Introduction

This factsheet provides an overview of key statistics on the rail industry in Great Britain. These statistics relate to the national rail network, so do not include London Underground or light rail and tram systems.

Passenger and freight services on the rail network in Great Britain are provided by a number of private sector companies. Most passenger rail travel is made with the 19 franchised operators, but there are also a small number of non-franchised operators. The railway infrastructure is owned and operated by Network Rail.

Rail usage

In 2010/11 rail passengers made 1.4 billion franchised journeys, travelling 34 billion.

After remaining at around the same level for several decades, rail use in Great Britain has seen large increases in the late 1990s and 2000s. Franchised passenger miles in 2010/11 were over 40 per cent higher than in 2000/01 and over 60 per cent higher than in 1990/91.
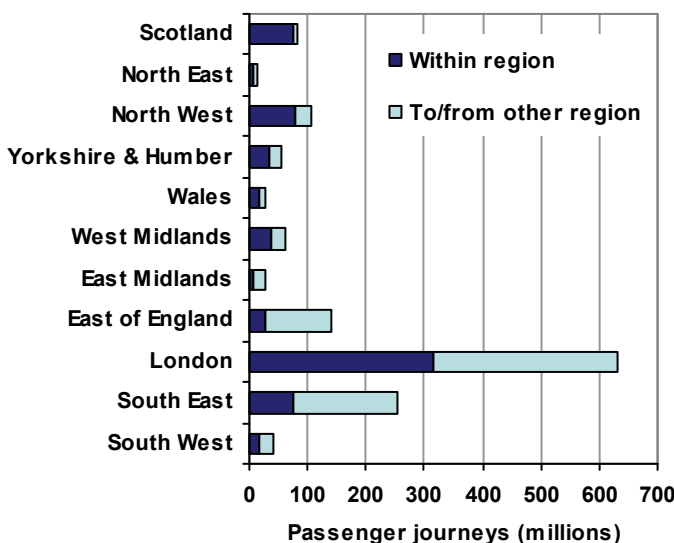
1.8 million journeys were made with non-franchised operators in 2010/11, 0.1 per cent of the national total.

Chart 1: Trend in franchised passenger miles: GB 1950 to 2010
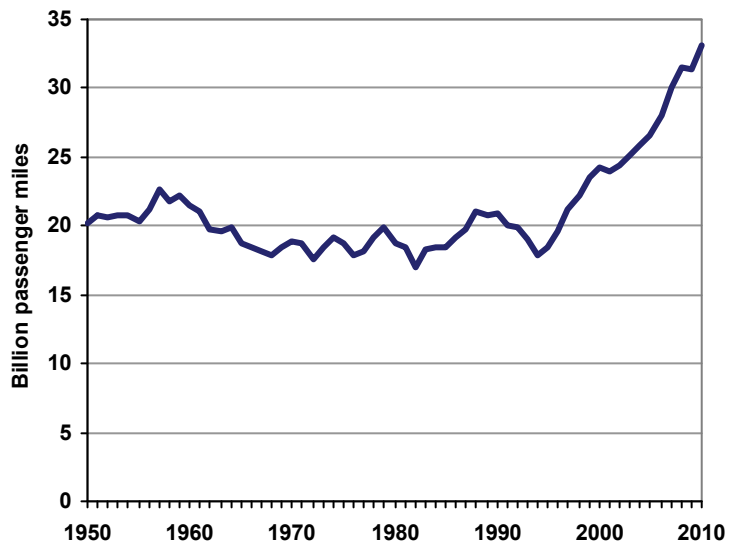
Source: National Rail Trends

Chart 2: Rail journeys by region: GB 2009/10

Source: National Rail Trends

In 2009/10, 59 per cent of all rail journeys started or finished in London. The South East and the East of England were the regions with the next highest number of journeys but 65 per cent of journeys in the South East and 75 per cent in the East of England were to or from London.

In the north of England, the North West had the highest number of rail journeys, with 10 per cent of all journeys starting or finishing in the region.

Eight per cent of all rail journeys started or finished in Scotland and 2 per cent in Wales.

The National Travel Survey shows that the average person in Great Britain made 19 trips by surface rail in 2010, travelling 506 miles. Rail was the main mode of travel for 2 per cent of all trips, but 8 per cent of distance travelled.

Eighty four per cent of rail trips were on weekdays and 16 per cent at weekends. On weekdays 51 per cent of rail trips were for commuting, 8 per cent for business and 20 per cent for leisure.
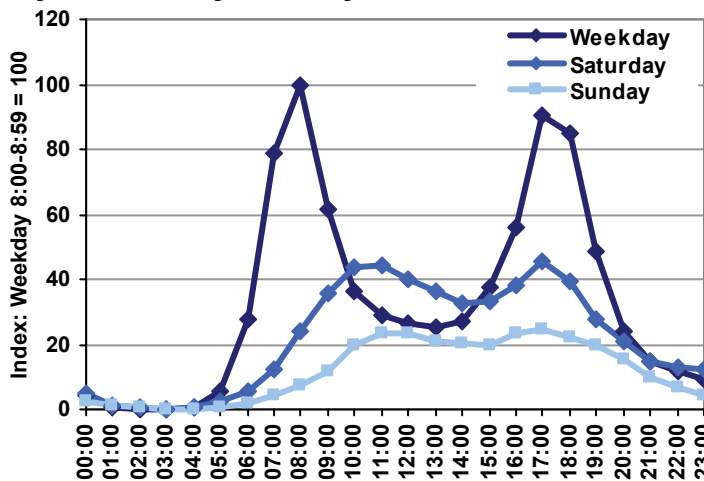
Conversely, on weekends 61 per cent of rail trips were for leisure purposes and 18 per cent for shopping. Only 12 per cent were for commuting or business.

Chart 3: Trips by main mode of travel: GB 2010
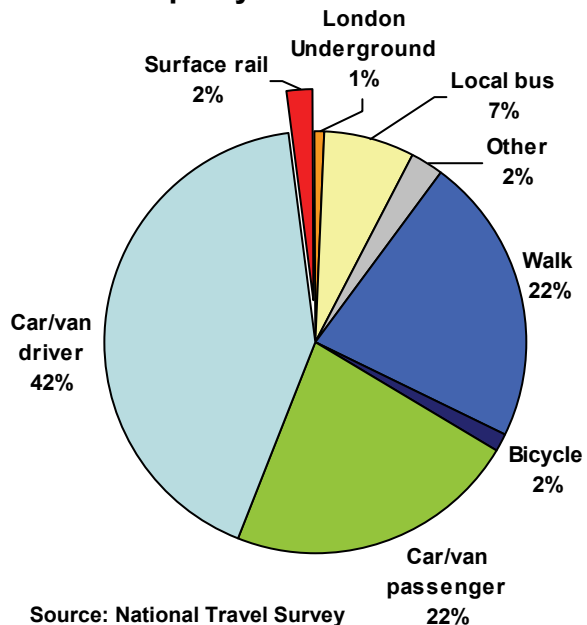
Source: National Travel Survey

Chart 4: Average surface rail trips in progress by time of day and day of week: GB 2005-10

Source: National Travel Survey

Chart 4 shows the trends in rail travel during the day on weekdays and weekends, based on National Travel Survey data from 2005-2010 combined.

Rail travel on weekdays predominantly reflects commuting patterns, with the majority of trips being made in two peaks in the morning and the early evening.

Weekend travel is more evenly spread during the day but still has two distinct peaks. Roughly twice as many trips are made on Saturdays as on Sundays.

In the Opinions Survey in 2009, 55 per cent of adults said that they had used a train in the past 12 months and 45 per cent had not. The proportion that had used a train was 57 per cent for men and 53 per cent for women.

The age group that had the highest proportion of rail users was 25-34 year olds, more than two thirds of whom had used a train in the previous year. This proportion decreased for older age groups, with less than half of over 65s and less than a quarter of over 75s having used a train in the previous year.

Chart 5: Proportion of adults that used a train in the past 12 months by age group: GB 2009
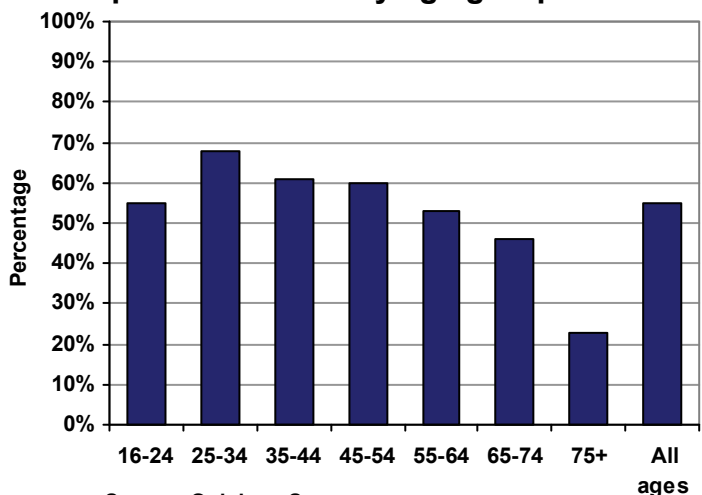

Source: Opinions Survey

Public performance measure

The public performance measure (PPM) is an indicator of the performance and reliability of Britain's passenger railways. It is the proportion of passenger trains that arrive at their final destination on time (defined as within 5 minutes of the timetabled time for short distance train services and 10 minutes for long distance).

In 2010/11, 90.8 per cent of franchised operators' trains arrived at their destinations on time, a slight reduction from 91.5 per cent the previous year. This figure was slightly lower for long-distance operators, at 87.9 per cent.

PPM fell sharply due to a deterioration in reliability following the Hatfield crash in October 2000, but increased steadily from 2001/02 to 2009/10.

Chart 6: Percentage of trains arriving on time: GB 1999/00 to 2010/11

Source: National Rail Trends
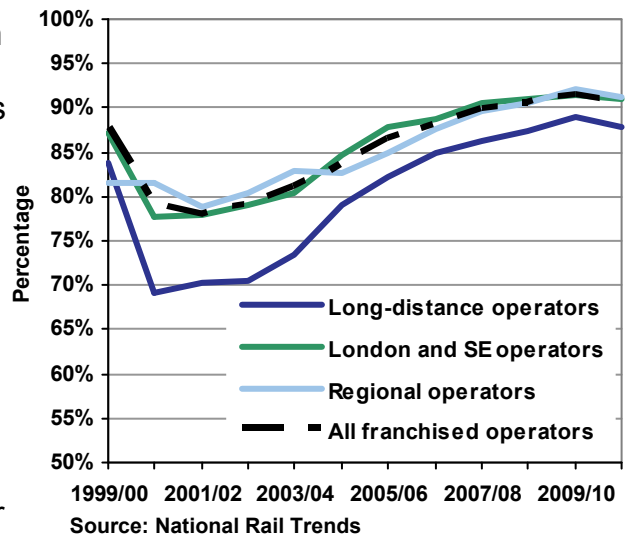
Passenger satisfaction

The National Passenger Survey showed that 84 per cent of rail passengers in Great Britain in spring 2011 were satisfied with their journey overall. This equalled the autumn 2010 figure, which was a record high since the National Passenger Survey began in 1999.

Only 44 per cent of passengers were satisfied with the value for money for the price of their ticket, and this dropped to 39 per cent for London and South East operators.

Eighty per cent of passengers were satisfied with the punctuality/reliability of their trains and 67 per cent were satisfied that there was sufficient room for all passengers to stand or sit.

Fares

The rail fares component of the Retail Price Index (RPI) increased by 66 per cent between 1997 and 2010. This compares to a 42 per cent increase in RPI overall, meaning that in real terms rail fares increased by 17 per cent.

During this time motoring costs increased by 33 per cent, a 7 per cent reduction in real terms, while bus and coach fares rose by 76 per cent, a 24 per cent increase in real terms.

Chart 7: Retail Price Index, transport components and all items: 1997 to 2010

Source: Retail Price Index

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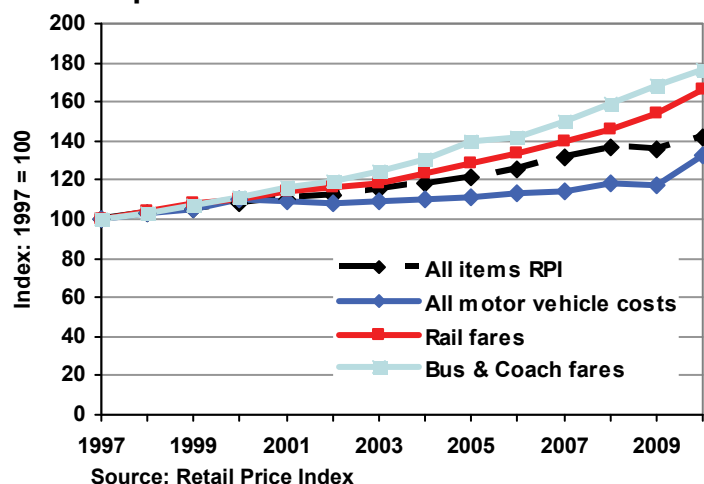
Safety

Rail has one of the lowest passenger casualty rates of any mode of transport. In 2010/11, 8 passengers and 1 railway worker were killed on the rail network, none of them in train accidents. In total there were 248 fatalities on the rail network, 208 (84 per cent) of which were suicides and 27 (11 per cent) trespassers. There were also 4 pedestrians killed at level crossings.

Environmental impact

Direct emissions from rail produced around 0.4 per cent of UK domestic greenhouse gas emissions in 2009, which was around 1.8 per cent of domestic transport emissions.

Including emissions from the production fuel/electricity used, national rail has one of the lowest levels of greenhouse gas emissions per passenger kilometre of any mode of land transport, less than half the level of the average car.

Chart 8: Greenhouse gas emissions per passenger kilometre by mode: UK
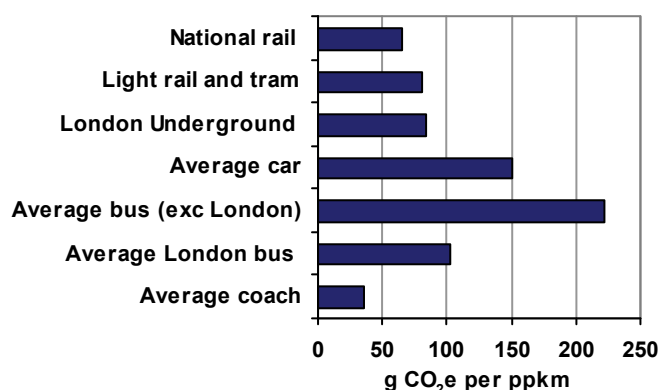
Source: July 2011 DEFRA/DECC Greenhouse Gas Conversion Factors for Company Reporting

Freight

In recent years around 8 or 9 per cent of freight moved in Great Britain each year has been moved by rail. Freight traffic is measured in net tonne kilometres (NTKm), so it takes into account both the weight of the goods and the distance they travel. In 2010/11 the amount of freight moved by rail was 19 billion NTKm. Thirty per cent was domestic intermodal freight and 28 per cent was coal.

Further Information

Much of the information in this factsheet can be found in the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) publication National Rail Trends, which is available on the ORR website:
http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1863

Other statistics used in this factsheet and further information about them can be found at the following links:

National Travel Survey: http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/national-travel-survey/
Opinions Survey: http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/rail/
National Passenger Survey: http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/nps/
Retail Price Index: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/product.asp?vlnk=868
Environment statistics: http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/energy-and-environment/
DEFRA: http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/economy/business-efficiency/reporting/

Any enquiries relating to the figures in this factsheet or requests for further information on rail statistics can be addressed to the Rail Statistics branch at the Department for Transport:

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