



Public Attitudes to Buses: Great Britain, March 2013

RESPONSIBLE STATISTICIAN:

Nicola George 020 7944 3556

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Media: 020 7944 3066

Public: 020 7944 3094 bus.statistics@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Main findings

This report summarises public attitudes towards buses; most people who use the bus are satisfied with their local bus service but a majority of non-users said they would only travel by bus 'if there was no other way of getting there'.

Rating of local bus services

- 75% of bus users rated the overall quality of bus services positively as did 45% of non-users – 61% of overall respondents. Number of destinations, frequency of services and information about bus times were rated most highly.
- The cost of bus fares was rated most poorly by both users and non-users.



75% of bus users rate the overall quality of their local bus service as very or fairly good 

Reasons for not using the bus more

- Respondents' main reason for not travelling by bus (more) was because travelling by car is easier and more convenient (46%). For those without a car a preference for walking or cycling was the main reason (16%).
- 66% of non-users and 50% of bus users agreed that they would only travel by bus if there was 'no other way of getting there'.



46% agreed the main reason for not using the bus more was because it is easier /more convenient by car

Concessionary travel

- 22% of the sample had an older or disabled concessionary bus pass. In general, bus users with a pass rated their local bus service more positively than users without a pass.
- 86% of all respondents were in support of free bus travel for older and disabled people.



86% of respondents in support of free concessionary travel

About this release

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A report on the bus module of the March 2013, Office for National Statistics' Opinions omnibus survey based on a random probability sample of 910 people. See background for further details.

Introduction

This report summarises people's experiences and attitudes towards bus travel in Great Britain. It is based on a module of questions sponsored by the Department for Transport on the Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey in March 2013, March 2011, February 2009 and June 2007. Further details of the methodology can be found in the 'background' section.

Definition of bus user. At some points this report refers to 'users', which is defined as people who use local buses at least once a year (53% of respondents) and 'non-users' who use local buses less than once a year or never (47%).

Statistical significance. Any differences between sub-groups or years mentioned in the text of this report are statistically significant at the 5% level of confidence (that is, if the sample were to be drawn repeatedly from the population, we would expect the result to lie within the confidence interval 95% of the time) unless otherwise stated.

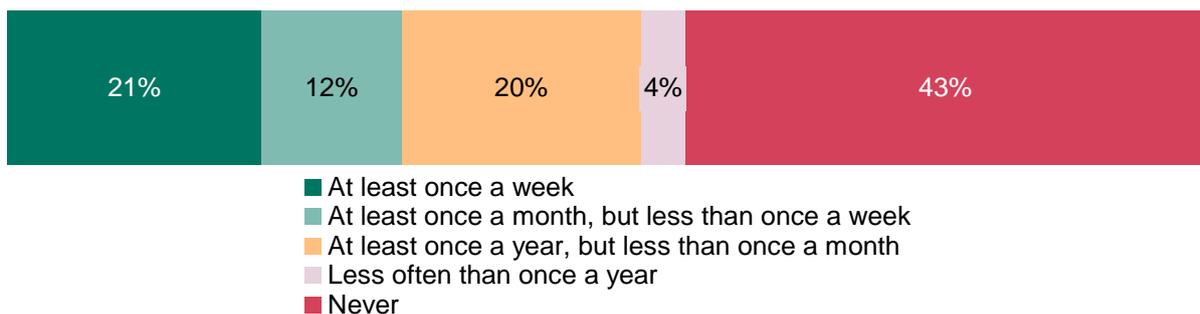
Further information and detailed statistics are published on the DfT website including:

- Detailed [statistical tables](#) including full breakdowns by sub-groups and trends over time. Individual tables are referenced at relevant points in the text.
- A copy of the [survey questionnaire](#)
- A full report on the previous [March 2011 module](#)

Frequency and purpose of bus journeys

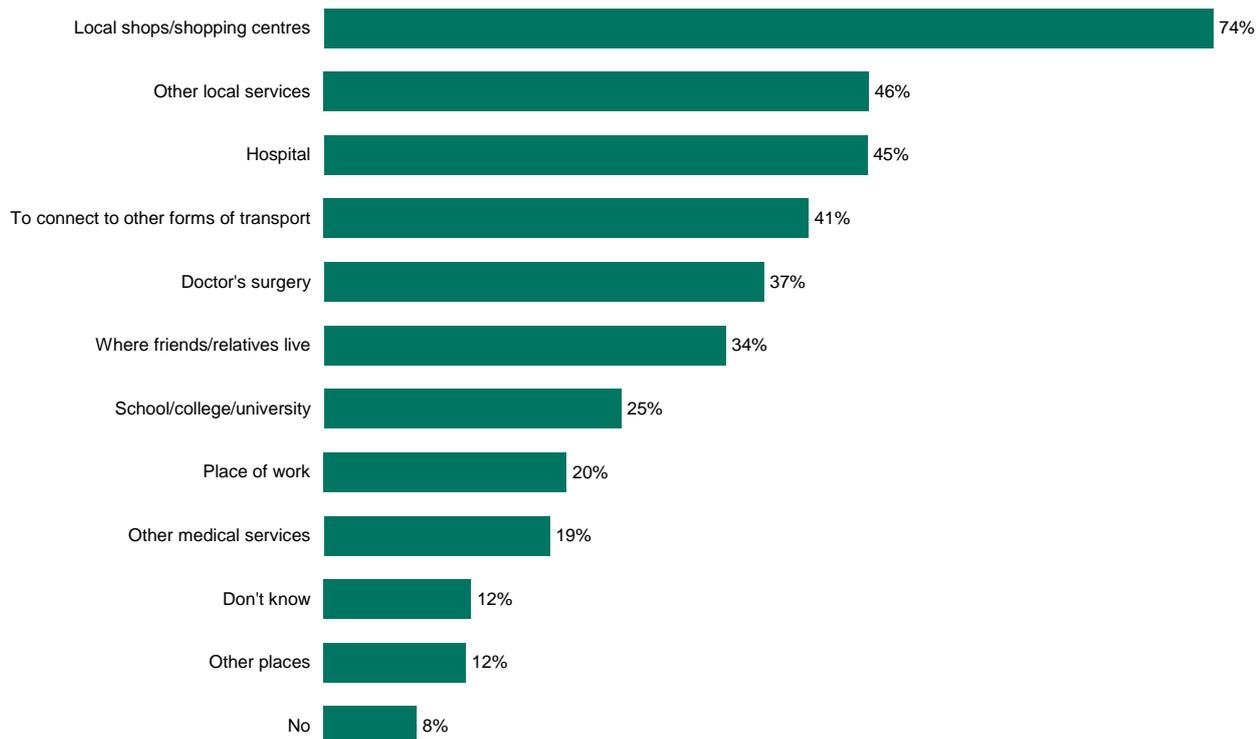
- In 2013, 21% of respondents said they used the bus at least once a week, 12% of people use the bus at least once a month but less than once a week and 43% said they never use the bus.

Figure 1: Frequency of bus use, 2013 (% of respondents: un-weighted base, n=910)



- Bus use was higher amongst those without access to a car or van in their household (78% users) and those with an older or disabled persons concessionary travel pass (75% users) [[ATT0102](#)]. These findings are in line with figures from the [National Travel Survey](#), which is the main source of information on how people travel.
- When asked whether the bus services from the nearest bus stop **go to any of the places where they would like to go**, 74% of respondents said 'yes' and that they went to local shops and shopping centres. Other popular positive answers included hospitals (45%), to connect to other transport (41%) and the doctors' surgery (37%) [[ATT0101](#)].

Figure 2: Destinations served by local buses, 2013 (%) (n=901)



Note: multiple response question so percentages sum to more than 100.

- The main **purpose of travelling by bus** mentioned by respondents was for shopping; 66% of people who had used the bus in the last 12 months said that in that time they had used the bus for shopping [[ATT0103](#)] – although this was a fall from 73% in 2011. Again, this is consistent with the National Travel Survey, which found the main purpose for travelling by local bus was for shopping.

Detailed statistical tables with breakdown by sub-groups (age, gender, income etc) and overall time series:

- [ATT0101](#) – Destinations served by local bus services
- [ATT0102](#) – Frequency of travelling by local bus
- [ATT0103](#) – Purpose of journeys made by bus in the last 12 months

How users and non-users rate their local bus service

- When asked how they would rate the **overall quality of local bus services**, 75% of bus users rated these positively ('very good' or 'fairly good') and 11% rated them negatively ('very poor' or 'fairly poor'). In contrast, 45% of non-users rated the overall quality of bus services positively and 16% rated them as negatively. Overall, 61% of respondents rated the overall quality of their local bus service positively [[ATT0106](#)].
- If the proportion of negative responses is taken away from the proportion of positive responses to provide an overall net rating, then the number of places you can get to by bus (47%), the frequency of buses (40%) and the availability of real time information at bus stops (39%) are rated most highly across the whole sample (see table ATT0106). The cost of fares (-18%) and the availability of fare information before the start of the journey (-15%) are rated lowest, the only statements with negative net ratings.
- **Users and non-users rank the performance of local bus services in a very similar order**, however, the proportion of non-users rating aspects of services positively were less than for users. This is largely because, unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of non-users said they 'didn't know' how to rate local services (25-54%) compared to users (1-21%).
- If these 'don't know' responses are excluded then the gap between users and non-users shrinks, however users' ratings are still higher than non-users (though not all differences are statistically significant).

Positive ratings have decreased since 2011, though are broadly consistent with earlier years and there is no evidence of a clear trend:

- The largest drops compared to 2011 were in ratings of overall quality, frequency, reliability and punctuality, the number of places and the simplicity of bus routes (all dropped 6 percentage points; see table ATT0106).
- However, when 2013 is compared to 2009 the only fall in positive ratings is for the cost of local buses. Bus fares have increased faster than the rate of inflation measured by the Retail Prices Index over this period. For more information on bus fares see the [DfT annual bus statistics](#) (table [BUS0405](#) shows an index of bus fare changes over time).

Respondents were asked if their household had any cars or vans normally available for use.

- For statements relating to the general quality of the bus service (speed, frequency, proximity of stops) the availability of a car did not change opinions.
- However those without access to a car or van were more likely to say that they would travel by bus more often if fares were cheaper.

Detailed statistical tables with breakdown by whether a user or non-user of local buses

- [ATT0106](#) – Ratings of local bus services
- A detailed [bus passenger survey](#), providing more detailed information on bus user satisfaction by area (though not for all areas), and based on a much larger sample size, is carried out by Passenger Focus. However, this survey does not cover non-users.

Figure 3: Ratings of local bus services by user status, 2013 (%)

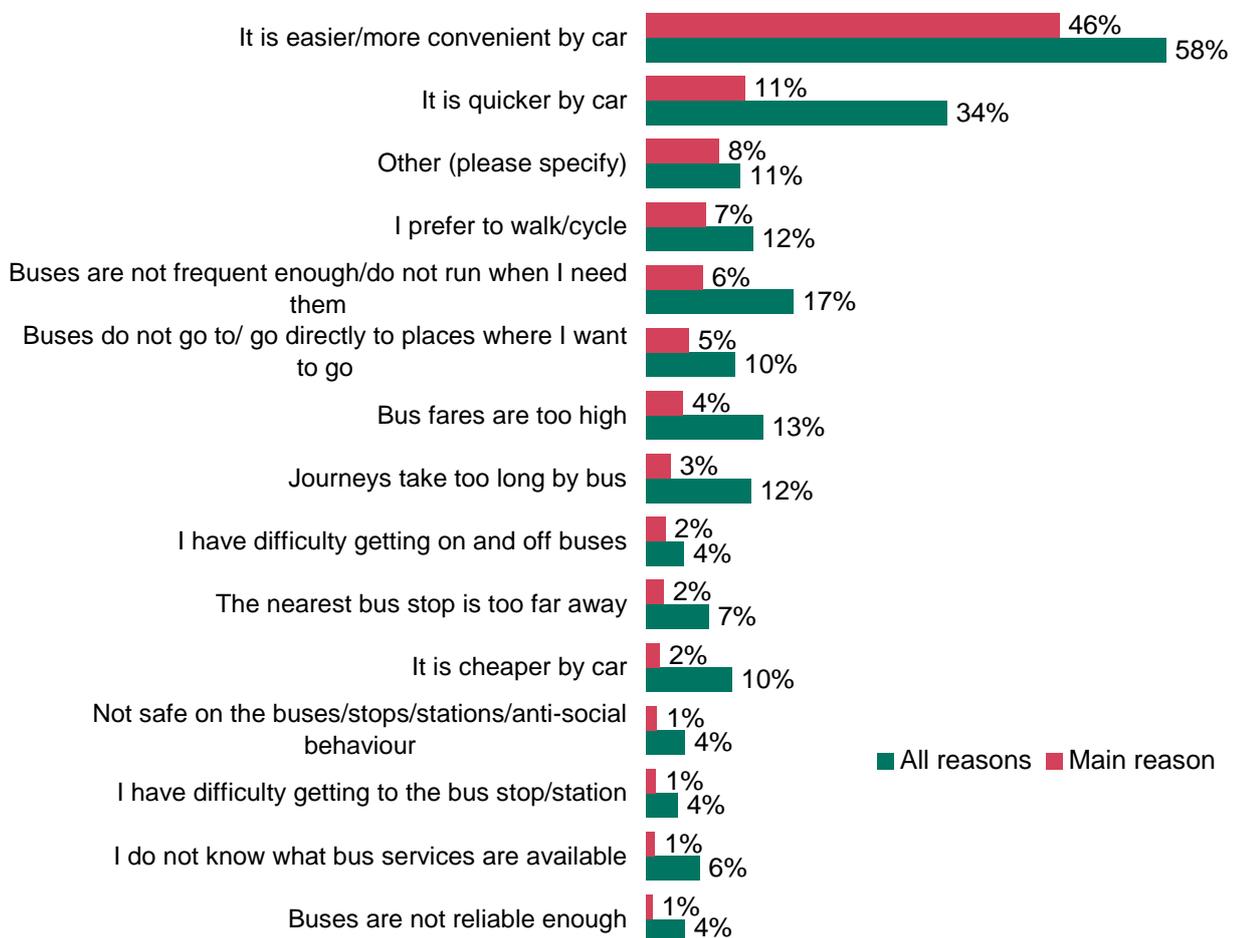


Reasons why people don't use local bus services (more)

Respondents who said that they never used local buses or used local buses less than once a month were asked why they do not use the bus (more).

- The most common reasons were because it's more convenient to travel by car (58%) and because it's quicker to travel by car (34%) [ATT0107]. Of those without household access to a car or van, top reasons (besides 'other') for not using the bus more were a preference for walking or cycling (23%) and bus fares being too high (20%).
- When asked for the main reason they did not travel by bus (more) respondents most often said it was because it was easier and more convenient to travel by car(46%) [ATT0108], though respondents in households without access to a car or van most often mentioned a preference for walking or cycling (16%).
- The main reasons and the ordering were broadly similar to 2011.

Figure 4: Reasons why people do not use buses (more often), 2013 (%), n=593)



Detailed statistical tables with breakdown by sub-groups (age, gender, income etc) and overall time series:

- [ATT0107](#) – Reasons for not using local bus services (more often)
- [ATT0108](#) – Main reason for not using local bus services (more often)

Things that would increase bus use

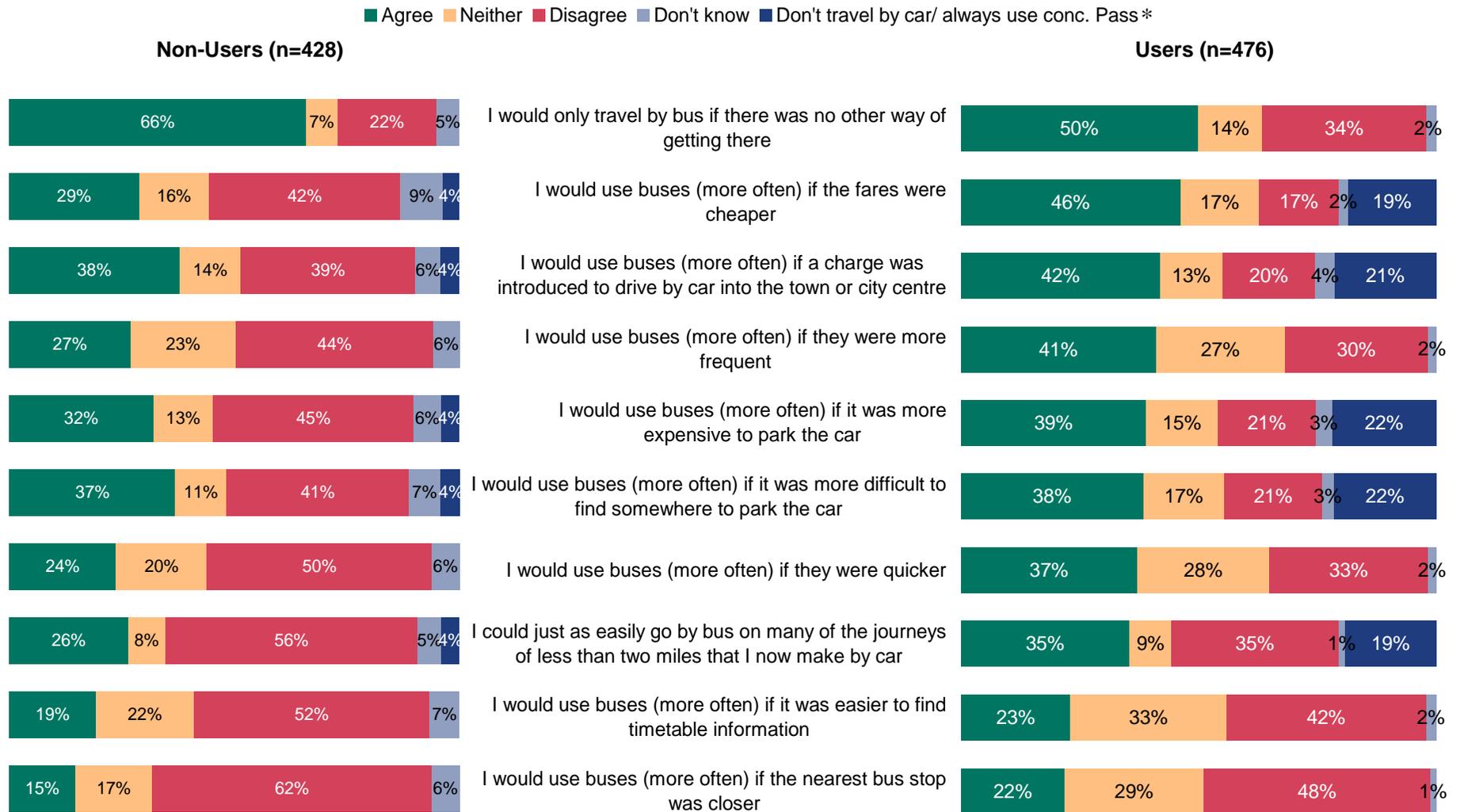
All respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with a range of statements about increasing bus use. As with the questions about rating bus services, there are typically differences in how users and non-users answer these questions [[ATT0109](#)].

- Users were more likely (than non-users) to agree that they would travel by bus more if aspects of the bus service itself were improved, such as if buses were quicker, more frequent, cheaper or if the nearest bus stop was closer.
- A similar (that is, not statistically significantly different) proportion of users and non-users agreed that they would use the bus (more) if it was more difficult or more expensive to park the car or if a charge was brought in to drive by car into the town or city centre.
- The pattern of responses to these questions has remained broadly the same over time (see ATT0109).
- 66% of non-users and 50% of bus users agreed with the statement that they would 'only travel by bus if there was no other way of getting there'. Users were more likely than non-users to agree with the statement that 'I could just as easily go by bus on many of the journeys of less than two miles that I now make by car'.
- Respondents without household access to a car or van were less likely to say that they would only travel by bus if there was no other way of getting there compared to those with access to a car. Despite this, 44% of those without access to a car or van said they would only travel by bus if there was no other way of getting there.
- Not surprisingly for statements about increasing the cost or difficulty of parking those respondents in households without access to a car or van were less likely to respond that this would increase their bus usage.

Detailed statistical tables with breakdown by whether a bus user or non-user and time series:

- [ATT0109](#) – Statements about bus use and things that would encourage greater bus use

Figure 5: Agreement with statements about increasing bus use by user status, 2013



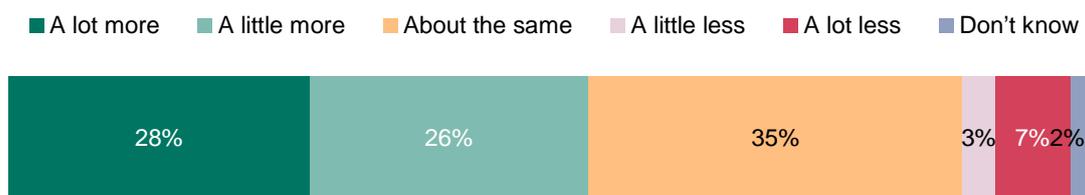
* Spontaneous answers were accepted if given by the respondent without prompt and were either 'I always use my concessionary pass' for statements relating to the cost of buses or 'I don't travel by car' for questions relating to driving.

Concessionary pass holders and bus use

In England, disabled passengers and men and women who have reached the pensionable age for women are entitled to a concessionary bus pass which provides free local bus travel throughout England. There are similar schemes in Wales and Scotland.

- 86% of all respondents said that they were in support of free bus travel for older people, the figure was the same in support of free travel for disabled people. [ATT0104 b, c].
- Those with a pass (22% of the sample [ATT0104 a]) were asked whether, since they received their pass, they used the bus more or less often than before they had a pass. The graph below shows that the majority of pass-holders say that they use the bus more often since they received their pass [ATT0105].

Figure 6: Change in bus use since receipt of concessionary pass, 2013 (%) (n=286)



Users with a concessionary pass rated 9 out of the 13 aspects of local buses asked about more positively than users without a pass, including overall quality.

- Comparing **users with a concessionary pass** to other bus users, it is not surprising that those with a pass rated the cost and availability of information about fares more positively than those without a pass. However they also rated levels of personal safety both at bus stops and on buses, reliability and punctuality, on board comfort and politeness/helpfulness of staff more positively than users without a pass.
- **Non-users with a concessionary pass** were more likely than other non-users to say that the main reason they didn't use local buses (more) was because they had difficulty getting to and from the bus stop and on or off buses. Users with a concessionary pass were more likely to say that they had difficulty getting on and off buses than users without a pass (4% compared to 0%) but this difference was not significant. This is likely to reflect the demographics of those with a pass, the majority being over 65.
- Users with a concessionary pass were less likely to say that the main reason they do not travel by local buses (more) was because they prefer to walk or cycle (2% compared to 13%) but this difference was not significant. The proportion of people giving the remaining reasons was similar across both those with and those without a concessionary pass.

Detailed statistical tables with breakdown by sub-groups (age, gender, income etc) and overall time series:

- [ATT0104](#) – Whether own a concessionary pass, and whether in support of free travel for older, and disabled
- [ATT0105](#) – Change in the frequency of bus use since receiving a concessionary pass

Background information

Users and uses of these statistics

These statistics provide high level information about both users and non-users attitudes towards buses. Whilst information on user attitudes is available in more detail from other sources (most notably Passenger Focus), information about non-users attitudes is less frequently available and this is a key benefit of Opinions survey questions. Figures are potentially of interest to bus policy makers and passenger groups.

Related sources of information

The main source of information on bus user satisfaction is the Bus Passenger Survey carried out by Passenger Focus, which has a much larger sample size allowing a more detailed breakdown of the results. This can be found at <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/bus-passenger-survey>

The main source of information about the characteristics of bus users and their journeys is the [National Travel Survey](#) published annually by DfT.

Statistics on the local bus sector, covering passengers, mileage, the vehicle fleet and concessionary travel are available via the DfT [bus statistics series](#)

- Latest [Annual](#) and [quarterly](#) bus statistics
- [Concessionary travel statistics for England](#)

Survey design and methodology

The Office for National Statistics' Opinions omnibus survey is a monthly random probability face-to-face survey of adults aged 16 and over living in private households in Great Britain.

During March 2013, 1810 eligible households were contacted by interviewers resulting in 910 interviews. This equates to a response rate of 50%. The March 2011 survey achieved 1,139 interviews (a response rate of 64%). February 2009 consisted of 1,070 interviews (a response rate of 58%) and the February 2007 and June 2007 surveys achieved a total of 2,255 interviews (a response rate of 62%).

Weighting factors are applied to Opinions data to correct for unequal probability of selection caused by interviewing only one adult per household, or restricting the eligibility of the module to certain types of respondent. The weighting system also adjusts for some non-response bias by calibrating the Opinions sample to ONS population totals. The weighting ensures that the results are representative of the population at large with respect to regions and age-sex groups.

This method of sampling and the consequent weighting affect the sampling errors of the survey estimates. The effect can be shown by calculating the Effective Sample Size which gives the size of an equal probability sample which is equivalent in precision to the unequal probability sample actually used. On average the Effective Sample Size of the weighted Opinions Survey is 84-86% of the actual sample of individuals. A design factor (DEFT) of 1.2 was used when testing results for significance.

Concessionary travel - background

Older and disabled people in England holding a statutory English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) pass are allowed to travel for free on local bus services anywhere in England, between 0930 and 2300 during weekdays and anytime at weekends and bank holidays. The scheme is administered at a local level by Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs). Some TCAs offer discretionary concessions in addition to the statutory ENCTS scheme, such as free or reduced travel before 0930 or on other transport modes. There are equivalent schemes in Scotland and Wales.

Next Release

This report is produced on an ad-hoc basis. Any further releases will be advertised via the DfT statistical publications list. Please contact bus.statistics@dft.gsi.gov.uk for further information.