



Department for Transport

Quarterly Bus Statistics: England Q1 (January to March) 2016

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.

The statistics for this quarter are the provisional figures for 2015/16 financial year. Final figures will be released in autumn 2016 as part of the annual bus survey statistical release.

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 provisional number of local bus passenger journeys in England was 4.53 billion in the year to end March 2016, a 2.5% decrease when compared with a year earlier.

Over the same period, the downward trend in bus use in England outside London continued with a 2.1% decrease. In London, bus use decreased by 3.0% but remains 21.9% higher than in 2005/06.

In the past year to March 2016, local bus fares increased by 1.8%, similar to the all items Retail Prices Index rate of inflation (1.6%).

Local bus passenger journeys

4.53 billion journeys in England in 2015/16 (provisional) ∨ **2.5%** since 2014/15

Local Bus Fares index

^ 1.8% Local Bus Fares index in England since March 2015 ^ **1.6%** All items Retail Prices Index since March 2015

Summary

Table 1 summarises the latest quarterly and year to end 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 to end local bus passenger journeys in England and Local Bus Fares index

| | Local bus passenger journeys (billion) | | Bus Fares index Mar 2016 (compared with Mar 2015) |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|
| | Year to end Mar 2016 (compared with previous year) | Q1 (Jan-Mar) 2016 (compared with Q1 2015) | |
| London | 2.29 ⬇️ -3.0% | 0.56 ⬇️ -4.1% | ⬆️ 1.2% |
| English metropolitan areas | 0.97 ⬇️ -3.1% | 0.24 ⬇️ -3.2% | ⬆️ 2.3% |
| English non-metropolitan areas | 1.27 ⬇️ -1.3% | 0.32 ⬇️ -1.5% | ⬆️ 2.0% |
| England | 4.53 ⬇️ -2.5% | 1.12 ⬇️ -3.2% | ⬆️ 1.8% |
| England outside London | 2.24 ⬇️ -2.1% | 0.56 ⬇️ -2.2% | ⬆️ 2.1% |
| Scotland | 0.41 ⬇️ -1.7% | 0.10 ⬇️ -0.3% | ⬆️ 2.8% |
| Wales | 0.10 ⬇️ -3.4% | 0.02 ⬇️ -1.1% | ⬆️ 0.4% |
| Great Britain | 5.03 ⬇️ -2.5% | 1.25 ⬇️ -2.9% | ⬆️ 1.9% |

Statistical tables

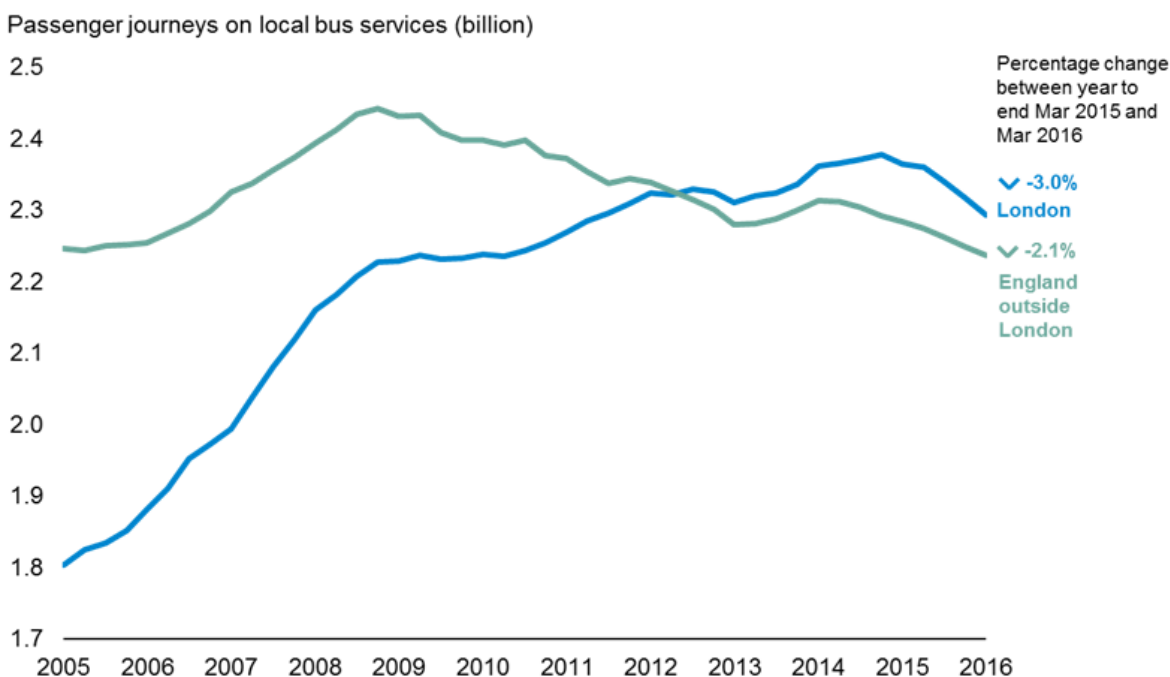
Additional tables are available online as part of the bus statistics series.

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 provisional number of local bus passenger journeys in England outside London decreased by 48 million or 2.1% to 2.24 billion when compared with the previous year. Bus use decreased in London by 70 million passenger journeys or 3.0% to 2.29 billion.

Chart 1: Local bus passenger journeys in England outside London and London, year to end March 2005 to year to end March 2016 (table [BUS0106a](#))

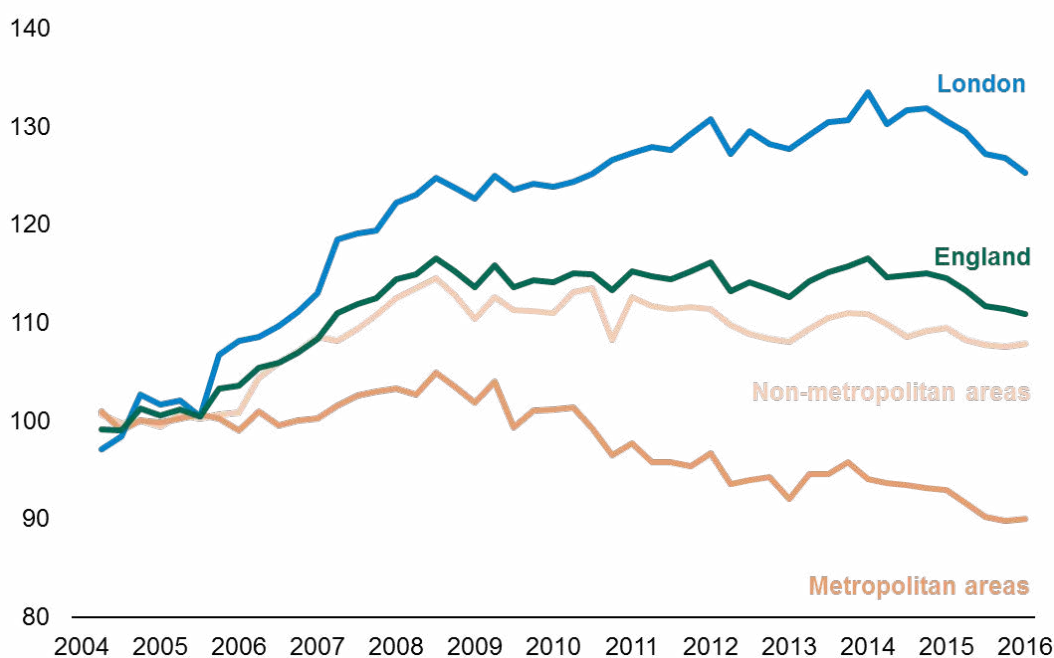


Local bus passenger journeys

In January to March, bus use decreased in London, metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas when compared with the same quarter in 2015. 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 was little changed showing a small increase on the previous quarter (October to December 2015) but lower than in 2014/15.

Chart 2: Index of local bus passenger journeys by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly from April to June 2004 to January to March 2016 (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.

Coherence with other statistics

Road congestion statistics, also published by the Department for Transport, show that average vehicle speeds in London have decreased during 2015. Road congestion statistics by local authority can be found in table section [CGN02](#).

Local bus fares

Local bus fares in England increased by 63% on average between March 2005 and March 2016¹. Bus fares have risen at a faster rate in metropolitan areas (75%) than in non-metropolitan areas (47%). The all items Retail Prices Index (RPI) has increased by 37% over the same period, which means that bus fares have risen in real terms. Chart 3 shows that in the past year to March 2016, local bus fares have increased by 1.8%, similar to RPI (1.6%). Over the last five years the rate of increase in local bus fares has slowed along with the rate of inflation.

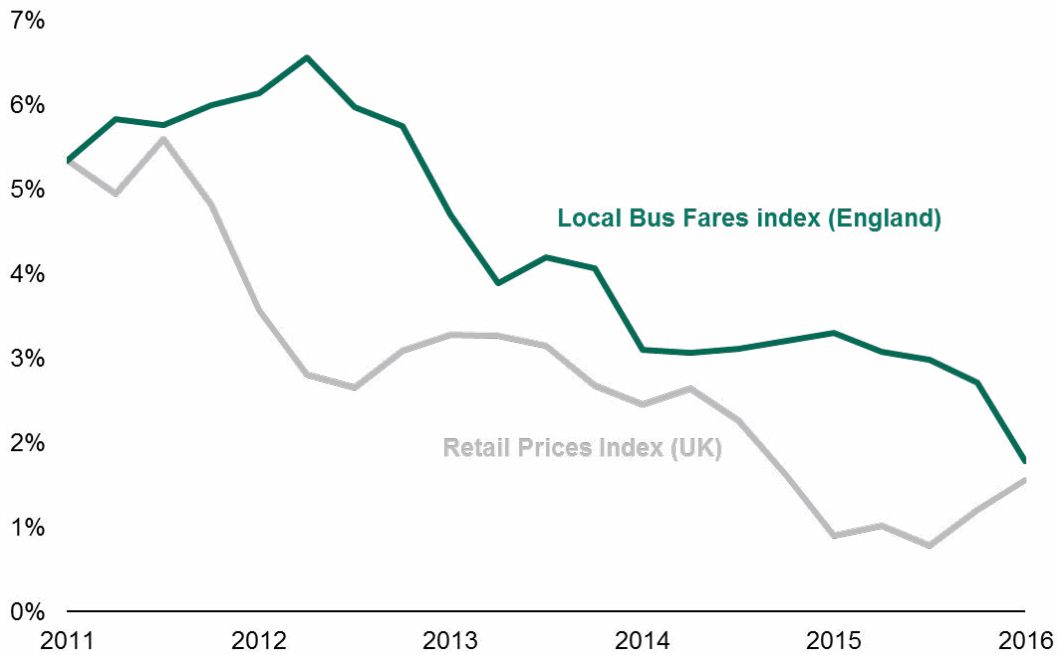
¹ The launch of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) in April 2006 resulted in some passengers who had previously paid fares being able to travel for free. As the Bus fares index reflects changes in the average costs of bus travel across all users of bus services, the ENCTS launch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

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.

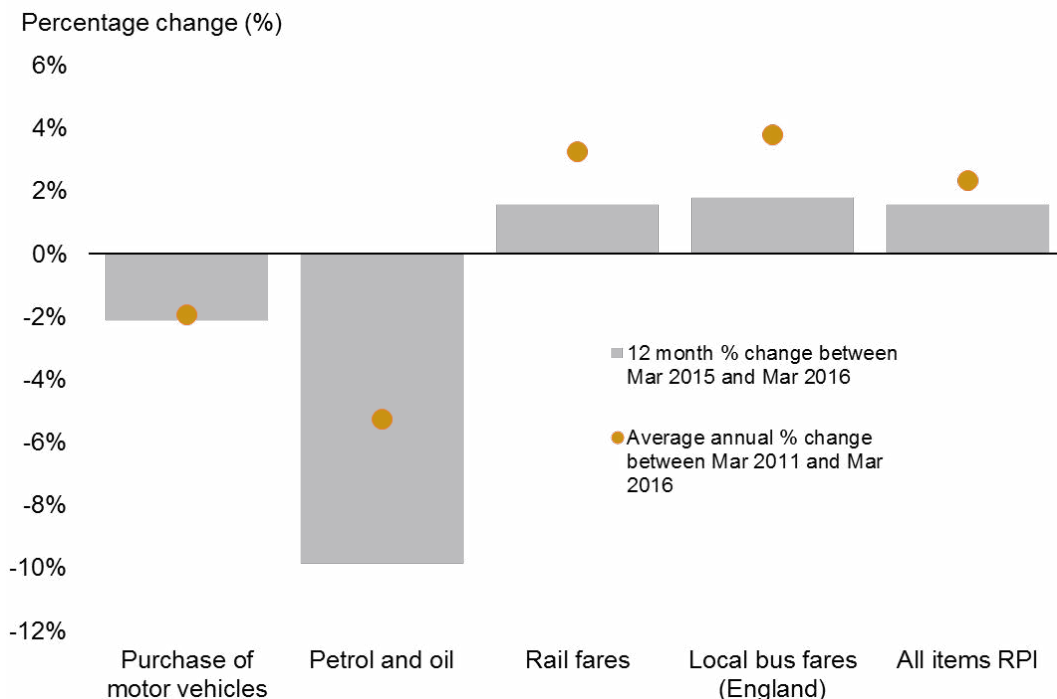
Chart 3: Percentage change in Local Bus Fares index and RPI: England and UK, quarterly since March 2011, current prices (table [BUS0415a](#))

Percentage change change over 12 months (%)



The average annual percentage change in bus fares was 3.8% between March 2011 and March 2016, similar to the average annual increase in rail fares (3.2%), see chart 4. In the past year to March 2016, local bus fares and rail fares have increased by 1.8% and 1.6% respectively, similar to the rate of inflation (1.6%). In comparison, the price of motoring (price of purchasing a motor vehicle and price of petrol and oil), has decreased by 2.1% and 9.9% respectively.

Chart 4: Percentage change in RPI and transport indices: UK, March 2011 to March 2016



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.

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 PSV operators, and figures are then seasonally adjusted.

For January to March 2016, responses were received from all of the 18 panel members, covering over 90% of the bus journeys made in Great Britain. Figures for Merseyside and West Yorkshire were estimated due to transitioning to a new methodology for capturing bus patronage. 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 panel member changes their methodology for collecting bus patronage.

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 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 Q2 April to June 2016 update in Autumn 2016, the online spreadsheet tables ([BUS0106](#) and [BUS0415](#)) will be updated but there will be no accompanying statistical release.