

CLEAN, WELL MAINTAINED AND SAFE RAILWAYS

A RESEARCH STUDY CONDUCTED FOR TRANSPORT FOCUS AND THE DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT AND GREAT BRITISH RAILWAYS TRANSFORMATION TEAM

QUALITATIVE REPORT





WHAT THIS REPORT INCLUDES

1. RESEARCH GOALS AND HEADLINES
2. THE CULTURAL CONTEXT
3. EXPLORING THE CONNECTIONS
4. DEEP DIVE INTO CLEANLINESS AND MAINTENANCE ON THE RAIL NETWORK
5. DEEP DIVE INTO SAFETY AND PERSONAL SECURITY ON THE RAIL NETWORK
6. APPENDIX



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Previous research (*Britain's Railway - What Matters to Passengers*) has highlighted the importance of cleanliness, maintenance and safety to passengers but exactly what this means and what matters to passengers within these topics are not well defined or understood.

Recapping the objectives

To explore passenger expectations around two core features of the railway in relation to trains and stations:

1. Cleanliness, upkeep and condition
2. Personal security

In particular, there is a need to explore:

- What defines these features in passengers' minds?
- What is the relative importance of the different elements of each?
- Do they notice the actions of the operators?
- How consistently does the railway perform – whether good or bad?
- Bring the research to life with clear examples to illustrate good and poor performance / what is acceptable vs unacceptable

THE APPROACH

6X 2 HOUR FOCUS GROUPS WITH A DIARY PRE-TASK TO CAPTURE ANY SPONTANEOUS EXPERIENCES WITH PUBLIC SPACES THAT RELATE TO CLEANLINESS AND PERSONAL SECURITY

8X 60 MINUTE TELEPHONE DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH THOSE WITH ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Specification

- **Travel frequency:** participants ranged from the frequent to less frequent travellers
- **Age:** younger and older travellers
- **Journey purpose:** a mix of commuters, business and leisure passengers
- **Journey length:** Including those travelling on short and longer journeys
- **Region:** a spread of passengers from different parts of Britain
- **Small/large stations:** including those who are from a range of small and larger stations of origin and/or destination
- **Disability:** pro-actively including those with additional physical, sensorial or processing needs
- **Groups were split by gender** due to the topic of personal security which could potentially include sexual harassment if raised by participants

Type	Gender	Location	Frequency of travel
Focus groups	x3 male	1x North and Scotland 1x East and South 1x Midlands and West (incl. Wales)	x2 frequent x1 infrequent
	x3 female	1x North and Scotland 1x East and South 1x Midlands and West (incl. Wales)	x2 frequent x1 infrequent
x8 depth interviews	Mix	Geographic spread	x5 frequent x3 infrequent

Fieldwork dates:

Online diaries; 6th March – 16th March 2023

Focus groups; 14th, 15th, 16th March 2023

Depth interviews; 14th March – 29th March 2023

01

We observed differences between passengers based on demographics, journey length and geography

Men and women appeared to have slightly different tolerances for aspects of cleanliness and personal safety – especially for women travelling alone at night.

Passengers taking longer journeys or journeys with pre-booked seats (especially for business) had lower tolerance levels especially for seating, rubbish and anti-social behaviour.

02

Cleanliness and personal safety and security have areas of overlap

Although there are elements that are unique, cleanliness and maintenance can inform how safe and secure a train or station feels for passengers with the less “well cared for” the station or train feels, the less safe it feels.

03

Passenger perception is that responsibility doesn't sit just with the network or railway – there is a “train etiquette” that should be followed by all

Although the rail network and train companies have a clear responsibility to create a clean, well maintained and safe mode of transport, it is also up to other passengers to “do their bit” to prevent issues from getting worse, for example, taking their rubbish with them or putting it in a bin, or not putting feet on the seat.

There is a perception that this “train etiquette and the social rules are not being enforced.

04

Not all issues are binary acceptable/ not acceptable, some are variable

This was particularly evidenced with cleanliness on the train including the amount of litter, graffiti, if seats are visibly clean and the degree of “wear and tear, the time of day, season and length of journey changes how acceptable or understandable the situation is.

Ideally, the train and station should always be clean, tidy, well maintained and safe.

Day-to-day, the majority experience relatively clean, tidy and safe trains and railway stations.

Passengers notice when efforts are made with cleanliness and upkeep on the train and at the station. It can lead to a more enjoyable experience, which in turn encourages repeat use of the railway

As a minimum, trains are expected to be clean

- Passengers expect the “bare minimum” to be a clean and well-maintained train, whether it is a newer train or an older train. Refurbished trains and older stations are acceptable, it does not need to be new to have good upkeep or be clean

What is “acceptable” is often about what is “tolerable”

- Older trains and seats provided they are clean and well maintained are acceptable, especially if the option is a worn seat or no seat. Similarly, some small amount of easy to move, hygienic litter (e.g., old tickets, empty packages) is acceptable, especially towards the end of the day or on a busy weekend
- However, what is not acceptable is when the train, station or seating is noticeably dirty or unclean e.g., spills, dirt, mud, mould, condensation. Things that are wet and will transfer on to clothes, or indicate there has not been recent cleaning, are not acceptable to passengers and negatively impact their experience

Passengers are understanding of the fact that other passengers play a role in how clean a train is at any given moment

- It is the actions of others that can make the train unclean e.g., putting feet on the seats or leaving litter

But the railway could do more to create clean trains and spaces

- More bins, more cleaning staff, more servicing of trains and stations would help create cleaner and more acceptable travel

“

“I see a big difference on different lines. So one line, for example is always a really old train and you sit on the seat and it’s just like there’s no cushion or anything and obviously needs replacing so I wouldn’t expect it to be clean either, I don’t think it could be clean”

MALE, NORTH/SCOTLAND

”

“

“Making sure that the bins are emptied and there are lots of bins around for people to put their rubbish in. I like a well-lit station with clean floors. Making sure the actual visible ground is clean. I like to get a clean train rather than something that’s a bit run down and grubby”

FEMALE, NORTH/SCOTLAND

”

Personal security has two main aspects: environmental risks and risks from other people, especially anti-social behaviour

Environmental risks link closely to cleanliness and maintenance

- Typically, these are cleanliness and maintenance issues that become safety hazards e.g. if platforms are not gritted, lifts in poor condition
- These are the responsibility of the station and rail staff to better maintain and manage and are not acceptable
- Passengers with additional access and support needs (physical, mobility, sensory or processing needs) are particularly at risk and vulnerable to these environmental risks, and if their local station is known for not addressing them it can be avoided entirely in favour of a safer station or a safer way to travel

Risks from other people are due to anti-social behaviour and/or crowds

- Passengers shared multiple examples of anti-social behaviour that impacts how safe they feel to travel e.g. known drug dealing spots, intimidation, theft and harassment
- Large groups, especially large groups of men can be intimidating, especially when alcohol and drinking is involved e.g. football fans travelling to or from a match
- Large numbers of passengers on any occasion can be a risk factor with passengers experiencing claustrophobia, anxiety, feeling crushed or generally feeling unsteady without a handhold
- Women are acknowledged as being potentially more at risk both from groups and individuals, especially if they are travelling alone and at unstaffed stations

“

“I think they’ve done a really good job and it does look like they’ve put the effort in and have improved the upkeep, all the zebra crossings and the drop off spaces...and it does make me feel safe”

FEMALE, MIDLANDS/WEST

”

“

It can be quite rough in the morning as the train was so packed that safety was an issue, especially with some of the reports in the news about crushes happening at London Bridge. The train is literally sardines, people pushing on. You do worry about people falling over or collapsing”

MALE, SOUTH/EAST

”

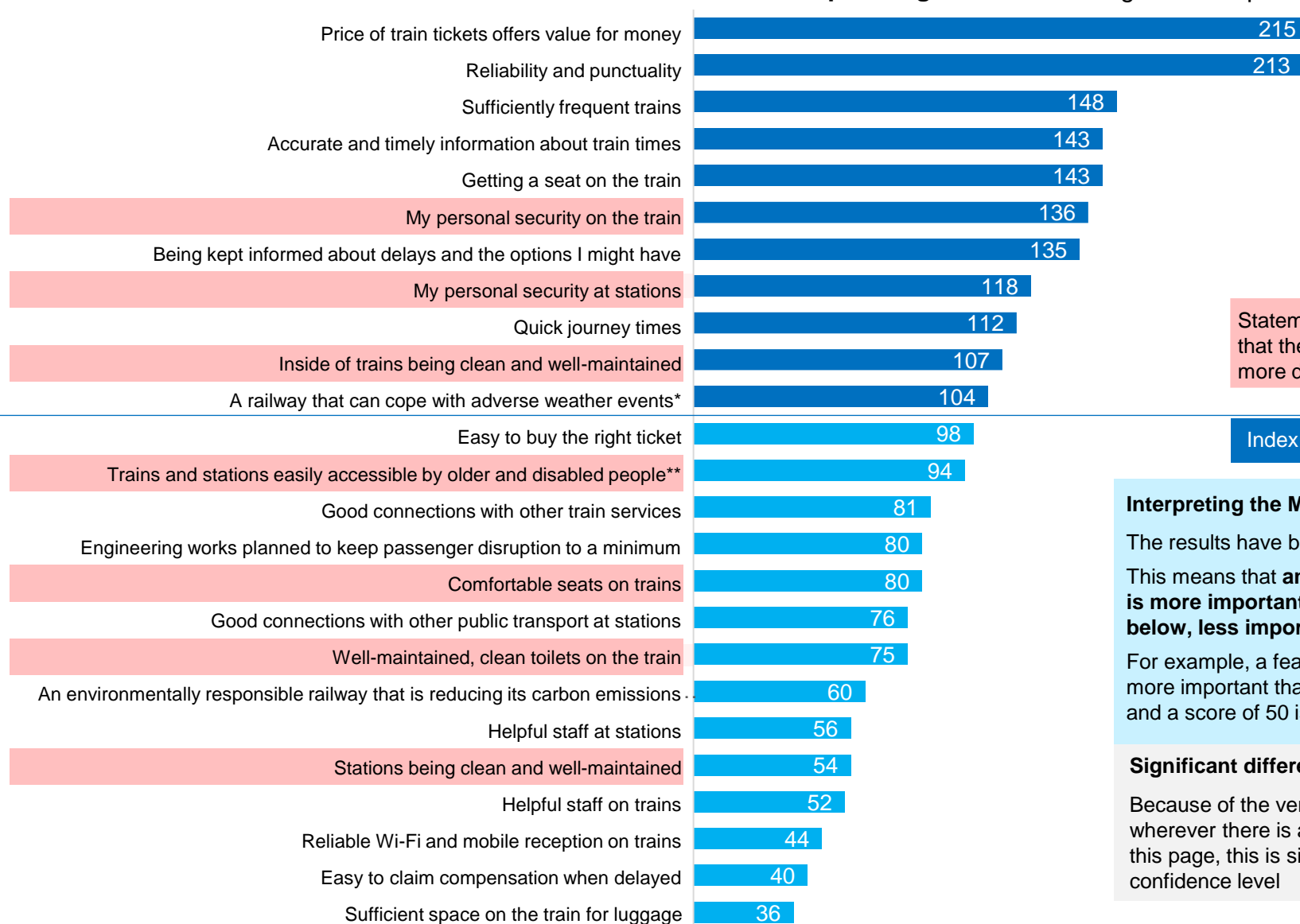


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WE KNOW FROM “BRITAIN’S RAILWAY – WHAT MATTERS TO PASSENGERS” THAT CLEANLINESS AND PERSONAL SAFETY ARE IMPORTANT TO PASSENGERS WHEN USING THE RAIL NETWORK

All current passengers Ranked High-Low importance



Statements highlighted in pink are factors that the current research has looked at in more detail

Index

Interpreting the MaxDiff results - Index scores

The results have been indexed to an average of 100. This means that **any feature with a score over 100 is more important than average, and a score below, less important**. For example, a feature with a score of 200 is 100% more important than average (or twice as important) and a score of 50 is half as important as the average.

Significant differences

Because of the very large sample size for this study, wherever there is a difference between the scores on this page, this is significantly different at the 95% confidence level.

PASSENGERS SPONTANEOUSLY RAISED A MIX OF THEMES THAT INFLUENCE THEIR EXPERIENCE OF RAIL TRAVEL, AS REFLECTED IN PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Cleanliness and personal security are a couple of many topics that come to mind when thinking about the rail network – they are not always the top priority

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

RELIABILITY, LATENESS, DISRUPTION

“Usually late – I seldom get on my train when I’m expecting it”

“Frustrating due to lateness, ongoing repairs at rush hour”

“I get frustrated that I am faced with delays on public transport as it interrupts my day/plans”

“It’s quite a gamble as it’s often unreliable”

STAFF AND CUSTOMER INTERACTION

“Friendly staff as I rate the staff that work on the trains”

“A mixed bag really, staff helpful”

RELAXING AND PLEASURABLE

“I enjoy being able to watch the world go by without worrying about parking”

“Relaxing if I get a seat... Smooth ride, cleaner as less fumes compared to the bus”

“Not much to worry about, I feel pretty calm on any transport”

CONVENIENCE AND EASE OF USE

“It’s right outside my doorstep so very convenient when needed”

“It’s quite cheap to travel express to see my son who is in Manchester”

“Stations dangerous at times, and many poorly laid out for people with disabilities”

AGE OF TRAINS AND THE NETWORK

“Need updating as trains can be old and dirty”

“Coming out of London the train was modern, clean and tidy. Even the toilets were clean which for an evening service is surprising”

PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

“Occasionally I have had not very nice experiences with other commuters late at night...drunk people make me nervous but more so in an enclosed space”

“Using public transport as a disabled, neurodivergent user is filled with uncertainty and difficulties”

CLEANLINESS AND MAINTENANCE

“I think that the trains are not as clean, well run or managed in the UK as it is in most parts of Northern Europe”

“Clean - Never had any issues or concerns in the main seating areas”

BUSY AND CROWDED, UNABLE TO GET A SEAT

“Busy trains can make me very anxious due to crowding and not being able to guarantee a seat”

“I think at busy times certain stations are dangerously overcrowded near the platforms”

Themes shown in no particular order, not a ranking

IN ADDITION, AS PER THE “WHAT MATTERS TO PASSENGERS” STUDY, WE OBSERVED DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSES BASED ON DEMOGRAPHICS

Personal security and levels of acceptability of cleanliness do appear to vary based on individual experiences and personal perception. These differences need to be taken into consideration when evaluating acceptability – especially “shades of grey”

For example:

- **Women** reported feeling more anxious, uncomfortable and unsafe when travelling, especially if they were doing so as a lone traveler at night, and if either groups of men or “someone behaving oddly” was the only other person nearby. Travelling **in a group** helped to mitigate this anxiety and discomfort
- **First class** ticket holders or those travelling for work or on pre-booked tickets expected a higher standard of cleanliness and maintenance
- Those with **disabilities** referenced feeling more unsafe navigating around the station, using facilities and more at risk in general
- Those **traveling with children or luggage** felt more at risk and more aware of dangers on the platform or on the train
- **Longer journeys** were expected to have more frequent litter and rubbish clearance, and trains better maintained whereas shorter journeys had a higher degree of acceptability of litter
- Those travelling in **Wales** noted that standards and quality of trains appeared to be lower than elsewhere

GENDER

AGE

TICKET TYPE

CLASS OF TRAVEL

DISABILITY

GOVERNMENT REGION

TRAVELLING WITH PERSONAL TRANSPORTATION, LUGGAGE AND HELPERS

GROUP TRAVEL

JOURNEY LENGTH

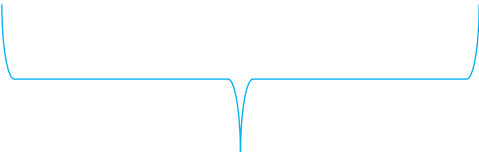
“Especially when you are travelling alone on a late train it can be a bit daunting if you are on your own as a woman”
Female, Midlands/West

“Sometimes a bit of a challenge with two kids and a pushchair. Getting on and off the platforms can be a bit difficult at times...sometimes people give us funny looks if the pushchair is sticking out a bit and obstructing the walkway”
Female, South/East

WHEN WE SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF CLEANLINESS AND PERSONAL SECURITY, WE FIRST LOOK TO THE RESIDUAL CODES IN CULTURE

BEHAVIORAL DRIVERS

CULTURAL DRIVERS



**HUMAN
SURVIVAL
& PROGRESS**

**SOCIAL RULES
&
EXPECTATIONS**



**INGRAINED
CULTURAL
SYMBOLISM**

**TRADITIONAL,
POPULAR &
MEDIA DRIVEN
CULTURE**

It's about **Human survival and progress**. To live within clean, safe environments is necessary for *social progress and healthy human development*

Striving for an unpolluted, hygienic, and harmless habitat and surroundings has been a key driver of multiple generations over centuries: delivered and evolved thanks to human insight, innovation and understanding (UK especially being at the global forefront of social improvement, health and security from the industrial revolution onwards).

Purpose driven - to maintain and advance society and for the population to not succumb to illness, death, disease or ill-harm. At its widest sense – underpins contentment, happiness, and freedom: “The safety of the people shall be the highest law.”

At an individual level, we are taught from childhood to take care of the self (and others) – to maintain health and ensure personal safety (in order to ensure our own progress and survival as we navigate the world).

“

“I think it’s the community’s responsibility and the railway’s responsibility. You can’t always prevent people but you can discourage them”

FEMALE, MIDLANDS/WEST

”



Safety is a small investment for a rich future.



It's about **Social Rules and Expectations**. Beyond the ingrained individual learnings, an understanding that social and community rules and regulations need to be maintained and adhered to

Majority of population follow formal set laws, as well as unwritten codes of social behavior: an *acknowledgement that to break set rules or acceptable social norms is to harm ourselves, others, the environment – or to be prosecuted.*

“

“A bit of education, a bit of train etiquette... if it's something that's been going on a long time it just sort of becomes the norm if somebody just leaves something there. Then it encourages people and people are more inclined to follow suit”

MALE, NORTH/SCOTLAND

”



Romantic graffiti artist jailed for amorous train tags

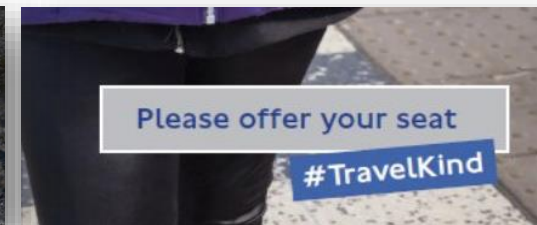


Man spotted clipping nails on train – but people have seen much worse

A man was spotted cutting his nails on an Overground train in London



Raymond Agbegah's graffiti tag 'Milk' with a heartfelt tribute to 'Emma', on a train. Photograph: British Transport Police/PA



There is clear **Cultural Symbolism**. Signs and symbols that subliminally communicate how we should behave – to keep safe and maintain a secure environment, for ourselves and others – surround us on a daily basis

We have become fine-tuned to absorbing visual meanings and verbal messaging at speed: from specific signage colourways (red as alert / danger, green as action / places of safety, blue as positive action etc.) – to the sense of assured security articulated through the uniformed presence of those who save, protect or make our lives more secure.

“[When I travel with my kids] I’m definitely more aware of things like the yellow lines and markings telling you to stand back from the tracks. If you’re on your own, you just sort of drift in and out and you’re not paying full attention”

MALE, NORTH/SCOTLAND



We see this reflected in **Traditional, Popular and Media Culture**. Our contemporary practices, beliefs and behaviour around the themes of clean and personal security are underpinned by, and through, popular culture

Through traditional and popular media over decades, we have been made aware of the need to follow rules, keep safe and maintain the status quo within society.

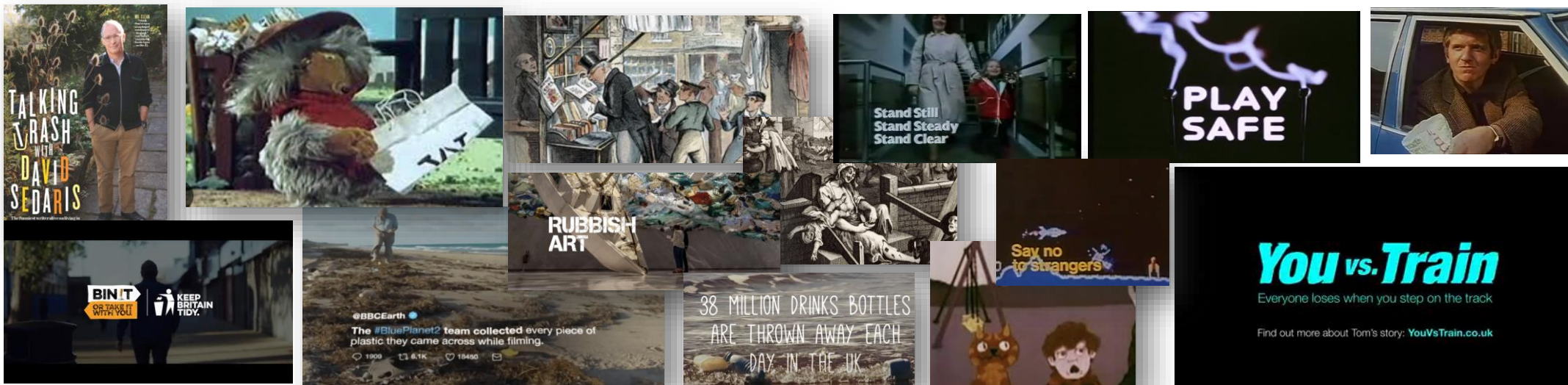
Narratives ingrained in us since childhood have been disseminated through a wide range of popularly consumed media e.g. public information films, TV campaigns, programme subject matter, movies, fiction and even art (e.g. associations of pickpocketing from Oliver Twist, immoral degradation of rubbish strewn streets from Hogarth).

“

“I’m old enough to remember Bristol Parkway when it wasn’t so nice and it was an old building and not well maintained”

MALE, MIDLANDS/WEST

”



Passengers feel frustrated with unclean and badly maintained public spaces – this helps to set the expectations and context for the experience of travelling on the railway

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Lack of facilities, bins and litter



“Noticed a bunch of wrappers for Greggs outside the shop, no bin nearby so makes sense but a lot of them caused me to notice it”
Male, North/Scotland

“Quite disgusted with the lack of tidying up from the council lately”
Female, Midlands/West



Lifts and enclosed spaces often poor

“Took a relative to the Hospital and parked in the nearby multi-story car park. The lift wasn’t very pleasant and unclean. There was chewing gum everywhere and it needed a good clean”
Female, North/Scotland



“Bins haven’t been collected again, means that some have blown over and there is rubbish in the street. It contributes to the local area being messy”
Male, South/East



Badly maintained public toilets

“I had to attend hospital today and the public toilets were very bad, outdated, dirty and in need of renewal”
Male, South/East

“Visited our local leisure park and there are no toilet facilities whatsoever, as a disabled person it’s humiliating to have to go into shops to ask to use their facilities and be told they have none”
Male, South/East



“I went to my local gym and in the car park there was quite a lot of debris and rubbish floating around. I think this was due to the weather but it was quite unsightly and didn’t make me feel good”
Female, North/Scotland

There is a frustration with poorly maintained spaces where other people either are not considerate, or there is not enough staff support to keep on top of keeping things clean and tidy

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Lack of staff support

Other people's mess and personal responsibility

Tunnels and covered spaces often poor

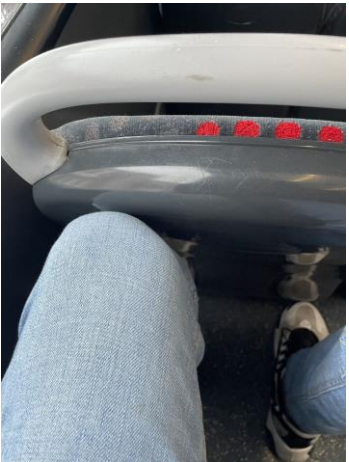
“Turned up to play 5-a-side football to find equipment left out in the sports hall and no staff on hand to help clear it away”
Male, North/Scotland

“Went to the park, however, there was dog poo in a lot of places and it wasn't cleaned up. I believe this makes the place dirty and should be cleaned by the owner”
Male, Midlands/West

“Noticed a lot of cigarette ends down the side of the railing. There was no bin so makes sense”
Male, North/Scotland

“Large amounts of dirt and little pieces of litter gathered underneath this sign near a tunnel. This isn't very acceptable to my standards of a clean street but being under a bridge makes sense”
Male, North/Scotland

“The bus was a little bit dirtier suggesting the bus driver maybe didn't clean up after the first run or the public were not respectful of the space. The bus was so cramped for my legs so it wasn't the most comfortable journey”
Male, Midlands/West



IT IS OFTEN A SURPRISE WHEN FACILITIES ARE CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED quadrangle

It is a pleasant surprise when facilities are clean and well maintained in public spaces – including on public transport

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Evidence of cleaning / hygiene

“It appeared very clean and there were hand gel pumps provided. This for me is very important as it allowed me to keep clean and showed others cared too”
Female, Midlands/West

Staff support

“Porter on hand at [hospital] entrance ensuring people knew where to go, arrangements for parking etc”
Female, North/Scotland

Clean and comfortable

“Pit stop for coffee, it was super clean. Floors were litter less and tables constantly cleared and wiped which made me feel comfortable”
Female, North/Scotland

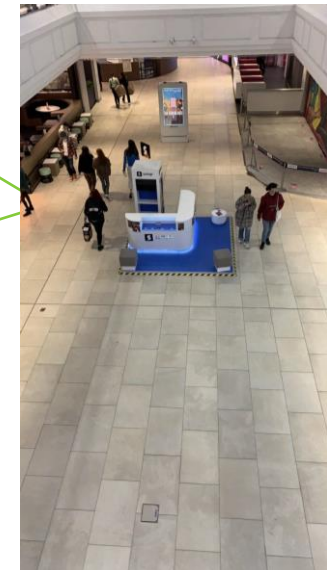


Community support

“As much as fly tipping and littering makes me sad, I felt happy and hopeful receiving the notification that some neighbors have built up this bee garden. Hopefully, a good step for our local wildlife”
Female, South/East



“Picture from inside the Arndale centre. Took it because I was looking down and noticed how I couldn't see any litter. This was very acceptable to me”
Male, North/Scotland



Key issues and themes emerged with respect to safety with a mix of both surroundings and the behaviour of others often triggering a concern or a response

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Impact of adverse weather conditions

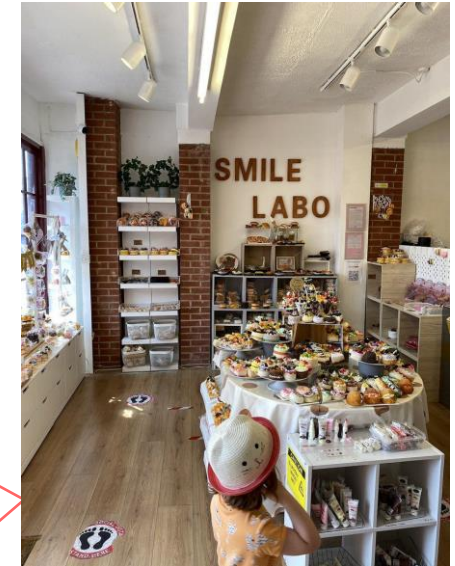
“Wind damage and damage to the local area from winds makes me feel nervous and worried to travel”
Female, South/East



Trip hazards

“Felt unsafe as I could injure myself due to slippery floors”
Male, North/Scotland

“Anxiety navigating shops and small spaces in a wheelchair, potentially getting stuck and knocking things over whilst roaming around”
Female, South/East



Poor Lighting

“Hospital car park lighting was very low and with it being dirty and dark it felt extremely unsafe even during the day”
Female, North/Scotland

“Hospital corridor, very dark and long and empty – lack of accessible doors to get in and out of toilets and rooms without help”
Female, South/East



Others potentially more vulnerable than you

“A large group hanging around the car park. Definite smell of drugs. Whilst I felt fine, there were women standing around waiting for taxis which made me feel uneasy”
Male, South/East

Key issues and themes emerged with respect to safety with a mix of both surroundings and the behaviour of others often triggering a concern or a response

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Lacking awareness of others

“Drivers on the high street, this van driver tried to drive straight through a red light and came head to head with an old man”
Male, Midlands/West

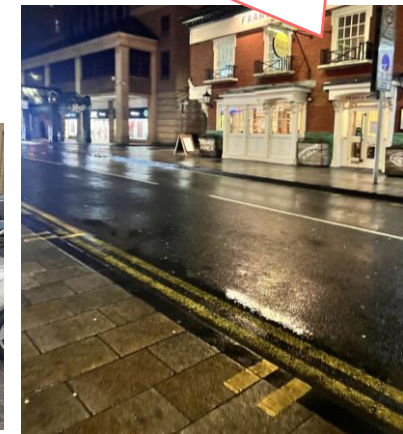


Lack of access

“Van parked and blocking footpath meaning I’d have to find an alternative route down the road in a wheelchair or go into the road”
Female, South/East



“Nowhere to cross on long street. Have to go a long way to find a crossing and use battery on electric wheelchair which might run out, leaving me stranded”
Female, South/East



Lone travellers, especially women

“I was walking my dog around the local area. We had to pass through a building site and it didn’t feel very safe to me. There were a lot of loud noises and machinery being operated which made me a little nervous”
Female, North/Scotland

Anti-social behaviour

“Did my shopping and was pushing the trolley to the car and noticed a man and woman coming up to me asking if they could take my trolley back for the £1, they asked if I had any other change or cash in my bag or in the car. I don’t usually get flustered but it was dark and there was no one else around and I felt a bit anxious”
Female, Midlands/West

“I feel quite unsafe as a pedestrian walking my young son to childcare. More often than not cars are not stopping at the zebra crossing as they are speeding towards traffic lights and roadworks makes it difficult to safely walk with a pram”
Female, South/East



Physical separation, space and visibility emerge as important themes, as does the role of those in authority – helping to put a step between the individual and a potential problem

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Clear signs and directions

“The area is clean and tidy. I’m not sure how well lit up this would be at night but visibility is good, signs are well informative and easy to spot”
Female, South/East



Physical separation or barriers

“Coffee shop was well lit and had a little wall around the seating area to put my handbag and as I’ve had mine stolen before this always plays on my mind when I go to a café or restaurant”
Female, North/Scotland





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PASSENGERS SEE LINKS BETWEEN SAFETY, MAINTENANCE AND CLEANLINESS quadrangle

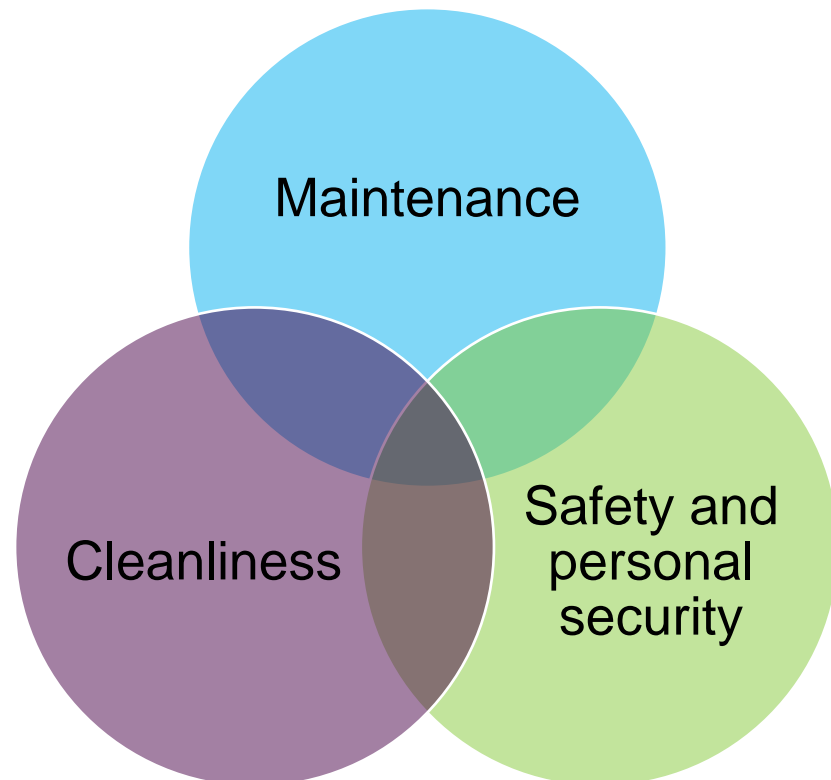
These topics and areas interlink and there are clear connections between each – issues that are encountered are not always discreet issues

The connections can be considered or visualised as a Venn diagram with arguably Maintenance having larger areas of overlap

These connections are worth keeping in mind when considering passenger evaluation towards acceptability, i.e. similar topics are raised spontaneously by passengers both when discussing safety and cleanliness or maintenance (e.g. trip hazards on the platform could be a cleaning issue, maintenance or safety issue – or indeed, a mix of all three)

In the following slides, we have highlighted some of the key instances where these areas overlap and what is driving these connections

Later in this report we will deep dive into safety and personal security and cleanliness as individual focus areas, with maintenance considered as part of wider cleanliness and upkeep, and referenced where relevant when it comes to safety considerations



Qualitatively, there appeared to be a causal relationship between maintenance issues that can become safety issues if the maintenance issue becomes worse or is not resolved

Typically, these were facilities or issues that were broken or under performing

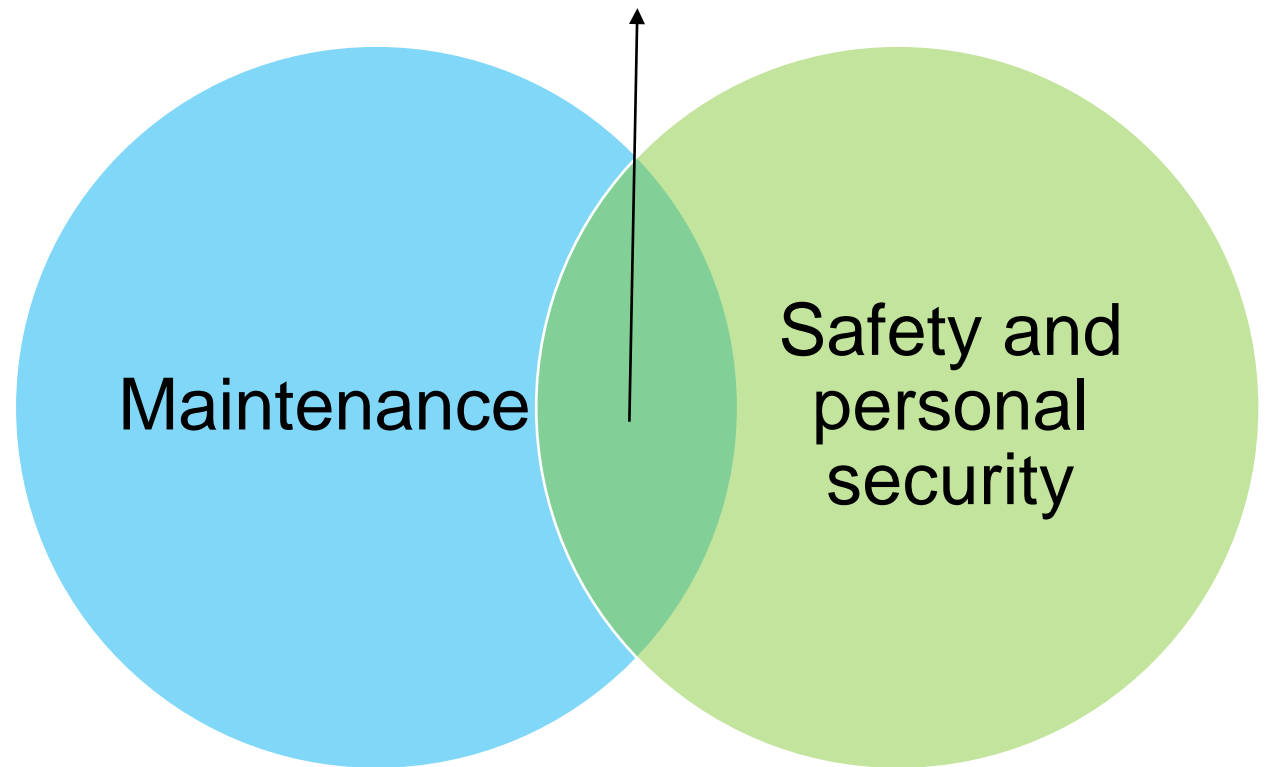
The main concern that passengers shared is if maintenance issues can result in injury to the passenger as a result

For example, if the information system is not working and the passenger needs to “run for another platform” this could lead to trips and falls, equally a broken seat on a train could cause injury if the passenger had to use the seat as there is nowhere else to stand

Qualitatively, these are issues that can become more frequently experienced in poor weather, when the platform is busy, travelling with small children and needing to use lifts, or for disabled passengers (mobility, hearing and vision in particular)

There are also unique experiences and edge cases to consider, for example, one disabled passenger raised a concern over use of RADAR keys and toilet locks not working which could lead to another user gaining access while the facility is in use

e.g. Broken seats, loud mechanical noises, diesel fumes and smells, signage issues, speaker problems, damaged windows, damaged toilet locks, broken air conditioning, lack of grit on icy days



THIS OVERLAP WAS DEFINED AS “GENERAL GRIME” AND A LACK OF CARE

Some passengers noted that positive improvements have been made to stations to improve the general maintenance and cleanliness, however, this was not universal, with those in Wales and more rural areas believing there had not been the same improvements in their area

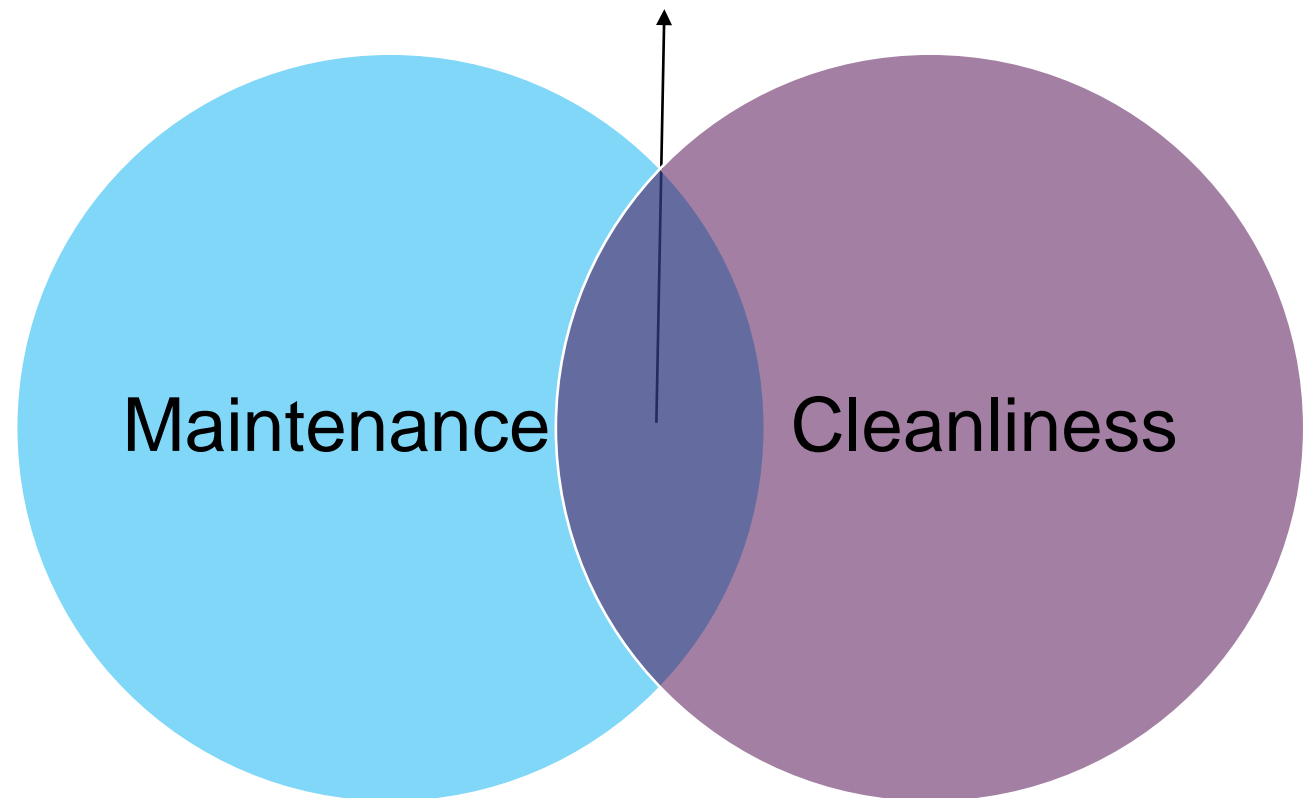
There was a perception that these themes connect to the level of care and “pride” of the train or station operator

Passengers observed there can be stations or areas in close proximity and managed by the same operator, but with very different levels of standard maintenance and cleanliness. For example, one station with flower beds and kept clean and tidy vs another one stop along the line that is “grimy” and “not well loved”

Typically, there is an overlap between poor maintenance and cleanliness with older rolling stock or stations that have not been recently refurbished. However, this can include “new” trains and stations which do not appear to be well cared for on a daily or regular basis, being “modern” is not enough

These experiences where there are maintenance and cleanliness problems are unpleasant and less attractive, but are not necessarily unsafe or unexpected

e.g. General “grime” and dirt on the train and around the station, dirty windows, broken toilet flushes, poorly maintained seats



Typically, the result of other people's actions around the passenger – other passengers lacking “train etiquette” – rather than the result of poor maintenance by the rail network, however, these are issues the train company or staff could help to enforce to improve the journey for everyone

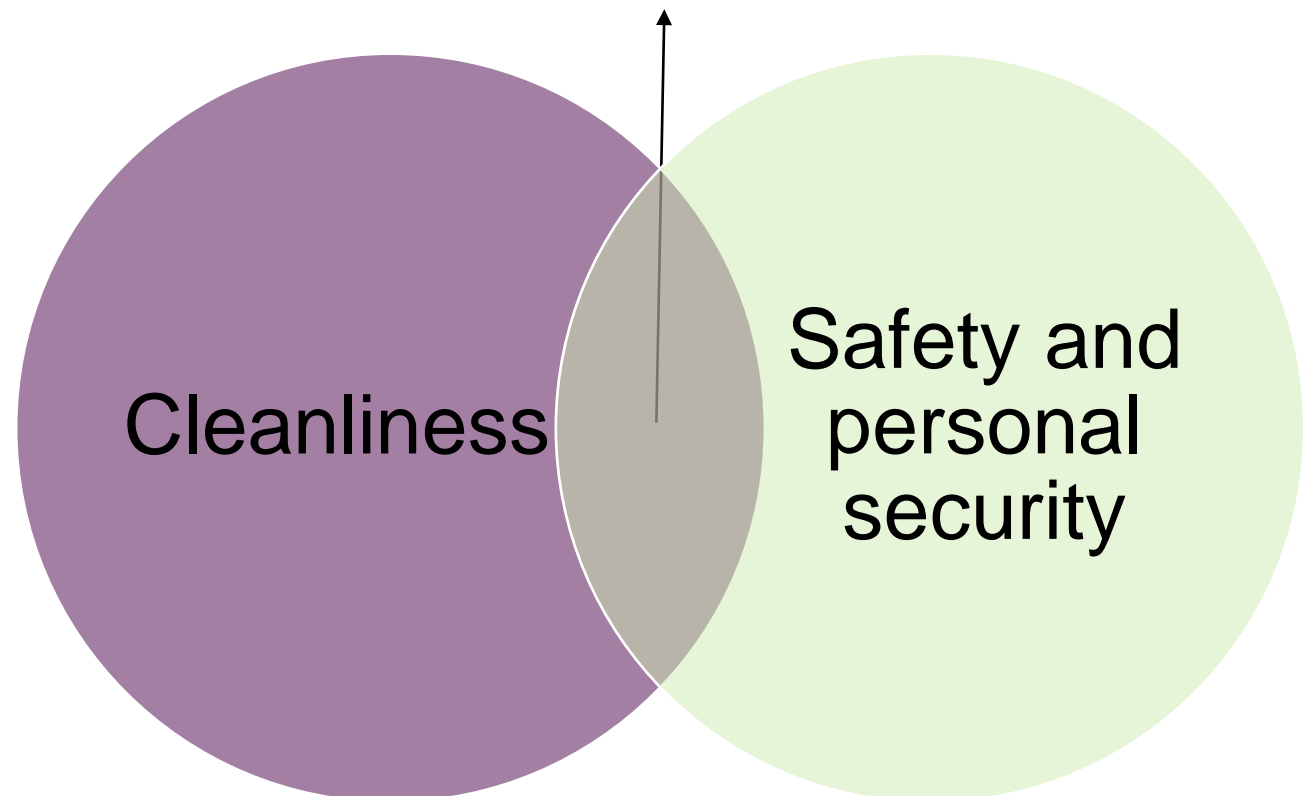
As with maintenance and safety, there appears to be a directional relationship between things being unclean, that then become unsafe

Air quality from other passengers smoking, vaping, using nail polish, strong smells can lead to breathing problems for those with asthma or feeling unwell for those with a very sensitive sense of smell

Hygiene issues were of greater importance during Covid (e.g. if passengers were wearing masks and sanitising hands regularly). Today, it is more an issue of those not covering their mouth when coughing or travelling when generally unwell

In addition, there appears to be a link with cleanliness and anti-social behavior making passengers feel less safe, for example, other passengers smoking, vaping, or putting feet on seats but intervening or asking the passenger to stop could put them at risk should the instigator take offence at the request

e.g. Smoking or vaping on the rail network, passengers putting feet on seats, other passengers not following Covid restrictions (historic behavior), passengers travelling when unwell (current behavior)



THESE COME TOGETHER TO CREATE UNCLEAN, BADLY MAINTAINED AND UNSAFE SITUATIONS

When all three areas combine, it becomes a very unpleasant experience and one that discourages passengers from travelling on the rail network – however, only a minority claim these types of situations are a regular occurrence at their local stations

These are issues and problems that if not resolved, will result in potential problems for passengers

As with previous areas of overlap, typically these are maintenance or cleanliness issues that become safety issues if left unattended (rather than the other way around)

Although both men and women highlighted this, some men appeared to be less accepting of some of these issues e.g. graffiti, vandalism

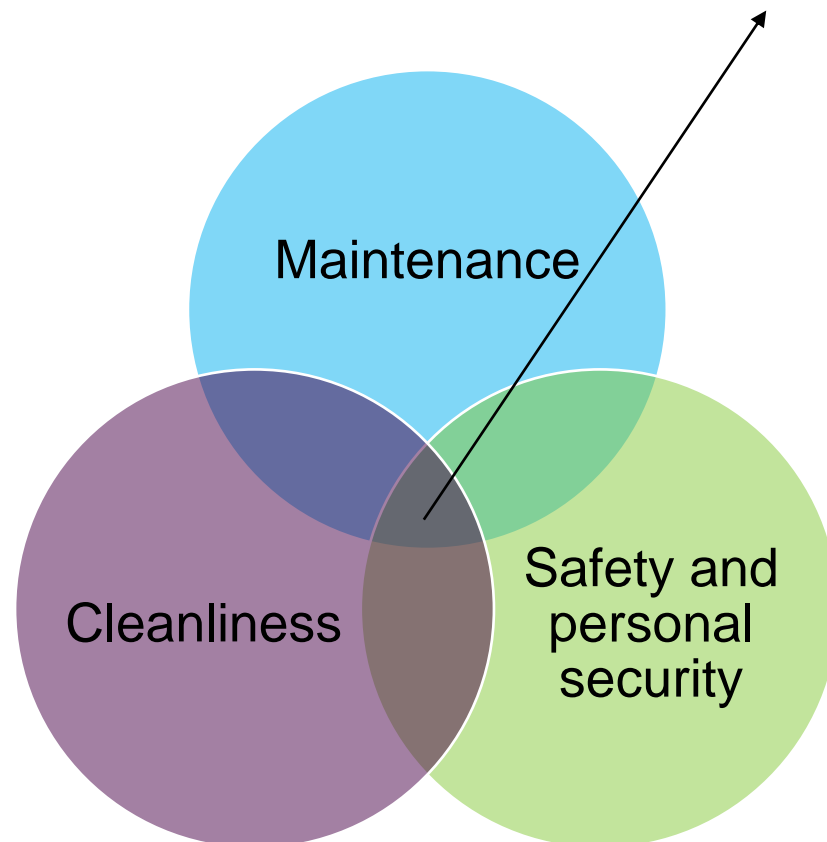
Passengers noted a mindset change when these three are taken together:

“If the rail network doesn’t care about the cleanliness, maintenance or safety, why should other passengers?”

The perception of a general lack of care, makes poor behaviour of other passengers appear more understandable and, potentially, become more prevalent

Improving one of these areas, should, in theory, have a positive knock-on effect to the other areas as well – when one is improved, all three are improved

e.g. Damaged facilities, lack of accessibility, graffiti, trip hazards due to dirty and uncleared mess, serious anti-social behavior e.g. drug dealing, vandalism





WHAT THIS REPORT INCLUDES

1. RESEARCH GOALS AND HEADLINES
2. THE CULTURAL CONTEXT
3. EXPLORING THE CONNECTIONS
- 4. DEEP DIVE INTO CLEANLINESS AND MAINTENANCE ON THE RAIL NETWORK**
5. DEEP DIVE INTO SAFETY AND PERSONAL SECURITY ON THE RAIL NETWORK
6. APPENDIX

CLEANLINESS AND MAINTENANCE IN SUMMARY

Passengers notice when efforts are made with cleanliness and upkeep on the train and at the station. It can lead to a more enjoyable experience, which in turn encourages repeat use of the railway

As a minimum, trains are expected to be clean

- Passengers expect the “bare minimum” to be a clean and well-maintained train, whether it is a newer train or an older train. Refurbished trains and older stations are acceptable, it does not need to be new to have good upkeep or be clean

What is “acceptable” is often about what is “tolerable”

- Older trains and seats provided they are clean and well maintained are acceptable, especially if the option is a worn seat or no seat. Similarly, some small amount of easy to move, hygienic litter (e.g., old tickets, empty packages) is acceptable, especially towards the end of the day or on a busy weekend
- However, what is not acceptable is when the train, station or seating is noticeably dirty or unclean e.g., spills, dirt, mud, mould, condensation. Things that are wet and will transfer on to clothes, or indicate there has not been recent cleaning, are not acceptable to passengers and negatively impact their experience

Passengers are understanding of the fact that other passengers play a role in how clean a train is at any given moment

- It is the actions of others that can make the train unclean e.g., putting feet on the seats or leaving litter

But the railway could do more to create clean trains and spaces

- More bins, more cleaning staff, more servicing of trains and stations would help create cleaner and more acceptable travel



“I see a big difference on different lines. So one line, for example is always a really old train and you sit on the seat and it’s just like there’s no cushion or anything and obviously needs replacing so I wouldn’t expect it to be clean either, I don’t think it could be clean”

MALE, NORTH/SCOTLAND

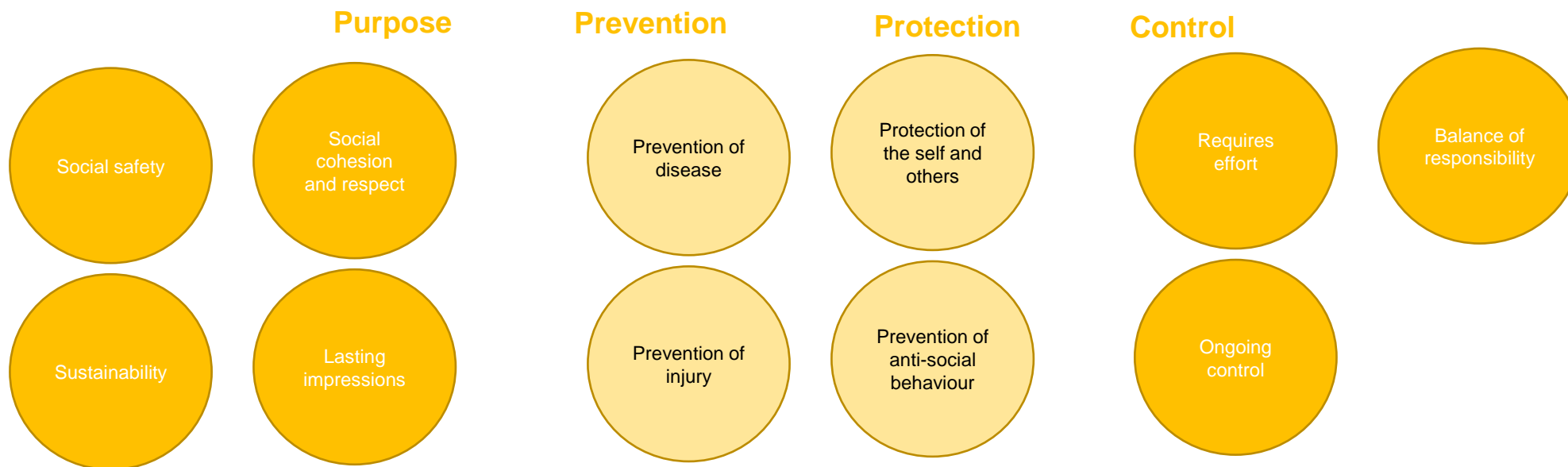


“Making sure that the bins are empties and there are lots of bins around for people to put their rubbish in. I like a well-lit station with clean floors. Making sure the actual visible ground is clean. I like to get a clean train rather than something that’s a bit run down and grubby”

FEMALE, NORTH/SCOTLAND



CLEAN “TO BE FREE OF DIRT, MARKS, STAINS UNCONTAMINATED. TO HAVE CLEAN HABITS”



THE OUTSIDE OF A STATION SHOULD GIVE A GOOD IMPRESSION OF THE AREA

Passengers link the appearance of the outside of a station with lasting impressions. Litter and overflowing bins are a key indicator as to whether a station is clean and well-maintained.

When a station isn't very well-maintained, for example if it needs to be **repainted or has evident damage**, it can make the station feel "older and more rundown than it is"

Cleanliness is associated with visual appearance, whether that be the image that forms peoples' impressions of a station/place, or that less-frequented stations are grubbier because they are not in 'tourist destinations' such as the main terminals in London, or in York.

Many participants have experienced **overflowing bins** outside of a station, often accompanied by litter that has fallen out or has been dropped by passengers. Where there are hedges and plant pots outside of a station, these are often not well-maintained and become a "**black hole for people to chuck in rubbish**". Most deem this to be unacceptable.

The **smells** around the outside of a station can also impact passengers' perceptions of how clean a station and well-maintained a station is. Some participants recalled smelling cannabis outside of stations or being on an open platform where they can smell cigarette smoke which adds to the impression of an unclean and uncared for station.

A minority of passengers reported regularly experiencing the smell of urine around a station, particularly in underpasses which becomes a key indicator that a station is not very well maintained.

In winter months, a station appears well maintained when it has been gritted, where it hasn't, this can make passengers fearful of their personal safety due to increased likelihood of slipping and falling.



"Outside Basildon train station there was a fair number of cigarette butts and empty vapes, despite having bins close by"
Male, South/East

"It's not a great impression for someone coming into Luton. If the first place you go the train station is falling apart and the roof is leaking, it hammers home that Luton is a bit of a dive"
Male, South/East

"In Glasgow Central, which is a big station, that tends to be pretty well staffed and kept tidy and I have never really noticed a lot that would put me off"
Female, North/Scotland

IN SUMMARY, AREAS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND UNACCEPTABILITY: AROUND THE STATION

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Unacceptable	Grey areas	Acceptable	“Above and beyond”
Litter and debris	Vermin traps	Untidy free newspaper displays (e.g. Metro, Evening Standard)	“Well loved” flowers and community gardens
Overflowing bins	General “grime”	Grit on icy days	
Vermin	Leaves during autumn/ winter	Tidy/no litter	
Cigarette butts	Smoking or vaping outside the station	Visibly clean	
Empty vape cans	Graffiti	Clear line markings and safe routes from the car park to the station	
Chewing gum on the floor, seats or near bins			
Badly maintained facias			
Smell of urine or cannabis			
Badly maintained hedges and plant pots			
Badly maintained car parks			

IN SUMMARY, AREAS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND UNACCEPTABILITY: AROUND THE STATION

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Unacceptable

“I really hate seeing fly-tipping and unfortunately it’s quite common around where I live. Noticed this on the sidewalk on my way to the station this morning”
Female, South/East



“Arrived at Queen St Station, floor very wet which is a slipping hazard but Scotrail doesn’t seem to be doing anything to make it safe other than put signs up”
Male, North/Scotland


“The passage between platforms is often dirty and smells like urine”
Female, North/Scotland

Grey areas

“Took the same route again to work, this time, in Cardiff Central, there was a big mess on the floor because of the rubbish that was not cleaned up. It did look dirty, however, I did avoid it and did not affect me at all, just a little eyesore!”
Male, Midlands/West

Acceptable

“Last few mornings have been well gritted as it’s been very cold and icy”
Male, North/Scotland



“Different station. A lot cleaner than the one I normally use. Even though it’s busier than usual, staff seem to be on top of cleanliness”
Male, North/Scotland

“I had to use Shelford station today and it was clean and tidy”
Female, South/East

“Above and beyond”

“I took this heading back from the train station, walking towards my accommodation. I took it because it was underneath a tunnel and typically I experience uncleanliness in these situations but this was surprisingly clean and pleasant”
Male, North/Scotland



EXPECTATIONS OF THE CLEANLINESS OF THE PLATFORM VARIES

Expectations are influenced by the season, weather and time of day, expecting there to be more “rubbish and debris” towards the end of the day and in the winter. Experiences are also inconsistent between locations with some stations “well loved” and others not at all.

General “grime” and “dirt” is expected at stations, especially older stations, however, this expectation does not mean it is acceptable

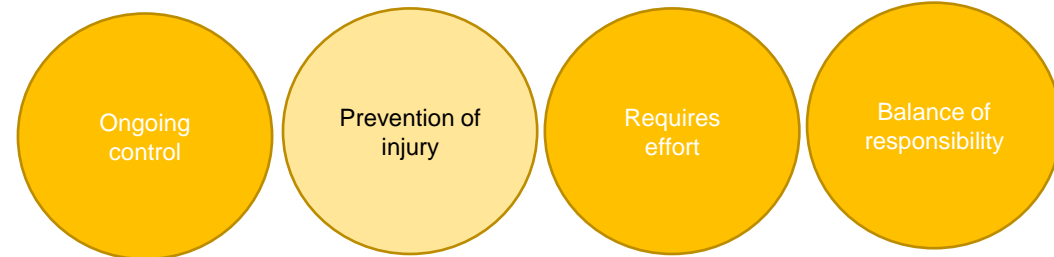
Passengers are aware that it **requires effort** on the side of staff and the rail network to keep “on top” of cleanliness and maintenance, especially if other passengers do not “play their part” to keep the space clean and tidy e.g. take their rubbish with them when they leave the train.

Winter months or on rainy days, passengers expect a level of maintenance such as gritting and clear wet floor signs. Bad weather is something that should be expected in the UK, especially in winter and as such, the train station staff should be able to help manage this to avoid muddy and slippery floors.

In **summer**, there is an understanding that footfall may be higher which could result in more litter and debris around the station.

Expectations of **station toilets** were universally low, with some claiming to have “never been in a good train station toilet”. Toilets on the station are often avoided entirely and only used in a moment of desperation, or if children need to use the facilities and cannot wait.

Bins are a hot topic and believed to be too hard to find, too small and emptied too infrequently. Not all bins are created equal, with passengers observing that ‘good bins’ such as the ones that are split into three to encourage recycling, ‘don’t seem as abused’ as standard black bins, and that where there are ‘good bins’, it can contribute to the overall appearance of maintenance in the station. More bins was frequently the one improvement passengers wanted to see.



“The smell was vile, and I thought ‘I’d rather hold it and drive to another place’. I don’t think I have been in a good train station toilet except big international ones”
Male, South/East

“I like to see like a wet floor sign. I don’t know why. It just lets me know that there’s at least someone around in the vicinity who’s done something”
Female, North/Scotland

“I would like them all to be clean and well maintained, especially when paying a lot of money, but maybe its a sorry state of affairs where you just expect peripheral stations to be less well maintained, you kind of expect it because you are used to it”
Male, North/Scotland

WAITING ROOMS, CAFES AND SHELTERS CAN BE DISAPPOINTING

Passengers reported seeing different levels of maintenance, upkeep and quality around the station itself, and between different stations. Some stations have well maintained spaces, others less so.



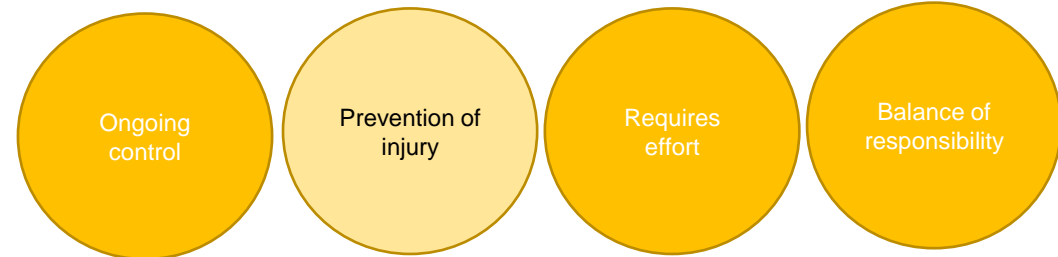
The maintenance and cleanliness of **waiting rooms and cafés** make an impact on the overall feeling of care and upkeep at the station.

In particular, those that have built, enclosed **waiting rooms** that are small and poorly lit, are normally expected to be less clean and well-maintained. This aligns with other spaces that are more closed off, such as underpasses, where there is less chance of being seen if litter or mess is left behind. In contrast, **waiting rooms** with windows on multiple sides which feel brighter and more open, are also more visible to others which can potentially make people more inclined to look after the space, leaving litter behind is likely to be noticed. There is a role of social pressure and social etiquette at play here depending on how obvious it would be to litter.

Shelters on the platform were mentioned as sites that can have graffiti or vandalism, often not replaced or repaired. These can lead to passengers feeling unsafe, especially on unstaffed stations and at night if there are only a few people on the platform. This is not universal, some are clean and well maintained and it is a minority who voiced this experience.

Cafes especially those that are on platforms, can become an area where discarded rubbish and litter collects, especially if there isn't a bin easily available to passengers. This can become a grey area of whose responsibility it is to maintain: the person managing the café, or station cleaning staff.

In addition, how frequently café tables are wiped down and cleaned can be a visible sign of cleanliness – here a damp table or cleaning smell can be a positive as it indicates it has recently been cleaned and sanitised. However, wooden tables were mentioned as more suspect when it comes to levels of cleanliness compared to plastic.



“The shelter, goes back to the point about closed areas being dirty. I just avoid it and I just feel they are unsafe sometimes”
Male, Midlands/West

“My local station we don't have waiting rooms, there's a ticket office but only open during the day and at the weekend there's nobody really there. There's a shelter like a bus shelter that I would use if it's really raining”
Female, North/Scotland

“There's only so many times you can Hoover and clean during the day but if I walk into the café and it's a bit manky then you'll probably walk right back out again”
Male, Midlands/West

IN SUMMARY, AREAS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND UNACCEPTABILITY: IN THE STATION

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Unacceptable

Broken and unfixed ticket machines

Lack of bins or overflowing bins

Litter on benches or seats

Broken, unclean lifts (e.g. chewing gum, dirty, rubbish, smell of urine)

Platform and station toilets: dirty, unmaintained toilets especially those with broken locks, or blocked toilets

Poorly maintained disability access

Grey areas

Wooden tables (hard to clean)

Points of contact (e.g. door handles, touch screens, lift buttons, help point buttons)

Platform and station toilets: in general, expected to be poor and unacceptable but not always the case

Acceptable

Damp newspaper stands on wet days

Smaller commuter stations less clean and well-maintained than bigger, ‘destination’ stations

“Above and beyond”

Staff actively cleaning

Staff mopping up a slippery floor

Cleaning schedule in toilets

IN SUMMARY, AREAS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND UNACCEPTABILITY: IN THE STATION

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Unacceptable

“Train back on Saturday evening was very dirty with tables filled with takeaway empty bags and spillages. I realise this would be the fault of the customer not taking their rubbish away however a quick walk through the train by the staff before allowing new passengers on would be a good idea”

Male, North/Scotland

“Poor maintenance on train from Cardiff to Bridgend. There was mould on the windows, this isn’t acceptable to me – it felt like cleanliness was only as deep as removing rubbish and not upkeep of the train itself”

Female, Midlands/West

“As usual packed train after previous being cancelled, damaged seats and electricity sockets not working so means I can’t work on my way home”

Female, Midlands/West

Grey areas

“Train delays and overcrowding, I opted to wait for the next train rather than being in a packed train. Still very mindful of germs when travelling”

Female, South/East



Acceptable

“Godalming station is in a reasonable state, looking at the Metro stand some papers are wet but otherwise the station is looking okay”

Male, South/East



“Above and beyond”

“Station platform generally well kept and clean”

Male, South/East

EXPECTATIONS OF CLEANLINESS AND UPKEEP ON TRAINS DIFFER DEPENDING ON JOURNEY LENGTH AND TIME OF DAY

There is an expectation that by paying a rail fare, all trains should be cleaned and maintained to a certain standard although that is not always the case. Litter and rubbish were mentioned as specific issues.

Passenger expectations vary depending on the **length of their journey and the time of day that they are travelling**. For instance, passengers find it less acceptable when there is poor cleanliness and maintenance on trains where they are taking a longer journey, or at the start of the day.

Typically, if a passenger is travelling early in the morning, **they expect the train to be clean, free of rubbish, and well maintained** having been cleared and cleaned after the last train the previous night.

Some passengers recognise that **litter** can be left behind from people's morning commute, and it is not necessarily something that a rail company should be expected to keep on top of but would be a positive if cleared more regularly. A minority of passengers claimed they would remove litter left on seats so they could sit, down provided it was not unhygienic.

Similarly, when travelling during the evening or late at night, passengers expect to see more **litter or lack of upkeep due to the heavy footfall** on the network throughout the day, and whilst this does not necessarily make for enjoyable journeys, passengers do find this to be more *understandable* even if it is not really considered *acceptable*.

Passengers acknowledge there is **individual responsibility** for cleanliness on the train and "taking your rubbish with you" but there is hesitation around asking someone to take their rubbish with them in case it impacts their personal safety "you never know what people are carrying"



"I got a train today which has a few empty coffee cups and crumbs on the seats. There had obviously been someone sat there before me having breakfast. While it's not a big deal, it doesn't make a great experience first thing in the morning..."
Male, Midlands/West

"My expectations taper off to end of the night, rush hour you expect it to be relatively clean but earlier on in the day if it's obviously not been cleaned and it's the beginning of the day, it's less acceptable because the whole day is going to be like that"
Male, South/East

SEATS ARE NOT ALWAYS EXPECTED TO BE NEW, BUT DO NEED TO BE CLEAN

Seats are a point of contention and there are “shades of grey” when it comes to what makes seating acceptable. Overall, provided a seat does not have significant visible dirt or is dangerously broken, it is acceptable to sit on.

Those who travel regularly with **Transport for Wales** noted that the seating on these trains is often old, uncomfortable, worn and in need of repair and refurbishment. In contrast, other lines e.g. **LNER** and **GWR** are believed to have improved the quality and comfort of the seating.

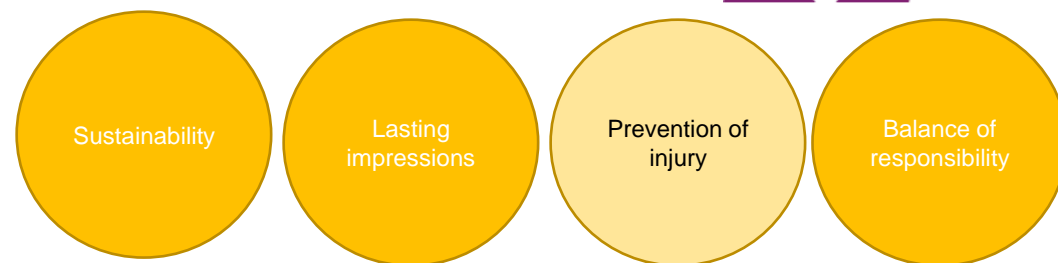
It is not expected that all seats will be new, it is **acceptable to refurbish seats** – recovering with new fabric or replacing cushions, this is considered to be more sustainable, cheaper and more likely to happen than entirely new trains.

Seats that are **worn or where the fabric is torn can be acceptable** and would be used if there is no other option, provided it appears clean. However, seats where there is a **wet or damp patch, leftover food, chewing gum or staining are not acceptable** and should be cleaned or repaired.

Seats that are **obviously damaged or broken** are not acceptable, and significantly less acceptable if it is a pre-booked seat for work or a long journey, or in first class. This is especially the case if the damage could potentially lead to a safety issue.

There is a potential trade off between seat comfort and seat cleanliness. Although metal or plastic seats were acknowledged by a minority to be potentially easier to clean, these materials are not as comfortable for long journeys compared to fabric seats with cushions.

“**Train etiquette**” dictates that feet should never be put on to the seat, none of our passenger group would admit to doing so themselves. However, few claimed they would intervene should they see another passenger doing so. This is a message that could (and arguably should) be reinforced.



“They don't make the fare cheaper because the train is tatty and worn and dirty. So I think as customers we should be expecting the same standard no matter what train we got on”
Male, North/Scotland

“Just making sure the bare minimum has been done in terms of general upkeep so like locks on the toilet doors, seat that are well maintained, no sharp edges or things like that or obvious damage”
Male, South/East

“I'd rather have a worn seat than a seat that's got dirt on it”
Female, Midlands/West

THE WINDOWS AND AIR QUALITY ALSO ADD TO OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF CLEANLINESS AND MAINTENANCE



The cleanliness of the air and the environment around adds to how clean and well maintained the train is with bad smells, poor air quality and dirty windows creating a poor impression

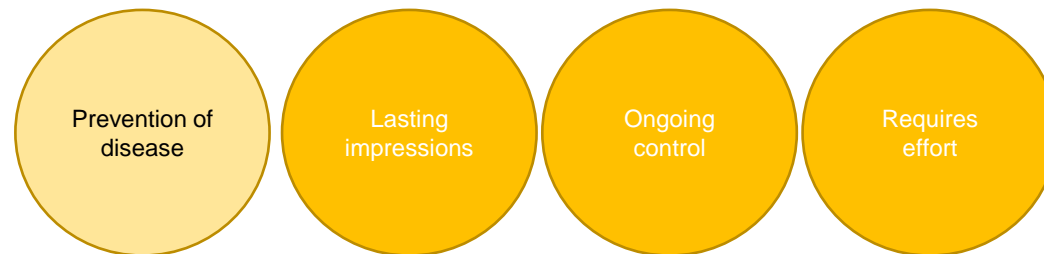
Windows are a visible signal of how clean and well maintained a train is. Those that have visible mould, dust, dirt or general “grime” clearly indicate the train has not been recently cleaned and can be off-putting especially if the passenger wishes to sit in a window seat.

Condensation on windows can also add to the feeling of the train being unclean and unhygienic, questioning if the air conditioning is on and working, if germs are spreading through the carriage, and potentially making clothing or seating damp and unpleasant.

Bad smells from **toilets** or **mechanical smells** can be worrying and concerning but for different reasons. **Toilet smells** are unpleasant, and frequently toilets on trains are expected to be unpleasant and passengers have low expectations, however, it indicates a lack of care, cleaning or general maintenance of the train in general. **Mechanical smells** can indicate there is a problem with the train which could lead to a delay or disruption and so these smells can be unsettling.

However, **bad smells** from other passengers are relatively more acceptable, even if they are not pleasant or tolerable. For example, other people’s coffees, food, perfume or aftershave, or body odour is an often unavoidable and not within the rail network’s control. Passengers are not calling for a “ban” on eating food on trains that exist in other countries.

However, despite not being permitted on trains, **vaping** appears to still be happening on trains and can impact the air quality and enjoyment of the journey. This is not something that should be acceptable and should be enforced further.



“If someone was vaping I would look and see if there is another available seat to avoid. I’m asthmatic so maybe I could cough or wheeze at them or get my inhaler out and that might pressure them to not vape next to me”
Female, Midlands/West

“All the smells in the carriages you’ve kind of got no choice but to sit in them unless you’ve moved, but you might have booked your seat. If it’s on a platform at least you can walk away from it”
Male, South/East

IN SUMMARY, AREAS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND UNACCEPTABILITY: ON THE TRAIN

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Unacceptable

Dirty and unmaintained or broken toilets

Broken toilet doors

Damp seats, chewing gum on seats, broken headrests

Dirty, grimy or mouldy windows

Litter that can spill left on seats (e.g. half drunk coffee cups)

Uneaten food left on seats or tables and unhygienic to remove

Grey areas

Litter and rubbish on seats or tables that are not spilling, smelly or unhygienic to move (especially on evening services or at the end of a long journey)

Wheelchair ramps that are “wobbly”

Food smells from others

Marks or damaged seats provided the mark will not transfer to clothing

Acceptable

Worn seats provided they appear clean

Plenty of usable bins

Facilities in good working order

“Above and beyond”

Staff actively cleaning

Smell of cleaning products

Pleasant smell in general

Cleaning schedule on train toilets

IN SUMMARY, AREAS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND UNACCEPTABILITY: ON THE TRAIN

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Unacceptable

“7.30am train, very old train making a lot of noises that suggest train needs maintenance. Seats not comfortable as very worn and just sink into them and grubby as so old they can’t be cleaned”
Male, North/Scotland

“The train was shabby looking, rubbish lying on the floor and I am always conscious of using hand sanitiser on trains due to the number of people I see holding the rails and pressing buttons but no evidence of cleaning. The dirt looks ingrained especially on the seats”
Female, North/Scotland

“It was so full that I was unable to move and there were many different smells circulating which made me feel sick and claustrophobic”
Female, Midlands/West

Grey areas

“I got a train today with a few empty coffee cups and crumbs on the seats. There had obviously been someone sat there before me having breakfast. While not a big deal, it doesn’t make a great experience first thing in the morning...”
Male, Midlands/West

“Floor dusty and dirty due to stations being gritted”
Male, North/Scotland

“Clean and tidy carriage. Some of the bins on the train are looking very full though. Floor is quite slippery due to the rain”
Male, South/East



Acceptable

“No sign of dirt on chairs or floor, reasonably clean for time of day, rush hour. Very clean and well kept”
Male, North/Scotland



“Above and beyond”

“Got a seat on the train and for the first time everything was spotless!”
Female, Midlands/West

“Train journey from Newmarket to Cambridge, feeling happy as it’s very clean”
Female, South/East





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THERE ARE TWO MAIN ASPECTS OF PERSONAL SECURITY

Personal security has two main aspects: environmental risks and risks from other people, especially anti-social behaviour

Environmental risks link closely to cleanliness and maintenance

- Typically, these are cleanliness and maintenance issues that become safety hazards e.g. if platforms are not gritted, lifts in poor condition
- These are the responsibility of the station and rail staff to better maintain and manage and are not acceptable
- Passengers with additional access and support needs (physical, mobility, sensory or processing needs) are particularly at risk and vulnerable to these environmental risks, and if their local station is known for not addressing them it can be avoided entirely in favour of a safer station or a safer way to travel

Risks from other people are due to anti-social behaviour and/or crowds

- Passengers shared multiple examples of anti-social behaviour that impacts how safe they feel to travel e.g. known drug dealing spots, intimidation, theft and harassment
- Large groups, especially large groups of men can be intimidating, especially when alcohol and drinking is involved e.g. football fans travelling to or from a match
- Large numbers of passengers on any occasion can be a risk factor with passengers experiencing claustrophobia, anxiety, feeling crushed or generally feeling unsteady without a handhold
- Women are acknowledged as being potentially more at risk both from groups and individuals, especially if they are travelling alone and at unstaffed stations



“I think they’ve done a really good job and it does look like they’ve put the effort in and have improved the upkeep, all the zebra crossings and the drop off spaces...and it does make me feel safe”

FEMALE, MIDLANDS/WEST



It can be quite rough in the morning as the train was so packed that safety was an issue, especially with some of the reports in the news about crushes happening at London Bridge. The train is literally sardines, people pushing on. You do worry about people falling over or collapsing”

MALE, SOUTH/EAST



PERSONAL SECURITY
“SAFETY DOESN’T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT”
SECURITY AS SAFE, PROTECTED FROM NEGATIVE EVENTS

Accessibility

Removing barriers

Openness

Meeting human need

Ease & comfort

Safety & Security

Individual agency

Safe from others

Safe from existential threat

Personal protection

Specific Individual & Group Need

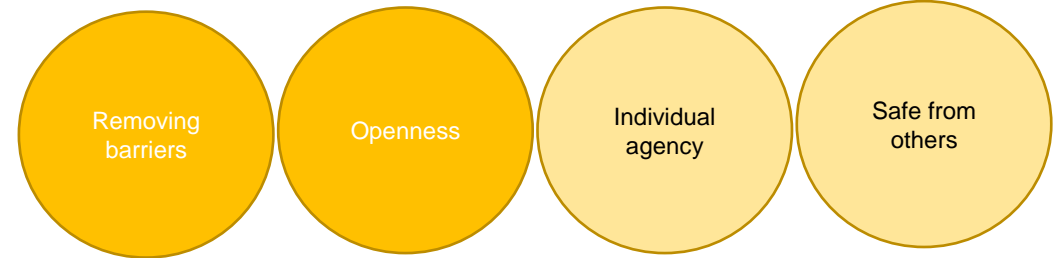
Removal of fear

Need for belonging

Security for all

FEELING SAFE AND SECURE STARTS WITH ARRIVING AT THE STATION

As with perceptions of cleanliness and maintenance, arriving at the station sets the tone for the journey, or when leaving, gives the final impression and memory of the journey.



A good journey can be undermined by an unsafe and uncomfortable final stop, and a bad start can cast a shadow over a later experience

For **disabled passengers**, unsafe and inaccessible station entrances are not acceptable and limits their ability to use the rail network. This includes lack of access to parking bays or no step free access into the station.

Lack of safe pedestrian crossings near the station was raised by several passengers but is especially important for those **traveling with children or with reduced mobility** to ensure the car park, drop off zones and entry to the station is safe.

Poor lighting was considered a significant issue – although one that has improved at several stations. Poor lighting not only outside the station itself but in underpasses or walkways up to the station and in the nearby car parks. Overall, darkness and bad lighting can contribute towards some of the anti-social behaviour that is experienced around the station.

“There just aren’t enough safe crossing points for someone in a wheelchair”
Female, South/East

“They have this new lighting where it comes on only as you walk towards it. I think it’s to be more eco but it’s a bit spooky and eerie”
Male, Midlands/West

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CAN BE A REAL SECURITY ISSUE

It can impact on how willing passengers are to use the rail network and their comfort when they do. Several passengers mentioned avoiding their local station entirely.



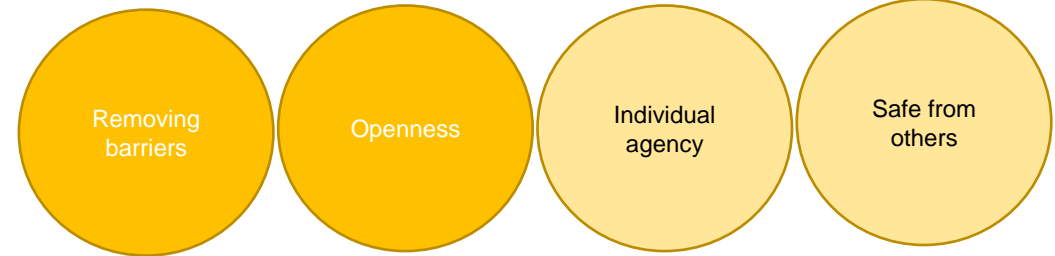
Anti-social behaviour was a key factor in how safe passengers feel when approaching the station and being around the station.

In particular, some passengers reported actively avoiding their nearest station **when travelling at night or on weekends** due to a lack of personal safety and security – typically due to the anti-social behaviours of others combined with poor lighting and a lack of staff or police response.

There were concerns raised regarding **female passengers**, especially young women, having to wait at a taxi-rank late at night, on their own in a badly lit station with a minority of passengers mentioning having first or second-hand experience of harassment, or feeling uncomfortable.

Instances where **vandalism** was evident or **poor maintenance** or **poor cleanliness** could make passengers feel less safe, as it indicates a lack of care by the rail network and staff and suggests if there is an issue, there may not be staff around to help support or resolve.

Poor lighting, lack of staff and lack of CCTV were all considered as contributors to this anti-social behaviour, creating an environment where there are limited, if any, consequences. There was limited, if any, mention of additional CCTV as a negative or feeling intrusive. However, there was some scepticism that CCTV was actively monitored and several passengers assumed it was recording only “if it is working”. Recordings are perceived to be a useful record if something serious happens that requires further investigation by the authorities.



“I just think when it’s later in the day or in the night I find it a little more daunting to travel by train, especially if I am by myself. Because you tend to get not so pleasant people on the platforms and hovering around the station”
Female, Midlands/West

“I use Cardiff Queen St a lot and on a Friday evening or a Saturday evening that’s not exactly safe. There’s homeless people, there’s gangs of kids hanging around and they’ve all had a beer or two. It’s not the safest... You feel safer once you’re through the doors”
Male, Midlands/West

IN SUMMARY, AREAS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND UNACCEPTABILITY: AROUND THE STATION

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Unacceptable

Low lighting at exits and entrances, subways/underpasses, car parks

Lack of pedestrian crossings

Being approached for money

Drug dealing outside the station

Badly marked taxi ranks

Damaged and vandalised bus stops

Grey areas

Drop off spots near pedestrian crossings

Using disabled bays as a drop-off point if empty

Graffiti

Acceptable

CCTV either recording or monitored

“Above and beyond”

Police presence on match days/ weekends/ responding to anti social behaviour

Community gardens and clearly well cared for social spaces

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Unacceptable

“I was waiting for my mum to pick me up after arriving on a late night train into Wakefield Kirkgate Station. I find that this area often makes me feel unsafe and found that I was checking over my shoulder on multiple occasions and sticking close to other train passengers that disembarked at the same time as me”

Female, North/Scotland

“It feels dark walking up the slope [to the station]. It feels like a long platform and while there are lights, they aren’t super bright on the walk to the main road”

Female, North/Scotland

Grey areas

“Sometimes it’s so packed they won’t allow passengers down to the platform before it’s clear.

Today it was busy but not packed to that degree. I felt safe but frustrated with how cramped it can be and the lack of personal space”

Male, Midlands/West

“Collecting my son after a football match. Lots of rowdiness at the station but was a noticeable police presence which did put me at ease”

Female, North/Scotland

Acceptable

“Although very busy I don’t feel unsafe, more police presence so maybe that’s why”

Male, North/Scotland

“Above and beyond”

“There’s a community garden at our local station. Someone clearly cares”

Female, South/East

THE STATION CAN BE A PLACE OF SAFETY OR UNCERTAINTY

The experience of the station varies depending on the size of the station, if it is staffed or unstaffed and how busy the station is.

Stations were perceived to be generally safe, although there are instances where this is not the case.

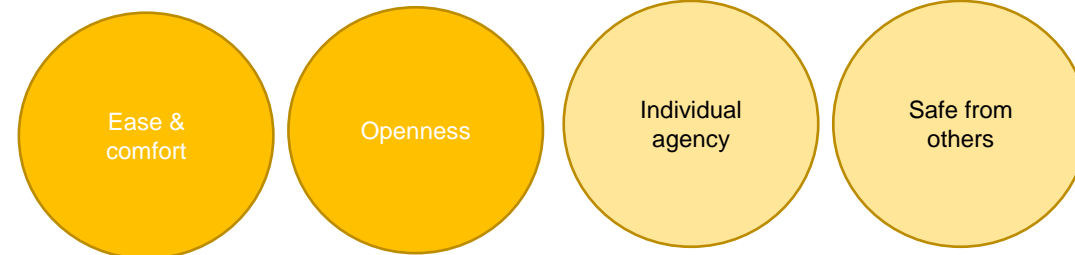
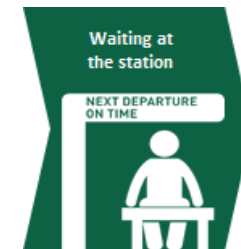
Anti-social behaviour can be an issue at the station, with groups of people engaging in “banter” or smoking or generally behaving in an anti-social way on the platform. When this happens, passengers reported feeling they have limited options other than moving elsewhere, or asking staff for help. One passenger mentioned contacting the British Transport Police but they took “hours” to arrive. A minority of men claimed to feel confident to intervene personally if there was anti-social behaviour.

Safety and personal security from fast trains and the platform edge was noted, especially by **parents travelling with children** who valued barriers or ways to help keep children safe from trains.

Neurodivergent passengers or passengers with children with additional needs mentioned the sensorial overload that can come with stations and needing to keep them safe from harm and over stimulation with loud noises, busy platforms, fast trains and strong smells all contributing to an uncomfortable and potentially unsafe experience.

Waiting rooms can feel unsafe if they are small, enclosed spaces and are badly maintained, and depending on the presence (or not) other passengers. For example, a small waiting room with few windows and only one exit and no CCTV can feel unsafe should another group of people enter. Well lit spaces with windows on both sides and second exits can feel safer. Similarly badly maintained **shelters** at a far end of the platform, away from others can feel less safe as they are more isolated and out of sight should something go wrong.

Graffiti had a wide variety of opinions with some individuals feeling that it creates an unsafe atmosphere and can be an indicator of other issues, however, other passengers felt it was not a concern and something that is likely to always be present.



“My son is 12 years old and he’s on the autistic spectrum and although he loves any kind of travel and transport, a train is the least likely I would take him on because he is super hyper sensitive to smells, he’s very sensory...it would be a disaster of a journey and we would both be so distressed”
Female, Midlands/West

“I sometimes feel self-conscious if there are only a couple of people on the platform and maybe if there’s other women then it’s like I don’t want to be the kind of weird, creepy person? As a bloke you want to look out for others or if there’s a group of people leering towards the girl or making comments. You want to make her feel safe”
Male, London/South East

IN SUMMARY, AREAS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND UNACCEPTABILITY: ON THE PLATFORM

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Unacceptable

Badly lit station

Broken CIS, broken tannoy, unable to find the correct platform

Trip hazards due to poor maintenance (e.g. loose carpets)

Damaged and vandalized shelters

Anti-social behaviour on the platform without staff intervention

Slow response to help requests

Grey areas

Alone on the platform (often unacceptable for women, late at night or on unstaffed stations)

Damaged posters

Trip hazards due to weather

Graffiti

Waiting rooms with only one entrance/exit

Waiting rooms without windows or limited visibility

Acceptable

CCTV for monitoring

Clear “yellow lines” and signs of where to go and where to stand

“Above and beyond”

Staff visible on the platform and actively engaged in helping passengers

Visual and physical barriers on the platform e.g. yellow lines, metal barriers between the platform edge and the entrance to the platform

IN SUMMARY, AREAS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND UNACCEPTABILITY: ON THE PLATFORM

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Unacceptable

“I have to carry the pram and let my 5 year old manage on his own up and down the stairs. Makes me feel unsafe as an accident could easily happen”
Female, South/East



“I was on the platform and a group of drunken men approached me. They were crude and inappropriate. No staff around to help or approach”
Female, Midlands/West

Grey areas

“I can’t say I’ve ever really felt unsafe on a platform other than when some young boys were kicking cans about. I was worried someone might fall over or be knocked into while they were messing about”
Female, Midlands/West

Acceptable

“I felt safe as I don’t stand right next to the platform edge”
Male, Midlands/West

“Station platform generally clean and well kept”
Male, Midlands/West

“Above and beyond”

“Train arrived perfectly on time and my boys were very excited to get a wave and a honk from the friendly train driver”
Female, South/East



TRAINS ARE GENERALLY PERCEIVED TO BE SAFE, BUT PROBLEMS DO OCCUR

The majority of the safety issues raised by passengers are due to others also using the service, especially those who are behaving in an anti-social way and disrupting the journey



Personal safety and security on the train impacts how passengers feel about travelling; raising anxiety levels and needing to be vigilant

The **mood and atmosphere** makes a significant difference to how safe a busy train can feel. If a group are drinking but “having a laugh” it is not an issue, but if the mood turns, it can start to feel unsafe very quickly.

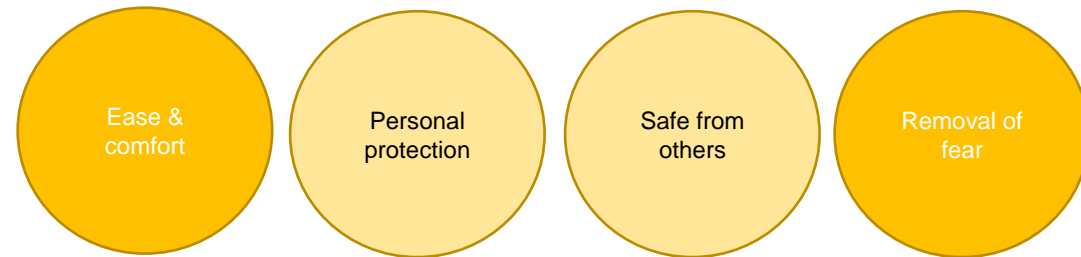
A minority of male passengers mentioned needing to take care if travelling to a sporting event (especially football) and the clothing they wear and if it will mark them out obviously as an opposing team fan and therefore a potential target if another group are nearby and “looking for a fight”.

Busy trains in general can feel unsafe if this means needing to stand – especially if a hand hold is not available – and some passengers reported feeling “crushed” or feeling claustrophobic on very busy trains which does not feel safe. This can be an issue during rush hour commutes in addition to local events and match days.

At the other end of the spectrum, **being the only traveller** in the carriage can either be enjoyable and relaxing or can be unsettling. This grey area can move to unacceptable if another person or group invade personal space – especially men invading women’s personal space.

Those traveling **with luggage** in particular mentioned needing to “keep an eye” on it at all times and feeling uncomfortable having to leave bags in vestibules or luggage racks away from their seat.

Aside from keeping safe from others, there is a concern over the safety of the train in terms of **breakdowns, delays or “jolts”** from an uncomfortable journey if loud mechanical noises are heard or if passengers have to sit on broken or damaged seats, or there are obvious problems e.g. broken and boarded windows.



“If it’s busy and you managed to get on the train but it’s the anxiety of if you get on the train and your heart is beating so fast, can I fit on the train? Can I get into the tiny space? And then you feel like you can’t breathe because there are so many people...it’s literally terrifying”
Female, Midlands/West

“Generally, I feel safe but don’t feel relaxed because I am on high alert. If I am on a long journey, I have taught myself not to doze off so no one nips at my belongings, I am being vigilant, I have to choose to look after my safety and can’t just relax”
Female, London/South East

IN SUMMARY, AREAS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND UNACCEPTABILITY: ON THE TRAIN

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Unacceptable	Grey areas	Acceptable	“Above and beyond”
<p>Large numbers of passengers creating claustrophobia, fear of “crushing”, lack of handholds or seats</p> <p>Other passengers putting feet on seats</p> <p>Broken or unavailable help points</p> <p>Smoking or vaping on the train</p> <p>Broken windows</p> <p>Broken air-conditioning or poor ventilation in summer</p>	<p>Groups of people drinking</p> <p>Other passengers listening to music loudly</p> <p>Other passengers making loud phone calls</p> <p>Not wearing masks when travelling if unwell</p> <p>Wet or muddy floors depending on why it is wet</p> <p>Unexpected mechanical noises or smells in the carriage</p>	<p>CCTV to monitor or record</p> <p>Wearing headphones to listen to music</p> <p>Sitting alone in a carriage including quiet carriages</p>	<p>Staff presence on the train to intervene</p> <p>British Transport Police responding in a timely way to an incident</p>

IN SUMMARY, AREAS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND UNACCEPTABILITY: ON THE TRAIN

Spontaneous response from diary tasks

Please note, “acceptable” does not mean “good” rather it is that a minimum standard has been met

Unacceptable

“I always feel a bit exposed and nervous on the train. I don’t like it if a stranger comes to sit next to me unless it’s obvious there are no other seats, possibly partly because I am wearing business wear and have a backpack”
Female, North/Scotland

Grey areas

“Today was fine but I have had mixed experiences when travelling later and people have been drinking”
Male, Midlands/West

Acceptable

“I was travelling during rush hour and at times you have to be more alert to your surroundings but overall I was feeling safe”
Female, South/East

“I felt completely safe as the train wasn’t full to capacity and there was plenty of seats to sit on whilst enjoying my journey”
Female, Midlands/West

“Above and beyond”

“Young, drunk crowd being thrown off the train for shouting at passengers...Police waiting to pick them up at the next station”
Male, North/Scotland





WHAT THIS REPORT INCLUDES

1. RESEARCH GOALS AND HEADLINES
2. THE CULTURAL CONTEXT
3. EXPLORING THE CONNECTIONS
4. DEEP DIVE INTO CLEANLINESS AND MAINTENANCE ON THE RAIL NETWORK
5. DEEP DIVE INTO SAFETY AND PERSONAL SECURITY ON THE RAIL NETWORK
6. APPENDIX

IMAGE BOARDS TO PROMPT DISCUSSION
ORDER WAS ROTATED BETWEEN GROUPS



1



You are waiting for your train and want to sit down. This seating is the only seating available.

2



When you get on the train, there is litter on the seats.

3



You go to take a seat on the train and there is dried chewing gum on the seat.

4



The train is full, and the only available seat is one with a missing headrest.

1



The seats look clean but are worn and the fabric is torn

2



The seat looks clean but when you put your hand on it, it feels damp

3

The seat has muddy footprints on it, someone has put their feet on the seats



1



The toilet on the train is out of service and you can smell something coming from the toilet

2



Quadrangle

The toilet is in service but does not appear to have been flushed

3



The toilet is in service but has no toilet paper

4



The toilet door is broken or difficult to lock

1



Strong smells like perfume/aftershave or nail polish

2



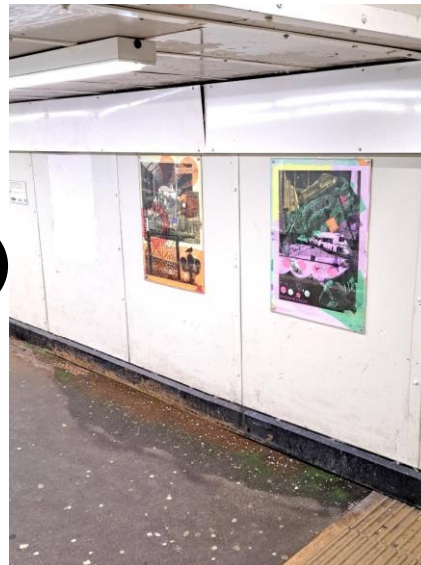
Mechanical smells such as diesel fumes or brake dust are evident in the carriage

3



You are walking past the train toilet and notice a nasty smell

4



The passage between platforms smells like urine

5



The train smells like it hasn't been cleaned and you can see/smell vomit

1



Someone nearby is eating food

2



You get on the train and can smell cleaning products

3



You are stood on the platform and can smell cigarette smoke

4



You are walking through the train carriage and can smell vape smoke

1



There is a bin on the platform/or train that is over-flowing

2



There is litter on the platform

3



It's early in the morning and the train has clearly not been cleaned

4



You can see empty beer cans or sandwich wrappers on the table where you would like to sit

1



You are making your way through the station, but it is not very well lit.

2



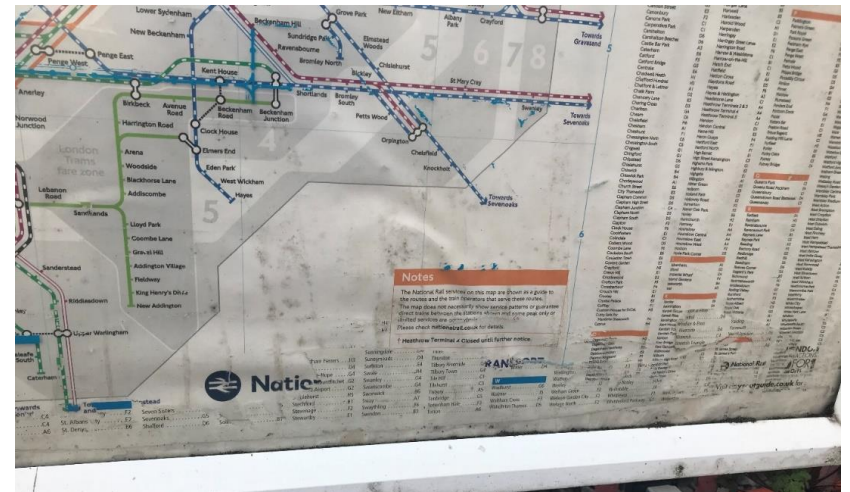
You are trying to read the signage, but it is hard to read as the poster is torn, wet, badly lit, damaged or missing

3



You are unsure whether you are on the right platform and the customer information system is not working.

4



You need to work out how to get to your destination and this is the available map

1



Access to the station from the car park, bus stops, taxi ranks, drop off zones etc. are not very well lit or well maintained

2



The floor of the carriage or platform is muddy or wet

3



Help points are dirty, damaged or out of service

4

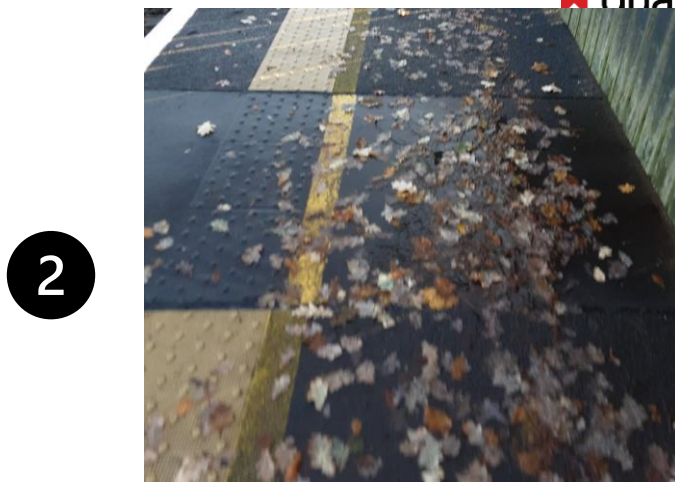


There is a broken window on your train that has been boarded and covered with tape



1

There is graffiti on the station platform/in the train



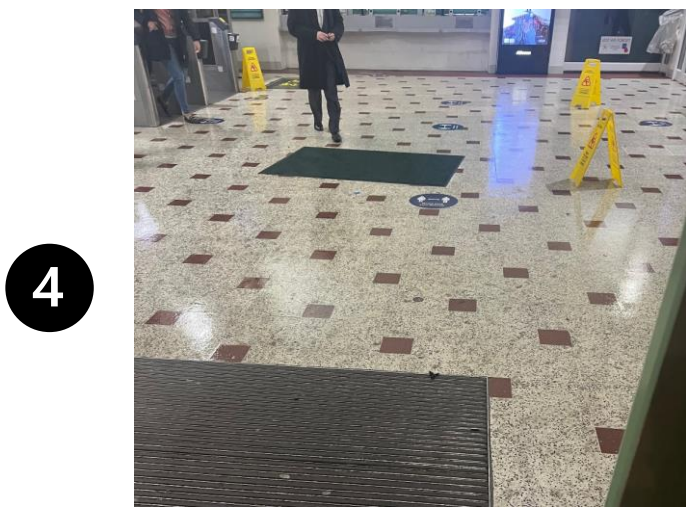
2

There are leaves, ice or snow on the platform



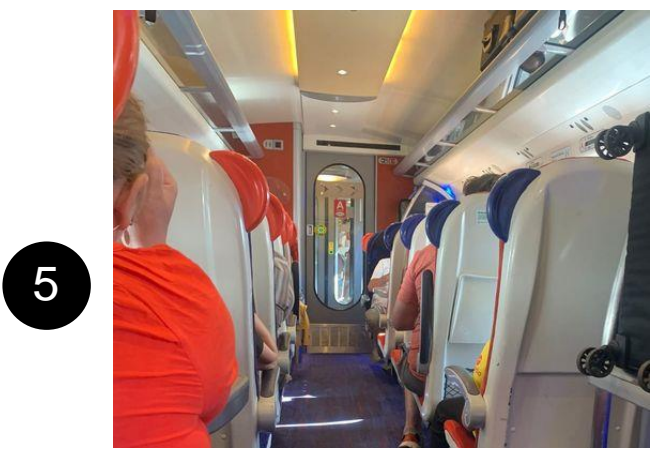
3

There is a carpet at the entrance to a platform café or waiting room



4

It has been raining and the station floor is very slippery and wet



5

It is a busy train on a hot day in summer and the air conditioning is not working or very effective

1



You are the only person on the platform/ or in the train carriage

2



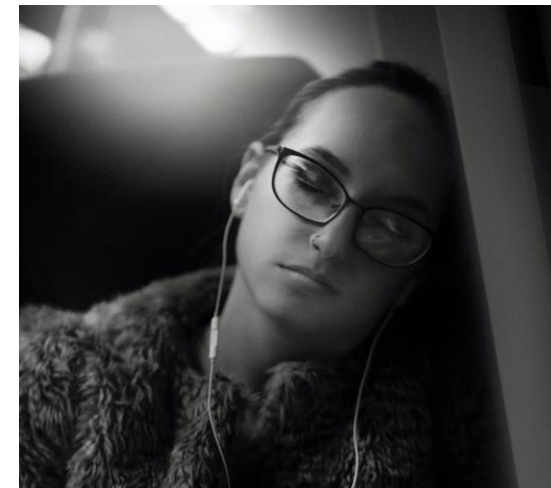
Sitting in the quiet carriage away from others

3



There is a shelter and somewhere to wait for your train, but it is not well maintained

4



Wearing headphones to listen to music

1



You are getting on the train and the platform and train are packed with people on their way to a concert.

2



You are in the same carriage as a group of people celebrating a stag/hen event. They are drinking alcohol and shouting loudly.

3



You are stood up on the train and the carriage is full of fans on their way to a match, loudly singing football chants.

4



The platform is so busy due to a local event that you were unable to get the last train to your destination.

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