



Department for Transport

Road Lengths in Great Britain 2016

In 2016 the total road length in Great Britain was estimated to be 246,500 miles, an increase of 600 miles (0.3 per cent) compared to the previous year.

About this release

This annual release presents estimates for road lengths in Great Britain. These 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 2016.

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

These statistics only cover roads maintained at public expense. They do not reflect the width or number of lanes on sections of road.

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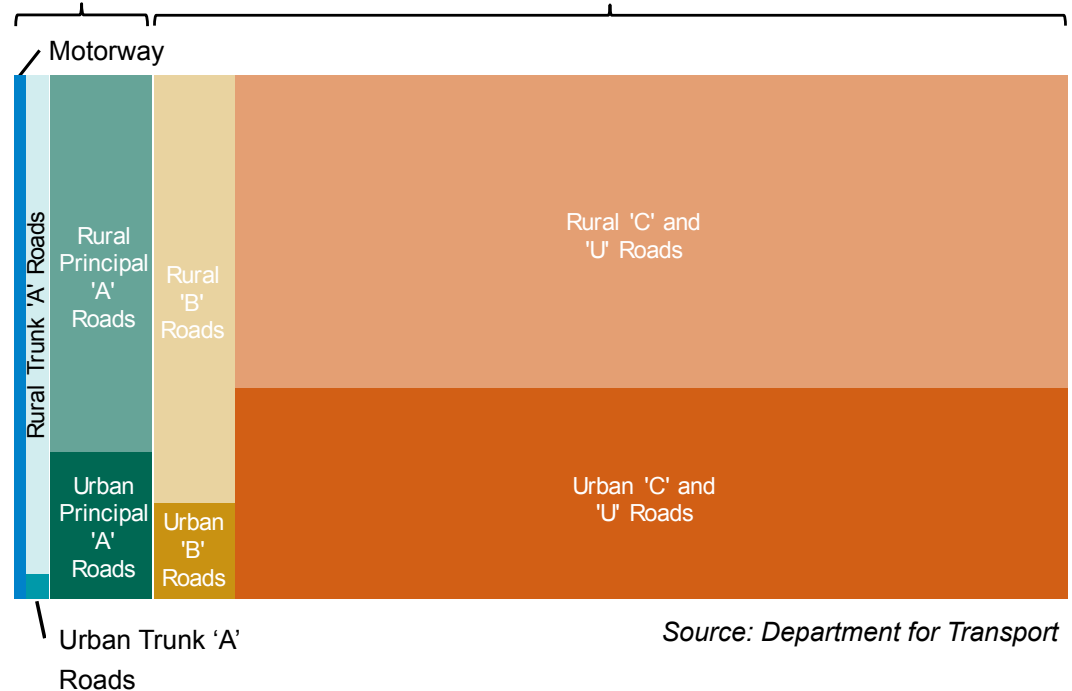
Compared to previous years, total road length in Great Britain in 2016 was:

- ↑ 600 miles (0.3 per cent) greater than 2015.
- ↑ 6,000 miles (2.5 per cent) greater than 20 years ago.

Road length by road type in Great Britain, in 2016

Major Roads -
12.7% of total road length

Minor Roads - 87.3% of total road length



Source: Department for Transport

In 2016 there were:

- 2,300 miles of motorway
- 5,300 miles of trunk 'A' road
- 23,800 miles of principal 'A' road
- 18,800 miles of 'B' road
- 196,300 miles of 'C' and 'U' road

Length by Road Type

Factors Affecting Changes in Road Length

The road length estimates presented in this release show overall net changes in length, resulting from a range of factors:

- roads that have been built, opened and adopted.
- roads that have been reclassified.
- roads that have been demolished.
- improvements or changes to the underlying data sources used.

It is not straightforward to separately identify the impact of each of these factors on the overall changes in the length data.

Roads in Great Britain

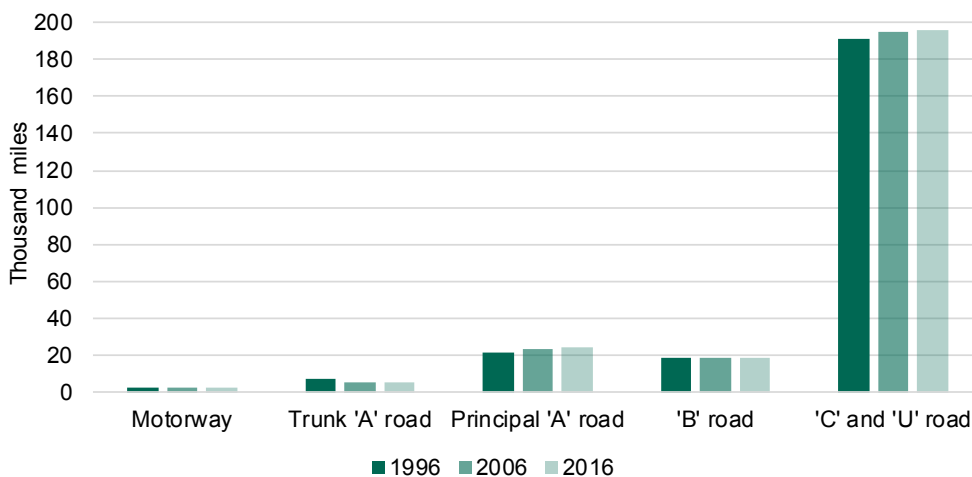
Major roads (Motorways and 'A' roads) in Great Britain are split into trunk roads, which are centrally managed, and principal roads, which are managed by local authorities (including Transport for London).

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.

Road length by road type in Great Britain, 1996, 2006, and 2016



Source: Department for Transport

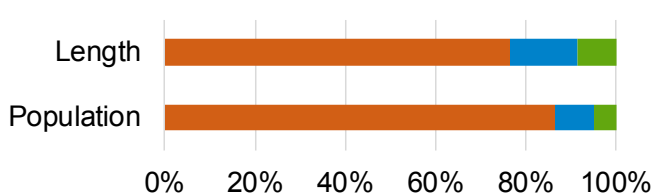
Since 1996 there have been two notable changes:

- The length of principal 'A' roads has increased by 2,400 miles, while the length of trunk 'A' roads has decreased by 2,000 miles. This largely reflects the de-trunking programme which began in 2001, where centrally managed roads were transferred over to local authorities.
- There was an increase of 2.8 per cent (5,400 miles) in the length of 'C' and 'U' roads, while 'B' roads were broadly the same as 20 years ago.

Road lengths (miles) by 'A' type in Great Britain, annual from 1914 [RDL0103](#), in KMs [RDL0203](#)

Road Length by Country and Region

Road length by country in Great Britain, in 2016

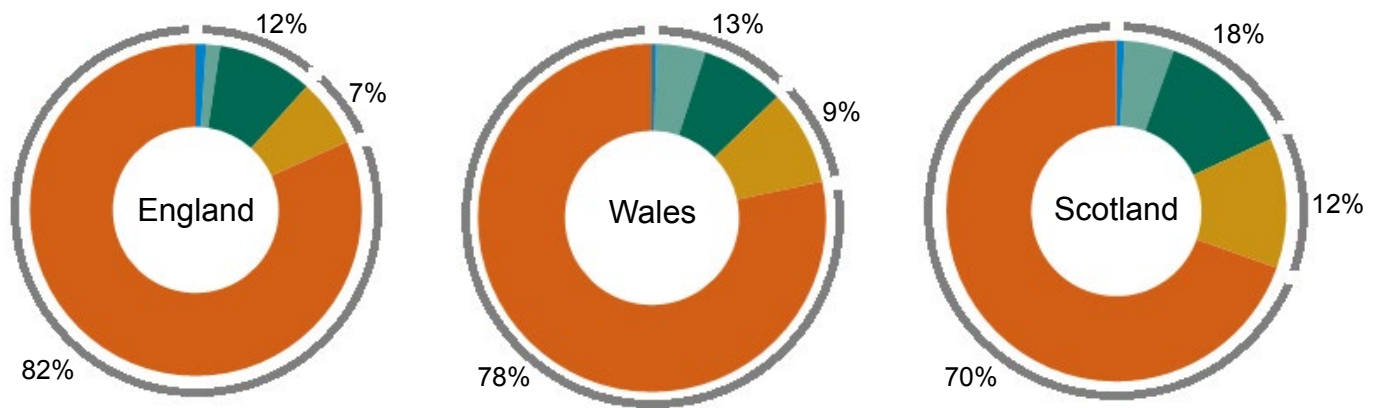


Sources: Department for Transport
ONS population estimates (mid-2015)

Of the 246,500 miles of road length in Great Britain in 2016:

- 76.5 per cent, 188,500 miles was in England
- 15.0 per cent, 36,900 miles was in Scotland
- 8.6 per cent, 21,100 miles was in Wales

Road length by country and road type in Great Britain, in 2016

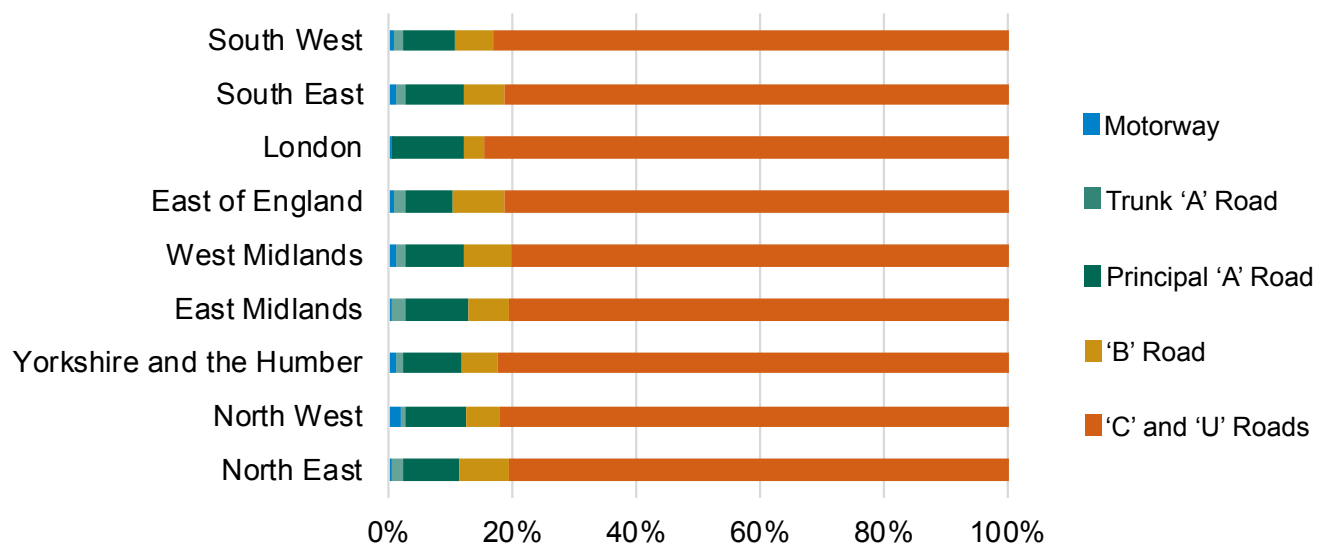


Source: Department for Transport

■ Motorway ■ Trunk 'A' Road ■ Principal 'A' Road ■ 'B' Road ■ 'C' and 'U' Road

In 2016, a higher percentage of the road network in Scotland consisted of major roads compared with England and Wales. Scotland also had a lower proportion of 'C' and 'U' roads compared with England and Wales.

Road length by region and road type in England, in 2016



Source: Department for Transport

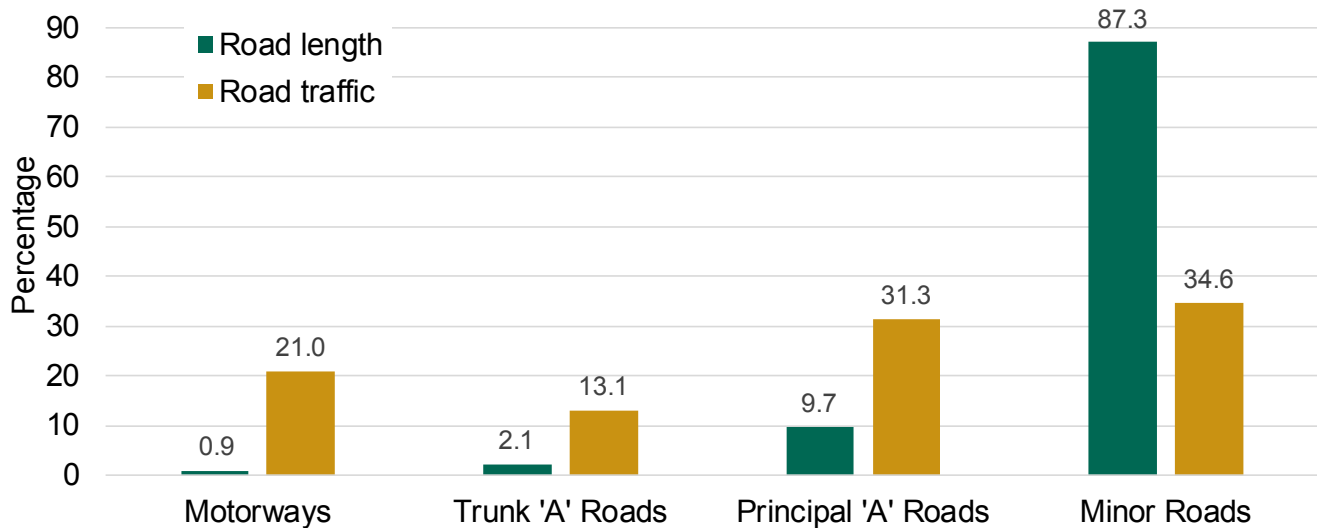
In 2016 the proportion of road length within each region varied between 5 per cent (London and North East) and 17 per cent (South West) of the total road length in England. Major Roads accounted for between 10 and 13 per cent of the total road length within a region. The variation in road length by classification across the regions 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

Major roads accounted for 12.7 per cent of total road length in Great Britain in 2016 but carried 65.4 per cent of total road traffic, with minor roads carrying the remaining 34.6 per cent.

Percentage of road traffic and road length accounted for by each road type in Great Britain, in 2016



Source: Department for Transport

The Strategic Road Network (SRN) forms part of the major road network and includes all trunk motorways and 'A' roads in England. In 2016 the SRN was 4,400 miles long and made up 2.4 per cent of total road length in England. By contrast it carried 33.2 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](#)

Future plans for Road Length Statistics

In future, the Department will also consider how the Highways Network dataset, which is currently being developed with Ordnance Survey, GeoPlace and other stakeholders, can be used to produce improved estimates of road length in future. The first commercial release of the Highways Network product took place in October 2016, with further releases planned later this year to incorporate new features and improvements. For more information on this project see the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/3-million-mapping-project-to-transform-road-improvements-and-maintenance>.

Background Information

Technical Information

All figures quoted in this publication are rounded to the nearest 100 miles, however percentage changes are based on unrounded figures. Further detail can be found 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 and in 2015, the Department for Transport (DfT) conducted a consultation exercise with local authorities to compare records for the roads they manage with those held by DfT. The main purpose of the collection is to provide the latest road length information for funding allocations made by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It also enables DfT to validate road length data and pick up changes to the road network.

Due to changes to the system of Local Government Funding introduced by DCLG in 2013-14, resource constraints within the statistical team in DfT and the stable nature of the statistical series a consultation did not take place in 2013, 2014 and 2016. Minor road lengths in these years have therefore been estimated differently to previous years, using the Ordnance Survey Integrated Transport Network in conjunction with data collected in previous years. For this reason 'C' and 'U' roads have been combined in the accompanying tables.

All data 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>

DfT 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 to ensure customer needs are met.

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. Some of the changes between years may be due to improved accuracy of data sources rather than actual changes to the road network.

The next update, Road Lengths in Great Britain 2017 are due to be published in April/May 2017.



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