

Bus Mystery Traveller Research

Independent national passenger watchdog



Passenger Focus research

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 for 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.

Bus Mystery Traveller survey

In preparation for this 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 1,200 journeys are assessed by trained researchers to rate 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 carried out by Passenger Focus in June and July 2009.

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



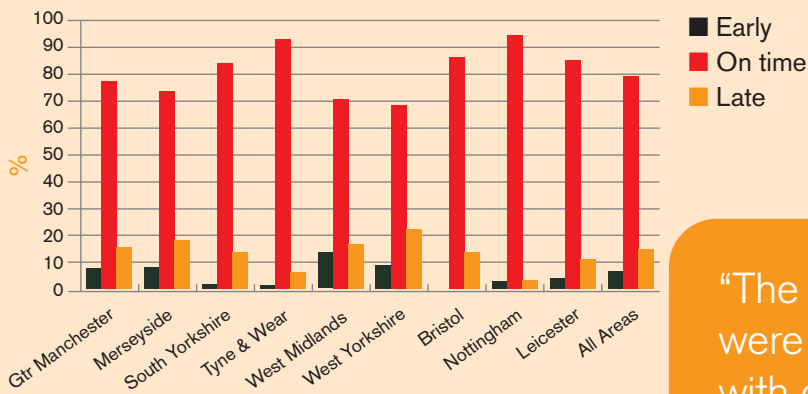
Punctuality

Punctuality is a key driver of satisfaction for bus users. This research records whether the bus arrived at the assessor's destination on time, earlier than timetabled, or later.

Punctuality varied significantly between regions. Across all the regions surveyed, 79 per cent of buses arrived on time, 6 per cent of buses were recorded early and 14 per cent recorded late. The top performing regions were Tyne & Wear and Nottingham with over 90 per cent of buses arriving on time. West Yorkshire was the lowest scoring region for punctuality with only 69 per cent of buses arriving on time and 22 per cent arriving late.



Punctuality



Early is defined as more than one minute early.
Late is defined as more than five minutes late.

“The top performing regions were Tyne & Wear and Nottingham with over 90 per cent of buses arriving on time”

The environment at the bus stop

The survey rates five aspects of the environment at the bus stop:

- presence of a shelter
- the cleanliness of the stop
- the level of litter
- the level of graffiti
- the condition of the glass in the shelter (if applicable).

Overall the environment at bus stops scored highly. Of the stops assessed, 83 per cent were provided with a shelter. Levels of graffiti were scored at 80 per cent and litter at 81 per cent. Cleanliness was scored at 74 per cent and shelter glass, where present, at 71 per cent.

The South Yorkshire and Tyne & Wear regions scored above average on all aspects of the bus stop environment while Leicester and Greater Manchester scored below average in each.



Bus stop environment

	All Areas
Proportion of bus stops with a shelter	83%
Cleanliness of bus stop / shelter	74%
Absence of graffiti at the bus stop / shelter	80%
Absence of litter at bus stop / shelter	81%
Condition of the glass in shelter	71%

Information at the bus stop

Researchers assess the information available at the bus stop, including whether a timetable is present and legible.

Of all bus stops surveyed 93 per cent displayed a timetable, and in the large majority of cases these were up to date and legible.

Bus stop information

	All Areas
Timetable at the bus stop	93%
Timetable up to date and legible	98%
Countdown electronic display	23%
Countdown display working properly	87%
Information about fares	7%
Contact information for bus operating co.	37%
Contact information for Travelline	83%

Results were similar for all regions except Leicester, where 78 per cent of stops displayed a timetable and 82 per cent of these were current and readable.

Countdown electronic displays

of next bus information remain the exception rather than the rule – only 23 per cent of stops surveyed have them. West Yorkshire has the highest proportion of electronic displays with 48 per cent of stops sporting the devices.

Contact details for Traveline, the public transport information service, were available in all areas surveyed except West Yorkshire.



The bus

Researchers rated the cleanliness and condition of the bus inside and out, as well as levels of litter. In general scores were high with three areas – Tyne and Wear, Bristol and Merseyside standing out as above average on all measures of the bus environment.

Nottingham and Leicester scored less well on the exterior cleanliness of buses – achieving 57 per cent and 55 per cent respectively, against an average of 79 per cent. Leicester buses also scored below the average on the cleanliness of windows – only 47 per cent against an average for all regions of 70 per cent.

Overall Bristol has the cleanest buses.

Condition of the bus

Cleanliness of exterior	81%	83%	76%	83%	83%	82%	85%	57%	55%	79%
Graffiti on exterior	92%	97%	91%	96%	99%	95%	99%	95%	99%	96%
Cleanliness of seating	78%	80%	72%	84%	75%	72%	88%	80%	75%	77%
Condition of seating	78%	81%	72%	83%	80%	77%	86%	81%	74%	79%
Cleanliness of windows	75%	78%	68%	80%	69%	56%	82%	52%	47%	70%
Level of litter	73%	81%	76%	80%	77%	75%	86%	81%	74%	77%
	Gr Manchester	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	Tyne & Wear	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Bristol	Nottingham	Leicester	All Areas

The bus driver

Bus drivers were assessed on ticketing, helpfulness and their overall presentation.

On 99 per cent of the journeys made, the driver gave the correct ticket. Where the researcher used a prepaid bus pass the driver recorded boarding in 91 per cent of cases. In Merseyside however only 42 per cent of non-cash journeys were recorded.

On the whole, drivers were presentable and spoke clearly, but when asked a question by the researcher, helpfulness and consideration varied. South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear had the most helpful drivers, each scoring 78 per cent. In Bristol, which has the cleanest buses, drivers scored somewhat below average for helpfulness.

Bus driver – tickets & service

	All Areas
Did the driver give you the correct ticket?	99%
If not paying cash, driver recorded your boarding	91%
Appropriateness of speed	81%
Smoothness of ride	75%
Appearance of driver	80%
Bus driver spoke clearly / was easy to understand	98%
Helpfulness and consideration of driver	63%

“Across all the regions surveyed, 79 per cent of buses **arrived on time**”

“83 per cent of stops assessed were **provided with a shelter**”

“93 per cent of bus stops **displayed a timetable**”

“**The driver gave the correct ticket** on 99 per cent of journeys made”



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