



RAIL OMBUDSMAN

RAIL CONSUMER EXPERIENCE SURVEY

Report

December 2021

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Background and objectives

Since its formation in November 2018, the Rail Ombudsman has provided a free and independent service that provides a point of escalation for complaints about service providers in the rail industry.

Part of the Rail Ombudsman's role is to raise standards in the industry by providing training whilst also delivering a fair and impartial service when mediating between Rail Consumers and Rail Operating Companies.

The Rail Ombudsman appointed Ipsos MORI, an independent research agency, to collect feedback, where possible, from

Rail Consumers who have contacted the Rail Ombudsman.

This research provides an insight into the experience of Rail Consumers. Feedback focuses on Rail Consumers who have had a case closed by the Rail Ombudsman, with their feedback separated from those whose cases were outside of the Rail Ombudsman's scope.

Methodology

- Fieldwork dates: 8th December 2021 - 21st December 2021
- 10 minute online survey sent out to 1,091 Rail Consumers who had contacted the Rail Ombudsman between the 3rd November 2020 – 29th October 2021
- 30% completion rate
- 198 Rail Consumers with cases that were in scope for the Rail Ombudsman completed the survey in 2021, along with 128 out of scope responses

↗ ↘ Arrows denote a score which is significantly higher or lower at 95% confidence compared to previous wave



Definitions

Term	Definition
In Scope	A complaint accepted as being eligible for the Rail Ombudsman scheme.
Out of Scope	A complaint that is outside the remit of the Rail Ombudsman scheme.
Simple Resolution	A stage in the Rail Ombudsman process that provides an opportunity, in some circumstances, to quickly resolve an issue.
Complex Resolution	A stage in the Rail Ombudsman process where a simple resolution is not possible. The Rail Ombudsman will first mediate and then where applicable, adjudicate to resolve an in scope complaint.
Mediation	The process by which, assisted by an independent view from the Rail Ombudsman, a settlement in relation to an in scope complaint can be negotiated to which both the Rail Consumer and the participating Rail Operating Company agree.
Cases resulted in a full or partial Rail Consumers remedy	The Ombudsman instructs Rail Operating Company to take action, Rail Consumer complaint upheld in part, Rail Consumer complaint Upheld in full, resolution reached between both parties prior to mediation and settled through mediation.
Cases ruled in favour of the Rail Operating Company	Rail Consumer complaint not upheld.

Executive Summary

Experience of the Rail Ombudsman remains positive

For Rail Consumers whose cases are dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman, the experience remains positive, despite a greater proportion of cases being ruled in the Rail Operator's favour this year, and the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

Almost 3 in 5 say the overall experience has been positive, with a similar number likely to recommend and recontact the Rail Ombudsman.

Staff professionalism strengthened this year. Accessibility remains strong.

Staff remain a key strength, with almost three-quarters rating knowledge and professionalism of staff positively, and an upward trend seen across measures related to staff. Accessibility and helpfulness are areas of strength in 2021.

Although Rail Consumer perception of signposting had improved last year, it remains an issue at the start of the complaints process

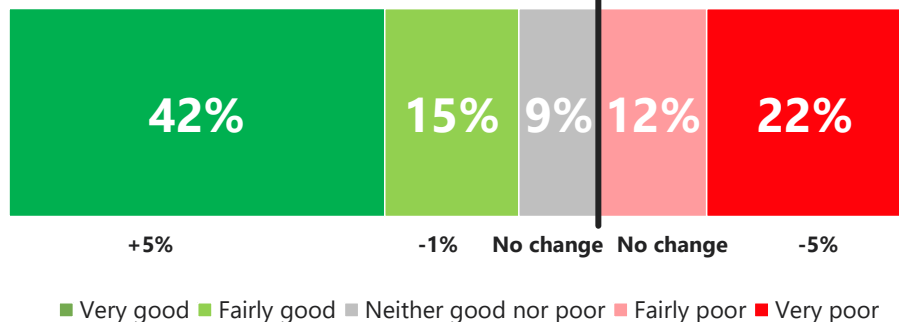
Less than one-fifth are informed of the Rail Ombudsman at the start of the complaint process, with the same number informed during the process. Three-fifths are informed only when the complaint needs to be escalated.

Rail Consumers whose cases are dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman tend to have a positive experience overall

Percentage rating experience overall as...

58% rate their experience as very or fairly good +5% vs 2020

Maintenance of positive experience despite a bigger proportion of case outcomes ruled in favour of the Rail Operating Company



Change in %pt vs. 2020

Ipsos Q1. Taking everything into consideration how would you rate your overall experience with the Rail Ombudsman? Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman (198)

Difference between case types

Proportion of participants based on case outcomes

% of in-scope cases in each category

66% of cases resulted in a full or partial Rail Consumer remedy
-7%

34% of cases ruled in favour of the Rail Operating Company
+7%

Experience of the Rail Ombudsman

% rating fairly or very good overall

Simple n=87

78% ↗+12%

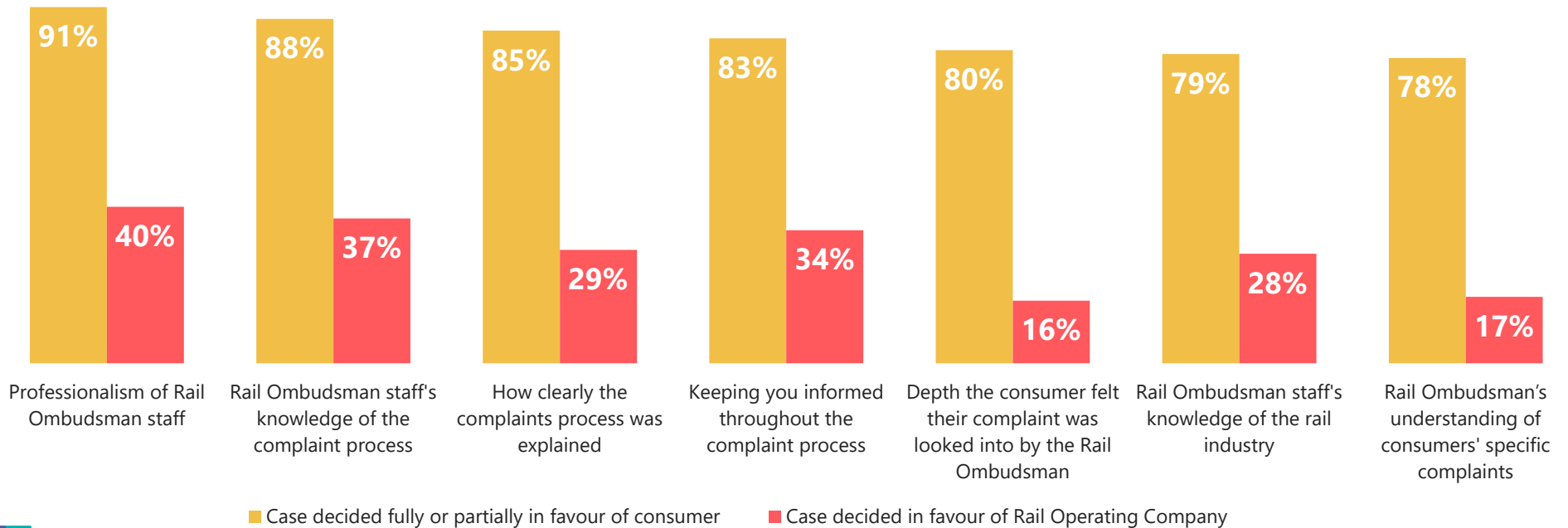
Mediation n=40

78% +11%

↗↘ Arrows denote a score which is significantly higher or lower at 95% confidence compared to previous wave

Ratings differ depending on outcome. The Ombudsman's staff remain the highest rated aspect even for cases decided in favour of the Rail Operator

Percentage rating as fairly good or very good

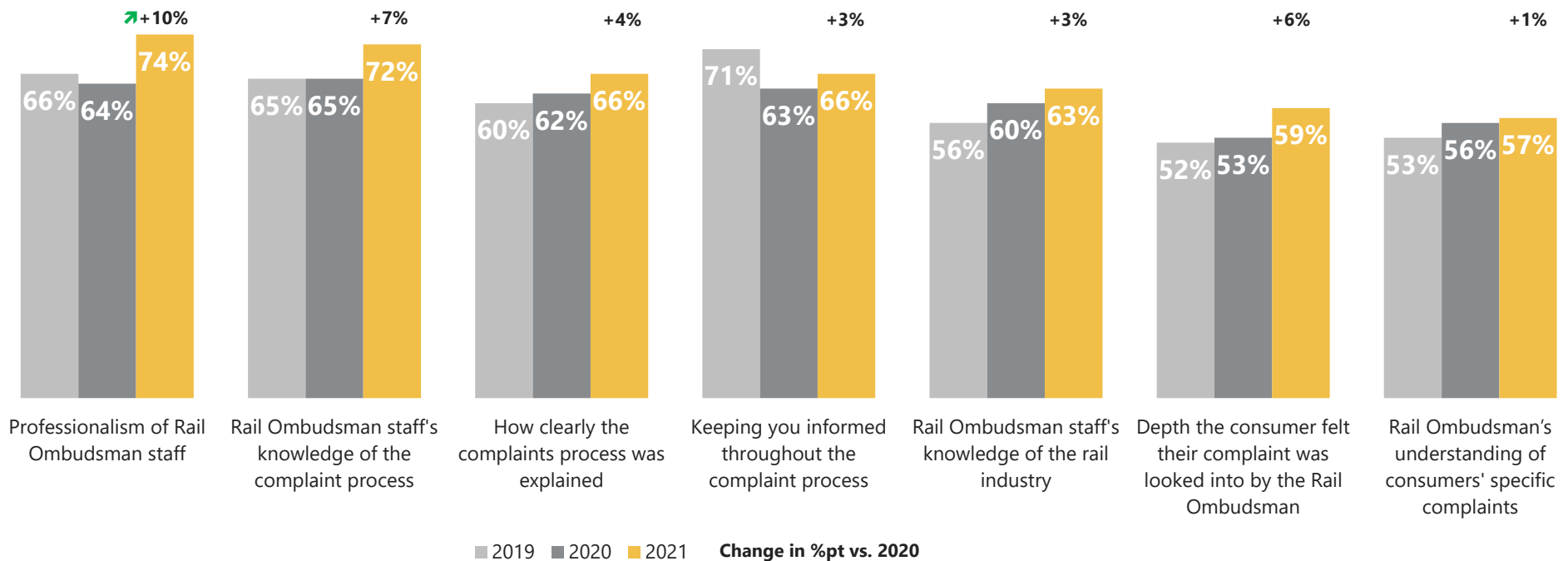


Q11. How would you rate the following aspects of the Rail Ombudsman's service? Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman. Cases decided fully or partially favour of rail passenger (131), Cases decided in favour of Rail Operating Company (67).

Arrows denote a score which is significantly higher or lower at 95% confidence compared to previous wave

There is a positive trend in performance across aspects relating to staff, and a significant increase in the rating for professionalism

Percentage rating as fairly good or very good



■ 2019 ■ 2020 ■ 2021 **Change in %pt vs. 2020**

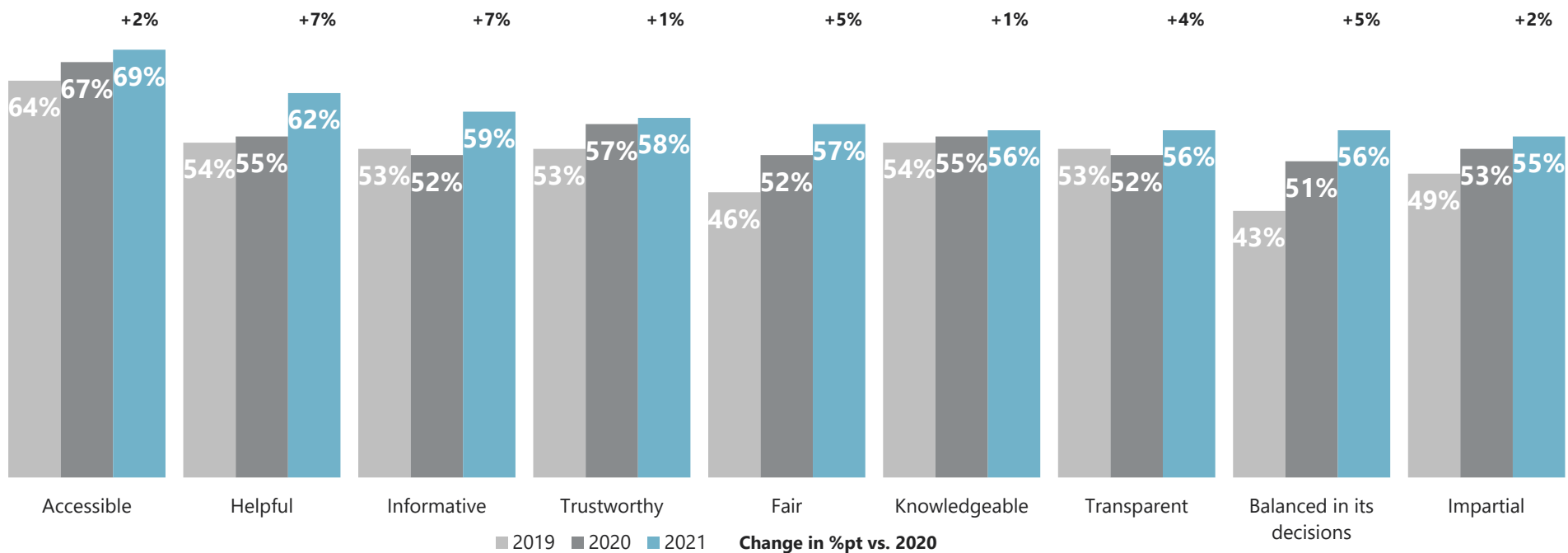


Q11. How would you rate the following aspects of the Rail Ombudsman's service? Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman (2021: 198, 2020: 504, 2019: 180).

Arrows denote a score which is significantly higher or lower at 95% confidence compared to previous wave

Perceptions of the Rail Ombudsman show signs of improvement across all attributes

Percentage agreeing that the Rail Ombudsman is...

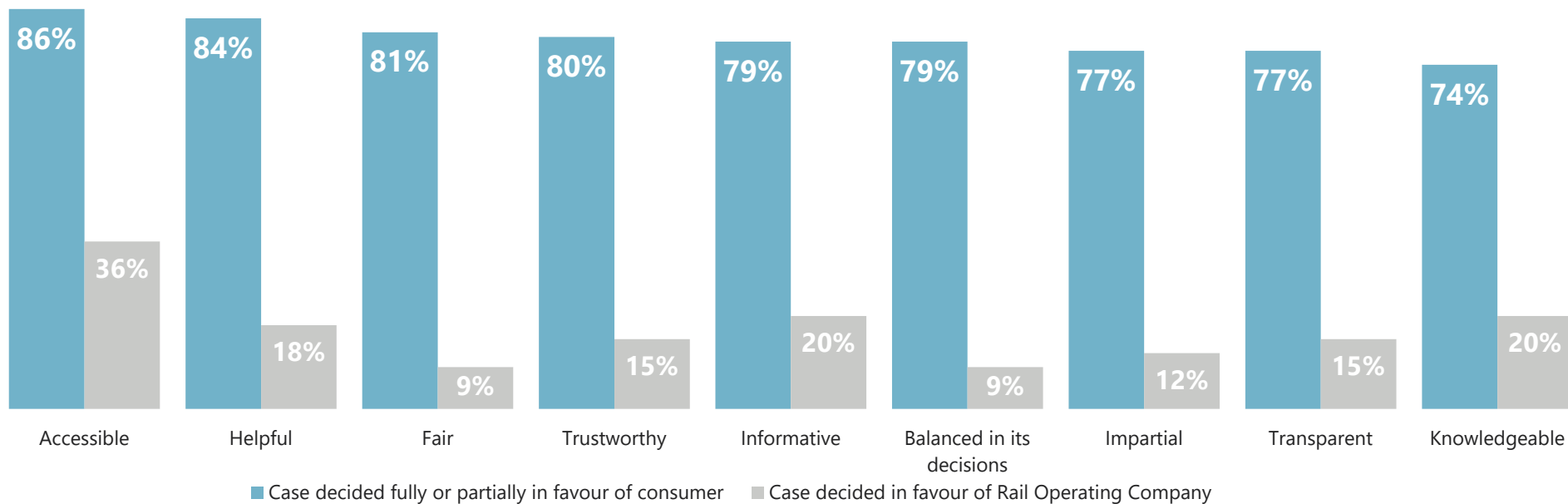


Q4. Taking into account your overall experience, how strongly do you agree or disagree that the Rail Ombudsman is... Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman (2021: 198, 2020: 504, 2019: 180).

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Perceptions of the Rail Ombudsman remain heavily influenced by the case outcome

Percentage agreeing that the Rail Ombudsman is...



Ipsos Q4. Taking into account your overall experience, how strongly do you agree or disagree that the Rail Ombudsman is... Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman
Cases decided fully or partially favour of rail passenger (131), Cases decided in favour of Rail Operating Company (67).

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Customers with a positive experience appreciate efficiency and quick responses. Those with a negative experience question the impartiality

Why do you rate your experience positively/negatively?

“ They responded quickly to my concerns and they were efficient and prepared to stick with me through the complaints process. I never felt out of my depth and it felt good to have somebody in my corner
Simple case ”

“ I made a complaint and it totally resolved to my complete satisfaction within 2 weeks
Simple case ”

“ In general, they responded quickly to my complaint and were easy to get in touch with
Complex case ”

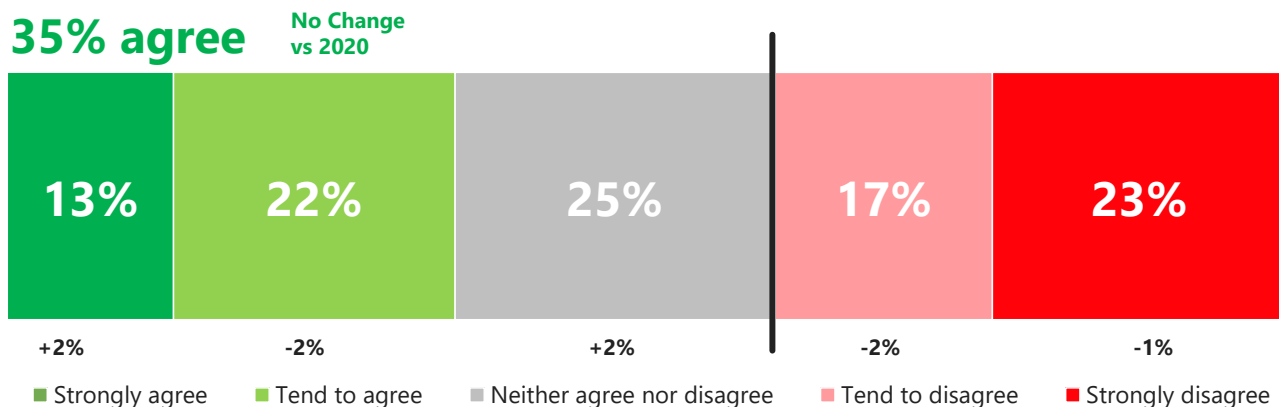
“ [They] said they couldn't help and passed me to another body who brushed me off
Out of scope ”



Q2a. Why did you rate your experience of the Rail Ombudsman positively?
Q2b. Why did you rate your experience of the Rail Ombudsman poorly?

Rail Consumers were told about the Rail Ombudsman when their case needed escalating but there is an increase in those told earlier in the process

The Rail Ombudsman was well signposted by the Train Operating Company...



Change in %pt vs. 2020



Q6. How strongly do you agree or disagree that the Rail Ombudsman was well signposted by the Train Operating Company? Base: All responding (185)
 Q7. At what point were you told about the Rail Ombudsman during the complaint process with the Train Operating Company? Base: All responding (143)

Point at which Rail Consumers were told about the Rail Ombudsman

17% ↗ +10%

Told about the Rail Ombudsman when first complained to the Rail Operator

19% ↔ -2%

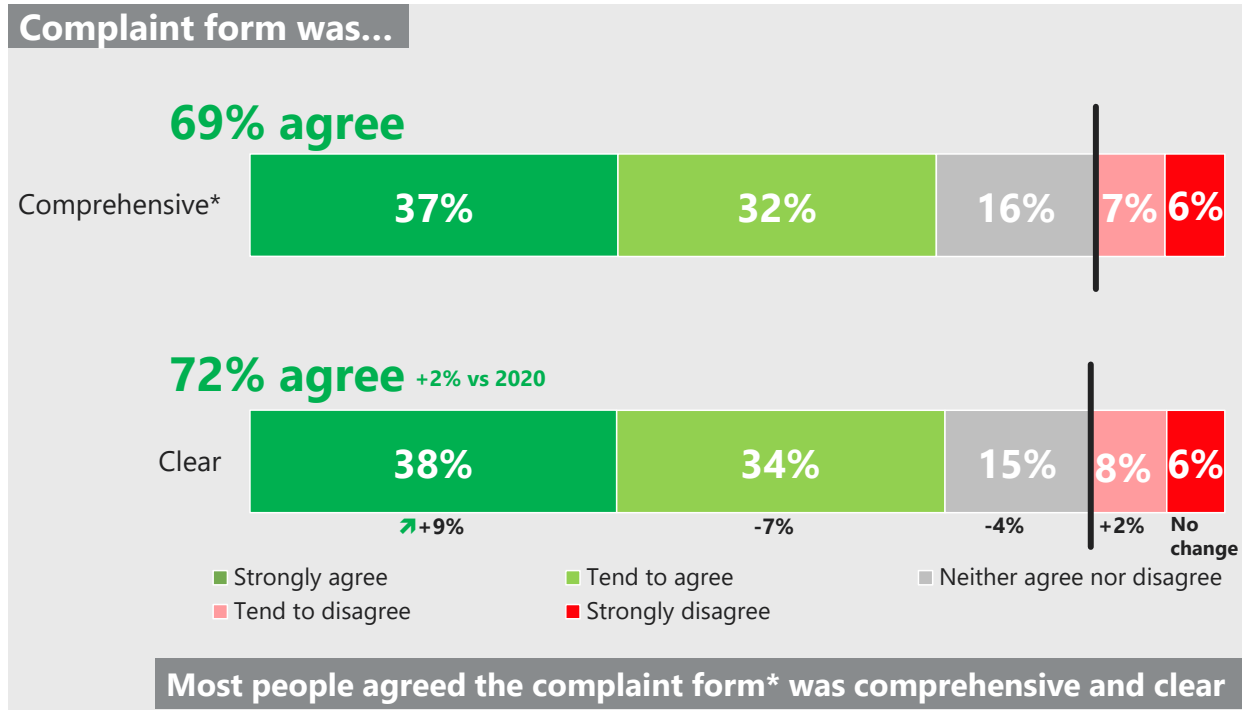
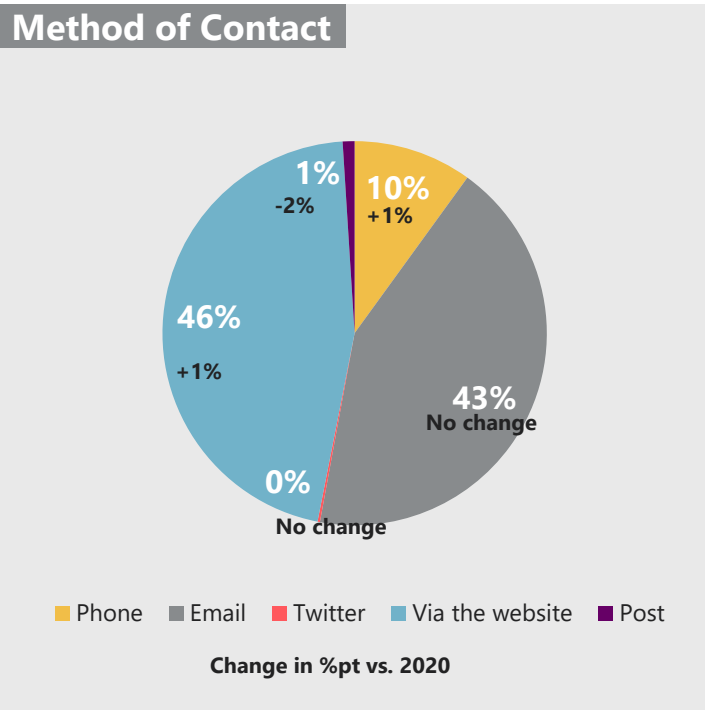
During the complaints process

64% ↘ -8%

When the complaint needed escalating beyond the Rail Operator

↗ ↘ Arrows denote a score which is significantly higher or lower at 95% confidence compared to previous wave

Online channels remain the most widely used method of contact. The complaint form is extensively seen as comprehensive and clear



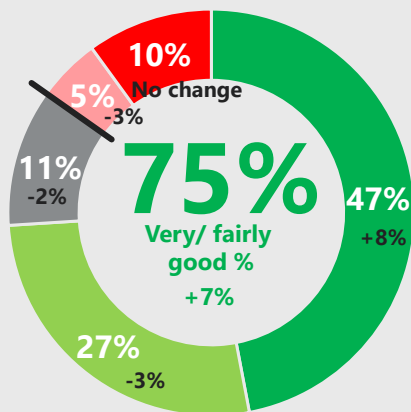
Q8. How did you first access the Rail Ombudsman to make your complaint? Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman (198)
 Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the initial complaint form was... Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman (198)
 *Q9 questionnaire change from "the initial online complaint form" to "the initial complaint form" and "Reliable" to "Comprehensive" in 2021.

Arrows denote a score which is significantly higher or lower at 95% confidence compared to previous wave

Three in four Rail Consumers rate the speed of response positively.

Additionally over two-thirds rate the different contact methods positively

Speed with which the Rail Consumer received an initial response



The different ways to contact the Rail Ombudsman about the complaint



- Very good
- Fairly good
- Neither good nor poor
- Fairly poor
- Very poor

Change in %pt vs. 2020

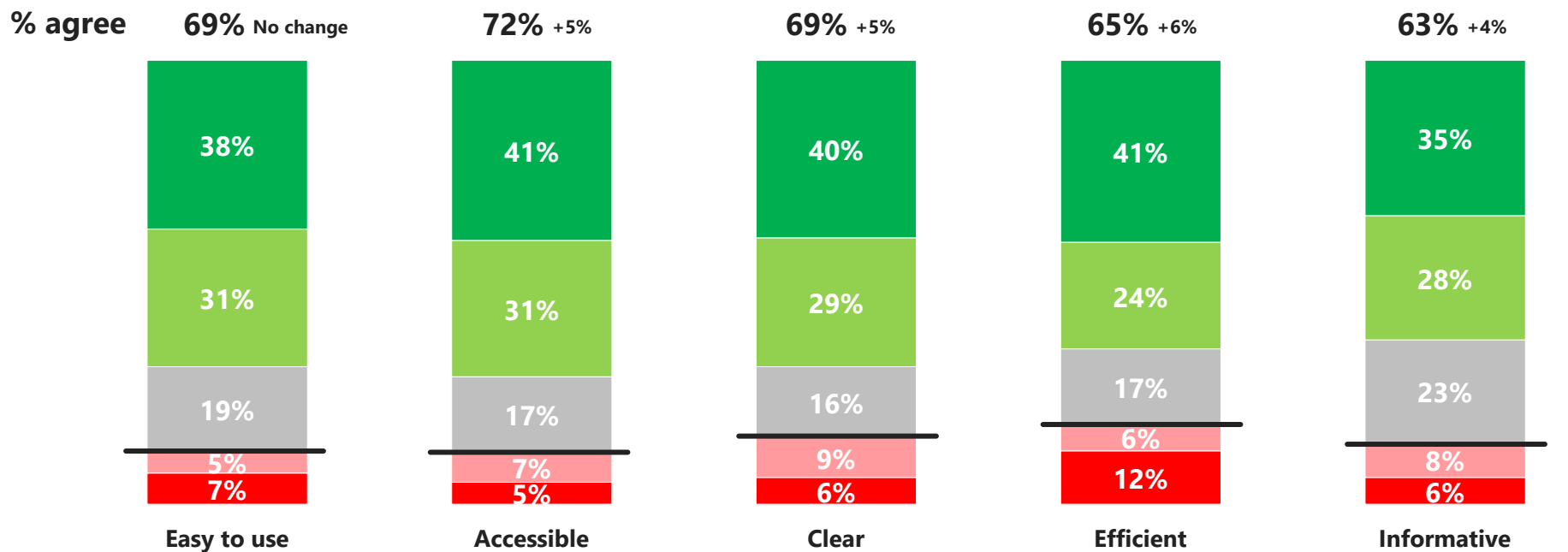


Q10. How would you rate the following aspects of your initial contact with the Rail Ombudsman? Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman (197)

Arrows denote a score which is significantly higher or lower at 95% confidence compared to previous wave

Around 70% of Rail Consumers agreed that the online application portal was easy to use, accessible and clear

The online application portal was...



■ Strongly agree
 ■ Tend to agree
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree
 ■ Tend to disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 Change in %pt vs. 2020

Q17. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the online application portal is... Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman (192)

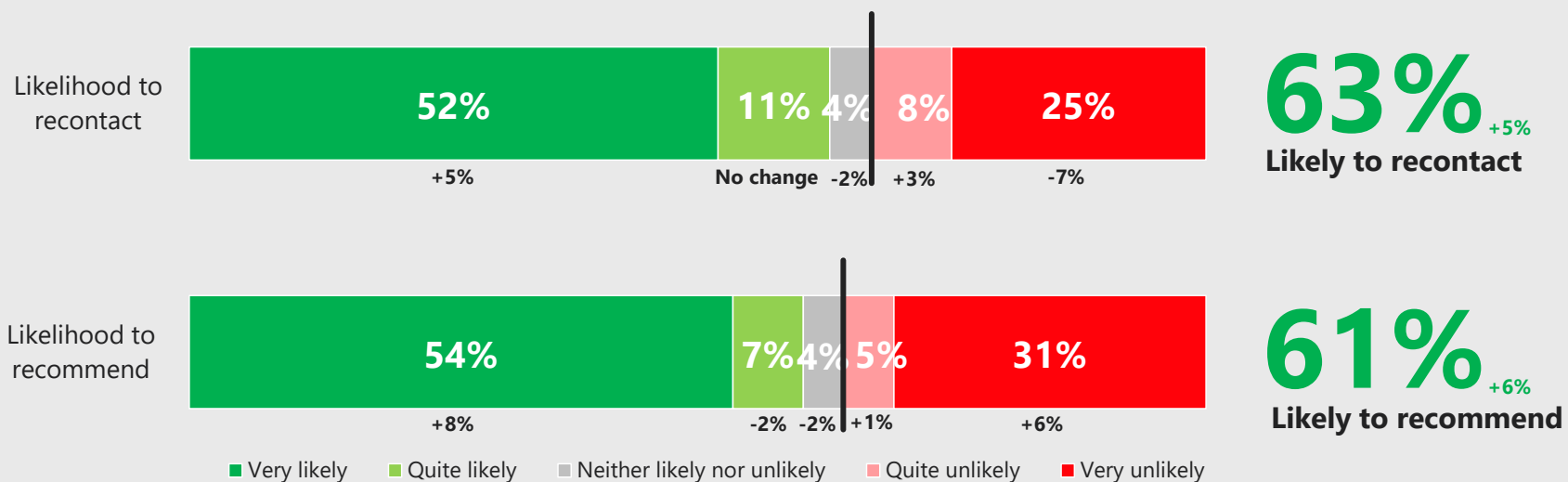
*Q17 questionnaire change from "the application portal" to the "online application portal" in 2021.

↗ ↘ Arrows denote a score which is significantly higher or lower at 95% confidence compared to previous wave

Over 60% of complainants are likely to recontact or recommend the Rail

Ombudsman

Based on the experience...



Q22. Based on your recent experience, how likely or unlikely are you to contact the Rail Ombudsman again if you had another complaint?
Q23. Based on your recent experience, how likely or unlikely are you to recommend the Rail Ombudsman to someone who has a complaint? Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman (192)

Arrows denote a score which is significantly higher or lower at 95% confidence compared to previous wave

Over half of Rail Consumers felt Covid-19 did not impact their case, but a larger percentage (+20%) believe that it did compared to 2020

57% ↘-20%

Do not believe that Covid-19 had a bearing on the complaint they escalated while **43%** (+20% vs 2020) believe that it did

66% ↘-8%

Do not believe that Covid-19 had a negative operational effect on the consideration of the case while **34%** (+8% vs 2020) believe that it did

Change in %pt vs. 2020

“ My request for a refund was as a result of a cancelled journey due to a positive COVID-19 test the day prior to planned travel. ”

Simple case

“ My complaint was based on the Operator's failure (twice) to adhere to its own, and national, COVID protocols. ”

Complex case

“ I had to cancel a booking due to lockdown and was told I could rebook but I couldn't as I didn't know how long the lockdown would be. I stated I would accept a voucher to use when the situation eased but this was refused. ”

Complex case

“ COVID was the reason we couldn't use the tickets, COVID was the reason the booking office was shut and we couldn't return the tickets in a timely manner. COVID was the reason everyone was working from home and no continuity with the operator. ”

Simple case



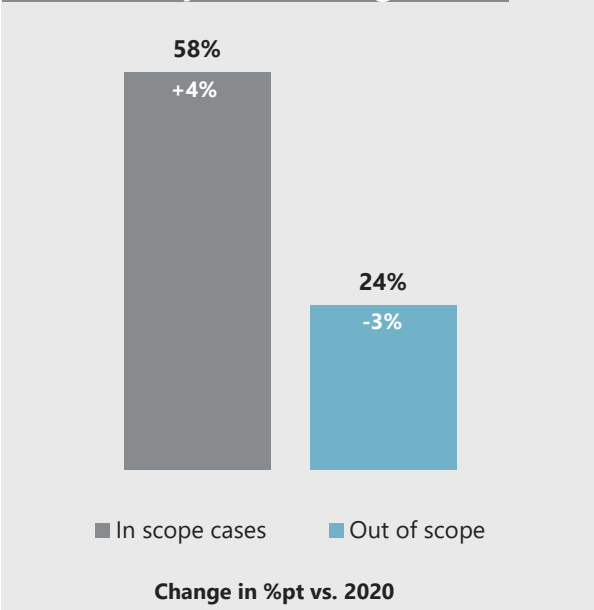
Q21a. Did the COVID-19 pandemic, or the restrictions or limitations caused by it, have any bearing on the complaint you escalated to the Ombudsman? **Q21b.** Do you feel that any of the operational changes the Ombudsman has had to make during the COVID-19 pandemic have had a negative effect on the process of considering your case? Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman (198)

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In addition to cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman, we also surveyed Rail Consumers whose cases were out of scope

Naturally, Rail Consumers with out of scope complaints feel aggrieved about their experience, although one quarter of them did rate positively

Overall experience % good



Why do you rate your experience negatively?

“ It was unfair I bought a disabled railcard with my benefit money as I can't work. COVID hit and I couldn't travel. They couldn't sort my problem. I didn't even want a refund, I wanted another rail card. ” **Out of Scope**

“ No action taken whatsoever despite experiencing a theft of my luggage on the train, surrounded by CCTV. Escalated to Rail Ombudsman and Police and nothing was done whatsoever. ” **Out of Scope**



Q1. Taking everything into consideration how would you rate your overall experience with the Rail Ombudsman? Base: Cases dealt with by the Rail Ombudsman (198), Out of scope (128)

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THANK YOU

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Ipsos MORI's Standards & Accreditations

Ipsos MORI's standards & accreditations provide our clients with the peace of mind that they can always depend on us to deliver reliable, sustainable findings. Moreover, our focus on quality and continuous improvement means we have embedded a 'right first time' approach throughout our organisation.



ISO 20252 – is the international market research specific standard that supersedes BS 7911 / MRQSA & incorporates IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme); it covers the 5 stages of a Market Research project. Ipsos MORI was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.



MRS Company Partnership – By being an MRS Company Partner, Ipsos MORI endorse and support the core MRS brand values of professionalism, research excellence and business effectiveness, and commit to comply with the MRS Code of Conduct throughout the organisation & we were the first company to sign our organisation up to the requirements & self regulation of the MRS Code; more than 350 companies have followed our lead.



ISO 9001 – International general company standard with a focus on continual improvement through quality management systems. In 1994 we became one of the early adopters of the ISO 9001 business standard.



ISO 27001 – International standard for information security designed to ensure the selection of adequate and proportionate security controls. Ipsos MORI was the first research company in the UK to be awarded this in August 2008.



The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) & the UK Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) – Ipsos MORI is required to comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the UK Data Protection Act; it covers the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy.

Ipsos MORI is an active member of **EphMRA** and **BHBIA**.



HMG Cyber Essentials – A government backed and key deliverable of the UK's National Cyber Security Programme. Ipsos MORI was assessment validated for certification in 2016. Cyber Essentials defines a set of controls which, when properly implemented, provide organisations with basic protection from the most prevalent forms of threat coming from the internet.



Fair Data – Ipsos MORI is signed up as a 'Fair Data' Company by agreeing to adhere to ten core principles. The principles support and complement other standards such as ISOs, and the requirements of Data Protection legislation.

This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for market research, ISO 20252 and with the Ipsos MORI Terms and Conditions.