



Choose Bus to Relax

Research finds that to reduce stresses and strain when travelling, bus use promotes mental health and wellbeing by providing the opportunity to relax.

In general, the car is the most attractive mode of transport. Convenience, speed, comfort and individual freedom are well-known arguments.

This means that public transport needs to adjust the service to the attributes required by consumers in order to become more attractive and influence a modal shift. Service quality is perceived as an important aspect of users' travel demand.

Benefits of Bus

Advantages of public transport use over car use included less stress and included being able to rest or read and also being able to talk to other people.¹ Commuting by bus is associated with lower strain compared to driving², and walking to work and using the bus is associated with better mental health than commuting by car.³

Less stress, active and relaxed

Research has found that people who find their journey most relaxing are more likely to be walkers or cyclists, whereas people who perceive their journey to be stressful are more likely to be car users.⁴

The stress of driving associated with traffic congestion is, for some respondents, a problem and a motivating factor for using public transport. For them the time spent on buses and trains is an opportunity to relax and read a book or newspaper.

Benefits of mindfulness

Research has also linked mindfulness to commuters under less stress than car drivers.

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Mindfulness is a psychological construct associated with improvements to mental health, social engagement, and behavioural regulation.⁵

However, these perceived advantages must be connected with comfort related attributes such as having a seat on the bus and a pleasant temperature.

Some car users, particularly women, would prefer to use buses or trains just for the freedom from driving responsibilities that allows one to relax.⁶

Comfortable commute

In addition, express buses users have been found to have higher commute wellbeing than local bus users. Reasons for this includes that express bus users have very few stops, and have more comfortable seating than local buses.⁷

This study also reports that highest commute wellbeing is found among cycle commuters and the lowest commute well-being for drive alone commutes longer than 40 minutes and that also include congestion. A person that rides the bus and encounters traffic congestion will have significantly high commute wellbeing than if that person drives alone and encounters congestion.

Active boost to mental health and wellbeing

Moreover, physical activity boosts mental health and well-being and contributes to reducing the risks of ill-health and premature death from preventable diseases. Most bus users undertake some physical activity in accessing the services.

There is strong evidence that this makes a significant contribution towards achieving the 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity recommended each week by Chief Medical Officers.⁸

Thank you to Professor Adrian Davis for this summary of Essential Evidence.

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