

National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) – an Introduction

Background

Transport Focus (known as Passenger Focus until April 2015), and previously OPRAF and the Strategic Rail Authority set up the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) in 1999. The aim of the NRPS was to provide customer views on rail company performance on a consistent basis, so that comparisons could be made between the various companies over time. Data from the NRPS has been built into the franchising contracts with train companies, making the results an important commercial dimension of running a Train Operating Company (TOC). Given this, the sample design, fieldwork standards and accuracy of assigning journeys to specific TOCs are of the greatest importance. In addition, large enough sample sizes are required for each TOC to ensure that performance changes can be seen in the marketplace.

It is important to note that NRPS is what is called an event-based passenger satisfaction programme; it measures passengers views of individual events that have taken place on the day they were given a questionnaire (or invitation to participate online). As such, the results allow Transport Focus and other users to generate various journey satisfaction measures. The results do not purport to provide an overall view of a TOC, rather an overall view of journeys undertaken on that TOC. The same distinction applies to journeys relating to any subset of NRPS; for example, the data for London Euston provides a view of journeys undertaken from that station rather than an overall view of the station itself.

Information available

NRPS utilises a self-completion questionnaire, combining a mixture of paper questionnaires and online responses. Both methods use the same questionnaire, which collects information and perceptions relating to the journey that a passenger undertook immediately following receipt of the questionnaire. The survey, undertaken twice per annum at present, typically covers around 27,000 responses, which enable analysis by Train Operating Company (TOC), individual routes and (larger) stations.

The methodology is fully described in the NRPS Technical Report, which is updated each wave and available on the Transport Focus website. Guidance on how to interpret results and the likely levels of accuracy are described in the NRPS User Guidance Report, which is also available on the Transport Focus website.

The aim of this document is to outline the information that is available for analysis purposes so that potential and existing NRPS data users can understand the range of information that is available. There is a data hub on the Transport Focus website, which provides a range of analysis facilities and users can access the respondent level data for their own further analysis.

The journey

The NRPS core questionnaire contains the following information on the journey being monitored:

- Station where the passenger boarded the train
- Station where the passenger left the train
- Origin station of the train service*
- Destination station of the train service*
- Whether the passenger made any interchanges through their overall journey and if so where
- Departure time of the train
- Duration of the journey
- TOC used for the journey
- TOC type (commuter, regional, long distance)*
- TOC building block typology (Short commute, Long commute, High speed, Long distance. Inter urban, Rural, Airport services)*
- Purpose of the journey
- Type of ticket used for the journey

* these variables are added at the data validation stage

Perceptions of the departure station

The questionnaire includes questions regarding perceptions of a range of station services and facilities:

- Ticket buying facilities
- Provision of information about train times / platforms
- The upkeep/ repair of the station buildings/ platforms
- Cleanliness of the station
- Toilet facilities at the station
- Attitudes and helpfulness of the staff
- Connections with other forms of public transport
- Facilities for car parking
- Facilities for bicycle parking
- The overall station environment
- Your personal security whilst using that station
- How request to station staff was handled
- Availability of staff at the station
- Shelter facilities
- Availability of seating
- Choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities available
- Availability of Wi-Fi
- Overall satisfaction with the station

Perceptions of the train journey

The questionnaire includes questions regarding perceptions of a range of station services and facilities:

- The frequency of the trains on that route
- Punctuality / reliability (i.e. the train arriving / departing on time)
- Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)
- Level of crowding
- Connections with other train services

Value for money of the price of your ticket
Cleanliness of the inside of the train
Cleanliness of the outside of the train
Upkeep and repair of the train
Provision of information during the journey
Availability of staff on the train
Helpfulness and attitude of staff on train
Space for luggage
Comfort of the seats
Space for bicycles (not included in the multivariate analysis)
The step or gap between the train and the platform
Your personal security whilst on board the train
The toilet facilities
Reliability of the Internet connection
Availability of power sockets
How well train company dealt with delays
Usefulness of information about any delay
Overall satisfaction with the train

There is also an overall satisfaction question, taking into account the departure station and the train journey.

Other journey related questions

Whether the journey was outward or return
Frequency of making this particular journey
Trust in the TOC
Emoticon that best applies to the journey
Passenger behaviour on the train

Demographics

Age
Gender
Ethnicity
Disability
Encumbrances (luggage, items travelling with)

Other areas

Questions on other areas are covered from time to time in NRPS, some regularly every other wave and some for part of the sample; other subject may be included from time to time. The list of topics covered recently includes:

Access to/egress from the station
Catering on the train
Fares availability
Activities undertaken on the train

Drivers of journey satisfaction

After each wave of NRPS, analysis is undertaken to identify the key factors that drive journey satisfaction. This is fully described in the NRPS Summary Report and the NRPS Technical Report, which appear on the Transport focus website.

Whilst the factors affecting overall journey satisfaction vary a little from wave to wave and from TOC to TOC, there are three underlying insights that emerge consistently from this analysis:

- Train factors appear to have more impact on journey satisfaction than station factors
- Punctuality is invariably the top driver of journey satisfaction
- How well the train company dealt with delays is invariably the top driver of journey dissatisfaction

Further information

The NRPS Main and Full Reports provides a wealth of information from each wave of NRPS. The NRPS Technical Report provides a lot more detail on the methodology used in the survey.

The NRPS User Guidance Report provides help in interpreting NRPS outputs
All these reports are available on the Transport Focus website

In addition, access to the raw data itself and to the verbatim comments written in by respondents in response to open-ended questions are available. Please see the Transport Focus website or contact David Greeno at Transport Focus for further details. SPSS files are also available.

An online system called the 'Data Hub' gives users the opportunity to do their own NRPS analysis (including some quite detailed analysis). Access is available at:
<https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/> .

Analysis of Transport Focus's other tracker surveys is also possible using the Data Hub.

Availability of data and reports

Reports can be generated using the Transport Focus data hub. This gives users the opportunity to do their own NRPS analysis (including some quite detailed analysis). Access is available at:

<https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/> .

Analysis of Transport Focus's other tracker surveys is also possible using the Data Hub.

In addition, access to the raw data itself and to the verbatim comments written in by respondents in response to open-ended questions are available online.

Please see the Transport Focus website or at <http://www.railpassengerdata.org.uk> for further details of this online system. SPSS files are also available.