



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

# Public service vehicles (buses and taxis): April 2021 to March 2022

Data on bus services, bus passes, frequency of buses and taxis for April 2021 to March 2022.

**First published:** 4 May 2023

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## Main points

A total of 52.3 million passenger journeys were undertaken on local buses in Wales during 2021-22 (1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022) compared to 25.9 million passenger journeys in the previous year and 91.0 million in 2019-20 (prior to the Covid-19 pandemic). The journeys in 2021-22 covered a total of 82.8 million **vehicle kilometres** (Figure 2).

The number of drivers employed on buses and coaches has generally decreased during the past 4 years. In 2021-22, the number of drivers employed on buses and coaches fell by 10.6% to 2,934 compared to 2020-21, (Figure 5).

Over the same period, the number of local bus and coach vehicles in operation increased by 1.1% to 2,215 (Figure 3).

As of March 2022, the number of licensed taxis fell by 4.9% whilst licensed private hire vehicles increased by 8.3% compared to March 2021. A total of 4,344 taxis and 4,974 private hire vehicles were licensed as of March 2022 in Wales.

## The local bus industry in Wales

Local bus services are defined as those services where passengers are carried 'at separate fares over short distances'<sup>[footnote 1]</sup>. Bus services are a vital part of Welsh economic and social life. The 2021 Census showed that 19% 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 2021-22, there were 52.3 million passenger journeys on local buses in

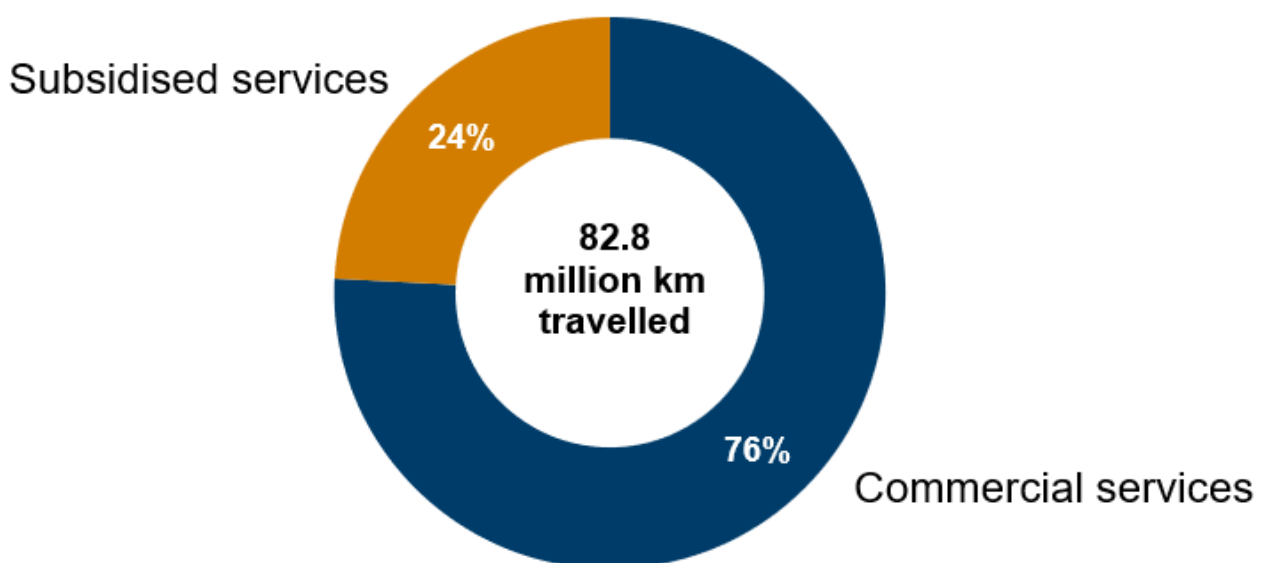
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Wales, double the level recorded in the previous year, but 43% below 2019-20 (pre-covid levels) with the services covering 82.8 million vehicle kilometres. 75.8% of the total distance travelled was accounted for by commercial routes (Figure 1).

## Figure 1: Passenger journey by user service, Wales 2021-2022



Description of Figure 1: The pie chart shows in year 2021-22 all local bus services covered a total of 82.8 million vehicle kilometres in Wales. 24% by Subsidised services and 76% by Commercial Services.

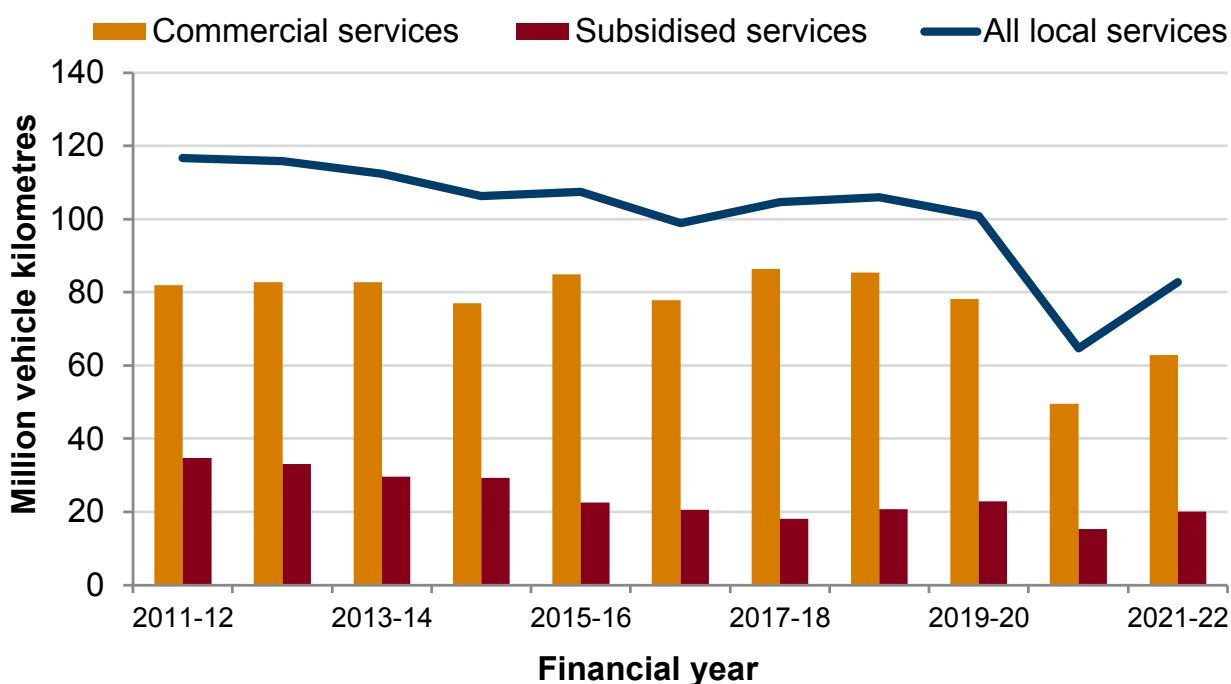
Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport 'Public Service Vehicle Survey'

The total distance travelled in 2021-22 increased by 27.9% compared to the

previous year. The distance travelled by subsidised services increased by 26.9% in 2021-22 whilst commercial services distance increased by 31.2%. The increases may reflect the easing of travel restrictions imposed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The total distance travelled before the COVID-19 pandemic 2019-20 was 19.0% lower than the distance travelled in 2009-10, a fall driven by a large decrease in the distance travelled on subsidised services (down 40.0%). Distances travelled on commercial services fell by 7.8% over the same period.

**Figure 2: Distance travelled on local bus services in Wales from 2011-12 to 2021-22**



Description of Figure 2: Figure 2 shows time series of distance travelled by Local bus services in Wales. Between financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22 the distance travelled increased by 27.9%.

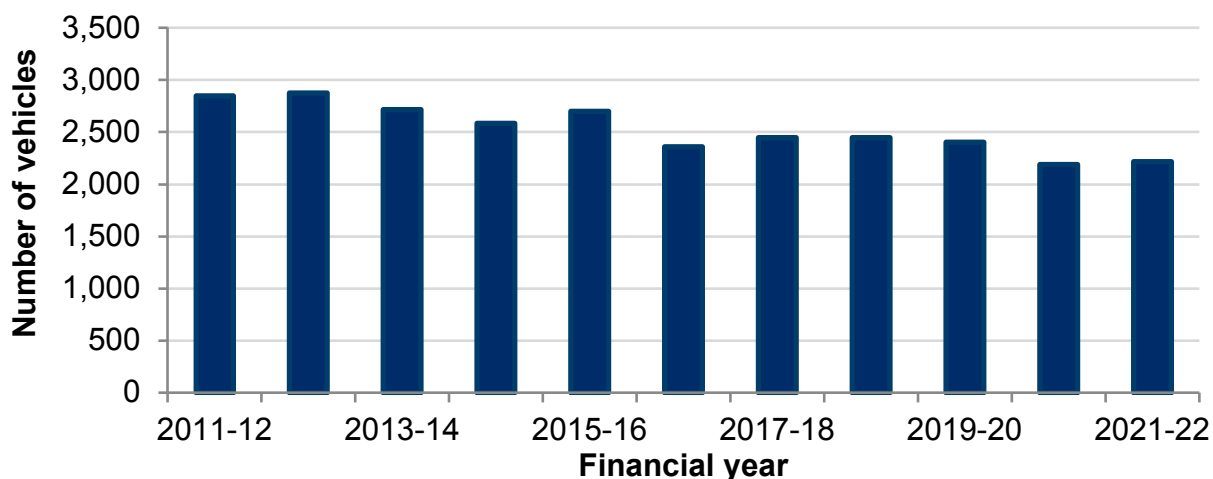
Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport 'Public Service Vehicle Survey'

### Vehicle kilometres and passenger journeys on buses and coaches by year data on Statswales

Broadly, the long-term trend in distance travelled has tracked the trend in numbers of buses in operation (Figure 3). Continuing the long-term decline in buses and distance covered, as well as reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years. In 2021-22, the number of buses and coaches marginally increased in the latest year by 1.1%.

There were 2,215 locally operated buses and coaches in Wales in 2021-22, an increase of 25 compared with the previous year. Since 2011-12 local bus and coach numbers have fallen by 635 (22.3%).

**Figure 3: Locally operated bus and coach vehicles in Wales, 2011-12 to 2021-22 [Note 1] [Note 2]**



Description of Figure 3: A line chart which shows that in 2021-22 there were 2,215 locally operated buses and coaches in Wales an increase of 25 when

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compared to the previous year.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport 'Public Service Vehicle Survey'

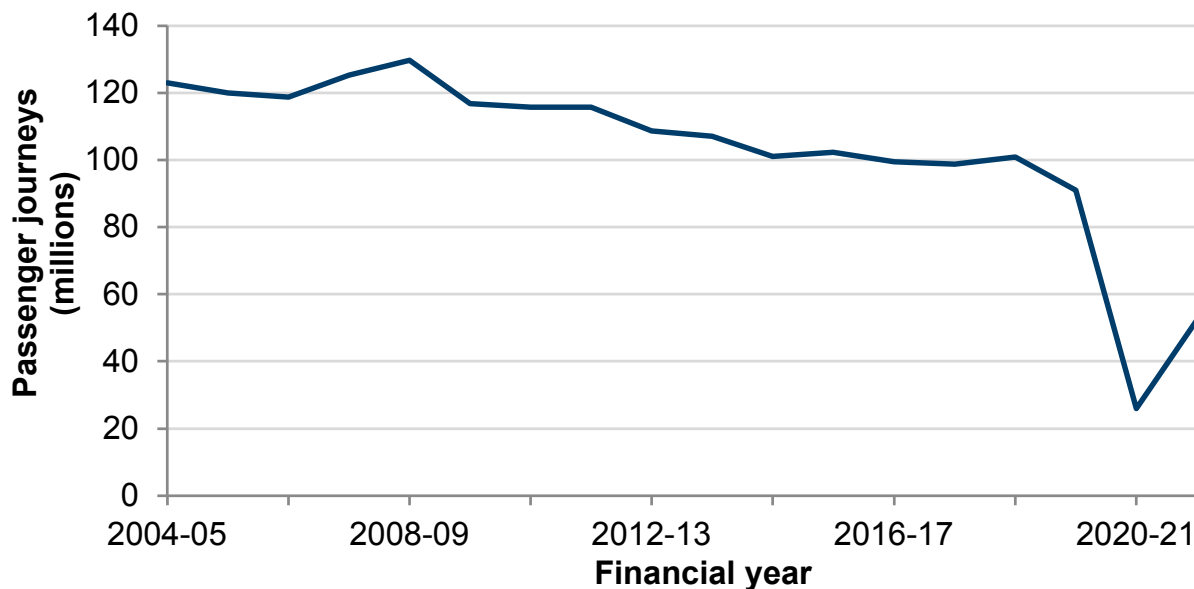
[Note 1] Covers all operators who run local bus services, including those who also do non-local work

[Note 2] Operators who do solely non-local work are excluded.

### **Number of bus and coach vehicles by year (gov.wales) data on Statswales**

The number of individual passenger journeys has followed a similar trend to that of distance travelled since 2007-08. Journey numbers had been relatively stable since 2014-15 to 2019-20 before falling in 2020-21. Compared to 2020-21, local bus journeys more than doubled in 2021-22, the largest increase since records began, however, this represents a 42.5% decrease in passenger journeys compared to 2019-20 (pre-covid levels). (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Local bus journeys in Wales from 2001-02 to 2021-22**



Description of Figure 4: A line chart showing the trend in local bus journey in Wales. The numbers have been relatively stable since 2014-15 to 2018-19, and in the latest year bus journeys have more than doubled compared to 2020-21.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport 'Public Service Vehicle Survey'

### **Vehicle kilometres on local bus services by UK country and year data on Statswales**

In 2021-22 the local bus industry in Wales had 3,832 staff, 76.6% (2,934) of which were drivers. There was a decrease of 8.5% of all staff in the latest year (Figure 5) with the number of drivers decreasing by 10.6%. 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

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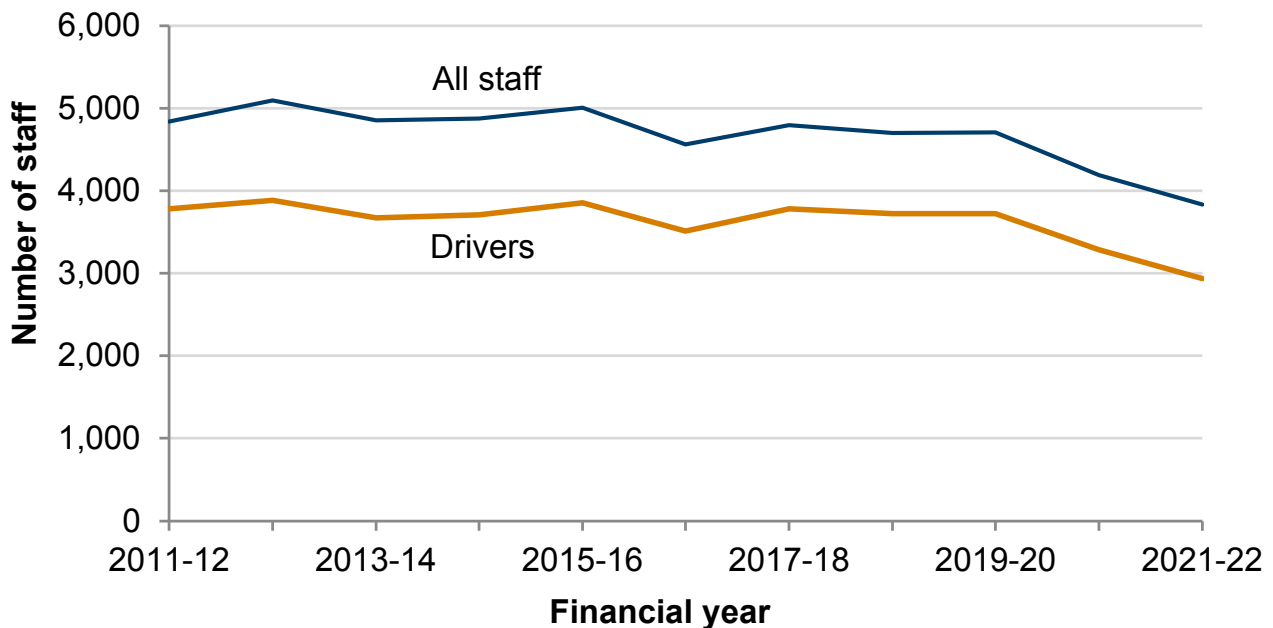
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in operation.

## Figure 5: Drivers employed on buses and coaches in Wales, 2011-12 to 2021-22



Description of Figure 5: Line chart showing the trend in number of drivers. There has been a 10.6% decrease in the number of drivers employed in the latest year when compared with 2020-21.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport data

[Number of staff employed on buses and coaches by year data on Statswales](#)

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## Local bus services: fares

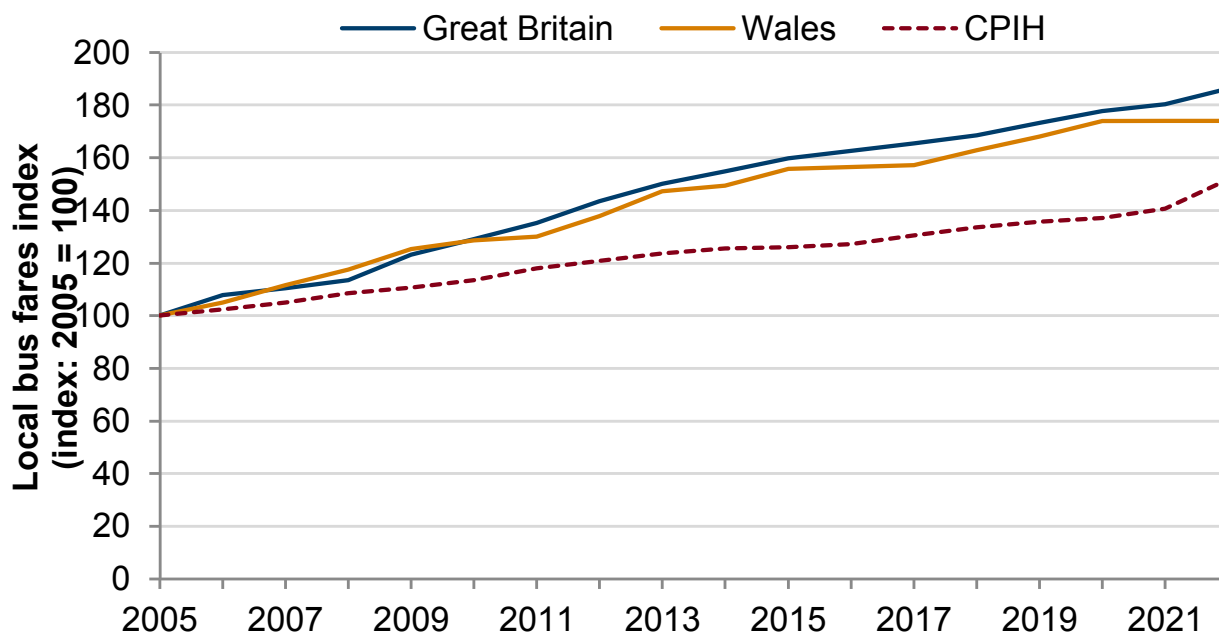
Figure 6 shows how bus fares in Wales and Great Britain have changed since 1995. Figures used are in current prices (actual prices paid). Bus fares in Wales have increased at a very similar rate to Great Britain, though in recent years fares have increased slightly more in Great Britain than in Wales. Bus fares have increased at a rate greater than inflation (as measured by CPIH <sup>[footnote 2]</sup>). This is shown by the steeper trajectories of the fare increases compared with the shallower slope of the dotted line for CPIH. Compared to 1995, fares in Wales increased by 174%, whilst fares in Great Britain increased by 188% and CPIH increased by 81%. In the latest year Welsh bus operators did not submit any changes in fares to the Department for Transport. There was a 3.3% increase in Great Britain.

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**Figure 6: Local bus services fare indices for Wales and Great Britain, 1995 to 2022 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 6: Line chart showing that in recent years bus fares have remained constant in Wales compared to Great Britain where they rose by 3.3%.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport data 'Fares Survey'

[Note 1] Index as at 31 March. Index (2005 = 100).

**Fare Indices for local bus services in Wales and Great Britain by year data on Statswales**

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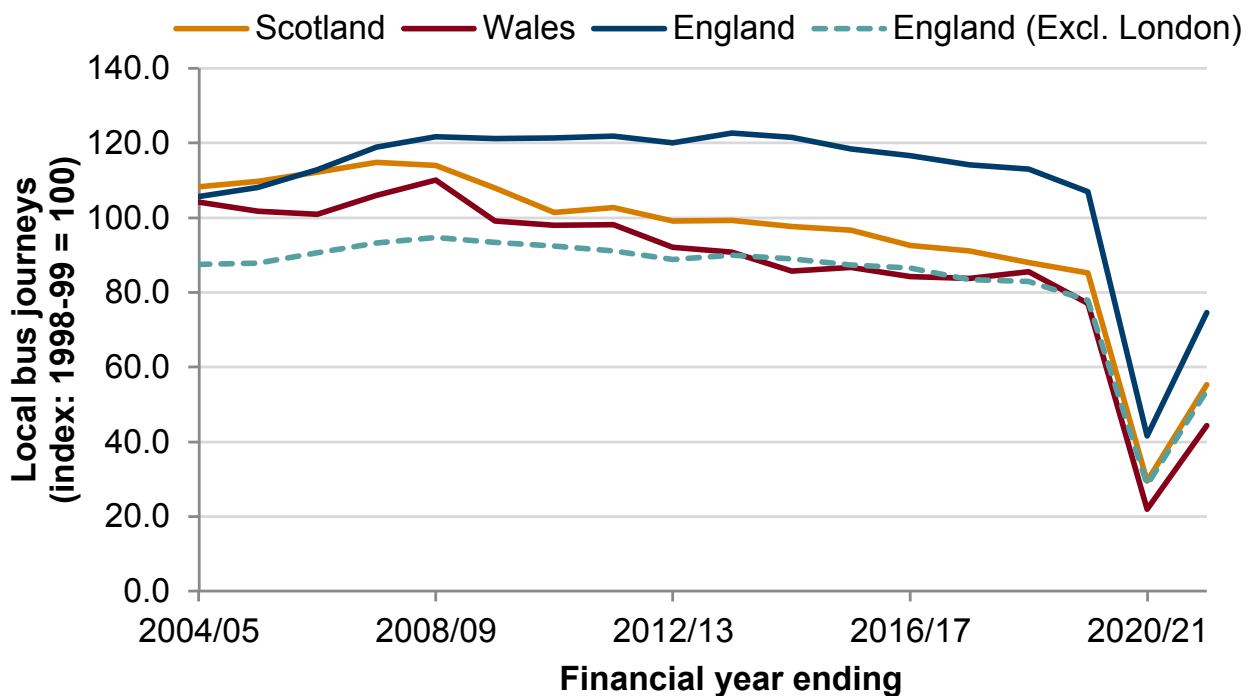
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## Local bus services: journeys

Wales accounts for a small proportion of the local bus market in Great Britain, with just 1.7% of total passenger journeys in 2021-22. This proportion shows that bus travel is less prevalent in Wales than across GB in general, with Wales accounting for 4.8% of the GB population in 2021. In 2021-22 all GB nations saw an increase in local bus journeys compared to previous year, with Wales reporting the largest increase (101.6%). (Figure 7).

Figure 7 shows trends in bus travel in the countries of Great Britain since 2001-02. The trend in Wales was broadly similar to that seen in Scotland until 2018-19. The overall trend for England is different because of the distortive effect of London, where there were significant increases in bus journeys up to 2008-09. In 2021-22 all countries reported increases in bus journeys following the widespread travel disruption in 2020-21 as a result of the covid pandemic.

**Figure 7: Local bus journeys by Great Britain country, 2001/02 to 2021/22 [Note 1] [Note 2]**



Description of Figure 7: Line chart showing that the trend in local bus journeys was similar in Wales to that seen in Scotland and England (excluding London). All countries reported increases over the latest year.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport data 'Public Service Vehicle Survey'

[Note 1] 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.

[Note 2] 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.

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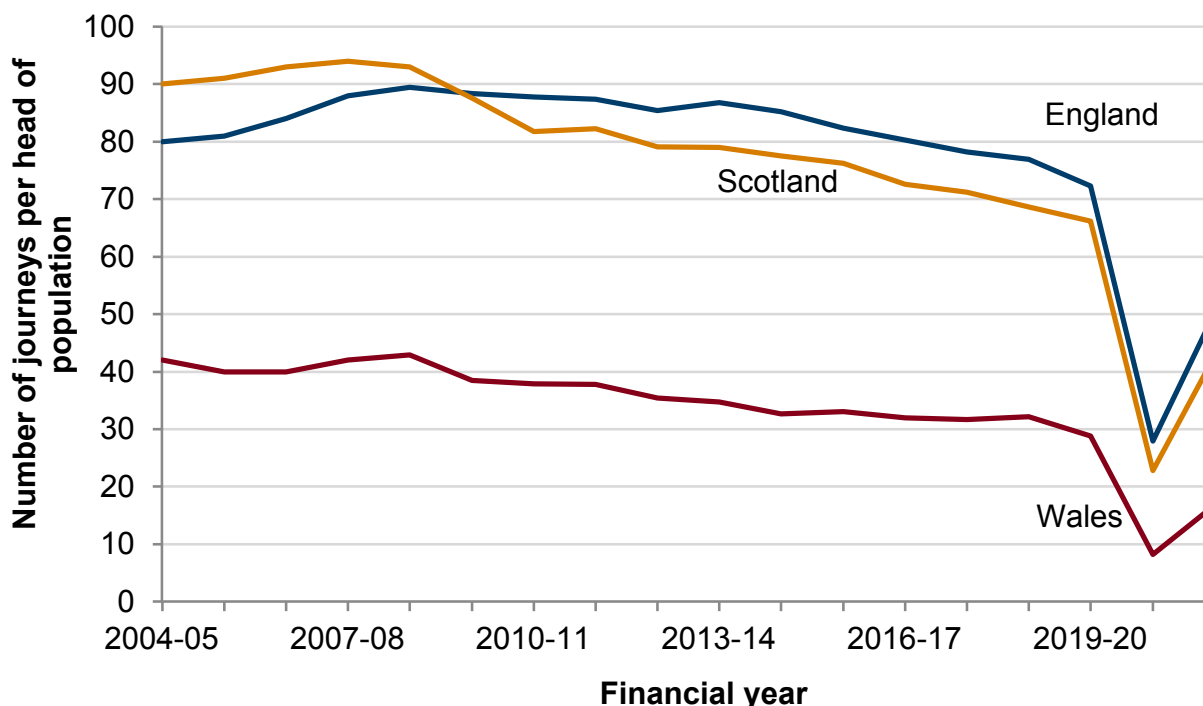
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## Local bus journeys index by UK country and London and by year data on Statswales

The number of passenger journeys per person has been decreasing across Great Britain since 2008-09. In Wales, the number of journeys per person is less than half the rate in both Scotland and England (Figure 8). This rate has remained broadly stable in Wales since 2014-15, whereas the rate per person has decreased in both England and Scotland over the same period.

**Figure 8: Passenger journeys per person on local bus services by country, 2001-02 to 2021-22 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 8: Line chart showing the number of passenger journeys per head of population has been decreasing across Great Britain since 2008-09. All countries reported increases in passenger journeys over the latest year.

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Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport data 'Public Service Vehicle Survey'

[Note 1] The journey figures relate to all bus journeys, including non-residents. Population figures (residents only and are as at June).

## Percentage change in passenger journeys on local bus services by country per head of population by year data on Statswales

### Local bus services: distance covered

The total distance travelled in Wales by bus represents 4.0% of all bus kilometres travelled in Great Britain in 2021-22 (Figure 9).

While the total distance travelled on buses in Wales increased by almost a third compared to the previous year, the total distance travelled decreased the most in Wales compared to pre-pandemic levels, and has recovered the least compared to England and Scotland.

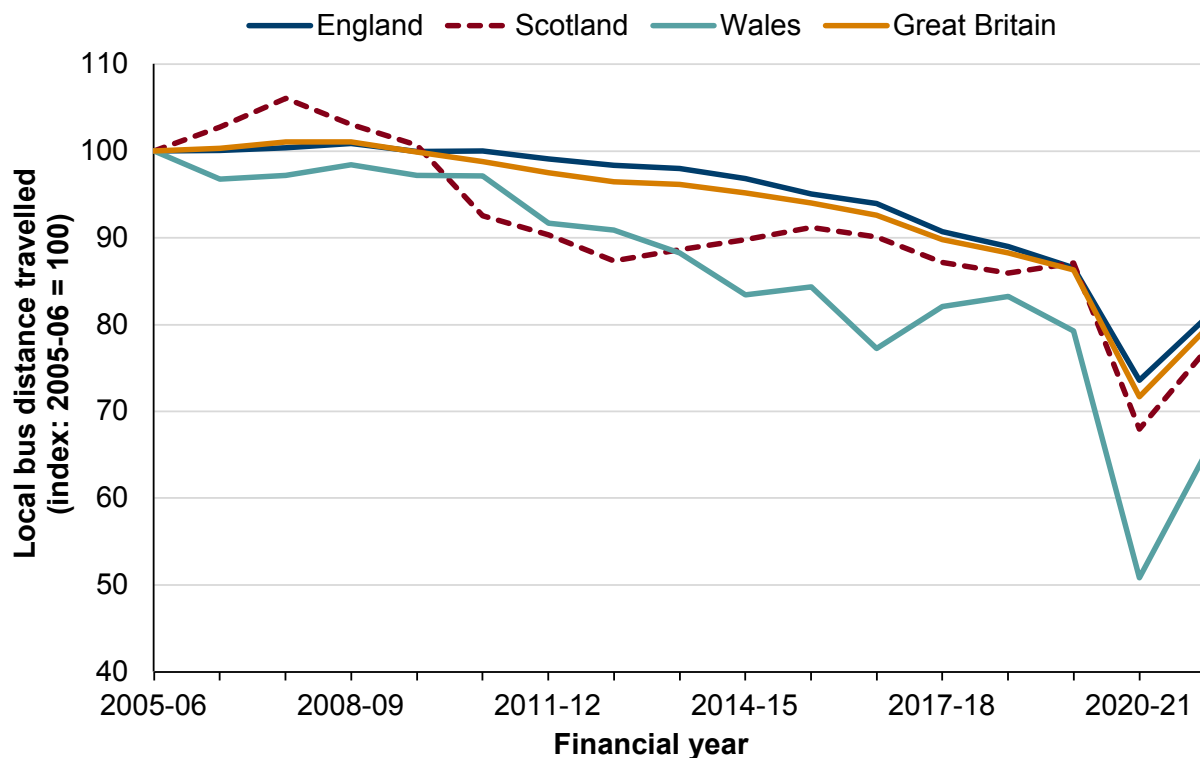
Over the long term, there have been decreases in the distance travelled in all three countries. Since 2005-06, the percentage decrease has been greatest in Wales (down 35.0%) compared with 19.3% in England and 23.1% in Scotland (Figure 9).

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**Figure 9: Vehicle kilometers on local bus services by country, 2005-06 to 2021-22**



Description of Figure 9: Line chart showing the trend in total distance travelled by local bus services in Great Britain. In 2021-22 Wales reported a 27.9% increase compared to 2020-21.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport data 'Public Service Vehicle Survey'

**Vehicle kilometres on local bus services by UK country and year data on Statswales**

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# Licensed taxis and private hire vehicles in Wales

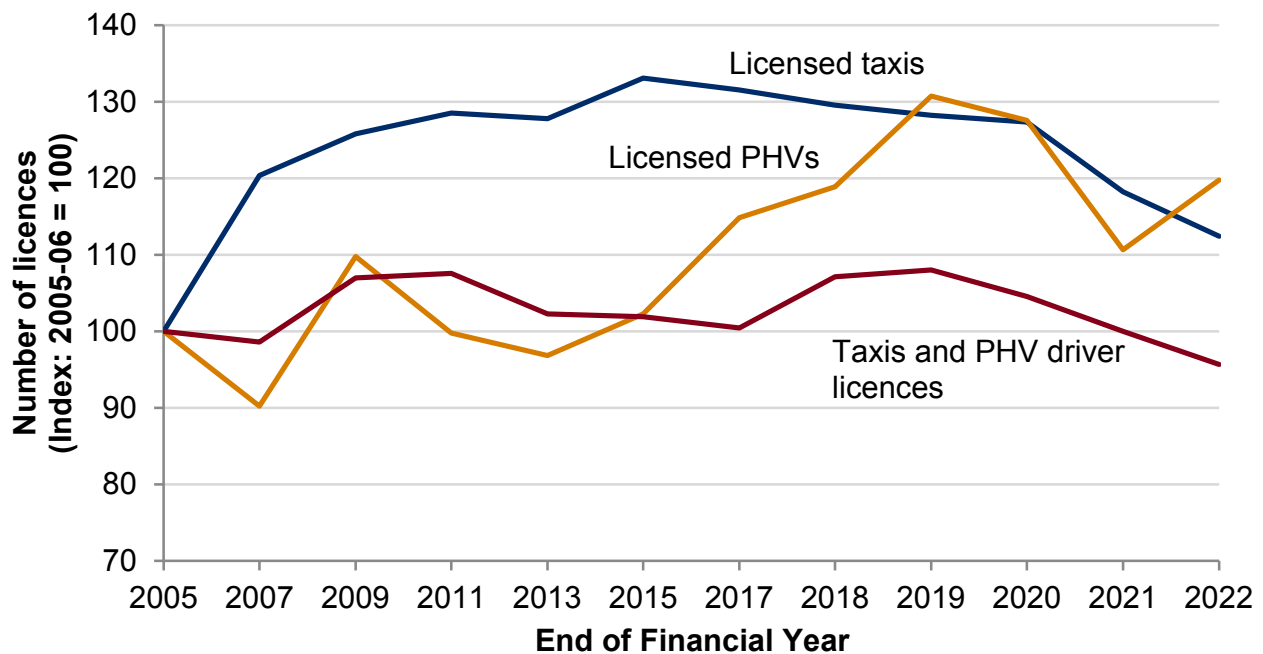
Individuals can apply for a taxi licence, a private hire vehicle (PHV) licence or a dual licence.

- 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 licensed private hire operator.
- A dual licence enables the holder to drive either a taxi or a private hire vehicle.

As of March 2022, there were 4,344 licensed taxis in Wales and 4,974 PHVs. This represents a 4.9% decrease in taxis, and a 8.3% increase in PHVs compared to the previous year.

There was a total of 10,938 taxi and PHV driver licenses issued, with 8,935 (81.7%) of these 'Dual taxi/PHV driver licences'. 35.8% of these dual licenses were issued in Cardiff and Swansea. There were 166 (1.5%) 'Taxi only licensed drivers'. The total number of driver licences issued in Wales decreased 4.3% between 2021 and 2022. (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Number of taxis, PHVs, and driver licenses in Wales, March 2005- March 2022 [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 10: Line chart showing the trend in number of taxis, private hire vehicles and driver licenses in Wales. As of March 2022, there were 4,344 licenced taxis and 4,974 PHVs in Wales.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of the Department for Transport, taxi licensing authorities' data

[Note 1] The figures in this chart are not National Statistics.

**[Licenced taxis and private hire vehicles by local authority and survey year data on Statswales](#)**

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# Quality information

## Data source

Most of the information presented here is derived from annual returns made to the Department for Transport (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 \(Department for Transport\)](#).

## Coverage

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

## 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

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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.

## **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.

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## 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% 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.

## Timeliness and punctuality

DfT collected data from operators during the summer 2022 for publication in November 2022.

## Accessibility and clarity

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

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## 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 2020-2021'** 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**.

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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. The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in February 2013 following a full assessment against the Code of Practice.

Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#), and have made the following improvements:

- Eliminated un-necessary tables from bulletin as they are freely available on StatsWales
- Improved visuals and commentary of long terms trends for all public service vehicles

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.

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

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing 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

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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 wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing 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 wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

## Footnotes

[1] 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.

[2] Consumer prices index including owner occupiers’ housing costs.



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SB 15/2023



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