We need bouncers on trains to stop headphone dodgers

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If Wetherspoons can ban "bare beating", why can't my train operator? Bare beating is the scourge of our times — the ghastly practice of playing music (or videos or phone calls or social media clips) out loud on a phone in shared public spaces has reached epidemic proportions.

I have lost count of the number of times that my commute has been ruined by some "headphone dodger" noisily devouring a surfeit of TikToks. And I am not alone. A recent survey found that eight out of ten passengers hate this abominable practice.

There is some good news, however. Wetherspoons, that last, great bastion of civilisation and manners, has vowed to eliminate bare beating from all of its 792 pubs.

So if they can stamp out this noise pollution, why can't the same happen on trains? Of course, pubs have one advantage over transport providers: they employ bouncers. The idea of enforcement is baked in to their business model. Transport operators, on the other hand, have largely given up on enforcing rules across their networks. Regulations and financial penalties already exist to tackle bare beating, but they are rarely applied and seldom enforced.

This lack of enforcement seems most egregious on the London Underground. Not only do headphone dodgers go unmolested but carriages are festooned with graffiti, fare evaders go unchallenged, and those consuming alcohol openly (in spite of an existing ban) go unadmonished.

And the absence of meaningful consequences does not just apply to anti-social behaviour. Out-and-out criminality has also been left to fester. Sexual assaults on the Tube network are at a five-year high and last year the number of assaults on staff doubled compared to just one year prior. Anarchy reigns on the Tube, it seems.

We cannot expect the travelling public or even regular rank-and-file staff to confront miscreant headphone dodgers any more than we can expect them to wrestle the horde of gropers, graffiti artists and fare evaders to the ground. To do so would risk confrontation, intimidation and even violence. That is too much to ask.

What we urgently need are the equivalent of transport bouncers to patrol the network and actually enforce the rules that exist to protect us. I don't care if they are British Transport Police, PCSOs or just trained security staff. But a visible deterrent is required to combat bad manners and criminality alike.