



Bus Mystery Traveller Survey 2008/2009

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1. 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 in addition to Britain's rail passengers. Passenger Focus expects to assume these new responsibilities in April 2010. Significant passenger research will be undertaken to ensure Passenger Focus really understands what bus and coach passengers think of these services. Passenger Focus has already conducted passenger satisfaction research in six 'pilot areas' of England. The pilot work will help identify how to carry out robust and meaningful bus passenger research and how the results can be used to generate improvements in bus services from 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 has taken over publication of the Bus Mystery Traveller Survey that was previously managed by the DfT.

Each quarter, 1200 journeys are assessed by 'mystery travellers'. Mystery travellers are researchers trained to assess aspects of the journey objectively and consistently. Objectivity was enhanced by a training video and assessor briefing notes. The work was 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 and Wear; and three non PTE areas: Bristol, Nottingham and Leicester. The areas of Bristol, Nottingham and Leicester are grouped for reporting under the title of 'Non PTE' areas.

The journeys were chosen to give good coverage of the urban centres and outer area journeys and include as many operators and services as possible, particularly the more frequent services.

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. Results of the Bus Mystery Traveller Survey will be published widely and made accessible to the bus industry.

2. Methodology

This report presents the key results from the Bus Mystery Traveller Survey for the financial year 2008-2009, comprising four quarters of 1200 journeys each. The fieldwork for this survey was carried out by the DfT, and the resulting data passed to Passenger Focus for analysis and publication.

Mystery travellers complete a questionnaire for each journey. The questions cover the environment at the bus stop, the bus itself, the punctuality and quality of the journey and the behaviour of the driver. Rating questions have scales from 0 to 10, with defined marking systems to enhance objectivity and consistency across the survey. The 0 to 10 scores are then multiplied by 10 to give a 'points out of 100' score. The 'points out of 100' score also enables comparison with some of the scores from the DfT Bus Satisfaction Survey.

3. Key results

Overall

- Overall, the assessors rated bus journeys highly, with overall satisfaction scoring 79 points out of 100 (see Table 1 overleaf)
- 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 points out of 100 respectively (see Table 1 overleaf)
- The composite indicators for exterior cleanliness and ease of boarding/alighting scored highly at 86 and 88 points out of 100 respectively (see Table 1 overleaf)
- The lowest rating was given for the helpfulness of driver and consideration for passengers at 66 points out of 100 (see Table 1 overleaf)
- The overall scores are largely unchanged from those published by the DfT for the financial year 2007-2008 in the 'Transport Statistics Bulletin', 2008 edition
- There were limited differences in overall satisfaction across different areas (see Table 1 overleaf).

Bus stop information

- Across all areas 83 per cent of bus stops had shelters
- The majority of bus stops had timetable information. Where there was a shelter, 94 per cent had a legible timetable. For bus stops without shelters, 73 per cent had legible timetable information.

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 points out of 100 than those given for smoothness of ride, at 77 points out of 100. Scores for both of these indicators do not appear to be greatly affected by the type of weather or by the type of bus (see Tables 1 and 6 overleaf)
- The score for 'helpfulness of driver and consideration for passengers' for all areas is 66 points out of 100; it is lowest in the West Midlands at 59 points out of 100. These scores do not seem to be noticeably affected by the particular question asked of the driver (Tables 1 and 6 overleaf).

Punctuality

- Overall 77 per cent of buses arrived within the punctuality window of one minute early to five minutes late – comparable to the results of the 2007/08 Bus Mystery Traveller Survey. 11% were more than one minute early and 12 per cent more than five



minutes late. As expected, the percentage of late buses increased during peak hours. The percentage of buses arriving on time was highest in Tyne and Wear at 91 per cent (see Tables 7 and 8 overleaf)

- The average scores for overall satisfaction were higher when buses were on time. Satisfaction was marginally lower when buses were early but noticeably lower when buses were late (see Table 10 overleaf).

Litter

- The level of litter on the bus tended to increase throughout the day, with the average score for all regions decreasing from 89 points out of 100 between 7am and 7.59am to a low of 69 points out of 100 between 5pm and 5.59pm. (Table 9). (Increasing absence of litter is represented by increasingly higher points out of hundred scores).

4. Results Tables and Charts for 2008/09

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

	All Areas	Gtr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE Areas
General measures								
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 & consideration for passengers	66	70	64	72	72	59	66	62
Appropriateness of Speed	82	82	84	82	81	79	85	83
General smoothness of ride	77	80	82	81	79	75	72	75
Level of graffiti (bus interior)	89	88	85	97	91	88	86	94
Presence of etching on windows (bus interior)	90	93	94	97	91	77	84	97
Crowding								
Availability of lower deck seating	81	78	86	79	75	83	82	81
Availability of upper deck seating	90	87	96	86	83	92	94	90
<i>Crowding - composite measure</i>	82	79	86	80	75	86	85	83
Interior cleanliness								
Cleanliness of seating	80	77	82	81	85	77	74	85
Cleanliness of windows (bus interior)	75	80	77	75	82	74	66	68
Level of litter (bus interior)	76	70	77	75	83	76	72	83
<i>Interior cleanliness - composite measure</i>	77	76	78	77	83	76	71	79
Clarity of route number / destination								
Clarity of route number / destination - front	94	93	93	88	93	96	95	96
Clarity of route number / destination blinds - back	86	91	70	84	92	86	85	85
<i>Clarity of route number / destination - composite measure</i>	90	92	84	86	92	91	91	91
Exterior cleanliness								
Overall cleanliness of exterior - front, side and back	76	79	76	78	82	75	74	68
Overall level of graffiti on bus exterior	96	93	95	97	98	98	92	99
<i>Exterior cleanliness - composite measure</i>	86	86	86	87	90	87	83	83
Ease of boarding / alighting								
Closeness of bus to kerb - boarding	88	87	92	91	89	85	86	88
Closeness of bus door to bus stop - boarding	88	86	92	91	89	85	88	90
Closeness of bus to kerb - alighting	88	86	92	89	89	85	88	88
<i>Ease of boarding / alighting - composite measure</i>	88	86	92	90	89	85	87	89

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

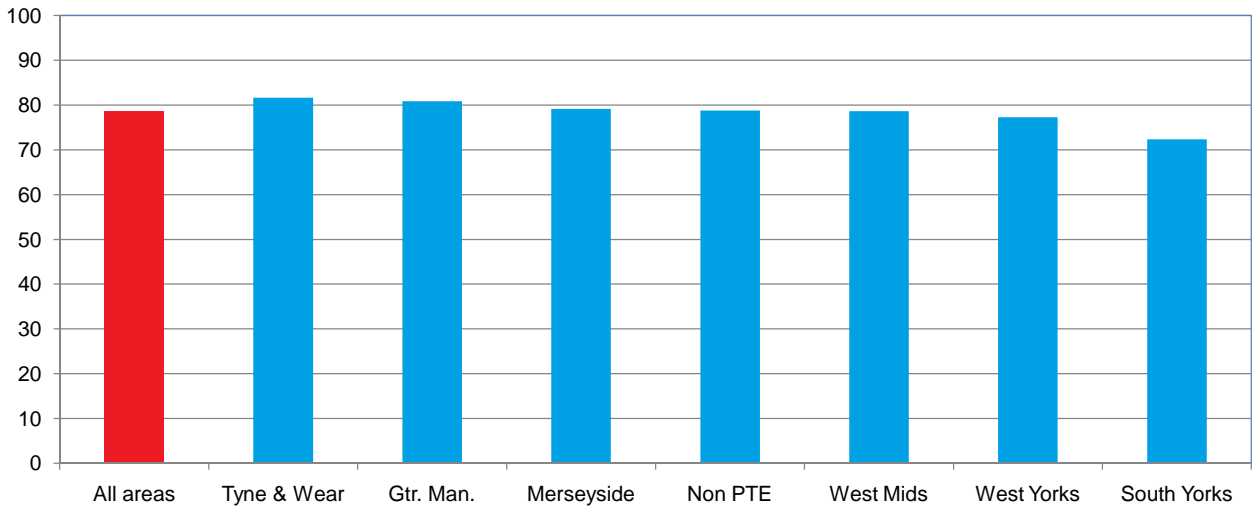


Chart 2: Average overall scores for selected indicators, 2008/09

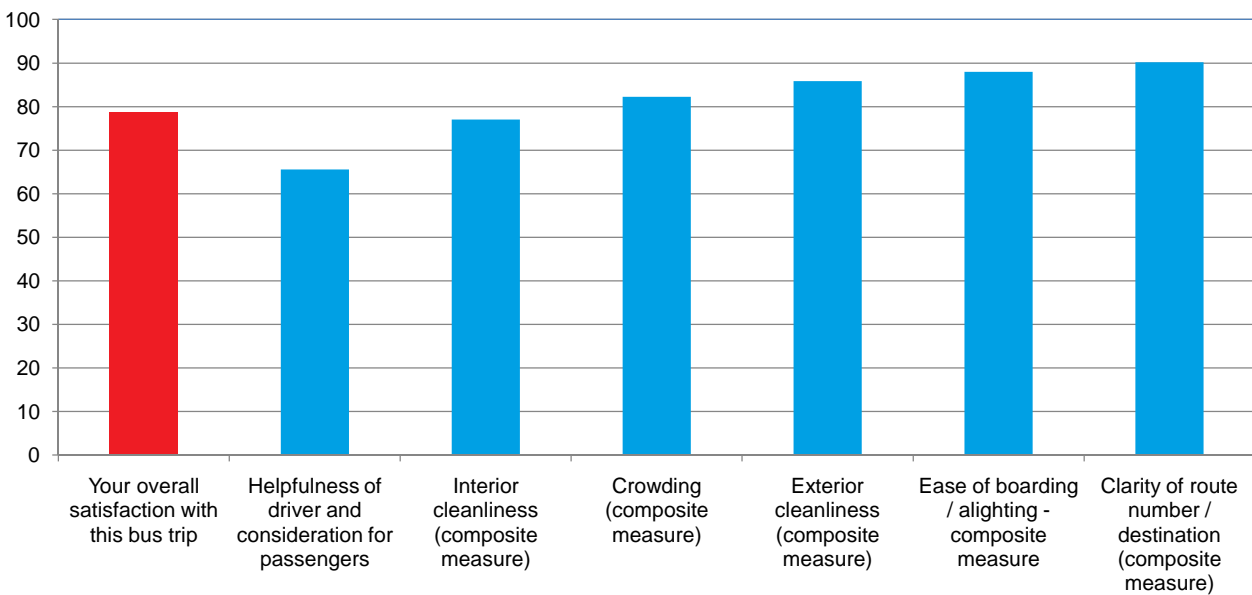


Table 2: Average scores for key indicators in comparison with BPSS, 2008-9¹

	Mystery Traveller Survey (MTS)	Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey (BPSS)	Difference (BPSS - BMTS)
Overall satisfaction	79	84	5
Cleanliness at the bus stop	75	80	5
Driver behaviour and attitude	66	90	24
Crowding	82	88	6
Interior cleanliness	77	81	4
Exterior cleanliness	86	85	-1
Smoothness and freedom from jolting	77	83	6

1. See Technical Appendix.

Table 3: Bus stop information, 2008/09

	All Areas	Gtr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE
Shelters at Bus Stops								
Bus stops without shelters	17%	28%	17%	14%	5%	17%	14%	21%
Bus stops with shelters	83%	72%	83%	86%	95%	83%	86%	79%
Bus stops without shelters								
No timetable available	25%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Timetable available	75%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Of which not legible</i>	2%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Of which legible</i>	73%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Bus stops with shelters								
No timetable available	5%	1%	6%	4%	2%	7%	4%	8%
Timetable available	95%	99%	94%	96%	98%	93%	96%	92%
<i>Of which not legible</i>	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%
<i>Of which legible</i>	94%	97%	94%	95%	96%	92%	95%	92%
Countdown display information (all bus stops)								
No countdown display present	80%	96%	83%	71%	79%	83%	65%	78%
Present	20%	4%	17%	29%	21%	17%	35%	22%
<i>Present but not working</i>	3%	*	*	3%	1%	3%	2%	3%
<i>Present but working</i>	17%	*	*	26%	20%	14%	33%	20%

* sample size too small for analysis (less than 100)

Table 4: Ticketing 2008/09

	All Areas	Gtr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE
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%	87%	40%	93%	97%	98%	90%	93%
Boarding not recorded	12%	13%	60%	7%	3%	2%	10%	7%

Table 5 - Accessibility 2008/9

	All Areas	Gr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE
Boarding								
Bus stop obstructed (boarding)								
Stop was obstructed	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%	6%	5%	5%
Stop was not obstructed	96%	98%	98%	98%	97%	94%	95%	95%
Stop was obstructed (boarding)								
Closeness of bus to kerb	72	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Closeness of bus door to stop	71	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Stop was not obstructed (boarding)								
Closeness of bus to kerb	88	87	93	91	89	87	88	88
Closeness of bus door to stop	89	86	93	91	89	86	89	91
Alighting								
Bus stop obstructed								
Stop was obstructed	3%	1%	2%	1%	1%	5%	3%	5%
Stop was not obstructed	97%	99%	98%	99%	99%	95%	97%	95%
Stop was obstructed								
Closeness of bus to kerb (alighting)	72	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Stop was not obstructed								
Closeness of bus to kerb (alighting)	88	87	92	89	89	86	88	88

* sample size too small for analysis (less than 100)

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

	All Areas	Gtr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE
General smoothness of ride (overall)	77	80	82	81	79	75	72	75
By weather conditions								
Dry	77	79	81	81	81	75	70	75
Some rain	77	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Heavy rain	82	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	77	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
By type of bus								
Single decker Hoppa Midi	77	78	82	81	80	75	71	73
Articulated Bus	77	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Double Decker	77	83	81	82	77	75	73	77
Appropriateness of speed (overall)	82	82	84	82	81	79	85	83
By weather conditions								
Dry	82	82	83	82	82	80	84	83
Some rain	82	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Heavy rain	85	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	84	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
By type of bus								
Single decker Hoppa Midi	82	81	84	82	81	79	84	82
Articulated Bus	80	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Double Decker	83	85	84	84	79	80	87	85
Helpfulness of driver and consideration for passengers								
What time is the last bus back from.....?	70	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
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	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
How long will it take to get to...?	65	*	*	71	72	56	65	65
Does this service run on a Sunday?	68	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
How much is a day pass?	67	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	60	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

* sample size too small for analysis (less than 100)

Table 7: Punctuality, 2008/09**

	All Areas	Gtr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE
Early	11%	15%	11%	6%	3%	23%	6%	6%
On Time	77%	75%	75%	80%	91%	62%	82%	83%
Late	12%	10%	14%	14%	6%	15%	12%	11%

** On Time is defined as between one minute before and five minutes after the time scheduled

Chart 3: Punctuality by area, 2008/09

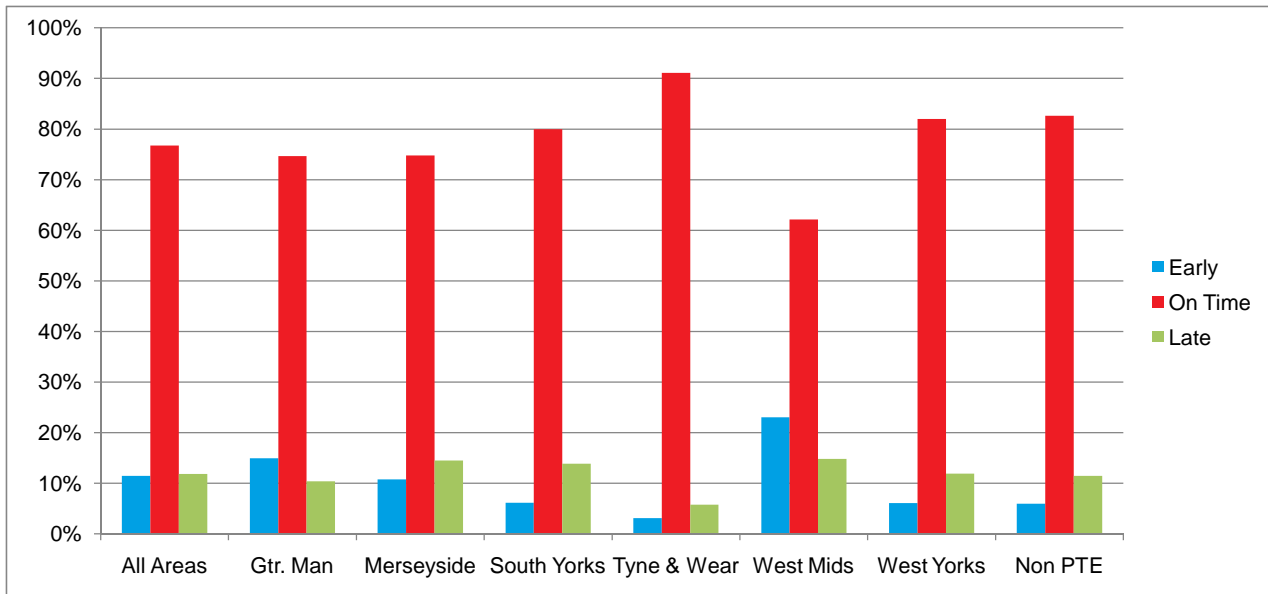


Table 8: Percentage of buses running late by time of day, 2008/09

Time of day	Percentage of buses running late - all areas
07:00-07:59	9%
08:00-08:59	18%
09:00-09:59	15%
10:00-10:59	8%
11:00-11:59	11%
12:00-12:59	12%
13:00-13:59	7%
14:00-14:59	10%
15:00-15:59	12%
16:00-16:59	15%
17:00-17:59	13%
18:00-18:59	7%

Table 9: Score for litter in bus by time of day, 2008/09

Time of day	Score for litter in bus - all areas
07:00-07:59	89
08:00-08:59	82
09:00-09:59	79
10:00-10:59	78
11:00-11:59	78
12:00-12:59	76
13:00-13:59	76
14:00-14:59	73
15:00-15:59	73
16:00-16:59	70
17:00-17:59	69
18:00-18:59	70

Table 10: Overall satisfaction, 2008/09

	All Areas	Gtr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE Areas
Overall satisfaction with this bus trip	79	81	79	72	82	79	77	79
Overall satisfaction for trips made from bus stops:								
Without a shelter	78	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
With a shelter	79	81	79	73	82	79	78	79
Overall satisfaction for trips made where the bus arrived:								
Early	79	80	77	71	89	80	76	76
On Time	80	82	82	74	81	80	79	80
Late	73	77	69	66	76	76	70	73
Overall satisfaction for trips made from bus stops where:								
A timetable was not available	77	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
A timetable was available but illegible	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
A timetable was available and legible	79	81	80	73	82	79	77	79
Overall satisfaction for trips made from bus stops where:								
A countdown display was not present	79	81	79	73	82	78	78	79
A countdown display was present but not working	75	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
A countdown display was present and working	78	90	80	74	81	80	77	79

* sample size too small for analysis (less than 100)

5. Technical Annex

The report produces five composite measures. These are based on the results of the component measures shown in the table below. The composite measure is an arithmetic average of the summated results for the component measures, thus if one component measure has a great number of results, it will have a proportionately greater influence on the average.

Composite measure	Component measures
Crowding	Availability of lower deck seating Availability of upper deck seating
Interior cleanliness	Cleanliness of windows (bus interior) Cleanliness of the seating Level of litter (bus interior)
Clarity of route number/destination	Clarity of route number/destination - front Clarity of route number/destination blinds - back
Exterior cleanliness	Overall cleanliness of exterior - front, side and back Overall level of graffiti on bus exterior
Ease of boarding/alighting	Closeness of bus to kerb - boarding Closeness of bus door to bus stop - boarding Closeness of bus to kerb - alighting

Comparison of Mystery Traveller and Bus Passenger Satisfaction Surveys

Some indicators from the Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey (BPSS) can be usefully compared to the more objective Mystery Traveller Survey (MTS) and a comparison is shown in Table 2. It should be noted that the correspondence between the indicators from the two surveys is not exact:

- Satisfaction with 'cleanliness at the bus stop' as measured in the BPSS takes into account any graffiti that may be present. Graffiti is explicitly excluded from the score given by MTS assessors.
- The satisfaction with 'crowding on the bus' given by respondents to the BPSS has been compared to the composite indicator for 'crowding' taken from the MTS. The MTS measure for 'crowding' is based on the scores given for availability of seating on the bus
- The 'interior cleanliness' score given for the MTS is a composite, while the score for the BPSS is a single indicator
- The 'exterior cleanliness' score for both indicators includes graffiti.



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