

Disabled rail passengers' awareness of assistance from train operators

March 2014

We recently commissioned some research to see how much people knew about the assistance provided when travelling by rail.

Awareness of assistance

We wanted to see if disabled travellers, without prompting, were aware of the types of assistance available or the specific schemes offered:

- 72% of people *expected* that disabled people would be a group with specific rights to enable use of the trains
- But, only 10% had seen, heard or read information from train operators about disabled passengers' rights to assistance
- 70% of respondents were unaware of any specific scheme to help disabled people (20% were unsure or couldn't remember).
- When we explained the Passenger Assist service, 9% had heard of this scheme before
- When the Passenger Assist service was explained of those who hadn't used it before, just under nine in ten (89%) considered they would or may use the service in future.

Personally I find everybody very nice and helpful. The Passenger Assist person was very nice, but in a way it would be nice not to have to have them being nice. It reinforces that you're disabled the whole time, if you could get on and off without using your legs it wouldn't be necessary, and that must save money in the long run."

Views of the assistance provided

We asked about the quality of information to help use the rail network, whether adequate assistance is provided by staff and the ease of the overall journey:

- Information: 31% considered information was good or very good, 20% thought it poor or very poor. However, a noteworthy minority (16%) had never seen any information.
- Assistance: Carers were more likely to consider assistance adequate (33% by station staff and 20% by train companies) than disabled respondents (17% by station staff and 13% by train companies). However, many respondents were either unsure (38%) or did not consider assistance adequate (35%)
- Ease of journey: Respondents mostly considered different parts of the journey as easy, the main issues arose with getting to the station, the platform or changing trains

My wife is disabled as well, she has mobility issues....it [Passenger Assist] was very good until we came back...On the way back it was exactly the same until we got to [location] and there was no assistance even though it had been booked."

Journey planning and habits

We asked what mode of travel people tended to use and how they planned their journeys:

- Respondents who used public transport used a range different modes, with the majority (55%) using buses as their *main* mode of transport and 20% mainly using rail

"I like the train...I find it a lot nicer. It's quicker, there's more space, and it's just a lot more pleasant."

- Of those who weren't carers and used public transport, 64% travelled with a friend, relative or partner (and an additional 9% with carer or personal assistant)

- 28% of respondents who travelled by rail held a Disabled Persons Railcard
- 31% did not use public transport, with 58% of these stating they would like to if more support were available. Of these respondents, 46% stated that they would use public transport at least once a week if more support was available
- Respondents that did not use public transport had a number of reasons for this, the main three being: Lack of confidence in the provision of services in different areas; difficult to access the train/bus; the price of ticket

Perceptions of rail travel

We asked for views of people who sometimes or mainly used trains about their experience:

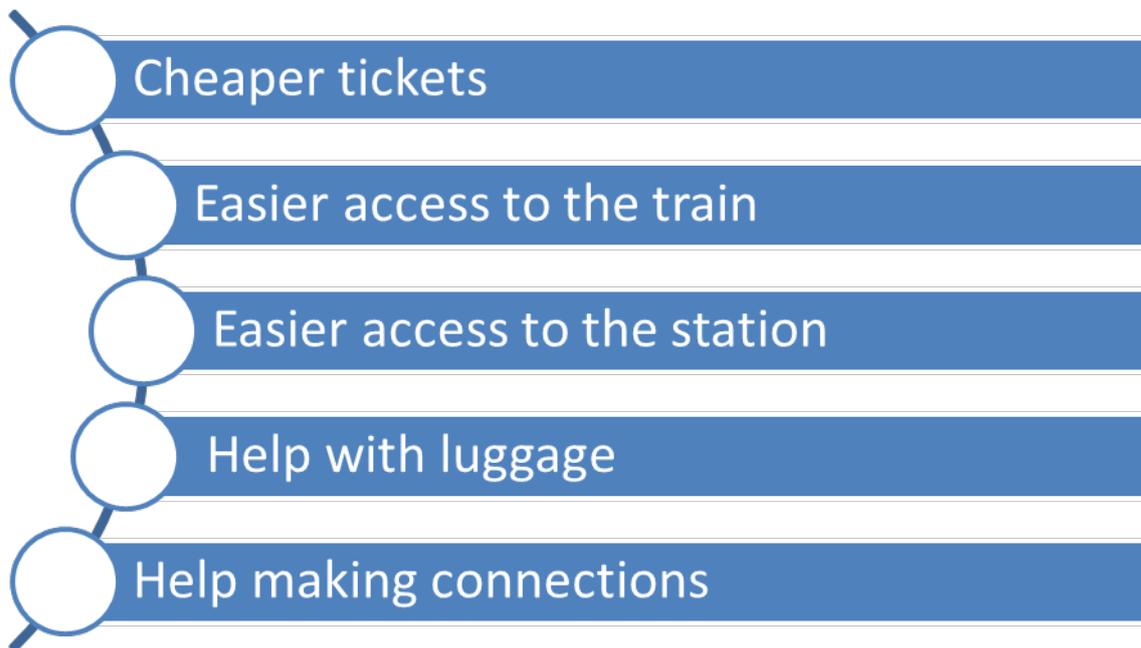


**“I've got to say
the staff are very
good”**

- Just over half of respondents (53%) were satisfied or very satisfied with rail travel, with 12% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied
- The helpfulness of staff/being well looked after and being happy with the service/never having any problems were the main reasons for satisfaction.

We asked what would encourage disabled people to use trains more:

- Cheaper tickets was the main reason given by all respondents
- People whose main mode of transport is the train considered that easier access to the station and train, help with luggage and help making connections are the most important things to encourage greater use of the train



Method

In January / February this year we commissioned targeted research of 350 people, 63% with a disability and 37% carers, via an online and telephone survey. We also included 10 in-depth interviews.

Respondents or those cared for had one or more disabilities including mobility, serious long-term illness, mental health conditions and others such as hearing or visual impairment. Three quarters lived in urban areas. Sixty per cent of respondents had an income of less than £300 per week.

The full results have been published. The research was conducted by Accent. The full research document can be found at:

http://www.orr.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/11710/disabled-travellers-rights-awareness.pdf