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FURTHER INFORMATION

Media Enquiries:

020 7944 3066

Public Enquiries:

Daryl Lloyd

020 7944 6142

vehicles.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Vehicle Licensing Statistics: 2011

This Statistical Release presents information on motor vehicles that were licensed, or were subject to a Statutory Off-Road Notification (SORN), in Great Britain during 2011.

The statistics are derived from data held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), which administers vehicle registration and licensing records in Great Britain.

The key findings from the Vehicle Licensing Statistics 2011 include:

- At the end of 2011 there were 34.2 million vehicles licensed for use on the roads in Great Britain, of which 28.5 million were cars.
- Between 2010 and 2011 the total vehicle stock number increased by 0.3 per cent. Since the recession of 2008-09 the annual growth in licensed vehicles has only averaged 0.4 per cent, lower than the 2.4 per cent averaged between 1996 and 2007.
- Just over 2.38 million vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain in 2011. This represents a 36 thousand vehicle, or 1.5 per cent, decrease from the previous year. However, the 2010 new registration figures will have been boosted by Vehicle Scrappage Scheme which ran until the end of March 2010.
- The number of newly registered cars powered by diesel has continued to rise. For the first time the proportion of cars registered for the first time that run on diesel has tipped over the 50 per cent mark.
- Average emissions from all the licensed cars first registered from 2001 onwards was down by 1.5 per cent from 2010 to an average of 163 g/km. The average CO₂ emissions from cars newly registered in the year fell by over 4 per cent from 2010 to an average figure of 138 g/km. Since 2001 the average emissions of new cars has fallen by over 21 per cent.
- At the end of 2011, the most common car in Great Britain was the Ford Focus (1.4 million) followed by the Ford Fiesta (1.3 million).

1. General context

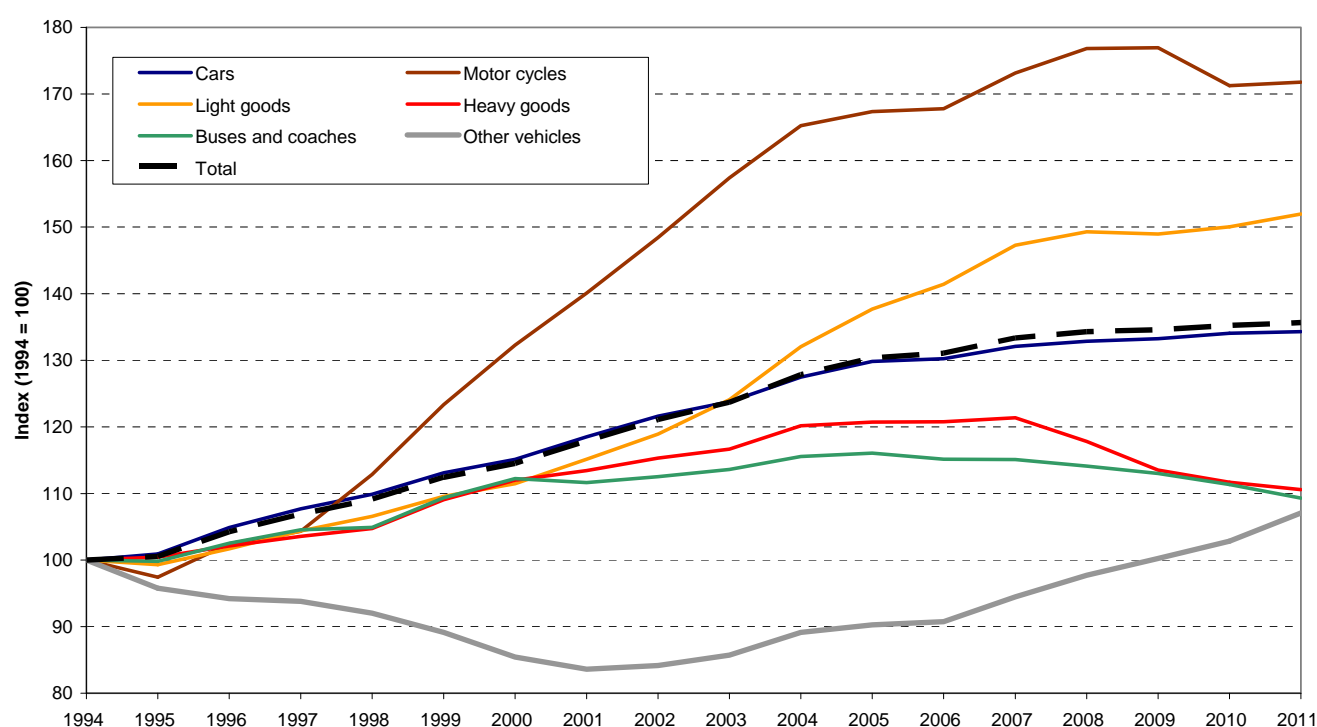
The number of licensed vehicles and number of vehicles registered for the first time continue to be affected by the general economic climate in Britain and further afield. The numbers of licensed heavy goods vehicles and buses & coaches tend to be more affected by the fluctuations of the economy than any other vehicle type. Both of these fleets have been on a downward trend for the last four years.

New car sales across the European Union as a whole are, with a few exceptions, down in 2011 in comparison with 2010, so in this context the market in the UK is comparable with elsewhere. However, analysis from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills suggests that the 4 per cent annual decline in new car sales in the UK in 2011 has been influenced by the previous government's Vehicle Scrappage Scheme which ran during 2009 and 2010. Once the effects of the incentive scheme have been adjusted for, BIS estimate that underlying trend in new car sales actually rose by 1 per cent in 2011¹.

2. Licensed vehicle stock

Licensed vehicles by body type: Great Britain, 1994 to 2011

(Vehicles web table VEH0102)



- At the end of 2011 there were 34.2 million vehicles licensed for use on the roads in Great Britain, of which 28.5 million were cars. Since 1994, the number of licensed cars in Great Britain has increased by 34 per cent from 21.2 million. Over the same period the number of light vans (or light good vehicles / LGVs) and motorcycles have increased by 52 per cent and 72 per cent respectively.

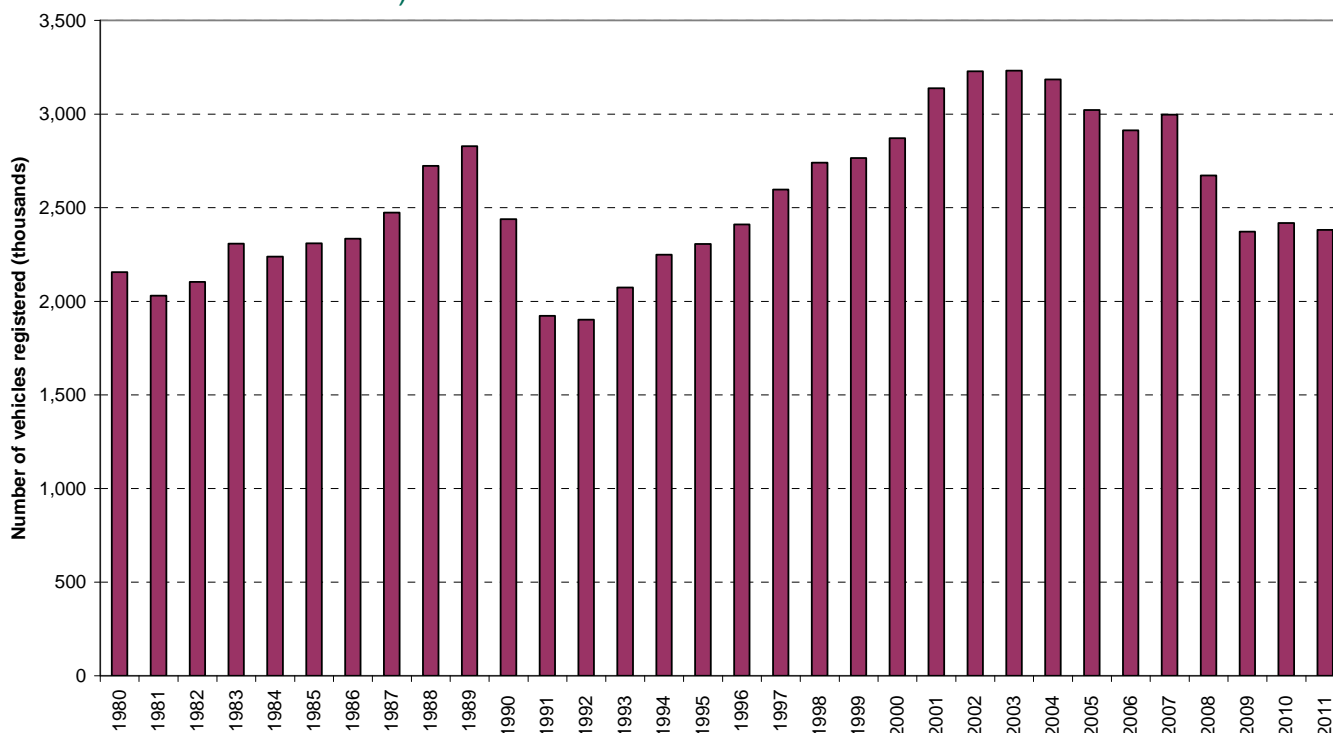
¹ Automotive Industry Report, Business Analysis Unit, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

- With the exception of 1991, the total number of licensed vehicles has increased every year since the end of the Second World War. Between 2010 and 2011 the total vehicle stock number increased by 0.3 per cent. Since the recession of 2008-09 the annual growth in licensed vehicles has only averaged 0.4 per cent, lower than the 2.4 per cent averaged between 1996 and 2007.
- The number of licensed heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and the number of licensed buses and coaches fell between 2010 and 2011. This marks the sixth successive year that the number of buses and coaches has fallen and there are now nearly 6 per cent fewer buses (by tax class) than there was at the peak time of 2005. The recent fall in the number of buses is mirrored by a reduction in vehicle miles driven by buses and coaches². The decline in HGVs is even more marked; 2011 figures are nearly 9 per cent lower than in 2007 and the lowest since 1999. It is likely that the number of licensed vehicles in both of these body types have decreased as a result of the economic downturn that began in 2008.
- Of the 1.9 million cars registered for the first time in 2011, 1.79 million remained licensed at the end of the year and an additional 34 thousand had a Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN). The remaining 84 thousand cars would have been exported or destroyed (at end-of-life or through accidents or enforcement action).

3. Vehicles registered for the first time

Vehicles registered for the first time in Great Britain: 1980 to 2011

(Vehicles web table VEH0153)

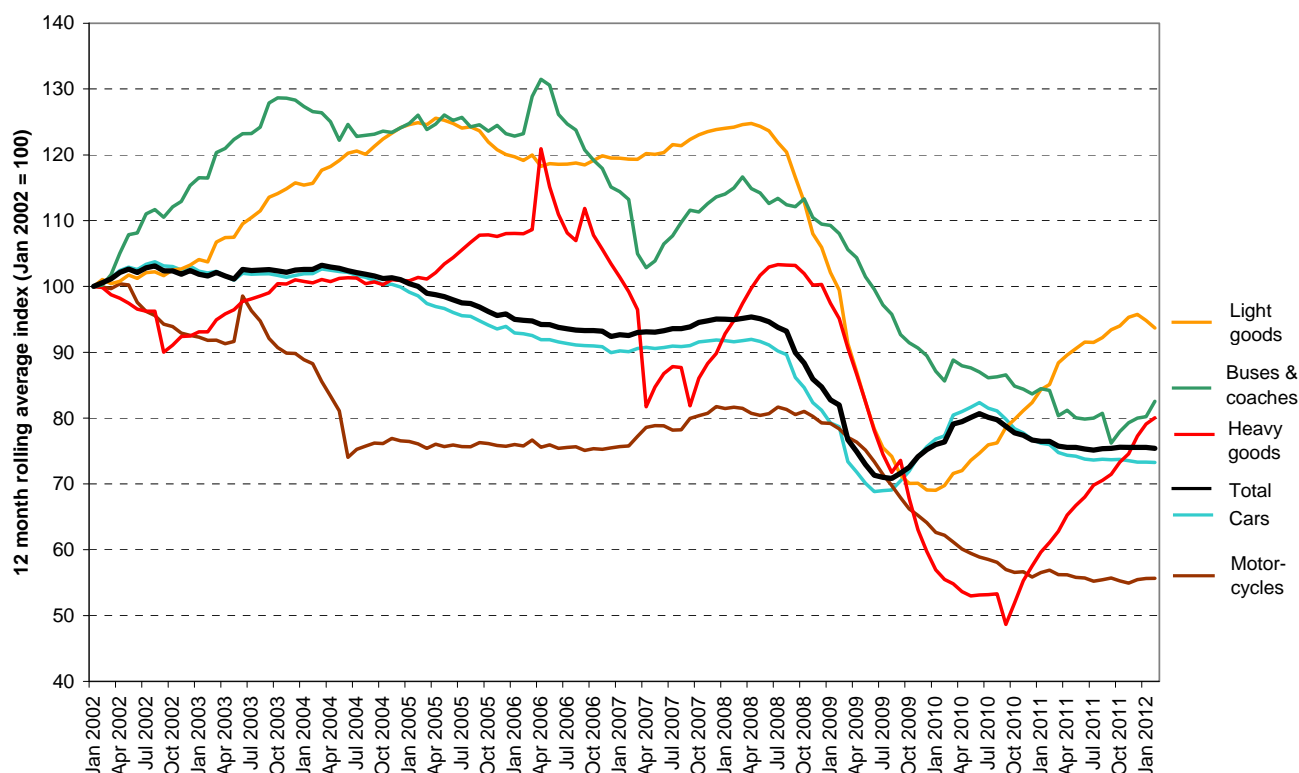


² See table TRA0101 (<http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/tables/tra0101/>), part of the traffic statistics series

- Just over 2.38 million vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain in 2011. This represents a 36 thousand vehicle, or 1.5 per cent, decrease from the previous year. It is, however, up slightly from the 2.37 million first registrations that took place in 2009. Aside from 2009, the 2011 total was the lowest since 1995.
- New vehicle registrations appear to be on a general downward trend from a peak in the early-2000s. The economic downturn is likely to have affected the figures from 2008 onwards, but the downward trend was already apparent before the recession began. However, the previous government's Vehicle Scrappage Scheme helped to boost first registrations between May 2009 and April 2010.
- The number of cars registered for the first time in 2011 was just over 1.9 million. This was 4.5 per cent, or 88 thousand, lower than in 2010, and it is the lowest year on record since body type figures were first produced in 2001. Within the private and light goods (PLG) taxation class (which includes private cars and light vans but excludes any vehicle that is exemption from vehicle excise duty), 2011 had the lowest number of first registrations since 1993, and the 1.9 million total was 32 per cent lower than the peak of PLG first registrations in 2003.

12-month rolling average of vehicles registered for the first time in Great Britain by body type, indexed to Jan 2002 = 100: January 2002 to February 2012

(Vehicles web table VEH0150)



- The number of light vans registered for the first time continues to grow more swiftly than any other body type. Following the recession-related dip during 2008 and 2009 dip, over 263 thousand light vans were registered in 2011, 16 per cent higher than the 226 thousand in 2010

and 38 per cent higher than the 190 thousand in 2009³.

- The most significant change in first registrations is within the heavy goods vehicles category. There number of HGVs that were registered for the first time rose from a low of 30 thousand in 2010 to 41 thousand in 2011, a 34 per cent increase.

4. Vehicle keepership / ownership

- At the end of 2011, the South West (SW) of England had the highest rate of vehicles, with 657 vehicles per thousand head of population. However, the South East (SE) of England had a higher rate of cars than any other region of country. There were 540 cars per thousand head of population in the SE in comparison with 399 cars per thousand head of population in the North East of England, the region with the lowest rate.
- It is estimated that there were roughly 9.1 million transfers of keepership of used vehicles during 2011. It is not possible to identify the precise reason for the transfer of keepership from the DVLA data, but a significant majority of these transfers are likely to be second-hand vehicle sales. About 7.4 million of these transactions were for cars with nearly 6.4 million cars changing hands at least once during the year and 0.87 million cars changing hands twice or more.
- The company / lease car market continues to be the primary driver of first registrations. Just under 60 per cent of all car first registrations were made by companies in 2011, the highest annual percentage on record. This figure is considerably smaller at 8.2 per cent in the whole licensed car fleet, though, which indicates that vehicles move quite swiftly from the company market to the private market.

5. Fuel type, CO₂ emissions and engine size

- The proportion of the licensed car fleet that is made up of diesel and alternative fuel vehicles has continued to grow. By the end of 2011 the number of hybrid electric cars climbed above the 100 thousand mark for the first time and the year also saw the appearance of the first plug-in hybrid cars. In total, diesel cars now account for nearly 31 per cent of all licensed cars, a significant increase from the 7.4 per cent it stood at in 1994. There were also 154 thousand gas, electric or hybrid electric cars in December 2011, 20 thousand (or 15 per cent) more than at the end of 2010.
- The number of newly registered cars powered by diesel has continued to rise. For the first time the proportion of cars registered for the first time that run on diesel has tipped over the 50 per cent mark. The equivalent figure in 2001 was 18 per cent. In addition, the introduction of the

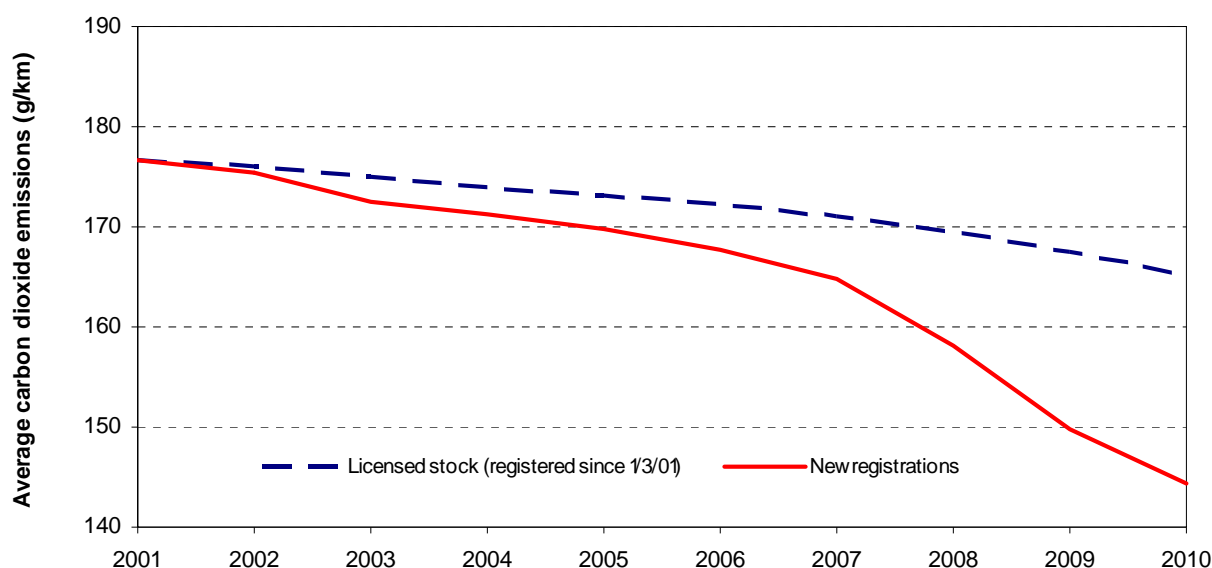
³ Information about the regulatory and licensing changes that might explain some of the reasons behind the relative changes in light goods and heavy goods vehicle ownership and usage is presented in section 1.6 of the Road Statistics 2007: Traffic, Speeds and Congestion statistical bulletin <http://tinyurl.com/roadstats07>.

plug-in car grant⁴ saw the number of pure electric car first registrations jump from around 250 in 2010 to 1,200 in 2011. This number is likely to continue increasing during 2012.

- The first ever plug-in hybrid cars were registered during 2011, but these were only a small number of pilot vehicles. The launch of the Vauxhall Ampera (also sold as the Chevrolet Volt) in January 2012 and the forthcoming plug-in Toyota Prius should lead to an increase in numbers during the coming year. In total, 154 thousand licensed cars used an alternative fuel to petrol or diesel by the end of the year, a figure that has increased roughly eight-fold since the year 2000.
- In total, 2,114 new ultra low emission vehicles (vehicles with tailpipe emissions of CO₂ below 75 g/km or vehicles with pure electric powertrains) were registered for the first time in the United Kingdom. This increased from 1,279 in 2010 and most of the increase was due to the introduction of the plug-in car grant. During 2011, 1,037 cars that were eligible for the grant were registered for the first time in the UK.
- The average engine size of all licensed cars in 2011 fell slightly to 1,740 cc from 1,746 cc in 2010 and 1,750 cc in 2009. This indicates that the previous long-term rising trend has stabilised and has probably now started to fall. Between 2007 and 2009 the average engine size of new cars fell sharply, but rose slightly to 1,702 cc in 2010 and remained at a similar value in 2011.

Average CO₂ emissions of licensed and newly registered cars: 2001 to 2010

(Vehicles web table VEH0206 and VEH0256)



- Average CO₂ emissions from cars continued to fall in 2011. Average emissions from all the licensed cars first registered from 2001 onwards was down by 1.5 per cent from 2010 to an average of 163 g/km. The average CO₂ emissions from cars newly registered in the year fell by over 4 per cent from 2010 to an average figure of 138 g/km. Since 2001 the average emissions of new cars has fallen by over 21 per cent.

⁴ See <http://www.dft.gov.uk/topics/sustainable/olev/plug-in-car-grant/> for further details.

- For cars licensed after 2001 and with a known CO₂ emission value, nearly a quarter (22.6 per cent) were in the lowest five VED bands (A to E, up to 140 g/km) at the end of 2010. This compares with under 1 per cent of cars emitting under 140 g/km of CO₂ in 2001 and 8 per cent in 2006. The number in VED Band A (under 100 g/km of CO₂) more than doubled from 57 thousand to 129 thousand between 2010 and 2011.
- Nearly 4 per cent of car first registrations were of cars in VED band A (CO₂ emissions of up to 100 g/km); this equates to nearly 73 thousand cars, up from 36 thousand cars in 2010. Just under 65 per cent of first registrations, or 1.2 million cars, were in bands A to E (up to 140 g/km). These five bands accounted for 55 per cent of first registrations in 2010. In comparison, the three bands for the highest emitting cars, over 200 g CO₂ per km, only accounted for 3.2 per cent first registrations, down from 4.7 per cent in 2010 and 17 per cent in 2001.
- There are financial benefits to motorists who switch to cars with smaller engine sizes or lower emissions. Cars with lower CO₂ emissions fall in cheaper VED bands. Cars with smaller engine sizes and / or cars which use diesel rather than petrol tend to have better fuel efficiency. Therefore, financial considerations are likely to be a significant driver of the trends towards cars with smaller engine sizes and lower emissions.

6. Marques and models of vehicles

- At the end of 2011, the most common car in Great Britain was the Ford Focus (1.4 million) followed by the Ford Fiesta (1.3 million). In total, Ford cars accounted for 15 per cent of all cars and 12 per cent were manufactured by Vauxhall. The top five marques (Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, Peugeot and Renault) accounted for nearly 50 per cent of all licensed cars in Great Britain. The next ten (Toyota, BMW, Nissan, Citroen, Honda, Mercedes, Audi, Fiat, Land Rover and Mazda) take the total to over 80 per cent. There were over 1 million cars licensed from each of the top ten marques (Ford to Honda).
- For the third year running, the Ford Fiesta has been the most popular new registration with almost 95 thousand cars registered for the first time during 2011. This is down from the 102 thousand first registrations in 2010 and 114 thousand in 2009. The Ford Focus, which was the most popular new car from 2001 to 2008, was in second place
- The top five car marques in terms of new registrations (Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, BMW and Audi) accounted for 47 per cent of the new car registrations in 2011. Audi is new to the list in 2011, pushing Peugeot down to seventh place, behind Nissan.

7. Background notes

1. The [Vehicle Licensing Statistics](http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/vehicles/licensing/) web page provides further detail of the key findings presented in this statistical release and statistics on other vehicle topics. The tables are available at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/vehicles/licensing/>.
2. 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 that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.
3. 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](#).