



Bus Mystery Traveller Survey 2009/2010

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1. Introduction

Passenger Focus is the official, independent consumer organisation representing the interests of rail users nationally and since 25 February 2010, bus, coach and tram users across England outside London. Created by the Railways Act 2005, Passenger Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council. It is a body corporate, executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Transport (DfT). Our mission is to get the best deal for passengers.

As part of Passenger Focus acquiring the remit for bus passenger representation, Passenger Focus took over management and publication of the Bus Mystery Traveller Survey from the DfT in April 2009.

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 have been published annually since 2007-08.

2. Methodology

This report presents the key results from the Bus Mystery Traveller Survey for the financial year 2009-2010, comprising four quarters of approximately 1200 journeys each.

Mystery travellers complete a questionnaire for each journey. The questions cover the environment at the bus stop, the bus itself, the punctuality, 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 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)
- The highest overall ratings were given for the 'overall level of graffiti on the bus exterior' and the 'clarity of the route/destination on the front of the bus' with scores of 97 and 95 points out of 100 respectively (see Table 1)
- The composite indicators for 'exterior cleanliness' and 'ease of boarding/alighting' scored highly at 86 and 90 points out of 100 respectively (see Table 1)
- The lowest rating was given for the 'helpfulness of driver and consideration for passengers' at 66 points out of 100 (see Table 1)
- The overall scores are largely similar to those achieved in 2008-09
- There were limited differences in 'overall satisfaction' across different areas. The scores ranged from 77 out of 100 to 82 out of 100 (see Table 1).

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, 96 per cent had a legible timetable. For bus stops without shelters, 74 per cent had legible timetable information
- A minority (23%) of bus stops have countdown displays.

Quality of driving and driver behaviour

- Scores for 'appropriateness of speed' were higher at 82 points out of 100 than those given for 'general smoothness of ride', at 76 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)
- The score for 'helpfulness of driver and consideration for passengers' for all areas is 66 points out of 100. This score does not seem to be noticeably affected by the particular question asked of the driver (Tables 1 and 6). The score for 'helpfulness of driver and consideration for passengers' is lowest in the West Midlands at 59 points out of 100 and highest in South Yorkshire at 82 points out of 100.

Punctuality

- Overall 80 per cent of buses arrived within the punctuality window of one minute early to five minutes late – higher than the results of the 2008/09 Bus Mystery Traveller Survey. Overall 9 per cent of buses were early and 11 per cent late. The percentage of buses arriving on time was highest in Tyne and Wear at 94 per cent (see Table 7). The percentage of late running buses was highest during the 4pm – 6pm period (see Table 8).
- The average scores for overall satisfaction were lower when buses were late. Satisfaction was the same regardless of whether buses were early or on time (see Table 10).



Litter

- The 'level of litter' on the bus tended to increase throughout the day, with the average score for all regions decreasing from a score of 90 out of 100 between 7am and 7:59am to a low of 69 out of 100 between 4pm and 4:59pm. (see Table 9). Increasing absence of litter is represented by increasingly higher points out of 100 scores.

4. Results Tables and Charts for 2009/10

Table 1: Average scores for all indicators by area, 2009/10

	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	80	79	77	82	77	78	78
Cleanliness of bus stop / shelter	74	74	78	82	84	72	66	69
Helpfulness of driver & consideration for passengers	66	65	63	82	77	59	62	61
Appropriateness of Speed	82	78	81	84	81	79	88	84
General smoothness of ride	76	74	78	81	79	74	72	76
Level of graffiti (bus interior)	89	87	90	98	91	85	88	90
Presence of etching on windows (bus interior)	90	93	94	98	93	77	90	96
Crowding								
Availability of lower deck seating	81	80	83	80	73	82	86	83
Availability of upper deck seating	92	92	93	88	85	92	95	90
<i>Crowding - composite measure</i>	83	82	84	81	74	85	88	85
Interior cleanliness								
Cleanliness of seating	80	80	81	83	85	76	72	84
Cleanliness of windows (bus interior)	74	76	81	75	83	70	66	68
Level of litter (bus interior)	78	75	82	74	81	76	75	82
<i>Interior cleanliness - composite measure</i>	77	77	81	77	83	74	71	78
Clarity of route number / destination								
Clarity of route number / destination - front	95	96	93	91	94	96	98	97
Clarity of route number / destination blinds - back	89	91	74	87	94	92	95	89
<i>Clarity of route number / destination - composite measure</i>	93	94	85	89	94	94	97	93
Exterior cleanliness								
Overall cleanliness of exterior - front, side and back	75	77	80	78	82	73	78	65
Overall level of graffiti on bus exterior	97	94	96	99	98	98	95	99
<i>Exterior cleanliness - composite measure</i>	86	86	88	89	90	85	86	82
Ease of boarding / alighting								
Closeness of bus to kerb - boarding	89	89	89	93	89	87	91	87
Closeness of bus door to bus stop - boarding	91	88	89	91	89	91	93	93
Closeness of bus to kerb - alighting	89	89	89	93	91	87	94	86
<i>Ease of boarding / alighting - composite measure</i>	90	89	89	92	90	88	92	89

Chart 1: Overall satisfaction scores by area, 2009/10

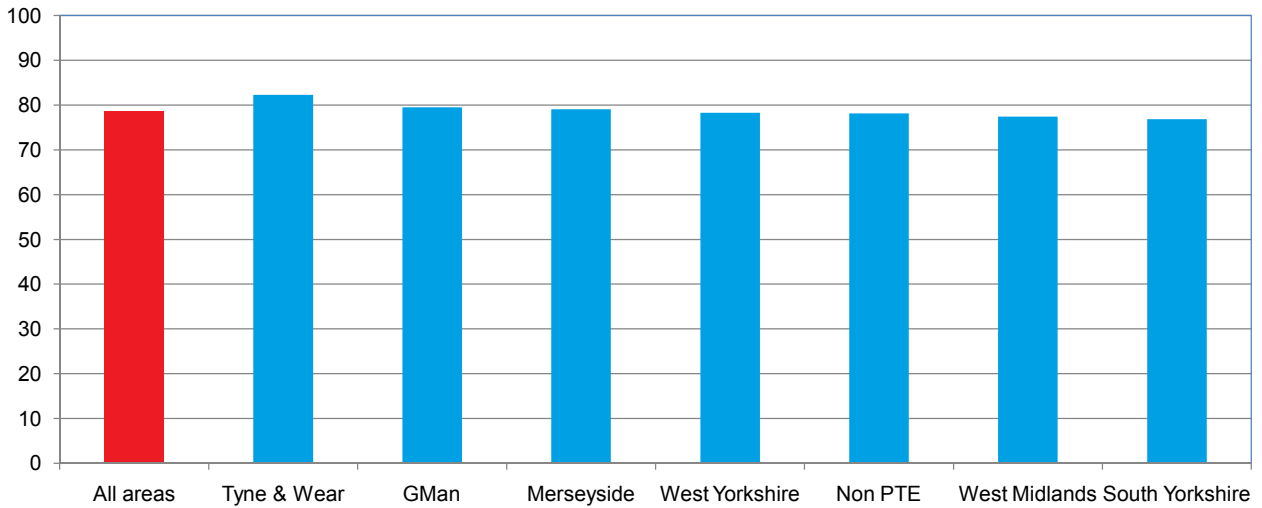


Chart 2: Average overall scores for selected indicators, 2009/10

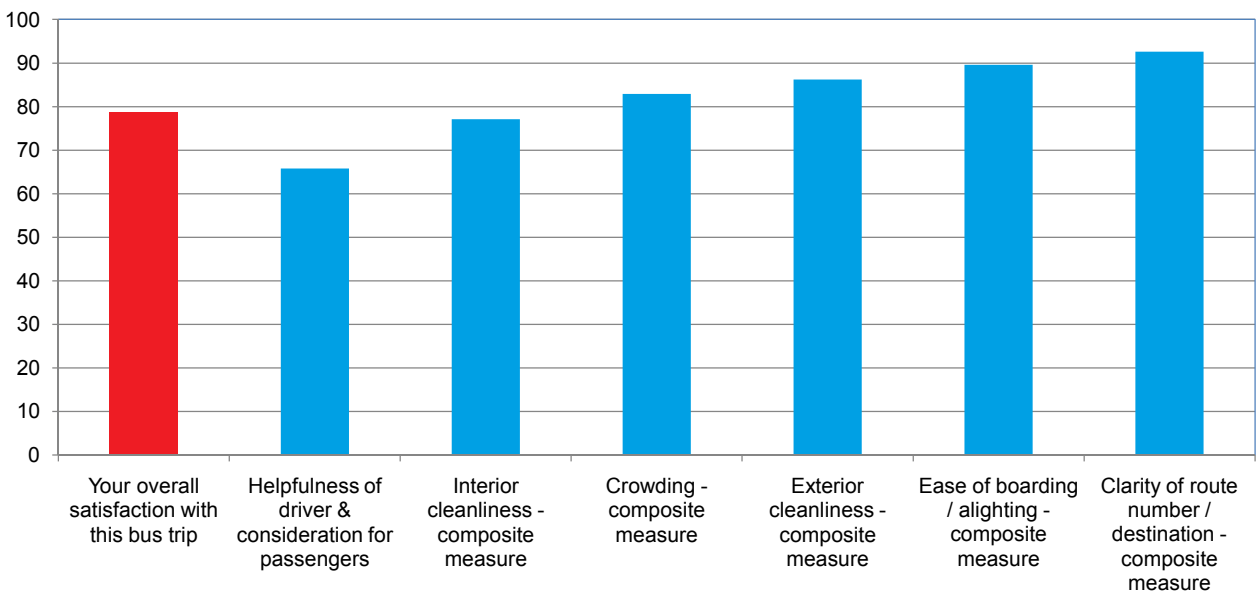


Table 2: Average scores for key indicators in comparison with BPSS, 2009-10¹

The BPSS 2009/10 results are due to be published later in 2010, so comparison of the results can not be made in this publication.

	Mystery Traveller Survey (MTS)	Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey (BPSS)	Difference (BPSS - BMTS)
Overall satisfaction	79	Not available	
Cleanliness at the bus stop	74	Not available	
Driver behaviour and attitude	66	Not available	
Crowding	83	Not available	
Interior cleanliness	77	Not available	
Exterior cleanliness	86	Not available	
Smoothness and freedom from jolting	76	Not available	

1. See Technical Appendix.

Table 3: Bus stop information, 2009/10

	All Areas	Gtr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE
Bus stops with or without a shelter								
Bus stops without shelters	17%	24%	20%	12%	6%	16%	13%	21%
Bus stops with shelters	83%	76%	80%	88%	94%	84%	87%	79%
For bus stops not having a shelter								
No timetable available	24%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Timetable available	76%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Of which not legible</i>	2%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Of which legible</i>	74%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
For bus stops having a shelter								
No timetable available	3%	1%	4%	2%	1%	5%	2%	4%
Timetable available	97%	99%	96%	98%	99%	95%	98%	96%
<i>Of which not legible</i>	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%
<i>Of which legible</i>	96%	98%	94%	97%	98%	94%	96%	94%
Countdown display information (all bus stops)								
No countdown display present	77%	96%	86%	66%	82%	77%	53%	74%
Present	23%	4%	14%	34%	18%	23%	47%	26%
<i>Present but not working</i>	3%	*	*	2%	*	5%	2%	2%
<i>Present and working</i>	20%	*	*	32%	*	18%	45%	24%

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

Table 4: Ticketing 2009/10

	All Areas	Gtr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE
Cash fares								
Correct ticket issued	99%	98%	99%	99%	99%	99%	97%	98%
Incorrect ticket issued	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	2%
Day pass/ other non cash fares								
Boarding recorded	90%	85%	39%	99%	100%	97%	96%	93%
Boarding not recorded	10%	15%	61%	1%	0%	3%	4%	7%

Table 5 - Accessibility 2009/10

	All Areas	Gr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE
Boarding								
Whether the bus stop was obstructed (boarding)								
The stop was obstructed	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	4%	3%	2%
The stop was not obstructed	98%	98%	98%	98%	99%	96%	97%	98%
For obstructed bus stops (boarding)								
Closeness of bus to kerb	70	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Closeness of bus door to stop	71	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
For unobstructed bus stops (boarding)								
Closeness of bus to kerb	89	89	89	93	89	87	91	86
Closeness of bus door to stop	91	88	89	91	89	91	93	93
Alighting								
Whether the bus stop was obstructed (alighting)								
Stop was obstructed	3%	1%	3%	1%	1%	4%	4%	4%
Stop was not obstructed	97%	99%	97%	99%	99%	96%	96%	96%
For obstructed bus stops (alighting)								
Closeness of bus to kerb	73	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
For unobstructed bus stops (alighting)								
Closeness of bus to kerb	89	89	89	93	91	87	94	86

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

Table 6: Driver behaviour and quality of ride, 2009/10

	All Areas	Gtr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE
General smoothness of ride (overall)	76	74	78	81	79	74	72	76
By weather conditions								
Dry	76	75	77	82	81	74	73	77
Some rain	76	*	*	*	78	76	68	*
Heavy rain	74	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	73	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
By type of bus								
Single decker Hoppa Midi	75	72	77	81	77	74	72	74
Articulated Bus	79	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Double Decker	76	78	*	81	*	74	72	78
Appropriateness of speed (overall)	82	78	81	84	81	79	88	84
By weather conditions								
Dry	82	78	81	84	83	79	88	85
Some rain	82	*	*	*	80	79	88	*
Heavy rain	79	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	79	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
By type of bus								
Single decker Hoppa Midi	81	76	81	84	80	79	88	83
Articulated Bus	83	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Double Decker	84	82	*	83	*	79	89	86
Helpfulness of driver and consideration for passengers (overall)	66	65	63	82	77	59	62	61
By type of question								
What time is the last bus back from.....?	71	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Does this bus go close toe.g. station?	62	60	67	*	78	58	57	59
Where can I get a bus timetable for this route?	74	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
How long will it take to get to...?	69	*	*	81	76	54	65	*
Does this service run on a Sunday?	70	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
How much is a day pass?	63	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	61	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

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

Table 7: Punctuality, 2009/10**

	All Areas	Gtr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE
Early	9%	12%	10%	6%	2%	16%	11%	3%
On Time	80%	74%	76%	80%	94%	74%	77%	88%
Late	11%	14%	14%	14%	5%	10%	12%	9%

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

Chart 3: Punctuality by area, 2009/10

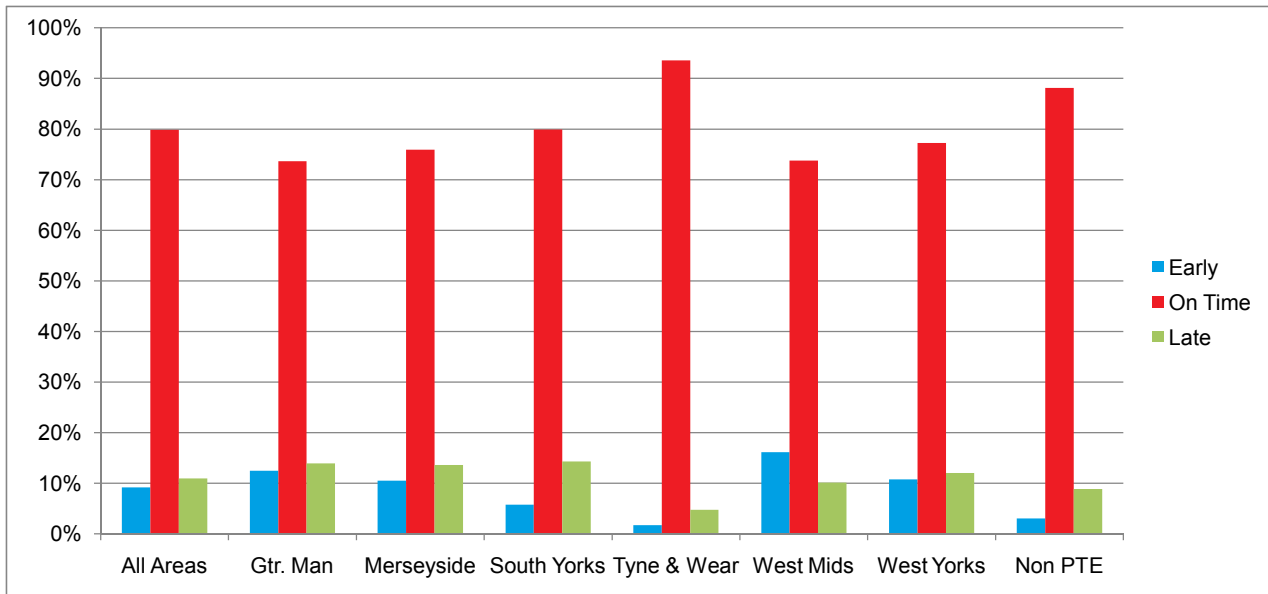


Table 8: Percentage of buses running late by time of day, 2009/10

Time of day	Percentage of buses running late - all areas
07:00-07:59	10%
08:00-08:59	14%
09:00-09:59	11%
10:00-10:59	8%
11:00-11:59	7%
12:00-12:59	10%
13:00-13:59	9%
14:00-14:59	11%
15:00-15:59	12%
16:00-16:59	18%
17:00-17:59	14%
18:00-18:59	6%

Table 9: Score for litter in bus by time of day, 2009/10

Time of day	Score for litter in bus - all areas
07:00-07:59	90
08:00-08:59	84
09:00-09:59	81
10:00-10:59	80
11:00-11:59	78
12:00-12:59	78
13:00-13:59	76
14:00-14:59	74
15:00-15:59	74
16:00-16:59	69
17:00-17:59	70
18:00-18:59	72

Table 10: Overall satisfaction, 2009/10

	All Areas	Gtr. Man	Mersey-side	South Yorks	Tyne & Wear	West Mids	West Yorks	Non PTE Areas
Overall satisfaction with this bus trip	79	80	79	77	82	77	78	78
Overall satisfaction for trips made from bus stops:								
Without a shelter	79	79	80	*	*	78	*	76
With a shelter	79	80	79	76	82	77	79	79
Overall satisfaction for trips made where the bus arrived:								
Early	80	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
On Time	80	81	82	79	82	78	81	79
Late	72	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Overall satisfaction for trips made from bus stops where:								
A timetable was not available	76	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
A timetable was available but illegible	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
A timetable was available and legible	79	79	80	77	82	78	79	79
Overall satisfaction for trips made from bus stops where:								
A countdown display was not present	79	79	79	78	83	78	80	77
A countdown display was present but not working	77	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
A countdown display was present and working	78	*	*	76	*	78	77	80

* 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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Passenger Focus
Freepost (RRRE-ETTC-LEET)
PO Box 4257
Manchester
M60 3AR

0300 123 2350
www.passengerfocus.org.uk
info@passengerfocus.org.uk

Passenger Focus is the operating
name of the Passengers' Council