

Passenger satisfaction dips as train punctuality falls



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According to the latest National Passenger Survey published by Passenger Focus on January 21, the train operating company with the least satisfied passengers is Southern. On March 27 2012, Southern 377424 approaches Clapham Junction heading south, as more Southern electric multiple units operate Metro trains on the right. On the left are South West Trains services. JACK BOSKETT/RAIL

OVERALL passenger satisfaction - the percentage of those interviewed in the Passenger Focus Autumn 2013 National Passenger Survey who rated the railways 'satisfied/good' - dipped slightly to 83% in autumn 2013, compared with 85% in autumn 2012.

In spring 2013 the overall satisfaction rating was actually lower, at 82%. However, it is better to compare autumn surveys, rather than autumn with the previous spring, because of the effect seasonal conditions can have on train performance and personal views.

Nevertheless, the overall rating has now remained above 80% for more than five years, although there has also been a slight dip in the percentage of passengers satisfied with key aspects of railway performance, and a corresponding rise in those expressing dissatisfaction (see tables).

Of the 23 train operators (the survey includes open access operators), seven scored over 90% 'satisfied/good', headed by open access operators Heathrow Express (96%), and Grand Central (95%).

Heathrow Express' rating rose three percentage points compared with autumn 2012, but First Hull Trains dropped nine percentage points to 86%. Three operators had 'satisfied/good' ratings below 80%, with Southern (76%) the worst.

The two major North of

England franchises, Northern and TransPennine Express, also had poor ratings for overcrowding. Just 66% said the amount of room on Northern's services was 'satisfactory/good', while TPE's rating of 58% was the lowest in the country.

On the plus side, no operator scored more than 10% 'dissatisfied/poor' overall.

Passenger Focus highlighted the wide variation in passenger satisfaction levels in key aspects of its survey, saying: "There are gaps of around 20% between the best and worst-performing services, and satisfaction with value for money varied from 28% to 82%."

"Although generally satisfaction has remained fairly high over the last five years, we want to see a more consistently high level of service for passengers, wherever they may be travelling to and from."

On reliability and punctuality, PF Acting Chief Executive David Sidebottom continued: "The satisfaction rating has dropped since the last autumn NPS, from 83% to 79%, reflecting a drop in actual punctuality over this period."

The survey interviewed about 30,000 passengers between last September and November, asking views on around 30 topics.

'Satisfied/good' rating for key topics (autumn, %)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Journey duration	84	85	85	86	84
Punctuality/reliability	83	82	81	83	79
Stations (overall)	81	76	78	80	78
Train interior cleanliness	72	73	75	76	75
Value for money of ticket	45	49	46	47	45
Dealing with delays	36	40	38	44	40

'Dissatisfied/poor' rating for topics (autumn, %)

	2011	2012	2013
Availability of staff on trains	25	25	25
Car parking	31	30	32
Station seating	-	32	33
Value for money	34	33	34
Train toilets	39	38	40

Most and least satisfied with 'value for money' (autumn, %)

	2012	2013
Most satisfied/good		
Grand Central	73	78
Merseyrail	70	66
East Coast	58	62
TransPennine Express	56	62
Virgin Trains	60	60
Most dissatisfied/poor		
Greater Anglia	42	44
Southeastern	40	42
South West Trains	39	40
Southern	35	40

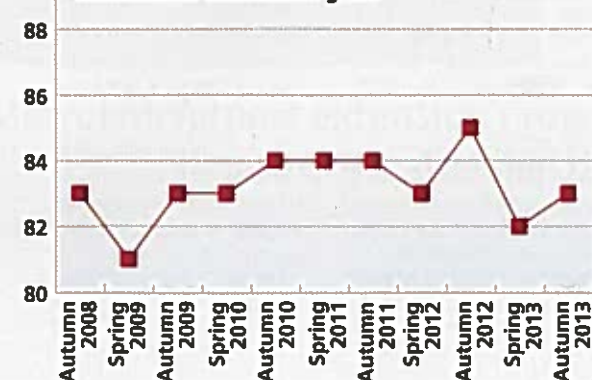
Most and least satisfied with 'punctuality/reliability' (autumn, %)

	2012	2013
Most satisfied/good		
Heathrow Express	96	95
c2c	96	94
Merseyrail	92	93
Chiltern	90	92
Most dissatisfied/poor		
First Hull Trains	1	22
London Midland	16	18
First Great Western	13	18
First Capital Connect	10	17

Source: Passenger Focus Autumn 2013 National Passenger Survey

Passenger Focus National Rail Passenger Survey

Percentage of those surveyed who rated their train service 'satisfied or good'



Best and worst train operators

(Percentage 'satisfied/good')

Highest scores	
Heathrow Express	96%
Grand Central	95%
Merseyrail	93%
c2c	92%
Chiltern	91%
East Coast	91%
Virgin	91%
Lowest scores	
First Capital Connect	79%
Northern	78%
Southern	76%