A dual measurement approach to the National Rail Passenger Survey in Scotland in the spring 2019 wave

Methodology

Some methodological changes were made to the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) from spring 2017. This included a shorter NRPS questionnaire, some changes to question wording and offering passengers the choice of completing the survey on paper or online. In light of these changes there was concern that the time series of NRPS results could be affected.

A robust pilot of the new approach that Transport Focus and our agency conducted in spring 2016 suggested that the methodological changes had resulted in only minor/insignificant changes to the results nationally. Although, it was not possible to look at the results by train operating company (TOC) due to the sample size at TOC level.

ScotRail and Transport Scotland were concerned that the results could be affected so it was agreed that a dual methodology would be implemented from spring 2017 (and autumn 2017) on ScotRail. This continued during 2018 (spring and autumn waves) and spring 2019. This means that results for the NRPS to the new methodology could be compared to results to the old methodology that was used up to autumn 2016. This report shows the main results for spring 2019.

The dual methodology involves carrying out 'duplicate' or parallel shifts of the main NRPS shifts on ScotRail. For each main NRPS shift during the spring 2019 wave a separate shift was arranged on a different day on the same day of the week at the same time as the main shift and, if possible, using the same fieldworker. The parallel run shift was at most two weeks later or the week before the main NRPS shift.

Results

A summary comparing the main (official) NRPS and the parallel run in spring 2019 is given below:

NRPS factor	Difference between the current NRPS methodology and the parallel run (current – parallel)
Overall journey satisfaction*	-2% (85% - 87%)
Overall station satisfaction	-4%
Overall train satisfaction	0%
Punctuality/reliability*	0%
Value for money for the price of your ticket	1%
Cleanliness of the inside of the train	1%
How well train company deals with delays*	-3%
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand (old methodology) versus level of crowding (new methodology)**	-2%

Notes:

*: Key factors used in performance targets.

**: The NRPS factors related to crowding changed between autumn 2016 and spring 2017.

Full results for all station and train factors are
available on request.

Comparing results between the two methodologies

Comparing the main NRPS and parallel run results for spring 2019, all scores are within plus
or minus 6 per cent (at most). This suggests that the main station and train scores (and
overall satisfaction) are little or no different under the two different methodologies.

Spring 2019 was the fifth (and last) wave where we ran the two methodologies in tandem.
Looking at results over the five waves we ran the two methodologies, analysis shows that
results are similar throughout. For example, the graphs below show the percentage of
passengers satisfied from the main NRPS and the parallel run for three of the key factors –
overall journey satisfaction, satisfaction with punctuality/reliability and satisfaction with value
for money.

Satisfaction with value for money

Spring 2017 | Autumn 2017 | Spring 2018 | Autumn 2018 | Spring 2019

Parallel — Main