Considerable decline in bus commuting across the UK, Commuter Census® 2025 reveals

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The annual survey of UK commuters reveals a fascinating drop in bus use among UK commuters, with a 19% fall since 2024.

Now in its fifth year, and with 8,789 respondents, Mobilityways Commuter Census® has recorded that the increase in bus fares from £2 to £3 in January 2025 has had a measurable impact on commuter behaviour.

There has been a near-complete reversal of the 17% increase in bus uptake recorded between 2023 and 2024 – when the £2 fare cap was put in place (January 2024). The findings highlight just how price-sensitive commuters are when it comes to public transport – and how quickly modal shifts can occur in response to policy changes.

The Department for Transport's own figures from the first half of 2025 support the trend recorded in Commuter Census, showing a decline in bus patronage since the fare cap was raised. While the cap remains in place, the increase to £3 appears to have pushed many commuters back into their cars – with driving alone rising for the first time since 2022, according to Commuter Census.

Only 8.1% of respondents now commute by bus (including EV bus), down from 9.9% in the prior year. This drop is particularly concerning given the UK's net-zero ambitions and the role public transport must play in reducing Scope 3 emissions.

The fall in bus use could be due to a variety of other factors. In fact, 31% of respondents said they would consider switching to the bus as an alternative to their current commute. However, barriers such as reliability, availability, and journey time remain significant.

When asked what would encourage them to switch to public transport, 16% of respondents cited the need for more reliable, regular, and direct services. Meanwhile, 9% said there was no public transport option available to them at all.

"Commuters are clearly price-conscious," said Julie Furnell, Managing Director, Mobilityways. "In our experience working with large employers, we've seen how quickly commuter behaviour can shift when the right incentives are in place.

"This year's data shows that when public transport is priced affordably, people will use it. The success of the £2 bus cap last year proved that affordability drives uptake. But when costs rise, even modestly, many revert to less sustainable options. This year's reversal shows how fragile that progress can be without continued support."

The data sends a clear message to policymakers: pricing and service quality are critical to encouraging sustainable commuting. While the £2 fare cap was widely praised for boosting bus use, the increase to £3 has had the opposite effect. Employers, local authorities, and transport providers must work together to make public transport a viable and attractive option.

Read the full Commuter Census® here, including commuting mode changes, work travel patterns, attitudes towards commuting methods and commuting emissions calculations.

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commuting a reality. Founded as Liftshare in 1998, Mobilityways was launched in 2021 to support employers meet their net-zero goals with its suite of climate tech tools.

These tools enable companies to measure, reduce and report their commuter emissions, providing full visibility of commuting challenges and identifying sustainable travel alternatives for employees.

Mobilityways has worked with more than 1,000 companies to cut their commuter emissions. In the last year alone, they helped large organisations to remove more than 5,000 tonnes of CO2e from the atmosphere and took 65 million miles off the road (enough miles to circumnavigate Earth 2,600 times) by encouraging employees to car-share, take public transport or actively travel to work instead of driving alone.

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