



# Transport Research Series

Understanding Why Some People  
Do Not Use Buses

# **UNDERSTANDING WHY SOME PEOPLE DO NOT USE BUSES**

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Responsibility for this report lies wholly with the authors.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

1. The Scottish Government commissioned this research to explore in depth the reasons why some people do not use buses and what might encourage them to do so. While there is considerable existing research on bus travel in Scotland, much of this to date has been quantitative, relying on survey data. Although very useful in measuring use of buses and other modes, survey data can be limited in the level of detail it can provide on why people use particular modes rather than others. This research was intended to address that gap.
2. Buses are the most commonly used form of public transport in the UK. In Scotland, there were 513 million passenger journeys on local bus services in 2007-08.<sup>1</sup> However, while the number of passenger journeys by bus has risen slightly in Scotland since 1998-99, this follows a period of steep and steady decline in bus passengers since the mid-1970s. At the same time, car use in Scotland has increased massively. The Scottish Government has identified that buses have an important role to play in delivering its central purpose of sustainable economic growth, and the strategic objectives of making Scotland fairer, healthier and greener, encouraging communities to flourish and extending opportunities for people to succeed (Scottish Government, 2008a). Buses are expected to play a key role in meeting the objectives of Scotland's National Transport Strategy (Scottish Executive, 2006a) in relation to improving journey times and connections, reducing emission and improving the quality, accessibility and affordability of public transport.

## Methods

3. The study was qualitative in nature, aiming to map the range and diversity of experiences and views of those who use the bus infrequently or not at all. It involved:
  - 12 general population focus groups with 'infrequent or non-bus users', defined as people who use the bus once a month or less.
  - 12 in depth interviews with people with mobility problems and/or learning disabilities who used the bus once a month or less.
4. The focus groups took place in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Dundee, West Lothian and the Borders. In order to capture the views of people with different personal characteristics, quotas were set around age, gender, working status and household income. Focus group participants were recruited by professional recruiters, using a screening questionnaire developed by ScotCen. In depth interview participants were recruited via the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) (people with mobility problems) and via Enable Scotland (people with learning disabilities). These participants lived in other urban areas in the central belt and in Aberdeen.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government (2009) *Scottish bus and coach statistics*

5. Interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed in full. They were then summarised under key themes using 'Framework', a software package which provides a consistent method for organising and condensing qualitative data. These summaries were interrogated to identify the range of views and experiences discussed.

## **Main Findings**

### ***Experience and knowledge of local bus travel***

6. Although all participants in this study were infrequent or non-bus users, the length of time since they had last used a bus varied. Participants were broadly split between those who had used a bus in the last couple of months, and those who had last used a bus over a year ago. Reasons for participants' last bus journey were divided between 'push' factors, associated with the car being unavailable or impractical for particular journeys, and 'pull' factors associated with positive attributes of bus travel – such as being able to travel in a large group together or wanting a child to have the experience of travelling by bus.
7. Given the focus of this study on reasons for not using the bus more often, unsurprisingly much of the discussion of buses focused on the negative. However, participants' opinions of their most recent journeys by bus were more varied, with more positive or at least 'neutral' experiences also apparent.
8. Participants' levels of knowledge of local bus services varied, largely depending on the length of time since they had last used a bus. It ranged from very limited knowledge, through a general awareness of routes or frequency, to quite detailed knowledge of routes and prices. Various possible sources of information about buses were identified by participants, including both formal (Internet, timetables at bus stops, Traveline) and informal (friends, family, other people at bus stops) sources. Informal sources appeared particularly important to participants with a disability.

### ***General perceptions of local buses***

9. As discussed above, although some positive examples of bus travel were cited – such as drivers helping passengers with prams or wheelchairs – discussion of buses in this research tended to focus on the negative. Participants' beliefs about problems with local bus services reflected a combination of previous experience (recent as well as long-past), 'hearsay' from other people, and media coverage. A wide range of problems with buses and actual and potential barriers to bus travel were identified. However, it was sometimes difficult to disentangle whether these were 'general' barriers, or reasons that participants *themselves* did not use buses more often. Barriers identified by participants included:
  - Bad driving behaviour and poor driver attitudes
  - Concerns about other passengers committing anti-social or criminal behaviour, as well as more general concerns about other people's behaviour causing annoyance or discomfort

- Fears about the physical condition of buses making them unsafe, unreliable or inaccessible (for participants with mobility problems), as well as concerns about cleanliness and comfort on board
- Concerns about personal safety, comfort and the adequacy of information at bus stops
- The perceived length of bus journeys, as well as the appropriateness of timetables for the journeys participants needed to make
- A belief that buses cannot be relied on to stick to their timetables
- A perceived lack of direct and/or appropriate routes, as well as concerns about routes travelling through 'undesirable' areas
- A belief that fares are too high, as well as complaints about the inconvenience of having to find exact change.

10. Safety concerns were apparent across a number of aspects of bus travel, including: driver behaviour, other passengers, the physical condition of buses, bus stops and routes.

11. There was considerable overlap in the barriers raised by men and women, older and younger people and those in urban and rural areas. However, there was some evidence that safety issues were of greater concern to women, that young people were particularly negative about driver attitudes, and that people in rural areas were particularly likely to feel buses were too infrequent and waiting times too long. Disabled people also shared many concerns with other participants. However, they also raised a number of issues which caused them greater problems, including:

- Safety concerns relating to drivers waiting for people to get on and off and reach their seat
- Accessibility issues, relating to steps and to poles obstructing wheelchair spaces, as well as accessibility of information, with small font sizes for timetables a particular problem for those with visual impairments
- Overcrowding creating particular issues for participants who suffered from anxiety
- Lack of toilets, and
- Distance to walk to stops.

12. In comparison with trains, buses were seen as less reliable/predictable, slower, and less safe (primarily because of the presence of conductors to 'police' behaviour on trains). It was also suggested that information about stops both on board and at stations is clearer for trains than for buses.

### ***Individual journey choices***

13. The car dominated as participants' preferred mode of transport to work. Reasons for preferring the car centred on its perceived 'convenience' and 'reliability'. Key reasons the car was seen as more 'convenient' than the bus for commuting to work included the belief that cars were:

- Quicker and more direct ('door to door')
- Easier/quicker for multi-stage/multiple journeys
- Easier for carrying equipment or paperwork.

14. Cars were also preferred on grounds of their perceived greater 'reliability' – doubt over whether buses would get participants to work on time was a key barrier to their use for commuting. Cars were generally seen as giving participants more freedom and control over their journeys and over the 'travel environment'. Participants also suggested that it was cheaper to travel to work by car, though comparisons of cost tended to take the costs of purchasing, maintaining or insuring a car as a 'given' – only petrol costs were taken into account when working out whether the car or bus was the cheapest option.
15. The car also featured prominently as the preferred mode of transport for non-work journeys. Again, it was seen as cheaper (especially for trips with other family members) and as allowing greater freedom and control over arrival and departure times. The bus was not seen as practical for food shopping because of the large amount of bags to carry, while taxis were seen as more cost effective than the bus for nights out when travelling in a group.

### ***Attitudes to future bus use***

16. In terms of attitudes to using the bus more often in the future, there was a general belief among employed participants that it would not be possible to use the bus to get to work. Sometimes this appeared to be based in fairly specific knowledge of available bus services, while in other cases, views appeared to reflect more general perceptions of the reliability or speed of buses. Multiple reasons were cited for participants being unable or unwilling to use the bus for commuting – including time, cost, frequency, reliability, the need to make multi-stage or multi-purpose journeys and the need to carry equipment or bags. There was some indication of willingness to use the bus more often for some social journeys or trips into town. However, again a range of barriers to doing so were cited, including time, hassle of changing buses, cost, infrequency, lack of certainty about routes/fares, lack of appropriate routes, timetables being unsuitable, and safety on night buses.
17. Analysis of the range of opinions expressed in relation to future bus use suggests that infrequent or non-users fall into three broad groups according to their attachment to the car, willingness to try the bus and identification with environmental problems:
- 'Bus refusers' were strongly attached to their cars and did not wish to use the bus more often under any circumstances, even if substantial improvements were made
  - 'Bus pessimists', if pushed, say they would like to use the bus more often, but do not see the bus as an attractive option currently and do not appear to have a strong desire to make this change
  - Those who are 'Willing to be convinced' would like to use the bus more and cite positive reasons for doing so (dislike of car travel and/or personal and environmental advantages to bus travel), but still think there are substantial barriers preventing them from doing so.

## ***Suggested improvements***

18. Participants identified a wide range of improvements to bus services which they felt might encourage some people to use the bus more often. However, it was not always clear that these changes would encourage individual participants to use the bus more – as discussed above, for some participants no amount of improvements to services would tempt them away from their car. Moreover, some of these suggestions may relate to actions that some bus companies and/or Local or Central Government have already taken, but of which participants were unaware. Specific suggestions for improving bus services included:

- Improved customer care skills for drivers (including improved awareness of the needs of disabled passengers)
- Conductors on buses to prevent anti-social behaviour and overcrowding
- General improvements to the physical condition of buses in order to improve comfort, safety and accessibility (e.g. seatbelts, rubbish bins, more regular cleaning, toilets, air conditioning, handrails, softer seats, etc.)
- Improved lighting, shelters and information, including accurate 'Real time' information, at bus stops
- Action to try and improve the speed and reliability of buses, including better/longer bus lanes, more direct/express routes, more frequent services at more standardised times and driver incentives for timekeeping
- Better information about routes, timetables and fares, to be available in places other than bus stops.
- Cheaper and/or more 'standardised' fares
- Introducing pre-pay or top-up card systems to pay for bus fares, to avoid the need for exact change or knowing how much a ticket will be in advance.

19. Reactions to disincentives to car use were mixed – one view was that participants would simply absorb the additional costs of higher petrol prices, congestion charges or higher parking prices, while another was that this might encourage them to use the bus or walk instead of using the car for short journeys.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

20. In addition to participants' own recommendations for improving bus services, the findings from this study suggest a number of broader implications for policy, practice and further research.

21. First, the findings suggest that attempts to 'convert' those who are 'willing to be convinced' of the merits of bus travel need to do three main things:

- Highlight the advantages – both personal and environmental – of bus travel
- Mitigate or challenge views of the disadvantages – addressing particularly the key issues of journey time and reliability
- Make it as easy as possible to use the bus – including making it easier for infrequent and non-users to find out about times, fares and routes and removing the need to have the exact fare.

22. Second, given the finding that bad experiences appear to stick in people's memories, bus companies need to ensure that the way they deal with complaints mitigates the potential impact of negative experiences – which can be long-lasting and far-reaching – on future travel decisions.
23. Third, in reviewing and presenting fare levels to the public, bus companies need to take into account the fact that while taking the bus may be cheaper than owning, insuring and running a car, car owners do not necessarily include all these costs when making these comparisons. Unless the bus fare is less than the costs of petrol and parking for a specific journey, the bus is unlikely to be viewed as the 'cheaper option'. While our findings suggest that cost may not be the only or main barrier to bus use for all infrequent users, cheap or free travel days could encourage those who have not travelled by bus for some time to try it again.
24. In terms of future research, this study suggests that when people describe the bus as 'inconvenient', this generally reflects a number of more specific concerns about directness, journey speed, and ease of making multi-stage or multi-purpose journeys. Given this, survey questions on reasons for not using the bus should focus on specific issues, rather than on general statements about 'convenience' or related concepts. Future surveys could also build on work by Anable and Stradling (in Dudleston et al, 2005) to explore in greater detail the size and characteristics of different 'sub-groups' of infrequent or non-bus users, and to test which, if any, policy solutions may be most successful in encouraging these groups of people to use the bus more often in the future. Finally, further research could explore how different bus companies market their services, in order to explore possible solutions for overcoming some of the 'stereotyped' views of buses and bus passengers identified in this study.

# 1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents findings from a qualitative study that explored why some people do not use buses often or at all and what, if anything, might encourage these people to use buses more often in the future. The study was commissioned by the Scottish Government Transport Directorate and conducted by researchers at the Scottish Centre for Social Research. This introductory chapter describes the policy and research context for the study, explains its aims and objectives and sets out the structure of the remainder of the report.

## Policy and research context

### *The role of buses in Scottish Government policy*

- 1.2 The Scottish Government has identified that buses have an important role to play in delivering its central purpose of sustainable economic growth and the strategic objectives of making Scotland fairer, healthier and greener, encouraging communities to flourish and extending opportunities for people to succeed (Scottish Government, 2008a). More specifically, one of the Government's national indicators is to achieve an increase in the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport. In addition, the Government anticipates buses playing an important part in achieving the three objectives of Scotland's National Transport Strategy (Scottish Executive, 2006a):

- Improving journey times and connections
- Reducing emissions, and
- Improving quality, accessibility and affordability of public transport.

- 1.3 The Scottish Government's recent guide for Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and Bus Operators (Scottish Government 2008a) recognises that buses are 'almost unparalleled in their scope to achieve the modal shift we all want to see'. However, with a background of long-term decline in bus passenger numbers and year-on-year increases in car traffic, they also acknowledge that 'people are attached to their cars and achieving modal shift will require the strongest vision and leadership'.

### *Trends in bus use in Scotland*

- 1.4 Buses are the most commonly used form of public transport in the UK. In Scotland, there were 513 million passenger journeys on local bus services in 2007-08 (Scottish Government, 2009a). However, while the number of passenger journeys by bus has risen slightly in Scotland since 1998-99, this follows a period of steep and steady decline in bus passengers since the mid-1970s. At the same time, car use in Scotland has increased massively. Recent information from the Scottish Government estimate that the volume of car traffic on major roads (Motorways and A roads) has more than doubled, from an estimated 9,300 million vehicle kilometres in 1975 to around 22,000 million vehicle kilometres in recent years (Scottish Government, 2008b). The 2007-8 Scottish Household Survey (SHS) showed that 55% of people had not used a

bus at all in the previous month, while the proportion using buses 'regularly' (every day or almost every day) had remained static at 12% since 1999 (Scottish Government, 2009a). Similar trends are apparent in relation to commuting in particular - while 12% travel to work by bus, this has remained static since 1999, with two thirds commuting by car (Scottish Government 2009b). Moreover, three-fifths of those who travel to work by car state that they could not use public transport for that journey. This is in spite of the fact that 80% of people in Scotland say their local bus service is 'very' or 'fairly' convenient (Scottish Government, 2009a).

### ***Existing research on attitudes to bus travel***

- 1.5 Public attitudes to bus travel have been explored in a number of recent Government surveys. A common finding is that those who currently use buses tend to be reasonably positive in their views of bus travel – for example, the 2005 Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey carried out for the Scottish Executive recorded an average 'satisfaction score' (where a maximum score of 100 indicates people were 'very satisfied' across all aspects) of 87 (Buchanan, 2006). However, there is some evidence to suggest that the views of those who do not travel by bus, or who do so only infrequently, tend to be more negative. For example, a recent ONS survey shows that while 78% of bus users rate services as 'very' or 'fairly' good, just 65% of non-users who gave a rating said the same. Moreover, a third of non-users felt unable to give any opinion on the overall quality of bus services (ONS, 2009).
- 1.6 As noted above, the SHS shows that 3 out of 5 people who currently travel to work by car claim that they could not use public transport for that journey. The most common reason given for saying this was a belief there was 'no direct route'. Among those who said they could, at least in theory, use public transport to travel to work, the most common reason for *not* doing so was the belief it would 'take too long'. Those in remote rural areas were more likely to cite 'lack of service' as their reason for not travelling to work by public transport. Cost did not appear to be a major barrier to bus use specifically, at least for the majority of people who used the bus once a week or less – in 2007, just 5% cited the 'cost of public transport' as a reason for not using buses more often. In contrast, 27% said they did not use buses as they 'use my own car', while 21% said they had 'no need' to use buses (all findings taken from Scottish Government, 2009a). Similarly, Lyons et al (2008) and ONS (2009) both report that reasons for non-use of buses are topped by comparisons of the 'convenience of travel by car against the available bus service'.
- 1.7 A recent survey of Edinburgh residents which asked about a wide array of issues that might put people off using the bus identified 8 'underlying factors' or groups of barriers (Stradling et al, 2007). They characterise these factors as relating to:
  - Service provision – covering factors like the directness of routes, having to change buses, perceptions of journey times/timetables/reliability, etc
  - 'Unwanted, intrusive arousal from the bus experience' – covering issues like feeling the buses are too crowded/cramped, people smoking or using mobiles on the bus, noise, heat and drivers braking too harshly

- Feeling unsafe and at risk – including feeling unsafe while waiting for buses or while on the bus due to the behaviour of other passengers, particularly at night
- Preferring the capacity, convenience and control conveyed by the car
- Monetary cost
- ‘Self image’ when travelling by bus – including feeling travelling by bus does not create the right impression
- Preference for ‘self-reliance’ for short journeys – including preferring to walk or cycle
- Difficulties relating to disability or discomfort on buses – including difficulties relating to lack of mobility, getting on and off buses, not enough hand rails, visual impairment, and other health reasons.

### ***Variations in use of and attitudes to buses***

1.8 Survey data shows that both bus use itself and attitudes towards bus use are strongly patterned by demographic and socio-economic factors, like gender, age and income, and by geography. The SHS (Scottish Government, 2009a) shows that:

- Young adults (aged 16-29) are most likely to have regularly used the bus in the previous month
- Bus use falls as household income increases
- People who are self-employed are least likely to have used the bus in the previous month, while those who are unemployed or in further/higher education are most likely to have used a bus
- People in rural areas are more likely *not* to have used the bus at all in the previous month than people in large urban areas
- The older someone is, the less likely they are to say they feel safe travelling on buses in the evenings
- Women are less likely than men to feel very or fairly safe travelling by bus in the evening.

1.9 The Scottish Executive’s 2006 Bus Strategy highlighted the infrequency of rural buses, combined with the lack of time constraints associated with the car, as a key reason that people in rural areas tend to use local bus services less often than their urban counterparts.

1.10 Choice of transport may also vary depending on the type of journey people want to make. A 2005 report for the Scottish Executive on public perceptions of travel awareness (Dudleston et al, 2005) noted that most people are in fact multi-modal travellers, using more than one form of transport at different times to meet their needs. ‘Supermarket shopping’ was identified as the most car dependent journey type, compared with ‘evenings out for leisure purposes’ as the least car dependent

1.11 Finally, recent research has also emphasised the importance of understanding people’s underlying attitudes and values, as well as their demographic characteristics, in explaining different orientations to transport and modal shift. Segmentation analysis has been used in several recent studies to highlight the extent to which different groups who may be demographically similar and

display similar levels of current car or public transport use actually have quite different aspirations and motivations as far as their future travel is concerned. For example, Dudleston et al (2005) suggest that people who are currently high car users can be divided into:

- Die hard drivers – who are strongly attached to the car and very unwilling to use alternative modes
- Car complacents – who enjoy travelling by car and are not particularly trying to use it less
- Malcontented motorists – who would like to reduce car use but feel there are no alternatives, and
- Aspiring environmentalists – who already use different modes and are ready and willing to do so more.

1.12 They argue that drivers in different segments may be differently susceptible to policy messages and initiatives to encourage modal shift. For example, while more punitive measures (congestion charging, petrol price increases, etc.) may have some effect on car complacents, they are less likely to work for die hard drivers. Malcontented motorists may be more affected by positive actions to improve timetabling, information, frequency and quality of local bus services.

### ***Disabled travellers***

1.13 Disabled people face particular challenges in terms of transport and travel. In fact, as noted in a recent report on improving public transport for disabled people in Scotland (TNS System Three, 2006), the biggest difference in travel between disabled adults and non-disabled adults is not in the way they make trips or in the reasons for trips, but the fact that disabled adults are less likely to make trips at all. Data from both the SHS and National Travel Survey show that disabled people make fewer journeys and are more reliant on public transport for those journeys than are the general population. Seven in ten respondents to the TNS Survey said they would like to travel more than they currently did.

1.14 Many disabled people qualify for free Scotland-wide bus travel<sup>2</sup>. Cost may therefore be less of a barrier for them than for some other travellers. However, they face a number of other challenges when using public transport. Recent studies (e.g. Penfold et al, 2008 and TNS System 3, 2006) suggest that the kinds of barriers people with a disability face when using public transport, including buses, include:

- Difficulties relating to the physical accessibility of buses themselves. A recent report commissioned by the Department of Transport concluded that whilst positive steps had been taken to improve the accessibility of public transport, this varied across different transport modes and type of disability. Particular issues for improvement included insufficient space for assistance dogs, a lack of storage and inconsistent design and location of features like wheelchair spaces, priority seating and door controls (Human Engineering Limited and GDBA, 2008).

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/concessionary-travel/who-qualifies> for information about the concessionary travel scheme.

- Physical access and facilities at points of departure (e.g. kerbs and pavements, lighting, signage and audio information for people with sensory impairments)
- Difficulties travelling from home to bus stops
- Inadequate information and communication – for example, information about physical accessibility or what assistance people can expect, as well as appropriate on-board information for people with different sensory impairments
- Approach/attitudes of transport staff – including not universally offering to lower vehicles, lack of awareness about difficulties caused by moving off before passengers are seated, and staff being rude or unhelpful when asked for help, particularly by people with mental health problems who may be less ‘visibly’ in need of support
- Personal safety concerns
- Lack of confidence – incorporating both personal confidence about using buses (for example, among those with severe anxiety) and lack of confidence in features of the system, such as drivers using ramps
- Lack of reliable companions
- Cost.

### ***The role of qualitative research in understanding bus use***

1.15 Findings from surveys can help policy makers identify trends and patterns in bus use among different groups. They can also help identify barriers to bus use. However, the level of depth with many surveys they are able to probe people’s answers can limit their usefulness. For example, the fact that people say they do not use buses because they ‘use their own car’ does not tell us why people prefer to use their car. Moreover, surveys on bus use often find that people dismiss the bus as ‘inconvenient’, but without understanding exactly what aspects of bus travel people view as ‘inconvenient’ it is difficult to know where policy should focus to try and address these concerns.

1.16 Guiver (2006) suggests that qualitative research can play an important role in looking at transport from the respondents’ point of view, rather than imposing assumptions about what is important. While surveys often focus on what Lyons et al (2008) call ‘utility’ factors, like cost and timekeeping, Beirao and Cabral (2007) argue that qualitative research can help reveal the more ‘emotional’ factors underpinning people’s travel decisions. Guiver’s own qualitative research suggested that feelings of power and control are major issues affecting people’s attitudes to bus travel. Her participants described feeling a lack of power over their environment and situation while travelling by bus, in contrast with the control they felt over these factors when travelling by car. Similarly, Beirao and Cabral (2007) use qualitative research to show that the underlying desire for control underpins many of people’s other reasons for preferring to travel by car.

### **Aims and objectives of the study**

1.17 This research was commissioned specifically to address gaps in understanding of barriers to bus use in the Scottish context. In particular, it was intended to fill gaps in the existing survey evidence by using qualitative methods to provide a

greater depth of understanding of people's reasons for not using buses. Moreover, it builds on existing qualitative research from elsewhere by exploring barriers and incentives to bus use in a specifically Scottish context.

1.18 The overarching aim of this research was *'To explore in more depth the reasons why people do not use buses (more) and what might encourage them to do so'*.

1.19 The findings are intended to improve understanding of the views of people who do not travel by bus often or at all ('infrequent' and 'non-users') and to help bus policy makers and operators to think about ways of encouraging people to use buses more. The focus was explicitly on **scheduled local bus services** – that is, regular public bus services operating within people's own local areas, rather than, for example, inter-city coach services.

1.20 The more detailed objectives of the study included:

- To explore, in depth, attitudes and perceptions about buses amongst those who use buses infrequently or not at all (including comparisons with car use)
- To explore views on the quality of bus transport and on different aspects of bus services
- To investigate why bus travel might be perceived as 'inconvenient'
- To explore what people's opinions are based on
- To explore, in depth, barriers to bus use amongst those who use buses infrequently or not at all, including examining:
  - The main influences affecting people's choice of travel mode for different journeys
  - The feasibility of making any journeys by bus instead of by car
  - Reasons why people do not use buses for these journeys.
  - Reasons why people choose not to use buses to travel to work (if they could feasibly do so)
- To investigate what might encourage people to use the bus more, including:
  - Whether people have any aspirations to use buses more (or the car less)
  - What might encourage people to use the car less and use the bus more (including both incentives to bus use and disincentives for car use)
  - The relative importance (priority) of different motivating factors
  - What solutions people would propose to the problems they raise
- To identify typologies of people who use buses infrequently or not at all, including:
  - To describe the characteristics of the different typologies identified
  - To identify which typologies would be most motivated to use the bus more and suggest what factors would motivate them to change their behaviours
- To set the research findings in the broader policy and research context.

## Report structure

1.21 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter Two summarises the methods used for the study, sets out reporting conventions, and discusses some key challenges experienced in discussing bus use with people who do not use buses often or at all.
- Chapter Three explores levels of knowledge and experience of using buses among our sample in order to contextualise the views and opinions presented in the rest of the report.
- Chapter Four explores views of bus travel in depth. It looks in detail at perceptions of specific aspects of local bus services and considers what people's opinions appear to be based on. The chapter also summarises views on how buses compare with trains (the next most commonly used form of public transport).
- Chapter Five looks at the travel choices of our sample and the reasons why people choose to use the car rather than the bus for different types of journey.
- Chapter Six explores what might encourage people to use buses more often, as well as identifying typologies of people who may be more or less likely to use the bus in the future.
- Chapter Seven pulls together the key findings from across the previous chapters and discusses possible implications for future policy and research.

## 2 METHODS

### Introduction

2.1 This Chapter briefly summarises the research methods used for the study. Further detail, including topic guides and recruitment materials, are included in Annexes to the report.

### Who was involved

2.2 The study involved two phases:

- Phase one involved 12 focus groups with 'infrequent or non-bus users', defined as people who use the bus once a month or less
- Phase two involved 12 in depth interviews with people with mobility problems or learning disabilities who used the bus once a month or less.

2.3 The research was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research aims to map the range and diversity of experiences, behaviours or views in relation to the subject of interest among a particular group or groups of people. The samples for qualitative studies are designed to ensure that both range and diversity are captured and that issues can be explored in some depth with participants<sup>3</sup>. Qualitative samples are not designed to provide robust statistical or numerical data about, for example the prevalence of a particular experience or behaviour. As such, they are usually smaller than those used for survey research.

### ***'Infrequent passengers' and 'non-bus users'***

2.4 As noted above, the sample consisted of both infrequent bus passengers and those who did not travel by bus at all. Our definition of 'infrequent use' – and our main criterion for participation in the study – was that someone used the bus once a month or less. As described in more detail in Chapter Three, within our sample experience of bus use varied considerably, from those who had not used a bus for many years or who had never used a local bus<sup>4</sup> to those who had used the bus in the last few weeks. However, as there was considerable overlap in the views of 'infrequent' and 'non-users', their views are generally presented together in discussion of the findings, rather than treating them as two distinct groups.

### ***Focus group sample***

2.5 Ninety-one participants took part in twelve focus group discussions. There were between 6 and 9 participants in each focus group. The sample structure is outlined in table 1.

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<sup>3</sup> Note however that the extent to which issues can be explored in detail with each *individual* participant in a focus group is constrained by the need to keep the discussions to a reasonable length and avoid disrupting the flow of the group discussion.

<sup>4</sup> One participant said they had never used a local bus, though they had used a bus abroad.

**Table 1: Sample structure for focus groups**

	Area	Age	Working-status	Household income
1	Aberdeen	30-44	Employed	£25,000+
2	Aberdeen	45+	Employed	£25,000+
3	Glasgow	16-29	Mix	Less than £25,000
4	Glasgow	45+	Employed	£25,000+
5	Dundee	30-44	Employed	£25,000+
6	Dundee	45+	Mix	Less than £25,000
7	West Lothian	16-29	Mix	Less than £25,000
8	West Lothian	30-44	Employed	£25,000+
9	West Lothian	45+	Mix	£25,000+
10	Borders	30-44	Employed	Less than £25,000
11	Borders	45+	Employed	£25,000+
12	Borders	30-44	Mix	£25,000+

2.6 The sample was designed to capture a range of views and experiences of buses by including people from different geographical areas and with different personal characteristics. The 12 groups were conducted in 5 locations across Scotland, including three of the four main cities<sup>5</sup>, an ‘inter-urban’ area (West Lothian), and a rural area (the Borders). Additional selection criteria were based on age, working status and household income. Given the Scottish Government’s particular interest in encouraging bus use for commuting, each group included at least some employed participants and seven groups only included people in employment. Quotas on age and income were set based on information from surveys about which groups are least likely to be regular bus users (which includes those on higher incomes and those aged 30-59). Further quotas were set to ensure that at least some participants were from a minority ethnic background.<sup>6</sup>

2.7 The focus groups were recruited for ScotGen by a professional recruitment agency (Propeller) and two freelance recruiters. Recruiters were asked to use a mix of door to door and on-street recruitment.<sup>7</sup> A screening questionnaire containing questions on age, gender, employment status, household income and the last time they used a bus was used to identify eligible participants (See Annex A for full Screening Questionnaire). Participants were also asked whether they currently drove a car (the majority of participants confirmed that they did). All participants were given a leaflet about the study (see Annex A), including contact details for the research team.

<sup>5</sup> Given the timing of the groups (conducted in summer 2009), it was felt that Edinburgh should not be included, since the disruption to bus services associated with the Edinburgh tram works might mean that people’s views were not representative of attitudes to buses in the city at other times.

<sup>6</sup> Of the 91 focus group participants, 9 were from a minority ethnic background.

<sup>7</sup> If recruiters experienced difficulties filling quotas, they were permitted to use their own contact details for people who had previously participated in research (and had consented to their details being held on file). These participants had to meet strict criteria set out in the recruitment questionnaire (including not having participated in any research in the previous 18 months). However, in practice recruiters indicated that the vast majority of participants were recruited on-street or door to door.

## **Sample of disabled people**

- 2.8 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a disabled person as someone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse affect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. This covers an extremely wide range of conditions and people with different types of disability may experience very different barriers and challenges in using public transport. For example, a recent report for the Department for Transport found that people with physical impairments and chronic health conditions experienced barriers in relation to journey planning, physical access and facilities, and the approach of transport staff. For people with mental health support needs, on the other hand, barriers were more about confidence and affordability (Penfold et al, 2008).
- 2.9 In terms of capturing a wide range of views and experiences of 'infrequent or non-bus users', it was important that this study included disabled people. Their views were explored using one-to-one, in depth interviews rather than simply involving them in the general population focus groups for two main reasons. First, the barriers to bus use faced by people with a disability may be different from those experienced by other infrequent or non-bus users. This could make it difficult for disabled participants to share their views and experiences in a general population focus group. Second, people with some types of disability may have particular needs to enable their participation in research – for example, interview schedules and interviewer style may need to be adapted for people with a learning disability. One-to-one interviews allowed greater flexibility to adapt the interviews to individual needs.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.10 Since the size of the study placed some limitations on the number of people with different types of disability who could be interviewed, the sample focused on two broad types of disability: mobility problems and learning disabilities. These two groups were selected on the basis that people with these types of disabilities were likely to face different types of barriers to using buses – for example, those with mobility problem might be more likely to mention problems around physical access, while those with learning disabilities might have issues around information provision. Given the size of the study, interviewing people across a wider range of disability groups would have meant there were too few people within each broad category (e.g. sensory impairments, mobility problems, learning disabilities, mental health problems, etc.) to allow us to identify patterns in the experiences of people in these specific groups. However, it is important to acknowledge that if it had been possible to include a larger (and therefore wider) sample of disabled people, it is likely that the research would have identified additional barriers faced by disabled people. For example, those with sensory impairments are likely to face a different set of issues around information provision to those experienced by people with mobility problems or learning disabilities.

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<sup>8</sup> Note that although we did not set quotas on disability for the focus groups, disabled people were not excluded from participating in these. The focus group recruitment questionnaire did ask whether participants had any disability in order to ensure that any additional support needs they might have were met. However, none of the focus group participants identified themselves as having a disability.

- 2.11 Six individuals with a mobility problem were recruited through following up participants in the Scottish Household Survey (SHS). The SHS asks questions about both bus use and disability, and asks people whether they would be happy to be re-contacted for further research in the future. As such, it enabled the researchers to identify people who used the bus once a month or less, who had mobility problems (such as problems or disabilities related to legs or feet, problems or disabilities related to back or neck, and arthritis) and who had consented to be re-contacted. Potential participants were sent letters introducing the research, then telephoned to see if they would be prepared to take part.
- 2.12 As there were too few people with learning disabilities in the SHS to use this as a sampling frame, an alternative recruitment approach was used. Six individuals with a learning disability were recruited through Enable Scotland, a charity working with people with learning disabilities. In order to ensure that potential participants fully understood what would be involved before deciding whether or not to take part, researchers from ScotCen visited Enable groups to explain the research in person, as well as providing written information (see Annex A for copies of leaflets).
- 2.13 It is possible (though by no means inevitable) that people who are in regular contact with organisations like Enable that represent their rights may be more conscious of disability issues compared to other disabled people. This could mean that their views on a range of issues – including transport – are somewhat different to those of other disabled people, who are not engaged with such organisations. However, a potential advantage to recruiting people from an organisation like Enable is that they may be more likely to be able to articulate issues of identity and discrimination in bus use relating to their disability. There is also a risk that when recruiting through a ‘gatekeeper’ organisation, they will ‘cherry pick’ people they think are likely to give a particular view, for example. While the risk of this is arguably less when the research is not about the organisation in question, we nonetheless took steps to discuss the nature and purpose of the study with Enable to ensure that this did not happen.
- 2.14 Most in depth interview participants lived in ‘other urban’ areas (Greater Glasgow, the central belt and Aberdeenshire) rather than in cities or rural areas<sup>9</sup>. The final sample structure is shown in Table 2, below.

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<sup>9</sup> This reflected the location of the Enable group we recruited through, as well as the location of eligible Scottish Household Survey respondents in the Central Belt/Aberdeen areas.

**Table 2: Sample structure for in depth interviews**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Type of disability</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Working-status</b>
Other urban	Mobility problem	60-74	Female	Not working
Other urban	Mobility problem	30-44	Male	Long term sick
Other urban	Mobility problem	45-59	Female	Not working
Other urban	Mobility problem	45-59	Female	Not working
City	Mobility problem	60-74	Female	Retired
City	Mobility problem	60-74	Male	Retired
Other urban	Learning disability	16-29	Female	Student
Other urban	Learning disability	16-29	Male	Employed FT
Other urban	Learning disability	45-59	Male	Not working
Other urban	Learning disability	45-59	Male	Not working
Other urban	Learning disability	30-44	Male	Not working
Other urban	Learning disability	16-29	Male	Student

### **Data collection techniques**

2.15 Focus groups were conducted by members of the research team and took place in hotel conference rooms or other suitable venues in the areas where the groups were recruited. A topic guide provided an indication of the issues to cover with each group, but these were used flexibly, with scope for the facilitator to follow-up in more detail on topics as they emerged (see Annex B for full topic guides). Topics included:

- Experiences of bus travel
- Perceptions of local bus services
- Types of transport used for different journeys
- Reasons for using different types of transport
- Views on the bus as an alternative
- Reasons for not using buses (more), and
- What, if anything, would encourage people to use the bus.

2.16 People with a mobility problem or a learning disability were interviewed face-to-face by members of the research team either in their homes or in a private room at Enable or one of Enable's partner organisations. Separate topic guides were developed for the in depth interviews. These were very similar in terms of topic coverage to the focus group topic guides. However, the topic guide for people with learning disabilities contained additional suggestions for probing to ensure that the topics raised in the interview were fully understood by all (see Annex B for full topic guides).

### ***Facilitating participation***

2.17 In order to help facilitate participation in the focus groups we ensured that:

- They were organised in central venues that were easy to access
- Groups were conducted in the evening for working participants.

2.18 For in depth interview participants we:

- Offered to use whatever method they were most comfortable with to arrange the interview (for example, text, type-talk, e-mail or phone)
- Conducted shorter interviews and offered comfort breaks
- Re-scheduled interviews, due to participant illness
- Reduced the detail and complexity of interviews particularly where people had learning disabilities or cognitive impairments
- Arranged interviews in venues of their choice, and
- In the case of participants with learning disabilities, we visited potential participants prior to interview to explain the format and content of the interview and to ensure that their consent was based on a full appreciation of what was involved

2.19 For both the focus groups and one-to-one interviews, participant leaflets clearly stipulated that we would do our best to accommodate any particular needs participants might have, and asked them to let us know if they wanted to participate but required help or support to do so.

2.20 As a 'thank you' for their participation, £30 was given to each interviewee and focus group participant who took part. Participants were also asked whether there were any facilities or support they would need to enable them to participate in the discussion, to try and ensure that the focus groups and interviews were as inclusive as possible.

## Data analysis

2.21 All focus groups and interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed in full. Transcripts were then summarised for analysis using 'Framework'. Developed by the National Centre for Social Research<sup>10</sup>, Framework is an analysis method that provides a consistent method for organising and condensing qualitative information to enable robust analysis. It helps reduce large volumes of data for analysis, while retaining systematic between case (looking at what different people said on the same issue) and within case (looking at how a person or group's opinions on one topic relate to their views on another) investigation. This project used an electronic version of 'Framework', which allows data summaries created by researchers to be searched and to be linked to verbatim sections of transcripts.<sup>11</sup>

2.22 Analysis involved a number of stages. First, the research team identified key topics and issues emerging from the research objectives and the data, following familiarisation with a selection of transcripts. An analytic framework was then drawn up and a series of thematic matrices, or charts, set up each relating to a different broad theme or issue. The columns in each chart represent the key sub-themes or topics whilst the rows represent individual participants or groups. This matrix was uploaded to the 'Framework' software

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<sup>10</sup> ScotCen's parent organisation.

<sup>11</sup> Ritchie, J (et al) 'Carrying out Qualitative Analysis' in Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis (Eds) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, 2003, Sage Publications: London

package and every focus group and interview transcript summarised under the key themes (See Annex C for details of themes).<sup>12</sup> By using 'Framework' software the context of the information was retained and the summary electronically linked to the section of the transcript from which it came<sup>13</sup>, so that analysts could easily return to the transcript to explore a point in more detail or to extract text for verbatim quotation. In this way, the data are ordered within an analytical framework that is grounded in participants' own accounts and oriented to the research objectives. The final stage was for the report authors to investigate the summary charts to identify:

- The range of experiences and views on key issues – by reviewing the relevant columns and classifying views and experiences so that the full variety is captured
- Any similarities and differences between and within groups – by searching the relevant columns for differences and similarities between, for example, those with disabilities and those without
- Emergent patterns and explanations for particular experiences or opinions – by searching across rows, to look for links between, for example, length of time since people last used a bus and their current views on bus services.

2.23 Both focus groups and individual interviews were charted using the same matrix. Where possible, the views of individual participants in focus groups were identified in the summaries, so that views could be analysed at both the individual and group level.

### **Reporting conventions**

2.24 As discussed above (paragraph 2.3), qualitative research does not attempt to provide statistical inferences about the prevalence or distribution of particular behaviour or views. Rather, it aims to map range and diversity, and to explore the reasons why people hold particular opinions or have particular experiences. Given this distinction, this report attempts to avoid using 'quantifying' language which could be misconstrued as implying statistical inferences to a wider population.<sup>14</sup>

2.25 Verbatim quotations are used in this report to illustrate, amplify and clarify findings. Quotations from participants are cited in italics, and are anonymised to protect their identities. Some background information about the respondent (e.g. gender, focus group number, location, type of disability) is provided for context.

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<sup>12</sup> As the broad themes explored and many of the issues raised were similar across the focus groups and in depth interviews, the same charting matrix was used for both. This also helped facilitate comparison between the groups and the in depth interviews.

<sup>13</sup> By creating a hyperlink between the summary and the data in the transcript.

<sup>14</sup> See White et al 'Reporting and presenting qualitative data' in Ritchie and Lewis (eds.) (2003) *Qualitative research practice: a guide for social science students and researchers*, London: Sage for more detailed discussion of this issue.

## **Challenges of discussing bus travel with people who do not use buses (often)**

- 2.26 Engaging participants on an issue where their knowledge and experience may be limited presents a number of challenges. Researchers on this study encountered two issues in particular which impacted both on the data we collected and some of the analysis discussed later in this report.
- 2.27 First, a key objective of the research was to identify what opinion of buses was based on among those who do not use them often or at all. Understanding how opinions are formed is important in terms of informing policies to persuade people of the merits of bus use. Are the views of those who do not use the bus, or who do so only infrequently, based on past experience of using buses, or do they rely on other sources, like family, friends, work colleagues, or the media? Researchers on this study tried where possible to probe on why people held particular opinions. However, they had to strike a balance between probing the foundations of opinion and ensuring that participants did not feel that they were being 'interrogated' or accused of holding incorrect or unfounded views. In addition, time constraints meant it was impossible to probe on the reasons for every opinion expressed. However, we have attempted to draw out what people's views were based on wherever possible in this report.
- 2.28 Second, participants identified a large number of barriers to using buses. However, they often talked about problems with buses in a 'general' manner, rather than focusing on the specific reasons *they* did not use the bus. We have attempted to separate out discussion of 'general problems' from 'individual barriers' in chapters four and five of this report. However, inevitably there is some overlap and it was not always possible to clearly separate the two. A similar issue arose in discussing potential solutions. While participants identified various improvements that might, in principle, make buses more attractive, it was not always clear that these would actually encourage them personally to use the bus more often. Again, where possible we have commented on this, but within the context of group discussions it was not always possible to follow up in detail on every suggestion made.

### 3 EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF BUS TRAVEL

#### Introduction

3.1 This chapter briefly explores experience and knowledge of travelling by bus among our sample, in order to help contextualise the views and opinions discussed in the remainder of the report.

#### Last experience of using local buses

3.2 Although all participants in the study travelled by bus infrequently (once a month or less) or not at all, there was considerable variation in when they had *last* used a bus, from within the last week to never.<sup>15</sup> Focus group participants were largely clustered into two groups – one of people who had used the bus in the last couple of months, and another who had last used the bus a year or more ago. Broadly speaking, participants in urban areas were more likely to have used the bus relatively recently, while participants in rural areas were more likely to have last used the bus a number of years ago. Four out of six participants with learning disabilities had used the bus within the last couple of months, while the experience of those with mobility problems tended to be less recent. Note that these figures are provided only to help frame subsequent discussion about views and experiences - given the sample size and purpose, it is not appropriate to draw wider inferences from this about the likelihood of different groups having used a bus recently.

3.3 Participants mentioned a wide variety of journey types when asked about their last bus journey, including: socialising/nights out, travelling to work, travelling to school (when they were still at school), going to a sporting event, taking a child on a bus trip, getting to a train station and going shopping in town. Reasons for choosing the bus for these trips were divided between negative 'push' factors relating to cars being unavailable/impractical for specific journeys, and more positive 'pull' factors. 'Push' factors included wanting to drink alcohol, the car being unavailable (because it was having an MOT test, being repaired or was needed by someone else), and parking charges being too high (for trips into town). 'Pull' factors included being able to travel in a large group together and wanting a child to have the experience of travelling by bus. The bus was also sometimes used as an alternative to walking, rather than as an alternative to car travel.

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<sup>15</sup> Participants were recruited using a question from the Scottish Household Survey which asks how often they have used the bus in the last month (see Annex A). They were eligible to participate if they answered either 'About once a month' or 'Not used the local bus service in the previous month'. Thus a participant may have only used the bus once in the last month, but this could have been in the week before they were recruited. Alternatively, they might have used a bus between being recruited and taking part in the discussion.

## General impressions of recent bus journeys

3.4 Participants' views of particular aspects of local buses are discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. As we will see, many of these views were fairly negative, although negative perceptions were not always linked to personal bad experiences. Given that the focus of this study was on finding out why participants did not use buses more often, it is unsurprising that much of the discussion focused on negatives. As discussed in Chapter One, we know that the views of people who actually use buses more often tend to be much more positive. Moreover, it is also worth noting that when participants in this study were asked specifically about their most *recent* experience of using the bus, rather than their views of buses in general, their views were more mixed. There were examples of recent bus journeys involving long waits or delays making participants late for work, for example. But more positive (or at least neutral) experiences were also mentioned, with journeys variously described as "*alright*", "*not too bad*", and "*fantastic*".

## Experience of using buses abroad or in other cities

3.5 Participants had collectively travelled on local buses in over 20 countries across the world including France, the USA, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Sweden, Malta and Lithuania. They had also used buses in other UK cities including Edinburgh, York, London and Manchester. Participants contrasted these experiences with their experiences of using local bus services in their area.

3.6 Although local bus services were sometimes viewed favourably in comparison with bus services elsewhere, there were two key areas where bus services in other countries or cities were seen as stronger:

- First, it was suggested that buses abroad were better organised, more regular and more likely to arrive on time. The service in Hong Kong in particular was described as "*a different quality of public transport*". While participants did admit that the types of journeys they made when on holiday abroad were different – and in particular less time sensitive – than journeys made at home, there still appeared to be a belief that some other countries provided more regular, reliable services.
- Second, the physical condition of buses in some other countries was seen as far superior to buses in participants' local areas. They were described as being a lot more clean and comfortable.

*In Belgium and places like that where the buses are absolutely sparkling... You know? Something like that makes people say 'Oh, I want to travel on a bus'.*

*(Male, 30-44, Borders, Group 12)*

## **Knowledge of local bus services**

- 3.7 Participants' knowledge of their local bus services ranged from none at all, to a general awareness of local services, to quite detailed knowledge about specific aspects of the service.
- 3.8 Examples where people appeared to have only a 'general awareness' of local buses included:
- Being aware that a number of buses travelled up the road where they lived during the day
  - Knowing the names of different local bus companies, and
  - Being aware of lots of people standing at bus stops and therefore thinking the buses are not very frequent.
- 3.9 Participants were also aware of different ticket types and services (e.g. day savers and monthly tickets, Park and Rides) without necessarily knowing prices or times.
- 3.10 However, there were also examples of more specific knowledge of actual bus times, which bus numbers to get to particular destinations, and the prices of specific tickets.
- 3.11 Unsurprisingly, the main factor affecting knowledge of local bus services appeared to be the length of time since participants last used a bus. Those who had used the bus more recently tended to have more detailed knowledge of routes and prices. In contrast, participants in a rural group that had not used a bus within the last year knew nothing about bus routes, bus fares, the frequency of buses or who the local bus companies were.

## **Sources of information about buses**

- 3.12 In some cases, participants did not know where they would find information about buses or could only speculate about what information was available, since they had not looked into it themselves. However, the following possible sources of information were discussed:
- The Internet
  - Written sources (timetables at bus stops, leaflets/flyers, information in shops, prices in bus windows)
  - 'Official' sources (like drivers, bus companies, bus stations and the Traveline phonenumber), and
  - Friends, family, neighbours or others at bus stops.
- 3.13 Online information on buses was accessed using Google or directly via specific websites like Traveline or the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport website. One view was that the Internet was the best source of information about local buses.

*I would always look there first. I wouldn't even bother going to the bus stop and seein' what the time... the timetable is*

*(Male, 16-29, West Lothian, Group 7)*

- 3.14 However, another view was that many travel websites are not user-friendly, that it is difficult to decipher where to get on and off the bus, and that some are not up-to-date.
- 3.15 It was suggested that in some areas, there was no longer anywhere to go to get information about local buses in person, since the bus station or ticket booth had closed.
- 3.16 Family, friends, neighbours or others at bus stops appeared to be a particularly important source of information for participants with a learning disability or a mobility problem.

### **Key points**

- Although participants in this study were recruited because they did not *currently* take buses often or at all, the length of time since participants had *last* used a bus varied considerably. Focus group participants were broadly split between those who had used a bus in the last couple of months, and those who had last used a bus over a year ago.
- Reasons for participants' last bus journey were divided between 'push' factors, associated with the car being unavailable or impractical for particular journeys, and 'pull' factors associated with positive attributes of bus travel.
- Although overall participants' views of buses focused on the negative, opinions of their most recent journeys by bus were more varied, with more positive or at least 'neutral' experiences also apparent.
- Levels of knowledge of local bus services varied, largely depending on the length of time since participants had last used a bus. While some knew very little and others had no more than a general awareness of routes or frequency, in some cases participants displayed quite detailed knowledge of routes and prices.
- Participants identified various possible sources of information about buses, both formal (Internet, timetables at bus stops, Traveline) and informal (friends, family, other people at bus stops). Informal sources appeared particularly important to participants with a disability.

## 4 GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF LOCAL BUSES

### Introduction

- 4.1 Chapter Three indicated that levels of knowledge and use of local buses among our sample were, unsurprisingly, not particularly high. However, in spite of this, strong attitudes towards local buses were apparent across focus groups and in depth interviews. As discussed in Chapter Two, a lot of the discussion in the groups and the in depth interviews focused on *general* perceptions of problems with local buses, rather than on people's own *individual* reasons for not using local buses more often. Although there is inevitably some overlap between the two, we have attempted to disentangle the general from the specific. Thus this chapter discusses people's general thoughts and opinions of local buses, while Chapter Five will look in more detail at individual reasons for not using the bus more.
- 4.2 The chapter starts by exploring views of different aspects of local bus services, summarising attitudes to bus drivers, other passengers, the physical condition of buses, bus stops, bus times and timetables, routes and fares. As well as summarising views on these areas, the chapter also considers what these opinions appear to be based on. A key objective of the research was to explore what appears to underpin the attitudes of people who do not use the bus often or at all, given that their views are unlikely to be grounded in substantial recent experience of using the bus. The chapter considers other possible influences on views, including past experiences, the views of others, and the media. Finally, it summarises perceptions of how buses compare with trains, the other most commonly used form of public transport.
- 4.3 Where there appeared to be differences in the views of different groups in our sample (e.g. men and women, older and younger people, people with and without disabilities, urban/rural areas), these are flagged in the discussion. However, many of the key themes discussed below were apparent across the different sub-groups in our sample.

### Views of local bus services

- 4.4 Discussion of specific aspects of local bus services tended to focus on the issues people felt were problems or barriers rather than on more positive aspects of travelling by bus. Given that our aim was to understand why people do not use buses more often, this is unsurprising. However, where positive aspects to bus travel were raised, these are also discussed.
- 4.5 It is worth noting that while different views and experiences of local buses were discussed, a common general theme was safety. Safety concerns were apparent in relation to most of the aspects of bus travel covered, including driver behaviour, other passengers, the physical condition of buses, bus stops and routes.

## **Bus drivers**

- 4.6 Views of bus drivers focused on two key issues: safety of driving behaviour and driver attitude.
- 4.7 Safety concerns centred on bus drivers not waiting long enough to let people on and off the bus (including allowing time for people to take a seat) and driving too fast. This was especially pertinent to people with a physical and/or learning disability.

*The driver moved too soon. She went flyin' across the other side o' the bus, an' when I got off I just says ... 'You should give us time to get off. You're supposed to help us, not hinder us'.*

(Male participant with learning disabilities)

- 4.8 However, more positive experiences were also mentioned where bus drivers did wait for people who needed extra time to get on and off the bus and ensured the bus was lowered for people with prams or wheelchair users. One participant who used a wheelchair praised her local bus driver for his help and willingness to tell other people to move if they were blocking access (although this was specific to one particular bus company – she complained that drivers for other operators waited until she asked for the ramp).
- 4.9 Concerns around safety of driving behaviour appeared to be less of an issue for the young people in our sample, with one group of 16-29 year-olds complaining instead that bus drivers are too slow. In contrast, negative views of drivers' *attitudes* were particularly apparent among some younger focus group participants. Complaints included drivers being unhelpful when passengers had questions about routes or fares, being rude or impolite, or just generally appearing lazy. There was also a perception that some bus drivers deliberately missed out part of their route or failed to stop at some bus stops. Finally, car drivers complained that some bus drivers display a lack of regard for other road users.

*It's not fair they just feel that they can just drive out in front of you. There's no courtesy in driving.*

(Female, 45+, Borders, Group 11)

- 4.10 In general, these views did appear to be grounded in actual experience - for example, one participant recalled sitting on bus with a driver who was reading his paper and drinking a can of juice while the bus was *'full of people trying to get to work.'* Another participant complained of being made to feel uncomfortable by bus drivers when they are fumbling with money because they do not know the fare, highlighting the danger that infrequent or non-bus users may be deterred from using the bus more by negative driver attitudes or behaviour. Participants also referred to negative experiences of bus drivers that were less recent – for example, remembering drivers failing to stop for them when participants were school-aged. This highlights that negative experiences

can have a long-term impact – as one participant put it, although bus drivers are not all bad, “*the bad ones always stuck in your mind.*”

### **Other passengers**

4.11 Stradling et al (2007) note a continuum of attitudes to other passengers, ranging from viewing them as unwelcome or threatening, to valuing interactions with other passengers as part of the experience of getting the bus. While there were examples in our research of participants enjoying travelling with other people – for example, one participant described the bus they used to get to work as being like ‘*a travelling community*’ – most of the discussion of other passengers focused on negative issues. Concerns primarily focused on personal safety, with ‘invasion of personal space’ (our terminology) and a general lack of respect for the bus or other passengers being secondary issues.

4.12 Safety concerns centred on a fear of being the victim of crime or anti-social behaviour while using the bus. Specific types of bus passenger were perceived as potential sources of trouble, particularly school children, young people, and anyone who was on the bus while drunk. Concerns about personal safety in relation to other passengers were particularly salient in relation to travelling on the bus at night, with women participants in our focus groups particularly suggesting they would not feel safe using night buses on this basis. There was a general perception that drivers were unwilling to intervene in disruptive behaviour by passengers, although there were examples where participants had seen the driver throw unruly passengers off.

*I was on the bus wi' ma ex-girlfriend (...) and these young guys got on the bus. The bus was more or less empty. (...). they went up the back and they were gettin' all rowdy an', you know, shouting abuse. So the bus driver threw them off.*

(Male participant with learning disabilities)

4.13 In some cases, these fears and concerns appeared to be grounded in direct experience. For example, one participant described being spat at by another passenger at a bus stop. In other cases, participants stated that although nothing had ever happened to them, they had either ‘come close’ to experiencing trouble or had seen trouble happening to other people on buses. However, even where participants did not appear to have any personal experience as a victim or witness of anti-social behaviour on buses, fear of this kind of behaviour was still an issue. For example, one participant who never used the bus stated that they ‘*just imagine*’ that there would be a lot of drunk young people on the buses and that they would be leaving themselves open to awkward situations. Sometimes these perceptions appeared to be influenced by hearsay – one participant referred to a friend who worked for a bus company who had told him that some passengers would spit on other passengers. There was also some evidence to suggest that reports in the media could help create or sustain these feelings of fear:

*It's just been on the news. Did you see the bus down at the motorway stops? Because they were all fighting on the bus and the bus had to pull over and they were all fighting on the hard shoulder. Did you see it on the news?*

(Female, 30-44, West Lothian, Group 8)

- 4.14 In addition to concerns about specific kinds of passenger, there was also evidence of a general feeling of uneasiness about sitting next to anyone you did not know. This was not always about safety – personal hygiene of other passengers, catching ‘germs’, having to listen to other people talking on their mobiles, playing music or using foul language, and having to speak to someone else when you want ‘peace’ were also concerns. There were also complaints about a general lack of respect for the bus, bus driver and fellow passengers – for example, leaving rubbish on the bus, or not giving up seats for elderly people, pregnant women or people with a disability.

### **Physical condition of buses**

- 4.15 Views about the physical condition of buses were determined, to some extent, by the age of the bus. Newer buses tended to be viewed more positively because they looked modern and were easier to get on and off. Older buses were described as looking ‘run down’ and being ‘wee rickety things’; accompanied by a perception that they were unsafe, unreliable (in terms of breakdowns) and not user friendly for people with prams, elderly people or wheelchair users (for example, because of steep steps or the wheelchair space being very tight). There was a suggestion that small buses run by some smaller private operators were in particularly poor condition.

*I was a HGV mechanic all my life and when I see some of the small traps [buses] that are running about, I wonder how they got on the road. Because I mean when I was working, they used to have to go through rigorous tests, but you see some of the buses that are going about now and I think to myself ‘how did they get that passed’?*

(Male, 45+, West Lothian, Group 9)

- 4.16 However, regardless of the age of the bus, buses without seatbelts were viewed as being unsafe, and questions were raised over why public buses were not required to be fitted with seatbelts.
- 4.17 Comments about the physical environment on board buses focused on a general lack of cleanliness (including dirty windows, spills, vomit and rubbish), buses being too hot in the summer, and overcrowding, which also made the bus too hot as well as preventing participants getting a seat. Crowded buses were a particular issue for participants who suffered anxiety and mental health problems, while a lack of toilets on board was also mentioned as an issue for people with some disabilities:

*I feel comfortable on the big long bus, the Citylink bus, the ones that dae the long journey's, they've got a wee toilet an that on them as well, I feel comfortable on them but they buses that run about, they've no got toilets on them, when you're on medication sometimes you've got to get to the ... toilet ... ken what I mean ..*

(Female participant with mobility problems)

- 4.18 Accessibility was also mentioned by participants with mobility problems. Steep steps and poles getting in the way of the wheelchair space on buses were particular issues.
- 4.19 As with perceptions of the behaviour of other passengers on buses, in some cases views about physical conditions on board buses were based in relatively recent experience – for example, of being on a bus where someone has been sick or where half-eaten takeaways are on the floor. But in other cases participants admitted that their belief that buses were smelly were based on experiences from a long-time ago (even school days for one participant aged 45+). Another participant cited hearing that a local bus company had been 'done' for unsafe conditions on board buses as a reason they were concerned about the quality of the bus stock.

### **Bus stops**

- 4.20 Comments about bus stops focused on concerns around personal safety while standing at bus stops and, to a lesser extent, comfort and the availability of information about bus times at stops.
- 4.21 Concerns around personal safety, particularly when waiting for buses at night, related to who else might be standing at the bus stop or shelter, worries about the area the bus stop is located in, lack of adequate lighting at stops, and concern about 'inappropriate use' of bus stops (see 4.22). In one rural group concerns about who else was standing at the bus stop was exacerbated by the style of the bus shelter:

*I particularly don't like the wooden ones that you don't know if there's somebody actually in there sort of hovering about. Like the clear ones what they've got at the post office, you can see who's there, so you would go and stand under there.*

(Female, 30-44, Borders, Group 12)

- 4.22 Participants expressed a desire to avoid waiting at stops in areas where people might be drunk, as they would not feel safe. Concerns about 'inappropriate' use ranged from young people 'hanging out', to shelters being vandalised or urinated in. This kind of behaviour was perceived as both threatening and a nuisance – one participant described having to walk to a bus stop further away when the nearest bus stop had been vandalised and its timetabling information removed.
- 4.23 Issues relating to comfort centred on lack of bus shelters for when it was raining. Distance to walk to stops was also an issue for participants with

physical disabilities. Opinion of the 'real time' bus information found at some bus stops was mixed. Positive views focused on its accuracy, but another view was that it was not accurate enough to be useful, and that sometimes buses took longer than the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) screen claimed. There were also complaints about timetables and route information at bus stops not being up to date, while the font size of some timetables was as a problem for older people with poor eyesight (mentioned both by an older participant who themselves had problems reading timetables, and by younger participants as a potential problem for others).

4.24 In general, views of bus stops did appear to be grounded in personal knowledge or experience, since people walked past stops and shelters even if they did not use the bus. That said, there was evidence that some negative views of the accuracy of RTPI screens were based on hearsay that the times are based on the timetable, and not on GPS (Global Positioning System) information from the buses themselves.

### ***Bus times and timetables***

4.25 Participants' main concern with respect to bus times and timetables was simply the length of time it would take to make journeys by bus. Journey times were seen as longer than they needed to be (and far longer than making the same journey by car). Even where the timetable showed a more reasonable journey time, there was a perception that buses could not be relied on to stick to this and that it was hard to judge how long a journey by bus would actually take. These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

4.26 Another issue was that bus times did not suit the times people want to travel. This viewpoint came though particularly strongly in rural areas where buses were perceived to be too infrequent and waiting times were seen as unacceptably long. In contrast, urban participants commented on seeing several buses that were not full and suggested that some buses were too frequent.

4.27 Comments about timetables themselves, rather than the ability of buses to stick to them, centred on difficulties understanding them. As discussed above, participants identified difficulties for older people and those with visual impairments in reading small writing. They also described problems with timetables being over complicated and difficult to interpret, particularly in areas with more than one company running buses. There were also complaints about a lack of clear information about fares at stops.

4.28 Although some participants appeared fairly certain of when particular buses came or how long they took, beliefs about times and timetables were not always based on up to date knowledge of what local services offered. For example, one participant admitted:

*I mean I don't use them but I get the impression they're not reliable and they're not as frequent as what (they) should be.*

(Female, 45+, West Lothian, Group 9)

4.29 In some cases, participants acknowledged this and qualified their views with a recognition that things may have changed since they last used a bus.

### **Bus routes**

4.30 Detailed discussion of bus routes was fairly limited, which is perhaps unsurprising given that our sample did not use buses particularly often. Routes were sometimes discussed in the context of the time it takes to travel by bus. There was a perception that there are not enough direct routes, and because of this other modes of transport, especially the car, were seen as more time-efficient.

4.31 Another view was that existing routes were not practical for participants, especially for journeys to and from work – buses did not go near enough to places of work, or participants would need to change buses to get there.

4.32 Finally, general fears about crime and personal safety were evident in discussion of bus routes. Some of the areas the bus route covered were described as '*rough*' or '*bad*'. One view was that if participants would not choose to go there otherwise, why should they go through them because they are on the bus?

### **Fares**

4.33 Participants from all the geographical areas included in our sample believed that fares were too expensive. This was in spite of the fact that not everyone in our sample was clear about the precise cost of bus travel (see Chapter Three). Participants also suggested that fares are a major barrier to bus travel for many people – though as discussed in the next chapter, fare levels did not in fact appear to be the only or main reason for not travelling by bus. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter One, cost was cited by just 1 in 20 respondents to the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) as a reason they did not use the bus more often (Scottish Government, 2009a).

4.34 Fares were seen as particularly disproportionate for short journeys and journeys where you need to get more than one bus. Another issue was the variation in bus fares across Scotland, with complaints that local bus fares compared unfavourably with those in other areas or cities. Bus fares were viewed as expensive in comparison with both private car and taxi travel (particularly where making journeys with other people). However, it is important to note that when discussing the relative cost of travelling by bus compared with travelling by car, participants tended to focus on petrol costs, and not longer-term costs such as purchasing, insuring or maintaining a vehicle:

*Obviously, with the car, it will cost me a couple of pound in petrol now, so that's a lot of the reason why I started driving; just 'cos I find the buses so expensive now.*

(Female, 16-29, West Lothian, Group 7)

4.35 This appeared to reflect the fact that participants would not consider giving up their cars completely. In fact, one view appeared to be that the 'fixed' costs of owning a car were so high that there was no incentive to even consider paying 'extra' to get a bus. This point of view, which suggests that car owners may view bus fares as *additional* costs rather than as an *alternative* to be weighed against the expense of making journeys by car, is illustrated by the following discussion:

*Female 3: But why would you want to ... why would you want to when you've got a car.*

*Female 2: When you've got a car sitting there but you've already paid insurance, road tax and petrol and everything for.*

*Female 1: Exactly.*

*Male 1: Yeah.*

*Female 2: I don't see why you would go and then pay out more money again. I think it's much cheaper.*

(West Lothian, 30-44, Group 8)

4.36 Beliefs about fare levels did sometimes appear to be based on participants' past experiences of using buses, although it was not always clear how long ago this experience was or whether it was on the same routes they would need to use now. In other cases, participants appeared to have overheard other people discussing prices and formed a general impression that they are expensive.

4.37 Related to the cost of fares was discussion about the need to have the exact fare. This was seen as annoying, inconvenient, and confusing for people who did not get the bus often and did not always know what the fare would be.

*What annoys me is the exact fare because sometimes I don't have it. I fancy going on a bus. I don't have the exact fare. I've got a fiver or something like that, and basically its £1.20 or £1.30 (...) so I don't take the bus (...) So I mean the exact fare is sometimes a nuisance. It can be frustrating.*

(Male, Dundee 30-44, Group 5)

### **Factors that appeared to influence views of local buses**

4.38 The discussion above shows that infrequent or non-bus users' views of their local bus service reflect a combination of previous experience (both recent and long-past), 'hearsay' from other people, and beliefs based on media coverage of problems on buses. These findings reflect Guiver's conclusion that 'transport users are not just making their modal choices on the basis of what is currently available to them, but also refer to (selective) memories, images and cultural references in their decision-making' (2006).

4.39 The role of past experiences in shaping current views of buses is also discussed in both Guiver and in Beirao and Sarsfield Cabral (2007). Both

studies found that negative experiences or 'worst case scenarios' can have a particularly strong impact on people's opinions of bus travel, often appearing to outweigh more positive experiences. This finding certainly appeared to be reflected in our data.

- 4.40 Moreover, both Guiver and Beirao and Sarsfield Cabral comment on the role of discussion with others in shaping people's views of public transport. As such, Guiver suggests that 'transport providers should not only challenge erroneous perceptions, but recognise that their passengers are carriers and filters of the bus image and each poor performance influences the future choices of that person and those they talk to.'

### **Image of a typical 'bus passenger'**

- 4.41 In addition to asking participants directly about their views of specific aspects of bus travel, interviewers also asked their views about 'typical' bus passengers. Their responses, particularly when compared with their descriptions of a typical car driver, cast further light on the image of bus travel among infrequent or non-bus passengers. Although one opinion was that you can find a 'cross-section' of people on the bus depending on the time of day, and that it is not possible to generalise about 'typical' passengers, there was also a clear view that the bus is only for certain types of people. Those identified as typical passengers included: people who cannot drive or afford to drive, including school kids and the unemployed, students, elderly people, mothers with prams, and a '*less discerning customer*' which could include '*Neds*' or '*junkies*'. This reflects findings from Guiver (2006) who also found that a 'sense of vulnerability' meant that bus passengers were often portrayed as 'victims' and that her participants often bracketed commonly disempowered groups – disabled people, elderly people, parents with young children – as bus users.
- 4.42 In contrast, car use was less clearly associated with any one particular group. It was suggested that '*most people drive nowadays*', which made it harder to identify a 'typical car user'. Parents, big families, young 'boy racers' and also participants themselves were identified as 'typical' drivers. 'Typical drivers' were also described in terms of personal characteristics or lifestyle: for example someone who is lazy, people with no time/busy people, someone who works/a commuter, someone who can afford a car, and someone with a parking space at work.
- 4.43 It appears that for at least some infrequent or non-bus users, bus use is seen as low status, as something for other, more vulnerable people. In contrast, cars were seen as being for everyone and/or for people like them.

### **Comparisons between buses and trains**

- 4.44 In discussing the pros and cons of bus travel, participants often compared buses with other modes of transport, in particular the car and the train. In general, buses came out less favourably than these other modes. Comparisons with cars are discussed in more detail in the next chapter when we look at the reasons why people used the car rather than the bus for particular journeys. However, here we briefly discuss perceptions of how buses compare with the

next most commonly used form of public transport, trains. Although interviewers did not explore in detail what participants' opinions of trains were based on, they did appear to be drawing on personal experience of train travel when describing some of the perceived advantages of trains over buses.

4.45 There are obvious differences in the services provided by local buses and by trains – for example, trains are generally used for middle to long distance journeys, compared with the shorter journeys made by local buses. Moreover, there are aspects of train travel – such as the speed at which they are able to travel – which may affect public perceptions of the service, but which cannot be replicated on buses. However, reflecting on how potential passengers view the differences between the two most common modes of public transport can nonetheless highlight aspects of bus services which are viewed as in need of improvement. In some cases, comparisons between the two may also suggest lessons that can be learned from train services.

4.46 Comparisons of buses and trains related to five key themes: reliability/predictability, speed, information, safety and control, and comfort and accessibility.

- **Reliability/predictability** - Train times were seen as more reliable and more predictable than bus times. It was suggested that this meant you could structure train travel into your life, whereas *'you've no hope of doing that with the bus'*. Although there are a number of reasons why it may be easier to ensure that trains run to a predictable timetable – for example, the general absence of congestion caused by other vehicles – this nevertheless highlights a key area where buses are seen as weak in comparison with other options.
- **Speed** - Trains were also viewed as quicker than buses, because they are more direct and do not stop as often, and because they are not affected by road works or traffic jams. Again, while it may be impossible to avoid road works and traffic jams, more direct routes and less frequent stops might help attract some infrequent or non-users on to buses.
- **Information** – Various aspects of the information on and around trains were seen as more 'user friendly' than buses. For example, it was suggested that buses would be better if they had screens on them like trains which tell people what the next stop is. It was also suggested that it is easier to tell which train is going where when you are at the station.
- **Safety and control** – There was a belief among participants that trains were safer, particularly at night. Train conductors were a key factor here – they were seen walking up and down the carriages and could, to an extent, police the behaviour of other passengers. In contrast, on the bus trouble could break out upstairs when you are the only other passenger and there are no staff present to intervene. However, there also appeared to be a belief that anti-social behaviour was simply more likely on the bus than on the train. One participant, who had experienced racial insults on the bus but never on the train, felt that you find a more *'discerning clientele'* on the train compared to the bus. Train stations

were also seen as safer than bus stops, in part due to their enhanced security (cameras in train stations were mentioned). It was suggested that people felt safer getting off trains, since more people usually disembarked at each stop, providing safety in numbers compared with only one or two getting off at each bus stop. A slightly different safety issue was that trains, unlike buses, do not move when people are trying to get on or off.

- **Comfort and accessibility** – Comparisons of the physical condition of trains and buses provoked more mixed reactions. One view was that trains were cleaner, quieter and have more comfortable seats with more leg room. But the opposite view, that trains were worse than buses in terms of discomfort and noise, was also expressed. The presence of toilets on trains but not local buses was commented on. In terms of accessibility, participants with mobility problems cited difficulties with both buses and trains. The requirement to book assistance in advance for trains was seen as a barrier.

4.47 One area in which buses were compared more favourably with trains related to the fact that buses come to you, whereas you have to travel to a station to get a train. Trains were also considered to be expensive, although they did have the advantage of allowing individuals to use a credit or debit card, or at least to get change from cash in contrast with many buses which require 'exact change'. It was, however, acknowledged that it could slow down buses if drivers had to give out change or take credit cards.

## Key points

- Participants identified a wide range of problems with and actual and potential barriers to bus travel, including:
  - Driving behaviour and driver attitude
  - Concerns about other passengers committing anti-social or criminal behaviour, as well as more general concerns about other people's behaviour causing annoyance or discomfort
  - Fears about the physical condition of buses making them unsafe, unreliable or inaccessible (for participants with mobility problems), as well as concerns about cleanliness and comfort on board
  - Concerns about personal safety, comfort and the adequacy of information at bus stops
  - The perceived length of bus journeys, as well as the appropriateness of timetables for the journeys participants needed to make
  - A belief that buses cannot be relied on to stick to their timetables
  - A perceived lack of direct and/or appropriate routes, as well as concerns about routes travelling through 'undesirable' areas
  - A belief that fares are too high, as well as complaints about the inconvenience of having to find exact change.
- Safety concerns were apparent with respect to a number of aspects of bus travel, including: driver behaviour, other passengers, the physical condition of buses, bus stops and routes.
- There was considerable overlap in the barriers raised by men and women, older and younger people and those in urban and rural areas. However, there was some evidence that:
  - safety issues were of greater concern to women
  - young people were particularly negative about driver attitudes
  - people in rural areas were particularly likely to feel buses were too infrequent and waiting times too long.
- Disabled people also shared many concerns with other participants. However, they also raised a number of specific concerns about safety on board (in relation to having time to get on and off and to their seats), accessibility of buses and of timetables, problems associated with overcrowding, lack of toilets, and distance to walk to stops.
- Beliefs about problems with local bus services reflected a combination of previous experience (recent as well as long-past), 'hearsay' from other people, and media coverage.
- In comparison with trains, buses were seen as less reliable/predictable, slower, and less safe (primarily because of the presence of conductors to 'police' behaviour on trains). It was also suggested that information about stops both on board and at stations is clearer for trains than for buses.

## 5 INDIVIDUAL JOURNEY CHOICES

### Introduction

5.1 The previous chapter discussed a wide range of views about local buses in general. This chapter shifts attention to individual travel choices and the specific reasons why buses did not feature highly in these choices for our sample. The chapter describes the typical journeys participants made, focusing particularly on journeys to and from work. It discusses how participants currently make these journeys, and their reasons for choosing particular modes of transport (particularly the car) rather than the bus.

### Typical journeys

5.2 Discussing people's individual 'typical journeys' presented some challenges in the context of group discussions. To discuss each participant's individual 'typical journeys' in depth would have taken up too much time and disrupted the flow of the group discussion. Our approach, therefore, was to focus discussion on journeys to work, since encouraging modal shift among commuters is a key area of interest (and increasing the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport is a National Indicator) for the Scottish Government. However, where possible, and in cases where some participants did not work, interviewers also explored other, non-work journeys – for example, journeys for leisure and shopping.

5.3 Discussion of typical journeys within individual interviews with disabled people, in contrast, tended to focus on non-work related trips, since a majority of these participants were either retired, or were not in work at present.

### *Choice of transport – the journey to work*

5.4 Among those in our sample who worked, most made this journey by car. The train, cycling and walking were also mentioned (but with the caveat that walking was only an option if the weather was nice).

5.5 Reasons for using the car to travel to work centred on its perceived 'convenience' and 'reliability', reflecting findings from survey research discussed in Chapter 1. Various aspects of car travel contributed to making it seem more 'convenient', with very few comments suggesting circumstances in which using the car could be *less* convenient than getting the bus (see 5.7 for an exception to this). First, the car was more convenient because it was **quicker and more direct** than the bus. Cars allowed participants to travel straight from home to work, choosing their route to avoid accidents or traffic. They were seen as quicker – with a car, there is no need to factor in time for walking to and from the bus stop, changing bus, or for picking and dropping people off. One participant said that the bus from her house to work would either get her there 40 minutes early, or the time would be so tight that she ran the risk of being late. The car allowed her to get to work at a more appropriate and convenient time for her. These views reflect findings from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS). As discussed in Chapter One, a belief there are no direct routes is the main reason SHS respondents give for saying they cannot

use public transport to travel to work. At the same time, among those who say they could, at least in theory, use public transport, a belief it would 'take too long' is the most commonly cited reason for not doing so (Scottish Government, 2009a).

- 5.6 Second, cars were 'convenient' for making **multi-stage journeys**. In some circumstances the trip to work was made after children had been dropped at school or nursery, and there was a perception that there simply was not enough time to do this and then get to work by bus. Some participants also made multiple journeys during their working day (to attend meetings, make deliveries, go shopping at lunch time, etc.). Again it was believed this would take too long by bus, as well as requiring participants to know details about numerous bus routes and timetables. Linked to this was the convenience of using the car for **carrying equipment or paperwork** associated with their job. One view was that it simply was not feasible to carry equipment needed for work onto a bus.

*I use the car every single day, I'm self employed, I do an ironing service so I couldn't possibly take ironing on a bus.*

(Female, 30-44, Aberdeen, Group 1)

- 5.7 A crucial element of the greater perceived 'convenience' of the car related to feelings of **freedom and control** over journeys. In general, cars are parked outside or near the home/workplace so people have the freedom to leave when they want, without the need to find out bus times or leave at a set time to catch a bus. In a rare case where a participant described the bus as being 'convenient' in comparison with the car, this reflected the fact that they were unable to park near their work, whereas the bus stopped right outside:

*I have to say I didn't mind on the bus in the morning, I sat and read my book (...) actually I thought it was quite relaxing and it's .. it was more convenient for me in terms of where I got off the bus and just crossed the road to work whereas (...) I've got to maybe walk, it's a good 15 minutes (from) where I have to park.*

(Female, 45+, Aberdeen, Group 2)

- 5.8 Concerns about control were also evident in discussion about 'knowing your own car' – in contrast with buses, cars were viewed as 'your own personal space' which meant you could control how clean/dirty it was and who would use it. These findings reflect those from Guiver (2006) and Beirao and Cabral (2007), who suggest that a desire for control underpins many of peoples other reasons for preferring car travel (see Chapter One).

- 5.9 In addition to being more convenient, cars were also viewed as more **reliable** than buses. In fact, one view was that buses are *'never going to be more reliable than your own car'*. This was especially a problem in terms of getting to work on time. The perceived 'unreliability' of buses led one participant to argue that getting the bus to and from work would not be viewed favourably by his employers:

*I ken in the criteria now when you put an application form, one of the things they do ask now (is) 'how would you travel to work?'. And if they say 'bus' you can guarantee you're doon the bottom of the pecking order cause they're no reliable ... that's just the way things are now, you just cannae afford folk not to be there, you need folk that are going to be reliable and be there on time.*

(Male, 30-44, Borders, Group 10)

- 5.10 This view of buses as *'unreliable'* was reflected in the language participants used to describe buses and bus journeys, examples of which include: *'pot luck'*, *'a lottery'*, *'random'* *'uncertainty'*, and not *'dependable'*. All these phrases suggest that people associate bus travel with an element of 'chance' about whether, and in particular when, you will arrive at your destination. There was, however, some indication that participants viewed some buses as more reliable than others, with night buses mentioned as generally reliable in terms of timing.
- 5.11 Other reasons for preferring to use the car to travel to work included a perception that the car was **cheaper** than the bus (although as noted in Chapter Four, comparisons of cost tended to take the 'fixed' costs of running and insuring a car as a given), the belief that there was simply **no other way** of getting to work than by car, as there was a belief there was no bus route to their work, and a general **'laziness'** about using other modes when the car is easily available. It was suggested that even if participants switched from car to bus for the journey to work, it would not mean giving up the car as it was still needed, especially for people with families.

### **Choice of transport – other kinds of journeys**

- 5.12 Discussion of non-work related journeys included trips for shopping (for food and for other items) and socialising (going on night outs and visiting friends and family). Journeys for leisure pursuits and hobbies (e.g. going to the gym or going fishing) were also mentioned, as were the school run and taking children to after school activities.
- 5.13 Cars were the preferred mode of transport for shopping, especially food shopping, first because people felt that shopping bags were too cumbersome to take on and off the bus, and second because there was a belief that some out of town retail parks and shopping centres were difficult to get to by bus. This reflects findings in Dudleston et al (2005) that supermarket shopping is the most car dependent type of journey.
- 5.14 Other modes were more likely to be mentioned in relation to socialising, and nights out in particular. Reasons for not using the car for these journeys

centred on the desire to drink alcohol and difficulties parking. The number of people travelling influenced whether people got a taxi or used public transport – taxis were seen as more cost effective than a train or bus for a group of people. One situation where the bus was seen as the best option was for nights out at New Year or on Bank Holidays, because taxis would be busy.

- 5.15 However, the car still appeared to be the dominant mode of transport for non work journeys. Feelings of freedom and control were again highly relevant, especially in relation to socialising and visiting friends and family. Participants liked being able to decide when they arrive and leave, without the constraints of bus times, especially the last bus home.

*I think the words says it all: the last bus. It's a finite limit on when you're allowed to enjoy yourself until .. and I don't really want to be limited like that, you know?*

(Male, 45+, Glasgow, Group 4)

*I go door to door. I'm safe. I'm in my own comfort. I can come and go as I please.*

(Female, 45+, Glasgow, Group 4)

- 5.16 And even in relation to leisure journeys, which are arguably less 'time critical' than the journey to work, the reliability of bus services was a concern.

*If that last bus doesn't turn up, and you've left your pals to go and get the last bus ... you're talkin' .. you're paying 30 or 40 quid back for a taxi on your own. You can't rely on that. You're better just to all get a taxi together.*

(Female, 16-29, West Lothian, Group 7)

- 5.17 Concerns about relative cost were also cited - where participants were making leisure trips with children or other family members, it was seen as cheaper to use the car when weighed against the cost of paying for a whole family to make a journey by bus.

- 5.18 Other, more general reasons for preferring to travel by car included: physical comfort (having heating, air conditioning, comfortable seats and being able being able to listen to music out loud); more general control over the travel environment (for example, being able to avoid over-crowding, which could be particularly important for disabled participants) and being able to carry anything you might need during the day with you.

## Key points

- The car dominated as focus group participants' preferred mode of transport to work.
- Key reasons the car was seen as more 'convenient' than the bus for commuting to work included the belief that cars were:
  - Quicker and more direct ('door to door')
  - Easier/quicker for multi-stage/multiple journeys
  - Easier for carrying equipment or paperwork.
- Cars were also generally seen as giving participants more freedom and control over their journeys and over the 'travel environment'.
- Reliability was another key reason cars were preferred for the journey to work, with one view being that buses are '*never going to be more reliable than your own car*'.
- Participants also suggested that it was cheaper to travel to work by car, though comparisons of cost tended to take the costs of purchasing, maintaining or insuring a car as a 'given'.
- The car still featured prominently as the preferred mode of transport for non-work journeys. Again, it was seen as cheaper (especially for trips with other family members) and as allowing greater freedom and control over arrival and departure times.
- The bus was not seen as practical for food shopping because of the large amount of bags to carry.
- Taxis were seen as more cost effective than the bus for nights out when travelling in a group.

## 6 ATTITUDES TO FUTURE BUS USE

### Introduction

6.1 Previous chapters have focused on the first aim of the research, to explore why buses were not used more often. This penultimate chapter focuses on the second aim - what might encourage greater bus use in the future. First, the chapter explores whether participants felt they could use the bus more in the future for work and non-work journeys. Next, it looks at whether our sample fell into different groups in terms of their attitudes to *future* bus use. Finally, it discusses what (if anything) would encourage or motivate people to use the bus more often.

### Could participants use the bus to travel to work?

6.2 Participants were asked whether or not they could make any of the journeys they typically make by car by bus instead, focusing particularly on the journey to and from work. Several key issues emerged from this discussion.

6.3 First, it was often difficult to disentangle people's *ability* to switch modes from their *willingness* to do so. For example, while some participants said they *could* use a bus, *but* it would take too long, others said they *could not* use a bus, *because* it would take too long. Thus the question of whether people said they could or could not use the bus in principle appeared less important than the reasons given for not in fact being able/willing to making the switch in practice.

6.4 Second, among our sample, while some people expressed the desire to use the car less or the bus more, there was a general belief among employed participants that it would not be possible or practical to use the bus for the journey to work in particular. Many participants gave multiple reasons for being unwilling/unable to use the bus for commuting, reflecting issues already discussed in Chapters Four and Five – time, cost, frequency, reliability, the need to make multi-stage or multi-purpose journeys, and the need to carry equipment or bags.

6.5 In some cases participants appeared to be basing their views on some knowledge of specific local services (although it was not possible to verify the accuracy of this 'knowledge'). For example, one participant said that they would need to get 3 buses and leave very early to get to work by bus. In other cases, views appeared to be based on more general perceptions of how long buses take or how reliable they are – one participant said she could use the bus to get to work, but suspected it would not work '*timewise*', while another said there were no stops '*that I knew of*' near their work, but they had not looked into it in detail since they had a car.

6.6 Finally, some participants said they would be unwilling to use the bus to travel to work *regardless* of whether the 'practical' barriers discussed above could be overcome. These different 'categories' of infrequent or non-bus users are discussed in more detail below.

## Could participants use the bus for other kinds of journeys?

- 6.7 Among participants who expressed a willingness to use the bus more, this was typically discussed in relation to social journeys or trips into town:

*I would certainly like to use it socially.*

(Male participant, 45+, Glasgow, Group 4)

*Socially, I'd probably use the bus socially 'cause I've got friends who live in town and ... if I wanted to drink I'd take the bus in to see them.*

(Male participant, Aberdeen, 30-44, Aberdeen, Group 1)

*Goin' into the town on a Saturday for some lunch, or whatever. Yeah. I would. I would use a park and ride for that.*

(Male participant, 30-44, Dundee, Group 5)

- 6.8 However, substantial barriers to using the bus for nights out, trips into town, and visiting family and friends were still identified. While some of these barriers were similar to those cited above, centring on time, changing buses, cost and infrequency, several additional barriers were also mentioned to using the bus for non-work journeys, including:

- Being unsure of routes or fares due to not using the bus often
- Lack of appropriate routes to where they want to go, and
- The last bus being too early for returning from nights out.

- 6.9 Although there was a lot of discussion about safety on buses (as seen in Chapter Four), safety concerns did not in fact feature particularly highly in the reasons given by participants for their being unwilling or unable to use buses more often in the future. The one exception to this was in relation to catching the bus at night, where concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour on buses and at bus stops did seem to be a real barrier. But night buses aside, safety concerns appeared to be subsidiary to issues around timing, reliability and perceived cost in terms of the 'biggest barriers' to getting the bus either to work or for other purposes.

## General attitudes to future bus use

- 6.10 One objective for this study was to explore whether or not there are particular 'categories' or 'types' of 'infrequent or non-bus users' who are more or less willing to use the bus more often in the future, and who might be susceptible to different types of incentives to bus use. Writing in Dudleston et al (2005), Jillian Anable and Steve Stradling used cluster analysis to identify different segments of car and non-car user using survey data. They found four driver 'segments'. These segments were primarily distinguished by their attitudes, rather than by their current car use or their demographic characteristics. That is, people of the same age, gender and income, who currently used their cars a similar amount, might nonetheless display quite different levels of: attachment to their car,

willingness and perceived ability to reduce their car use, and identification with environmental problems and transport issues.

6.11 Analysis of the interviews and focus groups conducted for this study provide some evidence to suggest that 'infrequent or non-bus users' can also be divided into three different groups depending on their willingness to use the bus more, attachment to the car and identification with environmental issues.

6.12 First, as discussed above in paragraph 6.6 there was a group of participants who categorically did not want to use the bus more in future, regardless of improvements to services. This group, who might be described as 'bus refusers' or 'car lovers' and who were similar in many respects to Anable and Stradling's 'die hard drivers' (see Dudleston et al, 2005), were particularly attached to their cars and said they enjoyed driving. They saw no point in paying for the bus when they already had access to a car they had paid for. The bus was described as a '*last resort*' among this group, with a suggestion that they would use a taxi or even not go out at all if their car was not available. They were unlikely to mention anything positive about getting the bus or to be motivated by 'green' reasons to use public transport more often (for example, saying they were 'not eco friendly'). Examples of views associated with this group include:

- *Probably nothing would encourage me to use the bus* (Male, 30s, with learning disabilities, who described himself as '*a complete and utter petrolhead*').
- *If I had no other means, I couldn't get somewhere I needed to go it would be a last resort to get a bus.* (Female, 30-44, Borders, Group 10)
- *I don't think you could pay me enough to make me travel by bus, there's just no way that (it) would ever come into my head to travel by bus.* (Male, 45+, Borders, Group 11)

6.13 The remaining participants, in contrast, did say they would either like to use the car less or the bus more. These two aspirations did not always go hand in hand – in particular, the aspiration to use the car less was sometimes focused on 'active' travel options, like walking, running or cycling, and appeared to be motivated more by a desire to have a healthier lifestyle. However, among those who expressed some interest in using the bus more (and the car less), two broad groups were apparent: 'bus pessimists' and 'willing to be convinced'.

6.14 'Bus pessimists' share some similarities with Anable and Stradling's 'car complacents'. Although, when pushed, they say they would like to use the car less and the bus more, at least for social journeys, they do not appear to have a particularly strong desire to make this change. Moreover, they do not see bus travel as an attractive option as it currently stands – they are put off by long-journeys, the need to change buses, perceived high fares etc. So in reality they say they would not use the bus any more than they currently do without some very major changes to bus services. Examples of views associated with this group include:

- *I mean to be honest ... I'd like the idea of not having a car and if you do want to get a bus here or a train there, but it would be just too far*

*fetches, it's just the hassle what is involved in it.* (Male, West Lothian, 30-44, Group 8)

- A female participant from Dundee stated that they might get the bus if there was a more direct bus to their work, but acknowledged that *'I'd still be thinking, "Time. Time. Time. Time. Time"'* and reiterated her view that the bus *'isn't as reliable as the car'*. (Female, 30-44, Dundee Group 5).

6.15 Participants who might be described as 'willing to be convinced' also believed that substantial improvements are needed to current bus services in order for them to be able to use them. However, they also see some positives to bus travel and some problems with car travel. They therefore appear to have a greater desire to make the change to using buses more often if this were possible. As such, this group could be termed 'willing to be convinced' – with enough persuasion that they could make some journeys by bus, they are relatively more likely to at least give it a try. Examples of positives associated with bus travel included: believing it was more relaxing and less stressful than driving and enjoying socialising with others on the bus. These participants also discussed their desire to be 'green' and feeling guilty about driving their car because of this. The bus was seen as a more environmentally efficient mode of transport, because it meant fewer cars and less traffic. These attitudes are similar in many respects to Anable and Stradling's 'malcontented motorists' group. Examples of views associated with this group include:

- A male participant in Dundee who said they would like to use the bus more in the future because it would save them money on their car, avoid parking difficulties and allow them to have drink. They would also like to use the car less because of the environment. However, he complained that the buses were too infrequent and too unreliable where he lived. (Male, 45+, Dundee, Group 6)
- A male participant with mobility problems expressed a strong wish to use the bus to avoid having to drive long-distances, because he gets pains in his legs when driving. However, the bus stop was too far away from his house which made it difficult for him to access.
- A female participant from Aberdeen who said she would like to use the car less to reduce repair bills, but still felt that the car was the quickest option for travelling to work: *'my husband's always saying 'the suspension's gone again because of your driving' so I mean taking the bus would eradicate that but again it's just because it's the quickest and fastest way to get to the job.'*

6.16 In practice, individual participants did not always fall completely clearly into one or other of these groups. For example, one participant appeared to straddle the first two groups in that he claimed to like the idea of using the car less, but felt the hassle involved would be too much. At the same time, he also felt attached to his car as a 'status symbol'. Neither were there very clear patterns in terms of the types of people who fell into each group. There was some tentative evidence that women and participants in urban areas were more likely to express interest in using the bus in the future, with participants in rural areas appearing more attached to their car. But equally, there were examples of

people who fell into each group from across different geographic areas, genders and age groups, and from both the focus group and in depth interviews with disabled people.

- 6.17 Further (quantitative) research would be required to examine the proportions of different kinds of people who fall into each of these groups and draw conclusions about these patterns with more certainty. But the groups do usefully summarise groups of attitudes that did appear to coalesce with each other. Considering the different kinds and levels of motivations people may have for using buses in the future may assist policy makers in developing more appropriate incentives to bus use in the future. This point is discussed in the following chapter.

### **What would encourage people to use buses more in the future?**

- 6.18 This report has identified a wide range of perceived barriers to increasing bus use among those who do not use the bus often or at all. This final section of findings discusses participants' suggested solutions to some of these barriers. Some of these suggestions may relate to actions that bus companies and councils have already taken, but of which our sample was unaware. Equally, there may be good reasons why some of these actions could not be taken. In addition, it should be remembered that although participants identified things that could make buses more attractive in general, we cannot be sure whether this would actually encourage them to *use* the bus more often. However, it remains important to understand what 'infrequent or non-bus users' believe might make the bus a more attractive option if policy makers and bus companies wish to entice them to use buses more often.

#### ***Drivers***

- 6.19 Ensuring drivers allow more time for passengers to sit down was a key issue for disabled participants. It was also suggested that drivers needed training to improve their awareness of the needs of individuals with mobility difficulties and around issues of discrimination. Improving drivers 'customer care' skills in general was raised by participants. It was also suggested that customer care might be improved if buses had conductors.

#### ***Other passengers***

- 6.20 Concerns about other passengers centred on fear of anti-social behaviour or crime. This was a particular issue with respect to night time bus services. A key suggestion for tackling this and reassuring potential passengers was to (re)introduce conductors on some routes. Conductors could play a role in 'policing' passenger behaviour, as well as monitoring numbers getting on and off and preventing over-crowding. CCTV was also mentioned as something that might help some people feel safer, although another view was that it would not stop bad behaviour on buses but at least might help catch the perpetrators.
- 6.21 There was a general perceived need to increase '*respect*' for bus services. One suggestion for promoting this was for bus companies to get more involved with communities and engage more with the young people who use buses. Heavier

finer or penalties for people who litter, drink or smoke on the bus were also suggested.

### **Physical condition of buses**

6.22 Suggestions for improving the physical condition of buses focused on improvements to cleanliness, comfort and safety, and included:

- Cleaning buses (more) often
- Having rubbish bins on buses
- Replacing old buses with newer/better models
- Introducing seatbelts on buses (to improve their safety)
- Having toilets on board
- General improvements to comfort on board – e.g. softer seats, air conditioning, something to rest feet on (mentioned by a disabled participant)
- Improvements to the accessibility of buses for particular groups of passengers – e.g. handrails, more space for buggies
- Better ‘policing’ of existing space for disabled people – e.g. preventing people putting shopping in wheelchair spaces.

6.23 It was suggested that WiFi on board buses would be useful, although one view was that this would not encourage use among people who did not already want to use them.

### **Bus stops**

6.24 Concerns about bus stops centred on safety, information and comfort.

6.25 Suggestions for improving feelings of safety at bus stops included better lighting and help buzzers (like those found in some train stations).

6.26 Better use of information technology to tell you when the next bus was coming was seen as having the potential to reduce frustrating waits without knowing whether a bus is coming or not. However, as discussed in Chapter Four there was also a belief that Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) systems were not always accurate or reliable. Another suggestion was that stops should include touch-screens for people to find up to date information about routes, times and prices. Participants with disabilities suggested that timetables at bus stops needed to be clearer and printed in a larger font.

6.27 Comfort focused on ensuring that all stops had adequate shelters to protect people from the weather. However, another view was that having bus stops encouraged young people to ‘linger’, which could increase safety concerns.

## **Timing and timetables**

6.28 As discussed above, a major barrier to bus travel was the perception that bus travel simply takes too long. Associated with this was the notion that you cannot rely on them to turn up on time. Indeed, participants used phrases such as *'if buses were more reliable...'* and *'if you could gain some trust in the system'* when describing the conditions under which they might use the bus more often. Ideas suggested by participants for resolving issues around speed and reliability included:

- *'Better'*, *'longer'* and even *'continual'* bus lanes that would enable buses to bypass traffic queues, particularly within peak hours
- Taxis should not be allowed in bus lanes
- An increase in the number of express and direct services and/or a reduction in the number of stops on some routes. However, it was also suggested that park and ride facilities were not attractive because it was not worth stopping driving so close to the city centre.
- More frequent buses and more standardised times - for instance, every 15 minutes, starting on the hour
- Pay drivers incentives to arrive on time
- A specific suggestion to encourage people to use the bus more for nights out was to extend night bus services so that they run until bars and clubs close at 3am.

## **Routes**

6.29 As discussed above, a key suggestion for improving the speed of buses was simply to have more direct or express routes, particularly into city centres (mentioned both by city residents and those who live in small towns outside major cities).

6.30 Another complaint among participants was that if you did not use the bus often, you did not know which buses to get even when you could in principle use a bus. Ideas for making it easier for people to access route/timetable information included:

- Displaying more information about routes and timetables in social places (e.g. bingo, cinemas), shops, hospitals, doctor's surgeries, etc.
- Including routes/timetables in weekly papers
- Delivering route/timetable leaflets door to door (particularly when these are changed)
- Enabling people to check routes/timetables on their mobile phone, and
- Providing a free number to call for bus information.

6.31 One suggestion from a rural area was that a proper bus station was needed so there is somewhere to go for information.

## **Fares and tickets**

6.32 As discussed, bus travel was seen as expensive, particularly when making multi-stage journeys or travelling with other people. Suggestions for addressing this included:

- Introducing a 'standardised' fare – one view was that a cheaper fare of around £1 to £2 would encourage participants to use buses in the future
- Greater government subsidies for bus fares
- Tax free travel allowances for those in employment
- Increasing competition among companies (to bring fares down)
- Introducing of 'off-peak' fares after 9am (as on the trains).

6.33 However, in terms of whether reducing fares would really encourage infrequent or non-bus users away from their cars, it is worth noting participants' responses to being asked whether free bus travel for a week would encourage them to use the bus. While one reaction was that this was a great idea, and would encourage participants to try the bus for leisure journeys or even for work, another view was that they might take advantage of the scheme for that week, but that it would not alter their current travel habits in the long-term.

6.34 Not knowing how much a bus would cost in advance of boarding was also an issue, as was the need to have exact change. Suggestions for addressing these barriers included:

- More or clearer fare information at bus stops
- Advanced purchase ticket machines that gave change and also accepted credit cards
- Introducing systems like the London Oyster Card or the Hong Kong Octopus Card system, which allow users to top-up swipe cards and then travel when they want, without worrying about change or tickets expiring.

6.35 Being able to use tickets across different types of public transport (e.g. bus and train) was another attraction of the Oyster card. In general, it was suggested that a more '*joined up*' service, that allowed you to use tickets on different bus companies and/or different modes of transport would be more attractive.

## **Disincentives to use cars**

6.36 In general, there was not a great deal of spontaneous discussion about perceived disadvantages to car travel in the groups and interviews. However, interviewers did probe on whether some specific potential disincentives to car use – like congestion charges, higher petrol prices or increased parking prices – would encourage them to use the bus more. Responses to these were mixed. Among those who were most attached to their car, there was a feeling that they would just absorb these costs, or even cut down on other things to maintain their car rather than use the bus. One participant even said they would change jobs rather than get the bus if they were made to pay for parking. Other participants felt they might use the bus more if any of these changes were introduced, though it was also suggested was that people would rather walk than get the bus in these circumstances.

## Key points

- There was a general belief among employed participants that it would not be possible to use the bus to get to work.
- Sometimes this appeared to be based in fairly specific knowledge of available bus services; in other cases, views appeared to reflect more general perceptions of the reliability or speed of buses.
- There was some discussion of willingness to use the bus more often for social journeys or trips into town. Perceived barriers to doing so included time, hassle of changing buses, cost, infrequency, lack of certainty about routes/fares, lack of appropriate routes, timetables being unsuitable, and safety on night buses.
- Three broad groups of attitudes to future bus use were apparent:
  - 'Bus refusers' - People who did not wish to use the bus more often under any circumstances, even if improvements were made
  - 'Bus pessimists' - People who, if pushed, say they would like to use the bus more often, but do not see it as an attractive option as it stands and do not appear to have a strong desire to make this change
  - 'Willing to be convinced' - People who would like to use the bus more and cite positive reasons for doing so (dislike of car travel and/or advantages to bus travel), but still think there are substantial barriers preventing them from doing so.
- Suggested improvements to bus services which participants felt might encourage some people (though not necessarily themselves) to use the bus more often included:
  - Improved customer care skills for drivers (including improved awareness of the needs of passengers with disabilities)
  - Conductors on buses to prevent anti-social behaviour and overcrowding
  - General improvements to the physical condition of buses in order to improve comfort, safety and accessibility (e.g. seatbelts, rubbish bins, more regular cleaning, toilets, air conditioning, handrails, softer seats, etc.)
  - Improved lighting, shelters and information, including accurate 'Real time' information, at bus stops
  - Action to try and improve the speed and reliability of buses, including better/longer bus lanes, more direct/express routes, more frequent services at more standardised times and driver incentives for timekeeping
  - Better information about routes, timetables and fares, to be available in places other than bus stops
  - Cheaper and/or more 'standardised' fares
  - Introducing pre-pay or top-up card systems to pay for bus fares, to avoid the need for exact change or knowing how much a ticket will be in advance
- Reactions to disincentives to car use were mixed – one view was that participants would simply absorb the additional costs of higher petrol prices, congestion charges or higher parking prices, while another was that this might encourage them to use the bus or walk instead of using the car for short journeys.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 This research was commissioned to explore in detail the reasons why people do not use buses and what might encourage them to do so more in the future. Some of the findings are perhaps unsurprising – for example, issues around journey times, reliability, cost, safety/comfort and accessibility, all of which have been discussed in other research, came up repeatedly in the interviews conducted for this study. However, the research has clarified and extended findings from existing survey research around, for example, what people mean when they dismiss bus travel as ‘inconvenient’, and what factors they take into account when deciding whether the bus or the car is more expensive for particular journeys. It also highlights the different factors underpinning people’s attitudes towards and beliefs about local bus services, emphasising the importance of negative past experiences as well as hearsay and media reporting in shaping attitudes. Finally, the study builds on earlier research by Stradling and Anable (see Dudleston et al, 2005) to outline several different groups of ‘infrequent or non-bus passengers’, each of whom holds slightly different orientations towards the bus as an option and who may be differently susceptible to policy solutions aimed at encouraging them to use the bus more.
- 7.2 The previous chapter summarised a large number of suggestions from participants about improving bus services, covering issues such as driver training, strategies for improving perceptions of safety on board and at bus stops, improvements to the physical condition of buses, improvements to timetables and routes and action on prices. Rather than repeating these suggestions here, in this final chapter, we draw on findings from across the report to suggest some additional, broader implications for policy, practice and further research.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice**

- 7.3 This study has identified a number of issues for those working to encourage bus use in Scotland. Responsibility for improving bus services and encouraging use is shared between bus companies, Local Authorities, the Scottish Government and others. We have not, therefore, attempted to separate out policy and practice recommendations by who might be responsible for acting on them.

### ***Marketing buses to ‘potential passengers’***

- 7.4 Findings from this study suggest that some infrequent or non-passengers are ‘willing to be convinced’ of the merits of bus travel (see paragraph 6.15, above). These passengers would appear to be the most obvious initial target for any attempts to increase use – ‘bus refusers’ and ‘bus pessimists’ are likely to be less susceptible to ‘positive’ messages about buses (see discussion in paragraphs 6.12 to 6.14). However, even the most ‘willing’ in principle still perceive substantial barriers to making the shift from car to bus. Based on our findings, we would suggest that any attempts to ‘convert’ these potential

passengers – through marketing campaigns or other measures – need to do three main things:

- **Highlight the advantages of bus travel** – The findings suggest that highlighting personal benefits, (e.g. the idea that journeys enable you to relax, that travelling by bus avoids the stresses of driving in heavy traffic, finding parking spaces, etc.) as well as environmental benefits, may help motivate potential passengers who are ‘willing to be convinced’ to use the bus by reminding them of the things they *dislike* about car travel (see paragraph 6.15).
- **Mitigate or challenge views of the disadvantages** – This needs to focus particularly on issues of journey time and reliability – key barriers cited by participants in explaining why they could not use buses more often (see discussion in Chapters 5 and 6). Any improvements to the frequency of services, evidence of good performance in sticking to timetables and the availability of direct or express services could be highlighted in this respect. Similarly, any improvements to the bus stock in terms of more comfortable seating, wheelchair access and low floors could be flagged. As discussed in Chapter 4, safety was a key theme cutting across much of the general discussion about barriers to bus use, so attempts to improve safety on buses and at bus stops could also be advertised to potential passengers. However, as noted in Chapter 6 (paragraph 6.9), safety concerns did not in fact feature particularly highly in discussion of why participants did not use the bus for their own typical journeys, like commuting – thus addressing safety issues alone may be unlikely to encourage infrequent users onto the bus.
- **Make it as easy as possible to use the bus** – findings from this study suggest that infrequent or non-bus users can be put off by their lack of knowledge about routes, times and prices, in particular (for example, see paragraphs 4.37, 5.6, 5.7, 6.30 and 6.34). Bus companies and policy makers may wish to review information provision with this in mind. Is it easy to follow for to someone unfamiliar with bus services? Is it displayed in locations other than bus stops, where it may be seen by those who would not normally choose to get a bus? Is it accessible for people with limited eyesight (see paragraph 4.27)? They may also wish to review whether there are alternatives to the requirement for exact change, which is an issue on some buses, or different approaches to ticketing (which could be either hi-tech – e.g. a smart card-type system, like Oyster,- or low-tech)..

### ***Dealing with complaints and highlighting improvements***

7.5 This report echoes Guiver’s (2006) finding that bad experiences of bus travel are more likely than good or average experiences to stick in people’s memory (see paragraph 4.10). Bad experiences are also more likely to be discussed with others, and therefore to form part of the ‘hearsay’ about buses that can transmit views of local services among infrequent or non-bus users.

7.6 Although participants in this study did not talk specifically about experiences of complaining to bus companies, this evidence nonetheless suggests that bus companies need to ensure that the way they deal with complaints mitigates the potentially far-reaching impact of negative experiences on future travel decisions.

### ***Costs and pricing***

7.7 As discussed in Chapter 6, cost was seen as a barrier to switching from car to bus. However, it appears that people are often only thinking of parking and petrol costs when calculating whether it would be cheaper to take the bus or drive (see paragraph 4.35). It may be worth considering fare levels with these comparisons in mind – how much would a particular journey cost in petrol and parking, for example? Even if fare levels cannot be reduced, this may help better understand how they are likely to be viewed by potential passengers. Where a bus ticket would still be cheaper than the cost of petrol plus parking for particular common journeys (e.g. from suburbs to town), this could be highlighted in any marketing campaigns. Finally, while cheap or free travel days might not be immediately effective in encouraging long-term change to travel to work, for example, they could be useful in encouraging those who have not travelled by bus for some time to give it a try. This could, in turn, help overcome negative views of buses which are not based in any recent experience.

### **Recommendations for research**

#### ***Improving survey questions on reasons for not using buses***

7.8 Findings from this study suggest that perceptions of the ‘convenience’ of the car and comparative ‘inconvenience’ of buses in fact reflect more specific concerns about directness, journey speed, and ease of making multi-stage or multi-purpose journeys (see paragraphs 5.5 to 5.9). This suggest that survey questions about reasons for car use or reasons for not using the bus could be improved if, rather than including ‘general’ statements about preferences for car over bus, they focus on the specific aspects of car travel which may make it more attractive. For example, rather than including statements like ‘I use my own car’ or ‘The car is more convenient’ or ‘No need to travel by bus’, questions could separate out more specific issues associated with thinking the car is ‘inconvenient’, such as:

- It takes too long to make journeys by bus (or ‘It is faster to make journeys by car’)
- I need my car to carry equipment/paperwork
- I need my car to make other journeys during the day
- I need my car to give other people lifts, etc.

7.9 Disaggregating the reasons people prefer to use their cars in more detail will enable policy makers and bus operators to identify (and where possible to target) barriers to bus use with more precision.

7.10 This research also suggests that people who do not use the bus often or at all fall into several different groups, distinguished by their willingness to try the bus

in the future, their attachment to the car and their environmental attitudes ('bus refusers', 'bus pessimists' and 'willing to be convinced'). As this study was qualitative in nature, it is not possible to estimate how many infrequent or non-users might fall into each of the three categories identified. Moreover, while there was some tentative evidence that women and participants in urban areas were more likely to be 'willing to be convinced', again the research design does not allow us to be definitive about this. Future survey research could be used to develop understandings of the characteristics and sizes of different groups of infrequent and non-bus users, as well as testing which, if any, policy solutions might be most successful in encouraging different groups of infrequent and non-users to use the bus more often in the future. The development of questions and analysis strategies for such surveys should draw on earlier research by Anable and Stradling on different groups of drivers and non-drivers (see Dudleston et al, 2005).

### ***Research on bus industry marketing***

7.11 Findings on views of 'typical' bus passengers in this research suggest that buses in Scotland have something of an image problem, which may be acting as a barrier to engaging new customers (see paragraphs 4.41 to 4.43). While one view is that they attract a cross-section of society, a more 'stereotyped' image of them as only for vulnerable groups who cannot afford a car was also apparent. Further research which explores how bus companies seek to market their services – and in particular whether or not different companies have explored strategies to encourage those who use the bus infrequently or not at all to see the bus as for 'people like them' – may be useful in helping devise strategies to encourage infrequent and non-users to use the bus more often.

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# ANNEX A – SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE, ADVANCED LETTERS AND LEAFLET

## Focus group screening questionnaire

Good morning/afternoon. I am recruiting people to take part in a Social Research project looking at views and experiences of bus services in your area. Taking part is voluntary and confidential. Everyone who takes part in a focus group discussion will be paid £30 for giving up their time. Would you mind answering a few questions please?

Q1. Have you been to a research group discussion or taken part in depth face to face Interview before?

- |     |   |           |
|-----|---|-----------|
| No  | 1 | GO TO Q5. |
| Yes | 2 | Q2.       |

Q2. How many have you been to in all?

- |             |   |       |
|-------------|---|-------|
| Two or more | 1 | CLOSE |
| One or none | 2 | Q3.   |

Q3. How long ago was the last one you went to?

- |                    |   |       |
|--------------------|---|-------|
| Under 18months ago | 1 | CLOSE |
| Over 18 months     | 2 | Q4.   |

Q4. Can you remember what the subject(s) discussed were?  
WRITE IN SUBJECT DISCUSSED. IF ANYTHING TO DO WITH RESEARCH TOPIC CLOSE INTERVIEW. IF NOT --> Q5.

Subjects .....

## **PRIMARY RECRUITMENT CRITERIA**

### **5.0 USE OF BUS SERVICES**

**RECRUITER NOTE : ALL PARTICIPANTS to be those who do not use buses at all or use them infrequently (one a month or less) but who could, in principle, use them more often.**

Q5a How often have you used your **local bus service** in the past month, if at all?

**(NOTE FOR RECRUITERS: By local bus service we mean a timetabled service that runs locally and a fare would normally be paid. Long distance express services, special tours and excursions are not classed as local bus services.)**

Ask.....	Action	Code
Every day	CLOSE	1
Almost every day	CLOSE	2
Two or three times per week	CLOSE	3
About once a week	CLOSE	4
About once a fortnight	CLOSE	5
About once a month	Proceed	6
Not used the local bus service in the previous month.	Proceed	7

Q5b Is there a local bus or buses which you could use if you needed to for some of the journeys you make? (e.g. to visit friends/family, go shopping or to and from work/school/college)

		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Yes	PROCEED	1	1
No		2	2 CLOSE
Don't know	PROCEED	3	3

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SECONDARY CLASSIFICATION DETAILS**

**QA GENDER**

Female 1  
 Male 2 **(4:4)**

**Quota Gender: Gender:** All groups should be mixed in gender and ideally will be 4 men and 4 women. It is very important that men are represented so we would like a **minimum of 4 men in each group** (equally we don't want the groups to be too male dominated so no more than 5 men per group please). PLEASE NOTE 9 SHOULD BE RECRUITED FOR EACH GROUP

**QB HOW OLD ARE YOU? .....** (WRITE IN) CHECK QUOTA

Under 16	1	<b>CLOSE</b>
16-29	2	<b>CHECK</b>
30-39	3	<b>QUOTAS</b>
40-44	4	
45-59	5	
60+	6	

- **NOTE** For the 45+ groups, **no more than 2 participants per group should be aged 60+**. The screening questionnaire should collect respondent age either exactly, or in bands (18-29, 30-39, 40-44, 45-59, 60+).

**GROUPS 3, 7 ,are 16-29**  
**GROUPS 1, 5, 8, , are 30-44**  
**GROUPS 2, 4, 6, 8, are 45+**

**QC What is your OCCUPATION?**

WRITE IN .....

**RECRUITER CODE SOCIAL GRADE**

A	1
B	2
C1	3
C2	4
D	5
E	6

**QD** What is your current **WORKING STATUS?**

Employed full-time 30+ hours per week	1	
Employed part-time	2	
Under 30 hours per week	3	<b>CHECK</b>
Non working\Unemployed	4	<b>AND</b>
Full time Education	5	<b>RECORD</b>
Retired	6	
Permanently Sick\disabled	7	
Carer\Home family	8	
Other	9	

- **Quota Working status:** Within the mixed groups, we would like **3 or 4 people to be in employment** (full or part time).

<p><b>GROUPS 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, , are EMPLOYED</b>  <b>GROUPS 3, 6, 7, 9 are a MIX</b></p>
--

**QE.** Thinking about HOUSEHOLD INCOME, (which is the total income of everyone living in the house), which of the following weekly or annual brackets do you fall into?  
 (NOTE TO RECUITERS: IF RESPONDENT DOES NOT KNOW THE HOUSEHOLD INCOME THEN THEIR OWN PERSONAL INCOME IS FINE BUT BE SURE TO NOTE THIS – SEE BELOW)

INCOME	PERSONAL	HOUSEHOLD
Under £15 K	1	1
£15K- 24,999	2	2
£25K- 34,999	3	3
£35K	4	4

**RECRUITER NOTE: AT LEAST 3 RESPONDENTS IN GROUPS 1,2,4,5,8 AND 9 (I.E. THOSE WITH HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUOTA OF OVER £25+) SHOULD HAVE AN INCOME HIGHER THAN £35K**

**RECRUITER NOTE: SUMMARY SAMPLE STRUCTURE FOR GROUPS 1-9**

Group number	Area	Age	Working-status	Household income
1	Aberdeen	30-44	Employed	£25,000+
2	Aberdeen	45+	Employed	£25,000+
3	Glasgow	16-29	Mix	Less than £25,000
4	Glasgow	45+	Employed	£25,000+
5	Dundee	30-44	Employed	£25,000+
6	Dundee	45+	Mix	Less than £25,000
7	West Lothian	16-29	Mix	Less than £25,000
8	West Lothian	30-44	Employed	£25,000+
9	West Lothian	45+	Mix	£25,000+

**6.0 ETHNICITY**

**RECRUITERS NOTE :** Aim for at least 8 BME participants across the whole sample, from at least 2 locations

Q6a Which of these best describes you?

.

White (Scottish, British, Irish)	1	Chinese	7
White (other) Please write in _____	2	Any Other Asian Background	8
Mixed - Any Mixed Background	3	Black (Caribbean)	9
Indian	4	Black (African)	10
Pakistani	5	Any other Black background	11
Bangladeshi	6	Any other background	12
		Refused	13

**CHECK QUOTAS ON ETHNIC GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

## 7.0 GENERAL

### **ASK ALL PARTICIPANTS**

Q7a Do you consider yourself to be fluent in English?

.

<b>Yes</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>2 DO NOT RECRUIT</b>

Q7b Do you currently drive a car?

.

<b>Yes</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>2</b>

Q7c May we contact you again in case we want to check our findings, or my supervisor wants to check my work has been carried out correctly?

<b>Yes</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>2</b>

Q7d During the group discussion we are going to be talking to you about what your views and experiences of using buses are.

.

Taking part is voluntary and confidential: you do not have to take part if you don't want to. If you do take part, you will not be identified and nothing you say will be used outside of this research project. Are you happy to participate in a group discussion such as this?

<b>Yes</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>2 DO NOT RECRUIT</b>

**RECRUITER : INVITE RESPONDENT TO A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION LASTING APPROXIMATELY ONE & A HALF HOURS FOR WHICH WE WILL PAY THEM £30.**

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

TELEPHONE NUMBER.....

( HOME \ MOBILE)

RECRUITER NOTE:

PLEASE INFORM PARTICIPANT THAT:

- THEIR DETAILS WILL ONLY BE KEPT FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND NOT KEPT FOR FUTURE RESEARCH PROJECTS BY SCOTCEN OR ANYONE ELSE
- THEIR DETAILS WILL BE DESTROYED AFTER COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT

I declare that this interview was conducted personally by the undersigned in accordance with my instructions and the MRS Code of Conduct.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

**POST SCREEN - DISABILITY SCREENER**

**Q8 Thank you for agreeing attend the group discussion , do you consider yourself to have any of the following long standing illness, health problems or disability?**

Difficulty hearing	1
Difficulty seeing (even when wearing glasses/lenses)	2
Problems or disabilities relating to legs or feet	3
Problems or disabilities relating to arms or hands	4
Learning disability	5
Mental health problems	6
Some other health problem or disability	7
None of the above	8

**Q9. Are there any facilities or support that you would need to enable you to attend and participate in the discussion?**

Yes (please specify) 1 \_\_\_\_\_

No 2

## **Leaflet for focus group participants**

### **Bus Perceptions**

The Scottish Government recognises that buses have an important role to play in:

- Improving journey times and connections
- Reducing emissions, and
- Improving quality, accessibility and affordability of public transport

However many people do not use buses. In order to inform future policy the Scottish Government has commissioned the Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen) to conduct a study to find out the views of people who rarely use buses.

#### **What's the study about?**

We are interested in:

- Your experiences of and attitudes towards travelling on buses
- Your views on the quality of bus transport and on different aspects of your local bus services.
- Your views about why bus travel might be seen as 'inconvenient'.
- Exploring what has influenced your opinions about buses.

#### **What is involved?**

We are conducting 12 focus groups with members of the public and would like to invite you, as someone who doesn't use bus services very often, to take part in one of the focus groups.

We are looking for people from a wide range of backgrounds that are willing to share their views on bus services in a 'safe' group setting. No expert knowledge is needed to take part – we're just interested in your views and experiences. Each focus group will last between 60 and 90 minutes.

And as a thank you for taking part in the focus group discussion we will give you £30 and refreshments will be available.

The study is taking place throughout Scotland in Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow, The Borders and West Lothian and will be completed by the end of October 2009.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

No. In all our research we rely on voluntary co-operation. The success of the research relies on the goodwill and co-operation of those asked to take part. Obviously we hope you will decide to take part and that you will enjoy sharing your

views with others. However you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to and are free to withdraw from the research at any time, without having to give a reason.

## **Confidentiality**

With your permission, the group discussion will be recorded and transcribed and stored securely with limited access by ScotCen staff. Any information given by respondents will be kept strictly confidential. Reports will **not** include names or other information which could identify you. Any quotations used in the report will be thoroughly anonymised.

## **Who is carrying out the study?**

The research is being conducted by the Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen). We are a not-for-profit organisation, and are independent of the government. You can find out more at our website: [www.scotcen.org.uk](http://www.scotcen.org.uk).

The ScotCen team for the study includes **Fiona Dobbie** (Senior Researcher), **Susan McConville** (Researcher), **Irene Miller** (Specialist Interviewer) and **Rachel Ormston** (Research Director).

In addition, a team of experienced researchers from ScotCen will help conduct the focus group discussions.

## **What will happen to the results of the study?**

We will write up the results of the study in a report to the Scottish Government based on the views of all the people that have taken part in the study. The report will provide information to help policy makers try and improve bus services in the future. If you would like a copy of the report after it is published we can send you one (or email you with a link to it).

## **Further questions?**

If you would like further information about the study or to make or change arrangements for a focus group please contact:

Lesley Birse (Research Support Manager)

**or**

Fiona Dobbie (Senior Researcher)

Scottish Centre for Social Research

73 Lothian Road

Edinburgh

EH3 9AW

Tel. 0131 228 2167

## **Useful numbers**

### **For journey advice:**

Traveline Scotland

Tel: 0871 200 22 33

Website: <http://www.travelinescotland.com>

### **For general information about transport in Scotland:**

Transport Scotland

Tel: 0141 272 7100

Website: <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk>

Email: [info@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk)

Scottish Government - Transport Directorate

Tel: 0131 556 8400

Website: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Transport>

## **Leaflet for participants with mobility problems**

### **Bus Perceptions**

The Scottish Government recognises that buses have an important role to play in:

- Improving journey times and connections
- Reducing emissions, and
- Improving quality, accessibility and affordability of public transport

However many people do not use buses. In particular, people with a disability or long-standing illness may face certain issues which discourage them from using buses. In order to inform future policy the Scottish Government has commissioned the Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen) to conduct a study to find out the views of people who rarely use buses.

### **What's the study about?**

We are interested in:

- Your experiences of and attitudes towards travelling on buses
- Your views on the quality of bus transport and on different aspects of your local bus services.
- Your views about why bus travel might be seen as 'inconvenient'.

### **What is involved?**

We are conducting 12 interviews with members of the public who do not use bus services very often. No expert knowledge is needed to take part – we're just interested in your views and experiences of bus services in your local area. Each interview will last around 60 minutes and, as a thank you for taking part, we will give you £30.

### **Why was I chosen?**

You may remember being interviewed for the Scottish Household Survey within the last 12 months. At the end of your interview you agreed that you were happy to be re-contacted about further research in the future.

We have chosen to contact you because you mentioned in your interview that you had a long-standing illness or disability and that you did not use buses often at the time. We are particularly interested in talking to people with a disability or long-standing illness that may affect how easy it is for them to use different kinds of transport.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No. In all our research we rely on voluntary co-operation. The success of the research relies on the goodwill and co-operation of those asked to take part. Obviously we hope you will decide to take part and that you will enjoy sharing your views with us. However, you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to and are free to withdraw from the research at any time, without having to give a reason.

### **Confidentiality**

With your permission, the interview will be recorded and transcribed and stored securely with limited access by ScotCen staff. Anything you say will be treated in confidence unless you tell me something that makes me worry about the safety of you or someone else. Reports will **not** include names or other information which could identify you. Any quotations used in the report will be thoroughly anonymised.

### **Who is carrying out the study?**

The research is being conducted by the Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen). We are a not-for-profit organisation, and are independent of the government. You can find out more at our website: [www.scotcen.org.uk](http://www.scotcen.org.uk).

The ScotCen team for the study includes **Fiona Dobbie** (Senior Researcher), **Susan McConville** (Researcher), **Irene Miller** (Specialist Interviewer) and **Rachel Ormston** (Research Director).

### **What will happen to the results of the study?**

We will write up the results of the study in a report to the Scottish Government based on the views of all the people that have taken part in the study. The report will provide information to help policy makers try and improve bus services in the future. If you would like a copy of the report after it is published we can send you one (or email you with a link to it).

## **Further questions?**

If you would like further information about the study or to make or change arrangements for an interview please contact:

Lesley Birse (Research Support Manager)

**or**

Fiona Dobbie (Senior Researcher)

Scottish Centre for Social Research

73 Lothian Road

Edinburgh

EH3 9AW

Tel. 0131 228 2167

## **Useful numbers**

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Tel: 0871 200 22 33

Website: <http://www.travelinescotland.com>

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Email: [info@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk)

Scottish Government - Transport Directorate

Tel: 0131 556 8400

Website: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Transport>



## Our Project Information Leaflet About Bus Research

*Who is doing the project?*

The project is being done by the Scottish Centre for Social Research. We do research. This means we ask people what they think about different things.



You can find out more about us at our website:

[www.scotcen.org.uk](http://www.scotcen.org.uk)

Our names are:



**Fiona Dobbie**

**Susan McConville**

**Irene Miller**

**Rachel Ormston**

*What is our research about?*



The Scottish Government has found out that lots of people do not use buses. They have asked us to find out what people think about travelling by bus.

We want to speak to people who do NOT use local buses very often.

**We want to find out:**



- **What you think about travelling by bus**
- **What is good about buses where you live**
- **What is bad about buses where you live**



We started our project in June 2009. We are travelling around Scotland to meet people. We are asking them what they think about travelling by bus.

## *What will happen if you take part?*



You do not need to be an expert to take part. We want to know what **you** think. The interview will last around 45 minutes. We will do the interview in a place that suits you. And as a thank you for taking part in the interview we will give you £30.

## *What happens next?*



After we finish talking to people we will write a report about what people have said. In November 2009 we will write our report for the Scottish Government.

We can give you a summary of the report.

## *What about my privacy?*

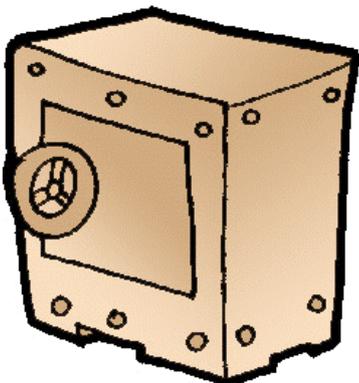
There are some things about privacy that we want to tell you:

**Confidentiality and Anonymity.** This means that we will be careful about the information we collect. We will not share your private details. People who read the report will not know that you have taken part.



We will not use your name in our reports. We will keep our notes very safe. We will not show them to anyone outside our xproject.

Do I have to take part?



It is up to you to decide if you want to take part. It is okay if you do not want to take part. If you do take part but you do not want to answer a question, that is okay too. Just tell us. We want to record the interview and we will ask your permission to do this before we start. We will explain why we want to do this and answer any questions you have.

**If you want to ask questions, please do!**

If you want to contact us, please call:

Fiona Dobbie or Susan McConville on 0131 338 2167

Our contact address is:

Scottish Centre for Social Research

73 Lothian Road

Edinburgh

EH3 9AW

**THANK YOU!**

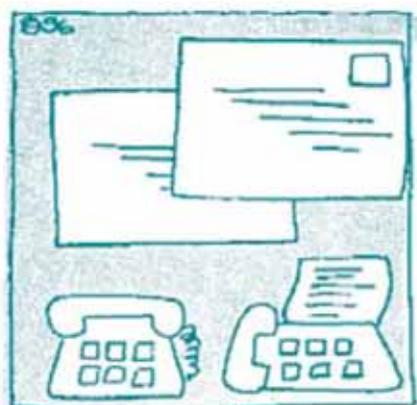
### *Words List*

These are some of the words we use in this information leaflet.

**Confidentiality** This means being careful about using information, and not sharing people's private information

**Research** The collecting of information about a subject

## *Useful numbers*



Enable Scotland:

Telephone: 0141 226 4541

Fax: 0141 204 4398

Email: [enable@enable.org.uk](mailto:enable@enable.org.uk)

Capability Scotland:

Telephone: 0131 337 9876

Textphone: 0131 346 2529

Fax: 0131 346 7864

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Website: <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk>

Email: [info@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk)

*For complaints about transport in Scotland:*

Transport Scotland

Telephone number: 0141 272 7114

Email: [chiefexecutive@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:chiefexecutive@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk)

## ANNEX B – TOPIC GUIDES

### Focus groups topic guide

#### 1. Introduction to the group (5 mins) (18:00 / 20:00)

---

*Aim: to introduce the research and set the context for the focus group.*

Introduce **self and ScotCen**. Explain why two researchers are present (one to facilitate and one to scribe)

#### **Introduce the study:**

- Commissioned by Scottish Government
- Interested in people's views and experiences of buses, reasons people do or do not like using them, and what might encourage people to use them more often.
- They're particularly interested in local bus services, as opposed to long-distance buses or coaches. *(We are defining a local bus service as a timetabled service which runs locally and where a fare would normally be paid. Long distance express services, special tours and excursions are not classed as local bus services.)*

#### **Stress independence of ScotCen:**

Although ScotCen is carrying out this research on behalf of the Scottish Government we are completely independent. We have no particular agenda in doing this research, we're simply here to listen to what you have to say.

#### **Details about their participation:**

- **voluntary** - both overall and in relation to any specific questions and discussions
- **recording** of discussion
- **confidentiality**, and how findings will be reported
  - No names, nothing that could identify them individually
  - Recordings held on a secure server; only research team and transcribers have access to them.
- ask people to **respect each other's views** and confidentiality
- **length** –1.5 hours. Will finish on time
- Ask scribe to introduce themselves and explain what their role is (i.e. just there as an aid to transcription, reassurance about confidentiality).

#### **Basic ground rules**

- No right or wrong answers – just interested in your views and experiences
- Really want to hear from everybody so encourage people to come in when they want – only request that do not all talk at once (recording)
- We'll start with questions, but want you to talk to each other, not just to us.
- That said, there may be points where we need to interrupt or move the discussion on – not that we're not interested, we just need to make sure we cover everything and hear from everyone.
- Everybody has a right to their views and people's views may be different: feel free to disagree with other people whilst respecting their right to their views
- Helpful to have all mobile phones either off or on silent
- Do you have any questions?

## 2. Introduction from the group (5 mins) (18:05 / 20:05)

---

*Aim: to find out who is in the group, identify how recently people have used bus*

### **Introductions around the group**

Go round group and ask people to introduce themselves:

- Name
- How they got here, and
- When the last time they travelled by local bus was?

### **Show of hands**

Explain: Just to get a quick idea of a few things about how you travel about your area, would like to get a quick show of hands for a few things.

**Scribe** – try and note who puts their hands up for the different things.

Who ...

- Has driven a car in the last week?

*Note to facilitator: Be aware that some groups have people in employment and not in employment. If you have a mixed employment status group you will need to frame this question with something like: I know some of you aren't working at the moment but for those of you who are how many of you..*

- Travel more than 1 mile to work?
- Ever walks to work?
- Ever cycles to work
- Has got a train in the last month?
- Knows how long it takes to travel to (nearest town/centre of Aberdeen/Dundee/Glasgow) from their home by bus?
- Knows the cost of a bus fare from their house to (nearest town/centre of Aberdeen/Dundee/Glasgow)?

## 3. Experiences of bus travel (10 mins) (18:10 / 20:10)

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*Aim: to explore in some detail their past experiences of travelling by bus, to help understand how far views of bus travel are or are not grounded in experiences.*

Ask people to think back to the **last time they used a bus in this area** (or at all if no local experience) and to tell the group a bit about that journey

- Probe if necessary to encourage them to talk (don't need to ask about each of these separately) – where they were going, why, time pressures, waiting time, other passengers, driver, overall how they felt about the journey, i.e. bus quality etc.
- Have other people had **similar or different recent experiences** of bus travel in this area?
- If not covered already and if appropriate (i.e. they do use a bus sometimes) ask for the main reason that they would use a local bus.

*If people don't have a lot of recent experience of bus travel:*

- What about experiences further back? Anyone had a particularly **memorable bus journey** (either positive or negative) they can share?

Finish this section by (briefly) asking about **experience of using local bus services in other cities or countries** (e.g. local buses on holiday? Note we are not talking about coach holidays or excursions – we are only interested in the local bus service specific to the area they were in)

- How does this compare with their experience of local bus services?

#### 4. Perceptions of local bus services (10-15 mins) (18:20 / 20:20)

*Aim: to explore in detail perceptions of bus services, and of specific aspects of bus services, in their local area. Also to explore what these views are based on through probing on reasons for specific negatives/positive given.*

**Facilitator** – make sure you probe fully in this section – we want detail on:

1. *disagreements/similarities in people's views*
2. *reasons for people's views – e.g. 'That's interesting, can you say a bit more about why you think that?'*

Start off by asking what **people know about bus services in their local area** (probe on: knowledge of where they travel to, frequency and cost of service)

Then move to explore their **thoughts of what they think it's like travelling by bus in their area, and why?**

What do people think is **good and bad about bus services** in their area, and why? (Facilitator note: If anyone says inconvenient – probe fully about why they say this and what it means. It's not enough for them to say its' inconvenient – we want to understand why)

Probe for agreement/disagreement.

Try and unpack whether their view is based on their **own experience**, or **something they've heard**. If own experience, how recent is this experience?

If this has not come already probe for views on:

- **Timetables/service information** (e.g. frequency of service and accuracy of timetable)
- **Reliability** (do they arrive when they're supposed to? Take the amount of time they're supposed to?)
- How nice the **inside of buses** are (How clean, how comfortable, accessibility for people with prams/who find it difficult to walk etc)
- How **safe** they feel **on buses/at bus stops**
- **General thoughts of bus stops (shelter, seating etc)**
- **Number of people** on buses
- **Cost** – probe on perceptions of value for money **relative to car** especially
- **Driver** attitudes/behaviour
- Behaviour of **other passengers**

#### 5. Perceptions of typical bus passenger (5mins) (18:35 / 20:35)

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*Aim: to explore whether people have particular views about who does and doesn't use buses, and how views about bus passengers compare with views about car drivers.*

Ask people to discuss whether there is such a thing as a 'typical bus user' or a 'typical car user'?

What kind of person do they think of when they think of a 'typical bus passenger' and who they think of when they think of a 'typical driver'?

Probe fully around reasons **why** thought of particular people. What is it about them that makes them typical bus passenger/car driver?

#### 6. Types of transport you currently use for different journeys (5 mins) (18:40 / 20:40)

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*Aim: to find out fairly rapidly what types of transport people use for common journeys (especially multi mode – i.e. more than one type of transport to make the journey) to facilitate discussion of reasons for transport choices.*

Ask each person to say:

- what different **sorts of transport they use in a typical month**
- and **what kinds of journeys they make** using these different types of transport and do they use more than one type of transport (multi mode) to make the journey (e.g. school run, journey to work, trips to supermarket).

Could ask for show of hand if necessary to clarify – e.g. who mainly travels to work by car? What about supermarket? Etc.

#### 7. Reasons for using different types of transport (10 mins) (18:45 / 20:45)

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*Aims: explore reasons for using particular sorts of transport – especially car.*

**Facilitator note:** *This section is important, but if you are running short on time may be one you need to run through a bit more rapidly – e.g. focusing just two main types of journey (e.g. journey to work and trip into town/supermarket and why they make it the way they do, rather than probing on other sorts of journey/other types of transport.*

Thinking about different journeys make in a typical month, **why do they use particular types of transport** for these journeys?

*If pressed for time, probe particularly around:*

- **Travel to work/education** (for those it applies to), and
- **Reasons for choosing to make particular journeys by car**

*If more time, also probe on:*

- reasons for using other types of transport mentioned, and
- reasons use particular types of transport for trips to supermarket; to visit friends/relatives in local area; to pick up children from school.

*If time and if not mentioned spontaneously, probe on whether any of the following factors in why they use particular type of transport for particular journeys:*

- Cost?
- Journey time (i.e. is it faster and/or more convenient time for the to travel,
- Comfort? (if yes – what makes one type of transport more comfortable than other?)
- Reliability? (if yes – probe one what makes one type more reliable than another?)
- Multipurpose journeys (e.g. dropping someone off and picking up shopping; taking kids to school and going to work – all in one journey

#### **8. Views on bus as an alternative (5 -10 mins) (18:55 / 20:55)**

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*Aims: views on feasibility of using bus as an alternative for journeys they make in a typical month.*

**Facilitator note** – make sure you probe for enough detail here – e.g. if say can't make journey by bus, why is this? If give vague answers, like 'inconvenient' probe – what makes it inconvenient?

**Could they make any of the journey(s) they make in a typical month by bus, or not?** (Ask for a show of hands here so we get an idea of who thinks they could make any of their journeys by bus)

- If yes
  - **which ones?**
  - **Why don't they** make these journeys by bus at the moment?
- If no – **why not?**
  - Probe on routes, availability of services, timing of services, other reasons, etc.
- If unsure –
  - Have they **ever looked into bus as option?** If not, why not?
  - How would they go about finding out about bus services?

#### **9. Reasons for not using buses (more) (10-15 mins) (19:05 / 21:05)**

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*Aims: to find out what prevents people using buses more often.*

**Facilitator note** – This section and the following section are particularly important so please make sure you leave enough time for it. You might have discussed quite a few barriers/reasons for not using buses already in course of talking about reasons for not using buses for specific journeys. Acknowledge this, but explain you want them to think about barriers in a bit more detail, including some barriers other people have mentioned in other research.

**Barriers to bus use activity:**

- Please give each participant a copy of 'sheet 1'. Ask respondent to read through the list of barriers and tick ALL that apply to them (i.e. reasons they do not travel by bus more often). They can tick as many as they want to.

*Note to scribe/facilitator: make sure that their scribe number is written on the sheet and corresponds with the correct person! (This is so we can link their answers to the screening questionnaire)*

- Then explain that they need to pick the main barrier that applies to them and show this to rest of the group by placing a sticky label on the flip chart.
- Explain that there is extra space on their sheet of paper to add any extra barriers and we can write these on the flip chart manually.
- Once the main barriers are identified on the flip chart, prompt discussion of what it is about these barriers that prevents them travelling by bus – ask for examples to help understand what makes them a barrier.

**IMPORTANT FACILITATOR NOTE:** *If 'lack of information/knowledge about times' and 'fares are too high' don't come up on the flip chart please prompt for these in particular (these are ones the client is particularly interesting in finding out opinion on).*

**DRAFT LIST OF BARRIERS:**

- Bus stops are too far away
- Buses don't come often enough
- Too long to wait at bus stops
- Don't feel safe waiting at bus stops
- Bus stops are dirty/vandalized
- Lack of information/knowledge about times
- Not sure if the bus will arrive on time
- Takes too long to get places by bus
- Too crowded/too many people on buses
- Fares are too high
- Bus drivers are rude/unhelpful
- Buses are dirty/smelly
- Don't feel safe on the bus
- Have to change buses/get more than one bus
- Need to use car to give other people lifts (e.g. children to school)
- Need car for work

**10. Incentives for bus use (10 mins) (19:20 / 21:20)**

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*Aims: to find out what would encourage people to use buses more often.*

- How can the main barriers mentioned above be addressed?
- What else (if anything) would make people in the group more likely to travel by bus?
- If they don't come up spontaneously, probe on:

- Offering travel incentives (e.g. free tickets for a week, park and ride service, combined bus-train tickets)
  - Providing more information (e.g. screens at bus stops showing updates on when buses are actually expected, someone working out the best bus route for particular journeys for you, better information about where the bus is stopping on board the bus)
  - More bus lanes/better policing of bus lanes
  - Making car use less appealing (e.g. being charged money to bring your car into town ('congestion charge'), increasing petrol prices, higher car parking charges)
  - Improving quality of buses (If you could access the Internet free on board buses (WiFi), making the inside of buses were more comfy/better designed – e.g. air conditioning, comfy seats.
  - Improved customer care (e.g. more welcoming staff, better training, staff uniform)
  - Physical layout of the vehicle (i.e. making it easier to get on and off the bus, comfy seats, more leg room)
  - Improved **bus stops** - (e.g. bus shelters instead of bus stops, seats, timetables, real time information screens, ticket machines etc)?
- Probe for agreement/disagreement on 'incentives' to travel by bus within group
  - Also probe on whether particular incentives would make them more likely to travel by bus for all journeys or just some (travel to work, trips to visit friends, etc.)
  - And whether the incentives they mention or say are good ideas would help get over the barriers they identified in the last section.

## **11. Final thoughts and end** (5 mins) (19:30 / 21:30)

*Aim: to give group participants the opportunity to give any final thoughts.*

- Would they like to use the bus more?
  - Probe for reason why/why not?
  - For car users probe to see if they would like to use their car less (why/why not?)
- Was there anything that came up in the discussion that surprised people or was new to them?
- Anything from the discussion people want to pick up on or add to?
- Bring discussion to close, thank respondents and reiterate confidential nature of the group.
- Any questions about ScotCen or the research?
- Give out incentives and get them to sign for these (if not done at start).

## Topic guide for people with a physical disability

The Interview aims to explore:

- Views of bus travel in **their local area** – the focus of this study is to explore local bus service so we do not want to probe inter-city travel or coach trips for long journeys.
- Specifically the interview will explore:
  - Experience and views of local bus travel, and what their opinions are based on
  - Reason why respondents do not use local buses more (especially any barriers to use)
  - Find out what might encourage more local bus use

### Introduce self and ScotCen

#### Introduce the study:

- Commissioned by Scottish Government
- Interested in people's views and experiences of buses, reasons people do or don't like using them, and what might encourage people to use them more often.

#### Stress independence of ScotCen:

Although ScotCen is carrying out this research on behalf of the Scottish Government we are completely independent. We have no particular agenda in doing this research, we're simply here to listen to what you have to say.

#### Details about their participation:

- **voluntary** - both overall and in relation to any specific questions and discussions
- **recording** of discussion
- **confidentiality**, and how findings will be reported
  - No names, nothing that could identify them individually
  - Recordings held on a secure server; only research team and transcribers have access to them.
  - Mention that we may talk to someone if they tell us something that makes us concerned for their safety or the safety of someone else.
- **length** – around 1 hour

#### Basic ground rules

- No right or wrong answers – just interested in your views and experiences
- Role of interviewer is to ask questions and listen to response, but explain that there may be points where you need to interrupt or move the discussion on to make you cover everything.
- Check to see if they have any questions before you start the interview.

### 1. Background and personal circumstances

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*Aim: to map out the participant's background and personal circumstances and provide important context information for analysis. The kind of question you could ask to get this section started is – 'Tell me a bit about yourself?'*

Probe on:

- who they live with / relationship with others in the household
- main daytime activity
- (briefly) employment history
- hobbies and interests
- health (general perception / any difficulties or disabilities)
- involvement of carer / enabler (if appropriate)

### 2. Knowledge of local bus service

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*Aim: to find out what they know about their local bus service.*

Probe on:

- what they know about their local bus service? (e.g. *knowledge of where they travel to, frequency and cost of service*)
- whether they know how long it takes to travel to (nearest town/centre of Aberdeen/Dundee/Glasgow) from their home by bus?
- whether they know the cost of a bus fare from their house to (nearest town/centre of Aberdeen/Dundee/Glasgow)?

### 3. Types of transport they currently use for different journeys

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*Aim: to find out what types of transport they use for common journeys to facilitate discussion of reasons for transport choices.*

Probe on:

- type of transport they use in a typical month (probe for reason for journey – was it alone or with someone else)
- what kinds of journeys they make using these different types of transport (e.g. school run, journey to work, trips to supermarket, probe also for any multi purpose journeys)

#### 4. Reasons for using different types of transport

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*Aim: to explore reasons for using particular sorts of transport – especially car.*

Thinking about different journeys they make in a typical month, **why do they use particular types of transport** for these journeys?

*If pressed for time, probe particularly around:*

- **Travel to work/education** (for those it applies to), and
- **Reasons for choosing to make particular journeys by car**

*If more time, also probe on:*

- reasons for using other types of transport mentioned, and
- reasons for using particular types of transport for trips to supermarket; to visit friends/relatives in local area; to pick up children from school.

*If time and if not mentioned spontaneously, probe on whether any of the following factor in why they use particular type of transport for particular journeys:*

- Cost?
- Journey time (relative to other types of transport)?
- Comfort? (if yes – what makes one type of transport more comfortable than other?)
- Reliability? (if yes – probe one what makes one type more reliable than another?)

#### 5. Experiences of bus travel

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*Aim: to explore in some detail their past experiences of travelling by bus, to help understand how far views of bus travel are or are not grounded in experiences.*

Ask respondent to tell you about the **last time they used a bus in their local area** (or at all if no local experience) and probe on:

- where they were going,
- why they decided to travel by bus
- how long they had to wait for the bus
- any views on other passengers/driver
- overall how they felt about the journey.

*If respondent is struggling with recent experience of bus travel:*

- What about experiences further back? Any particularly **memorable bus journey** (either positive or negative) they can share?

## 6. Perceptions of local bus services

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*Aim: to explore in detail perceptions of bus services, and of specific aspects of bus services, in their local area. Also to explore what these views are based on.. You could start this section with something like – **what do you think about the bus service in your local area?***

Probe on:

- What is **good and bad about buses** in their local area, and why?
- Are their views based on their **own experience**, or **something they've heard**. If own experience, how recent is this experience?

If not cover already probe for views on:

- **Timetables/ service information**
- **Reliability** (do they arrive when they're supposed to? Take the amount of time they're supposed to?)
- How nice the **inside of buses** are (cleanliness, comfort, accessibility for people with prams/who find it difficult to walk etc)
- How **safe** they feel **on buses/at bus stops**
- **General thoughts of bus stops (shelter, seating etc)**
- **Number of people** on buses
- **Cost** – probe on perceptions of value for money **relative to car** especially
- **Driver** attitudes/behaviour
- Behaviour of **other passengers**

## 7. Views on bus as an alternative

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*Aims: views on feasibility of using bus as an alternative for journeys they make most often.*

**Interviewer note** – make sure you probe for enough detail here – e.g. if say can't make journey by bus, why is this? If give vague answers, like 'inconvenient' probe – what makes it inconvenient? However, if running over time suggest go through this section fairly rapidly as next 2 sections are key.

**Could they make any of the journey(s) they make in a typical month by bus, or not?**

- If yes
  - **which ones?**
  - **Why don't they** make these journeys by bus at the moment?
- If no – **why not?**
  - Probe on routes, availability of services, timing of services, other reasons, etc.
- If unsure –
  - Have they **ever looked into bus as option?** If not, why not?
  - How would they go about finding out about bus services?

## 8. Reasons for not using buses (more)

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*Aims: to find out what prevents people using buses more often.*

**Facilitator note** – *This section and the following section are particularly important so please make sure you leave enough time for it. You might have discussed quite a few barriers/reasons for not using buses already in course of talking about reasons for not using buses for specific journeys. Acknowledge this, but explain you want them to think about barriers in a bit more detail, including some barriers other people have mentioned in other research.*

### **Barriers to bus use activity:**

- Please give participant a copy of 'sheet 1'. Ask them to read through the list of barriers and tick ALL that apply to them (i.e. reasons they do not travel by bus more often). They can tick as many as they want to.

*Note to scribe/facilitator: Depending on the nature of their disability you may need to help them with this exercise – e.g. if writing/reading is difficult you may need to talk them through it rather than let them read and complete themselves.*

- Explain that there is extra space on their sheet of paper to add any extra barriers (*note this will be very important for people with a physical disability so please encourage them to think about any other barriers that are specific to them*)
- Then explain that they need to pick the main barrier that applies to them.
- Once the main barrier is identified prompt discussion of what it is about this barrier that prevents them travelling by bus – ask for examples to help understand what makes them a barrier.

**IMPORTANT FACILITATOR NOTE:** *Regardless of what the main barrier is please prompt discussion of 'lack of information/knowledge about times', 'fares are too high' and 'need help to use the bus' (these are ones the client is particularly interesting in finding out opinion on).*

### **DRAFT LIST OF BARRIERS:**

- Bus stops are too far away
- Buses don't come often enough
- Too long to wait at bus stops
- Don't feel safe waiting at bus stops
- Bus stops are dirty/vandalized
- Lack of information/knowledge about times
- Not sure if the bus will arrive on time
- Takes too long to get places by bus
- Too crowded/too many people on buses
- Fares are too high
- Bus drivers are rude/unhelpful
- Buses are dirty/smelly
- Need assistance to use bus
- Don't feel safe on the bus
- Have to change buses/get more than one bus
- Need to use car to give other people lifts (e.g. children to school)
- Need car for work

## 9. Incentives for bus use

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*Aims: to find out what would encourage respondent to use buses more often.*

- How can the main barriers mentioned above be addressed?
- What else (if anything) would make respondent more likely to travel by bus?
- If they don't come up spontaneously, probe on:
  - Offering travel incentives (e.g. free tickets for a week, park and ride service, combined bus-train tickets)
  - Providing more information (e.g. screens at bus stops showing updates on when buses are actually expected, someone working out the best bus route for particular journeys for you, better information about where the bus is stopping on board the bus)
  - More bus lanes/better policing of bus lanes
  - Making car use less appealing (e.g. being charged money to bring your car into town ('congestion charge'), increasing petrol prices, higher car parking charges)
  - Improving quality of buses (If you could access the internet free on board buses (WiFi), making the inside of buses were more comfy/better designed – e.g. air conditioning, comfy seats.
  - Improved customer care (e.g. more welcoming staff, better training, staff uniform)
  - Physical layout of the vehicle (i.e. making it easier to get on and off the bus, comfy seats, more leg room)
  - Improved **bus stops** - (e.g. bus shelters instead of bus stops, seats, timetables, real time information screens, ticket machines etc)?
- Probe on whether particular incentives would make them more likely to travel by bus for all journeys or just some (travel to work, trips to visit friends, etc.)

## 10. Final thoughts and end (5 mins)

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*Aim: to give respondent the opportunity to give any final thoughts.*

- Would they like to use the bus more?
  - Probe for reason why/why not?
  - For car users probe to see if they would like to use their car less (why/why not?)
- Anything from the interview that respondent wants to pick up on or add to?
- Bring discussion to close, thank respondent and reiterate confidential nature of the group.
- Any questions about ScotCen or the research?
- Give out incentives and get them to sign for these (if not done at start).

## Topic guide for people with a learning disability

The Interview aims to explore:

- Views of bus travel in **their local area** – the focus of this study is to explore local bus service so we do not want to probe inter-city travel or coach trips for long journeys.
- Specifically the interview will explore:
  - Experience and views of local bus travel, and what their opinions are based on
  - Reason why respondents do not use local buses more (especially any barriers to use)
  - Find out what might encourage more local bus use

### Introduce self and ScotCen

#### Introduce the study:

- Make sure you have copy of the information leaflet and talk through this, make sure respondent fully understands what they are being asked to do and check they are still happy to take part.

#### Stress independence of ScotCen:

Although ScotCen is carrying out this research on behalf of the Scottish Government we are completely independent. We have no particular agenda in doing this research, we're simply here to listen to what you have to say.

#### Details about their participation:

- **voluntary** - It is up to you to decide if you want to take part. It is okay if you do not want to take part. If you do take part but you do not want to answer a question, that is okay too. Just tell us.
- **recording** of discussion. We want to record the interview and would like to ask your permission to do this.
- **confidentiality**, and how findings will be reported
  - This means that we will be careful about the information we collect.
  - We will not share your private details.
  - People who read the report will not know that you have taken part.
  - We will not use your name in our reports. We will keep our notes very safe.
  - We will not show them to anyone outside our project
  - Mention that we may talk to someone if they tell us something that makes us concerned for their safety or the safety of someone else.
- **length** – around 45 minutes

## Basic ground rules

- No right or wrong answers – just interested in your views and experiences
- Role of interviewer is to ask questions and listen to response, but explain that there may be points where you need to interrupt or move the discussion on to make sure you cover everything.
- Check to see if they have any questions before you start the interview.

### 1. Background and personal circumstances

---

*Aim: to map out the participant's background and personal circumstances and provide important context information for analysis. The kind of question you could ask to get this section started is – 'Tell me a bit about yourself?'*

Probe on:

- age
- who they live with / relationship with others in the household
- main daytime activity
- (briefly) employment history
- hobbies and interests
- health (general perception / any difficulties or disabilities)
- involvement of carer / enabler (if appropriate)

### 2. Knowledge of local bus service

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*Aim: to find out what they know about their local bus service.*

*The kind of question you could ask to get this section started is – 'What do you know about your local bus service?'*

Probe on:

- what they know about their local bus service? (e.g. knowledge of where they travel to, frequency(how often it goes there) and cost of service)

*(Note to interviewer only ask this if they have good knowledge of buses – if they don't know much don't ask this)*

- whether they know how long it takes to travel to (nearest town/centre of from their home by bus?
- whether they know the cost of a bus fare from their house to (nearest town/centre of Aberdeen/Dundee/Glasgow)?

### 3. Types of transport they currently use for different journeys

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*Aim: to find out what types of transport they use for common journeys to facilitate discussion of reasons for transport choices. The kind of question you could ask to get this section started is – 'Tell me where you went last week?' and then follow up with probes to find out about the*

- type of transport they use in last week or so (probe for reason for journey – was it alone or with someone else. E.g. *How did you get to x?*)
- what kinds of journeys they make using these different types of transport (remember to probe on multi purpose journeys)

#### 4. Reasons for using different types of transport

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*Aim: to explore reasons for using particular sorts of transport – especially car.*

Thinking about different journeys they make in a typical month, **why do they use particular types of transport** for these journeys?

*The kind of question you could ask to get this section started is – ‘Why do you travel by x?’*

*If pressed for time, probe particularly around:*

- **Travel to work/education** (for those it applies to), and
- **Reasons for choosing to make particular journeys by car**

*If more time, also probe on:*

- reasons for using other types of transport mentioned, and
- reasons for using particular types of transport for trips to supermarket; to visit friends/relatives in local area; to pick up children from school.

*If time and if not mentioned spontaneously, probe on whether any of the following factor in why they use particular type of transport for particular journeys:*

- Cost? – **‘Is it cheaper for you to travel by x?’**
- Journey time (relative to other types of transport)? – **‘Is it faster to travel by x?’**
- Comfort? (if yes – what makes one type of transport more comfortable than other?) – **‘Is x more comfortable?’**
- Reliability? (if yes – probe one what makes one type more reliable than another?) – **‘Is the x more reliable?’**

#### 5. Experiences of bus travel

---

*Aim: to explore in some detail their past experiences of travelling by bus, to help understand how far views of bus travel are or are not grounded in experiences. The kind of question you could ask to get this section started is – ‘When was the last time you used a bus?’*

Probe on:

- where they were going,
- why they decided to travel by bus
- how long they had to wait for the bus
- any views on other passengers/driver
- overall how they felt about the journey.

#### 6. Perceptions of local bus services

---

*Aim: to explore in detail perceptions of bus services, and of specific aspects of bus services, in their local area. Also to explore what these views are based on.. You could start this section with something like – **what do you think about buses where you live?***

Probe on:

- What is **good and bad about buses** in their local area, and why?
- Are their views based on their **own experience**, or **something they’ve heard**. If own experience, how recent is this experience?

If not cover already probe for views on:

- o **Timetables/ service information**
- o **Reliability** (do they arrive when they're supposed to? Take the amount of time they're supposed to?)
- o How nice the **inside of buses** are (cleanliness, comfort, accessibility for people with prams/who find it difficult to walk etc)
- o How **safe** they feel **on buses/at bus stops**
- o **General thoughts of bus stops (shelter, seating etc)**
- o **Number of people** on buses
- o **Cost** – probe on perceptions of value for money **relative to car** especially
- o **Driver** attitudes/behaviour
- o Behaviour of **other passengers**

## 7. Views on bus as an alternative

---

*Aims: views on feasibility of using bus as an alternative for journeys they make most often.*

**Interviewer note** – make sure you probe for enough detail here – e.g. if say can't make journey by bus, why is this? If give vague answers, like 'inconvenient' probe – what makes it inconvenient? However, if running over time suggest go through this section fairly rapidly as next 2 sections are key.

**Could they make any of the journey(s) they make in a typical week or so by bus, or not?**

- If yes
  - o **which ones?**
  - o **Why don't they** make these journeys by bus at the moment?
- If no – **why not?**
  - o Probe on routes, availability of services, timing of services, other reasons, etc.
- If unsure –
  - o Have they **ever looked into the bus as an option/tried to see if they could take the bus for one of their journeys?** If not, why not?
  - o How would they go about finding out about bus services?

*Probe:*

- Would they ask someone/phone/internet? How easy is it to use any of these?

## 8. Reasons for not using buses (more)

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*Aims: to find out what prevents people using buses more often.*

**Facilitator note** – This section and the following section are particularly important so please make sure you leave enough time for it. You might have discussed quite a few barriers/reasons for not using buses already in course of talking about reasons

*for not using buses for specific journeys. Acknowledge this, but explain you want them to think about barriers in a bit more detail, including some barriers other people have mentioned in other research.*

**Barriers to bus use activity: (something that stops/prevents them from using the bus)**

- Please give participant a copy of 'sheet 1'. Talk them through the sheet and either let them complete or go through each barrier and tick relevant ones for them. They can tick as many as they want to.
- Explain that there is extra space on their sheet of paper to add any extra barriers (*note this will be very important for people with a learning disability so please encourage them to think about any other barriers that are specific to them*)
- Then explain that they need to pick the main barrier that applies to them.
- Once the main barrier is identified prompt discussion of what it is about this barrier that prevents them travelling by bus – ask for examples to help understand what makes them a barrier.

*IMPORTANT FACILITATOR NOTE: Regardless of what the main barrier is please prompt discussion of 'lack of information/knowledge about times', 'fares are too high' and 'need help to use the bus' (these are ones the client is particularly interesting in finding out opinion on).*

**DRAFT LIST OF BARRIERS:**

- Bus stops are too far away
- Buses don't come often enough
- Too long to wait at bus stops
- Don't feel safe waiting at bus stops
- Bus stops are dirty/vandalized
- Lack of information/knowledge about times
- Not sure if the bus will arrive on time
- Takes too long to get places by bus
- Too crowded/too many people on buses
- Fares are too high
- Bus drivers are rude/unhelpful
- Buses are dirty/smelly
- Don't feel safe on the bus
- Have to change buses/get more than one bus
- Need to use car to give other people lifts (e.g. children to school)
- Need car for work
- Require assistance to use buses

**9. Incentives for bus use**

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*Aims: to find out what would encourage respondent to use buses more often. The kind of question you could ask to get this section started is – 'What could make you use buses more?'*

- How can the main barriers mentioned above be addressed?
- What else (if anything) would make respondent more likely to travel by bus?
- If they don't come up spontaneously, probe on:
  - Offering travel incentives (e.g. free tickets for a week, park and ride service, combined bus-train tickets)
  - Providing more information (e.g. screens at bus stops showing updates on when buses are actually expected, someone working out the best bus route for particular journeys for you, better information about where the bus is stopping on board the bus)
  - More bus lanes/better policing of bus lanes
  - Making car use less appealing (e.g. being charged money to bring your car into town ('congestion charge'), increasing petrol prices, higher car parking charges)
  - Improving quality of buses (If you could access the Internet free on board buses (WiFi), making the inside of buses were more comfy/better designed – e.g. air conditioning, comfy seats.
  - Improved customer care (e.g. more welcoming staff, better training, staff uniform)
  - Physical layout of the vehicle (i.e. making it easier to get on and off the bus, comfy seats, more leg room)
  - Improved **bus stops** - (e.g. bus shelters instead of bus stops, seats, timetables, real time information screens, ticket machines etc)?
- Probe on whether particular incentives would make them more likely to travel by bus for all journeys or just some (travel to work, trips to visit friends, etc.)

## 10. Final thoughts and end (5 mins)

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*Aim: to give respondent the opportunity to give any final thoughts.*

- Would they like to use the bus more?
  - Probe for reason why/why not?
  - For car users probe to see if they would like to use their car less (why/why not?)
- Anything from the interview that respondent wants to pick up on or add to?
- Bring discussion to close, thank respondent and reiterate confidential nature of the interview.
- Any questions about ScotCen or the research?
- Give out incentives and get them to sign for these (if not done at start).

## Barriers to bus use exercise

Please read the list below of reasons why some people do not use the bus more often. Please tick **ALL** that apply to you and then pick **ONE** that is the most important reason to you. If you would like to add some more reasons please feel free to do so in the blank space at the bottom.

	Reasons for not using the bus more often	√ <b>All</b> that apply to you
1	Bus stops are too far away	
2	Buses don't come often enough	
3	Too long to wait at bus stops	
4	Don't feel safe waiting at bus stops	
5	Bus stops are dirty/vandalized	
6	Lack of information or knowledge about times	
7	Not sure if the bus will arrive on time	
8	Takes too long to get places by bus	
9	Too crowded/too many people on buses	
10	Fares are too high	
11	Bus drivers are rude/unhelpful	
12	Buses are dirty/smelly	
13	Don't feel safe on the bus	
14	Have to change buses/get more than one bus	
15	Need to use car to give other people lifts (e.g. children to school)	
16	Need car for work	

## **ANNEX C – OUTLINE CHARTING MATRIX**

This summarises the basic structure of the charting matrix used for this study. All transcripts were summarised using an electronic version of Framework, produced by NatCen, under the themes/sub-themes below. Where a sub-theme was not relevant to a particular transcript, this was coded as 'Not applicable'. Additional information about the sample structure (e.g. group number, location, etc.) was also appended to each summary.

### **CHART 1: HEALTH CONDITIONS/NATURE OF DISABILITY/OTHER RESPONDENT BACKGROUND INFO**

#### **1.1 Health conditions/Nature of disability**

#### **1.2 Family/Hobbies/Typical day**

#### **1.3 Notes/Comments**

### **CHART 2: KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF BUSES**

#### **What is the overall aim of this chart?**

To summarise knowledge of their local bus service, and how they found out this information. The last time they travelled by bus and what their perceptions were of that particular journey. We also want to summarise any good or bad personal experiences they have had when travelling by their local bus. Also we want their experiences and thoughts of local buses in other countries.

#### **2.1 Last time Resp used a local bus**

#### **2.2 Knowledge of local bus services**

#### **2.3 Sources of knowledge on local bus services**

#### **2.4 Good personal experiences of local bus services**

#### **2.5 Bad personal experiences of local bus services**

#### **2.6 Experiences and thoughts of local bus services in other cities/countries**

#### **2.7 Notes/Comments**

### **CHART 3: GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF BUSES**

#### **What is the overall aim of this chart?**

To summarise the positive aspects of local buses, typical bus users and typical car users. All negative perceptions should be summarised in Chart 5 & 6: BARRIERS.

#### **3.1 Positive aspects of local buses**

### **3.2 Perceptions of typical bus user**

### **3.3 Perceptions of typical car user**

### **3.4 Comparisons between the bus and the train**

### **3.5 Notes/Comments**

## **CHART 4: CURRENT TRAVEL AND FUTURE BUS USE**

### **What is the overall aim of this chart?**

To summarise the typical journeys participants makes, including work and other journeys and if they could use the bus as an alternative for any of the journeys mentioned and why. Also if participants would like to use the bus more or the car less (if applicable) and under what circumstances might they use the bus.

### **4.1 Typical journeys – work (only)**

### **4.2 Typical journeys – other**

### **4.3 Bus as an alternative – work (only)**

### **4.4 Bus as an alternative – other**

### **4.5 Desire to use the bus more/car less**

### **4.6 Circumstances in which they'd use the bus**

### **4.7 Notes/Comments**

## **CHART 5: BARRIERS (1)**

### **What is the overall aim of this chart?**

- Summarise any reasons participants give for not using the bus. Make sure to unpack the barriers and explain fully why it is a barrier. e.g. fact buses are not always on time means difficult to plan around them.

### **5.1 Driver**

### **5.2 Other passengers**

### **5.3 Physical conditions of buses**

### **5.4 Bus Stop**

### **5.5 Bus times & timetables**

## **CHART 6: BARRIERS (2)**

### **6.1 Bus Routes**

### **6.2 Fares**

### **6.3 Advantages of the car over the bus**

### **6.4 Other**

### **6.5 Biggest Barrier**

### **6.6 Notes/Comments**

## **CHART 7: SOLUTIONS (1)**

### **What is the overall aim of this chart?**

- Summarise anything people say would encourage them to use the bus. Make sure to unpack the solutions and explain fully why it is a solution/incentive. The chart also needs to include discussion of possible incentives that group does not think would work.

### **7.1 Driver**

### **7.2 Other passengers**

### **7.3 Physical conditions of buses**

### **7.4 Bus Stop**

### **7.5 Bus times & timetables**

## **CHART 8: SOLUTIONS (2)**

### **8.1 Bus Routes**

### **8.2 Fares**

### **8.3 Advantages of the car over the bus**

### **8.4 Other**

### **8.5 Notes/Comments**

## **CHART 9: LANGUAGE (1)**

### **What is the overall aim of this chart?**

- We want to note the Respondents' use of vague terms like 'easier', 'unreliable', 'inconvenient'/'convenient' – if they did unpack these types of words, it is important that we chart this. If not, it is important to note that it wasn't expanded on.

#### **9.1 Things associated with buses being 'inconvenient'**

#### **9.2 Things associated with buses being 'convenient'**

#### **9.3 Things associated with buses being 'unreliable'**

#### **9.4 Things associated with buses being 'easier'**

#### **9.5 Other**

#### **9.6 Notes/Comments**

### **CHART 10: LANGUAGE (2)**

**What is the overall aim of this chart?**

#### **10.1 Things associated with other modes of transport being 'inconvenient'**

#### **10.2 Things associated with other modes of transport being 'convenient'**

#### **10.3 Things associated with other modes of transport being 'unreliable'**

#### **10.4 Things associated with other modes of transport being 'easier'**

#### **10.5 Other**

#### **10.6 Notes/Comments**

### **CHART 11: MISCELLANEOUS/COMMENTS**

**What is the overall aim of this chart?**

Too add anything that seems important but does not fit in any of the other charts – hopefully there won't be much. Also there is space for any general interpretive comments/analytic observations about the Resp or group as a whole – not specifically related to a particular chart

#### **11.1 Miscellaneous**

#### **11.2 General Comments**



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