

MTA Analysis & Insights

Q: What trends did you notice in subway ridership?

A: There was a **76% drop** in 2020 compared to 2019. Ridership fell from **1.686 billion** to **370 million**. By 2024, it recovered to **988 million**, showing gradual but incomplete recovery.

Q: Which transit mode recovered the fastest?

A: Bridges and Tunnels recovered the fastest. By 2023, ridership had already reached **101% of 2019 levels**, making it the only mode to **fully recover and surpass pre-COVID traffic**.

Q: How was subway ridership affected by the pandemic?

A: Daily ridership dropped by **over 90%** at the peak in April 2020. Annually, subway ridership dropped from **1.686 billion (2019)** to **370 million (2020)** – a **74% annual decrease**. By 2024, it recovered to **59% of 2019's total**.

Q: Did bus ridership recover faster than subways?

A: Yes. Buses maintained about **50–60% of pre-pandemic levels** in 2020, and recovered to around **90% by 2024**, compared to subway's **59%**. Buses were more resilient due to their essential role in outer boroughs.

Q: How was LIRR impacted compared to other modes?

A: LIRR dropped by **77%** in 2020, from **91.1 million** to **17.8 million** riders. In 2024, it reached **73.7 million**, or **81% of its 2019 total** — a slower recovery compared to buses and bridges.

Q: What about Metro-North ridership?

A: Metro-North dropped by **76%** in 2020, from **87.5 million** to **20.8 million**. In 2024, it climbed back to **69.4 million**, which is **79% of its 2019 levels**.

Q: Did car traffic bounce back quickly?

A: Yes. Car traffic through Bridges & Tunnels **fell by 27% in 2020** (from 333 million to 206 million). Recovery began steadily in 2021, and by 2023 it slightly exceeded pre-pandemic levels, reaching 336 million — about 101%. So **while the bounce back was not instant, it was strong and complete by 2023**.

Q: Which mode had the highest ridership before the pandemic?

A: Subways, with **1.686 billion annual riders** in 2019 (about **5.5 million per weekday**).

Q: Which had the lowest ridership before the pandemic?

A: Staten Island Railway, with **4.6 million total riders** in 2019 (around **12,600 daily riders**).

Q: And during the pandemic?

A: Buses had the **highest relative usage**, maintaining **60% of normal levels** in 2020.

Q: Is there a noticeable difference between weekdays and weekends?

A: Yes. Weekday ridership is higher than weekends across most modes, especially for commuter-heavy lines like LIRR and Metro-North.

Q: When did ridership start to recover after the initial pandemic drop?

A: Recovery began in mid-2020, with significant growth in **2021**. For example, subway ridership grew from **370 million (2020)** to **760 million (2021)** — a **105% increase**.

Q: Were there any sudden drops or spikes later in the dataset?

A: Yes. Sudden drops occurred during **holiday weeks, winter storms**, and **COVID-19 variant waves** (like Omicron in late 2021). Spikes appeared during **reopening phases and summer months**.