

Great scores: But could do better...

Overall bus passenger satisfaction averages 84% in England

By Mel Holley

"The industry has much to be proud of," Transport Minister Norman Baker told a high-level industry audience, as the results of the 2012 English Bus Passenger Survey (BPS) were unveiled on Monday (18 March).

The results of the latest research, by the government-funded independent watchdog Passenger Focus, show that average satisfaction is 84%, down one point from 2011.

However, this masks a wide variation, with passengers in Nottingham the most satisfied overall (92%), while passengers in Milton Keynes were the least satisfied (73%).

Norman Baker said: "The bus

industry is doing tremendously well. The industry should champion this and ask how do we get non-users onto buses.

"We've got to get more of the population to give buses a try. If we can get people on buses then we might be able to keep them.

"Even the worst average satisfaction levels of 70% are pretty good. Congratulations to the industry on a very good performance."

The BPS surveyed 22,000 bus passengers across 20 areas of England (outside London) and looked at many factors of journeys such as punctuality, frequency, helpfulness and attitude of the driver and value for money.

Passenger Focus CEO Anthony Smith says: "We hope this report will be a call to action for transport authorities and bus companies to better work together to improve things for passengers.

"In particular they should closely examine how the high level of passenger satisfaction

in places like Nottingham, Oxfordshire and Devon has been achieved, and then look to replicate it."

Guide Dogs Campaigns Manager James White says: "The provision of on-board information is the area that consistently ranks lowest in terms of satisfaction. Audio-visual on-board announcements would be a really simple way to improve this."

With very high overall satisfaction scores, adds Mr Smith, areas of dissatisfaction are brought into sharper focus, with driver attitudes being the top 'gripe'. Also, commuters are less satisfied than other fare-payers, while free travel pass holders are more satisfied.

"We know from our rail surveys that commuters are generally more grumpy," says Mr Smith. "They are either going to work or going home, and don't want to do either, and they see travel as a tax on them."

Another key finding is that



Minister Norman Baker: Praised industry

value-for-money ratings have dropped slightly from an overall average of 56% in 2011 to 54%. This is in part due to the effects of the recession, meaning people have less disposable income, and the effects of fare increases.

However, according to Mr Smith fare cuts would not necessarily make a big

difference, as other factors, such as how drivers treat passengers, influence the value-for-money score.

The 105-page report with full regional breakdowns is available online. And, crucially, all 7,000 passenger comments and the full data sets are also available. This means that operators

can produce any reports they wish, using the online tools, for example certain age ranges and satisfaction measures.

● Download the full survey from www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/bus-passenger-survey-full-report-march-2013