



Department
for Transport

Provisional Road Traffic Estimates

Great Britain: January 2015 - December 2015

Annual motor vehicle traffic was at the highest level ever in 2015, increasing by 2.2% compared to the previous year.

The **provisional figure** of 317.8 billion¹ vehicle miles travelled on GB roads in 2015 is the highest rolling annual total ever and 1.1% higher than the pre-recession peak in the year ending September 2007. Rolling annual motor vehicle traffic has increased for the eleventh quarter in succession.

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About provisional traffic estimates

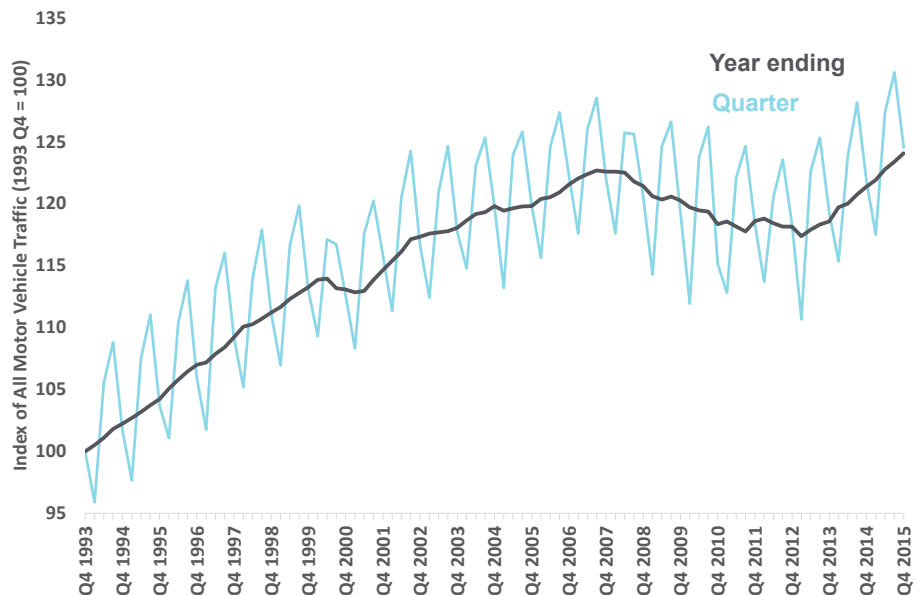
This release presents provisional estimates for road traffic in Great Britain for January 2015 to December 2015. Provisional estimates are published quarterly and remain provisional until after they have been constrained by the final annual estimates each year. Final annual estimates for 2015 are due to be published in summer 2016. These provisional estimates are based on traffic data collected continuously from a network of around 200 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.

Information

Further charts and tables can be accessed online via our [road traffic statistical series](#).

Chart 1: Rolling Annual and Quarterly Indices of Road Traffic in Great Britain, from 1993



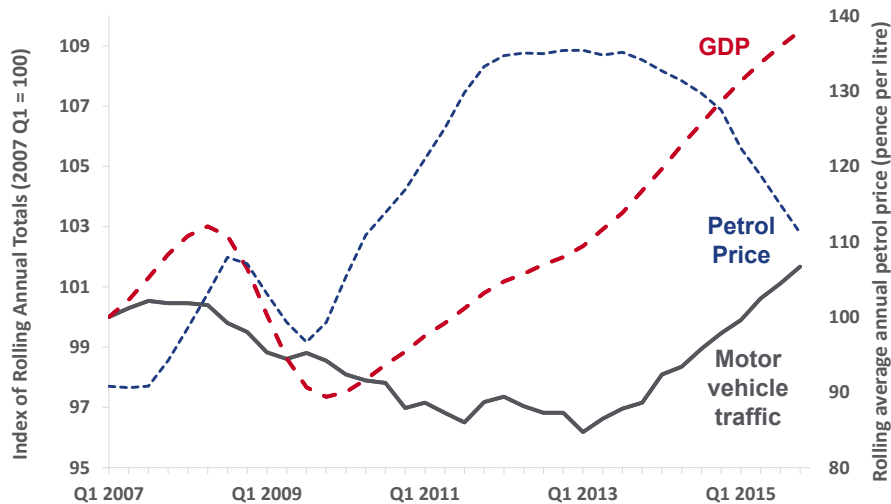
Compared to the previous year, in the year ending December 2015:

- ▶ **Car traffic increased by 1.7%** to 248.6 billion vehicle miles, very slightly above the pre-recession.
- ▶ **Van traffic continued to rise faster** than any other vehicle type, increasing by 6.1% to a new peak of 47.7 billion vehicle miles.
- ▶ **HGV traffic rose** on motorways and rural 'A' roads, but fell on urban 'A roads.
- ▶ **All road classes experienced a rise**, apart from Urban 'A' road traffic which remained at the same level.
- ▶ **Motorway traffic increased by 2.4%** to 65.8 billion vehicle miles, the highest ever level.

In Context

The upward trend in traffic volumes is likely to reflect growth in the UK economy, with GDP 2.2%² higher in the year ending December 2015 than in the previous year. Lower fuel prices may also have contributed to increased traffic. The typical retail price of premium unleaded in the year ending December 2015 was 16.3 pence per litre cheaper than in the previous year³, and diesel was 18.5 pence per litre cheaper.

Chart 2: Index of rolling annual motor vehicle traffic in Great Britain and UK GDP, together with rolling annual unleaded petrol price from 2007 [TRA2501f]



Summary Figures

The summary table below shows how vehicle traffic in the year ending December 2015 compares to that in the year ending September 2015, and to figures 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	Last Year	Five Years Ago	Ten Years Ago	Twenty Years Ago
		Year ending Sept 2015	Year ending Dec 2014	Year ending Dec 2010	Year ending Dec 2005	Year ending Dec 1995
All Motor Vehicle Traffic	317.8 billion	↑ 0.6%	↑ 2.2%	↑ 4.8%	↑ 3.6%	↑ 19.0%
Cars and Taxis	248.6 billion	↑ 0.4%	↑ 1.7%	↑ 3.7%	↑ 1.9%	↑ 13.9%
Light Goods Vehicles (LGV)	47.7 billion	↑ 1.6%	↑ 6.1%	↑ 16.2%	↑ 24.1%	↑ 72.4%
Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV)	16.2 billion	↑ 0.2%	↑ 1.1%	↓ -1.2%	↓ -10.1%	↑ 2.2%
Motorways	65.8 billion	↑ 0.7%	↑ 2.4%	↑ 7.9%	↑ 9.2%	↑ 43.4%
Rural 'A' Roads	91.5 billion	↑ 0.9%	↑ 2.8%	↑ 5.3%	↑ 4.2%	↑ 23.2%
Urban 'A' Roads	49.3 billion	↓ -0.2%	--- 0.0%	↓ -0.4%	↓ -2.9%	↓ -0.9%
Rural Minor Roads	45.8 billion	↑ 0.8%	↑ 5.2%	↑ 8.1%	↑ 12.2%	↑ 27.4%
Urban Minor Roads	65.4 billion	↑ 0.3%	↑ 1.0%	↑ 3.1%	↓ -2.6%	↑ 6.9%

Footnotes

- One billion = 1,000 million
- Economic data is sourced from the Office for National Statistics, available [here](#).
- Fuel price data is sourced from the Department for Energy and Climate Change, available [here](#).

Vehicle Type

Car, HGV and LGV traffic have increased over the last year

Provisional estimates for the year ending December 2015:



Car and taxi traffic reached a new high of 248.6 billion vehicle miles, slightly above (0.1%) the previous peak of 248.3 billion vehicle miles for the year ending June 2007.



LGV traffic increased by 6.1% from the previous year to a new high of 47.7 billion vehicle miles. LGV traffic has increased its share of motor vehicle traffic by 2.5 percentage points from 10 years ago, from 12.5% in the year ending December 2005 to 15.0% in the year ending December 2015.



HGV traffic increased on the previous year by 1.1%, but remained below the peak level in the year ending June 2008.

Long term trends

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

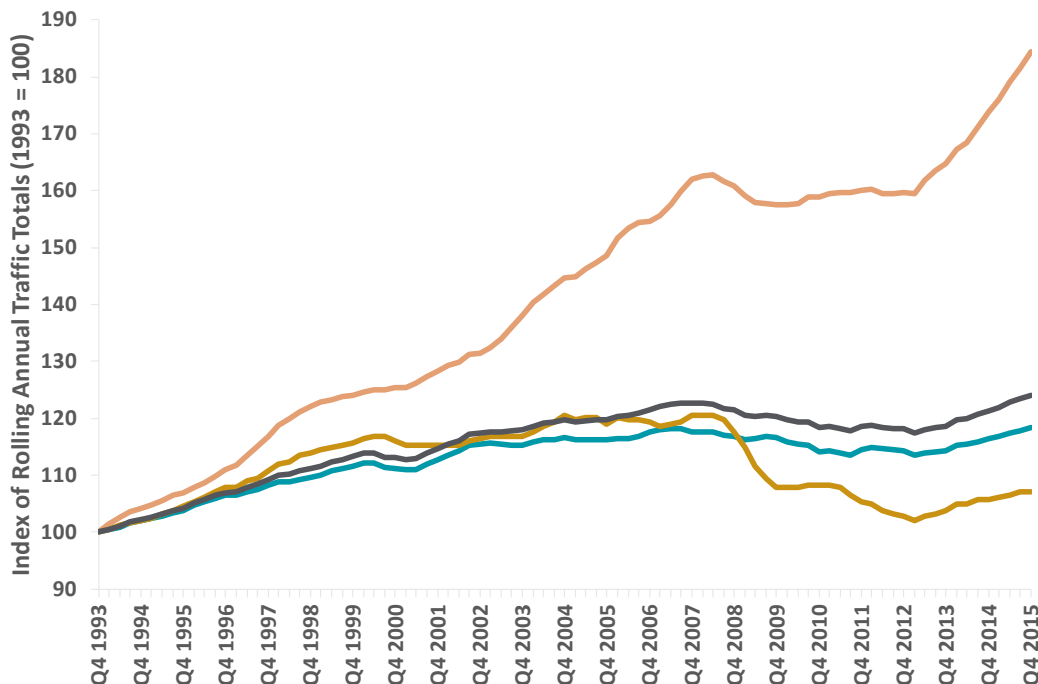
All Motor Vehicles 19.0%

13.9%

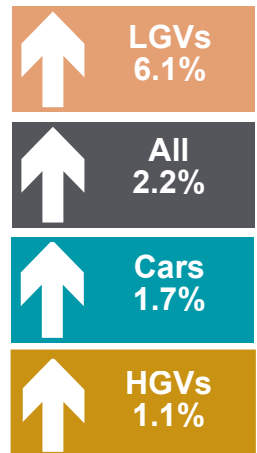
72.4%

2.2%

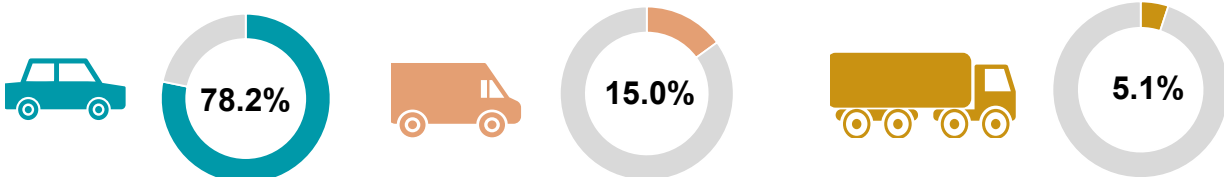
Chart 3: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain, by vehicle type from 1993 [[TRA2501f](#)]



% Change from year ending December 2014...



Share of traffic by vehicle type, in the year ending December 2015



Road Type

Motorway, rural and urban minor roads have increased

Provisional estimates for the year ending December 2015:

- Traffic on motorways and rural roads was higher than it has ever been.
- Motorway traffic increased by 2.4% from the previous year, to 65.8 billion vehicle miles.
- Traffic on rural roads rose by 3.6% to 137.3 billion vehicle miles
- 'A' road traffic showed an increase of 1.8% on the previous year. This is driven by traffic on rural 'A' roads, which grew by 2.8% to 91.5 billion vehicle miles. Traffic on urban 'A' roads remained at the same level, of 49.3 billion vehicle miles.
- Traffic volumes grew on minor roads. Traffic increased by 5.2% on minor rural roads, the biggest percentage increase of any road type, to 45.8 billion vehicle miles. On minor urban roads, traffic grew by 1.0% to 65.4 billion vehicle miles.

Long term trends

Over the last 20 years, levels have changed at varying rates across road types.

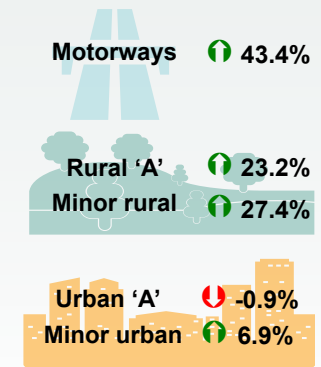
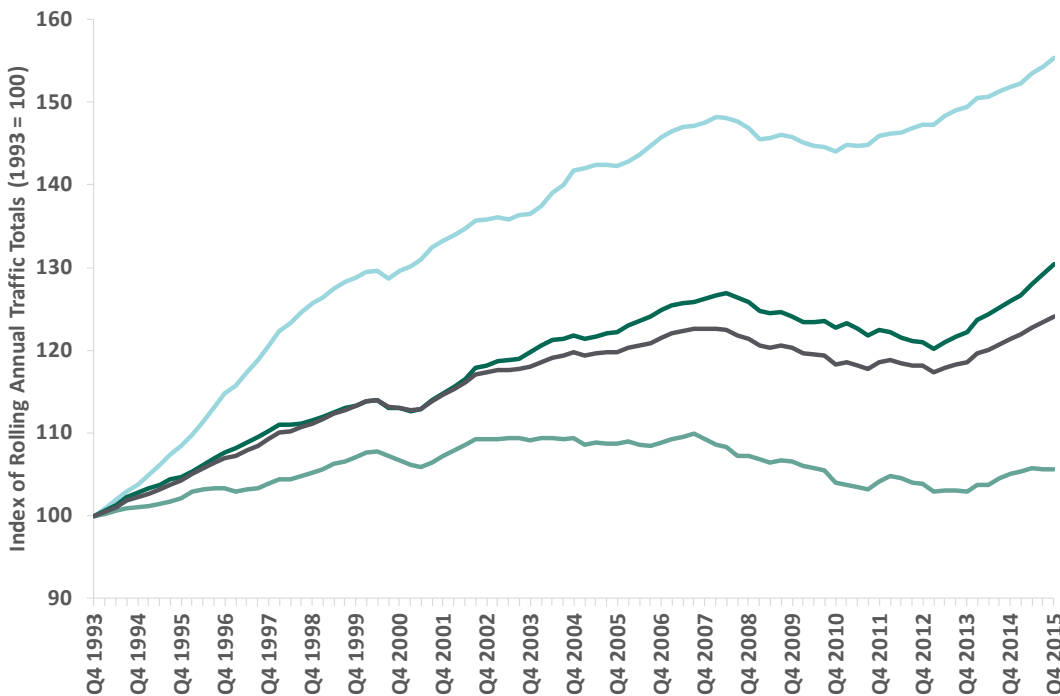
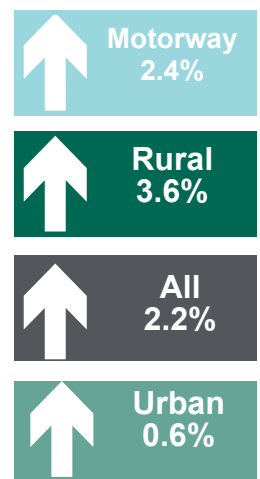


Chart 4: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain by road type from 1993 [TRA2502f]



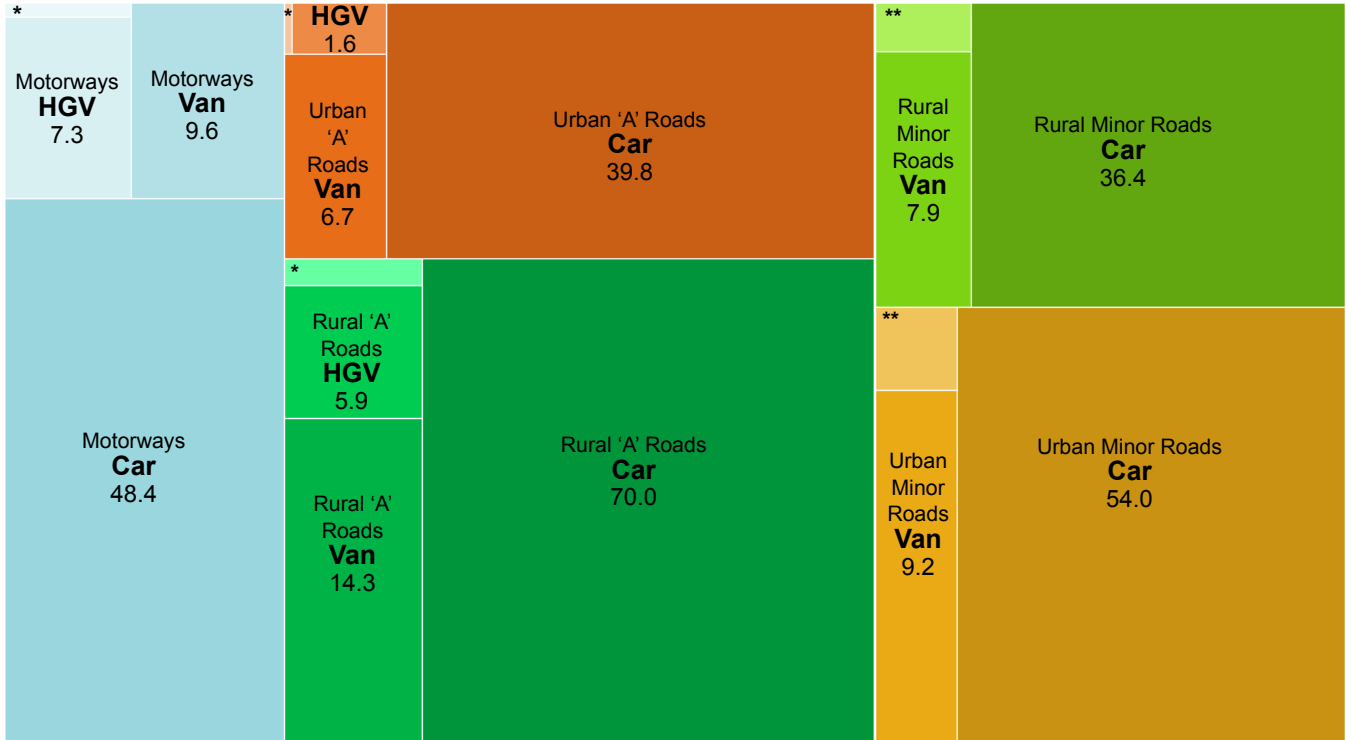
% Change from year ending December 2014...



Vehicle Type and Road Type

Provisional estimates indicate that **car traffic** was higher than ever before on motorways and minor rural roads in the year ending December 2015. **LGV traffic** grew on motorways and rural roads, but reduced very slightly on urban minor roads. **HGV traffic** increased on motorways and rural 'A' roads compared with the previous year, but reduced slightly on urban 'A' roads.

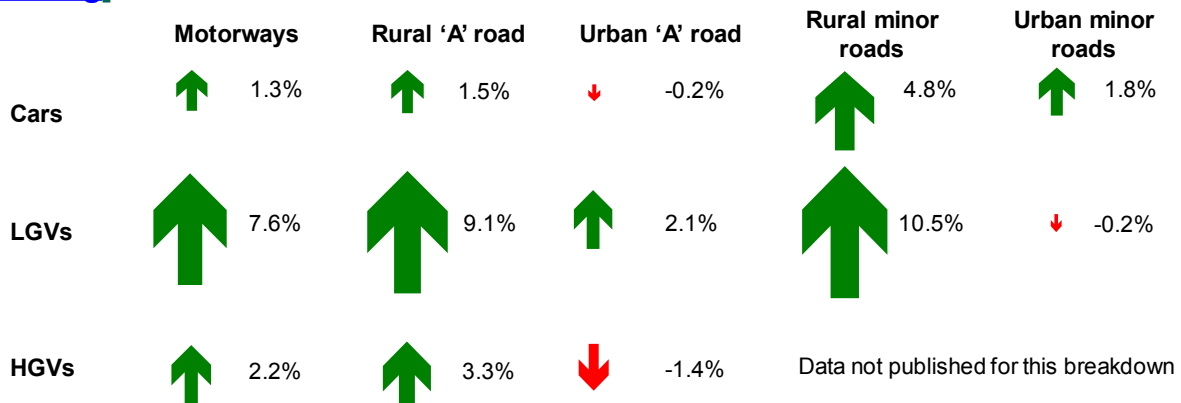
Figure 5: Provisional annual vehicle traffic (billion vehicle miles) by road class and vehicle type in Great Britain for 2015 [\[TRA2503e\]](#)



Road length (miles) by road type in Great Britain, 2014



Figure 6: Percentage change in traffic by road class and vehicle type in Great Britain [\[TRA2503g\]](#)



* Other vehicle types (buses and motorcycles). Provisional estimates for these vehicles are not published.

** Provisional traffic figures for HGVs on minor roads are not published.

Provisional traffic estimates are based on a sample of roads. Therefore, estimates split by vehicle and road type may be more prone to change when constrained by the final annual estimates.

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.gsi.gov.uk.

Sources, strengths and weaknesses of the data

Provisional estimates are based on data from around 200 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. Final 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 provisional 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 count data. The classification algorithms are continually developed to ensure that vehicle classification is as accurate as possible.

Further statistical guidance can be found online here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-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.

Billion vehicle miles/percentage

All motor vehicle traffic	2012					2013					2014				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.
Provisional estimates at time of publication	76.5	74.6	75.0	76.7	302.6	75.4	76.9	77.1	77.6	306.4	77.4	77.2	77.9	77.8	310.2
Final estimates	76.5	74.6	75.3	76.2	302.6	75.0	76.0	76.2	76.5	303.7	77.3	77.3	78.1	78.2	311.0
<i>Difference (%)</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>-0.1</i>	<i>-0.4</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>0.1</i>	<i>-0.2</i>	<i>-0.3</i>	<i>-0.6</i>	<i>-0.3</i>

Next release

The next Provisional Road Traffic estimates, for the year ending March 2016, are due to be published in May 2016. Final annual traffic estimates for 2015 are also due to be published in May 2016.

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