



# Congestion on local 'A' roads, England: April to June 2014

## Main findings: Average speeds have continued to fall steadily for more than 2 years

- ▶ **Average speeds on local 'A' roads** in England during the **weekday morning peak** in the year ending June 2014 were **24.4 mph**. This is a **0.9% decrease** on the year ending March 2014.
- ▶ For individual months, average speeds on local 'A' roads in England were slower in April, May and June 2014, with decreases of 1.5%, 4.0% and 3.6% respectively, compared to the same months in 2013.
- ▶ A combination of increases in traffic on the 'A' road network and increased levels of rainfall is likely to have contributed to the fall in speeds observed between March 2012 and June 2014.

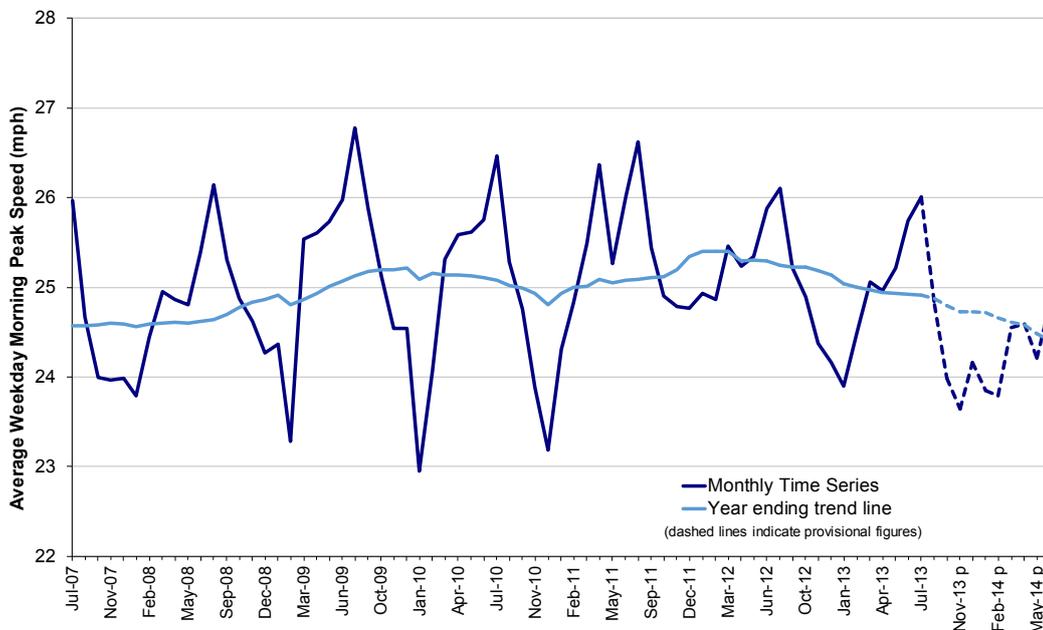


### About this release

This statistical release presents information about congestion on local highway authority managed 'A' roads in England. Congestion on locally managed 'A' roads is measured by estimating the average speed achieved by vehicles during the weekday morning peak from 7am to 10am.

### Average vehicle speeds during the weekday morning peak<sup>1</sup> on local 'A' roads: England, monthly and annual averages from 2006/07

(Table [CGN0205](#))



1. Morning peak defined as 7am to 10am. School holiday periods and the month of August are excluded.  
 2. Average speeds have been flow-weighted using DfT traffic estimates

p = provisional

### In this publication

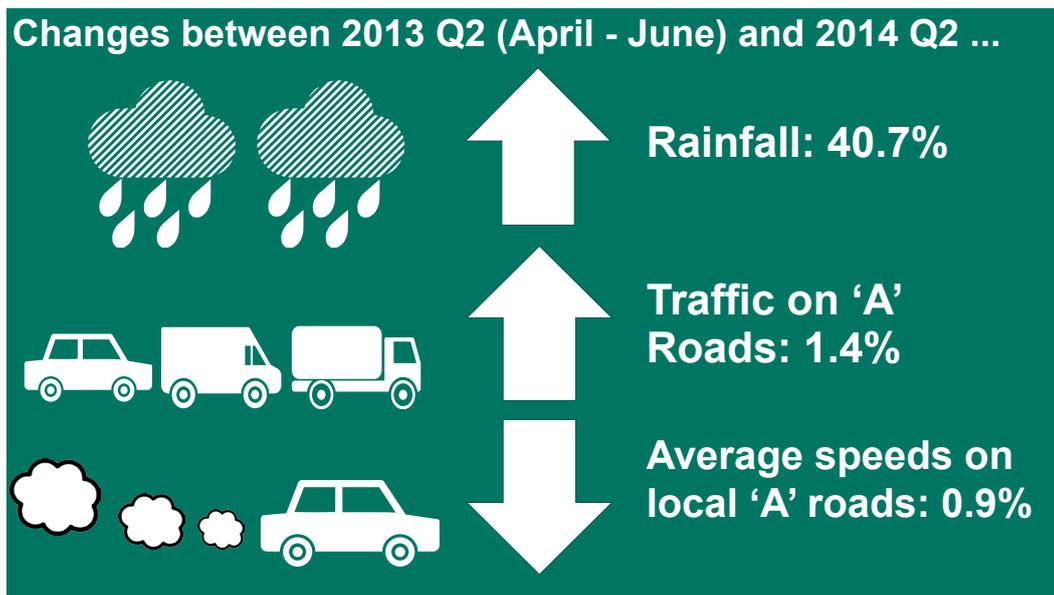
National Overview ...	p2
Regional Statistics ...	p3
Background Info ...	p4

**Latest statistics:** Provisional data show that the average speed on local 'A' roads in England during the weekday morning peak was 24.4 mph in the year ending June 2014. This is a 0.9% decrease on the year ending March 2014.

Looking further back, there were increases in annual average weekday morning peak speeds between the years ending December 2010 and February 2012. However, since March 2012, annual average speeds have generally decreased. The general downward trend in annual average weekday morning peak speeds observed for over two years can be partly attributed to the amount of rainfall over this period and growth in levels of traffic on 'A' roads.

Looking at individual months, the average speed in April 2014 was 24.6 mph (1.5% slower than in April 2013). In May 2014 it was 24.2 mph (4.0% slower than May 2013) and in June 2014 it was 24.8 mph (3.6% slower than June 2013).

Average speeds in the last three months are likely to have been affected by increases in traffic on 'A' roads and increased rainfall levels observed between April and June 2014 compared to the same months in 2013. Traffic levels on Great Britain's 'A' roads increased by 1.4% and rainfall levels in England increased by just over 40% over this period. Increased rainfall is likely to affect driving behavior, resulting in slower speeds across this period.



### Introduction

Local 'A' roads account for around 9% of all roads in England, but carry around a third of all traffic.

Congestion on local 'A' roads is measured by estimating average speeds achieved by vehicles during the weekday morning peak, 7am to 10am. Any weekdays falling during school holiday periods and the month of August are excluded.

The data are based on journey times estimated using in-vehicle Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and flows estimated using the Department's traffic count information.

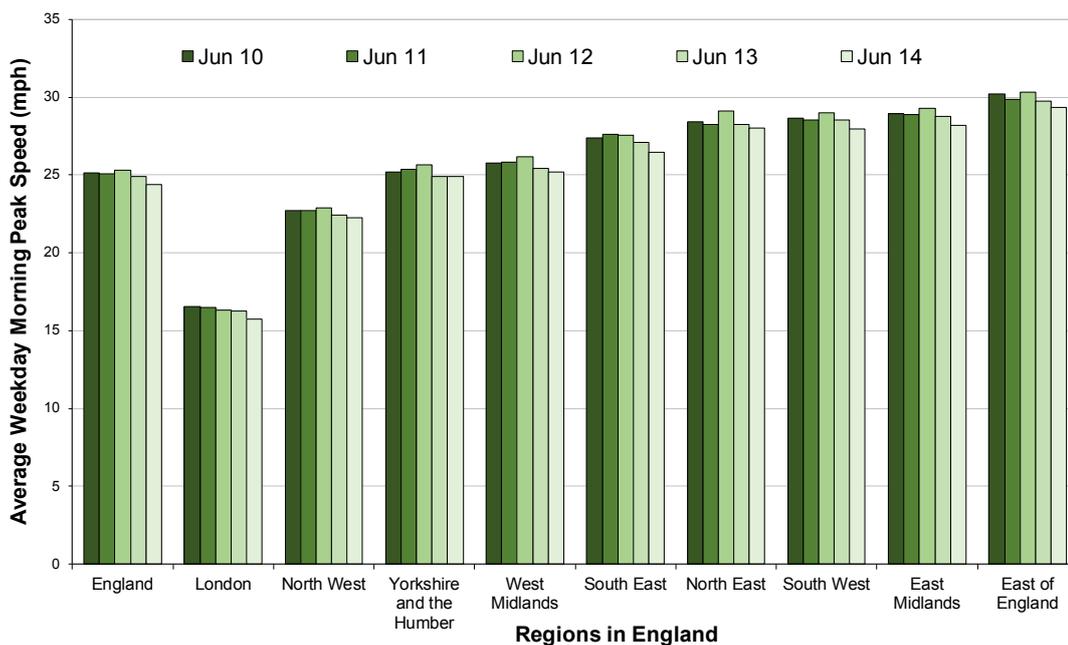
### Why measure speeds during morning peak?

Speeds are measured during the weekday morning peak as this is when demand on local 'A' roads is typically at its highest. This high demand often leads to physical congestion and low speeds.

### Regional trends for local congestion

At a regional level, all nine regions in England experienced slower average weekday morning peak speeds during the year ending June 2014 compared to the year ending June 2013. Between these years, London experienced the greatest fall in speeds (3.3%) across all nine regions, followed by the South East and South West (with a falls of 2.3% and 2.1% respectively). The East of England continues to have the highest average weekday morning peak speed and London continues to have the lowest (at 29.3 mph and 15.7 mph respectively in the year ending June 2014). The differences in regional average weekday morning peak speeds partly reflect physical differences in the types of roads in these areas. For example, in the East of England around 80% of locally managed 'A' roads are classified as rural compared to only 4% in London.

### Average vehicle speeds during the weekday morning peak<sup>1</sup> on local 'A' roads: by region, years ending June from 2010 (Table [CGN0206](#))



1. Morning peak defined as 7am to 10am. School holiday periods and the month of August are excluded.
2. Average speeds have been flow -weighted using DfT traffic estimates

p = provisional

### Further Information

For further information, a useful [introduction to the Department's congestion and reliability statistics](#), including the different measures, how they are published and the ways in which they are used is available.

### Detailed statistical tables

Detailed statistical tables can be accessed online via our [road congestion statistical series](#).

Regional and Local Highway Authority figures on average weekday morning peak speeds on locally managed 'A' roads, Table [CGN0206](#)

Individual roads, by direction, figures on average weekday morning peak speeds on locally managed 'A' roads, Table [CGN0209](#)

Since February this year we have been publishing statistics, 'badged' as 'Experimental', for individual local 'A' roads. This included maps and charts in our quarterly releases, and publishing statistical tables [CGN0209](#) for individual local 'A' road sections. In our last quarterly release, published in May 2014, we proposed to update the maps and charts on an annual basis for each calendar year, continuing to publish [CGN0209](#) on a quarterly basis. Because of the relatively small changes observed on a quarterly basis and limited feedback received to date on these Experimental Statistics, we have decided to implement these proposals with immediate effect. The latest map for 2013, showing average speeds for individual local 'A' roads can be found in [CGN0210](#)

## Background information

### Strengths and weaknesses of the data

Being a measure of the average speed achieved during one of the busiest time periods, these statistics allow users to assess the trends in the level of congestion on locally managed 'A' roads over time. Reductions in the speeds reported suggest that general congestion levels on these roads have increased over the period while increases in speeds suggest congestion levels have fallen.

Because the measure estimates average speeds during school-term weekday morning peak period (classified as 7am to 10am), sample sizes for some months will vary significantly depending on when school holidays fall.

Trends in speeds, and therefore congestion, can be reliably assessed both nationally and at a regional or local authority level and although some data imputation is necessary, this is generally very small and has a minimal effect on the published estimates. However, users should exercise some caution as any small fluctuations in average speed estimates over time may be due to large changes in imputation levels. Different levels of imputation may be a result of the number of school days in an individual month (e.g. months with school holidays are likely to have higher levels of imputation). Detailed tables showing the amount of data imputation necessary in the calculation of each published statistic are available at: [speeds and congestion statistics guidance](#)

## 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](#)

The statistics in this release were designated as National Statistics in July 2012.

## Related information

Information on traffic volume and flow used in weighting average speeds is available at: [Road traffic statistics](#)

British Social Attitudes Survey is available at: [British Social Attitudes Survey: 2013](#)

Public attitudes towards roads congestion is available at: [Public attitudes 2009-10](#)

Users should also exercise caution when assessing the statistics over short periods of time when temporary factors such as road works or bad weather may have influenced the speeds reported. This is particularly important when interpreting the data for relatively small areas where a small change on one or two roads can have a large effect on the overall average speeds reported. In addition, users should be cautious when comparing average speeds reported for different local authorities or individual local 'A' roads as a measure of the relative levels of congestion within these areas as physical differences in the types of roads and their speed limits will also have a large bearing on driving speeds.

### Methodology and technical detail

Full guidance on the methods used to compile the flow-weighted vehicle speeds on locally managed 'A' roads can be found here: [Methodology](#)

### Request for feedback

We are always keen to receive feedback from users of transport statistics. If you have any comments about how the statistics in this release are presented or analysed, please contact us using the details listed on the first page of this release.

### Next update

Statistics for July to September 2014 will be published on 13 November 2014.

Congestion statistics to July 2013 are now final. Statistics for September 2013 onwards are currently provisional and will be finalised in November 2014, once they are weighted by traffic flow information for 2013. Changes in our estimated figures on average speeds, from provisional to final, at local authority level can be found at:

[Differences in provisional and final figures](#)