



Quarterly Bus Statistics: Great Britain Q4 2012

This Statistical Release presents data on local bus passenger journeys and fares in Great Britain up to Q4 (October to December) 2012.

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 TfL.



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The key findings include:

Passenger journeys

Comparing Q4 (October to December) 2012 with the same quarter in the previous year:

- There was a 1.1 per cent decrease in bus passenger journeys in England with a 3.9 per cent decrease in non-metropolitan areas, a 0.2 per cent decrease in London and an increase of 0.3 per cent in metropolitan areas.
- Bus passenger journeys in Scotland decreased by 3.7 per cent over the same period, and decreased by 4.5 per cent in Wales.

Comparing Q4 (October to December) 2012 with the previous quarter, there was a 0.5 per cent decrease in seasonally adjusted bus passenger journeys in England, with falls in each area type except metropolitan areas which increased by 0.4 per cent. Quarter on quarter changes should be interpreted with caution.

Bus fares index

Comparing December 2012 with December 2011:

- There was an increase in bus fares of 5.7 per cent in England (5.4 per cent in London, 5.0 per cent in metropolitan areas and 6.8 per cent in non-metropolitan areas). The all items retail prices index increased by 3.1 per cent over this period.
- Over the same period there was an increase of 5.7 per cent in fares in Scotland, and an increase of 7.1 per cent in Wales.

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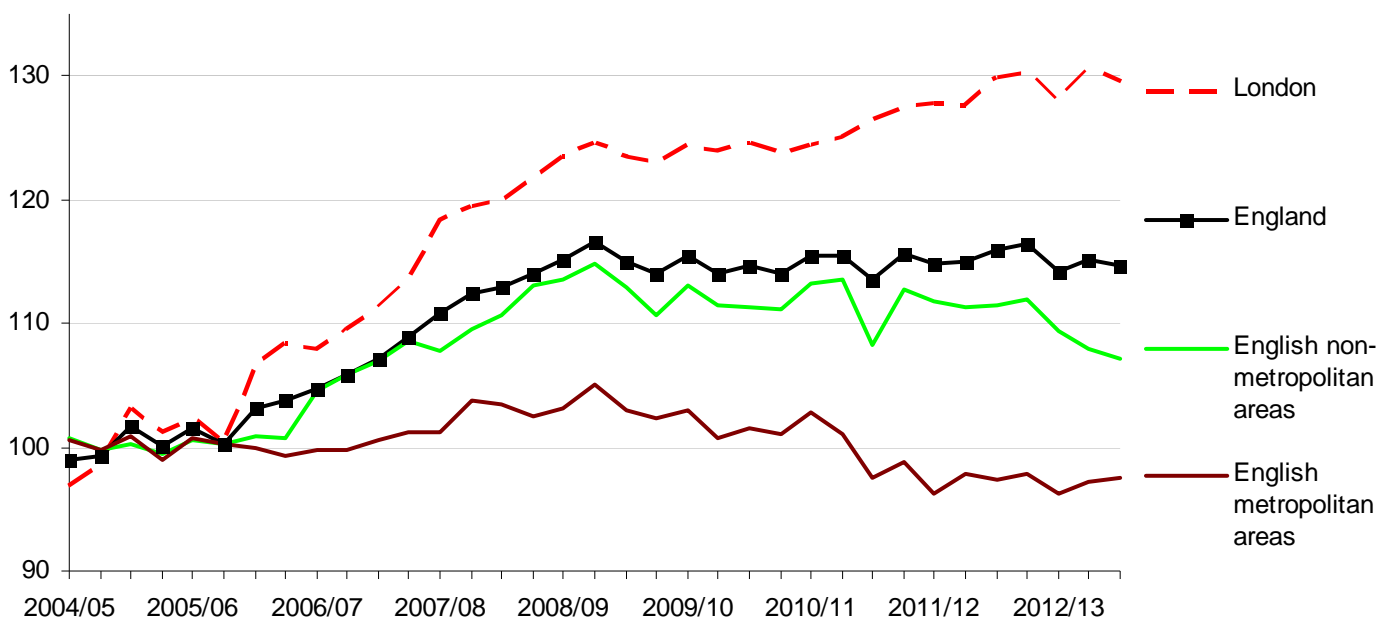
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1. Passenger journeys

- Bus passenger journeys in England increased by around 15 per cent between 2004/05 and 2008/09, a period in which the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme was introduced. Growth was greater in London, with a smaller increase in the metropolitan areas outside London over this period.
- Since 2008/09, total passenger journeys in England have remained broadly flat at around 1.2 billion journeys per quarter, as continued growth in London has offset a gradual decline in passenger numbers outside London.
- Though figures for individual quarters should be interpreted with caution, the latest figures show a decrease in seasonally adjusted journeys of 0.5 per cent for England compared with the previous quarter. London and non-metropolitan areas decreased by 0.7 per cent and 0.8 per cent respectively, whilst metropolitan areas had an increase in bus passenger journeys of 0.4 per cent over the same period.

Passenger journeys on local bus services by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly from 2004/05 [table bus0106, which also includes figures for Great Britain]

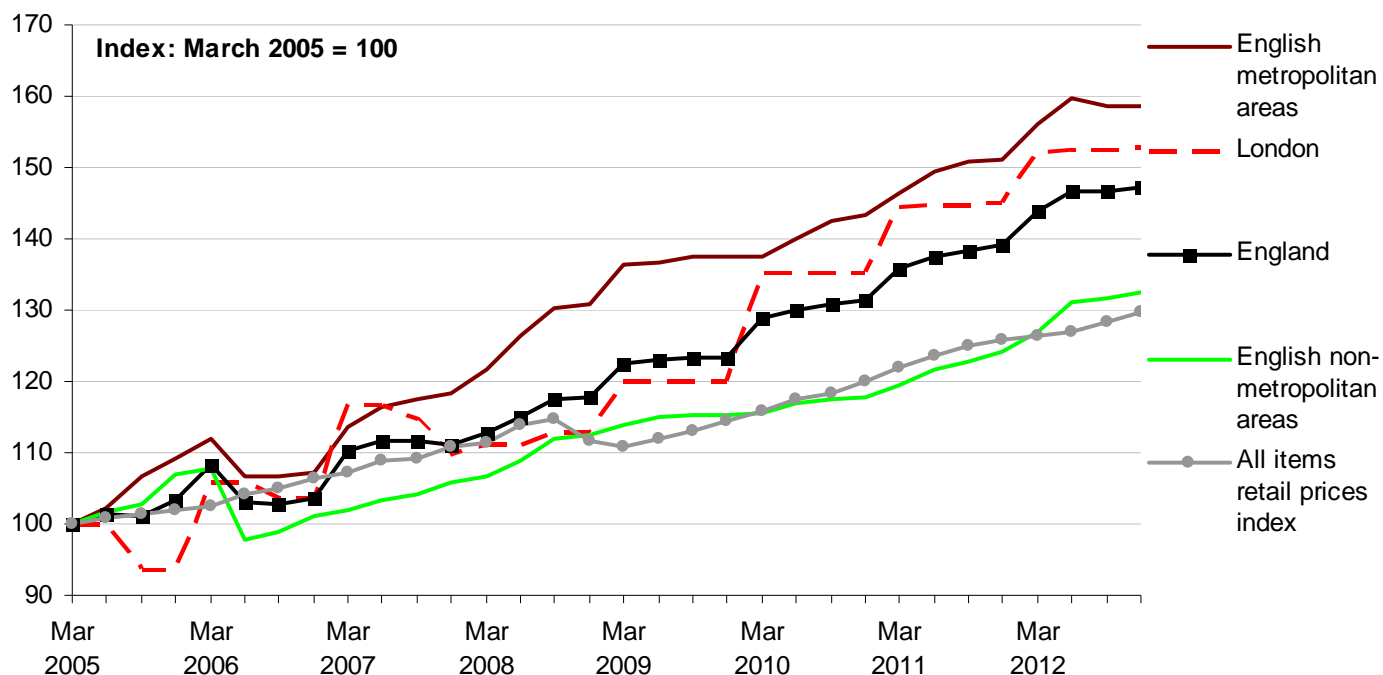
Index: 2004/05=100



2. Bus fares index

- Average bus fares paid by passengers in England increased by 34 per cent between March 2007 and December 2012¹, with a greater increase in metropolitan areas (40 per cent) than in London (31 per cent) and in non-metropolitan areas (30 per cent increase). This compares with a 21 per cent increase in the all items retail prices index (RPI), which means that bus fares have increased in real terms over this period.
- Average fares increased at a faster rate than inflation – measured by the all items RPI – in the first half of 2012 (with a 5.4 per cent increase in fares in England between December 2011 and June 2012, compared with a 1.0 per cent increase in the all items RPI). Bus Service Operators Grant, a central government subsidy to bus operators based on fuel consumption, was cut by 20 per cent in England in April 2012.
- However, between June and December 2012 fares have remained broadly flat, with an increase in fares of 0.4 per cent in England, compared to a 2.1 per cent increase in the RPI. Over this period, fares increased in non-metropolitan areas (1.2 per cent) and London (0.2 per cent), but fell in metropolitan areas (0.6 per cent).

Local bus fares index (in current prices) by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly from March 2005 [table bus0415, which also includes figures for Great Britain]



A longer time series is available in the annual bus fares index (table [bus0405](#))

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. However, passengers who were fare-payers both before and after the launch of the ENCTS would not have seen a reduction in the cost of bus travel. Therefore changes are reported from March 2007, after this one-off change. The chart below shows the trend from 2005.

3. Related information

Annual statistics on the bus sector in Great Britain, covering a wider range of topics including mileage run, revenue and support, costs and vehicles and staff are published by DfT, usually in the autumn. The latest published figures are available here:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/bus-statistics

4. Users and uses of these statistics

These figures provide up to date information on trends in bus passenger journeys and bus fares. Within the Department for Transport they are used for ministerial briefing and to answer public enquiries. Outside DfT, passenger journeys figures are used as a measure of the overall health/state of the industry, for example by private research organisations, and are occasionally 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.

We welcome feedback on any aspects of the Department's bus statistics including content, timing and format, by email to bus.statistics@dft.gsi.gov.uk

5. Strengths and weaknesses of the data

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 700 PSV operators, and figures are then seasonally adjusted.

For Q4 2012, responses were received from all of the 18 panel members, covering over 90 per cent of the journeys made in Great Britain. However, the quarterly figures are less precise than the annual statistics which aims to report on all journeys, including those covered by smaller operators.

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 **bus fares index** is based on a sample survey of around 100 bus operators and TfL. 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. Operators supply information each quarter.

In total the operators selected cover around 85 per cent of passenger receipts in Great Britain, and the sample design ensures operators in each area are adequately represented. The survey response rate is high, recently over 90 per cent (99 per cent for Q4 2012). The index has been compiled on a consistent basis for many years and so should measure trends consistently.

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).

6. Background notes

1. The web tables give further detail and regional breakdowns of the key results presented in this statistical release and statistics on other related topics.

The quarterly passenger journeys table is **BUS0106**. It is available here:

www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/bus01-local-bus-passenger-journeys

The quarterly fares index table is **BUS0415**. It is available here:

www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/bus04-costs-fares-and-revenue

The table showing annual statistics on price increases and competition for tenders for local bus contracts (table **BUS0504**) has been updated alongside this release and is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/bus05-subsidies-and-concessions>

2. Further guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/bus-statistics
3. 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.
4. 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/technical-guidance-for-transport-stats#bus-statistics
5. The next Quarterly Bus Statistics for Q1 (January to March) 2013 are due to be published in June 2013.