



Department for Transport

Free Flow Vehicle Speed Statistics: Great Britain 2015

About this release

This Statistical Release presents estimates of traffic speeds in free flowing conditions on roads in Great Britain, updated for 2015.

These statistics provide insight into the speeds at which drivers choose to travel and their compliance with speed limits, but should not be taken as estimates of actual average speed across the road network, which are available separately (see Background Information on [p15](#)).

The estimates are based on speed data collected from a sample of DfT's Automatic Traffic Counters (ATCs). These have been chosen to exclude locations where external factors might restrict driver behaviour (e.g. junctions, hills, sharp bends and speed enforcement cameras).

Statistics on speeding offences and reported accidents involving speeding have been added to this release for the first time.

More information is available in the [free flow vehicle speeds statistical series](#).

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Since 2011, average free flow speeds for all vehicle types across each road type monitored have remained broadly stable. The percentage of vehicles exceeding the speed limit for each type of vehicle has generally declined for nearly all vehicle types and road types.



- ▶ On motorways, 46% of both cars and light commercial vehicles (LCVs) exceeded the speed limit (70 mph) in 2015. Since 2011, there has been a small, steady, decrease from 49% for both vehicle types. 11% of cars and 12% of LCVs exceeded the speed limit by 10 mph or more.
- ▶ Across all road types, national speed limit single carriageways had the highest level of speed limit compliance for cars in 2015 with 92% of cars not exceeding the speed limit (60 mph).
- ▶ 44% of articulated heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) exceeded the speed limit on 30 mph roads in 2015. On motorways (60 mph speed limit), the level of speed limit compliance was 99%.
- ▶ For all vehicle types, 20 mph roads had the lowest level of speed limit compliance in 2015.

Table 1: Percentage of vehicles exceeding the speed limit by road type in Great Britain, 2011 and 2015 (Table [SPE0112](#))

Road Type	Per cent								
	Cars (and car-derived vans)		Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs)		Articulated Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs)				
	2011	2015	2011	2015	2011	2015			
Motorways	49	46	↓	49	46	↓	1	1	↔
National speed limit single carriageways	9	8	↓		74	16 ¹	↓
30 mph roads	54	52	↓	58	56	↓	47	44	↓
20 mph roads	..	84		..	83		..	73	

¹ The value for HGVs on national speed limit single carriageways in 2015 has been calculated using data from England & Wales after 6 April 2015 only, reflecting the change in the legal speed limit for these vehicles. All other figures in this table are for Great Britain for a complete year.

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What's changed in this release

A number of changes to this release have been introduced since the last publication we have:

- ▶ added speed statistics for *20 mph roads*;
- ▶ removed speed statistics for *motorcycles, cars towing and rigid 3-axle HGVs*;
- ▶ removed speed statistics for *dual carriageways and 40 mph roads*;
- ▶ reprocessed all speed data from 2011 onwards only and removed data for earlier years;
- ▶ added statistics on HGV headway;
- ▶ added statistics on speed offences and reported accidents involving speeding.

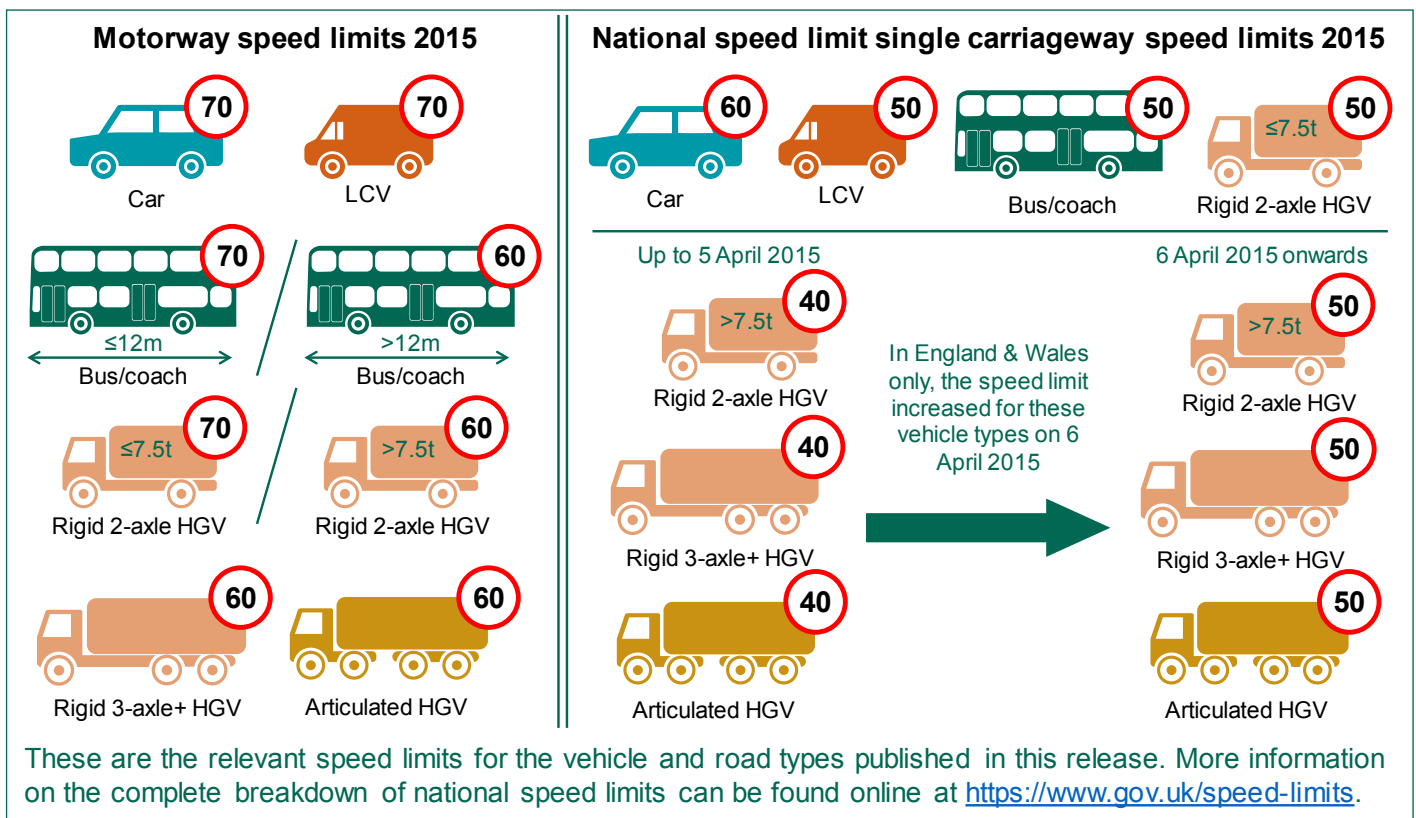
Please note the figures in this release are not directly comparable with previous releases. Please see the Background Information on [page 15](#) for details on all the above.

Applicable Speed Limits in Great Britain

Drivers in Great Britain must not drive faster than the speed limit for the type of road and their type of vehicle. The speed limit is the absolute maximum - it doesn't mean it's safe to drive at this speed in all conditions.

All vehicles have the same speed limit on *20 mph and 30 mph roads*. However, for other roads, speed limits differ by vehicle and road type. The speed limits on *motorways and national speed limit single carriageways* are shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Applicable speed limits for motorways and national speed limit single carriageways, 2015



Change in speed limits for HGVs over 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight

On 6 April 2015, in England and Wales only, the national speed limit for HGVs more than 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight increased from 50 mph to 60 mph on *dual carriageways*, and from 40 mph to 50 mph on *single carriageways*².

Analyses for *dual carriageways* are not included in this publication due to insufficient sample size.

HGV speed limits used in this publication

Speed limits for HGVs depend on the maximum laden weight of the vehicle which is not recorded by DfT's Automatic Traffic Counters (ATCs). HGVs are identified using the number of axles, the axle spacing and the length of the vehicle.

For the purposes of this publication, all *rigid 3 or more axle HGVs* and all *articulated HGVs* recorded by our ATCs are assumed to be over 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight.

Due to the large population of licensed *rigid 2-axle HGVs* both below and above the 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight threshold, the applicable national speed limit on *motorways* and *national speed limit single carriageways* (prior to 2015) cannot be determined for those vehicles at our ATC sites.

Consequently, speed compliance data for *rigid HGVs* on these road types prior to 2015 are not included in this publication.

Speed Limiters

Speed limiters are required by law, across the EU by European legislation (2002/85/EC), to be fitted to:

- ▶ passenger carrying vehicles with more than 8 passenger seats (*buses/coaches*);
- ▶ goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes (*all HGVs*).

Limiters restrict maximum powered speed to 62 mph (100 kph) for passenger carrying vehicles and, 56 mph (90 kph) for all HGVs. Operators/drivers can choose to install speed limiters on their vehicles even if not required to by law.

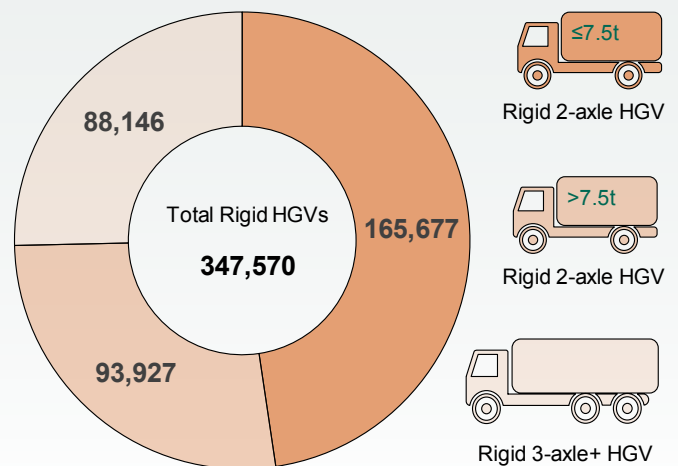
The main reason for introducing speed limiters to these vehicle types was because the consequences of accidents involving heavier vehicles tend to be so severe; they are generally less manoeuvrable and less able to take evasive action to avoid an accident.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hgv-changes-to-give-fairer-deal-for-hauliers>

Licensed Rigid HGVs

At the end of December 2015, there were 347,570 rigid HGVs licensed in Great Britain, with a breakdown as shown.

Source: [Vehicle licence statistics](#)



Vehicles exceeding the speed limit

The number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit varies by vehicle and road type. The following section provides insight into the speeds at which drivers choose to travel and their compliance with speed limits in free flowing conditions.

Motorways

- ▶ On motorways, 46% of both cars and light commercial vehicles (LCVs) exceeded the speed limit (70 mph) in 2015. Since 2011, there has been a small, steady, decrease from 49% for both vehicle types.
- ▶ In 2015, 11% of cars and 12% of LCVs exceeded the speed limit by 10 mph or more, a reduction since 2011 when the levels were 13% and 15% respectively.
- ▶ Compliance with the speed limit on motorways by articulated HGVs in 2015 was very high, with 99% of vehicles not exceeding the speed limit. This level has remained constant since 2011.

National speed limit single carriageways

- ▶ Across all road types, national speed limit single carriageways had the highest level of speed limit compliance for cars in 2015 with 92% of vehicles not exceeding the speed limit (60 mph), a increase from 91% in 2011. For other classes of vehicles, compliance with speed limits is lower with 70% of buses and coaches, 75% of rigid HGVs and 84% of articulated HGVs adhering to the speed limit in 2015.
- ▶ Very low percentages of vehicles exceeded the speed limit by 10 mph or more on national speed limit single carriageways in 2015. The highest level was 4% for rigid HGVs.
- ▶ Following the introduction of changes to the speed limits for HGVs on national speed limit single carriageways on 6 April 2015, the level of compliance for articulated HGVs has increased from 24% in 2014 to 84% in 2015¹.

Key terms

Free flow speed

Free flow speeds are observed in locations where external factors which might restrict driver behaviour (e.g. junctions, hills, sharp bends and speed enforcement cameras) are not present.

Exceeding the speed limit

Vehicles travelling at a speed higher than their applicable speed limit are defined as “exceeding the speed limit”.

More information is available in the [notes & definitions](#) document.

Free flow vehicle speed data series

The statistics included in the following sections can be found in these published tables:

[SPE01: Free flow vehicle speeds](#)

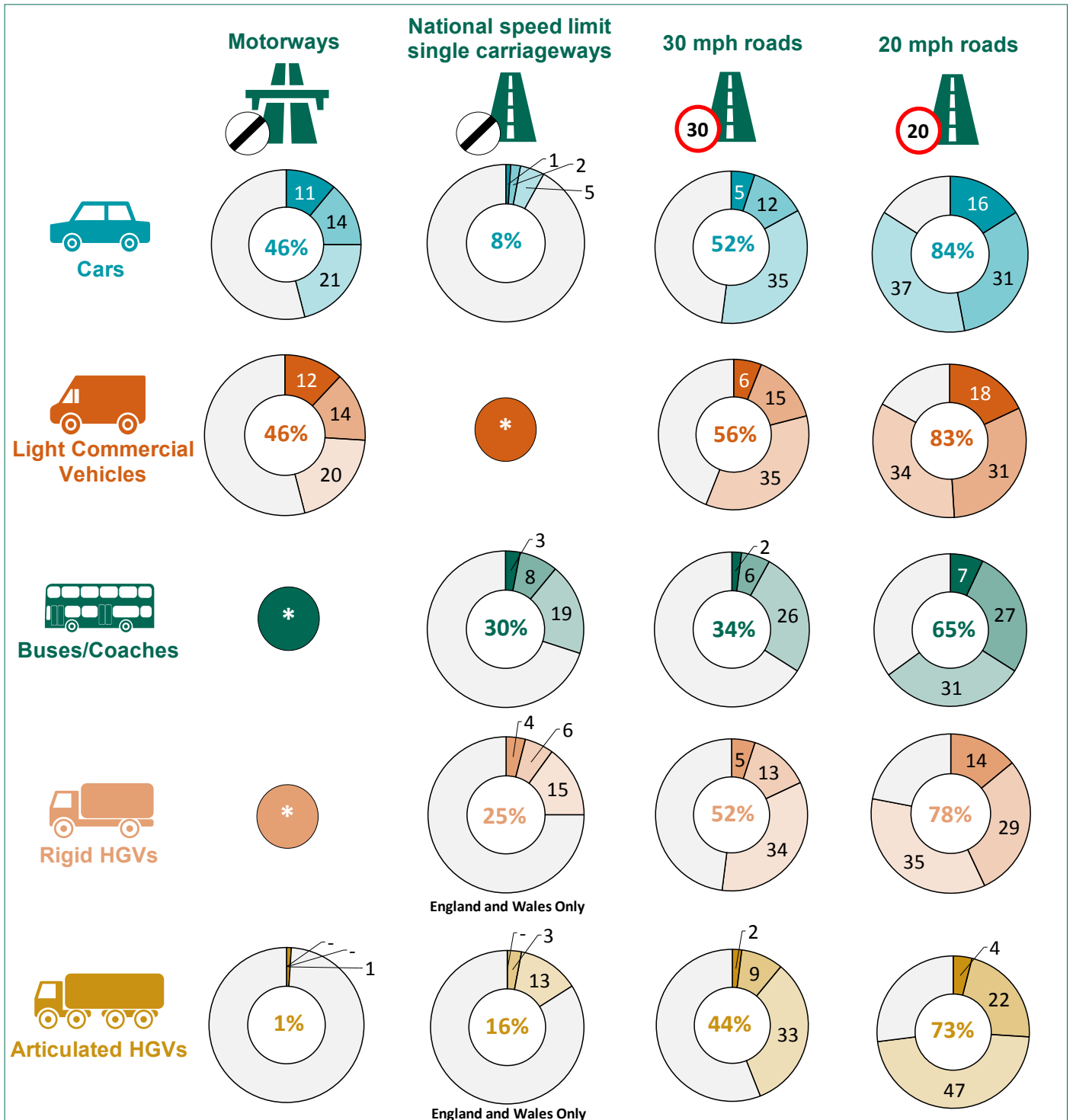
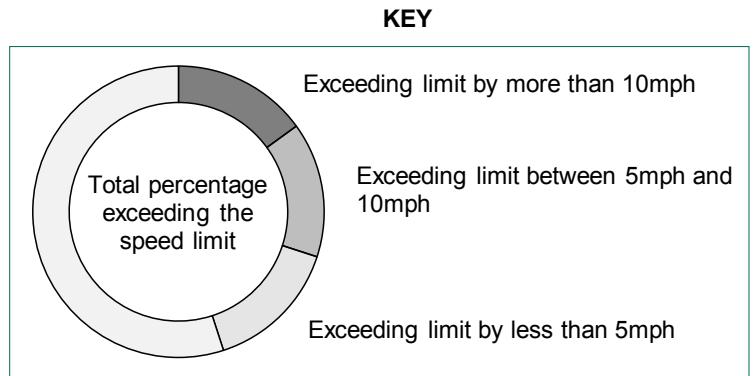
- ▶ SPE0111: Free flow vehicle speeds by road type and vehicle type in Great Britain.
- ▶ SPE0112: Free flow vehicle speeds in Great Britain.
- ▶ SPE0113: Percentage of cars exceeding the speed limit in free flowing conditions in Great Britain.
- ▶ SPE0114: Time difference (headway) between HGVs and the vehicle in front in Great Britain.

¹ The value for HGVs on national speed limit single carriageways in 2015 has been calculated using data from **England & Wales after 6 April 2015 only**, reflecting the change in the legal speed limit for these vehicles.

Figure 2: Percentage of vehicles exceeding the speed limit by road and vehicle type in Great Britain, 2015 (Table SPE0111)

Figure 2 shows, by vehicle and road type, the percentage of vehicles exceeding the speed limit broken down by the amount the speed limit was exceeded.

* denotes not published
 - less than half the final digit shown and different from a real zero



Figures 3a to 3c and 4a to 4c: Percentage of vehicles exceeding the speed limit by specified amounts in Great Britain, 2011 to 2015 (Table [SPE0112](#))

Trends on motorways



Figure 3a: Exceeding the speed limit on motorways

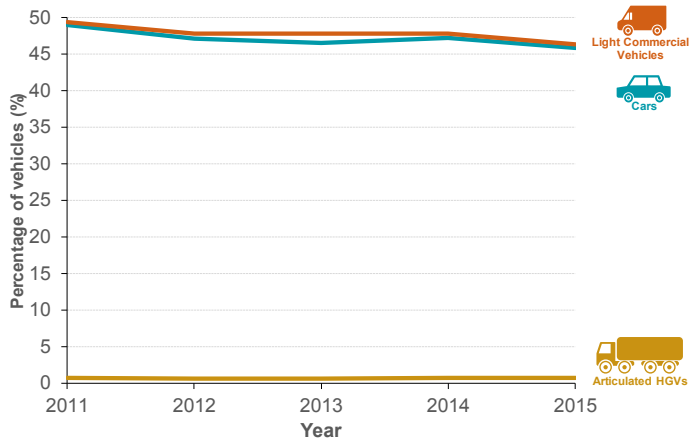


Figure 3b: Exceeding the speed limit by 5 mph or more on motorways

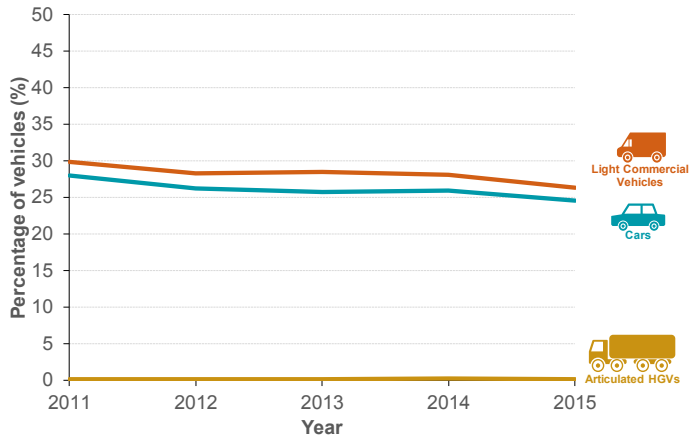
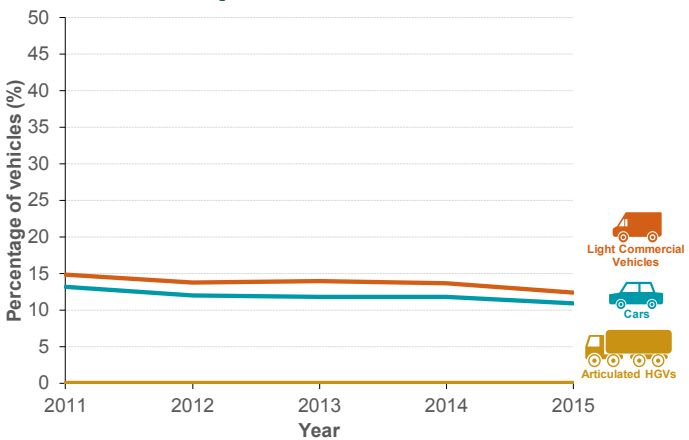


Figure 3c: Exceeding the speed limit by 10 mph or more on motorways



Trends on national speed limit single carriageways³



Figure 4a: Exceeding the speed limit on national speed limit single carriageways³

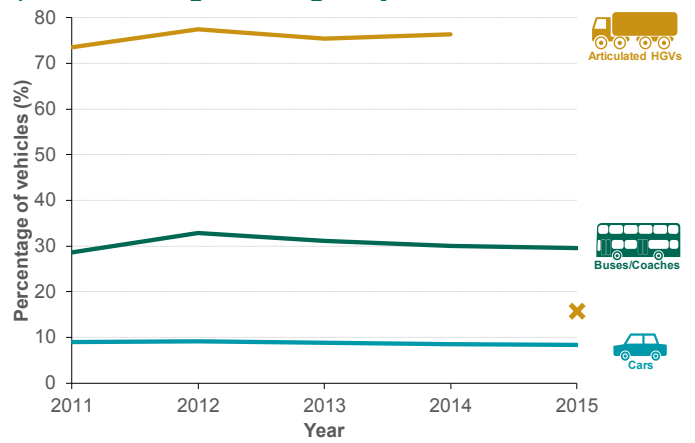


Figure 4b: Exceeding the speed limit by 5 mph or more on national speed limit single carriageways³

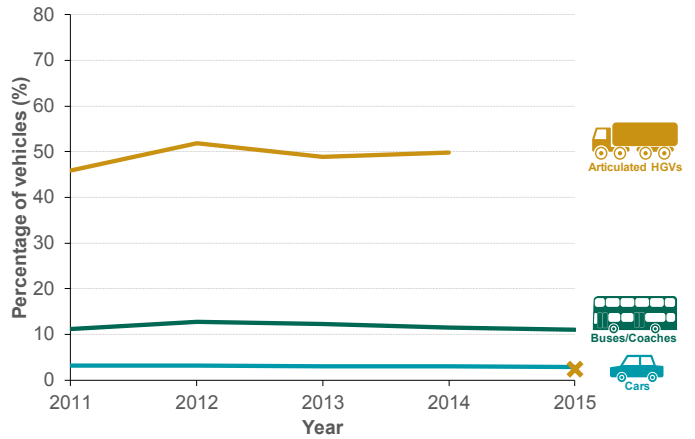
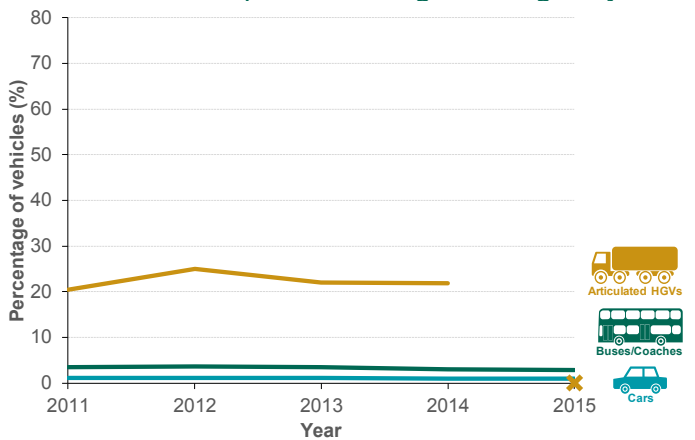


Figure 4c: Exceeding the speed limit by 10 mph or more on national speed limit single carriageways³



³ There is a discontinuity in the series for articulated HGVs on national speed limit single carriageways following the speed limit increase in England & Wales on 6 April 2015. This is explained in further detail on [page 3](#).

30 mph roads

- ▶ In 2015, 52% of cars and 56% of LCVs exceeded the speed limit on 30mph roads. For the larger-sized vehicle types, there were also high levels of speed limit exceedance, with 52% of rigid HGVs, 44% of articulated HGVs and 34% of buses and coaches exceeding the speed limit. Since 2011, for all vehicle types, small decreases in the level of speed limit exceedance have been recorded in the range of 1 to 3 percentage points dependent on vehicle type.
- ▶ LCVs have the highest level of vehicles (21%) exceeding the speed limit by more than 5mph in 2015.

20 mph roads

- ▶ Across all vehicle types, 20 mph roads had the highest level of speed limit non-compliance in 2015. This ranged from 65% for buses and coaches, to 84% for cars.
- ▶ In 2015, LCVs had the greatest share of vehicles exceeding the speed limit by more than 5 mph, recorded at 49%.
- ▶ Data are not available for earlier years.

Figures 5a to 5c: Percentage of vehicles exceeding the speed limit by specified amounts on 30 mph roads in Great Britain, 2011 to 2015 (Table [SPE0112](#))



Figure 5a: Exceeding the speed limit on 30 mph roads

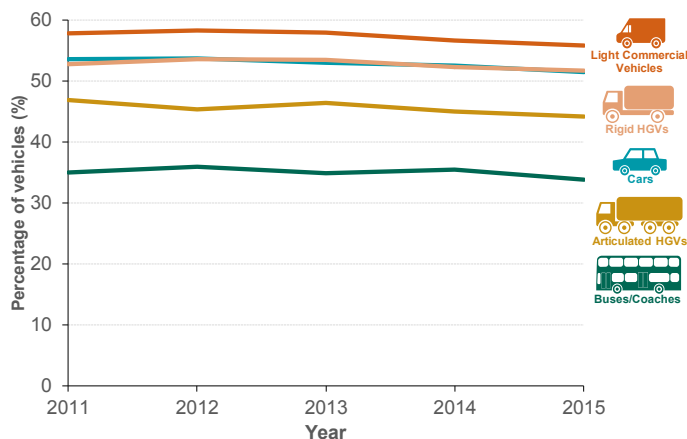


Figure 5b: Exceeding the speed limit by 5 mph or more on 30 mph roads

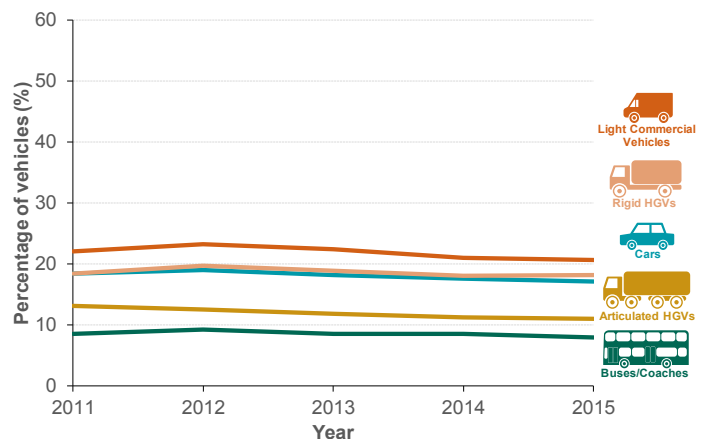
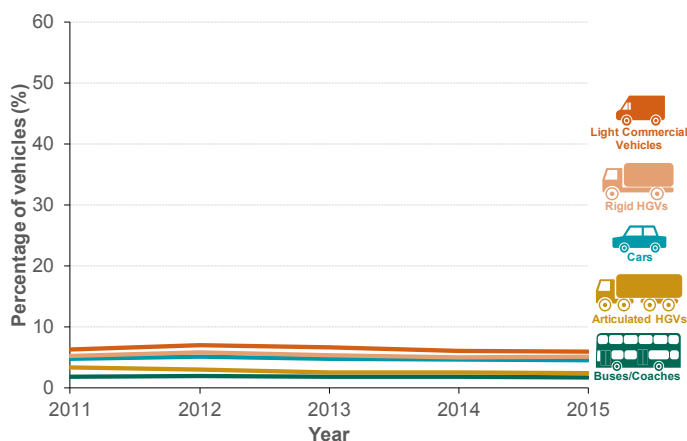


Figure 5c: Exceeding the speed limit by 10 mph or more on 30 mph roads



Cars exceeding the speed limit by time of day

The number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit varies during the day according to road type. The following section considers cars only for 2015. Congestion will inevitably have some impact depending on the time of day.

Figure 6: Percentage of cars exceeding the speed limit by hour of day on roads in Great Britain, 2015 (Table [SPE0112](#))

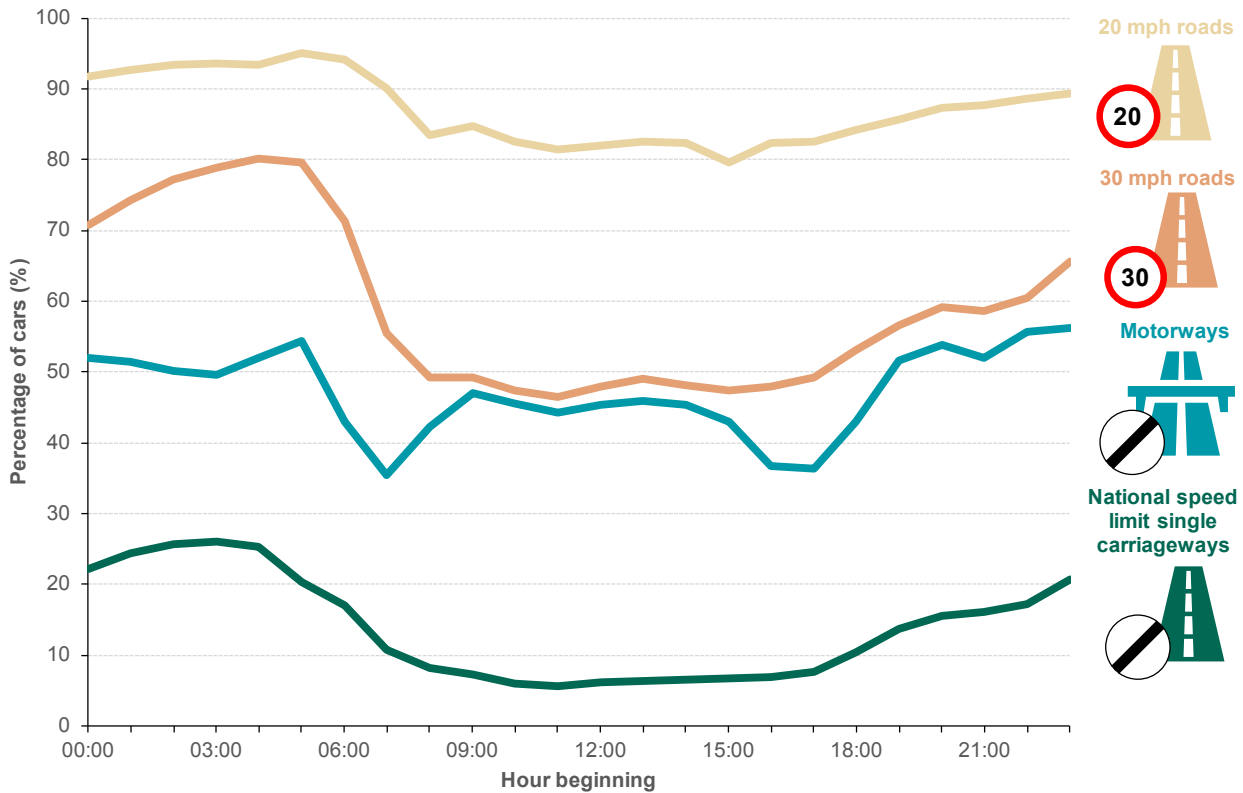


Table 2: Minimum and maximum values for the percentage of cars exceeding the speed limit by road type in Great Britain, 2015 (Table [SPE0113](#))

Road Type	Time/percentage			
	Minimum		Maximum	
	Time period	% cars exceeding the speed limit	Time period	% cars exceeding the speed limit
Motorways	07:00 to 08:00	35	22:00 to 00:00	56
National speed limit single carriageways	10:00 to 15:00	6	02:00 to 04:00	26
30 mph roads	10:00 to 11:00 and 15:00 to 16:00	46	04:00 to 06:00	80
20 mph roads	15:00 to 16:00	80	05:00 to 06:00	95

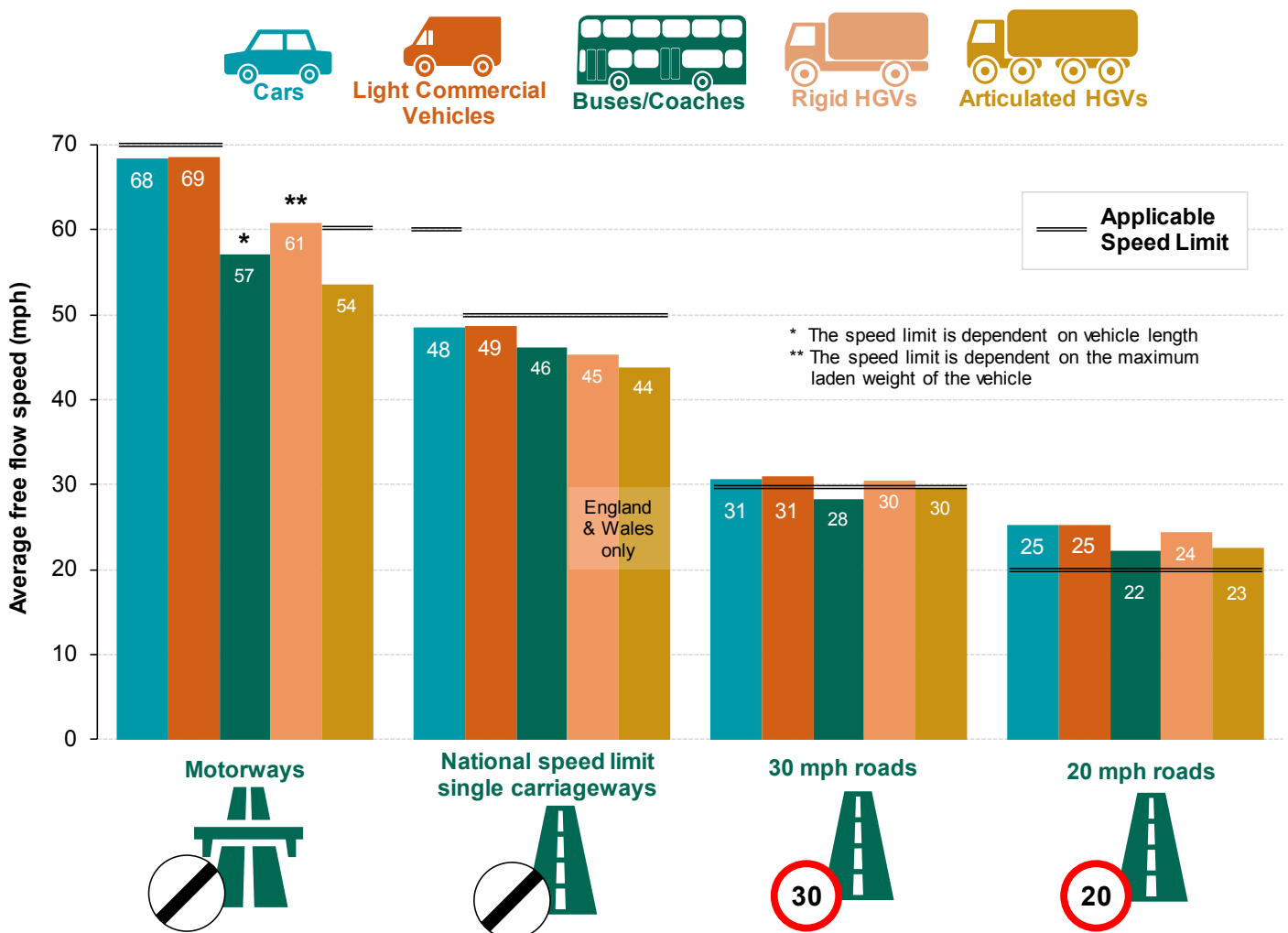
- ▶ On motorways, the percentage of cars exceeding the speed limit was highest (56%) between 22:00 and 00:00 and lowest (35%) between 07:00 and 08:00.
- ▶ On motorways, the pattern throughout the day has two distinct low values; a dip in the morning (06:00 to 09:00) and another beginning in the late afternoon (16:00 to 19:00).

- ▶ National speed limit single carriageways, 30 mph roads and 20 mph roads all had fairly static levels of cars exceeding the speed limit during the day (08:00 to 18:00).
- ▶ There is greatest variation during the day for 30 mph roads, varying from below 50% through most of the day (08:00 to 18:00) to 80% in the early morning hours (04:00 to 06:00).
- ▶ There is least variation during the day for 20 mph roads, varying from 80% in the afternoon (15:00 to 16:00) and up to 95% in the early morning hours (05:00 to 06:00).

Average free flow speeds

The following section presents the average free flow speeds at which drivers choose to travel as observed at sampled ATC locations.

Figure 7: Average free flow speeds by vehicle type and road type on roads in Great Britain, 2015
(Table [SPE0111](#))



Motorways and national speed limit single carriageways

- ▶ In 2015, the average free flow speed of cars was 68 mph on motorways and 48 mph on national speed limit single carriageways. LCVs were observed to have almost identical average free flow speeds to cars on these road types, with values of 69 mph and 48 mph respectively.

- ▶ On motorways, rigid HGVs had an average free flow speed of 61 mph in 2015. A definitive speed limit for these vehicles cannot be determined as the applicable speed limit relates to the maximum laden weight of the vehicle, see [page 3](#) for details. A higher speed limit of 70 mph applies to rigid 2-axle HGVs up to 7.5 tonnes, and these represent about one third of the population of rigid HGVs. A 60 mph speed limit applies to all other rigid HGVs on motorways.
- ▶ On national speed limit single carriageways, rigid and articulated HGVs in England and Wales¹ had an average free flow speed of 45 mph and 44 mph respectively.

Figures 8a to 8c: Average free flow speeds by vehicle type, split by road type in Great Britain, 2011 to 2015 (Table [SPE0112](#))

Figure 8a: Average free flow speeds on motorways

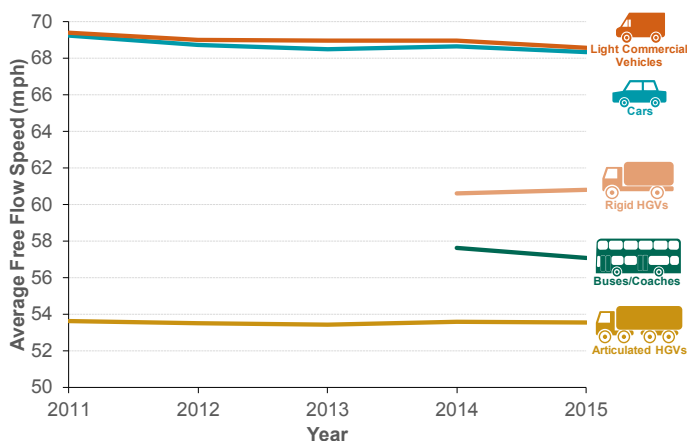


Figure 8b: Average free flow speeds on national speed limit single carriageways

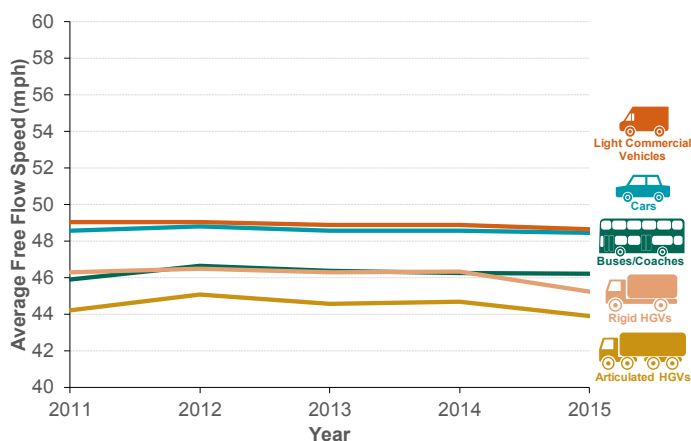
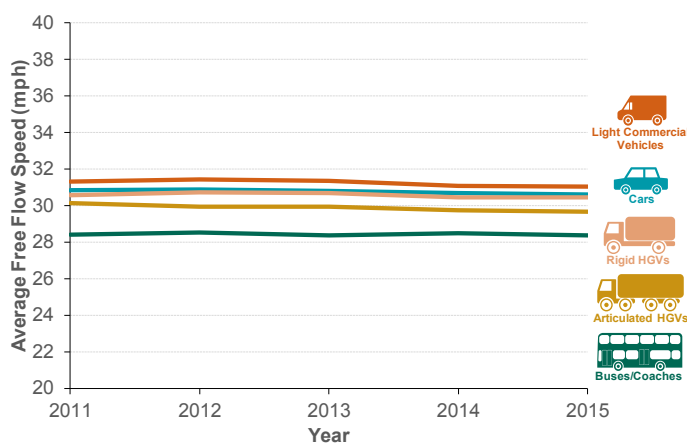


Figure 8c: Average free flow speeds on 30 mph roads



30 mph and 20 mph roads

- ▶ In 2015, cars and LCVs both had an average free flow speed of 31 mph on roads with a speed limit of 30 mph. For other vehicle types, average free flow speeds were at, or below, the speed limit.
- ▶ For all vehicle types on 20 mph roads, the average free flow speed was above the speed limit in 2015, with the highest being cars and LCVs at 25 mph.

Trends in average free flow speeds

- ▶ Since 2011, average free flow speeds for all vehicle types across each road type have remained broadly stable.

Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) headway

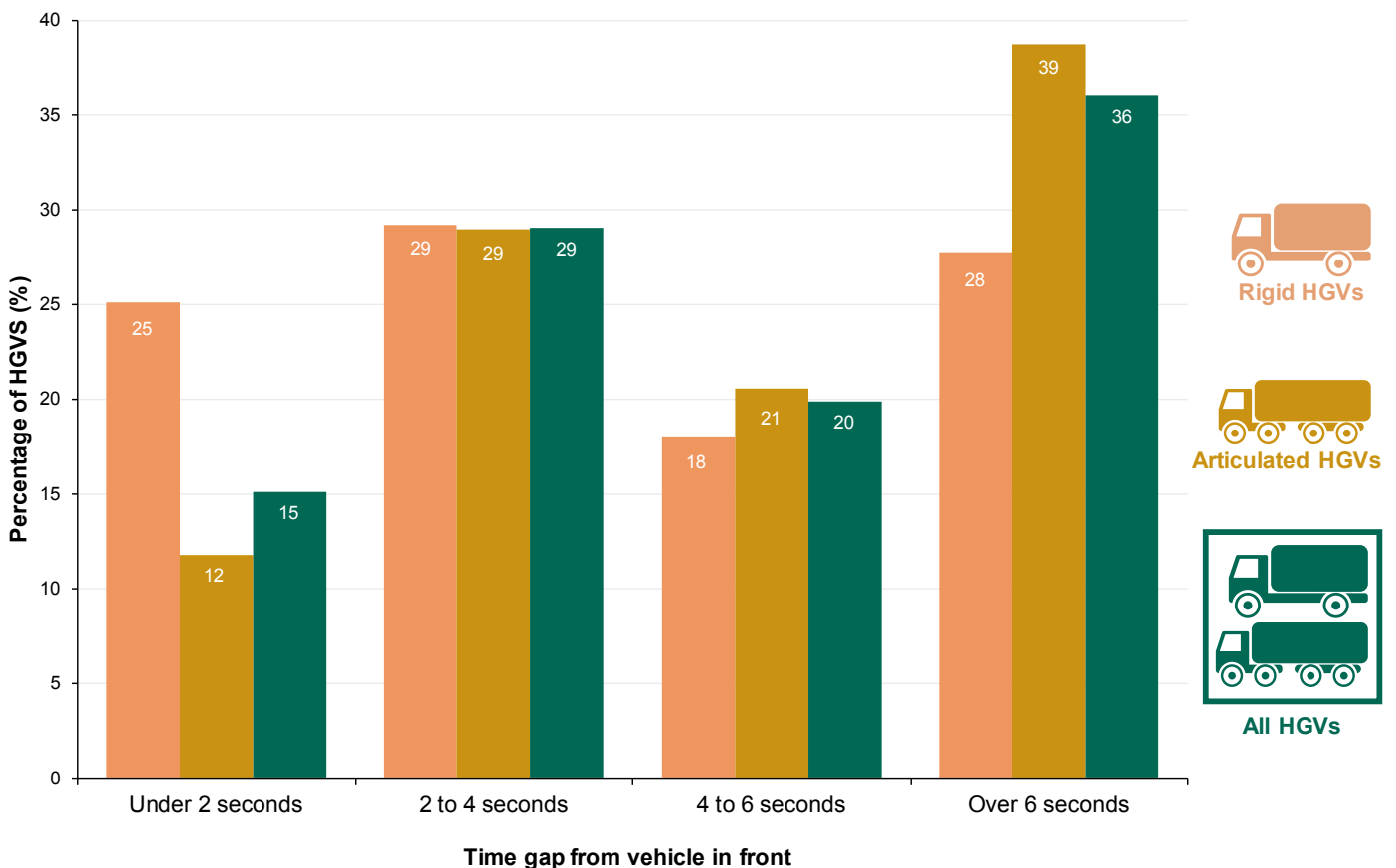
This section provides information about the time gaps between HGVs and the vehicles in front. This time gap is known as headway.

- ▶ In 2015, 85% of all HGVs left at least the recommended two-second gap between themselves and the vehicle in front.
- ▶ A higher percentage of articulated HGVs (88%) left the recommended two-second gap between themselves compared to rigid HGVs (75%).
- ▶ Adherence to the recommended two-second gap has remained stable since 2011.

Headway

Headway is the measurement of time between two vehicles. The Highway Code (rule 126) states that all drivers “should allow **at least a two-second gap** between you and the vehicle in front on roads carrying faster-moving traffic”, and this should be at least doubled in inclement conditions. More information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/general-rules-techniques-and-advice-for-all-drivers-and-riders-103-to-158>.

Figure 8: Distribution of time gaps between HGVs and the vehicle in front, split by HGV type, 2015
(Table [SPE0114](#))



Headway data: a note of caution

Headway data (originally from table TRA3107) is collected from a small selection (seven) of the free flow statistics motorway sites and are only based on traffic in the inside lane. These are classed as Official Statistics but not as National Statistics and should be treated with caution as the sample size is small.

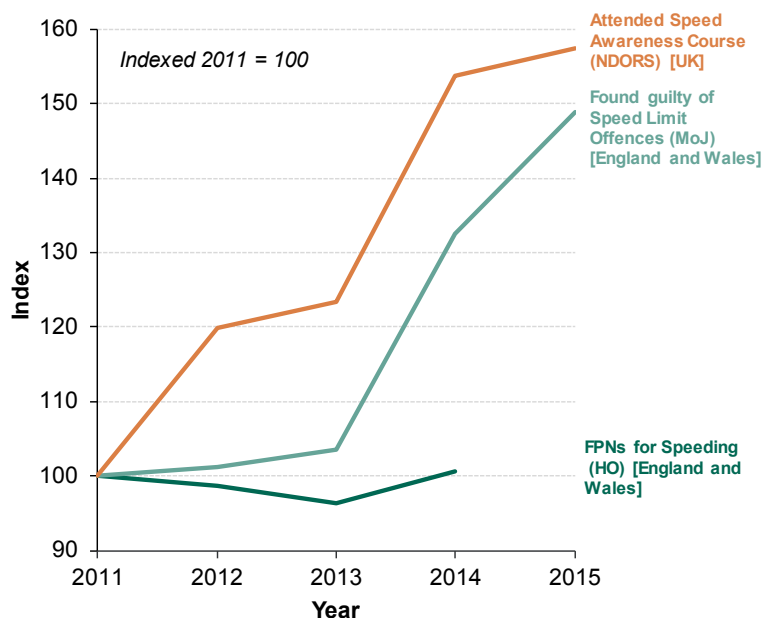
Speed offences and reported accidents involving speeding

This section reports on previously published data directly relating to speeding offences and road traffic accidents involving speeding.

Motor vehicle offences relating to exceeding the speed limit;

Source: Home Office (HO), Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS)

Figure 9: Indices of motor vehicle offences relating to exceeding the speed limit, 2011 to 2015 (Table [SPE0201](#))



Fixed Penalty Notices

- ▶ There were 743 thousand Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued for speed limit offences in England and Wales in 2014, an increase of 4% compared with the previous year. FPNs for speed limit offences account for 73% of all motoring FPNs in 2014.
- ▶ The majority (90%) of speeding FPNs in 2014 were detected by speed cameras.

Speeding Offences

- ▶ There was a 93% conviction ratio for people proceeded against for speed limit offences in England and Wales in 2015 (167 thousand were found guilty).
- ▶ 30% of motoring convictions in 2015 were for speed limit offences.
- ▶ The numbers of defendants convicted for speed limit offences have increased markedly over the four years, with convictions being 49% higher in 2015 (167 thousand) compared to 2011 (112 thousand)

Key terms

Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN)

Offered to motorists to avoid prosecution for various motoring offences (for example speeding, neglect of traffic directions and using a mobile phone while driving) by paying a prescribed financial penalty.

Speed Awareness Courses

National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS) is a set of schemes unique to the UK, where a motorist who has been caught committing a 'low level traffic offence', such as speeding, is given an opportunity to attend a course focusing on re-education designed to achieve greater compliance with the Road Traffic legislation, rather than receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) or attending court and face possible conviction.

Conviction Ratio

The number of convictions as a proportion of the number of proceedings. These are calculated on a principle offence basis.

More information is available in the [notes & definitions](#) document.

Speed offences and reported accidents involving speeding data series

The statistics included in this section can be found in these published tables:

[SPE02: Speeding offences and reported accidents involving speeding](#)

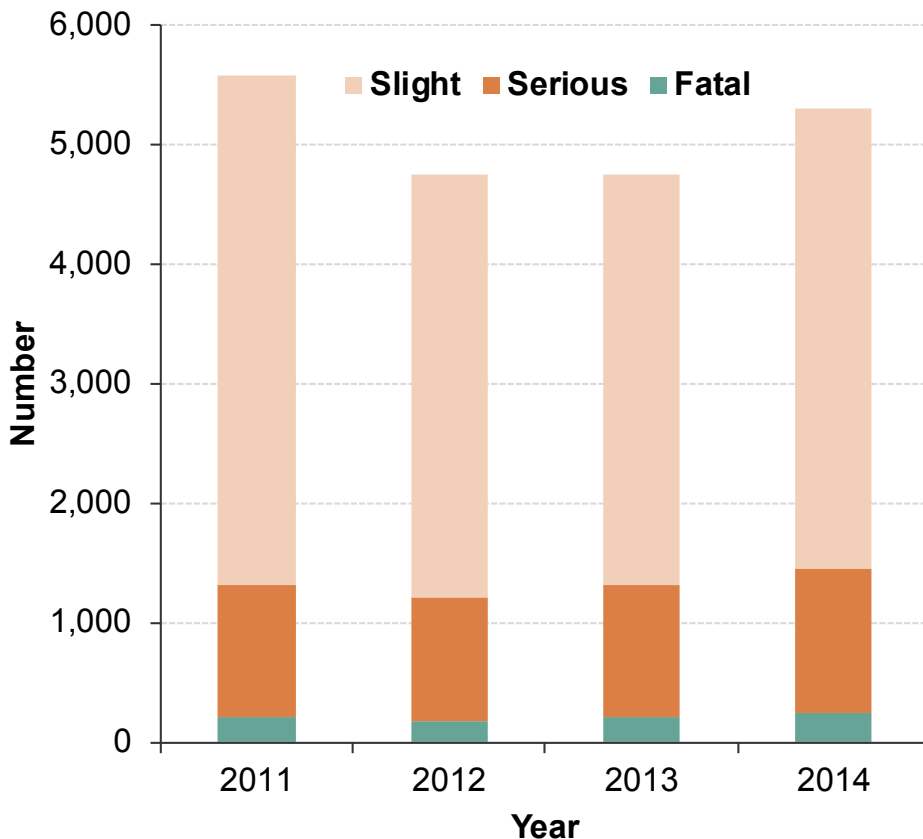
- ▶ SPE0201: Motor vehicle offences relating to exceeding the speed limit.
- ▶ SPE0202: Reported accidents where exceeding the speed limit was reported as a contributory factor, by severity.
- ▶ SPE0203: Vehicles involved in reported accidents where exceeding the speed limit was reported as a contributory factor by vehicle type and severity of accident.

Speed Awareness Courses

- ▶ In 2015, more than 1.2 million drivers attended a speed awareness course in the UK. Attendance has increased year on year since 2011. These yearly increases are also due to more police forces joining the scheme over the years and not solely due to more offences being committed.

Reported accidents where exceeding the speed limit was reported as a contributory factor, by severity

Figure 10: Reported accidents where exceeding the speed limit was reported as a contributory factor, by severity, 2011 to 2014 (Table [SPE0202](#))



- ▶ The share of accidents where exceeding the speed limit was reported as a contributory factor has stayed reasonably stable at 4.7% (5,576) in 2011 and 4.6% (5,309) in 2014.
- ▶ However, the share of fatal and serious accidents where exceeding the speed limit was reported as a contributory factor have increased from 6.5% (1,308) in 2011 to 7.4% (1,453) in 2014.
- ▶ Exceeding the speed limit was reported as a contributory factor for 16.5% of fatal accidents in 2014.

Key terms

Accident

Involves personal injury occurring on the public highway (including footways) in which at least one road vehicle or a vehicle in collision with a pedestrian is involved and which becomes known to the police within 30 days of its occurrence. Damage-only accidents, with no human casualties or accidents on private roads or car parks are not included.

Fatal accident

An accident in which at least one person is killed.

Serious accident

One in which at least one person is seriously injured but no person (other than a confirmed suicide) is killed.

Slight accident

One in which at least one person is slightly injured but no person is killed or seriously injured.

Contributory factor

The number of convictions as a proportion of the number of proceedings. These are calculated on a principle offence basis.

More information is available in the [notes & definitions](#) document.

Vehicles involved in reported accidents where exceeding the speed limit was reported as a contributory factor by vehicle type and severity of accident

Figures 11a to 11b: Percentage of vehicles with an exceeding the speed limit contributory factor by vehicle type, split by severity, 2014 (Table [SPE0203](#))

Figure 11a: All Accidents



Figure 11b: Fatal Accidents



- ▶ In 2014, for all accidents, 2.5% (5,381) of vehicles had an exceeding the speed limit contributory factor allocated to them. This has remained stable over the past four years, with the value being 2.6% (5,645) in 2011.
- ▶ Motorcycles were the vehicle type with the highest proportion of all accidents (5%) where exceeding the speed limit was the contributory factor, in 2014. 23.1% of fatal motorcycle accidents had exceeding the speed limit as the contributory factor, compared to 9.7% for all vehicles.
- ▶ HGVs had the lowest proportion of all accidents (0.8%) in 2014 where exceeding the speed limit was a contributory factor. This may relate to HGVs being speed limited or the drivers being professionally trained.

Figures 12a to 12b: Percentage of vehicles with an exceeding the speed limit contributory factor by vehicle type, split by severity, 2011 to 2014 (Table [SPE0203](#))

Figure 12a: All Accidents

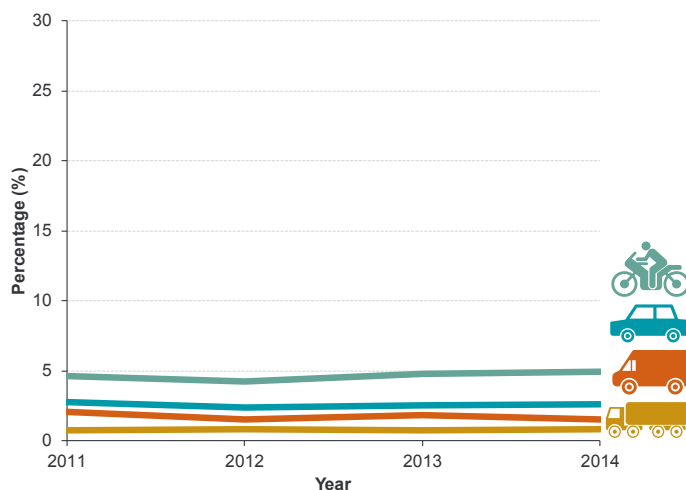
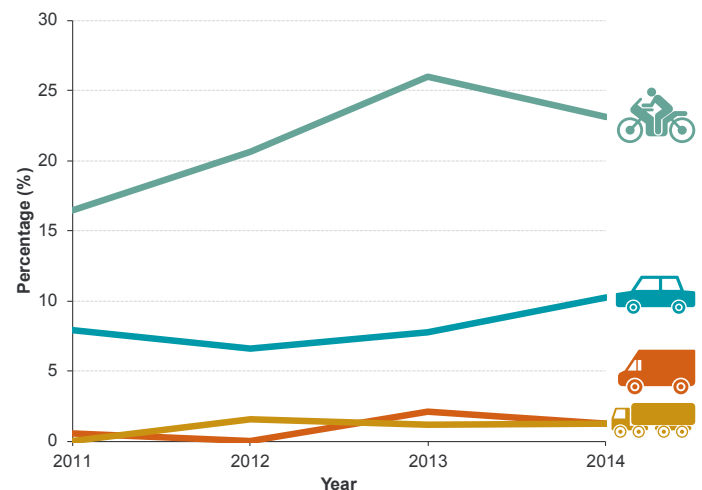


Figure 12b: Fatal Accidents



What's changed in this release

A number of changes to this release have been introduced since the last publication as follows:

► Added speed statistics for 20 mph roads

Many local authorities have introduced 20 mph speed limits in recent years. In response to this, a small number of monitoring sites on roads with 20 mph speed limits were introduced from 2014 onwards, which means that breakdowns for *20 mph roads* appear in this publication for the first time.

► Removal of speed statistics for motorcycles, cars towing and rigid 3-axle HGVs for all roads types; and for all vehicle types on dual carriageways and 40 mph roads

Following an internal review of the robustness of the statistics for each vehicle and road type, it has been decided to no longer publish breakdowns for *motorcycles*, *dual carriageways* and *40 mph roads*. Primarily this is due to the small samples observed and the variability between sample sites.

We have removed the cars towing category, and combined the previous *rigid 3-axle HGV* and *rigid 4 or more axle HGV* categories into a single *rigid 3 or more axle HGV* category.

► Reprocessed all speed data from 2011 onwards only and removed data for earlier years

A full review of the speed limits at our sample sites was carried out, which identified the need to correct the speed limit information for a small number of sites; these corrections are reflected in this publication. Furthermore, all years have been re-processed using vehicle level data from 2011 onwards, which has been re-validated to exclude some data which had previously been included in error.

► Added statistics on HGV headway

Heavy goods vehicle (HGV) headway statistics were previously published as part of Road Traffic Estimates in Great Britain in Table TRA3107 but are now included in this publication.

► Added statistics on speeding offences and reported accidents involving speeding

Previously published statistics from Ministry of Justice, Home Office, National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS) and the Department for Transport relating to speeding offences and accidents are now included for the first time, to provide additional information alongside the free flow speed data.

Key terms

Car: includes cars, car-derived vans and dual-purpose vehicles (definition of these vehicles can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/car-derived-vans-and-dual-purpose-vehicles>).

LCV: Light Commercial Vehicle, goods vehicle of 3.5 tonnes gross weight and under.

HGV: Heavy Goods Vehicle, goods vehicle of over 3.5 tonnes gross weight. For the purpose of these statistics, rigid 2-axle HGVs do not have a definitive national speed limit whilst all other observed HGVs are considered to have more than 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight.

Free flow speed: speeds observed in locations where external factors which might restrict driver behaviour (e.g. junctions, hills, sharp bends and speed enforcement cameras) are not present.

Exceeding the speed limit: vehicles travelling at a speed higher than their applicable speed limit

are defined as “exceeding the speed limit”.

Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN): offered to motorists to avoid prosecution for various motoring offences (for example speeding, neglect of traffic directions and using a mobile phone while driving) by paying a prescribed financial penalty.

Speed Awareness Courses: the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS) is a set of schemes unique to the UK, where a motorist who has been caught committing a ‘low level traffic offence’, such as speeding, is given an opportunity to attend a course focusing on re-education designed to achieve greater compliance with the Road Traffic legislation, rather than receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) or attending court and face possible conviction.

Conviction Ratio: the number of convictions as a proportion of the number of proceedings. These are calculated on a principle offence basis.

Accident: involves personal injury occurring on the public highway (including footways) in which at least one road vehicle or a vehicle in collision with a pedestrian is involved and which becomes known to the police within 30 days of its occurrence. Damage-only accidents, with no human casualties or accidents on private roads or car parks are not included.

Fatal accident: an accident in which at least one person is killed.

Serious accident: one in which at least one person is seriously injured but no person (other than a confirmed suicide) is killed.

Slight accident: one in which at least one person is slightly injured but no person is killed or seriously injured.

Contributory factor: the reporting police officer makes a subjective decision on whether something contributed to the accident. They are not necessarily the result of extensive investigation.

More information is available in the [notes & definitions](#) document.

Speed limits on different road types

More information on speed limits can be found online here: <https://www.gov.uk/speed-limits>.

Sources, strengths and weaknesses of the data

- ▶ These estimates are based on traffic speed data collected from a current sample of 99 Automatic Traffic Counters (ATCs) operated by DfT at 78 sites. There are more ATCs than sites as some sites require a different ATC for each carriageway. The number of individual vehicles observed in the production of the 2015 statistics was 694 million. The breakdown for each year is shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Number of Sites, Automatic Traffic Counters and Vehicles used to produce Free Flow Vehicle Speed Statistics for Great Britain, 2011 to 2015

Year	Sites Used	Automatic Traffic Counters Used	Vehicles used (millions)	Number	
				Significant proportion of data removed from (sites)	
2011	70	92	680		0
2012	70	92	687	1 motorway	
2013	70	92	537	2 motorways	
2014	70	92	585	2 motorways	
2015	78	99	694		0

- ▶ The ATC technology used to collect this data can experience technical failures and produce output data which is incorrect and not representative of the traffic passing the counter. The methodology accounts for these occasions and removes any data which is not accurately recorded, as well as during times when traffic volumes are abnormally low or high.
- ▶ The ATCs classify vehicles using the number of axles, the axle spacing and the length of the vehicle. It is possible for vehicles with similar dimensions to have different purposes, e.g. *cars* and *light commercial vehicles*.
- ▶ Full guidance on the sources and methods used to compile these statistics, plus information on speed limits, can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-statistics-guidance>.
- ▶ Detailed information on the Reported accidents data used in this release can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2014>.
- ▶ Detailed information on the Home Office data used in this release can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-powers-and-procedures-in-england-and-wales-201112-user-guide>.
- ▶ Detailed information on the Ministry of Justice data used in this release can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524418/a-guide-to-criminal-justice-statistics.pdf or in their statistical release at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-justice-statistics-quarterly>.
- ▶ Detailed information on the NDORS data used in this release can be found at <https://ndors.org.uk/faqs/>.
- ▶ Average speed statistics for both local authority managed 'A' roads and the Strategic Road Network are available online as part of a suite of new travel time measures from the Road Congestion and Reliability Statistics series at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-congestion-and-reliability-statistics>. Note that this series also uses the term "free flow speed" but this is calculated in a different way (e.g. 'capped' at national speed limits) and using a different data source to the statistics presented in this release.

Statistics on LCVs exceeding the speed limit

The speed limits applicable to different types of *light commercial vehicle* are complex and depend on the maximum laden weight of the vehicle, which our Automatic Traffic Counters cannot measure. DfT is currently reviewing how best these can be matched up with the classification data that we use from our Automatic Traffic Counters.

Consequently, we have decided to not publish the compliance with speed limit statistics relating to *light commercial vehicles* for *national speed limit single carriageways*.

Next update

The 2016 release of this publication is due to be published in summer 2017 under the provisional publication title of 'Speed Compliance Statistics 2016'. We are continuing to review methodologies and the coverage of these statistics and further changes may be reflected in the next publication. We welcome feedback on this publication including content, timing, and format via email to roadtraff.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

National Statistics

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs.

Free Flow Vehicle Speed Statistics were assessed by the UK Statistics Authority against the Code of Practice and were confirmed as National Statistics in February 2013.

Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-road-traffic-speeds-and-congestion-series>.