

# Creating Better Journeys

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Findings from the Citizens Advice Scotland bus users survey

March 2018





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# Contents

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Introduction and context	1
What we did	2
What we found	3
Your Bus – What were you most satisfied with?	3
Feeling safe	4
Driver behaviour	4
Cleanliness/condition of buses	5
Your Bus – What were you most dissatisfied with?	5
Providing feedback to bus companies	5
Getting help if something goes wrong	6
Service frequency	6
Your Bus – Where can't you travel to by bus?	7
Your Bus – What's important to you?	8
Results by where you live	10
Your Bus, Your Say – Telling us more	16

# Introduction and context

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## Scotland's bus network plays a vital role in keeping its citizens moving and accessing essential services every day.

Over three-quarters of public transport journeys in Scotland are taken by bus, with many consumers relying on buses for work, health and social journeys. However, fares have increased by 18% in the last five years<sup>1</sup>.

Citizens Advice Scotland's *Round the Bend* report on bus transport, published in 2016, was based on regional research led by 16 Citizens Advice Bureaux. The research highlighted examples of the difficulties accessing services due to long distances, sparse timetables and expensive ticket prices. There was also a perceived lack of consumer representation in the market which led us to revisit the issue and develop a campaign asking for consumers' views.

Public transport is a priority for the Scottish Government with a new Transport Bill being introduced this year. The Bill is expected to cover buses; rural aspects; local franchising and will aim to give Local Authorities a toolset to deliver transport in a way which is better for all Scottish communities – whilst recognising there is not a one size fits all solution.

As the Bill presents opportunities both locally and nationally, we considered how the work conducted for the *Round the Bend* report could be updated and expanded to feed in to this process. A local public transport satisfaction survey carried out by Kincardine and Mearns Citizens Advice Bureau showed high public interest in having a say on local bus services. We decided to build on this by taking forward a national survey and the *Your Bus, Your Say* campaign came into being.

The campaign was developed to gather evidence which can be used to influence decisions and effect real change in communities. By launching a public survey nationally, alongside citizens advice bureaux running local engagement events and campaigns, we aimed to ensure that the views of Scottish people were fed into the Scottish Government process. All of the information and data received during the campaign has been analysed. In addition a statement will be made on behalf of respondents by presenting their top priorities in relation to bus travel in the form of a Passenger Rights Charter.

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<sup>1</sup> CAS is also aware that after the *Your Bus, Your Say* survey closed a number of bus companies have increased their ticket fares.



# What we did

The *Your Bus, Your Say* campaign ran during October and November 2017 and received a total of 4,677 responses, submitted both electronically via a link on the Citizens Advice Scotland ('CAS') website and via completion of paper questionnaires at bureaux.

A total of 20 bureaux took part in the data collection process, ranging in areas from the Western Isles to Glasgow City centre. As part of the online survey there was also an open text box to allow people to make more detailed comments. 2,869 respondents chose to add extra comments in this space<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> CAS took an initial sample of 100 cases and created codes for all topics/issues which arose. Codes for all topics in the questionnaires were included. This initial coding was then sense checked and a number of categories were added. Following this, the coding framework was finalised and no further categories were added (though there was an opportunity to record a particularly 'noteworthy' comment which did not fit the existing categories).

Responses were received from all Local Authority areas in Scotland, with numbers ranging from 8 in the Shetland Islands to over 400 from Glasgow City. The top five Local Authorities in terms of number of responses are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Top 5 Local Authorities in terms of survey response numbers

Local Authority	Number of responses	Proportion of all responses
Glasgow City	419	9.0%
North Lanarkshire	393	8.4%
Dundee City	324	6.9%
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	315	6.7%
Fife	291	6.2%



# What we found

As can be seen in Table 2, an almost equal proportion of respondents travelled 3 times or fewer per week by bus (46%) as those who travelled 3 or more times per week (48%). Over one-quarter of all respondents (29%) travelled by bus at least 5 times or more per week.

Table 2: Frequency of bus travel per week

Frequency of bus travel	Number	Percentage
Never travel by bus	250	5%
Less than once per week	1,010	22%
1-2 times per week	695	15%
2-3 times per week	526	11%
3-4 times per week	437	9%
4-5 times per week	385	8%
5-6 times per week	451	10%
More than 6 times per week	903	19%
Question not answered	20	

In terms of satisfaction with different aspects of bus services, only those expressing an opinion are included in the analysis here; those stating 'no opinion' ranged from 22% to 30% in each category.

As can be seen in Table 3, the highest levels of satisfaction were expressed in relation to feeling safe while travelling (76%); driver behaviour (71%); and cleanliness/condition of buses (68%).

## Your Bus – What were you most satisfied with?

As highlighted earlier, respondents were given the opportunity to provide more information and comments related to their opinions on buses. We have analysed this information in order to present an overview of the views expressed. Many of these comments were positive and respondents expressed high levels of satisfaction with aspects of their bus service.

Table 3: Levels of satisfaction (excluding those expressing no opinion)

	Cleanliness/ Condition	Service frequency	Timetabling	Fare information	Information accuracy	Service punctuality
Generally dissatisfied	32%	64%	43%	60%	51%	56%
Generally satisfied	68%	36%	57%	40%	49%	44%
Total expressing an opinion	3112	3512	3390	3243	3037	3274

	Time given to sit down	Providing feedback	Getting help	Feeling safe	Driver behaviour	Value for money
Generally dissatisfied	46%	72%	67%	24%	29%	58%
Generally satisfied	54%	28%	33%	76%	71%	42%
Total expressing an opinion	3325	2438	2202	3307	3319	3309

## Feeling safe

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**“Your Say:** “In general, drivers are friendly and I feel safe. The CCTV cameras help and I know I can approach someone if I needed assistance.”

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Three-quarters of respondents (76%) said that they were satisfied with feeling safe on buses. Safety was a recurrent theme highlighted in the free text box. A variety of safety issues were raised including feeling safe with the way the bus was being driven; where bus stops/shelters were positioned; managing to go up and/or down stairs; being given time to sit down before the bus moved off; the speed at which buses travel; and safety in relation to other passengers.

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**“Your Say:** “Very happy every time I take the bus to the local town. Fantastic service and my child and I feel very comfortable and safe travelling by bus.”

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## Driver behaviour

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**“Your Say:** “I would rate the drivers at least 8 out of 10 as they do have a difficult job with diversions all over Edinburgh and doing their best for all passengers concerned.”

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**“Your Say:** “Praise for a job well done and not just focus on the negatives. Think of the staff who do genuinely give their all to their jobs and would do anything to help out.”

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Over two-thirds of respondents (71%) said that they were satisfied with driver behaviour on buses. Driver behaviour was one of the topics that was mentioned more frequently. Comments regarding driver behaviour were mixed. A number of respondents praised the behaviour of bus drivers whilst there were those who felt improvements could be made. Some respondents suggested there was variation between different drivers in the same area or on the same routes. Whilst the majority of respondents felt that most drivers' behaviours were of a high standard, there was a small minority who they felt displayed poor behaviour.

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**“Your Say:** “The bus drivers are usually always courteous, happy and look after the passengers very well, they always give everyone plenty of time to sit down and usually lower the front of the bus to let people off. They usually get out of their cab to help people with prams etc.”

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**“Your Say:** “Having moved from London the drivers are much more jolly and better drivers.”

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## Cleanliness/condition of buses

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**“Your Say:** “Personally I think the local bus company do a great job, it’s a very hard business to be in. The bus is always clean.”

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Two-thirds of respondents (68%) said that they were satisfied with the cleanliness/condition of buses. Negative comments concerning the cleanliness/condition of buses were expressed fairly frequently by survey respondents using the free text box, even though high satisfaction with this was expressed in the survey. A number of issues raised related to buses not being clean (including there being litter on the bus); the age of the fleet (which could also impact on the reliability and the level of noise buses made); the comfort of the seats and the absence of heating and/or air conditioning on buses.

**“Your Say:** “Staff are friendly and approachable, buses are clean and tidy and prices are very good!”

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## Your Bus – What were you most dissatisfied with?

As can be seen in Table 3 the highest levels of dissatisfaction were expressed in relation to the ease of providing feedback to bus companies (72%); getting help if something goes wrong (67%); and service frequency (64%).

## Providing feedback to bus companies

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**“Your Say:** “Bus company doesn’t listen to public feedback. They change timetables at will and the timetables don’t make sense.”

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Almost three-quarters of respondents (72%) said that they were dissatisfied with providing feedback on buses. Providing feedback was not the most commented about theme but, as might be expected from the levels of dissatisfaction expressed, those who commented were generally negative about their experience. For example, some individuals who contacted bus companies felt that they were not provided with a response which was to their satisfaction or that their query was not answered. It was suggested by respondents that improvements could be made if more effort was made to listen to customers and their views were taken more seriously. This could be one reason that providing feedback was the issue with the highest levels of dissatisfaction.



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**“Your Say:** “Having complained several times over driver behaviour and the punctuality of services. Not once has feedback been professional or adequate.”

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## Getting help if something goes wrong

Two-thirds of respondents (67%) said that they were dissatisfied with getting help if something goes wrong on buses. Although relatively high levels of dissatisfaction were expressed regarding this issue the additional comments made in relation to this were limited. Below is an example of an experience of a bus passenger when something went wrong.

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**“Your Say:** “My son uses the bus too, with a disability pass. This is vital for him, as he has only just started leaving the house and self-travelling (he is 19 and autistic). If something goes wrong, he finds it almost impossible to problem solve. Drivers need help to be supportive when this happens with a disability card – for example he forgot the date of expiry of one card and was not allowed to use the card the next day. The driver did have the discretion in this case to allow him to travel and to reorganise. This left my son in a panic. The card is clearly marked, so the driver does know they are dealing with a person with disability.”

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## Service frequency

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**“Your Say:** “Frequency in evenings and Sunday are bad with some services reduced from every 20 min to every hour and half.”

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**“Your Say:** “Not enough buses particularly in rural environment. Those who are dependent upon public transport don’t stand a chance! Older adults unable to attend appointments without expensive taxis, inappropriate use of health/social professionals, or being dependent on friends/family availability, young people being made dependent on parents to “taxi” around if they wish to socialise/train/work out with their local town. Those who work have to have a car as there is no public transport between local towns which facilitates a normal 9-5 job, let alone someone who works shift”

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Almost two-thirds of respondents (64%) said that they were dissatisfied with service frequency of buses. In addition to high levels of dissatisfaction in this area, it was also one of the most commonly raised issues in the free text box. In a number of cases, issues around frequency were also linked to other issues such as the absence of evening and weekend buses; the ability to travel where a respondent wishes, particularly to work and GP/ Hospitals; and a lack of services in rural areas.

Some respondents suggested that part of the reason for reliance on cars was due to a lack of frequent bus services. Other respondents commented that they would use buses more if services were more frequent. Changes to services reducing the frequency of buses were mentioned. There were a number of comments concerning limited numbers of bus services and two buses arriving at similar times, meaning there is a longer gap between services. The importance of buses and the lifeline they can provide was highlighted.

**“Your Say:** “I would love to use our buses more (especially since I don’t drive) but it is very difficult when they run so infrequently and at quite odd/irregular timings and routes.”

**“Your Say:** “In my village the bus service is nearly non-existent. We are a small community and feel isolated as it is but by taking our bus services away and cutting timetables it is so difficult to get to and from work & college. A 6 hour day at college can result in about an 11 hour day sometimes when I take into account the time spent waiting for buses if it turns up and then the actual travel times.”

## Your Bus – Where can’t you travel to by bus?

Respondents were also asked if there was anywhere they would like to be able to travel to by bus, but were unable to. The most common response to this question was GP/Hospital, with 16% of respondents unable to travel there. This was followed closely by those who could not reach work by bus at 14%. A further 8% reported not being able to reach a supermarket.

Respondents were asked if there were any other locations they could not reach by bus, as well as other barriers to bus travel. Almost 2,500<sup>3</sup> respondents provided answers to this. The majority of responses referenced specific places that could not be reached. 4% of the respondents could not travel to leisure or retail facilities such as out-of-town shopping malls or entertainment complexes. A further 2% reported being unable to link with other transport hubs, such as train stations, ferry terminals or airports. 1% noted that evening and/or weekend travel was either problematic or impossible.

Table 4: Locations respondents could not reach by bus

GP/Hospital	16%
Work	14%
Supermarket	8%
College/University	4%
Bank	3%
Jobcentre	2%
Post Office	2%

CAS explored the survey results to see whether or not there were any differences between those who used buses regularly and those who did not or rarely used the bus to travel. This showed that differences were only evident between those who could not travel to work or to a supermarket and those that can. The group that could not access these services reported not using buses or using them rarely more frequently than respondents overall. This may imply that more respondents would have used bus services to get to work or the supermarket had services been available.

**3** A total of 2,498 respondents answered this question

Table 5: Differences in response between those who did/did not use bus services

	All respondents	Only bus users	Only non-bus users	Don’t use/use less than once per week
<b>Work</b>	14%	13%	27%	19%
<b>Supermarket</b>	8%	8%	15%	9%

## Your Bus – What’s important to you?

In addition, respondents were asked to record the top three most important aspects of bus services to them. By far the most common response was service frequency (72%); followed by service punctuality but at a much lower frequency of 59%; and thirdly value for money at 39%.

Table 6: Factors important to bus users

Service frequency	72%
Punctuality	59%
Value for money	39%
Condition/Cleanliness	27%
Feeling safe	25%
Driver behaviour/attitude	25%
Timetabling	18%
Time to sit down	14%
Information accuracy	9%
Fare information	8%
Providing feedback	2%
Getting help	2%

When importance is compared with levels of satisfaction, it is possible to see the issues that have a low level of satisfaction but are also important to respondents (shown in Table 7). In particular, service frequency and punctuality were rated as important and had a low level of satisfaction, indicating that these areas are priorities for improvement. At the

other end of the importance scale, the majority of respondents who had an opinion were dissatisfied with fare information, but relatively few rated this as an important aspect of service.

Table 7: Importance of aspects of bus service to respondents and level of satisfaction with those service aspects, by ranking (1 = Most important).

	Importance	Level of satisfaction <sup>4</sup>
Service frequency	1	10
Punctuality	2	7
Value for money	3	8
Condition/Cleanliness	4	3
Feeling safe	5	1
Driver behaviour/attitude	6	2
Timetabling	7	4
Time to sit down	8	5
Information accuracy	9	6
Fare information	10	9
Providing feedback	11	12
Getting help	12	11

<sup>4</sup> Percentage of those who were ‘generally satisfied’, with no opinion removed



# Results by where you live

Although almost nine-tenths of respondents (88%) provided postcode information, around one-quarter of these were incomplete or not legible and therefore could not be used to identify such as urban/rural classification or Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation ('SIMD') ranking. Overall, postcode information was available for two-thirds (67%) of respondents.

However, as all respondents provided their Local Authority this made it possible to compare levels of satisfaction between different areas, as well as the number of responses received in each of the Scottish transport regions. Table 8 displays the different Regional Transport Partnerships ('RTPs'); the Local Authorities which are part of these regions; and the number of respondents by transport region. As can be seen survey responses were sizeable in all but two RTPs, namely SWESTRANS and ZetTrans.

## Your Bus – regional satisfaction<sup>5</sup>

As can be seen in Table 9, there was variation in satisfaction levels across RTPs in Scotland. Of all the areas analysed, the highest level of satisfaction was expressed in relation to feeling safe on the bus. There were more differences between the areas that are 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in levels of satisfaction. For example, there were higher levels of satisfaction expressed with driver behaviour in HITRANS, NESTRANS, and SPT compared to cleanliness/condition. In TACTRANS there was particularly high levels of satisfaction expressed with regard to timetabling when compared to other RTPs.

<sup>5</sup> In this analysis SWESTRANS and ZetTrans are excluded due to low numbers of respondents.

Table 8: Number of respondents by Regional Transport Partnership

Transport region	Local Authorities	No. of respondents
STP	Argyll & Bute (Helensburgh & Lomond only); West/East Dunbartonshire; North/South Lanarkshire; Glasgow; East Renfrewshire; Renfrewshire; Inverclyde; South/East/North Ayrshire	1630
SEStran	Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire; East Lothian; Falkirk; Midlothian; Fife; Scottish Borders; West Lothian	1161
HITRANS	Argyll & Bute (except Helensburgh & Lomond); Highland; Moray; Western Isles; Orkney	836
TACTRAN	Angus; Dundee; Perth & Kinross; Stirling	564
NESTRANS	Aberdeen; Aberdeenshire	381
SWESTRANS	Dumfries & Galloway	82
ZetTrans	Shetland	8

Table 9: Satisfaction with aspects of service, by Regional Transport Partnership

Most satisfied	HITRANS	NESTRANS	SESTRANS	SPT	TACTRANS
1 <sup>st</sup>	Feeling safe 84%	Feeling safe 74%	Feeling safe 82%	Feeling safe 66%	Feeling safe 72%
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Driver Behaviour 79%	Driver Behaviour 64%	Cleanliness/Condition 80%	Driver Behaviour 62%	Timetabling 69%
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Cleanliness/Condition 75%	Cleanliness/Condition 60%	Driver Behaviour 80%	Cleanliness/Condition 58%	Driver Behaviour 66%

## Your Bus – regional dissatisfaction

As can be seen in Table 10, the levels of dissatisfaction expressed were not the same across all RTPs. There appears to be less consensus over the levels of dissatisfaction compared with the levels of satisfaction expressed. Although three of the five RTPs expressed the highest level of dissatisfaction with providing feedback, there is a 21% gap between levels of dissatisfaction.

Levels of dissatisfaction with the availability of fare information appear to be more of an issue in HITRANS and SPT. Levels of dissatisfaction in relation to value for money is only in the top three in NESTRANS, though it is the area where the highest percentage in that RTP are dissatisfied. Once again, the levels of dissatisfaction expressed overall varied between RTPs. For example, the second highest percentage in NESTRANS is higher than the highest percentage in TACTRANS.

## Your Bus – What's important to you locally?

As can be seen in Table 11, there was general agreement on what mattered most to respondents with service frequency and punctuality being rated the most important two issues. The third most common response across all RTPs was value for money although the frequency with which respondents listed this as important varied.

There was less agreement in the next most frequently mentioned issues of importance after the three most common. In some RTPs the difference between the issues selected as the third most important and the fourth and fifth was narrow. In HITRANS, 28% selected driver behaviour and 26% selected condition/cleanliness as one of the most important issues for them. Similarly in both SESTRANS, SPT and TACTRANS the gap between the fourth and sixth most selected options was narrow.

This could mean there was less consensus in some RTPs about what the most important issues related to buses were to respondents.

Table 10: Dissatisfaction with aspects of service, by Regional Transport Partnership

Most dissatisfied	HITRANS	NESTRANS	SESTRANS	SPT	TACTRANS
1 <sup>st</sup>	Frequency of service 69%	Value for money 80%	Providing feedback 60%	Providing feedback 81%	Providing feedback 74%
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Providing feedback 66%	Getting help 79%	Getting help 55%	Getting help 78%	Getting help 69%
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Fare information 8%	Providing feedback 79%	Frequency of service 53%	Fare information 73%	Frequency of service 64%

Table 11: Importance of issues, by Regional Transport Partnership

Frequency of mention of importance	HITRANS	NESTRANS	SESTRANS	SPT	TACTRANS
1 <sup>st</sup>	Service frequency 75%	Service frequency 73%	Service frequency 72%	Service frequency 71%	Service frequency 72%
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Punctuality 57%	Punctuality 67%	Punctuality 59%	Punctuality 59%	Punctuality 61%
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Value for money 29%	Value for money 52%	Value for money 40%	Value for money 40%	Value for Money 42%

## Your Bus – Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

The availability of postcodes also allowed some consideration of the findings in relation to both urban/rural classification, and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

SIMD refers to the Scottish Government tool that ranks areas of multiple deprivation in order to provide a picture of which areas are the most/least deprived across the country. As can be seen in Table 12, the proportion of respondents from each of the five quintiles is broadly comparable to the national figures, with the exception of over-representation in Quintile 3.

As is also shown in Table 12, the frequency of travel by bus appears to decline as deprivation declines. While it is not possible to state with certainty why this should be the case, it could be hypothesised that there is perhaps greater car ownership in the less deprived areas and so less use of public transport, or perhaps that these areas are not served by bus transport to the same extent as others.

The 38 indicators used to define deprivation for SIMD range across seven different domains, one of which is ‘Access to Services’; this is described as:

*“Average drive time to a petrol station, a GP surgery, a post office, a primary school, a secondary school, a retail centre. Public transport travel time to a GP surgery, a post office, a retail centre”*

It would perhaps be expected that any trend evident in the full SIMD would be mirrored to at least some extent in each of the individual domains. That is, if something increases as the overall level of deprivation decreases, it would be expected that the same pattern would be repeated in each of the seven SIMD domains. However, as can be seen in Chart 1 in respect to the ‘Access to Services’ domain the opposite appears to be true.

Although high-frequency bus travel declines as the overall level of deprivation decreases, high-frequency bus travel *increases* as the deprivation related to Access to Services decreases. As bus travel is a factor in the Access to Services domain, it seems logical that the less deprived an areas was in access

Table 12: Frequency of bus travel, by SIMD quintile

SIMD Quintile	All	Low frequency travel (2 or fewer times per week)	High frequency travel (5 or more times per week)
1	17%	25%	43%
2	19%	36%	33%
3	27%	45%	28%
4	20%	52%	22%
5	17%	47%	23%

Chart 1: Frequency of bus travel by SIMD, and ‘Access to Services’ SIMD domain

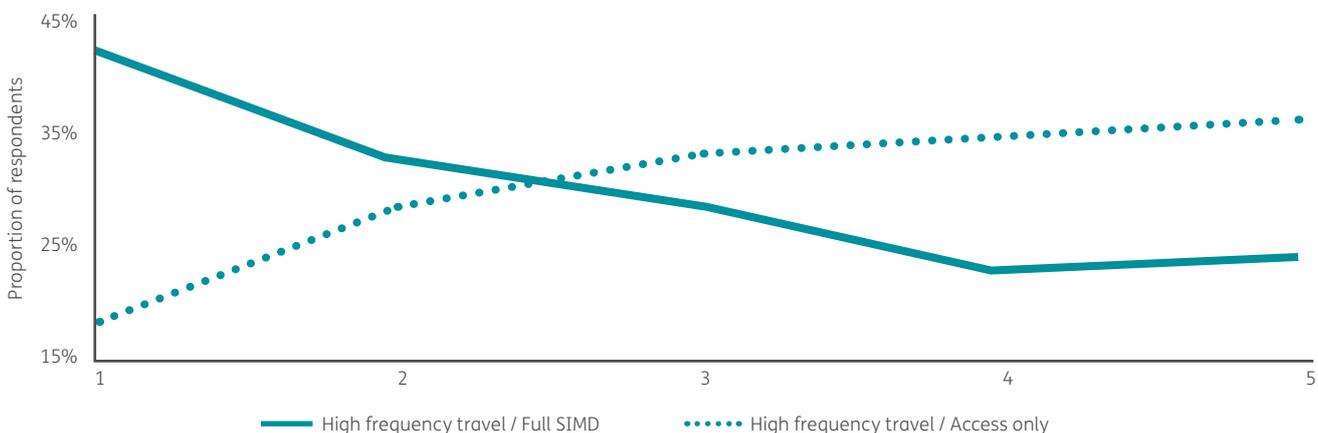
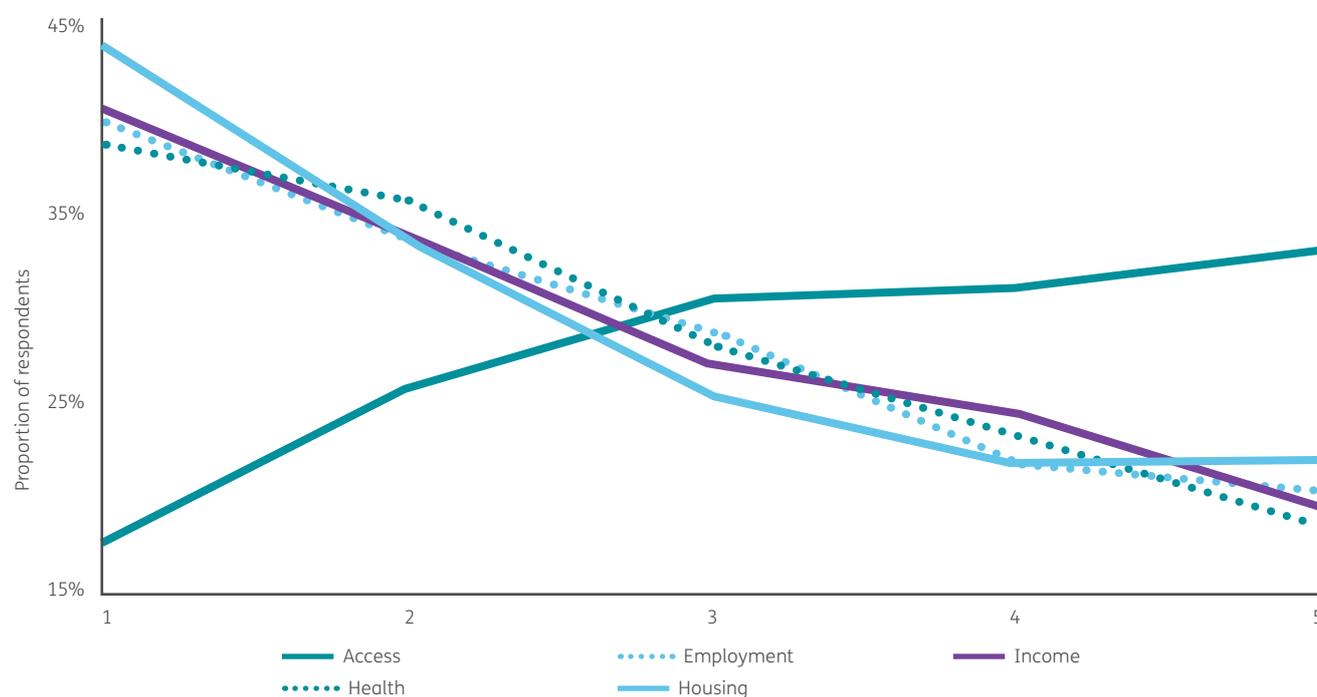


Chart 2: Frequency of bus travel, by SIMD domains



terms, the more likely it would be for bus travel to be more common. This finding highlights some of the difficulties that can arise in using SIMD for analysis purposes, but also the importance of considering the different domains that construct SIMD.

In order to explore this difference further, the individual SIMD domains relating to employment; income; health; and housing were also examined in relation to frequency of travel. As can be seen in Chart 2, all four of these domains follow the same pattern as SIMD overall in that frequency of travel declines as the level of deprivation decreases.

## Your Bus – Urban/Rural Classification

In considering the urban/rural classification in relation to survey respondents, as can be seen in Table 13 there are few similarities when comparing this to the profile for the Scottish adult population as a whole. In fact, only the profile for large urban areas is in any way similar. However, as the proportion of respondents in rural areas (i.e. 'accessible small towns' and 'remote rural') is higher than for the population as a whole, consideration of findings in these areas could be productive.

Table 13: Survey respondents and general Scottish population, by urban/rural classification

	2016 population estimates (adults only)	Survey respondents
Large Urban Areas	35%	31%
Other Urban Areas	35%	23%
Accessible Small Towns	9%	13%
Remote Small Towns	3%	4%
Accessible Rural	12%	16%
Remote Rural	6%	14%

Respondents in rural areas were much less likely to be frequent travellers (16%) than those in all other areas (32%), and were also marginally more likely to encounter difficulties accessing a range of services. Gaining access by bus to banks; GP/hospital; and/or work were the most problematic for those in rural areas.

In terms of levels of satisfaction with services, those in rural areas were more likely to be satisfied with most aspects of their bus service. It was only in the area of service frequency that satisfaction was much lower in rural areas than others, while satisfaction in relation to timetable information was similar. Both service frequency and timetable information were more important to rural respondents than those in other areas, while value for money and cleanliness were less important.

## Your Bus – Differences across Local Authority areas

The large number of respondents to the survey means that it is also possible to consider data at a Local Authority level in some cases; responses ranged from 8 in the Shetland Islands to 419 in Glasgow. While a full analysis would not be appropriate here, some of the most notable findings from the Local Authorities with the largest number of respondents are discussed below.

Of the 32 Local Authorities in Scotland almost half (15) had over one hundred survey respondents, ranging geographically from the Scottish Borders to the Western Isles. Some findings from these Local Authorities include:

- Respondents travelling most frequently came from Dundee and West Dunbartonshire, while those travelling least frequently were in Aberdeenshire and the Highlands;
- Those living in Aberdeenshire and North and South Lanarkshire were least likely to be able to reach work by bus, while those in Moray were more than 3 times less likely than the national average to be able to reach a supermarket by bus;
- Those in West Dunbartonshire were more than three times less likely than the national average to be able to reach a GP/Hospital by bus;
- Overall, respondents in Aberdeenshire; Highland; Moray; and the Scottish Borders had the greatest difficulty in reaching key services by bus;
- Satisfaction with service frequency and timetabling was highest in Edinburgh, and lowest in Highland;
- Edinburgh also saw the highest level of satisfaction in relation to punctuality and value for money, along with the Western Isles, while Aberdeen City and Glasgow had the lowest satisfaction levels in these categories;
- Value for money was of highest importance in Aberdeen City and East Lothian, and of least importance in Moray;
- While frequency and value for money were considered equally important in East Lothian, service frequency was over two and a half times more important than value for money in Edinburgh;
- Service frequency and punctuality were considered equally important in Dundee and Renfrewshire, while service frequency was considered much more important than punctuality in both Highland and the Scottish Borders.

STOP

BUS

STOP

# Your Bus, Your Say – Telling us more

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As mentioned previously, 2,869 respondents used the free text box to provide further information, thoughts, comments, and suggestions. This and the number of respondents overall, highlights the important role which buses play in Scotland. Some of the comments received have been used throughout this report to highlight various issues.

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“**Your Say:** “In the four years I’ve lived here I have experienced buses being everything from 15 minutes early through to 30 minutes late through to not even showing up. It just makes it impossible to rely on, and I have more than once been stuck having to phone a friend to give me a lift or I’d be stuck!”

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“**Your Say:** “The local bus operator recently stopped the off peak return fare for their service meaning customers need to pay over £4 for an all day ticket regardless of if they need it or not. In some journeys the fare increase is almost £1 per journey. This increase directly affects low income customers specifically people on zero hour contracts who can’t buy a weekly/monthly pass due to shift uncertainty and low wages.”

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“**Your Say:** “We no longer have a lifeline service to our local village. The first bus leaves the village for the city centre at 9.20 making access to work, college and university impossible for a 9 o’clock start. The latest bus leaves the city at 2.30 making return from work, college, university impossible. This also leaves a limited time span for outpatient appointments at hospital.”

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There were similarities between issues which were frequently mentioned and issues which were the most important to respondents. Service frequency; punctuality; and value for money/cost were the three most important areas when asked, and these were the most frequently mentioned in the free text box. Some respondents used this opportunity to highlight the locations they found it difficult or impossible to travel to using buses.

As well as reinforcing responses from the main survey questions, a high number of respondents used the free text box to comment on issues which were not specifically asked in the survey. These included competition between local bus companies, or a lack of this, and cuts and changes to bus services. Other comments touched on larger overarching issues including bus services at evening and weekends and speed/lack of direct routes.

It is important to make clear that comments were not necessarily negative and, of those using the free text box, a notable number used this as an opportunity to praise their local bus service or particular aspect of it. Table 14 below details how many times issues were raised within the free text box.

Table 14: Issues raised within the free text box

Rank	Issue raised	N
1	Timetabling / frequency	653
2	Cost	447
3	Evenings & Weekends	440
4	Punctuality/ reliability	374
5	Speed/ lack of direct routes	316
6	Praise	240
7	Driver behaviour	236
8	Unavailable locations	190
9	Condition/cleanliness	173
9	Cuts to services	173
11	work access	166
12	Change to services	161
13	Information availability/accuracy	150
14	Integration	146
15	Accessibility: disability/buggy	137
16	Closeness / proximity to bus stop	130
17	GP/hospital access	128
17	service demand	128
19	Competition	118
20	Complaints	94
20	Safety	94
22	Car ownership	90
23	Smart ticketing solutions	88
24	College/University/School access	61
25	Environmental/green	40
26	Supermarket/retail	37
27	Bus shelter	31
28	Bus trackers	17
29	New development/planning	11
30	Toilet	8

**“Your Say:** “In April the local bus company withdrew services completely from our village. Local residents, especially those who are elderly, young or less mobile have been struggling to travel in and out of the village since! As a consequence they have a reduced quality of life as they can’t get out to visit friends and family, attend medical appointments, go shopping and as there are no weekend services, attend church. Due to the limited services we now have some people also struggle to reach work on time! Furthermore the hospital within the city is very poorly served by our current buses! This is extremely stressful for local residents who need to attend appointments or visit poorly friends or family.”

**“Your Say:** “The cost of travelling and the route the bus takes makes the journey into the nearest city too inaccessible. The buses have decreased in numbers to a few times a day rather than a regular service. It takes nearly 2 hours to travel to town when it can be done in 45 minutes in a car. The numbers of the buses and the routes change regularly so there is little clarity or trust that the bus will turn up or that it will go where you need to. I would never use the bus for work and if the bus service was cheaper, more reliable, direct and regular I would as would lots of people that work in the city. It would be a great way to go to work. But costs need to come down. It costs £9.55 single and £17.20 return for an adult.”

**“Your Say:** “It has served us well over the years from Monday – Saturday each week. Keep up the good work!”





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