



Department
for Transport

Provisional Road Traffic Estimates

Great Britain:

April 2015 - March 2016

Provisional estimates show that motor vehicle traffic was at a record high in the year ending March 2016.

The **provisional figure**, of 318.5 billion¹ vehicle miles travelled on GB roads in the year ending March 2016, was 1.8% higher than the previous year, and 1.3% higher than the pre-recession peak in the year ending September 2007. Rolling annual motor vehicle traffic has now increased each quarter in succession for three years.

In this publication

Summary Figures [p2](#)
by Vehicle Type..... [p3](#)
by Road Type..... [p4](#)
by Road and Vehicle type... [p5](#)
Background [p6](#)

About provisional traffic estimates

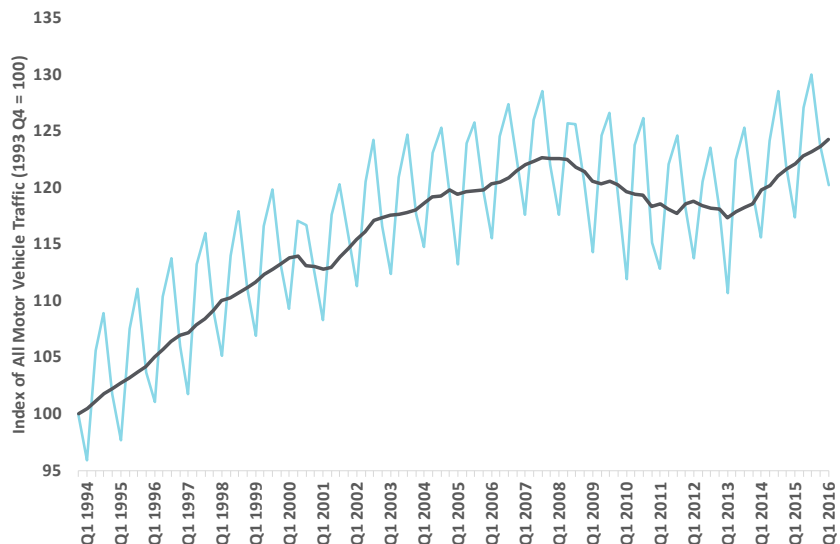
This release presents provisional estimates for road traffic in Great Britain for April 2015 to March 2016. Provisional estimates are published quarterly and remain provisional until after they have been constrained by the final annual estimates each year. Final annual estimates for 2016 are due to be published in summer 2017. 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

Final [Road Traffic Estimates in Great Britain: 2015](#) were published on the same day as this release.

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



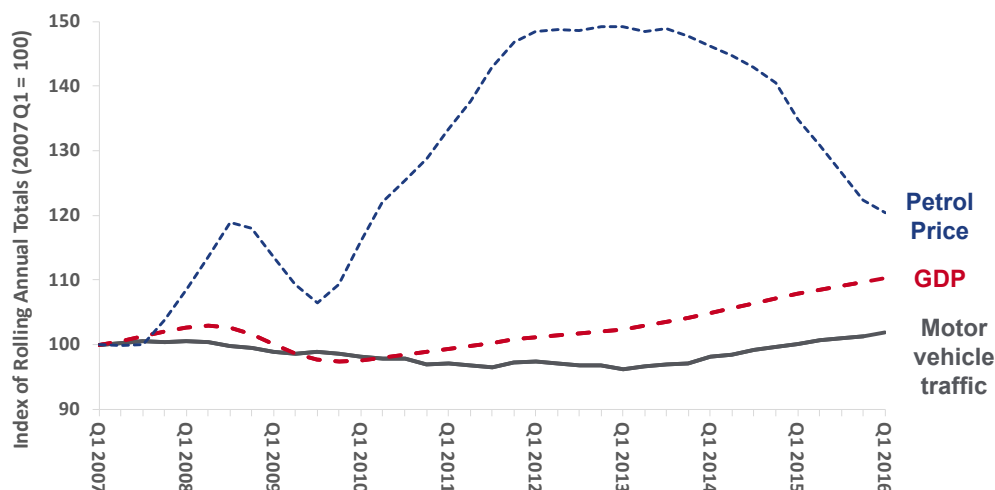
Compared to the previous year, in the year ending March 2016:

- ▶ **Car traffic increased** by 1.3% to a record 248.9 billion vehicle miles, slightly above the pre-recession peak of 248.2 billion vehicle miles in year ending September 2007.
- ▶ **Van traffic continued to rise** faster than any other vehicle type, increasing by 4.1% to a new peak of 47.3 billion vehicle miles.
- ▶ **HGV traffic** rose on motorways and rural 'A' roads, but fell on urban 'A' roads. HGV traffic is still below the 2008 peak.
- ▶ **All road classes experienced a rise** in motor vehicle traffic.
- ▶ **Motorway traffic increased by 3.0%** to 67.1 billion vehicle miles and **Rural 'A' roads increased by 3.0%** to 92.0 billion vehicle miles, **both are at the highest ever recorded level.**

In Context

The upward trend in traffic volumes is likely to reflect the growth in the UK economy over the last year, with GDP 2.2%² higher in the year ending March 2016 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 March 2016 was 13.1 pence per litre cheaper than in the previous year³, and diesel was 16.9 pence per litre cheaper.

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



Summary Figures

The summary table below shows how vehicle traffic in the year ending March 2016 compares to that in the year ending December 2015, and 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](#).

		Percentage change from...					
	Vehicle Miles (Provisional)	Last Quarter	Last Year	Five Years Ago	Ten Years Ago	Twenty Years Ago	
	Year ending Mar 2016	Year ending Dec 2015	Year ending Mar 2015	Year ending Mar 2011	Year ending Mar 2006	Year ending Mar 1996	
All Motor Vehicle Traffic	318.5 billion	↑ 0.6%	↑ 1.8%	↑ 4.8%	↑ 3.3%	↑ 18.3%	
Cars and Taxis	248.9 billion	↑ 0.5%	↑ 1.3%	↑ 3.6%	↑ 1.8%	↑ 13.2%	
Light Goods Vehicles (LGV)	47.3 billion	↑ 0.9%	↑ 4.1%	↑ 14.8%	↑ 20.7%	↑ 69.7%	
Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV)	16.8 billion	↑ 0.8%	↑ 3.9%	↑ 2.9%	↓ -7.3%	↑ 5.5%	
Motorways	67.1 billion	↑ 0.8%	↑ 3.0%	↑ 9.3%	↑ 10.8%	↑ 44.1%	
Rural 'A' Roads	92.0 billion	↑ 0.8%	↑ 3.0%	↑ 5.2%	↑ 4.3%	↑ 22.9%	
Urban 'A' Roads	49.8 billion	0.3%	↑ 0.6%	↑ 0.8%	↓ -2.2%	↓ -0.6%	
Rural Minor Roads	44.5 billion	0.1%	↑ 1.4%	↑ 5.2%	↑ 7.9%	↑ 23.5%	
Urban Minor Roads	65.0 billion	0.4%	0.2%	↑ 3.0%	↓ -3.5%	↑ 5.6%	

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

Car, Van and Lorry traffic have all increased over the last year

Provisional estimates for the year ending March 2016:



Car and taxi traffic reached a new high of 248.9 billion vehicle miles, slightly above (0.3%) the previous peak of 248.2 billion vehicle miles for the year ending September 2007.



LGV traffic increased by 4.1% from the previous year to a record high of 47.3 billion vehicle miles. LGV traffic has increased its share of motor vehicle traffic by 2 percentage points from 10 years ago, from 13% in the year ending March 2006 to 15% in the year ending March 2016.



HGV traffic increased by 3.9% from the previous year to 16.8 billion vehicle miles. However, this still remains well below the peak of 18.2 billion vehicle miles observed 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 ↑ 18.3%



↑ 13.2%

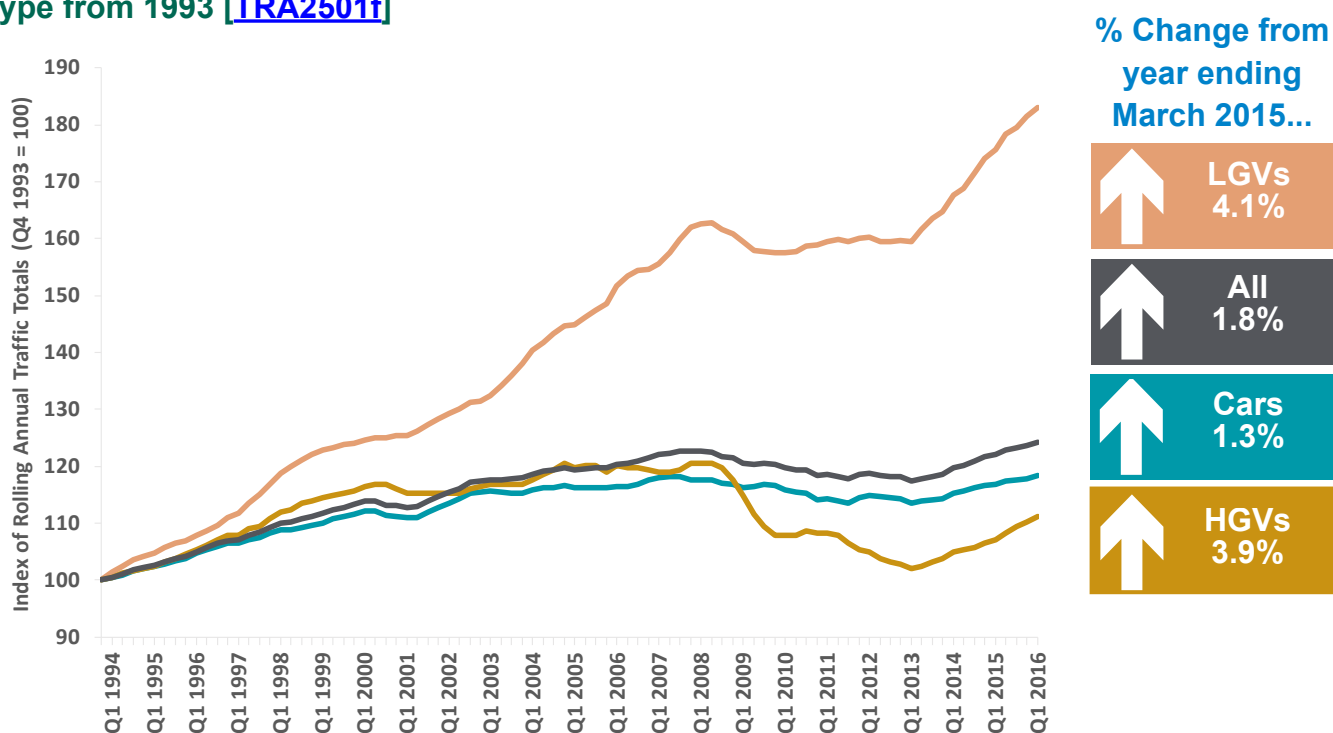


↑ 69.7%



↑ 5.5%

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



Share of traffic by vehicle type, in the year ending March 2016



78.2%



14.9%



5.3%

Road Type

Traffic has increased across all road classes

Provisional estimates for the year ending March 2016:

- Traffic on **motorways** and **rural roads** were at the **highest levels ever recorded**.
- Motorway traffic** increased by 3.0% from the previous year, to 67.1 billion vehicle miles.
- 'A' road traffic** showed an increase of 2.2% on the previous year. This was driven mainly by traffic on **rural 'A' roads**, which grew by 3.0% to 92.0 billion vehicle miles. While, traffic on **urban 'A' roads** increased by 0.6% to 49.8 billion vehicle miles.
- Traffic on **all rural roads** rose by 2.5% to 136.6 billion vehicle miles.
- Traffic volumes also grew on **all minor roads**. Traffic increased by 1.4% on **minor rural roads**, to 44.5 billion vehicle miles. While, on **minor urban roads**, traffic grew very slightly by 0.2% to 65.0 billion vehicle miles.

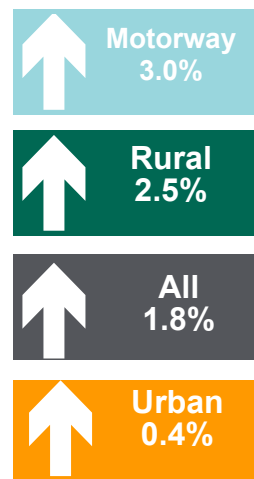
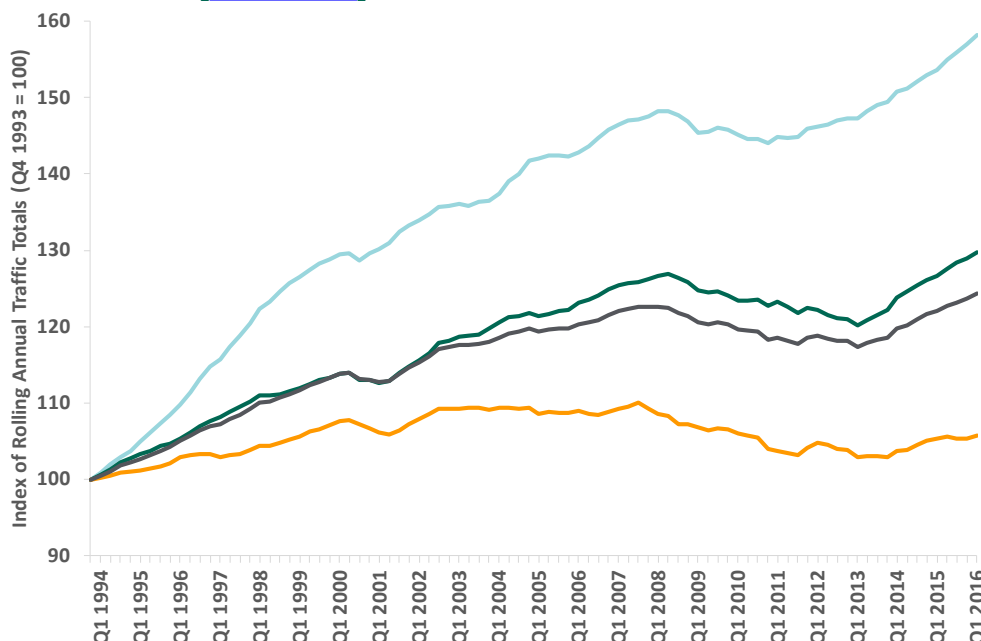
Long term trends

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

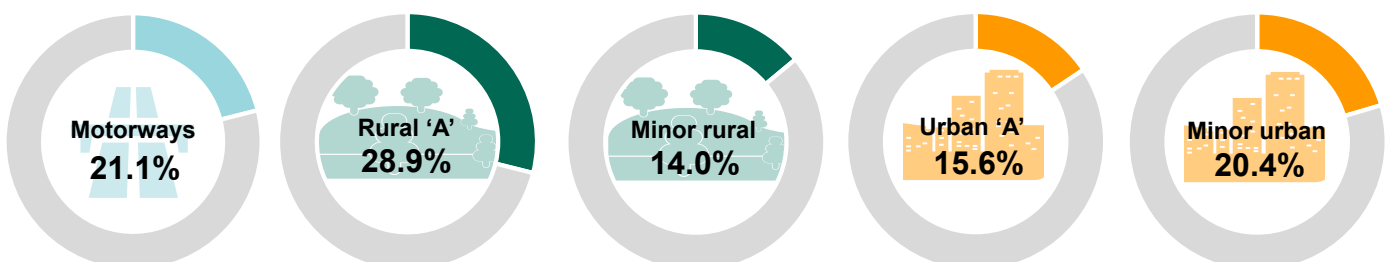


Chart 4: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain by road type from 1993 [TRA2502f]

% Change from year ending March 2015...



Share of traffic by road type, in the year ending March 2016



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 March 2016. **Car traffic** increased on all road types except for urban minor roads. **LGV traffic** grew on all road types, while **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 year ending March 2016 [TRA2503e]

Note: Area of bubbles are proportional to traffic levels

- * Provisional estimates for 'Other vehicle types' (buses and motorcycles) are not published.
- ** Provisional traffic figures for HGVs and 'Other vehicle types' on minor roads are not published.

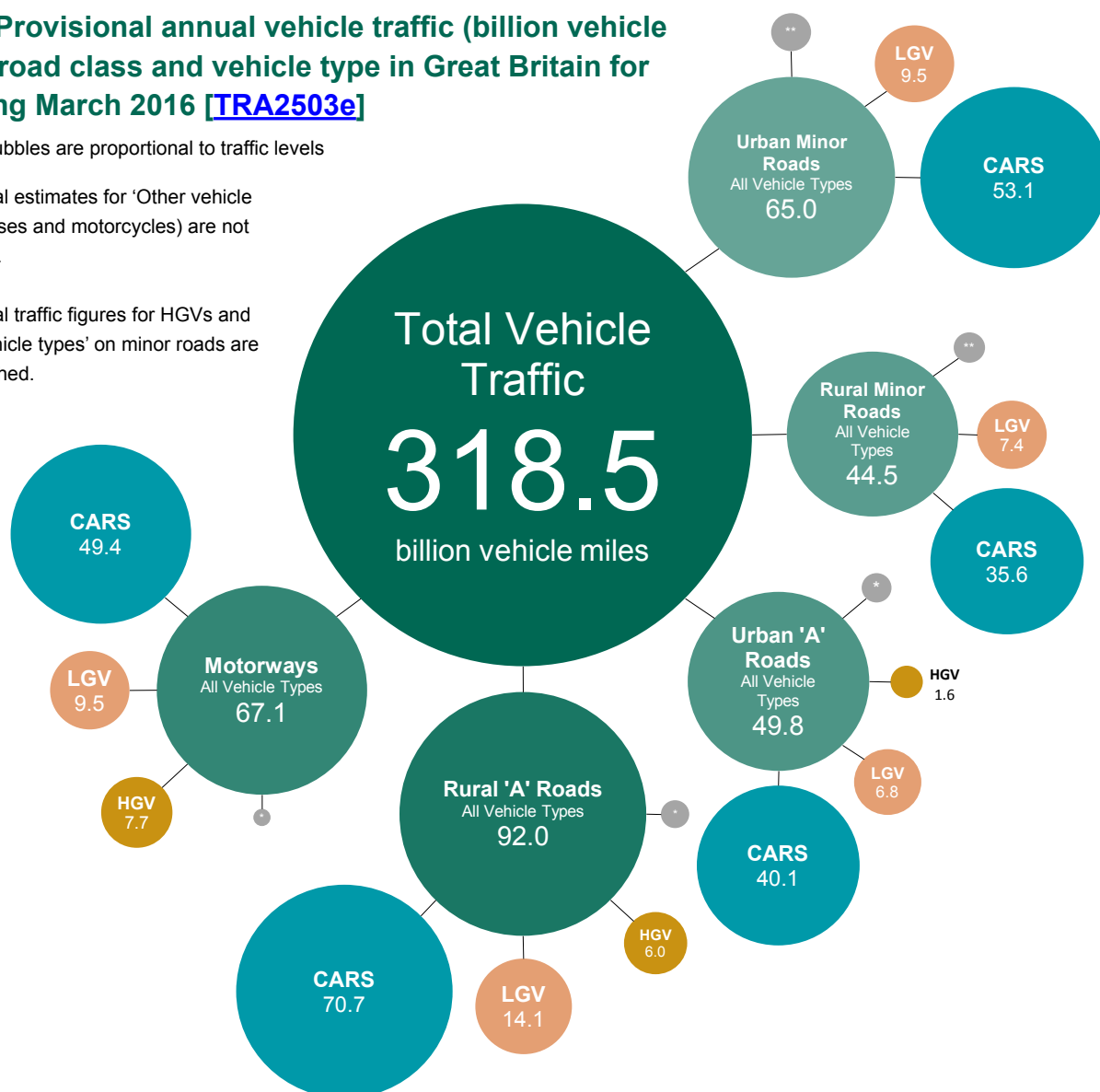


Figure 6: Percentage change on previous year of traffic by road class and vehicle type in Great Britain [TRA2503g]

	Motorways	Rural 'A' road	Urban 'A' road	Rural minor roads	Urban minor roads
Cars	↑ 2.1%	↑ 2.3%	0.4%	↑ 1.5%	-0.1%
LGVs	↑ 5.8%	↑ 6.6%	↑ 2.6%	↑ 1.0%	↑ 2.4%
HGVs	↑ 5.6%	↑ 3.9%	-0.3%	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.

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.

Next release

The next Provisional Road Traffic estimates, for the year ending June 2016, are due to be published in August 2016. Final annual traffic estimates for 2016 are due to be published in May 2017.

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

All motor vehicle traffic	Billion vehicle miles/percentage														
	2013					2014					2015				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Ann.
Provisional estimates at time of publication	75.4	76.9	77.1	77.6	306.4	77.4	77.2	77.9	77.8	310.2	79.0	79.3	79.5	80.0	317.8
Final estimates	75.0	76.0	76.2	76.5	303.7	77.3	77.3	78.1	78.2	311.0	78.8	79.2	79.2	79.6	316.7
Difference (%)	0.5	1.1	1.1	1.4	0.9	0.1	-0.2	-0.3	-0.6	-0.3	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.3