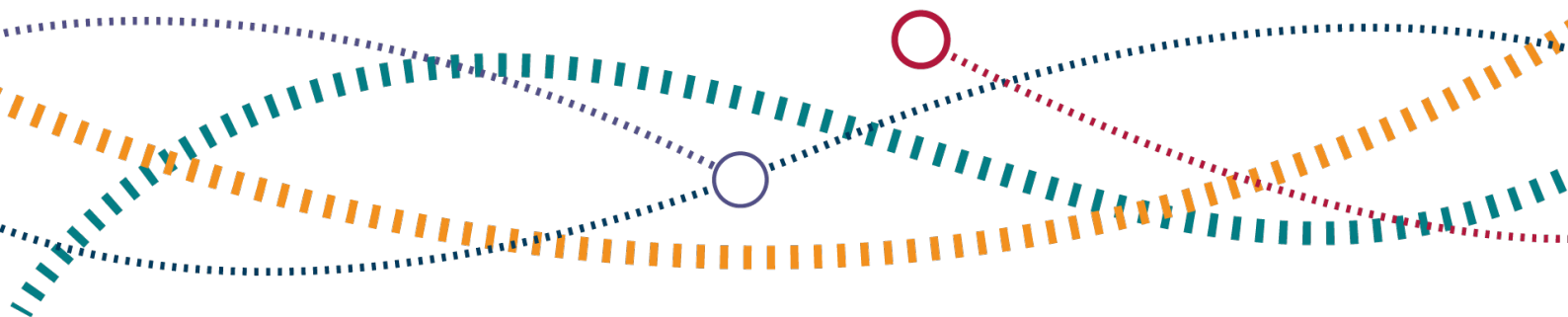




Passenger experiences and perceptions of revenue protection

Call for evidence findings report



Call for Evidence findings:

Executive Summary

- 1 To support our investigation into [train operators' revenue protection practices](#), ORR launched a public call for evidence on 16 December 2024. This was promoted through paid Instagram posts, newsletters from the NUS and MoneySavingExpert, and a feature on the National Rail Enquiries homepage. A Press Association article boosted coverage across major outlets and was picked up on Good Morning Britain. It closed on 31 January 2025.
- 2 A total of 1,029 responses were received relating to experiences across several years, with 506 meaningful responses. Not all responses answered every question posed, and therefore response rates varied for each one. While the results cannot be considered representative of the experiences of all passengers who engage with revenue protection staff (as those who responded were inevitably self-selecting), the results did enable us to identify themes to investigate further.
- 3 The call for evidence provided us with valuable case study examples from passengers, in their own words. The following section highlights key themes we identified through our analysis of the case studies. Appendix A sets out the quantitative responses we received through the call for evidence.

Key themes identified:

- 4 The themes identified through our analysis of the responses received are:
 - (a) **Buy on board:** 44 responses included whether it was permitted to buy a ticket onboard the train or not, especially where passengers had suggested they had done so before or witnessed other passengers doing so, and included where passengers were rushing or there was a queue at the station
 - (b) **Issues with TVMs:** e.g. where the TVM did not offer the ticket the passenger needed, or the TVM only accepting card when the passenger only had cash.
 - (c) **Terms and conditions:** 70 responses included confusion around certain terms and conditions, including child ticket age, ticket time restrictions, permitted routeing, Advance ticket conditions, PAYG boundaries and railcard restrictions. Further examples included fulfilment confusion, for such as not validating a ticket before travel, and issues with incompatibility of e-tickets with travel on London Underground or Merseyrail.

- (d) **Digital tickets:** 19 responses highlighted where passengers were unable to show their digital ticket or railcard, with a range of reasons including poor Wi-Fi connectivity, app not working, and lack of phone battery.
- (e) **Railcards:** 108 responses mentioned that the use of railcards had caused an issue. The three main issues were expired railcards, which affected 39 responses, forgotten railcards, with some reporting that the website to upload proof was inaccessible, and mistakenly buying tickets using a rail card, for example because the app defaulted to using a railcard or because they bought two tickets but only one passenger had a railcard.
- (f) **Disruption:** disruption meant that passengers travelled on a different train to that originally planned, and for which their ticket was not valid.
- (g) **Staff behaviour:** 45 responses had a poor perception of the behaviour of railway staff, including towards vulnerable passengers.
- (h) **Staff errors:** a small number of responses reported errors they considered were made by revenue protection staff where complex ticketing rules were involved.
- (i) **Appeals and prosecutions:** case studies included penalty fare appeals being denied or passengers being prosecuted despite the respondent insisting they had made a genuine mistake.
- (j) **Perceptions of fairness:** the quantitative results demonstrate significant dissatisfaction on the part of passengers with the way that they were treated. The case studies demonstrated that some passengers were having deeply unsatisfactory experiences. Everyone who was prosecuted or paid to settle out of the court felt they were not treated fairly or very fairly.

Conclusion

- 5 The call for evidence provided useful case studies about the rail industry's revenue protection practices and demonstrated that these can lead to dissatisfaction and distrust among passengers. Some passengers who had made mistakes felt unfairly criminalised. The disproportionate nature of prosecutions further exacerbated these negative experiences. The perception of aggressive and patronising behaviour of staff towards passengers, coupled with an opaque appeals process, has led some passengers to avoid rail travel altogether.

Appendix A: Summary of Quantitative Responses to the Call for Evidence

- 1 This appendix presents a summary of the quantitative data collected through the Call for Evidence. Respondents were invited to answer a series of questions designed to capture measurable insights across the key themes. Response rates vary depending on the answers given by respondents.

Q1. Have you (intentionally or unintentionally) boarded a train in Great Britain without a ticket, or with an invalid ticket, or been told by rail staff that this is the case?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
Yes	81.79%	521
No	18.21%	116

Total answered: 637

Q3. What action did the train company take?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
I was allowed to continue with my journey by train or station staff, e.g. I bought my ticket on the train	9.22%	47
I had to buy a new ticket for my journey, or paid an additional fare (known as an “excess fare”)	19.80%	101
I paid a penalty fare which included the cost of a new ticket	41.57%	212
I was prosecuted, or paid to settle out of court	17.45%	89
None of the above	11.96%	61

Total answered: 510

Q7. What was the reason given by the member of rail staff?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
No ticket	7.92%	8
Invalid ticket	68.32%	69
Something else (Please specify)	23.76%	24

Total answered: 101

Q8. What was the reason given by [train operator] on the penalty fare notice?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
No ticket	35.68%	76
Invalid ticket	42.72%	91
Something else (Please specify)	21.60%	46

Total answered: 213

Q9. What was the reason given for the prosecution on the letter you received from [train operator] or their agents?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
No ticket	23.60%	21
Invalid ticket	49.44%	44
Something else (Please specify)	26.97%	24

Total answered: 89

Q10. What is your view of what caused this situation? Tick all that apply

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
I thought my ticket was valid for my journey but it was not	36.47%	186
I did not understand the terms and conditions	8.82%	45
I could not find the information I needed at the station	9.61%	49
could not find the information I needed online	4.90%	25
I could not buy the ticket I wanted at the station	11.37%	58
Because the ticket machine or ticket office was not accessible to me	8.82%	45
I think I was sold the wrong ticket for my journey by station staff	3.14%	16
I think I was sold the wrong ticket for my journey online	5.88%	30
I was unable to collect a pre-paid ticket	1.96%	10
I was in a rush and didn't buy a ticket	8.43%	43
The queue was so long I would have missed my train	3.33%	17
I only had cash and the ticket machine was card only	3.14%	16
I thought I could buy a ticket on the train	11.96%	61

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
I got on the wrong train	6.27%	32
I lost my ticket (but could prove I bought one)	2.35%	12
I could not find my ticket at the time (but I've now found it)	0.98%	5
My phone ran out of battery, or I had another problem with my phone, so I couldn't show my ticket or railcard	4.51%	23
I did not have my railcard on me	5.10%	26
My railcard had expired	8.24%	42
My railcard wasn't valid for the journey I was taking	4.12%	21
I did not want to pay the full fare / I thought I could get away without paying	2.35%	12
Something else (Please specify)	27.84%	142

Total answered: 510

Q.11 Were you aware of the consequences of starting your journey without a ticket or with an invalid ticket?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
Yes	42.35%	216
No	49.22%	251
I don't know	8.43%	43

Total answered: 510

Q.13 Did you pay the penalty fare?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
I paid within 21 days and paid a discounted amount	56.34%	120
I paid after 21 days and paid the full amount	10.80%	23
I did not pay	2.92%	6
I appealed	30.05%	64

Total answered: 213

Q.15 Was your appeal successful?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
Yes, at first stage appeal	12.50%	8
Yes, at second stage appeal	0.00%	0
Yes, at third stage appeal to the independent committee	3.13%	2
Yes, but I don't know / cannot remember what stage	1.56%	1
No, it was not	71.88%	46
Still pending	10.94%	7

Total answered: 64

Q.16 What happened after your appeal was unsuccessful?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
I paid the penalty fare	97.83%	45
I did not pay the penalty fare	0.00%	0
I was prosecuted	2.17%	1

Total answered: 46

Q.18 Were you prosecuted using the Single Justice Procedure (SJP)?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
Yes	27.78%	25
No	28.89%	26
I don't know	43.33%	39

Total answered: 90

Q.19 What was the outcome of the court case?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
I was found guilty	52.17%	12
I was found not guilty	8.70%	2
The case is still pending	13.04%	3
Other (please specify)	26.09%	6

Total answered: 23

Q.23 How do you think you were treated?

Answer choices	Response (%)	Number of responses
Very fairly	5.69%	29
Fairly	5.69%	29
Neither fairly nor unfairly	6.67%	34
Unfairly	26.86%	137
Very unfairly	55.10%	281

Total answered: 510



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