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**Strategic questions of a horizontal and cross-sectoral policy or regulatory nature:
Transport statistics and data**

Transport Statistics Activities

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document highlights the ongoing work of the Working Party on transport Statistics, with a particular emphasis on some new statistical activities in relation to the COVID-19 epidemic.

I. Background

1. The Working Party on Transport Statistics (WP.6) continues its activities in providing key data to inform the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) on developments in the inland transport sector, as well as to facilitate the work of other Working Parties and individual member States through evidence-based policy making. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the secretariat has continued its mandated activities, including the production of Transport Statistics Infocards and Transport Statistics for Europe and North America 2020. Given the exceptional nature of the crisis, it has also been proactive in trying to disseminate near-term statistics on transport-relevant topics, in order to give policymakers the absolute latest information.

II. Wiki on Short-Term Transport Statistics Sources

2. Official annual statistics remain a vital benchmark to track progress over time, but the crisis has also forced policy makers and statisticians alike to consider new types of data sources. With some traditional surveys, censuses and even some administrative data sources either hampered or completely unavailable, statisticians have been forced by events to try to measure transport and mobility in different ways. There has been an emergence of “flash” indicators, often based on either mobile network operator location data or tolling/vehicle measurement sources, to allow reasonably accurate data to be released on a monthly, weekly or even daily basis. These indicators may not always have the label of official statistics, but



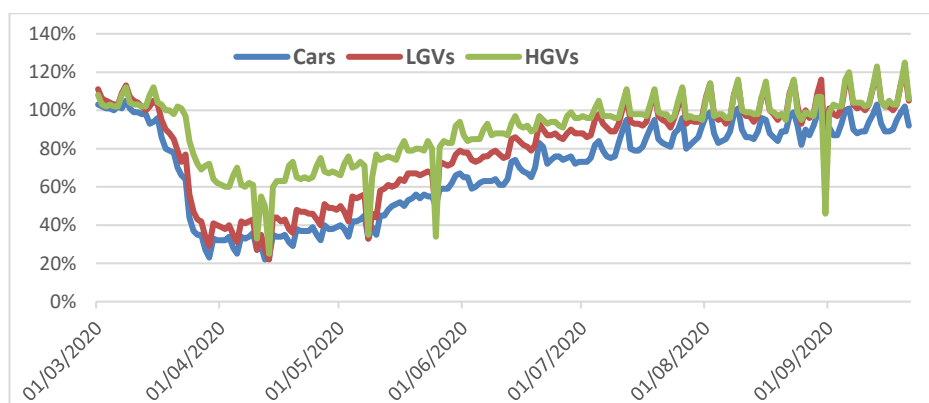
when produced to a high degree of quality by official statisticians, they provide a useful, trusted source of data in a timely fashion.

3. Since the crisis began, the secretariat has been monitoring transport impacts through the production and maintenance of a wiki of short-term official statistics sources relevant to transport.¹ At the time of writing, there are more than 150 sources linked to pages from almost all ECE member States. These data cover a wide range of topics relevant to transport statistics.

4. For policy makers interested in new vehicle registrations, public transport, road traffic levels and road safety performance in 2020 on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, the wiki page can provide a useful resource for timely information. To take just one example, the use of vehicle counters and in some cases toll data have really increased their prominence during 2020. The number of vehicles per day on key corridors can be a very pertinent proxy for overall traffic levels, and aggregating multiple points with other information can provide a useful index that can be somewhat comparable to vehicle-km. Data can also be obtained from tolling data on main highways, as is the case in Germany. Figure I shows an index of different traffic types on roads in United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Figure I

Changes in road traffic levels in United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for different vehicle types compared to 1st week of February 2020



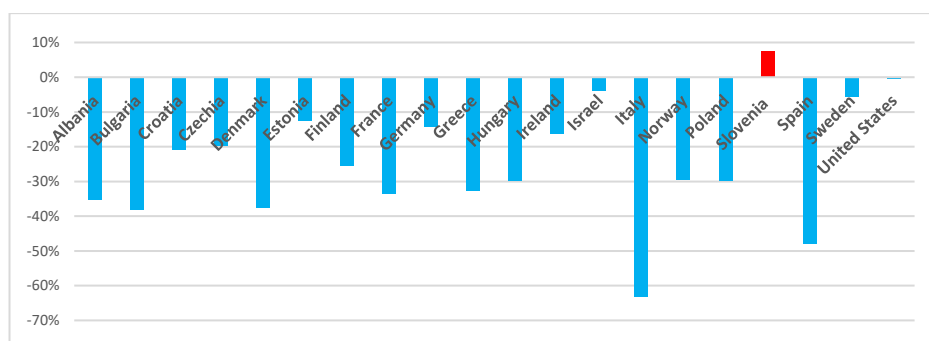
Source: UK DfT

5. The data are an index based upon an equivalent day in the first week of February 2020, for cars, Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs) and Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs). Data are not seasonally adjusted, and so the Bank Holidays are clearly visible as dips. The graph shows that car traffic was consistently lower than goods vehicles throughout the lockdown period. These traffic trends are also visible in data for other countries. For example, Germany's truck toll mileage index at its minimum on 30 April 2020 was 15.6 per cent lower than the baseline, whereas an index measuring total land mobility hit a low of 59 per cent below the baseline. Similarly, in the United States of America, the daily passenger Vehicle Miles Travelled index hit a low of 60% below the baseline on 12 April 2020.

6. With record falls in road traffic levels in many countries, there has been great interest in the impact on road traffic accidents. The secretariat found relevant monthly data for twenty ECE member States, and in addition data for some sub-national entities such as New York City, Greater London and Northern Ireland. The impact on road traffic accident numbers has varied considerably by country, with some countries seeing record decreases in fatalities while others seeing insignificant changes from the baseline or even small increases. Comparisons across time are challenging as provisional data are typically collated on a different basis to finalized annual numbers. Therefore, data have only been compared with previous years' provisional monthly data.

¹ This wiki page can be accessed at <https://wiki.unece.org/display/DSOCIOT/Data+Sources+on+Coronavirus+impact+on+transport>.

Figure II
Reductions in road traffic accident fatalities, April-June 2020 versus April-June 2019
 (available countries only)



7. Figure II shows the change in fatalities between April-June 2019 and April-June 2020 for all available countries with monthly data, with a negative number indicating a decrease. Users are strongly advised to consult country sites linked to on the online wiki in order to understand the limitations of these provisional numbers.² Figure II shows that the majority of countries did see a year-on-year decrease in traffic fatalities in the second quarter of 2020, with many experiencing over a 30 per cent reduction. These falls in fatalities are undoubtedly good news, but also need to be considered in the context of record falls in traffic in many countries, which were typically much larger (as evidenced in the traffic data above).

8. The above examples are simply a few of the many interesting data sources available on the wiki, through the innovative work of member States and collated by the secretariat.

III. Assisting countries with methodology on new mobility indicators

9. With the emergence of the aforementioned new data sources, in particular the new measures of mobility using mobile telephone data and traffic counters, it has become clear that there are many different country practices on how to collect the data, consider confidentiality, and calculate meaningful comparisons over time. The secretariat has therefore, in cooperation with the International Transport Forum, established a network of interested national statisticians and data users to discuss these issues and share best practices across countries, with the aim of increasing knowledge and possibly moving towards issuing recommendations on methodology in the future. The group met virtually in October for the first time, with representatives from fourteen member States as well as other international organisations present.

10. This initiative will continue as long as member States continue to benefit from it. If any delegates have interesting data-heavy examples of new ways to track mobility that they could present at a future meeting, then they are invited to contact the secretariat.

IV. Transport Statistics Infocards

11. The secretariat also continues its core work on producing annual official statistics. To make this information more readily available, the secretariat has prepared an updated set of transport statistics country profiles (Infocards). The Infocards set out key transport indicators including passenger and freight volumes, modal split and road safety related data for ECE member States. The Infocards are available for download on the ECE website (www.unece.org/trans/main/wp6/infocards.html) as one package or as individual country files and can be viewed in Informal Document No. 8. The data contained in the Infocards are

² A summary of these limitations is available at <https://wiki.unece.org/display/DSOCIOT/Collated+Provisional+Road+Safety+Data>.

based on information available in the ECE transport statistics database available online (w3.unece.org/PXWeb/en).
