

TRAFFIC IN GREAT BRITAIN

1st Quarter 2001

Department of the Environment,

Transport and the Regions

Statistics Bulletin (01)6

More detailed information on traffic flow data at selected points on the major road network and vehicle kilometre estimates by type of vehicle and class of road is available for purchase from the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions. Enquiries should be made to:

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This bulletin was compiled by Kerrick Macafee. The latest quarterly bulletin can be found at the following website address: <http://www.transtat.detr.gov.uk/qbullets/qtraff.htm>. Enquiries about the contents should be made to the above address or ☎ 020 7944 6396

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Special Note

DETR clarified the definition of rigid 2-axle goods vehicles (R2s) in 1999. Analysis of the 1999 data showed that counts in earlier years had included some light vans as heavy goods vehicles. As a result of this, 1999 estimates of R2 traffic are about 30 per cent lower than what might previously have been expected. Correspondingly, light goods van traffic estimates are about 15 per cent higher. The changes in the estimates vary by type of road and by area.

This clarification has brought the traffic estimates more into line with other DETR surveys of goods vehicles traffic. Data from earlier counts affected by the misclassification have been adjusted. For recent years, this has been done by reference to the differences found for 1999. For earlier years, it has been done using past data from the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport.

SYMBOLS

P	=	provisional figures
..	=	provisional figures not sufficiently accurate to be published

DEFINITIONS

Units

Billion: One thousand million.

Roads

Motorways: Special roads reserved for certain classes of vehicle.

Major roads: 'A' roads.

Minor roads: 'B', 'C' and unclassified roads

Non-Built-Up roads: Roads with a speed limit of over 40mph.

Built-Up roads: Roads with a speed limit of 40mph or less.

Vehicle types

Cars: Includes taxis, passenger vehicles with 15 or less seats and three-wheeled cars. Cars towing caravans or trailers are counted as one vehicle.

Light vans: Goods vehicles not exceeding 3,500kg gross vehicle weight.

Goods vehicles: Goods vehicles exceeding 3,500kg gross vehicle weight.

Other vehicles: Includes two wheel motor vehicles and large buses and coaches.

- Traffic levels were one per cent lower in the first quarter of 2001 than in the same quarter of 2000. This was partly due to the impact of foot and mouth disease on the level of traffic in March. After removing this effect, it is estimated that there would have been little change in traffic between the two quarters.
- Car traffic levels fell by about one per cent from the first quarter of 2000 to the same period of 2001, whilst goods vehicle traffic fell by two per cent over the same period. Both cars and goods vehicles traffic levels were affected by foot and mouth disease.
- Overall, traffic levels were virtually unchanged between 1999 and 2000: revised estimates show that traffic increased by 0.4 per cent between the two years. After adjusting for the effects of the fuel protest (traffic levels fell by an estimated 20% in mid-September), it is estimated that there would have been a rise of 0.8 per cent between 1999 and 2000.
- Pedal cycle traffic fell back two per cent in 2000, following a rise of five per cent from 1998 to 1999. This was probably related to the particularly wet weather in 2000.

Chart 1: Road traffic in Great Britain by vehicle type in 2000

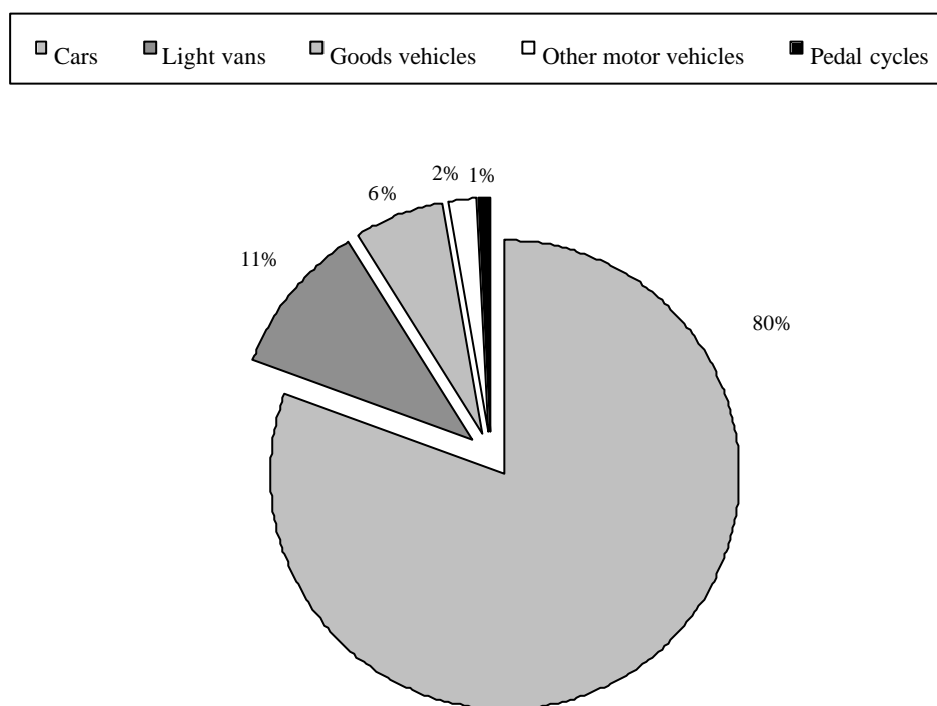


Table 1: Road traffic in Great Britain by vehicle type: Index numbers

Seasonally adjusted index numbers (1993=100)

	Cars	Light vans	Goods vehicles	Other motor vehicles	All motor vehicles	Pedal cycles
Weights (1993) (billion vehicle kms)	338.5	41.1	23.8	8.7	412.2	4.5
1988	90.2	88.0	99.8	118.4	91.1	116.5
1995	104.3	106.5	105.4	100.4	104.5	99.6
1996	107.0	109.6	109.1	103.1	107.3	94.6
1997	109.6	110.8	113.8	102.9	109.8	90.2
1998	111.0	116.8	112.2	101.3	111.4	88.3
1999	112.3	119.7	117.9	109.9	113.3	92.8
2000 *	112.4	122.3	120.1	106.8	113.7	91.4
Seasonally adjusted index numbers (average quarter 1993=100)						
1997 Q1	108.3	108.0	112.1	97.0	108.3	89.9
Q2	108.7	109.5	113.6	103.4	109.0	90.8
Q3	109.7	112.0	113.8	106.6	110.1	90.3
Q4	111.5	114.0	115.1	103.0	111.7	89.9
1998 Q1	111.1	115.0	112.8	96.6	111.3	88.1
Q2	110.6	115.4	110.8	103.0	110.9	89.0
Q3	110.1	117.0	111.3	102.5	110.7	88.1
Q4	112.0	119.8	114.0	103.4	112.7	88.1
1999 Q1	112.2	118.0	118.0	107.6	113.0	90.8
Q2	111.9	119.9	117.5	111.2	113.0	92.6
Q3	112.2	120.4	117.3	112.1	113.3	94.3
Q4	112.7	120.8	119.2	111.2	113.8	93.5
2000 Q1	113.1	120.9	120.4	113.5	114.3	92.6
Q2	112.7	120.9	119.8	111.2	113.9	92.6
Q3 *	110.3	123.4	119.2	107.0	112.1	89.9
Q4	112.7	122.5	118.6	105.9	113.8	90.8
2001 Q1 P	112.4	122.5	117.6	106.3	113.6	..
Percentage change on previous year						
1996	3	3	3	3	2.7	-5
1997	2	1	4	0	2.3	-5
1998	1	5	-1	-2	1.5	-2
1999	1	2	5	9	1.7	5
2000 *	0	2	2	-3	0.4	-2
1998 Q1	3	6	1	0	3	-2
Q2	2	5	-3	0	2	-2
Q3	0	4	-2	-4	1	-2
Q4	0	5	-1	0	1	-2
1999 Q1	1	3	5	11	2	3
Q2	1	4	6	8	2	4
Q3	2	3	5	9	2	7
Q4	1	1	5	8	1	6
2000 Q1	1	2	2	6	1	2
Q2	1	1	2	0	1	0
Q3 *	-2	2	2	-5	-1	-5
Q4	0	1	-1	-5	0	-3
2001 Q1 P	-1	1	-2	-6	-1	..

* Figure affected by September fuel protest

- The provisional estimate for all motor vehicle traffic in 2000 is 468.7 billion vehicle kilometres.
- In seasonally-adjusted terms, the level of car traffic has changed little over the past four quarters, after allowing for the fact that the third quarter figure was depressed by about two per cent as a result of the fuel protest.

Chart 2a: Road traffic in Great Britain for all motor vehicles

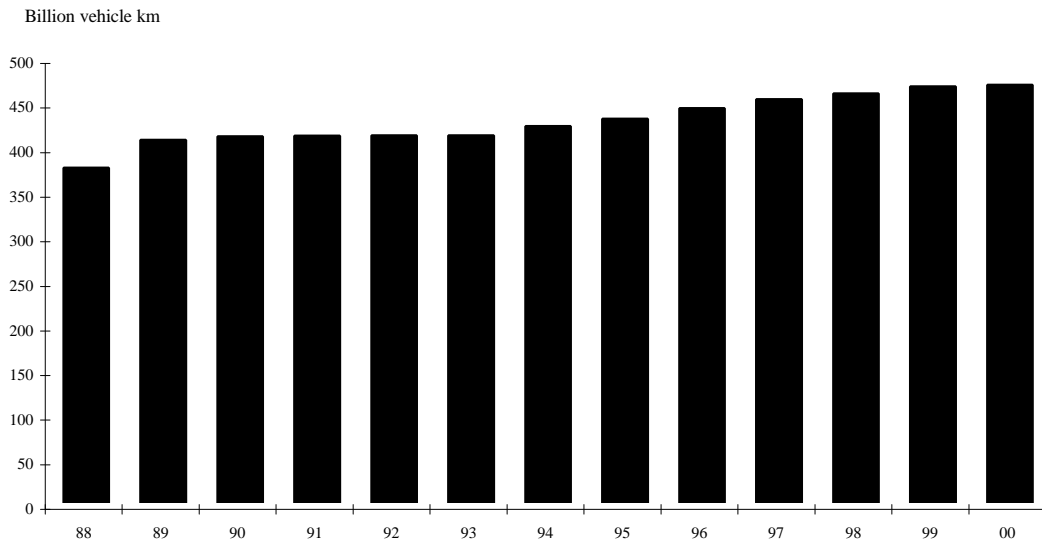


Chart 2b: Percentage change in road traffic for all motor vehicles

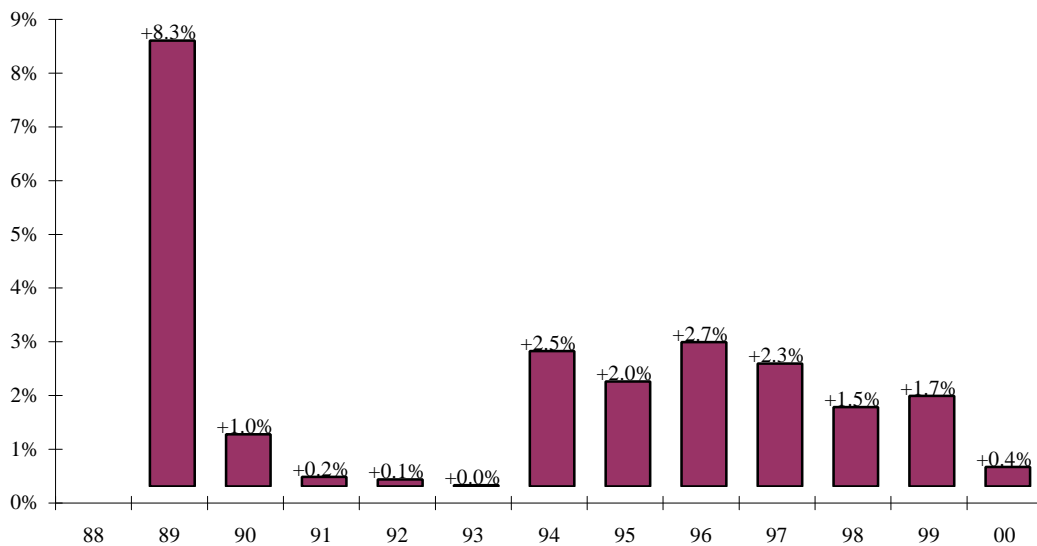


Table 2: Road traffic in Great Britain by vehicle type

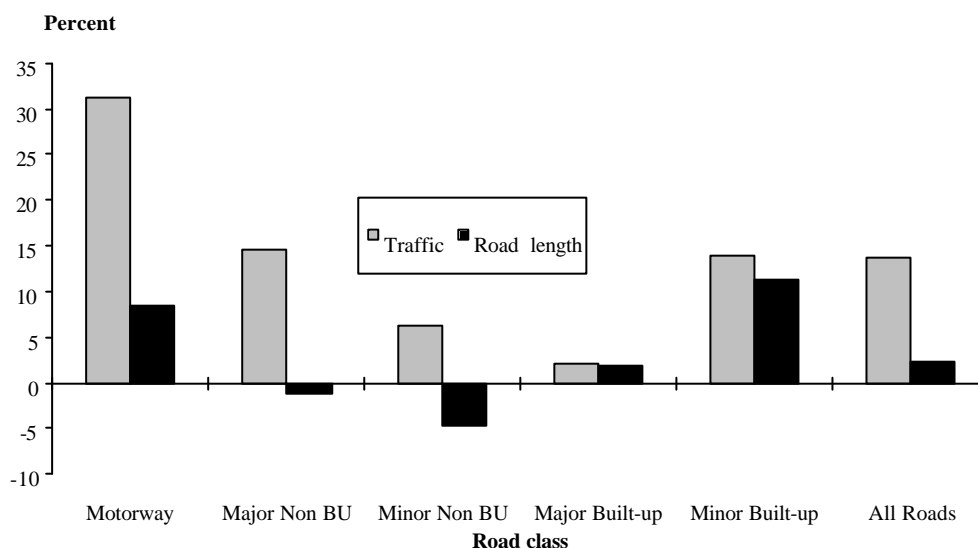
		Billion vehicle kilometres					
		Cars	Light vans	Goods vehicles	Other motor vehicles	All motor vehicles	Pedal cycles
1988		305.4	36.2	23.8	10.3	375.7	5.2
1995		353.2	43.8	25.1	8.8	430.9	4.5
1996		362.4	45.1	26.0	9.0	442.4	4.3
1997		370.9	45.6	27.1	9.0	452.6	4.1
1998		375.6	48.1	26.7	8.9	459.2	4.0
1999		380.1	49.2	28.1	9.6	467.0	4.2
2000	*	380.4	50.3	28.6	9.3	468.7	4.1
Seasonally adjusted figures							
1997	Q1	91.7	11.1	6.7	2.1	111.6	1.0
	Q2	92.0	11.3	6.8	2.3	112.3	1.0
	Q3	92.9	11.5	6.8	2.3	113.5	1.0
	Q4	94.3	11.7	6.9	2.3	115.2	1.0
1998	Q1	94.1	11.8	6.7	2.1	114.7	1.0
	Q2	93.6	11.9	6.6	2.3	114.3	1.0
	Q3	93.2	12.0	6.6	2.2	114.1	1.0
	Q4	94.8	12.3	6.8	2.3	116.2	1.0
1999	Q1	95.0	12.1	7.0	2.4	116.5	1.0
	Q2	94.7	12.3	7.0	2.4	116.5	1.0
	Q3	95.0	12.4	7.0	2.5	116.8	1.1
	Q4	95.4	12.4	7.1	2.4	117.3	1.1
2000	Q1	95.7	12.4	7.2	2.5	117.8	1.0
	Q2	95.4	12.4	7.1	2.4	117.4	1.0
	Q3 *	93.4	12.7	7.1	2.3	115.5	1.0
	Q4	95.3	12.6	7.1	2.3	117.3	1.0
2001	Q1 P	95.1	12.6	7.0	2.3	117.1	..
Unadjusted figures							
1997	Q1	87.4	10.6	6.7	1.9	106.5	0.7
	Q2	93.6	11.3	6.7	2.4	114.0	1.2
	Q3	97.1	12.0	6.9	2.7	118.6	1.3
	Q4	92.8	11.8	6.8	2.1	113.4	0.8
1998	Q1	90.0	11.2	6.8	1.8	109.9	0.7
	Q2	94.9	11.8	6.5	2.4	115.6	1.1
	Q3	97.2	12.5	6.7	2.6	118.9	1.3
	Q4	93.5	12.5	6.7	2.0	114.8	0.8
1999	Q1	91.1	11.5	7.1	2.0	111.8	0.7
	Q2	96.0	12.3	6.9	2.6	117.7	1.2
	Q3	98.9	12.9	7.0	2.8	121.6	1.4
	Q4	94.1	12.6	7.0	2.2	115.9	0.9
2000	Q1	92.1	11.8	7.3	2.1	113.4	0.8
	Q2	96.4	12.4	7.0	2.5	118.4	1.2
	Q3 *	97.4	13.3	7.1	2.7	120.5	1.3
	Q4	94.4	12.8	7.1	2.0	116.4	0.8
2001	Q1 P	91.9	12.0	7.3	2.0	113.2	..

* Figure affected by September fuel protest



- Figures on changes in traffic levels by road class are affected by long-term changes in road lengths. Over the last six years, there has been a significant reclassification of roads from non built-up to built-up, particularly minor roads. The apparent rise in minor built-up traffic shown on Table 3 is, therefore, largely the result of highway authorities imposing 40 mph or lower speed limits on previously unlimited roads. Chart 3 shows these trends in graphical terms.
- Traffic levels on motorways in the first quarter of 2001 were virtually unchanged from those in the same quarter of 2000. Traffic on minor non built-up roads fell by 6 per cent over the same period, largely reflecting the effects of foot and mouth disease on rural traffic in March.
- For the year as a whole, motorway traffic levels were about the same in 2000 as they were in 1999. This is the first time that motorway traffic has not increased year-on-year since 1991.

Chart 3: Percentage change in road traffic and road length for all motor



vehicles: 1993 to 2000

Table 3: Road traffic in Great Britain by road class: Index numbers

		Seasonally adjusted index numbers (1993=100)					
		Motorway	Major Non Built-up	Minor Non Built-up	Major Built-up	Minor Built-up	All roads
Weights (1993)		63.9	118.1	45.5	78.0	106.8	412.2
(billion vehicle kms)							
	1988	85.3	87.4	106.3	95.7	89.0	91.1
	1995	111.0	103.7	98.5	101.4	106.4	104.5
	1996	115.4	106.5	101.6	103.9	108.4	107.3
	1997	122.0	109.1	106.3	102.2	110.3	109.8
	1998	127.3	111.6	106.6	102.0	110.6	111.4
	1999	130.9	114.2	106.4	102.3	112.8	113.3
	2000 *	131.1	114.6	106.2	102.1	113.9	113.7
Seasonally adjusted index numbers (average quarter 1993=100)							
	1997 Q1	120.0	107.1	103.4	101.0	109.9	108.3
	Q2	120.9	107.0	107.2	102.0	109.9	109.0
	Q3	121.6	109.9	108.7	102.9	109.3	110.1
	Q4	125.6	112.4	105.8	102.7	111.8	111.7
	1998 Q1	127.2	111.5	106.9	101.8	110.4	111.3
	Q2	126.2	109.8	107.5	101.5	111.2	110.9
	Q3	126.5	110.7	106.5	101.1	110.2	110.7
	Q4	129.2	114.3	105.6	103.8	110.7	112.7
	1999 Q1	129.0	113.6	106.6	104.2	112.1	113.0
	Q2	130.3	114.4	106.3	102.3	111.8	113.0
	Q3	132.3	113.9	106.3	100.9	113.5	113.3
	Q4	132.0	114.8	106.8	101.8	113.7	113.8
	2000 Q1	132.9	115.0	106.4	102.9	114.1	114.3
	Q2	132.0	114.6	106.5	102.2	113.9	113.9
	Q3 *	128.6	112.6	106.8	101.8	111.3	112.1
	Q4	133.0	114.6	104.7	101.0	114.8	113.8
	2001 Q1 P	133.3	115.1	99.8	101.7	114.7	113.6
Percentage change on previous year							
	1996	4	3	3	3	2	2.7
	1997	6	2	5	-2	2	2.3
	1998	4	2	0	0	0	1.5
	1999	3	2	0	0	2	1.7
	2000 *	0	0	0	0	1	0.4
	1998 Q1	6	4	3	1	0	3
	Q2	4	3	0	0	1	2
	Q3	4	1	-2	-2	1	1
	Q4	3	2	0	1	-1	1
	1999 Q1	1	2	0	2	1	2
	Q2	3	4	-1	1	1	2
	Q3	5	3	0	0	3	2
	Q4	2	0	1	-2	3	1
	2000 Q1	3	1	0	-1	2	1
	Q2	1	0	0	0	2	1
	Q3 *	-3	-1	0	1	-2	-1
	Q4	1	0	-2	-1	1	0
	2001 Q1 P	0	0	-6	-1	1	-1
Memo item							
% rise in road length '93 to '00		8	-1	-5	2	11	2

* Figure affected by September fuel protest

●

- Car traffic on motorways was only 1 per cent higher in the first quarter of 2001, compared to the same quarter of 2000.
- Goods vehicle traffic on all roads fell over the same period. This was partly due to the impact of foot and mouth disease.
- Overall, car traffic on motorways for the year 2000 was about the same as for 1999. After allowing for the effects of the fuel protest, it is estimated that there would have been a rise of about one per cent. Goods vehicle traffic on motorways rose by two per cent between 1999 and 2000: goods vehicle traffic was relatively unaffected by the fuel protest.

Table 4: Car and goods vehicle traffic by road class: Index numbers

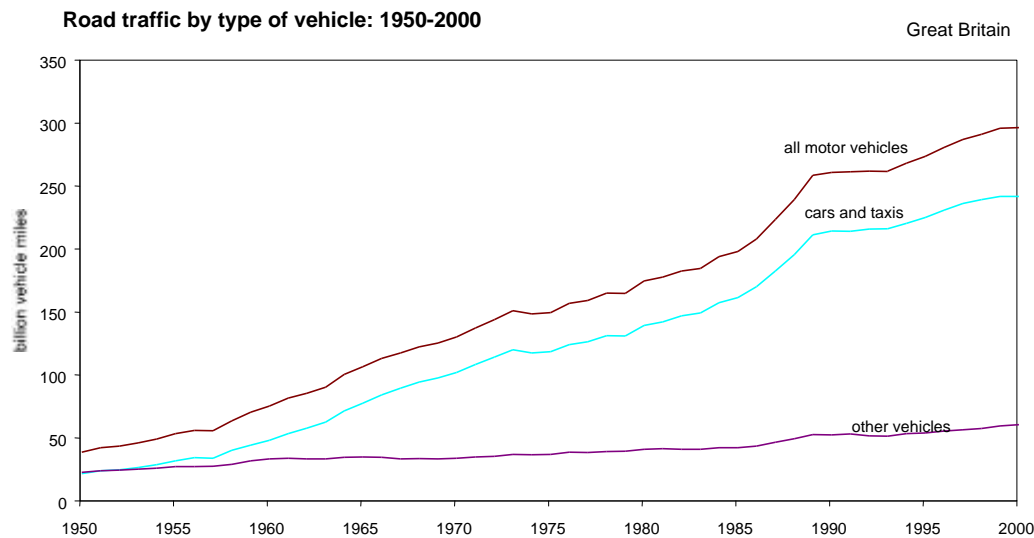
	Seasonally adjusted index numbers (1993=100)											
	Cars						Goods vehicles ¹					
	Motor- way	Major Non Built- up	Minor Non Built up	Major Built-up	Minor Built-up	All roads	Motor- way	Major Non Built- up	Minor Non Built- up	Major Built-up	Minor Built-up	All roads
Weights (1993) (billion vehicle kms)	49.2	95.2	37.9	65.1	91.1	338.5	7.7	9.0	1.7	3.0	2.4	23.8
1988	83.5	87.0	103.8	94.1	88.7	90.2	97.1	93.5	131.0	111.2	96.1	99.8
1995	111.1	103.2	98.0	101.4	106.6	104.3	110.9	104.3	93.0	103.3	103.4	105.4
1996	114.7	106.1	101.1	103.9	108.6	107.0	119.2	106.5	88.0	105.2	106.2	109.1
1997	121.3	108.9	106.1	102.3	110.5	109.6	126.2	107.5	99.0	102.2	122.0	113.8
1998	127.1	111.3	106.0	102.0	110.4	111.0	127.4	108.8	96.9	98.1	104.4	112.2
1999	128.7	113.0	106.2	102.0	112.5	112.3	140.5	114.6	91.9	96.5	103.5	117.9
2000 *	128.1	113.1	105.6	101.8	113.5	112.4	143.8	117.7	93.8	95.5	102.1	120.1
Seasonally adjusted index numbers (average quarter 1993=100)												
1997 Q1	119.6	107.1	103.3	101.4	110.4	108.3	123.0	106.3	98.8	101.3	121.6	112.1
Q2	119.8	106.7	107.0	102.2	110.3	108.7	127.1	105.9	101.2	101.3	123.2	113.6
Q3	120.9	109.6	108.2	102.7	109.3	109.7	125.1	107.7	101.2	103.9	121.6	113.8
Q4	124.8	112.2	105.7	102.9	111.9	111.5	129.7	110.4	94.1	100.0	119.9	115.1
1998 Q1	127.3	111.4	106.4	101.9	110.6	111.1	126.1	110.4	101.2	100.0	103.5	112.8
Q2	126.5	109.5	107.0	101.3	111.1	110.6	124.0	107.7	96.5	98.6	105.1	110.8
Q3	126.3	110.3	105.8	100.8	109.7	110.1	127.1	106.8	96.5	97.3	105.1	111.3
Q4	128.6	113.8	104.9	103.8	110.0	112.0	131.8	110.8	94.1	97.3	103.5	114.0
1999 Q1	127.4	112.7	106.4	104.0	111.8	112.2	139.6	115.3	87.1	100.0	103.5	118.0
Q2	128.2	113.2	105.8	102.0	111.4	111.9	138.0	115.3	94.1	97.3	101.8	117.5
Q3	130.2	112.7	105.6	100.5	113.2	112.2	140.6	112.6	96.5	94.6	103.5	117.3
Q4	129.1	113.3	107.1	101.4	113.5	112.7	143.8	116.2	91.8	94.6	101.8	119.2
2000 Q1	130.0	113.4	106.7	102.5	113.9	113.1	144.3	117.5	89.4	98.6	103.5	120.4
Q2	129.4	113.0	106.3	101.9	113.7	112.7	142.2	117.5	96.5	96.0	103.5	119.8
Q3 *	124.6	111.1	105.3	101.2	110.5	110.3	141.4	117.7	95.8	95.3	99.8	119.2
Q4	130.9	113.5	103.1	100.9	114.2	112.7	142.5	115.3	96.5	93.6	101.2	118.6
2001 Q1 P	130.9	113.9	99.2	101.6	114.1	112.4	141.9	115.4	85.2	93.7	100.7	117.6
Percentage change on previous year												
1996	3	3	3	3	2	3	7	2	-5	2	3	3
1997	6	3	5	-2	2	2	6	1	13	-3	15	4
1998	5	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	-2	-4	-14	-1
1999	1	2	0	0	2	1	10	5	-5	-2	-1	5
2000 *	0	0	-1	0	1	0	2	3	2	-1	-1	2
1998 Q1	6	4	3	1	0	3	3	4	2	-1	-15	1
Q2	6	3	0	-1	1	2	-2	2	-5	-3	-15	-3
Q3	4	1	-2	-2	0	0	2	-1	-5	-6	-14	-2
Q4	3	1	-1	1	-2	0	2	0	0	-3	-14	-1
1999 Q1	0	1	0	2	1	1	11	4	-14	0	0	5
Q2	1	3	-1	1	0	1	11	7	-2	-1	-3	6
Q3	3	2	0	0	3	2	11	5	0	-3	-2	5
Q4	0	0	2	-2	3	1	9	5	-3	-3	-2	5
2000 Q1	2	1	0	-1	2	1	3	2	3	-1	0	2
Q2	1	0	0	0	2	1	3	2	2	-1	2	2
Q3 *	-4	-1	0	1	-2	-2	1	5	-1	1	-4	2
Q4	1	0	-4	-1	1	0	-1	-1	5	-1	-1	-1
2001 Q1 P	1	0	-7	-1	0	-1	-2	-2	-5	-5	-3	-2

¹ Reliability of estimates of goods vehicles is ± 4 for all roads and even larger for separate road classes

ANNEX

Road traffic sustainable development headline indicator

The Government's headline indicators of sustainable development are intended to focus public attention on what sustainable development means and to give a broad overview of whether we are "achieving a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come". Road traffic is one of the headline indicators. It reflects the government's objective to improve the choice of transport and to improve access to education, jobs, leisure and services, while reducing the need to travel.



Key points to note about road traffic growth are:

- Motor vehicle traffic in 2000 was nearly nine times that in 1950, mostly because car traffic was nearly fifteen times as high.
- The rate of motor vehicle traffic growth has varied in recent years. Between 1985 and 1999 it grew rapidly, by over 6 per cent per year on average. Growth then slowed to less than 1 per cent per year between 1990 and 1994, before rising to about 2 per cent per year between 1994 and 1999. Between 1999 and 2000 it increased by 0.4 per cent. After adjusting for the effects of the fuel protest, it is estimated that there would have been a rise of 0.8 per cent between 1999 and 2000.

Other headline indicators include: growth in the economy, investment, employment, health, education, poverty, housing standards, crime, emissions of greenhouse gases, air and water quality, land use, wild bird populations, and waste. Full detail of the headline indicators, together with over 130 other indicators of sustainable development, were published in *Quality of Life Counts*¹ see web site:

<http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/sustainable/quality99/index.htm>

¹ *Quality of life counts: Indicators for a strategy for sustainable development for the United Kingdom*. DETR, 1999, London (ISBN 1 85112 3431).