

Roads and traffic



This section presents statistics on Roads and traffic in Great Britain from Transport Statistics Great Britain for 2011.

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.

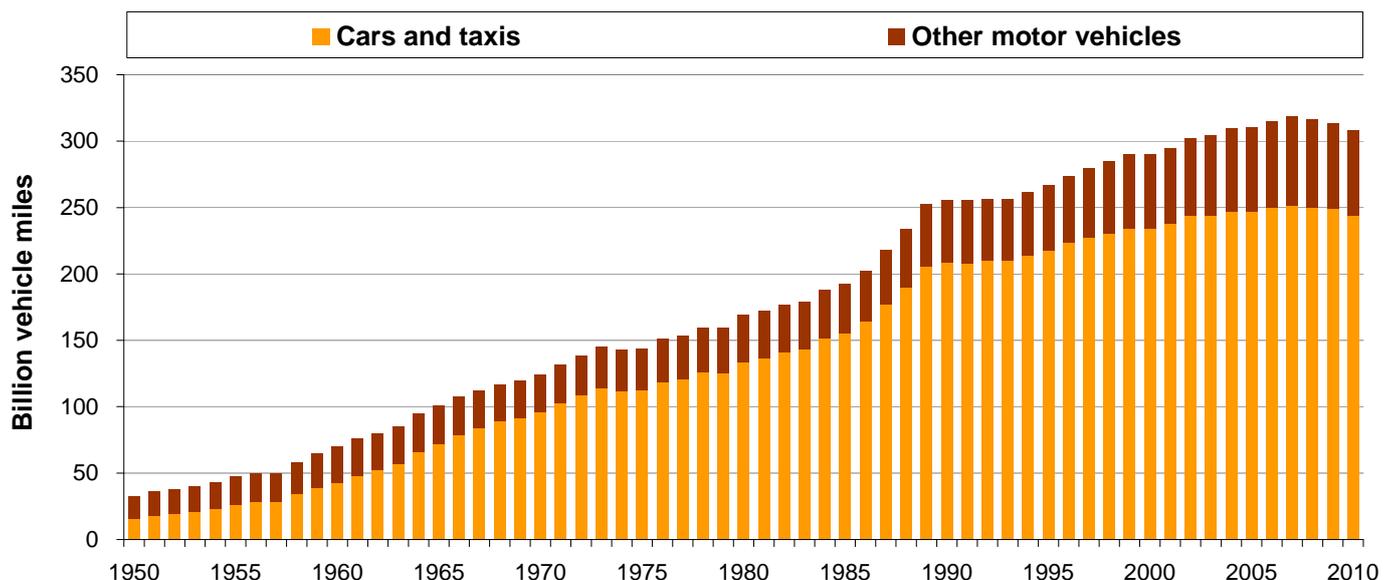
Roads and traffic includes:

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

Road traffic

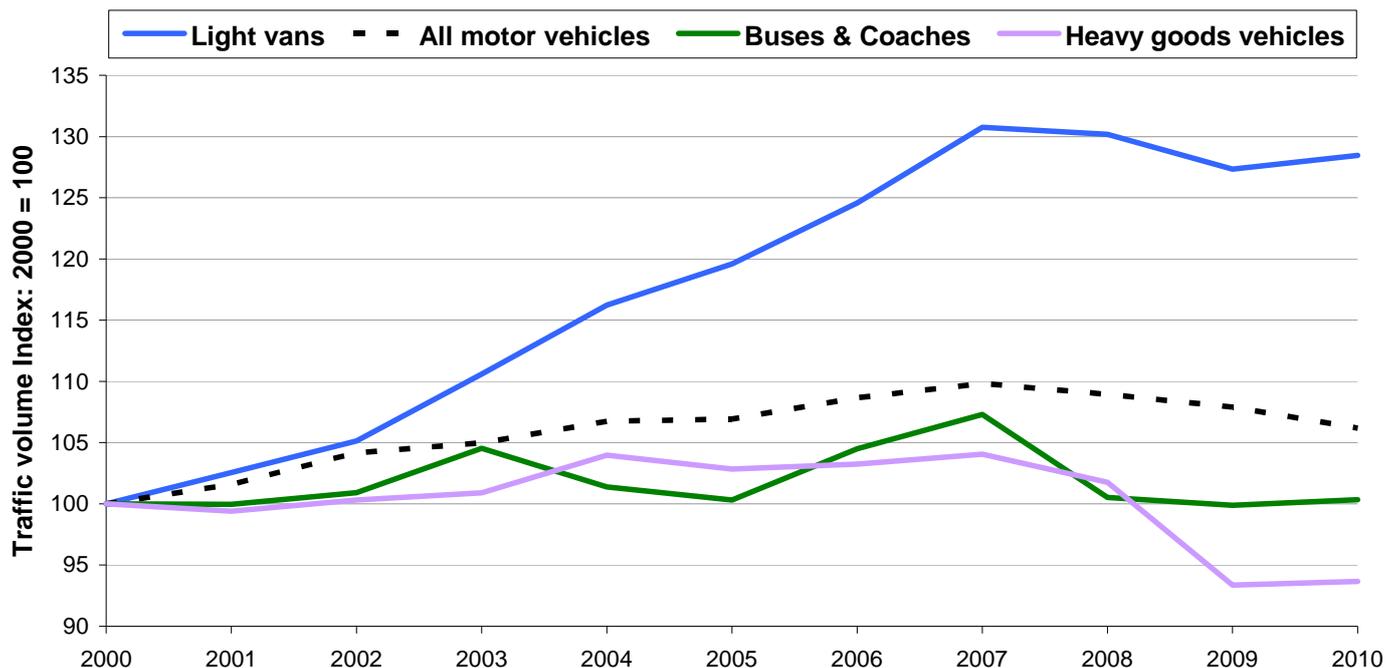
- In 2010, the overall motor vehicle traffic volume in Great Britain was 1.6 per cent lower than in 2009, at 308.1 billion vehicle miles.
- This follows a 1.0 per cent year on year fall between 2008 and 2009, and a 0.8 per cent fall between 2007 and 2008. Motor vehicle traffic has fallen for three consecutive years for the first time since records began in 1949. However, traffic levels in 2010 were 6.2 per cent higher than in 2000.

Chart 1: Road traffic by vehicle type (cars and all motor vehicles): 1950-2010



- Car traffic fell by 2.1 per cent from 2009 to 243.8 billion vehicle miles in 2010. The decline in car traffic accounts for the majority of the fall in overall traffic in 2010.

Chart 2: Road traffic by vehicle type (commercial and public service vehicles) in Great Britain: 2000-2010



- In 2010, light van traffic was 41.8 billion vehicle miles, a 0.9 per cent increase from 2009. Light van traffic increased by 28.6 per cent between 2000 and 2010.
- Heavy goods vehicle (HGV) traffic had a small increase between 2009 and 2010 of 0.3 per cent, to 16.4 billion vehicle miles.
- In 2010 19.8 per cent of traffic was on motorways, 28.2 per cent on rural ‘A’ roads, 16.1 per cent on urban ‘A’ roads, 14.1 per cent on rural minor roads and 21.8 per cent on urban minor roads, these proportions are similar to 2009.
- Overall, major roads showed a 1.3 per cent decrease in traffic, and minor roads saw a 2.2 per cent decrease in traffic between 2009 and 2010.
- Traffic on motorways decreased by 1.3 per cent between 2009 and 2010; traffic on urban ‘A’ roads decreased by 1.0 per cent and traffic on rural ‘A’ roads decreased by 1.5 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](#)

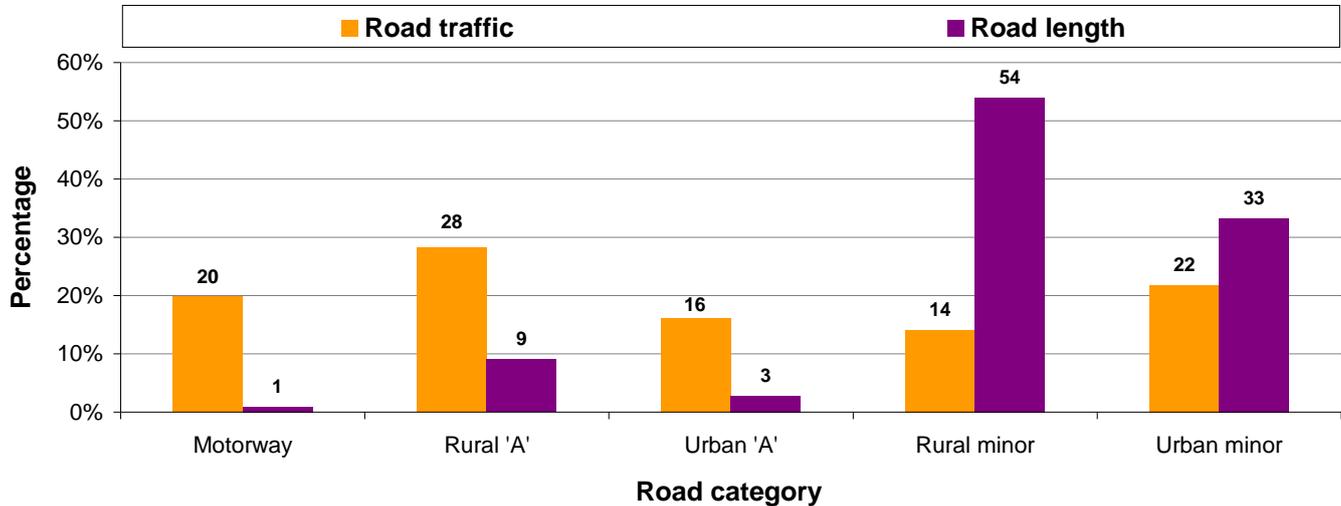
Road traffic forecasts ([Table TRA9905](#))

- Despite the traffic estimates for 2008 to 2010 showing declines in overall traffic levels, 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 43 per cent higher than in 2003. The greatest growth forecast is in light van traffic, which is predicted to be 103 per cent higher than in 2003.

Road lengths

- The total road length in Great Britain in 2010 was estimated to be 245.0 thousand miles. Estimated road length in Great Britain has increased by around 2.5 thousand miles (1.0 per cent) in the decade since 2000.

Chart 3: Percentage of road length and traffic by road class in Great Britain: 2010



- In 2010, motorways and 'A' roads accounted for 0.9 per cent and 11.8 per cent respectively of total road length in Great Britain. In contrast, 19.8 per cent of all motor vehicle traffic was on motorways and 44.3 per cent on 'A' roads.
- Minor road length in Great Britain was estimated to be 213.7 thousand miles in 2010, amounting to 87.3 per cent of the total, however these roads carried 35.9 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](#).

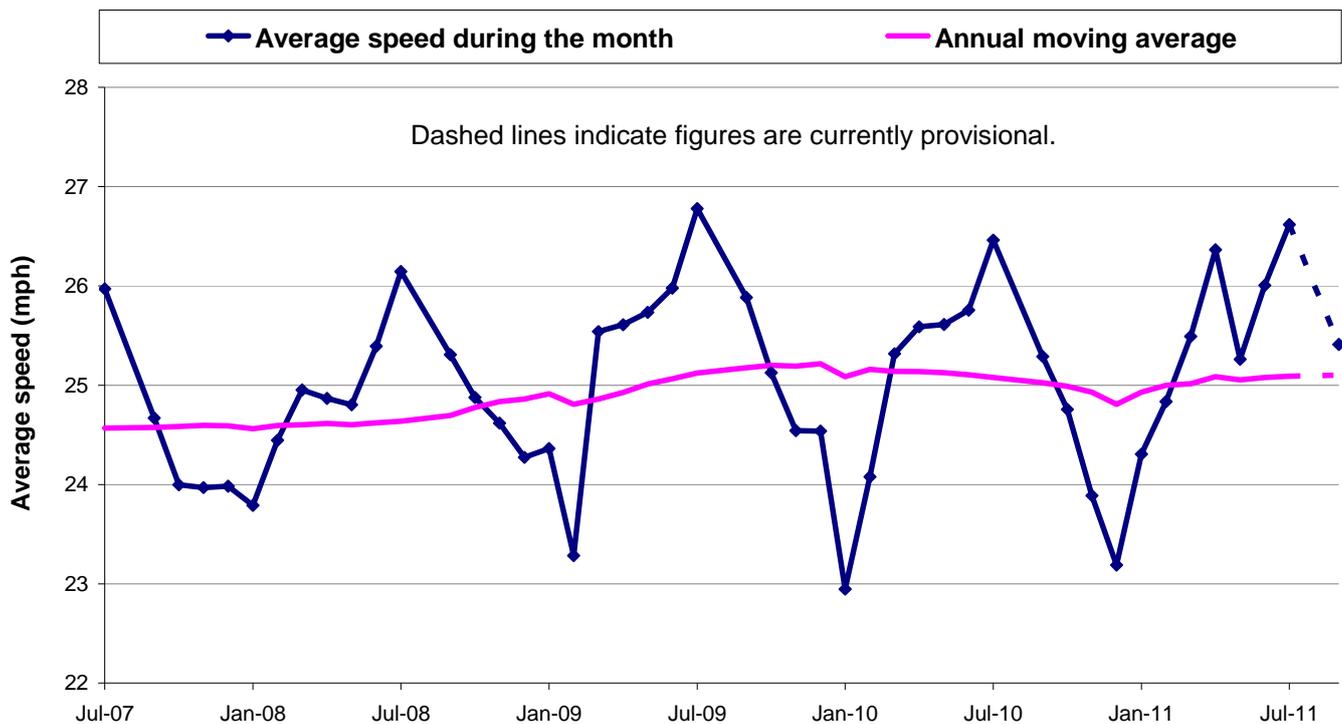
Vehicle speeds (Tables [SPE0101](#) and [SPE0201](#))

- In 2010, the average free flow speed of cars travelling on non-built-up roads was 69 mph on motorways, 68 mph on dual carriageways and 47 mph on single carriageways.
- The average free flow speed of cars in 2010 on roads with a 40 mph speed limit was 35 mph and on roads with a 30 mph limit it was 30 mph.
- Forty nine per cent of cars on motorways were travelling at a speed that exceeded the 70 mph limit. In addition, 14 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. Eighteen per cent exceeded the speed limit by 10 mph or more on single carriageway roads.

Road congestion

- The average speed achieved on local authority managed 'A' roads during the morning peak in 2010/11 was 25.1 mph.
- This is broadly similar to the average speeds observed during 2009/10 (25 mph) and 2008/9 (25.1 mph) but 1.8 per cent faster than those observed during 2006/7 (24.6 mph).

Chart 4: Average vehicle speeds (flow-weighted) during the weekday morning peak¹ on locally managed 'A' roads: England, September 2006 to September 2011^P



1. Morning peak defined as 7am to 10am. Weekdays falling within school holiday periods 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](#))

- Nearly £5.8 billion was raised through vehicle excise duty (VED) in 2010/11. This was based on nearly 43 million unique vehicles being licensed during the year and includes refunds for surrendered tax discs.
- About £27.3 billion was raised through fuel tax in 2010/11.

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](#).