

5th January 2000

New Survey Charts Way Forward for National Rail Standards

Over three quarters of passengers were satisfied with their rail journeys according to the first national rail passenger survey published by the SSRA. 76% were satisfied with the day 's journey and only 11% were dissatisfied. However, 41% thought the train offered value for money.

Commenting on the results, Mike Grant, the SSRA 's Chief Executive, said: -

" The need for a national, post privatisation, survey was given additional impetus by ministers at last February's Rail Summit.

"What the national survey has done is to highlight those areas where the railway as a whole is doing relatively well and where it needs to improve. The results will be invaluable in helping us to develop a national railway standard that reflects the expectations and experience of both today's, and the network 's future, passengers.

"I intend to see that we put the results to good use by ensuring that where these expectations have so far fallen short, they are satisfactorily addressed during the current and future rounds of franchise replacement negotiations."

Taken from a 19,000 sample and following a pilot survey in March 1999, the NPS is the most extensive post privatisation survey conducted on Britain's railways. Ratings were based on the actual experience of passengers who completed questionnaires during or immediately after their journeys. Following today 's announcement, it will be conducted on a six monthly basis.

At **national** level the highlights showed :-

Overall 76% of passengers were fairly or very satisfied with the day 's journey. Only 11% were dissatisfied.

Punctuality and reliability of services were also rated reasonably highly with 74% of passengers fairly or very satisfied. Passengers were also largely satisfied with the frequency of trains and length of journey times.

Value for money was the area where customers were least satisfied overall - only 41% were fairly satisfied/very satisfied. Upkeep and repair of trains, and the amount of seats/standing space also rated as areas where levels of dissatisfaction were fairly high.

Information about delays: 65% of those passengers who experienced a delay felt it was handled well, or were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Of the dissatisfied, the biggest cause for complaint was lack of information.

Personal Security: 95% of passengers expressed no concerns about their personal security on their current journey. When asked about their experiences on previous journeys 23% said they had had cause for concern. Other passengers on the train were one of the most significant causes of people feeling unsafe.

Complaints and compensation claims: 13% had made a complaint or sought compensation within the past 2-3 months. Of the 13% who had complained, over half were fairly or very dissatisfied with the way in which the matter had been handled.

At **operator level** the results showed:

London and South East (10 Operators):

The biggest areas of dissatisfaction were value for money, upkeep and repair of the train, amount of seats/standing space, and seat comfort. Off peak satisfaction levels were generally significantly higher than peak levels.

Chiltern Railways and Great Eastern Railways performed well in comparison with others in this group.

LTS Rail generally had the worst satisfaction levels in this group.

High Speed Long Distance (5 Operators):

Satisfaction was generally at a higher level than for the other groups. Value for money was the main complaint.

There is relatively little difference between the best and worst scores. GNER performed consistently well for most factors. Midland Mainline also performed well on a number of factors, but was one of the worst for providing an appropriate environment to catch the train.

Virgin CrossCountry and Virgin West Coast generally performed marginally worse than others in this group on a number of factors.

CrossCountry, however, scored relatively well on value for money.

Other services (10 Operators):

Value for money generated some of the worst ratings. Upkeep and repair of the train and amount of seats/standing space also showed relatively high levels of dissatisfaction.

Island Line and Gatwick Express both performed well on a number of factors. ScotRail and Anglia Railways also performed well across the board in comparison with other operators.

Valley Lines, Merseyrail Electrics, and First North Western were the lowest performers. This may partly reflect the fact that they carry more

commuters, who are generally less satisfied with services, regardless of the operator.

SSRA Chairman, Sir Alastair Morton, commented:

" Important though they are, the significance of these results extends far beyond useful feedback on the current state of our rail system. They provide the benchmark against which the SSRA will measure proposals coming forward in its current franchise replacement programme.

" Armed with this data we now know a lot more about passengers' perceptions and also which service areas need to be improved. We will be judging bidders' proposals accordingly with the objective of service excellence always uppermost in mind."

Notes to Editors

1. The survey was conducted for the SSRA by The Oxford Research Agency (TORA) over a four week period between 25 September and 22 October. Results are broken down at national and individual operator level measuring passenger perceptions against common criteria, particularly the key factors of main importance to passengers. At individual operator level there are no results for either Thames Trains or Great Western Trains. Survey work to interview Thames Trains and Great Western Trains' passengers was suspended on 5 October in light of the accident at Ladbroke Grove.
2. The latter stages of the survey coincided with the Ladbroke Grove accident. Statistical analysis of the results showed some significant downward differences between responses received before and after 5 October. This may have depressed the national level results and the individual ratings for some operators, particularly where service disruption added significantly to passengers numbers on some lines (for example, South West Trains).
3. All surveys have a margin of error and are also influenced by temporary factors (e.g. the late delivery of new rolling stock). The full picture on customer satisfaction will become more apparent following further waves of research.

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