



Department for Transport

Quarterly Bus Statistics: Great Britain Q1 (Jan-Mar) 2015

About this release

This quarterly release covers local bus passenger journeys and fares. It provides the most up-to-date statistics for monitoring trends in the local bus sector.

This release relates largely to England, in line with the coverage of DfT bus policy. Statistical tables which cover the whole of Great Britain, are available online.

Quarterly passenger journey figures are based on data collected from a panel survey of the largest bus operators, and are seasonally adjusted. The bus fares index is compiled from data provided by a representative sample of around 100 operators and Transport for London (TfL).

We want your feedback

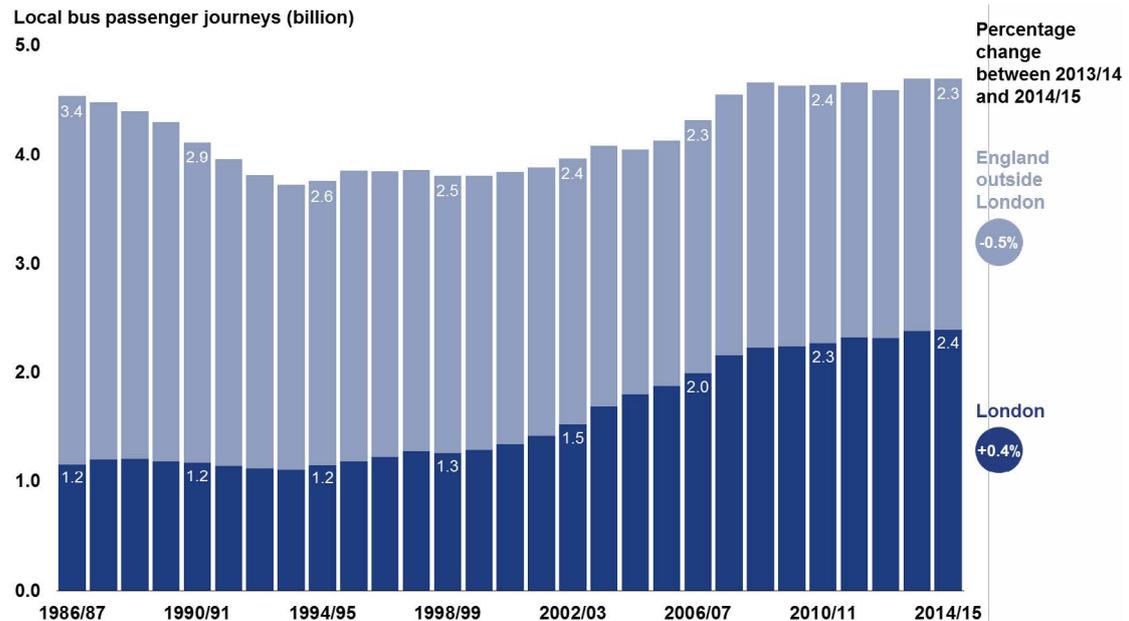
The Department for Transport frequently reviews the statistics it produces. In this release, we are seeking user feedback on the continuation of the quarterly bus statistics presented here. Please see the end of this release for details on the options proposed and how to respond.

The provisional number of local bus passenger journeys in England was 4.70 billion in the year to end March 2015, unchanged compared with a year earlier.

Bus use in London continued to increase while gradually decreasing in England outside London. These changes maintain the general trend since 2012/13 when bus use in London overtook bus use in England outside of London (see chart 1).

In the past year to March 2015, local bus fares have increased by 3.3%, faster than the annual all items Retail Prices Index rate of inflation (0.9%). Between March 2010 and March 2015, the average annual percentage change in bus fares was 4.5% higher than the average annual rate of inflation (3.1%).

Chart 1: Local bus passenger journeys in England outside London and London, 1986/87 to 2014/15 (p)



Summary

These are the first provisional estimates for the number of bus passenger journeys in the 2014/15 financial year. Final figures will be released in the annual 2014/15 bus statistics release in September this year.

Table 1 summarises the latest quarterly and year to end annual figures.

Figures for England are broken down into London, metropolitan areas and non-metropolitan areas.

Table 1: Summary of latest quarterly and year to end local bus passenger journeys in England and bus fares index

	Local bus passenger journeys		Bus Fares index
	Year to end Mar 2015 (compared with previous year)	Q1 (Jan-Mar) 2015 (compared with Q1 2014)	Mar 2015 (compared with Mar 2014)
London	2.39 billion: ▲ 0.4%	0.60 billion: ▼ 1.6%	↔ 2.7%
English metropolitan areas	1.00 billion: ▼ 1.1%	0.25 billion: ▼ 0.6%	↔ 3.7%
English non-metropolitan areas	1.30 billion: ↔ 0.0%	0.33 billion: ↔ 0.0%	↔ 3.6%
England	4.70 billion: ↔ 0.0%	1.18 billion: ▼ 0.9%	↔ 3.3%
England outside London	2.31 billion: ▼ 0.5%	0.58 billion: ▼ 0.3%	↔ 3.6%
Scotland	0.42 billion: ▼ 1.1%	0.10 billion: ▼ 3.6%	↔ 2.3%
Wales	0.10 billion: ▼ 3.3%	0.03 billion: ▼ 4.1%	↔ 4.2%
Great Britain	5.22 billion: ▼ 0.2%	1.31 billion: ▼ 1.2%	↔ 3.2%

Local bus passenger journeys

Since 2008/09, bus passenger journeys in England have remained broadly stable with growth in London offsetting a gradual decline outside of London (see chart 2). In January to March 2015, bus passenger journeys decreased in London and metropolitan areas while remaining flat in non-metropolitan areas when compared with the same quarter in 2013/14.

Index: 2004/05 = 100, seasonally adjusted

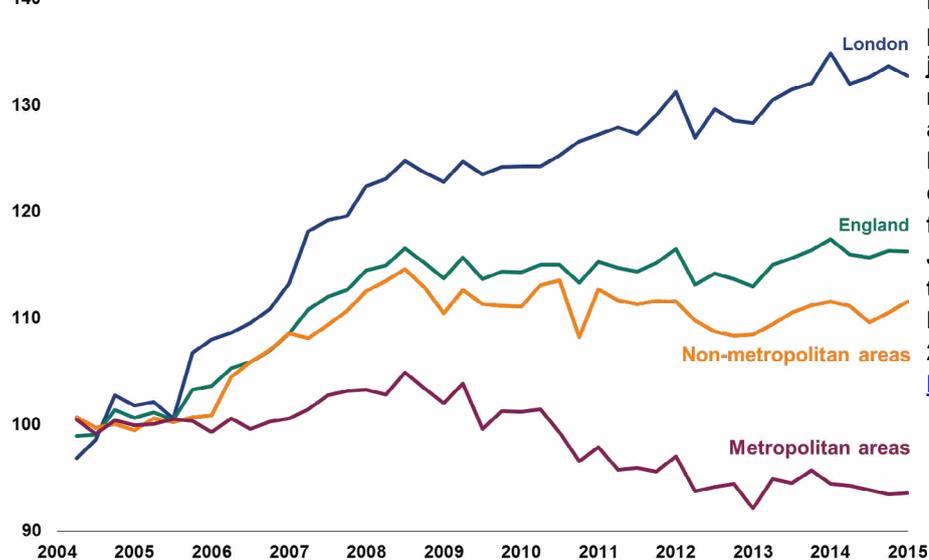


Chart 2:
Local bus passenger journeys by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly from April-June 2004 to January-March 2015 (table [BUS0106b](#))

Statistical tables

Additional tables are available online as part of the bus statistics series.

Passenger numbers can be found in table [BUS0103](#) (annual) and [BUS0106](#) (quarterly).

Bus fares index can be found in tables [BUS0405](#) (annual) and [BUS0415](#) (quarterly).

Bus usage

The number of bus passenger journeys (with each boarding of a bus counted as one journey) is the key measure of bus demand.

Seasonal adjustment

Estimates of the number of bus passenger journeys are seasonally adjusted. This removes the effects of seasonal factors and the arrangement of the calendar so that quarterly comparisons can be made.

Local bus fares

Local bus fares in England increased by 61% on average between March 2005 and March 2015¹. Chart 3 shows that bus fares have risen at a faster rate in metropolitan areas (71%) than in non-metropolitan areas (44%). The all items Retail Prices Index has risen by 35% over the same period, which means that bus fares have risen in real terms.

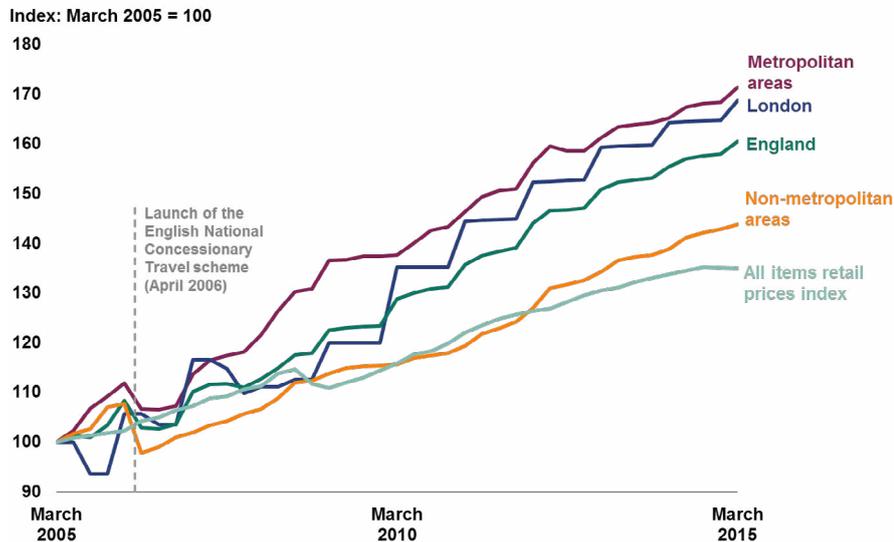


Chart 3: Local bus fares index by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly since March 2005, current prices (table [BUS0415a](#))

Local bus fares index

The local bus fares index measures the percentage change in bus operator receipts from passengers as a result of any fare changes. These figures provide an estimate of the change in the average cost of bus travel to the passenger but not the actual fare levels paid.

Bus fares in London are set by Transport for London.

Outside London, fare changes will largely reflect the commercial decisions of bus operators, which in turn may reflect changes in public funding. For example, Bus Service Operators Grant, a central government subsidy to bus operators based on fuel consumption, was cut by 20% in England in April 2012.

The average annual percentage change in bus fares was 4.5% between March 2010 and March 2015, similar to the average annual increase in rail fares (4.3%), as shown in chart 4. In the past year to March 2015, local bus fares and rail fares have increased by 3.3% and 2.8% respectively and both faster than the rate of inflation (0.9%). Bus fares have also increased at a higher rate than the price of motoring over the past year to March 2015. The price of purchasing a motor vehicle decreased by 1.6% and the price of petrol and oil dropped by 13.4%.

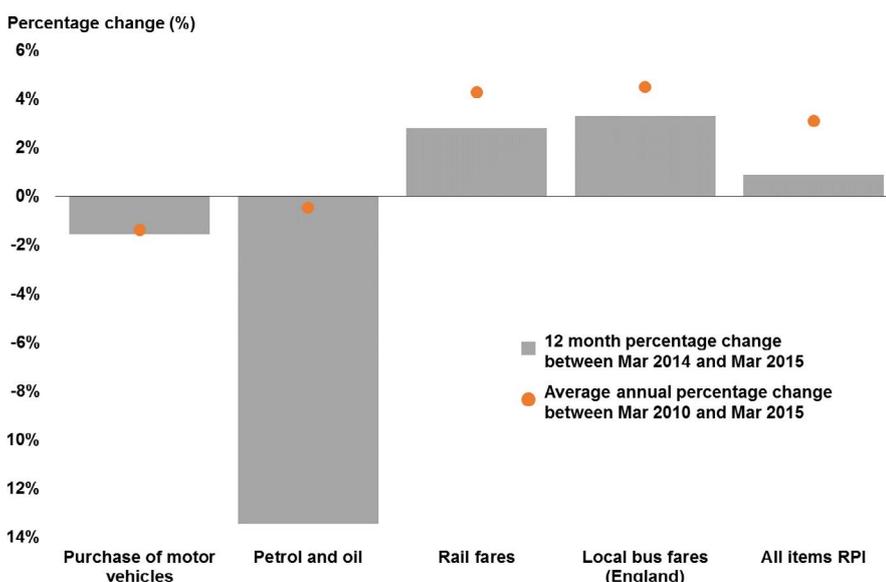


Chart 4: Percentage change in RPI and transport indices: UK, March 2010 to March 2015

Related information

A longer time series of annual figures is available in table [BUS0405](#)

Monthly inflation figures are published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), with a detailed breakdown by category including bus/coach fares, rail fares and motoring costs.

An annual summary of the ONS transport indices is available in table [TSGB1308](#).

¹ The launch of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) in April 2006 resulted in some passengers who had previously paid fares being able to travel for free. As the Bus fares index reflects changes in the average costs of bus travel across all users of bus services, the ENCTS launch resulted in a one-off downward step-change in the index between March 2006 and June 2006.

Quarterly bus statistics feedback

The Department for Transport frequently reviews the statistics it produces to ensure the resources allocated to statistical activities are meeting user needs and ensuring burdens on data providers are minimised. As part of this ongoing commitment we are seeking user feedback on the continuation of the quarterly bus statistics presented in this statistical release.

Quarterly bus statistics are published four times a year in March, June, September and December. The statistics are collected from a panel of the largest bus operators and Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) in Great Britain.

The continuation of quarterly bus statistics - in any format - will be judged against users need for the latest information on the bus market in Great Britain. With this in mind, we propose three options for which we are inviting feedback:

- **Option 1:** continue collecting quarterly bus data from bus operators and publish a statistical release with accompanying data tables (no change option)
- **Option 2:** continue with collecting quarterly bus data from bus operators and PTEs and publishing in spreadsheet tables but stop publishing an accompanying statistical release
- **Option 3:** stop collecting quarterly bus statistics from bus operators and PTEs and therefore no longer publish a statistical release and accompanying spreadsheet tables

The proposed changes outlined above will not affect the quarterly collection and publication of local bus fares data. However, it is worth noting that as the local bus fares data is currently referenced in the quarterly bus statistics release, choosing option 2 or option 3 above will mean bus fares data will not be accompanied by an associated statistical release.

The proposed changes will not affect the statistics collected and published from DfT's annual bus PSV survey.

We welcome any feedback on the options proposed above, or any other suggestions to improve the bus statistics we publish. The questions below

are intended as a guide if you wish to structure your response but we happy to receive more open feedback as well. Responses can be emailed to bus.statistics@dft.gsi.gov.uk or by completing a short online form, available here: <http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/DIC1B/>. The deadline for sending responses is 16 July 2015. The outcome of this feedback will be published with the 2014/15 annual bus statistics release.

- **Question 1:** what use do you make of the quarterly bus statistics?
- **Question 2:** what if any of the proposed options presented do you think it is best for DfT to implement, and why?
- **Question 3:** Do you have any other suggestions for, or thoughts on, bus statistics more generally at DfT?

Background information

Data sources, strengths and weaknesses

Estimates of local bus passenger journeys are based on a quarterly panel of the 18 largest non-metropolitan operators, Passenger Transport Executives (for metropolitan areas) and Transport for London (TfL). Data from the quarterly panel is scaled to annual figures from the department's main annual survey of over 500 PSV operators, and figures are then seasonally adjusted. For January to March 2015, responses were received from all of the 18 panel members, covering over 90% of the bus journeys made in Great Britain. Quarterly figures are subject to revision due to the nature of the seasonal adjustment, and scaling to annual figures. However, these will typically be minor and not affect overall patterns shown.

The quarterly local bus fares index is based on a sample survey of around 100 bus operators and TfL, who supply data each quarter. The index measures change in the 'gross yield'. This is the change in passenger receipts (excluding concessionary fare reimbursement and subsidies from government), which would result from a fares change, assuming no change in passenger numbers. In total the operators selected cover around 85% of passenger receipts in Great Britain, and the sample design ensures operators in each type of area are adequately represented. The survey response rate is high, almost 100% for the last four quarters.

Data on actual fare levels are not collected. The index assumes no change in passenger behaviour and therefore may not reflect changes in the average fare actually paid (for example if passengers switch to a different

Further details

The notes and definitions document is available at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/bus-statistics

National statistics

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs.

Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-buses

ticket type, or choose not to travel, as a result of fare changes).

Users and uses of these statistics

Within DfT, quarterly bus statistics are used to inform bus policy decisions, for ministerial briefing and to answer public enquiries. Outside DfT, passenger journeys figures are used as a measure of the overall health of the industry, for example by private research organisations, and are often reported in the trade press. Bus fares data are used by the Office for National Statistics in calculating the Retail and Consumer Price Indices and in the National Accounts.

Next update

Statistics for April to June 2015 are due to be published in September 2015.