



National Road Users' Satisfaction Survey

2016-17

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Anthony Smith

Foreword

Around 2,000 road users have taken part in the 2016-17 National Road Users' Satisfaction Survey (NRUSS). This is the first year Transport Focus has been responsible for measuring satisfaction among users of England's motorways and major 'A' roads, based on their last journey. These roads make up the Strategic Road Network which is managed by Highways England on behalf of the Government.

Transport Focus took responsibility for NRUSS in April 2016 as part of the Government's Roads Reform programme, the survey having previously been conducted by Highways England (and before that the Highways Agency). To ensure comparability with results in previous years we have not altered the methodology.

The level of overall satisfaction measured by NRUSS is used by the Office of Rail and Road to monitor Highways England's delivery against the performance specification set for it by the Government. User satisfaction for 2016-17, at 89.1 per cent very or fairly satisfied, is marginally below the target of 90 per cent. We will use the results to drive change for road users, including around information and roadworks.

Transport Focus is developing a new Strategic Roads User Survey which will in due course replace NRUSS. The new survey will have improved methodology and a bigger sample size. It will not only provide the official measure of satisfaction among users of Highways England's network, but will also provide the company with information it needs to target improvements in areas that matter most to road users. We will continue to carry out and publish NRUSS until the new survey, which is currently being piloted, is ready to succeed it.

A. J. C. 

Anthony Smith
Chief Executive

The Strategic Road Network in England

- Motorway
- Major 'A' road

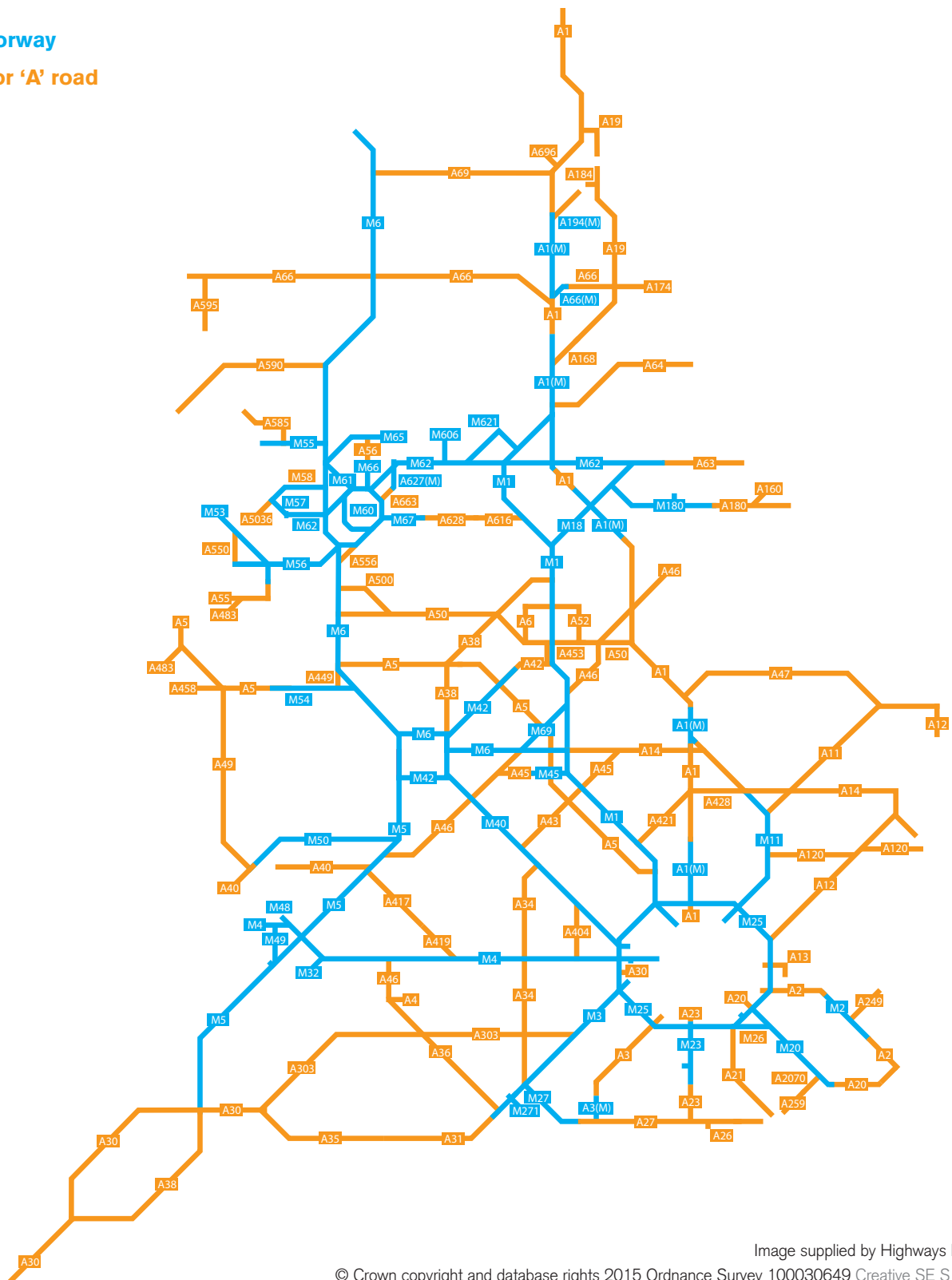


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Key findings

Introduction

The National Road Users' Satisfaction Survey (NRUSS) measures users' satisfaction with the motorways and major 'A' roads managed by Highways England. The NRUSS customer satisfaction result is a Key Performance Indicator for Highways England. The target is 90 per cent user satisfaction. NRUSS overall satisfaction score is derived from five core areas of user experience: journey time; safety; information/signage; roadworks management; and general upkeep of the road. Around 2,000 users are interviewed in their homes in randomly selected locations across England so that each of the seven Highways England regions is covered equally. More detail on methodology is provided in the appendix.



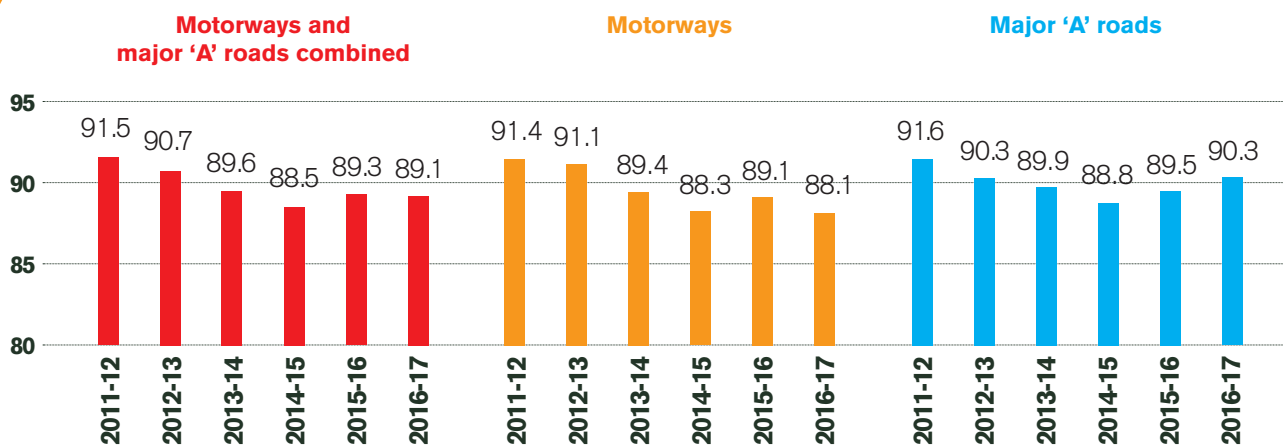
Overall satisfaction

In 2016-17 the overall satisfaction score achieved was **89.1 per cent**. Since 2011-12 there has been a general decrease in overall satisfaction. The lowest score was 88.5 per cent in 2014-15. The modest upturn in 2015-16 did not continue. There has been an improvement in major 'A' road satisfaction

of 0.8 percentage points but satisfaction with motorways reduced by 1.0 percentage point. The rise in major 'A' road satisfaction is due to improved user ratings of signage, roadworks and general upkeep. The decrease in motorway satisfaction is led by falls in user ratings of journey time and roadworks management.



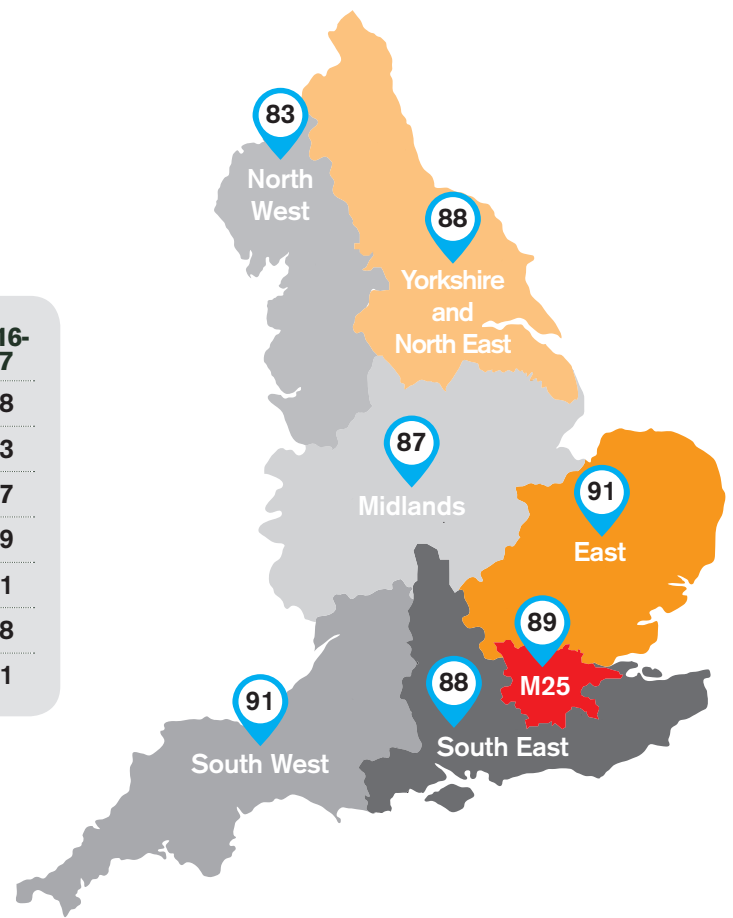
Overall satisfaction (% satisfied)



Overall satisfaction by region

The highest overall satisfaction was in the East and the South West regions, the lowest in the North West. Since 2011-12 the East region has been consistently highest, with the South West improving more recently and the North West falling in the last three years.

Satisfaction by region (%)	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Yorks and North East	93	91	89	89	86	88
North West	91	91	87	83	84	83
Midlands	93	93	91	87	89	87
M25	89	88	88	89	90	89
East	92	93	92	92	92	91
South East	89	88	89	88	89	88
South West	89	86	89	86	91	91



Journey time

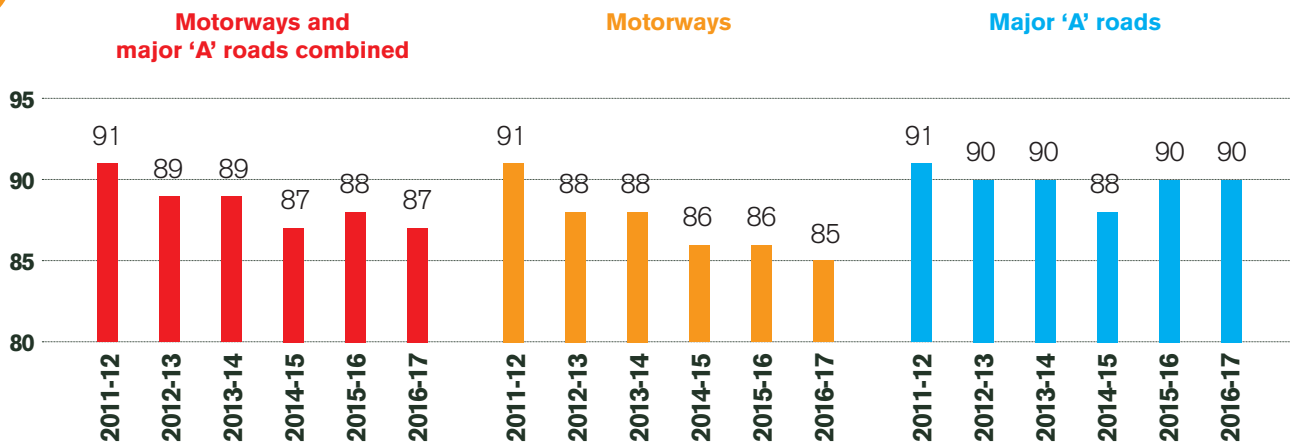
A satisfaction score of **87 per cent** was achieved for journey time in 2016-17. This is down from 88 per cent last year, caused largely by a fall in motorway scores from 86 per cent in 2015-16 to 85 per cent in 2016-17.

Over the last six years satisfaction with journey time for motorways has steadily decreased and that for major 'A' roads has stayed more or less the same; taken together the score

has been flat at around 88 per cent for the last five years. Key reasons for dissatisfaction with journey time are delays caused by roadworks, congestion and accidents.



Journey time (% satisfied)



Roadworks

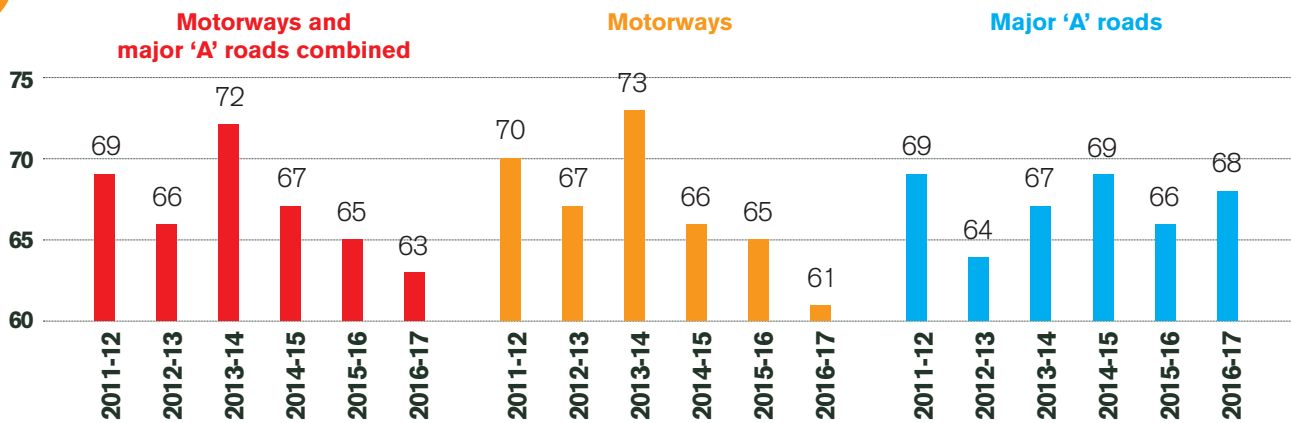
Roadworks achieved a satisfaction score of **63 per cent**, a decrease from 65 per cent in 2015-16. The drop is due to a decrease on motorways from 65 per cent last year to 61 per cent this year.

Since 2011-12 scores for satisfaction with roadworks have fluctuated year by year. Satisfaction with motorway

roadworks is nine percentage points lower now than in 2011-12. Satisfaction with roadworks on major 'A' roads has improved following the 2012-13 score. The reasons users are dissatisfied with roadworks are perceived lack of urgency to complete them and poor information provision.



Roadworks (% satisfied)



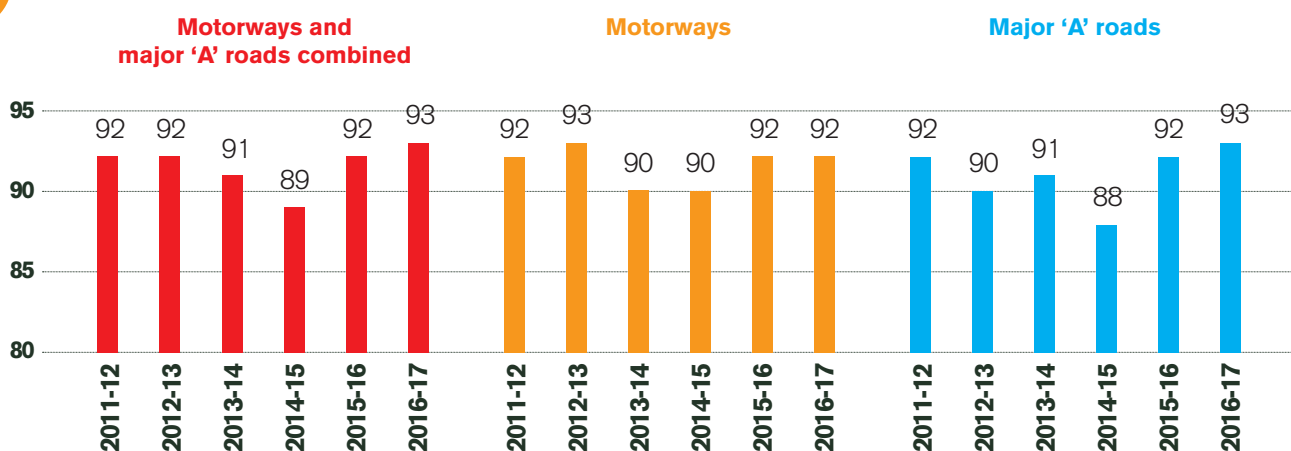
Signage

In 2016-17, the satisfaction score was **93 per cent**, an increase from 92 per cent in 2015-16. Satisfaction with signage has remained high over the past six years and in the last three years scores for both motorways and major 'A' roads increased back to levels achieved six years ago.

Reasons for dissatisfaction included occasions when variable message signs (VMS) are inaccurate and other signs being either hard to read, confusing, or visible too late.



Signage (% satisfied)



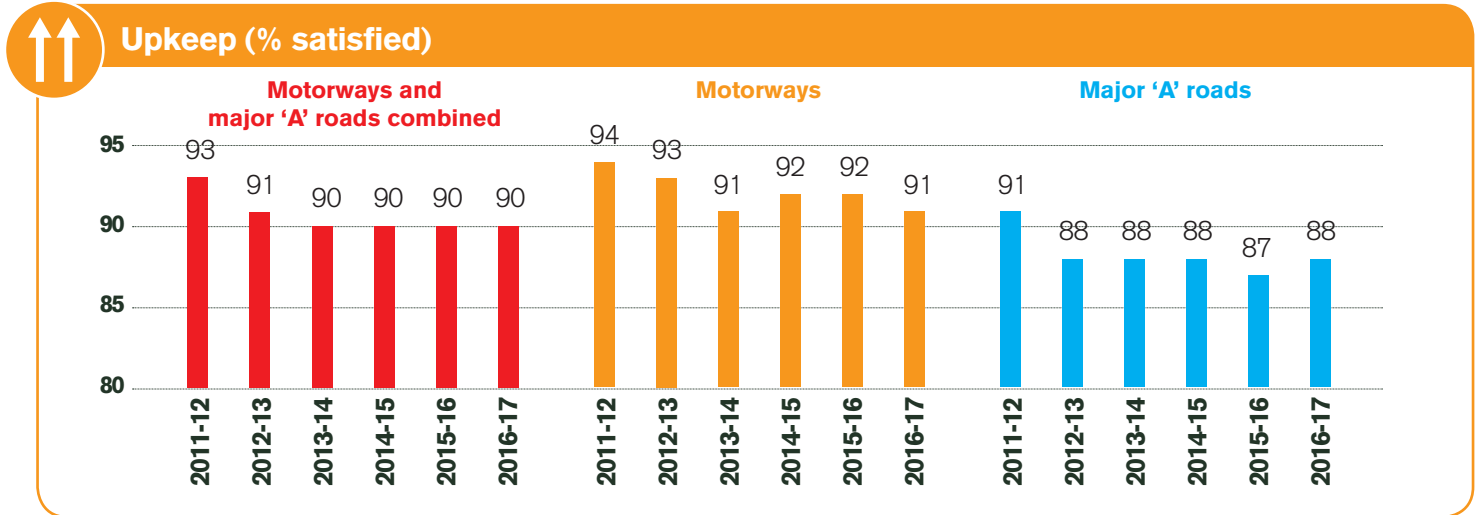
Upkeep

A satisfaction score of **90 per cent** was achieved for upkeep; the same as in 2015-16. A slight drop in satisfaction on motorways was countered by a slight increase in satisfaction on major 'A' roads.

High levels of satisfaction with upkeep have been maintained for motorways over the last six years, more

recently remaining steady at 91 per cent and above. The major 'A' road rating is also steady, but has not reached 90 per cent since 2011-12.

Key areas generating dissatisfaction are potholes, bad surfaces, debris on the road and surfaces that are not maintained or are noisy.

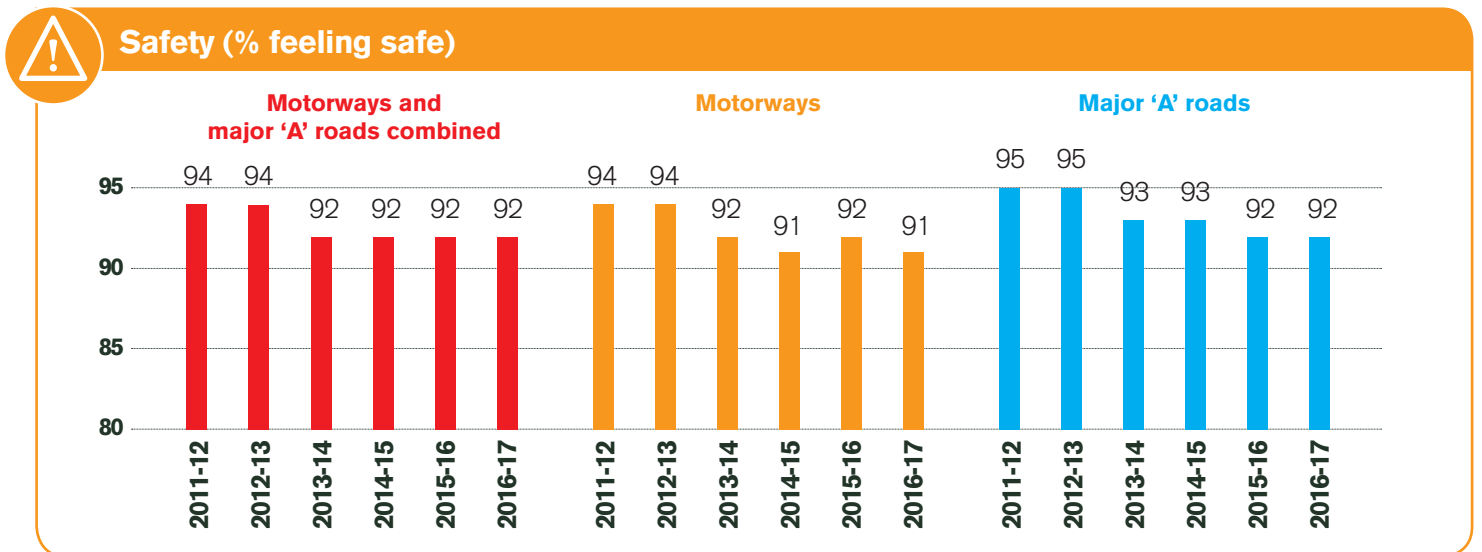


Safety

A score of **92 per cent** was achieved for safety among users. This is the same as in 2015-16. There was a small drop in feelings of safety on motorways from 92 per cent to 91 per cent. Over the last four years the level of 'feeling safe' has been lower than the years before by around two percentage points

when scores of 94 per cent were achieved.

The biggest reason contributing positively to 'feeling safe' is users being confident in their driving skills; notable negative contributors are poor lighting, poor surfaces, bad weather, and other users' poor driving.

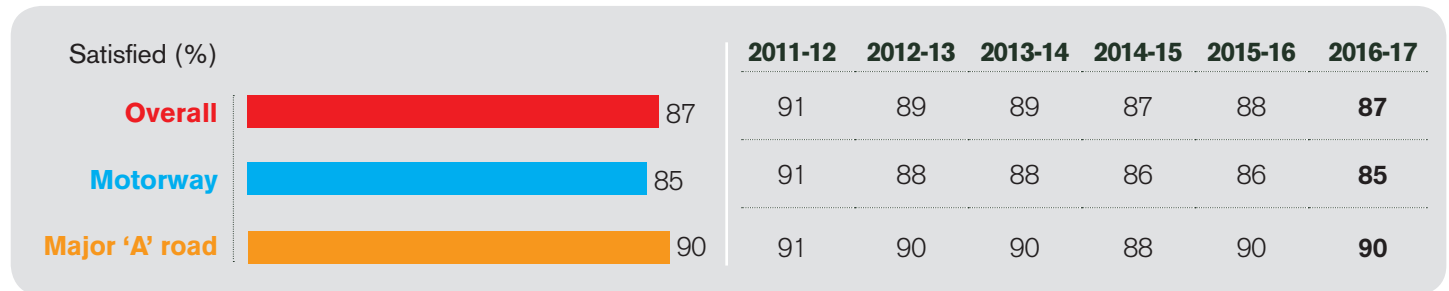


Journey times

Levels of satisfaction with journey time and trends

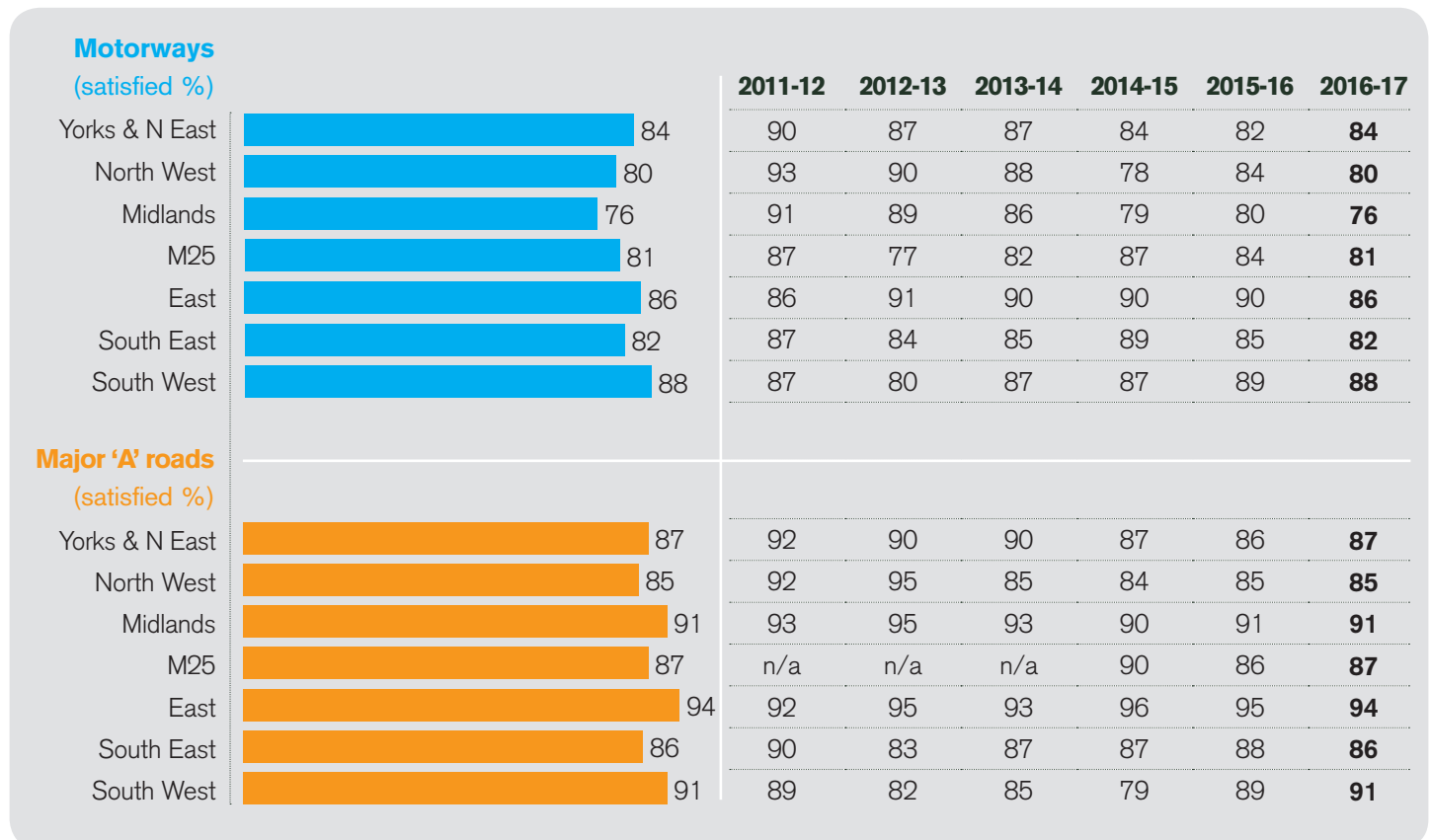
Overall satisfaction with **journey time** in 2016-17 was **87 per cent**. Looking at the six-year trend, satisfaction with journey time

on major 'A' roads has been largely consistent but since 2012 there has been a decline in journey time satisfaction on motorways.



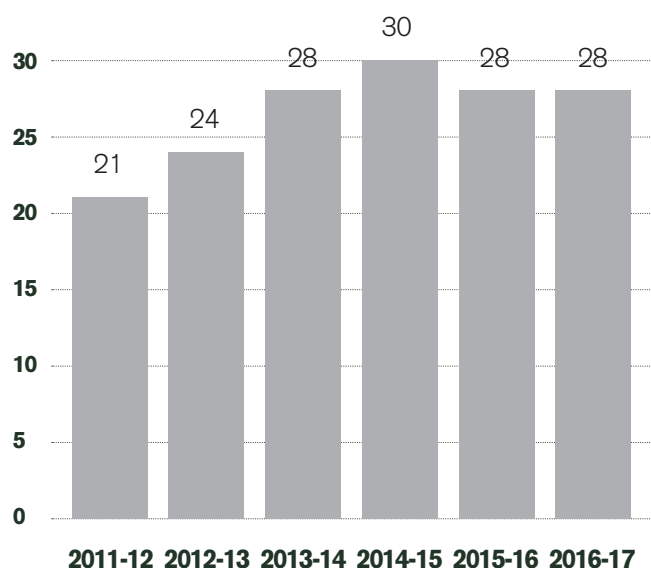
Users of motorways in the East and South West regions were most satisfied with journey time, users of Midlands region motorways the least. Users of major 'A' roads in the Midlands

and South West were most satisfied with journey time. Over the last six years, in most regions motorway scores have gone down, but more notably in the Midlands and North West.



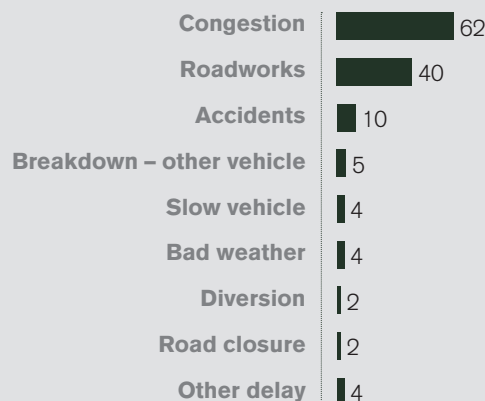
On 28 per cent of journeys users experienced delays. This has increased by seven percentage points since 2011-12 and rose to 30 per cent in 2014-15.

Experienced a delay when driving on motorways or major 'A' roads (%)



The main reasons given for delay are congestion (62 per cent) and roadworks (40 per cent), with average delays of 26 and 24 minutes respectively.

Reasons for delay (%)



Note: more than one answer permitted

Typical delay time (mins)

Congestion	15
Roadworks	15
Accidents	40



Just one in 10 respondents checked travel conditions beforehand. Websites (32 per cent) or mobile phones with internet access (29 per cent) were the most common ways.

- one in three checked during their journey.
- one in six allowed extra time in case of delays.

	%
Checked travel conditions pre travel	10
Allowed extra time in case of delays	15
Checked travel conditions during journey	34
Alerted to possible delays	17

76 per cent did not plan their route before setting off. However, of those who did, most were likely to be travelling outbound for holiday (43 per cent) or on the return leg of a trip on employer's business (42 per cent).

Analysis of satisfaction with journey time

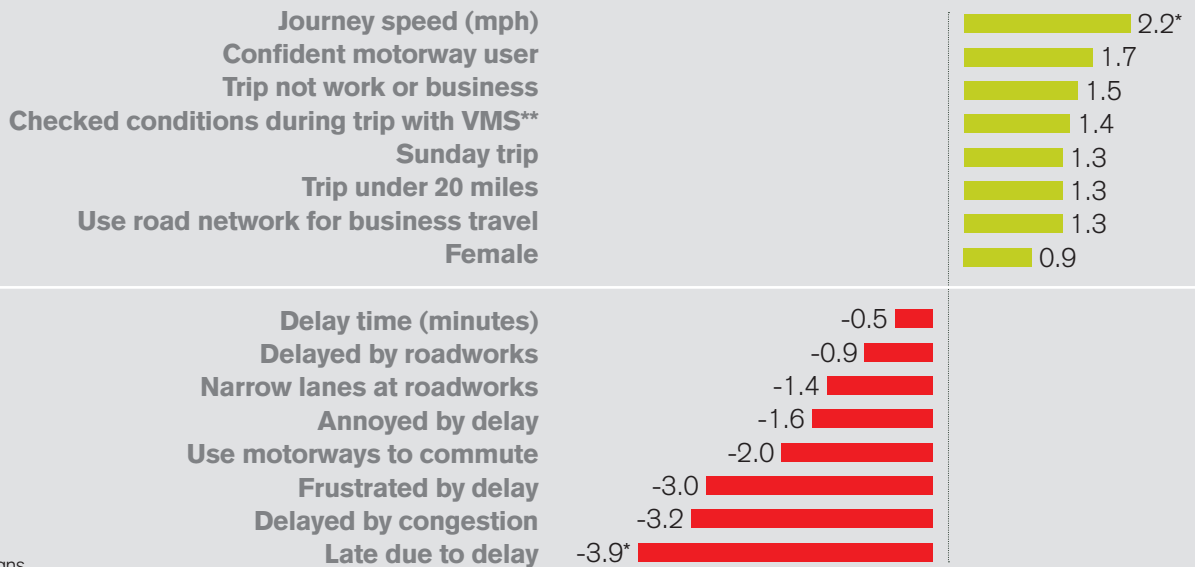
Statistical analysis of how road users rate satisfaction with journey time in comparison with how they answer

other questions shows the factors with greatest influence on their satisfaction.

Factors with greatest influence – motorways

Positive factors were journeys of good speed, being a confident driver and a journey for neither business nor work. Delays,

congestion and roadworks were the factors with the greatest negative affect on satisfaction.



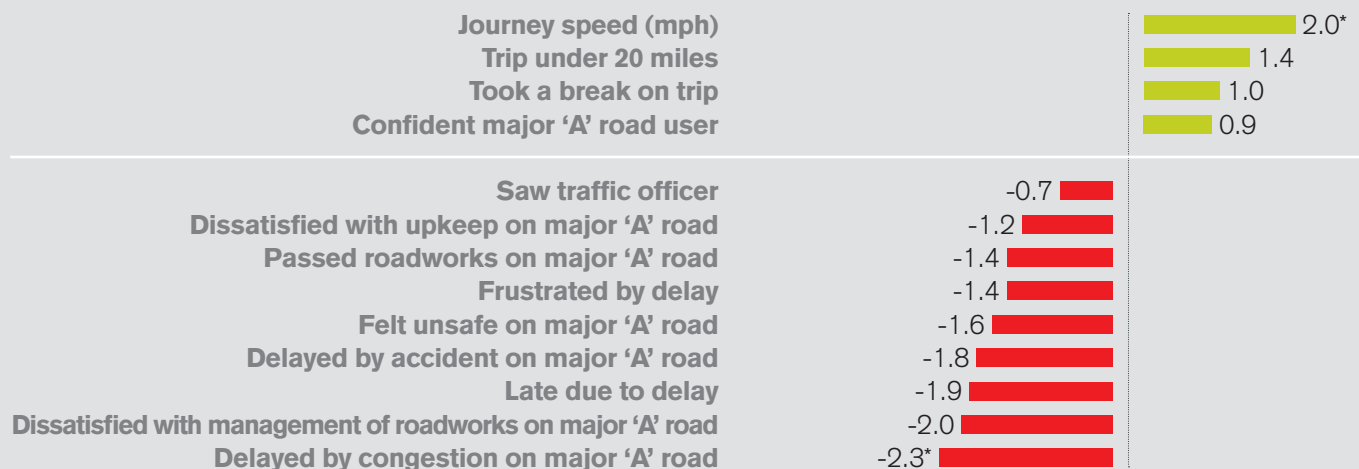
**Variable Message Signs

The following examples explain the chart values. A 10 percentage points increase in rating of 'journey speed' increases the proportion satisfied with journey time on motorways by 2.2 percentage points. A 10 percentage points increase in rating of 'late due to delay' decreases the proportion satisfied with journey time on motorways by 3.9 percentage points. Note that the impact of factors can overlap.

Factors with greatest influence – major 'A' roads

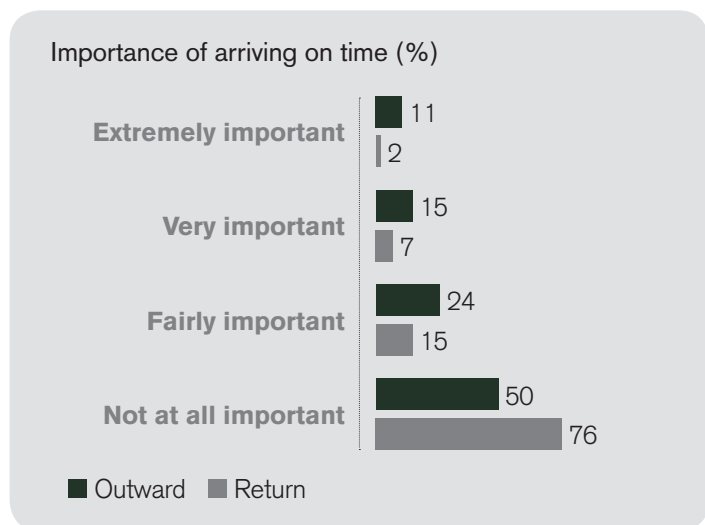
Similar to motorway users, for major 'A' road users delays, congestion and roadworks were the factors with the greatest

negative affect on satisfaction. Positive factors were journey speed, it being a shorter trip, and taking a break on route.



The following examples explain the chart values. A 10 percentage points increase in rating of 'journey speed' increases the proportion satisfied with journey time on major 'A' roads by 2.0 percentage points. A 10 percentage points increase in rating of 'delayed by congestion' decreases the proportion satisfied with journey time on major 'A' roads by 2.3 percentage points. Note that the impact of factors can overlap.




Around half of users tell us arriving on time for outward trips is important, and this is still one in four for return trips.



What users tell us about delays





Roadworks

Delays were frequently perceived as being due to roadworks and caused dissatisfaction. Many users thought this was due to their poor management.

-  They do all the roadworks at the same time of the year, poor planning. Held up in traffic, congestion due to roadworks (on business, motorway)
-  Roadworks, although a necessity, are a nuisance, needs better monitoring when there's no work being done (leisure journey, motorway)
-  The variable speed limits, poorly organised contraflow and too narrow lanes at the smart roadworks (M6) (leisure journey, motorway)

Congestion




Volume of traffic led to high levels of dissatisfaction with journey time by notably lengthening trips.

-  It took 20 minutes longer than expected for no obvious reason other than the volume of traffic (commuting, motorway)
-  It's too busy in rush hour (commuting, major 'A' road)
-  There was a lot of traffic and slow moving vehicles (on business, major 'A' road)
-  It was slow but flowing by then into the rush hour traffic (leisure journey, motorway)



Accidents and unexplained incidents

These were accepted as unforeseen events but many were still dissatisfied when there was no apparent reason for the hold-ups experienced.




-  I was late due to accident and diversions (education, motorway)
-  If there's an accident you can understand it but on the M25 there didn't seem to be a reason and what we thought was a one-hour trip turned into a two and a half-hour nightmare (leisure journey, motorway)
-  Due to the lengthy delays for no reason (leisure journey, motorway)

Are delays expected?






An important dimension is the extent to which a delay is expected.

When a delay is no worse than expected

Users can still be satisfied if they experience a delay but it is no worse than expected. Road users expect delays on the motorways and major 'A' roads if travelling at certain times or on certain routes from previous experience.




-  *It met with my expectations and with it being a Sunday the delay wasn't too bad (leisure journey, motorway)*
-  *Normally it's terrible with congestion and jams and the M3 has more roadworks or new roadworks, but it wasn't as bad as it could have been (leisure journey, motorway)*
-  *Not too bad, I've known it much worse (leisure journey, motorway)*

Commuters or those travelling on business had lower expectations of journey time from familiarity with the level of congestion and based on roadworks they frequently encounter. As a result, those travelling for work purposes said they allowed an additional 25 minutes, indicating an expectation of delay.

-  *There wasn't an accident...it was just the usual rush hour traffic (commuting, motorway)*
-  *It's rubbish but it's what you have to do to get to work, there is no way around it (commuting, motorway)*
-  *It was an average journey at that time and there are always hold ups (leisure journey, motorway)*
-  *I expect the delays now and I get used to it, it is just what it is, if I can get home in the 2 hours I am happy (commuting, motorway)*
-  *There is always some kind of incident or accident along there, every time I travel, you need to set off at least an hour earlier than you need to, to get anywhere on time (on business, motorway)*





Avoided delay

Some can avoid delays by pre-planning and by being flexible in timing their journey. Some users choose to travel when risk of delay is least, for example early morning, late night, or at weekends.





-  *No delays, no problems, we purposely set off later to avoid traffic congestion (leisure journey, motorway)*
-  *We had to forfeit an extra 20 minutes in bed to get to work on time just to avoid the traffic (on business, motorway)*
-  *If you hit it at the wrong time it can hold you up but I avoid that by leaving at 3pm (on business, motorway)*

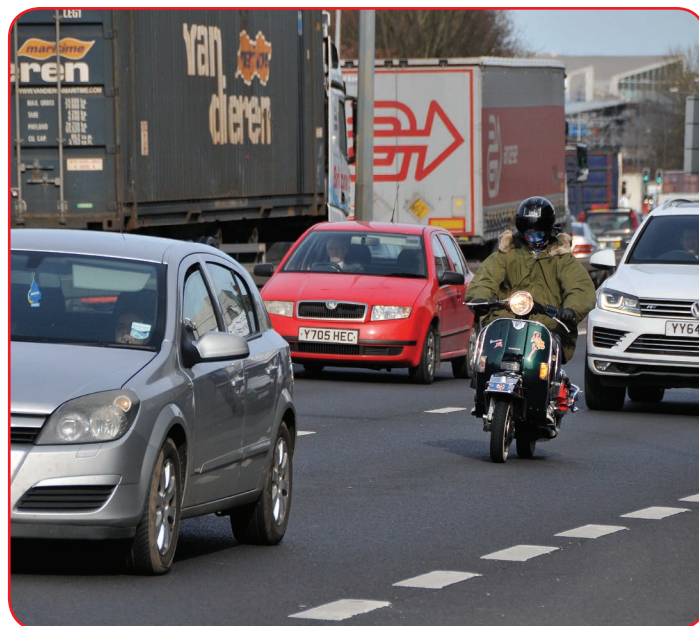
When the delay is unexpected or worse than expected

Almost universally, dissatisfaction was caused when delays experienced were not expected or were worse than anticipated.

-  *Held up with volume of traffic and could not see why I was held up (leisure journey, motorway)*
-  *It took so long, almost two hours longer than expected (on business, motorway)*
-  *We were stuck in traffic and had been delayed for 2 hours (leisure journey, motorway)*
-  *It took half an hour more than I expected it to (leisure journey, motorway)*

Users also consider themselves 'delayed' when they are unexpectedly required to go at reduced speeds for a significant period of time. Even if in reality lower speed did not add significant time to the journey, it gives an impression of delay and in most cases leads to dissatisfaction and frustration. With extensive motorway improvement schemes and speed through the roadworks often restricted to 50mph (enforced by average speed cameras), this can be regularly experienced by users.

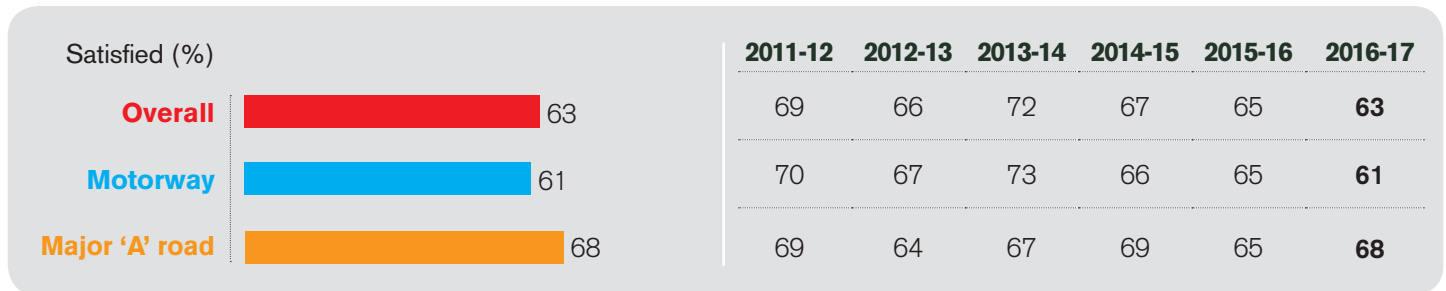
-  *M40 was fine but the M1 has all these 50 mph limits on them (leisure journey, motorway)*
-  *The speed restrictions are for such a long stretch of roadworks on the M3 (leisure journey, motorway)*
-  *You can't travel anywhere over 50 mph on our motorways (on business, motorway)*
-  *There are always some delays we allowed for it; 50 mph is frustrating on two large stretches (leisure journey, motorway)*



Roadworks

Levels of satisfaction with roadworks

Roadworks achieved an overall satisfaction score of **63 per cent** in 2016-17, the lowest of all the measures.



On around one in four (24 per cent) journeys on motorways users passed roadworks. On major 'A' roads this was much less at one in ten. Passing roadworks on motorways has generally increased over the last six years but has broadly stayed the same on major 'A' roads.

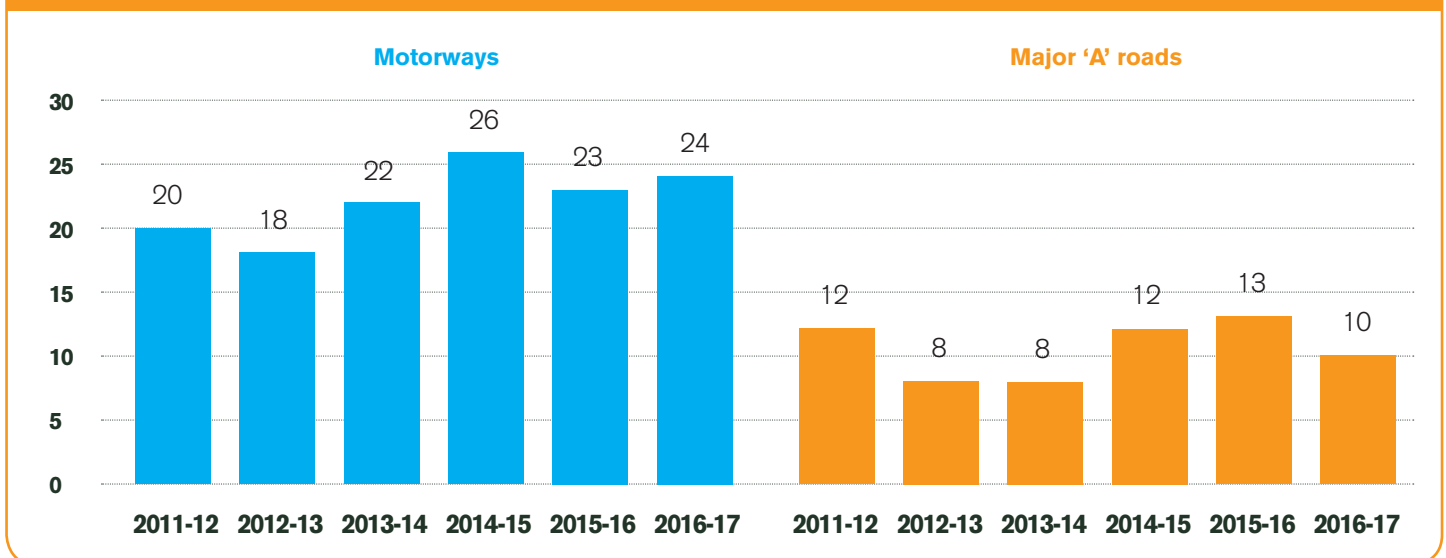
Seventy percent of those who passed roadworks had known about them before their journey. Looking at how they knew in advance, for most (almost three-quarters) it was

because they had driven through them previously.

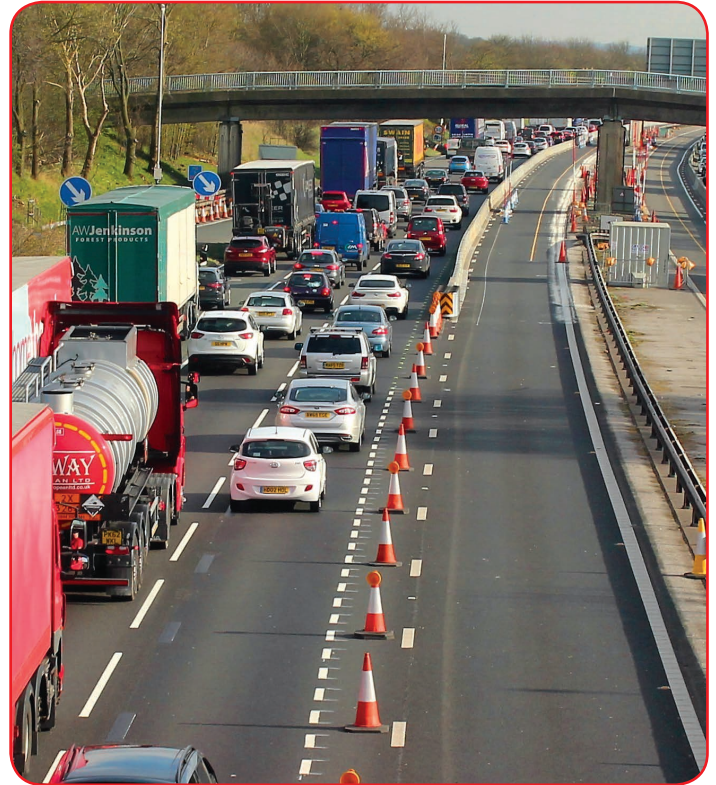
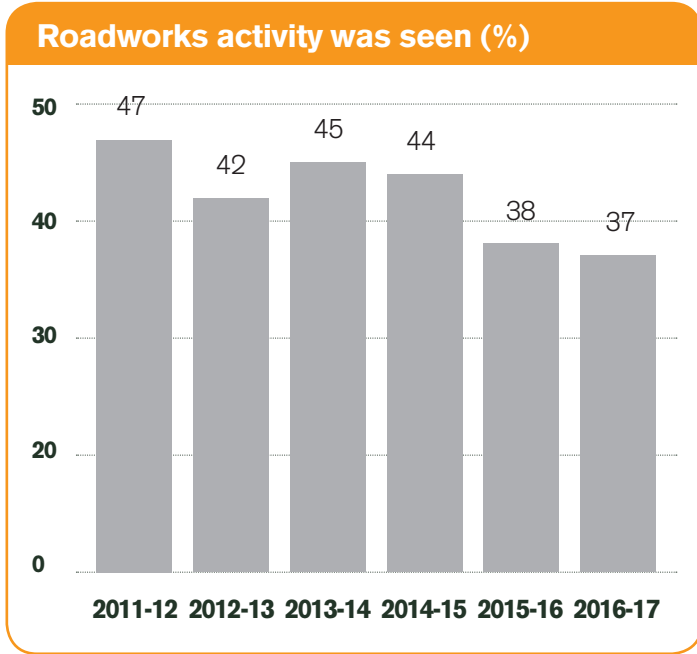
Only two per cent of all users planned their journey specifically to avoid roadworks.

Of those passing roadworks, the main features users noticed were: speed restrictions (82 per cent), narrowed lanes (51 per cent), closed lanes (31 per cent) and contraflows (9 per cent).

Experienced roadworks (%)



When users went through roadworks, on 37 per cent of occasions they saw work being done. The trend for this has been decreasing over the last six years.



Analysis of satisfaction with roadworks management

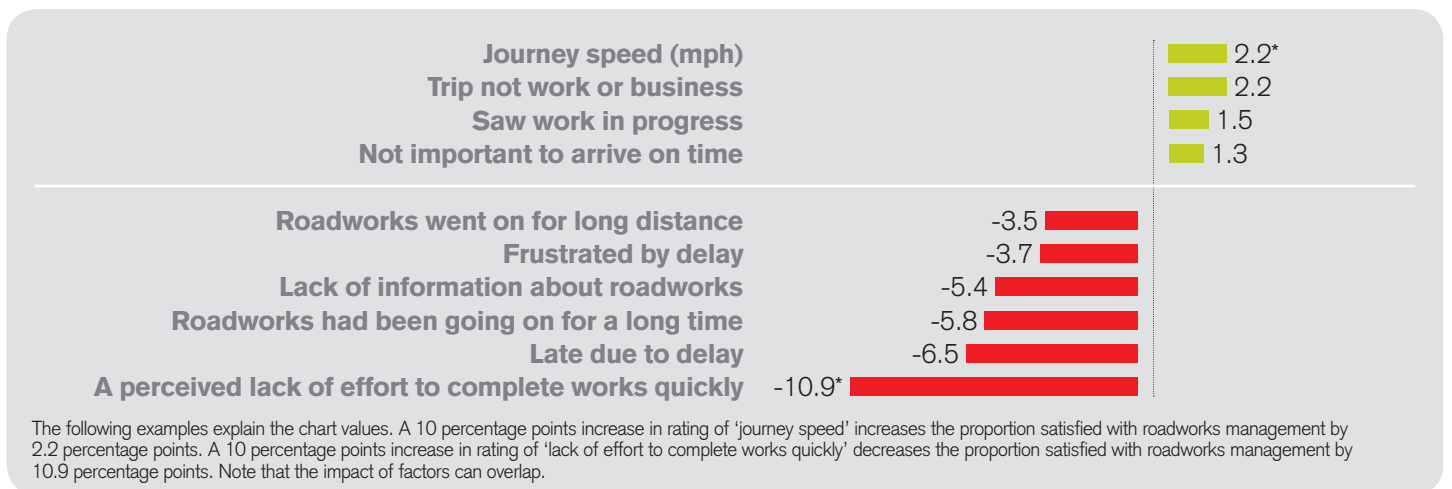
Statistical analysis of how road users rate satisfaction with roadworks in comparison with how they answer other

questions shows the factors with greatest influence on their satisfaction.

Factors with greatest influence

Positive factors were journey speed, a journey which was neither for business nor work, and seeing work in progress. Perceived lack of urgency to complete roadworks, being delayed, and

roadworks taking place over a long time and/or long distance were the factors with the greatest negative affect on satisfaction.




What users tell us about roadworks management

Users who were dissatisfied mentioned five reasons, which are outlined below


A. Lack of road worker presence


Over three-fifths of road users who travelled through roadworks (63 per cent) said they had not seen any work being undertaken. This perceived lack of urgency to complete roadworks was by far the biggest stated cause of dissatisfaction.


 *No signs to say there were roadworks, the cones were out but no-one was working. We see this every night and no-one is ever working (on business, motorway)*

Where work was not seen, a third had expected that because of the time of day they were travelling – such as late at night or early morning or weekends. The other two-thirds said they didn't see any reason why there appeared to be no activity.

Presence of workers on site was felt to justify the need to deploy cones or implement speed restrictions. When road workers weren't visible, many had the opinion that restrictions should be removed.

 *Have complained several times about speed restrictions when no workers there in the middle of night (leisure journey, motorway)*


 *I think if there is no one working they should put a cover over the 50mph signs (leisure journey, motorway)*

 *There should have been people working on the roadworks and not as long a stretch should have been closed off (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*


B. Information provision

Around three in ten road users told us they had not seen any signage and many were dissatisfied with the lack of information provision. Users expected information to be provided on the following:

Roadworks completion dates and how many miles they go on for


 *Nothing telling you when the roadworks will be completed and they have gone on for a year (leisure journey, motorway)*

 *There should be a finishing date to give us an idea (leisure journey, motorway)*


 *I think it would be helpful to know how long the roadworks go on for, like one mile or five miles. (leisure journey, motorway)*


Reasons for the roadworks

 *They never give reasons why there are roadworks (leisure journey, motorway)*


 *I think there should have been notice of the closure, also a sign explaining what it was all about instead of just the word diversion (commuting, major 'A' road)*


Advance warning about upcoming roadworks

 *No information before joining the motorway so committed to it and it's been ongoing (leisure journey, motorway)*

 *Advance warning could be better, they need roadworks but it's the organisation that's poor in terms of traffic management (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*


Diversion signage


 *There are some signs but not informative enough, there was no opportunity to take an alternative route (on business, motorway)*


 *They should put more notices up as to how long it is going to be and what other routes you could take (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*

C. Length of roadworks driven through

The longer in distance and/or time roadworks were there for, the more likely users were to be dissatisfied with their experience of travelling through them.


 *Went on for too long a section, should be done in shorter sections at a time (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*


 *They have been going on for far too long so they need to get them finished (commuting, motorway)*

 *A lot of the work could be done quicker. They seem to spin it out for their own benefits (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*

D. How safe they feel driving through


Roadworks on a stretch of road were viewed as a potential safety issue. Roadworks which allowed users to feel safe created high levels of satisfaction.


 *A safe drive, didn't feel at any point we were in danger and it was clear where to go (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*

 *They were working mainly on the side of the road and the workmen had reflective coats on and it all looked professional (commuting, motorway)*

But correspondingly, where users did not feel safe it impacted negatively on satisfaction.


On poor layout, many felt better signage and clearer directions would help encourage lane discipline. Narrow lanes frequently caused users to feel unsafe or trapped.


 *The cones kept changing us from one lane to another; it was very confusing for the driver (leisure journey, motorway)*

 *It was just poorly designed roadworks. Lanes too narrow especially for lorries so cars can't get past (leisure journey, motorway)*


E. Traffic flow through roadworks


Users said it was important that traffic flows constantly, not 'stop start', and roadworks were often seen as preventing smooth flow. Where roadworks did not affect traffic flow, satisfaction levels were impacted less significantly.

 *Still flowing traffic and had not come to a standstill (on business, motorway)*

 *The traffic kept going, they didn't hold us up at all (leisure journey, motorway)*

However, as with journey time, occasions of poor traffic flow which caused long and time-consuming delays through roadworks had a negative impact leading to dissatisfaction.

 *Caused long slow delays, no supervision available to help traffic flow more freely or to keep traffic moving (leisure journey, motorway)*

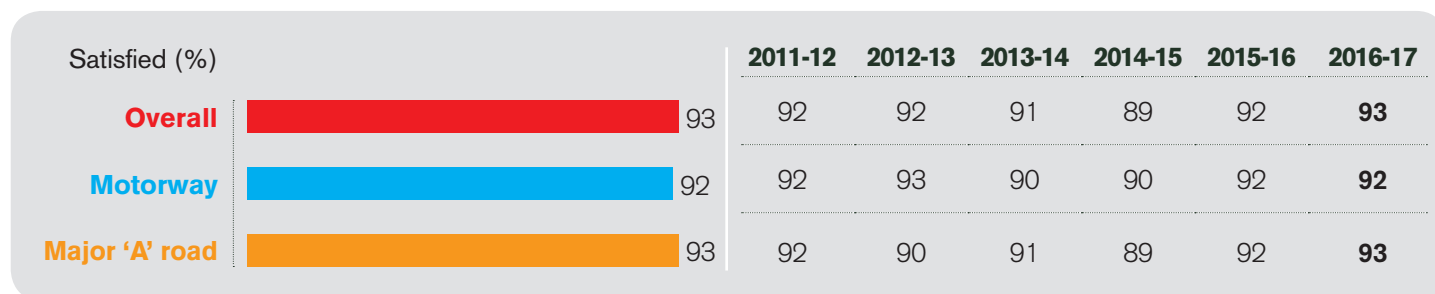
 *Ongoing long delays and the congestion (on business, motorway)*

Signage

Level of satisfaction with signage

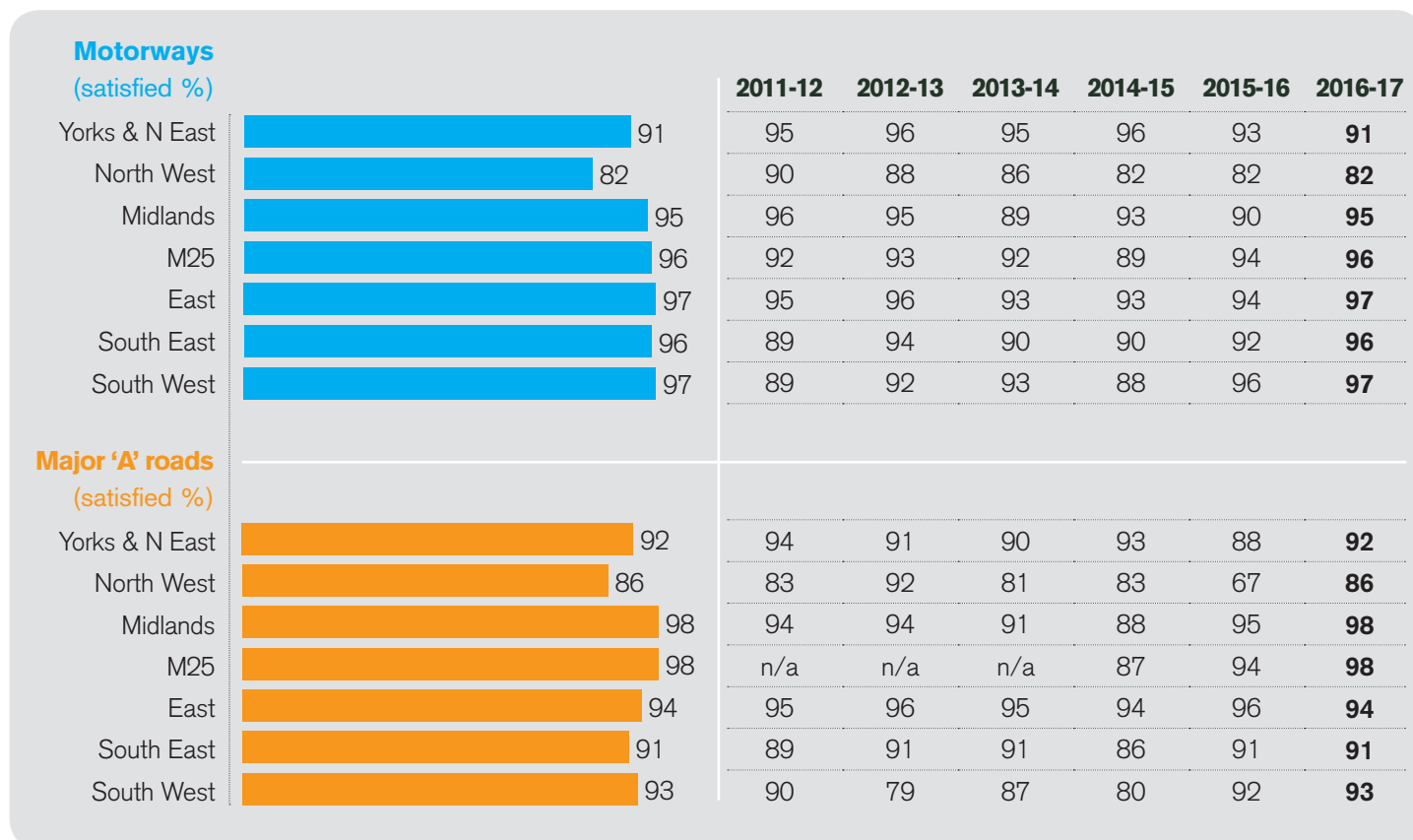
There was a satisfaction score of **93 per cent** for **signage** in 2016-17. Satisfaction with signage was slightly better

on major 'A' roads than motorways. This was the highest scoring of the five key areas of user experience.



The M25 and South East regions scored highest for signage on motorways, with the North West having the lowest regional score. The satisfaction on major 'A' roads was also lowest

in the North West, with major 'A' roads in the Midlands and M25 regions rated best for signage.



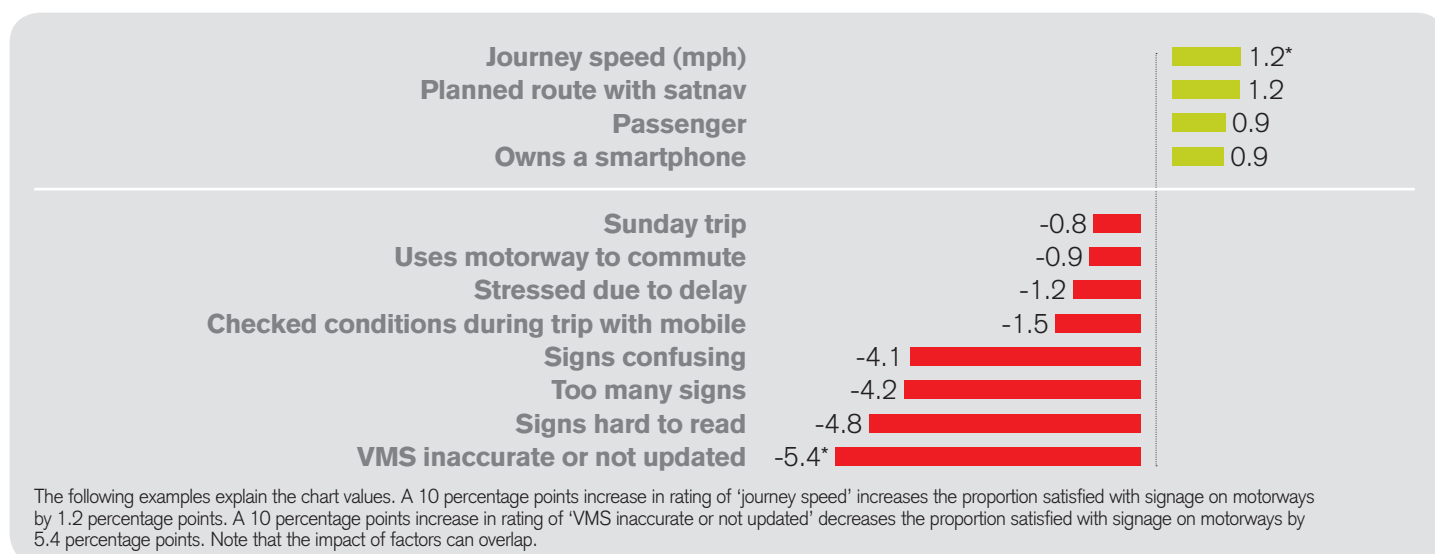
Analysis of satisfaction with signage

Statistical analysis of how road users rate satisfaction with signage, in comparison with how they answer other questions, shows the factors with greatest influence on their satisfaction.

Factors with greatest influence – motorways

Factors with a positive link to satisfaction with signage are journey speed, planning a route with satnav and those users who own a smartphone. Inaccurate and out of date variable

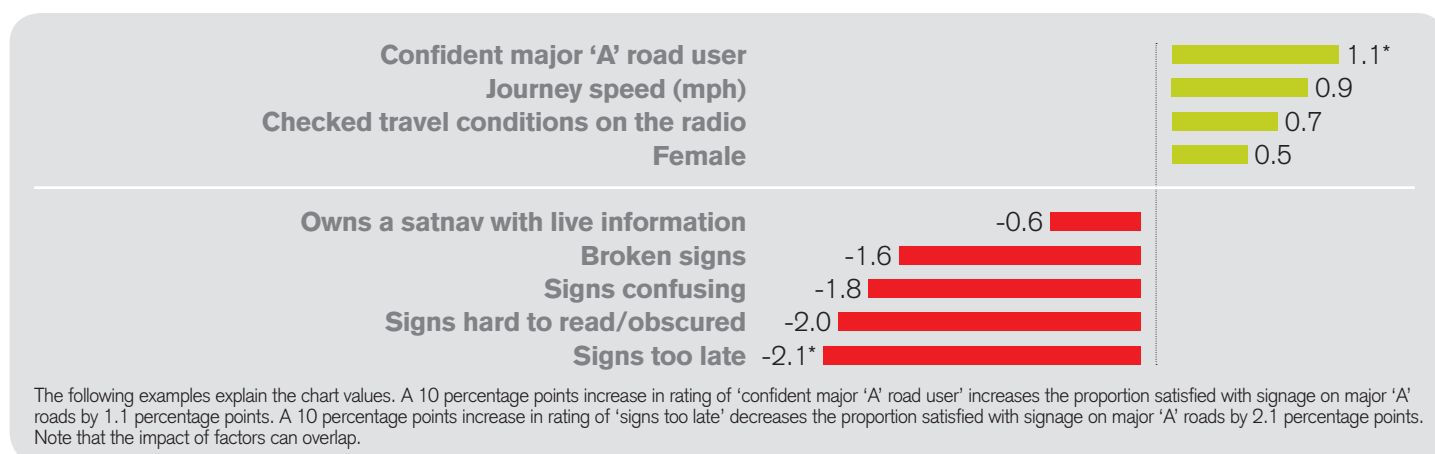
message signs (VMS) caused notable dissatisfaction, with other factors leading to dissatisfaction including signs which are hard to read, being too frequent or confusing.



Factors with greatest influence – major 'A' roads

Being a confident user impacted on satisfaction with signage, as did journey speed. Signs positioned too late, signs being


confusing, broken, obscured or hard to read had negative impacts on satisfaction.





What users tell us about signage

While road users were generally very satisfied with signage, where they were not, the comments below illustrate why.

Lack of information updates or traffic warnings


-  *The warning signs were not switched on before we got to the accident on the M1 so we had no prior warning and were not able to escape and go another way (leisure journey, motorway)*


-  *If there's a problem with the Blackwall Tunnel or Dartford Tunnel such as a vehicle broken down causing delays there's no sign until you get there, need something sooner (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*


-  *Should give more information...the road closure should have been explained (commuting, major 'A' road)*


Poorly maintained signage and surrounds


Users commented that signs were faded, dirty, had letters missing or obscured by nearby vegetation. This prevented them serving their purpose.

-  *Some are obscured by branches or trees (leisure journey, motorway)*

-  *Missing letters on signs, some need repainting (leisure journey, motorway)*


-  *Some of them look a bit grubby, it's as if the trees have left them dirty (leisure journey, motorway)*


-  *Some had graffiti on which you can't see through and some signs were tatty and broken or weather damaged (leisure journey, motorway)*


-  *Not illuminated, if you are in the right hand lane and a lorry goes past you can miss them (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*


Excessive signage

A number of users felt too many signs are distracting, dangerous and unnecessary. This had some impact on satisfaction.

-  *The number of signs in the roadworks is distracting, there are far too many strewn across the carriageway that have no relevance to drivers (leisure journey, motorway)*


-  *They have too many temporary signs overhead (leisure journey, motorway)*


-  *Quite a few of them and repetitive (commuting, major 'A' road)*


-  *I would say there can be too many signs and too much information to take in quickly (commuting, major 'A' road)*

Lack of signage

Some users felt there were not enough signs, especially on major 'A' roads.

-  *Some are too small, they need to be bigger and need more signs (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*


-  *Need more signage generally (commuting, major 'A' road)*


-  *They were clear but there could be more of them (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*


Satisfied

Users were overwhelmingly positive when the signs were:

Clear to read, easy to understand, and the correct size

-  *I do find them very clear on the motorway, the VMS are fantastic (leisure journey, motorway)*

-  *Very good, clean and tidy, all in one piece and tells you what you need (commuting, motorway)*

-  *They are clear to read and can be seen (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*



Placed well and at an appropriate distance from junctions or at the right level for drivers and passengers to see them

- The overhead ones make it easier to get into the right lane, they point directly down to the lane (leisure journey, motorway)
- Very good, they're high enough to see clearly and a nice clear font so you can see them (leisure journey, major 'A' road)
- Well-lit, in plenty of time to exit (leisure journey, major 'A' road)
- Positioned well, clear view, not obstructed by trees (commuting, motorway)

Informative

- They were informative and kept you up to date with the work that was happening on the motorway (leisure journey, motorway)
- They always get me where I need to go (leisure journey, major 'A' road)
- I wouldn't know where I was going without them (leisure journey, major 'A' road)
- There are enough there to help me make my decision as to how and where to drive (commuting, motorway)

Variable Message Signs (VMS)

These are electronic signs which many users, specifically those who had travelled on a motorway, focused on when asked about signage.

In 2016-17, 58 per cent of road users on motorway journeys said they saw a variable message sign. Of those that saw one, almost three-quarters (63 per cent) recalled that it had a message on it.

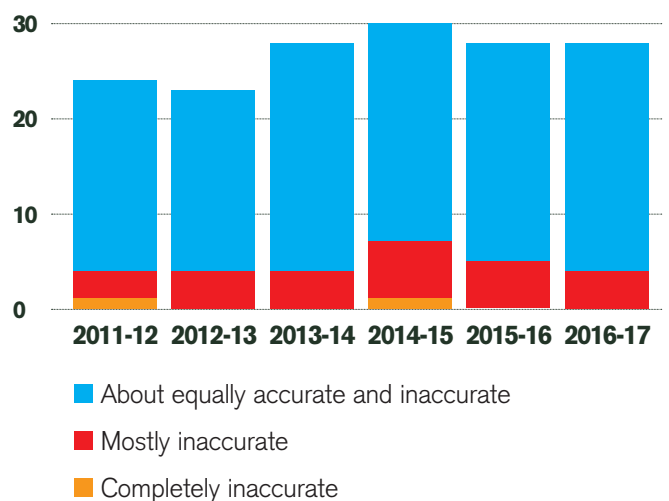
One of the key issues for users is having trust in the information on the VMS. There is a strong link between perceived accuracy of VMS and rating of satisfaction with signage. Many users mentioned that VMS were not updated quickly enough.

- They are not kept up to date and inaccurate VMS signs cause stress (leisure, motorway)
- Quite often they warn you for something which isn't there (business, motorway)
- VMS signs seem too out of date. Left on too long after incidents (business, motorway)

When asked to rate the accuracy of messages displayed, just over a quarter of motorway users thought they were inaccurate as much as they were accurate. This has improved a little over the last three years.



Inaccuracy of VMS on motorways (%)

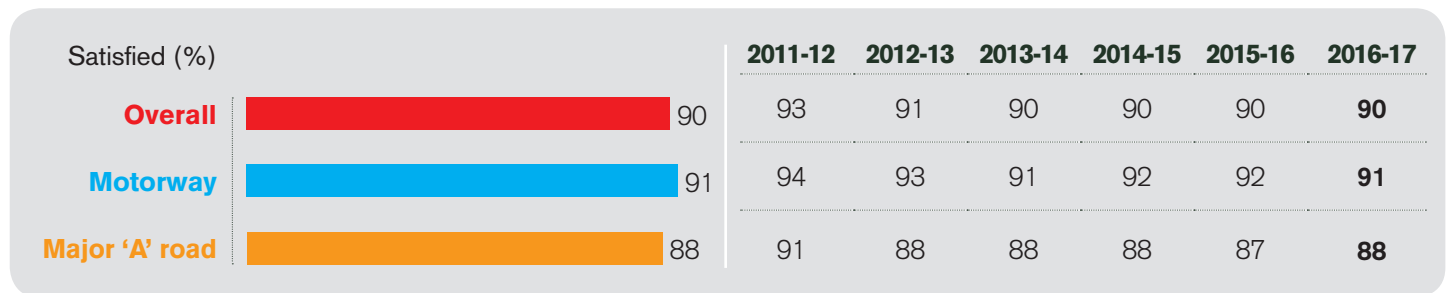


Upkeep

Levels of satisfaction with upkeep of motorways and major 'A' roads

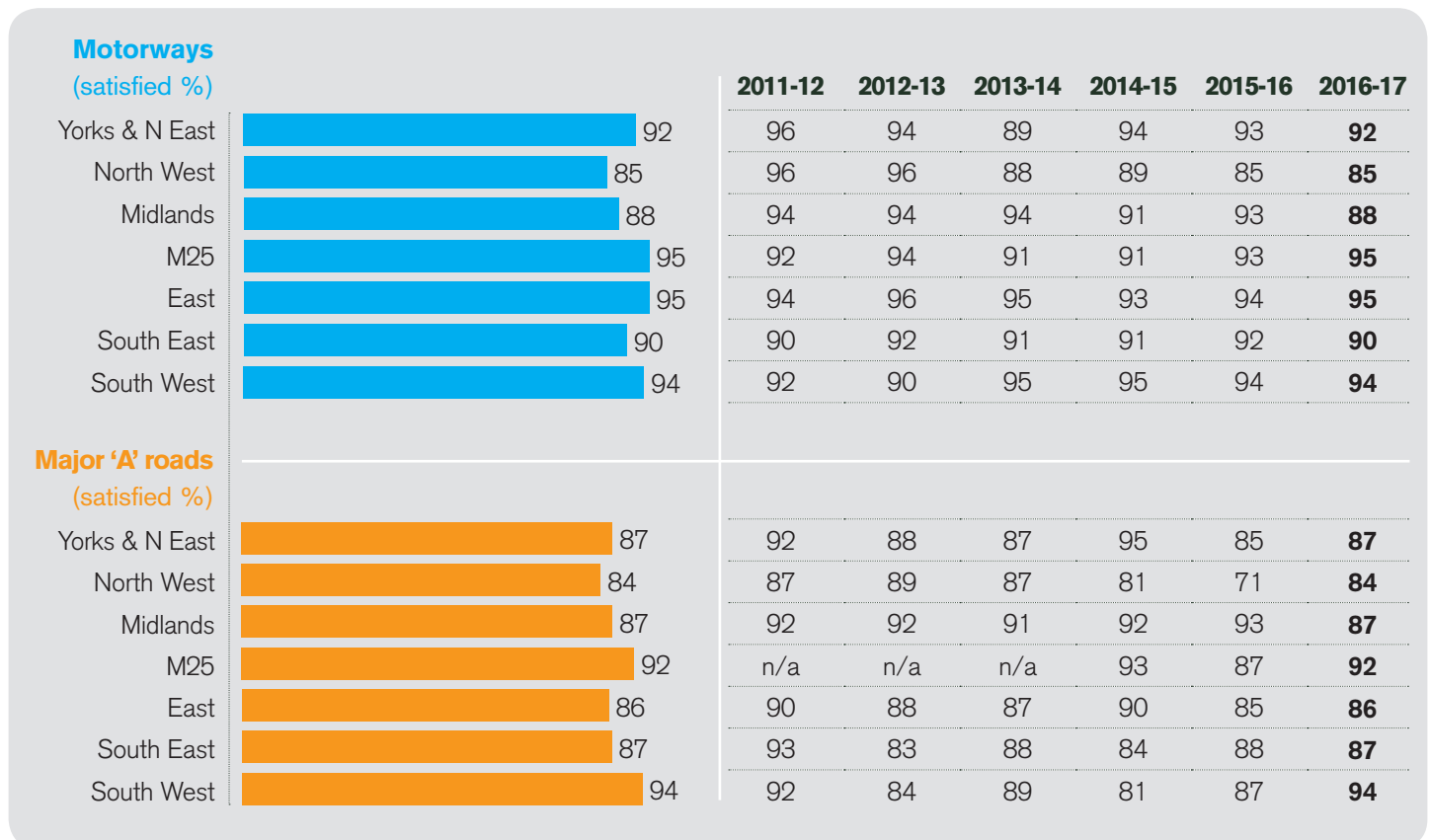
Satisfaction with the **general upkeep** of motorways and major 'A' roads achieved a score of **90 per cent** for 2016-17. The score for major 'A' roads has increased since 2015-16,

while there has been a decrease in satisfaction with upkeep on motorways.



In 2016-17, users of motorways in the M25, East and South West regions were the most satisfied, as were users of major

'A' roads in the South West and M25 regions. The North West region scored lowest for both motorways and major 'A' roads.



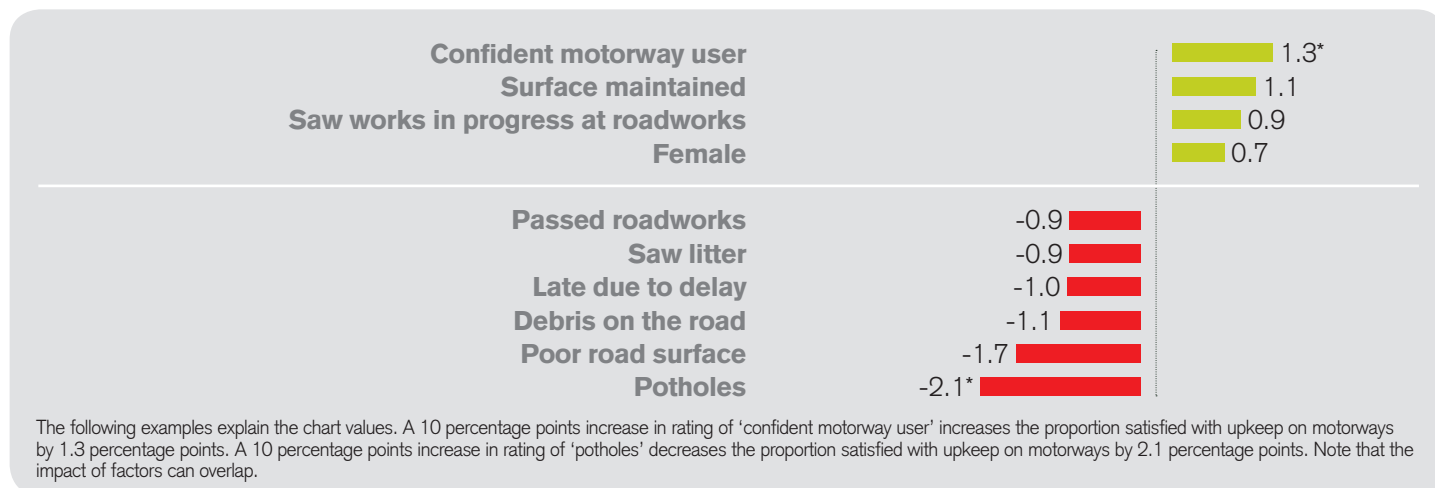
Analysis of satisfaction with upkeep

Statistical analysis of how road users rate satisfaction with upkeep in comparison with how they answer other questions shows the factors with greatest influence on their satisfaction.

Factors with greatest influence – motorways

Factors with a positive link to satisfaction with upkeep are being a confident motorway user, well-maintained surface

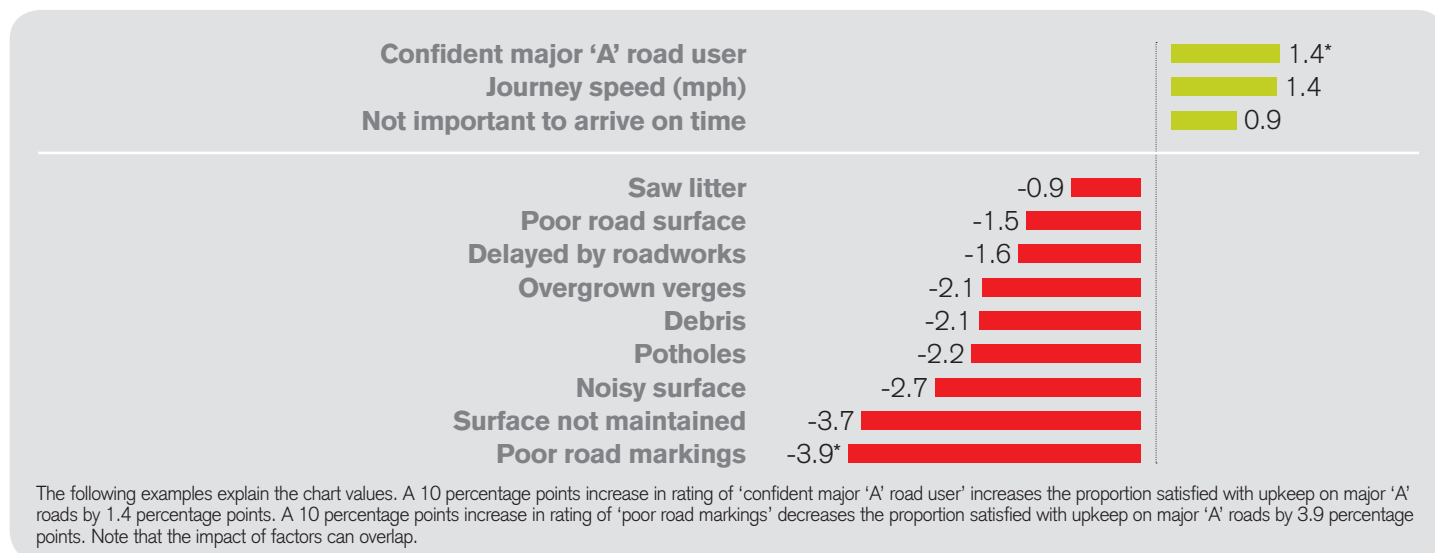
and progress at roadworks. Negative factors included potholes, poor road surface, debris and seeing litter on the road.



Factors with greatest influence – major 'A' roads

Factors with a positive link to satisfaction with upkeep on major 'A' roads are being a confident road user, journey speed and making a non time-pressured journey. Negative factors are similar to

motorways and include potholes, debris and poor road surface. But for major 'A' roads they also include poor road markings, noisy surfaces and overgrown verges.











Users' comments on their satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Road users principally mention the following when it comes to upkeep of the road:

- Potholes;
- Maintenance levels; and
- Litter, debris and vegetation.

Potholes

Users noticed potholes not just in a negative context when there were a lot of them, but also as a positive when there were fewer of them than expected.









Lack of potholes	Frequent potholes
 <i>It's a good road, no potholes and well-maintained (leisure journey, motorway)</i>	 <i>Quite a poor condition, potholes and uneven surfaces (commuting, major 'A' road)</i>
 <i>Didn't see or feel any potholes so it was fine (leisure journey, motorway)</i>	 <i>Rough surface in parts and bad potholes (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
 <i>There are no great potholes, it's just a normal road surface, not particularly smooth (commuting, major 'A' road)</i>	 <i>Potholes, rough surfaces and it has been like it for years (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
 <i>It was a surprisingly smooth ride, not as many potholes as I expected (leisure journey, motorway)</i>	 <i>The lanes are worn, it is difficult in narrow lanes to avoid such large potholes (commuting, motorway)</i>

Surface quality

A smooth drive was perceived as an important part of the journey. Users were more satisfied when roads had been recently upgraded or repaired, particularly if the work had

brought about a significant improvement in road surface quality.

A number commented that poor surfaces were affecting their journeys, complaining that the surfaces were uneven, bumpy or noisy.

Good surface	Poor surface
 <i>The surface is very smooth and clean, that's the best part of that journey (commuting, major 'A' road)</i>	 <i>It was the bumpiest road I've ever been on (leisure journey, motorway)</i>
 <i>The surface is better than average around here so it was fine (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>	 <i>Very uneven and bumpy, noisy too with cambers pulling you (leisure journey, motorway)</i>
 <i>There has been work done recently, it's a quiet motorway – some have really noisy tarmac (leisure journey, motorway)</i>	 <i>Needs resurfacing due to the noise (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
 <i>It's been upgraded, smooth, well lit, it's just all been done (leisure, motorway)</i>	
 <i>It's improved greatly since the work has been done (for education, motorway)</i>	

Levels of maintenance

Most users thought motorways and major 'A' roads were generally well-maintained (well lit, smooth, non-potholed surfaces, verges not overgrown, signage not blocked, and clear of hazards such as rubbish and debris). In contrast,

dissatisfaction occurred when repairs to road surfaces were poorly completed or users thought that no effort was being made to maintain them at all.

Ongoing high levels of maintenance

😊	<i>They have cleaned up all the debris and it's all fenced off and tidy, the potholes have gone (leisure journey, motorway)</i>
😊	<i>The verges are clear, the drains cleaned, the little cats eyes are okay and no debris, it's well looked after (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
😊	<i>I have a thing about well-kept roads and spaces and I thought the A500 was very well kept and maintained (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
😊	<i>They always keep it clean and regularly maintain it (commuting, motorway)</i>
😊	<i>That stretch is in good condition and well maintained (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>

Poor levels of maintenance

😞	<i>General road surface needs to be replaced and not keep patching it up as that breaks down with tarmac as that lifts on a concrete road (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
😞	<i>The lack of maintenance to the road surface and when they do it, it's a quick fix (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
😞	<i>It's a mess on the A14, it feels neglected and filthy, and lane markings are worn out in lots of places (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>

Litter and overgrowth

Users' comments reflect the analysis that how clear roads are of litter and the extent to which vegetation is under control affects satisfaction.

Clear motorways and major 'A' roads

😊	<i>It is very clean and they trim the hedges and you don't very often see debris on it (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
😊	<i>It's clean and tidy, and no overhanging trees (leisure journey, motorway)</i>
😊	<i>There was no litter, the greenery was low so I could see the signs (leisure journey, motorway)</i>
😊	<i>The motorway was clear of debris and other rubbish (like bottles) which you can see on other local roads (leisure journey, motorway)</i>
😊	<i>It was good, no major issues, it felt clean and safe (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>

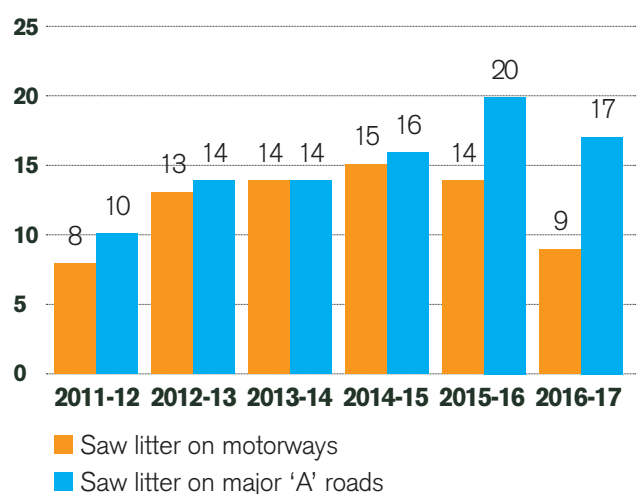
Seeing litter, debris and overgrowth

😞	<i>Lots of rubbish and the verges are overgrown (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
😞	<i>There's always litter and overgrown bollards everywhere, it's a mess (leisure journey, motorway)</i>
😞	<i>Not maintained, in my view, to a standard that I would like and there are weeds growing in the roadside gutters. I have never seen anyone cleaning that section and clearing up litter (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>

Nine per cent of users on motorways and 17 per cent of users on major 'A' roads had seen litter on their journey in 2016-17. On motorways this has decreased from 15 per cent in 2014-15 and for major 'A' roads from 20 per cent last year.

When we asked users how seeing litter made them feel, they said mainly it caused them to be angry or irritated. However, a small minority (seven per cent) thought it impacted on safety.

Seeing litter on motorways and major 'A' roads (%)

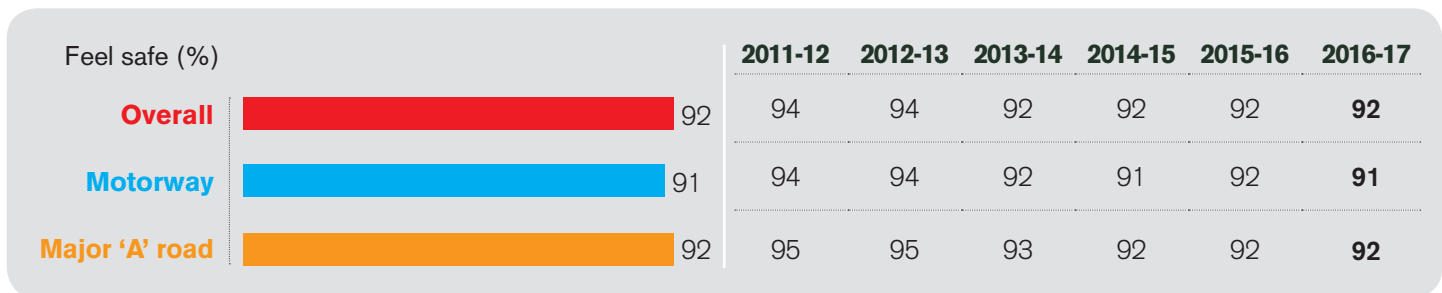


Safety

Level of feeling safe

92 per cent of road users felt very or fairly **safe** when making journeys on motorways and major 'A' roads in 2016-17. The proportion of users feeling safe has

dropped over the last six years by two percentage points. Users rate safety for motorways about the same as for major 'A' roads.



Motorway users felt most safe in the East, South East and Yorkshire and North East regions; users in the North West and Midlands regions felt least safe. Users of major 'A' roads

felt most safe in the South West, East and North West regions; users in Yorkshire and North East region felt least safe.

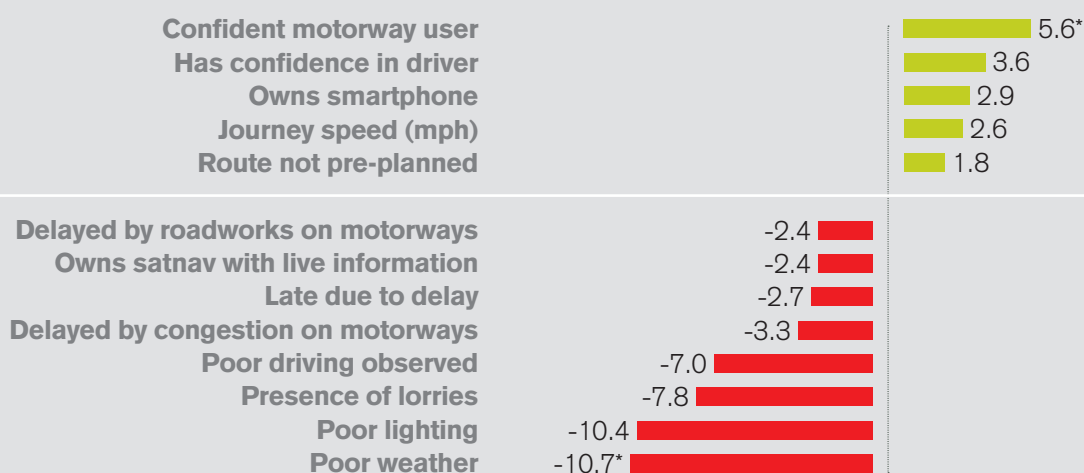


Analysis of users' feelings of safety

Statistical analysis of how road users rate safety in comparison with how they answer other questions shows the factors with greatest influence on how safe they feel.

Factors with greatest influence – motorways

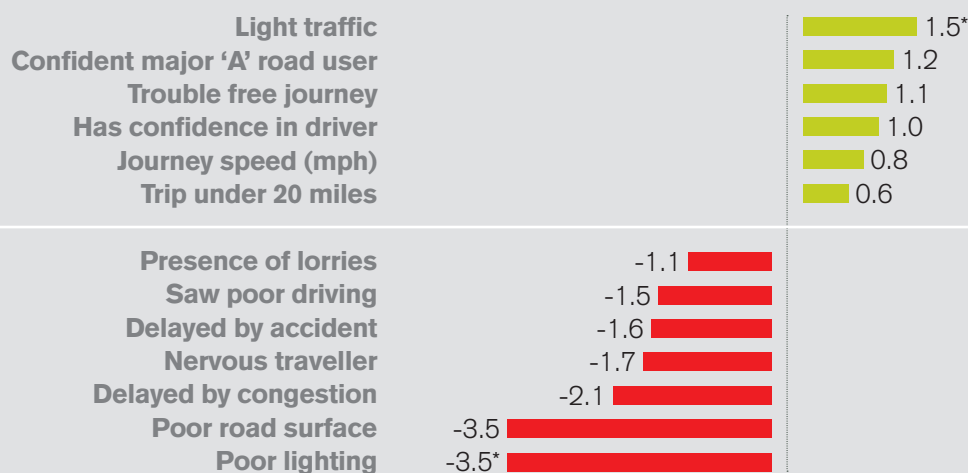
Motorway users who are confident drivers or have confidence in the driver feel more safe. Poor driving, poor lighting and presence of lorries make motorway users feel less safe.



The following examples explain the chart values. A 10 percentage points increase in rating of 'confident motorway user' increases the proportion feeling safe on motorways by 5.6 percentage points. A 10 percentage points increase in rating of 'poor weather' decreases the proportion feeling safe motorways by 10.7 percentage points. Note that the impact of factors can overlap.

Factors with greatest influence – major 'A' roads

Users of major 'A' roads feel more safe when there is light traffic and they are confident driving. Users feel less safe when there is poor lighting and poor road surface.



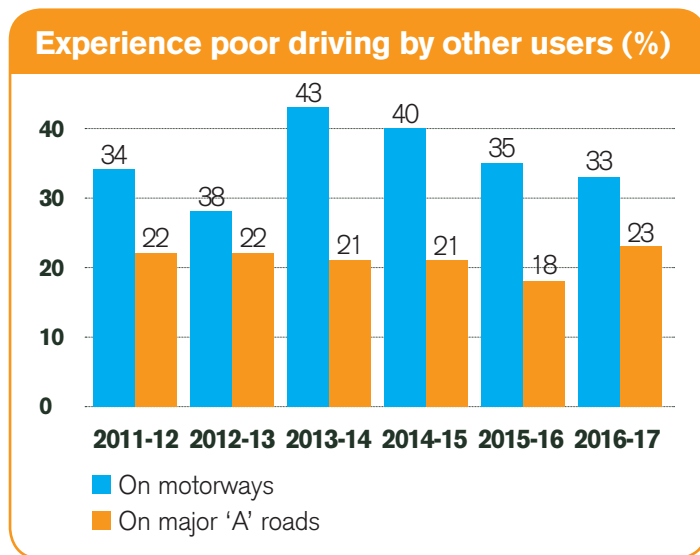
The following examples explain the chart values. A 10 percentage points increase in rating of 'light traffic' increases the proportion feeling safe on major 'A' roads by 1.5 percentage points. A 10 percentage points increase in rating of 'poor lighting' decreases the proportion feeling safe on major 'A' roads by 3.5 percentage points. Note that the impact of factors can overlap.

What users tell us about feeling safe

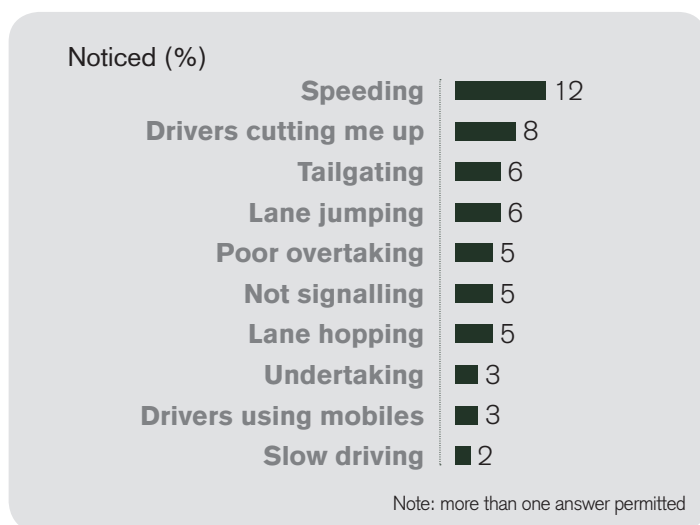
Road users' comments show they consider safety in a number of ways, often overlapping between cause and effect. Their comments can be grouped into three main themes: other drivers' behaviour; their own confidence when driving; and the road conditions they encounter on their journeys.

Other drivers' behaviour

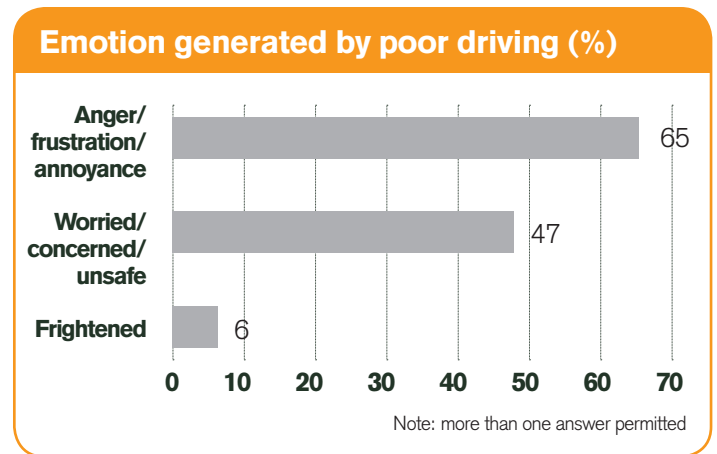
The chart below shows that in 2016-17 on 33 per cent of motorway journeys and 23 per cent of major 'A' road journeys, users experienced poor driving by others. Since 2011-12 the incidence of poor driving increased then fell for motorways, but stayed more or less the same on major 'A' roads.



Road users said the most frequent poor driving behaviours experienced were speeding and other drivers cutting them up.



The chart below shows that the lead emotion created by poor driving behaviour is anger/frustration/annoyance, but more notable are the net level of concerned/worried/unsafe at 47 per cent and frightened at six per cent.



Users' comments illustrate how other drivers' behaviours affect their feelings of safety.




First in general:

- I think the motorways are very unsafe with too many reckless drivers and lack of hard shoulder (leisure journey, motorway)
- People flashing me to move over even though I was going at the speed limit (leisure journey, motorway)
- I expect to see a lot of idiots on the road so I am always on my guard (leisure journey, motorway)

Then about more specific situations:







- There was a ridiculous speeding motorcyclist that drove a bit too close to me (commuting, motorway)
- There is a straight stretch and even if you're doing 60mph people still whizz past you which is dangerous and has caused accidents in the past. Feel there needs to be speed cameras (leisure journey, major 'A' road)
- Drivers were cutting me up on the motorway and jumping lanes (leisure journey, motorway)
- There was somebody weaving in and out of lanes which was a little unsettling (leisure journey, motorway)
- Bad drivers on the motorway, middle-lane hogging and using their phones (on business, motorway)

Those who did not encounter poor driving by others were more likely to feel safe, and some specifically commented on the positive role of speed limits and cameras.

	<i>No idiots driving on it, everyone moving and behaving themselves (on business, motorway)</i>
	<i>The traffic was behaving, doing what it should, no sudden braking and everyone using it sensibly (commuting, motorway)</i>
	<i>Cameras and it's restricted to 60mph which makes it safer (commuting, major 'A' road)</i>

The driver's confidence and experience



Users' comments showed that being a confident driver gave a higher feeling of safety; less confidence gave a greater likelihood of feeling less safe. However users also were more confident if their vehicle was well-maintained and the route was familiar.

	<i>I drive a lot on the motorways, I'm not a ditherer, you just need confidence (on business, motorway)</i>
	<i>I just know the route so well, I've driven it for 20 years and always feel safe (education, major 'A' road)</i>
	<i>I know the road but there's always the unexpected (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
	<i>I'm a nervous driver, especially near lorries (leisure journey, motorway)</i>
	<i>Not too happy with motorway travel, some travel far too fast (leisure journey, motorway)</i>
	<i>I am terrified of motorways (leisure journey, motorway)</i>



Road conditions

Where infrastructure or road conditions were poor, users' comments shed light on the way it makes them feel less safe.



Narrow lanes

	<i>I did feel a bit unsafe when the lanes narrowed at the roadworks as I have a wide car (leisure journey, motorway)</i>
	<i>Narrow lanes and drivers speeding at the roadworks (leisure journey, motorway)</i>



Road layout and markings

	<i>The changing of lanes with the cones was a bit unnerving (leisure journey, motorway)</i>
	<i>The roundabouts are poor, the wagons come straight down and the markings are worn so nobody gives way or stops (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>



Short sliproads on major 'A' roads

	<i>Difficult to get on to the road, the slip road is too short and cars don't pull over for you to get on, there are always accidents (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
	<i>Have concerns about people joining the A1 from slip roads as they are too short (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>




Poor lighting on major 'A' roads

	<i>Not very well lit otherwise the surface is fine (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
	<i>Very dark, it needs better lighting (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>




Insufficient capacity of major 'A' roads

	<i>The A38 is too busy for the size of the road, it needs three lanes at the pinch points to make it safer (on business, major 'A' road)</i>
	<i>I never feel safe, there is too much traffic on the A1, the road does not serve its purpose anymore, it needs another lane (commuting, major 'A' road)</i>






Poor road surface on major 'A' roads

	<i>You think something is wrong with the car when you hit the concrete section (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
	<i>Poor road surface needs resurfacing and flattening (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>
	<i>The first section is a sweeping bend with possibly an adverse camber and over the years I've seen a lot of caravans and trailers tipped over and gone in the ditch so it makes me wary (leisure journey, major 'A' road)</i>

Lorries were often cited as a cause of feeling unsafe, either due to driver behaviour or vehicle size. This was made worse when lanes were narrowed due to roadworks.

-  *The lanes are far too narrow for HGVs to travel alongside and for a car to travel alongside in the third lane, there just isn't the space. The HGVs also seem to want to push you through the roadworks faster than the 50mph limit (commuting, motorway)*
-  *A lorry was tailgating me in the 50mph zone to get me to go faster and I felt very intimidated (leisure journey, motorway)*
-  *Coming through the narrow lanes isn't good, you are so close to the HGVs and they can travel at 50mph and won't let you into the nearside lane to pull off (leisure journey, motorway)*

Good infrastructure or road conditions contributed positively to feeling safe. Roads being smooth, well lit, free of debris and vegetation being under control were mentioned by users.

-  *The weather was good, the lanes weren't clogged with traffic, the traffic was nicely spread out and there was lots of space between the vehicles (leisure journey, motorway)*
-  *It was a decent day, good weather but you can't account for other silly drivers (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*
-  *The motorways were well lit, quite bright and central reservation in place (leisure journey, motorway)*
-  *Resurfaced and very well marked road (education, major 'A' road)*
-  *[felt]100 per cent safe as the traffic was light (leisure journey, major 'A' road)*



Appendix: survey method

Introduction

The National Road Users' Satisfaction Survey (NRUSS) provides the official measure of customer satisfaction among users of the Highways England road network. The survey in its current form has been running since April 2011. In April 2015 responsibility for running the motorways and major 'A' roads changed. One change was that customer satisfaction is now measured independently by Transport Focus, starting in April 2016. Transport Focus decided, given the importance of trend data and that it was a formal Highways England target, to continue with NRUSS unchanged in the short-term. Transport Focus therefore appointed AECOM to conduct the survey on its behalf. They having carried it out for the Highways Agency/Highways England since April 2011.

The main aspects of the methodology are detailed here and further information can be obtained by contacting Transport Focus.

Conducting the survey

Each year around 2,000 users of the roads managed by Highways England are interviewed face-to-face in their homes. To take part, respondents must be aged 17 or over and have used a Highways England-managed road within the previous 12 months. The survey aims to achieve interviews evenly across each of Highways England's seven regions: Yorkshire and North East; North West; Midlands; M25; East; South East; and South West.

Each month, six sample areas are chosen at random within each region making 42 sample areas per month. Sample areas are selected at random from all possible postcodes within that region. The selected postcodes provide the start location from which interviewers will approach homes to request an interview. Within each sample area an interviewer has to secure interviews which meet the following criteria:

- a Gender: two men and two women
- b Driver/passenger: minimum three drivers
- c Age: minimum one person from each of the 17 to 34; 35 to 64; and 65+ age groups
- d Employment: minimum two employed

These criteria were set based on usage of Highways England's roads.

The questionnaire asks about their most recent journey on Highways England's roads. Where that journey was a return journey, only the outward or return leg is asked about (chosen at random). The questions cover general trip experience and satisfaction with five key performance areas: journey time; safety; roadworks management, information/signage; and general upkeep. The results are not weighted.

Sample sizes

With 42 sample areas each month and four completed interviews per sample area, there are around 2,000 interviews achieved each year. Some users will have used only motorways, some only major 'A' roads, some both. The exact sample size for any result quoted is available from Transport Focus, however the table below gives approximate sample sizes for the results shown in the report.

Measure	Sample size 2016-17	
	Motorways	Major 'A' roads
Overall satisfaction*	1330	1241
Satisfaction with journey times, upkeep, and safety at regional level**	Circa 220	Circa 200
Satisfaction with roadworks management (all regions results are combined – as only a proportion of users experience roadworks)	300	116

* These numbers added together exceed 2,000 because some journeys involved use of a motorway and a major 'A' road.

** The number of responses differs across the seven regions and across these four key areas. Two regions with notably fewer responses are the North West and M25 for major 'A' roads with around 75 and 130 respectively (both areas being more predominantly motorways). Exact sample size numbers for each region/question can be supplied on request.

The number of interviews achieved in 2016-17 is not significantly different from that achieved in previous years.

Overall satisfaction calculation

The overall satisfaction score is derived from the scores achieved for the five key performance areas. It is not generated from a direct question. The basis of the calculation is below:

$$\text{Overall satisfaction score} = \frac{\sum (Rm \times Nm) + \sum (Rt \times Nt)}{\sum (Nm) + \sum (Nt)}$$

- Where **Rm** is the satisfaction score for that key performance area for motorways
- Where **Rt** is the satisfaction score for that key performance area for major 'A' roads
- Where **Nm** is the total number of responses for that key performance area for motorways
- Where **Nt** is the total number of responses for that key performance area for major 'A' roads
- Each \sum sign means adding the five results (one for each key performance area) that come from calculating the mathematical expression within the bracket that follows that \sum sign.

In 2016-17 survey year the numbers used in the calculation were as follows:

Factors of influence charts

NRUSS asks direct satisfaction questions for each of the five key performance areas for both motorways and major 'A' roads, that is 10 measures in all. For each of these, statistical analysis of how all the other questions in the survey have been answered shows those with greatest influence on satisfaction in the key performance area concerned. The analysis includes answers from the questions asked directly and from 'coding' of what users have said were the reasons for their views.

The statistical process used was 'logistic regression modelling' which treats the dependent variable (the key performance area rating) as either zero = not satisfied or one = satisfied and similarly the independent variables (users' answers to the other questions). The modelling iteratively determines the smallest set of variables that can explain largest movement in satisfaction.

The output shows, of the explainable variance in satisfaction, how much movement in satisfaction might occur from a 10 percentage point change in users' answer to a particular question. The factors with most impact are shown, but please note the impact of some factors overlaps; so the total amount of influence on satisfaction is not the sum of the individual influences. You can contact Transport Focus for any further information required.

	% Satisfaction		No. of responses
R (journey time motorways)	84.73	N (journey time motorways)	1336
R (roadworks motorways)	60.91	N (roadworks motorways)	307
R (signage motorways)	92.19	N (signage motorways)	1217
R (upkeep motorways)	91.31	N (upkeep motorways)	1301
R (safety motorways)	90.83	N (safety motorways)	1330
R (journey time major 'A' roads)	89.95	N (journey time major 'A' roads)	1244
R (roadworks major 'A' roads)	68.10	N (roadworks major 'A' roads)	116
R (signage major 'A' roads)	93.13	N (signage major 'A' roads)	1034
R (upkeep major 'A' roads)	88.15	N (upkeep major 'A' roads)	1215
R (safety major 'A' roads)	92.34	N (safety major 'A' roads)	1241

The calculation for 2016-17 using these figures was:

$$\text{Overall satisfaction (\%)} = \frac{[(84.73 \times 1336) + (60.91 \times 307) + (92.19 \times 1217) + (91.31 \times 1301) + (90.83 \times 1330)] + [(89.95 \times 1244) + (68.10 \times 116) + (93.13 \times 1034) + (88.15 \times 1215) + (92.43 \times 1241)]}{(1336 + 307 + 1217 + 1301 + 1330) + (1244 + 116 + 1034 + 1215 + 1241)}$$

Overall satisfaction was therefore 89.1 per cent.



Contact Transport Focus

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