



## Public service vehicles (buses and taxis), 2017-18

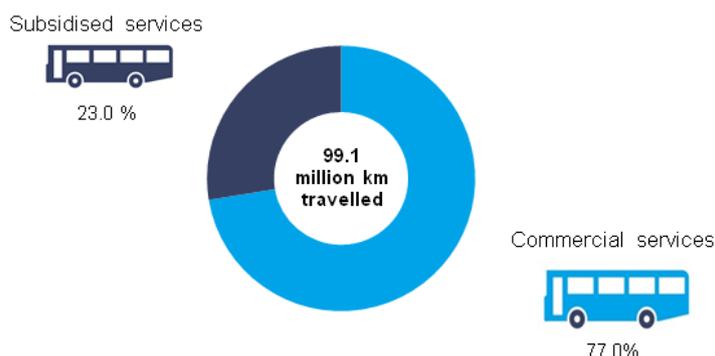
06 Mar 2019  
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### Key points

**The number of journeys undertaken on local bus services in Wales, and the total distance travelled, have stabilised in recent years. This followed a long term decline in bus usage.**

99.9 million passenger journeys were undertaken on local buses in Wales in 2017-18. These services covered a total of 99.1 million vehicle kilometres ([Chart 1](#)). Commercial services accounted for 77 per cent of the distance travelled and subsidised services accounted for 23 per cent.

**Figure 1: Distance travelled on local bus services in Wales, 2017-18**



**The number of drivers and vehicles in operation increased in 2017-18, after a long term downward trend.**

There was a 7.7 per cent increase in drivers to 3,798, and a 4.2 per cent increase in the number of vehicles to 2,458 ([Chart 3](#) and [Chart 4a](#)).

**Bus fares in Wales increased from 2017 to 2018.**

Bus fares in Wales increased by 3.6 per cent from 2017 to 2018, higher than the UK consumer price inflation rate over the same period ([Chart 5](#)).

**Taxi registrations fell (down 1.5 per cent) but private hire vehicle registrations increased (up 3.5 per cent) in 2018.**

In Wales, 5,007 taxis and 4,936 private hire vehicles were licensed as of March 2018 ([Table 1](#)).

### About this bulletin

This annual statistical bulletin reports on public service vehicles (buses, taxis and private hire vehicles) in Wales in 2017-18.

This bulletin provides key analysis with tables of underlying data available on the [StatsWales](#) website.

### In this bulletin:

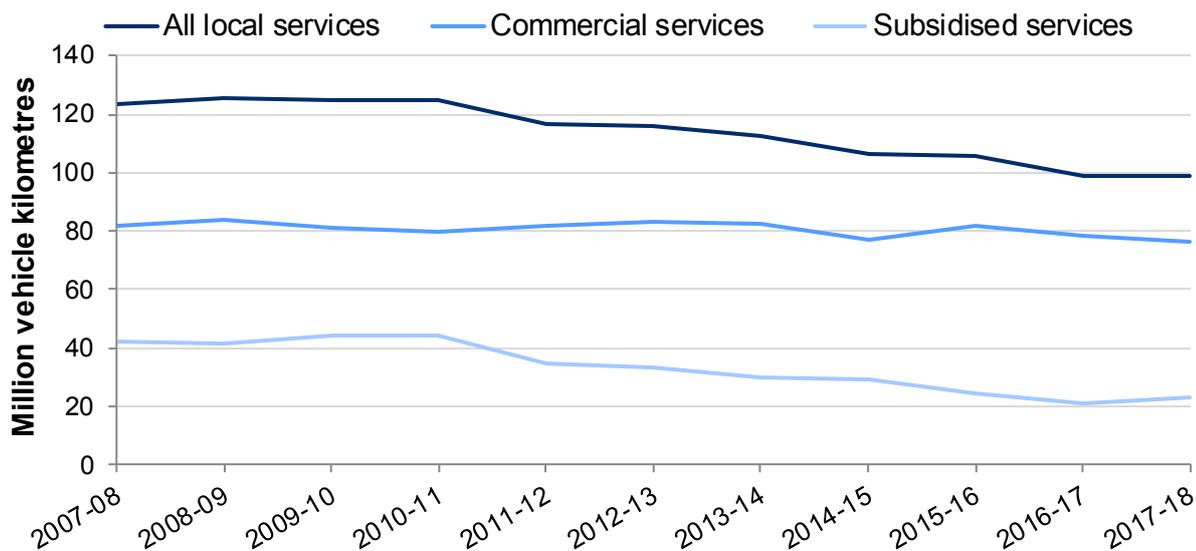
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## The local bus industry in Wales

Local bus services are defined as those where passengers are carried 'at separate fares over short distances'<sup>1</sup>. Bus services are a vital part of Welsh economic and social life. The 2011 Census showed that 23 per cent of the population of Wales had no access to a car or van, and many people rely on bus services for travel to work, for hospital appointments, visiting friends, shopping and accessing leisure services.

During 2017-18, there were 99.9 million passenger journeys on local buses in Wales, with the services covering 99.1 million vehicle kilometres. Just over three quarters (77.0 per cent) of the distance was accounted for by commercial routes (see [Figure 1](#) and Chart 1). The total distance travelled in 2017-18 was very similar to the previous year, following a long term downward trend. The latest figure is 20 per cent lower than the distance travelled in 2007-08, a fall driven by a significant decrease in the distance travelled on subsidised services (down 46 per cent). Distances travelled on commercial services fell by 7 per cent over the same period.

**Chart 1: Distance travelled on local bus services in Wales from 2007-08 to 2017-18**



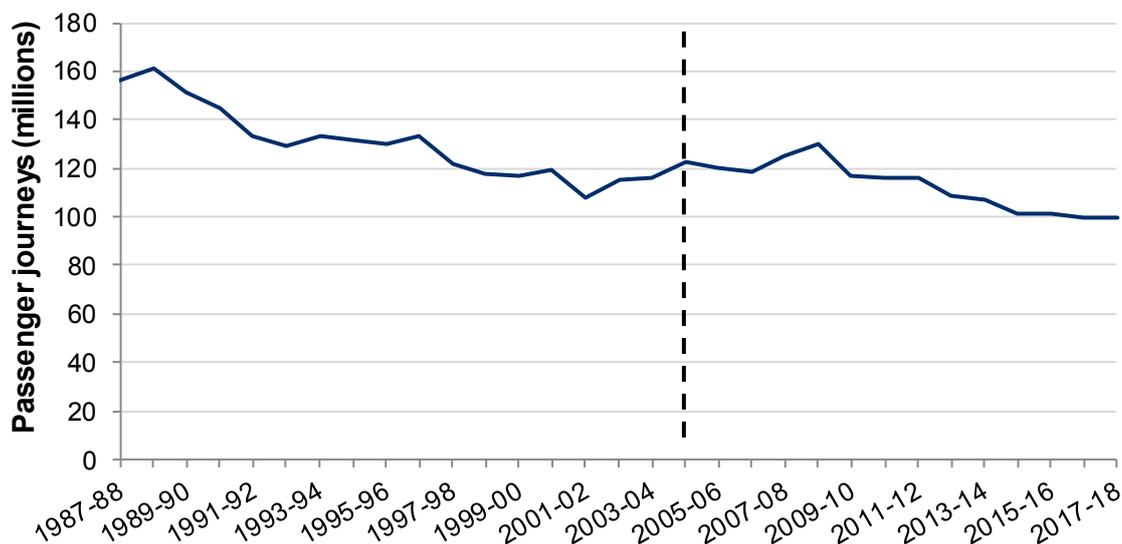
Source: WG analysis of DfT Public Service Vehicle Survey, Transport for London

Broadly, the long term trend in distance travelled has tracked the trend in numbers of buses in operation ([Chart 3](#)). After long term declines in buses and distance covered, the number of buses increased in the latest year and the total distance stabilised.

<sup>1</sup> Separate fares are where each passenger makes a separate payment to use the service. Though journeys are defined as 'short distances' they may be of any overall length, as long as passengers can get off within 15 miles of the place at which they were picked up.

The number of individual passenger journeys has followed a similar trend to that of distance travelled since 2007-08. Journey numbers have been relatively stable since 2014-15, and in the latest year were 23 per cent lower than in 2008-09. Looking further back, there has been a fall of 36 per cent between 1987-88 and 2017-18 (Chart 2).

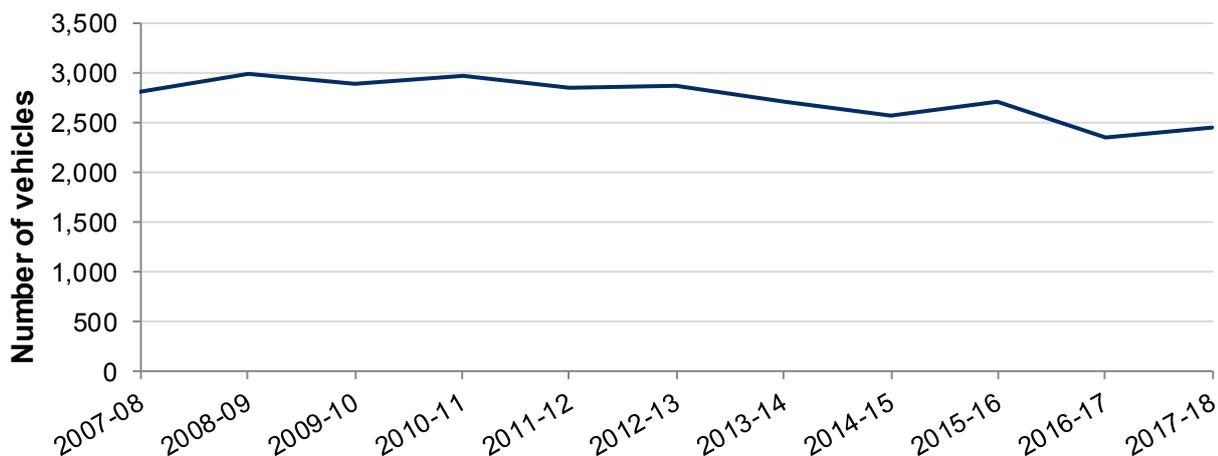
**Chart 2: Local bus journeys in Wales from 1987-88 to 2017-18**



Source: WG analysis of DfT Public Service Vehicle Survey, Transport for London

There were 2,458 locally operated vehicles in Wales in 2017-18, an increase of 98 (4.2 per cent) compared with the previous year. Since 2007-08 vehicle numbers have fallen by 368 (13.0 per cent). These vehicles were operated on 1,539 registered bus routes (as of 31 March 2018).

**Chart 3: Number of locally operated bus and coach vehicles in Wales, 2007-08 to 2017-18**  
(a) (b)



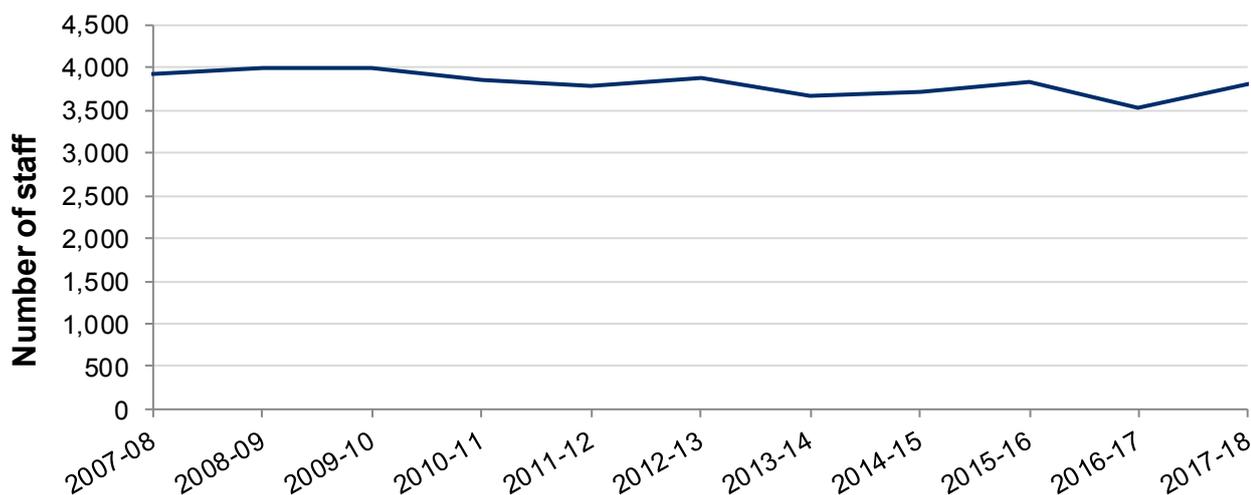
Source: WG analysis of DfT data

**Notes:**

- (a) Covers all operators who run local bus services, including those who also do non-local work (eg. Private hire, school contracts).
- (b) Operators who do solely non-local work are excluded.

In 2017-18 the local bus industry employed 4,834 staff, 79 per cent of which (3,798) were drivers. There was a 7.7 per cent increase in the number of drivers in the latest year (Chart 4a) and a 5.3 per cent increase for all staff combined. Over the long term there has been a slight downward trend in driver numbers and all staff numbers. Broadly, trends in drivers and all staff numbers are similar to the trend in buses in operation.

**Chart 4a: Number of drivers employed on buses and coaches in Wales, 2007-08 to 2017-18 (a)**

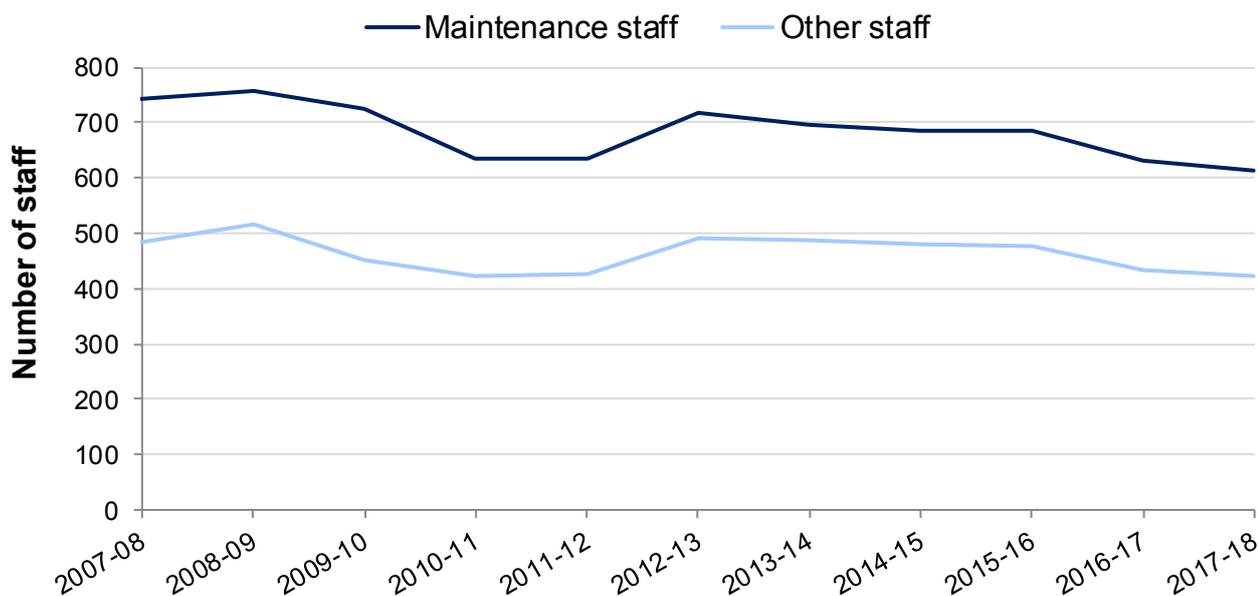


Source: WG analysis of Department for Transport (DfT) data

**Notes:**

(a) Includes other on-vehicle staff.

**Chart 4b: Number of maintenance staff and other staff employed on buses and coaches in Wales, 2007-08 to 2017-18**



Source: WG analysis of Department for Transport (DfT) data

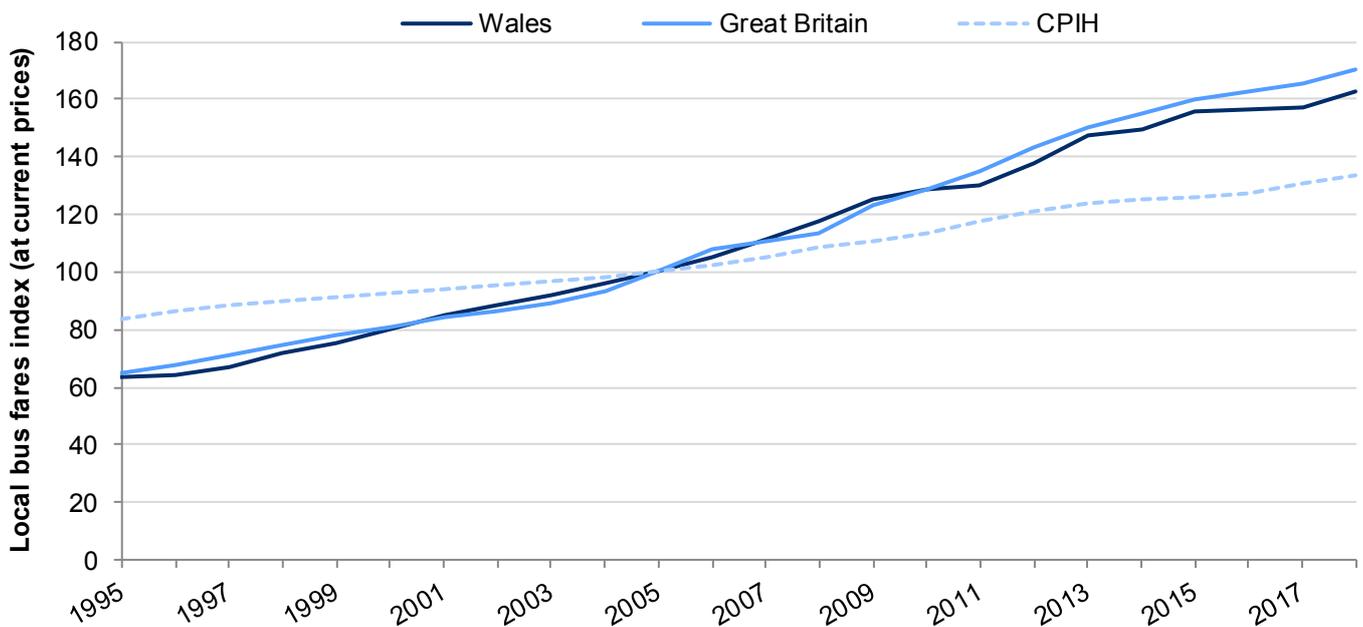


## The local bus industry in Wales compared with the rest of Great Britain

### Local bus services – fares

Chart 5 shows how bus fares in Wales and Great Britain have changed since 1995. Figures used are in current prices (actual prices paid). Over the period bus fares increased at a very similar rate in Wales and Great Britain, though in recent years fares have increased slightly more in Great Britain as a whole than in Wales. Bus fares have consistently increased by more than the rate of inflation (as measured by CPIH). This is shown by the steeper trajectories of the fare increases compared with the shallower slope of the dotted line for CPIH. Since 1995 fares in Wales increased by 157 per cent, fares in Great Britain increased by 164 per cent and CPIH increased by 59 per cent. In the latest year there was a 3.6 per cent increase in Wales and a 3.1 per cent increase in Great Britain, both higher than the inflation rate of 2.3 per cent.

**Chart 5: Fare indices for local bus services in Wales and Great Britain, 1995 to 2018 (a)  
(b)**



Source: WG analysis of DfT Fares Survey, Office for National Statistics

**Notes:**

(a) Index as at 31 March.

(b) Index (2005 = 100).

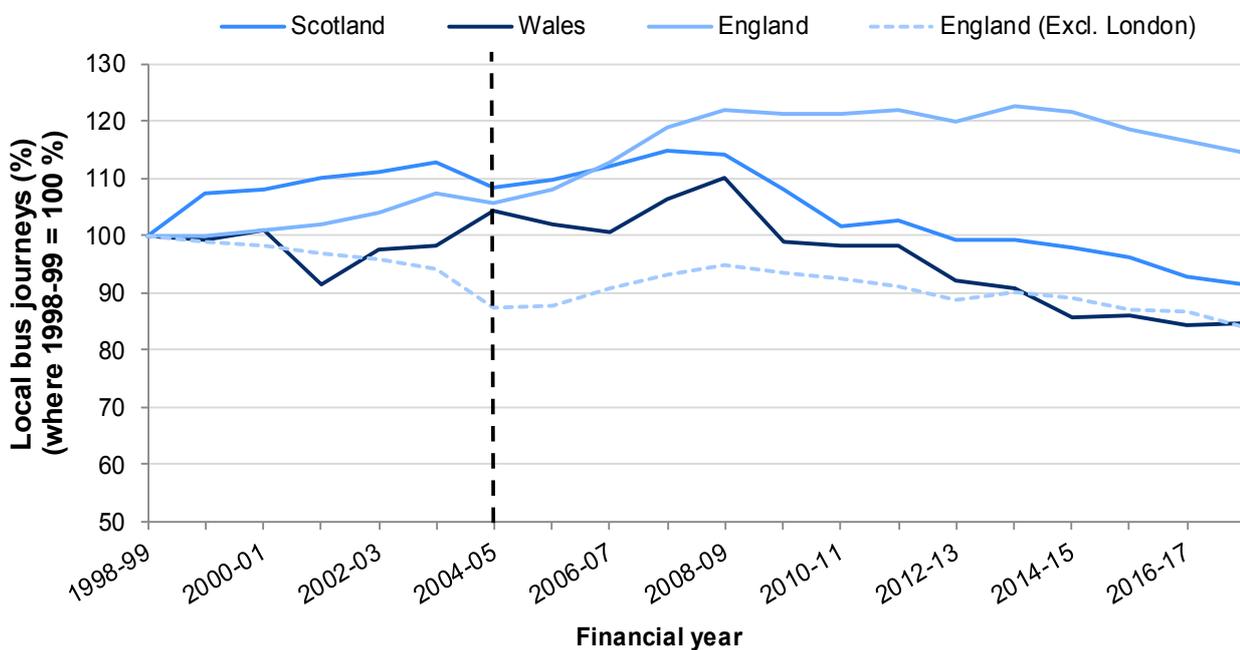


## Local bus services – journeys

Wales accounts for a small proportion of the local bus market in Great Britain, with just 2.1 per cent of total passenger journeys in 2017-18. Wales has a 4.9 per cent share of the population in Great Britain, meaning that bus journeys are relatively less common in Wales than across Great Britain as a whole.

Chart 6 shows trends in bus travel in the countries of Great Britain since 1998-99. The trend in Wales was similar to that seen in Scotland and England excluding London. The overall trend for England is different because of the distortive effect on London, where there were significant increases in bus journeys up to 2008-09.

**Chart 6: Local bus journeys by Great Britain country, 1998-99 to 2017-18 (a) (b)**



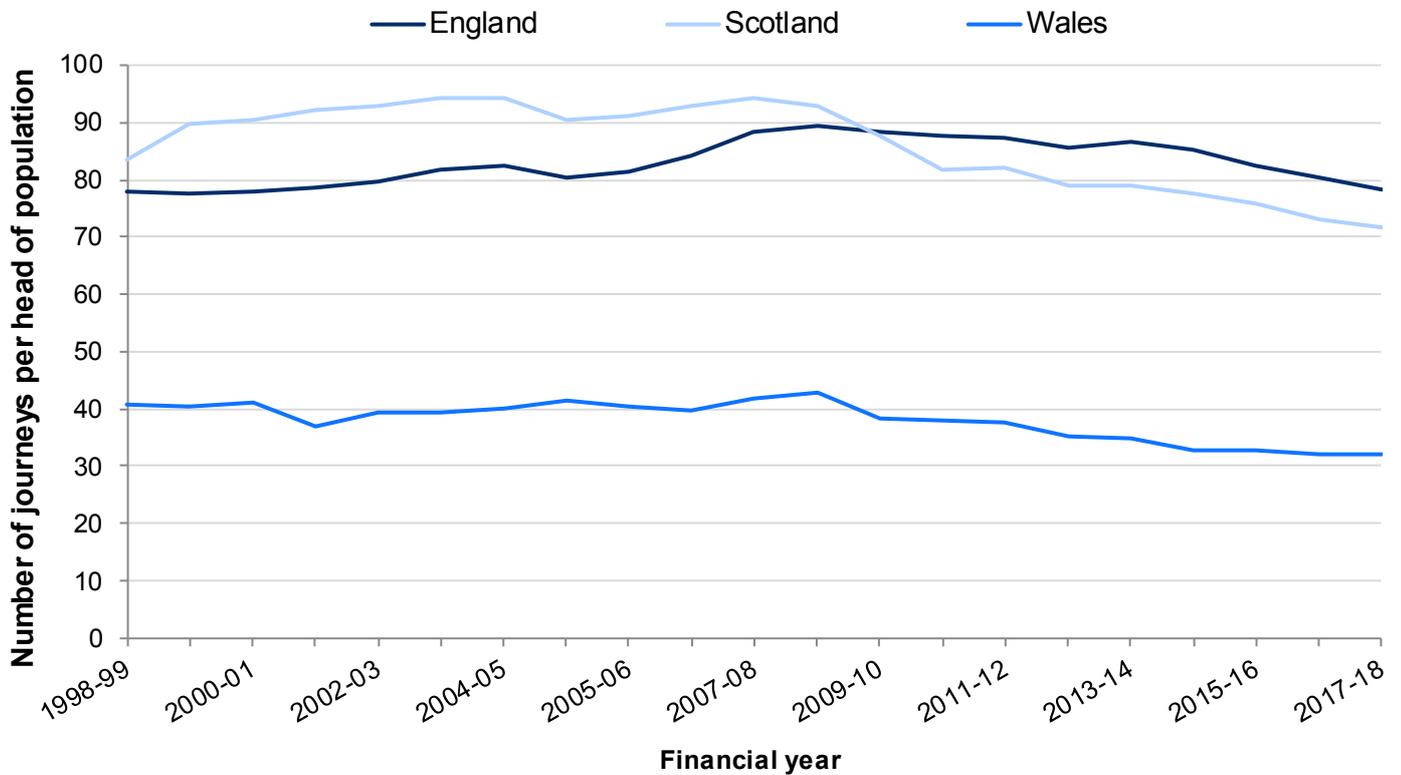
Source: WG analysis of DfT Public Service Vehicle Survey, Transport for London

**Notes:**

- (a) There was a break in series in 2004-05, in order to provide this longer run comparison, the older data were linked onto the post 2004-05 data before indexing onto the 1998-99 database.
- (b) The year 1998-99 was chosen as the base year as that was the low-point in bus travel for Great Britain as a whole.

The number of passenger journeys per head of population has been decreasing across Great Britain since 2008-09. In Wales the number of journeys per head is less than half of the rate in Scotland and England (Chart 7).

**Chart 7: Passenger journeys per head on local bus services by country, 1998-99 to 2017-18 (a)**



**Notes:**

Source: WG analysis of the DfT Public Service Vehicle Survey, Transport for London

(a) The journey figures relate to all bus journeys, including non-residents. Population figures (residents only and are as at June).

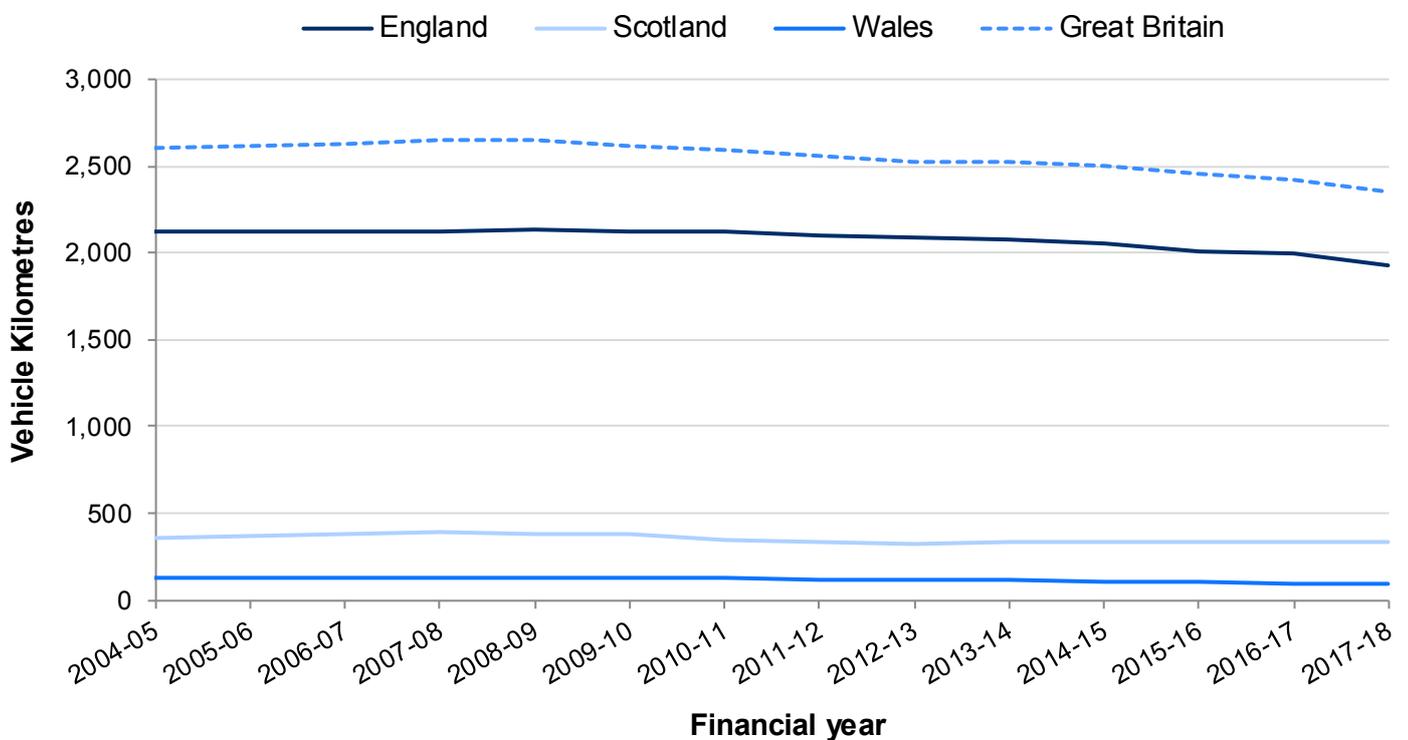


## Local bus services – distance covered

The total distance travelled in Wales represents 4.2 per cent of all vehicle kilometres in Great Britain for 2017-18 (Chart 8). This is a higher proportion of the total than for individual journeys, meaning that journeys are longer on average in Wales than in England and Scotland.

In 2017-18 the total distance travelled in Wales was very similar to the figure for 2016-17 (up 0.2 per cent), while there were falls in England (down 3.4 per cent) and Scotland (down 0.7 per cent). Over the long term there have been decreases in distances travelled in all three countries, though the fall is sharper in Wales since 2004-05 (down 23 per cent) than in England (down 9 per cent) and Scotland (down 7 per cent) (Chart 8).

**Chart 8: Vehicle kilometres on local bus services by country, 2004-05 to 2017-18**



Source: WG analysis of DfT Public Service Vehicle Survey, Transport for London data

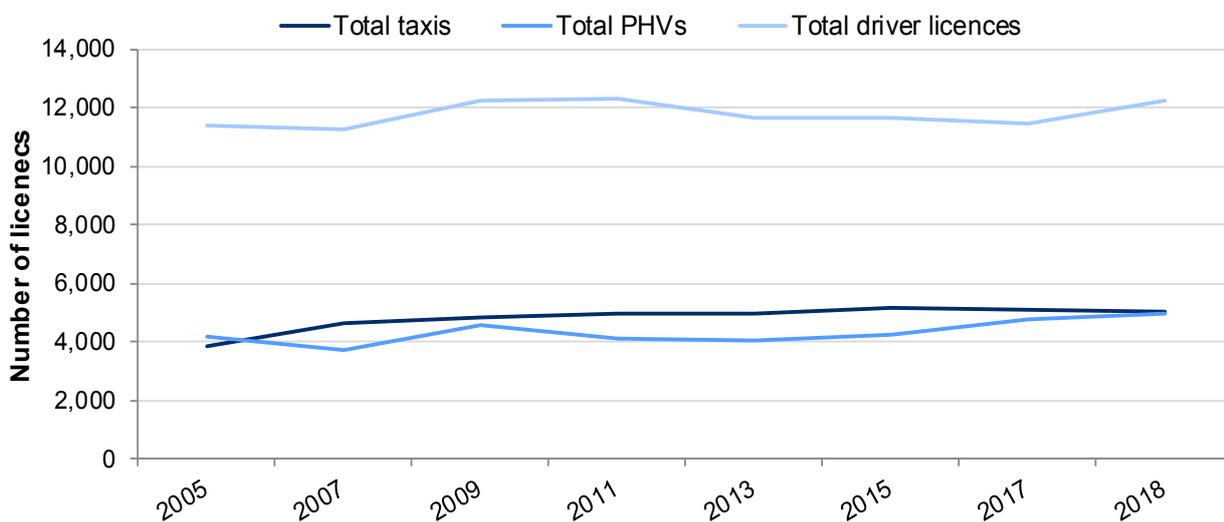


## Licenced taxis and private hire vehicles in Wales

People can apply for a taxi licence, a private hire vehicle (PHV) licence or a dual licence. A taxi licence enables the holder to pick up passengers on the streets or from designated taxi ranks. A private hire vehicle licence enables the holder to pick up passengers who have made a booking with a licenced private hire operator. A dual licence enables the holder to drive either a taxi or a private hire vehicle.

In 2018 there were 5,007 licenced taxis in Wales and 4,936 PHVs. There were a total of 12,251 driver licenses issued. Taxi numbers have been stable for some time and PHVs have increased in recent years to a similar level to taxis. For driver licenses there is no discernable long term trend (Chart 9).

**Chart 9: The number of taxi, PHVs, and driver licences in Wales, 2005- 2018 (a)**



Source: WG analysis of the DfT, Taxi Licensing Authorities data

**Notes:**

(a) The figures in this chart are not National Statistics.

[Table 1](#) shows the number of taxis and private hire vehicles licensed, by local authority, in Wales. The table highlights how different local authorities take different approaches to licensing. Three of the local authorities (Wrexham, Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent) issued no dual licences and instead licensed taxi drivers and private hire vehicle drivers separately.

There were 4,936 private hire fleet licensed vehicles in operation, with 1,616 drivers licensed and 761 operators licensed. There were 10,207 drivers licensed for both a taxi and private hire vehicle in Wales; with 34.2 per cent of these from the Cardiff and Swansea local authorities.

**Table 1: Licensed taxis and licensed private hire vehicles, by local authority at 31 March 2018 (a)**

Local Authority	<i>Number</i>					
	Taxis		Private hire vehicles			
	Vehicles licenced	Drivers licenced	Fleet licenced (b)	Drivers licenced	Operator licences	Dual licence holders (c)
<b>North Wales</b>	<b>768</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1,149</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>1,802</b>
Isle of Anglesey	92	0	43	0	21	195
Gwynedd	342	0	87	0	32	590
Conwy	98	0	126	117	42	183
Denbighshire	195	0	49	40	21	342
Flintshire	3	0	385	0	68	492
Wrexham	38	39	459	524	47	0
<b>Mid and South West Wales</b>	<b>1,590</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,008</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>3,317</b>
Powys	174	0	282	0	74	585
Ceredigion	174	0	30	0	14	275
Carmarthenshire	366	0	110	0	37	581
Pembrokeshire	210	0	21	0	11	388
Swansea	411	0	522	0	36	1,144
Neath Port Talbot	255	0	43	0	26	344
<b>South East Wales</b>	<b>2,649</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>2,779</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>5,088</b>
Bridgend	364	0	96	0	34	596
Vale of Glamorgan	116	0	172	0	29	359
Cardiff	946	0	1,216	0	84	2,351
Rhondda Cynon Taf	349	0	113	0	48	562
Merthyr Tydfil	132	208	42	103	21	0
Caerphilly	311	0	116	0	27	484
Blaenau Gwent	152	181	5	6	3	0
Torfaen	52	0	149	0	16	257
Monmouthshire	124	0	88	0	33	274
Newport	103	0	782	826	37	205
<b>Wales</b>	<b>5,007</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>4,936</b>	<b>1,616</b>	<b>761</b>	<b>10,207</b>

Source: WG analysis of the DfT, Taxi Licensing Authorities data

**Notes:**

- (a) The figures in this table are not National Statistics.
- (b) Number of fleet licences refers to the number of private hire vehicles.
- (c) Dual licence holders are drivers who hold a licence for a taxi and a private hire vehicle.

## Notes

### 1 Data source

Most of the information presented here is derived from annual returns made to DfT by a sample of 700 holders of Public Service Vehicle operators' licences ('the PSV survey'). This survey provides information on passenger journeys, vehicle miles, passenger receipts and operating costs.

Separate, smaller, surveys managed by DfT collect information about fare changes, service reliability and quarterly patronage from the larger bus operators.

Full details of the data sources and methods used can be found in the [guidance](#).

### 2 Definitions

#### 2.1 Coverage

The survey covers only those operators operating local bus services registered with the Traffic Commissioner.

#### 2.2 Key definitions

**Local bus service:** Local services are scheduled stopping services registered with the Traffic Commissioner. A local service is defined as a bus service using Public Service Vehicles to carry passengers at separate fares over short distances. The route can be of any total length, as long as throughout its length passengers can get off within 24.15 kilometres (15 miles) (measured in a straight line) of the place where they were picked up. Each passenger must make a separate payment to the driver, conductor or agent in order to use the service. Excursions and tours need only be registered if separate fares are paid, the whole journey is within a 24.15 km (15 mile) radius of the starting point and they run one or more times a week for at least 6 weeks in a row. Schools and works services may be local bus services if the users pay a separate fare but do not need to be registered if someone other than the bus operator is responsible for arranging the journey, and the journey is not advertised beforehand to the general public, and all passengers travel to or from the same place, and passengers pay the same fare no matter how far they travel.

**Passenger journeys:** A count of the total number of boardings of each vehicle, so a trip which requires a change from one bus to another would be counted as two journeys in these figures. Figures do not include children under 5 years of age.

**Vehicle kilometres:** Distance (kilometres) run by local buses in service. This includes only 'live' (i.e. service) miles and not 'dead' running e.g. from depots to the start of a route.

### 3 Symbols

In tables where figures have been rounded to the nearest final digit, there may be an apparent discrepancy between the sum of the constituent items and the total shown.

## **4 Key Quality Information**

### **4.1 Relevance**

DfT bus statistics represent the most comprehensive single source of official data on the bus industry in Great Britain, and provide data which is used in monitoring trends, developing policy and providing accountability for the subsidy provided to the industry at a high level.

### **4.2 Accuracy**

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 operator's cover around, or above, 90 per cent of the total figure, with the remainder imputed. Comparison with other sources suggests that, at aggregate (Great Britain) 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 required) which are more likely to even out at the national level. For this reason, regional, and particularly local authority, level figures should be interpreted with caution.

### **4.3 Timeliness and punctuality**

DfT collected data from operators during the summer for publication in January 2019.

### **4.4 Accessibility and clarity**

This Statistical Bulletin is pre-announced and then published on the [Statistics & Research website](#) and is accompanied by [StatsWales cubes](#).

### **4.5 Comparability and coherence**

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.

Related Publications:

The Department for Transport (DfT) produces [statistics on the local bus sector](#) in Great Britain presenting information on passenger journeys, vehicle miles, levels of revenue, costs and government support, the vehicle fleet, staff employed and other indicators including punctuality:

Transport Scotland produces an annual publication titled "[Bus and Coach Travel](#)" which brings together a range of bus and coach data to provide a more comprehensive and complete understanding of travel trends and behaviours across these modes. Data presented include DfT

Scottish bus operator data, Transport Scotland concessionary bus fare data and further analysis of bus-related information collected by the Scottish Household Survey (SHS).

The Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland produce an annual statistical publication titled [“Northern Ireland Transport Statistics 2017-2018”](#) which contains a chapter on public transport.

## **National Statistics status**

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority’s regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government’s responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

## **Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)**

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016 and this release does not include any of the 46 national indicators.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

## **Further details**

The document is available at:

<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/public-service-vehicles/?lang=en>

## **Next update**

February 2020 (provisional)

## **We want your feedback**

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided to:

[stats.transport@gov.wales](mailto:stats.transport@gov.wales)

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