

## Truth about rail delays: 30 per cent of trains run late



Fewer than 70 per cent of trains arrive on time Luke MacGregor/Reuters

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Fewer than 70 per cent of British trains run on time, according to an assessment of punctuality records.

A long-distance train used to be categorised by rail regulators as late if it arrived ten minutes after its scheduled time and a shorter, regional service five minutes later than expected. By this definition 91.6 per cent of train services were punctual.

However, Network Rail published figures yesterday showing the percentage of services that arrived no more than 59 seconds later than scheduled — and only 60 per cent of longdistance trains and 71 per cent of short-distance trains made the grade. The figures also showed that the number of services arriving on time has decreased in the past two years.

Network Rail said that while it was committed to improving punctuality, the increasing number of passengers and trains made it “ever more difficult to do so”. Robin Gisby, its network operations managing director, said: “We will be open and honest with the public about our performance and the capacity constraints we’re working under.”

Consumer groups welcomed the commitment to transparency. Anthony Smith, chief executive of Passenger Focus, described the publication of the statistics as an important move. He added that passengers had “always been suspicious of punctuality statistics that allow trains to be up to ten minutes late and still count as on time”.

The Government also welcomed the development. Norman Baker, the Transport Minister, said that the statistics compared “very favourably” with European rail networks.

Different ways of assessing punctuality around the world, as well as the different capacities, make direct comparisons difficult. However, recent figures indicate that Japan’s network, held up as the world’s most punctual, delivers 90 per cent of its trains within 59 seconds of their scheduled arrival, while Switzerland, which appears to have Europe’s best-performing network, delivers 91.6 per cent of its trains within 3 minutes of their expected times.

Eighty per cent of TGV long-distance services in France arrive within 5 minutes of the scheduled time. The United States has one of the patchiest records, with only 77 per cent of its short-distance services arriving less than five minutes late.

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