



Congestion on local 'A' roads, England: October to December 2014

Main findings: Average speeds during the morning peak have continued to fall for almost 3 years

- ▶ The **average speed on local 'A' roads** in England during the **weekday morning peak** in the year ending September 2014 was **24.1 mph**. This is a **0.7% decrease** on the year ending September 2014.
- ▶ For individual months, average speeds on local 'A' roads in England were slower across October, November and December 2014, with decreases of 2.3%, 2.8% and 2.6% respectively, compared to the same months in 2013.
- ▶ A combination of increases in levels of traffic on the 'A' road network and intermittent periods of high rainfall levels are likely to have contributed to the fall in speeds observed between March 2012 and December 2014.

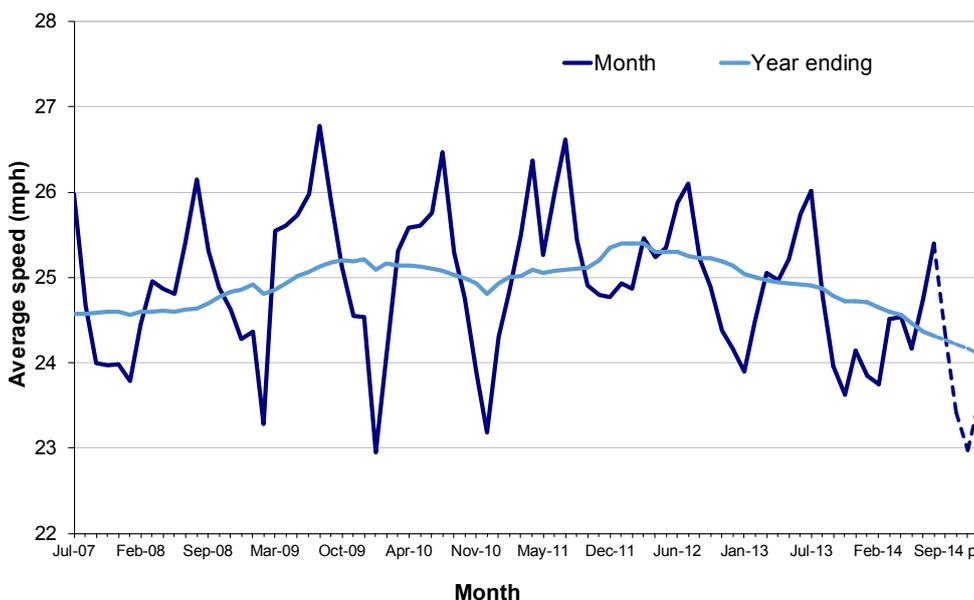


About this release

This statistical release presents information about congestion on local highway authority managed 'A' roads in England. Congestion on locally managed 'A' roads is measured by estimating the average speed achieved by vehicles during the weekday morning peak from 7am to 10am.

Average vehicle speeds during the weekday morning peak¹ on local 'A' roads: England, monthly and annual averages from 2006/07

(Table [CGN0205](#))



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1. Morning peak defined as 7am to 10am. School holiday periods and the month of August are excluded.
 2. Average speeds have been flow-weighted using DfT traffic estimates
 3. Dashed line on chart indicates the figures are currently provisional

p = provisional

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Latest statistics: Provisional data show that the average speed on local 'A' roads in England during the weekday morning peak was 24.1 mph in the year ending December 2014. This is a 0.7% decrease on the year ending September 2014.

Looking at individual months, the average speed in October 2014 was 23.4 mph (2.3% slower than in October 2013), in November 2014 it was 23.0 mph (2.8% slower than in November 2013) and in December 2014 it was 23.5 mph (2.6% slower than December 2013).

Recent trends: There were increases in annual average weekday morning peak speeds between the years ending December 2010 and February 2012. However, since March 2012, annual average speeds have generally decreased. The general downward trend in annual average weekday morning peak speeds observed over the last 3 years can be partly attributed to intermittent periods of high rainfall over this period, as well as the recent growth in levels of traffic on 'A' roads.

Despite rainfall levels dropping by 3.8% between September 2014 and December 2014, annual average speeds have continued to fall. The recent fall is more likely to have been affected by an increase in traffic levels on 'A' roads for year ending December 2014 compared to the year ending September 2014.

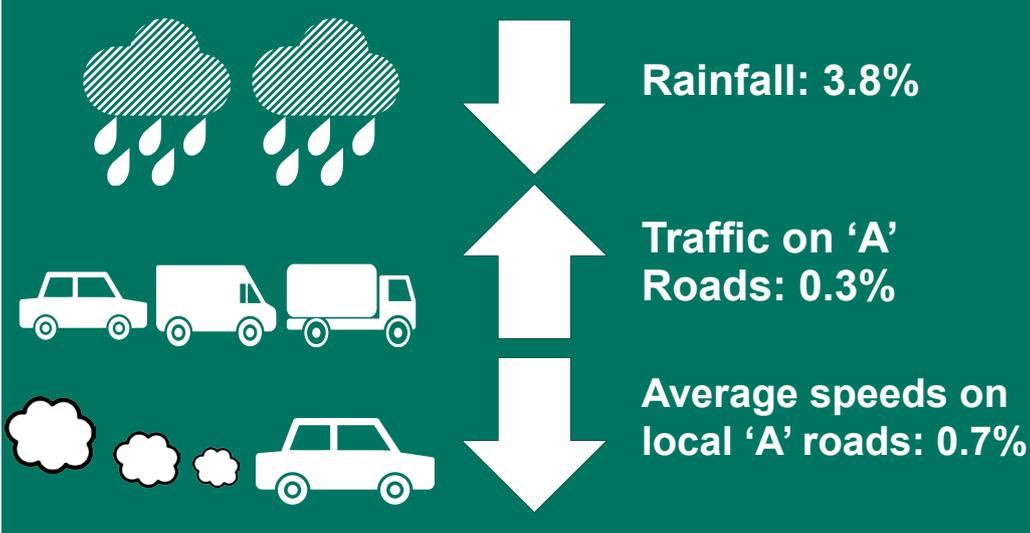
Introduction

Local 'A' roads account for around 9% of all roads in England, but carry around a third of all traffic.

Congestion on local 'A' roads is measured by estimating average speeds achieved by vehicles during the weekday morning peak, 7am to 10am. Any weekdays falling during school holiday periods and the month of August are excluded.

The data are based on journey times estimated using in-vehicle Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and flows estimated using the Department's traffic count information.

Changes between year ending Sep 2014 and Dec 2014 ...



Why measure speeds during morning peak?

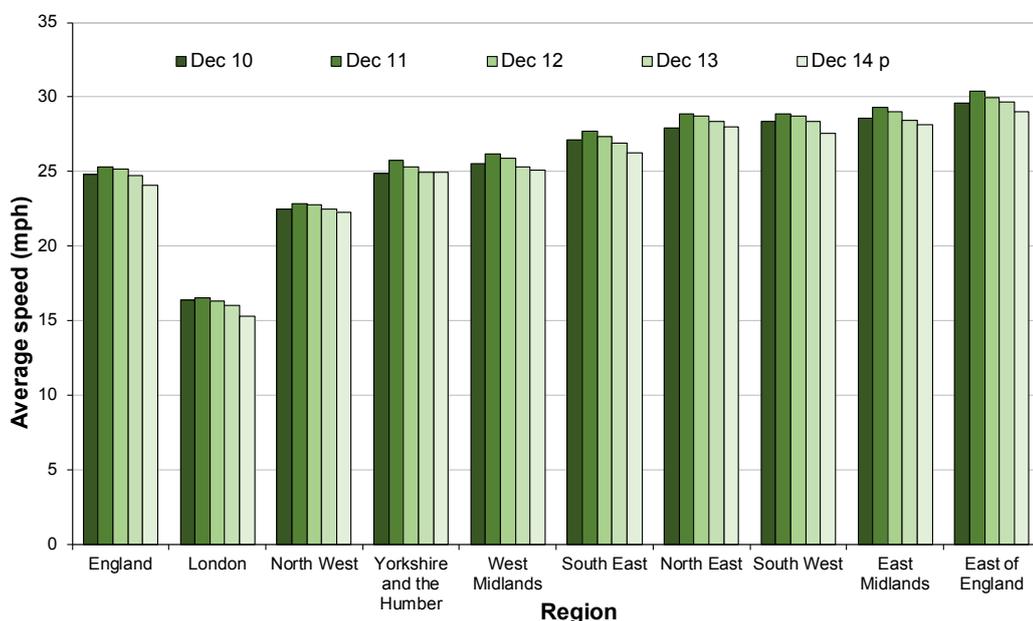
Speeds are measured during the weekday morning peak as this is when demand on local 'A' roads is typically at its highest. This high demand often leads to physical congestion and low speeds.

Regional trends for local congestion

At a regional level, most regions in England experienced slower average weekday morning peak speeds during the year ending December 2014 compared to the year ending December 2013. Between these years, London experienced the greatest fall in average speeds (4.5%) across all nine regions, followed by the South West (with a fall of 2.7% in average speeds). Yorkshire and the Humber was the only region to experience no change in its average speed. The East of England continues to have the highest average weekday morning peak speed and London continues to have the lowest (at 29.0 mph and 15.3 mph respectively in the year ending December 2014).

The recent falls in average speeds across London may be partly attributed to a reduction in speed limits in some London boroughs (e.g. the introduction of some 20mph zones to improve road safety).

Average vehicle speeds during the weekday morning peak¹ on local 'A' roads: by region, years ending December from 2010 (Table [CGN0206](#))



1. Morning peak defined as 7am to 10am. School holiday periods and the month of August are excluded.
2. Average speeds have been flow-weighted using DfT traffic estimates

p = provisional

Further Information

For further information, a useful [introduction to the Department's congestion and reliability statistics](#), including the different measures, how they are published and the ways in which they are used is available.

Detailed statistical tables

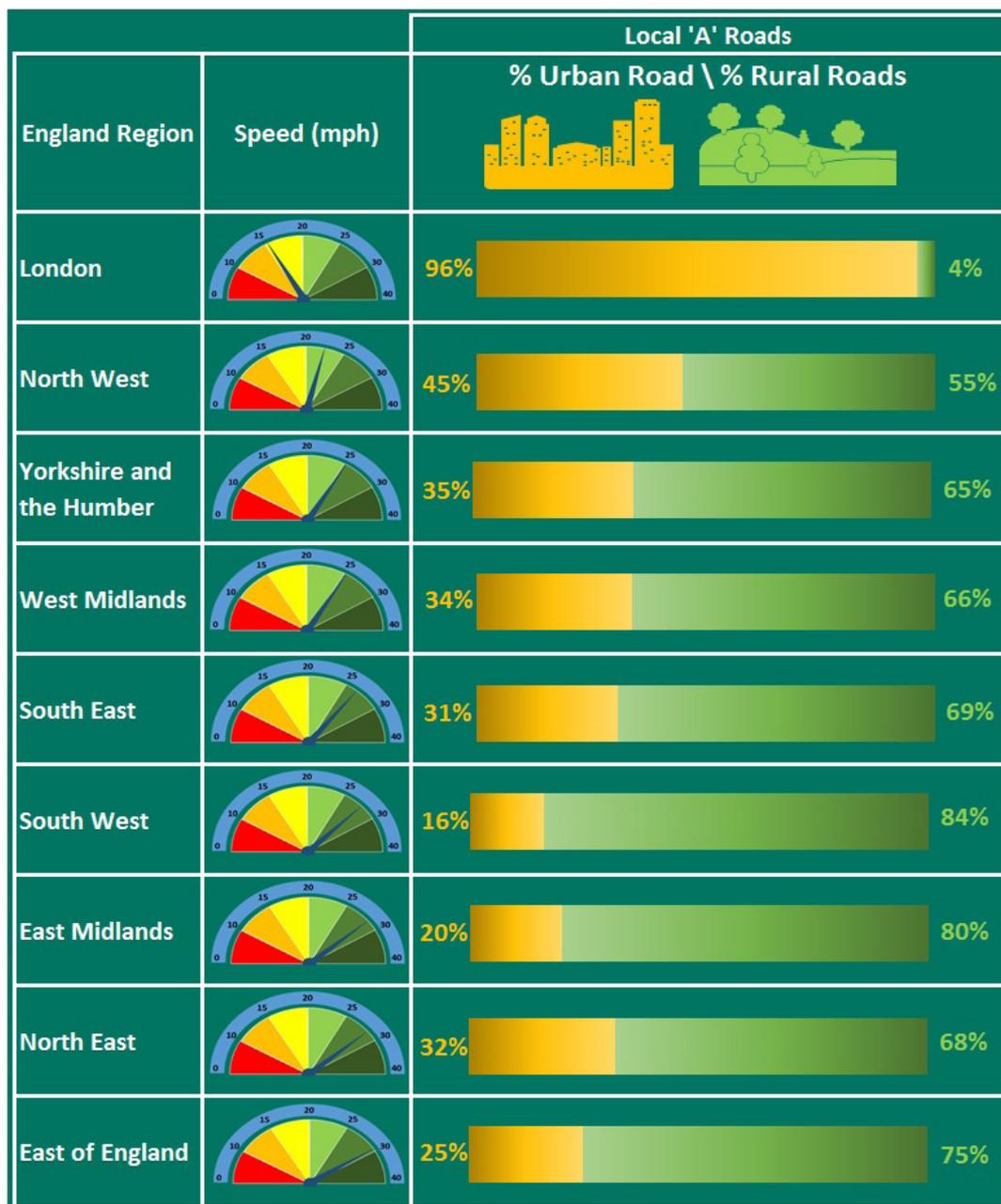
Detailed statistical tables can be accessed online via our [road congestion statistical series](#).

Regional and Local Highway Authority figures on average weekday morning peak speeds on locally managed 'A' roads, Table [CGN0206](#)

Individual roads, by direction, figures on average weekday morning peak speeds on locally managed 'A' roads, Table [CGN0209](#)

The differences in regional average weekday morning peak speeds partly reflect physical differences in the types of roads in these areas. For example, in the East of England around 75% of locally managed 'A' roads are classified as rural compared to only 4% in London.

Average vehicle speeds during the weekday morning peak on local 'A' roads, by region and urban/rural road length: year ending December 2014



Source

Speeds: DfT Congestion Data

Road lengths: Road lengths in Great Britain 2013, [Table RDL0101](#)

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](#)

The statistics in this release were designated as National Statistics in July 2012.

Related information

Information on traffic volume and flow used in weighting average speeds is available at: [Road traffic statistics](#)

British Social Attitudes Survey is available at: [British Social Attitudes Survey: 2013](#)

Change to presentation of Map CGN0202

We have updated map [CGN0202](#), *Average vehicle speeds (flow-weighted) during the weekday morning peak on locally managed 'A' roads*, using the latest data for year ending December 2014, from Table CGN0206. This relates to the move to present data for individual road sections on a calendar year basis (see next page). If you require any earlier versions of this map, please contact us.

Proposed changes to Table CGN0201

We propose to cease updating Table [CGN0201](#), *Average vehicle speeds (flow-weighted) during the weekday morning peak on locally managed 'A' roads*. This is because we are now presenting average speeds for academic years in Table CGN0206 which was introduced in March 2013. Figures in CGN0206 are derived in a slightly different way to CGN0201, are consistent with all the figures presented in this release and are judged to be equally robust. Figures in CGN0206 provide a fuller picture of trends in local authority average speeds on their locally managed 'A' road network, as well as to providing a series that is directly comparable with the national annual average speeds in table CGN0205.

If you would like to provide feedback on this proposal or would like more information then please use the contact details on the front cover of this release.

Future plans

We have been working closely with the Highways Agency and have also consulted a number of local authorities and other stakeholders to develop a new suite of travel time measures for the strategic road network. We are proposing to publish statistics for the strategic road network on this new suite of measures later in 2015. For further information on this please refer to the [reliability statistical release](#). If you would like to provide feedback on these proposals or would like more information then please use the contact details on the front cover of this release.

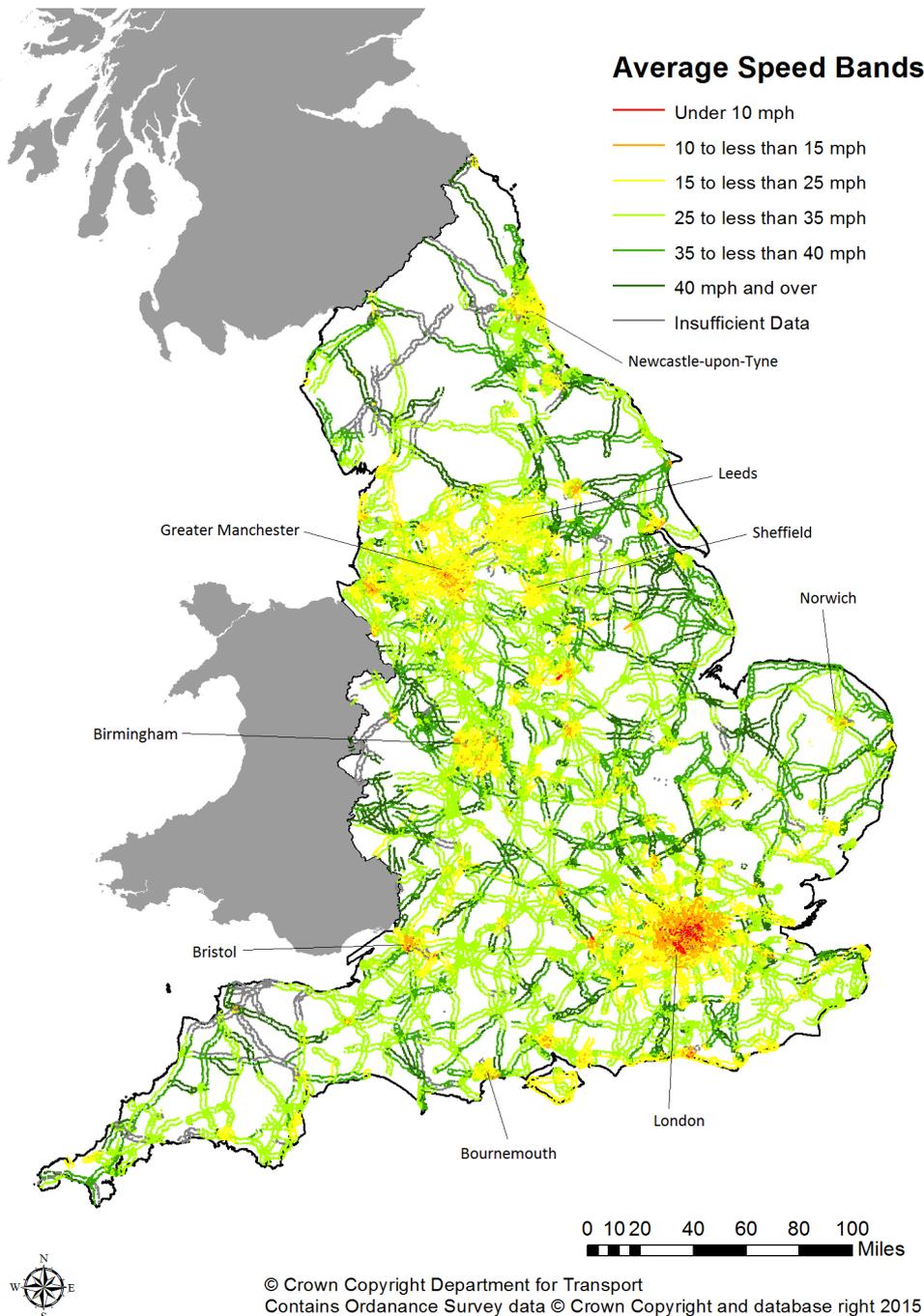
Experimental Statistics: Congestion statistics for individual road sections

Following their introduction a year ago, we have continued to publish average weekday morning peak speeds for individual local 'A' roads split by road name, local highway authority and direction of travel (e.g. A51 in Warwickshire, Northbound). These statistics are currently 'badged' as 'Experimental' and are undergoing evaluation. The analyses presented below are examples of how we can present the statistics for individual road sections. We welcome any feedback to improve the presentation of these statistics for future releases. Please contact us using the details provided on the first page of this release.

Experimental Statistics: CGN0210, Average speeds during the weekday morning peak on individual local 'A' roads: year ending December 2014^p

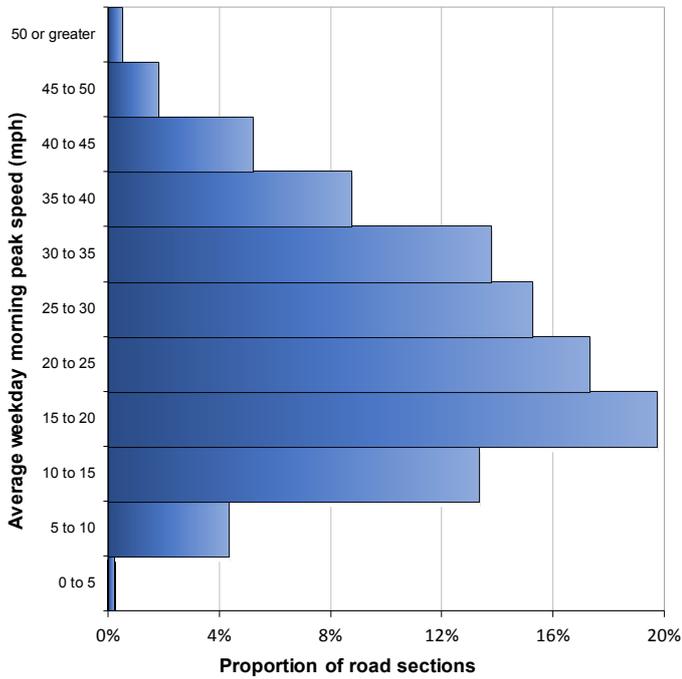
Experimental Statistics

The statistics for individual locally managed 'A' roads in this publication are labelled as Experimental Statistics. These official statistics are labelled as Experimental so that users and stakeholders can be involved in their development. It is accepted and expected that the quality of Experimental Statistics improves in the light of stakeholder use and feedback – to the point that they can be formally designated as National Statistics.

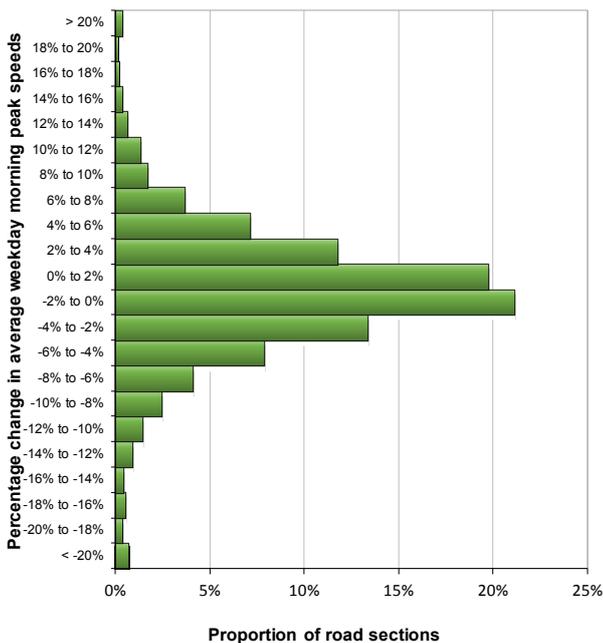


Insufficient data – Individual road sections shorter than 0.5 miles or where the level of imputation is high
If you require a copy of this map in different colours please contact the congestion statistics team.
p = provisional

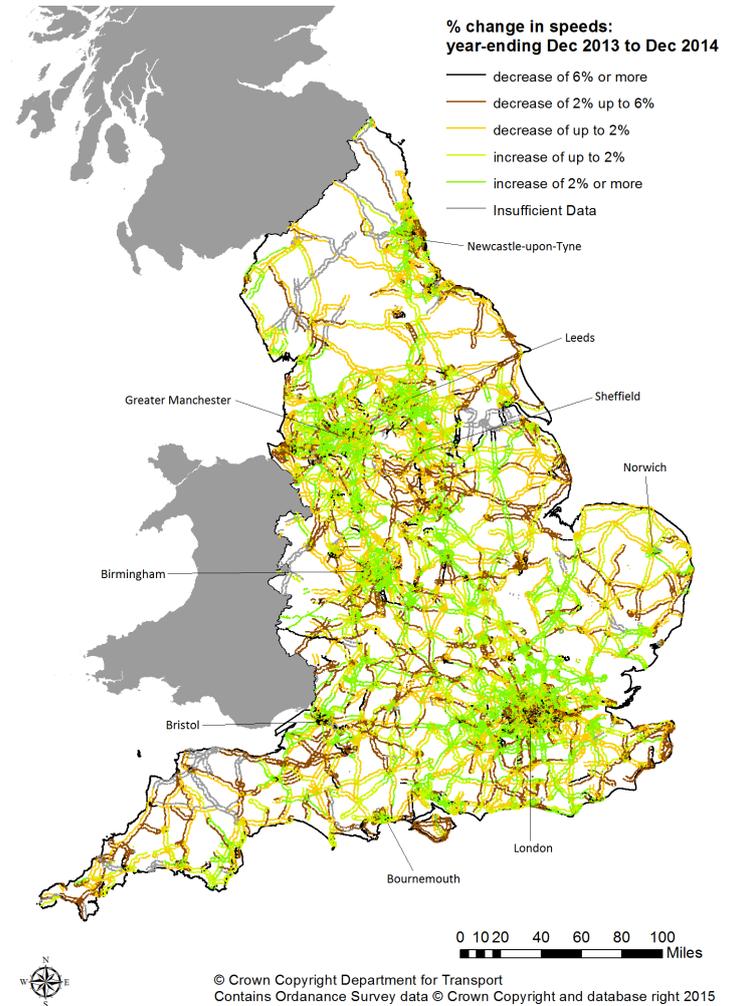
Experimental Statistics: Average speeds during the weekday morning peak for individual local 'A' roads: year ending December 2014^P



Experimental Statistics: Percentage change in average speeds during the weekday morning peak for individual local 'A' roads: from year ending December 2013 to year ending December 2014^P



Experimental Statistics: Percentage change in average speeds during the weekday morning peak on individual local 'A' roads: from year ending December 2013 to year ending December 2014^P



Insufficient data – Individual road sections shorter than 0.5 miles or where the level of imputation is high
If you require a copy of this map in different colours please contact the congestion statistics team.

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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.

Because the measure estimates average speeds during school-term weekday morning peak period (classified as 7am to 10am), sample sizes for some months will vary significantly depending on when school holidays fall.

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. However, users should exercise some caution as any small fluctuations in average speed estimates over time may be due to large changes in imputation levels. Different levels of imputation may be a result of the number of school days in an individual month (e.g. months with school holidays are likely to have higher levels of imputation). Detailed tables showing the amount of data imputation necessary in the calculation of each published statistic are available at: [speeds and congestion statistics guidance](#)

Users should also exercise caution when interpreting 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 be cautious when comparing average speeds reported for different local authorities or individual local 'A' roads as a measure of the relative levels of congestion within these areas. This is because physical differences in the types of roads and their speed limits will also have a large bearing on driving speeds.

Methodology and technical detail

Full guidance on the methods used to compile the flow-weighted vehicle speeds on locally managed 'A' roads can be found in our [Congestion Methodology document](#).

Next update

Statistics for January to March 2015 will be published on 21 May 2015.

Congestion statistics to July 2014 are now final. Statistics for September 2014 onwards will be provisional until they are finalised in November 2015, once they are weighted by traffic flow information for 2014. Changes in our estimated figures on average speeds, from provisional to final, at local authority level can be found at:

[Differences in provisional and final figures](#)

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.