



Bus Mystery Traveller Research

October 2009

Introduction

In 2008 the Department for Transport (DfT) announced that Passenger Focus would become responsible for representing the interests of bus and coach passengers in England outside of London. This is in addition to the watchdog's existing role of representing Britain's rail passengers.

Passenger Focus expects to assume these new responsibilities in April 2010. To ensure Passenger Focus really understands what bus and coach passengers think of these services extensive passenger research will be undertaken. Assuming responsibility of this new role Passenger Focus has been busy carrying out passenger satisfaction research in six "pilot areas" of England. This pilot work will help identify how to carry out robust and meaningful bus passenger research and how the results can be used to bring about improvements in bus services from both operators and transport authorities.

Passenger Focus is also working in three further pilot areas in England where bus representatives are working with bus and coach operators and the relevant transport authorities to discuss the results of the research.

In preparation for this important role for bus and coach passengers Passenger Focus have taken over publication of the Bus Mystery Traveller Survey that was previously managed by the DfT.

Each quarter 1200 journeys are assessed by trained researchers to assess aspects of the journey objectively and consistently. The work is carried out across nine urban areas:

- The six Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) areas of Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, West Midlands and Tyne & Wear
- Bristol
- Nottingham
- Leicester

The journeys chosen give good coverage of both urban and outer area journeys and include as many operators and services as possible.

The DfT first commissioned this work in 2006 to address concerns that the high scores achieved in bus passenger satisfaction research reflected low expectations on the part of bus passengers.

The Bus Mystery Traveller Survey sits within a suite of passenger research. The results will be published widely and made accessible and useful to the bus industry.

Methodology

This report presents the key results from the Bus Mystery Traveller survey for the financial year 2008-2009. The fieldwork for this survey was carried out by the DfT and the results data then passed to Passenger Focus for analysis and publication.

Researchers rate the environment at the bus stop, the bus itself, the punctuality and quality of the journey and the behaviour of the driver.

Key Results

Overall

Overall, the assessors rated bus journeys highly, with overall satisfaction scoring 79 points out of 100. (Table 1)

The highest overall ratings were given for the clarity of the route / destination on the front of the bus and the overall level of graffiti on the bus exterior, with scores of 94 and 96 respectively. (Table 1)

The composite indicators for exterior cleanliness and ease of boarding / alighting scored highly at 86 and 88 points out of 100 respectively. (Table 1)

The lowest rating was given for the helpfulness of driver and consideration for passengers at 66 points out of 100. (Table 1)

The overall scores are largely unchanged from those published by the DfT for the financial year 2007-2008 in "Transport Statistics Bulletin", 2008 Edition.

There were substantial differences in the bus passenger experience in different areas. (Table 1)

Bus Stop Information

Bus stops without shelters are often also without timetable information. In some areas a large proportion of bus stops without shelters did not display timetable information. Overall 70 per cent of bus stops without shelters had timetable information, 30 per cent did not.

Where a bus shelter was available, the proportion of stops with a legible timetable available rose to 94 per cent across all regions. (Table 3)

Quality of Driving and Driver Behaviour

The survey scored two aspects of quality of driving: appropriateness of speed and general smoothness of ride, although the latter may have been affected by the state of the bus and the roads. Scores for appropriateness of speed were higher at 82 per cent than those given for smoothness of ride, at 77 per cent. Scores for both of these indicators do not appear to be greatly affected by the type of weather or by the type of bus. (Table 1 & Table 6)

The scores for helpfulness of driver and consideration for passengers are lowest in the West Midlands at 59 points out of 100. These scores do not seem to be consistently affected by the particular question asked of the driver. (Table 1 & Table 6)

Punctuality

The overall 76 per cent of buses arrived within the punctuality window of 1 minute early to 5 minutes late - comparable to the results of the 2008 Bus Mystery Traveller Survey. 7 per cent were more than 1 minute early and 16 per cent more than 5 minutes late. As expected,

the percentage of late buses increased during peak hours. The percentage of buses arriving on time was highest in Tyne & Wear at 91 per cent. (Table 7 & Table 8)

Overall the average scores for overall satisfaction were higher when the bus was on time. Satisfaction was generally lower when the bus was early and lowest when the bus was late, although this was not the case in all areas. (Table 10)

Overall, the highest levels of lateness were found between 8:00 and 9:59, when 23 per cent of buses arrived late. (Table 8)

Litter

The level of litter within the bus tended to increase throughout the day, with the average score for all regions decreasing from 89 between 7:00 and 7:59 to a low of 69 between 17:00 and 17:59. (Table 9)

Table 1: Average scores for all indicators by area, 2008/09

	Total	Greater Man.	Mersey-side	South Yorkshire	Tyne & Wear	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Non-PTE Areas
Your overall satisfaction with this bus trip	79	81	79	72	82	79	77	79
Cleanliness of bus stop / shelter	75	74	77	82	83	78	64	71
Helpfulness of driver and consideration for passengers	66	70	63	72	72	59	66	62
Appropriateness of speed	82	82	84	82	81	79	85	83
General smoothness of ride	77	80	81	81	79	75	72	75
Level of graffiti	89	88	85	97	91	88	86	94
Presence of etching on windows	90	93	94	97	91	77	84	97
Crowding	82	79	86	80	75	86	85	83
Availability of lower deck seating	80	78	86	79	75	83	82	81
Availability of upper deck seating	90	87	96	86	83	92	94	90
Interior cleanliness	77	76	78	77	83	76	71	79
Cleanliness of windows	74	80	76	75	82	74	66	68
Level of litter	76	70	76	75	83	76	72	83
Clarity of route number / destination	90	92	84	86	92	91	91	91
Clarity of route number / destination - front	94	93	93	88	93	96	95	96
Clarity of route number / destination blinds - back	76	79	76	78	82	75	74	68
Exterior cleanliness	86	86	85	87	90	87	83	83

Table 1 continued: Average scores for all indicators by area, 2008/09

Overall cleanliness of exterior – front and side	76	79	76	78	82	75	74	68
Overall level of graffiti on bus exterior	96	93	94	97	98	98	92	99
Ease of boarding / alighting	88	86	92	90	89	85	87	89
Closeness of bus to kerb-boarding	88	87	92	91	89	85	86	88
Closeness of bus door to stop-boarding	88	86	92	91	89	85	88	90
Closeness of bus to kerb-alighting	88	86	91	89	89	85	88	88

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction scores by area, 2008/09

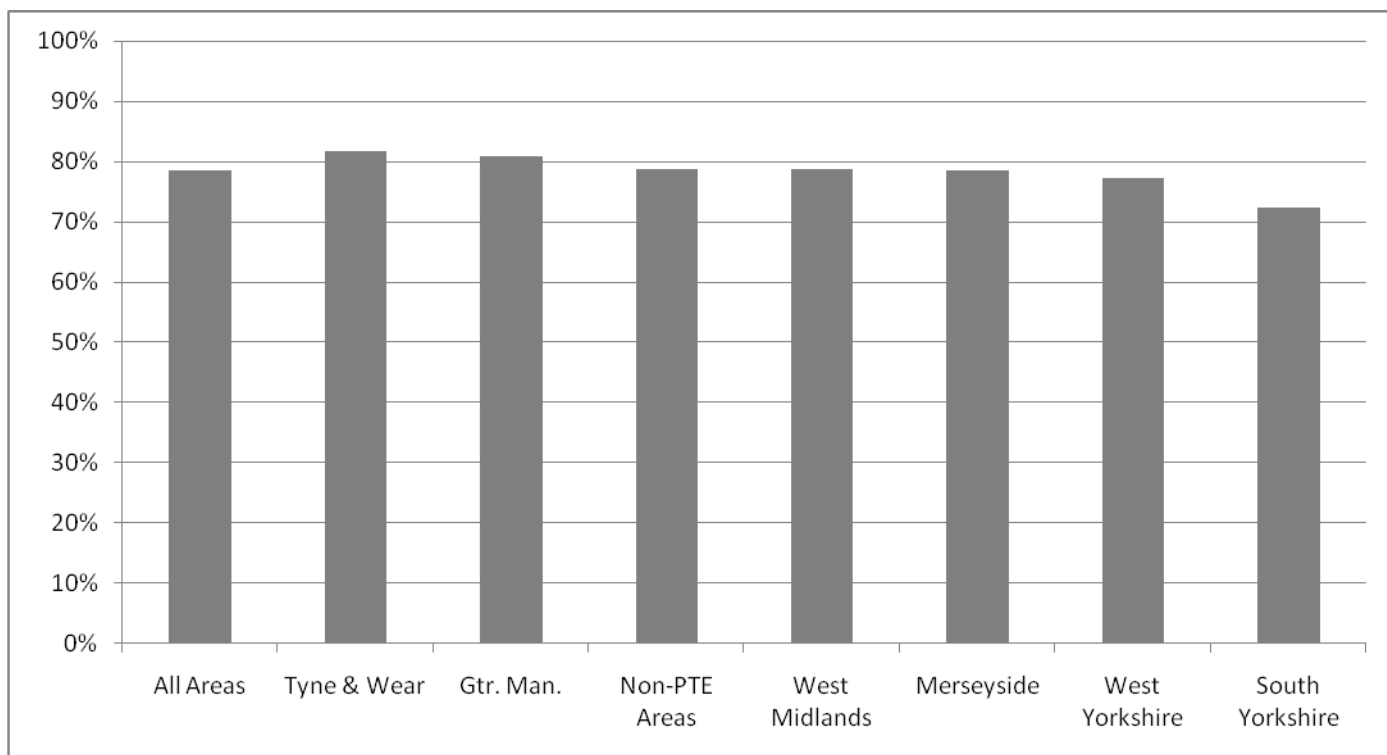


Figure 2: Average overall scores for selected indicators, 2008/09

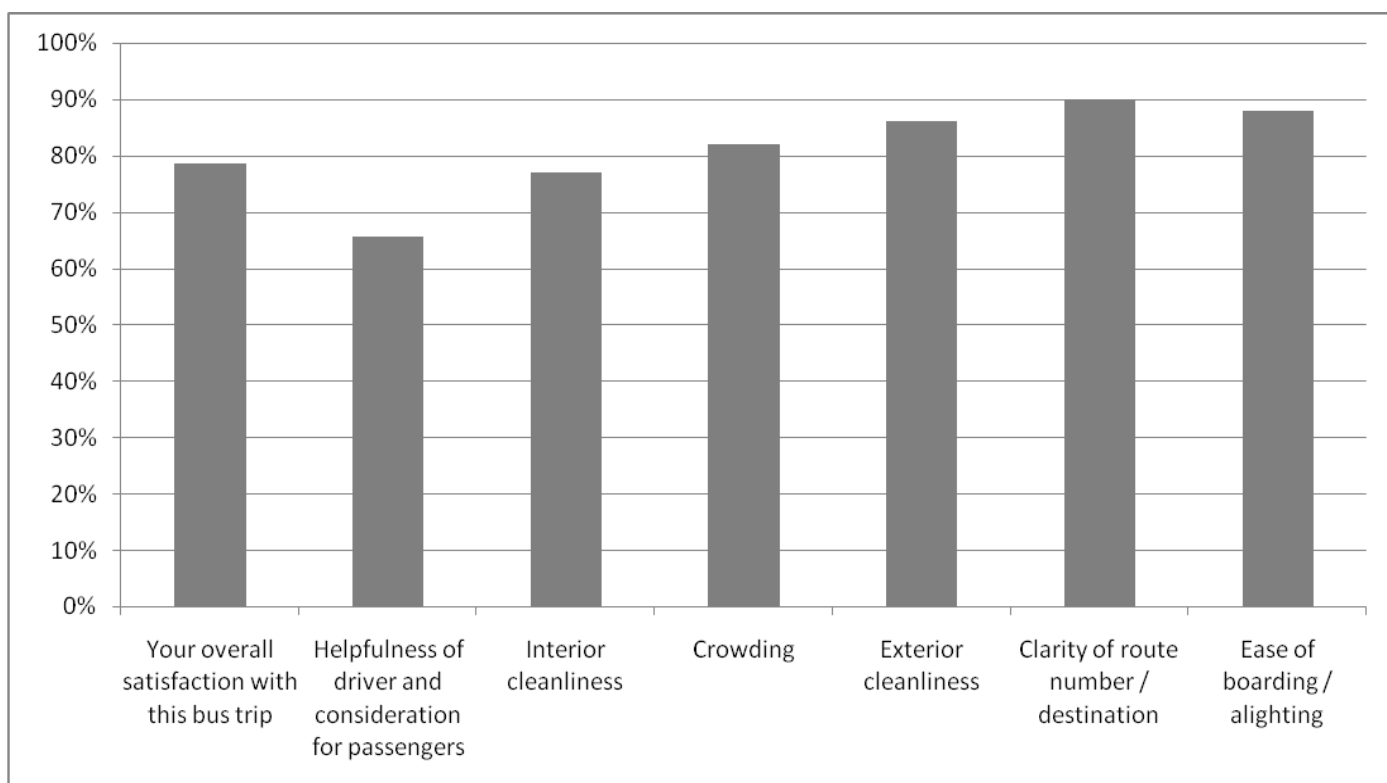


Table 2: Average scores for key indicators in comparison with BPSS, 2008/09

	MTS	BPSS	Difference
Overall satisfaction	79	84	5
Cleanliness at the bus stop	74	80	6
Driver behaviour and attitude	67	90	23
Crowding	82	87	5
Interior cleanliness	77	81	4
Exterior cleanliness	76	85	9
Smoothness and freedom from jolting	77	83	6

Table 3: Bus stop information, 2008/09

	All areas	Greater Manchester	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	Tyne & Wear	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Non-PTE areas
Bus stops without shelters	18	28	19	14	5	17	15	21
Bus stops with shelters	82	72	81	86	95	83	85	79
Bus stops without shelters:								
No timetable available	26	29	18	7	7	21	60	20
Timetable available but not legible	4	5	6	7		3		2
Timetable available and legible	70	66	76	86	93	76	40	78
Bus stops with shelters								
No timetable available	5	1	6	4	3	7	3	9
Timetable available but not legible	1	2		4	1	1	0	0
Timetable available and legible	94	97	94	93	95	92	97	90
No countdown display present	82	99	85	76	80	85	65	79
Countdown display present but not working	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	2
Countdown display working	17	0	14	23	20	14	34	19

Table 4: Ticketing, 2008/09

	All areas	Greater Manchester	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	Tyne & Wear	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Non-PTE areas
Cash Fares:								
Correct ticket issued	98	97	98	99	98	98	98	95
Incorrect ticket issued	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	5
Day pass / other non-cash fares:								
Boarding recorded	88	86	37	91	97	98	90	93
Boarding not recorded	12	13	62	7	3	2	10	7
Unable to tell	1	1	1	3		0		

Table 5: Accessibility, 2008/09

	All areas	Greater Manchester	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	Tyne & Wear	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Non-PTE areas
Stop was obstructed	4	2	3	2	3	6	5	5
Stop was not obstructed	96	98	97	98	97	94	95	95
Boarding								
Stop was obstructed								
Closeness of bus to kerb-boarding	72	78	68	82	91	62	63	84
Closeness of bus door to stop-boarding	71	76	69	88	93	63	61	76
Stop was not obstructed								
Closeness of bus to kerb-boarding	88	87	93	91	89	87	88	88
Closeness of bus door to stop-boarding	89	86	92	91	89	86	89	91
Alighting								
Stop was obstructed								
Closeness of bus to kerb-alighting	90	91	88	96	91	88	94	90
Stop was not obstructed								
Closeness of bus to kerb-alighting	88	86	91	89	89	85	87	87

Table 6: Driver behaviour and quality of ride, 2008/09

	All areas	Greater Manchester	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	Tyne & Wear	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Non-PTE areas
General smoothness of ride								
Dry	77	79	81	81	81	75	70	75
Some rain	77	81	84	78	73	75	74	79
Heavy rain	81	80	86	85	85	71	74	81
Other	77	*	77	*	76	*	80	74
Total	77	80	81	81	79	75	72	75
Single decker Hoppa Midi	77	78	82	81	80	75	71	73
Articulated Bus	77	80	*	*	77	*	*	*
Double Decker	77	83	81	82	77	75	73	77
Appropriateness of speed								
Dry	82	82	83	82	82	80	84	83
Some rain	82	83	86	79	75	80	86	85
Heavy rain	84	83	88	86	86	77	82	84
Other	84	*	83	*	77	*	92	78
Single decker Hoppa Midi	82	81	84	82	81	79	84	82
Articulated Bus	80	83	*	*	78	*	*	*
Double Decker	83	85	84	84	79	80	87	85
Driver behaviour and consideration for passengers								
What time is the last bus back from.....?	70	75	64	*	69	64	*	67
Does this bus go close toe.g. station?	65	67	70	71	74	58	59	60

Where can I get a bus timetable for this route?	68	74	58	*	68	62	81	62
How long will it take to get to...?	65	77	57	71	72	56	65	65
Does this service run on a Sunday?	68	69	55	72	77	65	81	66
How much is a day pass?	67	75	62	*	*	67	63	69
Other	60	*	54	*	*	*	*	60

* Sample size too small for analysis (less than 15)

Table 7: Reliability, 2008/09

	All areas	Greater Manchester	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	Tyne & Wear	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Non-PTE areas
Early	7	10	9	4	2	15	3	4
On time	76	75	71	75	91	65	78	81
Late	16	15	20	21	6	19	18	15

Figure 3: Punctuality by area, 2008/09

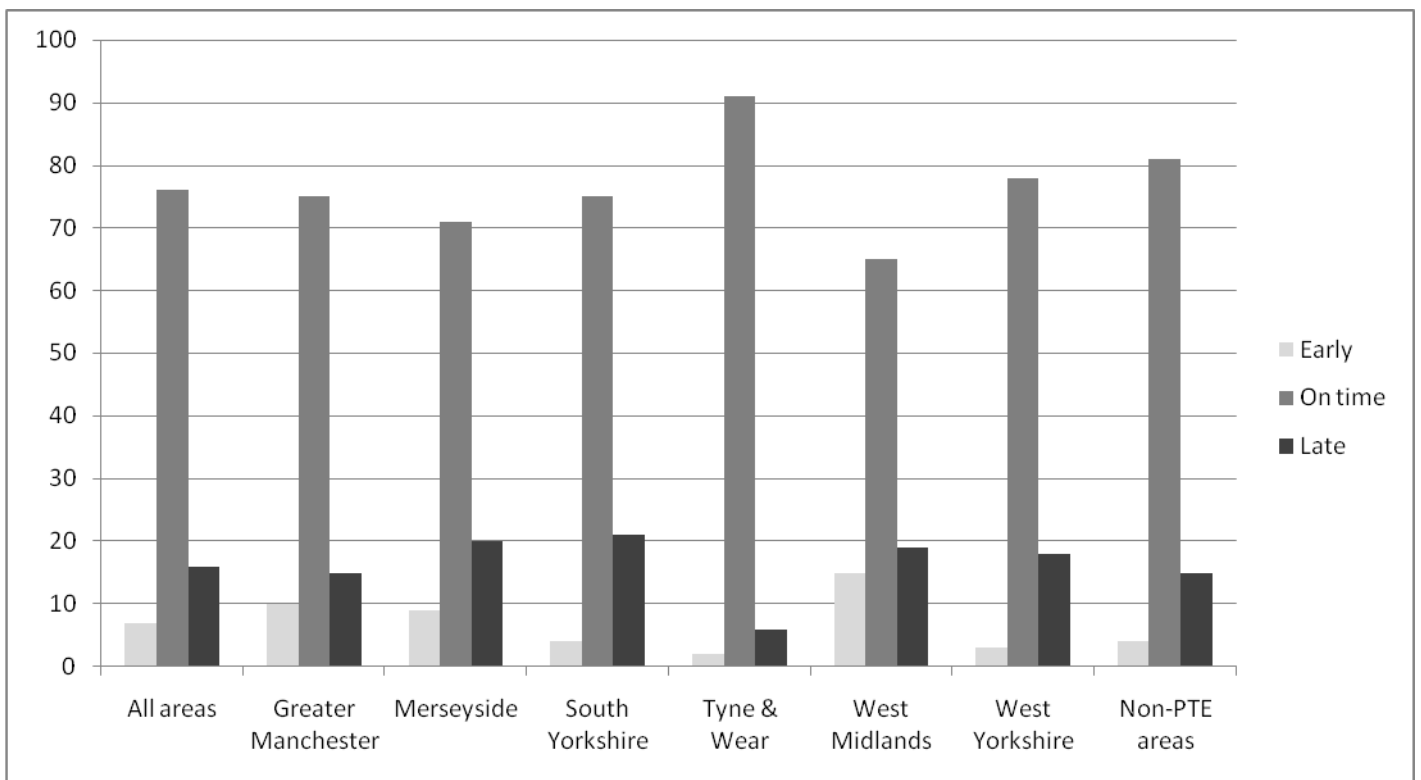


Table 8: Percentage of buses running late, 2008/09

All areas	
7:00-7:59	13
8:00-8:59	23
9:00-9:59	19
10:00-10:59	12
11:00-11:59	16
12:00-12:59	16
13:00-13:59	10
14:00-14:59	16
15:00-15:59	18
16:00-16:59	20
17:00-17:59	19
18:00-18:59	18

Table 9: Litter in bus by time of day, 2008/09

	All areas	Greater Manchester	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	Tyne & Wear	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Non-PTE areas
7:00-7:59	89	87	90	88	89	88	86	95
8:00-8:59	81	73	83	83	86	82	75	90
9:00-9:59	80	76	79	81	84	80	73	83
10:00-10:59	78	72	75	79	84	77	74	86
11:00-11:59	78	69	80	77	77	79	79	85
12:00-12:59	75	71	75	75	80	76	65	84
13:00-13:59	76	75	82	69	84	72	71	81
14:00-14:59	73	66	67	75	84	73	69	81
15:00-15:59	73	69	72	72	82	71	64	82
16:00-16:59	70	65	69	68	81	69	70	73
17:00-17:59	69	61	64	73	80	70	63	71
18:00-18:59	71	65	69	66	77	69	68	81
Overall	77	71	76	76	83	76	71	83

Table 10: Overall Satisfaction, 2008/09

	All areas	Greater Manchester	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	Tyne & Wear	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Non-PTE areas
Bus stop information								
Timetable not available	77	82	73	70	80	77	77	76
Timetable available but illegible	75	77	82	63	76	81	82	73
Timetable available and legible	79	81	79	73	82	79	77	79
Countdown screen not present	79	81	79	72	82	79	78	79
Countdown screen present but not working	74	73	78	58	90	83	72	74
Countdown screen present and working	78	90	78	74	81	80	76	79
Reliability								
Early	80	81	79	66	91	77	81	79
On time	80	82	81	75	81	80	79	79
Late	74	77	71	68	78	77	72	77
Bus stop / shelter								
Bus stop	78	80	82	69	84	78	75	78
Shelter	79	81	78	73	82	79	78	79



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