



Quarterly Road Traffic Estimates: Great Britain, Quarter 2 2013

This statistical release presents provisional estimates for road traffic in Great Britain between April and June (Quarter 2) 2013.

The provisional estimates are based on traffic data collected continuously from a national network of around 180 Automatic Traffic Counters (ATCs). In addition to counting traffic, the ATCs record some of the physical properties of passing vehicles which are used to classify traffic by vehicle type.

Quarterly estimates are provisional until they have been constrained by the final annual estimates each year. Therefore, figures for 2013 are provisional in this release. Annual estimates for 2013 are due to be published in June 2014.

The traffic estimates in this release are seasonally adjusted unless otherwise stated.



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Comparing Q2 (April to June) 2013 with the same quarter in the previous year:

- All motor vehicle traffic increased, by 2.9 per cent, to 76.8 billion vehicle miles.
- All vehicle types have shown an increase, including:
 - Car traffic increased by 2.3 per cent to 60.8 billion vehicle miles.
 - Light goods vehicle traffic increased by 6.1 per cent to a peak of 10.7 billion vehicle miles.
 - Heavy goods vehicle traffic increased by 1.7 per cent, to 3.9 billion vehicle miles.
- Traffic volumes increased on all road types, with larger increases on motorways (4.9%) and minor roads (3.6%) than 'A' roads (1.4%).

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1. Quarterly road traffic by vehicle type

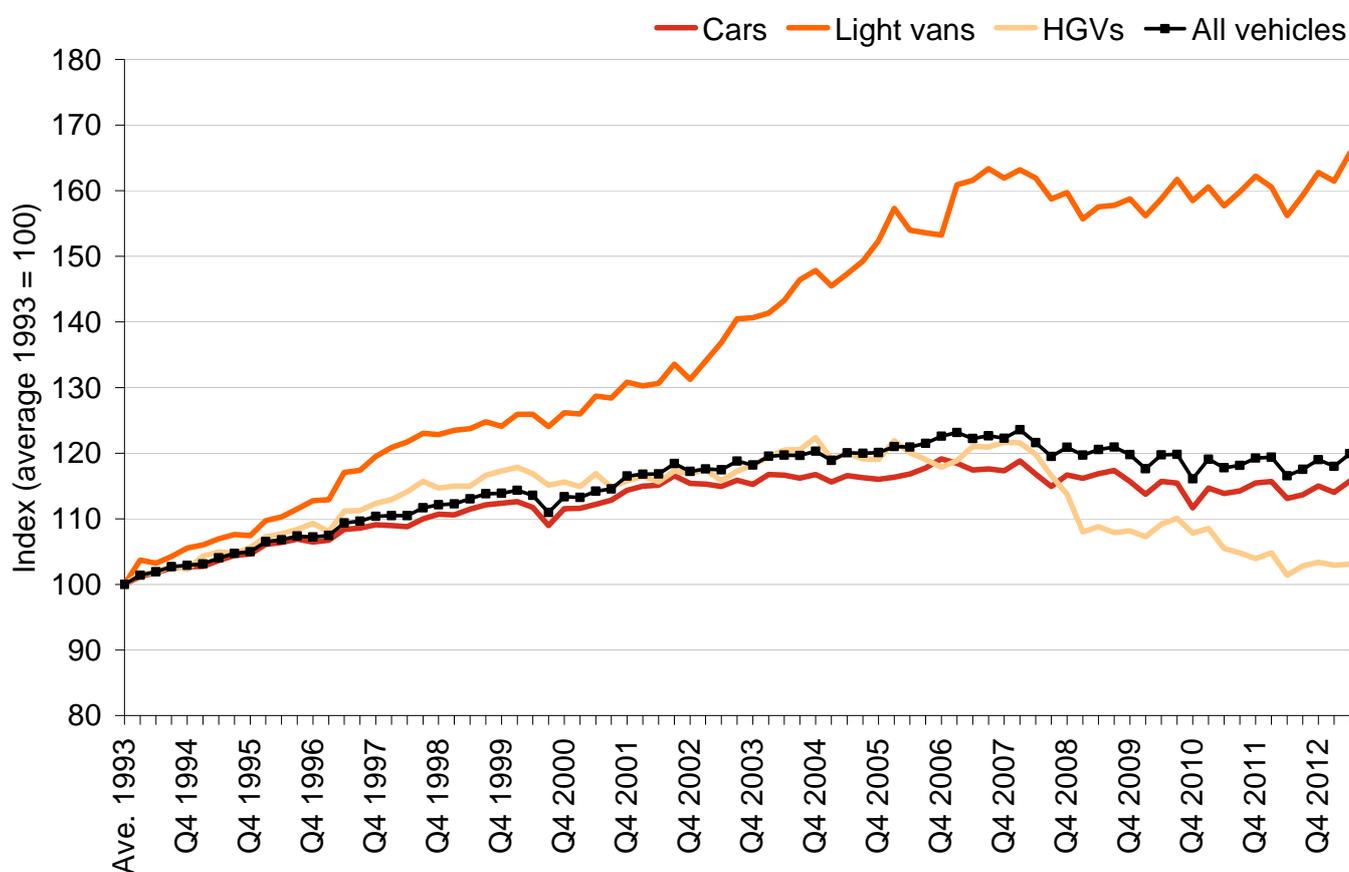
- Provisional estimates show that motor vehicle traffic in the second quarter of 2013 was 2.9 per cent higher than in the second quarter of 2012 at 76.8 billion vehicle miles. This follows five consecutive years of decreases between second quarters and traffic volumes were still 1.9 per cent lower than in 2007.

Traffic volumes increased between the second quarters of 2012 and 2013 for all vehicle types:

- Car traffic increased by 2.3 per cent, with increases across all road types, from 59.4 billion vehicle miles to 60.8 billion vehicle miles.
- Light goods vehicle traffic reached a peak of 10.7 billion vehicle miles, this was 6.1 per cent higher than the second quarter of 2012 and the highest since quarterly estimates began.
- Heavy goods vehicle traffic increased by 1.7 per cent to 3.9 billion, this was the first increase between second quarters since 2010 but still 14.8 per cent lower than its peak of 4.6 billion vehicle miles in 2007 quarter two.
- Other motor vehicle traffic, which includes motorcycles, buses and coaches, rose by 8.6 per cent to 1.4 billion vehicle miles. Caution, however, should be taken when interpreting figures for other motor vehicle traffic as they are based on small numbers.

Road traffic by vehicle type: Great Britain, quarterly from 1993

[table TRA2501c, seasonally adjusted indices (Ave. 1993=100)]



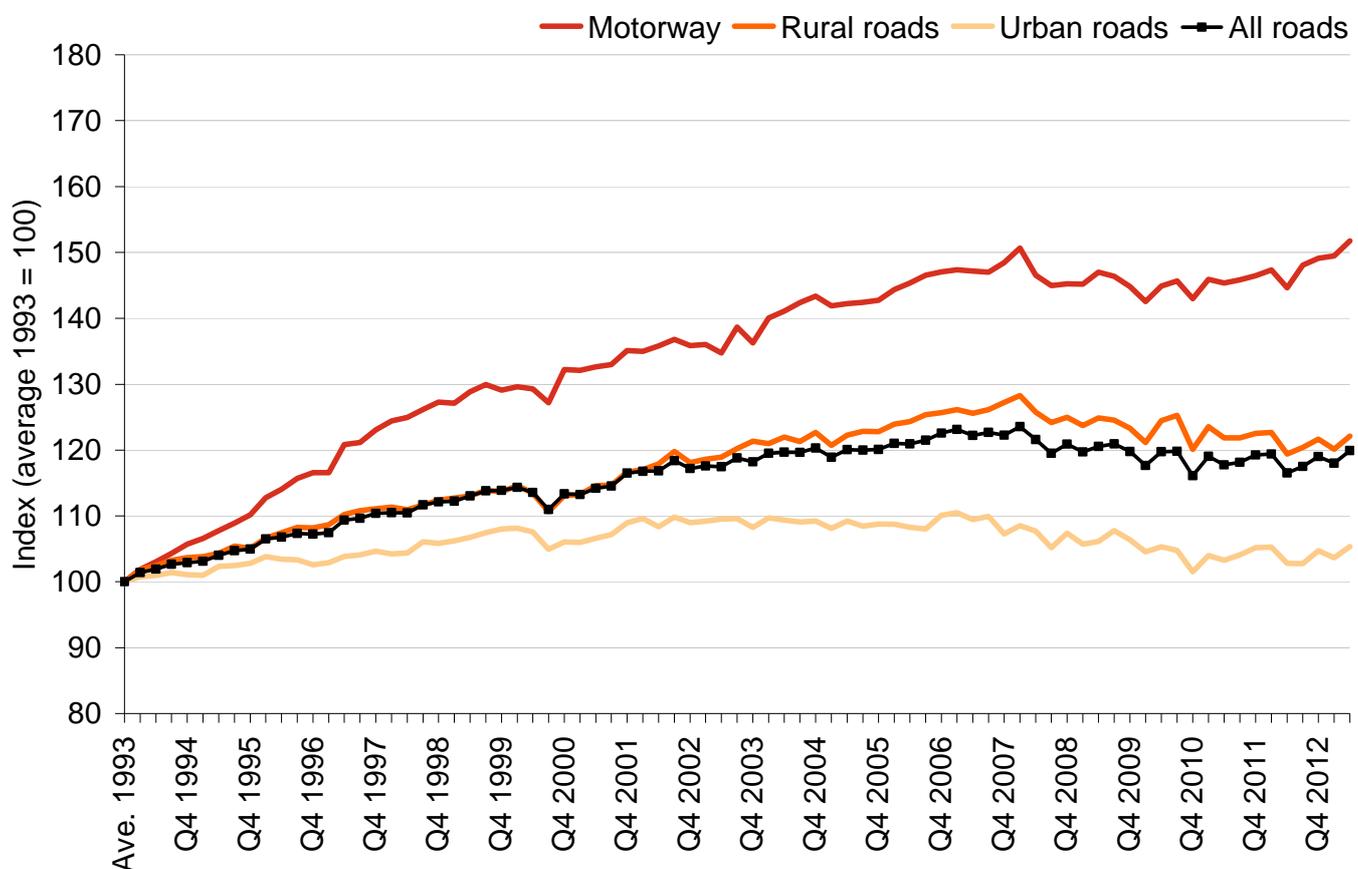
Detailed statistics (tables and charts) on “Quarterly road traffic by vehicle type” can be found in the Traffic Statistics web tables, [TRA2501](#), [TRA2504](#)

2. Quarterly road traffic by road class

- Provisional estimates for the second quarter of 2013 show that traffic volumes increased on all road types when compared to the same quarter in 2012. However traffic volumes were still lower than in 2007, before the downward trend began, for all road types except motorways where traffic volume was 3.1 per cent higher.
- Between the second quarters of 2012 and 2013 the increases shown in the level of traffic were similar across rural and urban roads (2.3% and 2.5% respectively) but higher on minor roads than 'A' roads (3.6% and 1.4%).
- The largest increase in traffic volume between quarters two of 2012 and 2013 occurred on motorways, increasing by 4.9 per cent to 16.1 billion vehicle miles. The smallest increase in the same period occurred on urban 'A' roads, 0.7 per cent to 12.2 billion vehicle miles. This was the first increase in traffic volume on urban 'A' roads between second quarters since 2009.
- The proportion of total traffic travelling on motorways in the second quarter of 2013 was 20.9 per cent, this is 4.5 percentage points higher than the proportion in the second quarter of 1993.
- Traffic volume has increased on all road types since the first quarter two estimate in 1993. It has increased the most on motorways (53.1%) and the least on urban 'A' roads (1.3%).

Road traffic by road class: Great Britain, quarterly from 1993

[table TRA2502c, seasonally adjusted indices (Ave. 1993=100)]



Detailed statistics (tables and charts) on “Quarterly road traffic by road class” can be found in the Traffic Statistics web tables, [TRA2502](#), [TRA2505](#)

3. Recent trends in traffic estimates

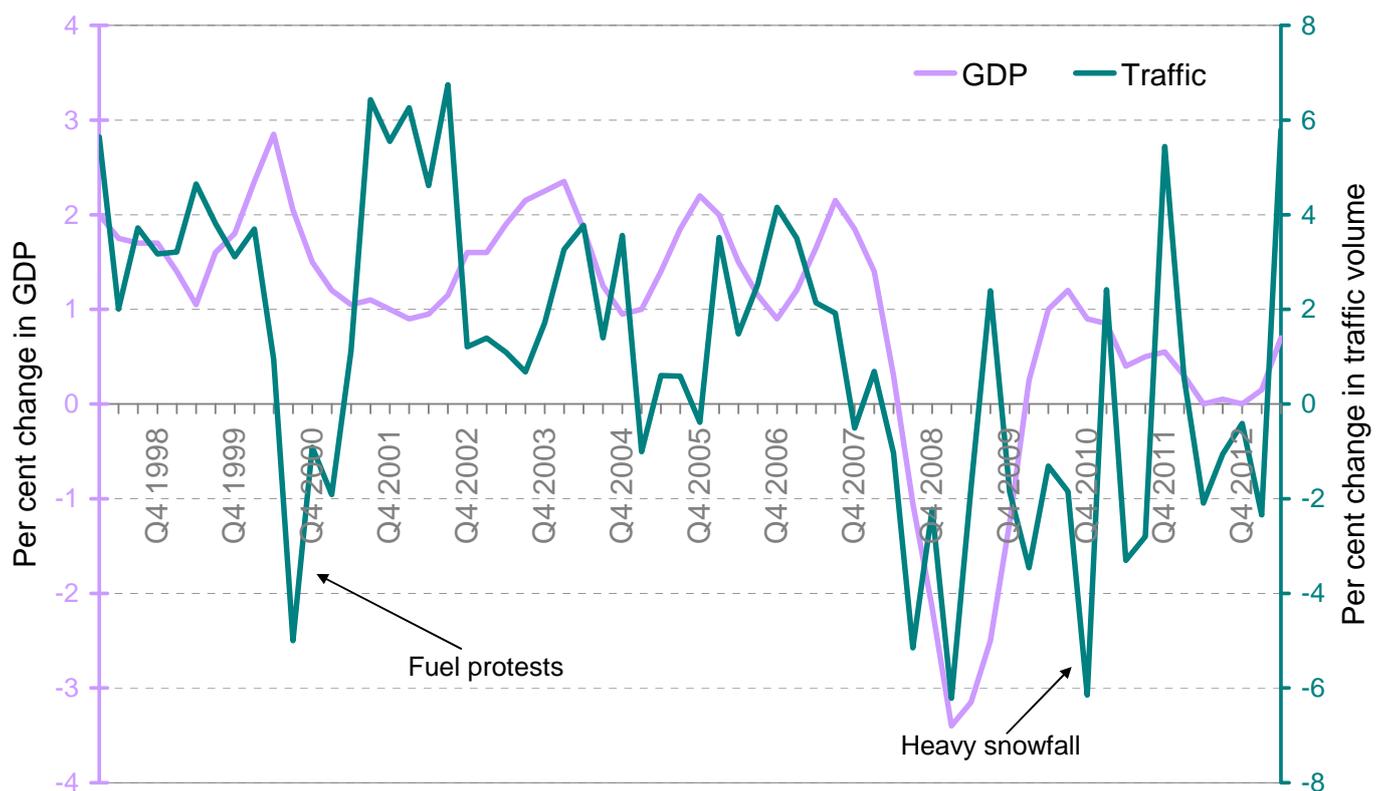
- The final 2012 estimates were broadly stable in comparison with 2011 at 302.6 billion vehicle miles, this was also similar to traffic volume in 2010.
- The increase in traffic volume between the second quarters of 2012 and 2013 follows traffic volume in quarter two of 2012 being the lowest in any second quarter since 2001.

A number of factors may affect traffic volumes. For example, traffic levels would normally be expected to change in line with economic growth, as well as widespread weather events. When comparing changes between quarter two of 2012 and quarter two of 2013:

- Preliminary estimates show GDP to have increased overall between quarter two 2012 and quarter two 2013, by 1.4 per cent, with increases in the sectors we would expect to have the greatest influence on traffic volume. For example, the index for transport, storage and communication increased by 2.1 per cent between the second quarters of 2012 and 2013 and index for distribution, hotels and restaurants increased by 4.1 per cent during the same period.

Motor vehicle traffic and Gross Domestic Product: Great Britain, quarterly from 1998

[table TRA2501d, percentage change on same quarter previous year]



- Labour market statistics for April to June 2013 are not yet available, however figures for March to May 2013 showed the employment rate in Great Britain during that period to be 0.5 per cent higher than in March to May 2012. This may have caused an increase in the number of people regularly travelling to work on the roads between the second quarters of 2012 and 2013.
- April, May and June of 2013 were all cooler than the 1981-2010 monthly averages across the UK. However April and June were also drier and had more hours of sunshine than the 1981-2010 averages for those months which may have encouraged more trips for leisure.

- In contrast, the second quarter of 2012 saw extremely high levels of rainfall, which have deterred people from making trips for leisure purposes, and a decrease in GDP of 0.5 per cent. Additionally, in April 2012 the price of fuel increased to over 140 pence per litre for the first time.

4. Users and uses of Road Traffic Estimates

We continuously review the content of these statistics to ensure they are meeting users' needs. A summary of the feedback we have received from users can be found in '[Meeting customers' needs: Users and uses of road traffic statistics and data](#)'.

Road traffic data are a key source of management information on the country's infrastructure. Main uses of road traffic statistics include:

- The Highways Agency, Local Authorities (including Transport for London) and devolved governments use the data for transport planning, road engineering and policy monitoring at a regional or local level.
- Road accident and safety statistics use annual and quarterly traffic estimates to produce road safety and accident rates, as required for the Strategic Framework on Road Safety.

We welcome feedback on any aspects of the Department's road traffic statistics including content, timing, and format via email to roadtraff.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk

5. Strengths and weaknesses of the data

- Quarterly estimates are based on data from automatic traffic counters and give an indication of changes in traffic levels for different types of vehicle and on different types of road in Great Britain as a whole.
- Annual estimates make use of data from around eight thousand manual traffic counts in addition to the data from the automatic traffic counters and can estimate traffic levels in local areas and on specific road links which cannot be produced from the quarterly data.
- Automatic traffic counters classify vehicle types based on characteristics such as axle-spacing and vehicle length. This creates the possibility for misclassification of vehicles with atypical characteristics, meaning that provisional estimates for different vehicle types are less robust than the final estimates which also utilise the more accurate manual counts data. The classification algorithms are continually developed to ensure that vehicle classification is as accurate as possible.
- Provisional quarterly traffic estimates for all motor vehicles have historically been accurate (typically within 1 per cent) when compared with the final quarterly estimates.

All motor vehicles traffic	billion vehicle miles/percentage														
	2010					2011					2012				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann
Provisional estimates at time of publication	71.8	79.5	81.1	74.1	306.6	76.7	75.8	76.2	77.3	305.8	76.5	74.6	75.0	76.7	302.6
Final estimates	72.2	79.9	81.5	74.6	308.1	76.3	75.4	75.7	76.4	303.8	76.5	74.6	75.3	76.2	302.6
Difference (%)	-0.6	-0.5	-0.5	-0.6	-0.5	0.6	0.4	0.6	1.2	0.7	0.0	-0.1	-0.4	0.6	0.0

6. Background notes

1. The web tables give further detail of the results presented in this release and statistics on other related topics.

The quarterly traffic estimates are presented in tables **TRA2501** to **TRA2506**. They are available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/tra25-quarterly-estimates

Also available annual traffic estimates, which are presented in table series **TRA01**, **TRA02**, **TRA03**, **TRA31**, **TRA32** and **TRA89**. They are available at:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/road-traffic-statistics#statistical-data-sets

2. Full guidance on the methods used to compile traffic statistics can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49975/quarterly-methodology-note.pdf or more general information at: www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-road-traffic
3. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Road Traffic Statistics were recently assessed against the Code of Practice by the UK Statistics Authority. The assessment report can be found here: www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-road-traffic#national-statistics
4. Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-road-traffic#pre-release-access-list
5. Final annual estimates for 2013 are due to be published in June 2014. The next Quarterly Road Traffic Estimates release, providing estimates up to Quarter 3 (July to September) 2013, is due to be published in November 2013.