

Notes and Definitions: Transport Accidents and Casualties



This section provides notes and definitions for the transport accidents and casualties section of Transport Statistics Great Britain published on 15 December 2011.

Notes and Definitions Include:

- Information on sources
- Information on “accuracy”.
- Definitions.
- General information for the tables including links to background information.

Reported road accidents and casualties

Tables TSGB 0801- 0804, 0809

The statistics in these tables refer to personal injury accidents occurring on the public highway (including footways) in which at least one road vehicle or a vehicle in collision with a pedestrian is involved and which become known to the police within 30 days of its occurrence. The vehicle need not be moving and accidents involving stationary vehicles and pedestrians or users are included. One accident may give rise to several casualties. “Damage only” accidents are not included in this publication. Further information about reported road casualty statistics can be found at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/road-accidents-and-safety/>

Comparisons with death registrations show that very few, if any; road accident fatalities are not reported to the police. It has long been known that police data does not provide a complete record of all injury accidents and resulting casualties. However, STATS19 remains the most detailed, complete and reliable single source of information on road casualties covering the whole of Great Britain. Our best current estimate derived from the NTS data is that the total annual number of road casualties in Great Britain, including those not reported to police, is within the range 660 thousand to 800 thousand with a central estimate of 730 thousand. A discussion of how these estimates have been derived, and their limitations, together with information on complementary sources of data on road accidents and casualties, are contained in two articles published by the Department in Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: 2010 – “Survey data on road accidents” and “Hospital admissions data on road casualties” both of which can be found at:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/road-accidents-and-safety-annual-report-2010/rrcgb2010-05.pdf>

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/road-accidents-and-safety-annual-report-2010/rrcgb2010-06.pdf>

Definitions of terms used in the tables:

Accident: Involves personal injury occurring on the public highway (including footways) in which at least one road vehicle or a vehicle in collision with a pedestrian is involved and which becomes known to the police within 30 days of its occurrence. One accident may give rise to several casualties. "Damage only" accidents are not included in this publication.

Adults: Persons aged 16 years and over (except where otherwise stated).

Cars: Includes taxis, estate cars, three and four wheel cars and minibuses except where otherwise stated. Also includes motor caravans prior to 1999.

Bus or coach: Vehicles equipped to carry 17 or more passengers regardless of use.

Casualty: A person killed or injured in an accident. Casualties are sub-divided into killed, seriously injured and slightly injured.

Children: Persons under 16 years of age (except where otherwise stated).

Drivers: Persons in control of vehicles other than pedal cycles, motorcycles and ridden animals (see riders). Other occupants of vehicles are passengers.

Failed breath test: Drivers or riders tested with a positive result, or who failed or refused to provide a specimen of breath.

Fatal accident: An accident in which at least one person is killed.

Goods vehicles: These are divided into two groups according to vehicle weight (see below). They include tankers, tractor units travelling without their semi-trailers, trailers, articulated vehicles and pick-up trucks.

Heavy goods vehicles (HGV): Goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes maximum permissible gross vehicle weight (gvw).

Light goods vehicles (LGV): Goods vehicles, mainly vans (including car derived vans), not over 3.5 tonnes maximum permissible gross vehicle weight (gvw).

Killed: Human casualties who sustained injuries which caused death less than 30 days (before 1954, about two months) after the accident. Confirmed suicides are excluded.

Motorcycles: Mopeds, motor scooters and motor cycles (including motor cycle combinations).

Motorways: “M” roads and “A”(M) roads.

Other roads: All “B”, “C” class and unclassified roads, unless otherwise noted.

Other vehicles: Other motor vehicles include ambulances, fire engines, trams, refuse vehicles, road rollers, agricultural vehicles, excavators, mobile cranes, electric scooters and motorised wheelchairs etc. Other non motor vehicles include those drawn by animal, ridden horses, invalid carriages without a motor, street barrows etc.

Passengers: Occupants of vehicles, other than the person in control (the driver or rider). Includes pillion passengers.

Pedal cycles: Includes tandems, tricycles and toy cycles ridden on the carriageway.

Pedal cyclists: Riders of pedal cycles, including any passengers. From 1983 the definition includes a small number of cycles and tricycles with battery assistance with a maximum speed of 15 mph.

Pedestrians: Includes children riding toy cycles on the footway, persons pushing bicycles, pushing or pulling other vehicles or operating pedestrian controlled vehicles, those leading or herding animals, occupants of prams or wheelchairs, and people who alight safely from vehicles and are subsequently injured.

Riders: Persons in control of pedal cycles, motorcycles or ridden animals. Other occupants of these vehicles are passengers.

Rural roads: Major roads and minor roads outside urban areas and having a population of less than 10 thousand.

Severity: Of an accident: the severity of the most severely injured casualty (fatal, serious or slight).
Of a casualty: killed, seriously injured or slightly injured.

Serious accident: One in which at least one person is seriously injured but no person (other than a confirmed suicide) is killed.

Serious injury: An injury for which a person is detained in hospital as an “in patient”, or any of the following injuries whether or not they are detained in hospital: fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushings, burns (excluding friction burns), severe cuts, severe general shock requiring medical treatment and injuries causing death 30 or more days after the accident. An injured casualty is recorded as seriously or slightly injured by the police on the basis of information available within a short time of the accident. This generally will not reflect the results of a medical examination, but may be influenced according to whether the casualty is hospitalised or not.

Slight accident: One in which at least one person is slightly injured but no person is killed or seriously injured.

Slight injury: An injury of a minor character such as a sprain (including neck whiplash injury), bruise or cut which are not judged to be severe, or slight shock requiring roadside attention. This definition includes injuries not requiring medical treatment.

Speed limits: Permanent speed limits applicable to the roadway.

Urban roads: Major and minor roads within an urban area with a population of 10 thousand or more. The definition is based on the 1991 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister definition of urban settlements. The urban areas used for these tables are based on 2001 census data.

Users of a vehicle: All occupants, i.e. driver (or rider) and passengers, including persons injured while boarding or alighting from the vehicle.

Motor Vehicle Offences

Tables TSGB 0810- 0811

Breath tests: Section 25 and Schedule 8 of the Transport Act 1981 amended the drinking and driving provisions of the Road Traffic Act 1972. These sections of the Act were renumbered (but otherwise unchanged) in the Road Traffic Act 1988. The police can require a person to take a screening breath test if they have reasonable cause to suspect that the person has been driving or attempting to drive or had been in charge of a vehicle with alcohol in his or her body, or that he or she has committed a moving traffic offence, or that he or she has been involved in an accident. A person failing to provide a breath test without reasonable excuse is guilty of an offence.

For the purposes of evidence in court, breath analysis was introduced in May 1983. The prescribed alcohol limit is 80 milligrams (mg) of alcohol in 100 millilitres (ml) of blood or 107mg per 100ml urine. The equivalent breath alcohol limit is expressed as 35 micrograms of alcohol per 100ml breath. In April 1996 the Association of Chief Police Officers recommended that drivers in all injury accidents should be breath tested.

An evidential breath test is required to be taken at a police station after a positive screening test, or where a screening test was refused or could not be provided. It may also be required after arrest for impairment or in certain other cases, e.g. where a person arrested for theft of a motor vehicle is suspected of having consumed alcohol. A suspect will normally be asked to provide two specimens of breath to establish the amount of alcohol in his or her body. The lower result is taken as evidence of the person's breath alcohol concentration. Where the lower result is between 36 and 50 micrograms the suspect may request a blood or urine test. In certain limited circumstances a suspect can be required to provide a specimen of blood or urine instead of breath.

From April 2008 onwards police forces across England and Wales progressively began to introduce new digital breath recording devices. This change may be a factor in the increase of around a fifth in the number of screening breath tests in 2008 compared to 2007.

Findings of guilt at all courts: Includes all motoring offences which have resulted in a finding of guilt either after a summary trial at Magistrates' Court or else at the Crown Court. A person appearing in court can be dealt with for more than one offence at that appearance, and in this table the number of offences is counted, not the number of persons appearing at court.

Fixed penalty notices: A large number of motoring offences are dealt with by fixed penalty notices. Under the extended fixed penalty system introduced by the Transport Act 1982, now incorporated in Part III of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988, the police can issue fixed penalty notices for a wide range of offences. The court can automatically register an unpaid notice as a fine without any court appearance.

Written warnings: These include cautions given in lieu of prosecutions for offences where there would have been enough evidence to support a prosecution. Informal warnings and advice, whether oral or written, are not included.

Obstruction, waiting and parking offences are dealt with both by fixed penalty notices and penalty charge notices. Penalty Charge Notices are issued by Local Authorities under Civil Parking Enforcement powers. The fall in fixed penalty notices issued by the police can be attributed mainly to more local authorities issuing Penalty Charge Notices. Further information on decriminalized parking, including data collected from Local Authorities by the Department for Transport can be found at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/civil-parking-enforcement-statistics-200910>

Motor insurance

The data previously published in TSGB Table 8.8 prior to 2009 are no longer routinely available. For further information see the Association of British Insurers web site at: www.abi.org.uk or Standard and Poor's SynThesys Non-Life database of returns.

Railway accidents:

Tables TSGB0805 - 0807

These tables give the number of train accidents and casualties in incidents that occurred in stations, on trains, or elsewhere on Network Rail managed infrastructure in Great Britain, such as the track and trackside. However, workforce fatalities that occur away from these locations, but occur during working time, are also included.

These data are subject to revision. Numbers may change as a result of late reporting or as more information, such as coroners' verdicts, becomes available.

In a change from previous years, these tables have been sourced from the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB). Previously these tables were based on accidents and casualties recorded by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) within a database called SIGNAL. However, to avoid the confusion caused by having two sets of data being published, ORR now publishes the statistics collected by RSSB. This means that there are a number of definitional differences between these figures and those published in previous years. In particular the RSSB figures only cover National Rail, and do not cover accidents on Eurotunnel, London Underground, trams, other rail guided systems and trolley vehicle systems, which were all included in the previous figures from SIGNAL. The tables have been revised to fit the RSSB definitions, and data from previous years have been revised to the RSSB figures to provide a consistent time series.

Most RSSB data are derived from the industry's Safety Management Information System (SMIS). SMIS records a wide range of incidents, including all injuries and all safety events that are reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1995. The most serious incidents tend to be well reported so the statistics for these should be robust, but it is likely that there is some underreporting of minor injuries, and this may differ depending on the injured party and the cause. For further details on how RSSB quality assure SMIS data, please refer to Chapter 10 of the RSSB Annual Safety Performance Report (ASPR) 2010/11.

Table TSGB0805 shows casualties occurring in rail accidents. In this table a **passenger** is defined as a person on railway infrastructure who intends to travel, is in the process of travelling, or has travelled. This is regardless of whether he or she has a valid ticket. The exceptions are travellers who trespass or who commit, or attempt to commit, suicide. People who are injured this way are classified as members of the public. A person is classified as a member of the **workforce** if he or she is working for the industry on railway activities, either as a direct employee or under contract. A person is considered a **member of the public** if they are neither a passenger nor a member of the workforce; this includes trespassers but excludes suicides. **Trespassers** are people deliberately going where they are never permitted to go, including those who deliberately jump from trains or platforms, or are climbing on the outside of overbridges, etc. People on level crossings are not classified as trespassers, even if they are misusing the crossing. **Suicides** include suicides, suspected suicides, and non-fatal injuries sustained by people attempting to commit suicide. Third party shock and trauma from witnessing suicides is included elsewhere, in the statistics for the person type affected (workforce, passenger or public). Where a coroner's verdict is not available, or a coroner returns an open verdict, intent is determined by applying the Ovenstone criteria (see Appendix 4 of the ASPR 2010/11).

A **fatality** is someone who dies as a result of a rail accident, within a year of the accident occurring. **Major injuries** include injuries to passengers, staff or members of the public as defined in schedule 1 to RIDDOR 1995. This includes losing consciousness, most fractures, major dislocations and loss of sight (temporary or permanent) and other injuries that resulted in hospital attendance for more than 24 hours. **Minor injuries** include all other physical injuries. **Shock or trauma** includes cases resulting from being involved in or witnessing events that have serious potential of a fatal outcome, such as collisions and derailments, as well as cases resulting from other causes, such as verbal abuse and near misses.

Table TSGB0806 is based on passenger casualties owing to train accidents and movement accidents involving people on board trains or in the act of boarding or alighting from them. Specifically, it covers passengers injured as a result of: (i) train accidents, (ii) falling or leaning from moving trains, (iii) sudden train movement, such as braking or lurching, and (iv) accidents while boarding or alighting from trains, whether they are stationary or moving. This is the basis for comparisons with other modes of transport.

Table TSGB0807 shows the total number of RIDDOR reportable train accidents irrespective of whether personal injury was involved.

Further details about the definitions used in these tables can be found in the RSSB Annual Safety Performance Report: <http://www.rssb.co.uk/SPR/REPORTS/Pages/default.aspx>.

Railway signals passed at danger:

Table TSGB0808

Table TSGB0808 shows signals passed at danger (SPADs). The rail industry uses the SPAD risk ranking tool to assign a numeric score to each incident. For each SPAD, the score reflects its accident potential (for example, how close it came to the conflict point) and the potential consequences if an accident had occurred (in the case of a collision, it takes into account speed, crashworthiness and passenger loadings). To assist with reporting, SPADs are grouped into severity bands: (i) not a significant risk; (ii) potentially significant; and (iii) potentially severe.

In a change to previous publications this table shows SPADs by financial year rather than calendar year, for consistency with the other rail tables in this chapter. Calendar year figures are available from ORR's National Rail Trends Portal: <http://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/>.

These notes and definitions relate to the detailed statistics (tables and charts) on “transport accidents and casualties” which can be found on the Transport Statistics Great Britain [Transport accidents and casualties page](#), TSGB0801 to TSGB0811