

Great Western Franchise

Introduction

Ahead of the new Great Western franchise, due to start in 2013, Passenger Focus commissioned a large-scale research study involving over 4000 passengers travelling within the Great Western area. This was to develop a more detailed understanding of their views, needs and aspirations. This report is a summary of that research.



Methodology

Fieldwork was undertaken by BDRC Continental Research on behalf of Passenger Focus. Questionnaires were distributed to passengers on board trains and at stations between Monday 21 November and Sunday 11 December 2011. To ensure a representative sample, shifts were carried out at weekday peak and off-peak times, as well as weekends.

Passenger Focus selected five routes, including long-distance and shorter regional routes, reflecting some of the very different characteristics of this large and diverse franchise.

The routes we surveyed were as follows:

- **Long distance** All passengers travelling between London

Paddington and Cardiff, Bristol, Taunton, Exeter or further (752 passengers)

- **Regional commuter lines** All passengers travelling between Bristol Temple Meads and Bath Spa, or Cam & Dursley, or Severn Beach, or Weston Super Mare (1062 passengers)
- **Regional mixed users** All passengers travelling between Hereford and Reading or Hereford and Oxford. (1023 passengers)
- **Branch lines** All passengers travelling between Truro and Falmouth Docks, Exeter St David's and Barnstaple, Exeter St David's and Exmouth (355 passengers)
- **Inter-regional** All passengers travelling between Cardiff Central and Portsmouth (805 passengers).



Journey purpose

Reasons for making the journey varied greatly by route, for example, journeys on the inter-regional route were mainly for leisure, while journeys on the regional commuter lines were as expected, mainly for commuting.

What improvements would passengers MOST like to see?

We asked passengers what improvements they would most like to see within the Great Western area. Passengers' top three priorities for improvement were:

- Punctuality / reliability of the train
- Being able to get a seat on the train
- Value for money for price of ticket.

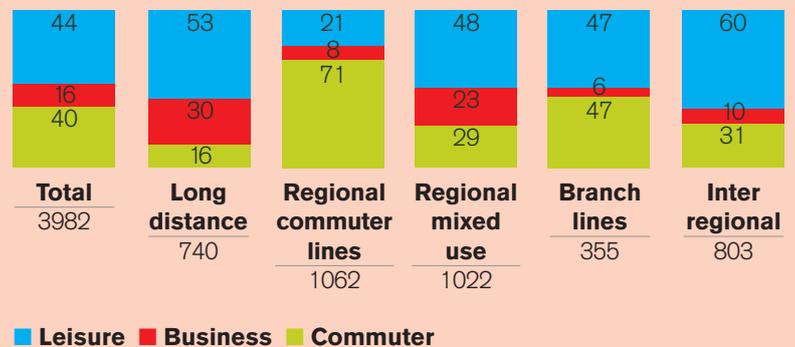
Satisfaction with aspects of the journey

Passengers were asked to rate aspects of their overall journey. As can be seen in chart 2 below, 76% of passengers rated their overall experience of service on this journey as very or fairly good. Those travelling on the regional commuter lines were the least satisfied with their journey overall (68% very/fairly good), while long-distance and regional mixed-use passengers were most satisfied (both 83% very/fairly good). Although being able to get a seat on the train, and punctuality/reliability of the train scored highly, they are also the top two priorities for improvement. This highlights the importance of these aspects of the journey to passengers.

Passengers were least satisfied with the provision of information during times of disruption, value for money, and facilities and services on board the train. Passengers on regional commuter lines in particular rated these areas poorly, while long-distance passengers rated them higher.

Chart 1

Journey purpose (%) all passengers



These top three priorities were rated as the most important by some margin. There were however some differences by route. Regional commuters ranked frequency of trains on the route as more important than being able to get a seat, while branch line passengers rated frequency as more important than value for money.

Chart 2

Rating of different journey attributes (% saying very or fairly good) (All passengers)

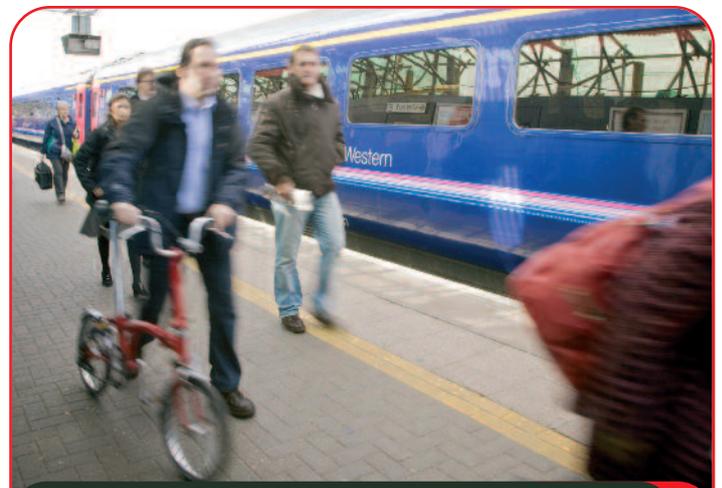
Ease of getting to and from the station (3632)	79
Being able to get a seat on the train (3781)	79
Punctuality/reliability of the train (3807)	78
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (3742)	77
Frequency of trains for this route (3710)	74
Connections with other train services (2324)	73
Upkeep/repair and cleanliness of the train (3774)	68
Quality of facilities and services at the station (3449)	64
Provision of information during the journey (3457)	64
Facilities and services on board the train (3205)	55
Value for money for price of ticket (3727)	52
Provision of information during times of disruption (2226)	50
Overall experience of service on this journey (3785)	76

The station

We asked passengers to rate aspects of the station where they boarded the train (please see chart 3). Passengers were most satisfied with the provision of information about train times/platforms, and least satisfied with the availability of staff, and services and facilities at the station.

Long-distance passengers had higher than average satisfaction on every station rating – particularly for facilities at services and station (+15% more than average), connections with other forms of transport (+14%), ticket-buying facilities (+13%) the availability of staff (+13%). Passengers on regional commuter lines had lower satisfaction on every rating than the average-particularly ticket buying facilities (-13%) and the availability of staff at the station (-12%).

These low scores are associated with the types of journey these different passengers were making – 50% of long-distance passengers boarded trains at London Paddington station, while passengers on regional commuter lines were more likely to have boarded at smaller, more rural stations which may therefore have fewer staff and facilities (or none at all).



Passenger satisfaction with provision of information during times of disruption ranged from **40%** to **63%** (averaging 50%)

Chart 3

Rating of station where boarded this train (% saying very or fairly good)
(All passengers)

Provision of information about train times/platforms (3901)	89
Cleanliness of the station (3766)	77
The upkeep and repair of station buildings/platforms (3817)	76
The attitude and helpfulness of the staff (3051)	74
Personal security at the station (3375)	71
Ticket buying facilities (3147)	67
Facilities for bicycle parking (1412)	65
Connections with other forms of public transport (2893)	64
The availability of staff at the station (3439)	60
The facilities and services at the station (3438)	58

Passengers were most likely to buy their ticket at the station from a ticket window office (42%) or via the Internet (25%). 53% of long-distance passengers (who are mainly leisure users) bought their ticket via the Internet, compared to only 11% of commuting passengers. We also asked passengers about their likelihood of using different ways of receiving their ticket. The most popular options were having a ticket sent to your mobile and printing from a computer.

Table 4

Likelihood to use following ways of receiving ticket (% saying very or fairly likely)

Printing out from a computer (3678)	63
Sent to your mobile (show message as proof of purchase) (3379)	55
Sent to your mobile (scan barcode at ticket gate) (3348)	47
By post (3523)	32
Smartcard (3329)	27



Train frequency

Passengers were also asked to assess their satisfaction with the frequency of trains between departure and destination station during the day and in the evenings (see chart 5). Passengers are less satisfied with train frequency in the evenings, particularly over

the weekends. Passengers travelling on the regional commuter and regional mixed-use routes were substantially less satisfied with train frequency across all days/times.

38%

of passengers surveyed rated the space for bikes on trains as good

Chart 5

Satisfaction with frequency of service between station boarded and station alighted (% very or fairly good) (All passengers)

Monday to Thursday before 19:00		74
Monday to Thursday after 19:00		54
Friday before 19:00		72
Friday after 19:00		52
Saturday before 19:00		69
Saturday after 19:00		49
Sunday before 19:00		54
Sunday after 19:00		43

The train

Overall 45% of passengers who make the journey regularly always get a seat, (33% usually get a seat, 10% usually stand, while 12% said that it varied). However, 18% of branch line passengers said that they usually stand and it is crowded.

We also asked passengers to rate different aspects of the train (please see chart 6). Passengers were most satisfied with the comfort of the seating area, and there being sufficient room for passengers to sit/stand. There was low satisfaction for catering and toilet facilities as well as space for bicycles.

Chart 6

Rating of train (% saying very or fairly good)

Comfort of the seating area (3849)		69
Sufficient room for passengers to sit/stand (3871)		68
The space for luggage (3565)		65
Catering facilities (2063)		47
Toilet facilities (2414)		43
Space for bicycles (1492)		38

The detailed research findings have been made available to DfT and bidders for the franchise and, together with information from other research, formed the basis for our response to the franchise consultation. These documents are now available on the Passenger Focus website: www.passengerfocus.org.uk