

Transport Direct: summary of Office of National Statistics Omnibus Survey result

The Survey

The ONS Omnibus Survey interviews a representative random sample of approximately 1,850 adults in Great Britain eight times a year. The Survey is ideal for gauging public attitudes towards a range of topics, but it is not a suitable vehicle for identifying detailed travel behaviour information.

In September 2001, the Department placed a number of questions in the Survey about travel information and Transport Direct. Respondents were given a short description of Transport Direct as follows:

The government plans to develop a single travel enquiry service giving information about all the ways of making a journey in the UK. It will let you compare routes and prices for different forms of transport to help you decide how to make the journey. For public transport, it will give timetables and fares, tell you where to get on and off, and let you book your ticket. For travel by car or bike, it will tell you which roads and junctions to use, and estimate the cost of the journey. It will also tell you how your chosen form of travel is performing, such as whether the bus is running late or the roads are congested.

The Results

Will people use Transport Direct?

The Survey suggested that people would use Transport Direct. 69% of respondents said that they were very or fairly likely to use such a service. Of these 69%, 66% said that they would anticipate using Transport Direct at least once or twice a month. This figure rose to 83% in London. Unsurprisingly, respondents who had used existing telephone travel enquiry services such as Traveline or National Rail Enquiries felt that they would be more likely to use Transport Direct. There was some difference by age: over half of over 75s felt that they would not use Transport Direct but this figure fell to 16% of those aged 65 - 74. However, it is most likely that people will use Transport Direct when visiting unfamiliar places and between 10 and 20% of respondents claimed not to have visited anywhere unfamiliar within the last six months.

What will people use Transport Direct for?

Of those very or fairly likely to use the service, 54% (or 37% of all respondents) felt that they would use Transport Direct for public transport timetable information. It is notable that 35% of car users (using a car at least two days a week) thought that they would use the service to access public transport timetables. 29% of all respondents felt that they would find out "routes by car or van". Around 17% thought that they would use Transport Direct to book a ticket. Slightly fewer (around one in eight) people mentioned information regarding delays and engineering work being the type of information they would use Transport Direct to access. Likelihood of using Transport Direct to access information about roadworks and congestion varied by age, being mentioned by 21% of 16-24s and 42% of 24-45s of those very or fairly likely to use Transport Direct).

6% of respondents felt that they would use Transport Direct for local journeys using more than one mode of transport and 11% felt that they would use the service for local journeys that they were unsure whether to make by car or public transport. These figures rose to 17% and 23% respectively for long distance journeys.

Means of delivery

The most popular means for accessing Transport Direct was by telephone - favoured by 70% of all respondents. 42% believed that they would access the service over the internet, with 60% of 25-44 year olds considering that they would use this medium. 20% felt they might use electronic kiosks, although there was some regional variation here. 17% of Londoners felt that internet on a mobile (eg WAP) would be a good way to access the service.

Effect on modal choice

The effect that Transport Direct might have on modal choice is difficult to determine from the Survey. Of those very or fairly likely to use the service and who had used a car or motorcycle in the past six months, 60% felt that it would not alter their car usage whilst 15% felt that it would increase the amount they travelled by car. Of those very or fairly likely to use the service, and who had used public transport in the past six months, 48% believed that it would not change the number of public transport journeys, but 47% thought that it would increase the amount they travelled on public transport.

Some 13% of public transport users likely to use the service (using public transport at least two days a week) said their usage of a car may be increased by Transport Direct, whereas only 10% of car users (using a car at least two days a week) expected it to increase their car usage. Of those very or fairly likely to use the service slightly more frequent car users (17%) than frequent public transport users (14%) thought it would reduce their car usage.

Willingness to pay

There was some evidence of willingness to pay for a Transport Direct service. Although 35% of those likely to use the service would not pay at all, 17% would pay for car, bike or public transport routes, times and costs; 15% for general info about road works or public transport engineering works; 25% for a personal alert (by e-mail, text message or phone call) about problems with a journey before setting out; 35% for a personal alert (by e-mail, text message or phone call) during the journey indicating that there is a problem ahead and suggesting another way of reaching the destination. Around half of those willing to pay thought that £1 a month would be reasonable.

Further information about this survey is available from the Transport Direct team. Please contact transportdirect@dft.gsi.gov.uk