Department for Transport

Provisional Road Traffic Estimates Great Britain:
October 2014 - September 2015

Motor vehicle traffic has increased, for the tenth quarter in succession.

Motor vehicle traffic in Great Britain **increased by 2.2%** in the year ending September 2015 from the previous year. The **provisional figure** of 316.1 billion[1] vehicle miles is the highest rolling annual total ever and 0.6% higher than the pre-recessional peak in the year ending September 2007.

In this publication

About provisional traffic estimates

This release presents provisional estimates for road traffic in Great Britain for October 2014 to September 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.
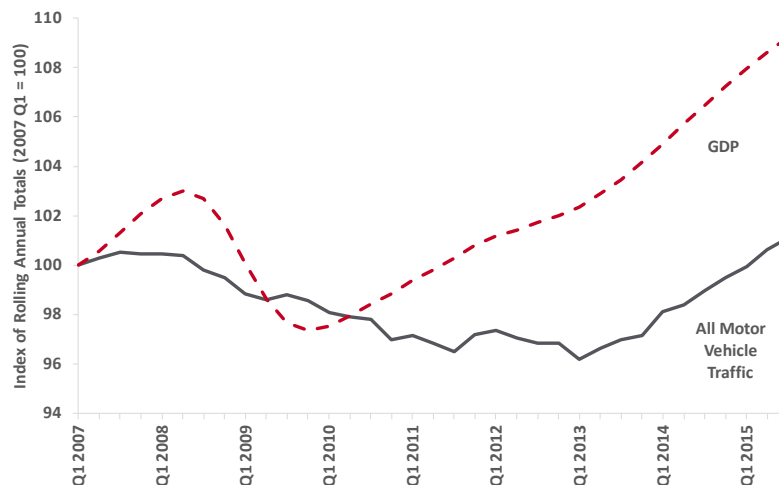
These provisional estimates are based on traffic data collected continuously from a network of around 200 Automatic Traffic Counters. Final annual figures also incorporate manual traffic count data.

Information

Further charts and tables can be accessed online via our road traffic statistical series.

The upward trend in traffic volumes is likely to reflect growth in the UK economy, with GDP 2.6%[2] higher in the year ending September 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 September 2015 was 14.8 pence per litre cheaper than in the previous year[3], and diesel was 17.1 pence per litre cheaper.

Chart 1: Index of rolling annual motor vehicle traffic in Great Britain, and UK GDP [TRA2501f]

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

► **Car traffic increased** by 1.7%.

► **Van traffic continued to rise** faster than any other vehicle type, increasing by 6.0% to a new peak of 46.9 billion vehicle miles.

► **All road classes experienced higher volumes of traffic**, with traffic on **rural minor roads increasing** the fastest, at 5.8%.

► **Motorway traffic increased by 2.0%** to 65.4 billion vehicle miles, the highest ever level.

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Vehicle Type

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

Provisional estimates for the year ending September 2015:

Car and taxi traffic increased by 1.7% on the previous year to 247.6 billion vehicle miles. This is just below the peak level of 248.3 billion vehicle miles in the year ending June 2007.

LGV traffic increased by 6.0% from the previous year to a new high of 46.9 billion vehicle miles. LGV traffic has increased its share of motor vehicle traffic by 2.4 percentage points on 10 years ago, from 12.4% in the year ending September 2005 to 14.8% in the year ending September 2015.

HGV traffic increased on the previous year by 1.2%, but remains 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:
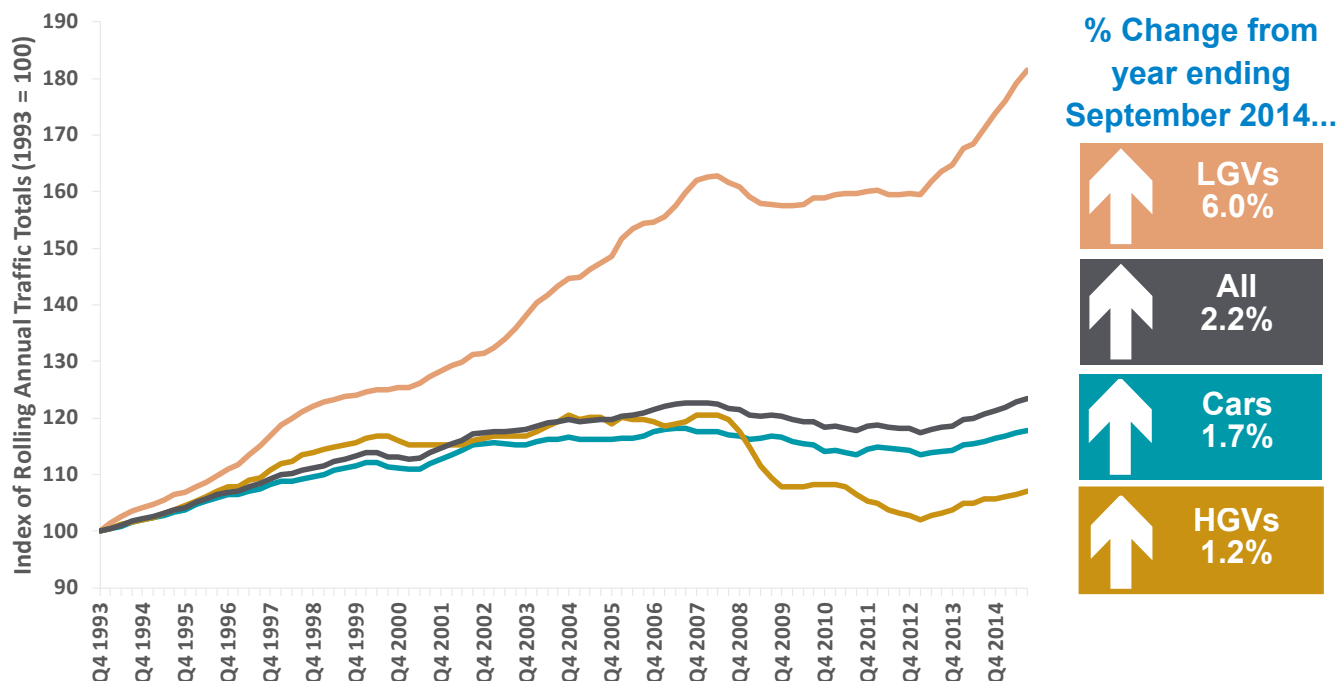
All Motor Vehicles ⬆ **19.0%**   ⬆ **14.0%**   ⬆ **70.4%**   ⬆ **2.9%**

Chart 2: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain, by vehicle type [TRA2501f]

% Change from year ending September 2014...

LGVs	6.0%
All	2.2%
Cars	1.7%
HGVs	1.2%

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

78.3%   **14.8%**   **5.1%**

Road Type

Traffic has increased across all road types

Provisional estimates for the year ending September 2015:

- Traffic on motorways and rural roads was higher than it has ever been.

- Motorway traffic increased by 2.0% from the previous year, to 65.4 billion vehicle miles.

- Traffic on urban roads increased by 1.0% on the previous year but remains 4.0% below the peak level of 119.4 billion vehicle miles in the year ending September 2007.

- 'A' road traffic showed an increase of 1.5% on the previous year. On rural 'A' roads it rose by 2.0% to 90.7 billion vehicle miles, while on urban 'A' roads it rose by 0.5% to 49.4 billion vehicle miles.

- Traffic volumes also grew on minor roads. Traffic increased by 5.8% on minor rural roads, the biggest percentage increase of any road type, to 45.4 billion vehicle miles. On minor urban roads traffic grew by 1.4% to 65.2 billion vehicle miles.

Long term trends

Over the last 20 years, levels have changed at varying rates across road types.
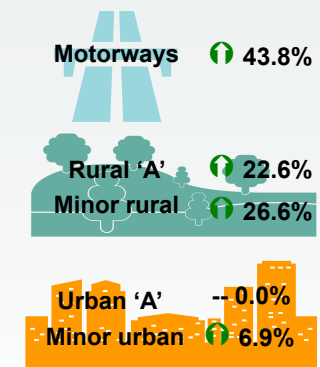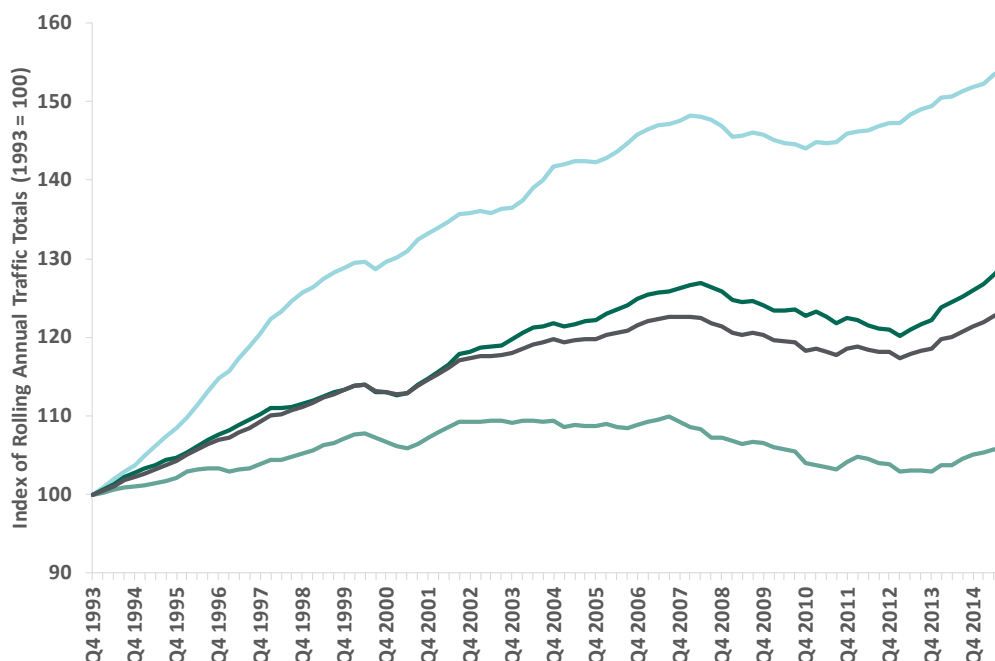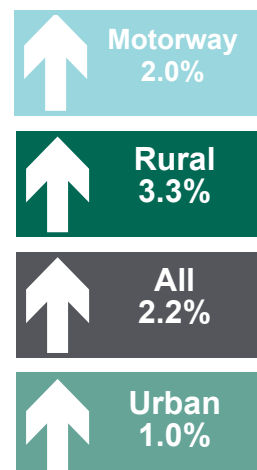
Motorways 43.8%

Rural 'A' 22.6%
Minor rural 26.6%

Urban 'A' -- 0.0%
Minor urban 6.9%

Chart 3: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain by road type (1993 = 100) [TRA2502f]

% Change from year ending September 2014...

Motorway 2.0%
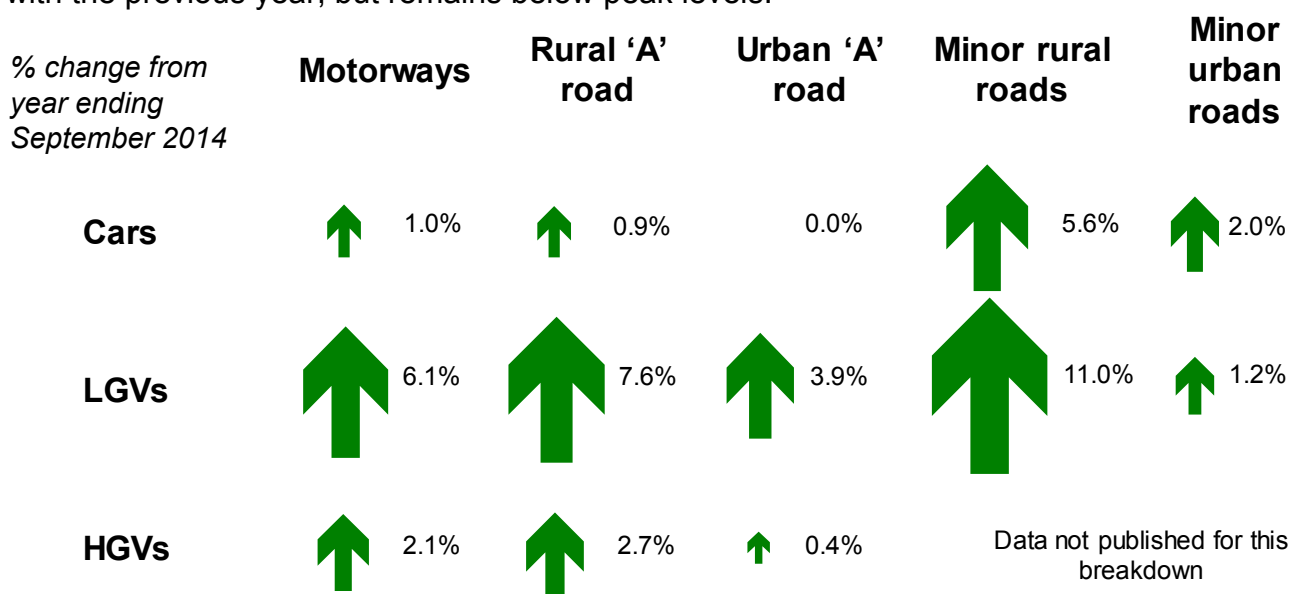
Rural 3.3%

All 2.2%

Urban 1.0%

Footnotes
1. One billion = 1,000 million   **2.** Economic data is sourced from the Office for National Statistics, available here.
3. Fuel price data is sourced from the Department for Energy and Climate Change, available here.

Vehicle Type by Road Type

Provisional estimates indicate that **car traffic** was higher than ever before on motorways and minor rural roads in the year ending September 2015. **LGV traffic** reached new peak levels on all road types. **HGV traffic** increased on motorways, rural 'A' roads and urban 'A' roads compared with the previous year, but remains below peak levels.

% change from year ending September 2014	**Motorways**	**Rural 'A' road**	**Urban 'A' road**	**Minor rural roads**	**Minor urban roads**
Cars	⬆ 1.0%	⬆ 0.9%	0.0%	⬆ 5.6%	⬆ 2.0%
LGVs	⬆ 6.1%	⬆ 7.6%	⬆ 3.9%	⬆ 11.0%	⬆ 1.2%
HGVs	⬆ 2.1%	⬆ 2.7%	⬆ 0.4%	Data not published for this breakdown	

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.

Summary Figures

The summary table below shows how vehicle traffic in the year ending September 2015 compares to that in the year ending June 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 Sep 2015	*Year ending June 2015*	*Year ending Sep 2014*	*Year ending Sep 2010*	*Year ending Sep 2005*	*Year ending Sep 1995*
All Motor Vehicle Traffic	**316.1 billion**	⬆ 0.5%	⬆ 2.2%	⬆ 3.4%	⬆ 3.0%	⬆ 19.0%
Cars and Taxis	**247.6 billion**	⬆ 0.4%	⬆ 1.7%	⬆ 2.2%	⬆ 1.4%	⬆ 14.0%
Light Goods Vehicles (LGV)	**46.9 billion**	⬆ 1.3%	⬆ 6.0%	⬆ 14.3%	⬆ 23.2%	⬆ 70.4%
Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV)	**16.1 billion**	⬆ 0.2%	⬆ 1.2%	⬇ -1.4%	⬇ -10.9%	⬆ 2.9%
Motorways	**65.4 billion**	⬆ 0.6%	⬆ 2.0%	⬆ 6.7%	⬆ 8.4%	⬆ 43.8%
Rural 'A' Roads	**90.7 billion**	⬆ 0.8%	⬆ 2.0%	⬆ 3.6%	⬆ 3.4%	⬆ 22.6%
Urban 'A' Roads	**49.4 billion**	⬇ -0.3%	⬆ 0.5%	⬇ -0.6%	⬇ -3.1%	--- 0.0%
Rural Minor Roads	**45.4 billion**	⬆ 1.3%	⬆ 5.8%	⬆ 6.6%	⬆ 11.4%	⬆ 26.6%
Urban Minor Roads	**65.2 billion**	--- 0.0%	⬆ 1.4%	⬆ 0.7%	⬇ -2.7%	⬆ 6.9%

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 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 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
Difference (%)	0.0	-0.1	-0.4	0.6	0.0	0.5	1.1	1.1	1.4	0.9	0.1	-0.2	-0.3	-0.6	-0.3

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