



Department  
for Transport

# Provisional Road Traffic Estimates

## Great Britain: October 2018 - September 2019

**Provisional estimates show motor vehicles travelled 330.1 billion vehicle miles in Great Britain for the year ending September 2019.**

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### About provisional traffic estimates

This release presents provisional estimates for road traffic in Great Britain for October 2018 to September 2019. Provisional estimates are published quarterly and remain provisional until after they have been constrained by the final annual estimates each year. These provisional estimates are based on traffic data collected continuously from a network of around 300 automatic traffic counters. Final annual figures also incorporate manual traffic count data.

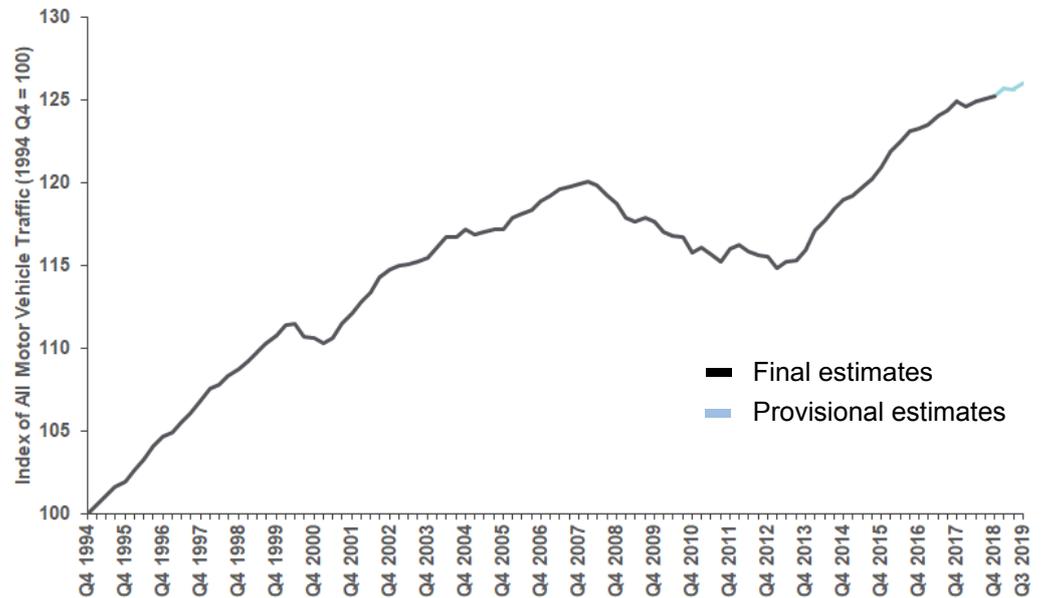
Traffic shows a seasonal pattern at the national level, being highest in summer and lowest in winter. This publication focuses on rolling annual traffic totals, which better illustrate medium and long term trends in traffic.

### Key Findings

Compared to the year ending September 2018, in the year ending September 2019:

- ▶ **All motor vehicle traffic increased** by 0.8%.
- ▶ **Car traffic increased** by 1.5% to 258.0 billion vehicle miles.
- ▶ **Van and lorry traffic decreased** by 1.4% and 1.1%, respectively.
- ▶ **Traffic on motorways and 'A' roads increased** by 0.9% and 1.2%, respectively. Traffic on minor roads remained broadly stable (increasing very slightly by 0.2%).

**Chart 1: Rolling Annual Indices of Road Traffic in Great Britain from 1994**



Compared to the last quarter's rolling annual figures (for the year ending June 2019), in the year ending September 2019 overall traffic levels remained similar. See the summary figures section on [page 2](#) for more information.

## Summary Figures

The summary table below shows how vehicle traffic in the year ending September 2019 compares to that in the year ending June 2019, and across a range of earlier years. More information on our provisional estimates, along with our [TRA25](#) series of provisional traffic estimate tables, can be found online [here](#).

	Vehicle Miles (Provisional)	Percentage change from...				
		Last Quarter (Provisional)	Last Year	Five Years Ago	Ten Years Ago	Twenty Years Ago
		Year ending Jun 2019	Year ending Sep 2018	Year ending Sep 2014	Year ending Sep 2009	Year ending Sep 1999
↔ is used for negligible changes, defined as: • 0.5% or less for 0-5 years • 5% or less for 10 years and over	Year ending Sep 2019					
<b>All Motor Vehicle Traffic</b>	<b>330.1 billion</b>	↔ 0.3%	↑ 0.8%	↑ 6.4%	↑ 6.9%	↑ 14.3%
<b>Cars and Taxis</b>	<b>258.0 billion</b>	↔ 0.4%	↑ 1.5%	↑ 5.7%	↑ 5.2%	↑ 10.5%
<b>Light Commercial Vehicles (Vans, or LCV)</b>	<b>50.4 billion</b>	↔ -0.3%	↓ -1.4%	↑ 13.6%	↑ 23.4%	↑ 57.6%
<b>Heavy Goods Vehicles (Lorries, or HGV)</b>	<b>16.9 billion</b>	↔ -0.2%	↓ -1.1%	↑ 5.8%	↔ 2.2%	↔ -2.6%
<b>Motorways</b>	<b>68.9 billion</b>	↔ 0.1%	↑ 0.9%	↑ 7.8%	↑ 12.5%	↑ 28.0%
<b>'A' Roads</b>	<b>150.3 billion</b>	↔ 0.3%	↑ 1.2%	↑ 8.4%	↑ 8.3%	↑ 13.5%
<b>Minor Roads</b>	<b>110.9 billion</b>	↔ 0.3%	↔ 0.2%	↑ 3.0%	↔ 1.9%	↑ 8.1%

## About Rolling Annual Figures

Rolling annual comparisons provide insightful evidence into the nature of road traffic in Great Britain.

(2) Year ending June 2019

(3) Year ending September 2018

(1) Year ending September 2019

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep									
2017												2018												2019											

Final estimates

Provisional estimates

Comparison with the previous quarter: (1) against (2)

Comparison with the previous year: (1) against (3)

All motor vehicle traffic remained broadly stable in the first comparison (increase of 0.3%) and increased by 0.8% in the second comparison.

# Vehicle Type

Provisional estimates indicate that van and lorry traffic decreased over the last year, and that car traffic increased.

In the year ending September 2019:



**Car and taxi traffic** increased by 1.5% to 258.0 billion vehicle miles (bvm) compared to the year ending September 2018. Car traffic rolling annual estimates were similar with those for the year ending June 2019.



**Van traffic** decreased by 1.4% to 50.4 bvm compared to the year ending September 2018. Van traffic rolling annual estimates have been decreasing since reaching a peak of 51.2 bvm last year.



**Lorry traffic** decreased by 1.1% to 16.9 bvm compared to the year ending September 2018. However, in the last five years there has been steady growth in lorry traffic (+5.8%).

## Long term trends

Over the last 20 years, traffic has changed at varying rates across vehicle types:

All Motor Vehicles 14.3%



10.5%

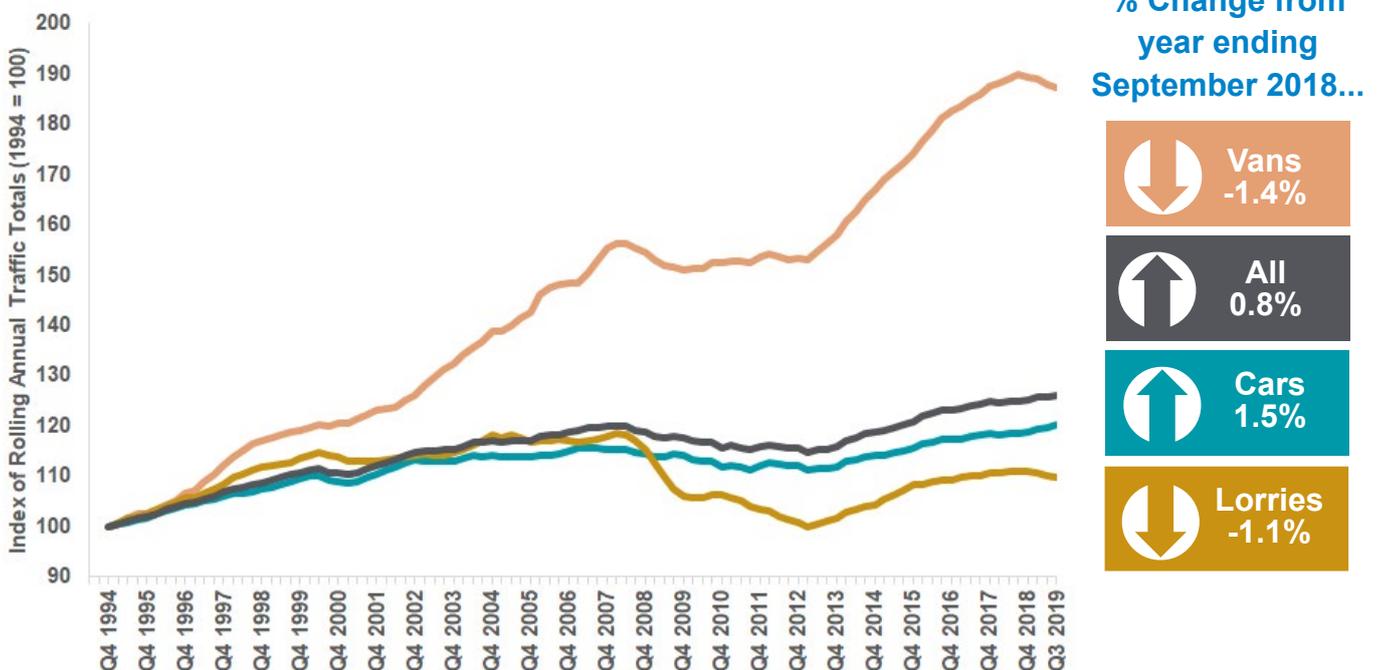


57.6%

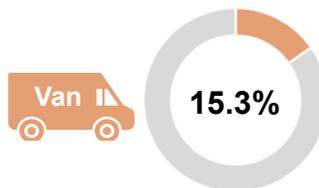
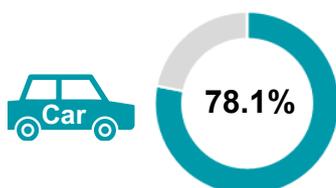


-2.6%

Chart 2: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain, by vehicle type from 1994 [\[TRA2501b\]](#)



## Share of traffic by vehicle type, in the year ending September 2019



# Road Type

Provisional estimates indicate that traffic increased on motorways and 'A' roads. Traffic remained broadly stable on minor roads.

Compared to the year ending September 2018, in the year ending September 2019:

- **Motorway traffic** increased by 0.9% to 68.9 bvm.
- **'A' road traffic** increased by 1.2% to 150.3 bvm.
- **Minor road traffic** remained broadly stable (increasing very slightly by 0.2% to 110.2 bvm).

## Long term trends over the last 20 years

Levels have changed at varying rates across road types.

All Road Types 14.3%

Motorways 28.0%

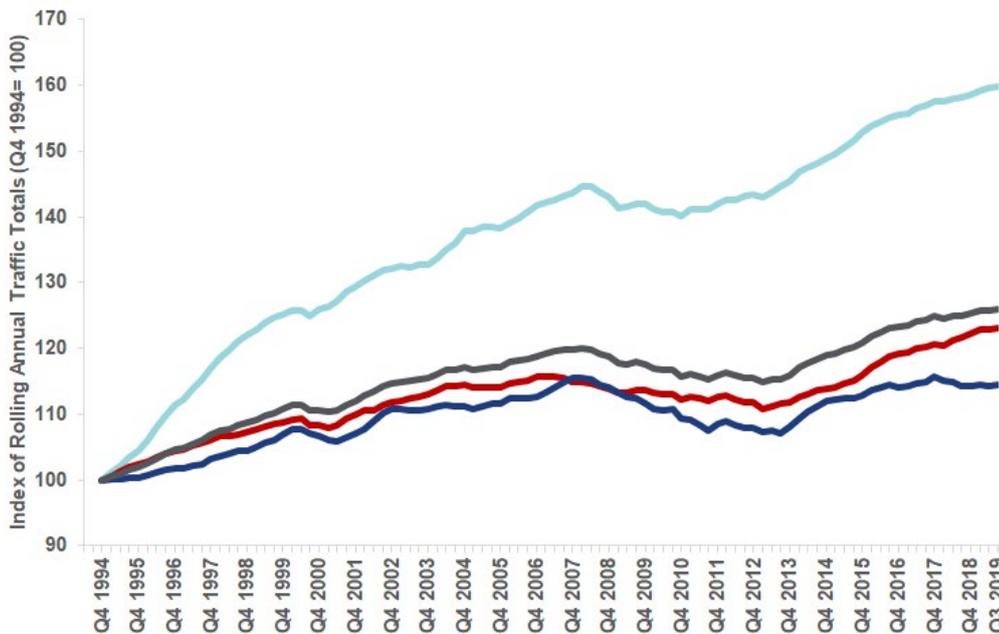
Rural 'A' 24.5%

Rural minor 18.5%

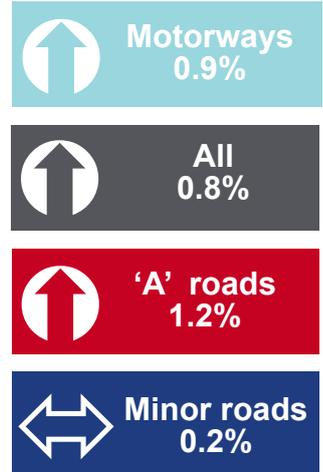
Urban 'A' -3.6%

Urban minor 2.0%

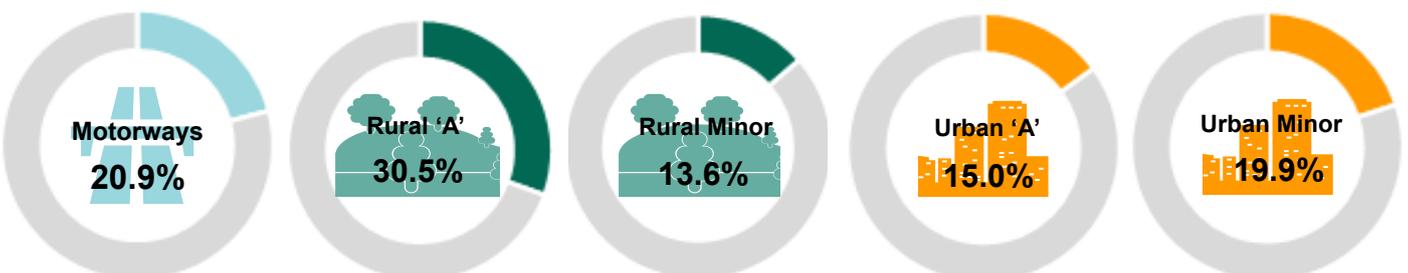
Chart 3: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain by road type from 1994 [\[TRA2502b\]](#)



% Change from year ending September 2018...



## Share of traffic by road type, in the year ending September 2019



## Glossary

	Term	Definition
	<i>Billion</i>	A thousand million
	<i>bvm</i>	Billion vehicle miles
	<i>Great Britain</i>	England, Wales, and Scotland
	<i>Index Number</i>	Comparing changes over time from a selected base year, often across multiple indicators where they cannot be directly compared
	<i>Q1</i>	Quarter 1: 1st January to 31st March. Similar for other quarters
	<i>Traffic</i>	Total distance travelled by vehicles, combining the number of vehicles on the road and how far they drive
	<i>Vehicle miles</i>	The units that traffic is measured in. Three vehicles travelling for four miles each would account for 12 vehicle miles worth of traffic
<b>Vehicle Types</b>	<i>Lorry / HGV</i>	A goods vehicle over 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight
	<i>Van / LCV</i>	A goods vehicle under 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight
<b>Road Types</b>	<i>Major</i>	'A' roads and Motorways
	<i>Minor</i>	'B', 'C' and unclassified roads
	<i>Rural</i>	Roads within an area with a population of under 10,000 people
	<i>Urban</i>	Roads within an area with a population of 10,000 or more people in England and Wales, or over 3,000 in Scotland

## Background Information

### Users and uses of these statistics

Road traffic data are a key source of management information on the country's infrastructure. Main uses of road traffic statistics are summarised online in our report "[Meeting customers' needs: Users and uses of road traffic statistics and data](#)". These include:

- Highways England, Local Authorities (including Transport for London) and devolved governments, who use the data for transport planning, road engineering and policy monitoring at a regional or local level.
- Road accident and safety statistics, who use our annual and quarterly traffic estimates to produce road safety and accident rates, as required for the Strategic Framework for Road Safety.

We welcome **feedback** on any aspects of the Department's road traffic statistics including content, timing, and format. Please send any queries you have by email, to [roadtraff.stats@dft.gov.uk](mailto:roadtraff.stats@dft.gov.uk).

These statistics were designated as [National Statistics in February 2013](#).

### National Statistics

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards, as 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: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-series](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-series)

## Background Information

### Sources, strengths and weaknesses of the data

**Provisional estimates** are based on data from around 300 automatic traffic counters and give an indication of changes in traffic levels for different types of vehicle and on different types of road in Great Britain as a whole. In addition to this data, final annual estimates make use of data from around 8,000 manual traffic counts and from automatic traffic counters operated by Highways England, Transport Scotland and Transport for London. Final annual statistics can estimate traffic levels in local areas and on specific road links, which cannot be produced from the provisional data.

The automatic traffic counters used as the data source in this publication classify vehicle types based on characteristics such as axle-spacing and vehicle length. This creates the possibility for misclassification of vehicles with atypical characteristics, meaning that **provisional estimates** for different vehicle types are less robust than the final estimates, which also utilise the more accurate manual count data. The classification algorithms are continually developed to ensure that vehicle classification is as accurate as possible. Between September 2018 and June 2019 a major upgrade of the DfT ATC network was carried out which involved installing a newer model of counter at about 60 per cent of sites. It is possible that this may have had a slight impact on the vehicle classification results, and therefore on the reported trend in vehicle types over this period. It is expected that planned development work on the classification algorithms will provide an opportunity to quantify and adjust for any such effects.

Further statistical guidance can be found online here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-traffic-statistics-guidance>.

Due to the methodology used to produce provisional traffic estimates, historic figures are subject to revision. However, these revisions are typically minor and will not affect qualitative patterns in the data. Provisional quarterly and annual traffic estimates for all motor vehicles have historically been accurate (typically within 1.5%) when compared with the final estimates, as illustrated in the table below.

All motor vehicle traffic	2017				Billion vehicle miles/percentage 2018			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Provisional estimates at time of publication	324.3	325.1	325.5	-	326.2	327.0	327.1	-
Final estimates	323.5	324.9	325.7	327.1	326.3	327.2	327.6	328.1
<i>Difference (%)</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>0.1</i>	<i>-0.1</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-0.03</i>	<i>-0.1</i>	<i>-0.2</i>	<i>-</i>

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### Next Release

The next annual traffic statistics release is expected to be published in June 2020, reporting the final 2019 estimates.

Provisional figures for 2020 will be published on quarterly basis during 2020. The next provisional figures, for the year to end March 2020, are due to be released in June 2020.