



NYPIRG

Straphangers Campaign

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NEWS RELEASE

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Subway Cars Are Dirtier, 15 of 22 Lines Worsen, Annual “Shmutz” Survey Finds

Cars on E and M Lines the Dirtiest; 4 Line the Cleanest

The number of clean subway cars decreased for the second year in a row, according to the eighth annual “subway shmutz” survey by the NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign, released today.

The survey was conducted on 2,200 subway cars on 22 subway lines between September 2, 2005 and January 5, 2006.

Campaign surveyors rated 47% of subway cars as “clean” down from 61% of cars rated clean in a survey released in the spring 2005. This continued to reverse an earlier trend of improvement found between 2000 and 2004, with the percentage of clean cars going from 32% in the campaign’s 2000 survey, to 47% in 2001, to 59% in 2003, to 66% in the 2004 survey.

Cars on 15 of 22 subway lines saw significant deterioration since last year’s survey (2, 7, A, B, C, D, E, G, J/Z, L, M, N, R, V and W), while cars on only three lines grew better (1, 3 and 4). Cars on the remaining four lines were largely unchanged (5, 6, F and Q.) (See attached table one.)

The worst performing lines were the E and M, with the smallest number of clean cars at 2% and 4%, respectively. The E and M performed next-to-worst in last year’s survey, with 35% of their cars rated clean; only the 1 line at 14% had a poorer performance. The best performing line was the 4, with 94% of those cars rated clean, up from 71% last year.

Cars were rated for cleanliness of floors and seats, following MTA New York City Transit’s official standards for measuring car cleanliness. Cars were rated as clean if they were “basically dirt free” or had “light dirt” (“occasional ‘ground-in’ spots but generally clean”). The survey did not rate litter. Since 1997, the campaign has conducted seven largely similar studies for similar periods. (See attached methodology.)

“Subway cars are growing dirtier,” said Gene Russianoff, campaign staff attorney, noting the group’s finding that subway car cleanliness dropped the last two years in a row.

“There’s no excuse for the great disparities in car cleanliness we found,” said Neysa Pranger, Straphangers Campaign coordinator who directed the survey.

The campaign had attributed improved cleanliness found in our surveys in 1999-2000, 2000-2001, and 2002-2003 to New York City Transit's decision to restore cleaning staff that had been cut in the mid-1990's.

Pranger noted that in 2003, New York City Transit adopted a "cleaner deployment savings" program, cutting \$8.9 million in 2003 and \$8.4 million in 2004. At the time, transit officials said these savings would be achieved through better scheduling and not staff reductions.

Further cleaning cuts were implemented in 200, according to the New York City Transit budget, with plans to save \$1.6 million by not filling vacancies in subway car cleaning staff.

Following the campaign's April 2005 report findings members, New York City Transit said: "This year's Straphanger survey rating the cleanliness of MTA New York City Transit's subway car interiors noted a decrease in the number of clean cars compared with last year's survey. New York City Transit's own Passenger Environment Survey (PES) also noted an increase in the number of cars with soiled floors and seats, though not as pronounced. 'We are not pleased with the cleanliness figures generated either by the Straphangers or our own internal audit,' said New York City Transit President Lawrence G. Reuter."

The New York City Transit budget indicated that a new cleaning initiative would not increase subway car cleaning. The 2006 budget says: "Transit's program will improve appearance and safety. It will offer increased general station and track cleaning, provide additional refuse collection from stations and track (to reduce fires) and repair water intrusion in its tunnels. The costs of these programs are \$12.8 million in 2006 and \$15.0 million in 2007 and beyond."

Transit officials have also blamed increases in trash in the subways to increases in ridership.

"Transit officials need to do more to keeping subway car clean," said Gene Russianoff, noting that survey did not rate litter but "grime" which often builds up without the fault of riders. "If the MTA takes in more fares with more riders, it must do a better job cleaning subway cars."

Other key findings of the survey included:

- The most deteriorated line was the E, which fell from 35% to 2%.
- The most improved line was the 1 line going from 14% clean cars in the campaign's 2005 survey to 76% in the current survey.
- MTA New York City Transit's own cleanliness survey shows a small decline in subway car cleanliness for the most recently available period. The number of clean car floors and seats (those with no or light dirt) "measured throughout the day while in service" worsened from 81% in the second half of 2004 to 79% in the first half of 2005.

The campaign urged transit officials to:

- devote more resources to cleaning subway cars, as they are now applying to station and track cleaning;
- produce more detailed and timely information on cleanliness. The MTA does not publish the results of its cleanliness ratings by line, even though it maintains such information for internal use. Russianoff said, “Transit officials should use ‘hand-held’ computers in their own passenger environment survey. This would provide more timely information.” It is the campaign’s understanding that such a pilot computer program is underway.
- post the results of its surveys where riders can see them. The campaign credited the MTA for providing several system-wide performance measures on its website, such as regularity of service, and urged the MTA to add the results of its line-by-line cleanliness surveys to www.mta.info.

This survey was funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, a leader in supporting assessment of public services. The findings can also be found on the Internet at www.straphangers.org.























TABLE ONE
Percentage of Clean Cars by Line*

	2004 Survey	2005 Survey	Significant Improvement?***	Significant Deterioration?***
1	14%	76%	✓	
2	58%	22%		✓
3	59%	75%	✓	
4	71%	94%	✓	
5	70%	59%		
6	78%	79%		
7	51%	22%		✓
A	81%	46%		✓
B	48%	24%		✓
C	69%	53%		✓
D	81%	53%		✓
E	35%	2%		✓
F	54%	49%		
G	78%	49%		✓
J&Z	71%	17%		✓
L	72%	61%		✓
M	35%	4%		✓
N	86%	65%		✓
Q	64%	69%		
R	59%	43%		✓
V	42%	23%		✓
W	74%	56%		✓
System Average	61%	47%		✓

*2005 survey based on 2,200 observations of subway cars by NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign between September 2005 and January 2006. A car was rated "clean" if surveyor found no or light interior dirt.

***.05 level used for tests of significance.

TABLE TWO
Worst to Best: Percentage of Clean Cars by Line*
September 2005-January 2006

	2%
	4%
	17%
	22%
	22%
	23%
	24%
	43%
	46%
	49%
	49%
	53%
	53%
	56%
	59%
	61%
	65%
	69%
	75%
	76%
	79%
	94%
System Average	47%

*Based on NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign of 2,200 subway cars between September 2005 and January 2006. A car was rated "clean" if it had no or light interior dirt.

Methodology: “Shmutz” Subway Cleanliness Survey, 2005

Background

This report is intended as a follow-up to the April 1998, February 1999, January 2000, February 2001, March 2003, March 2004 and April 2005 NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign surveys, *Subway Shmutz: Cleanliness in New York City Subway Cars*. The methodology followed in this survey is identical to that used in the 2000-2005 reports. One adjustment to the methodology of the 1998 and 1999 surveys is noted below.

Preparation

In July 1997, August 1999 and again in September 2002, our project directors accompanied members of the New York City Transit Passenger Environment Survey (PES) staff on an in-field mock rating of some 15 cars on two subway lines. This session included clarification of New York City Transit’s own rating system. We also received the actual survey form used by PES staff. PES looks at several measurements of the subway car environment, including car and seat cleanliness. Our survey is an in-depth measurement of car floor and seat cleanliness only.

Rating System

PES surveyors evaluate the cleanliness of subway car floors and seats with a four-level rating system in which a score of 1 represents the highest cleanliness rating and a score of 4 represents the lowest. The following definitions are from the New York City Transit’s Passenger Environment Survey, 1st Quarter 1997 and are still in use:

<u>Score</u>	<u>PES terminology</u>	<u>PES definition</u>
1	None	Basically dirt free.
2	Light	Occasional “ground-in” spots but generally clean.
3	Moderate	Dingy floor, one or two sticky dry spots.
4	Heavy	Heavy dirt; <u>any</u> opened or spilled food, hazardous (e.g. rolling bottles), or malodorous conditions, sticky wet spots, any seats unusable due to unclean conditions.

The PES notes that “the nature of the dirt (e.g. spilled food, malodorous floor/seat condition, etc.) is also considered in addition to just the volume.”*

We believe our definitions more accurately reflect the meaning behind each score:

<u>Score</u>	<u>PES terminology</u>	<u>Straphangers Campaign terminology</u>
1	None	Extraordinarily Clean
2	Light	Clean
3	Moderate	Dirty
4	Heavy	Heavily Dirty

In our study, we used a numbered system identical to the one listed above. However, we modified the terms to describe each rating.

* Passenger Environment Survey, New York City Transit, First Quarter 1997, p. 11

Survey

Our project directors trained 44 surveyors. Between September 2, 2005 to January 5, 2006, surveyors rated exactly 100 subway cars on each of 22 lines*, similar to the size of PES samples. We did not survey the Grand Central-Times Square, Rockaway and Franklin Avenue Shuttles because of the short length of these routes. Measurements were taken both on weekdays and weekends, during rush hours, and evening and overnight hours.

Analysis of Survey Data

All survey data submitted was visually inspected for error and then coded for entry into a spreadsheet format. After entering the data, we calculated both by-line and systemwide totals. The percentage of cars rated “dirty” and “heavily dirty” were combined to offer a measurement of the proportion of cars with an unacceptable level of interior dirt. Similarly, “extraordinarily clean” and “clean” rating totals were combined to reflect the proportion of subway cars with an acceptable level of dirt. Systemwide car cleanliness proportion is significant at the .05 confidence level within plus or minus 3%. By-line cleanliness levels are significant at the .05 confidence level within plus or minus 4-11%:

Line	Percent Clean or Extraordinarily Clean	Confidence Interval
1	76%	9%
2	22%	9%
3	75%	9%
4	94%	6%
5	59%	11%
6	79%	9%
7	22%	9%
A	46%	11%
B	24%	9%
C	53%	11%
D	53%	11%
E	2%	4%
F	49%	11%
G	49%	11%
J	17%	8%
L	61%	11%
M	4%	5%
N	65%	10%
Q	69%	10%
R	43%	11%
V	23%	9%
W	56%	11%
System	47%	3%

* The sample size per line is identical to that used in the 2000-2005 surveys. In 2002, two new lines—the V and W—were included in our analysis. In 1999 and 1998 Straphangers Campaign surveyors rated *approximately* 100 cars on each line surveyed.

Table One notes that in the period between the 2004 and 2005 surveys, car conditions deteriorated significantly systemwide. By-line car conditions improved on three lines and deteriorated on fifteen lines. These results are significant at the .05 level.

Comparison with PES Survey Data

The survey's finding of improvement mirror the trend in MTA New York City Transit own Passenger Environment Surveys (PES), which shows a deterioration in subway car cleanliness for the most recently available period. The number of clean car floors and seats (those with no or light dirt) "measured throughout the day while in service" declined from 81% in the second half of 2004 to 79% in the second half of 2005. (The PES used to be issued on a quarterly basis, but now only comes out twice a year. Reduced PES were part of the 2005 budget's "Program to Eliminate the Gap.") In past surveys, New York City Transit has rated subway cars as considerably more clean than has the campaign's surveys.

Credits

The NYPIRG Straphangers Campaign wishes to thank 44 volunteers who assisted in the survey. They are:

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