UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Buses and the Economy II

Survey of Bus use amongst the Unemployed

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research, funded by the Department for Transport and Greener Journeys, examines the use, accessibility, role and perception of buses amongst a sample of unemployed taken from a number of large British cities outside of London. Several key findings emerge.

- We find that the unemployed have extremely high levels of dependence on buses for accessing employment, much more so than the general working population, highlighting the vulnerability of this group to cuts in services. The levels of dependence on buses is particularly acute for females, those with no car availability, younger and the lower skilled.
- The high dependence on buses is linked to the low levels of car ownership within this group, with 77% of our sample having no or infrequent access to a car/van or motorbike.
- A fifth of interviewees had not applied for a job or not attended an interview or turned down a job or left a job due to the lack of a suitable bus service.
- We found over 60% of our sample felt they would have less chance of finding a job without a bus service. Over a third of our sample felt they would have a better chance of finding work if bus services were improved, with fares and journey times emerging as the key dimensions where it was felt improvements could make a difference.

2 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to examine the role that buses play in helping people find work. The survey looked at the accessibility, role and perception of buses amongst the unemployed.

In order to conduct our research we interviewed 912 unemployed[1] individuals attending Job Centre Plus offices in June-July 2013 at a number of sites in cities in Britain[2] outside London. The quotas used for our sample were chosen to reflect the national profile of job seekers in terms of age, sex and unemployment duration.

This work was conducted by the Institute for Transport Studies at the University of Leeds as part of the Buses and the Wider Economy II project, jointly funded by Greener Journeys and the Department for Transport. The work is a follow up to our previous study which highlighted the importance and value of buses to the economy[3]. The surveying was carried out via face to face interviews by Accent Market Research. We worked closely with the Department for Work and Pensions on the design of the interviews and to facilitate access to the Job Centre Plus offices where most of the interviews were conducted.

[1] We categorised as unemployed, those not in paid work, seeking paid work and claiming benefits.

[2] The sites included Edinburgh, Norwich, Leeds and Cardiff city centres and also Chorlton, Greater Manchester.

[3] Buses and Economic Growth, http://www.greenerjourneys.com/2012/07/buses-economic-growth-making-the-link-new-report/

3 USE OF TRANSPORT FOR WORK

We asked interviewees to select their usual means of transport for travelling to work. The results shown in Table 1 highlight the dependence of these individuals on buses as the main mode of transport. Overall, 58% of our sample use buses for work. Although not directly comparable[4], these figures are in stark contrast to our earlier study of the employed[5] which found that 8.5% of employed people from the National Travel Survey[6] use bus as their usual mode for travel to work.

This level of dependence on buses is higher amongst females, those with no car availability, younger and the lower skilled.

Table 1: Main mode of transport used for work amongst the unemployed (%)

		Bus	Car[7]	Walk/ Cycle	Train/ Tram	Other
	All	**58**	**22**	**15**	**4**	**1**
Gender	Male	**55**	21	19	5	0
	Female	**65**	24	8	2	1
Car Availability	No Car Available[8]	**72**	4	19	5	1
	Car Available	**23**	70	5	3	0
Age	18-24	**66**	11	16	5	0
	25-49	**58**	23	15	4	1
	50+	**46**	37	13	3	1
Occupation	Professional[9]	**31**	42	15	11	0
	Skilled[10]	**52**	27	15	4	2
	Lower skilled [11]	**65**	17	15	3	0
Qualifications	NVQ 2 or higher	**55**	26	14	5	0
	NVQ 1 or lower[12]	**62**	18	17	3	1
Duration	6 months or less	**53**	26	15	5	
	Over 6 months	**64**	18	15	3	0

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[4] This sample included those working in London, where buses are regulated and their use is higher than elsewhere. It was also based on figures from 2010.

[5] [5] Buses and Economic Growth, http://www.greenerjourneys.com/2012/07/buses-economic-growth-making-the-link-new-report/

[6] National Travel Survey 2010, Department for Transport, http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/national-travel-survey-2010

[7] Car users include car drivers, passengers and motorcyclists

[8] No Car available respondents are those who ‘always’ or ‘almost always’ have access to a car/van/motorbike for their personal use.

[9] Professional occupations include managers or senior official (e.g. office manager, company director, sales manager) and Professionals (e.g. doctor, engineer, teacher, lawyer, social worker), which correspond to the Standard Occupational Classification major groups 1 and 2.

[10] Skilled occupations include Technical (e.g. nurse, police officer, journalist, sales representative), Administrative or secretarial (e.g. account clerk, legal secretary, receptionist, administration assistant), Skilled trade (e.g. farmer, bricklayer, plasterer, joiner, plumber). These correspond to Standard Occupational Classes 3-5

[11] Lower skilled occupations include Personal service (e.g. dental nurse, cook, travel agent, beautician, hair dresser, caretaker, teaching assistant), Sales or customer service (e.g. sales assistant, cashier, market trader, call centre worker), Process, plant and machine operator (e.g. machinist, driver, laboratory tester) and Elementary occupation (e.g. cleaner, farm worker, labourer, porter, waiter, bar staff, postal worker). These correspond to Standard Occupational Classes 6-9

[12] NVQ level 1 or below includes no qualifications, school leavers certificate, attainment of 1-4 GCSEs or equivalent and other vocational level 1 qualifications.

Table 2: Have you ever used the bus for travelling to work?

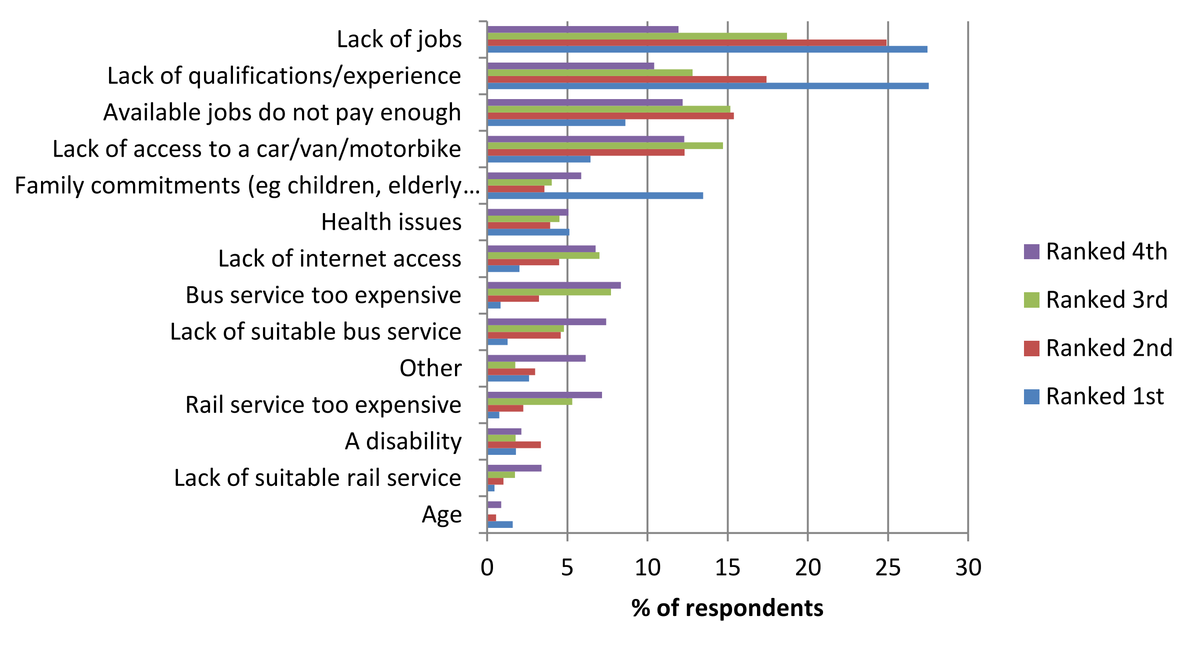
		Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	All	34	20	16	10	20
Age	18-24	36	21	15	6	21
	25-49	33	21	18	11	17
	50+	33	11	13	13	30
Duration	6 months or less	29	21	19	12	20
	more than 6 months	39	18	14	9	21

We asked interviewees in more detail about their bus use for travelling to work, as reported in Table 2. 34% of interviewees always use the bus, with usage higher amongst the 18-24 age group and those who have been unemployed for more than 6 months.

4 BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Interviewees were asked to select FOUR barriers below which most prevent them from finding suitable work. Figure 1 below shows the rankings of these barriers.

Figure 1: Which four barriers most prevent you finding suitable work (%)



We calculated a composite ranking score[13], and based on these scores the ranking of the barriers is shown in Table 3

Table 3: Most important barriers to employment

Barrier	Overall Ranking
Lack of jobs	1
Lack of qualifications/experience	2
Available jobs do not pay enough	3
Lack of access to a car/van/motorbike	4
Family commitments	5
Health issues	6
Lack of internet access	7
Bus service too expensive	8
Lack of suitable bus service	9
Other	10
Rail service too expensive	11
A disability	12
Lack of suitable rail service	13
Age	14

Figure 1 and Table 3 show that lack of jobs and qualifications/experience emerge as the key barriers to employment. Suitability of bus service and fares are recognised

[13] For each respondent, the fourth place ranked option was given a 'score' of 1, third place 2, second place 3, and first place 4. These scores were then totalled over all respondents to give an aggregate score which the reported rankings were based on.

factors but come below others such as health and lack of internet access. Table **4: Respondents citing bus related factors as a barrier to employment (%)**

shows what proportion of interviewees cited the lack of suitable bus services and/or the cost of bus services as a barrier to employment (ie selected as 1 of the 4 barriers from the list shown in Table 3)

The figures show that 22% of unemployed 18-24 year olds highlight the lack of a suitable bus service as a key barrier to finding a job. An even higher proportion of this age group (25%) cited the cost of bus services as a barrier.

We asked our interviewees whether the lack of suitable or affordable services had ever impacted them in terms of having to leave a job, turn down a job, turn down an interview or not apply for a suitable job.

Table 4: Respondents citing bus related factors as a barrier to employment (%)

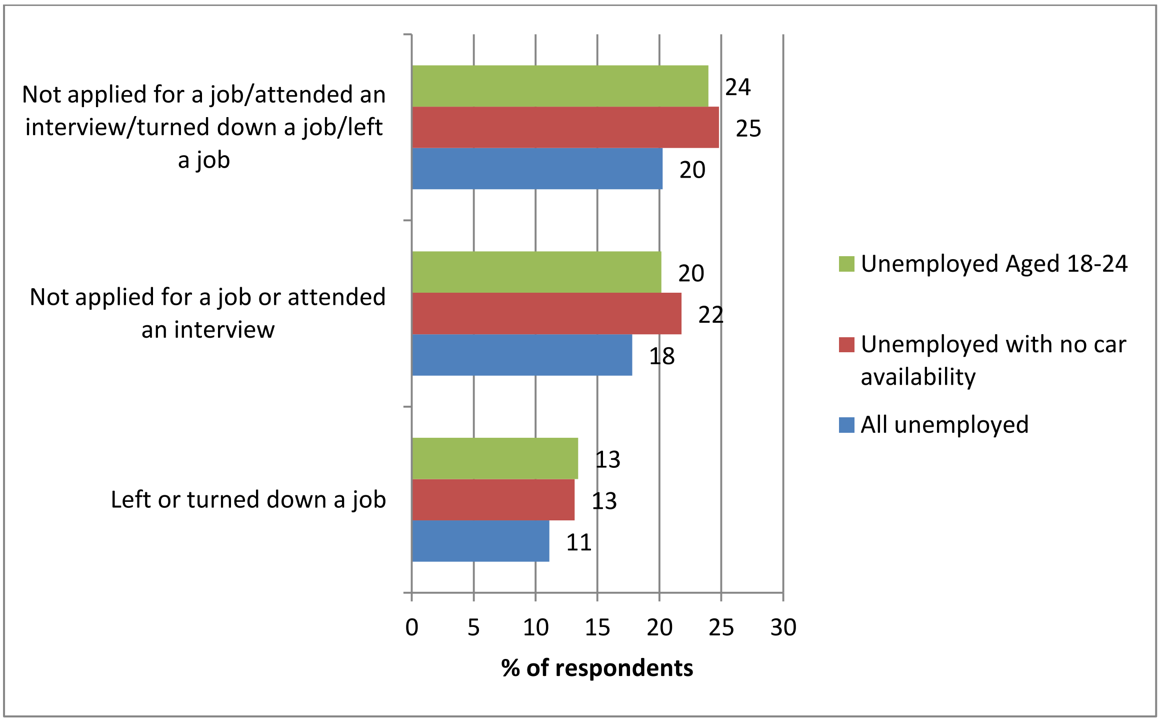
		Lack of suitable bus service	Bus service too expensive
	All	18	20
Age	18-24	22	25
	25-49	16	17
	50+	16	21
Duration	Unemployed 6 months or less	19	19
	Unemployed more than 6 months	16	21

Table 4: **Respondents citing bus related factors as a barrier to employment (%)**

		Lack of suitable bus service	Bus service too expensive
	All	18	20
Age	18-24	22	25
	25-49	16	17
	50+	16	21
Duration	Unemployed 6 months or less	19	19
	Unemployed more than 6 months	16	21

shows that a fifth of respondents have, at some stage, not applied for a job, not attended an interview, turned down or left a job because there was no suitable bus service available. This proportion is higher for those in the younger age group and without car availability. Over 1 in 10 respondents have left or turned down a job because of the bus service.

Figure 2: Has the lack of a suitable or affordable bus service ever meant you have...



5 PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF BUS SERVICE CHANGES

We asked our interviewees if a better bus service would make it more likely for them to find employment.

Figure 3: Would bus services improve chances of finding employment?

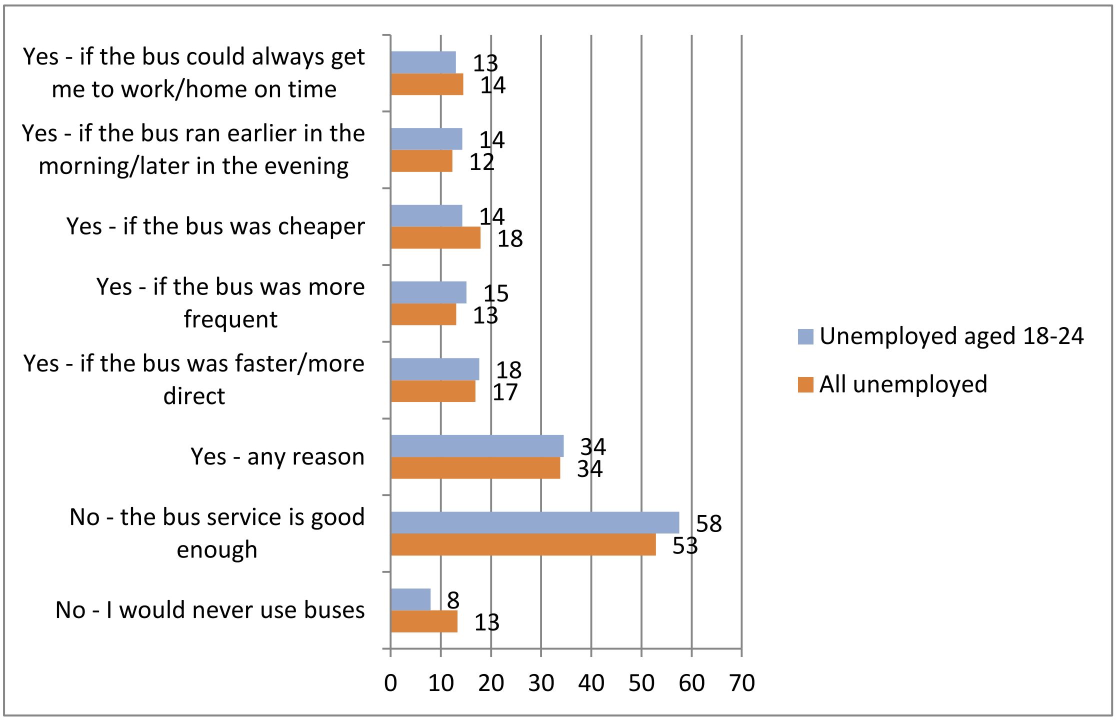


Figure 3 shows that over a third of respondents felt a better bus service, both overall and for the 18-24 age group, would make it more likely they could find work. Frequency of service and cost appear to be the main ways in which interviewees thought improved bus services could help them. However, over a half of respondents felt the bus service was good enough, ie any further improvements would not help them find work.

We found that 87% of our sample had at some time used, or would consider using, buses for travelling to work (92% of the 18-24 age group). These users or potential users were then asked whether the absence of a bus service would impact on their chances of finding a job, as shown in Table 5[i]. Table 5 also presents the results as a percentage of the entire sample.

Table 5: Would employment chances be impacted by a removal of bus services? (%)

	Bus users/ potential users	All respondents
Unemployed	71	61
No car available	79	70
18-24 year olds	73	67

Table 5 shows over 70% of bus users/potential users (or 61% of the total sample) felt they would have less chance of finding a job without a bus service. This rose to almost 4/5 of users/potential users with no car availability (or 70% of the total sample) and to 73% (67% of the total sample) for users aged 18-24.

6 CAR AND PRIVATE VEHICLE ACCESS AND OWNERSHIP

Table 6 shows car access that 77% of respondents do not have regular access to a car, van or motorbike (either no access or infrequent access). It is interesting to note that this percentage is even higher (83%) for those unemployed for more than 6 months, and (87%) for 18-24 year olds.

Table 7 shows licence holding amongst the respondents. Overall, 43% of interviewees had full vehicle licences, with lower levels amongst the younger and those unemployed for longer.

Table 6: Have you a car/van/motorbike available for your personal use for attending work or interviews?

		Yes always	Yes almost always	Yes but only infrequently	No I never have access
	All	18	5	5	72
Age	18-24	10	3	5	82
	25-49	18	5	5	71
	50+	30	6	3	61
Duration	Unemployed 6 months or less	21	6	5	67
	Unemployed more than 6 months	14	3	4	79

Table 7: Full car/motorbike driving licence holders

		%
	All	43
Age	18-24	25
	25-49	45
	50+	62
Duration	Unemployed 6 months or less	48
	Unemployed more than 6 months	37

7 ACCESS TO BUS SERVICES

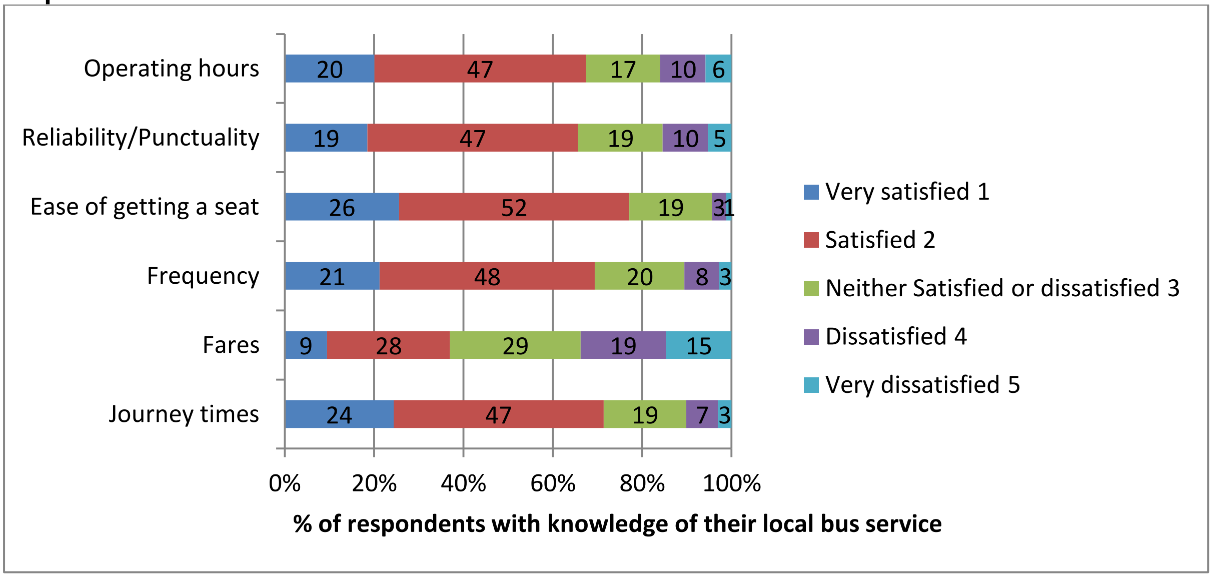
We asked interviewees how far away their nearest bus stop was. This is reported in Table 8 which shows the overwhelming majority of our sample, over 70%, live within 5 minutes' walk of bus stop, indicating this is unlikely to be a major hindrance in itself.

Table 8: Distance to nearest bus stop

Distance from nearest bus stop (% of respondents)	
Less than 5 minutes walk	71
Between 5 and 10 minutes walk	23
Between 10 and 15 minutes walk	4
More than 15 minutes walk	1
Don't know where my nearest bus stop is	1

We then asked respondents who knew about the services from their nearest bus stop (81% of the sample) to rate their satisfaction with their local service in terms of hours of operation, reliability/punctuality, ease of getting a seat, frequency, fares and journey times, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: How satisfied are you with the quality of the bus service at your nearest stop?



Over a third of interviewees were "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the fares on their local services. There is a lot of similarity amongst the remaining service aspects, with over 60% of individuals reporting themselves as "very satisfied" or "satisfied", compared to 37% for fares.

[i] Those who said they would never use buses were not asked this question as it is not relevant