



Roads and traffic

This section presents statistics on Roads and traffic in Great Britain from Transport Statistics Great Britain for 2012.

For further information on road traffic, speeds and lengths please email roadtraff.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

For further information on road expenditure and construction, and taxation revenue, please email road.maintenance@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

Roads and traffic includes:

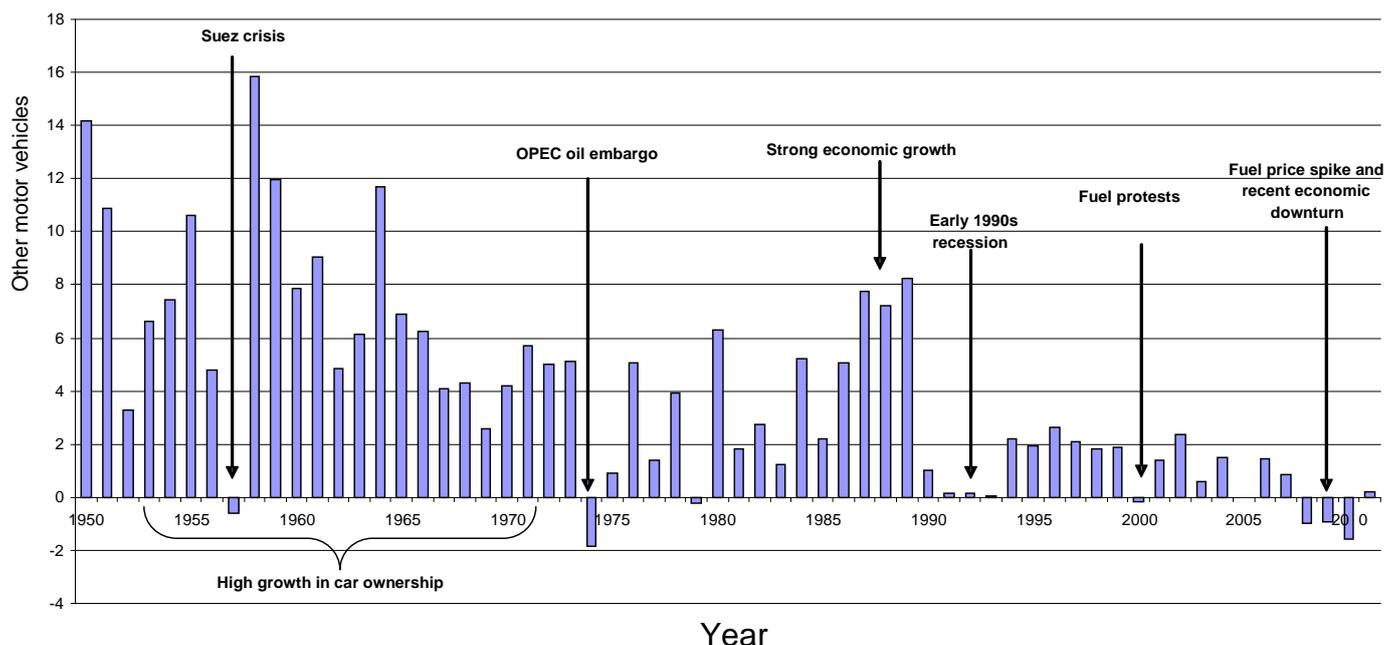
- Road traffic
- Traffic forecasts
- Road lengths
- Vehicle speeds
- Congestion
- Road taxation revenue

Road traffic

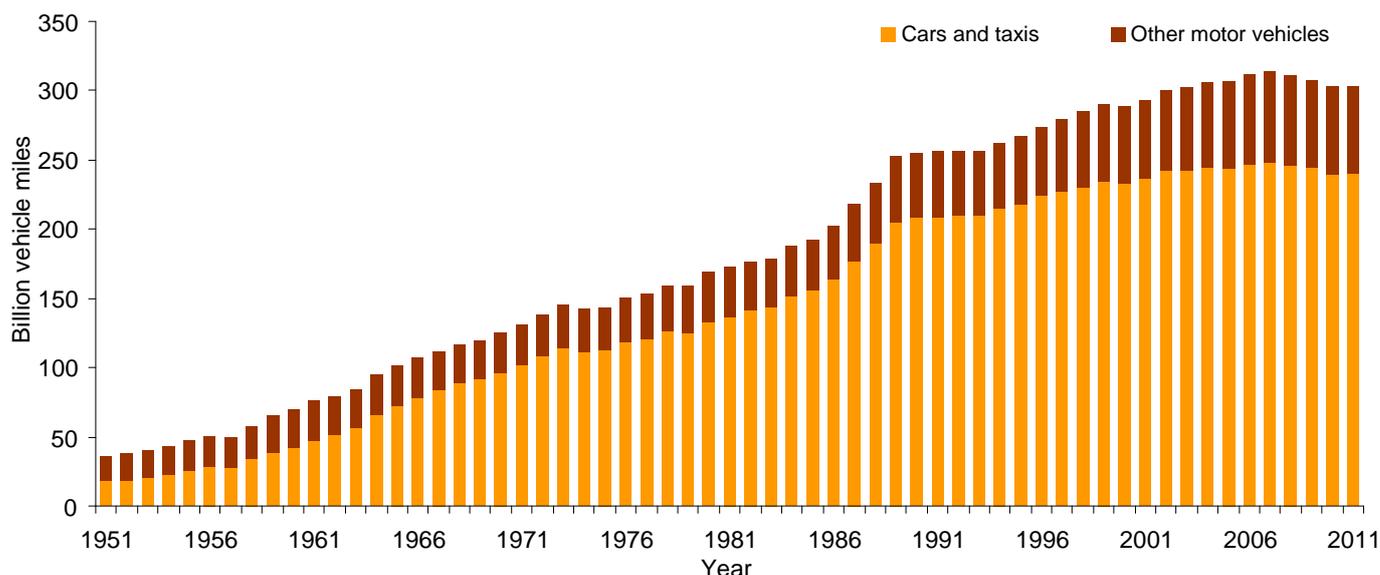
Since the 1950s the long term trend in the volume of road traffic has been one of growth. Fluctuations in road traffic volume tend to coincide with events such as changes in the economy and car ownership.

- In 2011, the overall motor vehicle traffic volume in Great Britain was 303.8 billion vehicle miles. This is similar to traffic volume in 2010 (303.2 billion vehicle miles) and follows three consecutive years of decreases.

Year-on-year growth of motor vehicle road traffic in Great Britain, 1950-2011



Road traffic by vehicle type (cars and all motor vehicles), 1951-2011



- Car traffic increased slightly (0.4 per cent) between 2010 and 2011, from 239.8 to 240.7 billion vehicle miles. This follows a decline for three consecutive years between 2008 and 2010. Longer term, car traffic increased by around 1.6 per cent between 2001 and 2011.
- Lights goods vehicle (LGV) traffic grew for the second year in 2011, increasing by 0.8 per cent to 41.4 billion vehicle miles. LGV traffic peaked in 2007, with recent increases not being large enough to cancel out the falls experienced in 2008 and 2009.
- Traffic on rural roads has increased by 6.6 per cent over the past 10 years between 2001 and 2011, whilst traffic on urban roads has decreased by 2.8 per cent.
- Traffic on motorways increased by 1.3 per cent between 2010 and 2011 and traffic on all major roads by 0.7 per cent. Over the past 10 years, the volume of traffic on motorways has grown by 9.5 per cent while traffic on all roads has increased by only 3.5 per cent.

Detailed statistics (tables and charts) on “Annual road traffic by vehicle type” can be found in the Annual Road Traffic Statistics web tables, [TRA0101](#), [TRA0104](#), [TRA0201](#), and [TRA0204](#)

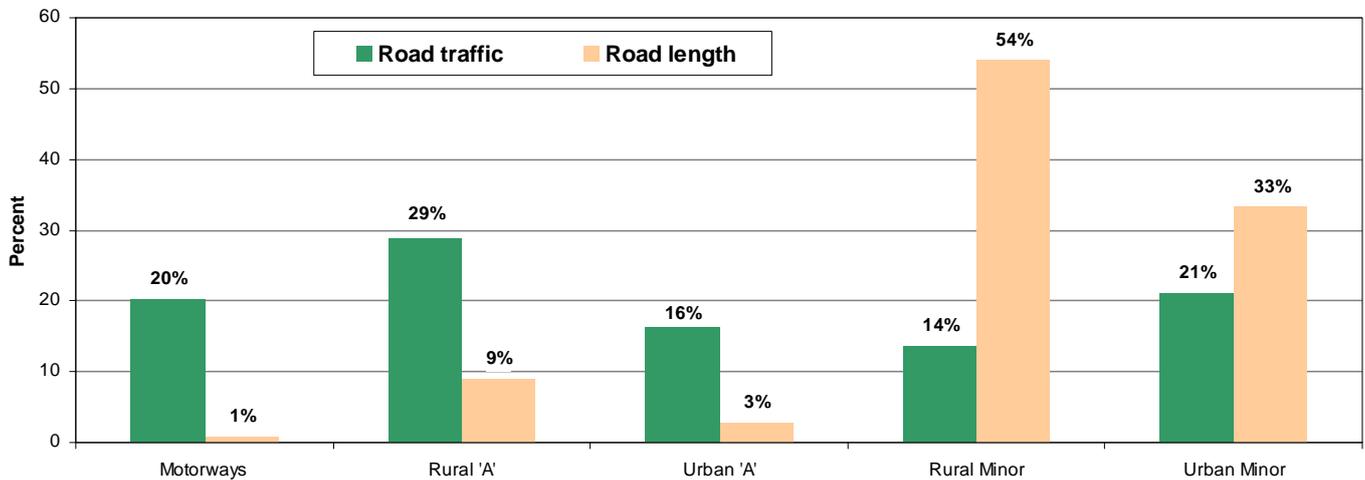
Road traffic forecasts (Table [TRA9905](#))

- Despite the traffic estimates for 2008 to 2010 showing declines in overall traffic levels, and a stabilisation in the latest year, the Department’s forecasts suggest the longer term trend of continual traffic growth will resume.
- Forecasts from the National Transport Model suggest that motor vehicle traffic in 2035 will be 36 per cent higher than in 2003. The greatest growth forecast is in LGV traffic, which is predicted to be 119 per cent higher than in 2003. The only predicted decrease is bus and coach traffic which is forecast to be 14 per cent lower in 2035 than in 2003.

Road lengths

- The total road length in Great Britain in 2011 was estimated to be 245.0 thousand miles. Estimated road length in Great Britain has increased by around 2.1 thousand miles (0.9 per cent) in the decade since 2001.

Percentage of road length and traffic by road class in Great Britain, 2011



- In 2011, motorways and 'A' roads accounted for 0.9 per cent and 11.9 per cent respectively of total road length in Great Britain. In contrast, 20.3 per cent of all motor vehicle traffic was on motorways and 45.1 per cent on 'A' roads.
- Minor road length in Great Britain was estimated to be 213.7 thousand miles in 2011, amounting to 87.3 per cent of the total, however these roads carried 34.6 per cent of all traffic.

Detailed statistics (tables and charts) on Road lengths by road type or by region can be found in the Road Lengths web tables, [RDL0101](#), [RDL0201](#), [RDL0103](#) and [RDL0203](#).

Free flow vehicle speeds (Tables [SPE0101](#) and [SPE0201](#))

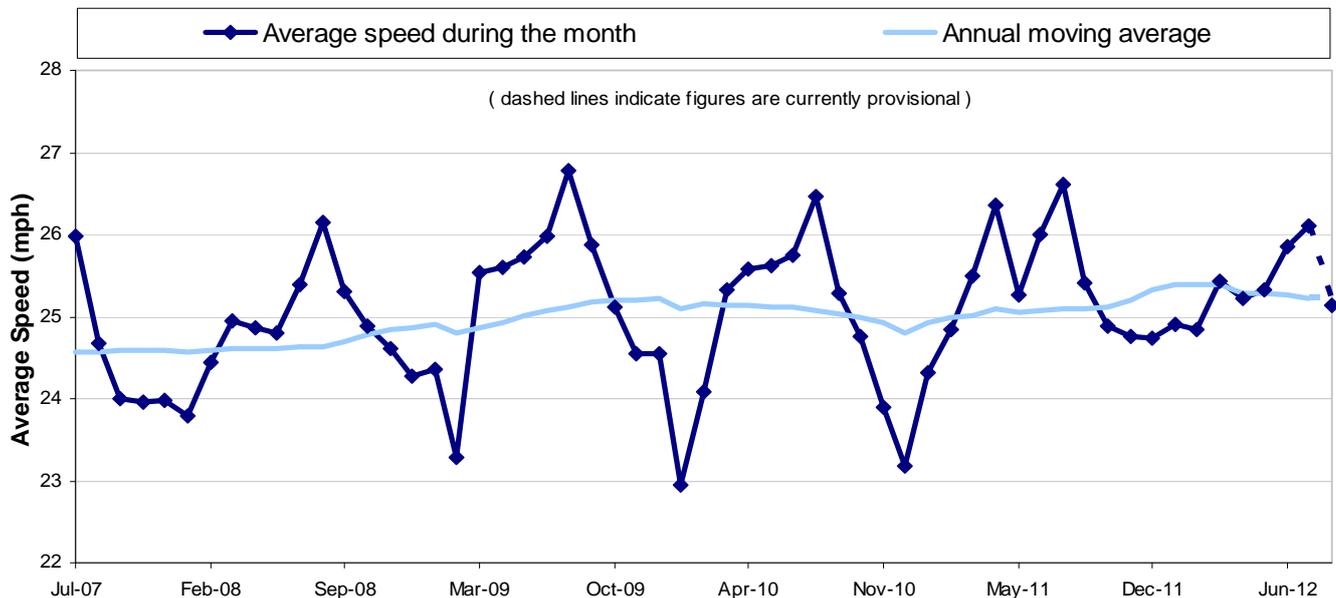
- Forty nine per cent of cars on motorways were travelling at a speed that exceeded the 70 mph limit. In addition, 13 per cent of cars were travelling 10 mph or more above the speed limit.
- Very few rigid and articulated HGVs exceeded their speed limit of 60 mph on motorways, as they are fitted with speed limiters. However, 83 per cent of them exceeded the 50 mph speed limit on dual carriageway non-built-up roads and 69 per cent exceeded the 40 mph limit on single carriageway non-built-up roads.

Road congestion

- The average speed achieved on local authority managed 'A' roads during the morning peak in 2011/12 was 25.3 mph.
- This is 0.8 per cent faster than the average speed observed during 2010/11 (25.1 mph) and

1.8 per cent faster than that observed during 2006/7 (24.6 mph).

Average vehicle speeds (flow-weighted) during the weekday morning peak¹ on locally managed 'A' roads: England, July 2007 to September 2012^P



1. Morning peak defined as 7am to 10am. Weekdays falling within school holiday periods and the month of August are excluded.
P = provisional

Detailed statistics on “Congestion on local authority managed ‘A’ roads” can be found in the Congestion Statistics web table numbers [CGN0201 to CGN0206](#) and [CGN0901 to CGN0903](#).

Road taxation revenue (Table [RDE0103](#))

- Over £5.9 billion was raised through vehicle excise duty (VED) in 2011/12. This was based on over 43 million unique vehicles being licensed during the year and includes refunds for surrendered tax discs.
- About £26.8 billion was raised through fuel tax in 2011/12.

Road expenditure and construction (Tables [RDE0101](#), [RDE0102](#), [RDE0104](#))

- In 2010/11 £8.7 billion was spent on roads in England. Of this, £1.7 billion was spent on the construction, improvement and structural maintenance of motorway and trunk roads and £4.1 billion was spent on new construction, improvement and structural maintenance of local roads.

Background notes

Full guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics and their sources can be found in the [Roads and traffic Notes and Definitions](#).