

# 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 significant 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 liaising 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 the Bus Mystery Traveller Survey that was previously managed by the DfT.

Each quarter 1,200 journeys are assessed by researchers trained 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 and 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.

This short report highlights results from the Quarter 2 – 2009/10 survey. Results for Bristol, Nottingham and Leicester are shown in a single group identified as 'Non-PTE Areas', due to limited sample sizes. Results are either percentages or 'scores are out of 100'. A technical annex is available as a separate document.



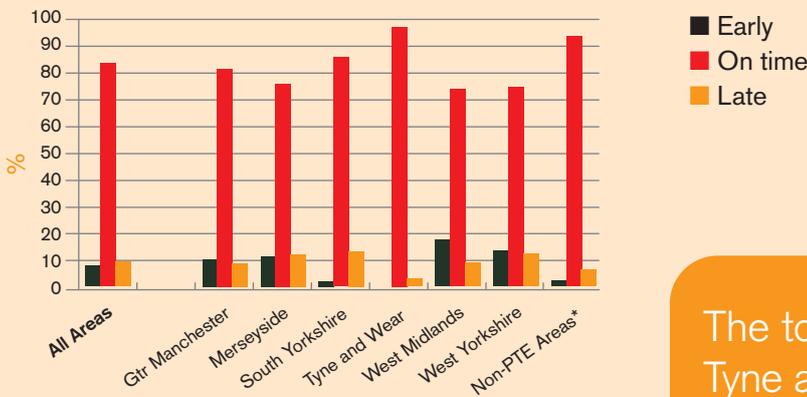
# Punctuality

Punctuality is a key driver of satisfaction for bus users. The researcher records the actual and scheduled departure time of the bus from which punctuality is assessed. Across all the regions surveyed, 83 per cent of buses arrived on time, 8 per cent of buses were recorded early and 9 per cent recorded late.

Punctuality varied between regions with the top performing regions being Tyne and Wear at 97 per cent and Non-PTE Areas where 93 per cent of buses arrived on time. In the lower than average performing regions, the ratings were clustered around 75 per cent for 'buses arriving on time'.



## Punctuality



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

The top performing Area was Tyne and Wear with 97 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 shelter (if applicable).

Overall the environment at bus stops scored highly. Of the stops assessed, 83 per cent had a shelter. This was highest in Tyne and Wear and South Yorkshire at 92 per cent and 90 per cent respectively and lowest in Greater Manchester at 76 per cent.

'Cleanliness at the shelter' overall scored 75 points out of 100. This was highest in South Yorkshire (89) and Tyne and Wear (87) being somewhat higher and Greater Manchester (75) being somewhat lower.

Wear (84) and lowest in West Yorkshire (65).

Levels of graffiti scored 81 points out of 100 across All Areas and was reasonably consistent across Areas.

Level of litter scored 82 points out of 100 with South Yorkshire (89) and Tyne and Wear (87) being somewhat higher and Greater Manchester (75) being somewhat lower.

The 'condition of the shelter' scored 86 points out of 100. This result was generally similar across Areas except for West Yorkshire (78) with a somewhat lower score.

### Bus stop environment

	All Areas
Proportion of bus stops with a shelter	83%
Cleanliness of bus stop / shelter	75
Absence of graffiti at the bus stop / shelter	81
Absence of litter at bus stop / shelter	82
Condition of shelter	86

\* The higher the score the greater the absence of litter / graffiti

# Information at the bus stop

Researchers assessed 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	88%
Information about fares	7%
Contact information for bus operating co.	36%
Contact information for Traveline	83%

Countdown electronic displays of next bus information remain in the minority – only 23 per cent of stops surveyed have them. West Yorkshire has the highest proportion of electronic displays at 48 per cent,

Greater Manchester had the lowest proportion at four per cent. Where there was a countdown display it was working properly in 88 per cent of cases.

Contact details for Traveline, the public transport information service, were almost universally available in all areas surveyed except West Yorkshire where there was almost a complete absence and the Non-PTE areas where a noticeable minority (15 per cent) of stops did not have this information.



# The bus

Researchers rated the cleanliness and condition of the bus inside and out, as well as levels of litter.

In general scores are good and had limited variations across areas. However, Tyne and Wear scored above average for all measures, West Yorkshire being lower than average on 'cleanliness of seating' and 'cleanliness of windows', and Non-PTE Areas being lower than average on 'overall cleanliness of exterior'.

## Condition of the bus

	All Areas	Greater Manchester	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	Tyne and Wear	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Non-PTE Areas
Cleanliness of exterior	68	83	84	84	85	83	82	81
Graffiti on exterior bus	99	94	98	99	98	100	96	98
Cleanliness of seating	84	79	80	84	85	76	72	80
Condition of seating	83	80	81	84	84	81	78	81
Cleanliness of windows	69	78	81	80	87	75	64	76
Level of litter	82	74	82	81	82	77	76	79

# 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 across All Areas. However, this occurred in just under half of cases in Merseyside.

The appropriateness of speed scored an average of 83 points out of 100. There was little variation across

Areas except for West Yorkshire with a higher score of 92. The 'smoothness of ride' scored an average of 76 across All Areas, with little variation across Areas.

On the whole, appearance of driver scored of 81 points out of 100 with little variation across All Areas. Overwhelmingly (98 per cent of occasions) bus drivers spoke clearly / were easy to understand across All Areas.

Drivers were asked a question by the researcher and 'helpfulness and consideration' scored an average of 64.

However whilst a number of Areas had slightly lower scores, South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear had higher scores with 83 and 79 respectively.

## Bus driver – tickets and service

	All Areas
Did the driver give you the correct ticket?	99%
If not paying cash, driver recorded your boarding	91%
Appropriateness of speed	83
Smoothness of ride	76
Appearance of driver	81
Bus driver spoke clearly / was easy to understand	98%
Helpfulness and consideration of driver	64

“Across all the Areas surveyed, 83 per cent of buses **arrived on time**”

“83 per cent of bus stops assessed **had 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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