
Quarterly Road Traffic Estimates



Methodology Note



A quarterly series of road traffic estimates are published on the Department for Transport website, approximately 6 weeks after the end of each quarter.

Road traffic estimates are produced by different vehicle types and by different road classes. These are presented as indices, with the average quarter in 1993 as the base figure, in order to show changes over time.

Quarterly traffic estimates are based on data collected continuously from a national network of around 180 Automatic Traffic Counters (ATCs). In addition to counting traffic, the ATCs record some of the physical properties of passing vehicles which are used to classify traffic by type.

In order to produce quarterly estimates, roads in Great Britain are split into 22 categories, based on the type of road, the location, and the estimated annual average daily flow (AADF)¹. See Annex A for details of these categories.

Data from ATCs are used to indicate changes in traffic levels for different vehicle types on each of these road categories on a quarterly basis. These changes are then used to calculate quarterly indices for traffic in each category, using the average quarter in 1999 as the baseline. Each of these indices are attributed a weighting based on the proportions of the final 1999 annual traffic estimates.

These weighted indices are used to calculate traffic volume in the latest quarter for the following **vehicle types**:

- Cars
- Light vans
- Heavy goods vehicles
- Other motor vehicles²

1 Annual average daily flow (AADF) is the number of vehicles estimated to pass a given point on the road in a 24 hour period on an average day in the year.

2 'Other motor vehicles' includes two-wheeled motor vehicles, buses and coaches.

And on the following **road classes**:

- Motorway
- Rural A road
- Urban A road
- Minor rural road
- Minor urban road

These quarterly traffic volumes are then indexed, using the average quarter in 1993 as the base to give the figures shown in tables **TRA2501 to TRA2508**.

The quarterly figures given in vehicle miles in table **TRA2502** are the traffic volumes calculated prior to this indexing.

In order to give a consistent series, quarterly estimates are adjusted to remove the seasonality which is evident in traffic volumes.

When final annual estimates are released each year, the quarterly estimates for that year are constrained to these totals. Quarterly estimates are **provisional** until they have been constrained by the final annual estimates each year.

Final annual estimates are based on around 10,000 manual counts, which are combined with ATC data and road lengths to produce overall estimates.

For further information on these statistics please email roadtraff.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

This methodology note relates to the “Quarterly Road Traffic Estimates” statistics (tables and charts) and statistical release published on the DfT website at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/roads/traffic>

Annex A:

Road categories used in the calculation of quarterly road traffic estimates

Category	Description
01	Motorways in holiday areas
02	Motorways in other rural areas with an estimated AADF of up to 59,999
03	Motorways in other rural areas with an estimated AADF of 60,000 or more
04	Motorways in part rural and part urban areas and conurbations
05	Motorways in mostly urban areas and Greater London
06	Rural A roads in holiday and very rural areas with an estimated AADF of up to 4,999
07	Rural A roads in holiday and very rural areas with an estimated AADF of between 5,000 and 7,999
08	Rural A roads in holiday and very rural areas with an estimated AADF of 8,000 or more
09	Rural A roads in all other areas with an estimated AADF of up to 13,999
10	Rural A roads in all other areas with an estimated AADF of 14,000 or more
11	Urban A roads in holiday areas
12	Urban A roads in all other areas except Greater London with an estimated AADF of up to 19,999
13	Urban A roads in all other areas except Greater London with an estimated AADF of 20,000 or more
14	Urban A roads in Outer London
15	Urban A roads in Inner London
16	Urban A roads in Central London
50	Minor rural roads in holiday areas with an estimated AADF of up to 399
51	Minor rural roads in holiday areas with an estimated AADF of 400 or more
52	Minor rural roads in all other areas with an estimated AADF of up to 2,499
53	Minor rural roads in all other areas with an estimated AADF of 2,500 or more
54	Minor urban roads in all areas except Greater London
55	Minor urban roads in Greater London
