

Quarterly Road Traffic Estimates: Great Britain Q3 (July - September) 2013



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for Transport

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Main findings:

Increase in traffic for each vehicle type and each road class compared to last year.

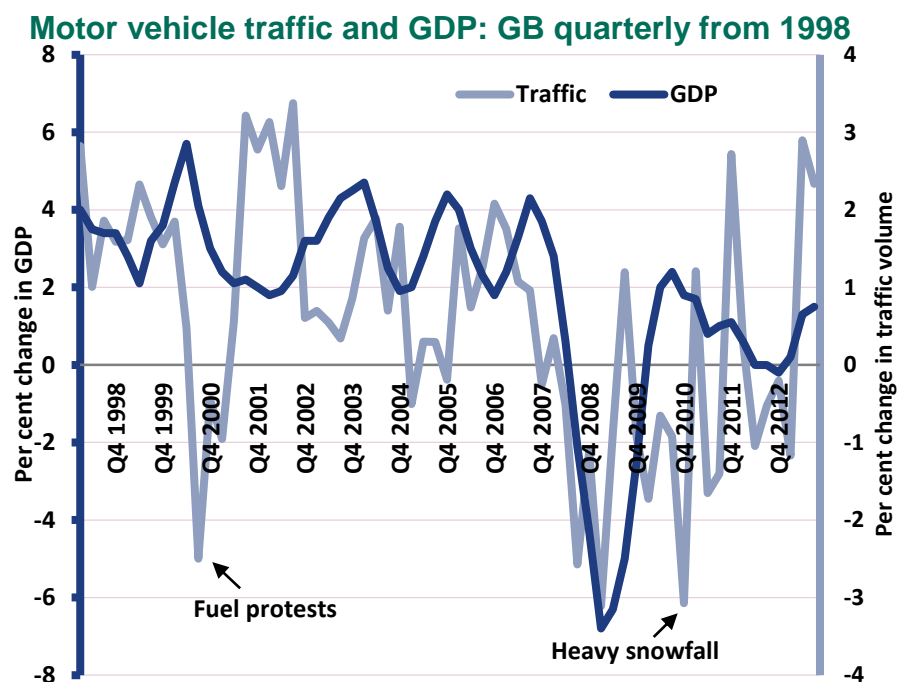
All Motor Vehicle Traffic in Great Britain in July to September (Q3) 2013 was 2.3% higher when compared to the same quarter in 2012.

However, the same quarter last year saw extremely high levels of rainfall, with the summer of 2012 (June to August) being the second wettest since records began. This poor weather may have put people off making trips, and the relatively drier weather this year is likely to have contributed to the growth in road traffic, compared to last year.

Since 2008, the trend in all motor vehicle traffic has been fairly flat, although this is the highest quarterly traffic estimate since quarter three 2009. Along with the weather, the economy is likely to have had an effect on this trend, as highlighted in the chart below.

Compared to the same quarter in 2012:

- **All vehicle types showed a rise.** LGV traffic increased by 5.1 per cent, HGV traffic grew by 2.7 per cent. Car traffic increased by 1.9 per cent.
- **Traffic volumes rose on all road types**, with a larger increase in motorway traffic (3.2 per cent) than traffic on rural and urban roads, which both rose 2.1 per cent.



About this release

This quarterly release presents provisional estimates for road traffic in Great Britain between July and September (Quarter 3) 2013. Quarterly estimates are provisional until they have been constrained by the final annual estimates each year. Therefore, figures for 2013 are provisional in this release. Annual estimates for 2013 are due to be published in June 2014.

The estimates are based on traffic data collected continuously from a national network of around 200 Automatic Traffic Counters (ATCs). The ATCs also record some of the physical properties of passing vehicles which are used to classify traffic by vehicle type.

The traffic estimates in this release are seasonally adjusted unless otherwise stated.

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Summary figures for Quarter 3 (July – September)

The summary table below shows the patterns in vehicle traffic compared to last year, ten years, and twenty years ago. Further commentary can be found over the next page.

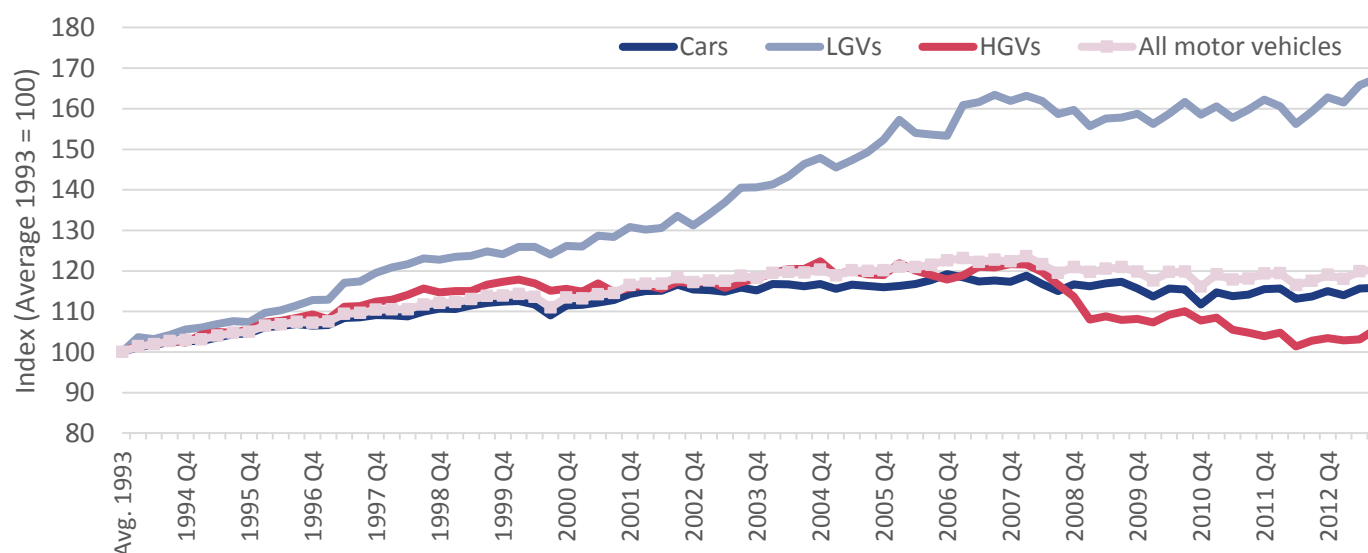
	Vehicle Miles Latest Quarter 2013 Q3	Percentage change compared to		
		Last year 2012 Q3	Ten years ago 2003 Q3	Twenty years ago 1993 Q3
All Motor Vehicle Traffic	77.0 billion	↑ 2.3%	↑ 1.2%	↑ 20.3%
Cars	60.8 billion	↑ 1.9%	↓ 0.1%	↑ 15.8%
Light Goods Vehicles	10.8 billion	↑ 5.1%	↑ 19.2%	↑ 66.7%
HGVs	4.0 billion	↑ 2.7%	↓ 9.9%	↑ 5.4%
Motorways	16.2 billion	↑ 3.2%	↑ 10.2%	↑ 51.9%
Rural A-Roads	22.0 billion	↑ 1.7%	↑ 1.2%	↑ 25.1%
Urban A-Roads	12.1 billion	↑ 0.2%	↓ 5.3%	↑ 0.6%
Rural Minor Roads	10.3 billion	↑ 3.0%	↑ 4.8%	↑ 19.4%
Urban Minor Roads	16.4 billion	↑ 3.5%	↓ 3.5%	↑ 8.7%

Quarterly Road Traffic by vehicle type

Latest figures: Rise in traffic for all vehicle types.

- Total motor vehicle traffic has grown by 20 per cent over the last twenty years. However, Light Goods Vehicle traffic has increased by almost 70 per cent over the same period. The increase in popularity of online shopping, for both food and non-food items is likely to have contributed to this growth.
- The latest quarter is the highest quarterly Light Goods Vehicle traffic figure since the series began in 1993. Light goods vehicle traffic totalled 10.8 billion vehicle miles in quarter three of 2013, 5.1 per cent higher than in the same quarter of the previous year.

Road traffic in Great Britain by vehicle type, seasonally adjusted indices (Ave. 1993=100)



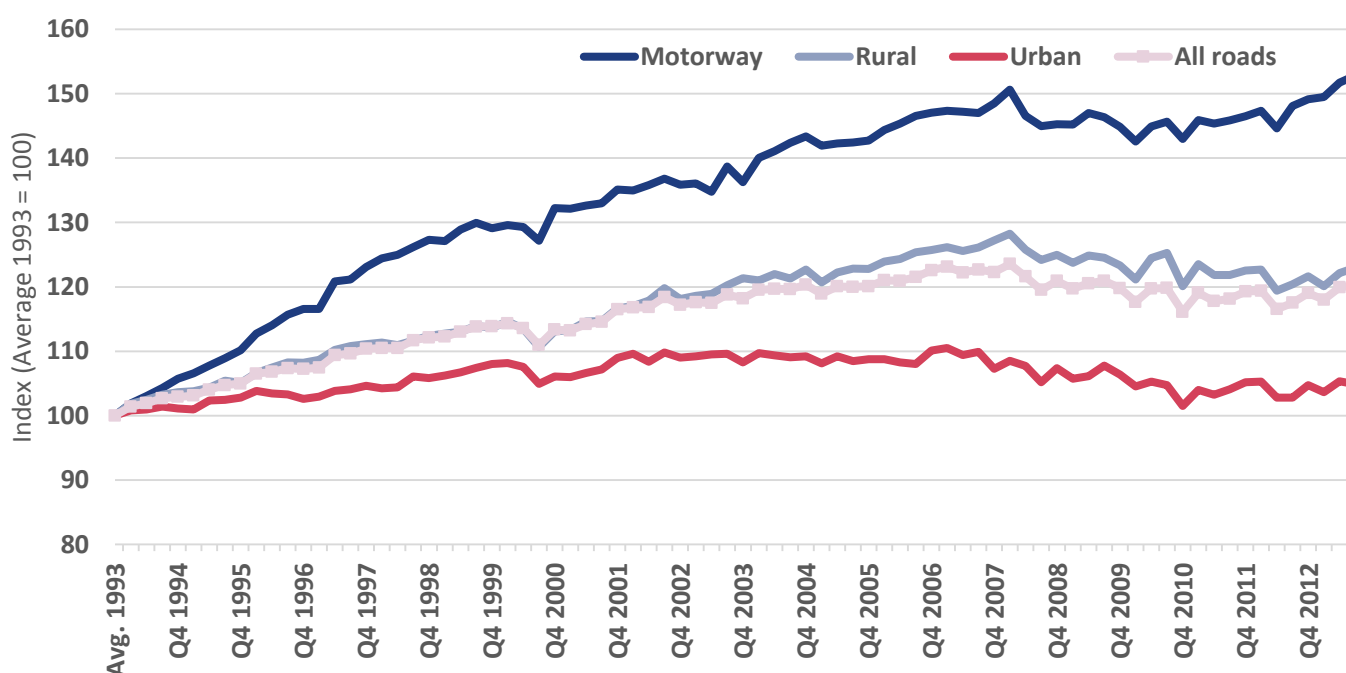
- Car traffic increased by 1.9 per cent, to 60.8 billion vehicle miles, between quarters three of 2012 and 2013. However, car traffic has fallen slightly (0.1 per cent), when compared to ten years ago.
- Heavy goods vehicle traffic increased by 2.7 per cent, to 4.0 billion vehicle miles, between the third quarters of 2013 and 2012. However, the latest figure is almost ten per cent lower than the level of HGV traffic ten years ago. According to licensing figures, the average weight of HGVs increased between 2001 and 2011. This may suggest a switch in companies using fewer, but larger HGVs.
- Other motor vehicle traffic, which includes motorcycles, buses and coaches, was relatively stable, rising by 1.1 per cent, to 1.4 billion vehicle miles in the third quarter of 2013. Caution, however, should be taken when interpreting figures for other motor vehicle traffic as they are based on small numbers.

Quarterly Road Traffic by road class

Latest figures: Increase in traffic on all road types.

- Compared to the third quarter of 2012, the increases shown in the level of traffic were similar across Motorways and minor roads (3.2 and 3.3 per cent respectively), and lower for A-Roads (1.2 per cent).
- Estimates for urban minor roads show the largest rise for any road type when comparing the third quarters of 2013 and 2012. Traffic volumes rose 3.5 per cent, to 16.4 billion vehicle miles.
- Over the last twenty years, the traffic volume on motorways has increased the most of any road type, 51.9 per cent. Traffic volume on rural roads has increased by 23.2 per cent, and urban road traffic has risen by 5.1 per cent, over the same period.
- In quarter three 1993, 16.6 per cent of all traffic was on motorways, compared to 21.0 per cent in quarter three of 2013. Over the same period, the proportion of traffic on urban roads has fallen from 42.3 per cent to 37.0 per cent.

Road traffic in Great Britain by road class, seasonally adjusted indices (Ave. 1993=100)



Background information

Sources, strengths and weaknesses of the data

- Quarterly estimates are based on data from 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.
- Annual estimates make use of data from around eight thousand manual traffic counts in addition to the data from the automatic traffic counters and can estimate traffic levels in local areas and on specific road links which cannot be produced from the quarterly data.
- Automatic traffic counters 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 counts data. The classification algorithms are continually developed to ensure that vehicle classification is as accurate as possible.
- Provisional quarterly traffic estimates for all motor vehicles have historically been accurate (typically within 1 per cent) when compared with the final quarterly estimates.

All motor vehicles traffic	2010					2011					2012				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann
Provisional estimates at time of publication	71.8	79.5	81.1	74.1	306.6	76.7	75.8	76.2	77.3	305.8	76.5	74.6	75.0	76.7	302.6
Final estimates	72.2	79.9	81.5	74.6	308.1	76.3	75.4	75.7	76.4	303.8	76.5	74.6	75.3	76.2	302.6
<i>Difference (%)</i>	-0.6	-0.5	-0.5	-0.6	-0.5	0.6	0.4	0.6	1.2	0.7	0.0	-0.1	-0.4	0.6	0.0

- Further details can be found in the Quarterly road traffic estimates: methodology note, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-statistics-guidance>

Users and uses of Road Traffic Estimates

Road traffic data are a key source of management information on the country's infrastructure. Main uses of road traffic statistics include:

- The Highways Agency, Local Authorities (including Transport for London) and devolved governments use the data for transport planning, road engineering and policy monitoring at a regional or local level.
- Road accident and safety statistics use annual and quarterly traffic estimates to produce road safety and accident rates, as required by the Strategic Framework on Road Safety.
- Traffic estimates are used to produce the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory (NAEI)

We continuously review the content of these statistics to ensure they are meeting users' needs. A summary of the feedback we have received from users can be found in ['Meeting customers' needs: Users and uses of road traffic statistics and data'](#).

We welcome further feedback on any aspects of the Department's road traffic statistics including content, timing, and format via email to roadtraff.statistics@dft.gsi.gov.uk

National Statistics

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards 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: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-series>

Next update

The next Quarterly Road Traffic estimates, for Q4 (October to December) 2013 are due to be published in February 2014.