



# Avanti West Coast Disruption Research Update 2024

December 2025

# Foreword

**T**his report highlights how Avanti West Coast passengers feel about disruption to their journeys and how the train operator communicates with them when it happens. It uses qualitative and quantitative research conducted between August 2023 and February 2024 and builds on the findings of previous research in 2021-22.

This research completes a programme of activity to help Avanti West Coast understand and respond to passenger needs when services are disrupted. Details of the initiatives Avanti West Coast has taken in response to the research are summarised later in this document.

Full details of the 2023 and 2024 findings outlined here can be found in the research

agency's reports available on the **Transport Focus website**, where the **2021-22 research** can also be found.

The 2023 and 2024 quantitative research involved passengers drawn from two distinct sources: an Avanti West Coast marketing database, where passengers are likely to have above average engagement with the company, and a separate general sample of passengers from an online panel. Regardless of source, all participants had travelled with Avanti West Coast in the previous 12 months.

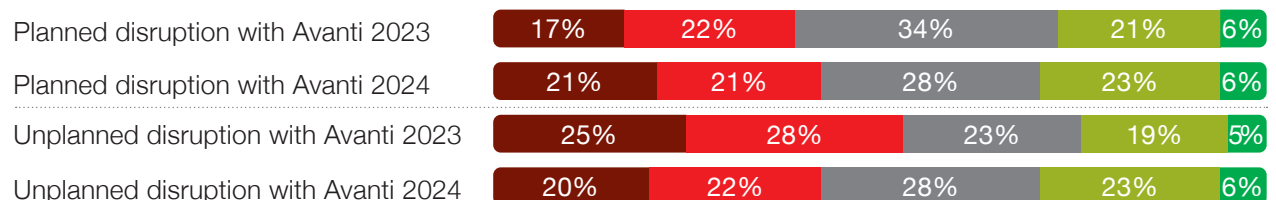
The research also included qualitative interviews and focus groups with passengers and three focus groups with staff.

## Key findings

**1. Overall, passengers' satisfaction with the way Avanti West Coast handles disruption is broadly the same in 2024 as in 2023.**

The results show a decrease in dissatisfaction and an increase in satisfaction for both planned and unplanned disruption. This can be largely explained by a change in the sample profile to include more panel respondents. They tend to be more positive about their experience than the Avanti West Coast marketing database participants.

**Chart 1** Satisfaction with how disruption was handled (Avanti journeys)



Unplanned disruption: significant difference 2024 vs. 2023 95% confidence  
29% Satisfaction vs. 24% Satisfaction 2023

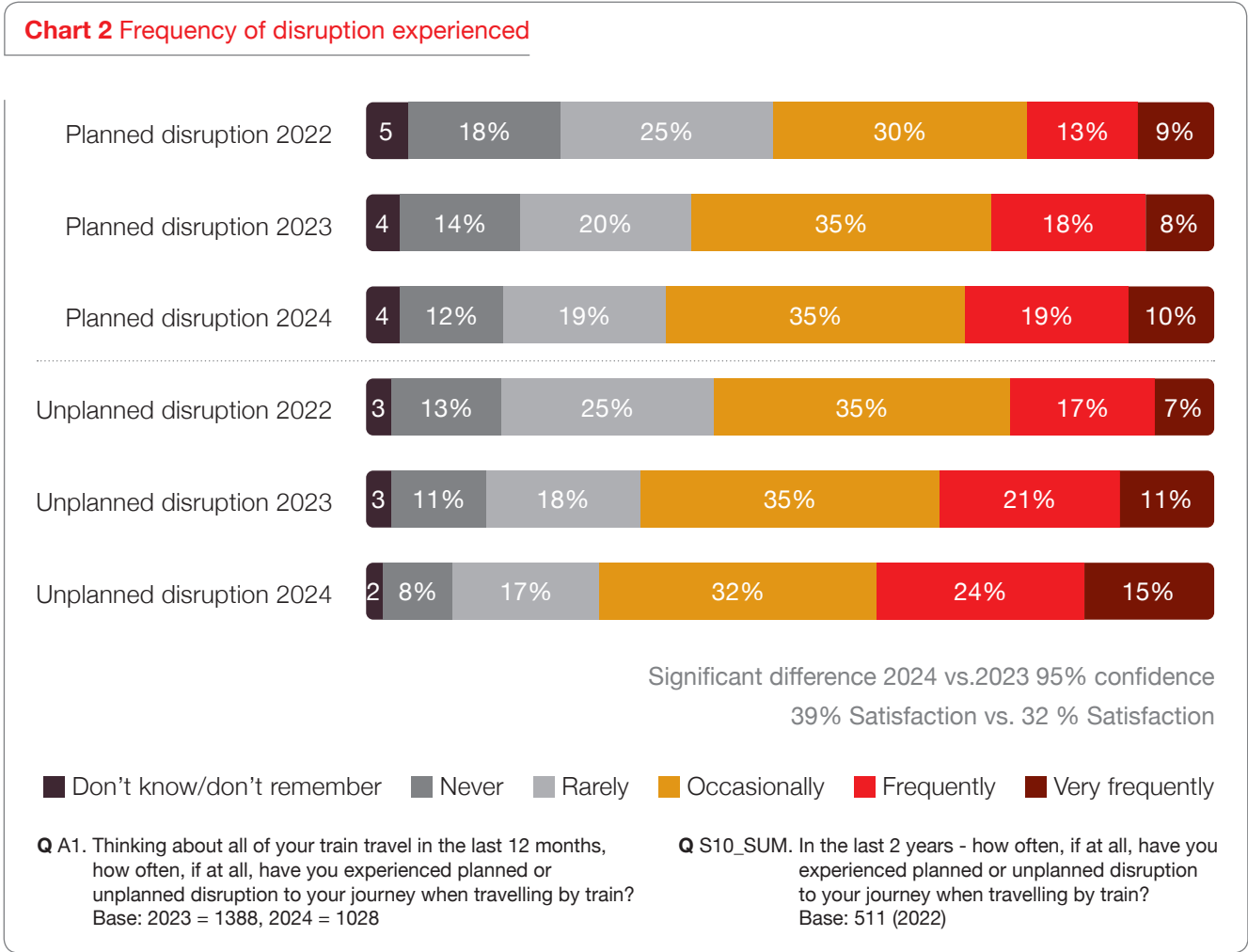
■ Very dissatisfied ■ Fairly dissatisfied ■ Neither dissatisfied/satisfied ■ Fairly satisfied ■ Very satisfied

**Q A2.** Overall, how satisfied were you with the way in which the planned disruption was handled by the train company and others involved?  
Base: 2023 = 820, 2024 = 541

**Q A8.** Overall, how satisfied were you with the way in which the unplanned disruption was handled by the train company and others involved?  
Base: 2023 = 810, 2024 = 535

2. This is despite a perceived increase in frequency of disruption since 2022.

Whether this reflects a change in the sample, or it is due to a perceived or genuine change, passengers reported increased frequency with which they encounter disruption.

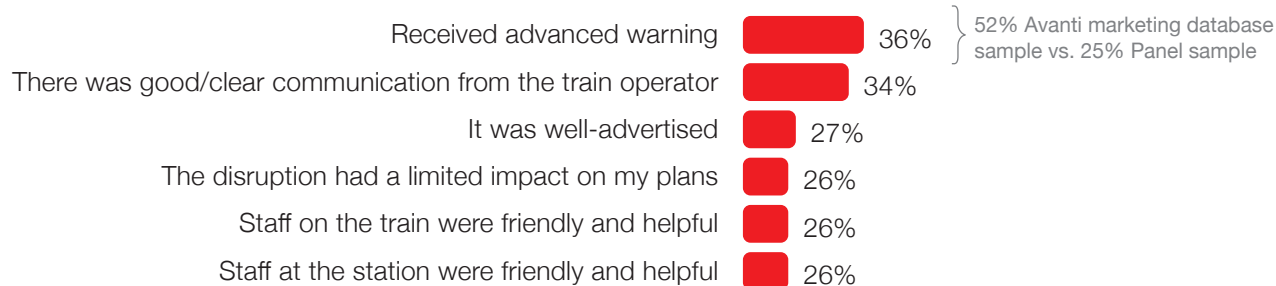


3. The reasons for passengers feeling satisfied or dissatisfied in 2024 are generally consistent with 2023.

During planned disruption, passengers are most likely to be satisfied when they receive advanced warning, clear communications and experience helpful staff from the train operator.

This is especially the case for the passengers in the Avanti West Coast marketing database sample. For unplanned disruption, passengers feel more satisfied if train staff are perceived as helpful, and the operator is seen as doing its best to deal with the situation.

Passengers are most likely to feel dissatisfied if their plans are affected by disruption (61 per cent of those who were dissatisfied had been impacted) as well as if communications from Avanti West Coast are poor or unclear (31 per cent of those who were dissatisfied said they had experienced poor communications).

**Chart 3 Top reasons for satisfaction with handling of planned disruption**

Q A3. Why do you say you were satisfied with the way in which the planned disruption was handled?  
Base: 266

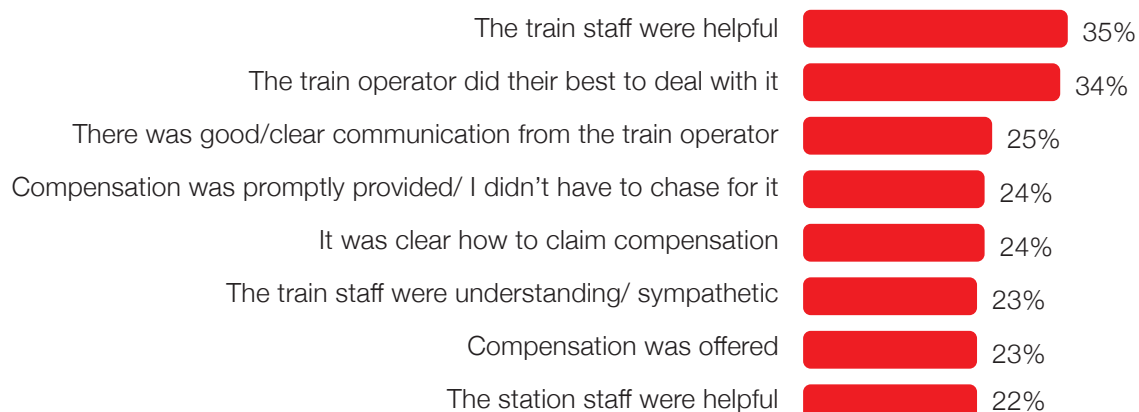
#### 4. Passengers report improvements in communication about planned disruption.

Passengers who were satisfied with clear communications during planned disruption increased to 34 per cent in 2024 and this reason is now ranked second from top – in 2023 the second reason was disruption having a limited impact on passenger plans. This suggests that work Avanti West Coast has done, based on 2021/22 and 2023 insights, may be paying off.

In addition, the survey asked what Avanti West Coast could have done better when communicating planned disruption. Passengers saying they need ‘more advanced warning’ have dropped from 26 per cent in 2023 to 12 per cent in 2024. Similarly, those saying ‘better/clearer communication’ have dropped from 15 per cent to seven per cent.

#### 5. But for unplanned disruption, the picture is more mixed.

A quarter of satisfied passengers (25 per cent) cited good and/or clear communications as the reason they were satisfied with the way unplanned disruption was handled. But 32 per cent of those dissatisfied cited poor or unclear communications as the reason they were dissatisfied, with 24 per cent saying information was inconsistent between staff and online/on the platform or train.

**Chart 4 Top reasons for satisfaction with the handling of unplanned disruption**

Q A9. Why do you say you were satisfied with the way in which the unplanned disruption was handled?  
Base: 252

## 6. Avanti West Coast staff are generally performing well.

There are few differences in staff performance from 2023 to 2024, and they are generally positive. Passengers are now more likely to say that call centre staff kept them informed, showed leadership and had control over the situation than in 2023.

It is encouraging that 29 percent of passengers in 2024 said staff on the train were available to help - an increase from 23 per cent in 2023. Staff performance at the ticket desk also improved with 52 per cent saying that staff were available to help versus 39 per cent in 2023. However, in 2024, 46 per cent of passengers who encountered staff on the platform said they were friendly, compared to 54 per cent of passengers in 2023.

## 7. Staff have their own issues to deal with.

In the staff focus groups, we heard about several issues including:

- There are problems with communication between train crew, control, platform staff and other train operators
- When there is disruption, the plans for onward travel are often not clear to them, making it difficult to offer accurate information to passengers
- Sometimes passengers appear to have information before staff
- Staffing levels can be an issue, particularly late in the day and at weekends

Passengers noted that they had occasionally seen other passengers 'crowd' or shout at those staff members who needed to keep the situation calm and prevent these situations from escalating. Staff also reflected this as something that can happen or has happened on their route or at their station.

*"On my route, when it goes wrong, it goes wrong very quickly. If the lines of communication from relevant departments are not working, it can get dangerous when managing this on the train with frustrated passengers"*

Train staff member

Staff suggested that better and clearer information could help to keep situations calmer if passengers know what is going on and what has been arranged. This appears to be the case particularly with last trains if they are cancelled or terminate early without a clear plan for onward transport.

## 8. Most passengers are satisfied with the frequency and quality of communication they receive from Avanti West Coast.

Questions about frequency and quality were new for 2024, so it is not possible to compare with the previous year's research. Overall, 63 per cent of passengers said the frequency of communications was 'about right' and 66 per cent were satisfied with the quality.

However, there is a big difference in satisfaction in relation to the degree of engagement with Avanti West Coast with 56 per cent of participants in the Avanti West Coast marketing database sample satisfied compared to 82 per cent in the general sample.

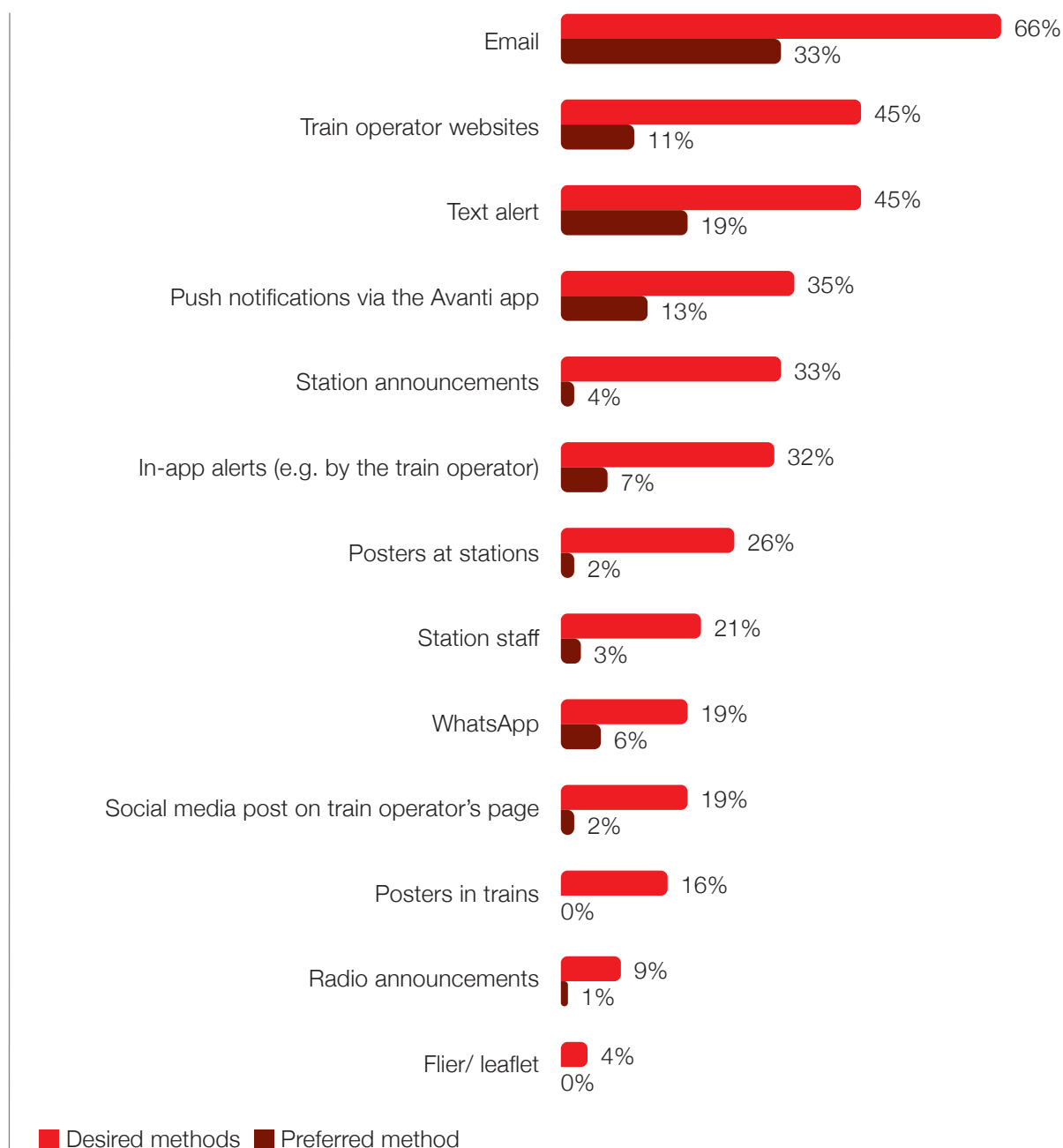
## 9. Email is the most popular communication channel for planned disruption and text alerts for unplanned disruption.

The results for planned disruption are similar to those in 2023, with email being the most popular method of communication. However, during unplanned disruption, regardless of whether the passenger is yet to arrive at the departure station or is already there, text alerts are the most popular.

Passengers are most likely to want to be alerted every ten minutes during disruption – and this preference for every ten minutes has increased since 2023, while the proportion of passengers preferring 15-minute alerts has decreased.

These findings vary by age – email and texts are more popular with older passengers, and in-app push notifications are more popular with those aged under 35.

**Chart 5 Methods of communication for planned disruption**



**Q B1a.** When thinking about planned disruption on Avanti West Coast routes, which of the following methods of communication would you like to receive the information through?  
Base: 1023

**Q B1b.** And which would be your preferred communication method for this type of disruption?  
Base: 1013 (Other and don't know removed)

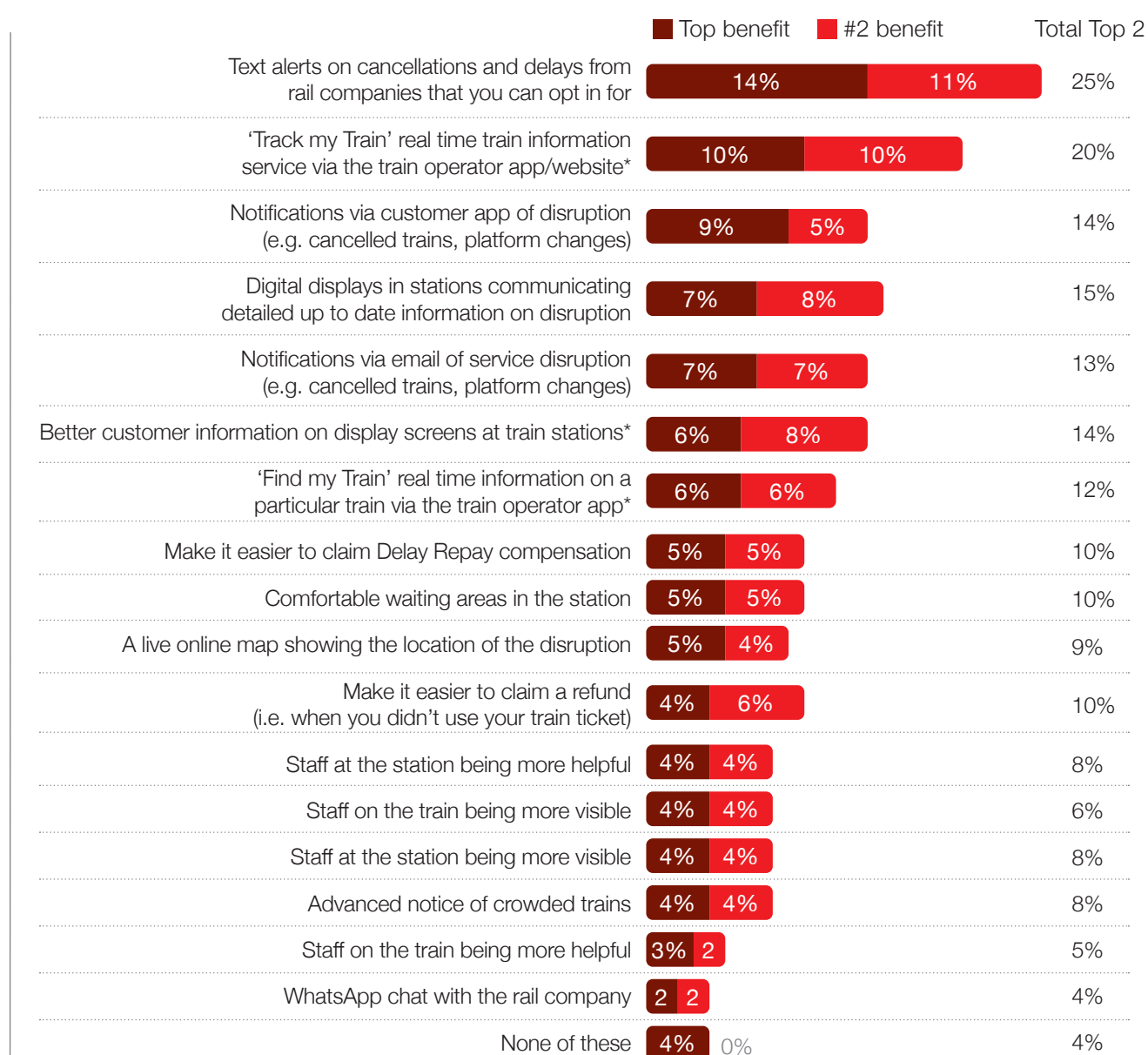


## 10. Greatest benefit to passengers in future service disruption.

Passengers ranked the opt-in Avanti West Coast text alerts and 'Track my Train' live updates via the app or website as the most beneficial in helping them manage the impact of disruption on their daily lives. Those in the Avanti West Coast marketing database sample were significantly more likely to choose text alerts and notifications via the app than the panel sample.

It is notable that staff being more visible or helpful are not top of the list for passengers, suggesting that staff are already performing well in this respect. This is supported by the finding that passengers who are satisfied cite helpful staff.

**Chart 6 Top ranked communications of greatest benefit in managing rail disruption in the future**



Q E1. Now thinking about the future, please select up to TWO of the following things that you think would be of greatest benefit in helping you to manage the impact of rail disruption in your daily life.  
Base: 1028

\*Full code wordings in slide notes.

## 11. What has Avanti West Coast done in response to the research?

Avanti West Coast has responded to areas for improvement highlighted in the full programme of research (2021/22 and 2023 and 2024) as follows:

### Insight:

- Customers told us that Avanti West Coast staff are generally friendly, but not always visible or able to help in disruption. Staff told us that they do not always get all the latest information they require from the Control team to pass onto customers.

### Response:

- A cross-functional working group is focusing on improving communication between Control and colleagues on trains and stations
- Process mapping for information systems has been completed
- AWC have undertaken a full review of customer handling plans for all the stations managed by AWC. New station disruption packs are being introduced to improve the management of disruption at AWC stations, aligned to Network Rail contingency plans.
- Back on Track (BOT) incident management system has been introduced which provides live updates to staff directly from the Control team during disruption incidents.
- Enhanced customer visual route maps on the AWC website provide visual images of alternative routes that customers can travel on during planned and unplanned disruption.

### Insight:

- Customers expect us to 'push' regular updates via email, app notification or text message.

### Response:

- Automated emails have been introduced to notify customers as soon as disruption impacts their booked journey.

### Insight:

- Updates on cancellations need to be provided at least 24 hours in advance.

### Response:

- AWC Control team aims to make changes in industry systems over 24 hours in advance wherever possible.
- Control processes have been reviewed to achieve this consistently.





## Contact Transport Focus

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