



Department  
for Transport

# Provisional Road Traffic Estimates

## Great Britain: July 2015 - June 2016

### Provisional estimates show that motor vehicle traffic was at a record high in the year ending June 2016.

The provisional figure, of 319.3 billion<sup>1</sup> vehicle miles travelled on Great Britain's roads in the year ending June 2016, was 1.5% higher than the previous year, and 1.6% higher than the pre-recession peak in the year ending September 2007, making it a record level. Rolling annual motor vehicle traffic has now increased each quarter in succession for three years.

#### In this publication

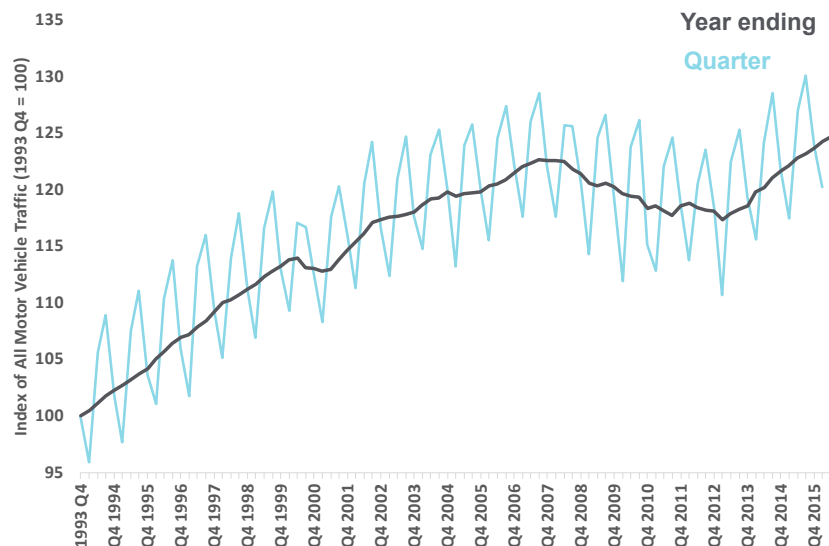
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#### About provisional traffic estimates

This release presents provisional estimates for road traffic in Great Britain for July 2015 to June 2016. Provisional estimates are published quarterly and remain provisional until after they have been constrained by the final annual estimates each year. Final annual estimates for 2016 are due to be published in summer 2017. These provisional estimates are based on traffic data collected continuously from a network of around 200 automatic traffic counters. Final annual figures also incorporate manual traffic count data.

Traffic shows a seasonal pattern at the national level, being highest in summer and lowest in winter. This publication focuses on rolling annual traffic totals, which better illustrate medium and long term trends in traffic.

**Chart 1: Rolling Annual and Quarterly Indices of Road Traffic in Great Britain, from 1993**



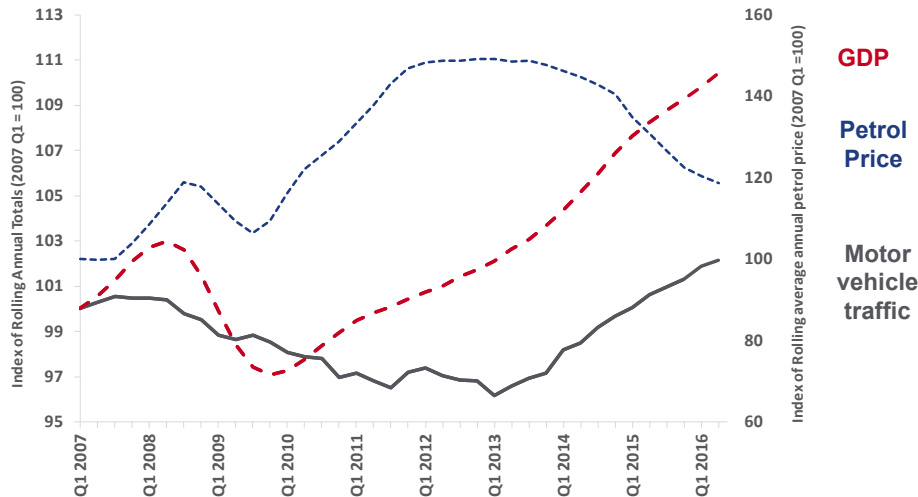
Compared to the previous year, in the year ending June 2016:

- ▶ **Car traffic increased** by 1.1% to a record 249.2 billion vehicle miles, 1 billion more vehicle miles travelled than the pre-recession peak in the year ending September 2007.
- ▶ **Van traffic (LGV) continued to rise**, increasing by 3.7% to a new peak of 47.8 billion vehicle miles.
- ▶ **HGV traffic grew** by 3.8% overall, rising on motorways and rural 'A' roads, but falling on urban 'A' roads.
- ▶ **All road types experienced a rise** in traffic, apart from urban minor roads where traffic remained at the same level.
- ▶ **Traffic on motorways and rural 'A' roads increased** to new record levels, rising by 2.6% and 2.9% respectively.

## In Context

The increase in traffic in the year ending June 2016, when compared to the previous year, is likely to reflect the growth in the UK economy over the same period, with GDP rising 2.0%<sup>2</sup>. Lower fuel prices may also have contributed to increased traffic. The typical retail price of premium unleaded in the year ending June 2016 was 11.1 pence per litre cheaper than in the previous year<sup>3</sup>, and diesel was 15.9 pence per litre cheaper.

**Chart 2: Index of rolling annual motor vehicle traffic in Great Britain, UK GDP and unleaded petrol prices, from 2007 [TRA2501f]**



## Summary Figures

The summary table below shows how vehicle traffic in the year ending June 2016 compares to that in the year ending March 2015, and across a range of earlier years. More information on our provisional estimates, along with our [TRA25](#) series of provisional traffic estimate tables, can be found online [here](#).

	Vehicle Miles (Provisional)  Year ending Jun 2016	Percentage change from...				
		Last Quarter	Last Year	Five Years Ago	Ten Years Ago	Twenty Years Ago
		Year ending Mar 2016	Year ending Jun 2015	Year ending Jun 2011	Year ending Jun 2006	Year ending Jun 1996
<b>All Motor Vehicle Traffic</b>	<b>319.3 billion</b>	0.3%	↑ 1.5%	↑ 5.5%	↑ 3.4%	↑ 17.9%
<b>Cars and Taxis</b>	<b>249.2 billion</b>	0.1%	↑ 1.1%	↑ 4.2%	↑ 1.9%	↑ 12.6%
<b>Light Goods Vehicles (LGV)</b>	<b>47.8 billion</b>	↑ 1.0%	↑ 3.7%	↑ 15.7%	↑ 20.6%	↑ 70.1%
<b>Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV)</b>	<b>17.0 billion</b>	↑ 1.0%	↑ 3.8%	↑ 4.5%	↓ -6.1%	↑ 5.9%
<b>Motorways</b>	<b>67.4 billion</b>	↑ 0.5%	↑ 2.6%	↑ 9.9%	↑ 10.7%	↑ 42.8%
<b>Rural 'A' Roads</b>	<b>92.5 billion</b>	↑ 0.5%	↑ 2.9%	↑ 6.1%	↑ 4.4%	↑ 22.6%
<b>Urban 'A' Roads</b>	<b>50.0 billion</b>	0.4%	↑ 0.6%	↑ 1.3%	↓ -1.6%	-0.2%
<b>Rural Minor Roads</b>	<b>44.4 billion</b>	-0.1%	0.4%	↑ 6.3%	↑ 7.4%	↑ 22.6%
<b>Urban Minor Roads</b>	<b>64.9 billion</b>	-0.2%	0.0%	↑ 3.2%	↓ -3.1%	↑ 4.9%

### Footnotes

1. One billion = 1,000 million
2. Economic data is sourced from the Office for National Statistics, available [here](#).
3. Fuel price data is sourced from the Department for Energy and Climate Change, available [here](#).

# Vehicle Type

## Car, Van and Lorry traffic have all increased over the last year.

Compared to the previous year, in the year ending June 2016:



**Car and taxi traffic** reached a new high of 249.2 billion vehicle miles, slightly (0.4%) above the previous peak of 248.2 billion vehicle miles for the year ending September 2007. Car traffic has grown steadily for the last 18 months by an average of 1.3% per year.



**LGV traffic** increased by 3.7% to a record high of 47.8 billion vehicle miles. Since 2013, LGV traffic has increased on average by 4.8% per year, and is the fastest growing traffic type.



**HGV traffic** increased by 3.8% to 17.0 billion vehicle miles. Since 2013, HGV traffic has grown on average by 3% per year making it the second fastest growing traffic type. However, HGV traffic remains below the peak of 18.2 billion vehicle miles observed in the year ending June 2008.

### Long term trends

Over the last 20 years, traffic has increased at varying rates across vehicle types:

All Motor Vehicles 17.9%



12.6%

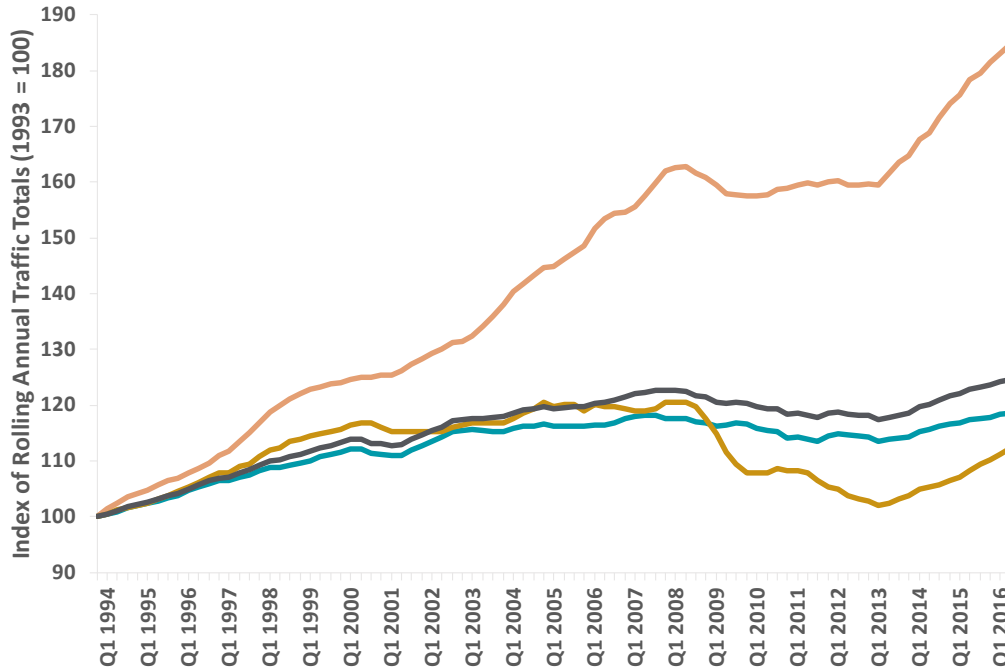


70.1%

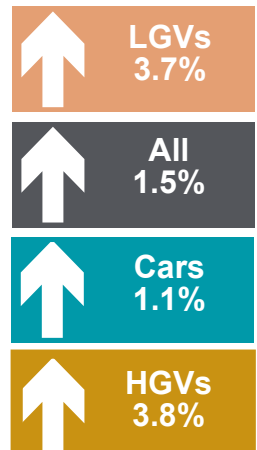


5.9%

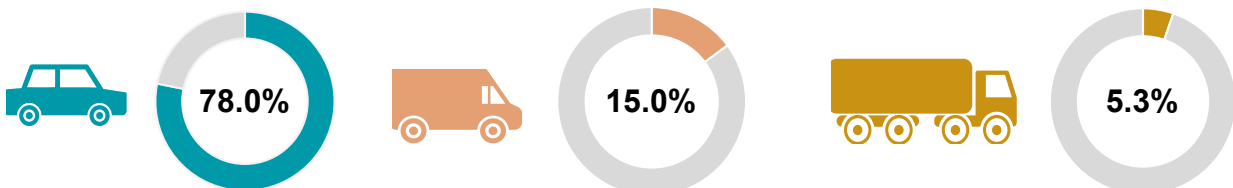
**Chart 3: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain, by vehicle type from 1993 [TRA2501f]**



**% Change from year ending June 2015...**



### Share of traffic by vehicle type, in the year ending June 2016



# Road Type

Traffic on motorways and rural roads were at the highest levels ever recorded. Traffic has grown on all road types since 2013.

Compared to the previous year, in the year ending June 2016:

- **Motorway traffic** increased by 2.6% to 67.4 billion vehicle miles. Since 2010, Motorway traffic has increased on average by 2.4 % per year.
- **'A' road traffic** showed an increase of 2.0%. This was driven mainly by traffic on **rural 'A' roads**, which grew by 2.9% to 92.5 billion vehicle miles. Traffic on **urban 'A' roads** increased by 0.6% to 50.0 billion vehicle miles.
- Traffic increased slightly on **minor rural roads**, to 44.4 billion vehicle miles. On **minor urban roads**, traffic stayed broadly stable at 64.9 billion vehicle miles.

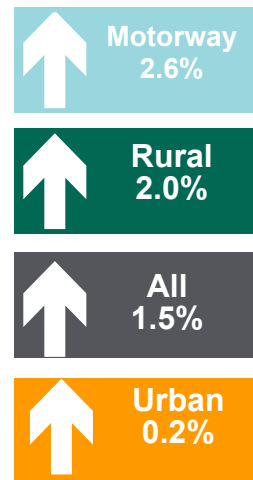
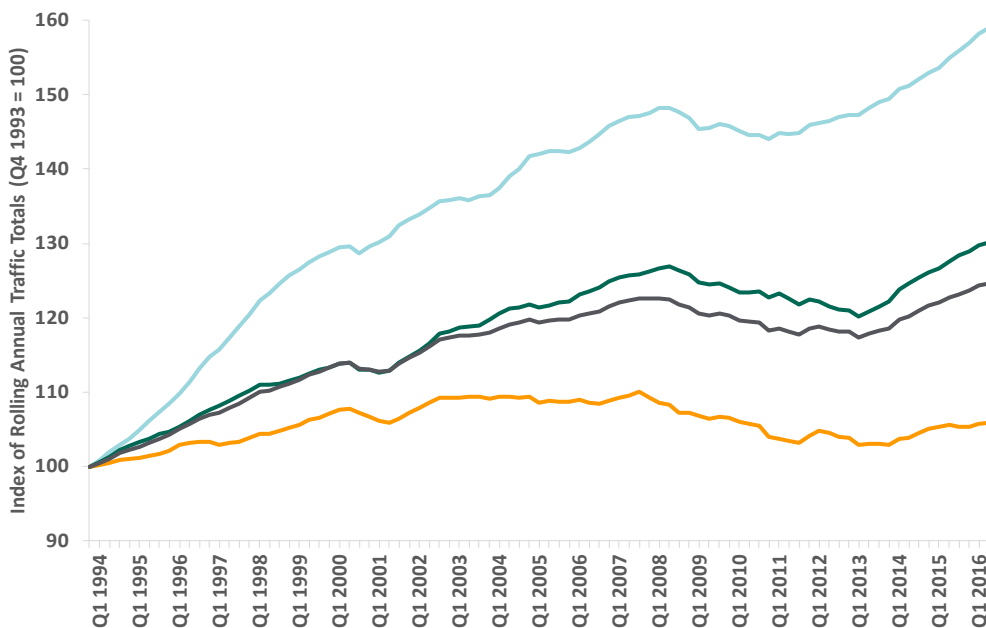
## Long term trends over the last 20 years

Levels have changed at varying rates across road types.

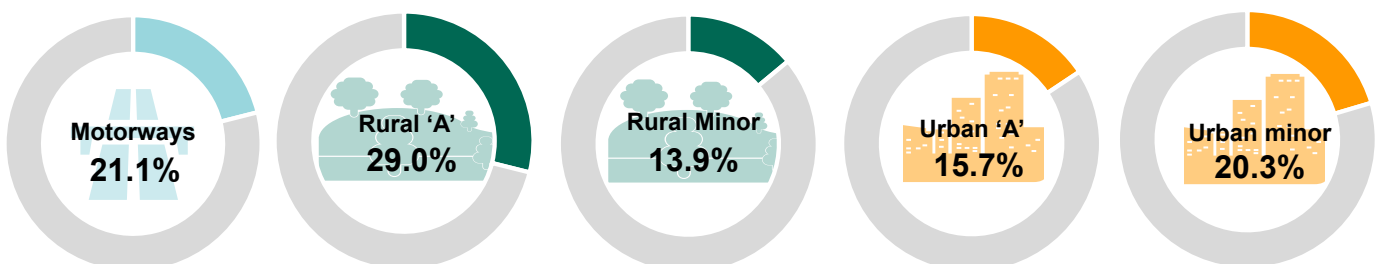


Chart 4: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain by road type from 1993 [TRA2502f]

% Change from year ending June 2015...



## Share of traffic by road type, in the year ending June 2016



## Vehicle Type and Road Type

Provisional estimates indicate that car traffic was higher than ever before on motorways and minor rural roads in the year ending June 2016.

Compared to the previous year, in the year ending June 2016:



**Car traffic** increased on all road types except for urban minor roads.

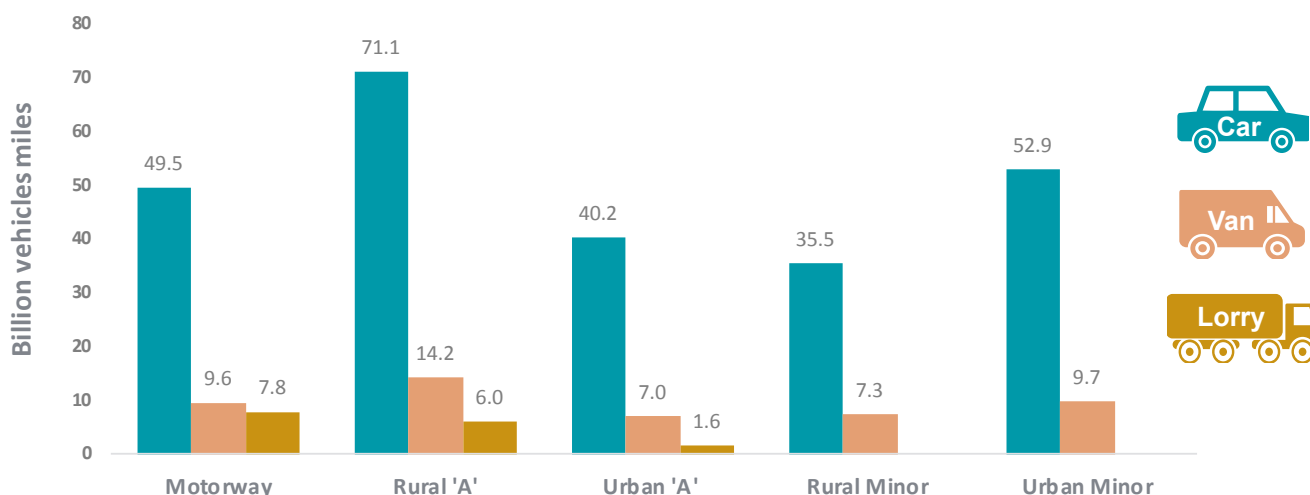


**LGV traffic** grew on all road types apart from urban 'A' roads.



**HGV traffic** increased by 5.4% on motorways to a new peak of 7.8 billion vehicle miles. HGV traffic also increased on rural 'A' roads, but reduced slightly on urban 'A' roads.

**Figure 5: Provisional annual vehicle traffic (billion vehicle miles) by road class and selected vehicle types in Great Britain for year ending June 2016 [TRA2503e]**



**Figure 6: Percentage change on previous year of traffic by road class and selected vehicle types in Great Britain [TRA2503g]**

	Motorways	Rural 'A' road	Urban 'A' road	Rural minor roads	Urban minor roads
Cars	↑ 1.9%	↑ 2.6%	0.2%	↑ 0.5%	↓ -0.6%
LGVs	↑ 4.7%	↑ 4.9%	↑ 3.8%	-0.3%	↑ 4.1%
HGVs	↑ 5.4%	↑ 3.4%	↓ -0.8%	Data not published for this breakdown	

Provisional traffic estimates are based on a sample of roads. Therefore, estimates split by vehicle and road type may be more prone to change when constrained by the final annual estimates.

## 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, who 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.

We welcome **feedback** on any aspects of the Department's road traffic statistics including content, timing, and format. Please send any queries you have by email, to [roadtraff.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:roadtraff.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk).

### Sources, strengths and weaknesses of the data

**Provisional estimates** are based on data from around 200 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. Final 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 provisional 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-statistics-guidance)

Due to the methodology used to produce provisional traffic estimates, historic figures are subject to revision. However, these revisions are typically minor and will not affect qualitative patterns in the data.

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

Billion vehicle miles/percentage

All motor vehicle traffic	2013					2014					2015				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.
Provisional estimates at time of publication	75.4	76.9	77.1	77.6	306.4	77.4	77.2	77.9	77.8	310.2	79.0	79.3	79.5	80.0	317.8
Final estimates	75.0	76.0	76.2	76.5	303.7	77.3	77.3	78.1	78.2	311.0	78.8	79.2	79.2	79.6	316.7
<i>Difference (%)</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>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>0.1</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>0.3</i>

### Next release

The next Provisional Road Traffic Estimates, for the year ending September 2016, are due to be published in November 2016. Final annual traffic estimates for 2016 are due to be published in May 2017.

### National Statistics

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards, as 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-series)