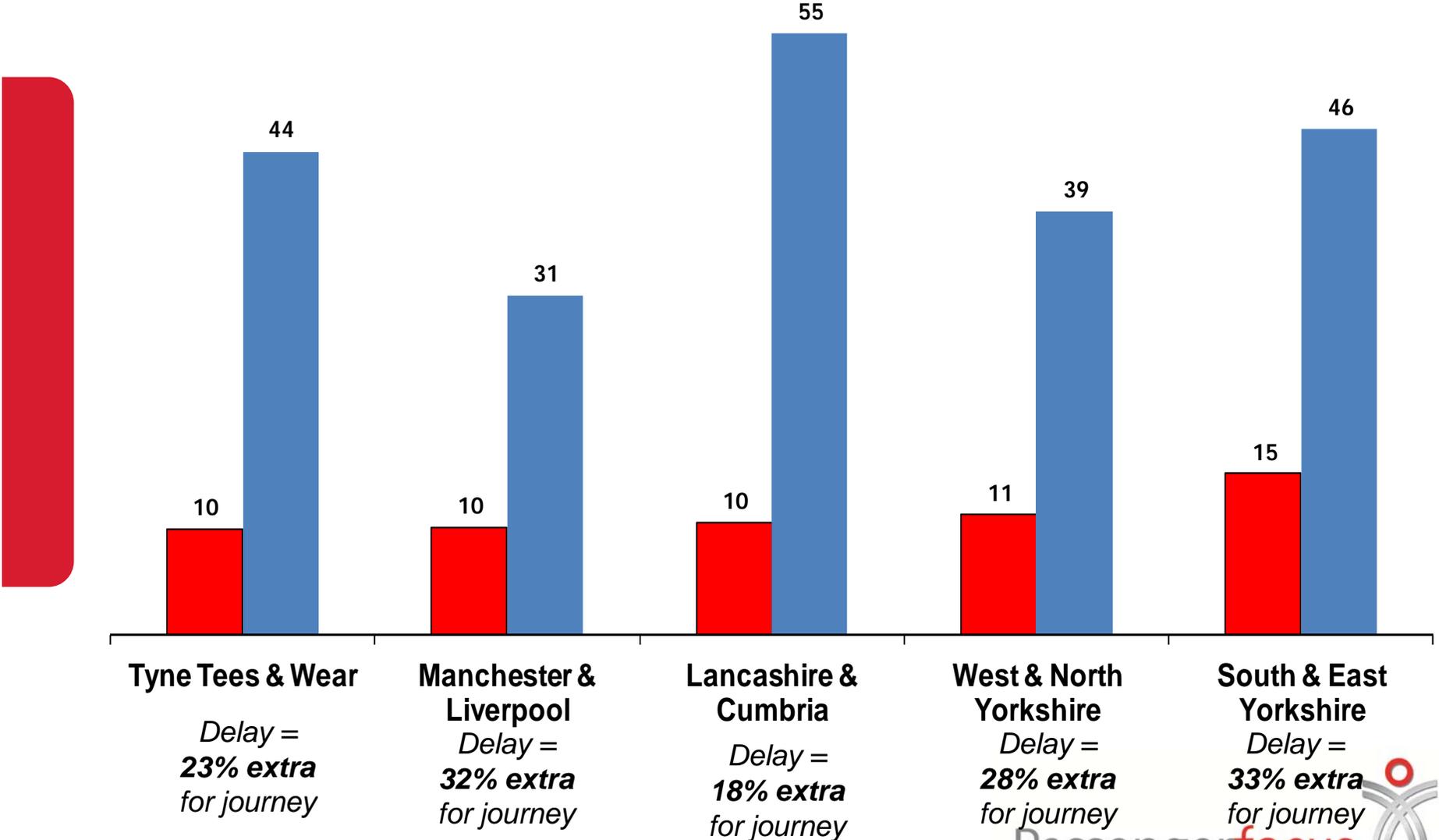


## Drivers of customer satisfaction – change over last two years



# LENGTH OF DELAY – NORTHERN BUILDING BLOCKS

(Mean length in minutes)



**Tyne Tees & Wear**

*Delay =  
23% extra  
for journey*

**Manchester & Liverpool**

*Delay =  
32% extra  
for journey*

**Lancashire & Cumbria**

*Delay =  
18% extra  
for journey*

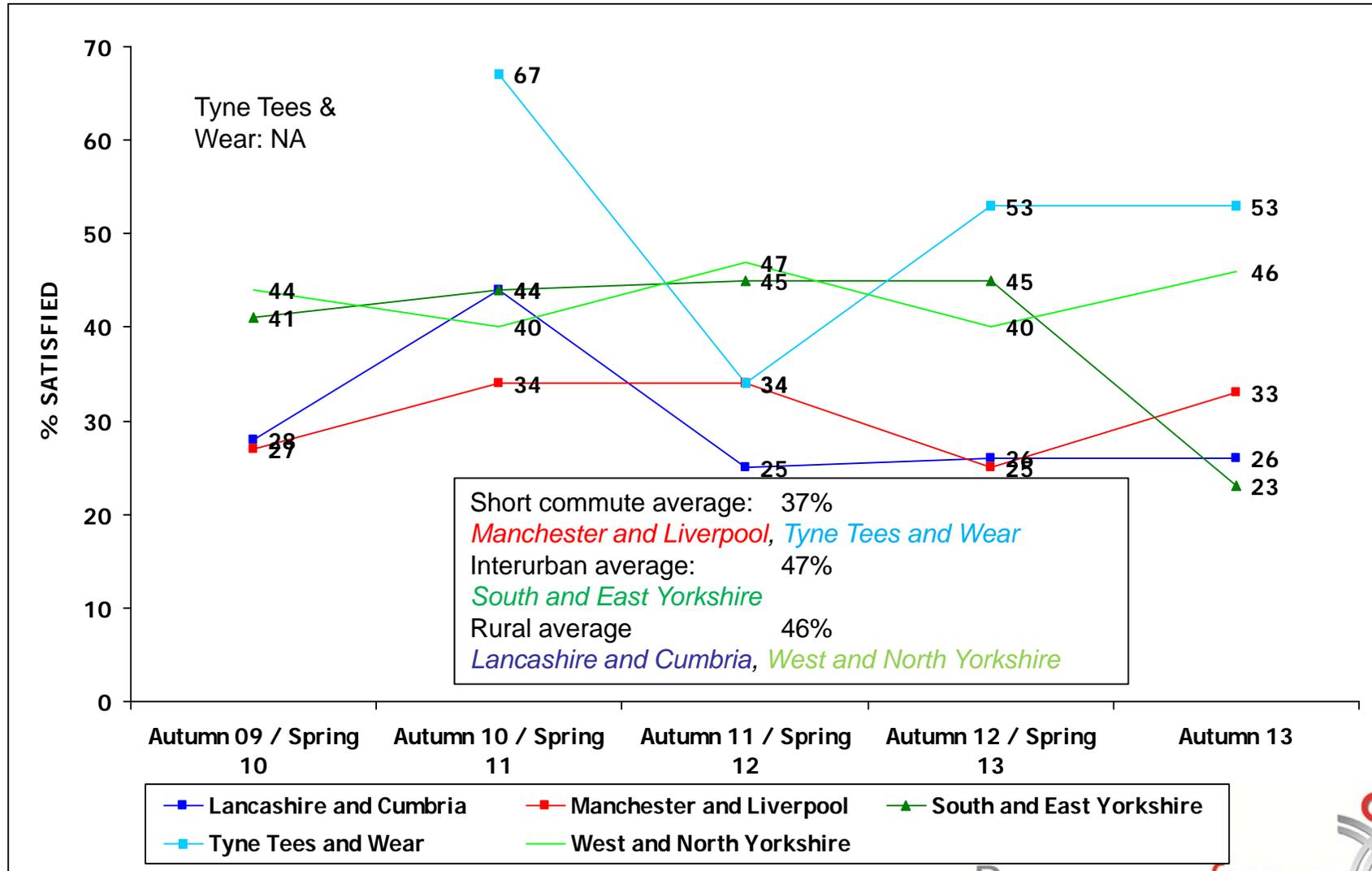
**West & North Yorkshire**

*Delay =  
28% extra  
for journey*

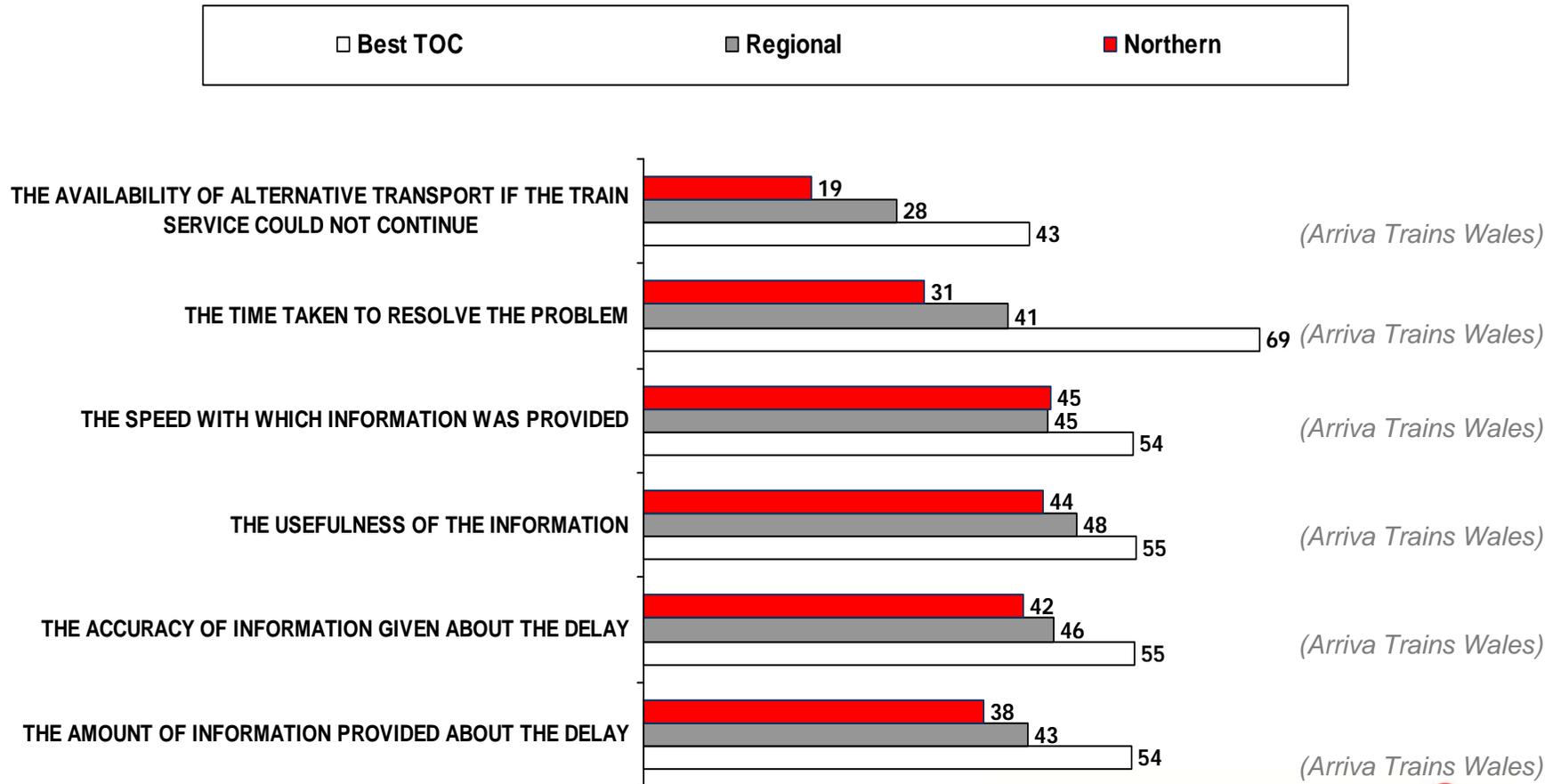
**South & East Yorkshire**

*Delay =  
33% extra  
for journey*

## TREND IN HANDLING OF DELAYS Northern by route



## % SAYING NORTHERN DID WELL ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF DELAYS – VERSUS OTHER REGIONAL TOCS



## Building block/route data for Northern

Station attributes	Lancashire & Cumbria	Manchester & Liverpool	South & East Yorkshire	Tyne Tees & Wear	West & North Yorkshire
Overall satisfaction with the station	74	72	80	86	79
Ticket buying facilities	81	65	88	86	80
Provision of information about train times/platforms	76	75	88	84	89
The upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	68	72	80	78	76
Cleanliness	63	72	84	84	81
The facilities and services	53	44	71	71	54
The attitudes and helpfulness of the staff	70	73	78	77	77
Connections with other forms of public transport	62	68	80	72	62
Facilities for car parking	56	52	62	56	50
Overall environment	66	69	83	73	72
Your personal security whilst using the station	64	66	76	68	67
The availability of staff	63	58	63	66	59
The provision of shelter facilities	76	67	78	77	73
Availability of seating	62	51	64	70	57
<b><i>How request to station staff was handled</i></b>	<b><i>95</i></b>	<b><i>87</i></b>	<b><i>89</i></b>	<b><i>92</i></b>	<b><i>77</i></b>
The choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities available	38	42	56	45	47

# Passenger priorities for improvement

- Update of previous national and regional work to be published shortly
- Typically, top factors feature:
  - Value for money
  - Punctuality and reliability
  - Sufficient train services (frequency)
  - Getting a seat
  - Information if there is delay

# 2012 findings – Opportunities for improvement on Northern

*I want the company to do more than just provide a service that works, but aspire to provide a great service  
(Sheffield – Commuter)*

- Aspects of service which are passenger priorities for improvement
  - Rolling stock
  - Overcrowding
  - Functionality of stations
  - Fare evasion (= higher fares for honest users and worse service)
  - All generating a feeling of poor value for money
- Other views explored included staffing and timetables

*They have a mentality of thinking that if it runs, it's OK – rather than thinking how could we run this better?  
(Sheffield – Leisure)*

# Northern Rail rolling stock seen as not acceptable

The rolling stock is dated and not well-maintained

*A bit dingy, pretty well worn, an old feel to it – maybe that's their intention, maybe it adds to the atmosphere...but I doubt it...I'm not convinced myself... How about some new trains mate?!*  
(Scotland - Leeds - Business)

*Like an old steam train*  
(Sheffield - Leisure)

*We only get London's rejects*  
(Leeds - Leisure)

*They're like the coaches you had when you went to the swimming baths at school, the coaches in the sixties*  
(Middlesbrough - Commuter)

*Some of the rolling stock is almost decrepit...its 1950s-1960s rolling stock*  
(Manchester - Commuter)

*They are like nodding donkeys*  
(Sheffield – Commuter)

*It's higher than a bus far, but its just like a bus, a bus on rails*  
(Leeds – Leisure)

Satisfaction with 'upkeep and repair of the train is lowest of all 19 franchised TOCs

**54%**

(NPS Spring 2012)

*The specification of the carriage is much worse [than FTPE]*  
(Manchester - Commuter)

This does matter to passengers and adversely affects their journey experience:

- Uncomfortable
- Sometimes considered dangerous
- Indicates lack of pride, professionalism and credibility as a business
- And lack of respect for passengers

*If you're travelling for an hour and a half on the train, you want to be comfortable. You wouldn't travel for an hour and a half on a Northern train...not by choice anyway*  
(Manchester - Leisure)

*During the summer months it's like a sauna – it's a good weight loss programme!*  
(Leeds - Commuter)

*The seats are a bit shabby...the one I was on the other week was quite loose and I almost slipped off it*  
(Manchester - Leisure)

*One of the seats was a health and safety problem, you couldn't sit on it, it was skew-wiff*  
(Leeds - Leisure)

# Overcrowding - a problem across the network

## Safety is compromised

*Don't wait for something to happen, God forbid, like a fire on the train and people can't get off*  
(Manchester - Leisure)

*People start arguing...and people faint...its just too hot...you can always tell who's pregnant when they drop*  
(Manchester - Commuter)

## Lack of comfort

*It's horrible. There's not enough space, especially when people are trying to push to get out the doors*  
(Manchester Airport - Leisure)

## Overcrowding seems illogical to passengers

*I just don't get it. The same train has been overcrowded for so long and yet the train companies do nothing about it. Its not suddenly going to stop being packed so why don't they do something?*  
(Sheffield - Commuter)

*They just don't seem to grasp that a lot of commuters use their trains. They always seem surprised that its busy but its been like that forever*  
(Lancaster - Commuter, FTPE)

## Objection in principle to standing

*You shouldn't have passengers standing on a train...why should you pay the same amount to stand*  
(Manchester Airport - Leisure)

*The other galling thing is that it's more expensive to travel at busy times, when they are ram jam full*  
(Manchester Airport - Leisure)

## Inability to work

*It's 'down-time', you can't get your laptop out if you haven't got a lap*  
(Manchester/Leeds-Glasgow - Business)

## NPS information confirmed the issue

Satisfaction with room to sit/stand, NPS Spring 2012

 **66%**  
northern

 **63%**  
First TransPennine Express

## The solution for most passengers would be more carriages (rather than increased frequency)

*They actually added an extra carriage onto the 08:27 from Wombwell due to over-crowding and it's made a difference. Its good when you feel they have listened ..*  
(Sheffield - Commuter, Northern)

# Fare evasion perceived as a big problem

This mainly arose as an issue related to Northern (but does also affect FTPE passengers)

- 'Honest' passengers feel a sense of injustice, and that it may be increasing their fares

*It infuriates me...a lot of people, you know they haven't paid...and they don't intend to pay...they're just getting a free journey*  
(Manchester –Business)

- Fare evasion means there is less investment for newer trains

*They should damn well check tickets, get people to pay and invest this back into the trains because they really need it*  
(Lancaster – Commuter)



## Fare evasion isn't necessarily deliberate:

### At stations:

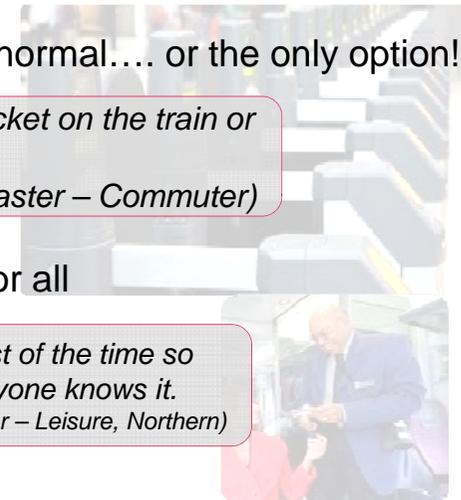
- Unstaffed stations and lack of gates make fare evasion easy.... or normal.... or the only option!

*I wish they would make up their minds about whether you are allowed to buy a ticket on the train or not so you don't get the rude lecture*  
(Lancaster – Commuter)

- Ticket gates would also provide a clear barrier to avoid ambiguity for all

*Why are they so lazy about collecting fares from people?*  
(Lancaster – Leisure)

*They don't bother checking tickets most of the time so there is no incentive to buy one. Everyone knows it.*  
(Lancaster – Leisure, Northern)



- **On trains:** Inconsistency and not enough staff to enforce regular ticket checks

# Some specific problems evident at smaller stations

## Access

- High steps between platforms and trains and lots of steps – problematic for disabled, elderly, and parents with young children

*They're not disabled friendly  
(Manchester – Leisure)*

## Security

*I get to Thornaby station and it's a bit...desolate....you do feel a bit vulnerable, especially if you're on your own. Somebody was attacked there.*

*(Middlesbrough – Commuter)*

- **Poor upkeep** of some stations also compounds security concerns

## Information

- Wayfinding is an issue – especially where platform is changed at short notice, as reported several times

*It could say for example, platform 6, but it doesn't make it clear which end of platform 6, so there could be a 6a, and I've tried numerous times to get on a train to Lincoln [by mistake]...it would be good if there were more staff around to say actually I am on the right platform, because it does get quite confusing*

*(Leeds – Business)*

- In relation to disruption...

*If they tell you ASAP you can do something about it. You have more options and you feel more in control*

*(Sheffield – Commuter)*

**Lack of staff at many smaller stations can exacerbate these issues – having just one member of staff could make a difference**



*There's no staff is there? If there's a problem – there's nobody.*

*(Manchester – Leisure)*

# Staff generally seen positively, but visibility and ticketing rules are bugbears

## Passengers have three key reasons for staff presence

- **Information** – on trains and at stations, especially but not exclusively during disruption)
- **Security**
- **Enforcement of rail ‘rules’** – keeping feet off seats, respecting ‘quiet coach’, preventing fare evasion

*Acknowledgement that staff authority is not always respected, but a visible staff member felt to act as a deterrent to majority of anti-social behaviour*

## Both qualitative and quantitative evidence suggests that:



- Visibility of staff is poor, on trains but especially at stations
- Attitude of staff is generally reasonable, with some poor exceptions
- Staff ability/knowledge to help often lacking

*Passenger perception that there is a need for better training, and better communication between and within TOCs*



- Visibility of staff is usually reasonable
- Attitude of staff is generally good
- Staff ability/knowledge to help often lacking

*Particular issue with staff attitude when there is (frequent) confusion over:*

- *whether tickets must be purchased at stations or on trains*
- *which tickets are valid for which journeys*

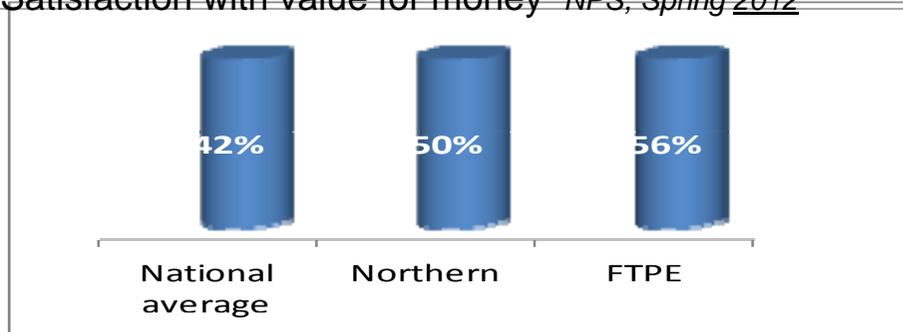
*Staff must be more sensitive, and rules must be clearer*

# In summary: in 2012, on the whole, there was perceived value for money in rail provision

- **Generally, passengers were not preoccupied with fares** for these services – indicating that this is not an immediate bugbear for all
- **Some have positive opinion of value for money**, especially in the context of other modes, and rail journeys to London/South

*Price-wise they're not overly expensive... it's not prohibitively expensive  
(Manchester Airport – Business)*

Satisfaction with value for money NPS, Spring 2012



*I don't mind. I get a weekly ticket which is £21. People who drive would put more than £20 of petrol in if they were doing that journey. For my business trips to Newcastle, again, I found this value for money.  
(Middlesbrough – Business/Commuter)*

## ***There are ways to improve and affirm value for money:***

- Certainly don't raise fares to pay for improvements
- Invest in the things that matter so this is visible to passengers
- Avoid waste and make the system fair for all (i.e. tackle fare evasion)
- A more transparent and less complex pricing structure

*Pay increases can be made more acceptable by being able to physically see the evidence of the increase either at the stations or on the trains. Even if they had a 'progress poster' telling people what they had changed/invested in  
(Sheffield – Commuter)*

*I'm always quite perplexed by the structure of pricing  
(Lancaster – Business)*

*I never get why it can cost £8 to go 20 minutes and then 20 minutes in another direction could cost you £2  
(Lancaster – Commuter)*

*The train prices will go up again in January, above the rate of inflation, but you **never see a difference in service and quality levels**. I think they should be held more accountable to this  
(Sheffield – Commuter)*

# Transparency and engagement

- Many passengers feel they have little awareness of the franchise process and operator promises
- BUT they do want to influence what is being purchased on their behalf AND to hold the operator to account
- Need improved mechanisms and a fresh commitment to seeking views, providing information and reporting on delivery
- Greater openness and disaggregation will make information relevant to passenger experience and build trust
- Explore scope for dialogue and partnership working with LAs, LEPs, RUGs and wider community. Where does rail fit within the wider picture?

## High level recommendations for the franchise

- Unstinting focus on delivery of all elements of the ‘core offer’
  - Capacity – *and quality and condition of trains*
  - Value for money – service elements as well as price
  - Punctuality and reliability
  - Information – especially during delays and disruption
- Facilitate ticket purchase and address fare evasion
- Mechanisms to address passenger concerns at stations
- Embed a genuinely customer-focused culture at all levels of the organisation – the ‘how’ as well as the ‘what’
- Provide disaggregated and transparent information
- Maintain two-way communication with passengers
- Use our resources in developing your plans!



**For further information:**

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