

Quarterly Bus Statistics: Great Britain Q1 2013



Department
for Transport

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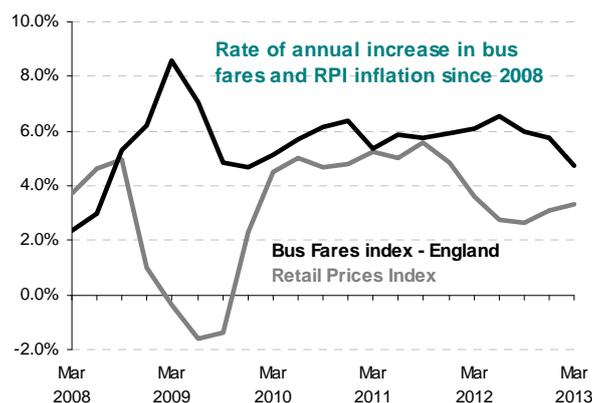
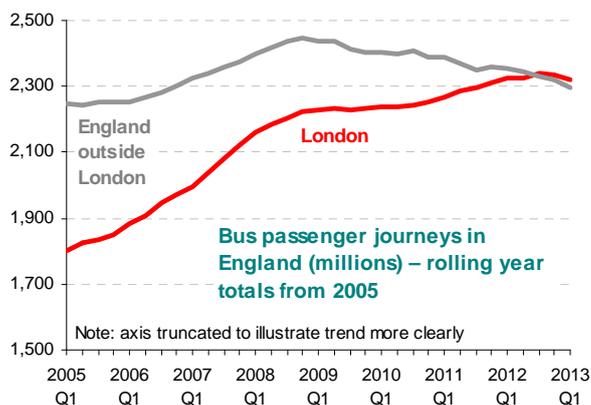
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Key findings: Bus usage flat in London, continuing to decline elsewhere

Total bus usage in England fell by around 1.3% in 2012/13 due to a levelling of usage in London and continuation of the long-term downward trend in usage outside London, according to provisional statistics from the Department for Transport.

An estimated 4.62 billion **bus passenger journeys** were made in the year to March 2013, around 60 million fewer than during the previous year. Prior to this, total bus passenger numbers in England had changed very little since reaching a 20-year high in 2008/09, with an upward trend in London offsetting a downward trend in the rest of England:

- Half of bus journeys in England were made in London, where usage was broadly unchanged in the year to March 2013, but has doubled since the mid-1990s, over a period in which public funding for London buses increased rapidly.
- Outside London, bus usage fell by 2.5% over the latest year, and is now around 6% lower than the 2008/09 peak (see chart). This represents a resumption of a long-term downward trend which was temporarily reversed by the introduction in 2006 and extension in 2008 of statutory free concessionary travel for older people on buses.



Bus fares in England increased nearly 5% over the year to March 2013, a slightly slower rate of increase than in recent years, but continuation of the general long term pattern of above-inflation increases (inflation measured by the Retail Prices Index (RPI) was 3.3% in March 2013).

About these statistics

This quarterly release covers local bus passenger journeys and fares. It provides the most up to date statistics for monitoring key trends in the local bus sector. More detailed annual bus statistics, including information on mileage, revenue and costs, and the vehicle fleet, are published each autumn.

This release relates largely to England, in line with the coverage of DfT bus policy. However the statistical tables cover the whole of Great Britain, including figures for Wales and Scotland.

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).

Key figures

The table summarises the latest quarterly and rolling annual figures. Figures for individual quarters should be interpreted with caution, as they can be affected by sustained periods of bad weather or the timing of public holidays (e.g. Easter, which fell in March 2013, but in April 2012).

Figures for England are broken down into London, metropolitan areas (which are 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).

	Passenger journeys		Bus fares index
	Year to end March 2013	Q1 (Jan – Mar) 2013	March 2013
	Compared to previous year	Compared to Q1 2012	Change on March 2012
Great Britain	5.15 billion; ⬇️ 1.5%	1.28 billion; ⬇️ 3.3%	⬆️ 4.7%
England	4.62 billion; ⬇️ 1.3%	1.14 billion; ⬇️ 3.2%	⬆️ 4.7%
London	2.32 billion; ⬇️ 0.2%	0.57 billion; ⬇️ 2.4%	⬆️ 4.6%
Outside London	2.30 billion; ⬇️ 2.5%	0.57 billion; ⬇️ 4.0%	⬆️ 4.7%
Metropolitan areas	1.03 billion; ⬇️ 1.5%	0.25 billion; ⬇️ 4.3%	⬆️ 3.3%
Non-metropolitan areas	1.27 billion; ⬇️ 3.3%	0.32 billion; ⬇️ 3.8%	⬆️ 5.7%
Scotland	0.43 billion; ⬇️ 2.7%	0.11 billion; ⬇️ 2.8%	⬆️ 4.3%
Wales	0.11 billion; ⬇️ 5.1%	0.03 billion; ⬇️ 6.9%	⬆️ 6.9%

Detailed statistical tables are available online as part of the [bus statistics series](#)

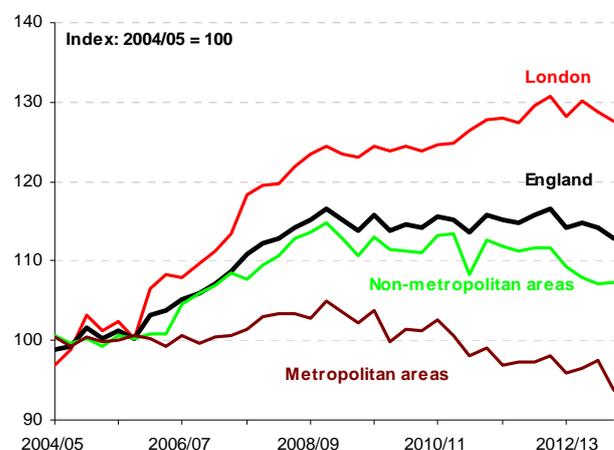
- Passenger numbers in section [bus01](#): tables bus0103 (annual) and bus0106 (quarterly)
- Bus fares index in section [bus04](#): tables bus0405 (annual) and bus0415 (quarterly)

Bus passenger journeys

Bus usage, measured by the number of bus passenger journeys (with each boarding of a bus counted as one journey), is the key measure of bus demand and is likely to be affected by many factors. While medium and longer-term trends can be explained to some extent, it is not usually possible to attribute causality to short-term movements which may reflect fluctuations in patronage, or result from the method of seasonal adjustment applied to the data.

- Passenger journeys in England increased by around 15% between 2004/05 and 2008/09, a period in which the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme was introduced and public funding for buses increased in real terms, particularly in London.
- Since 2008/09, total passenger journeys in England have remained broadly stable overall as continued, but slower, growth in London has offset a gradual decline in passenger numbers outside London.
- The latest figures tentatively show a decline in patronage for England as a whole, with the trend outside London continuing and bus use in London broadly flat over the latest year. However it is too early to assess whether this is a fluctuation or the start of a trend.

Passenger journeys on local bus services: England, quarterly from 2004/05 [table bus0106]



Related information includes:

- Table [bus0103](#) which shows annual bus passenger numbers from the mid-1980s
- DfT [bus statistical tables](#) provide information on the bus sector, including levels of subsidy and expenditure on concessionary travel (section bus05). Most are updated annually in autumn.
- The [National Travel Survey](#) (NTS) contains information on characteristics of bus users and long term trends in travel which provides context to trends in bus use.

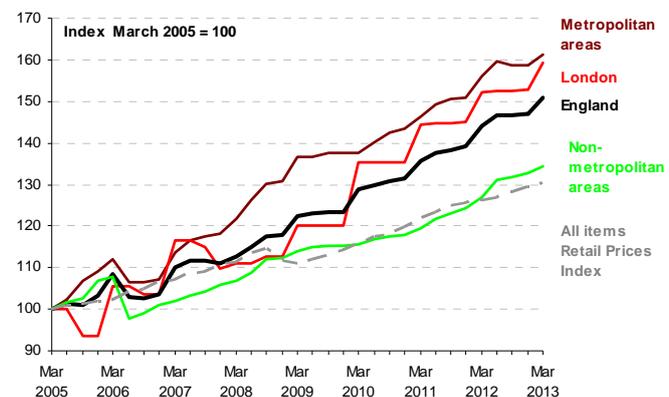
Bus fares

The local bus fares index measures percentage change in bus operator receipts from passengers as a result of any fare changes. These figures provide an estimate of change in the average cost of bus travel to the passenger, but not the actual fare levels paid (which can vary due to changes in the mix of journeys made and other factors).

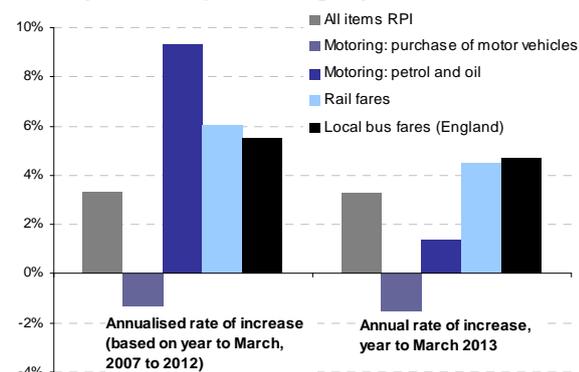
Outside London, fare changes will largely reflect the commercial decisions of bus operators, which in turn may in part reflect changes in public funding. For example, Bus Service Operators Grant, a central government subsidy to bus operators based on fuel consumption, was cut by 20% in England in April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

- Between March 2007 and March 2013¹, average bus fares paid by passengers in England increased 37%, with similar rises in London and the rest of England over this period as a whole. This compares with a 22% increase in the all items retail prices index (RPI), which means that bus fares have increased in real terms over this period.
- Local bus fares in England increased by an average annual growth rate of 5.5% per year over the period March 2007 to March 2012, broadly in line with rail fares but well below the average annual growth in motor fuel (petrol and oil) prices (9%).
- In the most recent year, to March 2013, local bus fares have increased by 4.7%, again broadly in line with the change of 4.5% in rail fares. Motor fuel increased by 1.4% over the same period.

Local bus fares index (current prices): England, quarterly from March 2005 [table bus0415]



Annualised rate of increase: RPI and transport indices, latest year and preceding 5 years [ONS data and bus fares]



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 shows the trend from 2005.

Related information includes:

- 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 [tsgb0123](#)

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 700 PSV operators, and figures are then seasonally adjusted.

For Q1 2013, responses were received from all of the 18 panel members, covering over 90 per cent of the journeys made in Great Britain. However, quarterly figures are less precise than the annual statistics which aims to report on all journeys, including those made with 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, 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 per cent 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, recently over 90 per cent (95 per cent for Q1 2013). The index has been compiled in the same way 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).

Further details can be found in the notes and definitions document available here: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/bus-statistics

Users and uses of these statistics

Within DfT these figures 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/state 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.

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

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

The next Quarterly Bus Statistics, for Q2 (March to June) 2013 are due to be published in autumn 2013.