



Department
for Transport

Concessionary Travel Statistics England 2020/21

About this release

This release covers concessionary bus travel in England. It provides the most up to date statistics on the number of older and disabled concessionary passes, the number of concessionary bus journeys, and the payments made by Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs) to reimburse bus operators for concessionary fares. These statistics are derived from a DfT survey of TCAs undertaken in 2021. The survey was last carried out in 2019 and so comparisons are made to 2018/19.

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There were 8.9 million older and disabled concessionary travel passes in England in 2020/21, 2.2% less than in 2018/19. Total concessionary bus journeys were 68% lower in 2020/21 than in 2018/19, the previous period for which data return was mandatory.

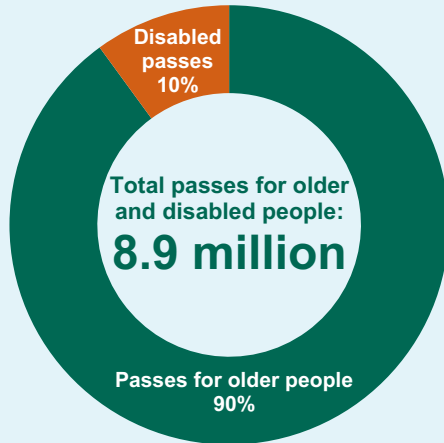
This activity will have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic and associated restrictions.

	8.0 million older passes in England in 2020/21
	2.0% less than in 2018/19
Concessionary passes	0.9 million disabled passes in England in 2020/21
	3.7% less than in 2018/19
Concessionary bus journeys	272 million in England in 2020/21
	68.5% less than in 2018/19
Net current expenditure (2020/21 prices)	£1.07 billion in England in 2020/21
	11.4% less than in 2018/19

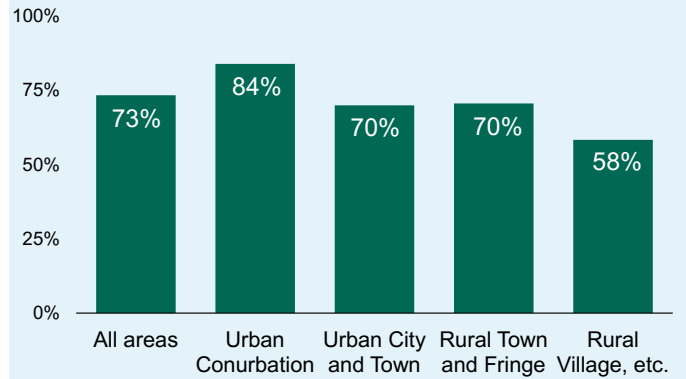


Concessionary Travel Statistics, England, 2020/21

Passes, 2020/21 (BUS0820)



Take up of Older Passes, 2020 (NTS9915)



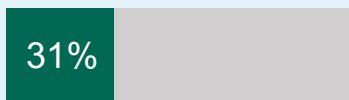
Take up rates of older passes are highest in urban conurbations.

Journeys, 2020/21 (BUS0821, BUS0105)

272 million Concessionary bus journeys in 2020/21
68% less than in 2018/19

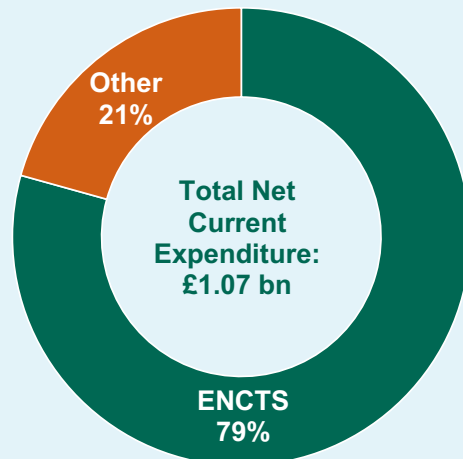
30 average number of concessionary journeys per pass

% share of all bus journeys



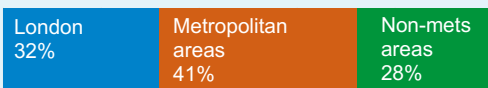
31% of all bus journeys are (statutory or discretionary) concessionary journeys

Net Current Expenditure, 2020/21 (BUS0813)



79% of concessionary net current expenditure was spent on the statutory English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS). The rest was spent on discretionary schemes.

Distribution of net concessionary expenditure by area: England, 2020/21



England outside London accounted for 68% of total net current expenditure on concessionary travel in 2020/21.

Discretionary Concessions, 2021/22 (BUS0841 & BUS0842)

69 of the 83 Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs) outside London either offered a youth concession, or it was offered by at least one commercial bus operator in 2021/22

78 of the 83 TCAs outside London offered some discretionary travel concession in 2021/22

Effect of the coronavirus pandemic

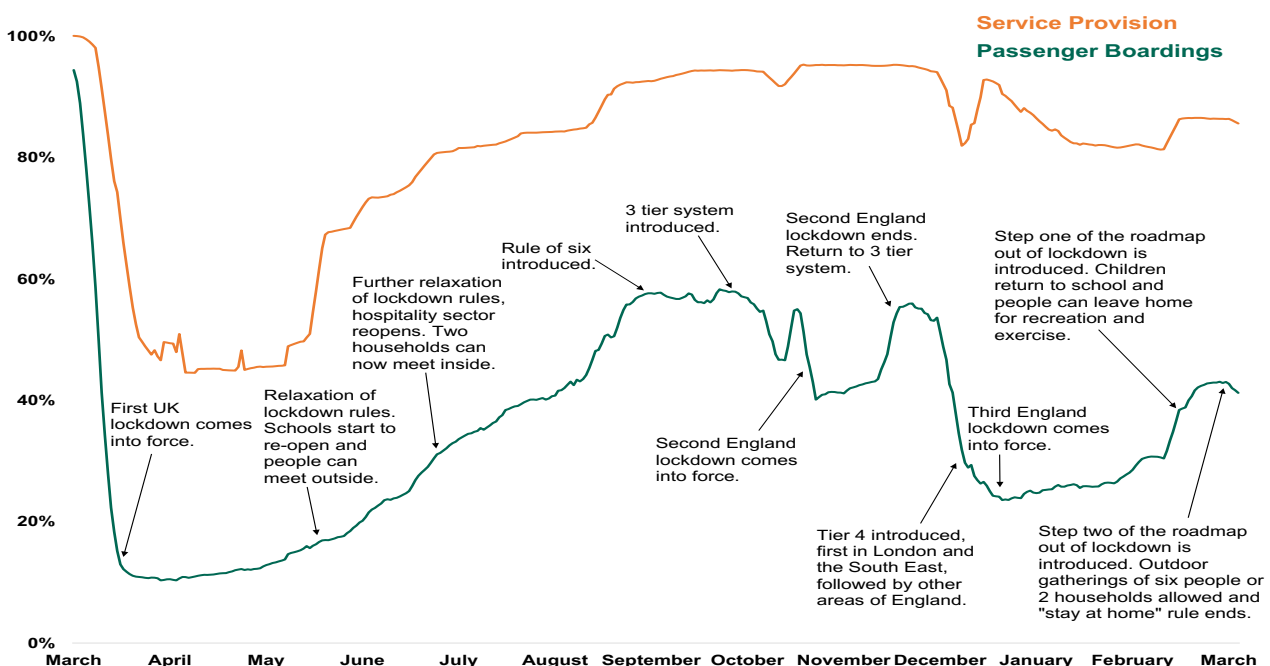
Daily passenger boardings and service provision

Data provided by Ticketer showed that during the first UK lockdown (March 2020), passenger boardings in England excluding London fell to approximately 10% of those on the same day of the January reference week. As restrictions were eased passenger boardings increased, peaking at approximately 55% when children returned to school in September 2020.

During the second English lockdown (November 2020) the decrease in passenger boardings was less severe, falling to approximately 42% of those on the same day of the January reference week. The application of Tier 4 restrictions to large parts of England during December 2020 and the subsequent third English lockdown in January 2021 had a larger impact, with passenger boardings falling to approximately 27% of those on the same day of the January reference week.

Following an initial decrease between March and June 2020, service provision remained consistently high. The introduction of the COVID-19 bus service support grant (CBSSG) is thought to have played a large part in this alongside the return of children to schools in September.

Chart 1: 7 day average of passenger boardings and service provision in England, excluding London, compared to the same day in the 3rd week of January 2020: March 15th 2020 to March 31st 2021



Ticketer
Daily passenger boardings and service provision compared to the January 2020 reference week (3rd week of January 2020) have been provided by Ticketer, one of the largest providers of Electronic Ticketing Machines (ETMs) in the UK. It is thought that, outside of TfL, West Midlands National Express, and Stagecoach, Ticketer is used by around 70% of operators. We are confident that these figures are robust enough to indicate overall trends at England outside of London level. Passenger boardings will include physical ticket sales, as well as smart cards, QR tickets, and where the driver counts passengers (such as school runs). Service provision represents numbers of services run by an operator for a specific vehicle, direction and driver. A service that has been cancelled would not be included. A figure of 100 means the same level as that seen on the same day the reference week. A figure higher than 100 shows an increase. A figure less than 100 shows a decrease.

During the coronavirus pandemic and associated restrictions travel on all modes decreased. There were reductions in bus journeys including concessionary journeys. The expenditure on concessionary and other bus use by local authorities changed to support the provision of services during this time.

Concessionary travel activity

Data provided by Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) based on the activity of 5 large operators suggest that trends in travel using concessionary tickets or passes on local bus services were broadly similar to those for other ticket types overall, rising and falling as restrictions changed and travel patterns shifted through the year.

Summary overview

The Concessionary Travel Survey was not carried out in 2020 to ease the burden on local authorities. This year's survey included the voluntary option to supply key data for 2020 if possible. The previous mandatory collection covered 2018/19 and so percentage changes are given from that period.

Figures are shown for London, metropolitan areas (Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire) and non-metropolitan areas (shire counties and unitary authorities).

Table 1: Concessionary travel figures by area: England, 2020/21 compared to 2018/19

	Total passes		Journeys		Net Current Expenditure (NCE) (2020/21 prices)		Reimbursement (2020/21 prices)		% NCE spent on statutory scheme
	2020/21 (millions) and % change since 2018/19								
England	8.9m	-2.2%	272m	-68.5%	£1,071m	-11.4%	£839m	-12.6%	79%
London	1.1m	-7.7%	92m	-65.9%	£340m	-9.6%	£224m	-5.6%	66%
Outside London	7.9m	-1.3%	180m	-69.6%	£731m	-12.2%	£615m	-15.0%	86%
Metropolitan areas	2.1m	2.1%	77m	-65.7%	£435m	-12.7%	£212m	-16.1%	71%
Non-Metropolitan areas	5.8m	-2.5%	103m	-72.0%	£296m	-11.5%	£403m	-14.4%	96%

What is concessionary travel?

A statutory bus concession for older and disabled people has been in place since 2001. In 2008, the concession was extended to cover free local bus travel between 0930 and 2300 to older and disabled people anywhere in England. This statutory concession is referred to as the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS).

In London, the statutory concession for London residents covers the whole London Local Transport Network.

Eligible population

Since April 2010, the eligibility age has been tied to the State Pension age for women. The pensionable age for women reached 65 in 2018 and had increased to 66 for both men and women by 2020.

Passes vs pass holders

The Concessionary Travel Survey captures the number of passes from administrative databases. While this provides a reasonable proxy for the number of pass holders, the returns can include inactive passes, issued to people who are deceased or no longer resident in the area.

Older and disabled concessionary passes

There were 8.9 million older and disabled concessionary passes in England in 2020/21, a decrease of 2.2% since 2018/19. Pass numbers decreased in all area types except metropolitan areas where the number of passes increased 2.1%. It is possible decreases were caused by expiring licences not being renewed due to reduced travel in 2020/21.

Of the 8.9 million passes in total, around 8.0 million (90%) were for older people and 0.9 million (10%) were for disabled people.

The proportion varies by area type. In London and metropolitan areas, the proportion of older passes was slightly lower (at 85% and 87% respectively). In non-metropolitan areas it was slightly higher (92%).

Chart 2: Older and disabled passes: England, 2020/21
(table [BUS0820](#))

Total passes:
8.9 million

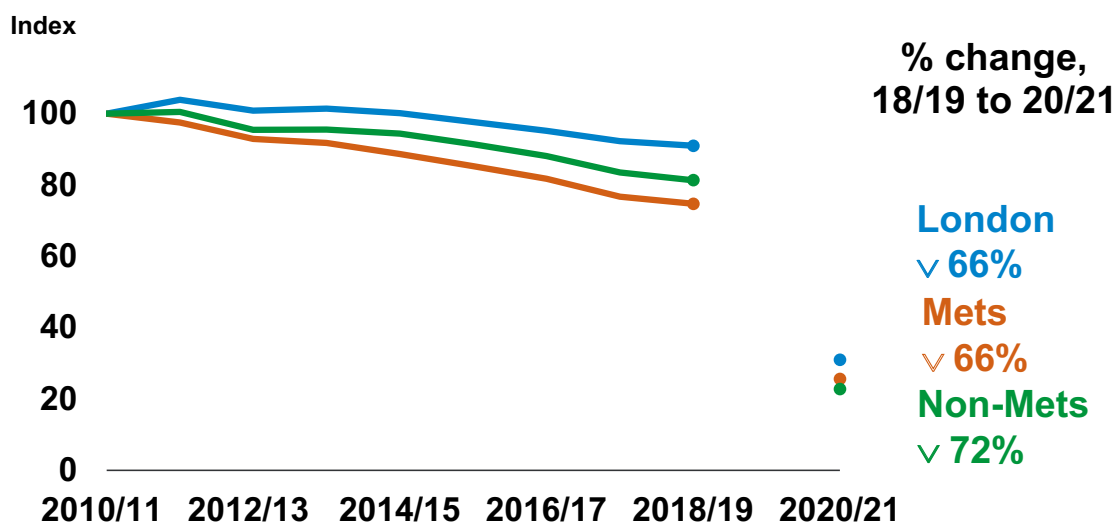
Passes for
older people
90%

Disabled
passes
10%

Concessionary bus journeys

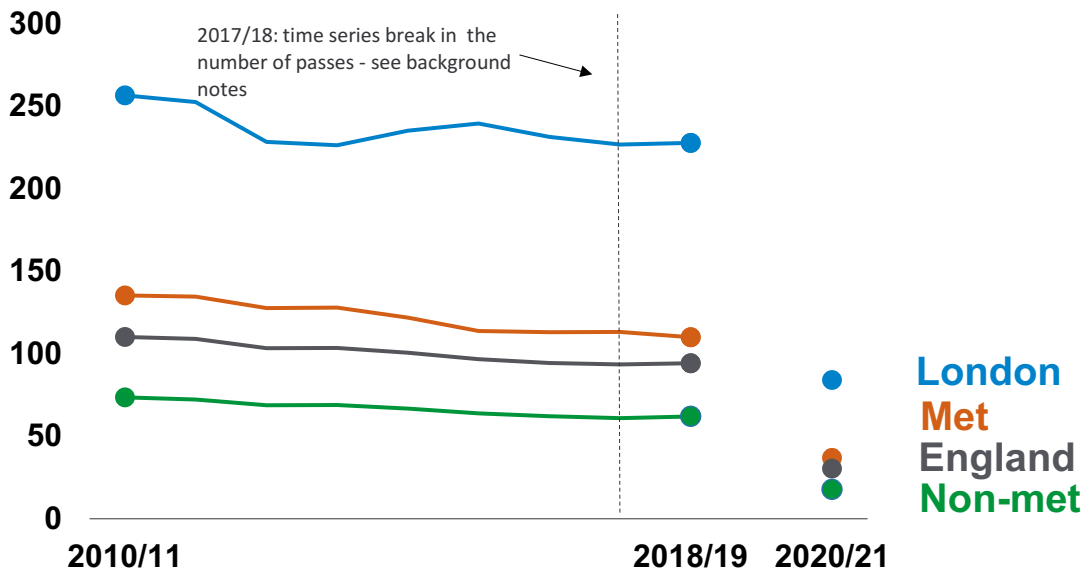
There were 272 million concessionary bus passenger journeys in 2020/21. The coronavirus pandemic and associated restrictions resulted in large decreases in travel across all areas. Compared with 2018/19, the number of journeys in London areas and metropolitan areas decreased by the same proportion (66%) while non-metropolitan areas decreased by 72%. More detailed information on local bus services, including passenger journeys and vehicle miles, can be found in the latest [annual bus statistics](#) release. The charts below only include figures from mandatory collection and so omit 2019/20.

Chart 3: Concessionary bus journeys by area: England, index 2010/11 = 100 (table [BUS0821](#))



On average 30 concessionary bus journeys were made per pass in England in 2020/2021. As in previous years, the highest numbers of concessionary bus journeys per pass were in London, at around 84 journeys per pass in 2020/21. This is more than 4 times the 18 journeys per pass in non-metropolitan areas. These figures are much lower than in previous years because of the very large decrease in journeys, due to coronavirus restrictions, which greatly exceeds the reduction in passes.

Chart 4: Concessionary journeys per pass by area status: England, from 2010/11 (table BUS0821)



Expenditure on concessionary travel

Net current expenditure is the expenditure that local authorities spend on running the concessionary travel scheme in their area. It covers all aspects of the scheme for both the statutory and discretionary elements (if offered by the authority), including reimbursement to bus operators, administration, pass production costs and employee costs.

In this release the expenditure presented is based on the TCA survey returns. Data on total concessionary travel expenditure by TCAs is also collected by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities as part of the revenue outturn data (and presented in tables BUS0811 and BUS0812).

The expenditure figures in this section cover the total net expenditure on concessionary travel, including reimbursement and administration. In 2020/21, English Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs), including London, estimated they spent around £1.07 billion on concessionary travel. 28% of this was expenditure in non-metropolitan areas.

From the start of the pandemic, DfT has urged TCAs to continue to pay concessionary travel reimbursement payments at pre-Covid levels. This is to ensure that bus services could continue to operate through the outbreak and into recovery. This has meant that spending over 2020/21 does not reflect the reduced number of concessionary journeys. Combined with funding from DfT, this support worked towards ensuring the continued operation of local bus services across the country during this period.

Chart 5: Distribution of net concessionary expenditure by area: England, 2020/21



Overall, English TCAs spent 79% of their concessionary travel net current expenditure on the statutory English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) in 2020/21. This is a similar proportion as reported in the previous survey for 2018/19 although the proportion for London and non-metropolitan areas is higher in 2020/21 while the proportion for metropolitan areas is lower. The chart below only includes figures from mandatory collection and so omits 2019/20.

Chart 6: Total Net Expenditure: England, 2020/21

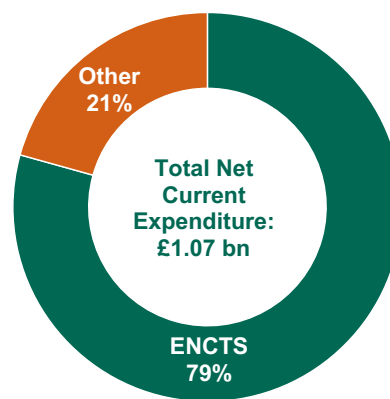
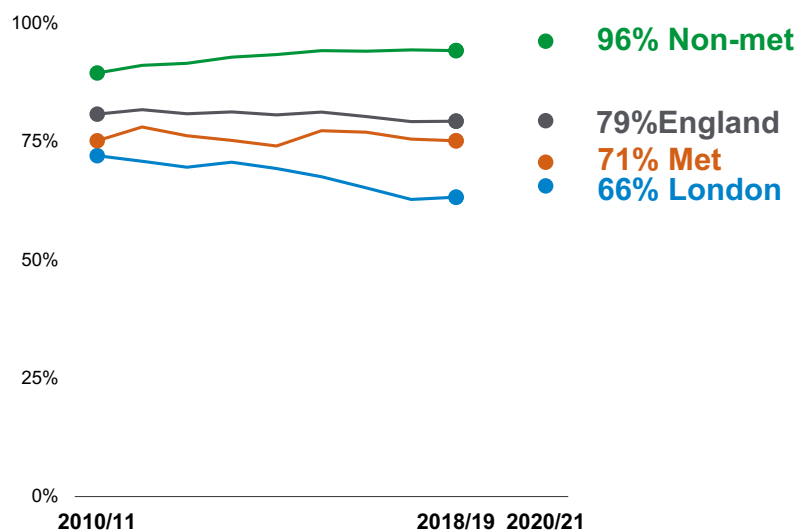


Chart 7: Proportion of net concessionary expenditure spent on ENCTS by area: England, from 2010/11 (table [BUS0810](#))



Distribution of expenditure

The data in this section concentrates on how expenditure on concessionary travel is distributed. Reimbursement to bus operators for statutory and discretionary journeys made by ENCTS passholders is the largest element of a TCA's concessionary expenditure.

In 2020/21, TCAs estimated they spent 76% of their total net expenditure on this type of reimbursement. The proportion of net current expenditure allocated to reimbursement has decreased over time, although the latest figures will also have been affected by calculation of continued support for 2020/21 at pre-covid levels.

Chart 8: Total Net Current Expenditure: England 2020/21

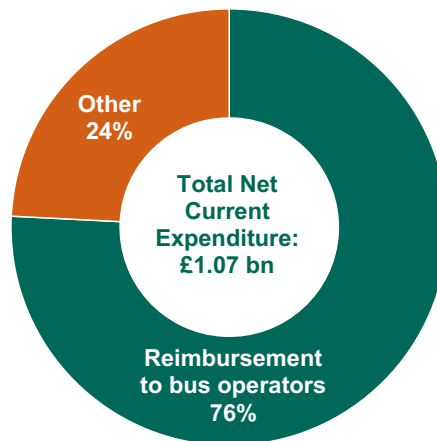
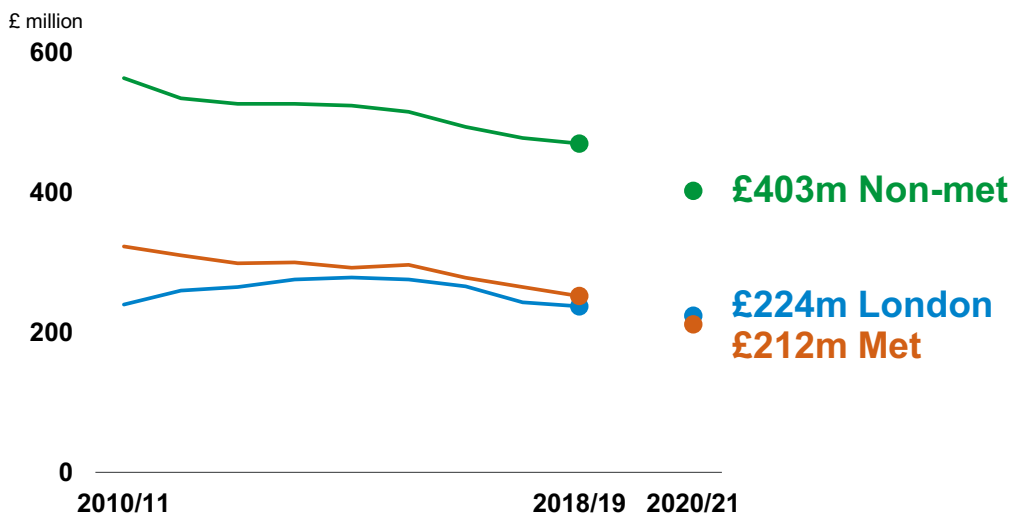


Chart 9: Reimbursement by area: England, (2020/21 prices) (table BUS0830)



The chart above only includes figures from mandatory collection and so omits 2019/20. Adjusted for inflation, the total net current expenditure and reimbursement has decreased over recent years. Average reimbursement per journey has not been included for 2020/21 because during this period reimbursement arrangements were not related to journeys as in previous years.

From 2010/11 to 2018/19 total reimbursement decreased from £1.13 billion to £0.96 billion, at 2020/21 prices. Over this time the number of concessionary bus journeys decreased resulting in an overall increase in average reimbursement per journey from £1.08p in 2010/11 to £1.12p in 2018/19.

Reimbursement

The Department publishes guidance on the ways TCAs can calculate the cost of reimbursement to bus operators in their area.

The underlying principle which underpins reimbursement is set out in domestic regulations which state that operators should be left 'no better and no worse off' as a result of the existence of concessionary travel schemes.

TCAs need to estimate the various components of reimbursement. These include an estimate of the revenue that would have been received in the absence of a scheme ("revenue foregone"), based on journeys and fares that would have been made and received.

Discretionary concessions

Since 2010/11, almost all of the TCAs outside London have offered some discretionary travel concession over and above the statutory minimum ENCTS, although the local authority offer can change over time. The most commonly offered discretionary concessions are extensions to the statutory time period, free or reduced travel for companions to disabled people, allowing the use of discretionary companion passes issued by other TCAs and concessions on community transport (including Dial-a-Ride). Some of the concessions offered are very specific to the local authority. For example concessions for travel on light rail systems or ferries.

The total number of TCAs in England has reduced since the previous survey due to the merger of some authorities.

Number of authorities offering discretion:

67



Extensions to travel times

53



Companions to disabled people

45



Community Transport or Dial-a-Ride

30



Park and ride

Discretionary concessions

TCAs may offer residents discretionary enhancements over and above the statutory scheme, including free travel outside the statutory time period or on other transport modes (on trams, for example).

In London, the statutory concession for older and disabled residents covers off-peak travel on the whole London Local Transport Network, as well as free bus travel in England. London residents aged 60+ but below the statutory concessionary travel age can obtain a 60+ Oyster card which allows free travel on bus, Tube, tram, DLR, London Overground, TfL Rail and most National Rail services.

The National Travel Survey

The National Travel Survey (NTS) is a household survey and the primary data source on personal travel patterns in England. The NTS provides a long term time series of the take up rates of older concessionary travel passes, and allows for more detailed analysis of the people who hold them.

Travel concessions for young people

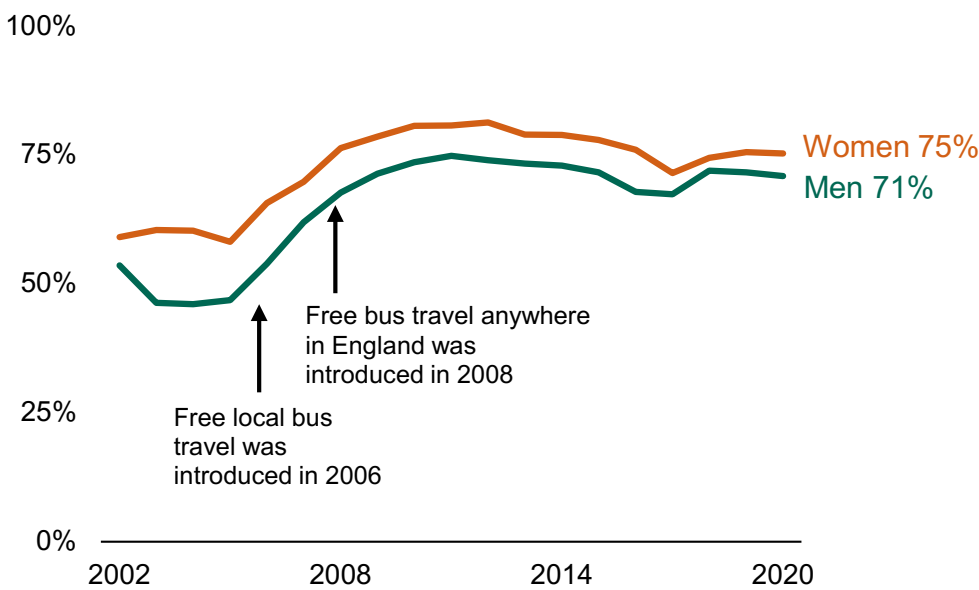
Concessions for young people fall into two categories – those offered by TCAs and those offered by bus operators on a commercial basis. One or both of these types of concessions may be available to young people in a TCA.

In 17 of the 83 TCAs outside London, a youth concession is offered by the TCA. A youth concession is offered by at least one commercial bus operator in 67 of the TCAs outside London.

Concessionary Travel Users

The National Travel Survey estimated that in 2020 73% of eligible people held an older person's concessionary pass. The proportion was higher for women (75%) than men (71%), although the gap has narrowed in recent years. The proportions have risen from 58% and 47% respectively in England in 2005, the year before the introduction of free local bus travel.

Chart 10: Proportion of eligible older people who hold a concessionary pass: England, National Travel Survey since 2002 (table [NTS0620](#))



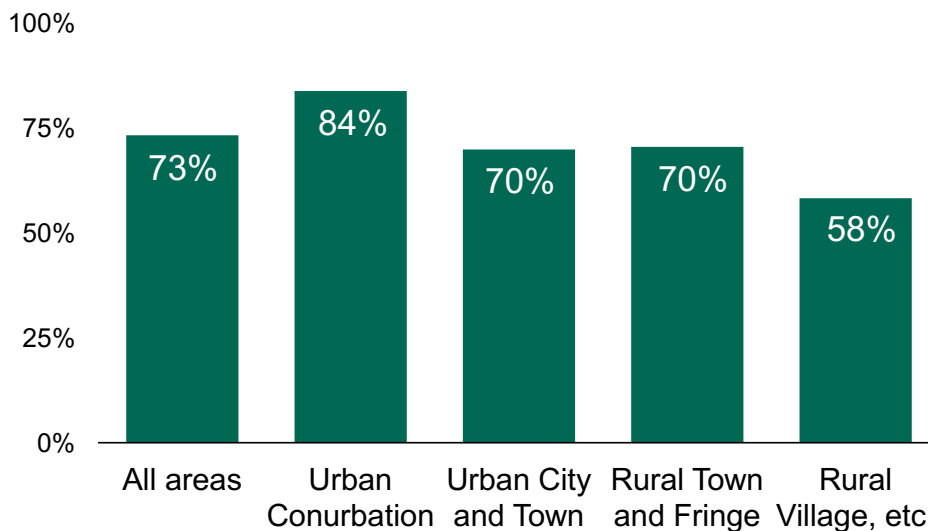
Passes vs pass holders

The Concessionary Travel Survey captures the number of **passes** from administrative databases. The NTS asks respondents whether they are a concessionary **pass holder**.

This means that there are differences between estimates of pass holders depending on which of the two sources is used. However, the two sources do produce broadly comparable totals.

Although concessionary pass holding has been common among older people in recent years, a large proportion of over 60s report travelling by bus less than once a year or never. In 2019, 74% of people eligible had an older pass but 45% of those aged 60 and over reported travelling by bus less than once a year or never.

Chart 11: Take up of Older Passes, by Rural-Urban classification of residence, 2020 (table [NTS9915](#))



A factor that may affect concessionary pass take up and use is the area in which passholders live. Take up rates of older concessionary passes are highest in urban conurbations, with 84% of eligible pensioners holding passes in 2020. However, all types of areas have shown an increase in the rate since 2002/03 to the latest year (including rural village, hamlet and isolated dwelling where the proportion more than doubled from 26% to 58%).

What is concessionary travel?

A statutory bus concession for older and disabled people has been in place since 2001. In 2008, the concession was extended to cover free local bus travel between 0930 and 2300 to older and disabled people anywhere in England. This statutory concession is referred to as the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS).

Older and disabled people holding an ENCTS pass are allowed to travel for free on local bus services anywhere in England, between 0930 and 2300 during weekdays and anytime at weekends and bank holidays. The scheme is administered by Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs). Some TCAs offer discretionary concessions in addition to the statutory ENCTS scheme, such as free or reduced travel before 0930 or on other transport modes

In London, the statutory concession for London residents covers the whole London Local Transport Network.

Further information, including a full history of the concessionary travel policy, can be found in the Notes and Definitions document that accompanies this statistical release.

Passes vs pass holders?

The Concessionary Travel Survey aggregates the number of **passes** reported by TCAs from their administrative databases. While this provides a reasonable proxy for the number of **pass holders**, the returns can include inactive passes, issued to people who are deceased or no longer resident in the area.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

Many of the the statistics in this report are derived from the annual DfT survey of Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs) covering 90 areas: the 89 TCAs outside London plus London Councils. However, in each of these areas, not all respondents answered all questions in full. The response rate achieved is comparable with that achieved in other DfT surveys of local authorities.

Where data were missing, information from adjacent years and from TCA websites (for discretionary and youth concessions) was used to impute for non-response.

A small number of TCAs provided revisions to figures supplied last year.

Year-on-year changes in the number of passes should be treated with caution due to:

- Data cleansing: in some years, TCAs will perform an exercise to clean their records of people who have received duplicate passes, people who are deceased, or people who have moved out of the area.
- Changes to renewal practice: some local authorities switch from the autorenewal of passes to only **automatically** renewing passes to people who had used them within a certain number of years (although anyone fulfilling the age or disability criteria would always be entitled to a pass).

Further information and statistics on concessionary travel

These figures are Official Statistics. Official Statistics are produced to the high professional standards set by the Code of Practice for Statistics. However, these statistics have not yet been assessed by the Office for Statistics Regulation.

Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/buses-statistics-pre-release-access-list>

The Department for Transport's National Travel Survey collects some information about concessionary travel, including the demographic characteristics of pass holders. These statistics can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts06-age-gender-and-modal-breakdown>

The Department for Transport's Survey of Public Service Vehicle Operators (PSV Survey) also collects figures for concessionary bus journeys. These data, which includes youth concessionary journeys as well as older and disabled journeys can be found in the bus statistics series along with data relating to a range of other aspects of bus travel, including overall patronage and operator finance and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bus-statistics>

Users and uses of these statistics

Within the Department for Transport, these statistics are used to understand the impact of changes to the concessionary travel scheme and reimbursement guidance, for ministerial briefing and to answer public enquiries. Outside the Department, users include TCAs and others with an interest in concessionary travel, such as campaign groups, bus operators and specialist transport press.

Feedback

We welcome any feedback on these statistics, to ensure future releases best meet user needs. Feedback can be provided by email to bus.statistics@dft.gov.uk.

Next update

The next Concessionary Travel Statistics are due to be published in Autumn 2022.



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