Provisional Road Traffic Estimates Great Britain: April 2018 - March 2019

Department for Transport

Provisional estimates show motor vehicles travelled 328.9 billion vehicle miles in Great Britain for the year ending March 2019.

In this publication

About provisional traffic estimates

This release presents provisional estimates for road traffic in Great Britain for April 2018 to March 2019. Provisional estimates are published quarterly and remain provisional until after they have been constrained by the final annual estimates each year. These provisional estimates are based on traffic data collected continuously from a network of around 300 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.

Key Findings

Compared to the year ending March 2018, in the year ending March 2019:

► **All motor vehicle traffic increased** by 0.8%.

► **Car traffic increased** by 1.0% to 256.0 billion vehicle miles. Van and lorry traffic remained broadly stable (increasing slightly by 0.4% and decreasing by 0.1%, respectively).

► **Traffic on minor roads decreased slightly,** by 0.6%. Traffic on Motorways and 'A' roads increased by 0.9% and 1.8%, respectively.

Chart 1: Rolling Annual Indices of Road Traffic in Great Britain from 1994
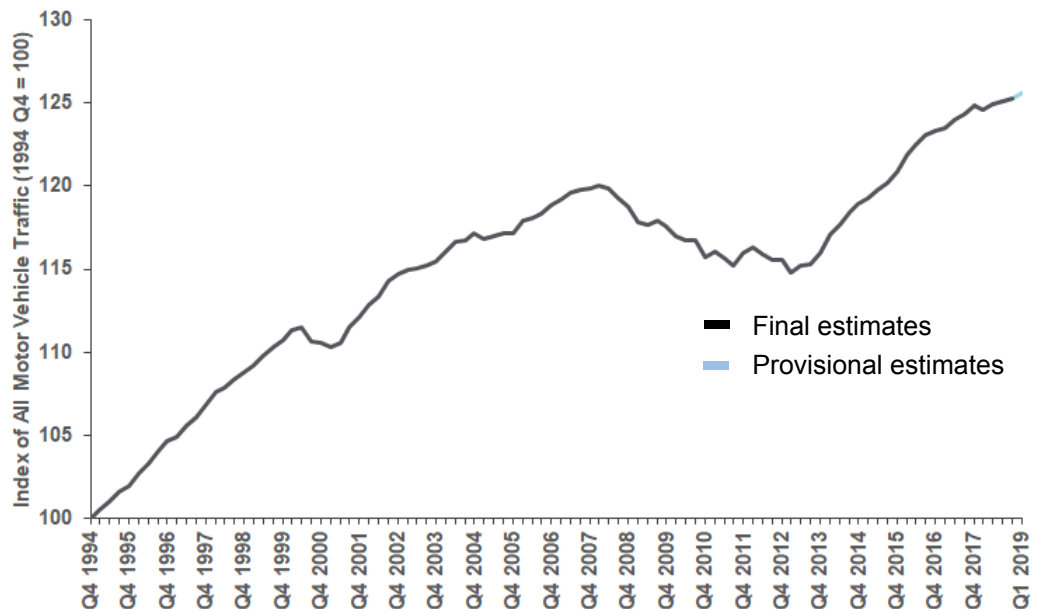
Compared to the last quarter's rolling annual figures (for the year ending December 2018), in the year ending March 2019 overall traffic levels remained similar. See the Summary Figures on page 2 for more information.
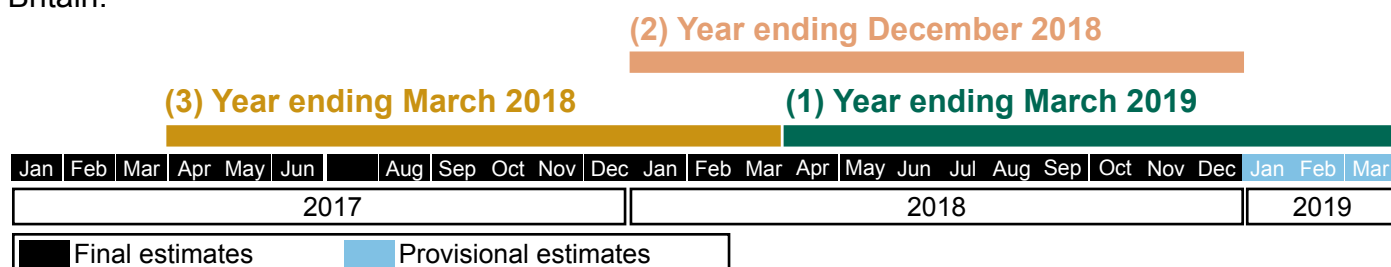
Summary Figures

The summary table below shows how vehicle traffic in the year ending March 2019 compares to that in the year ending December 2018, 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.

⇔ is used for negligible changes, defined as: • 0.5% or less for 0-5 years • 5% or less for 10 years and over	Vehicle Miles (Provisional) *Year ending Mar 2019*	Percentage change from...				
		Last Quarter (Provisional) *Year ending Dec 2018*	Last Year *Year ending Mar 2018*	Five Years Ago *Year ending Mar 2014*	Ten Years Ago *Year ending Mar 2009*	Twenty Years Ago *Year ending Mar 1999*
All Motor Vehicle Traffic	**328.9 billion**	⇔ 0.2%	⬆ 0.8%	⬆ 7.2%	⬆ 6.5%	⬆ 15.0%
Cars and Taxis	**256.0 billion**	⇔ 0.4%	⬆ 1.0%	⬆ 5.8%	⇔ 4.9%	⬆ 10.7%
Light Commercial Vehicles (Vans, or LCV)	**50.9 billion**	⇔ -0.2%	⇔ 0.4%	⬆ 17.6%	⬆ 23.4%	⬆ 60.5%
Heavy Goods Vehicles (Lorries, or HGV)	**17.0 billion**	⇔ -0.4%	⇔ -0.1%	⬆ 7.5%	⇔ -1.9%	⇔ -1.5%
Motorways	**68.6 billion**	⇔ 0.3%	⬆ 0.9%	⬆ 8.2%	⬆ 12.4%	⬆ 29.3%
'A' Roads	**149.7 billion**	⇔ 0.3%	⬆ 1.8%	⬆ 8.8%	⬆ 8.3%	⬆ 13.9%
Minor Roads	**110.7 billion**	⇔ 0.1%	⬇ -0.6%	⬆ 4.6%	⇔ 1.0%	⬆ 8.9%

About Rolling Annual Figures

Rolling annual comparisons provide insightful evidence into the nature of road traffic in Great Britain.

(2) Year ending December 2018

(3) Year ending March 2018   **(1) Year ending March 2019**

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
				2017											2018										2019	

■ Final estimates   ■ Provisional estimates

Comparison with the previous quarter: **(1)** against **(2)**
Comparison with the previous year: **(1)** against **(3)**
All motor vehicle traffic remained broadly stable in the first comparison, and increased by 0.8% in the second comparison.

Note that **(2)** and **(3)** contains data from February and March 2018 when there were adverse weather conditions, including the "Beast from the East".

Vehicle Type

Provisional estimates indicate that car traffic increased over the last year and van and lorry traffic was broadly stable.

In the year ending March 2019:

Car and taxi traffic increased by 1.0% to 256.0 billion vehicle miles (bvm) compared to the year ending March 2018. Car traffic rolling annual estimates were similar with those for the year ending December 2018.

Van traffic was broadly stable at 50.9 bvm (increasing by 0.4%) compared to the year ending March 2018. There has been a slow down in the growth of van traffic over the last two years.

Lorry traffic was broadly stable at 17.0 bvm (decreasing slightly by 0.1%) compared to the year ending March 2018.

Long term trends

Over the last **20 years**, traffic has changed at varying rates across vehicle types:
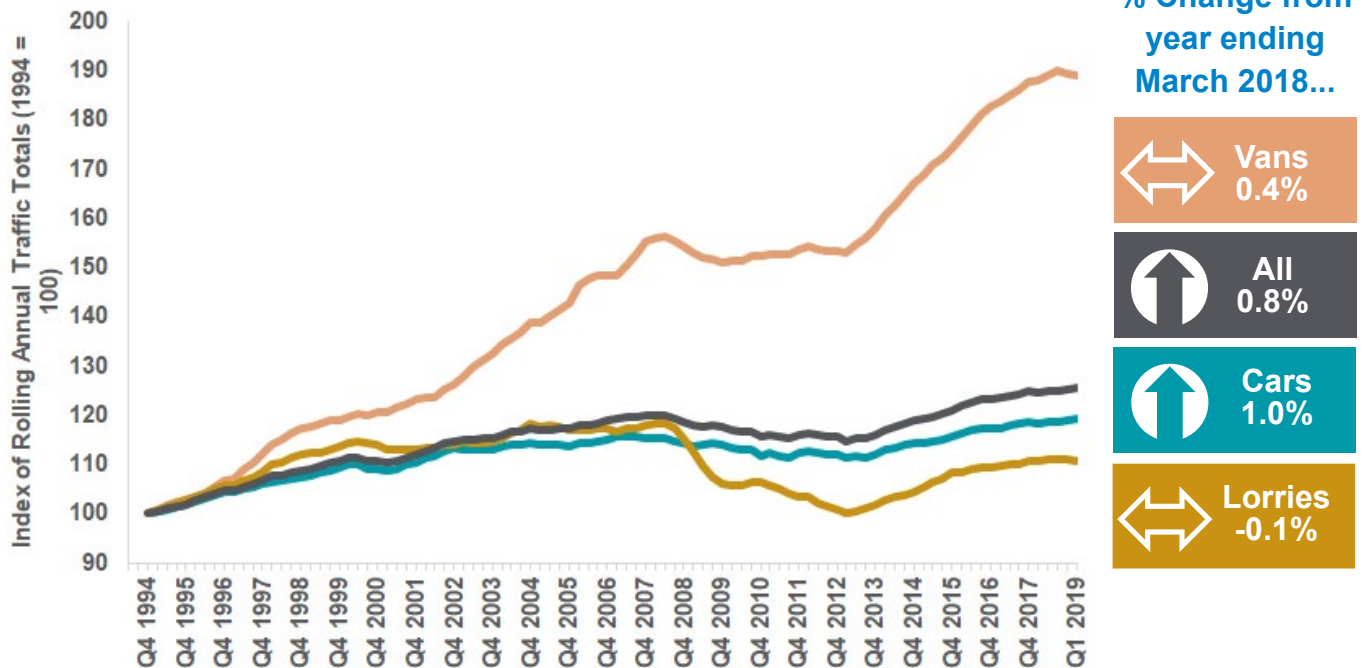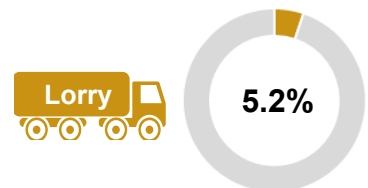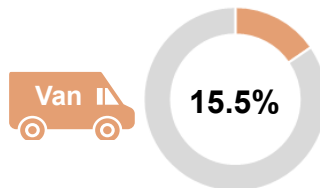
All Motor Vehicles ⬆ **15.0%**   Car ⬆ **10.7%**   Van ⬆ **60.5%**   Lorry ⬌ **-1.5%**

Chart 2: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain, by vehicle type from 1994 [TRA2501b]

% Change from year ending March 2018...

⬌	**Vans 0.4%**
⬆	**All 0.8%**
⬆	**Cars 1.0%**
⬌	**Lorries -0.1%**

Index of Rolling Annual Traffic Totals (1994 = 100)

Share of traffic by vehicle type, in the year ending March 2019

Car **77.8%**   Van **15.5%**   Lorry **5.2%**
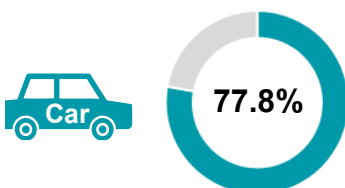
Road Type

Provisional estimates indicate that traffic decreased slightly on minor roads and increased on motorways and 'A' roads.

Compared to the year ending March 2018, in the year ending March 2019:

- **Motorway traffic** increased by 0.9% to 68.6 bvm.

- **'A' road traffic** increased by 1.8% to 149.7 bvm.

- **Minor road traffic** decreased slightly by 0.6% to 110.7 bvm.

Long term trends over the last 20 years
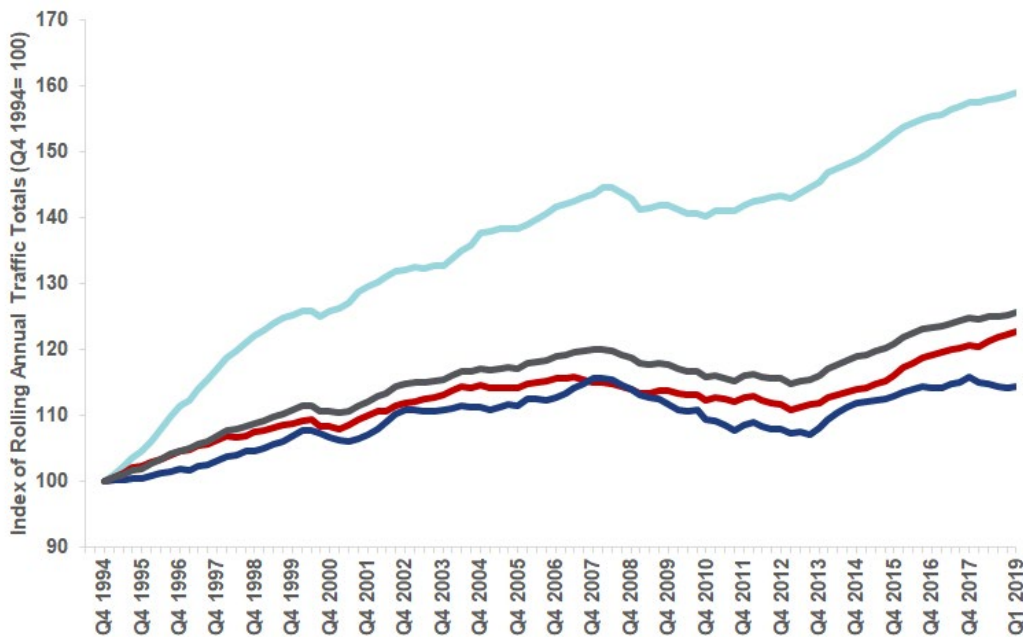Levels have changed at varying rates across road types.
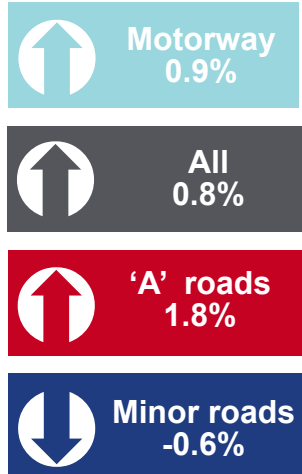
All Road Types ⬆ 15.0%   Motorways ⬆ 29.3%   Rural 'A' ⬆ 25.1% Rural minor ⬆ 19.8%   Urban 'A' ⬌ -3.6% Urban minor ⬌ 2.5%

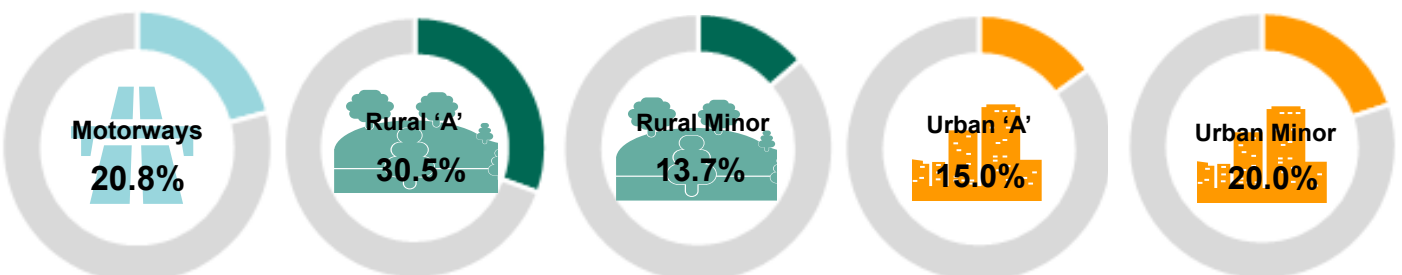### Chart 3: Rolling annual index of road traffic in Great Britain by road type from 1994 [TRA2502b]

% Change from year ending March 2018...

⬆ Motorway 0.9%

⬆ All 0.8%

⬆ 'A' roads 1.8%

⬇ Minor roads -0.6%

Share of traffic by road type, in the year ending March 2019

Motorways **20.8%**   Rural 'A' **30.5%**   Rural Minor **13.7%**   Urban 'A' **15.0%**   Urban Minor **20.0%**

Glossary

	Term	Definition
	Billion	A thousand million
	bvm	Billion vehicle miles
	Great Britain	England, Wales, and Scotland
	Index Number	Comparing changes over time from a selected base year, often across multiple indicators where they cannot be directly compared
	Q1	Quarter 1: 1st January to 31st March. Similar for other quarters
	Traffic	Total distance travelled by vehicles, combining the number of vehicles on the road and how far they drive
	Vehicle miles	The units that traffic is measured in. Three vehicles travelling for four miles each would account for 12 vehicle miles worth of traffic
Vehicle Types	*Lorry / HGV*	A goods vehicle over 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight
	Van	A goods vehicle under 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight
Road Types	*Major*	'A' roads and Motorways
	Minor	'B', 'C' and unclassified roads
	Rural	Roads within an area with a population of under 10,000 people
	Urban	Roads within an area with a population of 10,000 or more people

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.gov.uk.

Background Information

These statistics were designated as National Statistics in February 2013.

Sources, strengths and weaknesses of the data

Provisional estimates are based on data from around 300 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. In addition to this data, final annual estimates make use of data from around 8000 manual traffic counts and automatic traffic counters operated by Highways England, Transport Scotland and Transport for London. Final annual statistics can estimate traffic levels in local areas and on specific road links, which cannot be produced from the provisional data.

The automatic traffic counters used as the data source in this publication 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: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-traffic-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	2017				2018			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Provisional estimates at time of publication	324.3	325.1	325.5	-	326.2	327.0	327.1	-
Final estimates	323.5	324.9	325.7	327.1	326.3	327.2	327.6	328.1
Difference (%)	*0.2*	*0.1*	*-0.1*	*-*	*-0.03*	*-0.1*	*-0.2*	*-*

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