

# Safety and public transport in the North

Summary report

September 2025



## How safe do Northern residents feel when using public transport?

Transport for the North conducted seven focus groups and an online survey in spring 2025, speaking to over 900 people from diverse social and economic backgrounds across the North of England.

The findings show a number of areas where personal safety issues – both perceived and experienced – affect how Northern residents use public transport.

### Our key findings show:

- Personal safety concerns influence how, when, and whether residents choose to use public transport
- Perceptions of safety, informed by the media and experiences of others, can often outweigh direct personal experience
- Women and ethnic minorities face a disproportionate burden in staying safe

“ Yes, I definitely feel less safe as a woman. Women are a lot more vulnerable, and I think a lot of men just don't realise how different it is for a woman... Men get a different sort of attention though and I know the statistics say you're more likely to be a victim of violence as a young man. I have three adult sons, who would never feel afraid, neither would my husband.

**Woman, 60-64, West Yorkshire**

- Safety perceptions decline significantly after dark
- The first and last mile of a journey plays an important role in the concerns and experiences of safety
- Low reporting of incidents, crime, and antisocial behaviour suggests that users have limited confidence that their concerns will be resolved
- The mode of transport can affect perceptions of safety, with trains generally seen as safer than buses
- Improvements to safety on public transport – particularly through staffing, CCTV, lighting, and safe route planning – attracted strong support.

“ Being from the LGBT community I do feel I can be a target. I tend to wear a jacket if I go to pride events, so I don't show off colourful clothes.

**Man, 45-59, West Yorkshire**

## Drawing out the main issues

For most passengers, journeys made on public transport are typically smooth and incident free. However, safety concerns are widespread. These are determined by direct experiences and perceived issues formed through media coverage and second-hand accounts. Both contribute to negative feelings of safety when choosing to use buses, trams or trains.

Where these issues exist, Northern residents may choose to avoid using certain modes of transport. This can mean choosing more expensive forms of travel (such as taxis) than they otherwise would, placing residents at greater risk of transport poverty. Some residents also avoid using public transport altogether, leading to a greater risk of isolation and social exclusion.

While anyone can feel unsafe, our research shows some population groups are more likely to have negative experiences. Instances of antisocial behaviour and offences against women and girls, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ and disabled people are of particular concern. This can lead to the adoption of behaviours such as modifying appearance or clothing, avoiding speaking in different languages, sharing locations via GPS, or changing time of travel, particularly after dark. In some cases, residents avoid travel altogether because of these issues.

I definitely avoid travelling through certain areas because of how I look. I'd rather take a more circuitous route or a different mode of transport or just not go at all.  
**Man, 45-59, Northumberland and Tyne Wear**

## Where would Northern residents like to see improvements?

Through our research, we asked where users would like to see improvements with safety on public transport. While safety improvements would attract strong public support, Northern residents are clear they want them to be funded by government or operators, not through fare increases or higher taxes.

**Safety measures attracting support from our participants include:**

- An increased visible staff presence across the public transport network
- Expanded and visible CCTV across public transport networks, with information warning of criminal prosecutions to provide a suitable deterrent and reassurance for users
- Improved lighting at bus stops, bus stations and train stations, addressing users fears when travelling at night
- Better, practical travel planning measures that reflect improved safety which include request-stop policies and safe route planning which were especially valued by women and disabled participants, particularly after dark
- Fast and discreet methods to report crime and anti-social behaviour, and responsiveness from authorities to these reports.

## What next?

Transport for the North works with mayoral combined authorities, county combined authorities, local transport authorities and national partners to support transport improvements to unlock sustainable and inclusive growth.

We have a number of ways that we can help partners to achieve their aims.

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## Safety and public transport in the North

Download the main report that accompanies this publication.

**Safety and public transport in the North** - Exploring personal safety when using public transport reveals further information and detail on our work to look at personal safety on public transport in the North.

This report details our research with the Northern Transport Voices through focus groups and a wide-ranging online survey.

For further information, contact us at [research@transportforthenorth.com](mailto:research@transportforthenorth.com)



## Transport-related social exclusion

Access our transport-related social exclusion data and tools that can help local transport authorities to identify areas and communities where transport issues contribute to poverty, poor health, and social exclusion.

Download our latest [TRSE data report](#) and access our [TRSE data tool](#).



## TfN Offer

The TfN Offer is our data and evidence resource hub. Available to constituent authorities and other partners in the North, we can provide technical services, advice, analysis, modelling and planning tools.

For more information on how we can help to support our Local Authority partners, please contact us at [TfNOffer@transportforthenorth.com](mailto:TfNOffer@transportforthenorth.com)

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