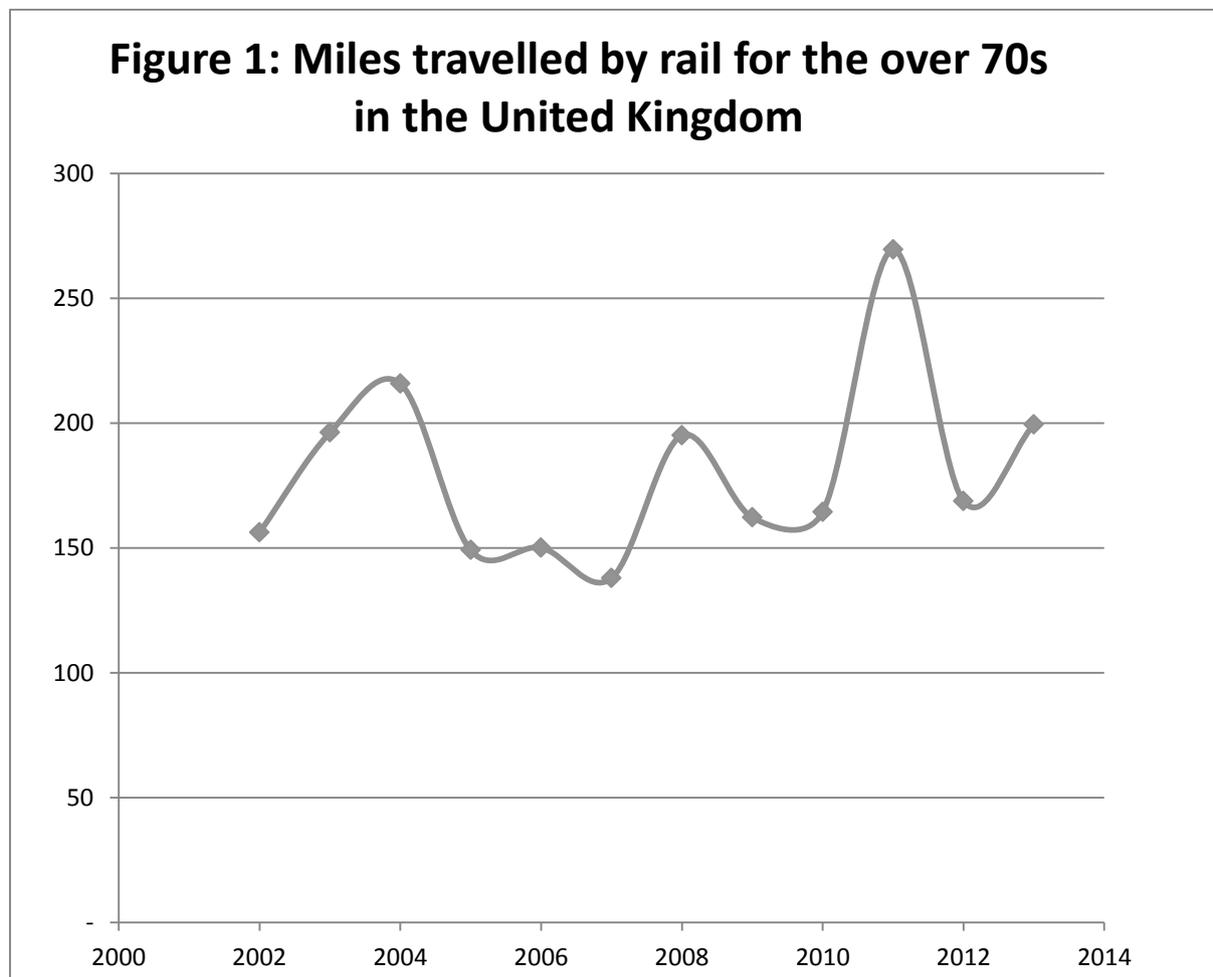


## Age Friendly Rail travel

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Over the past decade the amount of people using rail has grown significantly in the United Kingdom (UK), both absolutely and in terms of percentage of overall distance travelled. In the United Kingdom, rail travel has increased 67% between 1995/97 and 2013 (DfT, 2014). The increase is especially noticeable in early and middle aged adults and is not anywhere near as pronounced in later life, indeed those aged over 70 years of age have stayed around similar levels, fluctuating between 130 and 200 miles (except a peak of 269 miles in 2010) per person per year, accounting for between 4 and 6% of miles travelled. Figure 1 shows the recent trends in miles travelled by rail for the over 70s, with a peak in 2012 of over 260 miles and a trough of below 150 in 2007. There is little explanation for these peaks and troughs. Across the lifecourse, train usage begins to fall from 60 years onwards (DfT, 2014), some of which is linked to decreasing travel as commuters or for work purposes (DfT 2014). Overall, there is very little research on older people's use of railways but I've tried to highlight below what there is.



Older people have higher satisfaction with their train travel including being positive about price and the overall journey experience. This maybe because of making more recreational journeys than the average train user – leisure users are more satisfied than those using it for work and commuters

across all ages, for example (Ormerod et al., 2015). Searching through passenger data from Passenger Focus (2015) reveals the following:

- Getting a seat on a train is a higher priority for older passengers than it is for younger passengers and from 60 years onwards it becomes more important than cost of the ticket.
- Older rail passengers are more likely than rail passengers in general to want to be kept informed about the journey and any delays (Passenger Focus, 2015) and
- Older rail passengers compared to younger and middle age rail passengers, are less likely to be concerned about free wi-fi being available.
- There is more concern with the state and cleanliness of the carriage and of the toilet facilities from 65 years onwards (Passenger Focus, 2015).
- Passengers aged over 60 prioritise these over length of journey and frequency of services, possibly showing their more intermittent and leisure use.

Station design is also of vital for older people. For those with mobility impairments or want a little help going upstairs with heavy luggage, we have seen lifts being put in now on most principal stations, but little consideration has been made as to the location of the lifts which are often at one end of the platform requiring much walking to and from them to get the train which often stops in the middle! Stations naturally must have indoor waiting areas and toilets wherever possible. Older people can feel more vulnerable on trains and station and visibility is key to this; older people feel more vulnerable and are less likely to use the station where there is a lack of staff, lack of other passengers, lack of lighting and dark enclosed waiting areas (Cozens et al., 2004). This can be placated somewhat through better design. An excellent project was carried out on the valley lines in Wales which resulted in better designed stations. In particular, Dingle Road was re-designed from a station that contained two old enclosed shelters to one that contained a see-through shelter which improved feelings of safety for all age groups (Cozens et al., 2004). Consideration of platform barriers in and out of the station must weigh up pros and cons of accessibility, allowing family, friends, carers and helpers to carry luggage and help on and off the train without the need for a ticket and without the need for older people to make mistakes with the barrier system, causing anxiety and stress.

Ticketing is complex in the UK for all everyone, let alone people either (1) not used to using the railway and not using it regularly, as many older people fit this category as they are less likely to be using the rail regularly for work, for example; (2) who suffer some cognitive challenge, which again many begin to acquire as we get older. Making tickets more straightforward and legible is needed, both in terms of who can use the ticket when and where (the validity of the tickets allowed on which services is highly complex) but also on the ticket printed out itself. Allowing a single ticket or card to move between different modes of transport, say between bus and train and certainly between buses is needed. The Oyster card in London is a great example of this. Consideration of free or concessionary travel should be investigated. The free bus pass in the UK for older people, for example has been hugely successful in keeping older people mobile and in turn keeping them connected, fit and healthy (see Mackett, 2013 for an overview). A recent report by Greener Travel (2014), in conjunction with KPMG LLP, used DfT guidance on economic appraisal and found for every £1 spent on the 'free' bus pass for older people, £2.87 is returned back into the economy (Ormerod et al., 2015).

Older people more than other groups value the importance of staff to help them at rail stations and on train services. They are more likely to trust information if it is given from authority figures, for example railway staff, and like the staff to be friendly and approachable (Musselwhite, 2011). They use staff for timetable information, especially if trains get delayed or things go wrong, whereas other groups are more likely now to use mobile ICT and apps (Musselwhite, 2011). They use staff for backing up information they see on screens or hear over the announcements which they trust less than younger groups. They also often want staff available should they need help carrying cases.

So, overall an age friendly railway service must have the following:

**(1) Railways must be accessibility.** The railways station and train must be accessible, especially help with mobility but also in terms of facilities, and crucially, seating and toilets. If services are likely to be full or a seat cannot be booked in advance or a train does not have toilet facilities, older people need to be made aware of this and be given opportunities to alter or change travel at no additional cost.

**(2) Railways must have integrated and simple ticketing.** Clear ticket labelling and pricing and the possibility of integrated Oyster Card style ticketing be investigated. Concessionary or free fares would really benefit older passengers and should be considered.

**(3) Railways must have available helpful and friendly staff.** Having staff that are trained to deal with issues that older people might face, that have the time and patience to deal with enquiries and concerns are crucial. Staff must be on hand to be able to help escort passengers and their luggage to their seats without much hassle and without making older people feel a burden. Staff training should emphasise an age friendly approach, as has been undertaken by many bus companies, for example. If no staff are to be available, again older people need to be alerted and opportunities to make alternative travel, at no extra cost, be offered.

**(4) Railways must be safe.** The railway station and train itself must feel safe to use. Presence of staff can aid this, but also design is crucial with visibility being the key. Where staff are present they must be visible and approachable for the passengers.

**(5) Railways must provide an attractive service.** The railway service should be clean and presented in an attractive manner.

**(6) Railways must provide an intuitive, information based system.** Clearly labelled exits and entrances placed on stations. Clear instructions on services with updated information on delays and changes to the service are needed at all times. Information often needs verifying by staff members and this should be done as a matter of course not only when something goes awry.

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