

# South Eastern Franchise

Independent national passenger watchdog

September 2012



## Introduction

**A**head of the refranchising of South Eastern in 2014, Passenger Focus commissioned research to develop a more detailed understanding of passengers' views, needs and aspirations. We had responses from over 2400 passengers travelling within the South Eastern area. This report is a summary of this research.

According to the Autumn 2011 wave of the National Passenger Survey, the overall satisfaction (83%) of passengers using Southeastern services is on a par with other train operating companies in London and the South East. As with other train

operating companies in the region the main driver of passenger satisfaction is the punctuality and reliability of trains, whilst the way in which Southeastern deals with delays is the principal cause of the dissatisfaction expressed by passengers. Only 26% of Southeastern's passengers were satisfied with this – well below the sector average (36%). There are also considerable differences between lines within this franchise; the High-speed line has relatively high satisfaction (94% satisfied), Mainline passengers were considerably less satisfied overall (79% satisfied).



Matt Buck

## 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 23 February and 25 March 2012. To ensure a representative sample, shifts were carried out at weekday peak and off-peak times as well as weekends. Passengers

were using High-speed, Mainline and Metro services within the South Eastern franchise area.<sup>1</sup>

### Routes and sample sizes

#### High-speed (400)

#### Mainline (1104)

- Hastings/Tonbridge to London (440)
- Rochester/Ramsgate to London (244)
- Ashford to London via Maidstone East (254)
- Other Mainline routes (166)

#### Metro (916)

- Gravesend/Dartford to London (404)
- Sevenoaks to London (512)



Pipenstuff

Table 1

Journey purpose (%) all passengers

	High-speed (400)	Mainline (1104)	Metro (916)
<b>Commuter</b>	51%	60%	78%
<b>Business</b>	13%	6%	3%
<b>Leisure</b>	36%	35%	18%

## Journey purpose

The majority of passengers on these South Eastern routes were commuters, particularly those travelling on the Metro lines, (see Table 1, left).

<sup>1</sup>Please note, the objective of this research was to understand the nature of particular routes of interest, rather than the franchise area as a whole. Therefore the total of the routes combined in this research do not provide a representative profile of passengers for the franchise as a whole. For this reason we have only shown results for individual routes.

# Passenger priorities

We asked passengers what improvements they would most like to see to South Eastern's services and the top three priorities identified for improvement are shown in Chart 1 (right). The top ratings were given a score of 100, and the others were ranked in relation to this. Value for money was the top priority for travellers on High-speed and Mainline routes, while punctuality/reliability of the train was the highest priority for Metro passengers.

# Overall satisfaction

Passengers were asked to rate various aspects of their journey and their responses can be seen in Chart 2 (right). High-speed passengers were most satisfied, with 85% rating their overall experience of the journey as very or fairly good.

High-speed passengers were more satisfied than Metro and Mainline passengers across all aspects of the journey. Over 90% of High-speed passengers we spoke to were happy with the punctuality/reliability of the train, upkeep/repair and cleanliness of the train, and the length of time the journey was scheduled to take.

Passengers on all the routes were least satisfied with their train's on-board facilities and services, provision of information during times of disruption and value for money of tickets. The areas of highest satisfaction were less consistent. High-speed passengers were most satisfied with the punctuality/reliability of the train, while Mainline passengers were most satisfied with being able to get a seat. Metro passengers were most satisfied with the length of time the journey would take.

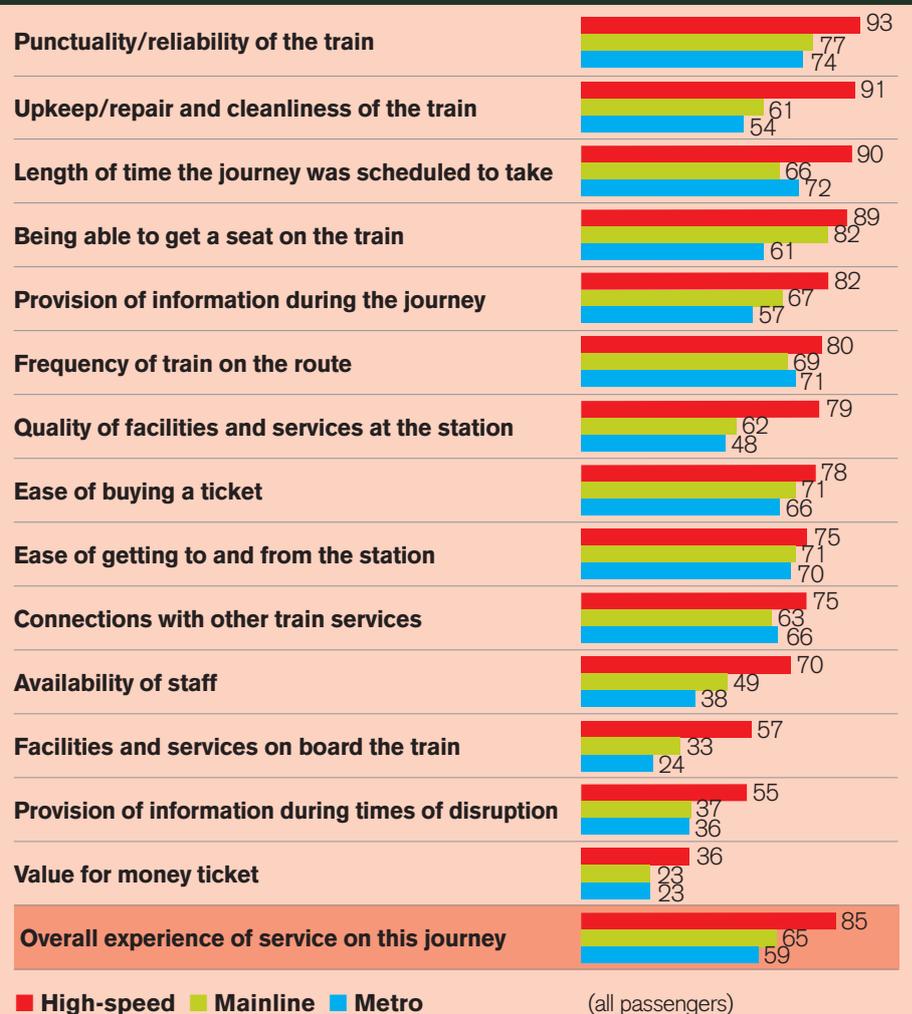
Chart 1

## Passengers' top three priorities identified for improvement



Chart 2

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



We also asked regular users (who make this journey more than twice a month) how likely they were to get a seat.

63% of High-speed and 57% of Mainline passengers always got a seat, compared to just 31% of Metro passengers.

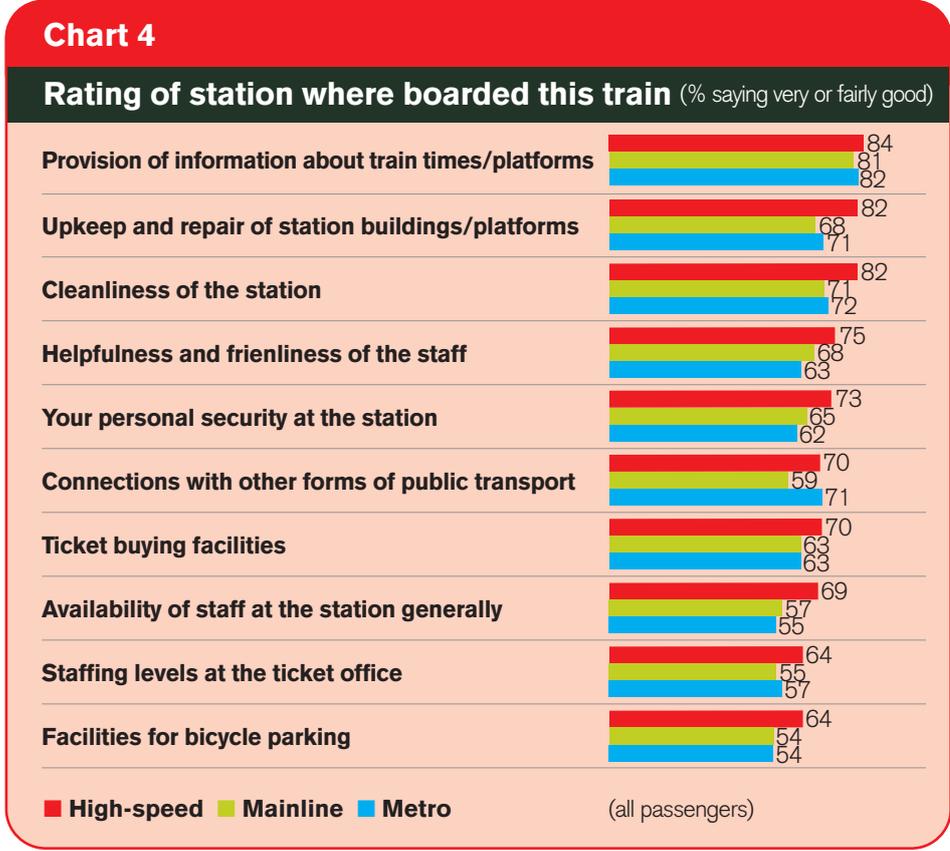


# Purchasing a ticket

Over half of the passengers we spoke to bought their ticket from the ticket window/office. For roughly half of passengers this is also their preferred method of purchase. The other most popular options were to use a ticket machine, or the Internet. Almost all (98%) of High-speed and Mainline passengers received their ticket in a standard paper

format. This compares with two thirds (65%) of Metro passengers, where 30% had their ticket loaded onto an

Oyster card. Chart 3 above, shows the format passengers would prefer to receive their ticket in.



# The station

Passengers rated various aspects of the station where they boarded the train, as can be seen in Chart 4 (left). Passengers were most satisfied with the provision of information about train times and platforms and least satisfied with facilities for bicycle parking and staffing levels at the ticket office. Availability of staff generally, as well as at the ticket office, also scored low. High-speed passengers were most satisfied with all aspects of the station.



**51%**

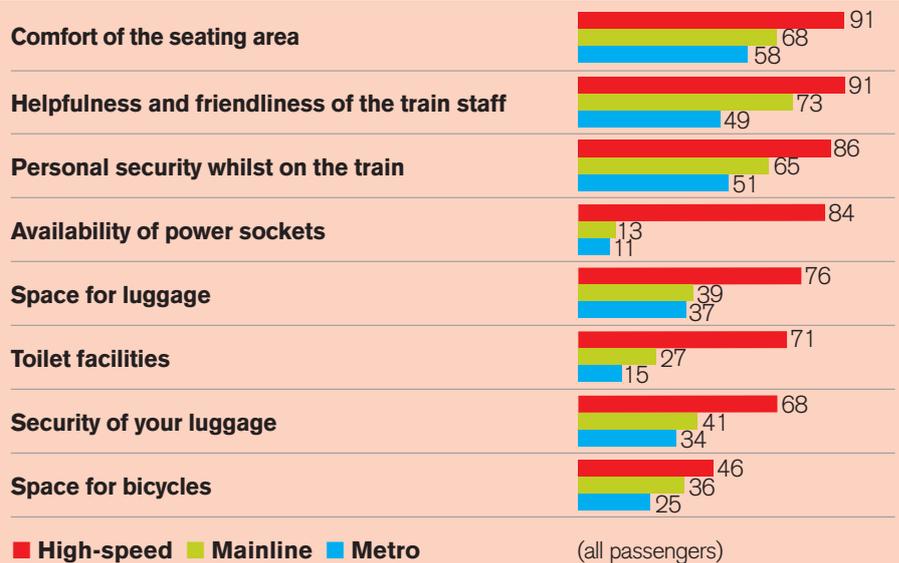
of passengers surveyed rated their personal security whilst on the train as 'good'

## The train

We asked passengers to rate various aspects of the train they used for that journey. The results can be seen in Chart 5 (right). Passengers were most satisfied with the comfort of the seating area, helpfulness and friendliness of train staff, and personal security whilst on the train. High-speed passengers were most satisfied with all aspects of the train, with at least two thirds satisfied with each aspect apart from space for bikes. Mainline and Metro passengers were particularly dissatisfied with the availability of power sockets and toilet facilities on-board. There is a relatively smaller gap in satisfaction between High-speed and other passengers with space for bicycles, and it is the only aspect that less than half of High-speed passengers rate as very or fairly good.

**Chart 5**

**Rating of train** (% saying very or fairly good)



**The detailed research findings have been made available to the Department for Transport (DfT) and bidders for the franchise. This, together with information from other research, formed the basis for our initial submission on the new franchise. These documents are now available on the Passenger Focus website [www.passengerfocus.org.uk](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk)**