



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**  
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

# Scottish Transport Statistics 2021

## Road Traffic

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Key Points</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Main Points</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Major and Minor Roads .....	3
Trends .....	4
Local Area volumes .....	4
Delays and Congestion.....	5
Fuel Consumption.....	5

## I. Introduction

1.1 This chapter provides information about road traffic, such as the total volume of traffic by type of road, by type of vehicle, and by council area. It also provides figures on traffic flows at selected points on the road network, selected statistics on delays and congestion and information about petrol and diesel consumption.

1.2 Traffic estimates, indicate only the *broad* level of traffic, so year - on - year comparisons should be made with care as they are based on a very small cross-section of the roads in Scotland: 12 hours in one day traffic counts taken at around 750 sites per year and data from automatic traffic counters at about two dozen sites in Scotland (then combined with data from automatic counters at similar sites in England and Wales). See Sources section.

**Transport and travel habits in Scotland were profoundly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with restrictions on travel and daily activity in place for large parts of 2020.**

## Key Points

- **38 billion vehicle km were driven in 2020, a 22% drop compared with 2019.**
- **38% of the distance travelled on the road network is on Trunk roads, which account for only 7% of the road network.**
- **4.7% of driver journeys were delayed by congestion in 2020.**

## 2 Main Points

### Major and Minor Roads

2.1 The estimated volume of traffic on Scotland's roads in 2020 was around 38 billion (thousand million) vehicle km: 22% less than 2019. As with other types of transport, road traffic was significantly affected by the Coronavirus pandemic and its accompanying restrictions on travel and daily activity. There had been slight increases in the previous eight years, following the steady downward trend seen between 2007 and 2011. (*Table 5.1*)

2.2 The total volume of traffic on major roads (Motorways and A roads) in 2020 was estimated to be 24 billion vehicle-km. Traffic on Motorways accounted for 6.3 billion vehicle km (17% of all traffic). This was less than the estimated 8 billion vehicle km on trunk A roads (21% of the total), and the 9.7 billion on non-trunk A

roads (26%). Sixty nine per cent of A road traffic was in rural areas: 12 billion out of the A roads total of 18 billion vehicle km. (*Table 5.1*)

2.3 Minor roads (B, C and unclassified roads) accounted for the remaining 37% of traffic in 2020: an estimated 13.9 billion vehicle km (*Table 5.1*)

2.5 The total volume of traffic on major roads (Motorways and A roads) in 2020 was 26% lower than in the previous year (Motorway traffic decreased by 27%). Minor road traffic was about 16% lower than in 2019. Traffic levels are around 13 per cent lower than in 2010. (*Table 5.1*)

## Trends

2.6 Prior to 2020, traffic volumes on major roads in Scotland had been broadly increasing over the past three decades. The volumes reached a peak in 2007 and fell back slightly before rising to new highs in 2019. In 2019, traffic volumes on major roads were 46% higher than in 1995. Motorway traffic saw a 14 per cent rise between 2003 and 2008, fell slightly over the next two years before resuming its rise in the years leading up the pandemic. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020 motorway traffic is now 15% lower than the earlier peak in 2008. (*Table 5.1*)

2.7 Traffic on minor roads is estimated to have risen by 9% between 2003 and 2007, falling by 6% between then and 2012, before rising again. The total volume of traffic on all roads in Scotland was also estimated to have risen by 6% between 2003 and 2007, falling by 2% between then and 2011, before rising again in the years before the pandemic. (*Table 5.1*)

2.8 Cars account for over three quarters (72%) of the total volume of traffic on the roads (i.e. of the total for major roads and minor roads combined), light goods vehicles for 19% and heavy goods vehicles for 6%. Pedal cycle traffic increased by 64% in 2020. However, pedal cycles still account for less than two percent of estimated traffic volume. (*Table 5.2 & 5.3*)

2.9 In 2020, the volume of car traffic was 5 per cent lower than in 2010, light goods vehicle traffic 5 per cent lower and bus vehicle traffic 0.4% lower. (*Table 5.3*)

## Local Area volumes

2.10 Thirteen per cent of motorway traffic was within the City of Glasgow, whereas Highland had the highest volume (12%) of trunk A road traffic. The five local authorities with the highest traffic volumes (Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Edinburgh, Fife and Aberdeenshire) account for 26% of all traffic on Scotland's roads. (*Table 5.4*)

2.12 Selected trunk road traffic flows are given in Table 5.7. The A720 Dreghorn was the busiest site from this sample, with an annual average of 63,057 vehicles per day in 2020. Its Monday-Friday average was 67,661 vehicles per day. The A720 Dreghorn had the highest Monday-Friday peak hourly flows at 4,236 vehicles in the morning and 4,848 vehicles in the evening. At the opposite end of the scale, the A835 Aultguish averaged 1,135 vehicles per day over the year as a whole and its Monday-Friday peak hourly flows were 82 in the morning and 86 in the afternoon. The M74 Junction 18 to Junction 19 had the highest percentage of heavy goods vehicle traffic in 2020 at 41% for the week, followed by the M74 Junction 9 (32%).  
*(Table 5.7)*

## Delays and Congestion

2.13 In previous editions of STS Table 5.8 estimated the time lost by traffic due to delays on trunk road routes monitored by Transport Scotland. This table is no longer being updated due to number of factors, including major changes to the network which would have required a substantial rework to the methodology.

2.14 The Scottish Household Survey provides estimates of delays attributed to congestion experienced by drivers (on the previous day). In 2020, 4.7% of journeys made as the driver of a car were said to be delayed due to traffic congestion. Short delays were more common than longer ones - 4% of car drivers' journeys were delayed by around 5 minutes compared to 2% by 15 minutes or longer. Weekday journeys were most likely to suffer congestion delays between 7 and 9 am and 4 and 6 pm (24-26% and 24-27% respectively). Fewer delays (7%) were experienced by people residing in remote small towns than those in accessible small towns (12%).  
*(Tables 5.8 and 5.9)*

2.15 These statistics no longer feature in Scotland's National Indicator on driver congestion in their old form. More information on National Indicators can be found on the Scotland Performs website:  
<http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/indicator/congestion>

2.16 Delays experienced by bus users have fallen since 2008, though changes in recent years are not significant due to small sample sizes. *(Table 5.9)*

## Fuel Consumption

2.17 DECC estimates suggest that the traffic on Scotland's roads consumed just over 3 million tonnes of petrol and diesel in 2019. This figure includes fuel purchased outwith Scotland which is consumed in Scotland, and excludes fuel purchased in Scotland which is used outwith Scotland. It is estimated using information about average fuel consumption, vehicle emissions and traffic volumes - see road traffic section of the user guide.

2.18 Petrol and diesel consumption has been rising since 2013. There has been a steady fall in petrol consumption in cars over the period and an increase in diesel cars, reflecting trends in vehicle propulsion shown in Chapter 1 i.e. increases in the proportion of diesel powered vehicles on the roads and reductions in petrol powered vehicles. (*Table 5.10*)



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**

CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

© Crown copyright 2022

You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> or e-mail: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Further copies of this document are available, on request, in audio and visual formats and in community languages. Any enquiries regarding this document / publication should be sent to us at [info@transport.gov.scot](mailto:info@transport.gov.scot)

This document is also available on the Transport Scotland website: [www.transport.gov.scot](http://www.transport.gov.scot)

Published by Transport Scotland, March 2022

Follow us:



**transport.gov.scot**