

## Congestion on local authority managed 'A' roads, England: April to June 2012



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This Statistical Release presents provisional information about congestion on local authority managed 'A' roads in England between April and June 2012.

These local 'A' roads account for around nine per cent of all roads in England, but carry around a third of all traffic.

Congestion on locally managed 'A' roads is measured by estimating the average speed achieved by vehicles during the weekday morning peak, 7am to 10am. The data are based on GPS location reports from a fleet of probe vehicles and, in the case of the statistics published in this release, are weighted to take account of the relative traffic flow on each road.

Statistics for the period September 2011 to June 2012 are currently provisional and will be finalised, along with subsequent data from the 2011/12 academic year, in November 2012.

### The key findings from this statistical release include:

- Provisional data for 2012 shows that average speeds during the weekday morning peak on locally managed 'A' roads in England were slower in April (4.4 per cent), stable in May (up 0.2 per cent) and slightly slower in June (0.6 per cent) compared to the same months in 2011.
- The decreases in April and June were likely to have been influenced by the substantial amount of rainfall experienced in those months. April 2012 was the wettest April in England and June 2012 the second wettest June since records began in 1910.
- Annual average 'weekday morning peak' speeds showed an upward trend between the years ending December 2010 and February 2012. Other than a decrease in average speeds in the year ending April 2012, average speeds have been fairly static since.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

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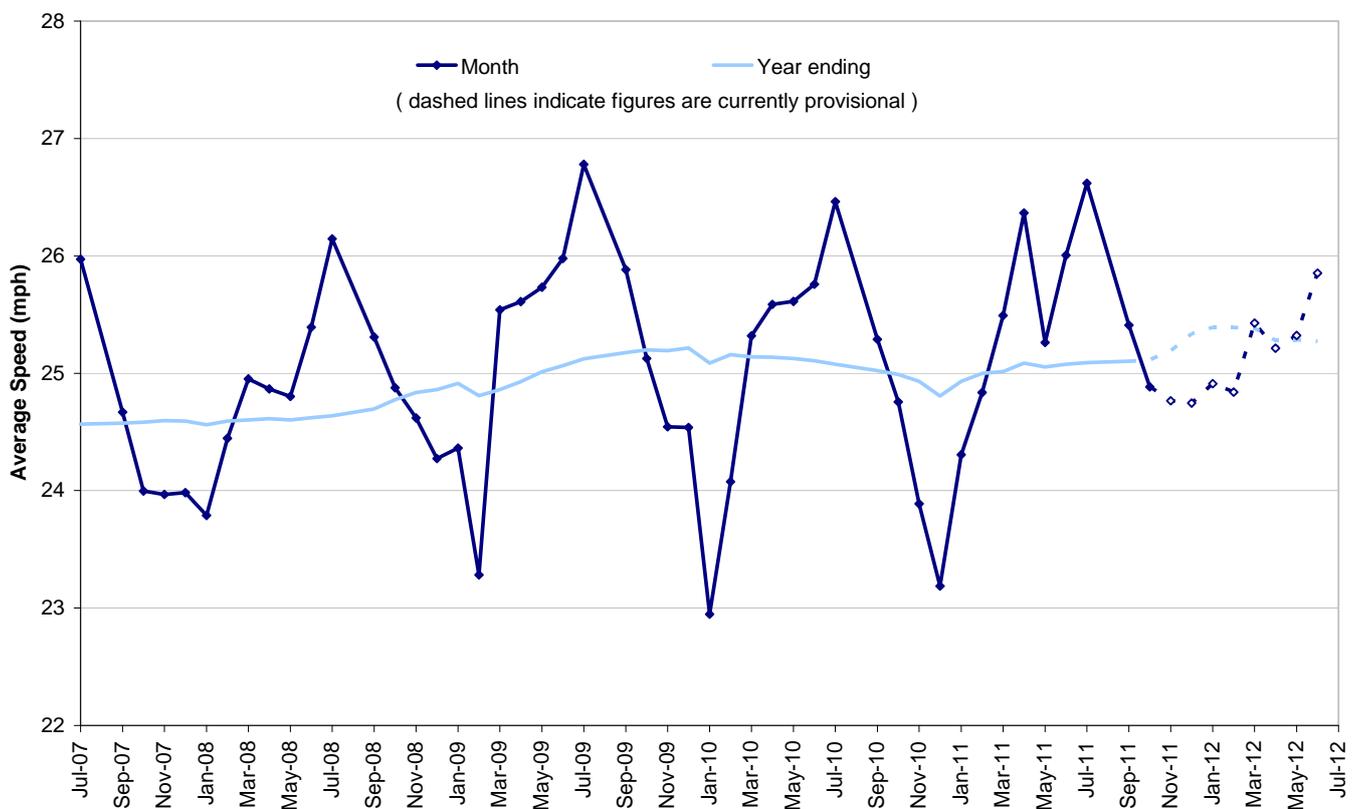
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# 1. Congestion on local authority managed 'A' roads

- The monthly data for the period April to June 2012 show that the average speed during the morning peak in April 2012 was 25.2 mph, 4.4 per cent slower than in April 2011. The average speed during the morning peak in May 2012 was 25.3 mph, which is similar to the average speed in May 2011. In June 2012 the average speed during the morning peak was 25.9 mph, slightly slower (0.6 per cent) than in June 2011.
- There was an upward trend in the annual average speeds during the weekday morning peak between the years ending December 2010 and February 2012. The only period when speeds fell during this time was in the year ending May 2011. This was likely to have been affected by people returning from leave following the late Easter and Royal Wedding in April, placing greater than usual demand on the road network in May. Other than a decrease in average speeds in the year ending April 2012, annual average speeds have been fairly static since the year ending February 2012. The substantial amount of rainfall experienced in April 2012 is likely to largely explain the decrease in average speeds in the year to April 2012.

## Average vehicle speeds (flow-weighted) during the weekday morning peak<sup>1</sup> on locally managed 'A' roads: England, July 2007 to June 2012<sup>p</sup>

(Congestion web table [CGN0205](#))



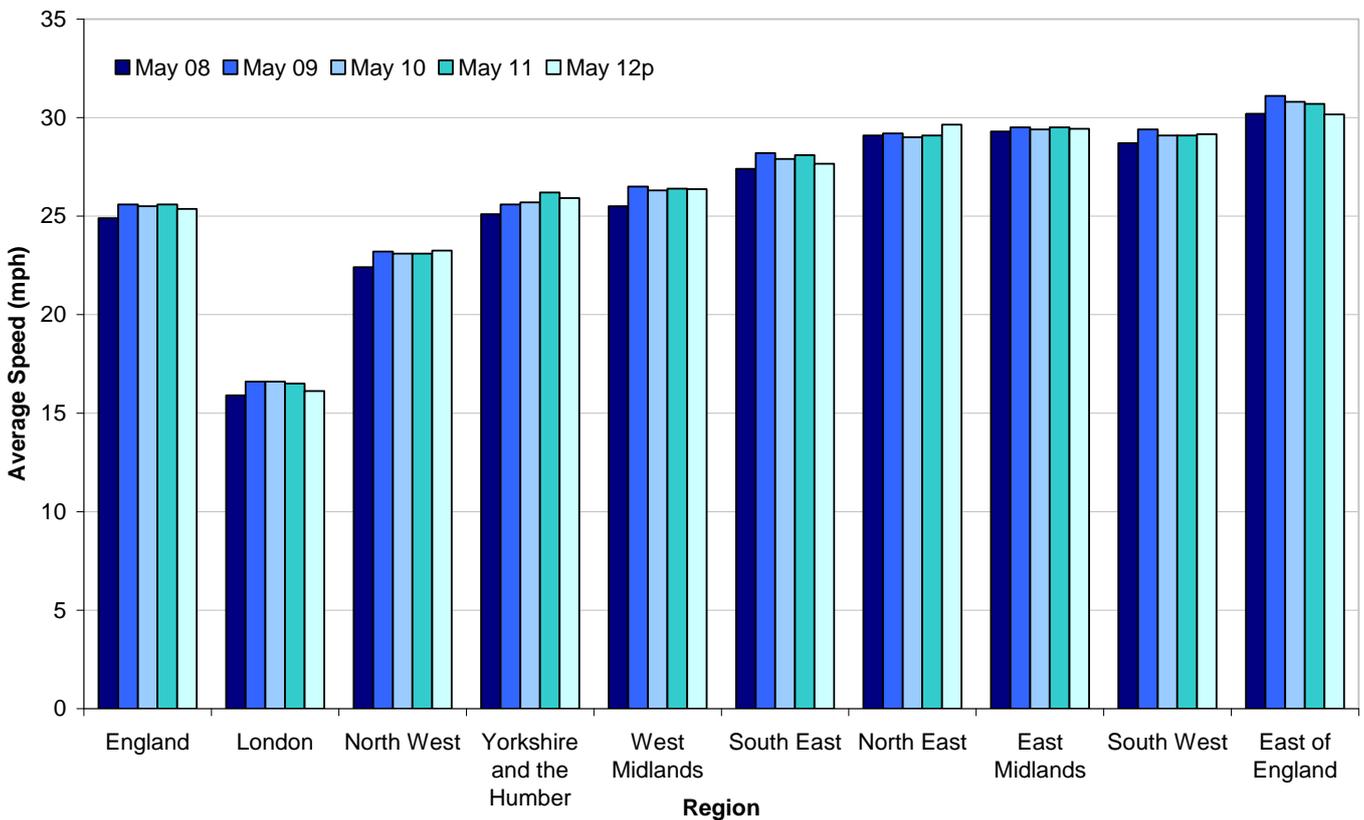
1. Morning peak defined as 7am to 10am. Weekdays falling within school holiday periods excluded (so typically no data exist for the month of August).

p = provisional

- Focussing on the three month period from March to May 2012, average weekday morning peak speeds in England fell by 0.8 per cent compared to the same three month period in 2011.
- At a regional level, six of the nine English regions had slower average weekday morning peak speeds during the three month period ending May 2012 compared to the same three month period in 2011. Comparing the same three month periods, London experienced the greatest proportional decline in speed (2.5 per cent) while the North East region experienced the largest increase (1.9 per cent). The East of England was the only region where the average weekday morning peak speed was over 30 miles per hour (30.2mph in the three month period ending May 2012).

**Average vehicle speeds (flow-weighted) during the weekday morning peak<sup>1</sup> on locally managed 'A' roads: by region, three month periods ending May 2008 to May 2012<sup>p</sup>**

(Congestion web table [CGN0903](#))



1. Morning peak defined as 7am to 10am. Weekdays falling within school holiday periods excluded (so typically no data exist for the month of August).

p = provisional

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

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## 2. 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.

The measure estimates average speeds achieved by vehicles during the weekday morning peak, 7am to 10am. Any weekdays falling during school holiday periods or on bank holidays are excluded so that the measure reflects conditions when demand for the network is highest. Therefore, sample sizes for some months will vary significantly depending on when school holidays fall. Typically, no data exists for August and data for the three month period ending in August is only based on June and July data.

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. Detailed tables showing the amount of data imputation necessary in the calculation of each published statistic are available at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/congestion-and-reliability/>

Users should, however, 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 not take a direct comparison of the average speeds reported for different local authorities or regions as a measure of the relative levels of congestion within these areas as physical differences in the types of roads in these areas and their speed limits will also have a large bearing on driving speeds.

The congestion statistics for September 2011 to June 2012 are currently provisional as they have been weighted by traffic flow information from 2010. These statistics will be updated using 2011 traffic data in November 2012 and made final at this point. The small differences between the provisional and final versions of the national-level statistics published in previous years are shown below. In addition, a detailed table showing the effect of re-weighting the statistics at a local authority level is available at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/congestion-and-reliability/>

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## Difference between final and provisional monthly speed statistics

Month	Difference
September 2010	0.00%
October 2010	-0.02%
November 2010	0.01%
December 2010	-0.01%
January 2011	-0.02%
February 2011	-0.02%
March 2011	0.04%
April 2011	0.02%
May 2011	0.08%
June 2011	0.00%

### 3. Background notes

1. The web tables give further detail of the key results presented in this statistical release and statistics on other related topics. They are available here:

[http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics?post\\_type=table&series=congestion-and-reliability](http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics?post_type=table&series=congestion-and-reliability)

2. Full guidance on the methods used to compile the new flow-weighted vehicle speeds on locally managed 'A' roads can be found here:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/congestion-and-reliability/flow-speed-calculation.pdf>

3. A useful introduction into the Department's congestion and reliability statistics, providing more detail as to what the different statistics measure, how they are published and the ways in which they are used is available here:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/congestion-and-reliability/an-introduction-into-the-department-for-transport-congestion-statistics.pdf>

4. A short paper outlining the differences between the flow-weighted and un-weighted vehicle speeds on locally managed 'A' roads can be found here:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/congestion-and-reliability/vehicle-speed-estimates.pdf>

5. There are many interlinking factors that may have a bearing on the statistics published in this release. Amongst others, these include traffic volumes, road conditions, localised traffic interventions, driver behaviour and the weather. Recent statistics published by the Department relating to some of these areas are available at:

- Traffic volume and flow:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/traffic/>

- Public attitudes towards road congestion:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/congestion-and-reliability/roadcongestion.pdf>

- British social attitudes survey: attitudes to transport:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/2010-british-social-attitudes-survey-attitudes-to-transport>

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6. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

7. In July 2012, the United Kingdom Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

The letter of confirmation as National Statistics can be found here:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/congestion-and-reliability/UKSA-letter-congestion-and-reliability.pdf>

8. Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/congestion-and-reliability/pre-release-urban.pdf>

9. The next Congestion Statistics release will be published in November 2012. It will contain final estimates of vehicle speeds on locally managed 'A' roads between September 2011 and July 2012.

## 4. 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.