

Passenger numbers and season ticket usage rise between October and December 2020

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A total of 140 million rail journeys were made in Great Britain in October, November and December 2020 and season ticket usage by passengers increased to 23% of pre-COVID levels, according to official statistics by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).

The independent rail regulator's Passenger Rail Usage statistics showed 140 million journeys were made in the third quarter of 2020-21, equating to around 30% of the 463 million journeys made in 2019-20 Q3.

This continued a steady rise in passenger numbers since Q1 (April – June 2020) when only 35 million passenger journeys in Great Britain were made, the lowest level of passenger usage since the mid-nineteenth century.

Usage was higher in London and the South East in 2020-21 Q3 compared to other parts of the country. London Overground, TfL Rail (both 42.4%) and c2c (40.6%) recorded the highest usage this quarter as a proportion of journeys made in 2019-20 Q3.

For franchised operators, the lowest levels of usage this quarter as a proportion of journeys made in

2019-20 Q3 were recorded by ScotRail (18.5%), Avanti West Coast (19.1%) and TfW Rail (20.1%).

ORR's stats also showed an increase in season ticket usage. 36.4 million journeys were made using a season ticket – up 15.1 million compared to the second quarter (Q2) of 2020-21, but remain significantly lower than the 156 million used in 2019-20 Q3.

The majority of journeys were made using off-peak tickets (54.9 million) and anytime/peak tickets (40.1 million). Journeys made using advance tickets and any other type of ticket made up 5 million and 3.3 million journeys respectively during 2020-21 Q3.

Total passenger revenue in Great Britain was £641 million in 2020-21 Q3. This equates to 23.8% of the £2.7 billion in 2019-20 Q3.

Graham Richards, Director of Planning and Performance at the Office of Rail and Road, said: “Passenger numbers were slowly rising in Q3 compared to the first quarter of 2020-21, which saw the lowest levels of usage seen since the mid-nineteenth century.

“Season ticket usage also increased and this could have hinted at a more regular return to work for some commuters, and students travelling to schools and colleges.

“When passengers do slowly return in 2021, it is important that the rail industry maintains the good punctuality we’ve seen recently and provides clear and accurate information to help passengers plan and make journeys with confidence and ease.”

Photo credit: Office of Rail and Road