



Passenger Rail Service Complaints

2018-19 Q4 Statistical Release

Publication date: 27 June 2019

Next publication date: 24 October 2019

Background

This release contains information on **complaints made by passengers regarding rail services in Great Britain**. This release focuses on these statistics:

- Complaints rate per 100,000 journeys including by train operator;
- Complaint categories;
- Complaint response time within 20 working days;
- Complainant contact method;
- Appeals made to passenger watchdogs.

The release focuses on **annual** statistics for 2018-19 but also includes summary statistics for 2018-19 Q4.

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There were 30.1 complaints per 100,000 journeys for franchised operators in 2018-19, an increase of 2.8% compared to 2017-18.

Punctuality/reliability of rail services remains the largest category of passenger complaint in 2018-19. The largest percentage point (pp) increases in 2018-19 compared with 2017-18 were for complaints regarding timetabling (up 1.8 pp to 2.3%) and facilities on board the train (up 1.3 pp to 9.3%).

Top complaint categories, Great Britain, 2018-19

Type of complaint	% of all complaints	Percentage point change to 2017-18
 Punctuality/reliability	 22%	 -2.9
 Facilities on board	 9%	 1.3
 Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	 8%	 1.0
 Ticketing & refunds policy	 6%	 0.9
 Other ticket buying facilities – online ticket sales	 5%	 -1.0



Nationally, 94.3% of complaints were closed within 20 working days in 2018-19. A total of 15 out of 23 train operators met the industry requirement to close 95% or more of their complaints within 20 working days.



There were 6,313 appeals closed by passenger watchdogs in 2018-19, an increase of 8.8% compared to last year. Punctuality/reliability remains the largest category for appeals.

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1. Rail complaints

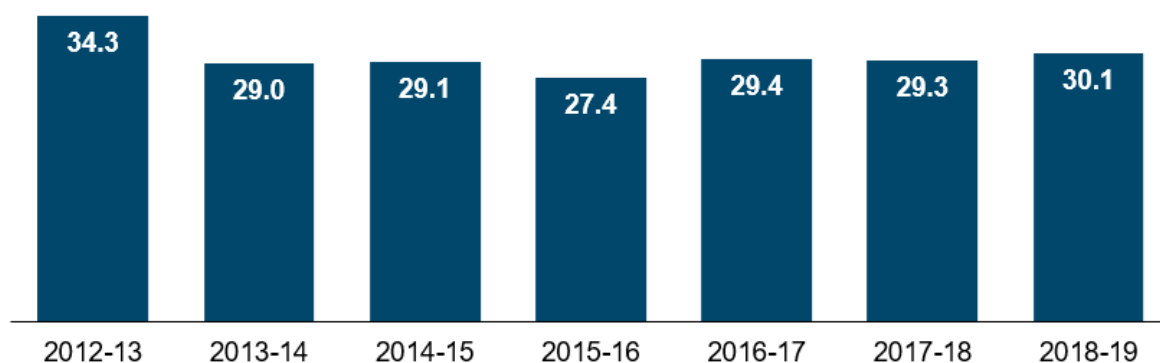
A **complaint** in the rail industry is any expression of dissatisfaction by a customer or potential customer about service delivery, or about company or industry policy. All the complaints data contained within this release are sourced directly from the train operating companies. In the complaints rate statistics each communication with the customer is counted as a single complaint, regardless of how many topics are covered in the communication.

The **complaints rate** is the volume of complaint correspondences closed per 100,000 passenger journeys. Complaints are normalised by passenger journeys to allow effective comparisons of data between time-periods and train operating companies.

2018-19 Annual

- There were **30.1 complaints per 100,000 journeys for franchised operators in 2018-19**. This represents an increase of 2.8% in complaints rate since 2017-18 when there were 29.3 complaints per 100,000 journeys for franchised operators.
- The complaints rate in 2018-19 for franchised operators is the highest annual complaints rate since 2012-13 when it was 34.3 complaints per 100,000 journeys.

Complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys (franchised operators only), Great Britain, 2012-13 to 2018-19 ([Table 14.8](#))



- There were **78.6 complaints per 100,000 journeys for non-franchised operators in 2018-19**, a 4.2% increase compared to 2017-18. If these non-franchised operators are included, the national complaints rate in 2018-19 was 30.4 complaints per 100,000 journeys.

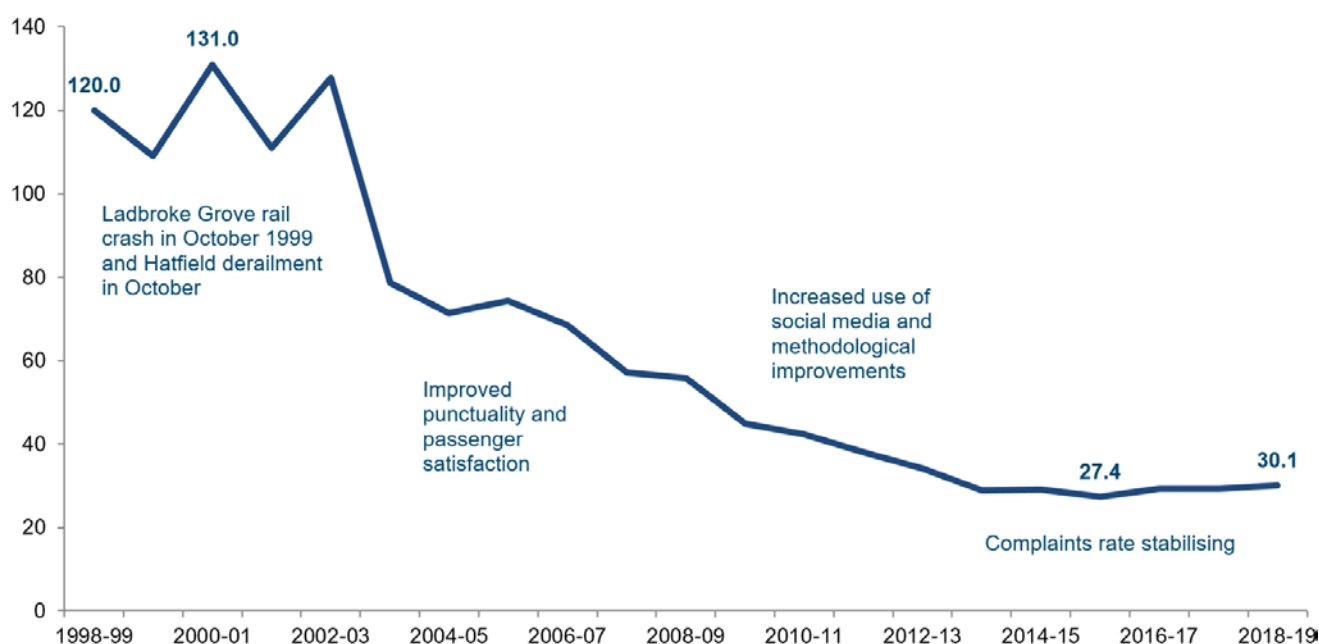
Social media comments are excluded from these statistics. The number of complaints received via such sources, the definition of a 'complaint', and the resources that each train operator allocates to these social platforms vary significantly, and therefore they are excluded from the published figures.

For information on the methodology and quality of these statistics, please see the [quality report](#).

Long-term trend since 1998-99

The complaints rate for franchised operators between 1998-99 and 2002-03 was between 109 and 131 complaints per 100,000 journeys, with the complaints rate peaking in 2000-01. There was then a sharp fall in complaints rate during 2003-04, followed by a long-term downward trend. In recent years, complaints rates have stabilised between 27 and 30 complaints per 100,000 journeys.

Complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys (franchised operators only), Great Britain, 1998-99 to 2018-19 ([Table 14.8](#))



Note: This data is available quarterly from 1997-98 Q3 onwards on the Data Portal in [Table 14.8](#).

Potential reasons for the long term decline in complaints since 2003-04:

1. The **punctuality/reliability of services** has improved since 2001-02, where the Public Performance Measure (PPM) metric has increased from 78% of trains on time in 2001-02, to a high of 92% of trains on time in 2011-12¹. Punctuality/reliability is the biggest driver of passenger satisfaction with rail services, with 36% of those surveyed in the [autumn 2018 National Rail Passenger Survey](#) (NRPS) stating punctuality/reliability has the biggest impact on their overall satisfaction. However, since 2011-12, punctuality/reliability has declined every year while the complaints rate has begun to stabilise (in 2018-19, 86% of trains were on time).

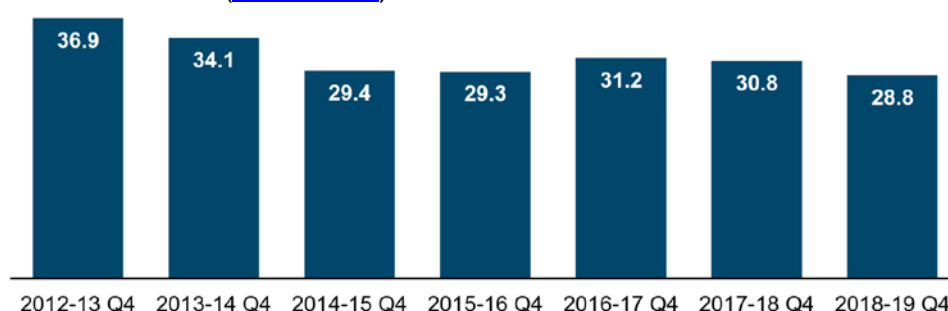
¹ Figures sourced from the 2018-19 Q4 'Passenger and freight rail performance' statistical release: https://orr.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/41098/passenger-freight-performance-2018-19-q4.pdf.

2. Overall **satisfaction** with the rail network, as measured by the [National Rail Passenger Survey](#) (NRPS), increased from a low of 72% in the autumn 2001 survey to a high of 85% in the autumn 2012 survey. However, the latest survey in 2018 showed 79% of passengers were satisfied with their last rail journey, which is the lowest percentage for an autumn survey since 2004.
3. More recently, the increased use of **social media** may have caused a decrease in the complaints rate. Over the past few years, operators have set up social media accounts to interact with customers and these interactions are not included within these statistics. It may be that either social media is replacing the traditional way of making complaints, or it allows operators to interact with customers and prevent a formal complaint being made².
4. In recent years, work has been undertaken by ORR to **improve data quality and methodology consistency** for the complaints data we receive from train operators. Since ORR took over the data collection in 2009-10, we have worked with the industry to standardise definitions and methodology³ to ensure only complaints are included within the data submitted by operators. This may have decreased complaints rates if operators previously were including general enquiries or delay claims.

2018-19 Q4

- There were **28.8 complaints per 100,000 journeys for franchised operators in 2018-19 Q4**, a 6.6% decrease compared to the same quarter last year.
- The Q4 complaints rate in 2018-19 was the lowest Q4 rate since the beginning of the time-series in 1997-98.

Complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys (franchised operators only), Great Britain, 2012-13 Q4 to 2018-19 Q4 ([Table 14.8](#))



- There were **48.3 complaints per 100,000 journeys for non-franchised operators in 2018-19 Q4**, a 43.7% decrease compared to the same quarter last year.

² More information on how the social platform Twitter can be used by train operators as regards passenger complaints can be found here: https://orr.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/18115/social-media.pdf.

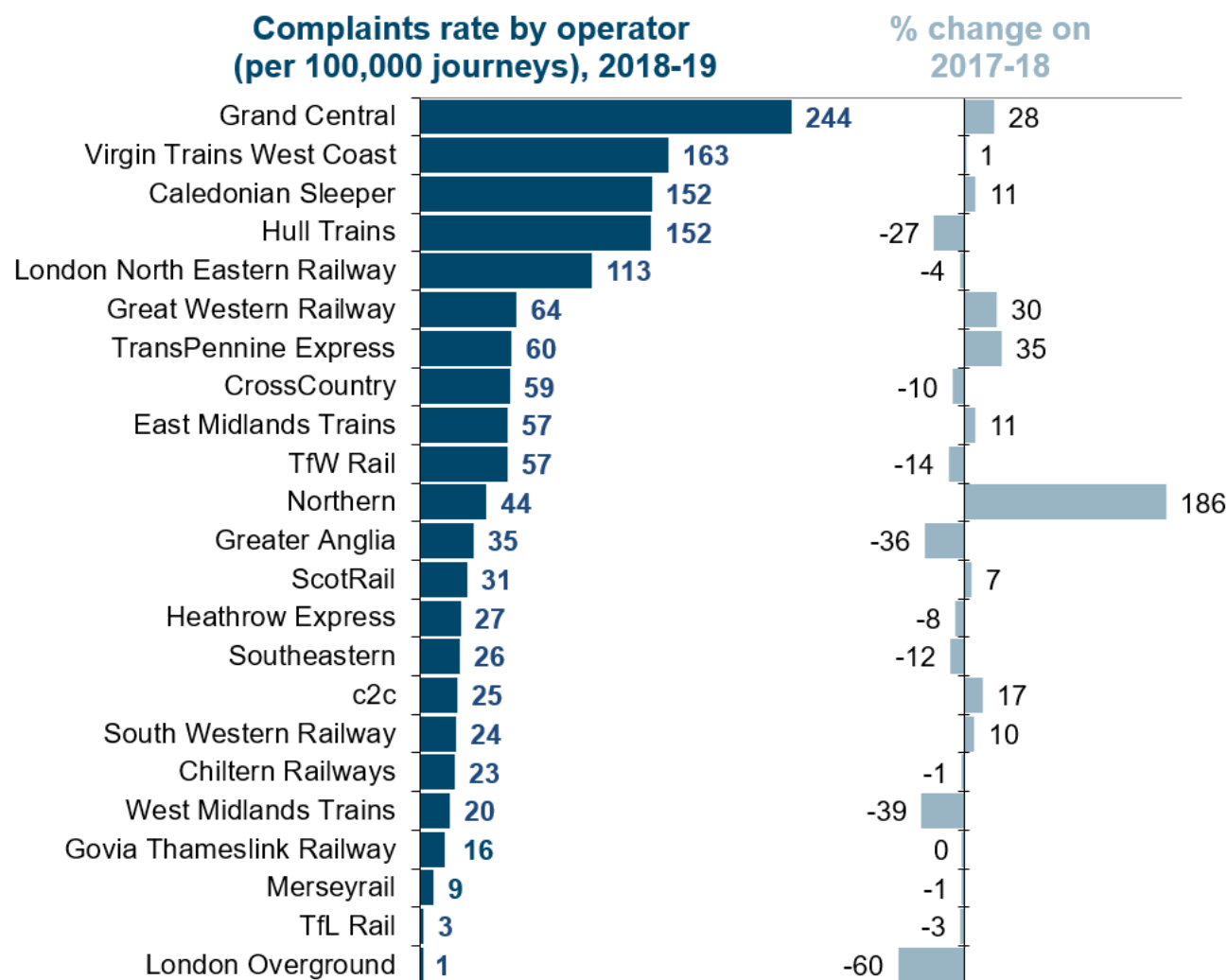
³ Guidance we provide train operators on definitions and methodology can be found in our webpage regarding 'Core Data' here: <https://orr.gov.uk/statistics/published-stats/core-data>.

Complaints rate by train operator

2018-19 Annual

- Grand Central had the highest complaints rate in 2018-19 with 244 complaints per 100,000 journeys, followed by Virgin Trains West Coast with 163 complaints per 100,000 journeys.
- There were 10 train operators that had a higher complaints rate in 2018-19 compared with 2017-18, and there were 13 train operators that had a lower complaints rate.
- Northern has seen the largest percentage increase in their complaints rate (up 186%), increasing from 15 complaints per 100,000 journeys in 2017-18 to 44 complaints per 100,000 journeys in 2018-19.

Complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys by train operator, Great Britain, 2018-19
([Table 14.9](#))



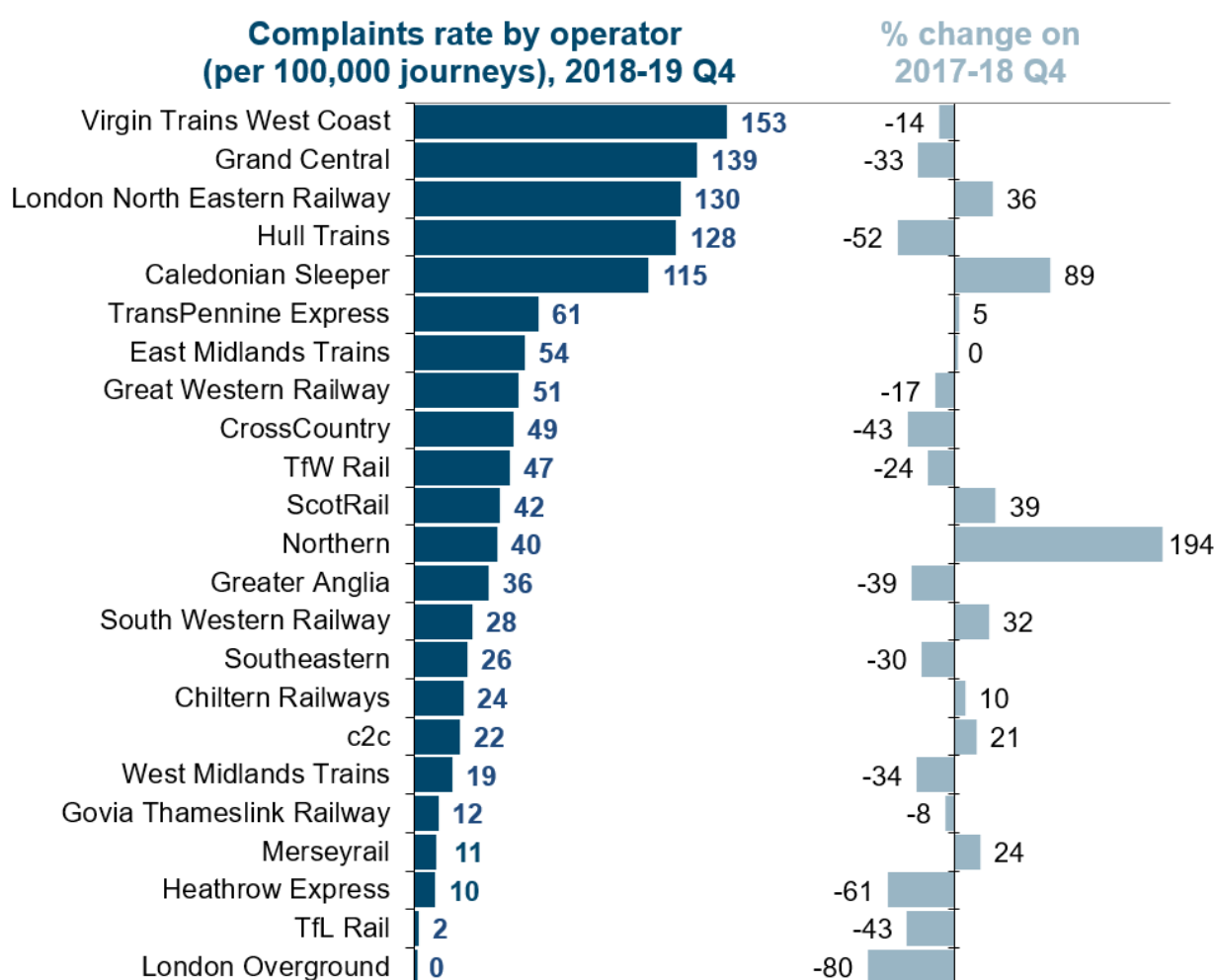
Note: Transport for Wales Rail (TfW Rail) replaced Arriva Trains Wales as the operator of the Wales & Borders franchise on 14 October 2018. London North Eastern Railway (LNER) replaced Virgin Trains East Coast as the operator of the East Coast franchise on 24 June 2018.

2018-19 Q4

Note: This page presents the complaints rates for quarter 4 (January to March 2019) of 2018-19 only, see the previous page for annual 2018-19 complaints rates

- Virgin Trains West Coast had the highest complaints rate in 2018-19 Q4 with 153 complaints per 100,000 journeys.
- There were 10 train operators that had a higher complaints rate in 2018-19 Q4 compared with 2017-18 Q4, and there were 13 train operators that had a lower complaints rate.
- Northern has seen the largest percentage increase in their complaints rate (up 194%), increasing from 14 complaints per 100,000 journeys in 2017-18 Q4 to 40 complaints per 100,000 journeys in 2018-19 Q4.

Complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys by train operator, Great Britain, 2018-19 Q4 ([Table 14.9](#))



Complaints by category

The train operator records the **category** for each complaint correspondence it closes. A single correspondence may contain more than one category and each complaint category should be recorded: For example, a letter covering two complaint areas is counted as two complaints categories, but this would only be recorded as one complaint correspondence within the complaints rate.

There are 71 detailed categories, mostly based on National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) satisfaction categories, which make up 14 higher-level complaint categories. Categories on accessibility complaints were expanded to include more detailed categories from 2018-19 onwards.

2018-19 Annual

- **Punctuality/reliability of rail services was the most common cause to complain to train operators.** Overall, 22.4% of complaints nationally in 2018-19 were about punctuality/reliability, though this was a 2.9 percentage point (pp) decrease compared with 2017-18.
- Complaints regarding the facilities on board the train remained the second most common cause of complaint in 2018-19, at 9.3% of all complaints (up 1.3 pp from 2017-18). Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand remains the third most common cause of complaint, at 8.3% of all complaints (up 1.0 pp from 2017-18).

Top 5 complaint categories by percentage, Great Britain, 2018-19 ([Table 14.3](#))









For information on the methodology and quality of these statistics, please see the [quality report](#).







Largest increases/decreases in category between 2017-18 and 2018-19

- The largest increase in 2018-19 compared to the previous year was regarding timetabling, where 2.3% of all complaints were attributed to this category, up 1.8 pp from 2017-18. The cause of the increase in timetabling complaints were mostly due to the disruption caused by the May 2018 timetable changes which saw large increases in the percentage of timetabling complaints in the first two quarters in 2018-19.
- The largest decrease in 2018-19 compared to the previous year was complaints about ticket buying facilities, where 3.7% of all complaints in 2018-19 were attributed to this category, 3.0 pp lower than the previous year.

Top 3 increases in complaints category in 2018-19 compared with 2017-18, Great Britain ([Table 14.3](#))

		pp change from 2017-18	2018-19 percentage of all complaints
	Timetabling	 1.8	2.3%
	Facilities on board	 1.3	9.3%
	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	 1.0	8.3%















Top 3 decreases in complaints category in 2018-19 compared with 2017-18, Great Britain ([Table 14.3](#))

		pp change from 2017-18	2018-19 percentage of all complaints
	Ticket buying facilities	 3.0	3.7%
	Punctuality/reliability	 2.9	22.4%
	Other policy	 1.4	1.1%

List of high-level complaint categories

Each of the 71 detailed categories aggregate to 14 higher-level complaint categories. These 14 high-level complaint categories are shown below with the percentage point changes from the previous year:

Percentage of complaints attributed to each of the 14 high-level complaint categories, Great Britain, 2018-19 ([Table 14.3](#))

	High-level category	pp change from 2017-18	2018-19 percentage of all complaints
	Punctuality/reliability	↓ 2.9	22.4%
	Quality on train	↑ 3.5	22.0%
	Fares & retailing	↓ 4.9	11.5%
	Staff conduct & availability	↑ 0.1	9.0%
	Delay compensation schemes	↑ 1.8	8.3%
	Company policy	↓ 0.6	7.7%
	Complaints handling	↑ 0.6	5.9%
	Provision of information	↑ 0.2	3.5%
	Timetabling & connection issues	↑ 2.1	3.2%
	Safety & security	↑ 0.2	2.2%
	Station quality	↓ 0.2	2.1%
	Accessibility issues	↑ 0.1	1.2%
	Other - miscellaneous	↓ 0.3	0.6%
	Environmental	→ 0.0	0.4%

Further commentary on annual complaint categories by train operator



Each train operator receives different types of complaints depending on the nature of service it offers and the differing levels of expectations passengers have for each service. This is because each operator's passengers may have different priorities for the service when booking. For example, punctuality/reliability may be a higher priority for passengers on commuter operators, while train quality may be a higher priority for passengers on long-distance operators. This can be observed if we look at the percentage of complaints attributed to the high-level category train quality:

Percentage of complaints attributed to train quality by train operator, Great Britain, 2018-19 ([Table 14.5](#))

Train operators with the highest proportion of complaints attributed to train quality
Grand Central (55.1%)
London North Eastern Railway (45.8%)
CrossCountry (44.7%)
East Midlands Trains (43.5%)
Caledonian Sleeper (35.7%)

All the operators in this box are long-distance train operators

Train operators with the lowest proportion of complaints attributed to train quality
London Overground (2.8%)
Merseyrail (2.8%)
c2c (5.0%)
Govia Thameslink Railway (6.5%)
Heathrow Express (7.1%)



The percentage of complaints also vary widely for complaints attributed to punctuality/reliability. Nationally, punctuality/reliability accounts for 22.4% of all complaints but this varies between individual train operators:

Percentage of complaints attributed to punctuality/reliability by train operator, Great Britain, 2018-19 ([Table 14.5](#))




Train operators with the highest proportion of complaints attributed to punctuality/reliability
London Overground (45.6%)
Northern (38.3%)
Merseyrail (37.6%)
CrossCountry (36.5%)
Hull Trains (36.4%)

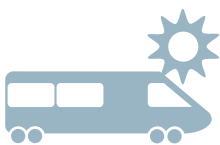
Train operators with the lowest proportion of complaints attributed to punctuality/reliability
London North Eastern Railway (2.7%)
Caledonian Sleeper (8.6%)
Great Western Railway (9.5%)
Chiltern Railways (9.8%)
TransPennine Express (11.1%)



The individual complaint category with the largest increase in 2018-19 compared with the previous year was complaints about timetabling. This was highlighted in the 2018-19 Q1 and Q2 statistical releases and followed the disruption of the May 2018 timetable changes where performance declined for some train operators, in particularly for Govia Thameslink Railway, Northern and TransPennine Express. This can be seen by looking at the train operators with the largest increases in this complaint category:




Largest 3 train operators for increases in the percentage of complaints attributed to timetabling, Great Britain, 2018-19 ([Table 14.5](#))

	pp change from 2017-18	2018-19 percentage of all complaints
Govia Thameslink Railway	 12.6	13.1%
London Overground	 4.6	4.8%
Northern	 3.0	3.7%



Another complaint category that saw an increase in 2018-19 compared with the previous year was complaints attributed to the upkeep and repair of the train. This could be partly due to the hot weather in summer 2018⁴ resulting in an increase in the volume of complaints related to the temperature of the train and air conditioning:

Largest 3 train operators for increases in the percentage of complaints attributed to upkeep and repair of the train, Great Britain, 2018-19 ([Table 14.5](#))

	pp change from 2017-18	2018-19 percentage of all complaints
Grand Central	 14.5	23.1%
Hull Trains	 6.7	18.8%
Great Western Railway	 3.3	4.7%

A full list of all 71 complaint categories and the percentages attributed to each category is available by train operator on the ORR Data Portal in [Table 14.5](#).

⁴Met Office summary on the hot weather experienced in summer 2018:
<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2018/summer>.

2018-19 Q4

Note: This page presents the complaints by category for quarter 4 (January to March 2019) of 2018-19 only, see the previous page for annual 2018-19 figures

- Punctuality/reliability of rail services was the most common cause to complain to train operators in 2018-19 Q4 with 21.1% of complaints nationally, though this represents an 8.6 pp decrease compared with Q4 the previous year.
- Complaints about the facilities on board was the second most common cause to complain, with 10.2% of complaints nationally in 2018-19 Q4, a 2.7 pp increase compared with Q4 during the previous year (the largest pp increase of all categories).
- Following complaints regarding the facilities on board, the second largest increase was for ticketing and refunds policy with 6.4% of all complaints, a 1.8 pp increase from Q4 the previous year.
- The largest decrease in 2018-19 Q4 compared to Q4 the previous year was for complaints about punctuality/reliability, an 8.6 pp decrease. The second largest decrease was for complaints where there was no response by the train operator on a previous complaint correspondence with 0.7% of all complaints, a 2.1 pp decrease from Q4 the previous year.

Top 5 complaint categories by percentage, Great Britain, 2018-19 Q4 ([Table 14.3](#))

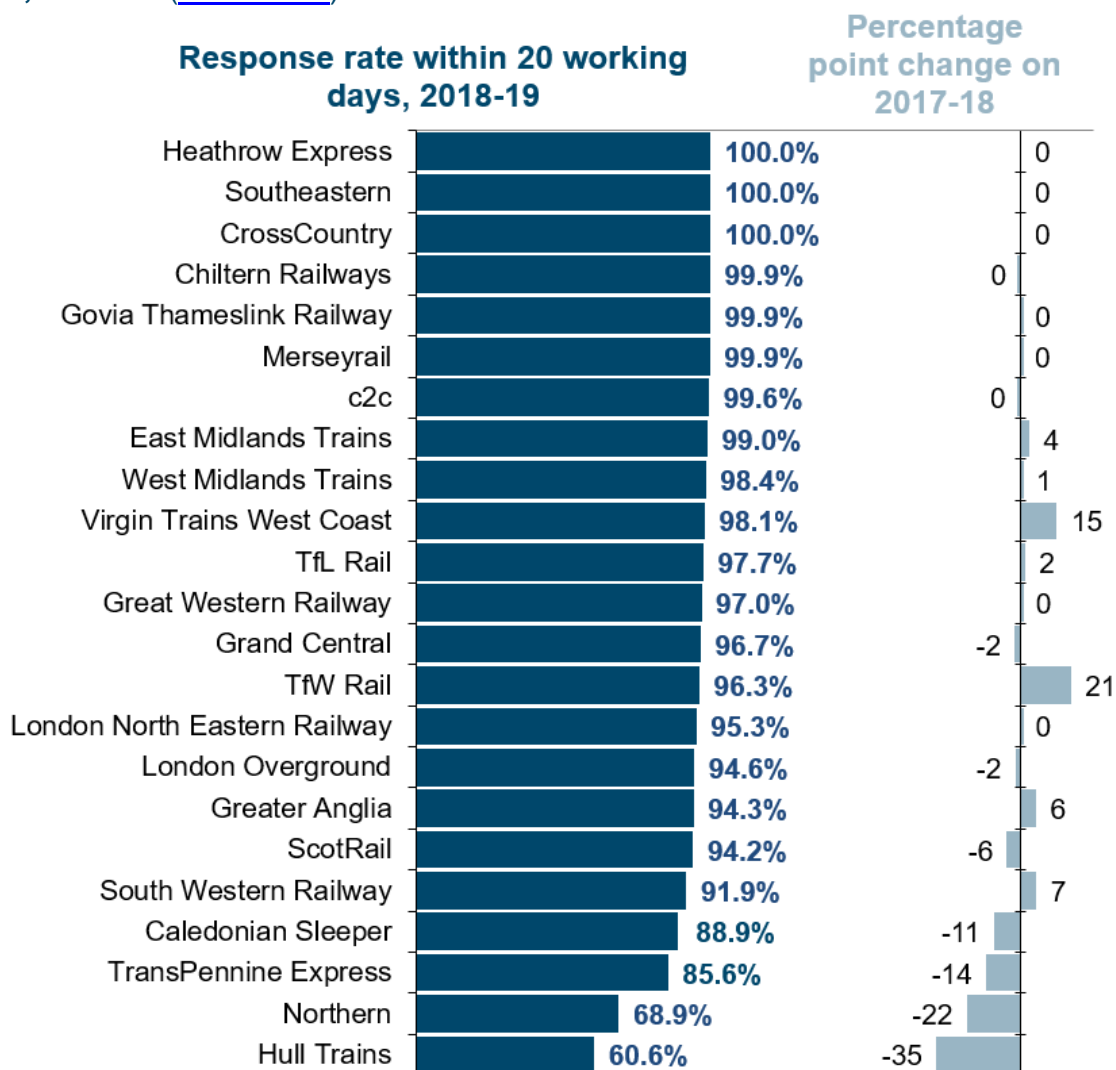


Complaints answered within 20 working days

2018-19 Annual

- Nationally, 94.3% of complaints were closed within 20 working days in 2018-19. This is 1.0 pp higher than in 2017-18.
- In 2018-19, 15 out of 23 train operators met the industry requirement to close at least 95% of their complaints within 20 working days over the year. This has declined from 17 out of 23 train operators that met the industry requirement in 2017-18.
- Hull Trains, Northern and TransPennine Express have seen the largest decreases in their complaints response rates during 2018-19 compared to the previous year.

Percentage of complaints answered within 20 working days by train operator, Great Britain, 2018-19 ([Table 14.2](#))



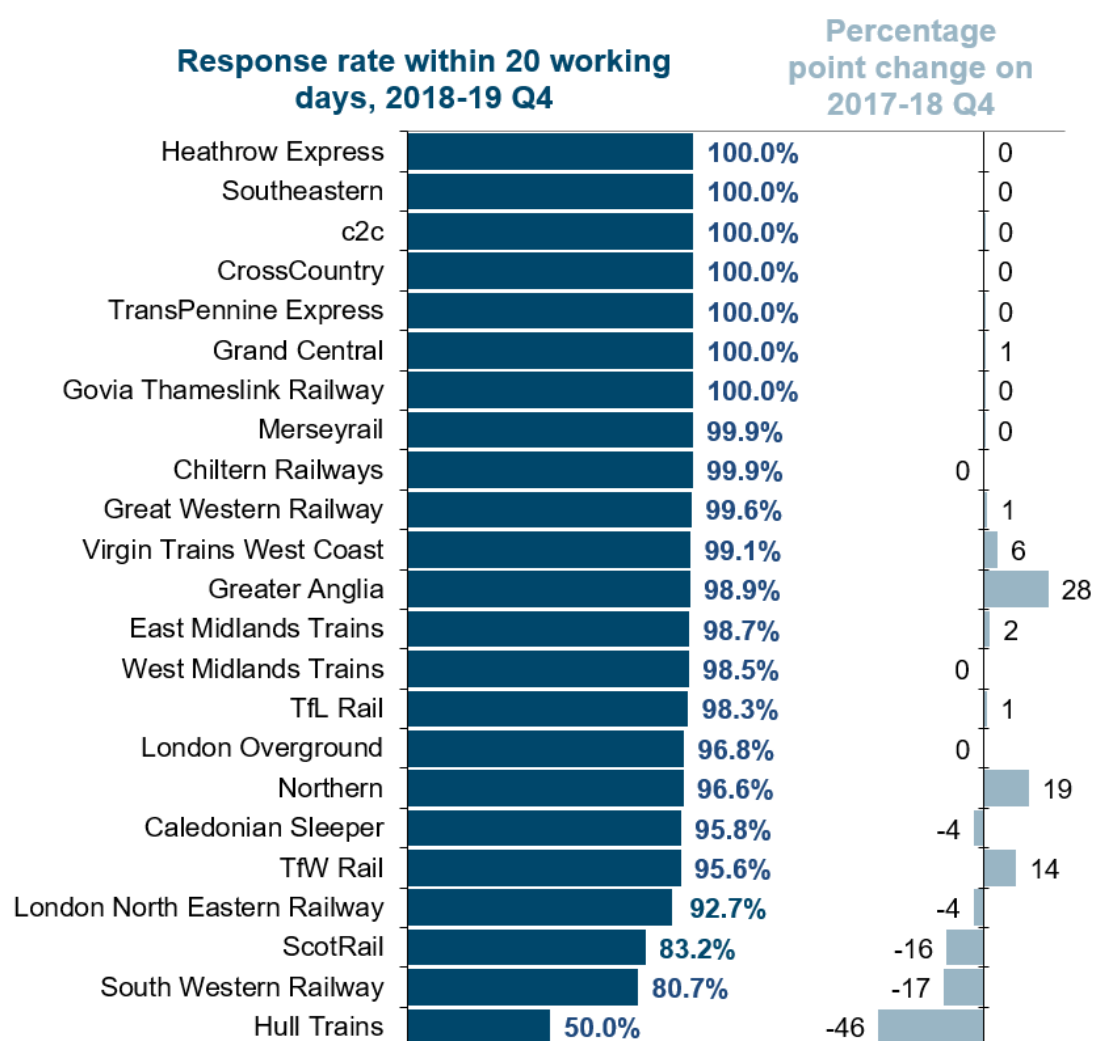
Note: Transport for Wales Rail (TfW Rail) replaced Arriva Trains Wales as the operator of the Wales & Borders franchise on 14 October 2018. London North Eastern Railway (LNER) replaced Virgin Trains East Coast as the operator of the East Coast franchise on 24 June 2018.

2018-19 Q4

Note: This page presents response rates within 20 working days for quarter 4 (January to March 2019) of 2018-19 only, see the previous page for annual 2018-19 figures

- Nationally, 95.1% of complaints were closed within 20 working days in 2018-19 Q4. This is 0.6 pp higher than in 2017-18 Q4.
- In 2018-19 Q4, 19 out of 23 train operators met the industry requirement to close 95% or more of their complaints within 20 working days. This was the same number of train operators that met the industry requirement as in 2017-18 Q4.
- Hull Trains, South Western Railway, and ScotRail have seen the largest decreases in their complaints response rates during 2018-19 Q4 compared to 2017-18 Q4.

Percentage of complaints answered within 20 working days by train operator, Great Britain, 2018-19 Q4 ([Table 14.2](#))



Key changes for selected train operators during 2018-19

Grand Central had the largest complaints rate for any train operator in 2018-19 at 244 complaints per 100,000 journeys, though long-distance operators tend to have higher complaints rates than other sectors.

Virgin Trains West Coast had the second largest complaints rate for any train operator in 2018-19 at 163 complaints per 100,000 journeys. However, it has significantly improved its complaints response rate within 20 working days to 98% in 2018-19, an increase of 15 pp from the previous year.

Northern saw the largest percentage increase in complaints rate of all train operators in 2018-19 compared with 2017-18. Northern received 44 complaints per 100,000 journeys, an increase of 186% from its complaints rate in the previous year. Alongside this increase in the number of complaints, Northern's complaints response rate within 20 working days declined to 69%, a decrease of 22 pp from the previous year. However, Northern has seen recent improvements in Q4 where their response rate was 97% for that quarter.

London Overground and **TfL Rail** saw the lowest complaints rates of all train operators in 2018-19, at 1 and 3 complaints per 100,000 journeys respectively.

Hull Trains had the lowest complaints response rate within 20 working days for any train operator in 2018-19 at 61%, a decrease of 35 pp from 2017-18. This is the lowest complaints response rate for any individual train operator since 2015-16. Hull Trains also failed to meet the industry requirement of 95% for complaints responded to within 20 working days for every quarter during 2018-19.

TfW Rail, which was the Arriva Trains Wales franchise until 13 October 2018, saw the largest increase in response rate within 20 working days in 2018-19 compared to the previous year, increasing by 21 pp to 96% of complaints responded to within 20 working days.

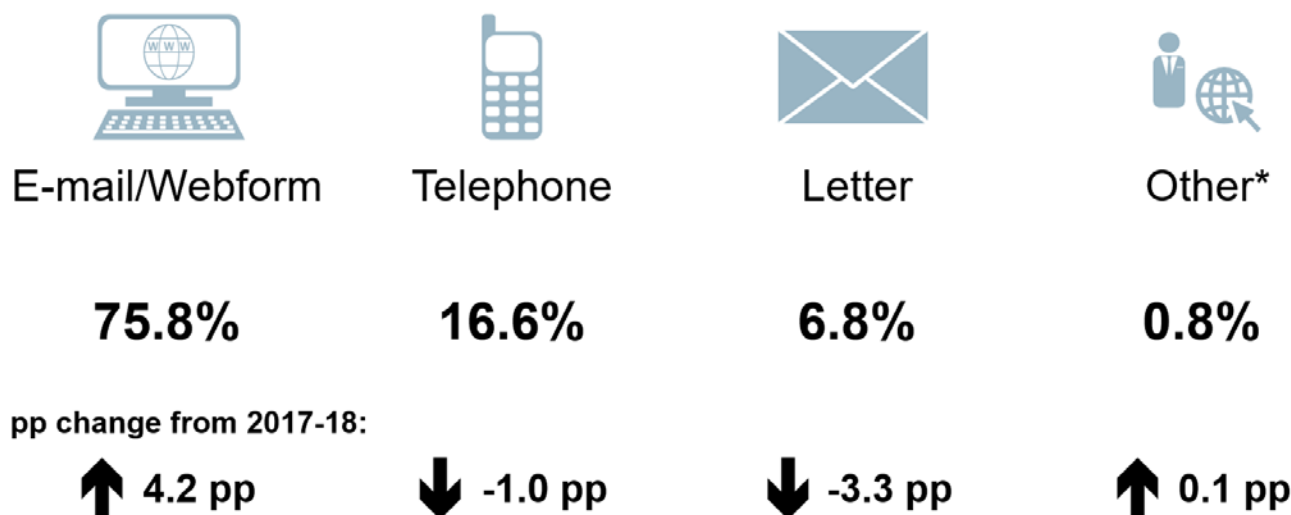
There were three train operators which dealt with every complaint within 20 working days: **CrossCountry**, **Heathrow Express** and **Southeastern**. A further four operators (**c2c**, **Chiltern Railways**, **Govia Thameslink Railway** and **Merseyrail**) responded to 100% of complaints within 20 working days rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Complaints by contact method

2018-19 Annual

- Nationally **75.8% of all complaints during 2018-19 were made by e-mail or webform**, a 4.2 pp increase from the previous year:

Percentage of complaints by contact method, Great Britain, 2018-19 ([Table 14.6](#))



* 'Other' includes 'meet the manager' sessions and online forums

The figures from 2018-19 continue the long-term trend of the increasing use of online contact methods to complain to train operators. Between 2016-17 and 2018-19, correspondence using e-mail/webform has increased from 68.4% to 75.8%, a 7.4 pp increase in only 2 years. In the same 2-year time period, correspondence using letters fell from 13.3% in 2016-17, to only 6.8% in 2018-19, a 6.5 pp decrease.

2018-19 Q4

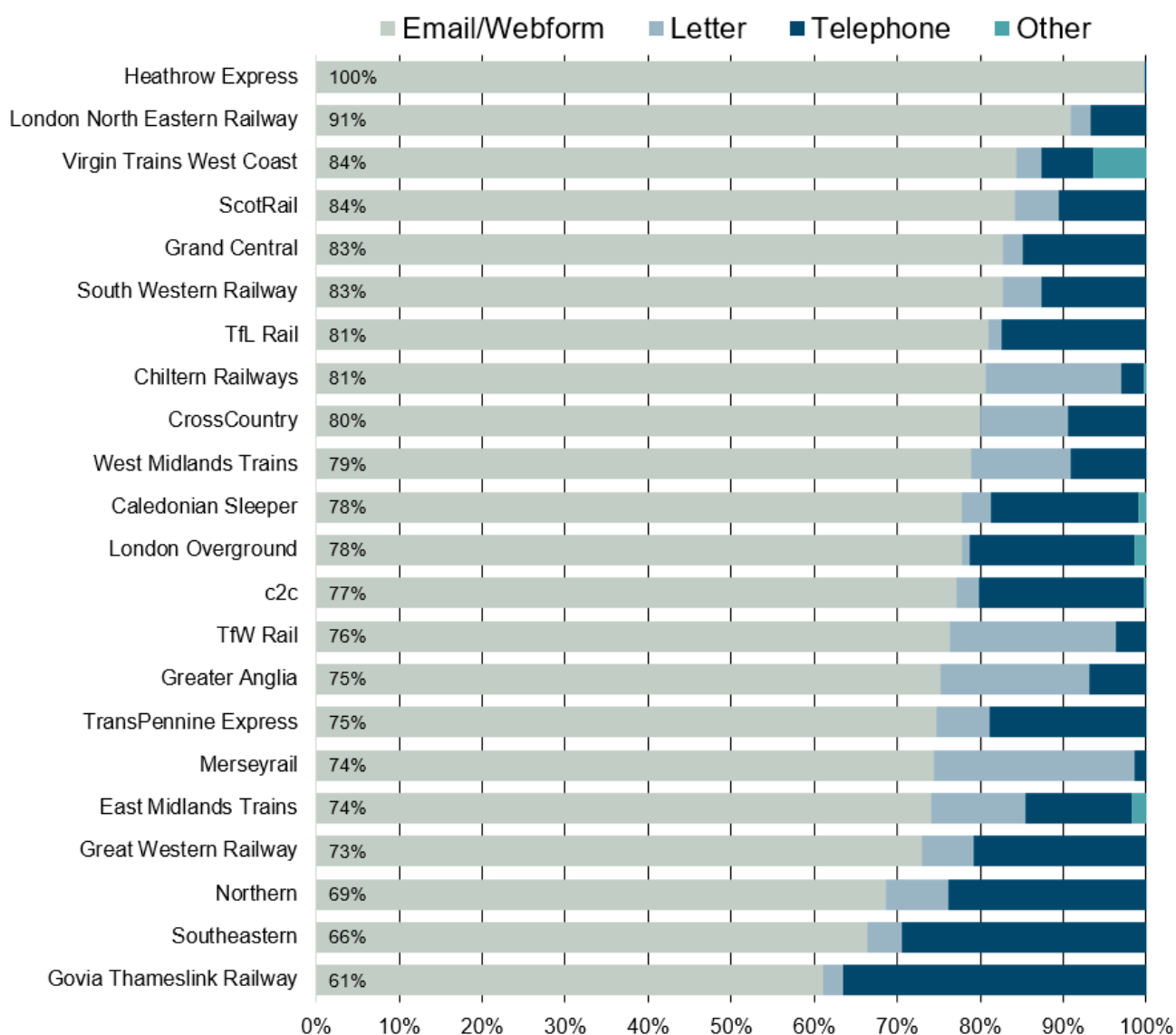
- During 2018-19 Q4, **77.8% of all complaints were made by e-mail or webform**, a 2.1 pp increase from Q4 in the previous year.
- Complainants using letters to complain decreased by 2.7 pp in 2018-19 Q4 compared with 2017-18 Q4, where only 5.6% of all complaints in 2018-19 Q4 were by letter.

Contact method by different train operators in 2018-19

The percentage of complaints that use different contact methods varies between train operators. The below chart shows this and the differences between the percentages of complaints dealt with e-mail/webform and other contact methods:

Percentage of complaints by contact method and train operator, Great Britain, 2018-19 ([Table 14.6](#))

Figures given in chart shows the percentage of complaints by e-mail/webform for each operator. 'Other' includes 'meet the manager' sessions and online forums.



Note: Hull Trains were unable to supply data from 2018-19 Q2 onwards for contact method by letter and e-mail/webform separately, so this operator is not displayed in the graph above.

ORR are proposing to publish data tables on contact method annually instead of quarterly from 2019-20 Q1. See [Annex 1](#) for more details.

Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling

After a passenger makes a complaint to a train operator, they are invited to participate in a follow up survey by an independent research company, commissioned by ORR, about their experience of how the complaint was handled. The survey asks questions relating to the complaints process and resulting outcome. The complainant is asked to rank their satisfaction with each on a five point scale. This survey data shows passenger satisfaction with train operators' complaints handling processes and is used by ORR to monitor complaints handling, as well as used by train operators to improve their own complaints handling.

The new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into effect on 25 May 2018, has heavily impacted the passenger satisfaction with complaints handling survey. Due to these changes in the use of personal data to contact complainants, sample sizes have seen more than a 90% decrease in 2018-19 compared to the sample sizes seen in 2017-18. Consequently, many train operators who participate in this survey have too low sample sizes to report robust results on.

Furthermore, there has been a change in methodology regarding who completes the survey due to who receives an invitation to complete it. This means analysis with previous survey results are incomparable.

For these reasons, ORR will not be reporting on the results of this survey for 2018-19.

ORR has worked with train operators to change their current contact methods to increase the sample sizes for 2019-20. ORR will closely monitor this with the intention of publishing data in the 2019-20 Q4 statistical release.

Data on the passenger satisfaction with complaints handling survey for 2017-18 is available in the [2017-18 Q4 statistical release](#), or in the data portal tables: Tables [14.18](#), [14.19](#) and [14.20](#).

2. Praise

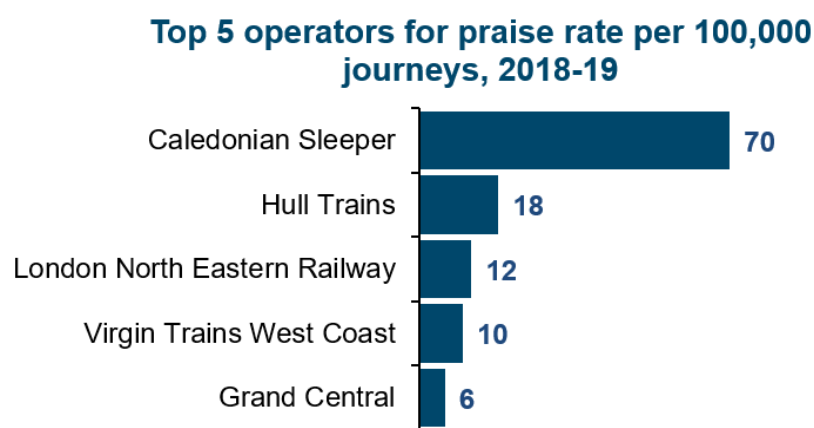
Praise is where a customer expresses satisfaction to the train operator about service delivery, or about company or industry policy. General phrases such “thanks” or acknowledgement or receipt of the TOCs reply should not be counted. This praise correspondence may also be part of a complaint.

The **praise rate** is the volume of praise correspondences closed per 100,000 passenger journeys. Praise is normalised by passenger journeys to allow effective comparisons of data between time-periods and train operating companies.

2018-19 Annual

- There were **1.49 praise correspondences per 100,000 journeys** nationally in 2018-19. This is a 3.9% increase on 2017-18 where there were 1.43 praise correspondences per 100,000 journeys.
- Long-distance operators tend to have higher praise rates than other sectors. This is because these long-distance services tend to encourage a higher rate of customer correspondence, for both praise and complaints, and generates more active engagement with customers before and after the journey (for example, e-mail communication and marketing following advanced ticket purchasing).

Top 5 train operators for praise correspondences per 100,000 journeys, Great Britain, 2018-19 ([Table 14.17](#))



For praise rate statistics for all train operators, as well as a quarterly and annual time-series since 2015-16, see [Table 14.17](#)

ORR are proposing to publish data tables on praise rates annually instead of quarterly from 2019-20 Q1. See [Annex 1](#) for more details.

3. Appeals

When a customer is unhappy with a train operators' response, they can **appeal** against their operators' decisions. This data provides the number of complaint appeals closed by Transport Focus or London TravelWatch for each train operator (including all non-franchised operators) and some other rail bodies. The data also includes the number of appeals in each complaint category where a single appeal can be attributed to a multiple number of complaint categories.

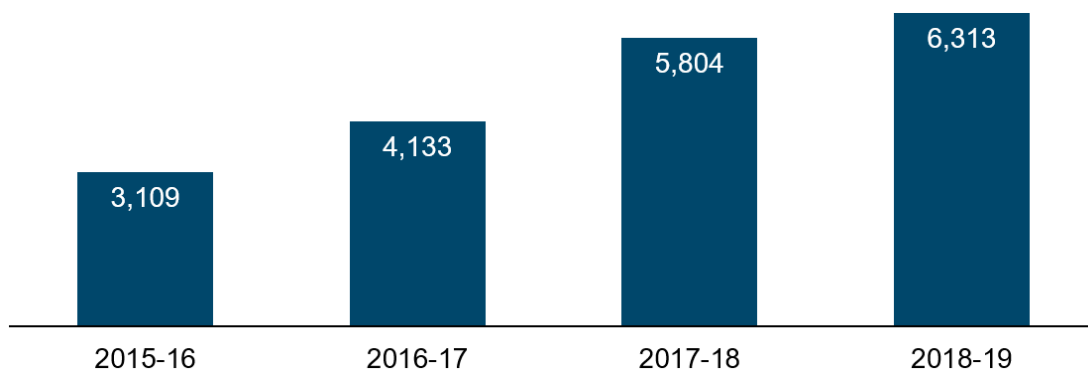
The independent passenger watchdogs may open an appeal on behalf of a rail passenger whose initial complaint to the train operator has not been resolved to their satisfaction. This data does not include appeals made to the Rail Ombudsman.

2018-19 Annual

- **Passenger watchdogs closed 6,313 appeals during 2018-19.** This was 8.8% higher than the volume of appeals closed during 2017-18.

Appeals closed by passenger watchdogs, Great Britain, 2015-16 to 2018-19

([Table 14.15](#))



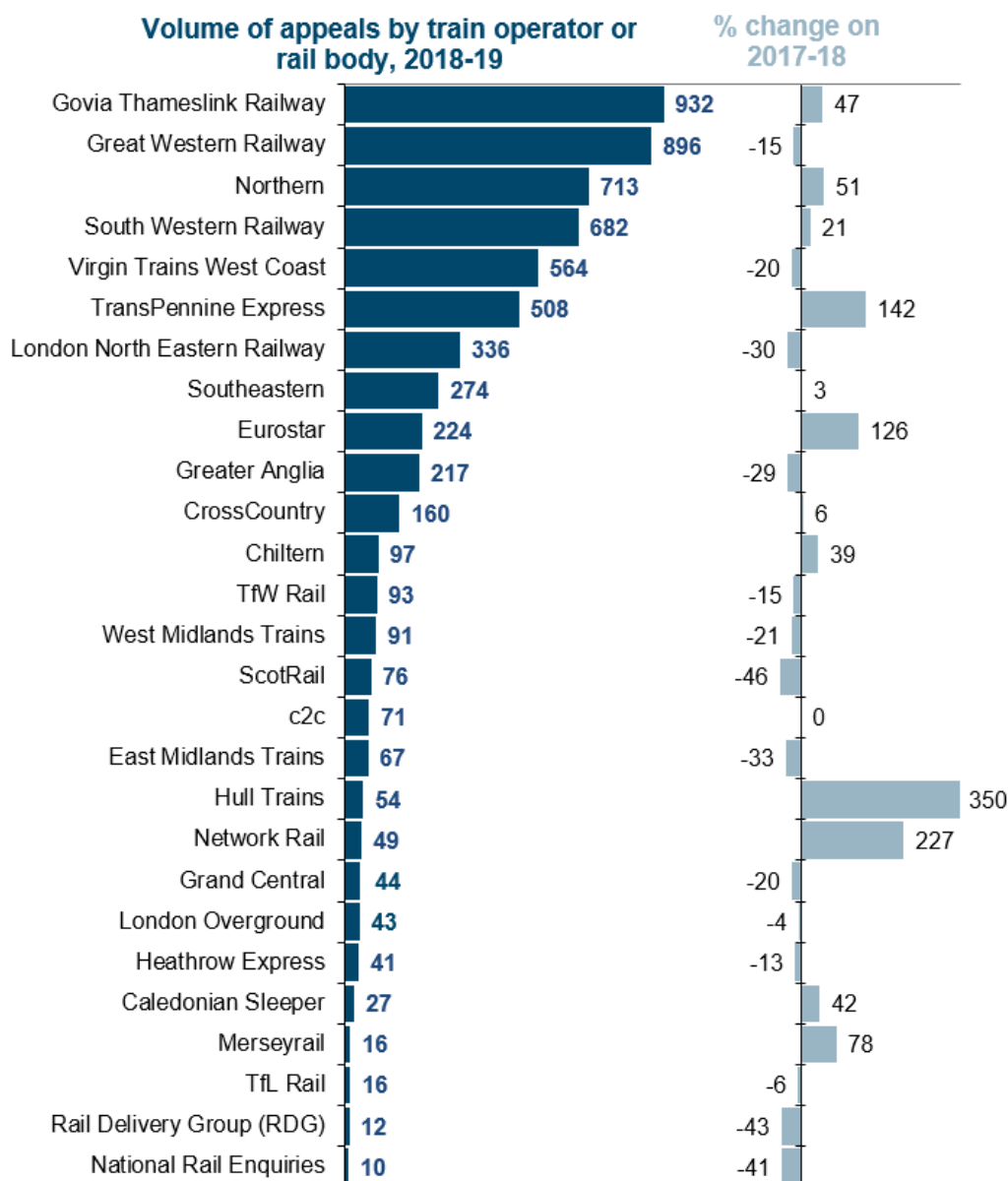
- **Transport Focus** closed 4,467 appeals during 2018-19, an increase of 2.5% compared with 2017-18.
- **London TravelWatch** closed 1,846 appeals during 2018-19, an increase of 27.8% compared with 2017-18.

ORR began to collect data from train operators on the number of complainants who were being sign-posted to the passenger watchdogs from 2016-17. This may have increased the number of complainants that are being sign-posted, and therefore more complainants are appealing due to a greater awareness of these watchdogs.

Appeals by train operator or other rail body

The number of appeals closed for each train operator or other rail body are given below. Note that these figures are not normalised by the number of journeys made by each train operator.

Volume of appeals closed by train operator or other rail body, Great Britain, 2018-19
(Table 14.15)



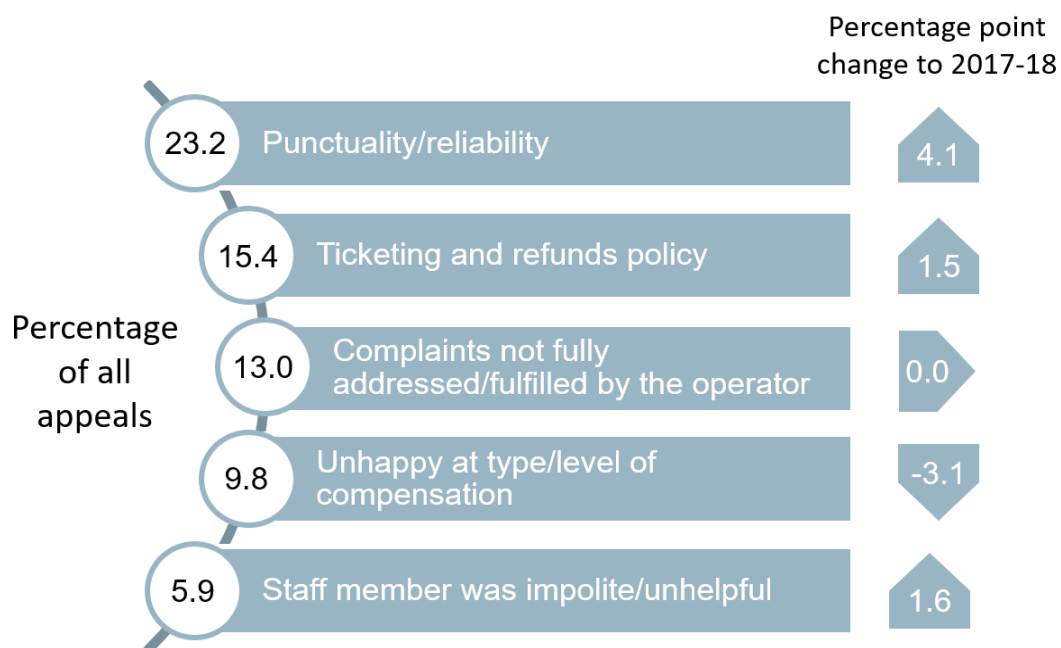
From 26 November 2018 (during 2018-19 Q3) the **Rail Ombudsman** started. The Rail Ombudsman provides a service for unresolved customer complaints within the rail industry. As a result, future statistics in this series may be affected with some appeals being dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman instead of Transport Focus or London TravelWatch. The Rail Ombudsman is planning to publish data on the number of appeals closed during 2018-19 on 27 June 2019. More information can be found at the following link:

<http://www.railombudsman.org>.

Appeals by category

- Appeals about punctuality/reliability of rail services remain the most appealed about complaint category with 23.2% of appeals closed being about this category in 2018-19. This was a 4.1 pp increase between 2017-18 and 2018-19 and was the largest percentage point increase of any complaint category.
- Appeals about ticketing and refunds policy remains the second most appealed about complaint category with 15.4% of appeals closed being this category in 2018-19, a 1.5 pp increase compared to 2017-18.
- Appeals about the complainant being unhappy at type/level of compensation saw the largest pp decrease in 2018-19, a decrease of 3.1 pp from 2017-18 to 9.8% of all appeals.

Top five appeal categories, Great Britain, 2018-19 ([Table 14.16](#))



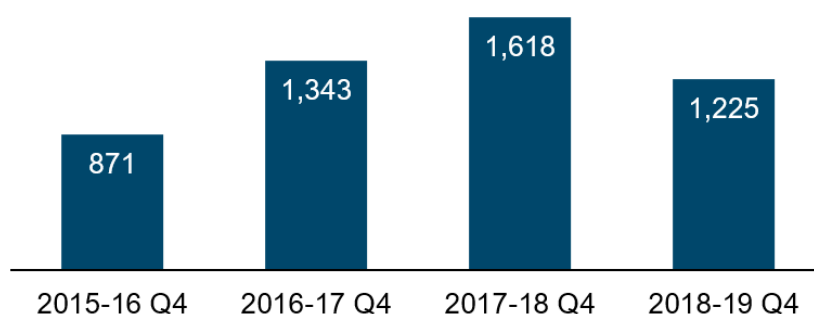
A full list of all appeals categories and the percentages attributed to each category is available on the ORR Data Portal in [Table 14.16](#).

2018-19 Q4

Note: This page presents appeal figures for quarter 4 (January to March 2019) of 2018-19 only, see the previous two pages for annual 2018-19 figures

- **Passenger watchdogs closed 1,225 appeals during 2018-19 Q4.** This was a decrease of 24% compared to 2017-18 Q4.

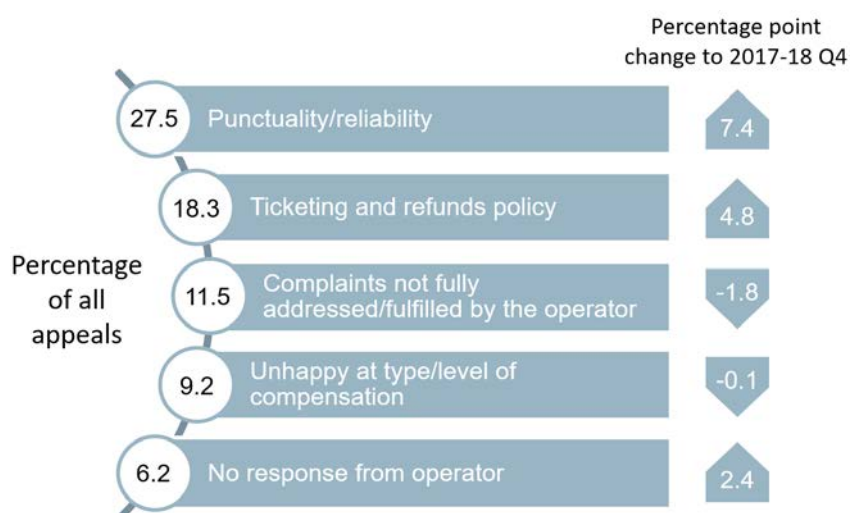
Appeals closed by passenger watchdogs, Great Britain, 2015-16 Q4 to 2018-19 Q4 ([Table 14.15](#))



The reduction in appeals in 2018-19 Q4 compared to the previous year would suggest the Rail Ombudsman is now dealing with a number of appeals that Transport Focus and London TravelWatch would have normally dealt with before the induction of the Rail Ombudsman.

- Appeals about punctuality/reliability of rail services remain the most appealed about complaint category with 27.5% of appeals closed being about this category in 2018-19 Q4, a 7.4 pp increase compared to 2017-18 Q4 (this category was the largest percentage point increase from 2017-18 Q4 as well).

Top five appeal categories, Great Britain, 2018-19 Q4 ([Table 14.16](#))



- Appeals about the staff members being impolite/unhelpful saw the largest percentage point decrease in 2018-19 Q4, a decrease of 6.2 pp from 2017-18 Q4 to 1.9% of all appeals.

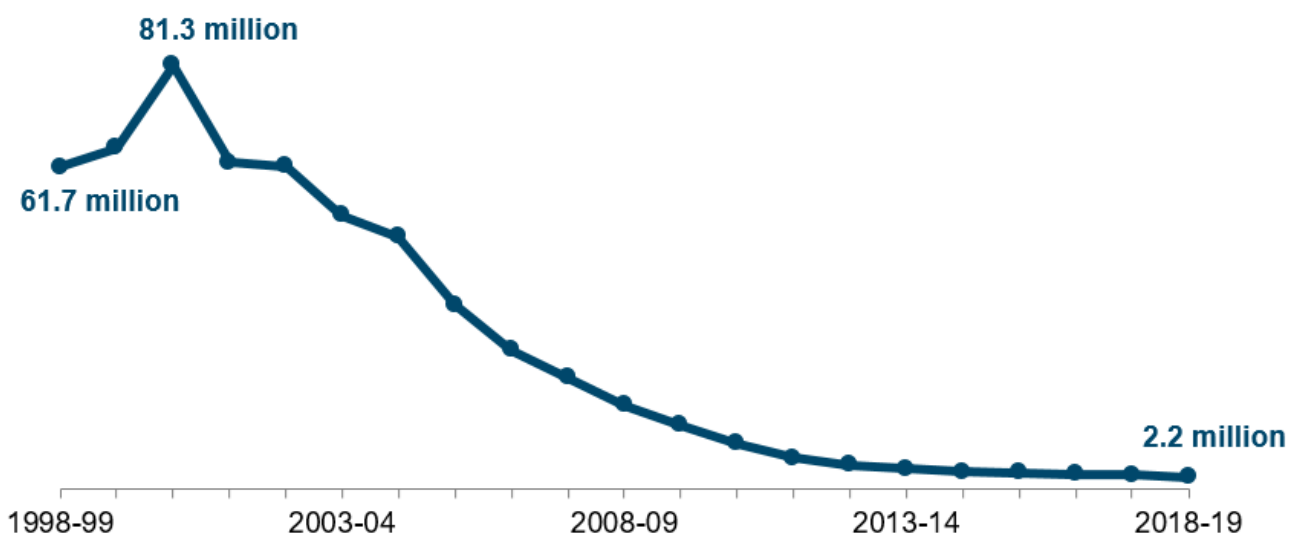
4. National Rail Enquiries telephone service

Enquiries to the National Rail Enquiries (NRE) telephone service can be made through numerous different channels, however the data presented in this statistical release relates to enquiries made through the NRE telephone service only. This data is provided by the Rail Delivery Group (RDG).

2018-19 Annual

- There were 2.2 million calls made to the National Rail Enquiries (NRE) telephone service during 2018-19, a decrease of 13.6% compared to last year. Of those calls made in 2018-19, 97.8% were answered and 2.2% were abandoned.
- Since 2000-01, there has been a long-term decline in the number of calls to the NRE telephone service. This decline has been due to the increased availability of other information sources such as on webpages or more recently by mobile app.

Number of calls made to the National Rail Enquires telephone service, Great Britain, 1998-99 to 2018-19 ([Table 14.13](#))



2018-19 Q4

- There were 0.4 million calls made to the NRE telephone service during 2018-19 Q4, a decrease of 35.2% compared to same quarter last year. Of those calls made in 2018-19 Q4, 99.0% were answered and 1.0% were abandoned.

ORR are proposing to publish data tables on National Rail Enquiries telephone service annually instead of quarterly from 2019-20 Q1. See [Annex 1](#) for more details.

Annex 1 – List of pre-created reports available on the ORR Data Portal

All data tables can be accessed on the [Data Portal](#) free of charge. The ORR data portal provides on screen data reports, as well as the facility to download data in Excel format and print the report. We can provide data in csv format on request.

Complaints

- Complaints rate – [Table 14.8](#);
- Complaints rate by train operator – [Table 14.9](#);
- Complaints by category – [Table 14.3](#);
- Complaints by category and train operator – [Table 14.5](#);
- Complaints responded to within 10 and 20 working days by operator – [Table 14.2](#);
- Complaints by contact method and train operator – [Table 14.6](#);
- Praise rate by train operator - [Table 14.17](#);
- Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling by train operator - [Table 14.18](#);
- Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling – [Table 14.19](#);
- Passenger satisfaction survey by train operator and quarter - [Table 14.20](#).

Note: Statistics on passenger satisfaction with complaints handling are not designated as National Statistics as they have not been assessed by the Office for Statistics Regulation

Appeals

- Appeals closed by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch by operator - [Table 14.15](#);
- Complaint categories for appeals closed by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch - [Table 14.16](#).

National Rail Enquiries

- National Rail Enquiries (telephone enquiries received) – [Table 14.13](#).

Related data: Statistics on rail delay compensation

One of the complaint categories in this release relates to delay compensation claims. For the first time new statistics were published on rail delay compensation claims alongside this 2018-19 Q2 statistical release in January 2019. This data can be found on the ORR data portal in [Table 17.01](#).

The statistics include the volume of delay compensation claims received, closed and approved, as well as the percentage of claims which were responded to within 20 working days. All these measures are provided at national level as well as by each individual train operator.

A factsheet on these delay compensation claims containing data for 2018-19 can be found on the ORR statistics homepage⁵ at the following link: <http://orr.gov.uk/statistics/published-stats/statistical-releases>, where data tables on these statistics can be found on the ORR data portal in [Table 17.01](#).

Note these statistics are not designated as National Statistics as they have not been assessed by the Office for Statistics Regulation.

Proposed changes to the publishing of data tables within this statistical release

ORR are proposing to publish the following tables on an annual basis rather than a quarterly basis from 2019-20 Q1:

- Complaints by contact method and train operator – [Table 14.6](#);
- Praise rate by train operator - [Table 14.17](#);
- National Rail Enquiries (telephone enquiries received) – [Table 14.13](#).

These tables will be published alongside the Q4 statistical release only, although the tables on the [Data Portal](#) will still provide a quarterly disaggregation.

Any feedback regarding this proposed change should be directed to rail.stats@orr.gov.uk.

⁵ The ORR statistics homepage will be migrated to a new data portal in July 2019. Statistical releases and factsheets with their associated data tables will all be available under their relevant theme.

Annex 2 – Statistical Releases

This publication is part of ORR's [National Statistics](#) accredited statistical releases which consist of annual and quarterly themed releases:

Annual

- Rail Finance;
- Rail Fares Index;
- Rail Safety Statistics;
- Rail Infrastructure, Assets and Environmental;
- Regional Rail Usage;
- *Estimates of Station Usage (not National Statistics).*

Quarterly

- Passenger and Freight Rail Performance;
- Freight Rail Usage;
- Passenger Rail Usage;
- Passenger Rail Service Complaints.

A full list of publication dates for the next twelve months can be found in the [release schedule](#) on the ORR website.

National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is ORR's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

For more details please contact the Statistics Head of Profession Lyndsey Melbourne on 020 7282 3978 or contact rail.stats@orr.gov.uk.

The Department for Transport (DfT) publishes a range of rail statistics which can be found at [DfT Rail Statistics](#). Transport Focus publishes the [National Rail Passenger Survey](#) (NRPS) which provides a measure of passenger satisfaction for rail services.



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