



Department for Transport

Road Lengths in Great Britain 2015

Main findings: Total road length in Great Britain in 2015 was estimated to be 245.9 thousand miles, an increase of less than 0.1 per cent from 2014.

About this release

This annual release presents estimates for road lengths in Great Britain. These road length estimates are based on information from a range of sources including Ordnance Survey and local authorities. The majority of the data relate to the time point of April 2015.

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

Statistics on road length do not reflect alterations to the width or number of lanes on sections of road.

In this publication

- Length by Road Type.... [p2](#)
- Length by Country and Region.... [p3](#)
- Road Length and Road Traffic.... [p4](#)
- Background.... [p5](#)

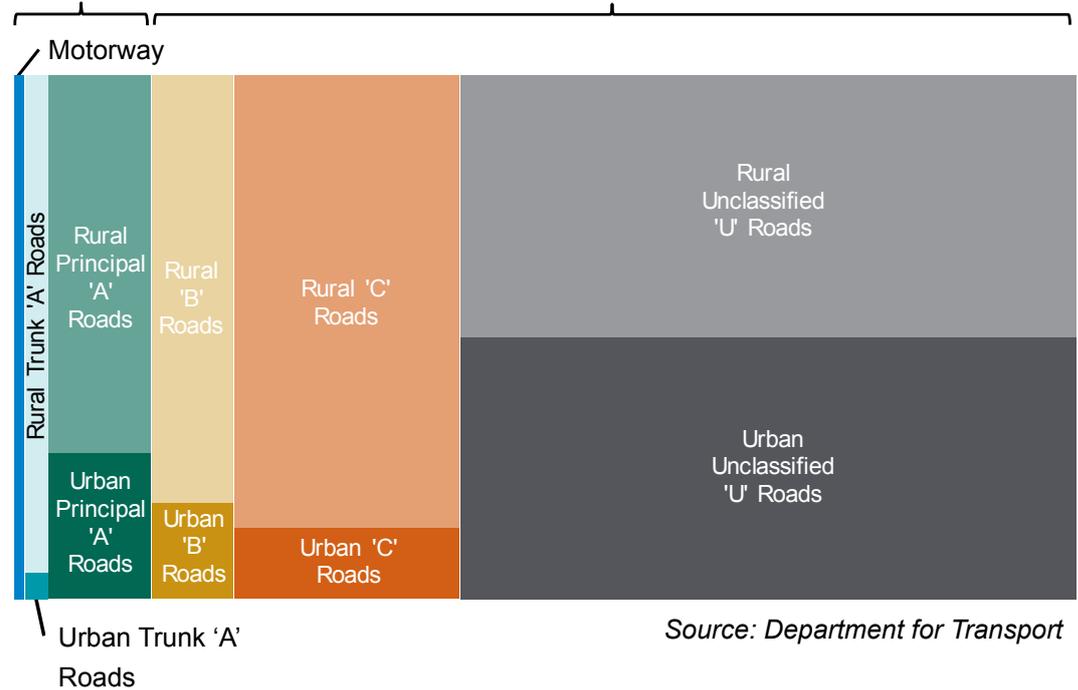
Compared to previous years, total road length in Great Britain in 2015 was:

- 100 miles greater than in 2014, an increase of less than 0.1 per cent
- 5.8 thousand miles greater than in 1995, an increase of 2.4 per cent

Road length by road type in Great Britain, in 2015

Major Roads -
12.7% of total road length

Minor Roads - 87.3% of total road length



Source: Department for Transport

In 2015 there were:

- 2.3 thousand miles of motorway
- 5.3 thousand miles of trunk 'A' road
- 23.8 thousand miles of principal 'A' road
- 18.8 thousand miles of 'B' road
- 52.4 thousand miles of 'C' road
- 143.3 thousand miles of 'U' road

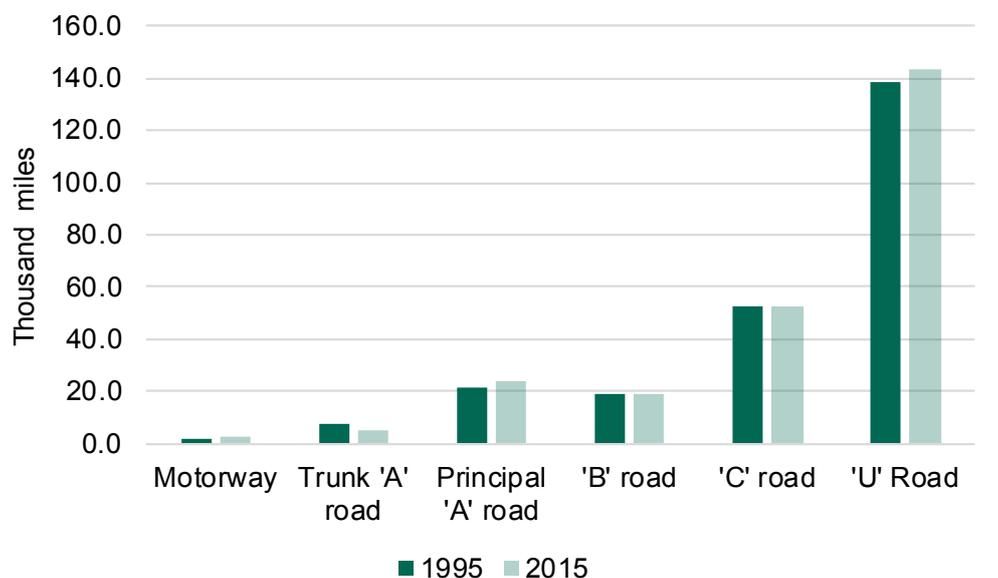
Length by Road Type

Of the estimated 245.9 thousand miles of road length in Great Britain in 2015, there were:

- 31.3 thousand miles of major road, making up 12.7 per cent of the road network;
- 214.5 thousand miles of minor road, making up 87.3 per cent of the road network.

The length of trunk road in Great Britain in 2015 was 7.5 thousand miles, 3.1 per cent of total road length in Great Britain.

Road length by road type in Great Britain, 1995 and 2015



Source: Department for Transport

Roads in Great Britain

Major roads (Motorways and 'A' 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 (formerly the Highways Agency), 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.

Overall road length in Great Britain was higher in 2015 compared with 20 years ago, increasing by 5.8 thousand miles from 1995.

Since 1995 the length of major roads increased overall by 1.7 per cent (0.5 thousand miles). The combined length of principal and trunk motorways increased by 11.8 per cent (0.2 thousand miles).

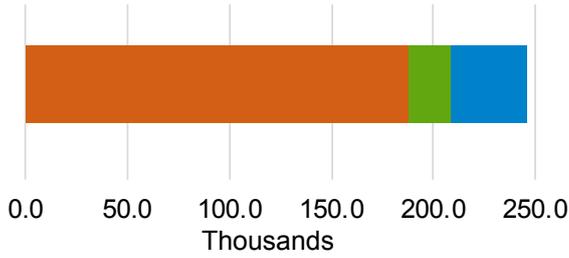
Over the same period the length of principal 'A' roads increased by 10.5 per cent (2.3 thousand miles) whilst trunk 'A' road length decreased by 27.2 per cent (2.0 thousand miles). This reflects alterations to the management responsibilities for a number of roads over this time. Since the detrunking programme began in 2001, the total length of trunk road has decreased by 1.7 thousand miles or 18.3 per cent.

There was an increase of 3.6 per cent (5.0 thousand miles) in the length of 'U' roads in Great Britain from 1995. For other minor roads the total length of 'B' roads and 'C' roads were broadly the same as 20 years ago.

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

Road Length by Country and Region

Road length by country in Great Britain, in 2015

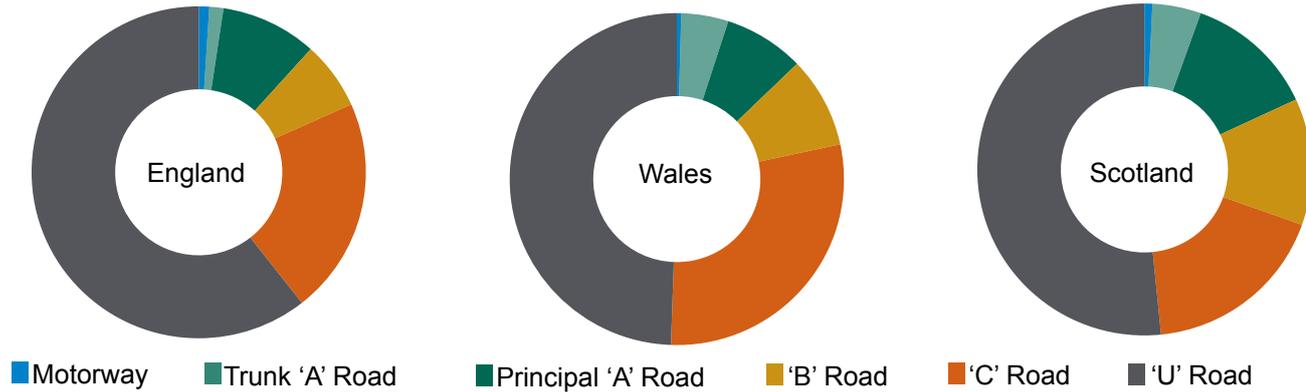


Of the 245.9 thousand miles of road length in Great Britain in 2015:

- 76.4 per cent, 188.0 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

Source: Department for Transport

Road length by country and road type in Great Britain, in 2015

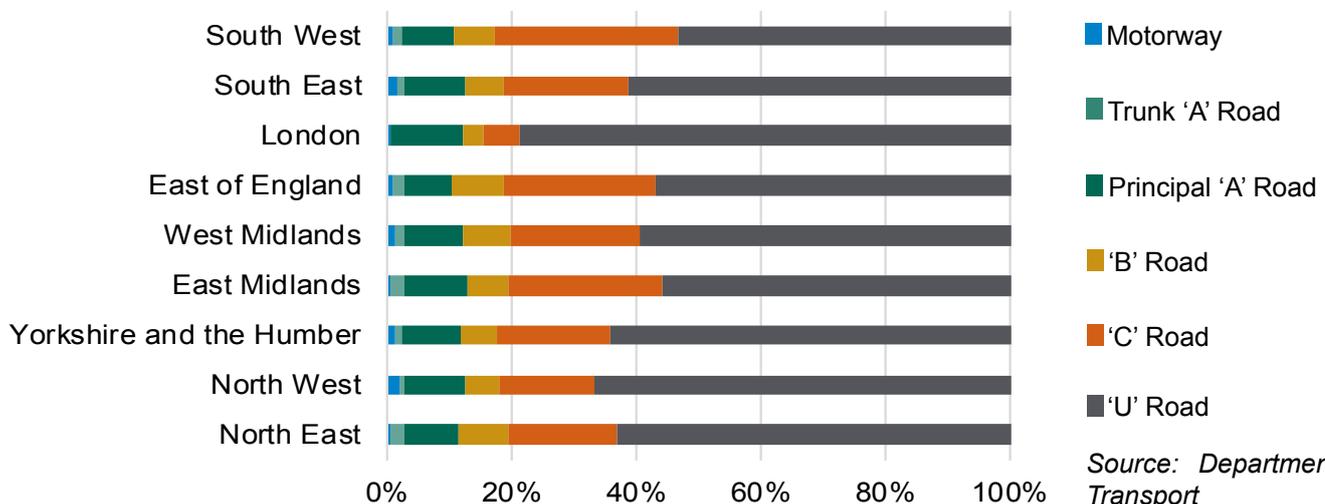


Source: Department for Transport

In 2015, 18 per cent of the road network in Scotland consisted of major roads. This was higher than in both England and Wales where the length of these roads accounted for 12 per cent and 13 per cent of the road network respectively. In Scotland and Wales the total length of 'A' road accounted for 96 per cent and 97 per cent of all major roads respectively, whilst this was 91 per cent in England.

The composition of minor roads varied by country. In England, 69 per cent of the minor road network were 'U' roads, which was higher than in both Scotland and Wales. By comparison 'B' road made up 7 per cent of the minor road network in England, compared with 15 per cent and 10 per cent in Scotland and Wales respectively.

Road length by region and road type in England, in 2015



Source: Department for Transport

In 2015 each region accounted for between 5 and 17 per cent of the total road length in England. The highest figure was for the South West. The split between major and minor roads within each region in England was broadly consistent, with major roads accounting for between 10 and 13 per cent of the total road length within a region.

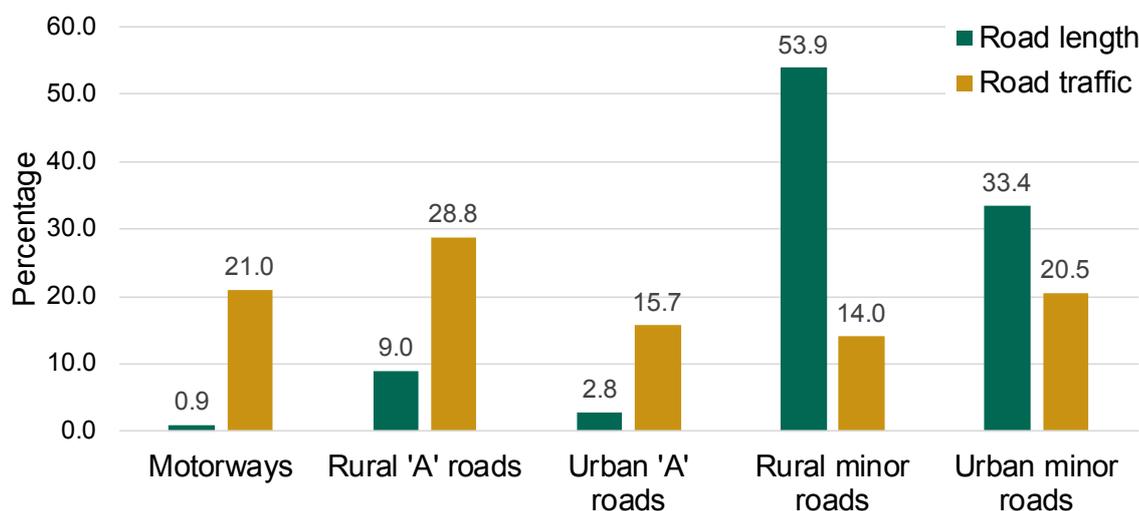
Road length by classification varied across the regions. The greatest variation was for 'U' roads, which accounted for between 59 per cent and 89 per cent of the total length of minor roads within a region in 2015. For major roads the greatest variation amongst regions was for principal 'A' roads which accounted for between 75 per cent and 97 per cent of the total length of major roads within a region. The variation across each region is reflective of the of the different road networks at local authority level.

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

Road Length by Traffic

Although major roads accounted for 12.7 per cent of total road length in Great Britain in 2015, they carried 65.5 per cent of total road traffic. While minor roads made up 87.3 per cent of total road length, they carried 34.5 per cent of total road traffic. All types of major road carried a greater percentage of total road traffic than the percentage of the road length that they made up. The opposite was true for minor roads.

Percentage of road traffic and road length by road type in Great Britain, in 2015



Source: Department for Transport

The Strategic Road Network (SRN) includes all trunk motorways and 'A' roads in England only. In 2015 the SRN was 4.4 thousand miles long and made up 2.4 per cent of total road length in England. By contrast it carried 33.1 per cent of road traffic in England.

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

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>.

In 2015, the Department conducted the R199b Local Authority Road Length Consultation in support of this publication for the first time since 2012. The consultation asks authorities in England to compare their records for the roads they manage with those held by the Department. This process is undertaken to ensure the accuracy of the road length data and to pick up any changes that have occurred to the road network. Minor road lengths have been estimated using the same methodology that was used in previous years that the consultation was run. This uses information from the R199b consultation, Ordnance Survey Integrated Transport Network and data collected in previous years.

All 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-releaseaccess-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.

Strengths and Weaknesses

As road length 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

Road Lengths in Great Britain 2016 and accompanying tables are due to be published in May 2017.