



# Delays and disruption

## Rail passengers have their say

December 2010





Colin Foxall CBE

# Foreword

Our previous research has shown a high level of dissatisfaction with handling of disruption. We decided the best way to explore passenger views and to engage them in the process was to set up a large passenger panel. This report is based on the views from a panel of 1,000 passengers who reported on actual disruption events.

While the rail industry has reduced the incidence of delays, what has not changed is passengers' perception of the way disruption is handled. What passengers have told us illustrates why, when the National Passenger Survey "overall satisfaction" score stands at 83%, the score for "How well do you think the train company dealt with this delay?" is 35%. It is particularly striking that passengers perceive that the industry is fixed on solving the technical, logistical problem, and in doing so overlooks the fact that human beings – paying customers – are caught up in it. But we did find best practice as well. What is notable is that giving a clear, accurate explanation about a delay can often be enough to lessen passenger dissatisfaction, or indeed generate satisfaction, even when delays are lengthy. Alongside considering passengers' plight, the need for good passenger information during disruption comes through very clearly in this report.

Our research identifies six key themes passengers associate with how disruption is handled and these are:

- **Treat me with respect**
- **Recognise my plight**
- **Help me avoid the problem in the first place**
- **You got me into this, help get me out**
- **Act joined up**
- **I am 'always' delayed, do something about it!**

Passenger Focus is aware that various initiatives are currently underway involving both train companies and Network Rail aimed at improving information during disruption; we hope these are delivered as quickly and comprehensively as possible. However, we believe more needs to be done.

Passenger Focus calls on the rail industry to respond positively to this research. We will seek to work with train companies and the wider industry to help them rise to as many of these challenges as possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Foxall'.

**Colin Foxall CBE**  
Chairman  
Passenger Focus

# Executive Summary

The National Passenger Survey (NPS) shows consistently that passengers do not believe disruption is well-handled by train companies. The handling of disruption is the main 'driver' of overall dissatisfaction within NPS and is a high priority for improvement among passengers across Britain.



To understand why scores are so low and what practical steps could be taken to improve them, Passenger Focus established a 'disruption panel' to obtain accounts from passengers of how their train company handled disruption. The panel consisted of regular rail travellers who provided a short report of their experiences whenever disruption occurred, together with their thoughts about what might have been handled better. Over the 12-months that the panel has been in operation Passenger Focus received around 2000 'disruption reports'. These reports have been used by our Passenger Link Managers in their work with train companies to tackle problems and encourage best practice. This report draws on analysis of all the feedback received.

The research has revealed that six themes run through passengers' views about disruption handling. Each is covered in detail in Section 3. They are: **"treat me with respect"**; **"recognise my plight"**; **"help me avoid the problem in the first place"**; **"you got me into this, help get me out"**; **"act joined up"**; and **"I am 'always' delayed, do something about it!"** Having analysed the issues under each theme, Passenger Focus has drawn the following principal conclusions:

- Many passengers who experience disruption feel that the rail industry shows too little respect for them, both as customers and as human beings. The impression is given that train companies treat disruption as a purely logistical challenge to be overcome before normal running resumes – that is, divorced from what passengers are thinking and experiencing in the meantime.
- Too many passengers experience patchy, inaccurate or conflicting information – and some get none at all. It shines through that having accurate, consistent information is vital, irrespective of the information channel used, whom you ask or where you ask. It seems extraordinary to passengers that in our modern communications age this is apparently so difficult to achieve.
- That the rail industry is poor at helping people through incidents once they have become caught up in them. Indeed, passengers cite actions that made things worse and lack of

action that would have made the disruption more bearable. This manifests itself in two main ways: failure to provide accurate estimates of delay or incident duration; and failure to proactively help passengers understand what they should now do, whether it be specific advice or a range of options.

- That there is considerable scope to help passengers avoid disruptions in the first place, prevention being better than cure. Many passengers have the option to take a different route, travel from a station on a different line, or delay their journey to avoid getting caught up in disruption. Yet the majority (87%) of passengers arrive at the station not knowing that there is a problem.
- That when train companies behave 'considerately', in particular when accurate information is shared in a proactive, timely way, passengers are often quite forgiving, even when the delay is lengthy.

Passenger Focus is fully aware that train companies and Network Rail are taking steps to improve passenger information in various ways. We support these initiatives and encourage the industry to implement them as quickly and comprehensively as possible. However this research highlights the need to do more if National Passenger Survey measures for how well train companies handle delays are to improve significantly.

In section 4, Passenger Focus has outlined a range of challenges we wish the industry to consider. These are listed in groups: **“cultural”**; **“before the journey”**; **“at the station”**; **“during the journey”**; and **“measurement and improvement”**. We believe addressing these challenges will produce a significant change in passengers' experiences during disruption.

### **Here is a selection of passengers' comments taken from Section 3 of this report:**

*“Whilst waiting for the train at Newcastle Central station there were two ‘security’ announcements telling us not to leave luggage lying around and that it was against the law to smoke on the station. However not a single announcement that the train was late.”*

[Newcastle to Wylam]

*“There was no information regarding the cancellation of my original train until after it was due to arrive, and even then the displays showed “on time”. I find it incredible that they didn't know before that the train was cancelled.”*

[Maidenhead to London Paddington]

[How in your opinion could the disruption have been better handled] ... *“More timely information so I didn't waste one hour walking in the snow to the station, wait another hour for a train [that didn't come] and then waste another hour walking home!”*

[Winnersh Triangle to London Paddington via Reading]

*“There was no staff announcement, just the robot voice, which doesn't really sound ‘sorry’.”*

[London Bridge to Blackheath]

*“It was freezing cold, the station staff said they had no idea when a train would come, one finally came up on the fast line and did not stop, then some unable to be heard message on tannoy system, no free hot drinks offered. No train between Durham and Newcastle for over an hour on freezing cold January rush hour evening with no info or help.”*

[Durham to Newcastle]

*“We were told to wait at the top of the platform and then at the very last minute we had to run to platform 11 to catch the only train that was running the right arm didn't know what the left arm was doing... it would be better if they know a train is going to run if they give you time to get to the platform rather than holding us like cattle at the top... they had known since early afternoon about the problems with overhead lines, they could have been more organised.”*

[London Euston to Watford Junction]

*“There was complete chaos at the station no one knew what was happening including the staff. They were running to the published “timetable” after having cancelled trains for hours. They had no contingency plans to clear the back log of commuters. One member of staff blamed Network Rail and said it was not up to them, the result was a total fiasco.”*

[London Euston to Berkhamstead]

*“This service is my regular home journey. 99% of the time it is delayed because although it is meant to be fast it has to give way to a Gatwick Express service. It has been disrupted since the new timetable was introduced 12/08.”*

[Clapham Junction to Brighton]

*“I received a text advising the train was cancelled which enabled me to make alternative arrangements, albeit a longer journey time.”*

[Sudbury & Harrow Road to London Marylebone, 30-59 minutes delay, completed by a train from another station. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied]

*“Due to a gas explosion near Temple Meads all trains were disrupted/cancelled. This service is operated by First Great Western who, to their credit, arranged alternative transport pretty quickly.”*

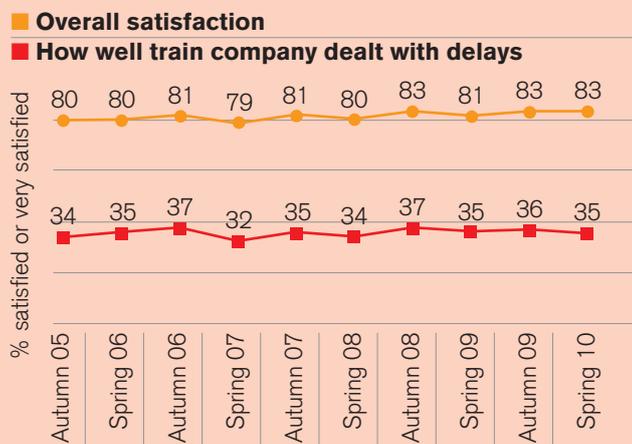
[Bristol Temple Meads to Oldfield Park, 16-30 minutes delay, completed by bus or taxi (paid for by train company), fairly satisfied]

# How and why the research was carried out

The National Passenger Survey (NPS) shows consistently that passengers do not believe disruption is well-handled by train companies. It is the main 'driver' of overall dissatisfaction within NPS and is a high priority for improvement for passengers.

**Table 1**

## National Passenger Survey Results



To understand why scores are so low, and what practical steps could be taken to improve them, Passenger Focus wanted to establish a 'disruption panel' to obtain accounts directly from passengers of how their train company handles disruption. Passenger Focus selected Ipsos MORI to recruit and manage the panel on our behalf.

Ipsos MORI interviewers handed out postcards at a selection of major stations across Great Britain to invite passengers to join our panel. Passengers interested in joining the panel then completed a short online application to ensure they met the profile of being regular travellers and to set up their journey details for disruption reporting. Panellists were provided with an individual 'log on' so they could complete a 'disruption report' online whenever they were subject to unplanned disruption. The disruption report asks the panellist to provide a short account the train company's handling of that unplanned disruption together with their views about how it might have been handled better.

The disruption panel recruitment was complete at end November 2009 and has run for a year; it will close in early December this year. Each week Ipsos MORI sent the disruption reports to Passenger Focus and we have used these disruption reports in two ways. First, the reports have been used by our Passenger Link Managers to take up the issues raised directly with the relevant train company. Second, Passenger Focus has conducted an analysis across all the reports received to generate this report and its theme-based perspective of disruption handling.

In establishing the panel it was not intended that its composition fully-matched the profile of the travelling public. This research sought to understand disruption through learning about the direct experiences of passengers involved and this was not a quantitative exercise. The report includes quotations from panellists to illustrate each theme. While the quotes relate to a specific journey, the fact that there are more quotations about some train companies than others should not be regarded as significant. Passenger Focus has received around 2000 reports from panellists. The recruitment leaflet, recruitment questionnaire and blank disruption report are shown in Appendix 1.

# Key findings

The disruption reports show a wide range of comments. Having analysed the reports received, the issues passengers face can almost all be grouped into six main themes, some of which then subdivide into different aspects of that theme. Our analysis also shows that when train companies behave 'considerately', in particular when accurate information is shared in a proactive, timely way, passengers are often quite forgiving, even when the delay is lengthy. This is highlighted at the end of this section.

## Theme 1 Treat me with respect

This theme is about the language and manner of communications with passengers during disruption, and about how passengers often feel that they are not treated with respect when things go wrong.

Panellists complain of messages that are insincere and dismissive; of formulaic platitudes and simplistic explanations; and about just being left in the dark, as if no proper explanation is required or deserved. This relates to passengers' perspective of being 'a customer' and that the treatment of customers in society generally should apply to the railway, but they feel it does not. In some ways panellists feel the railway exhibits a 'yesteryear' attitude.

### 1.1 Have the decency to tell me there is a delay

A great angst for passengers is to be told absolutely nothing when they are delayed. It arouses strong negative emotions, as if it is the height of disrespect to have no acknowledgement that there is a problem. Passengers expect a train company to know where its trains are. We live in an age of immediate communications and outright non-communication is at such odds with other areas of daily living. Passengers expect the courtesy of being told there is a delay and if it does not happen the negative reaction can be strong.

*"No information was given to passengers who had been waiting on the platform for over an hour and with train departure boards showing simply that trains were "delayed"..... WHY do they not inform waiting passengers as to what is happening? It just baffles me. Instead people are just left waiting without any idea as to why or what time the next train is likely to appear."*

[Robertsbridge to London Charing Cross]

*"The train was cancelled but this wasn't obvious as it wasn't announced in the station or it wasn't on the boards/screens, so it looked like it had disappeared, we had to ask at information who then told us it was cancelled, no explanation was given."*

[Leeds to Bradford Interchange]

*"Why is it that with some delays we get a proper explanation and then you get something like this where they could not be bothered to tell the passengers anything at all."*

[London Euston to Milton Keynes Central]

*"A member of the public made a call then went along the platform telling us the train was cancelled. The tannoy system was not used and the ticket sellers said nothing."*

[Mauldeth Road to Manchester Piccadilly]

*"Whilst waiting for the train at Newcastle Central station there were two 'security' announcements telling us not to leave luggage lying around and that it was against the law to smoke on the station. However not a single announcement that the train was late."*

[Newcastle to Wylam]

*"There was no information on the delay, the train just ran slow all the way into London. Once in the station there was some comment regarding a broken down train, but this was not mentioned [on the train]."*

[Maidenhead to London Paddington]

*We certainly should have been told why it occurred and what was going on rather than left standing on the platform like lemons for over 15 minutes with no information.*

[Balham to London Victoria]

### 1.2 You must have known earlier, so tell me earlier

In many disruption reports passengers are irritated that the train company must have known earlier, but did not announce a delay. There is a strong sense of frustration around “why leave it until the last minute?” While being told eventually is better than not being told at all, it confirms in passengers’ minds a sense that train companies do not really care about them.

*“Platform monitors originally showed train on time – then a few minutes before scheduled departure – showed 10 mins late – although delay incurred at start of trains journey in Cardiff ~ 50 mins earlier.”*

[Llantwit Major to Cardiff Central]

*“Were (eventually) told that the train was late because of technical problems at Skegness. Were told this about 8 minutes after the train was due to leave and 10 minutes standing on the platform in the frost. If I had known earlier I could have waited indoors.”*

[Grantham to Nottingham]

*“More information, at an earlier stage. Platforms are generally announced 10 minutes before the scheduled departure time therefore at two minutes before departure its fairly clear there is a problem – to wait until 10/15 minutes after a train should have departed to say there maybe delays is laughable – FCC keep treating us like mushrooms!”*

[Hatfield to London Kings Cross]

*“Train shown as 6 minutes late when but that slipped without explanation to 30 minutes. ....on train delay due to something at Exeter, in which case why didn’t they know that it would be about 30 minutes [late] from the start.”*

[Nailsea and Backwell to Bristol]

*“There was no information regarding the cancellation of my original train until after it was due to arrive, and even then the displays showed “on time”. I find it incredible that they didn’t know before that the train was cancelled.”*

[Maidenhead to London Paddington]

### 1.3 Be frank, be consistent and speak to me

Passengers object to what they perceive to be impersonal announcements, empty platitudes and reasons bordering on deceit. There is a sense of “speak to me, not at me”. Passengers particularly resent it when the reason for a delay changes over time or depending on who you speak to. It fuels the impression that either passengers are being lied to or that the industry is incompetent.

*“Whenever the “reason” for the disruption changes – as it so often does – it only convinces us that we’re being lied to & the operator is not concerned about giving us correct information. The famous & very large “Train Book of Excuses”!”*

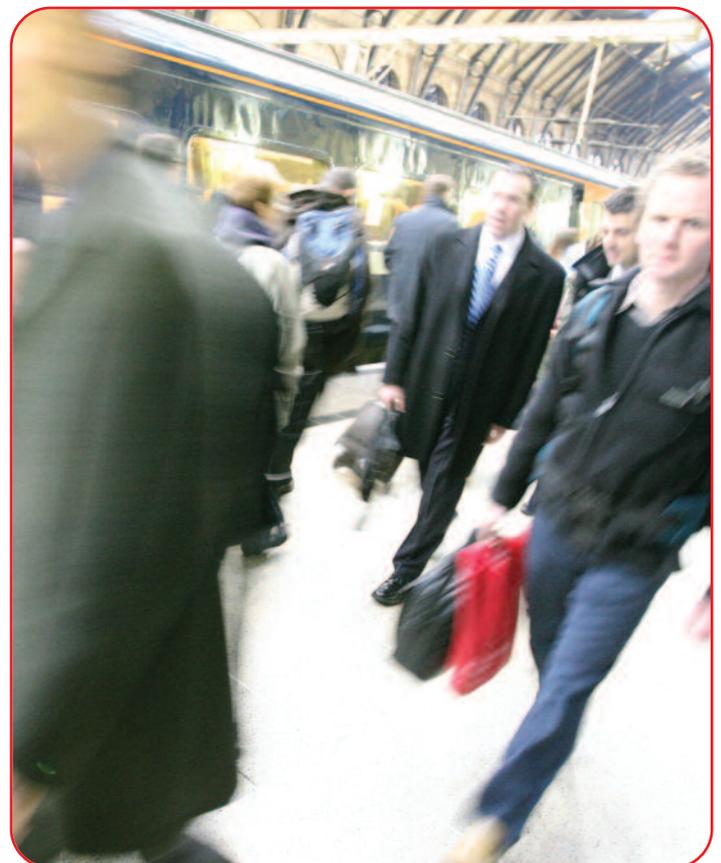
[Clapham Junction to Brighton]

*“There was no staff announcement, just the robot voice, which doesn’t really sound ‘sorry’.”*

[London Bridge to Blackheath]

*“Staff attitude was robotic repeating of ‘train to Formby bus to Sandhills train to Liverpool Central’ and could not care less about passengers travelling on to other destinations even when it was clear they would miss their last onward connection and be stranded in Liverpool.”*

[Southport to West Allerton]



## Theme 2

### Recognise my plight

This theme is about consideration of the human impact of what has happened; and about what train companies can do to make the situation more comfortable for their passengers.

One sentiment coming through from panellists is that train companies treat disruption as matter-of-fact, a purely logistical challenge to be overcome before normal running resumes. Words like 'abandoned' and 'ignored' feature in the reports. The strong feeling from passengers is that the effect on them as human beings is not front of mind.

#### 2.1 I am a human being, not some inanimate object

Some passengers are ill-at-ease, or even fearful, when disruption puts them in an unfamiliar place, circumstance, or time. Passengers describe situations in which because of delays they reached their destination much later than normal, or had to disembark at an unfamiliar station late at night with no staff to help. This is worse in the winter when it is dark early and physical security becomes of greater concern. The whole experience leaves some passengers feeling alone and vulnerable, leading them to perceive that the train operator is indifferent to their situation, which is exacerbated when little or no information is forthcoming.

The perceived lack of care is reinforced when passengers are left on platforms in the cold, without access to shelter, hot drinks or toilets. The picture some passengers have is of train companies that do not consider the welfare and comfort of their passengers, let alone act to help people through a difficult situation.

*"Staff had an appalling 'couldn't care less' attitude. It took considerable debate with staff to eventually get them to agree to pay for a taxi to take three of us who were travelling beyond Liverpool. It was an extremely stressful and unpleasant experience to have to go through at eleven o'clock at night."*

[Southport to West Allerton]

*"It was freezing cold, the station staff said they had no idea when a train would come, one finally came up on the fast line and did not stop, then some unable to be heard message on tannoy system, no free hot drinks offered. No train between Durham and Newcastle for over an hour on freezing cold January rush hour evening with no info or help."*

[Durham to Newcastle]

*"No staff on hand to assist passengers to make alternative arrangements at that time in the evening, passengers left in the cold for 30 minutes."*

[Leeds to Brighouse]

*"The train was delayed by over an hour as it got stuck behind a broken down train... it would also have helped if they hadn't closed the buffet car as people were getting thirsty and uncomfortable."*

[London Paddington to St Erth]

#### 2.2 When you don't know what you're doing, you make it worse

The effect of poor coordination is that passengers have a stressful last minute scramble, miss trains or cannot take advantage of alternatives – resulting in additional delay and discomfort. Passengers believe that train companies do not appreciate the impact of last minute platform changes, e.g. being decanted from one train and squashed onto another, often without proper explanation. If passengers knew why it was not possible to bring the train in on the usual platform it would help.

*"Absolutely no information at all as to why 6.53 train was late, so caught the 6.59 which was then held up at High Wycombe to let the delayed 6.53 through which meant that we were even later – Chiltern Railways by and large run an excellent service but they are hopeless about giving information when things aren't running according to plan."*

[Bicester North to London Marylebone]

*"Our train was halted outside Piccadilly and we waited while another train passed us. We then followed this train – slowly – all the way. Had we been given information, I would have boarded the train that left later but arrived earlier."*

[Manchester Piccadilly to New Mills Central]

*"The train was announced as being 10 min late, as time went on the announced delay rose to 15, then 30 then 50 mins late. The 8.12 arrived at 8.23 but because it only had 2 carriages instead of 4 there was no room to get on. The driver of the train assured people that the 7.50 was just behind him. however no train arrived for a further 40 mins, with no significant communication."*

[Outwood to Leeds]

*"We were told of a platform alteration for the 08:04, so all the passengers changed platforms, only to be told that the train would be arriving on the original platform as the train was pulling into the station (20 minutes late). By this point, the station and platforms were very overcrowded, posing a risk to passengers' health and safety as the crowds rushed to catch the incoming train."*

[Hemel Hempstead to London Euston]

*“No indication of any problems as we boarded the train which was scheduled as on time. Just before the train was due to leave we overheard the platform announcement saying that the first stop was going to be Wilmslow and that it was not going to stop at Mauldeth Road or other intermediate stations. Got off the train asked the dispatcher who did not seem to know anything. No explanation offered.”*

[Mauldeth Road to Ashton-Under-Lyne]

*“Many Crosscountry trains were at a stand a Birmingham new street that busy Friday evening. Nobody knew which train towards Burton and Derby would depart first. I went for the 17:39 which departed at 6pm but I noticed that the later Nottingham train at 17:49 left before ours!”*

[Birmingham New Street to Burton-On-Trent]

*“There were no announcements at the station. The length of delay on the matrix board kept changing minute by minute meaning it was difficult to gauge whether to wait for the train or chose an alternative method of transport.”*

[Nunhead to London St Pancras]

*“We were told to wait at the top of the platform and then at the very last minute we had to run to platform 11 to catch the only train that was running the right arm didn't know what the left arm was doing... it would be better if they know a train is going to run if they give you time to get to the platform rather than holding us like cattle at the top... they had known since early afternoon about the problems with overhead lines, they could have been more organised.”*

[London Euston to Watford Junction]

### **2.3 Acknowledge overcrowding and do what you can to alleviate it**

Overcrowding adds to the misery of delays and many passengers feel that train companies should make greater effort to alleviate it during disruption. Passenger Focus recognises that crowding during disruption will be difficult to prevent, but perhaps more thought is needed to ensure that the first trains on resumption of service run at maximum capacity? If overcrowding cannot be avoided, then train companies need to say why and apologise. Otherwise it will continue to appear that the railway is indifferent to the impact of crowding during disruption. Some passengers have suggested that relief could come by declassifying first class until the backlog has cleared.

*“The one arrival that did appear was only 4 carriages and could have been filled to bursting three times over with the number of passengers waiting.”*

[Liverpool Street to Wood Street]

*“Only two carriages during peak time. Both carriages were ‘crammed full’ with passengers which must raise safety issues. The next train had 5 carriages?!!!?”*

[Starbeck to Leeds]

*“There was a breakdown at Glasgow Queen Street station. This had a knock on effect and resulted in the train being cancelled. the later train was short of carriages resulting in serious overcrowding.”*

[Edinburgh Waverley to Glasgow Queen Street]

*“Apart from the delays, lack of accurate information and general discomfort involved I worry about the safety implications of the overcrowding on the trains when they eventually run and the platforms. There is also a lack of train company personnel on hand to answer passenger queries. Once the service resumed it would have made far more sense to run a 6 carriage train rather than a 3 carriage train.”*

[Moorfields to Waterloo (Merseyside)]

*“Need better information at the station to avoid excessive numbers boarding delayed trains. Some passengers could have used other trains like the Hull one if staff were more proactive and visible on the station.”*

[Garforth to Leeds]



## Theme 3

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

This theme is about giving passengers information that enables them to avoid the disruption in the first place, whether by staying at home, delaying their trip, changing modes of transport, taking a different route etc. If passengers can take an informed decision they are in control and they will feel much better about it.

Feedback from panellists suggests it is a significant source of frustration that if delays had been known about earlier passengers would have made alternative arrangements at the outset. Some passengers have other options, even if less convenient, that are preferable to the uncertainty of becoming embroiled in disruption. As part of Passenger Focus's research "Passengers' priorities for improvements in rail services" published in March 2010, we found that:

- 87% of passengers surveyed did not find out about disruption before they arrived at the station
- prior to the journey passengers primarily find out about delays through websites and radio;
- in terms of letting passengers know about delays before they reach the station text alerts are currently the clearly preferred method; and
- when at the station the preferred method to find out about the delay is through information screens and announcements. Further details of this research is given in Appendix 2.

*"If we had been told the train was cancelled we could have gone to Dewsbury train station and caught a different train. The cancelled train was obviously a problem; this was made worse by not being told that it was cancelled."*

[Mirfield to Leeds]

*"'Over running engineering works' is not a valid reason for delaying trains anymore... Yet again there was no advance warning given to news media which would have forewarned me. If works are not going to be completed on time it must have been known about some hours beforehand."*

[Milton Keynes Central to London Euston]

[How in your opinion could the disruption have been better handled] ... *"More timely information so I didn't waste one hour walking in the snow to the station, wait another hour for a train [that didn't come] and then waste another hour walking home!"*

[Winnersh Triangle to London Paddington via Reading]

*"Marsden has no public announcements or info boards. I could not tell how late train was going to be. A fellow passenger checked internet regularly and train kept being delayed for 10 mins at a time before finally being cancelled. I would have made alternative arrangements had I known it was cancelled."*

[Marsden to Leeds]

*"It's just really frustrating that there's not a more efficient way of informing passengers of delays and especially cancellations before they get to the station – I could easily have changed my travel plans this morning if I'd known, instead I was over 40mins late into work."*

[Twyford to London Paddington]

## Theme 4

### You got me into this, you get me out

This theme is about how the industry helps passengers make decisions about their journeys once they are caught up in disruption, whether they are at a station or on a train.

#### 4.1 Just give me an honest estimate of the delay

Once passengers are caught up in disruption, whether at a station or on a train they need to know how long they will be delayed. When a train company does not give an estimate about arrival times or resumption of service passengers cannot take informed decisions about what they do. While the extent of the disruption may not initially be known, panellists' feedback suggests that the industry must become better and quicker at giving robust estimates of delay. Constantly escalating estimates are extremely frustrating: first, because options to get around the problem are not taken up on the basis of the original estimate and, second, because passengers feel that they have been 'strung along'. The problem of trains 'dropping off' the customer information system (CIS) screens without comment is all too common during major disruption.

The frustration is all the more because people consider that the train company must have known the facts, but did not bother to pass them on. There is also a human impact side to this: some passengers have a lift waiting at their destination, buses to catch or need to give a reliable estimate to an employer or family member. Passengers want an honest and realistic assessment of how long they are likely to be delayed. When there is no estimate at all, or a constantly escalating one, it is extremely unhelpful.

*"Would have been nice to have been given a rough estimate of likely delay to assist with onward travel plans/notifying employers."*

[Rochford to London Liverpool Street]

*"Trains kept being cancelled and disappearing from the board at the station. No explanation was ever given. At one point a train was scheduled to arrive on the platform, a train came through the platform fast, without stopping showering everyone with snow."*

[Flitwick to London St. Pancras]

*"If I'd have known what the problem was or how long I was going to be delayed I would have known whether or not I would miss my bus and hence whether I needed to arrange a lift from the station. I think it's just unacceptable not to at least acknowledge that passengers are being inconvenienced."*

[London Euston to Hemel Hempstead]

*"Checked website before leaving home. Train showed as On Time. Reached station and boards showed 8 minutes late. This became 14 then 18 then 20 then 24,26,27 and then the train was abruptly cancelled. Went home. .... Information should not be put on the website if it is incorrect."*

[Whitton to London Waterloo]

*"We were never told why the train was late and why it continued to get later and later or why it was suddenly cancelled. We stood for half an hour in temperatures of -8 for absolutely no reason."*

[Farnborough (Main) to London Waterloo]

*"Train was delayed, approximately 5 mins at first, and kept going up in increments of 5 minutes every 5 minutes, until it reached 30 minutes at which point I caught a different train thus don't even know if that train arrived."*

[Newton Le Willows to Liverpool Lime Street]

*"Again, there was no indication of how severe the disruption was likely to be. It would be very helpful; to provide estimates of how bad any delay is likely to be. I would prefer to go back to work or get a meal (if I knew the delay was probably going to be severe) than stand around a station wait for snippets of information."*

[London Euston to Milton Keynes Central]

## 4.2 Help me re-plan my journey

When services are disrupted passengers are looking to train companies to help. Yet panellists reported arriving at stations and being given little help in re-planning their journey – often, ‘wait and see what happens’ seemed to be the best advice. Even when passengers had been decanted from a train mid-journey panellists reported feeling “abandoned” with little guidance about what they should do next.

During severe disruption, re-planning the journey should involve lateral thinking. It could be that getting out at a particular station and taking a taxi just a few miles to a station on an unaffected route, or a bus route is an option; or a combination of bus and train; or driving or being driven to a station on a parallel route. Such options do not, generally, show up on journey planning enquiries, so passengers need train companies to help.

In these situations passengers want someone to own their problem; many perceive that the rail industry does not wish to or is incapable of doing so. Staff are often happy to provide information when asked, but do not proactively issue it.

Passengers want train companies to be proactive in helping them re-plan their journey. They want the railway to accept “you got me into this, you get me out”, but they often seem to be disappointed.

*“The train was announced as being delayed. However passengers were not given advice on alternative trains that were departing from the station that they could have taken instead.”*

[Cardiff Central to Weston-Super-Mare]

*“Where there is major disruption – some guidance on what passenger groups should do i.e. take the next available train to Reading and change there for all stations beyond.”*

[Hungerford to London Paddington]

*“Following problems with overhead power cables on the 8th [February], on the morning of the 9th the train left LTV more or less on time. The train manager explained that there were likely to be delays as queuing was in place. However, suddenly the train made an unscheduled stop at Milton Keynes and the train manager told all of the passengers to get off the train. That was it. We were deposited on the platform to figure out for ourselves how to get to Euston.”*

[Litchfield Trent Valley to London Euston]

*“At weekend it seemed that no-one was in charge. Possible quick way back to London on HS1, but no-one knew if we would be allowed to use it, and going via Ashford would be a long way to go if not. ... [How to improve] ... Someone taking responsibility for informing passengers about options.”*

[Hastings to Orpington]

*“My train was full of people travelling very long journeys – Paddington to South Wales or Cornwall – they were suddenly told they may only get further than Reading if a bus possibly turned up and they possibly could fit on it – management and planning of this incident showed zero regard for their safety – what was going to happen to them if the line didn’t re-open and the bus didn’t have space.”*

[Paddington to Swindon]

*“The problem was clearly known about for a while...if we’d have been told when the train started on a go slow just after Alexandra Palace we could have made the decision to change route at Finsbury Park.”*

[New Southgate to Moorgate]

*“We were not told the reason for the delay (a lineside fire at Victoria) until quite late on. I can understand that this sort of problem would cause significant delay, but I would like to have known this earlier, when I still had the option to change trains for London Bridge, rather than being committed to the Victoria route.”*

[Epsom Downs to London Victoria]

*“Just told line closed and no local train service Bham Wolves for intermediate stations. had to get bus at own expense... As usual when this sort of thing happens (vehicle striking bridge) passengers on the all stops local from New St to Wolverhampton line are just abandoned... Lay on alternative transport / bus / taxi and pay for it. Why should we have to pay when London Midland just abandon us.”*

[Shirley to Tipton]

*“The train was terminated at an earlier station (Woking). No guidance given by the on-train staff about the best way to complete your journey (e.g. change at Guildford, change at Woking...)”*

[Liss to London Waterloo]

## Theme 5

### Act joined up

This theme is about passengers feeling that there is no co-ordinated approach within or between train companies and that front-line staff often do not know what is going on during disruption. Passengers have reported getting different answers depending on who they asked and say that some staff are out of the loop on the current status of the disruption. The effect is that passengers lose confidence in the information provided by any source and do not receive advice that could have minimised the impact of the disruption.

#### 5.1 One version of the truth, please

Feedback from panellists reconfirms the importance of consistent information, irrespective of where you get it. Passengers are baffled that staff do not all have the same information. They find it particularly extraordinary that in some instances National Rail Enquiries has more accurate information than is available from the train company itself. Inconsistency contributes to the way passengers believe an incident is not being well-managed. "If they cannot get the information right, what hope is there that they'll sort out the train service?" is the feeling it creates.

*"I had conflicting sources of information: the web information was wrong; at the station, the CIS conflicted with the automated voice (which constantly announced delays and gave apologies); and this all conflicted with a woman announcing over the top of all this on the PA system. Shambles!"*

[London Blackfriars to West Dulwich]

*"Screens at Brighouse showed train as 'on time' despite a 5 minute delay. National Rail Enquiries Managed to show the correct ETA for anyone lucky enough to have access to the Internet on their phone."*

[Brighouse to Leeds]

*"When I arrived at the station, my train (07:54) was shown on the screen as 'delayed' with no ETA displayed (even though the National Rail Enquiries Live Departure website had one)."*

[Hemel Hempstead to London Euston]

*"One reason for delay given at the station and on line – two different reasons given on the train".*

[Peterborough to York]

#### 5.2 Pull together in passengers' interests

Passengers want train companies to make greater efforts to pull together to get them to their destination. Passengers wonder why non-stopping trains cannot make an extra stop to collect passengers who have been decanted from a failed train; they wonder why 'half empty' trains run past them while nothing has stopped at their station for ages. If the solutions passengers might regard as 'obvious' are impossible, it is important to say why and what is being done instead. Otherwise, passengers will conclude that they are suffering because the industry cannot pull together.

*"There was complete chaos at the station no one knew what was happening including the staff. They were running to the published "timetable" after having cancelled trains for hours. They had no contingency plans to clear the back log of commuters. One member of staff blamed Network Rail and said it was not up to them, the result was a total fiasco."*

[London Euston to Berkhamstead]

*"They should radio the drivers of other trains and get them to stop at the station to collect delayed passengers. At least four Southern trains passed through Streatham Common and if they had stopped, it would have allowed most passengers to continue their journey with relative ease."*

[Streatham to London Victoria]

*"The weather and the lack of trains meant that East Croydon was overflowing with people with no services to board. In the meantime two Gatwick express trains passed through the station (one of them pausing in the station for a signal permission) to pass through visibly empty of passengers. How many of us could have been transported on those trains?"*

[East Croydon to London Victoria]

*"It was then announced that the train was being 'terminated' and 'cancelled' at Nailsea and we all had to get off again. We were told a Cross Country train 'right behind' would stop to pick us up but when it arrived 5 minutes later, it did not stop. Oddly, the original train that presumably had broken down had continued its journey to Bristol and was waiting to do a return run with passengers on it when we finally got to Bristol ourselves."*

[Nailsea & Backwell to Bristol]

In a number of disruptions it appears to passengers that a little forethought by the train company would have prevented or reduced the inconvenience they suffered. A good example is 'holding' less frequent services where the main feeder train has been delayed. If the train cannot or has not been held then it is better to say so and explain why. If nothing is said, the impression is given that it has not even been thought about.

*"The train was delayed from Bristol to Swindon and arrived two minutes after the connecting train left. As this service only operates on an hourly basis, I would have expected the train to wait for two minutes! I had to sit at the station for an hour waiting for the next train. There were many other passengers in the same situation."*

[Stroud to Bristol Temple Meads]

*"An earlier failed train caused severe delay near Teignmouth. The train manager tried valiantly to keep us updated but the information given to him did not seem consistent or reliable. It was most annoying having missed the 1148 connection to Exmouth, that FGW did not hold the next Exmouth service at 1218 for just two or three minutes to allow passengers to change platforms at Exeter St David's."*

[Plymouth to Exeter St David's]

*"Train delayed on three separate parts of the journey, but no explanation offered. Maybe an explanation as to why those very efficient Virgin trains always seem to get through while we are stuck."*

[Tring to London Euston]

*"Dumped at Stockport station. No taxis, no buses, no cash in the cash machine. And no staff member could point me to the bus station. The platform staff refused to provide any advice, with comments verging on the ridiculous. After asking if I could claim back the costs of the bus fare or taxi, the staff member replied "you have to write to Cross Country, I work for Virgin and you were travelling on Cross Country". He also "told me I couldn't break my outward journey, [despite] knowing all services to Piccadilly (my destination) had been suspended."*

[Birmingham to Manchester]

*"The service was cancelled completely, no reasons were given and no alternative transport was arranged... they had no driver available to take train on. Other services to Barry Island and Penarth were run on time and these run every 15 mins but the service to Rhose and Llantwit are only run once an hour.... Alternative road transport could have been arranged for these passengers or the next service to Barry could have been rerouted to serve these stations too. Passengers should not have been told to wait another hour for the next train."*

[Cardiff to Llantwit Major]

*"The disruption did not happen until Elephant & Castle (there was a broken down train in front of us) the driver did at least provide info so that people could disembark from the train if they wished."*

[Shortlands to London St Pancras International]



## Theme 6

### I am 'always' delayed, do something about it!

A number of the panellists tell us that it seems as though their train is always delayed; the impression being that train companies regard this as an acceptable situation. Passengers do not see evidence of anything being done to address problems that they perceive to happen every, or almost every day.

#### 6.1 Rolling stock/infrastructure/staffing

Some passengers say they experience regular delays, frequent failures of equipment etc. Some concluded that this is because the train company is using old rolling stock or because of old infrastructure, which inevitably leads to them suffering disruption. Passengers appear to accept that things will go wrong, but when it is very frequent they perceive that there is a systemic problem – and can't see action being taken to tackle it.



*"I want to know what the technical problem was and why it has blighted this service!"*

[Cam & Dursley to Bristol Temple Meads]

*"Northern need a larger and more modern (reliable) fleet of trains serving Greater Manchester, no more ageing hand-me-downs then perhaps we wouldn't have the disruption in the first place."*

[Mauldeth Road to Ashton-Under-Lyne]

*"Given the vast amounts of money spent on upgrading the WCML the failure of signals should be a much a rarer occurrence."*

[Milton Keynes Central to London Euston]

*"This is the first major commuter train between Huddersfield and Leeds and it was cancelled due to a lack of driver. This is a major company which should have a contingency plan ..."*

[Huddersfield to Leeds]

*"The train company did not send all of the carriages on the train and it was so overcrowded by the time it came to Outwood I couldn't get on the train and then had to wait for the next train, no apologies or explanation from the train staff, no hope this won't happen again. As a passenger I feel their stats will look fine as trains arrive in Leeds near enough on time so they don't care. But as a passenger the train was as good as cancelled to me."*

[Outwood to Leeds]

*"If anyone is serious about competing with the car to get less people to drive, the first thing that needs to be done is to ensure the fleet is modern and at least tries to keep up with expectations. Prevention is better than cure replace all of the trains over 20 years old!"*

[Hornbeam Park to Leeds]

#### 6.2 Timetable

Panellists expect train companies to offer a timetable that is deliverable. If their train is late by even a few minutes every day, they see the timetable as fictional. This leads passengers to wonder about the competence of planners or whether there is the will to address the issue, this being reinforced by a suspicion that some delays slide in under the formal statistics radar because they are too small or occur between measuring points.

*“The train is regularly late, a reason is almost never given. It can hardly be congestion at that time in the morning (05:56am).”*

[Farnborough Main to London Waterloo]

*“This service is my regular home journey. 99% of the time it is delayed because although it is meant to be fast it has to give way to a Gatwick Express service. It has been disrupted since the new timetable was introduced 12/08.”*

[Clapham Junction to Brighton]

*“The original arrival time for this service was 06.42 and was rescheduled to 06:38. It appears that whilst the timetable was changed you would be tempted to think that nobody told the driver that the train was supposed to arrive earlier. I can understand that on occasion that service will not run to time, but just about every day is ridiculous.”*

[Glasgow Queen Street to Charing Cross (Glasgow)]

*“The train I take every morning is disrupted on average 80% of the time (i.e. 4 out of the 5 days it is late). 5 minutes doesn't sound a lot but it is a local journey which should only be 20 minutes in total. Because the local service is always late, information is not provided as everyone just accepts it now.”*

[Yate to Bristol Temple Meads]

*“This is becoming a regular habit for this train – it is supposed to depart Durham at 17:08 but instead doesn't arrive until 17:13. This is obviously a problem with the timetable, as it happens too often for it to be coincidence.”*

[Newcastle to Durham]

*“Despite snow, train only a minute or two late from Farnborough. Ten minutes late by the time it reached Waterloo. Regular occurrence despite giving themselves a generous 38 minutes travel time considering the network is almost empty at that time. It seems to be accepted that this train can regularly run 5 to 10 minutes late without bothering to explain or justify it. There are almost no other trains around and it only has two stops to make so there is no reason for it.”*

[Farnborough (Main) to London Waterloo]



*“It's fair enough to be told that 'congestion' is the cause of a delay – but frustrating when it is quite obvious that it's the direct result of being routed on a path behind a stopping service. This is now a regular occurrence on this particular train and the excuses are now wearing thin ... Not a good day (again) on the Hastings line.”*

[Robertsbridge to London Charing Cross]

*“For the third morning running the train was late. For the third morning running there were no station announcements. For the third morning running there was no apology from the conductor.”*

[Wylam to Newcastle]

# Doing it well makes a difference

Passengers do seem to recognise that in running a railway, like owning anything mechanical, it can unexpectedly break down or develop faults. When information is provided about the delay, and it is done in a way that passengers feel is honest and 'genuine', they are more tolerant of the situation. This is the case even where delays are quite lengthy.

*"Announcements on the station PA system, but also a member of staff on hand (Platform 15) who was excellent at updating passengers."*

[Selby to Leeds, 30-59 minutes delay, very satisfied]

*"We were kept regularly updated on the length and nature of the delays due to a signalling problem at East Croydon. The announcements on the train were also good humoured."*

[Brighton to London Victoria, 16-30 minutes delay, fairly satisfied]

*"Communication on the train was good. It makes such a difference rather than be left wondering in silence."*

[Brighton to London Bridge, 16-30 minutes delay, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied]

*"Female conductor made manual PA announcements and was honest about cause of delays outside Manchester & Liverpool, rather than relying on the automated announcements. She also sounded genuinely sorry."*

[Leeds to Liverpool Lime Street, 5-10 minutes delay, very satisfied]

*"The Guard kept us all very well informed, even before it was evident we were to be delayed."*

[Alton to London Waterloo, 11-15 minutes delay, fairly satisfied]

*"The on-board staff apologised, explained the reason for the delay (which was a failed express train ahead of us down the line) and kept us updated."*

[Liverpool Lime Street to Whiston, 16-30 minutes delay, very satisfied]

*"The station staff kept us fully informed. Delays are acceptable as long as the passenger is informed of what is happening and in this case that happened. I would comment though that this is extremely rare."*

[Tipton to Shirley, 11-15 minutes delay, very satisfied]

*"Shock Horror!! The driver can speak. We actually had regular updates as to our delay and he apologised as well. Wonders will never cease."*

[London Liverpool Street to Harlow Town, 16-30 minutes delay, fairly satisfied]

Passengers value efforts by staff or the train company to help them in times of disruption either by enabling them to avoid travelling, acting in a joined up fashion, or making a decision to alleviate the impact.

*"I had an email from Southern to tell me that the train was cancelled so I left the house a little later and didn't have to stand in the cold on the platform."*

[Carshalton to London Victoria, 16-30 minutes delay, fairly satisfied]

*"Line closure due to fatality ..... train was diverted back from Newbury to Westbury, Chippenham, Reading etc. but made stops for passengers wanting to get back home at Hungerford and Pewsey which was appreciated."*

[Hungerford to London Paddington, 1-3 hours delay, fairly satisfied]

*"Lots of apologies. Connecting services held back as long as possible to assist journey completion."*

[Penarth to Ty Glas, 16-30 minutes delay, fairly satisfied]

*"I received a text advising the train was cancelled which enabled me to make alternative arrangements, albeit a longer journey time."*

[Sudbury & Harrow Road to London Marylebone, 30-59 minutes delay, completed by a train from another station. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied]



*“Information screens were updated with the reason for the delay (a broken rail), and gave information that rail replacement bus would run. As I live near the station, I chose to go home, and use the website to wait for trains to run again, which didn’t take very long. Good information, helpful staff member, alternatives given (catch train to Grays – which was still running – and catch London bound Ockendon trains).”*

[Purfleet to London Fenchurch Street, 30-59 minutes delay, very satisfied]

Passengers value common sense decisions taken by staff to make their experience of the disruption more bearable.

*“When I arrived at the station, the board at the entrance displayed the fact that the train had been cancelled. The fact that this information was available at the station entrance meant that people could make alternative arrangements straight away (e.g. catch the bus, or in my case go back home and come out again 20 minutes later for another train). This meant that I didn’t not have to stand in the cold not knowing whether the train would come or not.”*

[Brighouse to Leeds, 30-59 minutes delay, very satisfied]

*“Due to a gas explosion near Temple Meads all trains were disrupted/cancelled. This service is operated by First Great Western who, to their credit, arranged alternative transport pretty quickly.”*

[Bristol Temple Meads to Oldfield Park, 16-30 minutes delay, completed by bus or taxi (paid for by train company), fairly satisfied]

*“...no trains were running because of a major incident, a fire at the Kirkdale depot. All trains were cancelled. Luckily the station staff arranged a taxi.”*

[Maghull to Liverpool Central, 30-59 minutes delay, completed by taxi paid for by train company, fairly satisfied]

*“There was a fault in the air brakes, the train was stopped outside of Yatton, and they had to fetch a fitter from Bristol. The train manager was excellent at keeping us informed. He also offered free coffee/tea & biscuits.”*

[Weston Milton to Bristol Temple Meads, 1-3 hours delay, fairly satisfied]

*“Very professionally managed by a conscientious conductor. First Class compartment de-classified, compensation forms given out, regular PA announcements explaining the reasons for the delay and providing updated ETAs in addition to regularly passing through the train, maintaining high levels of visibility, re-assuring passengers and providing help / advice with connections.”*

[Huddersfield to Manchester Piccadilly, 16-30 minutes delay, very satisfied]

*“The train was delayed by frozen points & we were informed of this every five minutes or so for the whole time we were not moving .... The train was kept warm despite being stationary for over an hour.”*

[Edinburgh Waverley to Charing Cross (Glasgow) 1-3 hours delay, Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied]

*“Train stopped at Nuneaton station and passengers were allowed to exit the train whilst [it was] waiting.”*

[Manchester Piccadilly to London Euston, 1-3 hours delay, fairly satisfied]

# Challenges to the industry

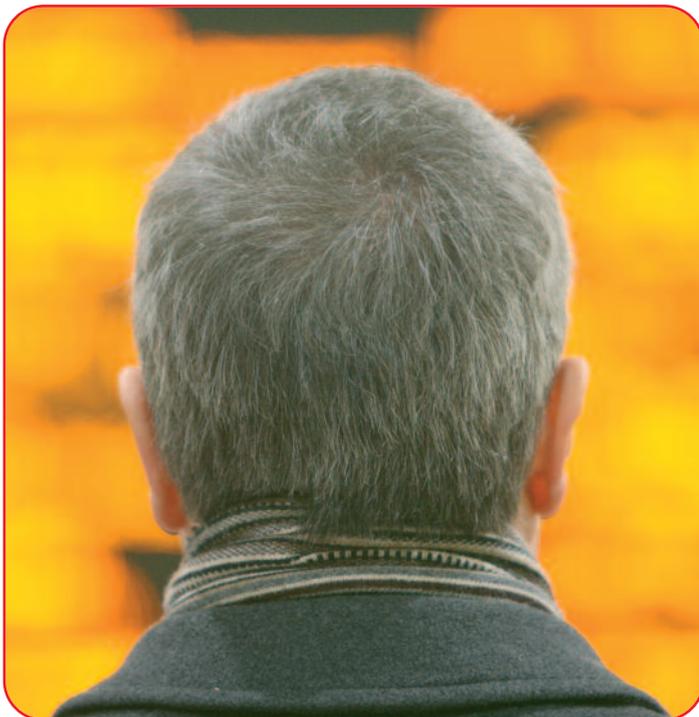
**P**assenger Focus is fully aware that the rail industry is taking steps to improve passenger information in various ways, including through two principal initiatives:

- To ensure that information provided on display screens at stations is accurate and consistent by using the national real time running database (Darwin) as their data source.
- To ensure that during disruption a “core message” is issued every 20 minutes setting out what has happened, detailing its impact and giving advice to passengers.

We support these initiatives and encourage the industry to implement them as quickly and comprehensively as possible.

However this research highlights the need to do more if passengers’ rating of how disruption is handled is to increase significantly, and the scores improve for the National Passenger Survey questions “How well do you think the train company dealt with this delay?” and “How well do you rate the train company for the usefulness of the information, in relation to the delay that occurred?”.

Passenger Focus therefore presents the following challenges to the industry, under the headings “cultural”; “before the journey”; “at the station”; “during the journey”; and “measurement and improvement”.



## Cultural

- **That the industry delivers cultural change so that all staff, from senior management to the front line, are understanding of the human impact of disruption and appreciate that any disruption is a failure to provide what the customer has paid for.**

Such a culture change will underpin many of the practical measures needed and is vital to behaving with the empathy, or even humility, many passengers just do not see during disruption.

- **That train companies introduce their enhanced management actions during disruption, known as “Customer Service Level 2 (CSL2)”<sup>1</sup>, and in particular start issuing ‘core messages’ referred to above, at the point where 25% of passengers regard a delay as “serious,” as shown by our research<sup>2</sup>. This equates to:**

- **London and South East train companies**

delays of 16-20 minutes

- **Long Distance train companies**

delays of 21-25 minutes

- **Regional train companies**

delays of 16-20 minutes.

## Before the journey

- **That the industry develops and implements a strategy to help passengers avoid disruptions in the first place, by providing information that allows them to make an informed decision before setting out.**

Passenger Focus’s “Passengers’ priorities for improvements in rail services”<sup>3</sup> research published in March 2010 showed that 87% of passengers do not usually know about delays until they arrive at the station. This represents a huge missed opportunity to help people avoid a problem altogether. We recognise the growth of mobile internet, however such a strategy must acknowledge that passengers’ current preferred method of being informed of delays before they reach the station, outlined in that research, is by SMS text message – which should be offered at no more than a user’s standard message rate.

<sup>1</sup> Customer Service Level 2 (CSL2) is a term used within the rail industry to describe a range of enhanced management actions that are implemented during major service disruption

<sup>2</sup> Analysis of National Passenger Survey responses waves 19-22

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 2 for further details.

### **At the station**

- **That train companies ensure delivery of the ‘core message’ to passengers waiting at stations and that as many staff as possible are available for passengers to consult about their options.**

This would include provision and use of ‘special notice’ screens and associated announcements, but also how the message will reach all front-line staff and how they will help disseminate it to passengers. It would also involve making sure as many staff as possible are visible and actively helping passengers make an informed decision about what they do.

- **That train companies develop, for every station, comprehensive advice about how to get to key destinations by alternative routes and/or modes, together with plans to make sure the information is actively provided to passengers.**

For example, if one route is closed but there is an unaffected station up the road or a scheduled bus service to the same destination, passengers should be provided with details.

- **That a source of real time passenger information derived from Darwin, and a facility to speak to a member of staff to obtain advice, must be made available at every station.**

At stations where there are no staff, this might be via a telephone link. The fact that at some stations passengers’ only option is to wait and see if their train arrives is not acceptable.

- **That the industry investigates how station public address announcements can be made using data from Darwin.**

Using the single source of the truth to provide station announcements is a logical next-step from it ‘driving’ visual displays at stations.

- **That train companies draw up a “how we will look after passengers stranded at ....” plan for every station they operate.**

At some stations this might cover little more than the provision of refreshments by a retail outlet on that station, but we would encourage train companies to think laterally. If you have no staff at a station but people stranded, how can you get staff there? Is there a pub/takeaway/shop nearby that could supply refreshments/toilet facilities – and if so, who has the phone

number and contact name? If you have passengers stranded at an isolated location, could the Police, BTP or county force, be asked to ‘look in’? Could volunteers (e.g. station adopters) help out? Could there be a dedicated telephone line for passengers to obtain advice specific to them?

### **During the journey**

- **That train crew should be required to acknowledge a delay within two minutes of coming to an unscheduled halt and to acknowledge delays resulting from slow running.**

Acknowledging the fact of the delay is vital. It gives passengers confidence that somebody knows there is a problem and cares enough to say something. “The two minute rule” is already regarded as good practice by the industry, but has not been comprehensively implemented.

- **That the industry investigates how on-board passenger information systems, visual and audible, can operate using real time data from Darwin.**

We see using the single source of the truth to provide information on trains as a logical development from it ‘driving’ visual displays at stations.

- **That train companies embrace the “we will help you re-plan your journey to keep the inconvenience to a minimum” approach and make commitments to provide – in extremis – alternative transport and overnight accommodation, as is explicit in some train company Passenger’s Charters.**

Making such commitments and implementing processes to make them a reality will help drive cultural change. It will signal to staff and passengers alike that a train company *will* help; it will not leave you to fend for yourself when things go wrong. As well as ensuring that staff are proactive, providing a facility for passengers to telephone for advice on re-planning their journey should be considered.



- **That the industry should commission a study into the most effective way or ways to provide the Holding and Core Message to drivers of Driver Only Operated (DOO) trains as quickly as possible during CSL2 disruptions.**

The list below is not exhaustive, but such a study should look at the merits of:

- Displaying the Core Message at the “Car Stop” points on station platforms
- Deploying staff (Revenue Protection Inspectors perhaps?) at the “Car Stop” points physically handing drivers a piece of paper on which the Core Message is printed
- Transmitting the Core Message to drivers using Network Rail’s “General Call” procedure
- Seeking a safe method by which drivers of DOO trains can make and receive telephone calls when stationary.

### Measurement and improvement

- **That Control staff have better information and better processes to allow them to consider the passenger impact of their decisions during disruption.**

This might include: average load information for each train (to help Control avoid terminating a train with 1,200 passengers aboard in favour of one with 100, other things being equal); a list of connections that will be broken/are at risk if a particular service is delayed or cancelled; real time visuals of how crowded platforms are at key stations; an easy means to see the time elapsed since a train last called at a particular station; and processes that force the question “what happens to the passengers if I do this?”.

- **That further effort is needed to improve the industry’s ability to provide an accurate estimate of delay to a passenger and of incident duration.** Constantly escalating delay estimates is a source of major frustration to passengers, and makes the industry look as if it does not know what is going on. The use of predictive estimates, based on experience of similar incidents, built up and refined over time should be considered. If a reliable estimate cannot be given, perhaps in the very early stages of a disruption, explain why and provide one as soon as possible.

- **That train companies make their performance in delivering a Core Message every 20 minutes during CSL2 disruptions a key metric.**

This could be achieved by making it a standing KPI reported at board and/or senior executive meetings.

- **That during all CSL2 disruption train companies monitor in real time what their website(s), the National Rail Enquiries disruption pages, live departure boards, email and text alerts etc. are saying to ensure that information is “useful”.**

This is probably best done by somebody not embroiled in the disruption, probably in a marketing, communications or customer service role. That is, somebody who can sit to one side and think “is this useful to our customers?” – and intervene if necessary.

- **That train companies establish, for the purpose of continuous improvement, a forum to make a qualitative assessment of the information provided to passengers at each stage of at least one CSL2 disruption every industry period.**

Such a forum would provide a rigorous ‘review and improve’ process for information provided during disruption, identifying what worked well and what did not.

- **That train companies are more active in identifying those trains which are delayed very frequently and addressing the root cause.**

Being required to publish an annual list of individual trains with a Public Performance Measure Moving Annual Average of less than 80%, together with an explanation of what is being done to improve things would help train companies get a better understanding of passengers’ daily experiences and give visibility to their efforts to improve.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Part A Recruitment leaflet



The leaflet features a red header with the text 'HELP IMPROVE YOUR TRAIN SERVICE' and the URL 'www.passengerfocus.org.uk/disruption'. Below this is a white illustration of a train platform with silhouettes of passengers and a city skyline. The bottom section is red and contains a survey questionnaire, the URL, and logos for Ipsos MORI and Passenger Focus.

**HELP IMPROVE  
YOUR TRAIN SERVICE**  
[www.passengerfocus.org.uk/disruption](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/disruption)

Are you a regular passenger?  
Do you regularly experience delays on your journey?  
Do you want to be a part of an online panel to help improve your train service?  
We are Passenger Focus, the independent passenger watchdog, and we need your help to improve rail services for all passengers.

[www.passengerfocus.org.uk/disruption](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/disruption)

Ipsos MORI

Passengerfocus  
putting passengers first

## Part B

## Recruitment questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in helping Passenger Focus, the national passenger watchdog, to make a difference to the way service disruption is handled by the rail industry. How train companies deal with delays scores badly in our twice-yearly National Passenger Survey, which includes the views of over 50,000 passengers every year. We also know that passengers want the rail industry to do better at times of disruption because 'delay information' is among the top five passenger priorities for improvement.

The information you provide about your experiences will be invaluable to Passenger Focus in highlighting the difficulties passengers experience when train services are disrupted. We will use the feedback you give us to campaign at a national and local level for improvements in the service provided to passengers when things go wrong.

**Regards****Anthony Smith****Passenger Focus Chief Executive**

This research is being undertaken for Passenger Focus by Ipsos MORI, an independent market research agency. Any answers you give will be treated in confidence in accordance with the Market Research Society code of conduct.

To continue your registration onto the Train Disruption Panel member, please click the '>>' button below and complete the short registration questionnaire.

If you have any questions about this survey, please feel free to contact Paul Orovan at IPSOS-MORI on 02073473000. If you have any concerns about the legitimacy of the research itself, you can contact the Market Research Society on 0500 396999 who will verify the status of Ipsos MORI as a market research organisation.

If you have any technical questions or you are having any difficulty accessing the website or answering the questionnaire, please send an email to the following address: [trainsdisruptionpanel@ipsos-forum.com](mailto:trainsdisruptionpanel@ipsos-forum.com)

[Click here](#) for details on technology/system requirements.

**Please indicate how often you use the train (i.e. not the tube or a light rail system such as tram) in an average week. Please count an outward and return journey as two different journeys, (for example, your commute to work counts as two journeys).**

- a** Five times a week or less (only a small number in this category admitted to the panel)
- b** Six times a week or more

**For which of these reasons do you mostly travel by train?**

[SINGLE RESPONSE]

- a** Commuting
- b** Business trips
- c** Leisure
- d** Other

**Using the boxes below, please indicate which stations you travel between in a typical week? (note if your main reason for using the train is commuting, please state departure station as your morning departure station).**

Departure station: [Predictive text with list of the stations]

Arrival station: [Predictive text with list of the stations]

**Which train company operates the service on this journey?**

[Drop down list]

**After arriving at [Arrival Station], do you use any further public transport to reach your final destination?**

Yes / No

If yes: And what is the average frequency of that onward public transport connection?

- i** There is a departure at least every 15 minutes
- ii** Departures are usually spaced 15 minutes or longer apart

**When returning to [Departure Station], do you use any further public transport to reach home?**

Yes / No

If yes: And what is the average frequency of that onward public transport connection?

- i** There is a departure at least every 15 minutes
- ii** Departures are usually spaced 15 minutes or longer apart

We would like some information about who you are to help us analyse the panel as a whole. If you do not wish to answer any of these questions please select 'prefer not to say'.

**What is your age?** 16-25, 26-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70-80, 81+, Prefer not to say

**Are you ...?** Male, Female, Prefer not to say

**Are you...?** Working – full time, Working – part time, Not working – unemployed, Not working – student, Not working – other, Prefer not to say

**Do you consider yourself to have a disability?**

Yes, No, Prefer not to say

**Part C**

The blank report below shows the information areas completed when reporting a disruption

Train company - Report Number:xxxx							
Week Number - xx			Satisfaction with overall disruption handling				
Date of incident	Departure station	Scheduled time of Departure	Arrival station	Length of overall journey delay	How journey was completed	Told the cause of the train disruption	
Degree of problems experienced with the way the disruption was handled		Degree of good/pleasing aspects experienced with the way the disruption was handled		Given information in relation to the train disruption?		Rating of helpfulness of that information	
Major problems		Many good/pleasing aspects		Yes - before station			
Minor problems		Some good/pleasing aspects		Yes - at station			
No problems		No good/pleasing aspects		Yes - on the train			
				No			
				Don't know			
If a negative incident: Thinking about the problems or issue(s) you had, can you tell us what happened?							
If a positive incident: Thinking about things that pleased you, can you tell us what happened?							
NEGATIVE COMMENTS:							
POSITIVE COMMENTS:							
Was there anything else about the way the disruption was handled, that would be helpful for us to know?							
How, in your opinion, could the disruption have been better handled?							

## Appendix 2

Findings relevant to information and delays from Passenger Focus's "Passengers' priorities for improvements in rail services" research, published March 2010.

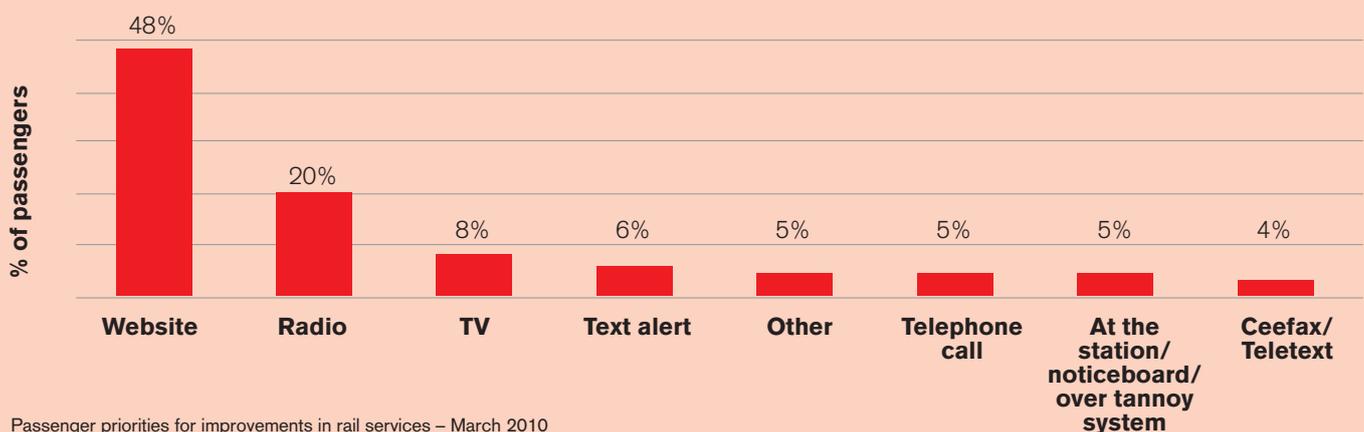


This research set out to identify rail passengers' priorities for improvement across the nine English government regions, Scotland and Wales. As part of this research, passengers were asked a series of questions about their information needs, in relation to delays and disruption on the rail network.

It established that passengers placed improvements to the way train operators keep passengers informed of delays as their fifth priority (out of the total of the 31 station and train attributes within the National Passenger Survey). The research then identified that just under nine out of ten passengers (87%) were 'often unaware' of delays/disruptions before reaching the station. Just 13% said that they 'usually knew' about the delays/disruption in advance. Of those passengers, just under half said that they learnt of the disruption via a website, whilst a fifth said they learnt about it through listening to the radio:

Chart 1

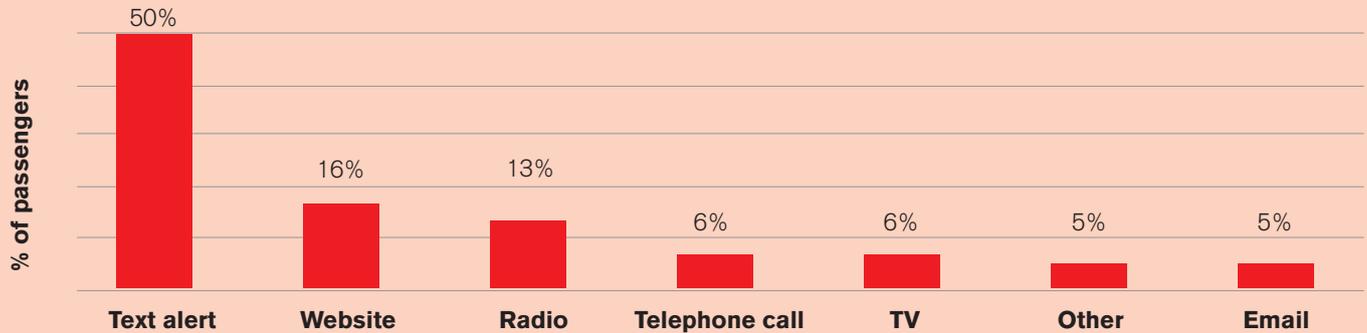
### How passengers usually find out about delays or disruption before getting to the station



Passengers were also asked how train operators could best let them know about disruption/delays in advance of them reaching the station.

## Chart 2

### The best method to let you know there are delays/disruption before you set off to the station



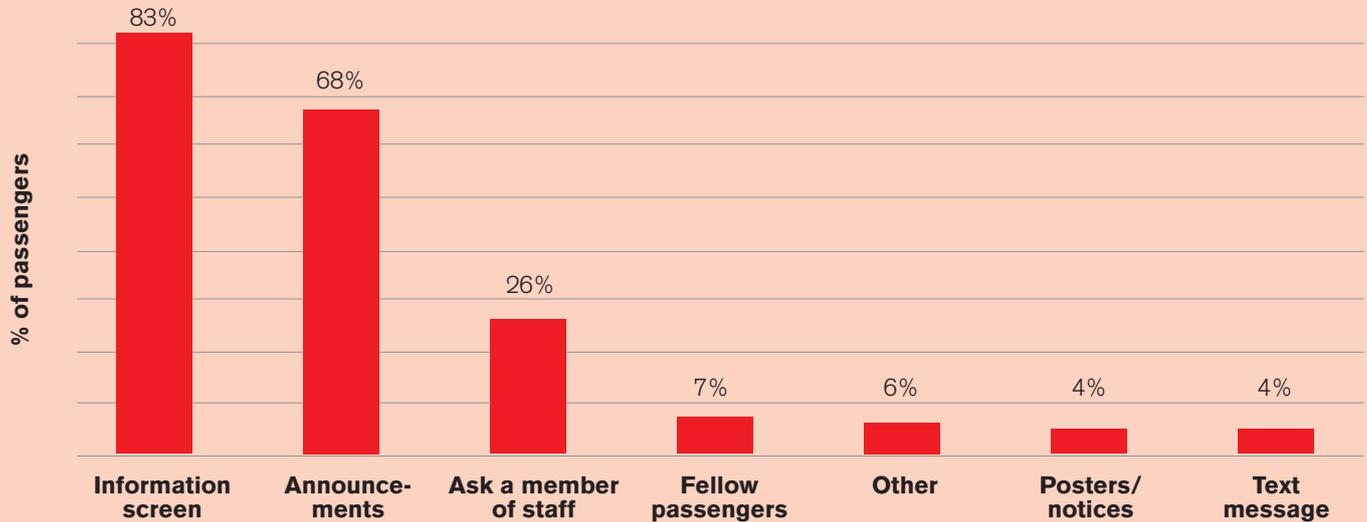
Passenger priorities for improvements in rail services – March 2010

As can be seen from chart 2 above, passengers clearly favour being advised by text that there is disruption/delays affecting services before they reach the station.

They were also asked how they would like to be informed of a delay/disruption once at the station (chart 3 below).

## Chart 3

### The most important ways to find out how delays/disruption affect you



Passenger priorities for improvements in rail services – March 2010

Once at the station, passengers think that the best way to advise of any delays/disruption is through a combination of information screens (83%) and announcements (68%).

## Appendix 3

Analysis of waves 19 – 22 of Passenger Focus National Passenger Survey responses to question 24 by question 26.

**Q24** Did you experience any delay either on this train or because the train you had planned to catch there was cancelled? Again, please think only of the train you first boarded at [your station] directly after receiving the questionnaire.

No delay:    Yes – minor delay:    Yes – serious delay.

**Q26** How long was your delay?

**Table 1**

### London and South East – sample 12,602

Length of delay	Perception as it being a minor delay	Perception as it being a serious delay
5 mins or less	99	1
6-10 mins	97	3
11-15 mins	86	14
16-20 mins	73	27
21-25 mins	61	39
26-30 mins	48	52
31-35 mins	46	54
36-40 mins	29	71
41-45 mins	32	68
46-50 mins	28	72
51-55 mins	17	83
56-60 mins	21	79

27% of London and South East passengers experiencing a 16-20 minute delay regard it as serious and 52% of those experiencing a 25-30 minute delay regard it as serious.

**Table 2**

### Long distance – sample 5,115

Length of delay	Perception as it being a minor delay	Perception as it being a serious delay
5 mins or less	98	2
6-10 mins	99	1
11-15 mins	95	5
16-20 mins	84	16
21-25 mins	75	25
26-30 mins	64	36
31-35 mins	46	54
36-40 mins	37	63
41-45 mins	48	52
46-50 mins	28	72
51-55 mins	33	67
56-60 mins	26	74

25% of Long Distance passengers experiencing a 21-25 minute delay regard it as serious and 54% of those experiencing a 31-35 minute delay regard it as serious.

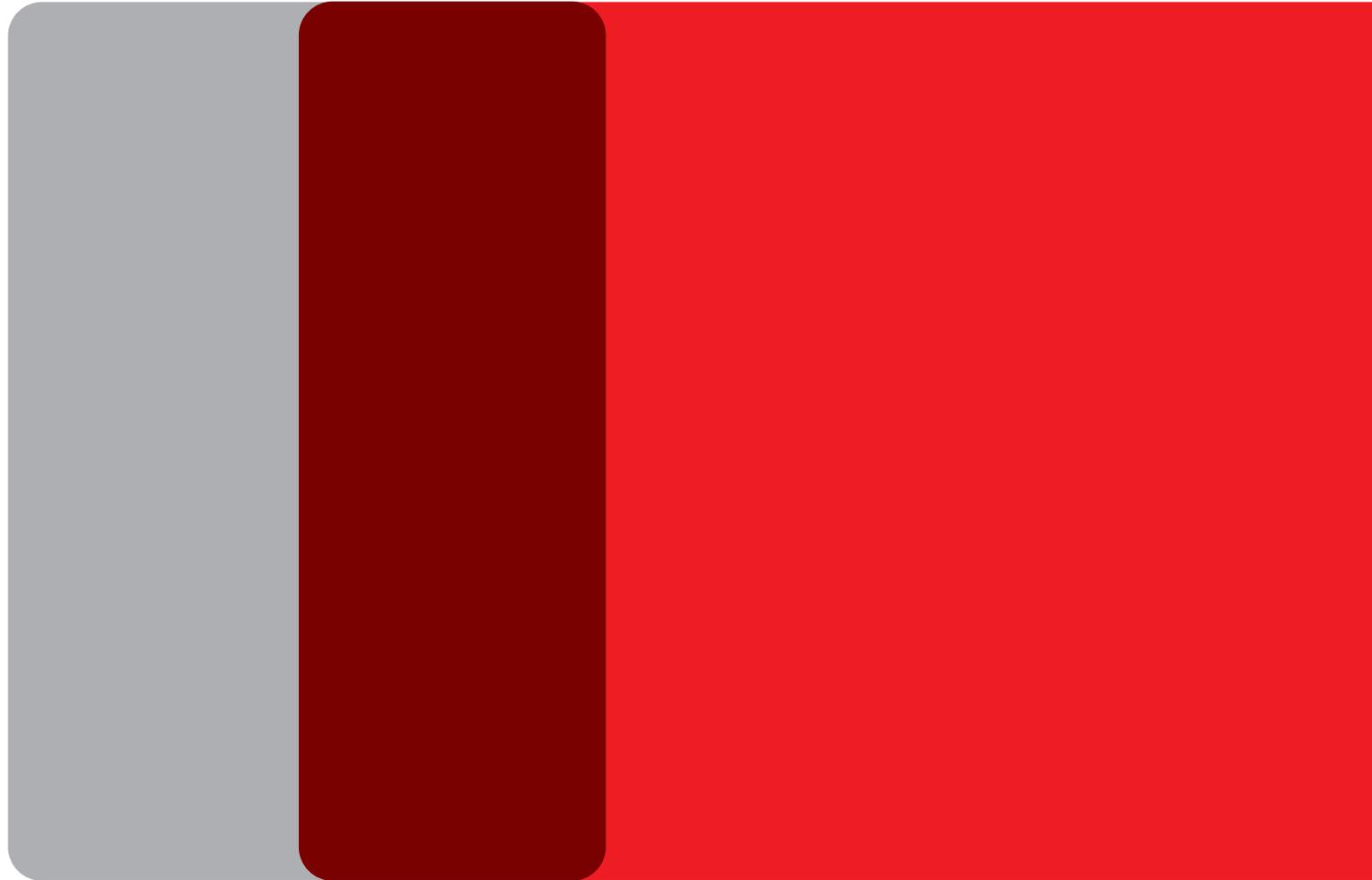
**Table 3**

### Regional – sample 2,177

Length of delay	Perception as it being a minor delay	Perception as it being a serious delay
5 mins or less	99	1
6-10 mins	98	2
11-15 mins	88	12
16-20 mins	75	25
21-25 mins	71	29
26-30 mins	51	49
31-35 mins	50	50
36-40 mins	34	66
41-45 mins	24	76
46-50 mins	16	84
51-55 mins	43	57
56-60 mins	22	78

25% of Regional passengers experiencing a 16-20 minute delay regard it as serious and 49% of those experiencing a 26-30 minute delay regard it as serious.





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