



Department
for Transport

Annual bus statistics: England 2017/18

About this release

This statistical release presents the latest annual statistics on the local bus sector. Local bus services use public service vehicles (PSVs) to carry passengers paying separate fares over short distances. Most of the data are derived from the Department for Transport's (DfT) annual survey of local bus operators. Figures are presented for England, in line with coverage of DfT bus policy. Statistics for Scotland and Wales are available [online](#).

In this publication

Summary	2
Things you need to know	2
Passenger journeys	3
Bus mileage	7
Vehicles	9
Bus partnership	11
Financial outlook	12
Bus punctuality	14
Passenger satisfaction	15
Bus and coach staff	16
Background information	17

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to bus.statistics@dft.gov.uk.



The number of local bus passenger journeys in England fell by 85 million or 1.9% to 4.36 billion in the year ending March 2018.

Passenger journeys in **England outside London** declined by 3.2% over the same period, continuing the decline since 2008/09 and are now 4.2% lower than in the year ending March 2005.

In **London**, bus use decreased by 0.7% in the latest year but remains 23.5% higher than in the year ending March 2005.

Bus mileage in **England** decreased by 3.4% when compared with 2016/17.

Local bus passenger journeys

4.36 billion journeys **↓ 1.9%**
since 2016/17
in England in
2017/18

Vehicle miles on local bus services

1.20 billion vehicle miles **↓ 3.4%**
since 2016/17
in England in
2017/18

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Summary

Table 1 summarises the annual figures for bus passenger journeys and mileage for the 2017/18 financial year. Figures for England are broken down into England outside London (metropolitan areas and non-metropolitan areas) and London.

Table 1: Local bus passenger journeys and mileage by area type: England, 2016/17 to 2017/18 (tables [BUS0103](#) and [BUS0203](#))

	Passenger journeys		Vehicle mileage	
	2017/18 figures in billion / billion miles and change compared with 2016/17			
London	2.23	↓ 0.7%	0.30	↓ 0.9%
English metropolitan areas	0.91	↓ 3.3%	0.30	↓ 2.6%
English non-metropolitan areas	1.22	↓ 3.1%	0.59	↓ 5.1%
England outside London	2.13	↓ 3.2%	0.89	↓ 4.2%
England	4.36	↓ 1.9%	1.20	↓ 3.4%

Concessionary travel

Total concessionary journeys (elderly or disabled, and youth concessions) made up 34% (1.51 billion passenger journeys) of all local bus passenger journeys in England. In England outside London, 30% of journeys were elderly or disabled concessionary journeys, twice the share as in London. DfT's [Concessionary Travel Survey](#) collects more detailed information for Travel Concession Authorities on concessionary passholder numbers, total expenditure on concessionary travel and concessionary discretions offered.

Things you need to know

The statistics presented here on the local bus sector in England provide information for monitoring trends in usage and provision for a mode of transport used for about 59% of public transport journeys.

Most figures in this release relate to local bus services. These are timetabled services using public service vehicles to carry passengers over relatively short distances, and usually eligible for Bus Services Operators Grant. Long distance coach services, private hire work and closed contracts are excluded but school services accessible to the general public are included.

The majority of bus services in England are provided by private companies since deregulation of the industry in 1986 in England outside London. Services can be operated on a purely commercial basis or with financial support from local authorities (supported services). London services are operated by private companies but regulated by Transport for London (TfL). There are two broad passenger types: concessionary and non-concessionary passengers.

Concessionary passengers are either older or disabled people (free to travel anywhere in England since April 2008) or young people in local authorities where such discretionary travel schemes exist. More detailed statistics on concessionary travel are published separately by DfT and available [online](#).

Passenger journeys

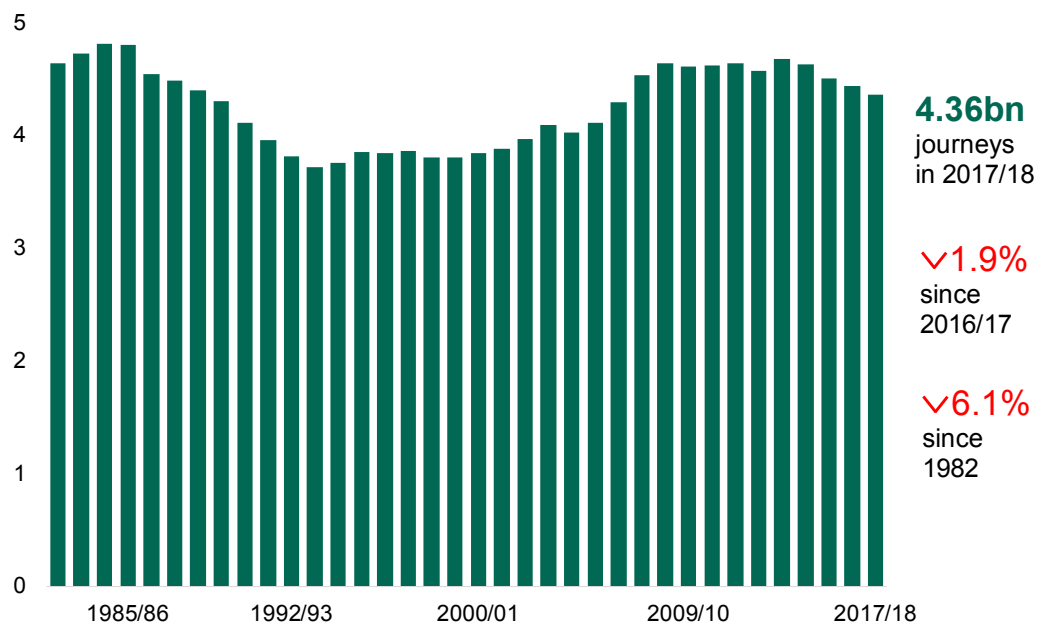
England

In 2017/18, 4.36 billion passenger journeys were made by local bus in England, down 85 million journeys or 1.9% when compared with 2016/17.

Chart 1 shows the trend in local bus journeys in England between 1982 and 2017/18. Bus use fell in the early 1990s before starting to increase but has remained relatively stable since 2007/08 at over 4.3 billion passenger journeys.

Chart 1: Local bus passenger journeys in England, 1982 to 2017/18
([table BUS0103](#))

Passenger journeys on local bus services (billion)



What is a bus passenger journey?

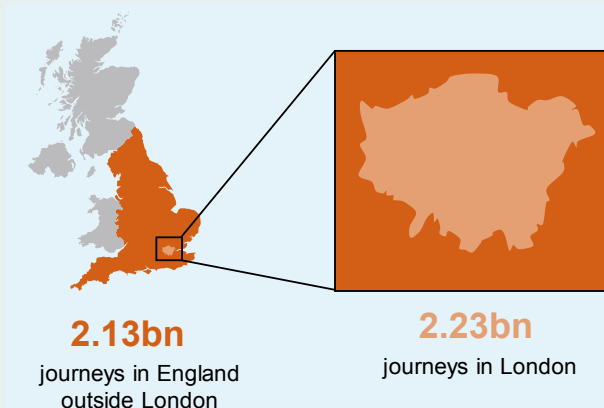
Each boarding of a bus is counted as one journey. The number of passenger journeys are an important measure of bus demand. These statistics relate to passengers on local bus services. The main source of information on non-local bus use (e.g. long distance coach services) is the [National Travel Survey](#).

Quarterly bus statistics

Local bus passenger journeys and local bus fares are updated every quarter. The latest quarterly statistics are available for [July to September 2018](#).

Passenger journeys in London accounted for around a half of the 4.36 billion passenger journeys made by local buses in England in 2017/18.

51% of journeys occurred in London



England outside London

In 2017/18, 2.13 billion passenger journeys were made by local bus in England outside London, down 3.2% when compared with 2016/17. Bus use in England outside London has been on a downward trend since the recent peak of 2.41 billion passenger journeys in 2008/09 (see [chart 2](#)).

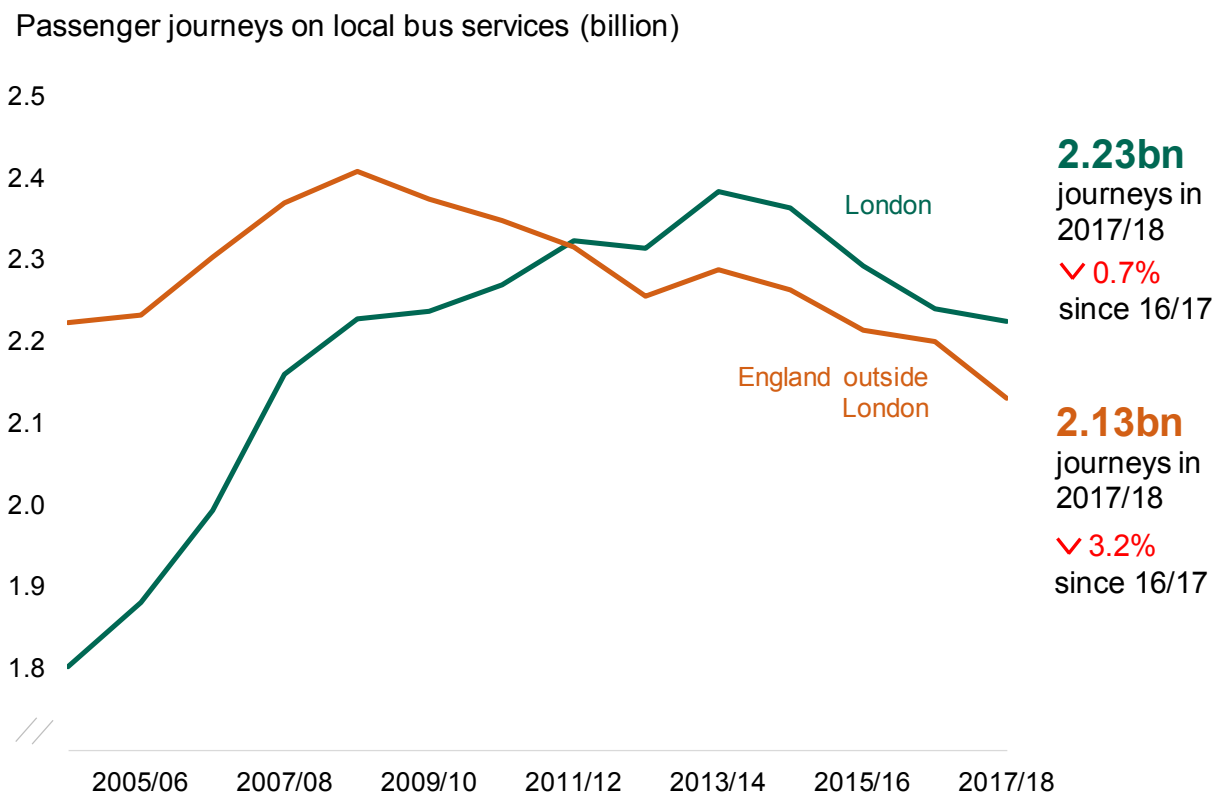
London

There were 2.23 billion passenger journeys made by local bus in London in 2017/18, a decrease of 0.7% compared with 2016/17. This is the fourth consecutive year in which passenger journeys in London have fallen (see [chart 2](#)). Transport for London attribute increased congestion and road works as likely factors that have affected bus performance including bus speeds. Before 2012/13, bus use in London increased every year since 1998/99. Bus use in London in 2017/18 is still 23.5% higher than in 2004/05 and accounted for just over half of all local bus journeys in England.

Why the distinction between London and England outside London?

Buses in London, through Transport for London, operate under a different regulatory framework to the rest of England. The size of the bus market in London and differing trends in bus use also makes it sensible to disaggregate these two area types. Different disaggregations are available online including local authority level and for urban and rural areas.

Chart 2: Local bus passenger journeys in England outside London and London, 2004/05 to 2017/18 ([table BUS0103](#))



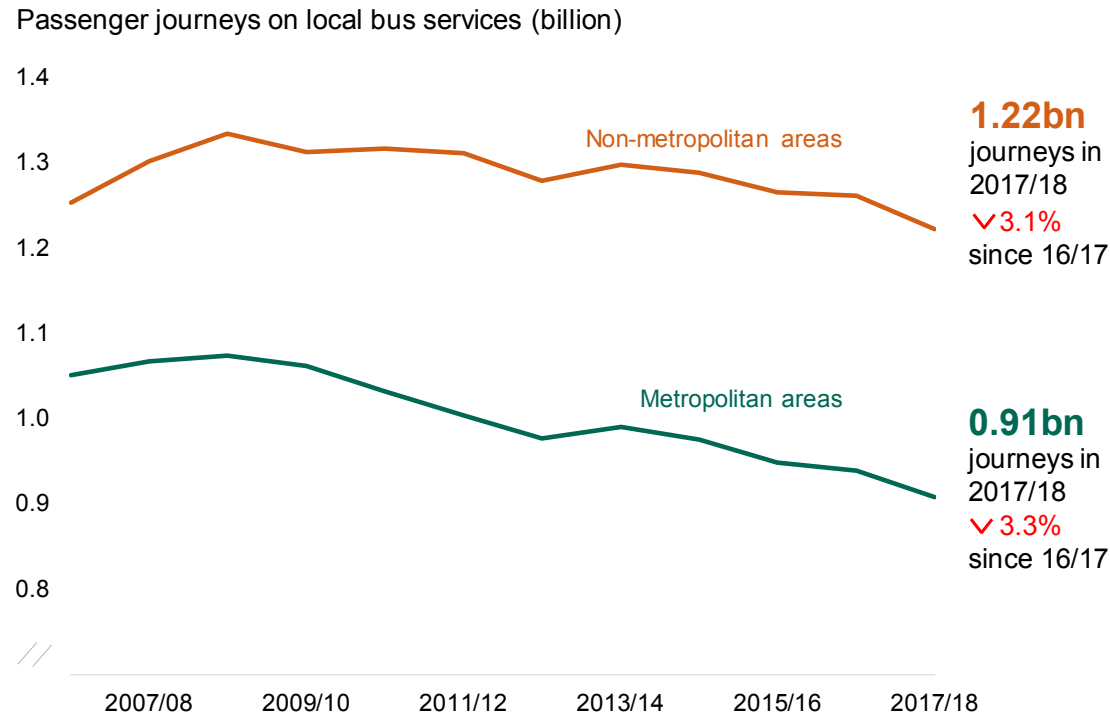
Metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas

Local bus passenger journeys decreased in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in 2017/18. In metropolitan areas, there were 0.91 billion passenger journeys, a decrease of 3.3% compared with 2016/17. In non-metropolitan areas, there were 1.22 billion passenger journeys, a decrease of 3.1%.

In both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, the introduction of free concessionary travel in local authority areas from 1 April 2006 and nationally from 1 April 2008 led to annual increases in local bus passenger journeys (see [chart 3](#)). After 2008/09, bus use in England outside London has decreased at a faster rate in metropolitan areas. In 2017/18, passenger journeys in metropolitan areas were 15.5% lower than in 2008/09 and 8.3% lower in non-metropolitan areas.

Some factors affecting bus patronage were described in detail in the 2016/17 bus statistics release. These included congestion, changes in car ownership, reductions in local authority supported services and increased online shopping.

Chart 3: Local bus passenger journeys in England outside London by area type, 2006/07 to 2017/18 ([table BUS0103](#))



England outside London

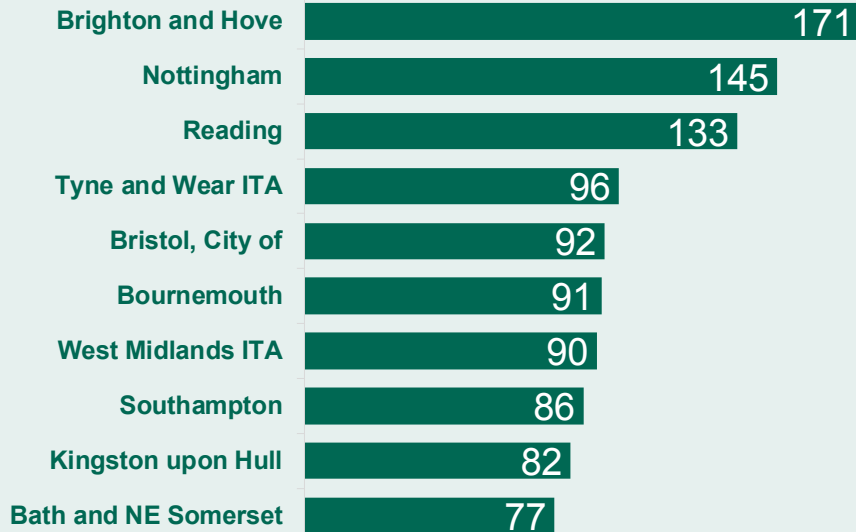
Figures for England outside London can be disaggregated further into metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. Metropolitan areas are the six former metropolitan counties: Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire. Non-metropolitan areas cover the remaining county councils and unitary authorities in England outside London.

Bus use by local authority

Chart 4: Local bus passenger journeys per head by local authority: England outside London, 2017/18 (table BUS0110a)

Highest 10 local authorities

Passenger journeys per head



Lowest 10 local authorities

Passenger journeys per head



The two charts of bus passenger journeys per head in 2017/18 in England outside London shows the difference in bus use across local authorities. In general, more urban local authorities have above average levels of bus use when compared with rural areas.

The average number of bus passenger journeys per head in England outside London was 46 in 2016/17, down from 54 in 2009/10. Out of 88 local authorities in England outside London, 70 had a decrease in bus use per head from 2009/10 to 2017/18.

About the data

The bus passenger journeys per head figures presented here are estimates based on returns provided by bus operators. Mid-year population estimates from Office for National Statistics are used but do not account for bus passengers using the bus outside the local authority in which they reside. Users should be aware that figures for small areas can be affected by recording differences and so individual figures should be interpreted carefully.

National Travel Survey

The annual PSV survey collects information on the overall number of journeys. More information on the passengers making those journeys is available from the National Travel Survey. This is a household survey carried out on around 16,000 individuals in England every year. For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-travel-survey-statistics>.

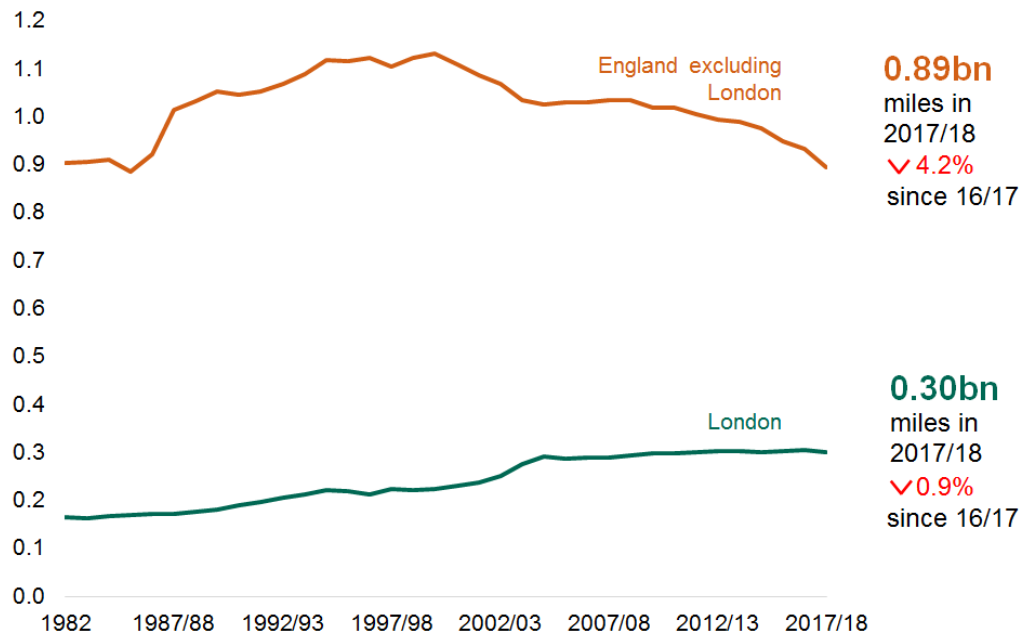
For detailed analysis of bus passengers, please see the 2016/17 Annual Bus Statistics release.

Bus mileage

In 2017/18, 1.20 billion bus service miles were run in England, a decrease of 3.4% when compared with 2016/17 (see [chart 5](#)). In England outside London, bus mileage continued its decline, decreasing by 4.2% when compared with 2016/17. In London, bus mileage remained at levels seen since 2011/12 at over 300 million vehicle miles.

Chart 5: Vehicle miles on local bus services by area type: England, 1982 to 2017/18 ([table BUS0203](#))

Vehicle miles on local bus services (billion)



About bus mileage

Mileage run by buses in service, which excludes 'dead running' (for example mileage between the start and end of routes and the depot). Mileage is split into the amount ran on services which are operated on a purely **commercial** basis or with financial support from local authorities (**supported** services).

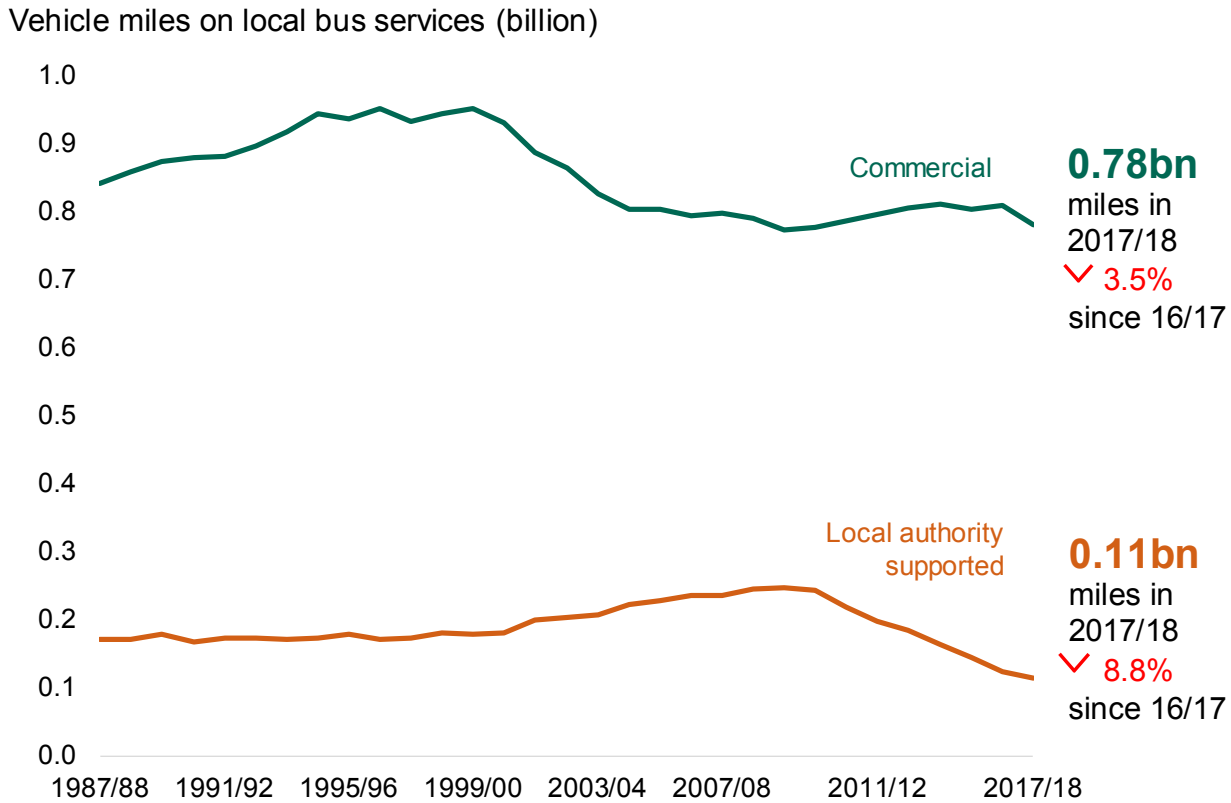
For supported services, operators receive payment from a local transport authority for running the service. They are usually considered socially necessary but not commercially viable. Supply of services is likely to be affected by similar factors to bus use. Operating costs and local authority support for supported services are also likely to be important.

Commercial and local authority supported bus mileage

In England outside London bus mileage has declined by 12.9% since 2004/05. This has been driven by a decrease of 49% in local authority supported mileage, in particular in non-metropolitan areas. Although commercial mileage increased by 0.6% from 2004/05 to 2016/17, it decreased by 3.5% over the year to 2017/18.

Supported mileage in England outside London as a percentage of total mileage was 17% in 1987/88. Supported mileage reached its highest proportion in 2009/10 at 24.2%. **Chart 6** shows the decrease in supported mileage since 2009/10 and it is now 12.7% of total mileage. The chart also shows the increase in commercial mileage to 2014/15 and a levelling off of the trend in the years since then.

Chart 6: Vehicle miles on local bus services by service type: England outside London, 1987/88 to 2017/18 (table BUS0205)



Overall, the decline in supported mileage has not been fully matched by an increase in commercial mileage and in the latest year commercial mileage decreased by 3.5%. Another part of the public transport network in a local authority is flexible or demand responsible modes transport, including community transport. These forms of transport are unlikely to be captured in these statistics because the annual bus survey is completed by operators holding a Public Service Vehicle (PSV) licence rather than the Section 19 and 22 permits that the majority of “community” transport organisations operate under.

Through DfT’s annual bus punctuality survey, local authorities are asked to briefly describe the community and on demand transport services that operate in their area, including the number of passenger journeys if available. A high level review of responses in 2016/17 indicated that there were around 5 million community and on demand passenger journeys in England. This estimate should be treated with caution as responses were not received from all local authorities and the recording of journeys by community transport organisations is unlikely to be as robust as that by PSV operators. Local authorities indicate that community transport services operate for those that cannot use conventional bus services such as older people or people with disabilities, and also for where conventional services do not reach such as rural areas.

Vehicles

The below graphic summarises the annual figures for the number of buses used by local operators in England in 2017/18.

Summary



34,500 buses used by local operators in England in 2017/18

Of which...



29% were in London



91% had CCTV



97% had an AVL device



29% had free WiFi



64% were enabled for payment by contactless bank card

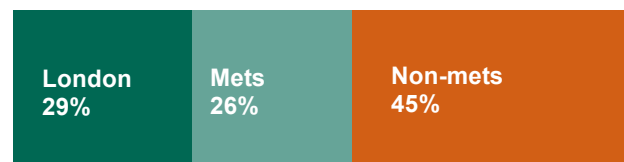


92% of buses in England outside London were ITSO smart enabled

Bus fleet

The number of buses used by local bus operators in England has remained at similar levels since 2004/05 at around 35,000 buses. Over a quarter of buses were in London (see [chart 7](#)). The average age of a bus in England in 2017/18 was 7.7 years.

Chart 7: Proportion of buses used by local bus operators by area type: England, March 2018 ([table BUS0602](#))



Equipment on buses

In 2017/18, 91% of buses used by local operators in England were equipped with CCTV, up from 44% in 2005/06. The majority of buses were also fitted with an Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) device (97% of buses in England, compared with 35% in 2006/07). Of the buses in England with an AVL device in 2017/18, 98% were being used to monitor punctuality and 94% used the AVL device to provide real time service information to customers.

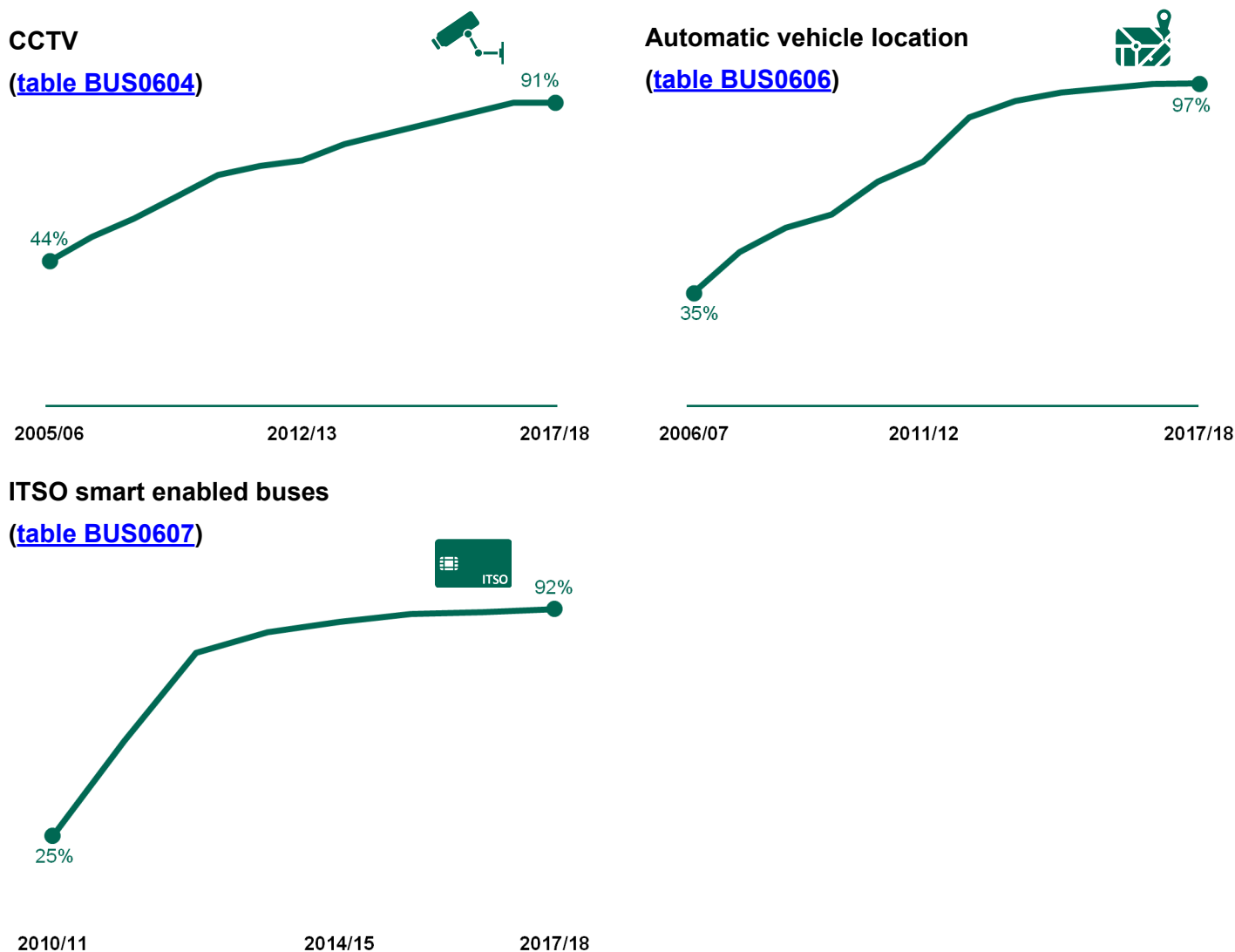
AVL and ITSO

Automatic Vehicle Location is used to track vehicle location in order to monitor punctuality and provide real time service information to customers.

ITSO is an organisation which sets a common technical standard for smart ticketing. Further information can be found at: www.itso.org.uk.

Other questions were added to the survey last year on buses with contactless payment and free WiFi. In 2017/18, 29% of buses in England had free WiFi, up from 25% the year before and 64% were enabled for payment by contactless bank card (or mobile phones emulating these e.g. Android Pay or Apple Pay) up from 44% in 2016/17. In 2017/18, 92% of buses used by local bus operators in England outside London were ITSO smart enabled. This is up from 25% of buses which were ITSO enabled in 2010/11 (see [chart 9](#)).

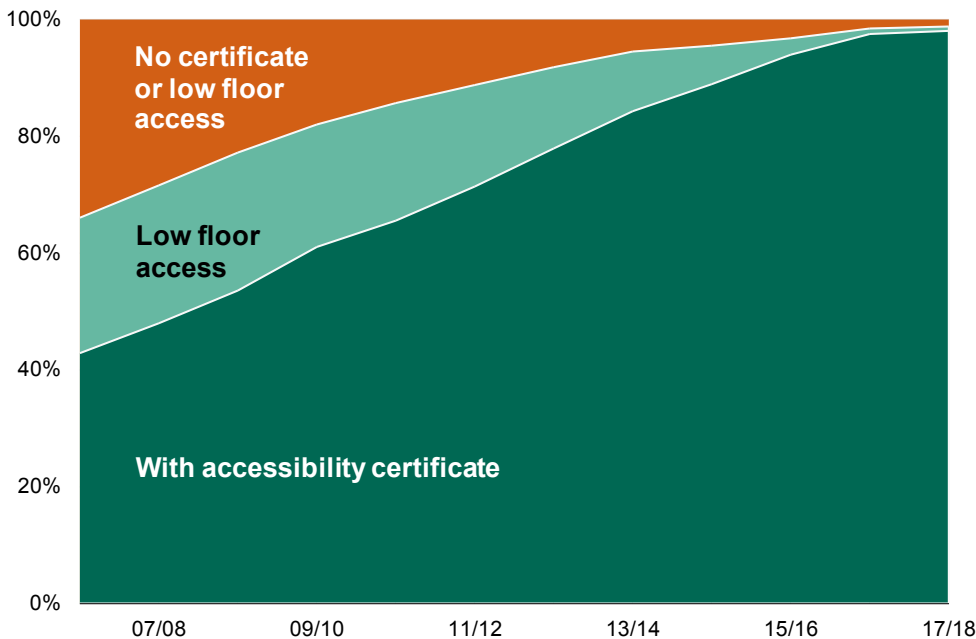
Chart 8: Percentage of buses fitted with CCTV, AVL or ITSO smart enabled buses: England, 2017/18 compared with previous years



Bus accessibility

In March 2018, 98% of buses in England had been issued with an accessibility certificate. **Chart 10** shows that the proportion of buses in England with an accessibility certificate has increased each year since 2004/05 and is now at a record high level.

Chart 10: Percentage of local buses with low floor access or an accessibility certificate: England, 2006/07 to 2017/18 ([table BUS0603](#))



Accessibility regulations

The [Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000 \(PSVAR\)](#) set out standards for public service vehicles to ensure they are accessible to disabled people by 1 January 2017 at the latest (depending on bus type). Buses that comply with the accessibility regulations are issued with an accessibility certificate. Some buses are suitable for wheelchair access through low floor designs.

Bus partnership schemes

New questions were added to the survey last year to capture information on bus partnership schemes. In 2017/18, 20% of local bus operators in England were part of at least one bus partnership scheme (operators can be involved in more than one). Of the operators involved in a partnership scheme, 54% were involved in one only with 46% involved in two or more schemes.

In 2017/18, 7% of local bus operators in England were involved in at least one statutory bus partnership scheme with 16% involved in at least one voluntary scheme (operators can be involved in more than one scheme e.g. one statutory and one voluntary).

About partnership schemes

Bus partnership schemes are agreements between local authorities and local bus operators to improve the quality of services and facilities within the scheme area. They will involve at least one bus company and at least one local authority. The local authority may undertake to provide bus priority measures, new bus stops and/or real time information systems. In return bus operators may provide new vehicles with improved levels of accessibility and environmental performance and/or enhanced driver training. They may also provide an enhanced level of service. A **statutory scheme** is one made under section 114 of the Transport Act 2000. A **voluntary scheme** is a non-statutory term used to describe any agreement entered into voluntarily by one or more local authorities and one or more bus operators, and possibly other relevant parties. Further information can be found in the [bus11](#) online tables.

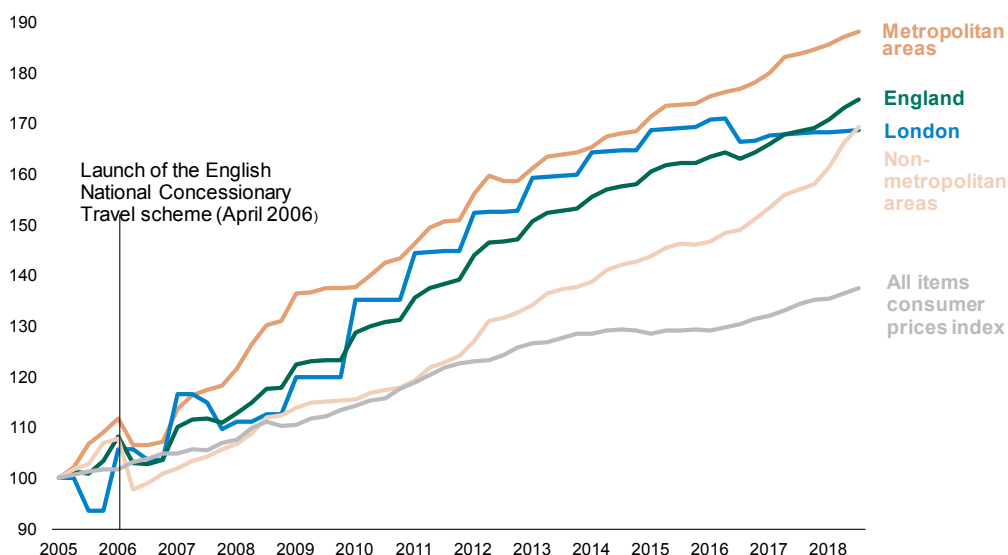
Financial outlook

Bus fares

In the past year to March 2018, local bus fares in England have increased by 2.8%, faster than the annual all items Consumer Prices Index rate of inflation over the same period (2.5% increase). Between March 2012 and March 2018, the average annual percentage change in bus fares was 2.9%, higher than the average annual rate of inflation (1.6%).

Local bus fares in England increased by 71% between March 2005 and March 2018. **Chart 11** shows that bus fares have risen at a faster rate in metropolitan areas (86%) than in non-metropolitan areas (61%). The all items Consumer Prices Index has risen by 35% over the same period, which means that bus fares have risen in real terms.

Chart 11: Local bus fares index by metropolitan area status: England, quarterly March 2005 to September 2018, current prices ([table BUS0415a](#))



Government support

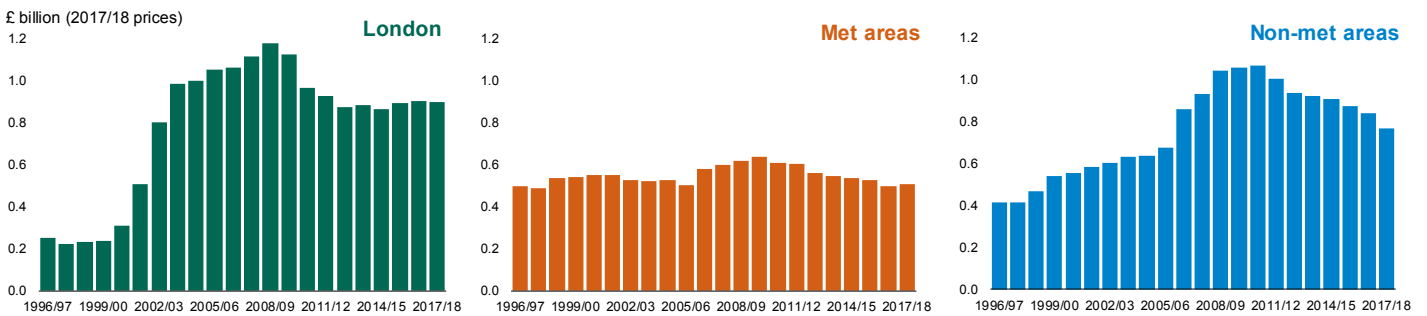
Central and local government support for local bus services consists of payments for supported services, Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) and concessionary travel reimbursement (effectively a subsidy to concessionary passengers). In 2017/18, estimated total net support paid in England was £2.18 billion, of which £1.00 billion or 46% was for concessionary travel.

BSOG

One form of central government support for buses. The rate at which BSOG is paid was cut by 20% from April 2012. From October 2013, BSOG for London was devolved to Transport for London.

Chart 12 shows that in real terms total net support in metropolitan areas has remained at a similar level since 1996/97 and increased in the last year. London has seen increases in support but has declined since a peak in 2008/09. In non-metropolitan areas, there was a peak of net support in 2010/11 of £1.07bn but support has declined since then.

Chart 12: Total net support by central and local government for local bus services and concessionary travel by area type: England, 1996/97 to 2017/18 (2017/18 prices) ([table BUS0502b](#))



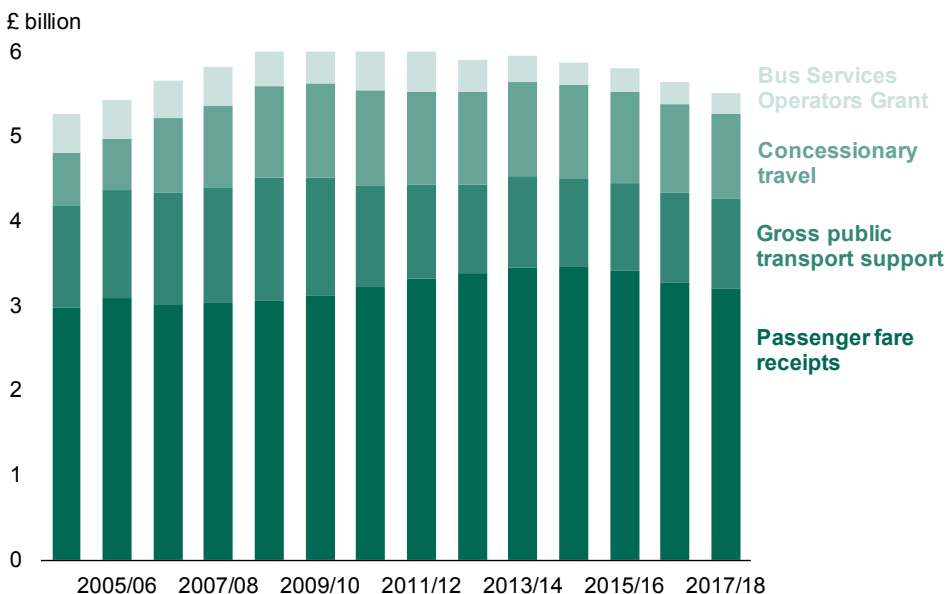
Operator revenue

In 2017/18, the total estimated operating revenue for local bus services in England was £5.52 billion. Passenger fare receipts made up the largest proportion of operating revenue: £3.22 billion or 58% of operating revenue (see [chart 13](#)). Revenue from passenger receipts has increased on average each year by 0.6% in real terms between 2004/05 and 2017/18.

BSOG has decreased by 44% in real terms between 2004/05 and 2017/18. In 2004/05, BSOG made up 9% of operating revenue but in 2017/18 this proportion had fallen to 5%. Some of this decrease will be due to BSOG in London being devolved to Transport for London.

Operating revenue from concessionary fare reimbursement has increased by nearly 60% in real terms over same period from £0.63 billion to £1.00 billion. This increase reflects the wider coverage of the concessionary travel scheme (moving from a local authority to a national scheme), increased eligibility and a larger proportion of elderly people in the wider population.

Chart 13: Operating revenue for local bus services by revenue type: England, 2004/05 to 2017/18 (2017/18 prices) ([table BUS0501b](#))



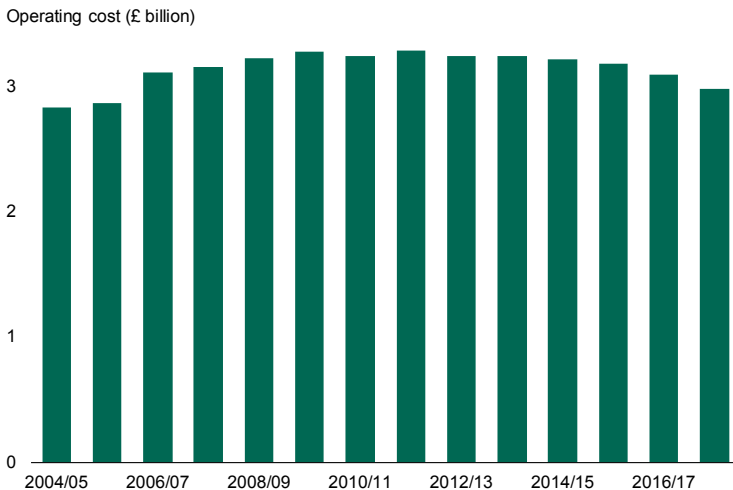
Types of revenue for operators

- Fare receipts:** on and off bus fares
- Public transport support:** payments from local authorities, mostly for running supported services
- Concessionary reimbursement:** from LAs for carrying concessionary passengers
- BSOG:** fuel duty rebate from DfT
- Other sources of income excluded.

Operator costs

In England outside London, between 2004/05 and 2017/18, operator costs for local bus services increased from £2.83 billion to £2.98 billion in real terms (see **chart 14**). This was an average annual real terms increase of 0.4%. However, operator costs have been falling since a high of £3.28 billion in 2011/12. A more detailed index of bus industry cost is compiled by the [Confederation of Passenger Transport](#).

Chart 14: Operating cost for local bus services: England outside London, 2004/05 to 2017/18 (2017/18 prices) ([table BUS0406b](#))



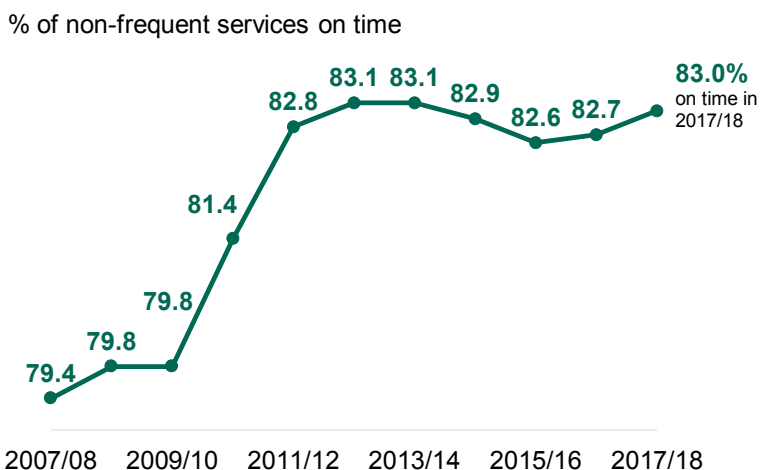
Bus timetable data

Timetable data provides more detailed information on when and where bus services run, and who operates them than the other sources in this publication. An analysis of bus timetable data from the [Traveline National Dataset](#) was included in [the 2016 publication](#) (see page 12 of the release).

Bus punctuality

In 2017/18, 83.0% of non-frequent services in England ran on time. This is very similar to the level seen since 2011/12 (see **chart 15**). 'On time' is defined as one between 1 minute early and 5 minutes 59 seconds late. At the regional level bus service punctuality varied between 81.6% and 88.3%. At the local authority level there was greater variation ranging between 65% and 97%.

Chart 15: Percentage of non-frequent services running on time:



Bus punctuality data

[Bus punctuality statistics](#) provide one measure of the performance of local bus services based on data reported by local authorities who monitor punctuality using manual surveys or data from electronic systems. There are different measures of punctuality for frequent and non-frequent services: a frequent service is one that has six or more buses per hour. Several areas have no frequent services.

Frequent services

Data on the average excess waiting time for frequent services by local authority in England can be found in [table bus0903](#).

Bus passenger satisfaction

The Transport Focus Bus Passenger survey gathers information on levels of satisfaction of bus users.

Bus Passenger Survey

Data from the [Bus Passenger Survey](#) (BPS) is managed by the independent transport user watchdog Transport Focus. Note that the statistics from the BPS are not National Statistics.

Summary



88% overall satisfaction with the journey



65% satisfaction with value for money (fare-payers)



73% satisfaction with punctuality



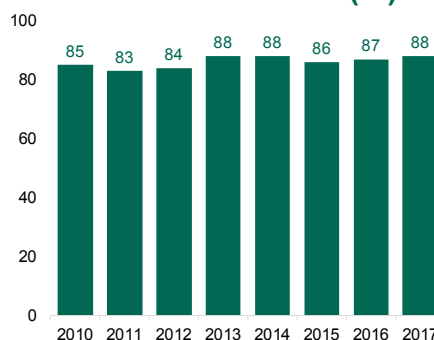
84% satisfaction with length of time for journey

In 2017, 88% of passengers in England outside London were satisfied with their journey. This is virtually unchanged from 2016 when journey satisfaction was at 87%.

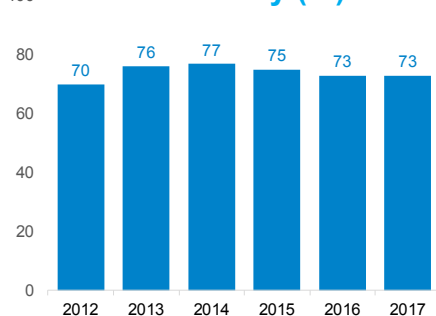
Chart 16 shows longer time series for each of the four measures in the summary. Since around 2014, overall levels of satisfaction with buses have been increasing, from around 84% to around 88% in 2017; value for money satisfaction has increased from 54% to 65% over the same period; satisfaction with the length of time taken with a journey has remained broadly similar; and satisfaction with punctuality has fallen.

Chart 16: % satisfaction with different aspects of a bus journey: England outside London, 2010-2017 and 2012-210

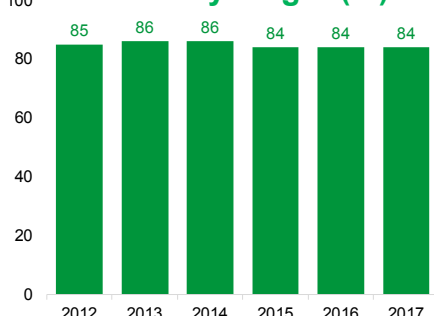
Overall satisfaction (%)



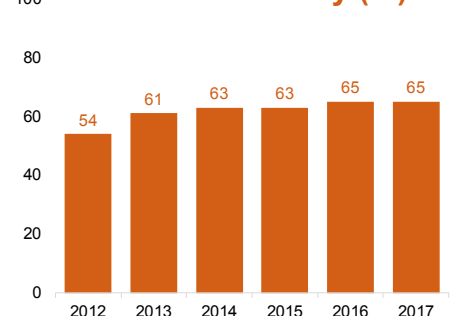
Punctuality (%)



Journey length (%)



Value for money (%)



For the 2018 survey, the BPS covered the whole of Great Britain for the first time and was conducted in 48 authority areas in England outside London. The areas in England include the six metropolitan counties and a mix of unitary and county councils and bus operators' operating divisions.

The sample was around 48,000 bus passengers.

The survey does not cover all areas but covers those that account for around two thirds of bus passenger journeys within its England outside of London remit area.

For information on your area, see the full BPS report [here](#).

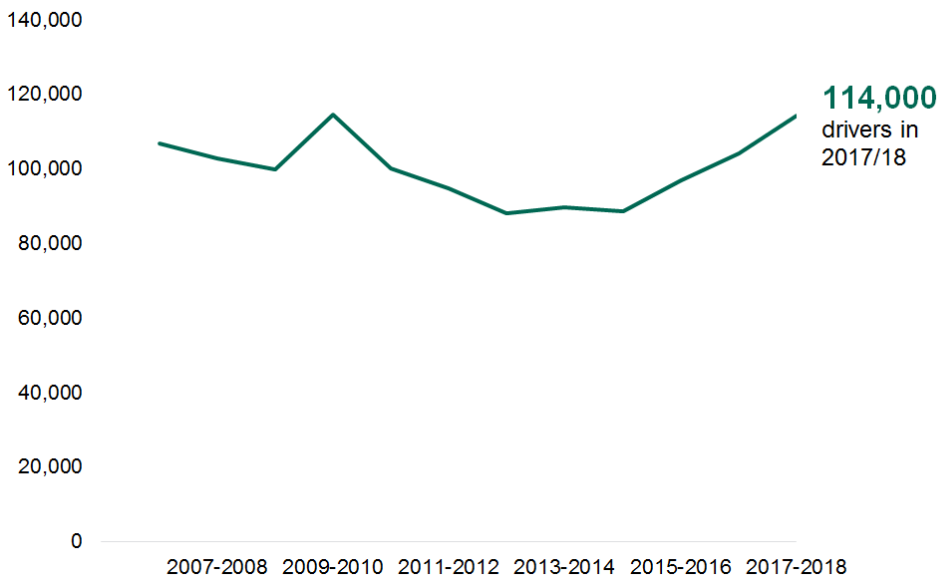
Bus and coach staff and drivers

Bus staff

Local bus operators in England employed an estimated 100,000 full-time equivalent staff, including maintenance and admin staff, as at March 2018 (see [table BUS0701\(area\)](#)). This was 3% lower than the 2017 figure and is based on PSV survey figures.

The Labour Force Survey collects information about individuals in the labour market. The data can be used to provide insight on bus and coach drivers. There were an estimated 114,000 bus and coach drivers in England during 2017/18, 11% higher than ten years ago (103,000 in 2007/08). 88% of drivers were male in 2017/18, down from 91% in 2016/17.

Chart 17: Number of bus and coach drivers, England, 2006/07 to 2017/18 (Labour Force Survey)



Staff disability awareness training

This year we added a new question to our survey following new legislation on disability awareness training which came into effect from March 2018. As at March 2018, 88% of bus operators required drivers to meet this requirement, covering 98% of all driver and on bus staff.

88%

Of operators requiring staff are trained in disability awareness

98%

Of all drivers and on bus staff

Labour Force Survey

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a large study of the employment circumstances of the UK population, ran by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). More information can be found [here](#)

Drivers

The drivers in this section are defined using the Standard occupational classification system, SOC 2010, as “Bus and coach drivers” (code 8213), which will contain both bus and coach drivers. The respondent reports their occupation to the interviewer and is then classified in this way during the interview, so whether the respondent was a bus or coach driver cannot be determined.



88%



12%

Staff disability training background

From March 2018, Article 16 of Regulation (EU) 181/2011 requires that drivers are trained in disability awareness, consistent with Part A of Annex II to that Regulation. Such training may be provided as part of Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (DCPC) or separate to it. More information can be found [here](#)

Background information

Users and uses of these statistics

These statistics provide key information on trends in the bus sector. Within the Department for Transport they are used for:

- ▶ Ministerial briefing and to answer public enquiries;
- ▶ As background to policy development;
- ▶ Monitoring trends in the bus sector, for example in relation to accessible buses;
- ▶ The bus punctuality figures are used to monitor progress for the DfT business plan indicator related to the proportion of buses running on time (www.gov.uk/government/publications/input-and-impact-indicators); and
- ▶ By economists in modelling policy options (for example related to reform of bus subsidy).

Outside DfT known uses include:

- ▶ 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;
- ▶ Local authorities may use these statistics to compare trends in their area with the national picture;
- ▶ These statistics have also provided background information for recent reports by the Transport Select Committee and Competition Commission;
- ▶ Bus fares data are used by the Office for National Statistics in calculating the Retail and Consumer Price Indices and in the National Accounts.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

These statistics are derived from a number of sources, with the main source being the DfT annual Public Service Vehicle (PSV) survey of over 500 local bus operators which provides data on passenger journeys, vehicle miles, revenue and costs, and vehicles and staff. However, certain statistics (for example annual statistics on bus fares) are derived from smaller surveys of the larger bus operators, or from local authorities. Information on passenger journeys and bus mileage for London is provided by Transport for London.

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: www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html. For details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release: www.gov.uk/government/collections/bus-statistics

Many of these statistics have been collected on a broadly comparable basis from operators for many years. However, following revisions to the methodology used to compile the published figures, 2004/05 is the earliest year for which figures are comparable on exactly the same basis.

The PSV survey uses imputation techniques to derive key figures for operators who were either not selected in the sample for that year, or who did not respond. On occasion, imputations for earlier years can be improved using directly-reported data for later years. Minor revisions to back-data can occur as a result, although trends are rarely affected substantively.

For the key indicators (passenger journeys and vehicle miles operated) the data provided by operators covers around, or above, 90% of the total figure, with the remainder imputed.

Comparison with other sources suggests that, at aggregate (national) level, the statistics are likely to provide a reasonably robust measure of levels and broad trends. However, figures representing smaller groups of operators and single year on year changes should be treated with caution as these are more susceptible to measurement errors (for example, an inaccurate return by an operator, or a change in an operator's method of producing the figures) which are more likely to even out at the national level. Regional, and particularly local authority, level figures should be interpreted with caution.

Further details of the data sources and methods used in the production of these statistics can be found in the notes and definitions document available via: www.gov.uk/government/publications/buses-statistics-guidance.

Next update to bus statistics

Quarterly bus statistics for October to December 2018 will be released in March 2019. The next annual bus statistics will be published in Autumn 2019.

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