

# Public attitudes towards buses

## A report on the bus module of the March 2011, Office for National Statistics' Opinions omnibus survey

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Excel tables containing selected cross-tabulations and time series and a copy of the 2011 questionnaire can be found on the Department for Transport's website at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/public-attitudes-towards-buses-march-2011>

## Key findings

1. In 2011, popular destinations served by buses from the nearest bus stop included local shops (82 per cent), hospitals (54 per cent), doctor's surgeries (46 per cent) and schools/colleges/ universities (28 per cent). More respondents reported buses going to these locations than they did in 2009. Four per cent of respondents reported that the bus services from the nearest bus stop did not go to any of the places where they would want to go.
2. Twenty-three per cent of respondents said they use local buses at least once a week, 14 per cent said they use local buses at least once a month but less than once a week and 21 per cent said they use local buses at least once a year but less than once a month. This report refers to 'users' who use buses at least once a year (57 per cent of respondents) and non-users who use local buses less than once a year or never (43 per cent).
3. Shopping was by far the most popular reason for making a journey by bus (73 per cent), followed by visiting friends and family (35 per cent).
4. Eighty-one per cent of bus users rated the overall quality of bus service 'very good' or 'fairly good' as did 48 per cent of non-users. The number of destinations, frequency of services and reliability and punctuality of bus services were rated most highly, whereas cost, the availability of information on fares before making a journey and real time information at bus stops were rated least positively.
5. Bus users' positive ratings of the availability of information about bus times before the start of journeys and personal safety from crime onboard buses had increased since 2009. Non-users' positive perceptions of these aspects of local bus services had also increased as had perceptions about personal safety from crime at bus stops, onboard comfort and the simplicity of routes.
6. Twenty-three per cent of respondents held a concessionary pass. The majority of concessionary pass holders were aged 60 and over. Concessionary pass holders were more likely than non-pass holders to travel at least once a week by bus.
7. The main reason for not travelling by bus (more) was because it was easier and more convenient to travel by car. For those without access to a car, a preference for walking and cycling or difficulties getting on and off or to bus services were the main reasons for not using buses (more).

8. Seventy per cent of non-users and 48 per cent of bus users agreed that they would only travel by bus if there was no other way of getting to their destination. Bus users indicated that they were more inclined to respond to cheaper fares than non-users by using buses more (56 per cent compared to 31 per cent). Since 2009, bus users were also more likely to agree that they would use buses more if it was difficult to park the car and could just as easily make most of their short car journeys by bus.

## Introduction

9. 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 2011, February 2009 and February and June 2007.

### **Survey design and methodology**

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

During March 2011, 1781 eligible households were contacted by interviewers resulting in 1,139 interviews. This equates to a response rate of 64 per cent. The February 2009 survey achieved 1,070 interviews (a response rate of 58 per cent) and the February 2007 and June 2007 surveys achieved a total of 2,255 interviews (a response rate of 62 per cent).

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.

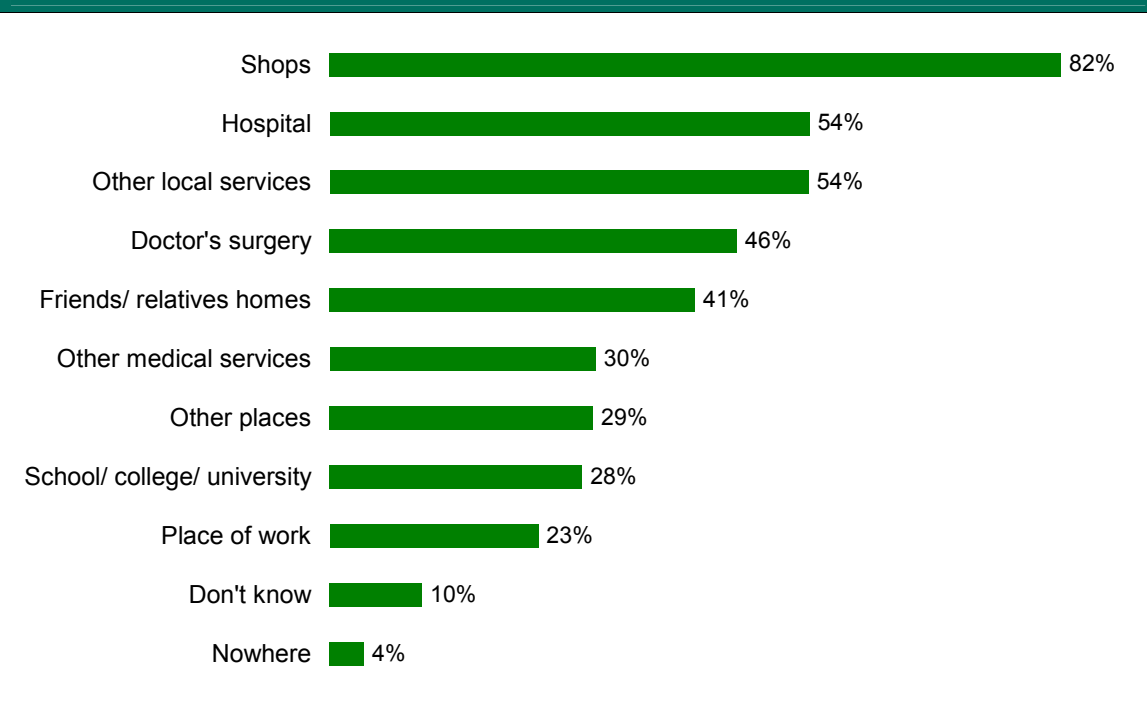
This method of sampling and the consequent weighting affect the sampling errors of the survey estimates. The effect can be shown by calculating the Effective Sample Size which gives the size of an equal probability sample which is equivalent in precision to the unequal probability sample actually used. On average the Effective Sample Size of the weighted Opinions Survey is 84-86 per cent of the actual sample of individuals.

10. Any differences between results for 2011, 2009 and 2007 or other sub-groups remarked upon in this text are statistically significant at the five per cent level of confidence (that is, we can be 95 per cent certain that the difference exists in the population). A design factor (DEFT) of 1.2 was used when testing results. This report was prepared by Abby Sneade (Statistics Travel and Safety).

## Accessibility of local services

11. When asked whether the bus services from the nearest bus stop go to any of the places where they would like to go, 82 per cent of respondents said 'yes' and that they went to local shops and shopping centres. Other popular positive answers included hospitals (54 per cent), doctor's surgeries (46 per cent), homes of friends and relatives (41 per cent) and schools, colleges and universities (28 per cent) and places of work (23 per cent). Four per cent of respondents said that the bus services from their nearest stop did not go to any of the places that they would want to go to.

**Figure 1: Destinations served by local bus services, 2011**



Note: Multiple response question - responses may sum to more than 100 per cent.  
Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey, March 2011.  
Un-weighted base: 1,135 (all responses)

12. Figure 2 contains the destinations for which the results varied by age of respondent. This question specifically asked whether the bus services from the nearest bus stop go to any of the places where the respondent would want to go. Responses are therefore typically skewed towards where people want to go; so it is not surprising to see that those aged 65 and over are less likely than younger respondents to say that the bus goes to their place of work or an educational establishment. Seven per cent of those aged 65-74 and one per cent of those aged 75 and over reported that buses from the nearest stop went to a place of work compared to 19-33 per cent of respondents of working age. Ten per cent of those aged 65-74 and seven per cent of those aged 75 and over reported that buses from the nearest stop went to a school, college or university, compared to 24-55 per cent of respondents aged 16-64. Those aged 16-24 were more likely than those aged 45-74 to say that the bus goes to their friends and relatives homes.

**Figure 2: Selected destinations served by local bus services by age of respondent, 2011**

	Place of work	Doctor's surgery	School/college/university	Friends/relatives homes	Un-weighted base count
16 to 24 (a)	31% <sup>ef</sup>	40%	55% <sup>bcdef</sup>	58% <sup>cde</sup>	81
25 to 44 (b)	28% <sup>ef</sup>	40%	30% <sup>ef</sup>	42%	355
45 to 54 (c)	33% <sup>def</sup>	46%	28% <sup>ef</sup>	34%	176
55 to 64 (d)	19 % <sup>ef</sup>	50%	24% <sup>f</sup>	39%	223
65 to 74 (e)	7%	52%	10%	29%	170
75 + (f)	1%	57% <sup>b</sup>	7%	40%	130

Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey

Note: Letter indicate that a result is statistically significant from the result within the age group allocated that letter.

13. In 2011, a greater proportion of respondents said that buses went to the locations they would want to get to - excepting places of work - than in 2009. For example, the proportion of respondents saying that buses went to a school, college or university had risen from 15 per cent in 2009 to 28 per cent in 2011 (Table 2). This may indicate that local buses now serve more destinations that people want to go to, that people want to go to a broader range of destinations or that people are more aware about which destinations local buses serve.

**Table 3: Destinations served by local bus services, 2007-2011**

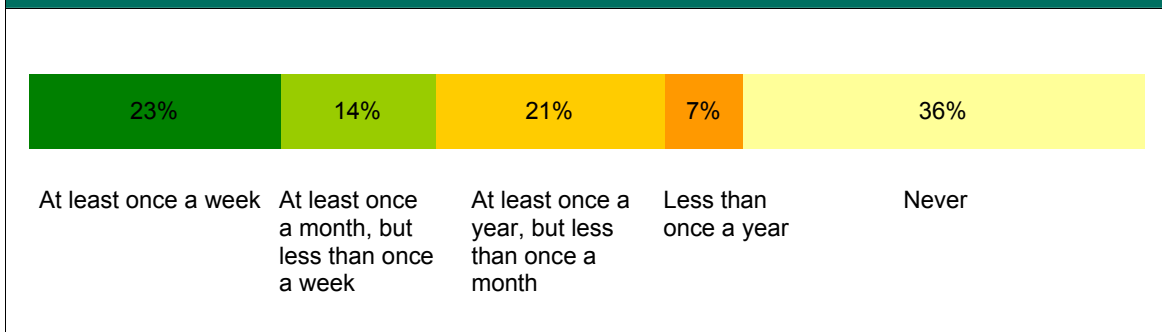
	<i>Shops</i>	<i>Place of work</i>	<i>Doctor's surgery</i>	<i>Hospital</i>	<i>School/college/university</i>	<i>Friends/relatives/homes</i>	<i>Other medical services</i>	<i>Other local services</i>	<i>Other places</i>	<i>Base</i>
Mar-11	82%	23%	46%	54%	28%	41%	30%	54%	29%	1,135
Feb-09	76%	19%	26%	32%	15%	27%	11%	35%	15%	1,030
Feb/Jun-07	73%	18%	28%	34%	15%	27%	10%	35%	21%	2,214

Note: Multiple response question, responses may sum to more than 100 per cent  
Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey

## Frequency and purpose of bus journeys

14. In 2011, nearly a quarter of all respondents reported travelling by bus at least once a week; 14 per cent said they travelled by bus at least once a month but less than once a week; 21 per cent said they travelled by bus at least once a year but less than once a month, and seven per cent reported travelling by bus less than once a year. Just over a third (36 per cent) of all respondents said they never travel by bus.

**Figure 4: Frequency of bus use, 2011**



Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey, March 2011.  
Un-weighted base: 1,135 (all respondents)

15. Those aged 75 and over were more likely than younger respondents aged 25-64 to use the bus at least once a week. Thirty-five per cent of respondents aged 75 and over used the bus at least once a week compared to 17-21 per cent of respondents aged 25-64. Those aged 25-64 were more likely than younger respondents aged 16-25 to say that they never use the bus (39-47 per cent compared to 20 per cent respectively).

**Table 5: Frequency of bus use by age, 2011**

	At least once a week	At least once a month, but less than once a week	At least once a year, but less than once a month	Less than once a year	Never	Un-weighted base count
16 to 24 (a)	28%	24%	20%	9%	20%	81
25 to 44 (b)	17% <sup>aef</sup>	14%	23%	7%	39% <sup>a</sup>	355
45 to 54 (c)	19% <sup>f</sup>	10% <sup>a</sup>	19%	5%	47% <sup>ae</sup>	176
55 to 64 (d)	21% <sup>f</sup>	13%	20%	8%	39% <sup>a</sup>	223
65 to 74 (e)	30%	11%	22%	9%	28%	170
75 + (f)	35%	12%	16%	5%	32%	130

Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey

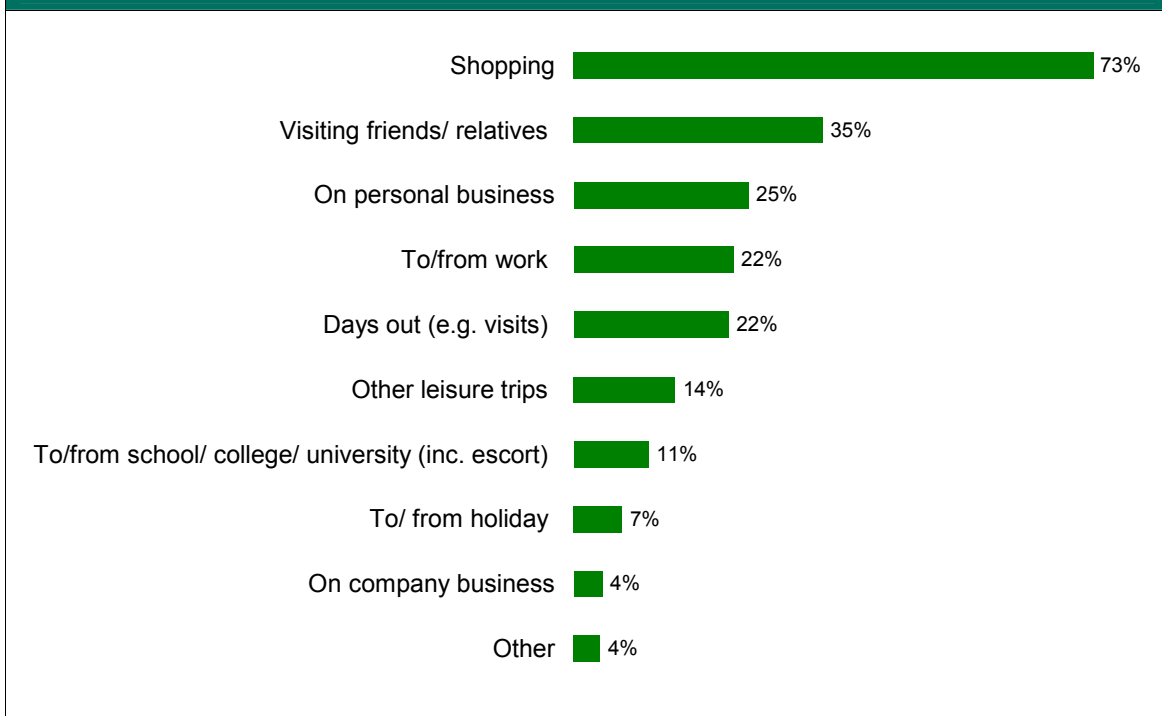
Note: Letter indicate that a result is statistically significant from the result within the age group allocated that letter.



16. Since 2009, the proportion of respondents who reported never travelling by bus fell from 42 per cent to 36 per cent in 2011. The proportion who reported using the bus to some extent, albeit less than once a month increased from 18 per cent in 2009, to 28 per cent in 2011.

17. Shopping is the most popular purpose for making a journey by bus (Figure 5). In 2011, 73 per cent of respondents who said they travel by bus at least once a year (hence forth referred to as 'bus users') reported having used the bus to go shopping in the previous 12 months. Just over a third of bus users (35 per cent) had used the bus to visit friends or relatives, a quarter had travelled by bus in order to attend to personal business, and around a fifth of bus users had used the bus to travel to work (22 per cent). Just four per cent of bus users said they had used the bus to travel on behalf of company business.

**Figure 5: the purpose of journeys made by bus in the last 12 months, 2011**



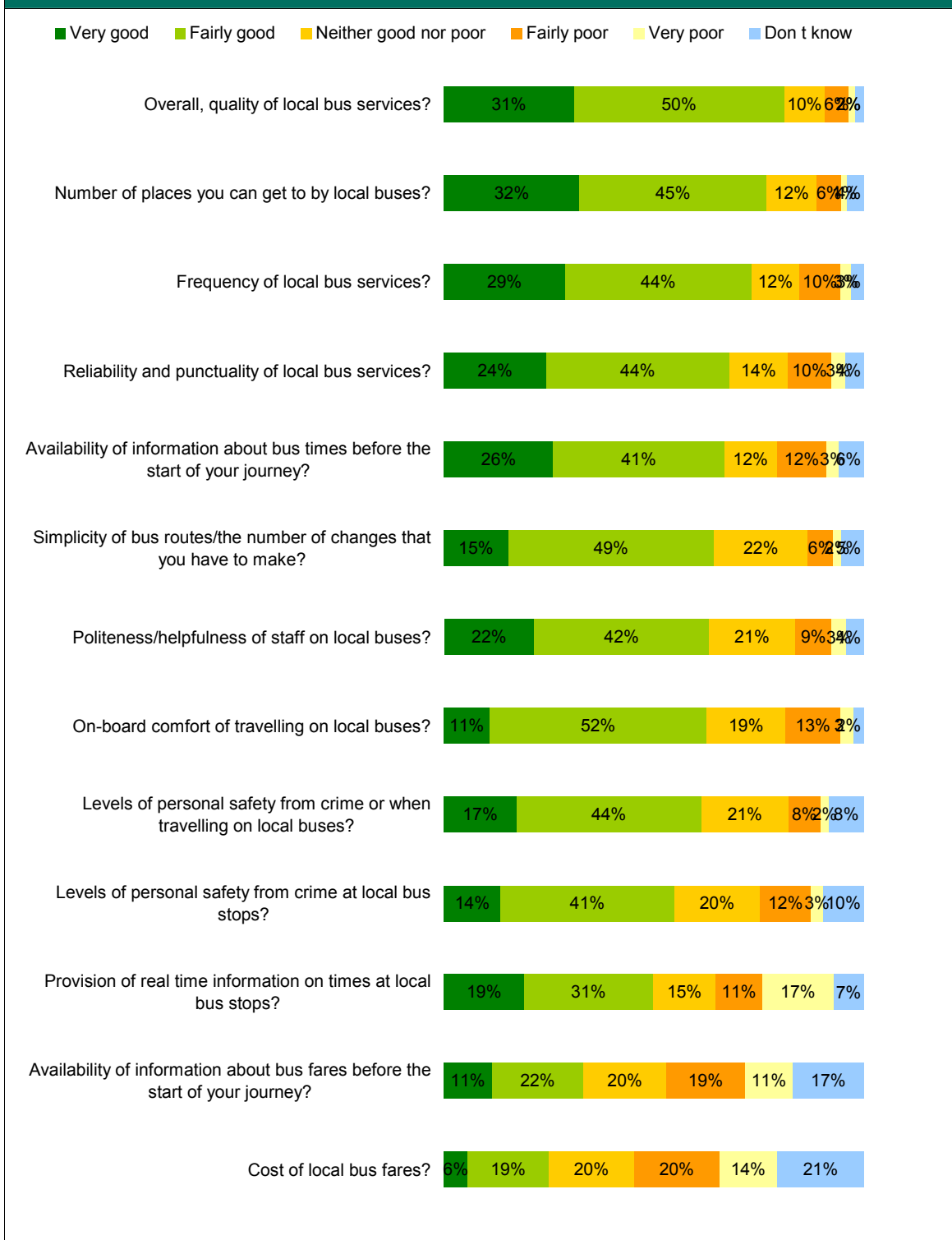
Note: Multiple response question, responses may sum to more than 100 per cent  
Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey, March 2011.  
Un-weighted base: 627 (all respondents who had travelled by bus in the previous 12 months)

18. In 2011, bus users aged 55 and over were more likely than those aged 25-54 to have used the bus to go shopping. Unemployed bus users were also far more likely to have used buses to visit friends or relatives. Sixty per cent of unemployed bus users had visited friends or relatives using the bus, compared to 29 per cent of employed bus users and 38 per cent of economically inactive bus users (the majority of who are aged 60 and over).

## How users and non-users rate local bus services

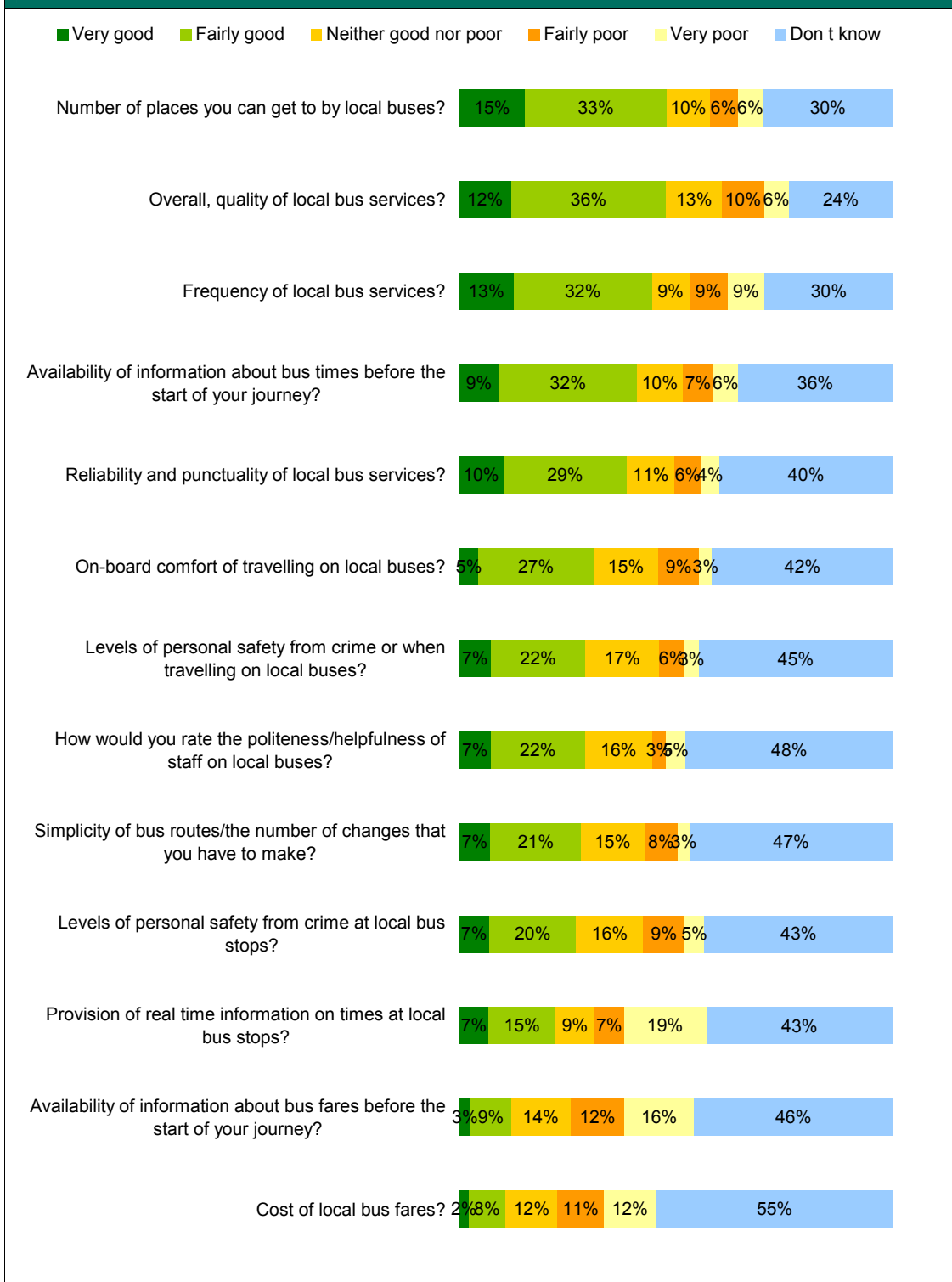
19. One of the key benefits of using the Opinions survey to rate bus services is that it allows us to monitor the perceptions of those who do not use local bus services as well as understanding how users rate their local bus services.
20. When asked how they would rate the overall quality of bus services, 81 per cent of bus users rated these positively ('very good' or 'fairly good') and eight per cent rated them 'very poor' or 'fairly poor'. In contrast, 48 per cent of non-users rated the overall quality of bus services positively and 16 per cent rated them as poor.
21. Figure 6 presents detailed ratings of local bus services from users; Figure 7 presents detailed ratings from non-users and Figure 8 presents the proportion of users and non-users rating local bus services positively.
22. Users and non-users ratings rank the performance of local bus services in a very similar order, however, the proportion of non-users rating aspects of services positively were typically around half that of users. This is largely because unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of non-users said they 'didn't know' how to rate local services (24-55 per cent) compared to users (2-21 per cent).
23. Respondents rated aspects of service such as the number of destinations, frequency of services, and reliability and punctuality most positively. The cost of bus fares, the availability of information on fares before the start of a journey and the provision of real time information at bus stops were rated least positively.

**Figure 6: users ratings of bus services, 2011**



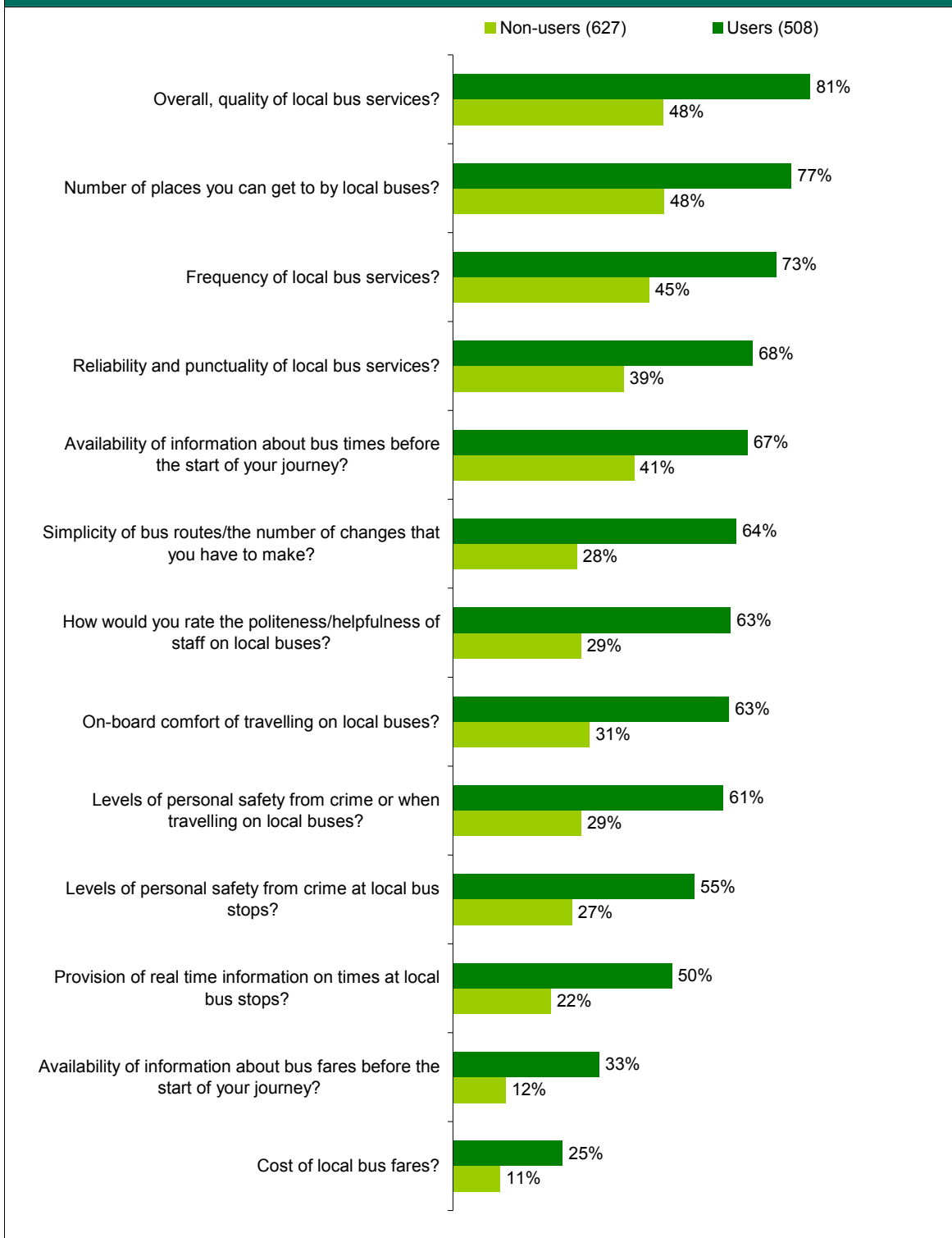
Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey, March 2011.  
 Un-weighted base: 627 (all users)

**Figure 7: non-users ratings of bus services, 2011**



Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey, March 2011.  
Un-weighted base: 508 (all non-users)

**Figure 8: positive ratings of bus services by frequency of use, 2011**



Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey, March 2011  
 Un-weighted base: shown in brackets

**24.** Users' ratings and non-users' perceptions of some aspects of local bus services had improved since 2009:

- In 2011, 56 per cent of respondents (41 per cent of non-users and 67 per cent of users) rated the availability of information about bus times before the start of journey positively. This had increased from 49 per cent of respondents in 2009 (32 per cent of non-users and 60 per cent of users).
- The proportion of users rating levels of personal safety from crime when travelling on local buses as 'very good' or 'fairly good' had increased from 55 per cent in 2009 to 61 per cent in 2011. At the same time positive ratings of personal safety onboard buses amongst non-users increased from 19 per cent to 29 per cent.
- Non-users' perceptions of the level of personal safety from crime at local bus stops and stations were up from 20 per cent in 2009 to 27 per cent in 2011; perceptions of the onboard comfort of travelling on buses increased from 23 per cent in 2009 to 31 per cent in 2011, and perceptions of the simplicity of routes went from 18 per cent in 2009 to 28 per cent in 2011.
- There is no statistically significant evidence that there are any differences in responses according to respondent age and gender within the user and non-user categories, however; when subdivided by two categories, the sample size become very small, in some cases too small for robust statistical analysis (Table 9).

**Table 9: Proportion of respondents agreeing that personal safety from crime is very or fairly good (by use status then age and gender)**

		At local bus stops and stations	Onboard local buses	Un-weighted base count
User	Male	57%	62%	284
	Female	52%	61%	343
Non-user	Male	30%	31%	216
	Female	24%	27%	292
User	16 to 24	47%	56%	56
	25 to 44	48%	51%	182
	45 to 54	54%	62%	78
	55 to 64	65%	75%	124
	65 to 74	67%	76%	105
	75 and over	62%	68%	82
Non-user	16 to 24	*	*	25
	25 to 44	23%	26%	173
	45 to 54	23%	27%	98
	55 to 64	29%	34%	99
	65 to 74	35%	35%	65
	75 and over	*	*	48

Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey, March 2011

- 25.** Nor was there evidence that positive ratings for any of the aspects of local bus services that respondents were asked about, had fallen since the 2009 survey.



## Concessionary pass holders and bus use

26. In England, disabled passengers and men and women who have reached the pensionable age *for women*<sup>1</sup> and disabled passengers are entitled to a free concessionary bus pass for use throughout England. In Scotland and Wales disabled passengers and men and women who have reached 60 years of age are entitled to a concessionary pass. Concessionary passes allow the holder to free bus travel both locally and to other parts of the nation within which they live.
27. In 2011, 23 per cent of respondents held a concessionary pass. Sixty-eight per cent of respondents with concessionary passes were aged 65 and over and 91 were aged 60 and over. Concessionary pass holding and age of respondent are therefore highly correlated. Therefore it is no surprise that as with older respondents, those who hold concessionary passes are less likely to say that local buses go to destinations such as work or educational establishments (see Annex table [ATT0101](#)). They are also more likely to travel at least once a week or more by bus (41 per cent compared to 17 per cent: (see Annex Table [ATT0102](#)) and more likely to have travelled to the shops by bus in the previous 12 months (84 per cent compared to 64 per cent of non-pass holders: see Annex Table [ATT0103](#)).
28. Nearly half of concessionary bus pass holders said they used buses a lot more (20 per cent) or a little more often (28 per cent) since they received their pass. Forty-one per cent said they used buses about the same as before receiving their pass, and a small number said they said they used buses a little less often (two per cent) or a lot less often (six per cent).
29. Concessionary pass holder who used the bus less than once a week were more likely to say the reason they didn't use buses more was because they have difficulties getting on and off buses or to the bus stop or station (13 per cent compared to four per cent of non-pass holders: see Annex Table [ATT0107](#)).

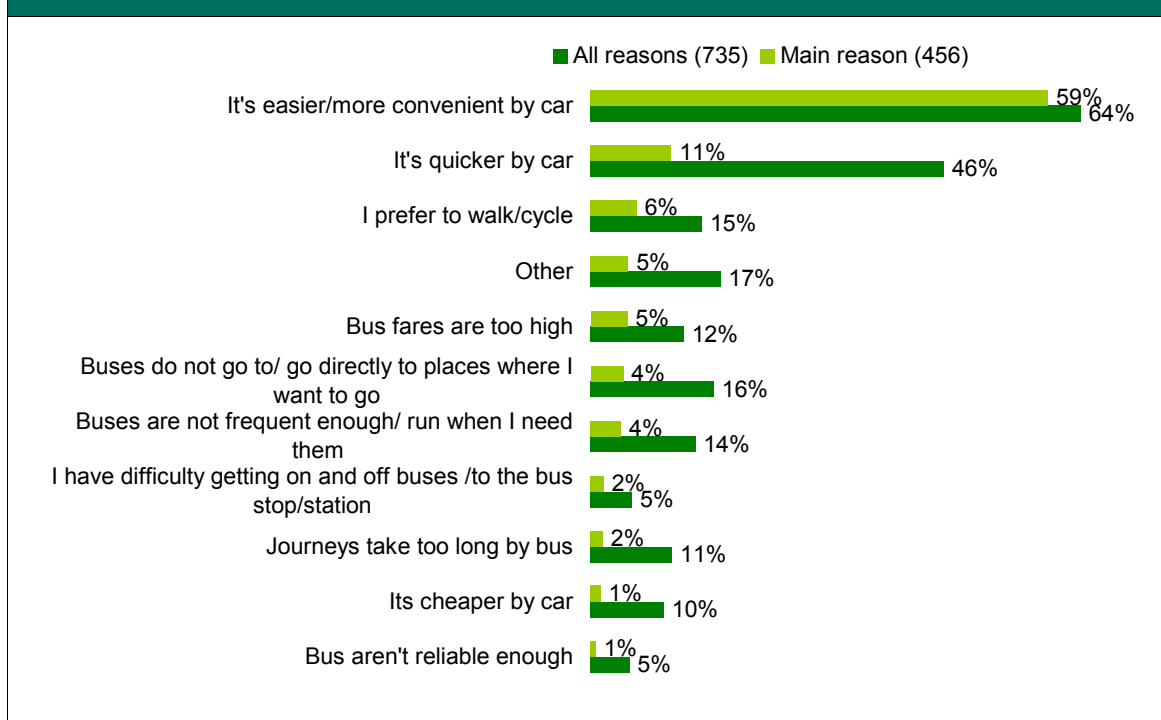
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<sup>1</sup> The current State Pension age in England for men is 65. For women, the current State Pension age will increase from 60 to 65 between April 2010 and November 2018.

## Reasons why people do not use local bus services (more)

30. 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 (64 per cent) and because it's quicker to travel by car (46 per cent). When asked for the main reason they did not travel by bus (more) the majority of respondents (59 per cent) said it was because it was easier and more convenient to travel by car.

Figure 9: reasons why people do not use buses more



Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey, March 2011  
Un-weighted base: shown in brackets

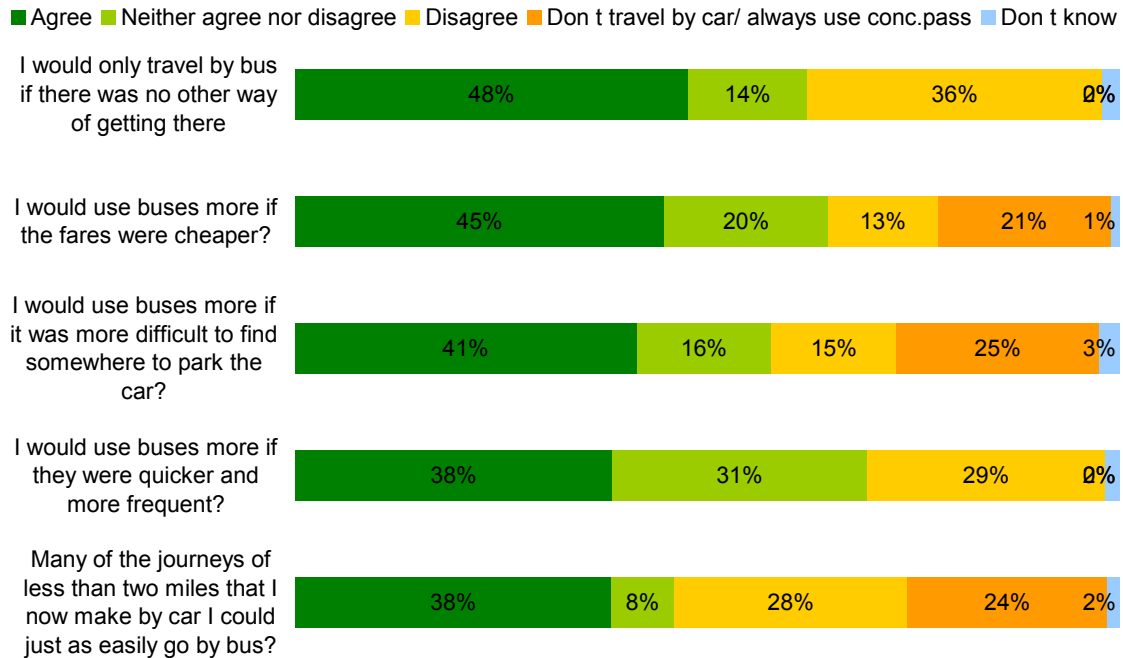
- 31.** Ninety per cent of the respondents who said they travelled by local bus less than once a month or never, lived in a household where there was at least one car or van normally available for use. This is higher than the proportion of 82 per cent for all respondents. Of those respondents who did not have household access to a car or van, top reasons for not using local buses (more) included because they preferred to walk or cycle (31 per cent) and because they have difficulty getting on and off buses or to the bus stop (27 per cent). Furthermore, infrequent bus users and non-users who did not have access to a car were more likely to have difficulties accessing bus services (27 per cent) than those who had a car (three per cent).

## Things that would increase bus use

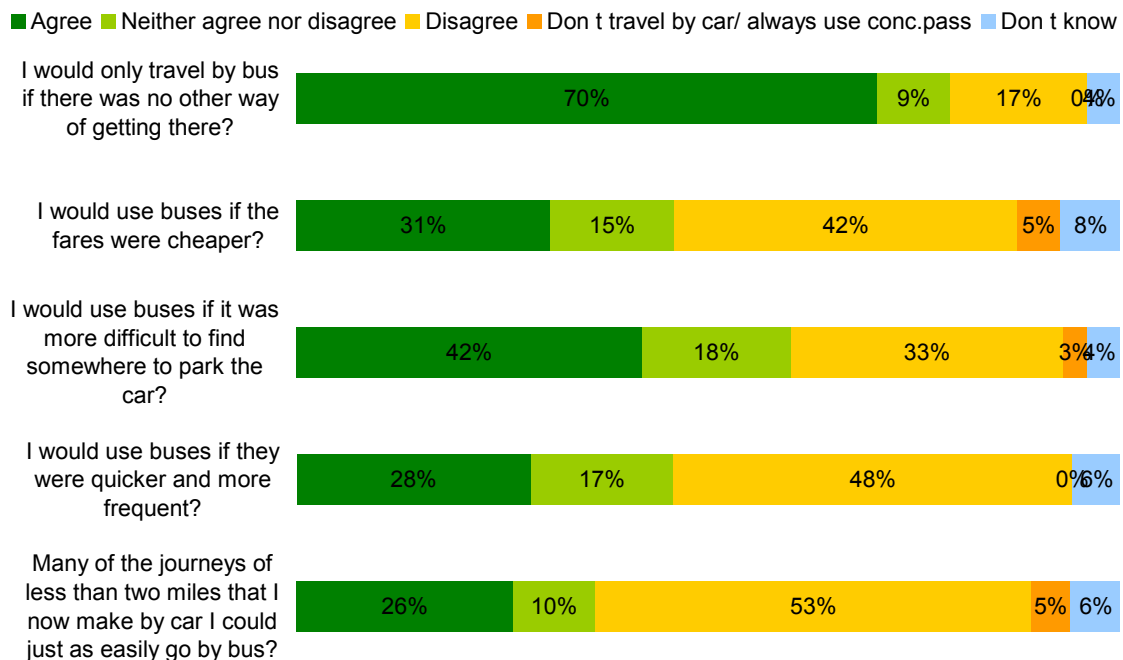
- 32.** All users were asked to what extent they agreed with a range of statements about bus use. As with the previous questions about rating bus services, there are typically differences in how users and non-users answer these questions. Figure 10 illustrates the results for users, Figure 11 illustrates the results for non-users and Figure 12 compares the proportion of users and non-users who agreed 'strongly' or tended to 'agree' with the statements.
- 33.** Users' and non-users' agreement with these statements ranked them broadly in the same order, however, compared to bus users, non-users results put reduced car parking availability above cheaper bus fares as a factor that would lead to them using buses. This reflects the higher levels of household car access within this group.
- 34.** When asked whether they would be more likely to travel by bus if parking were more difficult or whether they could make many of the shorter journeys they currently make by car by bus, around a quarter of bus users 'spontaneously' volunteered that they don't travel by car (25 per cent and 24 per cent respectively compared to three per cent and five per cent for non-users).
- 35.** Bus users were also more likely to say they made all their bus journeys using their concessionary pass. When asked whether they would use buses more if fares were cheaper, 21 per cent of bus users volunteered that they always use their concessionary pass (i.e. travelled free of charge) compared to five per cent of non-users. However, the majority (77 per cent) of concessionary pass holders are bus-users.

- 36.** If we exclude the 'ineligible' voluntary answers about never using cars, or always using concessionary passes then the proportion of users who agreed with the statements relating to parking, short journeys and cheaper fares increase such that:
- 50 per cent of users said that they could just as easily make many of the journeys of less than two miles that they currently make by car, by bus;
  - 55 per cent said they would use buses if it was more difficult to find somewhere to park the car, and
  - 56 per cent said they would use buses more if fares were cheaper.

**Figure 10: things that would encourage bus users to use buses more**

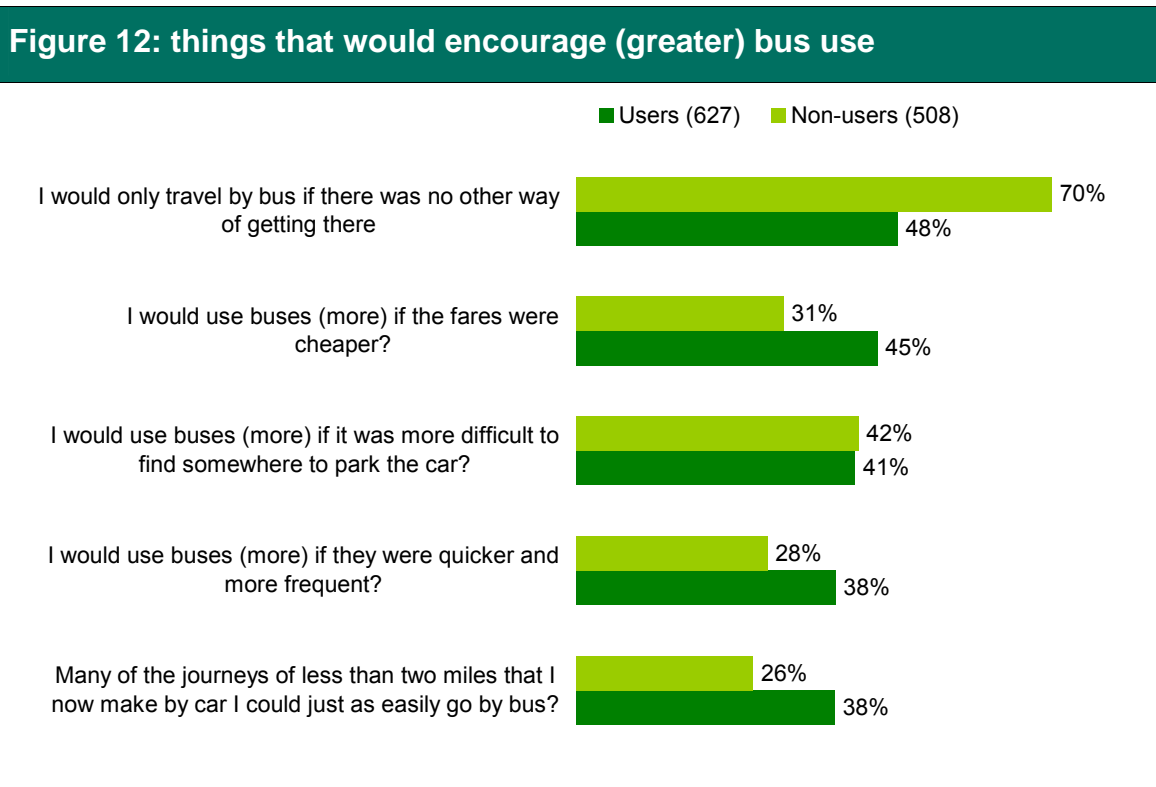


**Figure 11: things that would encourage non-users to use buses**



Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey, March 2011  
 Un-weighted base: 627 users, 508 non-users

37. The only statement which non-users agreed with more than users was that they would only travel by bus if there was no other way of getting there. Seventy per cent of non-users agreed with the statement compared to 48 per cent of users. It is perhaps worth noting that even amongst those who use buses, approximately half agree that they would only use the bus to make a journey if there was no other way of getting to their destination.



Data: Office for National Statistics Opinions omnibus survey, March 2011  
 Un-weighted base: shown in brackets

- 38.** The proportions of non-users agreeing with these statements in 2011 were not significantly different from the results from 2009. If the 'ineligible' responses are excluded from the analysis (as discussed in paragraph 36) so that they are comparable with the previous year's results which did not include these spontaneous answers, bus users agreement with three of these statements has increased:
- 50 per cent of bus users said that they could just as easily make many of the short journeys they currently make by car, by bus compared to 41 per cent in 2009;
  - 55 per cent of bus users said they would use buses more if it was more difficult to find somewhere to park the car (46 per cent in 2009), and
  - 56 per cent said they would use buses more if fares were cheaper, compared to 41 per cent in 2009.