



Department
for Transport

Concessionary Travel Statistics England 2017/18

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 reimbursement for concessionary fares to Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs).

These statistics are derived from a DfT survey of TCAs undertaken in June 2018, covering 90 areas: the 89 TCAs outside London, and London Councils.

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There were 9.4 million older and disabled concessionary travel passes in England in 2017/18. Total concessionary bus journeys fell by 4.8% between 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Older and disabled passes

8.5 million

older passes in England in 2017/18

0.9 million

disabled passes in England in 2017/18

Concessionary bus journeys

884 million

concessionary bus journeys in England in 2017/18

4.8%

since 2016/17

Net expenditure

£1.12 billion

spent on providing concessions in England in 2017/18

Summary table

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, 2017/18 compared to 2016/17

	Total passes	Journeys	Reimbursement (2017/18 prices)	% spent on statutory scheme
	2017/18 (millions) and % change since 2016/17			% in 2017/18
England	9.4m	884m ↓ 4.8%	£888m ↓ 4.7%	79%
London	1.2m	273m ↓ 3.1%	£218m ↓ 6.6%	63%
Outside London	8.2m	611m ↓ 5.5%	£670m ↓ 4.0%	87%
Metropolitan areas	2.0m	234m ↓ 6.1%	£240m ↓ 5.0%	75%
Non-metropolitan areas	6.2m	376m ↓ 5.2%	£430m ↓ 3.5%	94%

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.

For more details, see Background Information.

Eligible population

Since April 2010, the eligibility age has been tied to the State Pension age for women. The pensionable age for women is rising, to reach 65 by 2018 and 66 for both men and women by 2020. See tables for ages used to estimate the eligible population.

Detailed statistics

are available online as part of the bus statistical series:

- Concessionary passes in table [BUS0820](#)

Older and disabled concessionary passes

Note: due to administrative changes in some TCAs, it has not been possible to produce a consistent time series for the number of passes. See the background note for more information.

Of the 9.4 million passes in total, around 8.5 million (90%) were for older people and 10% for disabled people (**Chart 2**). The proportion varies by area type. In London and metropolitan areas, the proportion of older passes was slightly lower (at 86% and 87% respectively). In non-metropolitan areas it was slightly higher (92%).

66% of older and disabled passes were held in non-metropolitan areas (**Chart 3**).

Chart 2: Older and disabled passes: England, 2017/18

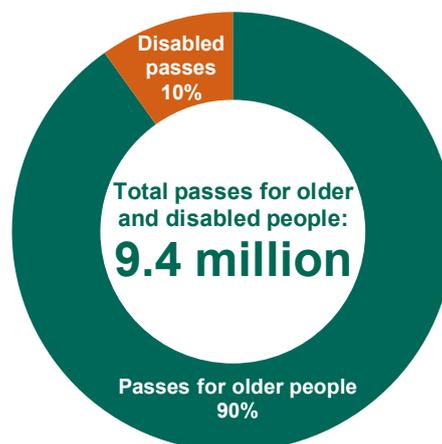
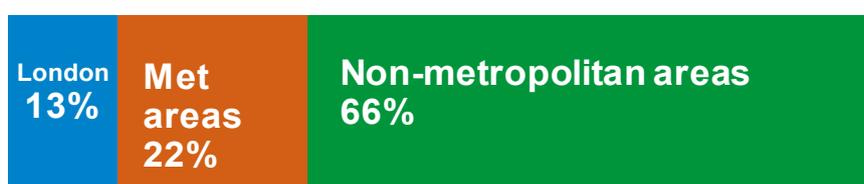


Chart 3: Distribution of older and disabled passes by area: England, 2017/18



Concessionary bus journeys

There were 884 million concessionary bus passenger journeys in 2017/18, a decrease of 4.8% (around 44 million journeys) on the previous year. There was a bigger percentage decrease in metropolitan areas (6.1%) than in London (3.1%) (**Chart 4**).

The latest year continued the decrease in concessionary journeys in recent years. Concessionary bus journeys outside of London have decreased by 18.8% since 2010/11 and decreased by 7.7% in London over the same period.

Chart 4: Concessionary bus journeys by area: England, index 2010/11 = 100 (table [BUS0821](#))

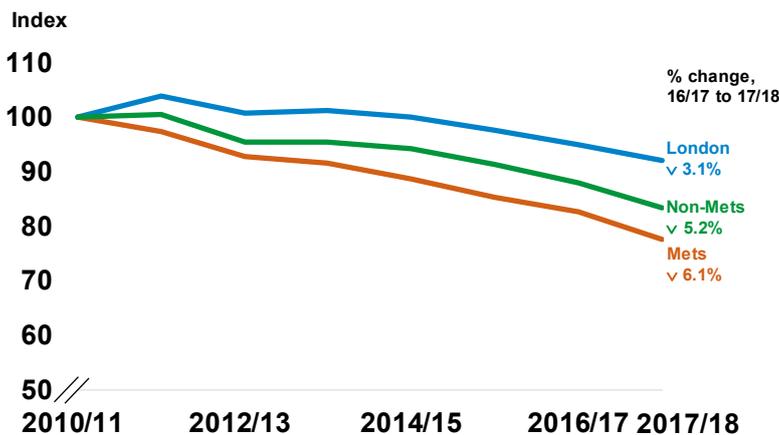
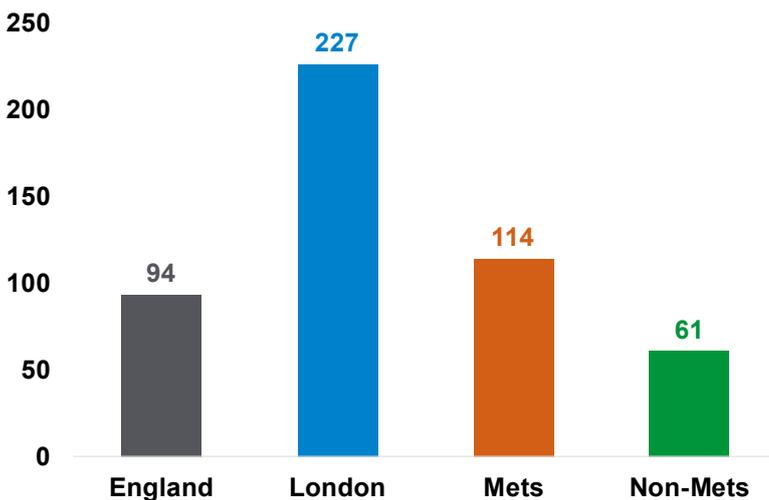


Chart 5: Concessionary journeys per pass by area status: England, 2017/18 (table [BUS0821](#))



The highest numbers of concessionary bus journeys per pass were in London, at around 227 journeys per pass in 2017/18. This is nearly 4 times the 61 journeys per pass in non-metropolitan areas (**Chart 5**). Given the decrease in passes issued in 2017/18 due to data cleaning (see Background Notes), users should use caution when comparing these figures across time.

Detailed statistics

are available online as part of the bus statistical series:

- Concessionary passes in table [BUS0820](#)
- Concessionary passes by Travel Concession Authority (TCA) in table [BUS0822](#)
- Total bus passenger journeys (including fare paying passengers and concessions) in table series [BUS01](#)
- Concessionary journeys on light rail systems are available in table [LRT0102](#)

Bus Journeys

More detailed information on local bus services, including passenger journeys and vehicle miles, can be found in the latest [annual bus statistics](#) release.

Journeys per pass

These averages are derived by dividing the total number of journeys by total passes.

Expenditure on concessionary travel

In 2017/18, English TCAs estimated they spent around £1.12 billion on concessionary travel. 41% of this was spend in non-metropolitan areas (**Chart 6**).

Chart 6: Distribution of net concessionary expenditure by area: England, 2017/18

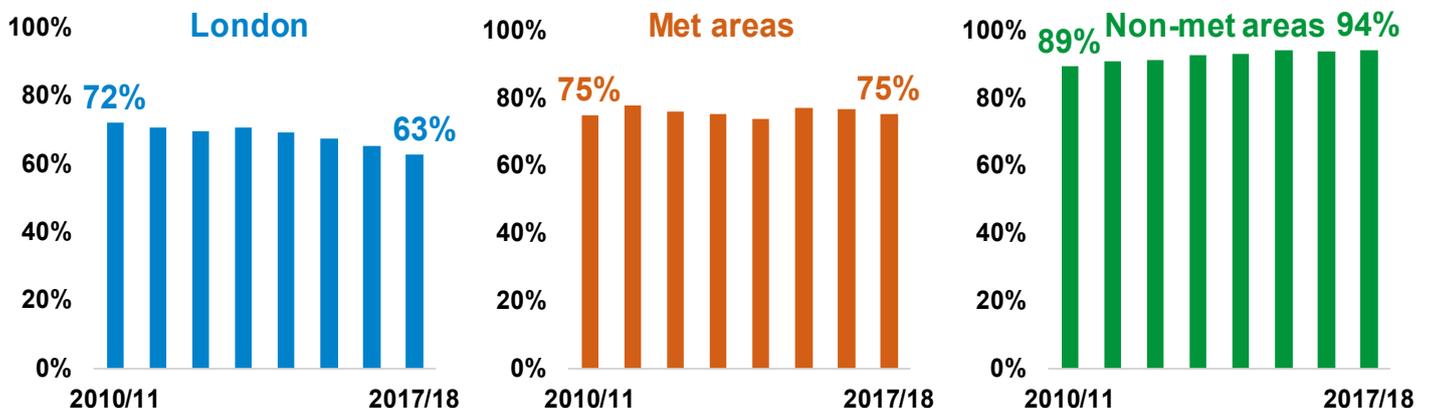


Overall, English TCAs spent 79% of their concessionary travel net current expenditure on the statutory English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS). In 2017/18 this equated to around £884 million spent on the ENCTS. The remaining 21% was spent on discretionary concessions such as youth and non-bus concessions such as trams, ferries, national rail concessions and Park-and-Ride schemes.

Over the last 7 years, the proportion spent on the statutory scheme in England outside London has increased slowly, from 84% in 2010/11 to 87% in 2017/18. However, the proportion spent on the ENCTS for the last three years has been 87%. This figure was higher in non-metropolitan areas at 94% in 2017/18 (compared to 75% in metropolitan areas).

In London, however, there has been an increasing trend in the amount spent on discretionary travel, increasing from 28% in 2010/11 to 37% in 2017/18 (**Chart 7**). This variation, at least in part, reflects the prevalence of different types of transport in London and other metropolitan areas such as trams, which may be offered as discretionary concessions.

Chart 7: % of net concessionary expenditure spent on ENCTS by area: England, 2017/18



Net expenditure

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.

Data on total concessionary travel expenditure by TCAs is also collected by the Department for Communities and Local Government as part of the revenue outturn data.

Statistical tables:

- Expenditure on ENCTS as a proportion of total expenditure on concessionary travel in table [BUS0810](#)
- The most recent DCLG Net Current Expenditure figures are available in table [BUS0811](#)

Distribution of expenditure

The expenditure figures in the previous section cover the total expenditure on concessionary travel, including reimbursement and administration (see Box on page 5). The data in this section concentrates on how that expenditure is distributed. Reimbursement to bus operators for concessionary journeys made by ENCTS passholders is the largest element of a TCAs concessionary expenditure.

In 2017/18, TCAs estimated they spent 80% of their total net expenditure on this type of reimbursement (**Chart 8**). This was a total of £888 million and was a decrease in real terms (i.e. adjusted for inflation) of 4.7% on the £932 million reimbursed in 2016/17. The remaining 20% was spent on non-bus discretionary travel reimbursement (for example to tram or train operators), or administration, for example pass production costs.

Chart 8: Total Net Current Expenditure: England 2017/18

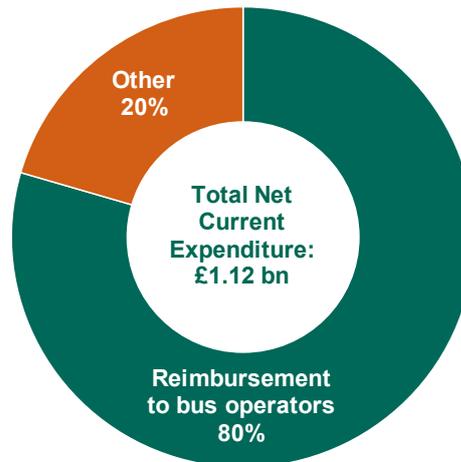
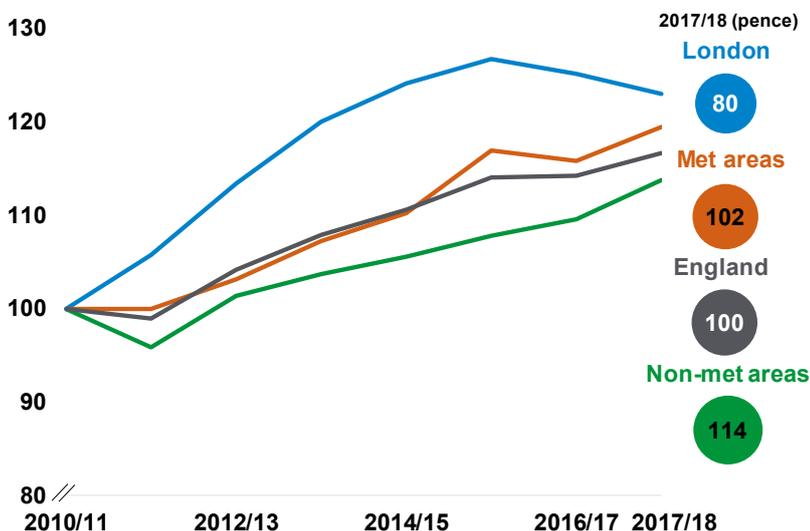


Chart 9: Reimbursement per concessionary bus journey (not adjusted for inflation): England, index = 2010/11



Average reimbursement was 100p per journey in England in 2017/18. It varied in different areas: in London it was 80p per journey. In non-metropolitan areas it was 114p per journey (**Chart 9**). In London, the average reimbursement per journey has risen by 9.7% in real terms since 2010/11, although it has decreased over the last year. Outside of London there has been a smaller increase at 3.6% in real terms over the same period.

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.

Statistical tables:

- Reimbursement to bus operators in table [BUS0830a](#) (not adjusted for inflation)
- Reimbursement to bus operators in table [BUS0830b](#) (adjusted for inflation)
- Reimbursement methods in table [BUS0831](#)

Discretionary concessions

Since 2010/11, almost all of the 89 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 (70 TCAs in 2018/19), 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.

Number of authorities offering discretion:

70



Extensions to travel times

53



Companions to disabled people

44



Community Transport or Dial-a-Ride

29



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)

Detailed statistical tables

- Discretionary travel enhancements in table [BUS0841](#)

Detailed statistics

on concessions for young people can be found in table [BUS0842](#)

The National Travel Survey

NTS statistics on concessionary travel can be found:

- Concessionary travel schemes take up by area in table [NTS0619](#)
- Concessionary travel schemes take up by gender in table [NTS0620](#)
- Frequency of bus use by people aged 60 years or over in table [NTS0621](#)

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.

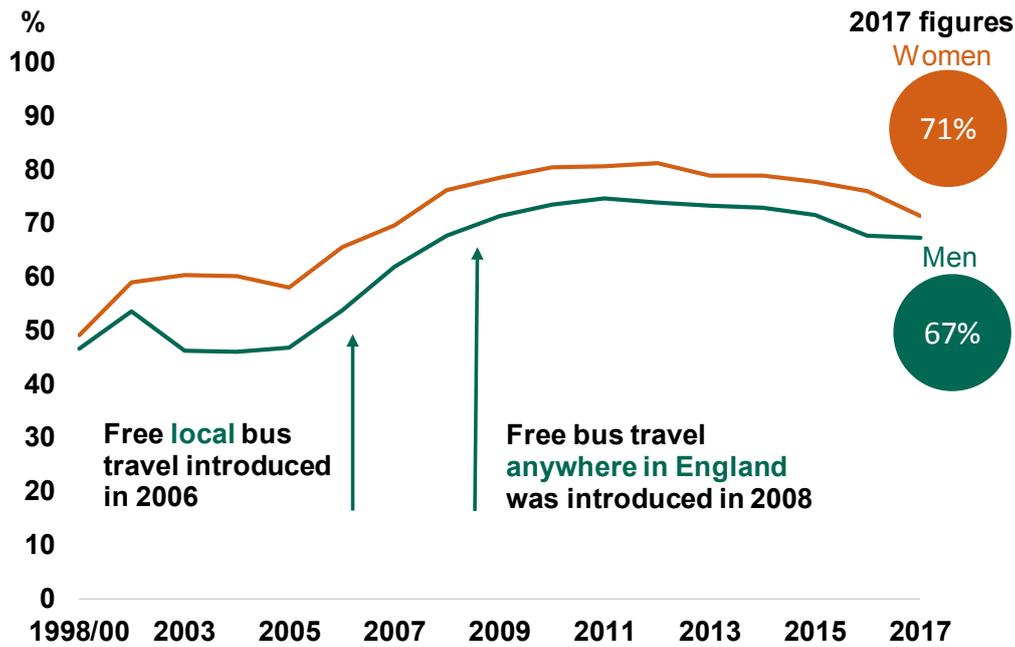
In 18 of the 89 TCAs outside London, a youth concession is offered by the TCA. A youth concession is offered by at least one commercial bus operator in 71 TCAs outside London.

Concessionary Travel Users

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 time series of the take up rates of older concessionary travel passes, and allows for more detailed analysis of the people who hold them.

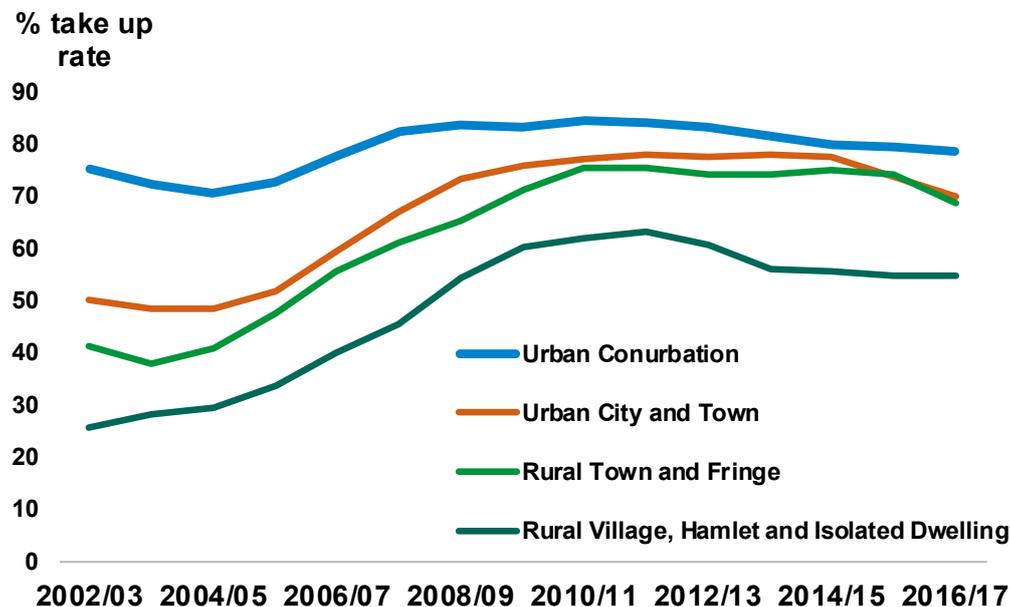
The NTS estimated that in 2017 70% of eligible people held an older person's concessionary pass. The proportion was higher for women (71%) than men (67%). The proportions have risen from 58% and 47% respectively in England in 2005, the year before the introduction of free local bus travel (**Chart 10 over**).

Chart 10: % of eligible older people who hold a concessionary pass: England, National Travel Survey since 1998/2000 (table [NTS0620](#))



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 78% of eligible pensioners holding passes in 2017 (**Chart 11**). However, all types of areas have shown an increase in the rate since 2002/03 for the latest year (including rural village, hamlet and isolated dwelling where the proportion more than doubled from 26% to 55%). There was also relatively little difference between urban areas and rural town and fringe areas.

Chart 11: % of people holding older concessionary pass by area: England, NTS since 2002 (table [NTS9915](#))



Passes vs pass holders

The Concessionary Travel Survey aggregates the number of **passes** reported by TCAs from their administrative databases. The National Travel Survey is a sample survey that 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.

For more details, see Background Information.

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.

Break in time series of issued passes

In this statistical release it has not been possible to produce an accurate estimate of the change in the number of passes between 2016/17 and 2017/18. The overall number of passes decreased by 3.9% over this period, but we know from data returns from TCAs that pass numbers in 2017/18 (compared to 2016/17) will have been affected by a number of different issues which we believe represent **a break in the time series**. These issues include:

- 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. While this can affect the figures in a particular year, it does appear to have been a significantly larger issue this year (see below).
- Changes to renewal practice: some local authorities switched from the autorenewal of passes this year 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).
- These issues are separate to the decrease we might see due to the increasing age of eligibility for an

older pass (although this decrease might be offset by an increasing population).

While these administrative changes can happen within a TCA in any year, it does appear to be a significant issue this year. More than 20 TCAs out of the 90 have been identified from returns that fall into either or both of the first two categories above. This has had a significant impact on passholder numbers that has not been seen in previous years. Statistical tables associated with this release have been marked with a line to represent this break in the series.

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.

The accompanying Notes and Definitions document, including details of the imputation methods used to derive the national-level totals, is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/buses-statistics-guidance>

Furthermore, in light of information received in the most recent survey, some revisions have been made to the figures for previous years. For example, where a TCA has not previously responded but did respond in 2018, we have used the 2018 survey as a basis for imputing figures for the previous years. In addition, a small number of TCAs provided revisions to figures supplied last year or earlier years.

Further information and statistics on concessionary travel

These figures have not been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority, and so are not National Statistics. However, they have been produced in compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

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 in tables NTS0620 and NTS0619: <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 2019.



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