Department for Transport

Faster Indicators and Forward-Looking Data

UNECE Working Group on Transport Statistics

June ‘22

Context

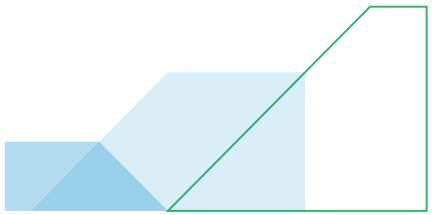
During the Covid-19 pandemic, there rapidly became a need for real-time data, both for internal and public usage.

Like many ministries, the Department for Transport had to rapidly develop its standard data collections, as well as exploring other sources to provide effective insight that met user needs – all whilst maintaining statistical integrity.

In doing this, statisticians and other analysts demonstrated an ability to provide excellent insight on key, topical issues – which has helped to encourage asks of us on other issues too.

Some of the questions facing us now are:

- What frequency is it appropriate to publish these data?
- What data are appropriate for publications?
- How can we best leverage other data sources for decision making?



Faster Indicators

Department for Transport

UK Transport COVID Indicators

GOV.UK | Topics | Government activity

Home > Coronavirus (COVID-19) > Driving and transport in the UK during coronavirus

Official Statistics

Transport use during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

To monitor the use of the transport system during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, DfT provides statistics on transport use by mode.

From: Department for Transport
Published 3 June 2020
Last updated 15 June 2022 — See all updates

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Documents

Domestic transport use by mode: Great Britain, since 1 March 2020
ODS, 70.9 KB
This file is in an OpenDocument format
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Request an accessible format.

Related content

Statistics at DfT
Van statistics
Bus statistics
COVID-19 vaccination: consent form and letter for adults
Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 31 October

COVID-19-transport-use-statistics (10).ods

Department for Transport statistics
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-use-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic
Use of transport modes: Great Britain, since 1 March 2020[a]
Figures are percentages of an equivalent day or week.

Percentage

Date[note 1] (weekends and bank holidays in grey)	Cars[note 2]	Light Commercial Vehicles[note 2]	Heavy Goods Vehicles[note 2]	All motor vehicles[note 2]	National Rail[notes 3,4,12]	Transport for London Tube[note 5]	Transport for London Bus[notes 5,7]	Bus (excl. London)[notes 6,8,9]	Cycling[notes 10,11]
01/03/2020	103%	111%	108%	104%	97%	104%	102%	..	..
02/03/2020	102%	106%	103%	103%	94%	95%	97%	..	..
03/03/2020	101%	105%	102%	102%	95%	95%	96%	..	..
04/03/2020	101%	104%	103%	101%	95%	95%	97%	..	..
05/03/2020	100%	103%	102%	100%	97%	92%	92%	..	..
06/03/2020	102%	103%	102%	102%	99%	92%	96%	..	..
07/03/2020	101%	109%	108%	102%	99%	91%	93%	..	..
08/03/2020	105%	113%	112%	106%	99%	87%	95%	..	89%
09/03/2020	101%	107%	104%	103%	100%	90%	95%	101%	105%
10/03/2020	99%	105%	103%	101%	99%	89%	97%	102%	82%
11/03/2020	99%	104%	103%	100%	98%	86%	93%	98%	118%
12/03/2020	98%	102%	102%	99%	96%	81%	92%	98%	120%
13/03/2020	98%	100%	102%	98%	92%	72%	87%	94%	99%
14/03/2020	93%	102%	108%	95%	89%	61%	83%	85%	127%
15/03/2020	94%	105%	112%	96%	85%	54%	74%	85%	93%
16/03/2020	96%	103%	104%	98%	78%	60%	79%	88%	104%
17/03/2020	86%	95%	103%	89%	69%	44%	70%	77%	77%
18/03/2020	80%	90%	100%	83%	59%	35%	65%	62%	93%
19/03/2020	79%	88%	100%	82%	51%	30%	59%	58%	91%
20/03/2020	78%	85%	98%	81%	43%	24%	52%	53%	82%
21/03/2020	70%	79%	102%	73%	37%	13%	39%	40%	118%
22/03/2020	66%	73%	101%	69%	33%	11%	32%	35%	126%
23/03/2020	64%	77%	97%	69%	25%	15%	31%	27%	86%
24/03/2020	44%	56%	84%	49%	20%	9%	22%	17%	85%

Transport_use_(GB) | Notes

https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-use-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic

UK Transport COVID Indicators

- Range of methods used, e.g. our existing automatic traffic counters and new data from a company providing ticket machines to local buses across the country

- Work has since become award winning, being awarded the Evaluation and Analysis Award at the prestigious UK Civil Service Awards 2021. We “transformed the data and insight available to decision makers across government and the public in a matter of days … The consequence of this was providing real-time data to GOV.UK, 10 Downing Street, and SAGE, to inform decision makers and the public during the pandemic.”

But Indicators Aren't Just for COVID

Developing faster indicators of transport activity

To monitor transport activity on a timelier basis for topical issues relating to transport, DfT has developed updates on the following:

Indicator	Frequency of update	Timing of update	Date first published
Road haulier coronavirus testing in Great Britain	Weekly	No longer published	11 March 2021
Large goods vehicle vocational testing in Great Britain	Monthly	Every second Wednesday	10 November 2021
Electric vehicle public charging devices available in the UK	Monthly	Every second Wednesday	7 December 2021

In special circumstances, the timing of updates might change for some indicators. Where applicable, the date of the next update will be added to the "Timing of update" field.

Some of the issues will be short term in nature, and the relevant updates will cease once the issue is no longer either in operation or of relevance.

- **Non-COVID faster indicators have started to appear, in response to demand determined by "topical" events**
- **Currently developing new standards to give a clearer process when this happens, by asking our users:**
- How they currently use our cross-modal statistical outputs
- How relevant the statistical outputs are for their needs
- What changes they would like to see to make the outputs more useful, such as publishing more frequently

https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about/statistics#developing-faster-indicators-of-transport-activity

And Indicators Can Come from Many Sources

- In addition to the work of statisticians in the UK Department for Transport, the UK Office for National Statistics also compiles indicators
- They can draw on different technologies and data sources, allowing our work to complement each other

https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/bulletins/economicactivityandsocialchangeintheukrealtimeindicators/16june2022#latest-indicators-at-a-glance

2. Latest indicators at a glance

Business insights and workforce | **Transport** | Consumer behaviour | Energy and housing

Indicator	Latest data compared with **previous period**	Latest data compared with **equivalent period the previous year**	Latest data compared with **pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) baseline**	Timeline
Daily UK flights Source Units	2%▲	211%▲	-14%▼	4,761 01/01/2020 — 5,703 12/06/2022
Road traffic, all motor vehicles Source Units	3pp▲	1pp▲	No change	104 01/03/2020 — 100 13/06/2022
Total ships visits Source Units	-2%▼	Not available	Not available	216 01/01/2020 — 303 12/06/2022
Cargo and tanker ship visits Source Units	-4%▼	Not available	Not available	71 01/01/2020 — 87 12/06/2022

Source: Office for National Statistics

Real-Time Disruption Monitoring

Department for Transport

Queues at Airports

Evening Standard

VIDEO ON ES

BUSINESS EVENTS ES MONEY CULTURE INSIDER THE ESCAPIST THE REVELLER THE OPTIMIST

Tearful grandmother left unable to board flight at Birmingham Airport

1 day ago

NEWS › LONDON

Travel chaos as customers face huge queues at Heathrow Airport

The situation – due to delays at security – was described as “absolute chaos” and “manic” by passengers

Top stories

Mirror

Gatwick in meltdown 'every night' as easyJet warns travel chaos 'hasn't peaked yet'

2 days ago

SussexLive

Gatwick Airport lifts lid on 'perfect storm of issues' causing 'chaotic scenes' and cancelled flights

17 hours ago

EXPRESS

Gatwick chaos: Insider reveals industry in crisis 'Crews are exhausted'

2 days ago

More news

The Power (and limitations) of Social Media Data

When we see headlines like these, it causes concern – both operationally but also emotionally from the human stories.

Lots of people use social media to report and complain about queues at airports, so with the help of data scientists at the Department for Transport, we looked in to the Twitter traffic around London Heathrow to compare with times of disruption.

Some findings:

- Level of disruption required; baselining
- Flagship airports have a lot of noise
- Reliability of data; self-reporting
- Buy-in

Monitoring Disruption

Due to this, we have taken action to work with other Ministries to access administrative and operational data in partnership with industry

Whilst Social Media has some uses, it felt like a fairly blunt tool that could detect the presence of a queue, but little else reliable.

As such, we have been working with other departments, and airports directly, to get a **common evidence base** from which we can report on and monitor disruption.

The benefits of this approach are:

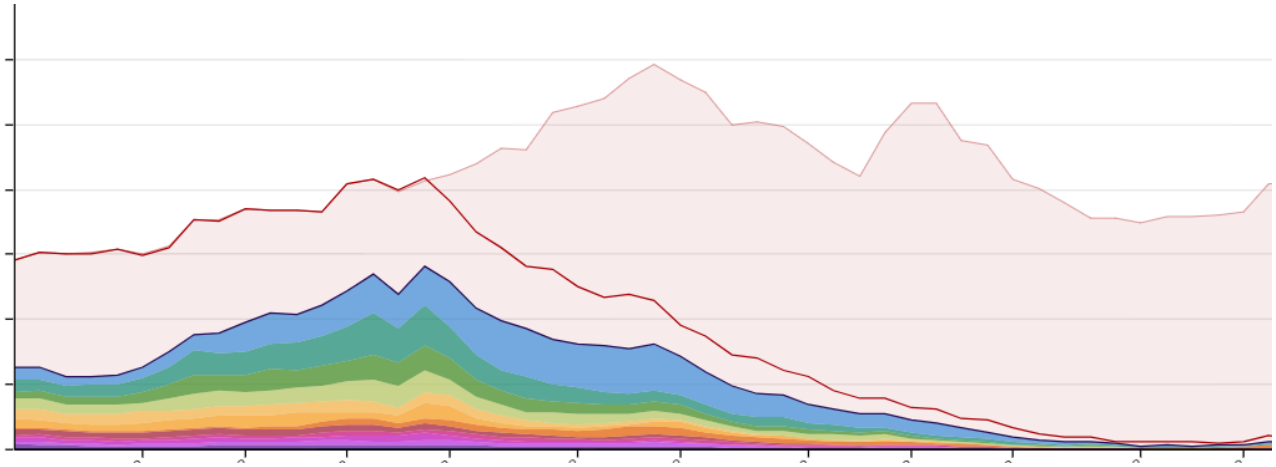
- Consistency across Government
- Building relationships with industry partners during difficult periods
- Re-assurance to users of our data

But by definition, monitoring and reporting happens after-the-fact, so the challenge becomes **how can we use this data to improve transport for our users.**

Forward Looking Data

Department for Transport

How are passenger volumes recovering?



Post-pandemic, disruption is partially dictated by the ability of the sector to cope with recovering demand.

The challenge is to understand booking patterns of the travelling population, and how it will scale up to total volumes. Please get in touch if you have experience of this!

Understanding this enables us to ensure appropriate operational resourcing to **improve the experience of transport users**.

Working with industry partners

Sometimes, the transport sector experiences shocks and government data cannot provide all the answers.

As part of this, we have needed to understand where data does exist and understand from the holders of that data what is appropriate to use to estimate the intensity of future disruption.

- Hauliers
- Eurotunnel and Dover
- Aviation

Through working with industry partners, we have been able to use and share data collaboratively to better inform operational decisions that have allowed us to better understand the causes of disruption and what Government can do to mitigate it.

This also has its challenges, in particular around consistency of the data that is provided; the reliability of the data; and the voluntary nature of the collections.