



2018 IMTC Bus Survey Report

August 2018

The Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) at Western Washington University (WU) and the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG)



2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

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2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

I. Introduction

The 2018 IMTC Bus Survey is an evaluation of commercial passenger traffic northbound and southbound through the Pacific Highway port-of-entry (POE) on the British Columbia-Washington border. The project was carried out in partnership by the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) and the Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI) in the summer of 2018 with the cooperation of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (US CBP) and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

The project is a component of the 2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey and refreshes baseline data collected in a 2013 bus survey of similar scope. Analyses in this report include measurements of border processing rates, vehicle type data, origin-destination patterns, bus carrier characteristics, passenger characteristics, and more. An Access Database of all collected data is available through WCOG.

Bus Data collection

Methods

Bus and passenger data were recorded throughout the entire inspection process – from bus arrival at the border to bus departure from the inspection facility. Data points were gathered through observation of the buses themselves, by interviewing the bus drivers, and by interviewing passengers after they cleared inspection. Only the buses that underwent inspection were recorded. Field surveyors were assigned to one of four roles to ensure that all aspects of the inspection process were recorded. A complete copy of the four survey components used is available in the Annex.

Dates, hours, directions

The bus survey was conducted during four consecutive days in the last week of July 2018. Surveys were conducted on buses going into Canada and into the U.S. on one weekday and one weekend day each. Unlike the 2013 survey which only collected data on the weekend, weekdays were included in 2018 to more accurately reflect general bus travel.

Survey schedule

Direction	Day	Date	Hours
Northbound	Friday	July 27, 2018	7:30AM-8:30PM
	Sunday	July 29, 2018	8:00AM-9:00PM
Southbound	Thursday	July 26, 2018	9:30AM-8:00PM
	Saturday	July 28, 2018	8:00AM-9:00PM

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Count of buses and passengers surveyed

Direction	Total recorded bus traffic	Passengers that were interviewed
Northbound	85	270
Southbound	59	187
Total	144	457

The survey recorded 144 buses transiting the border. Passengers from 92 buses were interviewed, totaling 457 passengers, or about 15.4 percent of the total occupancy of all buses inspected at the border during the four survey dates. Note that complete surveys do not exist for every bus and passenger approached due to time limitations, language barriers, and other variables.

II. Bus processing

How long does it take buses to cross the border?

The table below summarizes the duration of buses' time at the border – from their first full stop at the border, whether at inspection or in the queue, to their departure from the inspection area. The only notable difference between the 2018 and 2013 data is that the shortest southbound wait was 14 minutes longer in 2018.

Total border wait time

Direction	Average (hr:min)	Longest (hr:min)	Shortest (hr:min)
Northbound	0:21	0:56	0:02
Southbound	0:53	2:55	0:18

Often buses had to wait for entry into the plaza before beginning inspection when traveling southbound. As a bus would wait, a queue sometimes formed behind it, especially during peak hours of bus travel.

How long does the inspection process take?

The tables below summarize duration of buses' time in the inspection area, from their first full stop where passengers could disembark to departing the facility. Survey records are grouped and summarized below by the contents they unloaded at inspection – luggage and passengers, just passengers, or neither.

Northbound inspection duration

Contents unloaded	# of buses	%	Average (min)	Longest (min)	Shortest (min)
Luggage & Passengers	54	81.82%	25	56	2
Passengers Only	8	12.12%	16	25	9
Neither	4	6.06%	7	10	5

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Southbound inspection duration¹

Contents unloaded	# of buses	%	Average (min)	Longest (min)	Shortest (min)
Luggage & Passengers	44	97.78	43	167	18
Passengers Only	1	2.22%	25	25	25
Neither	0	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Whereas in 2013, 18 percent of southbound buses were permitted to pass without luggage being unloaded, in 2018 only one bus (two percent of surveyed southbound buses) was given this same privilege. This could be a surveyor error. The vast majority of buses were required to unload both passengers and luggage. Inspection durations were on average 9 minutes longer than they were in 2013.

How do already-full staging areas affect processing time?

As each bus arrived at the inspection area, it was recorded whether the inspection staging area was already full, meaning buses already occupied the area parallel to the inspection buildings. Some buses and vehicles, presumably empty of passengers, were allowed to bypass the inspection area.

The following tables compare the border inspection times for buses arriving when the staging area was full versus when it was not full. Times are recorded from when a bus first comes to a full stop (at inspection or in the queue) to when they depart the inspection area.

The staging area being full does not seem to impact waits in the northbound direction. This stands in contrast to the 2013 survey data, where this factor consistently altered wait times in both directions. There is still a substantial increase in wait time when traveling southbound, with wait times being 85 percent longer on average when the staging area is full. Note that the southbound inspection area has a round plaza that allows passengers to disembark while another bus is being inspected. The northbound inspection area has no plaza between the inspection facility and the highway approach.

¹ Note that during periods of high bus traffic going southbound, queues sometimes formed within the CPB inspection plaza, where some buses would come to a full stop and wait till the inspection staging area emptied in order to unload passengers near the inspection building.

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Border wait when staging area is full

2018

Direction	Average (min)	Longest (min)	Shortest (min)
Northbound	21	53	4
Southbound	65	175	22

2013

Direction	Average (min)	Longest (min)	Shortest (min)
Northbound	29	93	6
Southbound	85	190	18

Border wait when staging area is NOT full

2018

Direction	Average (min)	Longest (min)	Shortest (min)
Northbound	22	56	2
Southbound	35	53	18

2013

Direction	Average (min)	Longest (min)	Shortest (min)
Northbound	18	49	3
Southbound	31	85	4

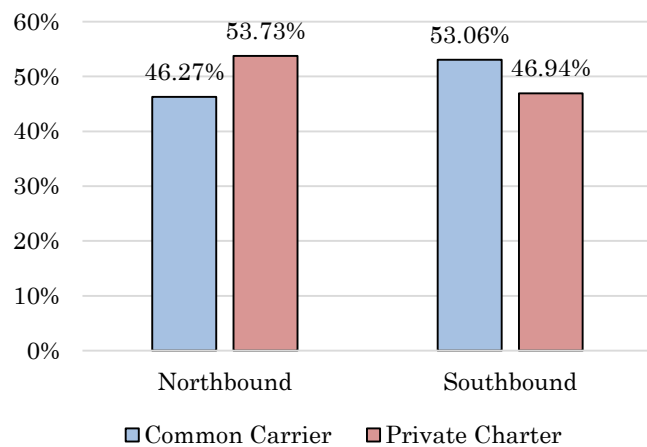
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What is the mix of bus carrier types crossing the border?

Buses were categorized into two groups during surveys. The first group, common carriers, are buses that offer a regularly scheduled service carrying passengers on set routes. The second group, private charters, are buses hired by groups, where passengers are either members of one group occupying the entire vehicle or passengers are of a specific market, such as cruise ship charters or language-specific tours. Some bus carriers provide both services. It's important to note that the survey did not collect carrier type data on the buses that bypassed the inspection area.

In 2013, about two-thirds of the buses surveyed while traveling southbound were chartered. The balance shifted in the 2018 survey, but the sample size may not be large enough to claim significance.

Common carrier vs private charter



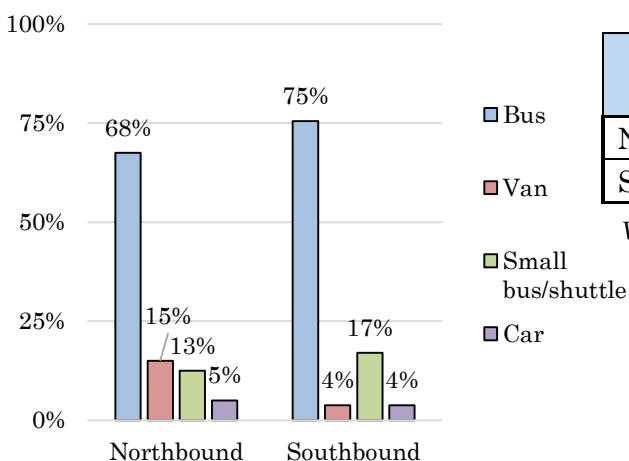
Carrier type counts

Direction	Common Carrier	Private Charter
Northbound	31	36
Southbound	26	23
<i>Carrier type %</i>	<i>49.14%</i>	<i>50.86%</i>

What types of commercial passenger vehicles cross the border?

In addition to buses, vehicles observed crossing the border included vans, small buses or shuttles, limousines, and minivans. The latter two are categorized below as cars. In 2018, 17 percent of southbound vehicles were small buses/shuttles and only 4 percent were vans. This contrasts with 2013 data, when it was observed that only 4 percent of southbound vehicles were small buses/shuttles and 18 percent were vans.

Vehicle types



Vehicle type counts

Direction	Bus	Car	Small bus/shuttle	Van
Northbound	54	4	10	12
Southbound	40	2	9	2
<i>Vehicle type %</i>	<i>70.7%</i>	<i>4.5%</i>	<i>14.3%</i>	<i>10.5%</i>

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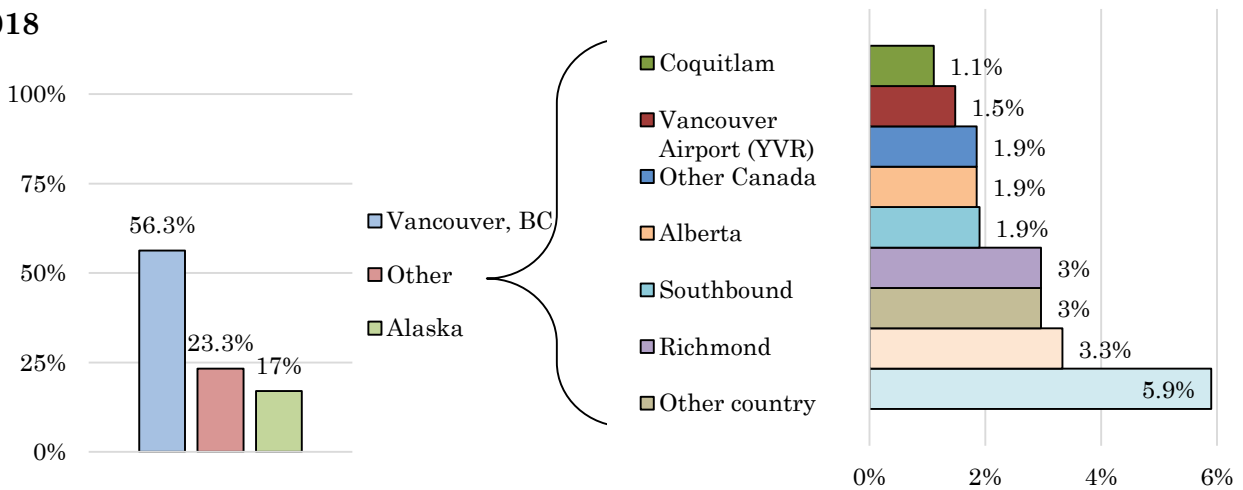
What are passengers' destinations?

Passengers were asked where they were ultimately headed on their cross-border trip. For passengers crossing northbound, top-of-mind answers were overwhelmingly Vancouver, BC and Alaska. A few survey respondents traveling northbound claimed to be traveling to southbound destinations and vice versa. It is possible that these bus passengers were flying out of Vancouver International Airport (YVR) or were taking a roundabout route. Compared to 2013, far fewer respondents said they were traveling to Vancouver.

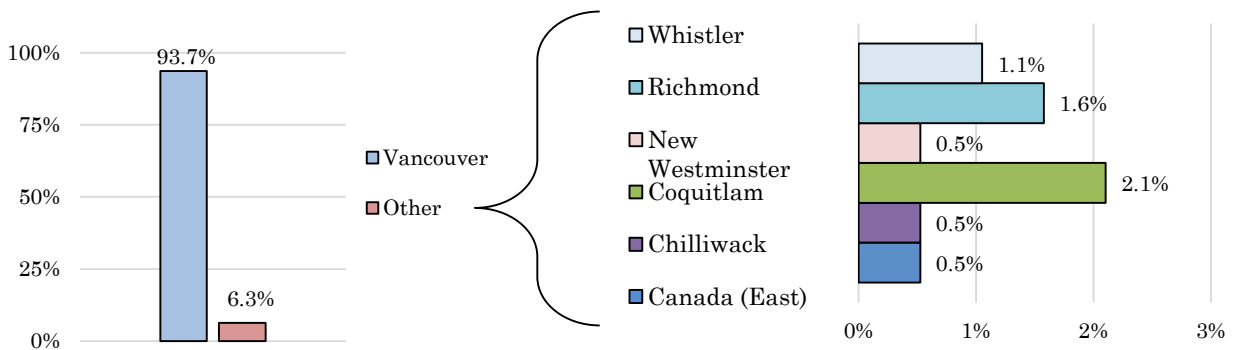
Note that in 2013, top-of-mind answers were given to the question "What is your destination?", whereas in 2018 respondents were asked their bus drop-off location and ultimate trip destination separately.

Northbound destinations²

2018



2013



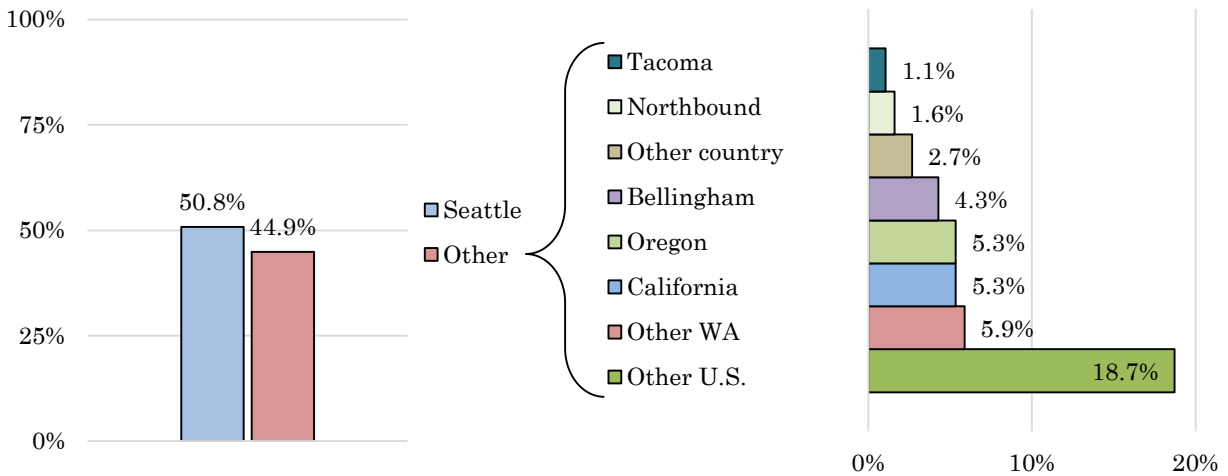
² During one survey day in 2018, a large number of charter buses headed to the Vancouver Cruise Terminal for a cruise to Alaska came through the port. This is likely the reason why Alaska was a more popular destination in 2018 than in 2013.

2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

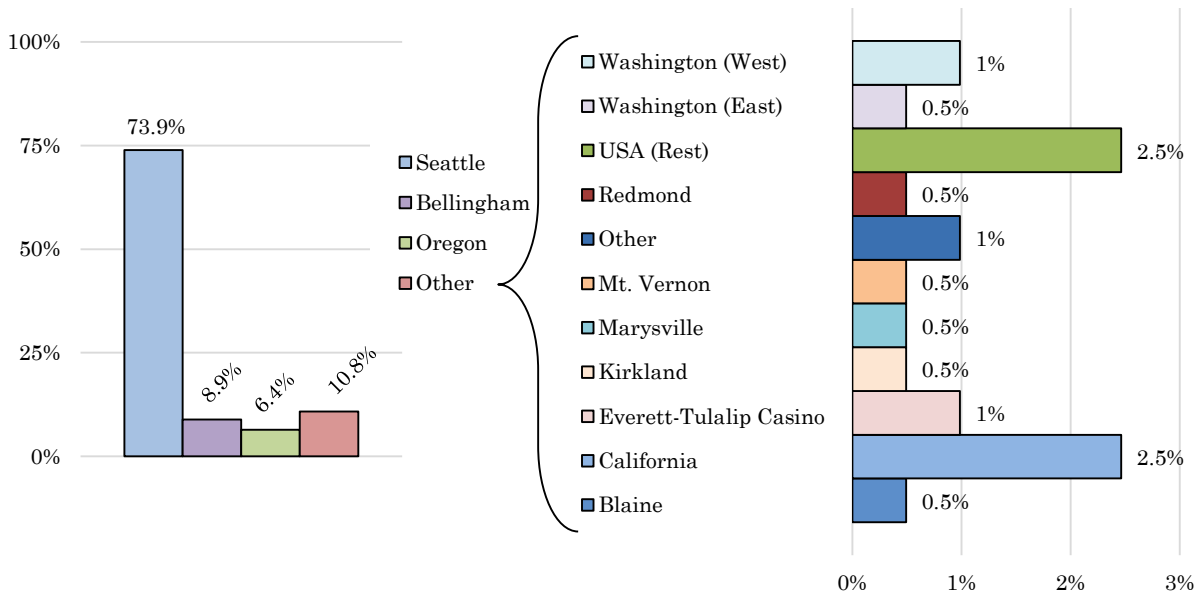
Southbound destinations

About half of southbound passengers said they were going to Seattle with others mainly traveling to Bellingham, Oregon, or California. Again, a few respondents claimed to be traveling to a northbound destination despite traveling southbound. Compared to 2013, fewer respondents said they were traveling to Seattle.

2018



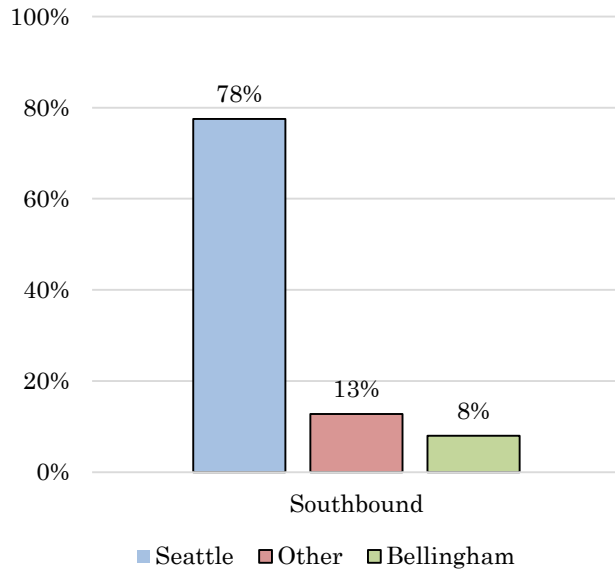
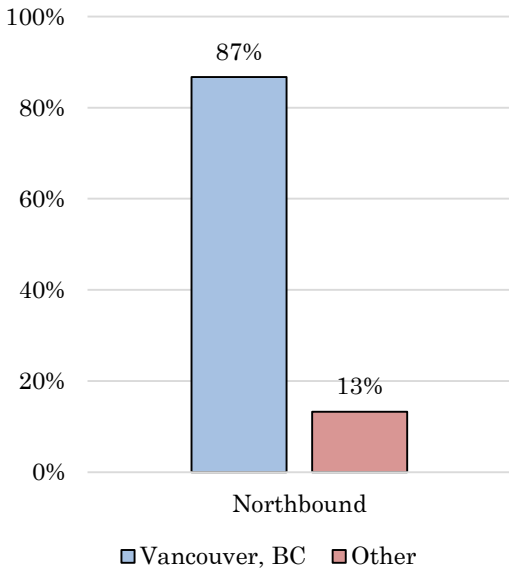
2013



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Passenger drop-off locations

Passengers were also asked where they planned to get dropped off from the bus as opposed to where they were ultimately traveling to on their cross-border trip. These answers were overwhelmingly Vancouver and Seattle.



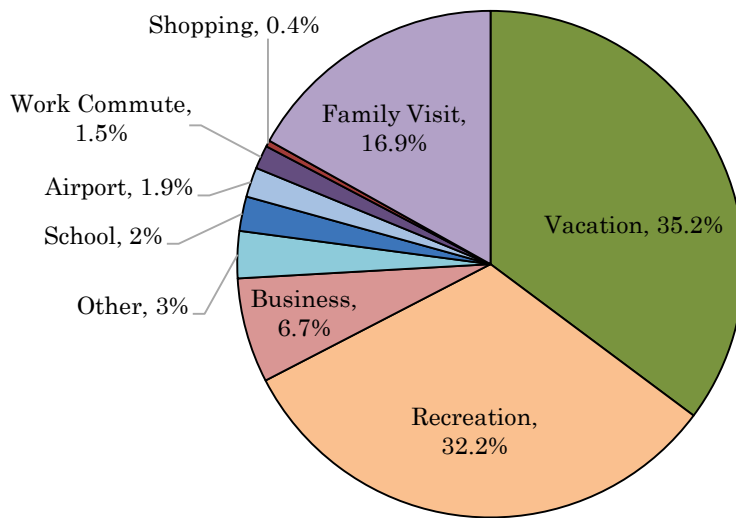
2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

What are the trip purposes for passengers?

Answers to the question, “What is the purpose of your cross-border trip?” were grouped into pre-defined categories. During the survey Recreation/Vacation was a single category. Recreation and Vacation were later segregated, with Vacation being any Recreation/Vacation trip lasting longer than two days and Recreation being shorter. Fewer people traveled for vacation in 2018 than 2013, but more crossed for recreation.

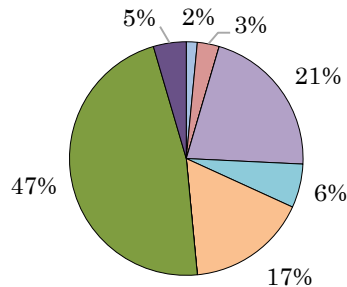
The first graph is all data for one direction and the three following graphs include data in one direction broken out by the passenger’s country of residence.

Northbound trip purposes



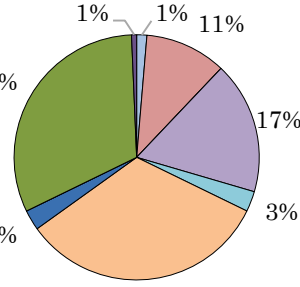
- Airport
- Business
- Doctor/Dentist
- Family Visit
- Other
- Recreation
- School
- Shopping
- Vacation
- Work Commute

Canada



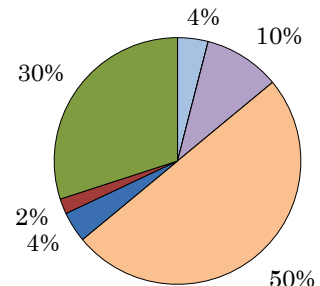
N = 66

USA



N = 149

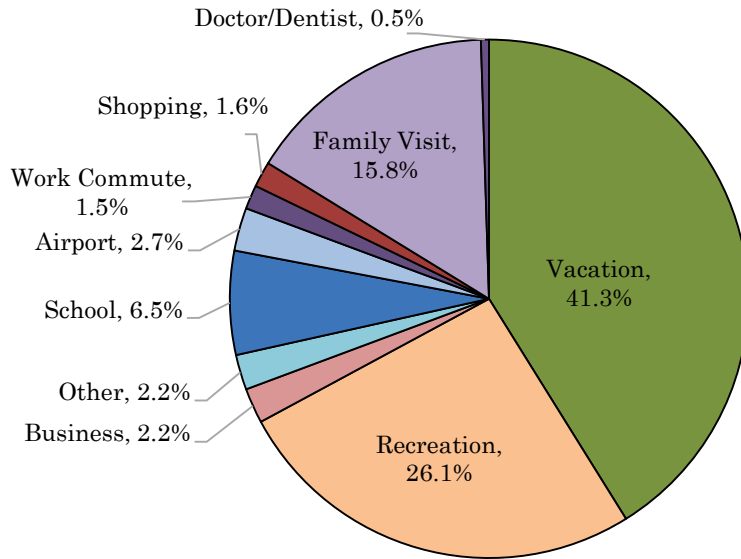
Other country



N = 50

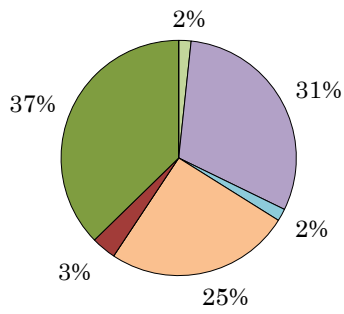
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Southbound trip purposes



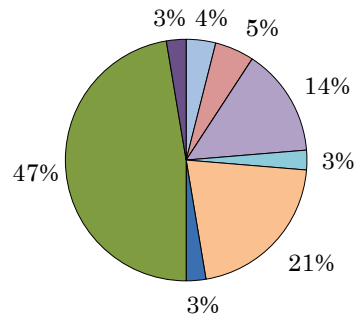
- Airport
- Business
- Doctor/Dentist
- Family Visit
- Other
- Recreation
- School
- Shopping
- Vacation
- Work Commute

Canada



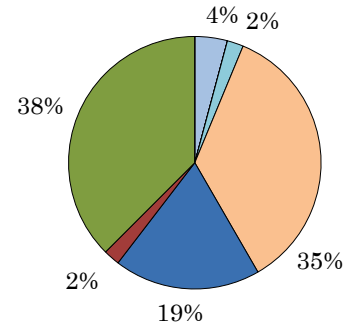
N = 59

USA



N = 76

Other country



N = 48

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Data used to answer the following questions came from bus driver responses to questions about their current routes.

How many buses planned on all passengers disembarking at their next stop after the border?

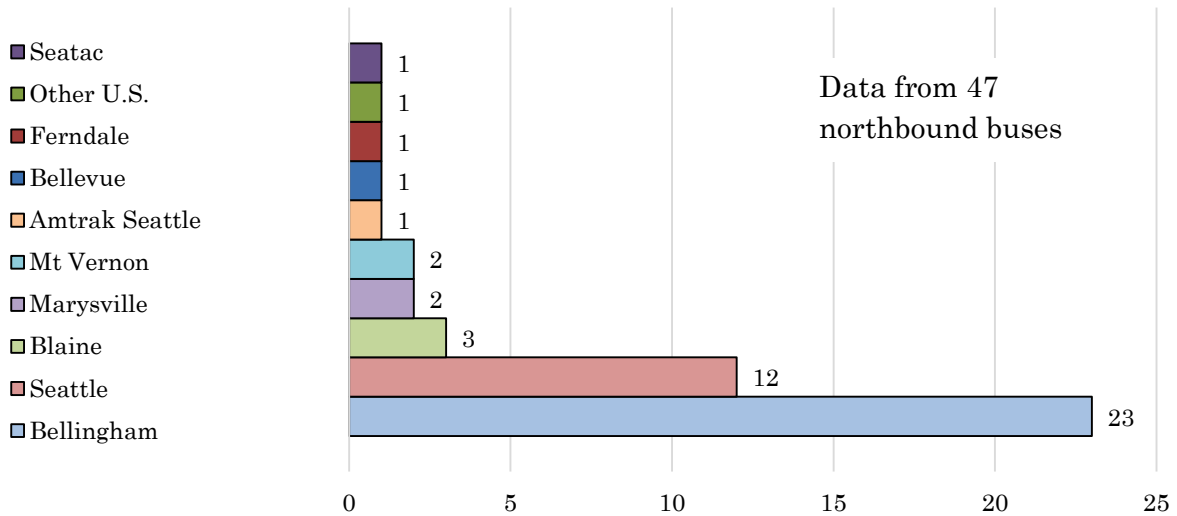
Direction	No	Yes
Northbound	44.9%	55.1%
Southbound	56.8%	43.2%

How many buses planned on picking up more passengers before their final stop?

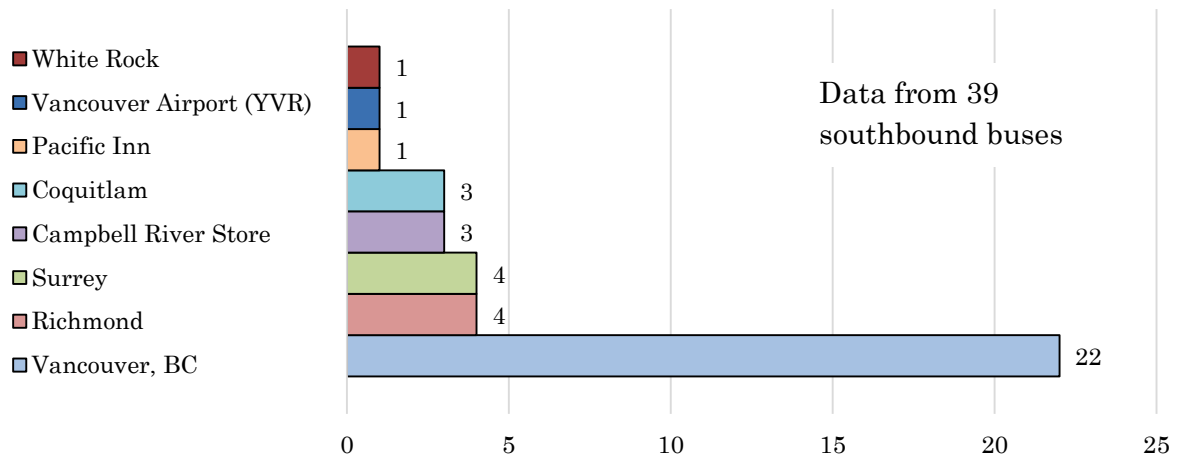
Direction	No	Yes
Northbound	100.0%	0.0%
Southbound	47.6%	52.4%

2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

What locations were listed as the *most recent stops* before coming to the border?
Northbound last stops before coming to border (bus count)

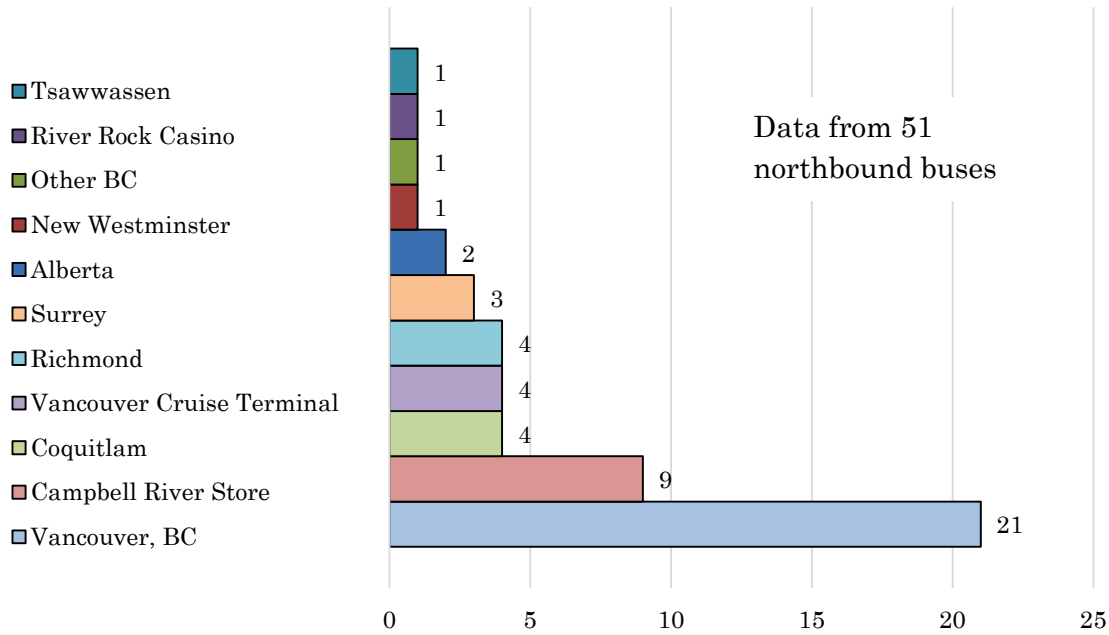


Southbound last stops before coming to border (bus count)

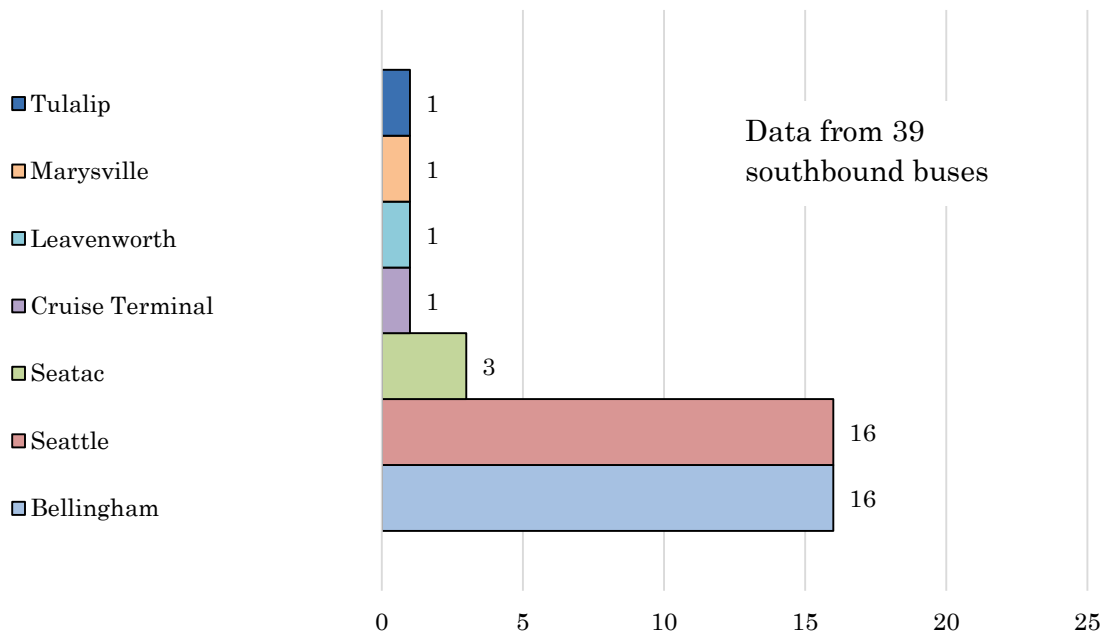


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What locations were listed as the *very next stops* after the border?
Northbound next stops after crossing to border (bus count)



Southbound next stops after crossing to border (bus count)



2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

III. Passenger processing

How long does it take to process each passenger?

It was recorded how long passengers were off their bus for inspection. This length of time was divided by the number of passengers for the bus, resulting in an estimated length of time it takes to process each passenger.

Processing time per passenger (min:sec)

2018

Direction	Average	Longest	Shortest
Northbound	0:31	1:38	0:03
Southbound	0:56	2:44	0:08

2013

Direction	Average	Longest	Shortest
Northbound	0:53	12:17	0:10
Southbound	1:10	6:00	0:09

Compared to 2013, processing times in 2018 were faster in both directions. The lengthiest processing times per passenger in 2013 were due to buses with low passenger counts. Note that the southbound inspection plaza at Pacific Highway POE allows for more opportunities for buses to unload passengers before reaching the inspection facility than northbound. This may inflate the southbound processing-time-per-passenger if unloaded passengers from multiple buses are going through inspection.

What is the average capacity per bus?

Data was taken from carrier information displayed on sides of vehicles or from drivers. The maximum capacity for both types of carriers in both directions was 56. In 2013, buses with an 84-person capacity were recorded traversing the border, but no such buses were encountered in 2018.

Bus capacity

Common Carrier

Direction	Average	Median	Highest	# of Buses
Northbound	53	56	56	29
Southbound	54	56	56	26

Charter

Direction	Average	Median	Highest	# of Buses
Northbound	36	36	56	29
Southbound	40	54	56	23

2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

What is the average number of passengers per bus, not counting empty buses?

Passengers per bus

Common Carrier

Direction	Average	Median	Highest
Northbound	36	36	55
Southbound	34	34	55

Charter

Direction	Average	Median	Highest
Northbound	26	22	54
Southbound	28	24	54

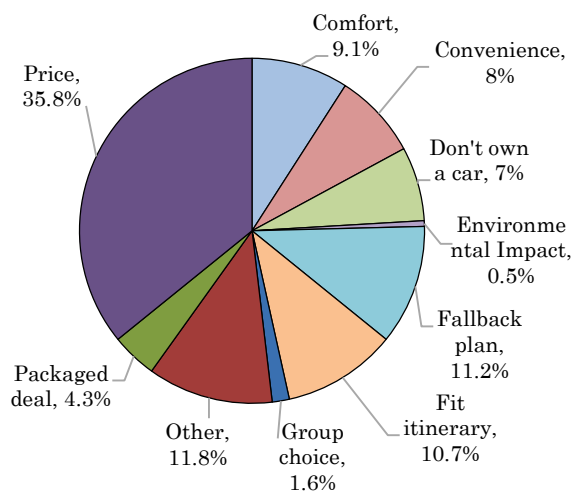
Why do people choose to use the bus?

Passenger responses were grouped into predefined categories. Many of the Northbound Charter passengers chose the bus because it was included in their cruise package. In 2018, Convenience was added as a category after a number of survey respondents named it as their reason for using the bus. In the 2013 survey, these responses may have been categorized as Fit Itinerary, Other, or Comfort. The 2013 survey also included the Destination category (which was folded into Fit Itinerary for 2018) and Amtrak Charter, which was not a response received in 2018.

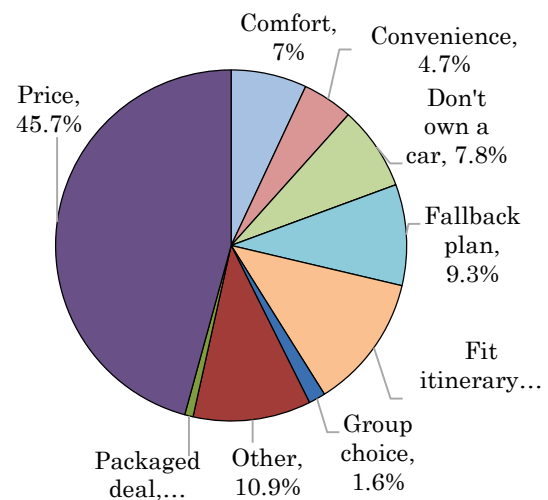
The 2018 responses were segregated by carrier type, because group choice and the inclusion of bus tickets in a package with other services is unusually high for respondents traveling on charter buses. Responses from 2013 are most consistent with Common Carrier responses in 2018.

2018 Common Carrier

Northbound bus choices



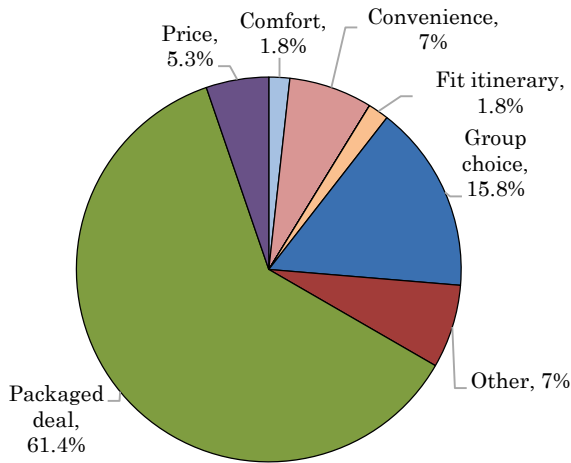
Southbound bus choices



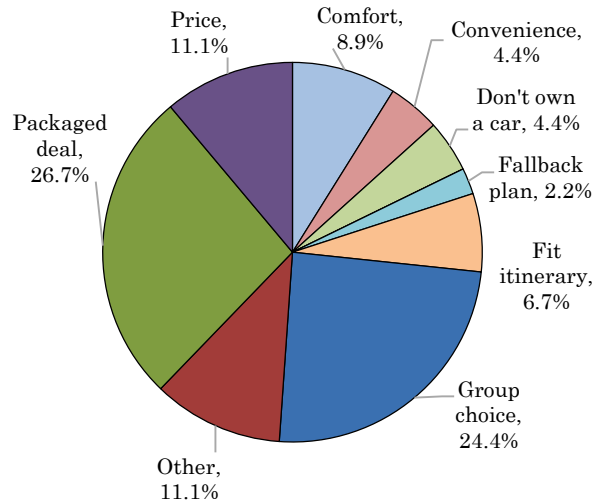
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2018 Charter

Northbound bus choices

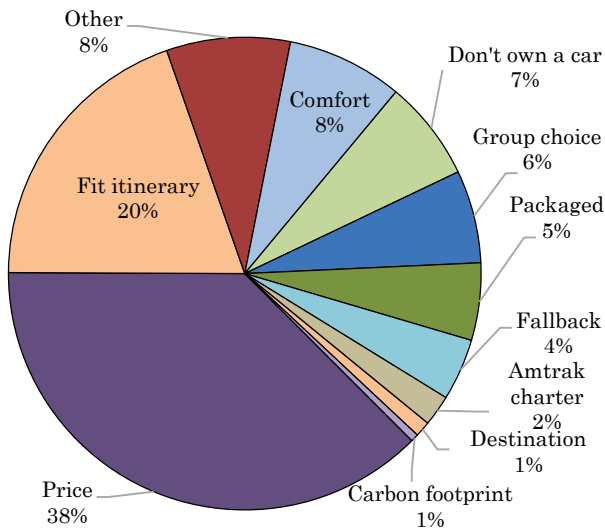


Southbound bus choices

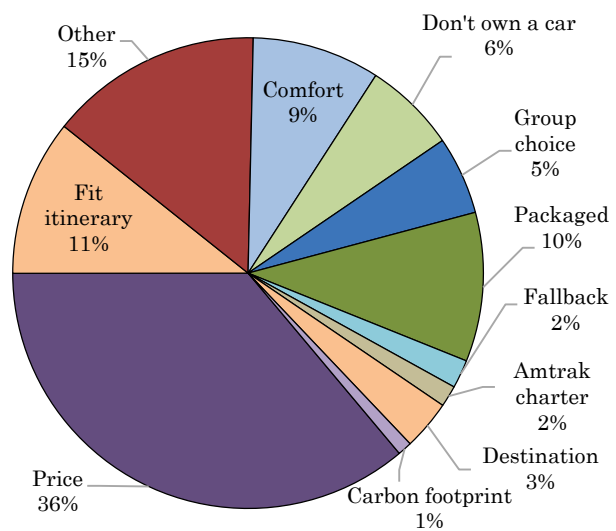


2013 Charter and Common Carrier³

Northbound



Southbound



³ Destination has been assigned the same color as Fit Itinerary to reflect that they were combined in 2018.

2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

Where do the passengers reside?

Northbound-passenger residences*

Residence Location	Count	%
Other U.S.	71	26.8%
Other country	50	18.9%
Vancouver, BC	42	15.8%
Seattle	34	12.8%
California	15	5.7%
Other WA	15	5.7%
Bellingham	8	3%
Other BC	8	3%
Other Canada	4	1.5%
Richmond	4	1.5%
Coquitlam	3	1.1%
Oregon	3	1.1%
Burnaby	2	0.8%
Alberta	1	0.4%
Burlington	1	0.4%
Everett	1	0.4%
Langley	1	0.4%
Tacoma	1	0.4%
Whistler	1	0.4%
TOTAL	265	

Country of Residence	Count	%
USA	149	55.2%
Canada	66	24.4%
Other country	55	20.4%
TOTAL	270	

Southbound-passenger residences*

Residence Location	Count	%
Other country	48	25.9%
Other U.S.	45	24.3%
Vancouver, BC	39	21.1%
Seattle	19	10.3%
Other BC	8	4.3%
Coquitlam	5	2.7%
California	4	2.2%
Other WA	4	2.2%
Bellingham	3	1.6%
Burnaby	3	1.6%
Oregon	3	1.6%
Other Canada	3	1.6%
Alberta	1	0.5%
TOTAL	185	

Country of Residence	Count	%
USA	79	42.2%
Canada	59	31.6%
Other country	49	26.2%
TOTAL	187	

*Note the geography of some of the location categories:

BC (other) = BC locations mentioned infrequently
 Other Canada = Locations outside of BC and Alberta
 Other WA = Washington locations mentioned infrequently
 Other U.S. = Locations east of WA, OR, and CA
 Other country = Country besides the U.S. and Canada

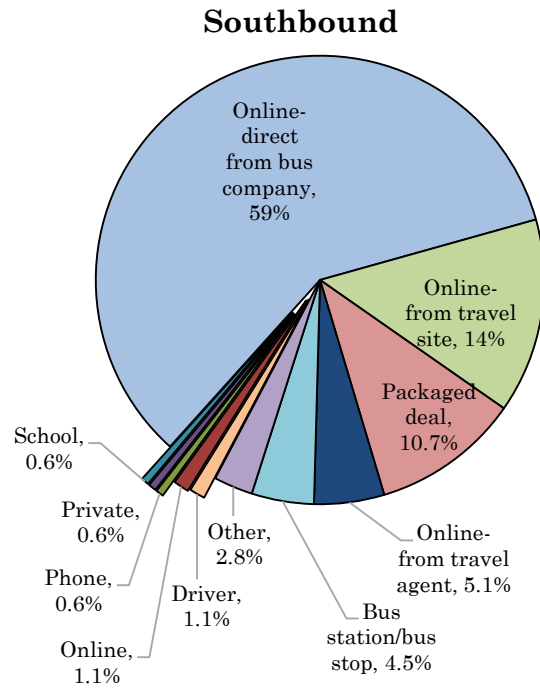
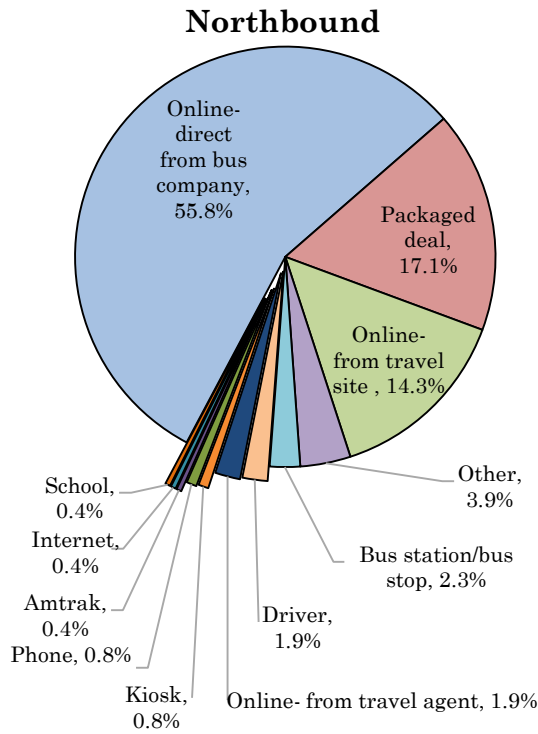
These descriptions also apply to the destination graphs.

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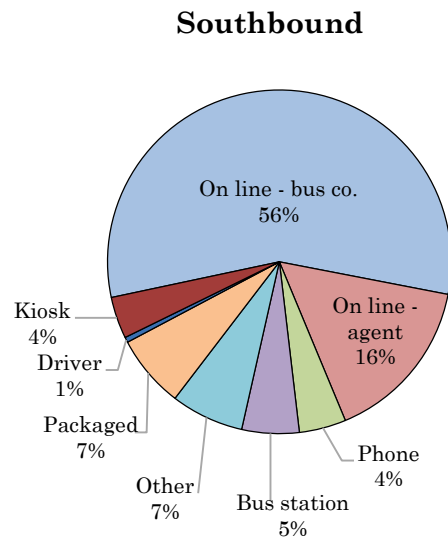
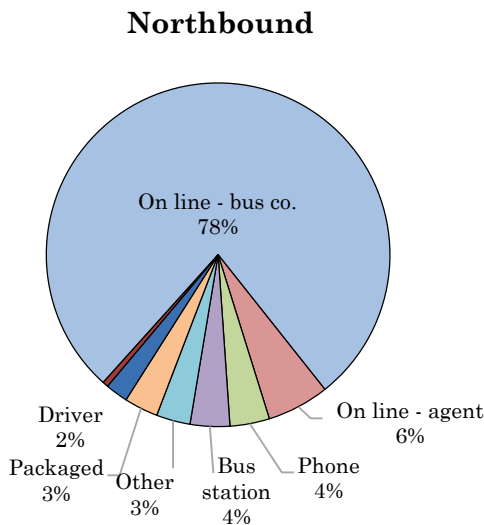
How do passengers buy their tickets?

The 2013 category *On line - bus co.* was split into *Online- direct form bus company* and *Online- from travel site* in 2018. Percentages remained approximately the same, with fewer travelers purchasing tickets through a travel agent and more receiving their tickets as part of a packaged deal with other services.

2018



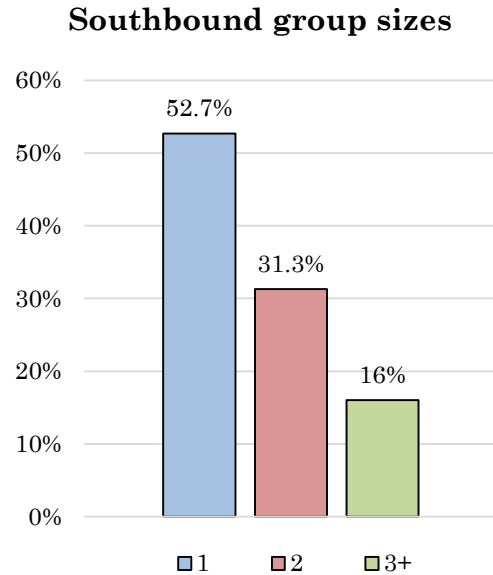
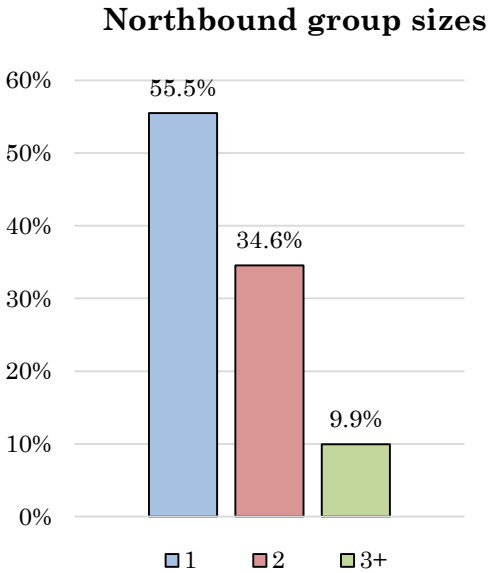
2013



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In what size groups do passengers travel?

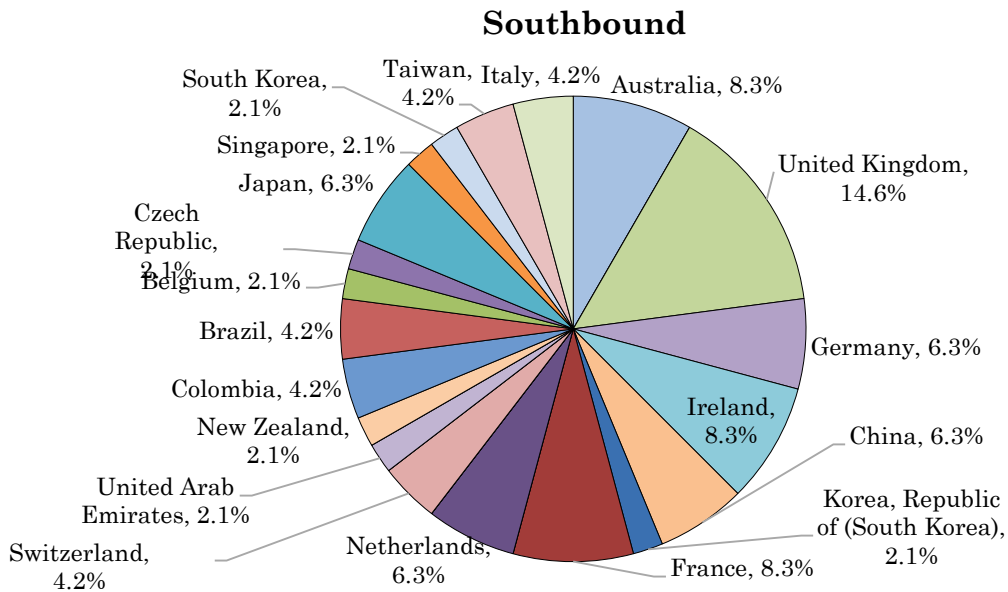
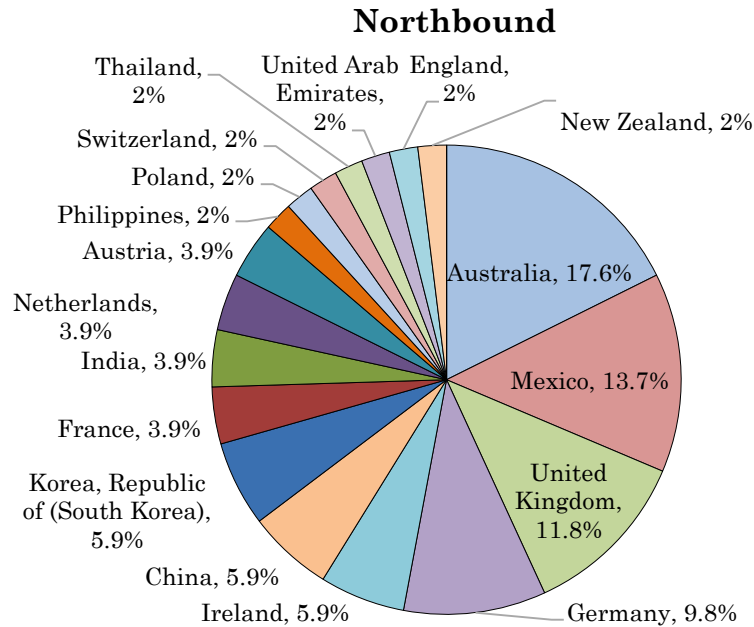
Those traveling in a group of “1” are traveling alone. Data does not include charter groups where the entire vehicle is occupied by one definable group. One outlier traveling northbound reported that they were traveling in a group of 30. This has been excluded from the data.



2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

Where were passengers from besides the U.S. and Canada?

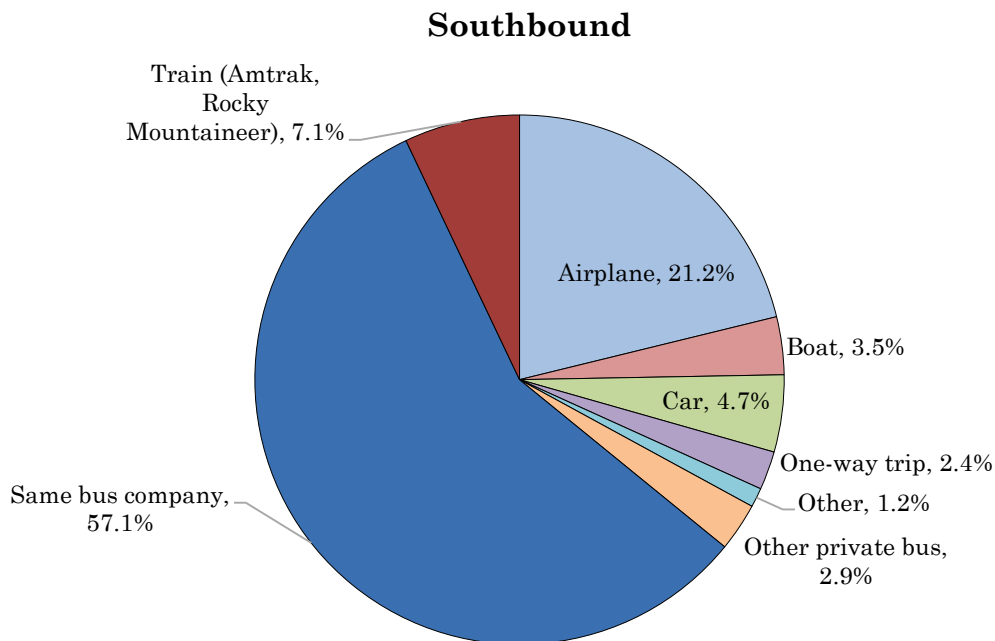
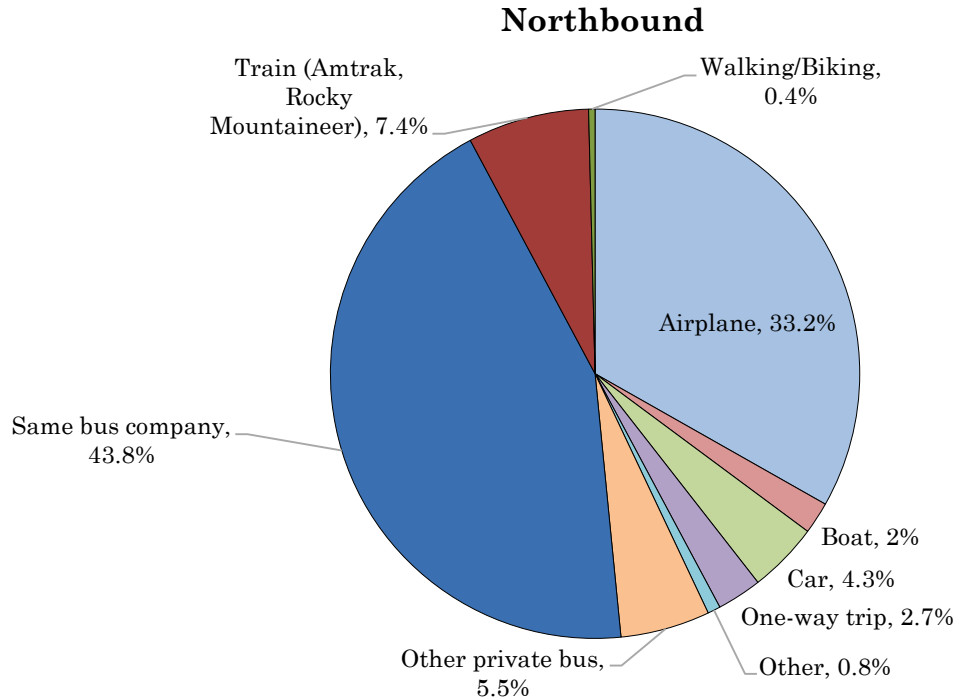
The following charts show the countries of residence for respondents who were not from the U.S. and Canada. Surveyors did encounter language difficulties during the survey, which may have affected the sample.



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How did respondents cross the border in the other direction?

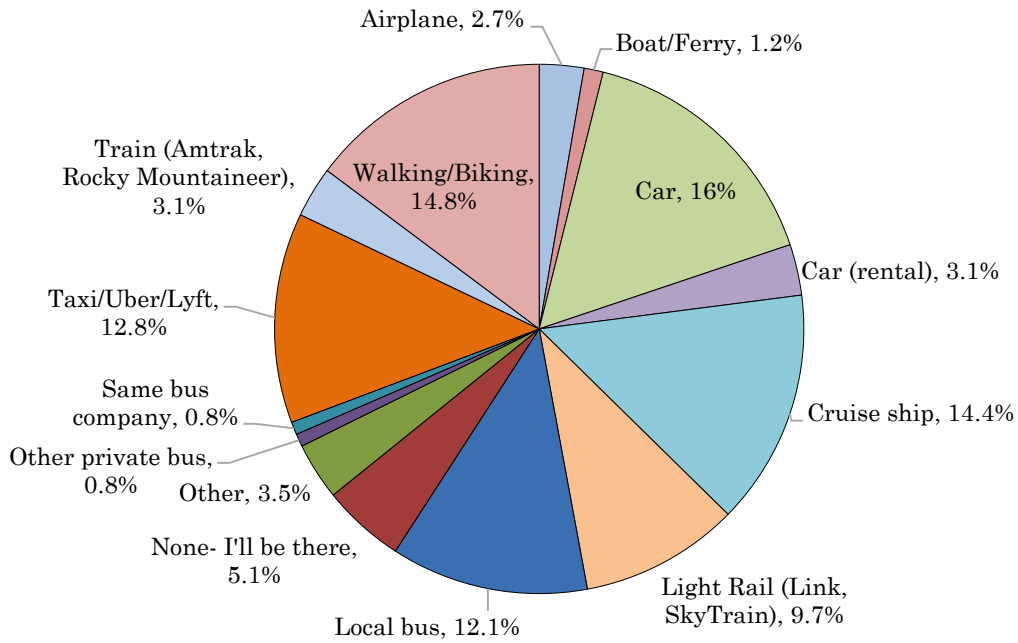
Bus passengers crossing the border for a temporarily visit were asked about the transportation mode they were using to cross the border on the other leg of their roundtrip.



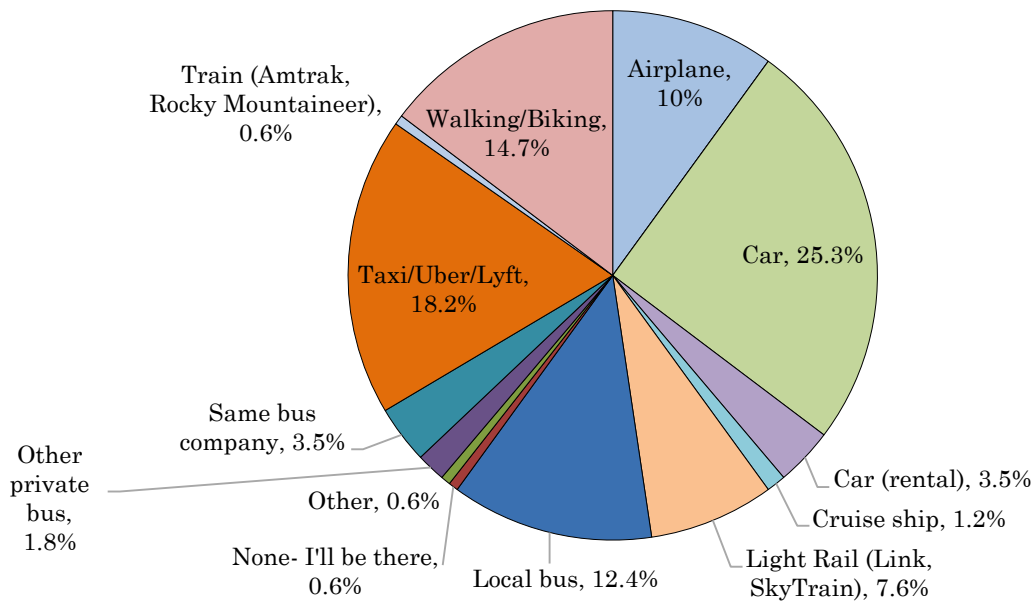
What mode of transportation did bus passengers plan to use once they disembarked the bus?

2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

Northbound



Southbound



2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

For more information...

Please direct any questions or comments regarding the 2018 IMTC Bus Survey to:

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Annex: The 2018 IMTC Bus Surveys

To more accurately observe buses at every stage of inspection, data collection in 2018 was split into four parts. Each of these parts was assigned to one or more persons. Most of the questions have a picklist with an optional short answer text box in case a response could not be fit into a category.

1) Queue End Arrival

Bus arrival at queue end: Arrival time

Timestamp

License Plate #

Short answer (text)

LP⁴ State/Province

Pick list: all 50 U.S. states and D.C., all Canadian provinces, and UNKNOWN

Carrier Name or other description

Long answer (text)

2) Inspection Arrival/Bus Info

Bus ARRIVAL at inspection building/plaza: Arrival time

Timestamp

Bus DEPARTURE from inspection area: Departure time

Timestamp

License Plate #

Short answer (text)

Bus ID #⁵

Integer

⁴ License plate.

⁵ Assigned by surveyors as the bus entered the inspection area.

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Is inspection area next to building already occupied by a bus?

Checkbox

Vehicle Type

Picklist: Bus, Car, Mini van, RV, Small bus/shuttle, Van

Carrier Name

Short answer (text)

Carrier Base City

Short answer (text)

Carrier Base State/Province

Pick list: all 50 U.S. states and D.C., all Canadian provinces, and UNKNOWN

Seating Capacity

Integer

Was luggage taken off the bus?

Yes/No

Did passengers disembark the bus?

Yes/No

All passengers off the bus: Disembark time

Timestamp

All passengers on the bus: Board time

Timestamp

Notes

Long answer (text)

3) Driver Interview

Bus ID #

Integer

2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

Bus description

Short answer (text)

Carrier type

Charter/Common Carrier/Other

Bus seating capacity

Integer

Passenger count

Integer

Previous stop before border?

Picklist with common destinations in the B.C. Lower Mainland south of and including Vancouver and destinations in Washington north of and including Tacoma. Included Oregon, California, Other BC, Other Canada, and Other U.S.

Next stop after border?

Picklist with common destinations in the B.C. Lower Mainland south of and including Vancouver and destinations in Washington north of and including Tacoma. Included Oregon, California, Other BC, Other Canada, and Other U.S.

All passengers off there?

Yes/No/(x)

In next stop the final stop?

Checkbox

Last city bus will reach on this trip?

Picklist with common destinations in the B.C. Lower Mainland south of and including Vancouver and destinations in Washington north of and including Tacoma. Included Oregon, California, Other BC, Other Canada, and Other U.S.

Any more passengers being picked up before the last stop?

Yes/No

2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

Will this bus make more cross-border trips today?

Yes/No

How many more?

Integer

Driver's remaining hours of service today

Integer

Notes

Long answer (text)

4) Passenger Survey

Bus ID #

Integer

Are you traveling with anyone else today?

Yes/No

Group size

Integer

Where do you live?

Picklist with common destinations in the B.C. Lower Mainland south of and including Vancouver and destinations in Washington north of and including Tacoma. Included Oregon, California, Other BC, Other Canada, and Other U.S.

Country of residence

Picklist with countries recognized by the United States and UNKNOWN.

What is the purpose of your trip across the border?

Picklist: Airport, Business, Church, Doctor/Dentist, Family Visit, Mail, Other, Purchase Gas, Recreation/Vacation,⁶School, Shopping, Work Commute, (Type own answer)

⁶ Recreation and Vacation were combined during the survey period, then separated later by duration of stay across the border.

2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

Where are you getting off the bus?

Picklist with common destinations in the B.C. Lower Mainland south of and including Vancouver and destinations in Washington north of and including Tacoma. Included Oregon, California, Other BC, Other Canada, and Other U.S.

When do you expect to get there?

Time, HR:MN:SC AM/PM

Where are you ultimately traveling to?

Picklist with common destinations in the B.C. Lower Mainland south of and including Vancouver and destinations in Washington north of and including Tacoma. Included Oregon, California, Other BC, Other Canada, and Other U.S.

Where did you get on the bus?

Picklist with common destinations in the B.C. Lower Mainland south of and including Vancouver and destinations in Washington north of and including Tacoma. Included Oregon, California, Other BC, Other Canada, and Other U.S.

What time did you get on the bus?

Time, HR:MN:SC AM/PM

Why are you using the bus for this trip?

Picklist: Comfort, Cruise, Destination, Don't own a car, Environmental Impact, Fallback plan, Fit itinerary, Group choice, Other, Packaged deal, Price, (Type own answer)⁷

Where did you buy your bus ticket?

Picklist: Bus station/bus stop, Driver, Kiosk, Online- direct from bus company, Online- from travel agent, Online- from travel site (e.g. Expedia, Kayak), Other, Packaged deal, Phone, (Type own answer)

⁷ Although 'Convenience' was not an option given during the survey, a large number of respondents gave convenience as an answer, resulting in it being added as a category after the survey was over. Surveyors recorded 'convenience' answers by typing it in.

2018 IMTC Passenger Vehicle Survey: Bus Survey Component

How long were you/will you be out of country?⁸

Integer and a time unit chosen from Hours/Days/Weeks/Months

How are you going to return across the border? - OR - How did you initially cross the border?

Picklist: Airplane, Boat, Car, Car (rental), One-way trip, Other, Other private bus, Same bus company, Train (Amtrak, Rocky Mountaineer), Walking/Biking, (Type own answer)

What mode of transportation will you use when you get off the bus?

Picklist: Airplane, Boat/Ferry, Car, Car (rental), Cruise ship, Light Rail (Link, Skytrain), Local bus, None- I'll be there, Other, Other private bus, Same bus company, Taxi/Uber/Lyft, Train (Amtrak, Rocky Mountaineer), Walking/Biking, (Type own answer)

⁸ For respondents traveling to Alaska, this answer was generally less than a day, meaning some records were marked as recreation when they may actually be vacation.