The Rail Census

Data Qualification

The Rail Census is a snapshot of rail usage on a single day. While this survey is broadly representative of a typical weekday it is important to remember that it does not present systematic use or provide information on variations in rail usage by day of week or seasonally.

Variation in rail usage from one day in a particular year to another day in the next year may be influenced by a range of factors. Some of these factors include operational changes such as amendments to timetables and frequencies of services, while other factors are outside the control of the operator, such as weather or the macroeconomic environment.

Although providing a robust annual trend, the data presents a snapshot only and does not provide a full picture of rail usage over the course of an entire year. The findings in this report should be interpreted in this context.

The National Heavy Rail Census

The National Heavy Rail Census, funded by the National Transport Authority, records rail patronage at every train station in the Country on one day of the year.

The 2017 Census is the sixth National Census. Prior to 2012, the Census was carried out in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) only.

The Census was conducted by surveyors counting the number of individuals boarding and alighting each service at each station for an entire day on 16th November 2017.

The month of November is chosen as a month which is unaffected by holidays and when most places of work and education are in full session.

Operating conditions on the day of the census were normal with no severe delays, cancellations or disruptions on the rail network. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that the Census was undertaken on a generally representative day.

Summary of the National Heavy Rail Census

Carried out in November 2017

Bulletin Topics:
• The Rail Census 2017
• Highlights of the National Rail Census 2017
• The National Rail Census 2016 v 2017
Overall the number of daily journeys on the rail network increased by 14% on 2016. DART accounted for 44%, Commuter services for 40% and Intercity for 11% of all journeys made on Census day.

Almost 75,000 journeys were made on the DART on Census day 2017, 11% more than in 2016.

Approximately 3,440 more passengers boarded commuter services on the Kildare line in 2017 than in 2016.

3,161 passengers boarded services operating via the Phoenix Park Tunnel on Census day 2017.

The greatest passenger flow during the morning peak hour was on DART services travelling towards Dublin between Clontarf Road and Connolly.

In 2017 the peak hour for boarding on DART and Maynooth lines was between 08:00-09:00. On the Kildare, Northern and South Eastern lines, the peak hour was 07:00-08:00.

Journeys in the GDA account for approximately 84% of total journeys undertaken nationally on Census day – this remains unchanged since 2013.

The numbers of rail journeys taken outside of the GDA on Census day 2017 increased by almost 18% relative to 2016.

5,894 passenger journeys were made on Cork Commuter lines on Census day, an increase of 5% on 2016.

There was a 22% increase in cross border patronage on the Enterprise Service between 2016 and 2017.

Daily throughput at Sallins and Naas increased by 47% since the reintroduction of passenger services through the Phoenix Park Tunnel and inclusion of the station in the short hop zone in 2017.

The 10 busiest stations on the network accounted for just under half (45%) of all passengers movements on the network.

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