

Urban public transit, January 2022

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Highlights

In January, urban transit recorded its lowest ridership in five months, falling to 67.3 million passenger trips. This drop followed the reintroduction of stricter public health measures in several provinces in response to an upsurge in COVID-19 cases.

Provincial restrictions to combat the Omicron variant also served to slow the recovery in public transit. Ridership as a percentage, compared with pre-pandemic 2019 levels, slipped from 56.0% in December 2021 down to 41.8% in January 2022.

Recovery on pause

The total number of passenger trips taken on Canada's urban transit networks was 67.3 million in January—an increase of 39.6% from 48.2 million in January 2021. Although this marked the 10th consecutive month of year-over-year increases, it was the lowest number of passengers carried since August 2021.

While ridership increased sharply year over year, it remained far below the average of 77.4 million rides reached in the latter half of 2021, before the Omicron outbreak. Working from home, online learning for students, reduced business capacity and sick employees reduced the number of public transit passengers in January. Passenger volumes recovered less than half (41.8%) of the pre-pandemic January 2019 level (160.9 million).

Since the onset of the pandemic, the [Labour Force Survey](#) has been tracking the proportion of non-absent workers who worked from home. During the week of January 9 to 15, more than 4 in 10 (43.0%) of those employed worked most of their hours from home, the highest proportion since the initial lockdown in April 2020. Among those who did not usually work any of their hours at home, 30.3% worked at home for at least part of the week.

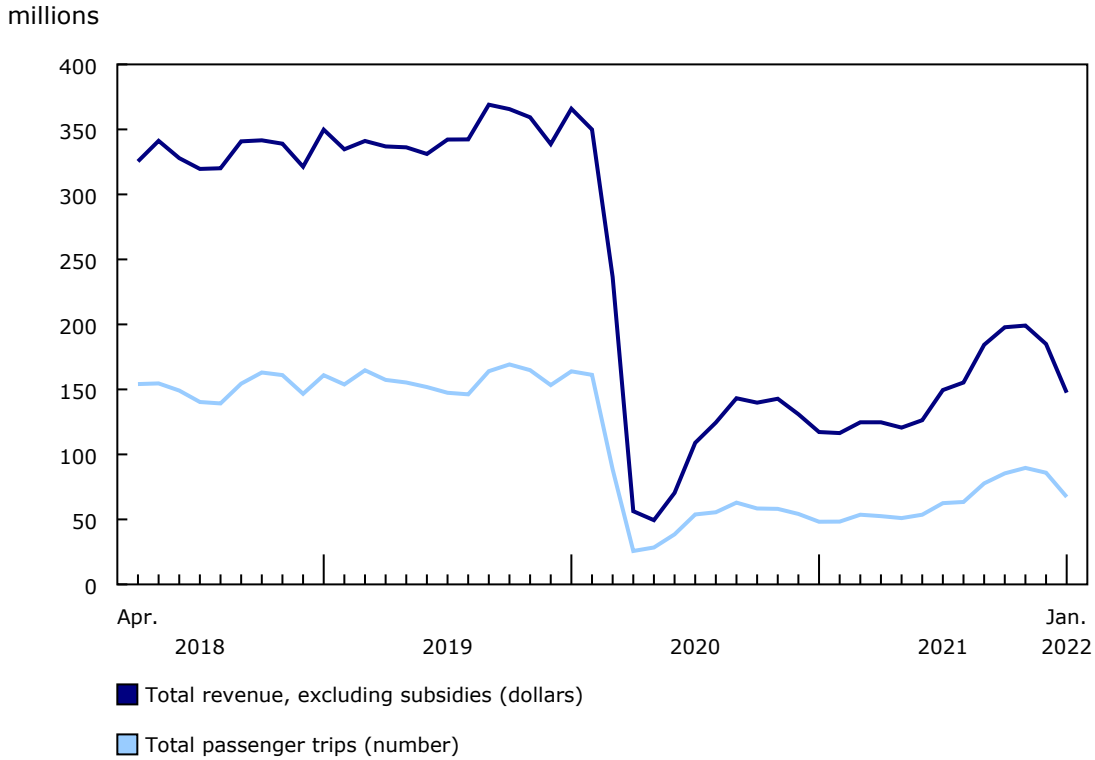
On a monthly basis, ridership typically increases in January as students and workers return after the holiday break. However, in January 2022, ridership decreased by 18.6 million rides from December 2021—an unseasonable 21.7% drop. As Ontario and Quebec reintroduced capacity limits or imposed closures in high-contact settings and encouraged employees to work from home, they accounted for more than three-quarters (78.6%) of this monthly drop.

Financial situation remains fragile

In January, transit agency operating revenues (excluding subsidies) were up 25.9% from the same month in 2021 to \$147.5 million, the lowest level seen since June 2021, but still 57.8%, or \$202.3 million, below the pre-pandemic January 2019 level.



Chart 1
Urban public transit operating revenue and passenger trips, monthly, 2018 to 2022



Source(s): Table 23-10-0251-01.

Note to readers

Data for the most recent quarter are subject to revision. The data in this release are not seasonally adjusted.

This survey collects data on operating revenue (excluding subsidies) and the number of passenger trips from a panel of urban transit companies that represents at least 75% of revenues in each province and territory. Note that the panel is adjusted annually to maintain the 75% coverage and could differ slightly from what it was in the same month a year earlier.

Data prior to January 2017 can be found in table 23-10-0078-01.

The [Transportation Data and Information Hub](#), a web portal developed jointly by Statistics Canada and Transport Canada, provides Canadians with online access to comprehensive statistics and measures on the country's transportation sector.

Available tables: table [23-10-0251-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [2745](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).