



Department for Transport

Quarterly Bus Statistics: Great Britain Q3 (July - September) 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).

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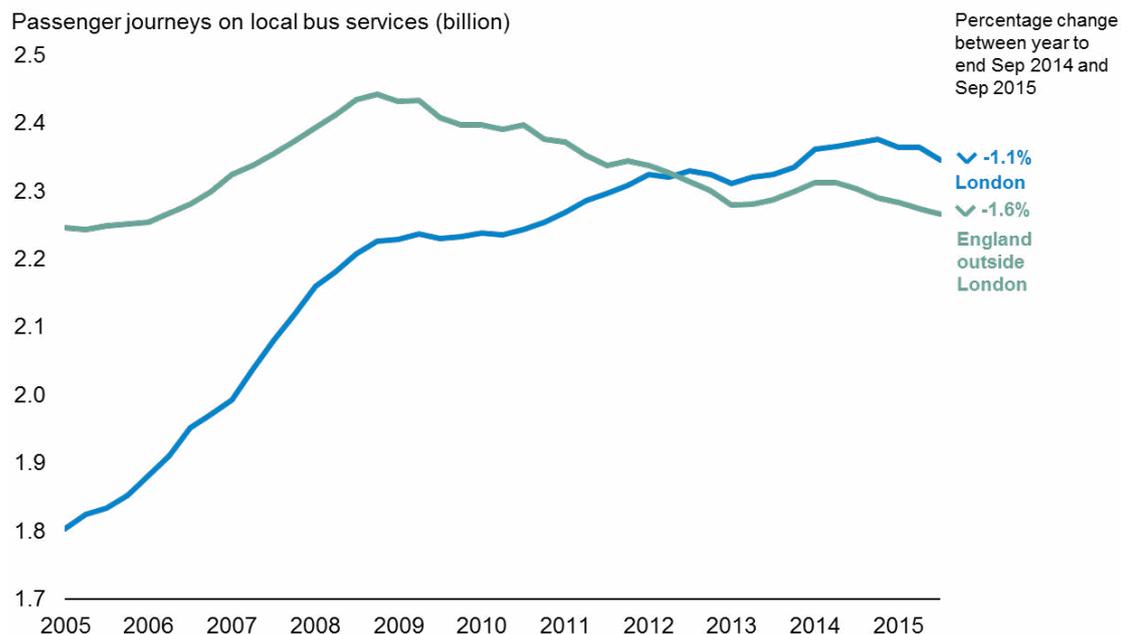
The number of local bus passenger journeys in England was 4.61 billion in the year to end September 2015, a 1.3% decrease when compared with a year earlier.

Over the same period, the downward trend in bus use in England outside London continued but in London, in a change to the long-term upward trend, bus use decreased by 1.1% (see chart 1).

The decline in bus use in London is likely to be due to increased congestion and road works. Road congestion statistics, also published by the Department for Transport, show that average vehicle speeds in London have decreased during 2015.

In the past year to September 2015, local bus fares in England have increased by 3.0%, faster than the annual all items Retail Prices Index rate of inflation (0.8%).

Chart 1: Local bus passenger journeys in England outside London and London, year to end March 2005 to year to end September 2015



Summary

Table 1 summarises the latest quarterly and year to end annual figures. Figures for England are broken down into London, metropolitan areas (the six former metropolitan counties of Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire) and non-metropolitan areas (the rest, covering shire counties and unitary authorities).

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

	Local bus passenger journeys (billion)		Bus Fares index
	Year to end Sep 2015 (compared with previous year)	Q3 (Jul-Sep) 2015 (compared with Q3 2014)	Sep 2015 (compared with Sep 2014)
London	2.35 ⬇️ -1.1%	0.58 ⬇️ -3.0%	⬆️ 2.7%
English metropolitan areas	0.99 ⬇️ -2.2%	0.24 ⬇️ -2.6%	⬆️ 3.3%
English non-metropolitan areas	1.28 ⬇️ -1.2%	0.32 ⬇️ -0.4%	⬆️ 3.0%
England	4.61 ⬇️ -1.3%	1.14 ⬇️ -2.2%	⬆️ 3.0%
England outside London	2.27 ⬇️ -1.6%	0.56 ⬇️ -1.4%	⬆️ 3.1%
Scotland	0.41 ⬇️ -2.8%	0.10 ⬇️ -1.6%	⬆️ 3.5%
Wales	0.10 ⬇️ -5.2%	0.02 ⬇️ -3.5%	⬆️ 1.1%
Great Britain	5.12 ⬇️ -1.5%	1.26 ⬇️ -2.2%	⬆️ 3.0%

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).

Road congestion statistics by local authority can be found in table section [CGN02](#).

Local bus passenger journeys

In July to September, bus use decreased in London, metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas when compared with the same quarter in 2014 (see table 1). Chart 2 shows the three consecutive quarters of declining bus use in London in 2015. In the latest quarter, however, bus use in London remained 28% higher than in 2004/05. Over the long term, bus use in England has remained broadly stable with growth in London offsetting a gradual decline in England outside of London.

Index: 2004/05 = 100, seasonally adjusted

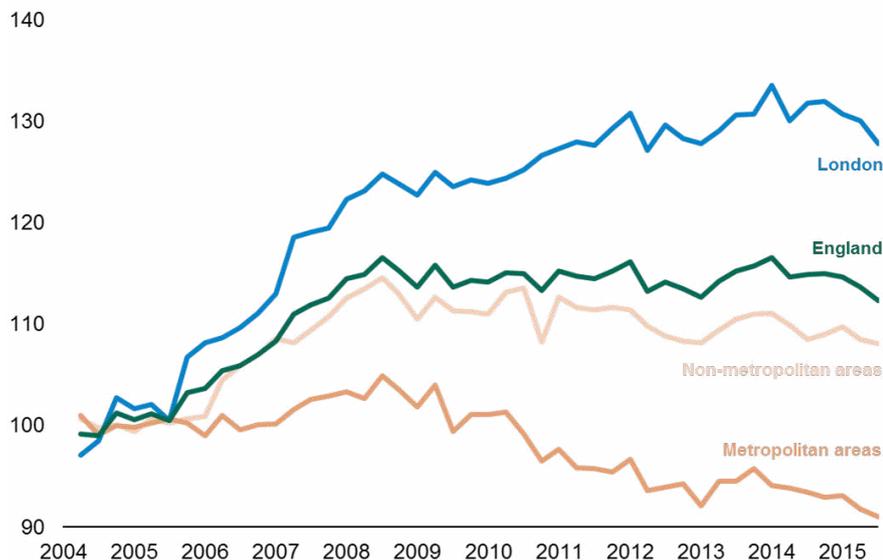


Chart 2: Local bus passenger journeys by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly from April-June 2004 to July to September 2015 (table [BUS0106b](#))

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 62% on average between March 2005 and September 2015¹. Chart 3 shows that bus fares have risen at a faster rate in metropolitan areas (74%) than in non-metropolitan areas (46%). The all items Retail Prices Index has risen by 36% over the same period, which means that bus fares have risen in real terms.

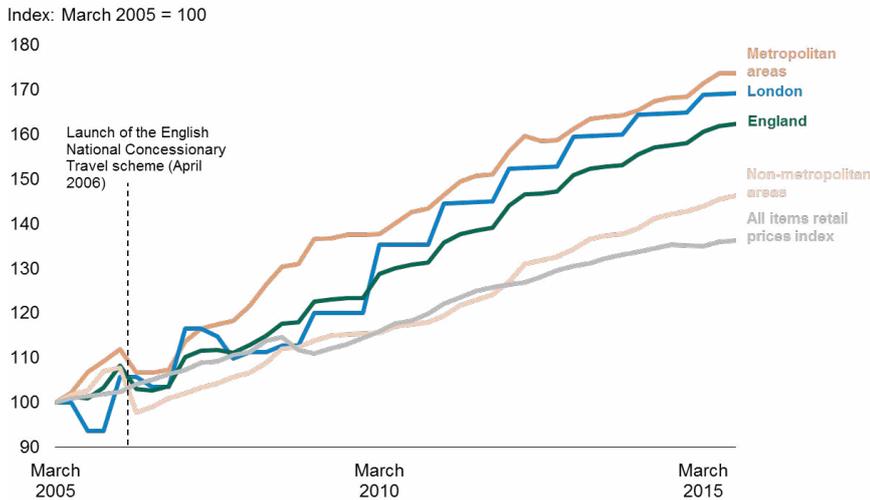


Chart 3: Local bus fares index by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly since March 2005, current prices (table [BUS0415a](#))

The average annual percentage change in bus fares was 4.4% between September 2010 and September 2015, similar to the average annual increase in rail fares (4.2%), see chart 4. In the past year to September 2015, local bus fares and rail fares have increased by 3.0% and 1.9% respectively, and both faster than the rate of inflation (0.8%). Bus fares have also increased at a higher rate than the price of motoring over the past year to September 2015. The price of purchasing a motor vehicle decreased by 3.8% and the price of petrol and oil dropped by 14.8%.

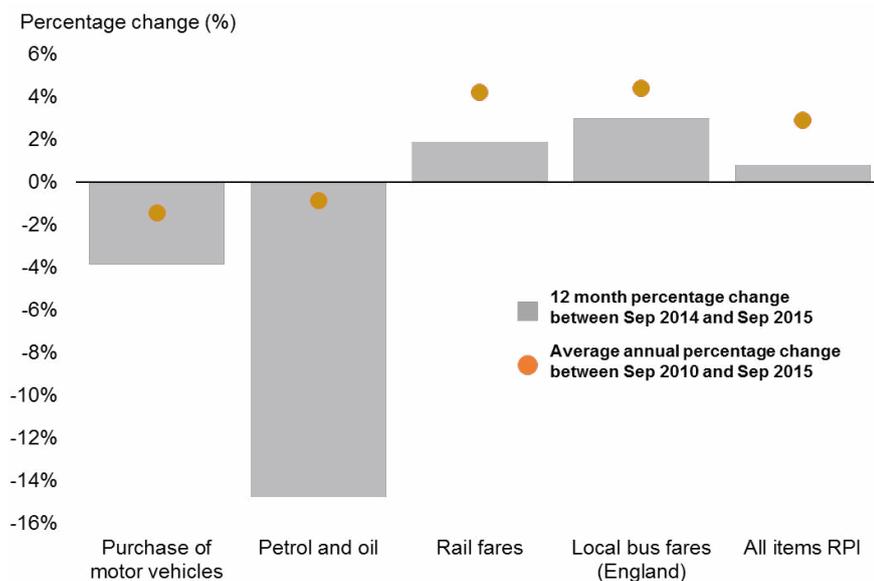


Chart 4: Percentage change in RPI and transport indices: UK, September 2010 to September 2015

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.

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.

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 July to September 2015, responses were received from 16 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 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.

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

Next update

Following the [user feedback exercise](#) on the quarterly bus statistics, DfT will continue to publish quarterly bus data in online spreadsheet tables.

A statistical release will accompany data tables in Q1 January to March (for release in June) and Q3 July to September (for release in December). For the Q4 October to December 2015 update on 15 March 2016, the online spreadsheet tables ([BUS0106](#) and [BUS0415](#)) will be updated but there will be no accompanying statistical release.