



Department  
for Transport

# Concessionary Travel Statistics England 2018/19

## 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 June 2019, covering 90 areas: the 89 TCAs outside London, and London Councils.

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There were 9.1 million older and disabled concessionary travel passes in England in 2018/19, a decrease of 3.0% between 2017/18 and 2018/19. Total concessionary bus journeys fell by 2.5% in the same period.

## Older and disabled passes

8.2 million,  3.4%  
older passes in England in 2018/19


0.9 million,  0.3%  
disabled passes in England in 2018/19

## Concessionary bus journeys

861 million  
concessionary bus journeys in England  
in 2018/19

 2.5%  
since 2017/18

## Net current expenditure

£1.11 billion,  2.8%  
spent on providing concessions in England in  
2018/19

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FURTHER INFORMATION:

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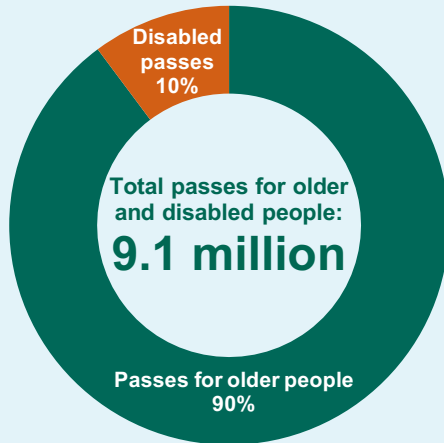
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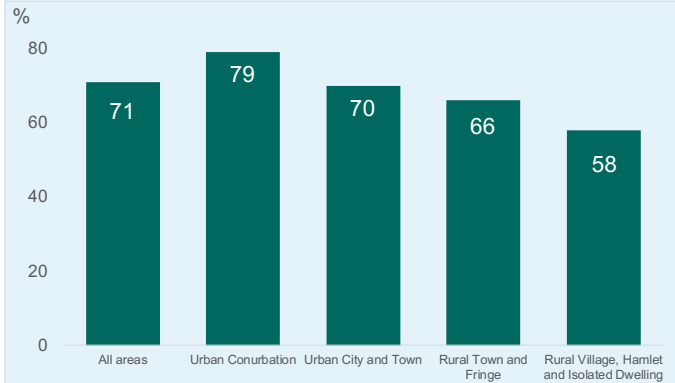


# Concessionary Travel Statistics, England, 2018/19

## Passes, 2018/19 (BUS0820)



## Take up of Older Passes, 2018 (NTS9915)



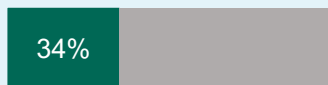
Take up rates are highest in urban conurbations

## Journeys, 2018/19 (BUS0821, BUS0105)

**861 million** concessionary journeys **2.5%** since 2017/18

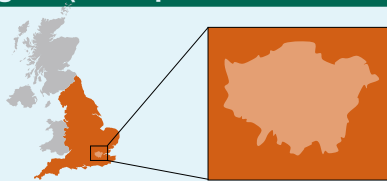
**94** average number of concessionary journeys per pass

% share of all bus journeys



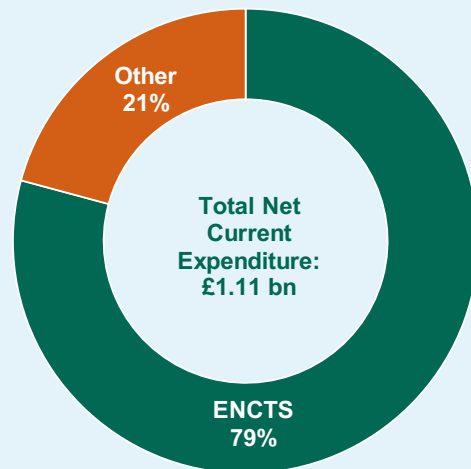
34% of all bus journeys are (statutory or discretionary) concession journeys

## Passenger satisfaction, non-fare paying passengers (Transport Focus and TfL)



**93%** England outside London (2018) **86%** London (2018/19)

## Net Current Expenditure, 2018/19 (BUS0813)



79% (£877m) of concessionary net current expenditure was spent on the statutory English National Concessionary Travel Scheme. The rest was spent on discretionary schemes

## Discretionary Concessions, 2019/20 (BUS0841 & BUS0842)

**76** of the 89 TCAs outside London either offered a youth concession, or it was offered by at least one commercial bus operator in 2019/20

**85** of the 89 TCAs outside London offered some discretionary travel concession in 2019/20

## 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, 2018/19 compared to 2017/18**

	Total passes	Journeys	Net Current Expenditure (NCE) (2018/19 prices)	Reimbursement (2018/19 prices)	% NCE spent on statutory scheme
	2018/19 (millions) and % change since 2017/18				% in 2018/19
England	9.1m ↓ 3.0%	861m ↓ 2.2%	£1,107m ↓ 2.8%	£879m ↓ 2.6%	79%
London	1.2m ↓ 1.8%	269m ↓ 1.4%	£344m ↓ 3.0%	£217m ↓ 2.3%	63%
Outside London	8.0m ↓ 3.2%	592m ↓ 2.6%	£762m ↓ 2.6%	£662m ↓ 2.7%	86%
Metropolitan areas	2.1m ↑ 0.2%	226m ↓ 2.6%	£306m ↓ 4.2%	£231m ↓ 4.8%	75%
Non-metropolitan areas	5.9m ↓ 4.3%	366m ↓ 2.6%	£456m ↓ 1.6%	£431m ↓ 1.6%	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.

## Older and disabled concessionary passes

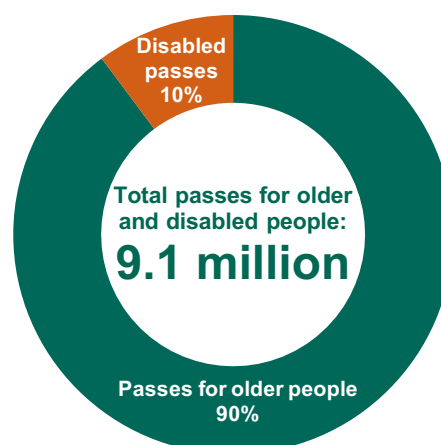
There were 9.1 million older and disabled concessionary passes in England in 2018/19, a decrease of 0.3 million (3.0%) since 2017/18. Decreases were seen in London and non-metropolitan areas, but in metropolitan areas the number of passes increased slightly by 0.2%.

This overall decrease is in part explained by the changes to the State Pension Age, which would decrease the numbers eligible for an older person's ENCTS pass. However, the projected increases in the older age population, which would increase the numbers eligible, is offsetting this impact.

Of the 9.1 million passes in total, around 8.2 million (90%) were for older people and 10% 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 1: Older and disabled passes: England, 2018/19 (table [BUS0820](#))**



## 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 is increasing 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.

## Concessionary bus journeys

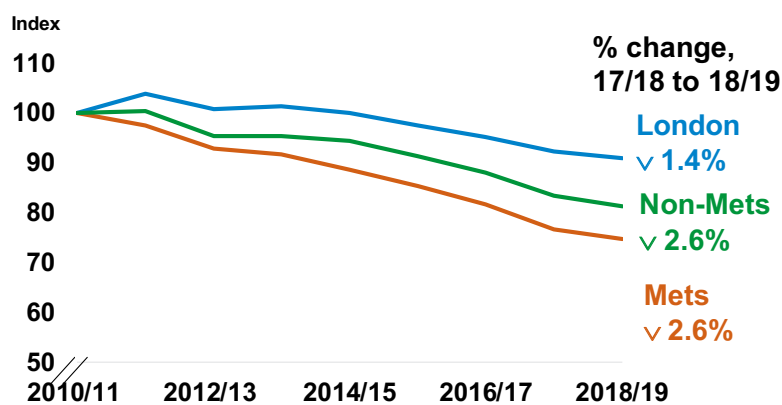
There were 861 million concessionary bus passenger journeys in 2018/19, a decrease of 2.5% (around 20 million journeys) on the previous year. The metropolitan areas and non-metropolitan areas saw approximately the same decrease (2.6%) while London saw the smallest percentage decrease (1.4%).

The latest year continued the decrease in concessionary journeys in recent years. Concessionary bus journeys outside of London have decreased by 21.3% since 2010/11 and decreased by 9.0% in London over the same period.

## Bus Journeys

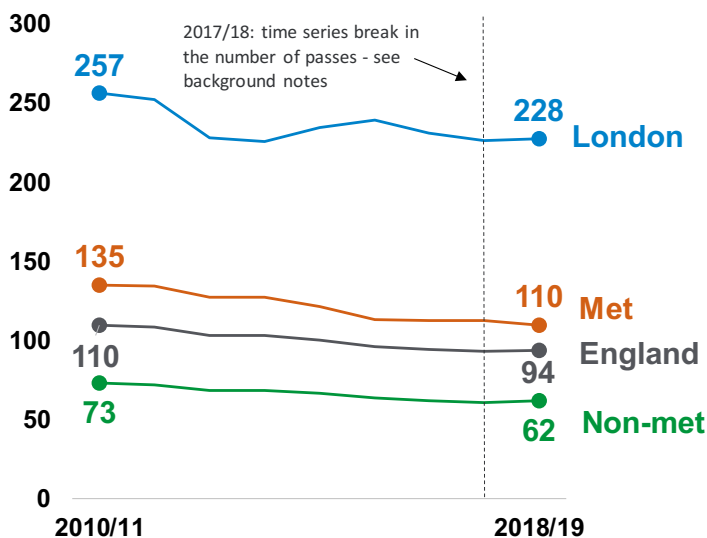
More detailed information on local bus services, including passenger journeys and vehicle miles, can be found in the latest [annual bus statistics](#) release.

**Chart 2: Concessionary bus journeys by area: England, index 2010/11 = 100 (table [BUS0821](#))**



The highest numbers of concessionary bus journeys per pass were in London, at around 228 journeys per pass in 2018/19. This is nearly 4 times the 62 journeys per pass in non-metropolitan areas. These figures are similar to those seen in 2017/18, and show a general decline in journeys per pass since this survey started in 2010/11.

**Chart 3: Concessionary journeys per pass by area status: England, from 2010/11 (table [BUS0821](#))**



## Journeys per pass

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

## Expenditure on concessionary travel

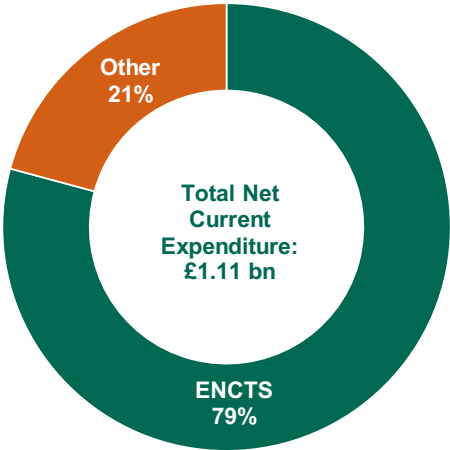
The expenditure figures in this section cover the total expenditure on concessionary travel, including reimbursement and administration. In 2018/19, English Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs), including London, estimated they spent around £1.11 billion on concessionary travel. 41% of this was spent in non-metropolitan areas.

**Chart 4: Distribution of net concessionary expenditure by area: England, 2018/19**



Overall, English TCAs spent 79% of their concessionary travel net current expenditure on the statutory English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS). In 2018/19 this equated to around £877 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.

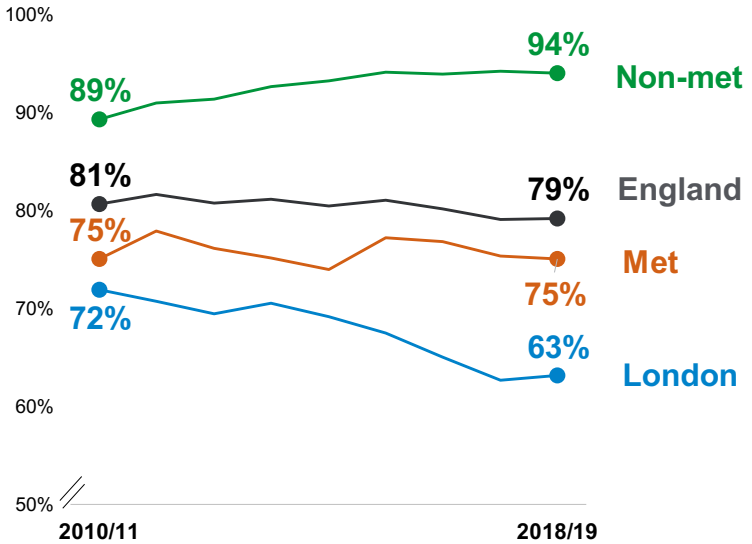
**Chart 5: Total Net Expenditure: England, 2018/19**



Over the last 9 years, the proportion spent on the statutory scheme in England outside London has increased slowly, from 84% in 2010/11 to 87% in 2015/16, where it remained until 2018/19 when it decreased slightly to 86%. The proportion spent in non-metropolitan areas was higher (at 94%) compared to metropolitan areas (75%).

In London, however, there has been an increasing trend in the proportion spent on discretionary travel, increasing from 28% in 2010/11 to 37% in 2018/19. 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 6: % of net concessionary expenditure spent on ENCTS by area: England, from 2010/11 (table [BUS0810](#))**



## 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.

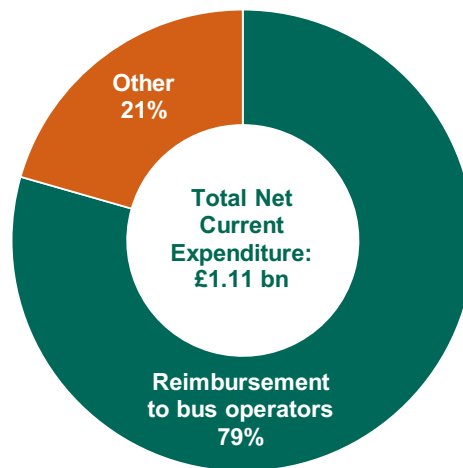
In this release the expenditure presented is based on the TCA survey returns. Data on total concessionary travel expenditure by TCAs is also collected by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of the revenue outturn data (and presented in tables BUS0811 and BUS0812).

## Distribution of expenditure

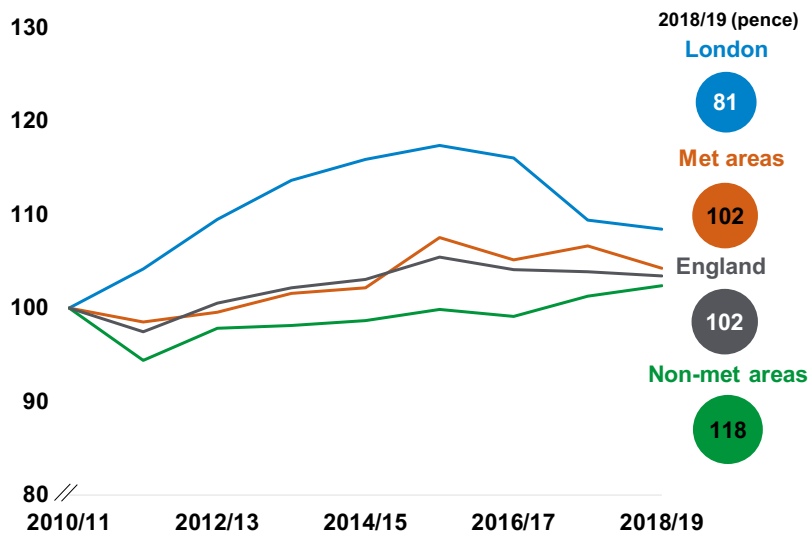
The data in this section concentrates on how that expenditure is distributed. Reimbursement to bus operators for statutory and discretionary journeys made by ENCTS passholders is the largest element of a TCA's concessionary expenditure.

In 2018/19, TCAs estimated they spent 79% of their total net expenditure on this type of reimbursement. This was a total of £879 million and was a decrease in real terms (i.e. adjusted for inflation) of 2.8% on the reimbursement in 2017/18. The remaining 21% was spent on non-bus discretionary travel reimbursement (for example to tram or train operators), or administration, for example pass production costs.

**Chart 7: Total Net Current Expenditure: England 2018/19**



**Chart 8: Reimbursement per concessionary bus journey (adjusted for inflation): England, index = 2010/11 (table [BUS0830](#))**



Average reimbursement was 102p per journey in England in 2018/19. It varied in different areas: in London it was 81p per journey. In non-metropolitan areas it was 118p per journey. In London, the average reimbursement per journey has risen by 8.4% in real terms since 2010/11, although it has decreased every year since 2015/16. Outside of London there has been a smaller increase at 3.5% 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.

## 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 (71 TCAs in 2019/20), 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:

71



Extensions to travel times

54



Companions to disabled people

42



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).

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.

Take up of disabled concessionary travel passes is not captured in the NTS.

## 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.

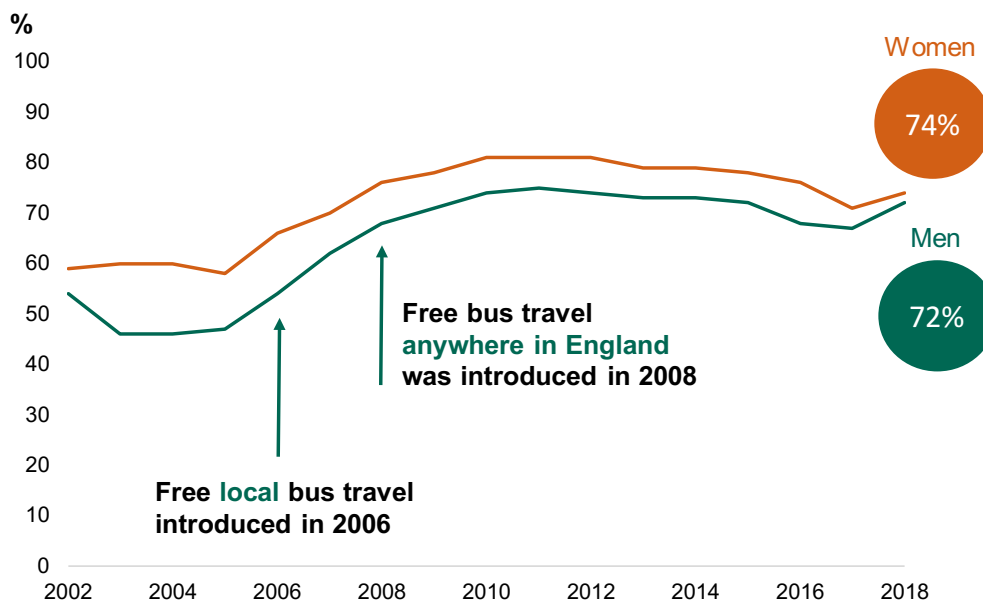
In 19 of the 89 TCAs outside London, a youth concession is offered by the TCA. A youth concession is offered by at least one commercial bus operator in 74 of the TCAs outside London.

## Concessionary Travel Users

The NTS estimated that in 2018 73% of eligible people held an older person's concessionary pass. The proportion was higher for women (74%) than men (72%), 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.

People with an older person's pass make more trips in total than those without; they also make far more bus trips than those without a pass. For the average of the years 2016-2018, pass holders made 88 local bus and London bus trips per person per year compared to 12 by those without.

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



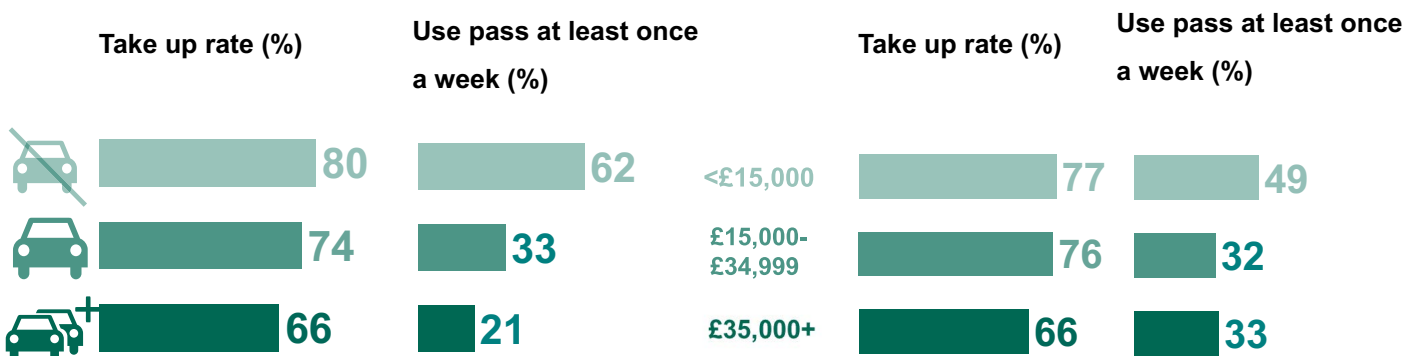
### Passes vs pass holders

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.

Older people with no car access are more likely to have and use a pass (80% and 62% respectively) than older people with access to two or more cars (66% and 21%). Similarly, older people with lower incomes (less than £15,000 per year) are more likely to have and frequently use a pass than older people with higher incomes (77% and 49% respectively).

**Chart 11: Take up and use of passes, 2018 (National Travel Survey)**



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 79% of eligible pensioners holding passes in 2017/18. 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%).



## Satisfaction of concessionary travel pass holders

### England Outside of London (2018)

The Transport Focus Bus Passenger Survey gathers information on levels of satisfaction of bus users. with their most recent journey.

Figures for 2018 show that passengers using a free pass had higher levels of satisfaction than fare-paying passengers at 93% compared to 85%. However there is a wider variation in scores for fare-payers than there is for free pass holders: for example, overall satisfaction ranged from 60% to 94% for fare-payers compared to 87% to 98%. However, it should be noted that some of the differences seen in the satisfaction levels may be a result of fare-payers and free pass holders tending to travel at different times.



**93%** overall satisfaction with the journey



**81%** satisfaction with punctuality



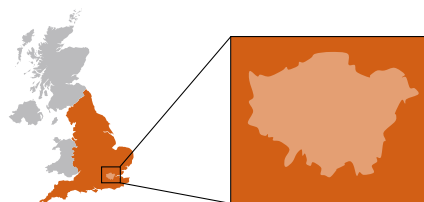
**92%** satisfaction with length of time for journey

### London (2018/19)

Transport for London collects satisfaction data on a wide range of bus service features from a sample of passengers every quarter, based on the journey they have just made.

Although the overall satisfaction of non-fare paying bus passengers had remained broadly stable at 88% over the last few years, in 2018/19 this decreased to 86%.

As with in England outside of London, bus passengers who did not pay for their ticket reported higher satisfaction levels than those who did, although the difference between levels was much less (at 85% compared to 86%).



**86%**

overall satisfaction

### Bus Passenger

#### Survey



Data from the [Bus Passenger Survey](#) (BPS) is managed by the independent transport user watchdog Transport Focus.

The sample was around 20,000 concessionary bus passengers: the 2018 survey was conducted in 50 authority areas in England outside London, including the six metropolitan areas and a mix of unitary and county councils and bus operators' operating divisions.

93% of the sample travelling with free tickets were using an older or a disabled concessionary pass.

Note that the statistics from the BPS are not National Statistics.

### TfL Customer

#### Satisfaction Survey



Non-fare paying bus passengers reported holding a Freedom Pass, a 60+ London Pass or were in the Heathrow Free Travel Zone. The sample of those who had not paid for their tickets in 2018/19 was around 1,600 bus passengers. More information can be found on the [TfL](#) website.

Note that the statistics from the TfL Customer Satisfaction Survey are not National Statistics.

### 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 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).

In 2017/18 these issues looked to be more widespread than usual, and therefore represent a break in the time series.

## 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](mailto:bus.statistics@dft.gov.uk).

## Next update

The next Concessionary Travel Statistics are due to be published in Autumn 2020.



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