



Department
for Transport

Road Lengths in Great Britain 2014

Main findings: Total road length in Great Britain in 2014 was estimated to be 245.8 thousand miles, an increase of 4.9 thousand miles (2.0%) over ten years.

About this release

This annual release presents estimates for road lengths in Great Britain covering the period April 2013 to March 2014.

These road length estimates are based on information from a range of sources including Ordnance Survey and local authorities.

Further charts and detailed statistical tables can be accessed online via the [road length statistical series](#).

Motorways and 'A' roads are referred to as major roads. 'B', 'C' and unclassified 'U' roads are referred to as minor roads.

Compared to previous years, total road length in Great Britain in 2014 was:

- 100 miles greater than in 2013, an increase of less than 0.1 per cent
- 4.9 thousand miles greater than in 2004, an increase of 2.0 per cent
- 6.3 thousand miles greater than 20 years ago in 1994, an increase of 2.6 per cent

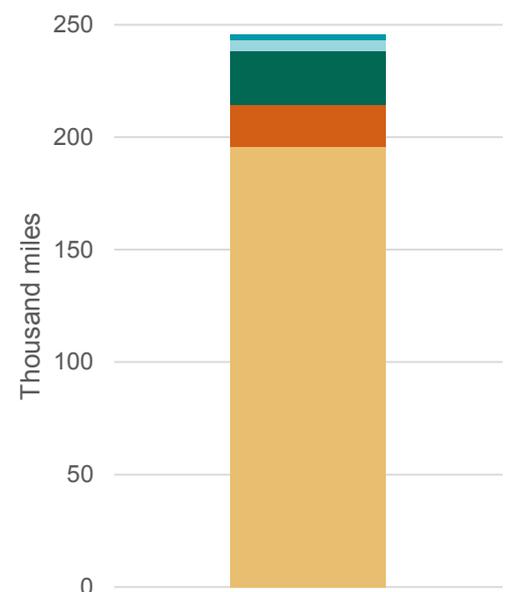
Road length by road type in Great Britain, in 2014

Major roads made up 12.7 per cent of total road length:

- 2.3 thousand miles of motorway
- 5.3 thousand miles of trunk 'A' road
- 23.8 thousand miles of principal 'A' road

Minor roads made up 87.3 per cent of total road length:

- 18.8 thousand miles of 'B' road
- 195.7 thousand miles of 'C' and 'U' road



Source: Department for Transport

In this publication

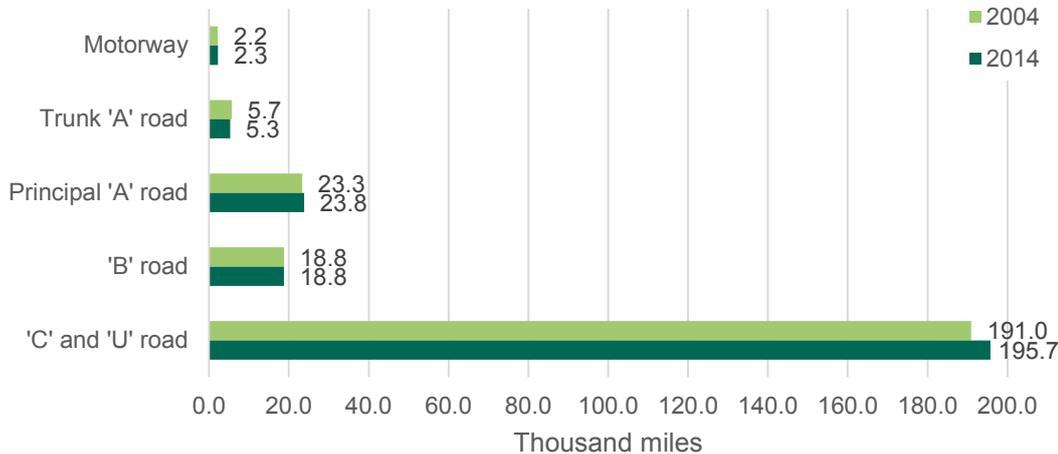
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100 years of road length statistics: This publication provides road length statistics for 2014, 100 years on from the first year for which road lengths were first estimated for Great Britain in 1914. Methods and data sources have varied much over the last century making it difficult to say precisely how things have changed. However, figures from Table [RDL0103](#) suggest that road length in Great Britain has increased by about 70 thousand miles over that time, an increase of just less than 40%.

Length by Road Type

There were 31.3 thousand miles of major road in 2014, making up 12.7 per cent of total road length in Great Britain. By comparison there were 214.5 thousand miles of minor road, making up the remaining 87.3 per cent of total road length. The chart below shows how this compares to road length 10 years ago in 2004:

Road length by road type in Great Britain, 2014 and 2004



Source: Department for Transport

Overall road length in Great Britain increased by 4.9 thousand miles between 2004 and 2014. Of this, combined 'C' and 'U' road length saw the largest increase of 4.8 thousand miles. The total length of 'B' roads saw negligible change, whilst the combined length of principal and trunk motorways increased by 0.1 thousand miles (100 miles) over the same period. The length of principal 'A' roads increased by 0.5 thousand miles whilst trunk 'A' road length decreased by 0.4 thousand miles, reflecting alterations to the management responsibilities for a number of roads over this time.

Road lengths (miles) by road type in Great Britain, annual from 1914 [RDL0103](#), in kilometres [RDL0203](#)

Roads in Great Britain

Major roads in Great Britain are split into trunk roads which are centrally managed, and principal roads which are managed by local authorities (including Transport for London).

Trunk motorways and 'A' roads in England are managed by Highways England, in Scotland by Transport Scotland and in Wales by the Welsh Government.

The Government's detrunking programme involved the transfer of centrally managed trunk roads to local authority managed principal roads, with most transfers carried out between 2001 and 2003.

Motorways, 'A', 'B' and 'C' roads are classified roads, whilst 'U' roads are unclassified. Unclassified roads are typically residential streets or rural lanes.

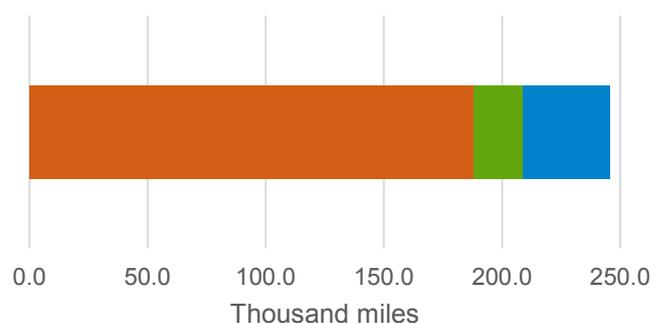
Length by Country

Of the 245.8 thousand miles of road length in Great Britain in 2014:

- 76.4 per cent, 187.8 thousand miles, was in England
- 8.6 per cent, 21.1 thousand miles, was in Wales
- 15.0 per cent, 36.9 thousand miles, was in Scotland

Road length (miles) by road type and region and country in Great Britain from 2005 [RDL0101](#), in kilometres [RDL0201](#)

Road length by country in Great Britain, in 2014



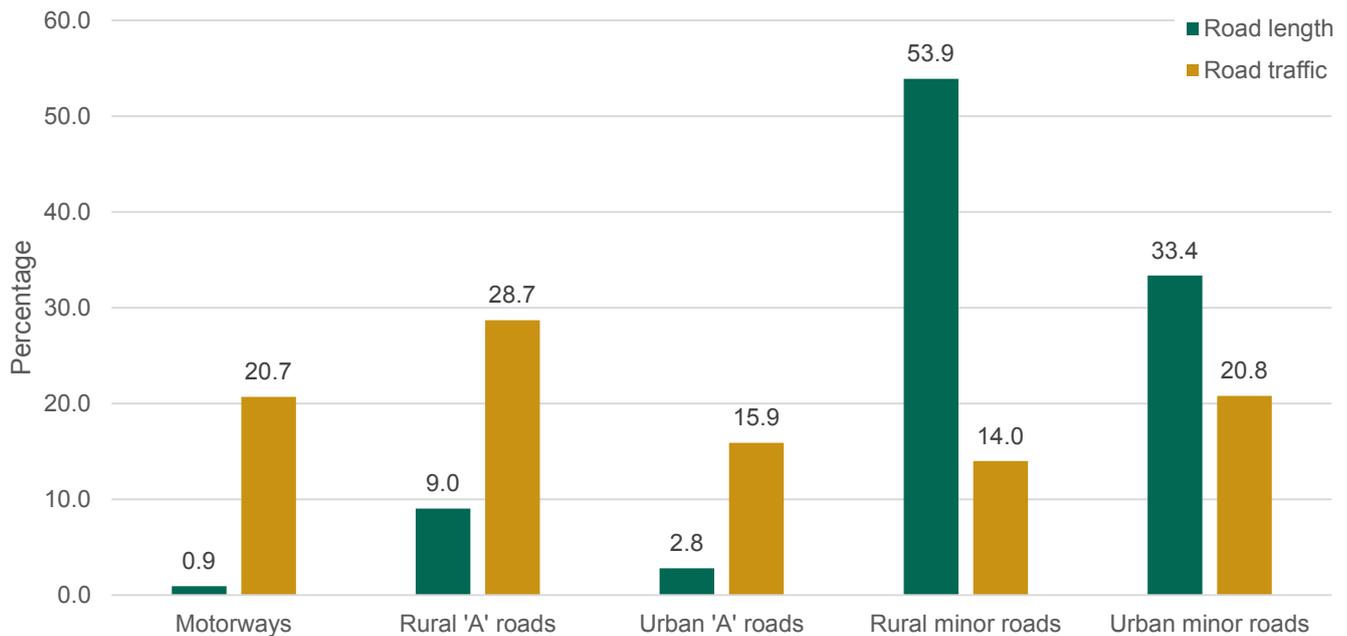
Source: Department for Transport

Road Length and Road Traffic

Although major roads accounted for 12.7 per cent of total road length in Great Britain in 2014, they carried 65.2 per cent of total road traffic. While minor roads made up 87.3 per cent of total road length, they carried 34.8 per cent of total road traffic.

The chart below shows the percentage of road length compared with the percentage of road traffic carried, by road type in 2014. All types of major road carried a greater percentage of total road traffic than the percentage of the road length that they make up. The opposite was true for minor roads.

Percentage of road traffic and road length by road type in Great Britain, in 2014



Source: Department for Transport

Statistics on road traffic in Great Britain are available [here](#)

Road lengths (miles) by road type and local authority in Great Britain, annual from 2005 [RDL0102](#)

Road lengths (kilometres) by road type and local authority in Great Britain, annual from 2005 [RDL0202](#)

Trunk Roads and the Strategic Road Network

Trunk roads are centrally managed by Highways England, Transport Scotland and the Welsh Government. In 2014 trunk roads made up 3.1 per cent of total road length in Great Britain but carried 32.7 per cent of total road traffic in Great Britain.

The length of trunk road in Great Britain in 2014 was 7.5 thousand miles. Since the detrunking programme began in 2001, the total length of trunk road has decreased by 1.7 thousand miles or 18.3 per cent.

The Strategic Road Network (SRN) includes all trunk motorways and 'A' roads in England only. In 2014, the SRN was 4.4 thousand miles long and making up 2.4 per cent of total road length in England. By contrast, it carried 32.7 per cent of road traffic in England.

Background Information

Technical information

All figures quoted in this publication are rounded to the nearest 100 miles (0.1 thousand miles).

Further information about road length data can be found in the road length statistics notes and definitions document and the methodology document on the Road Network Size and Condition Statistics webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-network-size-and-condition-statistics-guidance>

Up to 2012, the Department for Transport conducted a consultation exercise with local authorities to compare their records for the roads they manage with those held by the Department. This was to ensure the accuracy of the road length data and to pick up any changes which have occurred to the road network. Due to resource constraints this consultation did not take place in 2013 or 2014. Minor road lengths in 2013 and 2014 have therefore been estimated differently to previous years. This process uses the Ordnance Survey Integrated Transport Network in conjunction with information collected in previous years, which is consistent with the methodology used elsewhere in the publication. For this reason, 'C' and 'U' roads have been combined in the accompanying tables.

All the statistics related to this statistical release can be found in tables in the road length statistics series: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-network-size-and-condition>

Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found in the pre-release access list: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-network-size-and-condition-statistics-pre-release-access-list>

Department for Transport road traffic statistics included in this publication are also published separately: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-traffic-statistics>

National Statistics

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

We are always keen to receive comments from users of transport statistics. If you have any comments or questions about the statistics in this release, please contact us using the details listed on the first page.

Strengths and weaknesses

As road lengths estimates are based on information from a range of sources, the final estimates are reliant on all of these sources being accurate and up to date.

Small changes may occur between years which are not accounted for by changes to the physical road network but may have occurred due to improved measurement of road lengths and better accuracy of the data sources used.

Next update

The next update, Road Lengths in Great Britain 2015, and accompanying tables are due to be published in May 2016.