PIDD-29 Wave 1 Research Findings

Introduction

The rail industry wishes to understand better the extent to which each train operator is providing effective communications about disruption to their customers and what improvements might be made.

ATOC commissioned quantitative research to answer PIDD-29 out of 46 PIDD objectives:

> *"Ongoing quantitative research should be commissioned to measure the improvement in the quality of information during disruption for all train companies and that the results are published."*

The research has three key objectives with a further optional objective:

1. To identify the information passengers recall as being provided during disruption and the extent to which each is seen as satisfactory, both overall and in terms of specific considerations such as:
   a. quantity;
   b. quality of content;
   c. quality of use;
   d. quality of delivery style; and
   e. repetition (this may be seen as good and/or bad).

2. To compare the experiences of passengers during different types/severity of delay (e.g. single train failure/line blockage/major station closure/weather events).

3. To provide a benchmark against which to measure future changes in satisfaction.

4. Optionally, to compare experiences on rail with those on bus, plane, tram, etc. and as a car driver (we don't expect alternative modes to constitute robust data in a single wave).

Methodology

The research was designed to collect responses from rail users on a national (Great Britain) basis by passenger type (Commuter v Business v Leisure User) and also by TOC sector (Long Distance v Regional v London South East), with the TOCs being allocated to one of these three sectors as per the Transport Focus National Rail Passenger Survey.

There is not a requirement to analyse the data robustly at an individual TOC level, however ATOC requires the research to cover the operations of all train companies.

Given that disruption on the railway is subject to seasonal variation, the period for fieldwork is lengthy to enable the work agency to take account of this and four waves are scheduled each year.

Wave 1 (early December 2015-end February 2016) provides a benchmark against which to measure future changes in satisfaction.

As the passage of time is likely to have an impact on attitudes to passenger information during disruptions, the research approach aimed to minimise that impact. A key aspect of the research methodology was to facilitate completion of the questionnaire including when in the course of the rail journey to ensure that responses were as far as possible made during or close to the disrupted rail journey.

A number of methods were employed to promote the survey and encourage participation. This included:

- card hand outs (with following link www.traindelay.info to online questionnaire).
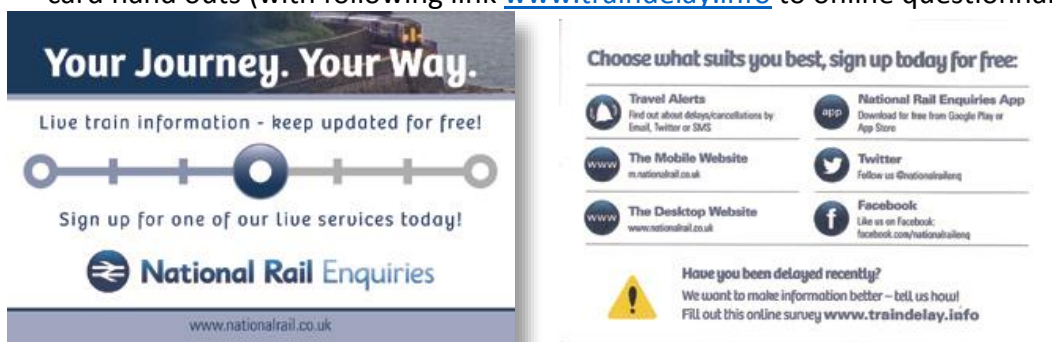
- Tweets (sent to those registered to receive tweets if there was a disruption[1])
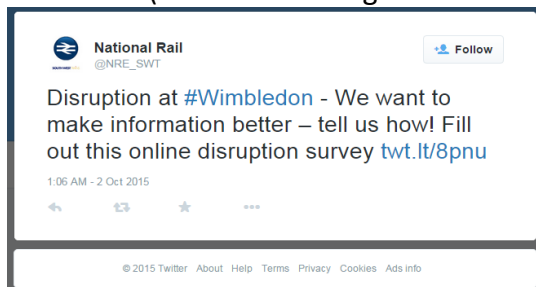
- emails including the link
- a link on the National Rail website.

All four channels led participants to an online survey.

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[1] Sent for P1 and P0 events

Wave 1 Results

There were 5,755 completed questionnaires in Wave 1:

- Website   2,962
- Emails   2,597
- Cards   139
- Twitter   57

When responded to the survey

Participants were asked if they were making the rail journey now. 16% were doing so, 19% hadn't started it and for 16% it was cancelled.

Those who used the website and tweets to respond were much more likely to be making the trip when they responded: 24% website, 21% tweets compared to 12% card and 6% email.

Nearly half (49%) had completed the trip when they answered the questionnaire.

Figure 1: When entered the questionnaire
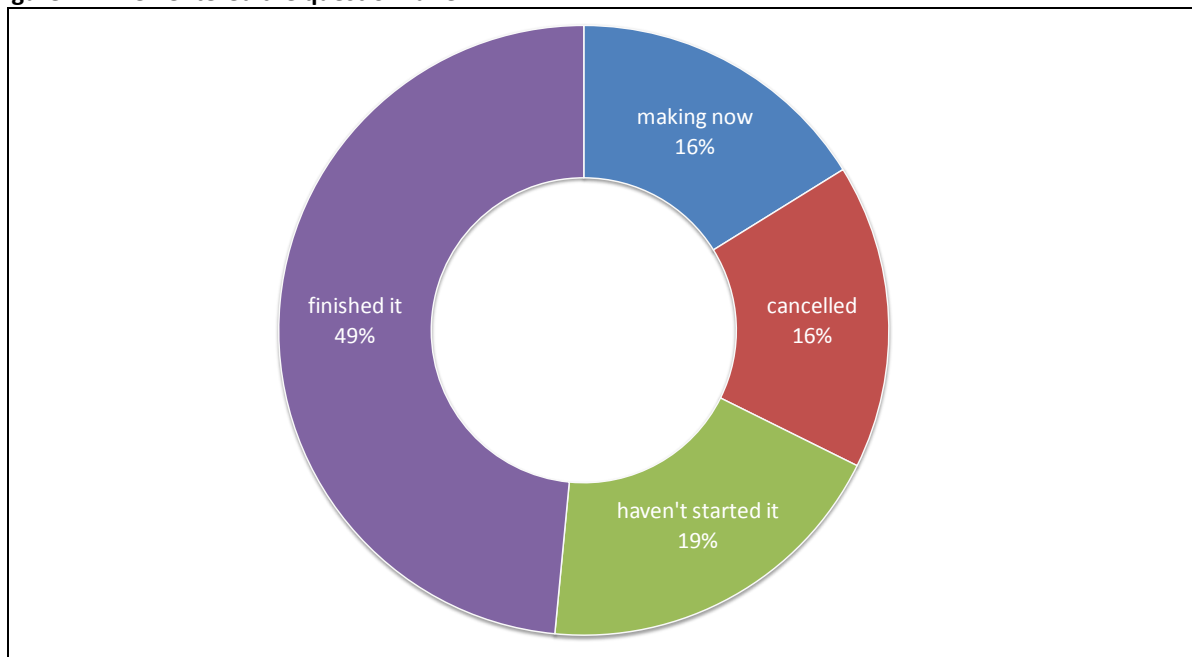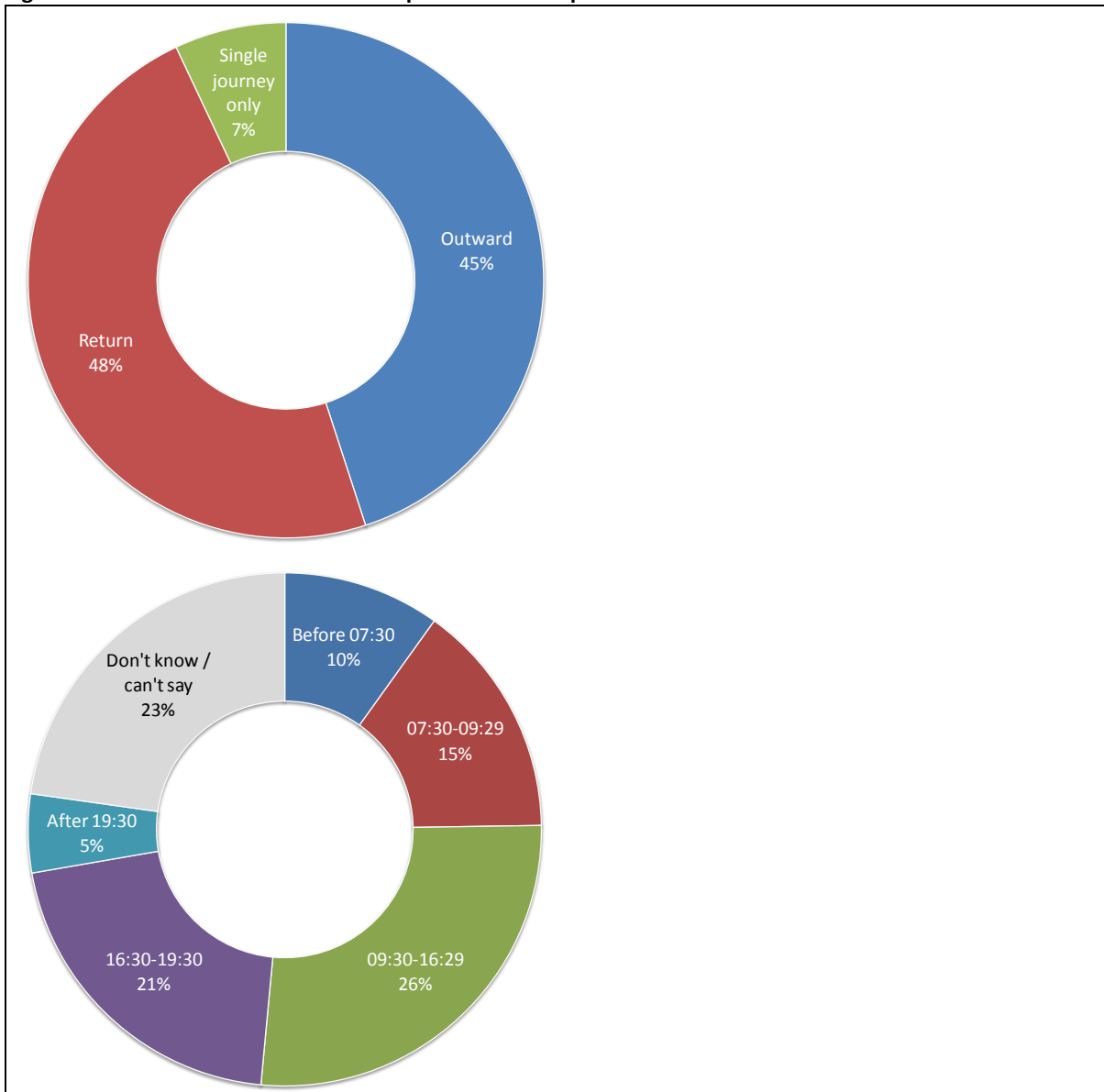

Base: 5,755

Overall, 45% completed the questionnaire on the day of the disruption and a further 21% within a week of the disruption.

Leg of trip and time of trip

There was a fairly evenly split between outward and return legs.

Over a third of trips were made at peak times: 15% 07:30-09:29 and 21% 16:30-19:30.

Figure 2: Whether outward or return trip and time of trip
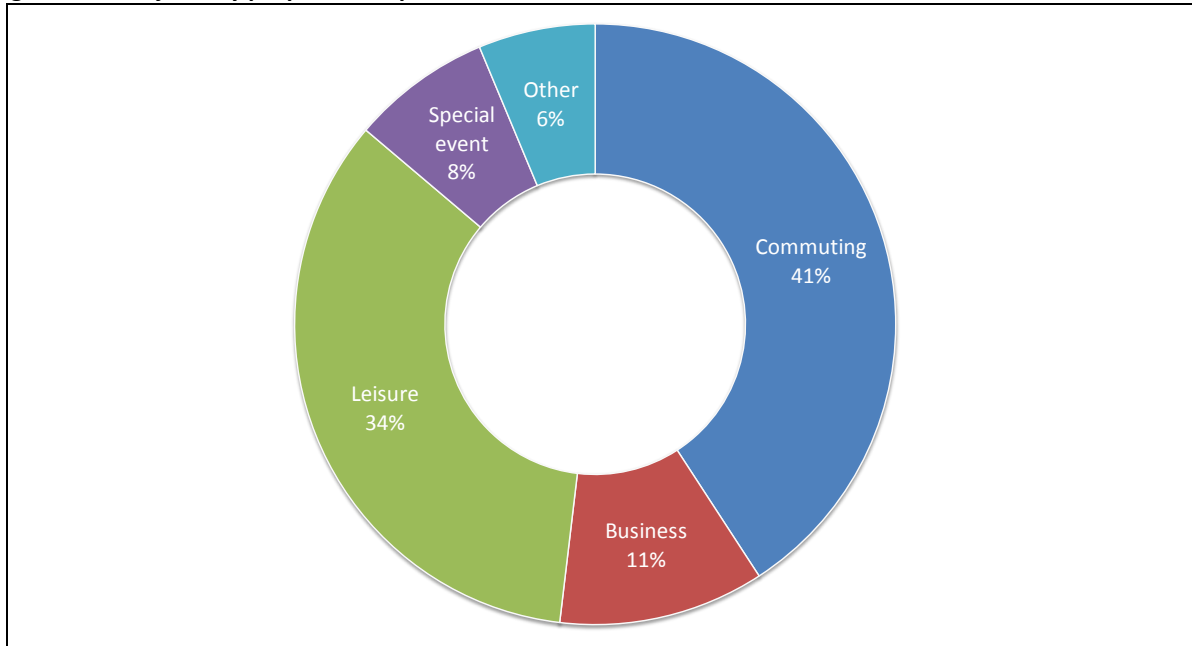

Base: 5,755

Journey purpose

Participants were asked what the **main** purpose of the disrupted or cancelled train journey.

The responses were dominated by commuting and leisure traffic and these proportions are in line with overall purpose split as shown in NRPS 2014:

- Commuter (41%, NRPS 41%)
- Employers' business (11% NRPS 14%)
- Leisure/other (48% NRPS 44%)

Figure 3: Main journey purpose of trip

Base: 5,755

## Awareness of possible disruption/cancellation to train journey

Customers were asked when they were first aware of a possible disruption/cancellation to train journey:

- 23% were first aware of disruption/cancellation **before** arriving at the station
- 49% at the departure station
- Remaining 28% during the journey

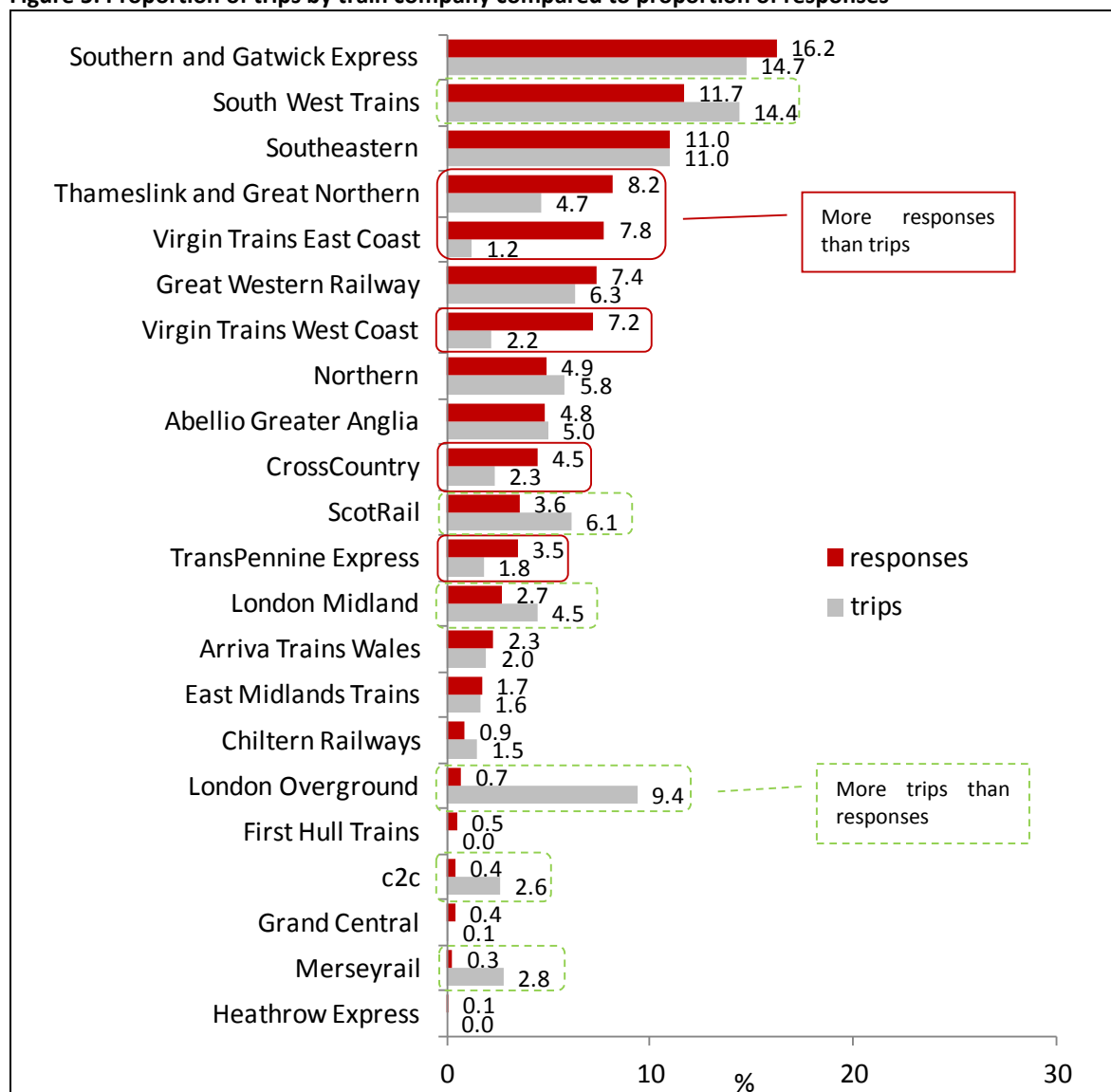**Figure 4: When first aware of a possible disruption/cancellation to train journey**
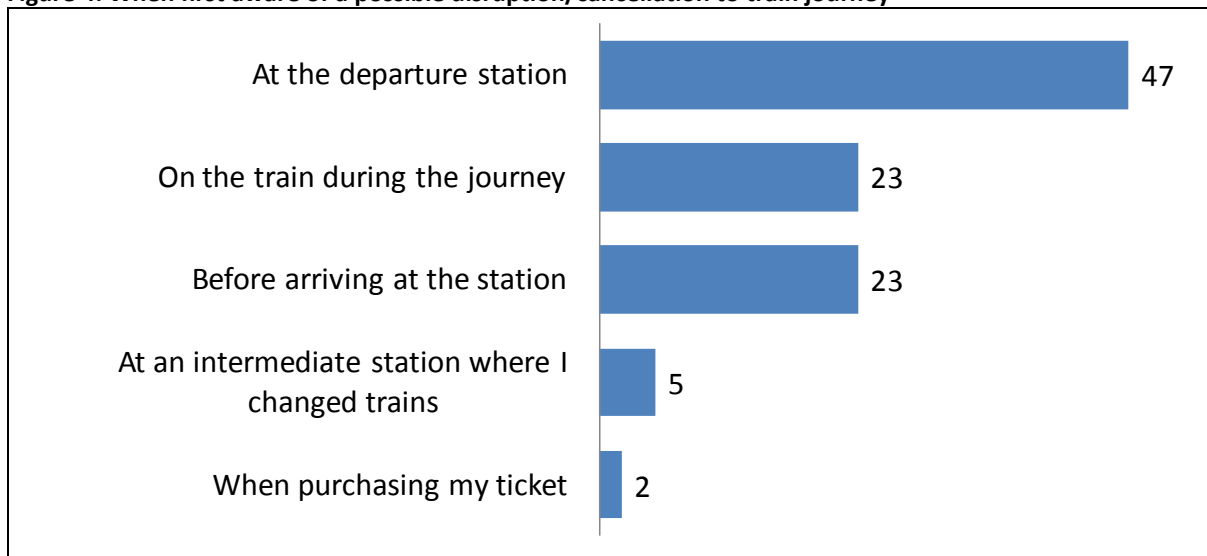
Base: 5,755

TOC operating disrupted service

Data on the Train company operating the disrupted service, is dominated by the large London and South East region TOCs: Southern, South West Trains and Southeastern since they also dominate rail trips.

The figure below compares the proportion of trips made on each TOC with the proportion of responses.

Figure 5: Proportion of trips by train company compared to proportion of responses

Train Company	responses	trips
Southern and Gatwick Express	16.2	14.7
South West Trains	11.7	14.4
Southeastern	11.0	11.0
Thameslink and Great Northern	8.2	4.7
Virgin Trains East Coast	7.8	1.2
Great Western Railway	7.4	6.3
Virgin Trains West Coast	7.2	2.2
Northern	4.9	5.8
Abellio Greater Anglia	4.8	5.0
CrossCountry	4.5	2.3
ScotRail	3.6	6.1
TransPennine Express	3.5	1.8
London Midland	2.7	4.5
Arriva Trains Wales	2.3	2.0
East Midlands Trains	1.7	1.6
Chiltern Railways	0.9	1.5
London Overground	0.7	9.4
First Hull Trains	0.5	0.0
c2c	0.4	2.6
Grand Central	0.4	0.1
Merseyrail	0.3	2.8
Heathrow Express	0.1	0.0

More responses than trips

More trips than responses

Base: 5,755

TOCs with a higher proportion of trips than responses were London Overground, South West Trains, Scotrail and Merseyrail.

Those with a higher proportion of responses than trips were Virgin Trains West Coast, Virgin Trains East Coast, Thameslink/Great Northern and CrossCountry.

The distribution of responses by rail sector is:

- London & and South East   64%
- Long-distance   25%
- Regional   11%

How informed of disruption/cancellation

We asked how the customer was informed of the disruption/cancellation.

The primary information source varies by journey stage:

- Online and apps most important for before travel
- Departure screen and announcements for at station and interchange
- Announcements most important on train

Table 1: How informed of disruption/cancellation

	before arrival at station %	at station %	on the train %	at inter-change station %
Announcement by staff on the train		9	66	16
Announcement at the station		35	13	33
Departure screen at the station		61	15	52
Speaking to member of staff at the station		13		14
Speaking to member of staff on the train			7	5
From the clerk when buying my ticket		2		
Online via a website	48	6	7	5
Via an app	25	9	9	10
Received an email	8	1	1	*
Via Facebook	2	*	*	*
Via Twitter	7	2	3	2
Received a text alert	2	*	1	*
Word of mouth	9	4	3	3
From other people at the station	10	9	6	8
From fellow passengers on the train				2
From family, friends or colleagues	8	2	2	1
Travel news updates on radio or television	10	1	1	1
Other	7	6	12	6
Don't know/can't remember	1	1	4	1
Base	**1,307**	**3,180**	**2,765**	**310**

Note: grey shaded information sources potentially provided by NR/TOCs

Key:

Most mentions

2nd most mentions

3rd most mentions

Information content

For customers who received information about the disruption/cancellation from a potentially rail company source (the grey shaded sources in table above), the content of the information was asked for.

The main content provided to customers varied by journey stage:

- 'Length of delay' and 'alternative modes/ routes' were the main content **before arrival at station**
- 'Length of delay' and 'an apology' were the main content **at station** and **at interchange station**
- 'An apology' and 'length of delay' were the main content **on train**

Figure 6: Information content
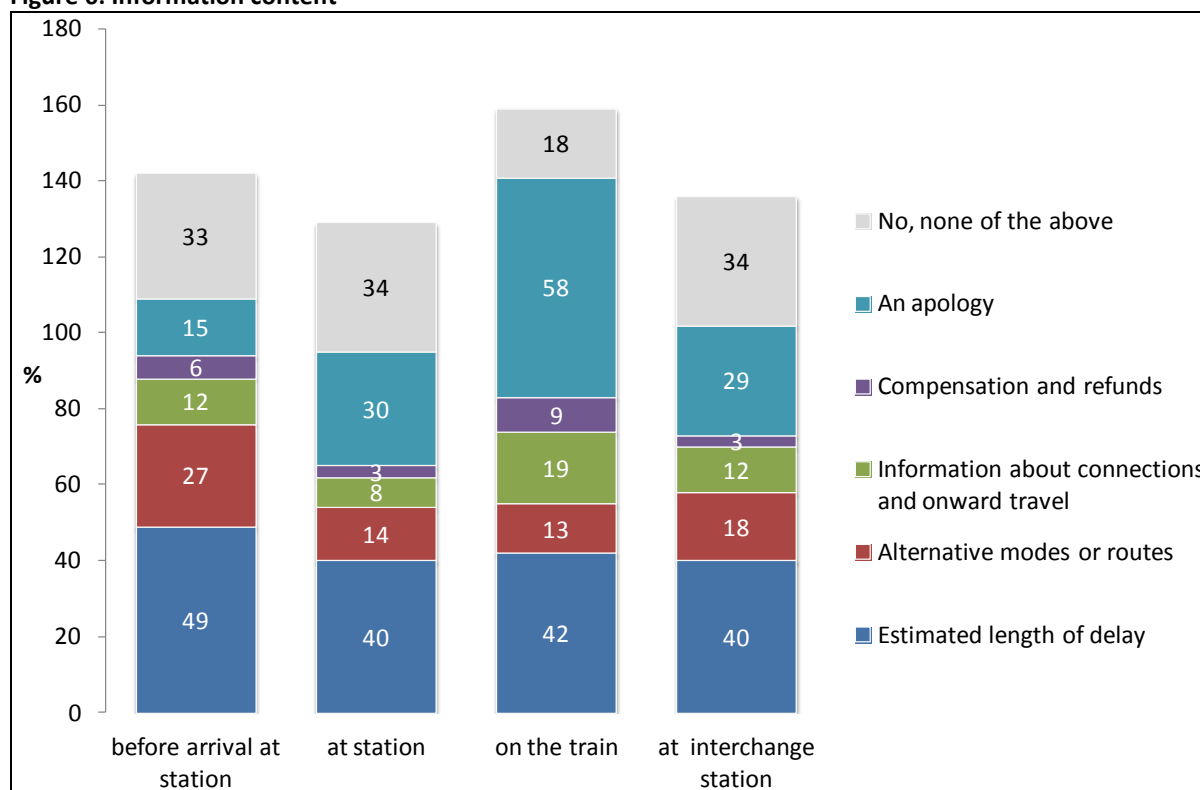
Base: before arrival at station 1,006, at station 2,879, on train 2,138, at interchange station 280
Note: more than one response could be given so percentages add to more than 100%

Rating of information provision

Customers were asked to rate the TOC operating the service on a range of aspects of information provided in relation to the disruption/cancellation (on a scale where 1 = very poorly and 5 = very well).

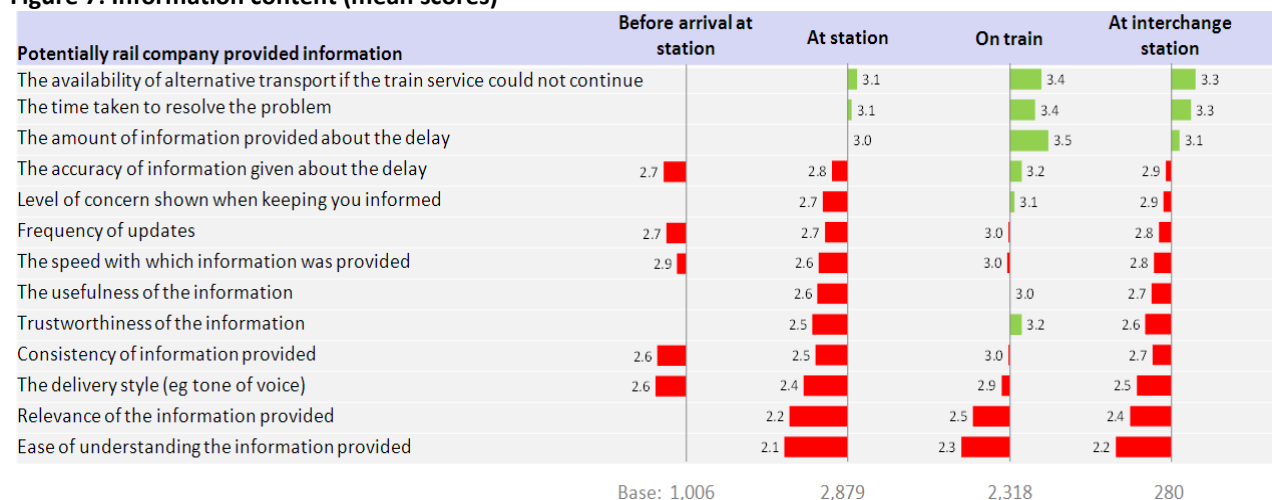The worst rated aspects were (ie with the lowest mean scores):

- Ease of understanding the information provided
- relevance of the information provided
- the delivery style
- consistency of information provided

Almost all aspects of information rated worst at station than on train.

The best rated aspects were:

- the availability of alternative transport if the train service could not continue
- the time taken to resolve the problem
- the amount of information provided
- the accuracy of information

Figure 7: Information content (mean scores)

| Potentially rail company provided information	Before arrival at station	At station	On train	At interchange station
The availability of alternative transport if the train service could not continue		3.1	3.4	3.3
The time taken to resolve the problem		3.1	3.4	3.3
The amount of information provided about the delay		3.0	3.5	3.1
The accuracy of information given about the delay	2.7	2.8	3.2	2.9
Level of concern shown when keeping you informed		2.7	3.1	2.9
Frequency of updates	2.7	2.7	3.0	2.8
The speed with which information was provided	2.9	2.6	3.0	2.8
The usefulness of the information		2.6	3.0	2.7
Trustworthiness of the information		2.5	3.2	2.6
Consistency of information provided	2.6	2.5	3.0	2.7
The delivery style (eg tone of voice)	2.6	2.4	2.9	2.5
Relevance of the information provided		2.2	2.5	2.4
Ease of understanding the information provided		2.1	2.3	2.2
Base:	1,006	2,879	2,318	280

Feelings when learnt of the disruption/cancellation

Customers were shown a list of feelings and asked to select those they felt when they learnt of the disruption or cancellation.

- 'Frustration' dominates feelings (between 61% and 75%)
- 'Resignation' and 'anger' were also high (between 26% and 38%)

Those who learnt of the disruption **at station** were most likely to be frustrated and angry. Those who learnt of the disruption **on the train** were least likely to be frustrated or angry.

Figure 8: Feelings when learnt of the disruption/cancellation
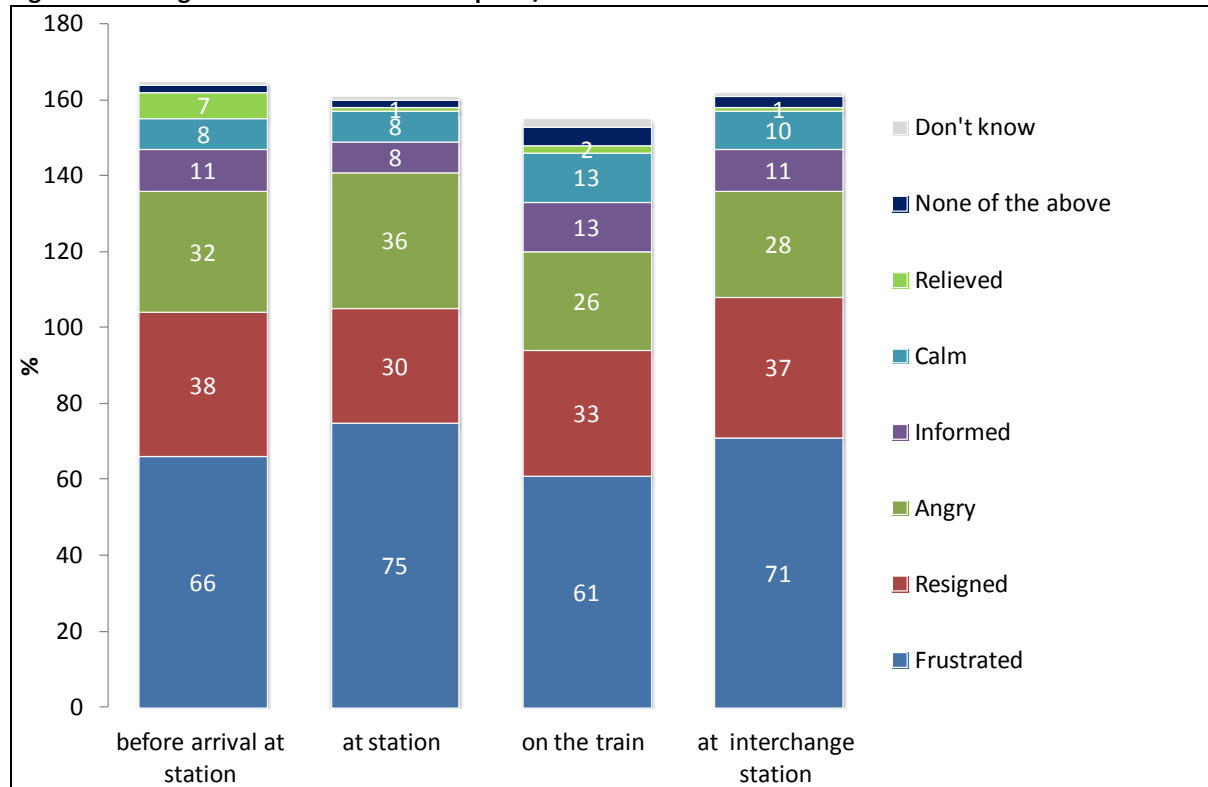
Base: before arrival at station 1,307, at station 3,180, on train 2,765, at interchange station 310
Note: more than one response could be given so percentages add to more than 100%
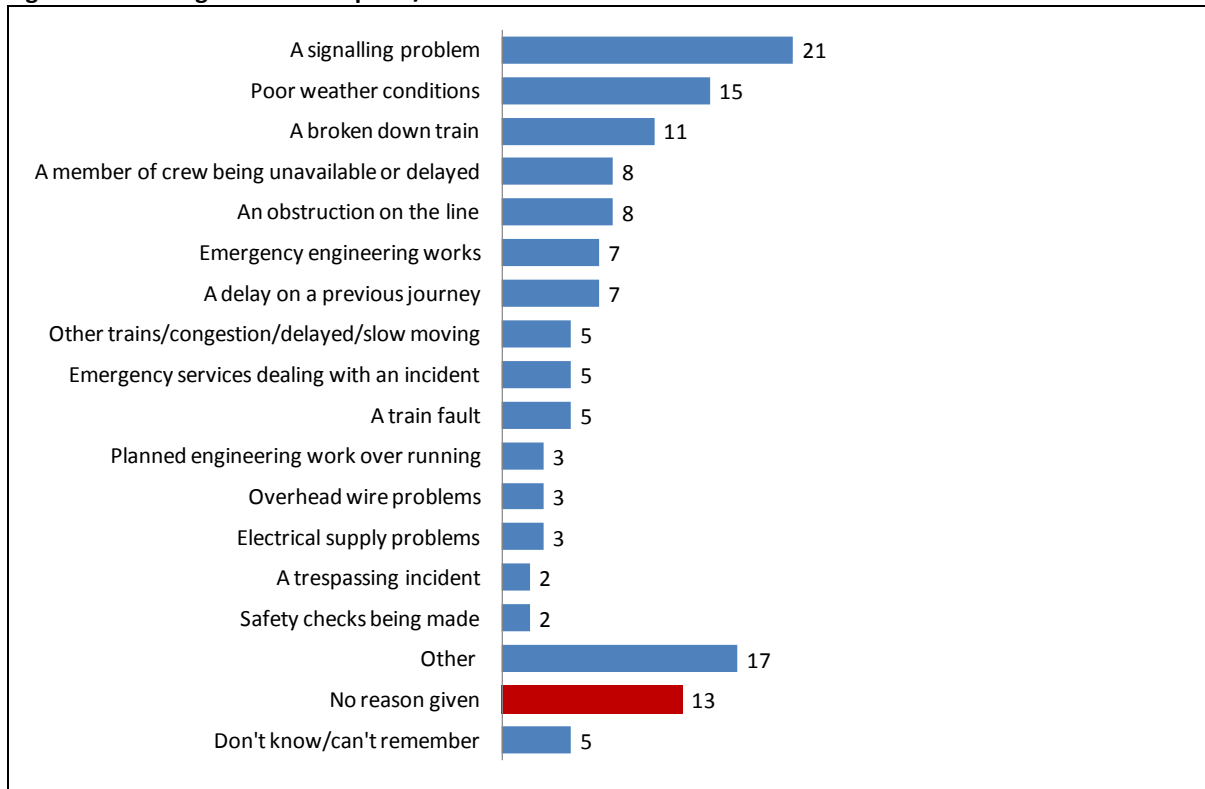
Reason given for disruption

Customers were asked what was the reason given for the disruption.

The main reason given, mentioned by 21%, was signalling problems.

Other important reasons were poor weather conditions (15%), a broken down train (11%), crew unavailable or delayed (8%) and an obstruction on the line (8%).

13% said no reason was given.

Figure 9: Reason given for disruption/cancellation

Reason	%
A signalling problem	21
Poor weather conditions	15
A broken down train	11
A member of crew being unavailable or delayed	8
An obstruction on the line	8
Emergency engineering works	7
A delay on a previous journey	7
Other trains/congestion/delayed/slow moving	5
Emergency services dealing with an incident	5
A train fault	5
Planned engineering work over running	3
Overhead wire problems	3
Electrical supply problems	3
A trespassing incident	2
Safety checks being made	2
Other	17
No reason given	13
Don't know/can't remember	5

Base: 5,755
Note: more than one response could be given so percentages add to more than 100%

Length of delay

Customers who had arrived at their destination were asked how late they were arriving at their destination station. Customers who were still travelling when they were answering the questionnaire (9% of the sample) were asked what time they expected to be arriving at their destination station.

Over a third (38%) suffered delays of over an hour and a third suffered delays of between 30 minutes and an hour. The mean delay was 59 minutes.

Figure 10: Length of delay
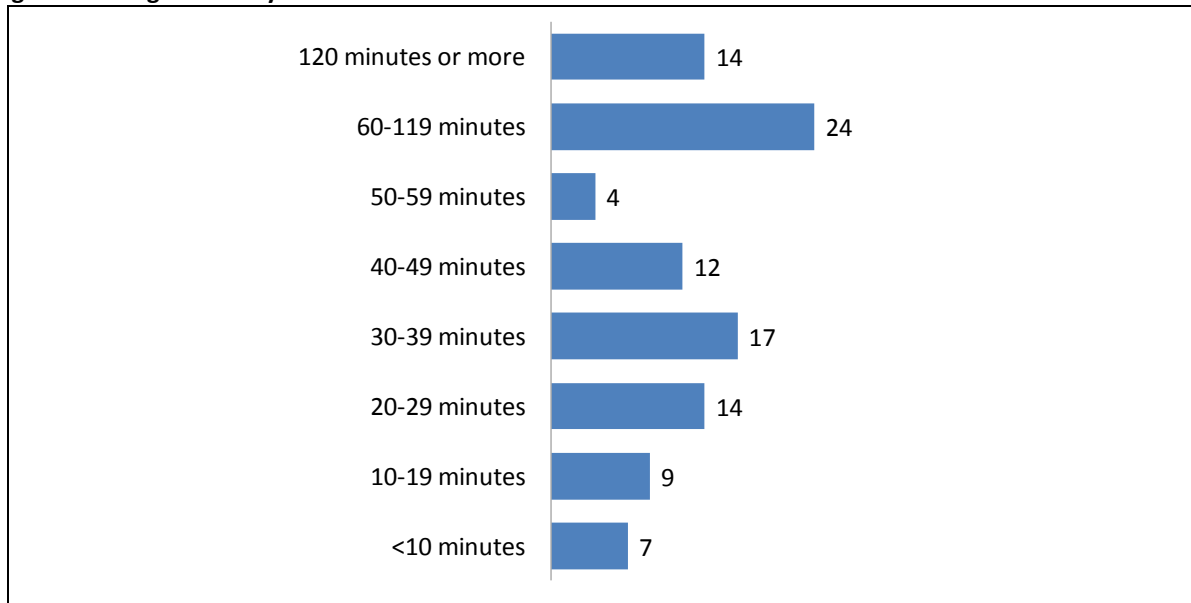
Base: 4,769 who suffered a delay (excludes cancellations)

Passengers rating of how well the delay was handled

Customers who suffered a delay were asked "Overall, how well do you think the train company dealt with this delay?" Customers who suffered a cancellation were asked "Overall, how well do you think the train company dealt with this cancellation?"

The overall rating of how the train company dealt with the delay/cancellation was poor, with twice as many negative ratings as positive.

Figure 11: Overall rating of how well the train company dealt with the delay/cancellation
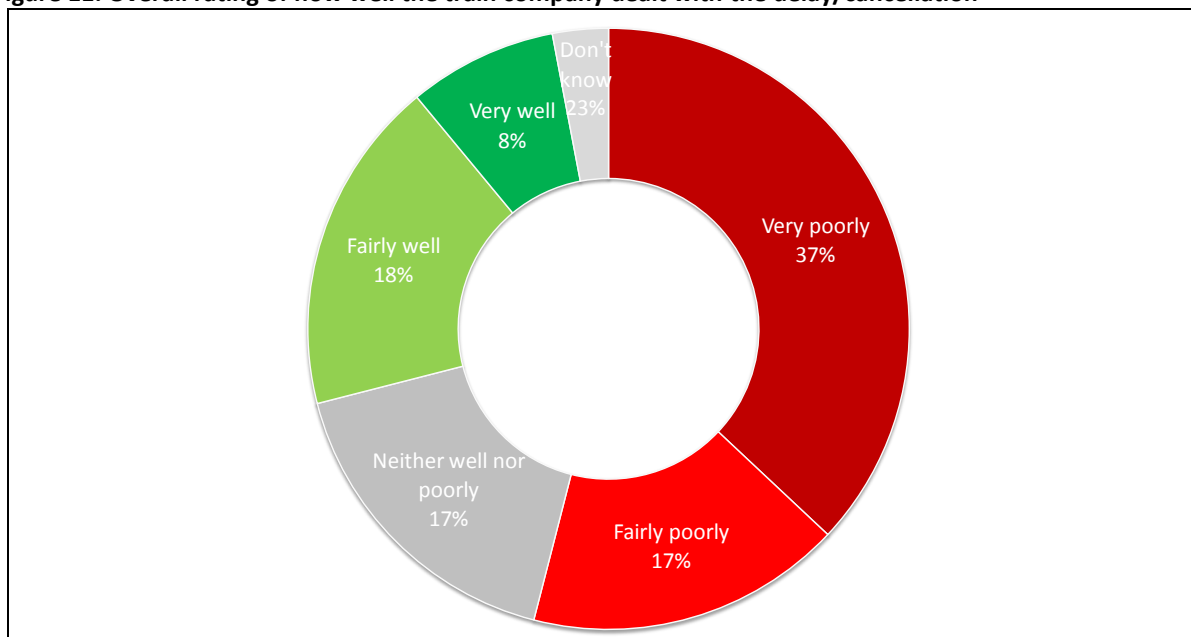

Base: 5,755

The mean ratings (where 1 = very poorly and 5 = very well) was 2.41.

- The mean ratings were worse for longer delays (mean of 2.2 for delays of an hour or longer compared to 3.33 for delays of less than 20 minutes).

- The mean ratings were worst for cancelled journeys (mean of 1.75) and 'live' trips (2.26). Those who finished their trips gave best ratings (2.63)

- Participants who used the email channel were most positive (mean of 3.1 compared to 1.8 website, 1.9 card and 2.0 tweet)

- Leisure travellers gave the best ratings (3.01) and commuters the worst (1.82)

Figure 12: Overall rating of how well the train company dealt with the delay/cancellation by length of delay, journey stage and journey purpose
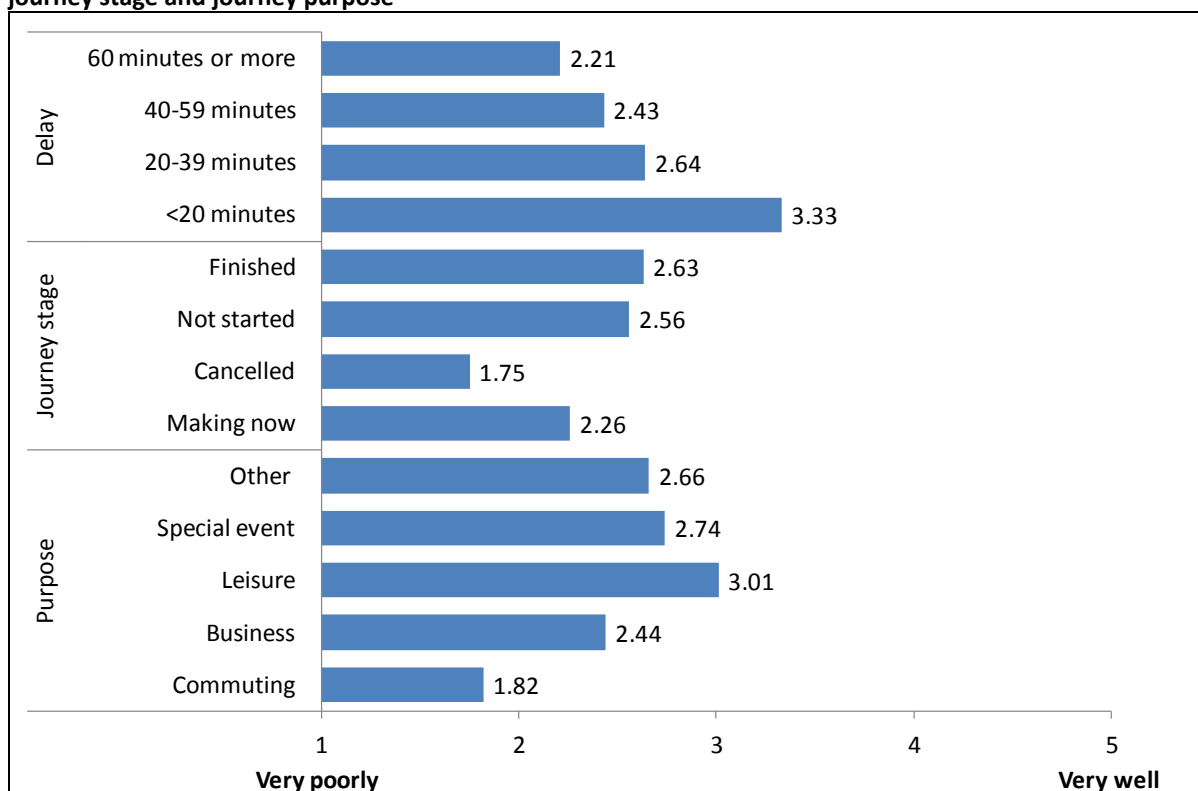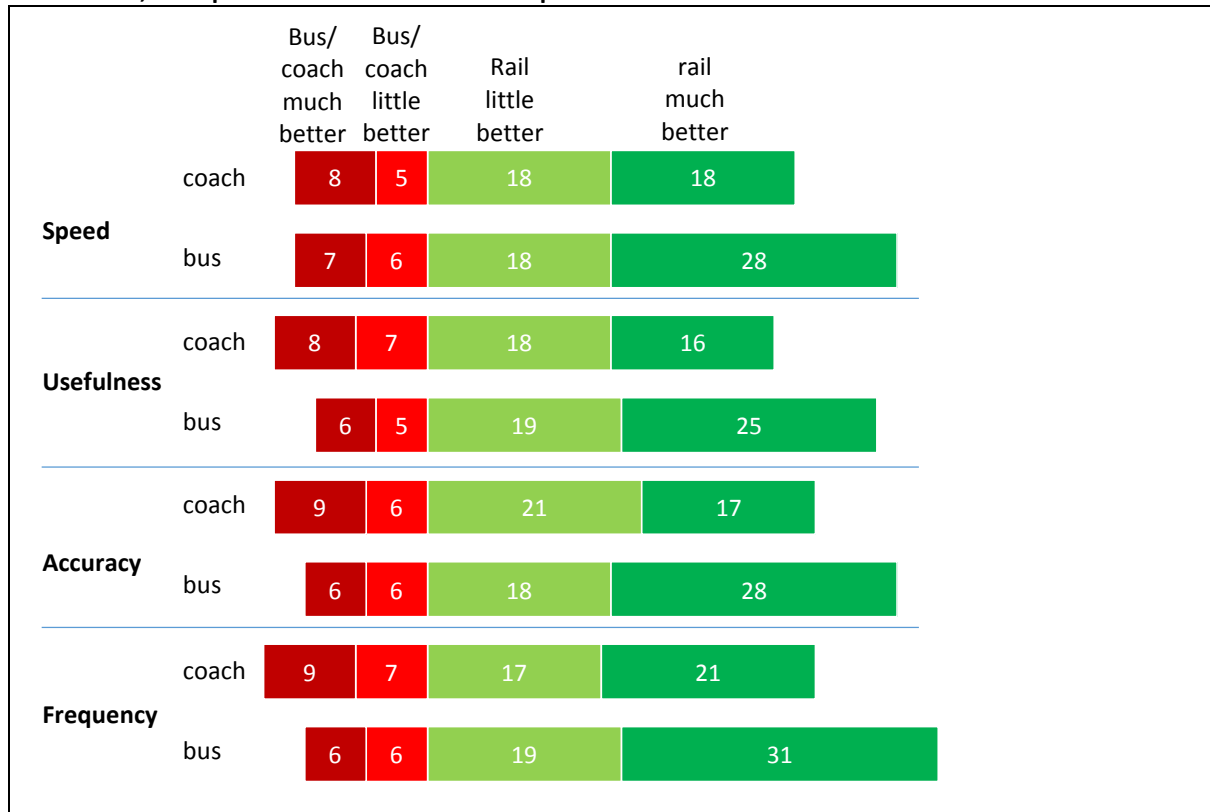

Comparative experience

To understand how well the rail industry dealt with disruptions compared to other transport operators passengers who suffered delays or cancellations were asked if they had also suffered delay of 20 minutes or more or a cancellation to a bus or coach journey in the previous three months.

Overall, 15% had suffered a delay of 20 minutes or more or a cancellation to a bus or coach journey in the last three months: 12% bus, 5% coach (2% both).

In summary, rail was rated much better than bus and coach for the following four aspects of information provision:

- Frequency of updates
- Accuracy of information
- Usefulness of information
- Speed with which information provided

Figure 13: Rail compared to bus and coach for frequency of updates, accuracy of information, usefulness of information, and speed with which information provided

		Bus/ coach much better	Bus/ coach little better	Rail little better	rail much better
Speed	coach	8	5	18	18
	bus	7	6	18	28
Usefulness	coach	8	7	18	16
	bus	6	5	19	25
Accuracy	coach	9	6	21	17
	bus	6	6	18	28
Frequency	coach	9	7	17	21
	bus	6	6	19	31

Base: Bus 677, Coach 277

Demographics

The age distribution of the sample is shown below. 17% over 60 years old.
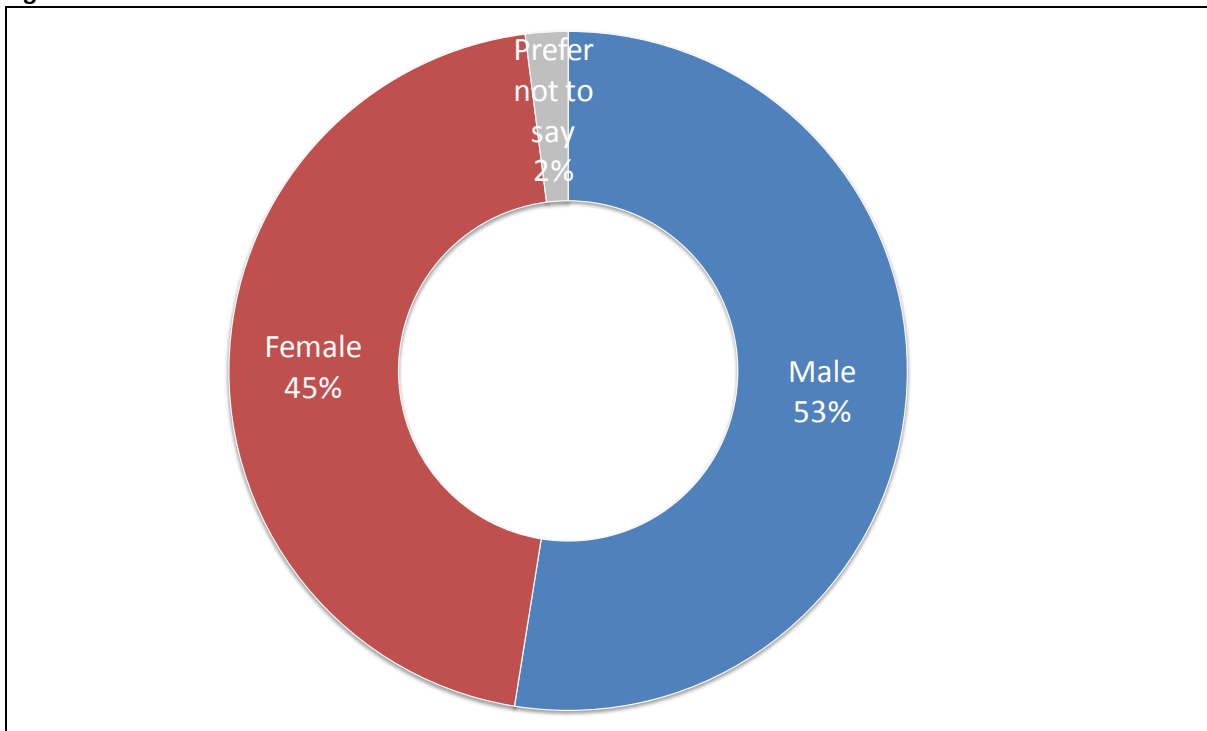
The median age band was 46-55.

Figure 14: Age
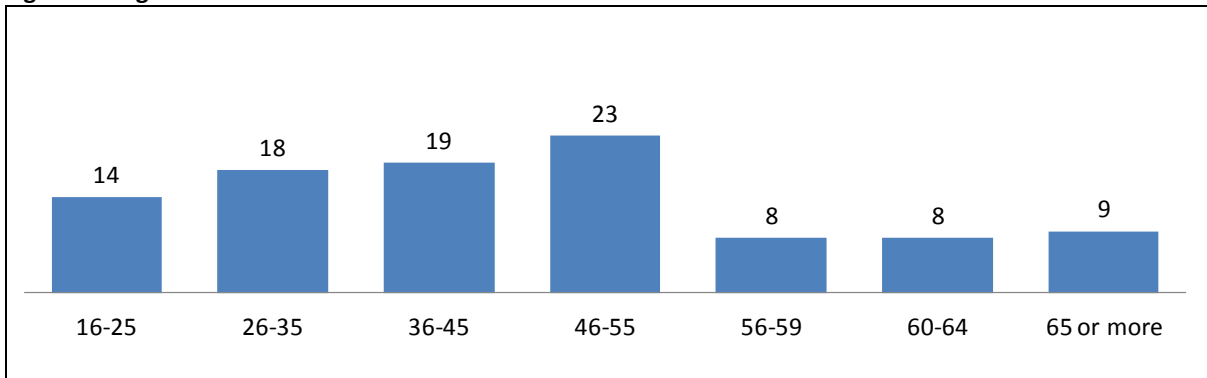
Base: 5,755

53% of the sample was male.

Figure 15: Gender

Base: 5,755

Conclusions

The overall rating of how the train company deals with delays/cancellations is poor, with twice as many negative ratings as positive. However, the findings indicate that satisfaction is more closely linked with the length of the delay rather than the information provided.

Information provision is rated poorly, particularly when given at stations. The areas of information provision that need most attention are:

- ease of understanding the information provided
- relevance of the information provided
- the delivery style
- consistency of information provided