



Department for Transport

Quarterly Bus Statistics: England Q1 (January to March) 2018

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 that 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 4.38 billion in the year ending March 2018, a 1.4% decrease when compared with a year earlier.

Bus use in England outside London declined by 2.2% over the same period, continuing the decline since 2009, and is now 11% lower than the peak in the year ending December 2008. In London, bus use decreased by 0.6% in the latest year but remains 3% higher than in the year ending March 2008.

In the past year to March 2018, local bus fares increased by 2.8%, faster than the all items Consumer Prices Index rate of inflation (2.5%).

Local bus passenger journeys

4.38 billion journeys **↓ 1.4%**
in England in year to Mar 18 since year to Mar 17

Local Bus Fares index

↑ 2.8% Local Bus Fares index in England since Mar 17
↑ 2.5% All items Consumer Prices Index since Mar 17

Summary

Table 1 summarises the latest quarterly and year ending annual figures. Figures for England are disaggregated 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 (covering shire counties and unitary authorities).

Table 1: Summary of latest quarterly and year ending local bus passenger journeys (seasonally adjusted) in England and Local Bus Fares index

	Local bus passenger journeys (billions)		Bus Fares Index	
	Year ending Mar 2018 (compared with previous year)	Q1 (Jan-Mar) 2018 (compared with Q1 2017)	Mar 2018 (compared with Mar 2017)	
London	2.23 ↓0.6%	0.55 ↓1.2%	↑0.4%	
English metropolitan areas	0.92 ↓2%	0.23 ↓0.1%	↑3.1%	
English non-metropolitan areas	1.23 ↓2.3%	0.3 ↓2.9%	↑5.2%	
England	4.38 ↓1.4%	1.09 ↓1.5%	↑2.8%	
England outside London	2.15 ↓2.2%	0.53 ↓1.7%	↑4.4%	
Scotland	0.38 ↓3.5%	0.09 ↓5.8%	↑5.1%	
Wales	0.1 ↓3.3%	0.02 ↓3.7%	↑3.6%	
Great Britain	4.85 ↓1.6%	1.2 ↓1.9%	↑3.1%	

Statistical tables

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

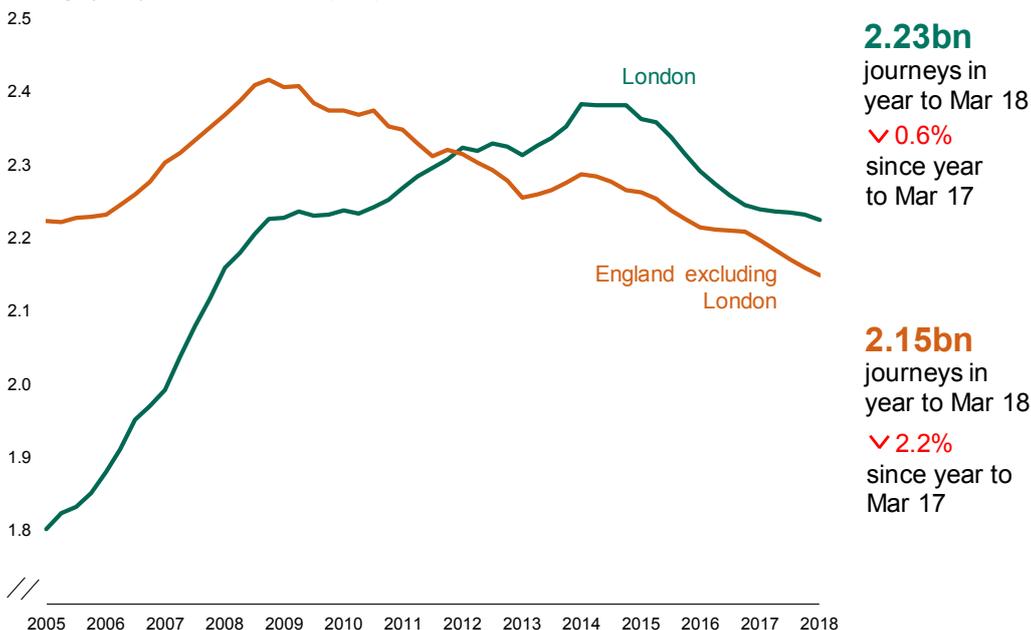
Passenger numbers can be found in table [BUS0103](#) (annual) and [BUS0106](#) (quarterly).

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

Chart 1 shows that the number of local bus passenger journeys in England outside London in the year ending March 2018 decreased by 47 million or 2.2% to 2.15 billion when compared with the previous year. Bus use decreased in London by 14 million passenger journeys or 0.6% to 2.23 billion.

Chart 1: Local bus passenger journeys (seasonally adjusted) in England outside London and London, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2018 (table [BUS0106a](#))

Passenger journeys on local bus services (billion)

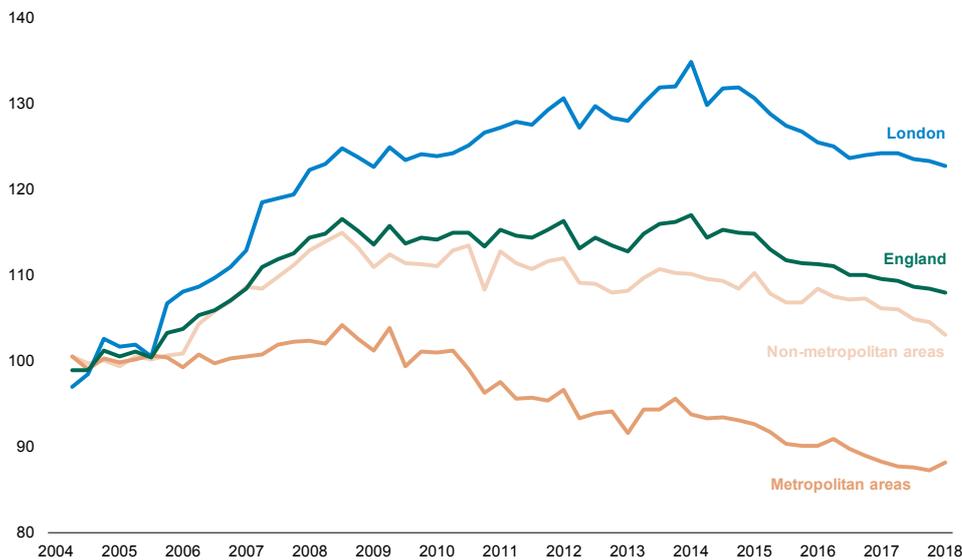


Local bus passenger journeys

In January to March 2018, bus use decreased in London by 1.2% when compared with the same quarter in 2017. Bus use in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas also decreased over the same period. **Chart 2** shows a period of declining bus use in London since early 2014. **TfL** attribute increased congestion and roads works as likely factors that have affected bus performance including bus speeds. Bus use in England outside London decreased by 1.7% compared with the same quarter of 2017 (January to March 2017).

Chart 2: Index of local bus passenger journeys (seasonally adjusted) by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly from April 2004 to January to March 2018 (table [BUS0106b](#))

Index: 2004/05 = 100, seasonally adjusted



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.

Other statistics

Average vehicle speeds by local authority in England are also published by the Department for Transport. These can be found in table [CGN0501b](#).

Local bus fares

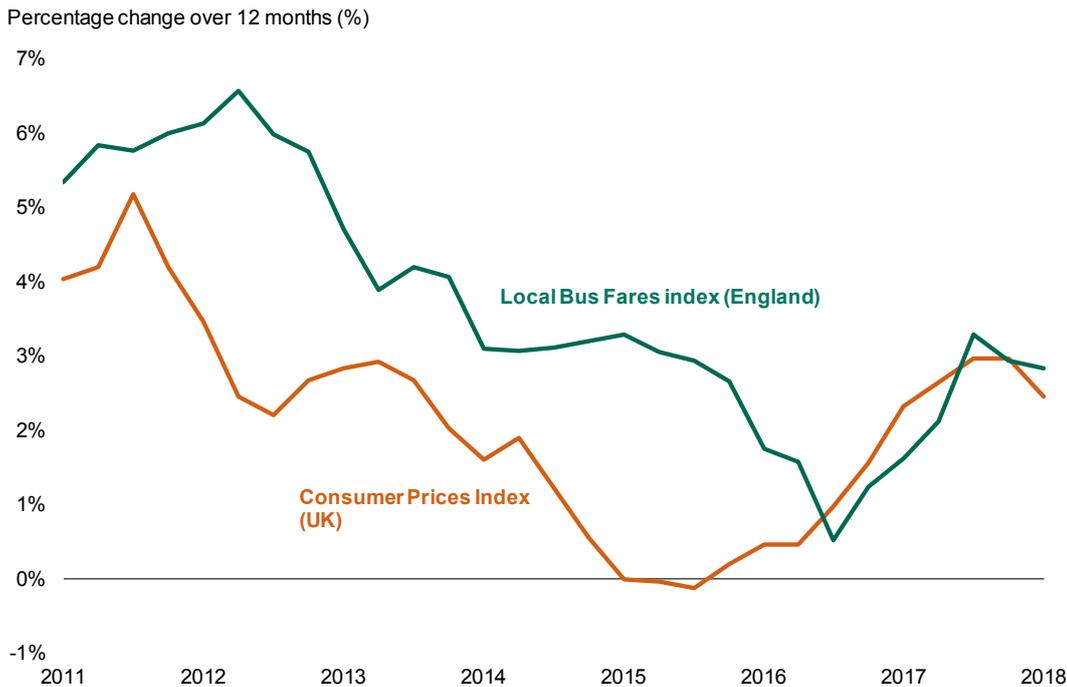
Local bus fares in England increased by 71% on average between March 2005 and March 2018¹. Bus fares have risen at a faster rate in metropolitan areas (86%) than in non-metropolitan areas (61%). The all items Consumer Prices Index (CPI) has increased by 35% over the same period, which means that bus fares have risen in real terms. **Chart 3** shows that in the past year to March 2018, local bus fares have increased by 2.8%, faster than the CPI (2.5%). Since September 2016 (**chart 3**), the increase in local bus fares and the CPI have been relatively similar. Prior to this, the increase in local bus fares was higher than the increase in the CPI between March 2011 and June 2016.

Local bus fares index

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.

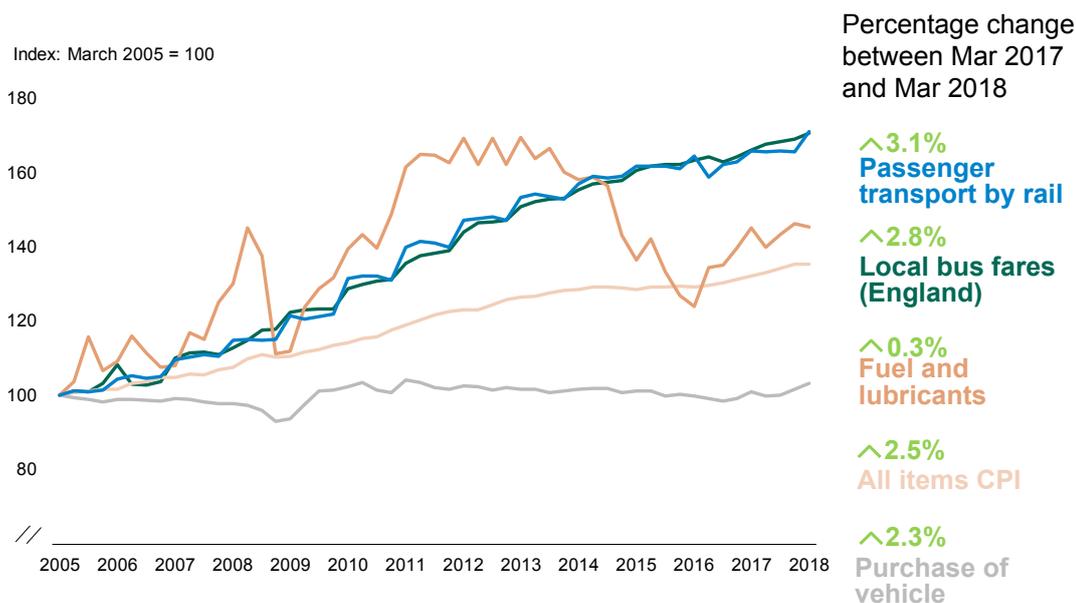
¹ The launch of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) in April 2006 resulted in some passengers who had previously paid fares being able to travel for free. As the Bus fares index reflects changes in the average costs of bus travel across all users of bus services, the ENCTS launch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

Chart 3: Percentage change in Local Bus Fares index and CPI: England and UK, quarterly since March 2011, current prices (table [BUS0415a](#))



The average annual percentage change in bus fares was 2.5% between March 2013 and March 2018, similar to the average annual increase in passenger transport by rail (2.2%). In the past year to March 2018, local bus fares and passenger transport by rail have increased by 2.8% and 3.1% respectively, faster than the CPI rate of inflation (2.5%). In comparison, the price of purchasing a vehicle has increased by 2.3%. The price of fuel and lubricants has increased by 0.3% over the same period.

Chart 4: CPI and transport indices (at current prices): UK, quarterly from March 2005



Local bus fares in different areas

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.

Passenger transport by rail in the CPI includes fares on UK overground rail, but also: London transport Fares; Euro Tunnel fares; and other underground/metro fares. The ORR also publish a Rail Fares Index measuring the change in prices charged by train operating companies to rail passengers. Further information can be found [here](#).

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

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 public service vehicle (PSV) operators, and figures are then seasonally adjusted.

For January to March 2018, data was received from all 18 panel members, covering over 90% of the bus journeys made in GB. Provisional figures for Merseyside have been used for Q3 and Q4 2017 and Q1 2018. 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. Figures are also subject to revision if a member changes their methodology for collecting bus patronage data.

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 over 90% 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 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.



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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 Q3 July to September 2018 (for release in December 2018). For the Q2 April to June 2018 in September 2018, the online spreadsheet tables ([BUS0106](#) and [BUS0415](#)) will be updated but there will be no accompanying statistical release.