

Quarterly Road Traffic Estimates: Great Britain Quarter 1 (January - March) 2014



Department
for Transport



RESPONSIBLE STATISTICIAN:
Bowie Penney

FURTHER INFORMATION: Media: 020 7944 3066
Public: 020 7944 3095 roadtraff.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Main findings: Car, LGV and HGV vehicle traffic has increased, along with traffic across all road classes, from Quarter 1 2013.

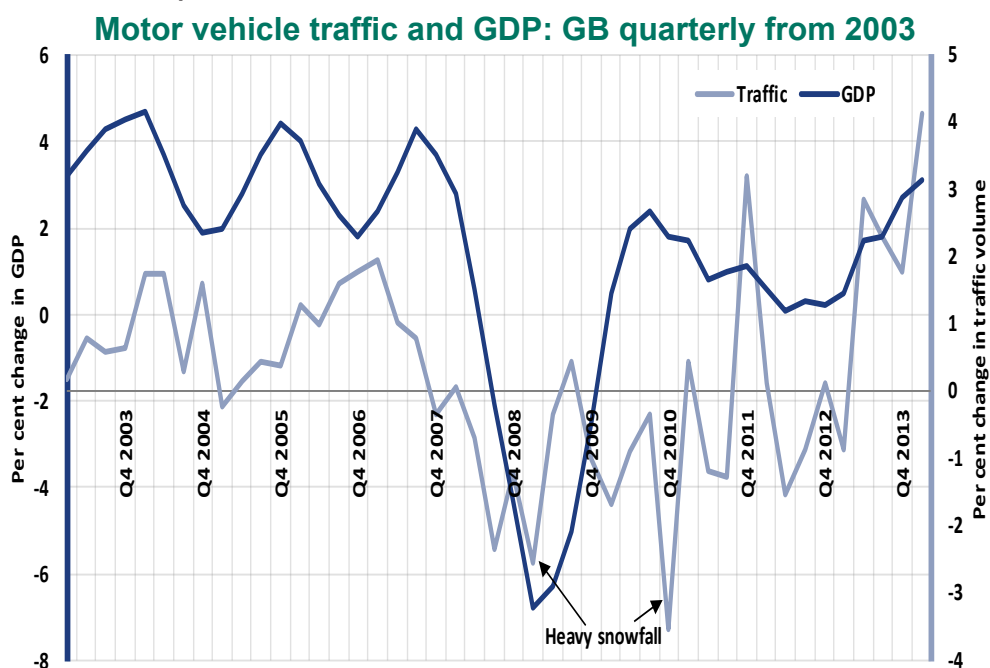
From January to March 2014 (Quarter 1) **All Motor Vehicle Traffic increased** by 4.1 per cent when compared to the same quarter in 2013.

The Quarter 1 2014 estimate of 78.5 billion vehicle miles represents the **highest quarterly volume of traffic estimated since the peak in 2008**. The trend in all motor vehicle traffic has declined and recovered since the highest quarterly total was recorded in Quarter 1 2008 (78.9 billion vehicle miles).

GDP increased over Quarter 1 2014, as illustrated by the chart below. This suggests that economic growth may be contributing to the continued upward trend in traffic volumes. The relatively mild weather during Quarter 1 2014, compared to Quarter 1 2013, may also be a factor in the increase in traffic over this period.

Compared to Quarter 1 2013:

- **Car, Light Goods Vehicle (LGV) and Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) traffic has increased**, with LGV traffic showing the largest increase of 7.3 per cent.
- **All road classes experienced higher volumes of traffic.** Traffic increased by at least 4 per cent on motorways, rural 'A' roads and across both urban and rural minor road classes.



About this release

This quarterly release presents estimates for road traffic in Great Britain from January to March 2014. Quarterly estimates are provisional until they have been constrained by the final annual estimates each year. The quarterly figures presented in this release for 2013 and 2014 are provisional. Final annual estimates for 2013 are due to be published in June 2014.

Estimates are based on traffic data collected continuously from a national network of around 200 Automatic Traffic Counters (ATCs). ATCs also record some physical properties of passing vehicles which are used to classify traffic by vehicle type.

The traffic estimates in this release are seasonally adjusted unless otherwise stated. In this quarter we have updated the software used for seasonal adjustment. This has not changed our core quarterly publication methodology.

Further charts and detailed statistical tables can be accessed online via our [road traffic statistical series](#).

Summary figures for Quarter 1 2014 (January – March)

The summary table below shows the patterns in vehicle traffic compared to the last quarter and previous Quarter 1 figures across a range of years. More information on our quarterly estimates, along with our [TRA25](#) quarterly tables, can be found online [here](#).

Vehicle Miles	This Quarter Q1 2014	Q1 percentage change over time				
		Last Quarter Q4 2013	Last Year Q1 2013	Five Years Ago Q1 2009	Ten Years Ago Q1 2004	Twenty Years Ago Q1 1994
All Motor Vehicle Traffic	78.5 billion	🟢 1.2%	🟢 4.1%	🟢 2.1%	🟢 2.6%	🟢 20.5%
Cars and Taxis	62.0 billion	🟢 1.2%	🟢 3.8%	🟢 1.4%	🟢 1.2%	🟢 16.3%
LGVs	11.2 billion	🟢 1.9%	🟢 7.3%	🟢 10.4%	🟢 21.0%	🟢 66.8%
HGVs ¹	4.0 billion ¹	🟢 0.7% ¹	🟢 2.8% ¹	🔴 2.6% ¹	🔴 11.0% ¹	🟢 3.5% ¹
Motorways	16.4 billion	🟢 1.0%	🟢 4.0%	🟢 6.7%	🟢 10.6%	🟢 51.7%
Rural A-Roads	22.4 billion	🟢 1.3%	🟢 4.7%	🟢 1.8%	🟢 2.0%	🟢 24.7%
Urban A-Roads	12.4 billion	🟢 1.9%	🟢 2.5%	🟢 0.2%	🔴 3.8%	🟢 2.4%
Rural Minor Roads	10.6 billion	🟢 0.8%	🟢 4.6%	🔴 1.1%	🟢 5.2%	🟢 18.6%
Urban Minor Roads	16.7 billion	🟢 1.0%	🟢 4.5%	🟢 1.5%	🔴 0.5%	🟢 9.1%

¹ We have introduced a correction to the way buses are classified on motorways and some 'A' roads for Quarter 1 2014 and this will be applied indefinitely going forward. The reclassification has led to a shift in traffic from buses to HGVs. As a result, it is advised that users take caution when comparing statistics for bus and HGV traffic from Quarter 1 2014 with historic traffic statistics. Overall traffic volumes are unaffected by this correction.

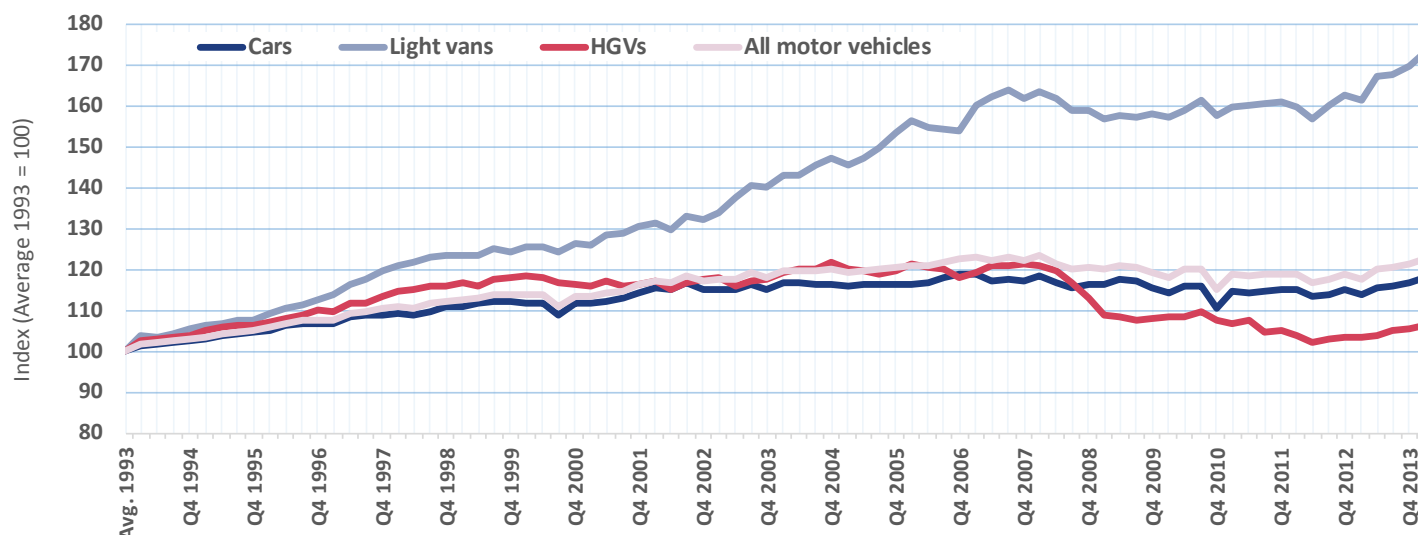
Initial estimates suggest that this change may have increased HGV estimates by around 2 per cent and decreased bus traffic estimates by around 7 per cent when compared to previous years. We are continuing to investigate the impact of this change, and whether it is possible to apply the same change to historic data. Further information will be provided alongside our next quarterly publication.

Quarterly road traffic by vehicle type

Latest figures: Traffic increases across car, LGV and HGV vehicle types.

- All motor vehicle traffic increased by 4.1 per cent compared to Quarter 1 2013. This is despite extensive flooding which affected several regions across Great Britain during this same period in 2014. Longer term, traffic volumes have grown by 20.5 per cent since 1994.

Road traffic in Great Britain by vehicle type, seasonally adjusted indices (Ave. 1993=100)



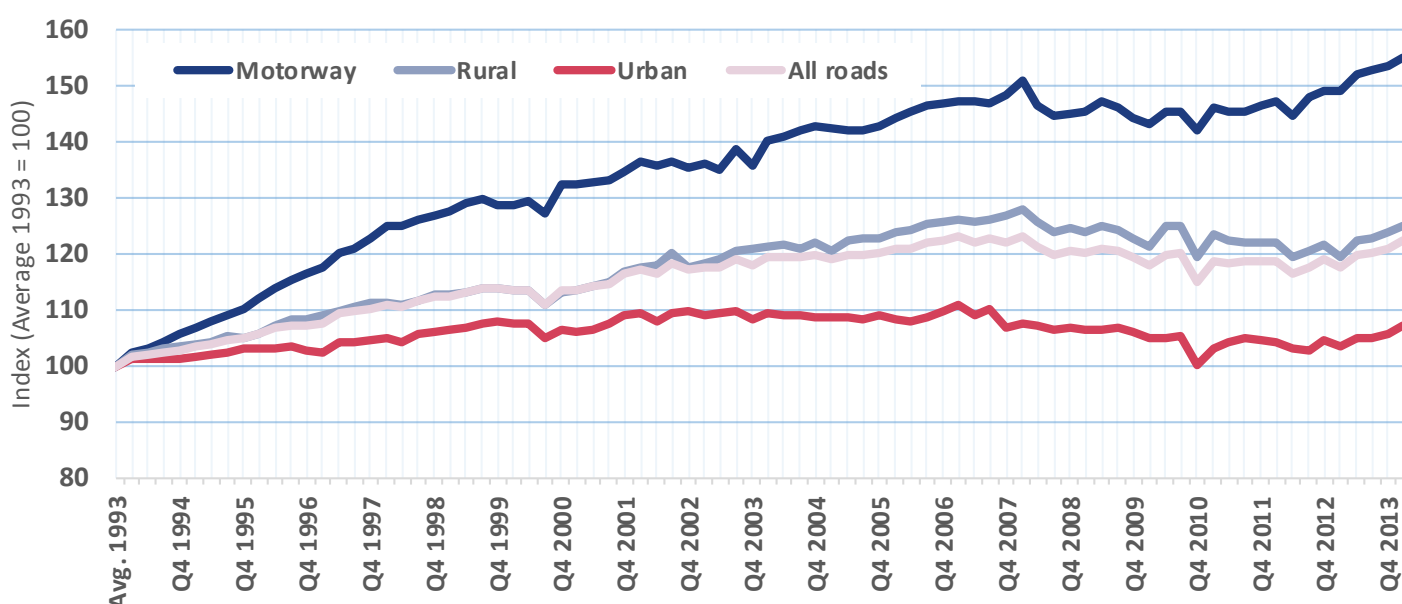
- Car and taxi traffic increased by 3.8 per cent, to 62 billion vehicle miles, in Quarter 1 of 2014 from Quarter 1 2013.
- Quarter 1 2014 saw the highest quarterly LGV traffic figure since the series began in 1993, increasing a further 1.9 per cent since the previous highest total in Quarter 4 2013.
- LGV traffic totalled 11.2 billion vehicle miles in Quarter 1 of 2014, 7.3 per cent higher than in the same quarter in the previous year. This contributes to a 21.0 per cent growth in LGV traffic over the past ten years, and an increase of over 65 per cent since 1994.
- HGV traffic increased by 2.8 per cent in Quarter 1 2014 from Quarter 1 2013. However, the HGV increase is likely to be smaller than 2.8 per cent, as a proportion of this increase is due to the correction made to HGV and bus vehicle classification. See the background information section on page 4 for further details.

Quarterly road traffic by road class

Latest figures: Increase in traffic on motorways and all other road classes.

- Traffic on motorways in Great Britain increased from 15.8 in Quarter 1 2013 to 16.4 billion vehicle miles in Quarter 1 2014, representing growth of 4.0 per cent.
- Motorway traffic has increased by more than 50 per cent over a 20 year period since 1994.
- Traffic volumes rose by 4.6 per cent on minor rural roads, compared to Quarter 1 estimates for 2013, rising to 10.6 billion vehicle miles. Traffic on minor urban roads increased 4.5 per cent to 16.7 billion vehicle miles over the same period.
- Estimates for 'A' road traffic in Quarter 1 also increased when compared to the same period in 2013. In Quarter 1 2014, traffic on rural 'A' roads was 22.4 billion vehicle miles, up 4.7 per cent. Traffic on urban 'A' roads has also increased but at a slower rate, rising to 12.4 billion vehicle miles which is a 2.5 per cent increase on Quarter 1 2013 estimates.
- Over a 20 year period since 1994, rural 'A' roads (24.7 per cent) and minor rural roads (18.6 per cent) have experience the sharpest increase in traffic, after motorways. Minor urban roads (9.1 per cent) and urban 'A' roads (2.4 per cent) have also experienced growth in traffic levels over the same period but at a comparatively lower rate.

Road traffic in Great Britain by road class, seasonally adjusted indices (Ave. 1993=100)



Background information

HGV and bus vehicle classification

- A correction has been applied to Quarter 1 2014 figures for HGV and Other motor vehicles. This has shifted traffic from buses to HGVs on motorways and some 'A' roads. As a result, these figures are not directly comparable with earlier years and this is highlighted in the tables by a break line and a footnote.
- Initial estimates suggest that this change may have increased HGV estimates by around 2 per cent and decreased bus traffic estimates by around 7 per cent when compared to previous years. We are continuing to investigate the impact of this change, and whether it is possible to apply the same change to historic data. Further information will be provided alongside our next quarterly publication.

Sources, 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.
- As part of the quarterly methodology, historic figures are subject to revision. However, these revisions will typically be minor and will not affect the overall patterns shown in the data.
- Provisional quarterly traffic estimates for all motor vehicles have historically been accurate (typically within 1 per cent) when compared with the final quarterly estimates.
- Further statistical guidance and methodological notes methodology note can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-statistics-guidance>.

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

Users and uses of Road Traffic Estimates

Road traffic data are a key source of management information on the country's infrastructure. Main uses of road traffic statistics are summarised online in our report [Meeting customers' needs: Users and uses of road traffic statistics and data](#). We continuously review the content of our statistics to ensure they are meeting users' needs. A summary of the feedback we have received from users can also be found in the above document.

We welcome further 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.

National Statistics

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs. Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-series>.

Next update

The next Quarterly Road Traffic estimates, for Q2 (April to June) 2014, are due to be published in August 2014. Annual Road Traffic estimates for 2013 are currently scheduled to be published in June 2014.