



Department for Transport

Quarterly Road Traffic Estimates, Great Britain January - March 2015

About this release

This quarterly release presents estimates for road traffic in Great Britain from January to March 2015. Quarterly estimates remain provisional until they have been constrained by the final annual estimates each year. Final annual estimates for 2015 are due to be published in summer 2016.

These estimates are based on traffic data collected continuously from a national network of around 200 Automatic Traffic Counters. Final annual figures also incorporate manual traffic count data.

Information

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

In this publication

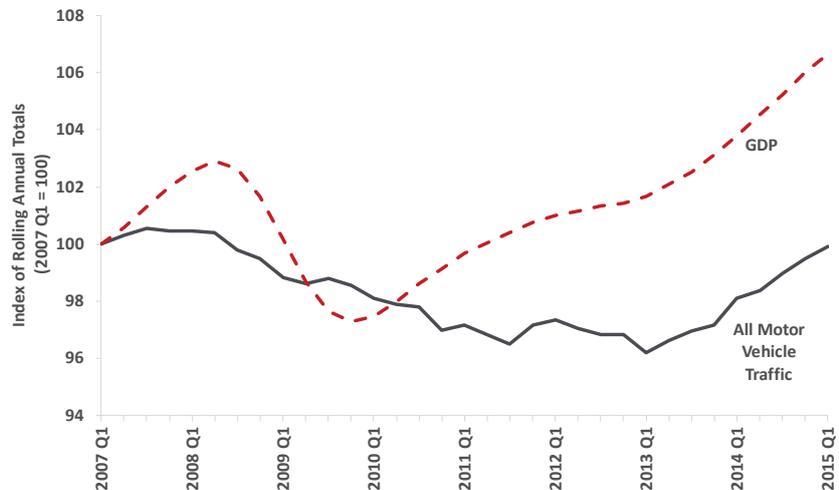
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Main findings: Traffic across all vehicle types and road classes have continued to increase for the past two years.

All motor vehicle traffic in Great Britain increased by 1.8 per cent in the year ending March 2015, compared to the same period in 2014, reaching a total of 312.4 billion vehicle miles.

Preliminary estimates indicate that GDP in the UK increased in the year ending March 2015, with the four main industrial groupings in the economy (services, construction, agriculture and production) showing increases in output over the same period. It is likely that such estimated growth is contributing to the continued upward trend in traffic volumes, as illustrated in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1: Index of rolling annual totals - All Motor Vehicle Traffic in Great Britain and preliminary estimates of UK GDP, from 2007 [TRA2501e]



Compared to the year ending March 2014, estimates indicate that:

- ▶ **Car traffic increased by 1.3 per cent in the year ending March 2015.**
- ▶ **Light Goods Vehicle (LGV) traffic continued to rise at a higher rate than any other vehicle type, increasing by 5.1 per cent to a new peak of 45.5 billion vehicle miles.**
- ▶ **All road classes experienced higher volumes of traffic, with traffic along rural minor roads increasing the most, 4.9 per cent.**
- ▶ **Motorway traffic increased by 1.2 percent, reaching 64.5 billion vehicle miles, at end of March 2015.**

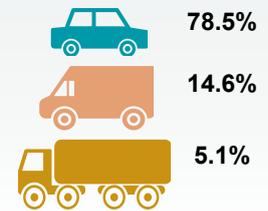
Summary Figures

The summary table below shows the patterns in vehicle traffic compared to the year ending December 2014, and to figures across a range of earlier years. More information on our quarterly estimates, along with our [TRA25](#) series of quarterly tables, can be found online [here](#).

	Vehicle Miles (Provisional) Year ending Mar 2015	Percentage change over time from...				
		Last Quarter Year ending Dec 2015	Last Year Year ending Mar 2014	Five Years Ago Year ending Mar 2010	Ten Years Ago Year ending Mar 2005	Twenty Years Ago Year ending Mar 1995
All Motor Vehicle Traffic	312.4 billion	↑ 0.4%	↑ 1.8%	↑ 1.9%	↑ 2.1%	↑ 18.7%
Cars and Taxis	245.3 billion	↑ 0.3%	↑ 1.3%	↑ 0.8%	↑ 0.5%	↑ 14.0%
Light Goods Vehicles (LGV)	45.5 billion	↑ 1.2%	↑ 5.1%	↑ 11.7%	↑ 21.5%	↑ 68.1%
Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV)	16.0 billion	↑ 0.1%	↑ 1.0%	↓ 1.6%	↓ 11.5%	↑ 3.3%
Motorways	64.5 billion	↑ 0.3%	↑ 1.2%	↑ 4.9%	↑ 7.2%	↑ 45.2%
Rural 'A' Roads	89.3 billion	↑ 0.3%	↑ 1.2%	↑ 1.9%	↑ 2.0%	↑ 22.6%
Urban 'A' Roads	49.4 billion	↑ 0.2%	↑ 0.8%	↓ 1.1%	↓ 3.3%	↑ 0.9%
Rural Minor Roads	44.1 billion	↑ 1.3%	↑ 4.9%	↑ 4.2%	↑ 9.5%	↑ 22.9%
Urban Minor Roads	65.0 billion	↑ 0.4%	↑ 2.2%	↓ 0.3%	↓ 2.8%	↑ 6.7%

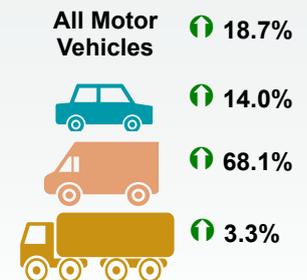
Proportion

Car traffic continues to account for the highest proportion of vehicle miles travelled in Great Britain;



Longer term trends

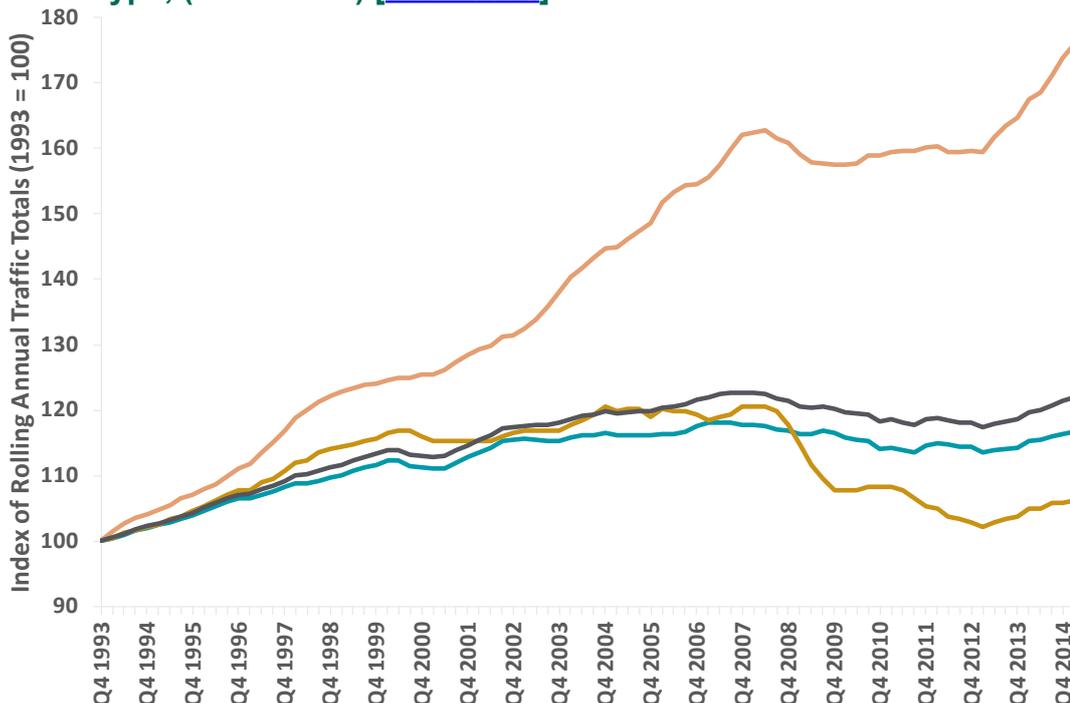
Traffic volumes have increased at varying rates across vehicle types since 1995:



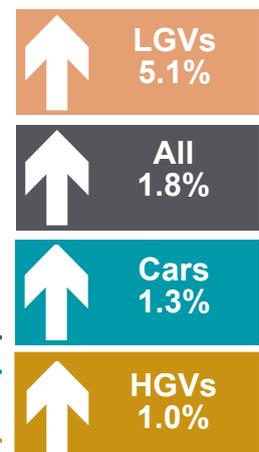
Vehicle Type

Latest figures: Traffic across all vehicle types has increased.

Chart 2: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain by vehicle type, (1993 = 100) [TRA2501e]



% Change from year ending March 2014...



- Car and taxi traffic increased by 1.3 per cent, to 245.3 billion vehicle miles, in the year ending March 2015 compared to 2014.
- Car (1.3 per cent), LGV (5.1 per cent) and HGV (1.0 per cent) traffic have increased at varying rates from the year ending March 2014.
- Estimates indicate that LGV traffic totalled 45.5 billion vehicle miles in the year ending March 2015, 5.1 per cent higher than the same period in 2014. This contributes to a 68.1 per cent increase since 1995.
- HGV traffic increased 1.0 per cent over the same period, totalling 16.0 billion vehicle miles.

Longer term trends

Over the last 20 years (since 1995), estimates suggest that traffic volumes have increased across motorways and both 'A' roads and minor roads;

Motorways ↑ 45.2%



Rural 'A' ↑ 22.6%

Minor rural ↑ 22.9%



Urban 'A' ↑ 0.9%

Minor urban ↑ 6.7%

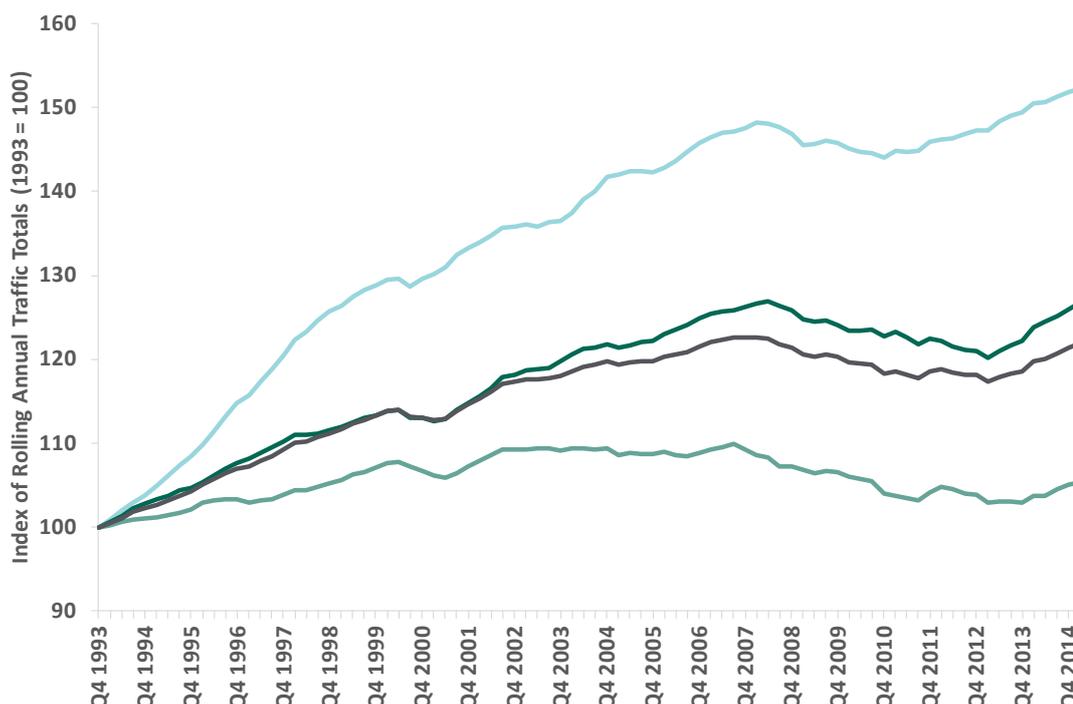


Road Type

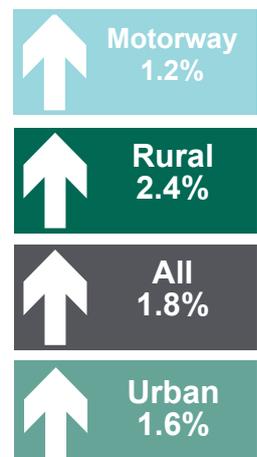
Latest figures: Traffic continues to increase across all road classes.

- Traffic on motorways in Great Britain increased from 63.8 billion vehicle miles, in the year ending March 2014, to 64.5 billion vehicle miles across the same period in 2015, representing growth of 1.2 per cent.
- Motorway traffic has increased by more than 45 per cent since 1995.
- In the year ending March 2015, estimates for 'A' road traffic show an increase when compared to the same period in 2014. Traffic on rural 'A' roads was 89.3 billion vehicle miles, up 1.2 per cent, with traffic on urban 'A' roads rising to 49.4 billion vehicle miles, up 0.8 per cent.
- Traffic volumes also rose by 4.9 per cent on minor rural roads, increasing to 44.1 billion vehicle miles, and by 2.2 per cent on minor urban roads, increasing to 65.0 billion vehicle miles, when comparing the same twelve month period in 2014 and 2015.

Chart 3: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain by road type, (1993 = 100) [TRA2502e]



% Change from year ending March 2014...



Background Information

Users and uses of these statistics

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](#). These include:

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

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 count data. The classification algorithms are continually developed to ensure that vehicle classification is as accurate as possible.

Further statistical guidance can be found online here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-statistics-guidance

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 and annual traffic estimates for all motor vehicles have historically been accurate (typically within 1.5 per cent) when compared with the final estimates, as illustrated in the table below.

Next release

The next Quarterly Road Traffic estimates, for year ending June 2015, are due to be published in August 2015. Final annual traffic estimates for 2015 are due to be published in summer 2016.

Feedback

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: www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-series

Billion vehicle miles/percentage

All motor vehicle traffic	2012					2013					2014				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.
Provisional estimates at time of publication	76.5	74.6	75.0	76.7	302.6	75.4	76.9	77.1	77.6	306.4	77.4	77.2	77.9	77.8	310.2
Final estimates	76.5	74.6	75.3	76.2	302.6	75.0	76.0	76.2	76.5	303.7	77.3	77.3	78.1	78.2	311.0
<i>Difference (%)</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>-0.1</i>	<i>-0.4</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>0.1</i>	<i>-0.2</i>	<i>-0.3</i>	<i>-0.6</i>	<i>-0.3</i>