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 season.

Variation in rail usage from one day to another in a particular 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 2018 Census is the seventh 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 15th November 2018.

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 service delays, cancellations or disruptions on the rail network. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that the Census was undertaken on a generally representative day.
Highlights from the 2018 Rail Census

178,058 journeys were taken on the day of the Census.

As in 2017, 12 stations handled in excess of 5,000 passengers, Connolly, Pearse, Houston and Tara continued to be the busiest stations handling one third of all passengers on census day.

Outside of Dublin, Kent Station in Cork City and Bray in Wexford feature in the top ten busiest stations in terms of passenger traffic.

Malahide is now the 6th busiest station in terms of boardings, having been ranked 5th in 2017 and 5th in 2016.

Daily throughput at Broombridge increased by 90% since the introduction of LUAS Cross City Services in December 2016. Broombridge Station offers interchange between the LUAS Green and Maynooth Rail Lines.

The 10 busiest stations on the network accounted for just under half (46%) of all passengers on census day.

Of the quietest stations, 8 experienced less than 200 daily journeys. This number has fallen by 34% since 2017.

21 stations in the Country experienced less than 100 journeys per day. This number has fallen by 32% since 2017.

Birdhill was the least used station on the network with just under half (46%) of all passengers on census day.

The busiest train in the country was the 08:10 DART service from Malahide to Bray carrying a total of 1,703 passengers.

The busiest Commuter service was the 08:02 Maynooth train.

Almost 82,000 journeys were made on the DART on Census day 2018, 10% more than in 2017.

Over the number of daily journeys on the rail network increased by 6% on 2017.

DART accounted for 46% of total journeys, and InterCity for 22% of all journeys made on Census day 2018. Commuter lines on Census day, an increase of 1% on 2017.

81,905 journeys were made on the DART on Census day 2018, 10% more than in 2017.

12 stations handled in excess of 5,000 passengers unchanged from 2017.

Overall the number of daily journeys on the rail network increased by 6% on 2017.

The 10 busiest stations on the network accounted for just under half (46%) of all passengers on census day.

The busiest train in the country was the 08:10 DART service from Malahide to Bray carrying a total of 1,703 passengers.

Approximately 1,668 more passengers boarded Commuter services on the Kildare line in 2018 than in 2017.

The peak passenger load on this service occurred between Clontarf Road and Connolly when 1,153 passengers were on board the train.

3,887 passengers boarded services operating via the Phoenix Park Tunnel on Census day 2018, up 23% on 2017.

In 2018 as in 2017 the peak hour for boarding on DART, Commuter services on the Kildare line was on Census day 2018, 10% more than in 2017.

There were increases in boardings on DART services in 2018 compared with 2017.

There was a 3% decrease in cross border patronage on the Enterprise Service between 2017 and 2018.

The number of daily journeys undertaken nationally on Census day were in the GDA.

Almost 1,670 more passengers boarded Kildare line commuter services in 2018 than in 2017.

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