



Department  
for Transport

# Quarterly Bus Statistics: England, January to March 2020

## 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 Local 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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## 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).

The number of local bus passenger journeys in England was 4.13 billion in the year ending March 2020, a 4.3% decrease when compared with a year earlier.

In the year to March 2020, local bus fares in England increased by 2.5%, faster than the all items Consumer Prices Index rate of inflation (1.5%).

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

	Local bus passenger journeys (billions)		Bus Fares Index	
	Year ending Mar 2020 (compared with previous year)	Q1 (Jan-Mar) 2020 (compared with Q1 2019)	Mar 2020 (compared with Mar 2019)	
London	2.09 ↓ -4.9%	0.47 ↓ -13.5%	↑	0.4%
English metropolitan areas	0.87 ↓ -4.6%	0.2 ↓ -11.9%	↑	3.4%
English non-metropolitan areas	1.17 ↓ -3.2%	0.27 ↓ -12.5%	↑	4.1%
<b>England</b>	<b>4.13 ↓ -4.3%</b>	<b>0.94 ↓ -12.9%</b>	↑	<b>2.5%</b>
<b>England outside London</b>	<b>2.04 ↓ -3.8%</b>	<b>0.47 ↓ -12.2%</b>	↑	<b>3.8%</b>
Scotland	0.37 ↓ -3.6%	0.08 ↓ -13.1%	↑	3.5%
Wales	0.1 ↓ -5.9%	0.02 ↓ -15.7%	↑	3.5%
<b>Great Britain</b>	<b>4.59 ↓ -4.3%</b>	<b>1.05 ↓ -13%</b>	↑	<b>2.6%</b>

## Comment on Coronavirus (COVID-19) impact

The period covered by this release includes time after movement restrictions were announced in March 2020. The collection of passenger data is not granular enough to distinguish numbers of passenger journeys before and after the restrictions were announced.

An indication of changes in bus passenger volume during this period can be found in separate datasets provided to monitor the use of the transport system during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Figures are available throughout the period for Great Britain excluding London. Figures for London are available up to mid April. These figures are derived from a different source to this publication. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-use-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic>

For this release series, returns from a small number of operators are adjusted for slight differences in the time period used for reporting and the calendar quarter. For this release the adjustment has included reference to the reduced passenger volume in the days at the end of March.

Transport for London have also released information on bus services during this period <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/buses-performance-data>

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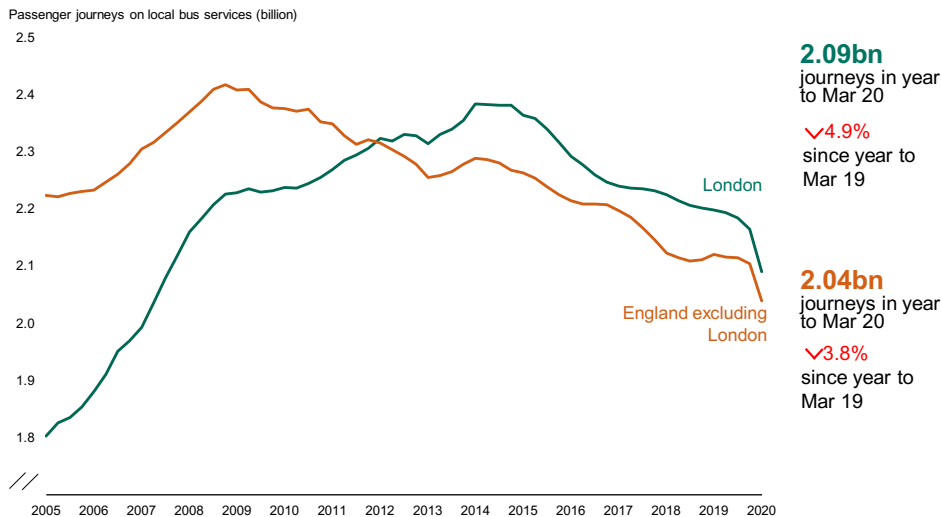
# Local bus passenger journeys

**Chart 1** shows that the number of local bus passenger journeys in England outside London in the year ending March 2020 decreased by almost 81 million compared with the previous year, to 2.04 billion. Bus use decreased in London by nearly 107 million passenger journeys or 4.9% to 2.09 billion.

## 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.

**Chart 1: Local bus passenger journeys (seasonally adjusted) in England outside London and London, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2020 (table [BUS0106a](#))**



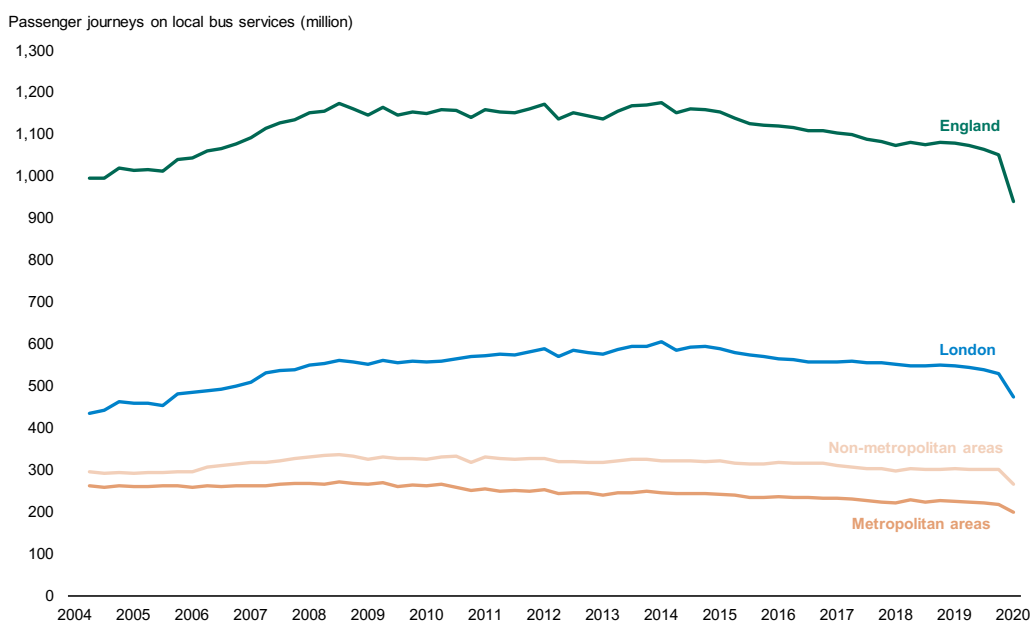
## Seasonal adjustment

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.

For the first time we are publishing non seasonally adjusted results alongside the adjusted figures.

In January to March 2020, bus use decreased sharply in London by 13.5% when compared with the same quarter in 2019. **Chart 2** shows a period of declining bus use in London since early 2014. Bus use in England outside London also decreased but by a slower rate of 12.2% compared with the same quarter in 2019. Excluding London, bus use decreased slightly less in metropolitan areas.

**Chart 2: Local bus passenger journeys (seasonally adjusted) by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly from April to June 2004 to January to March 2020 (table [BUS0106a](#))**



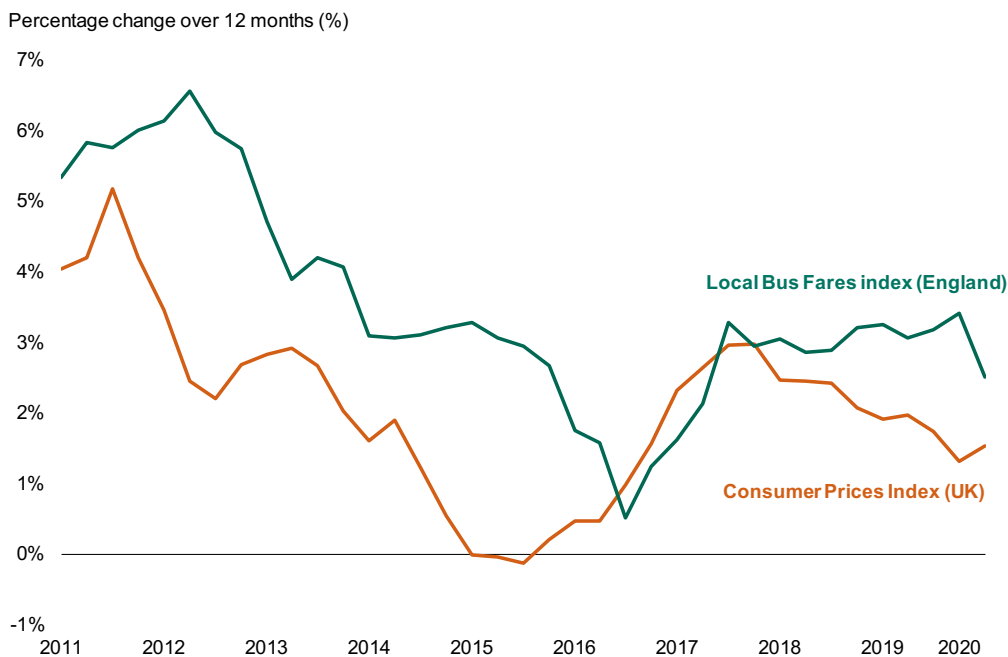
## Local passenger journeys in different areas

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).

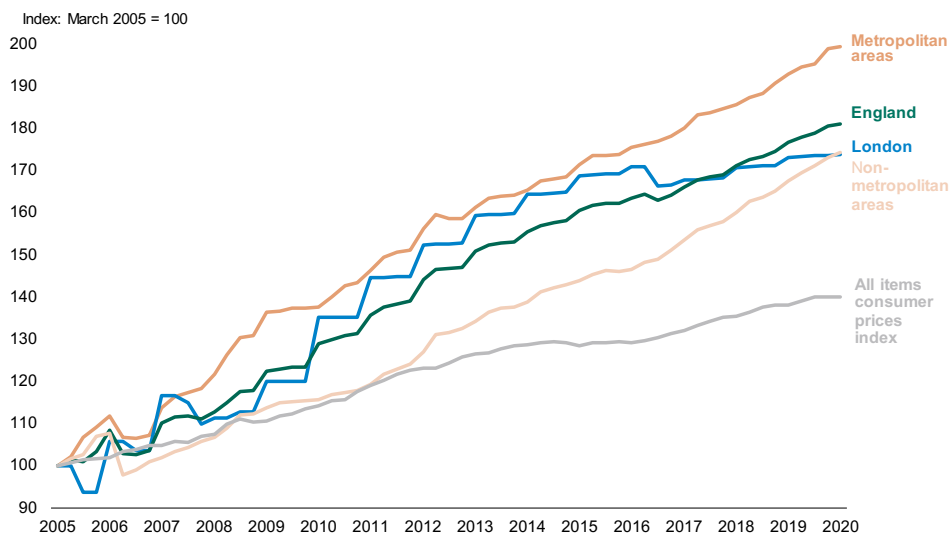
## Local bus fares

Local bus fares in England have increased by 2.5% in the past year to March 2020, faster than the CPI (1.5%). **Chart 3** shows that between 2016 and 2018, the increase in local bus fares and the CPI were relatively similar, but have been diverging since with bus fares 1.0 percentage points higher in the latest quarter. Between March 2005 and March 2020, bus fares have risen at a faster rate in metropolitan areas (99.5%) than in non-metropolitan areas (74.3%) (**chart 4**), while fares in London rose at similar levels up until 2016, before flattening to an increase of 3.8% over the whole period. The all items Consumer Prices Index (CPI) increased by 40.1% over the same period, meaning bus fares have risen in real terms.

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



**Chart 4: Local bus fares index (at current prices) by metropolitan area status: England, from March 2005 (table [BUS0415a](#))**



### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

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 2020, data was received from panel members, covering over 95% of the bus journeys made in GB. 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. Figures for West Yorkshire and Manchester have been estimated for this release due to changes in collection methodology.

The quarterly local bus fares index is based on a sample survey of over 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 journey figures are used to measure the overall health of the industry and often reported in the trade press. Bus fares data are used by the Office for National Statistics in calculating the Consumer Price Indices.

### Next update

A statistical release will now accompany data tables for each quarter.

Quarterly bus statistics for April to June 2020 will be released in September 2020.

### National Statistics

These statistics were designated as National Statistics in June 2012. The continued designation was confirmed in February 2013.

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. 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](http://www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-buses).

### Further details

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



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