

A wide-angle photograph of a multi-lane highway. Traffic is moving in both directions. On the right shoulder, there is a construction area with two yellow excavators and several orange traffic cones. A blue bus is visible on the right side of the road. The background shows a dense forest on a hillside.

Strategic Roads User Survey

2025/26 annual report

July 2026

transportfocus 

→ Foreword

Measuring and benchmarking the road user experience is essential to understanding how well the Strategic Road Network (SRN) is working for the people who use it every day. The Strategic Roads User Survey (SRUS) provides a consistent, independent view of that experience, showing what matters most to users and where improvements will make the greatest difference. The SRUS findings this year do provide some encouragement, with overall satisfaction improving and several key measures recovering from the impacts of recent years.

This year's results come at an important moment. National Highways is embarking on a significant programme of renewals over the next five years, resulting in increased levels of roadworks across the network. Road users understand that roadworks are a necessary part of maintaining the network. The challenge is ensuring it is delivered in a way that minimises disruption, keeps people informed and leaves the network better than it was before.

While some projects will be large and highly visible, many road users are more likely to experience the cumulative effect of smaller schemes across the network. The success of the programme will therefore depend not just on individual projects, but on how effectively National Highways manages disruption across the network as a whole.

The survey shows why this matters. Roadworks remain one of the weakest-performing aspects of the road user experience. Satisfaction with their management remains low, overall satisfaction is significantly lower among those encountering roadworks, and awareness before travel has declined. Journey time remains the strongest driver of satisfaction, and satisfaction improves when delays caused by roadworks fall.

Too often, the success of roadworks is judged by whether the engineering work was completed on time and budget. Road users judge success differently: whether disruption was well planned, information was clear, delays were minimised, restrictions felt justified and the completed road is noticeably better than before - for example, through a smoother road surface.



For Transport Focus, there are four tests that should shape how this programme is planned and delivered. These are grounded in the latest SRUS results as well as the wider evidence from our work with road users, communities and stakeholders.

- 1. Planning and sequencing.** Individual schemes cannot be viewed in isolation. National Highways must demonstrate that works are coordinated, disruption is not unnecessarily duplicated and the overall impact on road users has been considered across the programme, not just on a scheme-by-scheme basis.
- 2. Communication.** Road users are more accepting of disruption when they understand what is happening, why it is necessary, how long it will last and what benefit it will deliver. Advance notice, real-time updates and clear diversion information should be treated as part of the project, not as an afterthought.
- 3. Delivery.** Road users expect restrictions and traffic management to be necessary, proportionate and visibly linked to progress on site. Long stretches of cones, reduced speed limits and little visible activity quickly undermine confidence that disruption is being managed effectively.
- 4. Improvement.** This programme should be about more than maintaining existing assets. If road users are being asked to tolerate disruption, they should see tangible improvements in the quality, reliability, safety and overall experience of their journeys when the work is complete.

Recent experience also offers important lessons. The National Emergency Area Retrofit (NEAR) programme showed how long stretches of traffic management, temporary speed restrictions and limited visible progress can undermine satisfaction even where users understand the purpose of the work. The M6 Lune Gorge scheme demonstrates that meaningful engagement is not about ticking a box but being prepared to adapt plans in response to what people say. Meanwhile, the temporary HGV restrictions on the M48 Severn Bridge illustrate how operational decisions can have far-reaching consequences for businesses and communities. Together, these examples reinforce the importance of planning proactively, understanding wider impacts and keeping the user perspective at the centre of decision-making.

Transport Focus will continue to work closely with National Highways throughout this programme, bringing independent evidence, insight and challenge to decisions as they are being made. The priority should be preventing avoidable frustration through better planning, communication and delivery, rather than explaining it afterwards.

While renewals and roadworks are a major focus for the next five years, they are not the only measures of success. This report highlights the wider factors that shape road user experience and provides a clear evidence base for future decisions. The challenge for National Highways is to use that insight to deliver a network that is not only safe and reliable, but one that is continuously improving from the road user's perspective.

Louise Collins
Director



National Highways commentary

As one of our corporate imperatives, delivering for our customers is a responsibility we take seriously. The SRUS continues to provide invaluable insight into what matters most to road users and helps us to be more customer-oriented in decisions, design and delivery.

This year's results are encouraging, with improvements across all key areas measured, including overall satisfaction, satisfaction with journey time, safety, road surface, motorway journeys and 'A' road journeys. Although satisfaction with roadworks has improved this year, we recognise it remains one of the aspects of the journey experience where customers expect more from us.

Overall, the results suggest that we've understood what's important to our customers and our work on improving their experiences is making a positive difference.

During 2025/26, we delivered a range of initiatives designed to improve the experience of travelling on the SRN, including:

- helping customers make better-informed travel decisions through clearer and more useful network information on our signs
- making journeys smoother during major roadworks by improving diversion routes, reducing disruption and helping customers reach their destinations more efficiently
- supporting customers to plan ahead by providing clearer, more timely information about significant roadworks and road closures, helping them avoid delays where possible
- improving the experience for lorry drivers by working with industry partners to deliver more freight parking spaces and better, safer and more secure welfare facilities.

The completion of the NEAR programme also contributed to improved satisfaction. While roadworks are necessary, it's clear we need to continue to improve our focus on the needs and expectations of road users as we plan and deliver them.

As we move into RIS3, customer insight will be more important than ever. Over the next five years, we expect an increase in demand on the road network and must deliver a substantial programme of renewals and maintenance to ensure the network remains safe, reliable and fit for the future. We recognise that this work will bring disruption for road users and that our success will be judged not only by the engineering outcomes we achieve, but by how effectively we minimise disruption, communicate with our road users and communities and demonstrate the positive benefits of the work. We know customers are more accepting of disruption when they understand why it is necessary, how long it will last and what improvements it will deliver. Building that understanding and trust will be a central part of how we deliver our renewals programme.

We're committed to planning and coordinating work across the network, providing timely and accurate information, delivering roadworks efficiently and ensuring customers see lasting improvements in the quality and reliability of their journeys. Working closely with Transport Focus, our road users and our stakeholders, we will continue to use insight from the SRUS to shape decisions and build trust in how we deliver to make journeys stress-free and create lasting satisfaction.

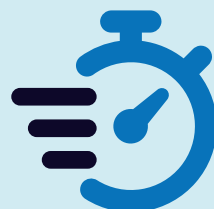
Sandie Forte-Gill
Customer Director



Journey satisfaction on England's motorways and major 'A' roads



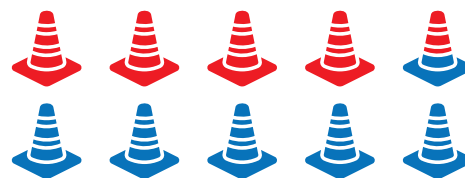
71% overall satisfaction



69%
journey time



70%
road surface



50% management of roadworks



81%
feeling safe

Key findings

The Strategic Roads User Survey (SRUS) measures the consumer experience driving on England's motorways and major 'A' roads, the Strategic Road Network (SRN) managed by National Highways on behalf of the government.

Summary of findings for April 2025 - March 2026

Overall, 71 per cent of road users were satisfied with their last motorway or major 'A' road journey. This is a statistically significant increase from last year's 69 per cent, returning to the same level as was seen in 2023/24. The decline in overall satisfaction with motorways last year has largely recovered, most likely due to the completion of the National Emergency Area Retrofit (NEAR) programme of roadworks, where more than 150 additional emergency areas have been added to existing all lane running (ALR) stretches of smart motorway and those that were still under construction.

Overall satisfaction with journeys on smart motorways has largely recovered since the completion of the NEAR roadworks, with 66 per cent satisfied this year compared to 60 per cent last year. Overall satisfaction specifically on ALR stretches of smart motorway has also almost returned to pre-NEAR levels, with 67 per cent satisfied this year, compared to 59 per cent last year. More details on how smart motorways have fared since the completion of the NEAR roadworks can be found later in the report.

Journey time has the greatest influence on overall satisfaction, so unsurprisingly shows a similar trend to overall satisfaction. Road user satisfaction with journey time at 69 per cent is a statistically significant increase on last year's 67 per cent.

Satisfaction with the road surface – another key user priority – has also seen a statistically significant improvement this year, increasing from 68 per cent to 70 per cent. However, there are still high numbers of mentions of potholes when drivers are asked about road surface quality.

Management of roadworks continues to be one of the weaker performing areas, with 50 per cent of those passing through roadworks on their journey satisfied with their management. This, however, has seen a statistically significant increase from 46 per cent last year. As well as improved satisfaction with the management, the proportion passing through roadworks has decreased to 24 per cent, after a spike of 31 per cent last year due to the NEAR programme of roadworks. Time added to the journey due to roadworks has also decreased this year, with 25 per cent of journeys affected by roadworks experiencing a delay of 16 minutes or more, compared to 31 per cent last year.

The slight decline over the last two years for feelings of safety has been halted this year, with 81 per cent saying they feel safe, compared with 80 per cent last year.

Longer term trends since 2022/23 can be seen for these key metrics in the following charts.

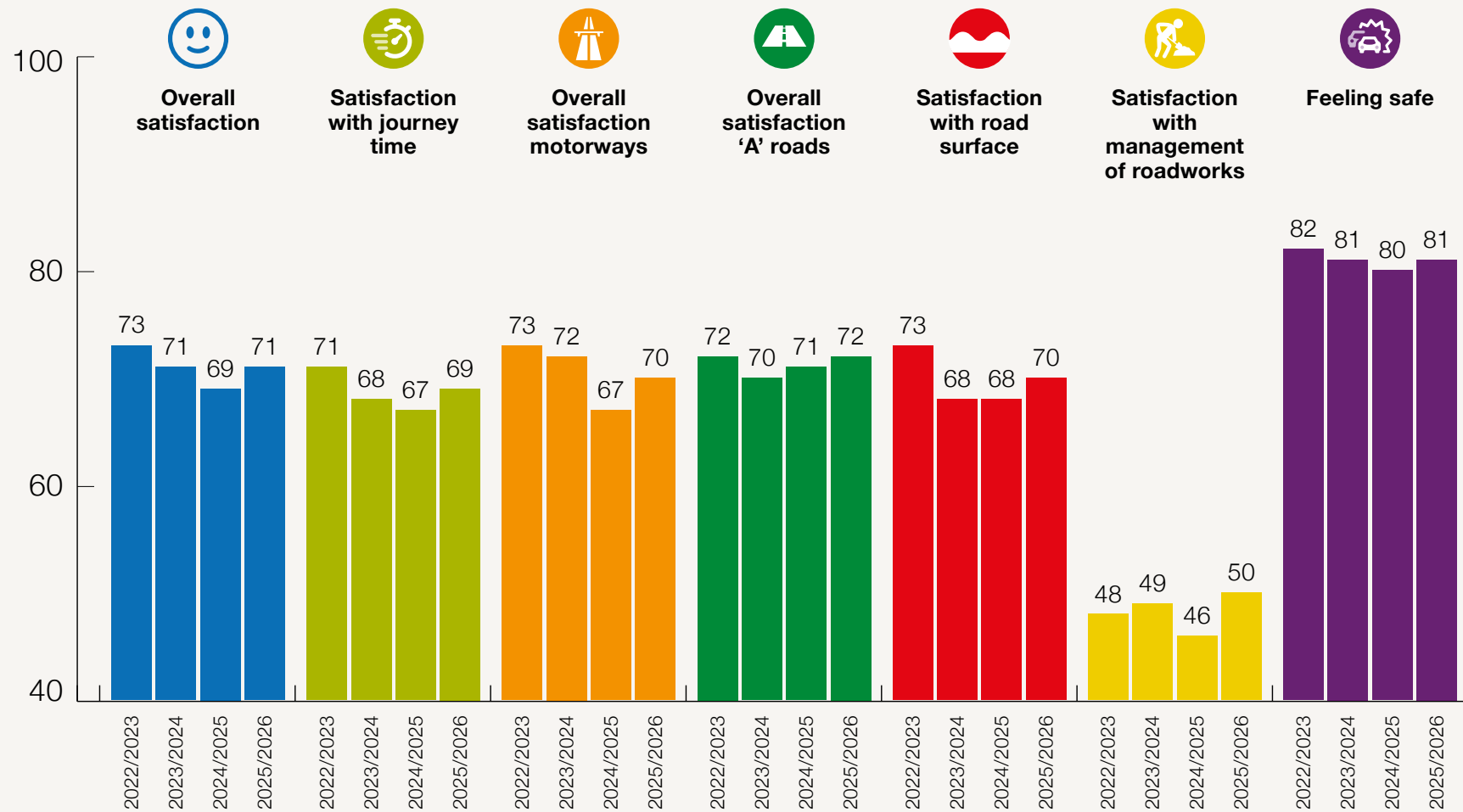
"There was no traffic and the only issue was with some of the tarmac and some cracks in it."

M42, fairly satisfied

"Road was at a good standard, no potholes, no roadworks and didn't get stuck in any major traffic."

A19, very satisfied

Key findings



Base sizes for 7 mini charts (all rolling annual):

Overall sat / journey time / safety / road surface (all based on all respondents giving a rating): range from 8874 to 9489

Overall sat for motorway journeys (all respondents giving a rating of a motorway journey): range from 4762 to 5059

Overall sat for A-road journeys (all respondents giving a rating of an A-road journey): range from 4210 to 4422

Management of roadworks (all passing through roadworks and giving a rating): range from 2033 to 2638

Strategic Roads User Survey

2025/26 – results for selected roads

Overall rank



% % % %

1	A30	79	79	74	85
2	M20	79	73	73	78
3	M56	78	71	74	82
4	M5	78	76	77	84
5	A19	77	76	84	85
6	A23	77	76	70	92
7	M4	76	75	74	83
8	A14	76	75	65	84
9	A303	74	75	60	82
10	M40	74	71	72	82
11	M1	74	72	77	79
12	A1(M)	74	69	74	86
13	M3	72	63	75	79
14	A5	72	70	63	82
15	A3	72	69	73	87
16	A38	72	71	72	81
17	A2	72	76	67	74
18	A64	71	71	77	80
19	A46	71	68	67	85
20	M61	70	64	63	81
21	A34	70	67	65	75
22	M11	70	69	66	85
23	A1	69	70	72	78
24	A47	69	61	59	84
25	A27	69	61	72	84
26	M62	68	70	73	76
27	M6	65	64	67	78
28	M25	65	65	64	75
29	A12	64	70	52	79
30	M60	63	60	71	71
31	M42	61	52	67	75
32	M27	56	55	69	77

Roads selected: all those with 100 survey responses or more, except M61 which is based on 99 responses.

Satisfaction = very satisfied and fairly satisfied combined

Where National Highways manages multiple discontinuous sections of the same road number (for example the A1), combined results are shown.

Rankings



Overall satisfaction



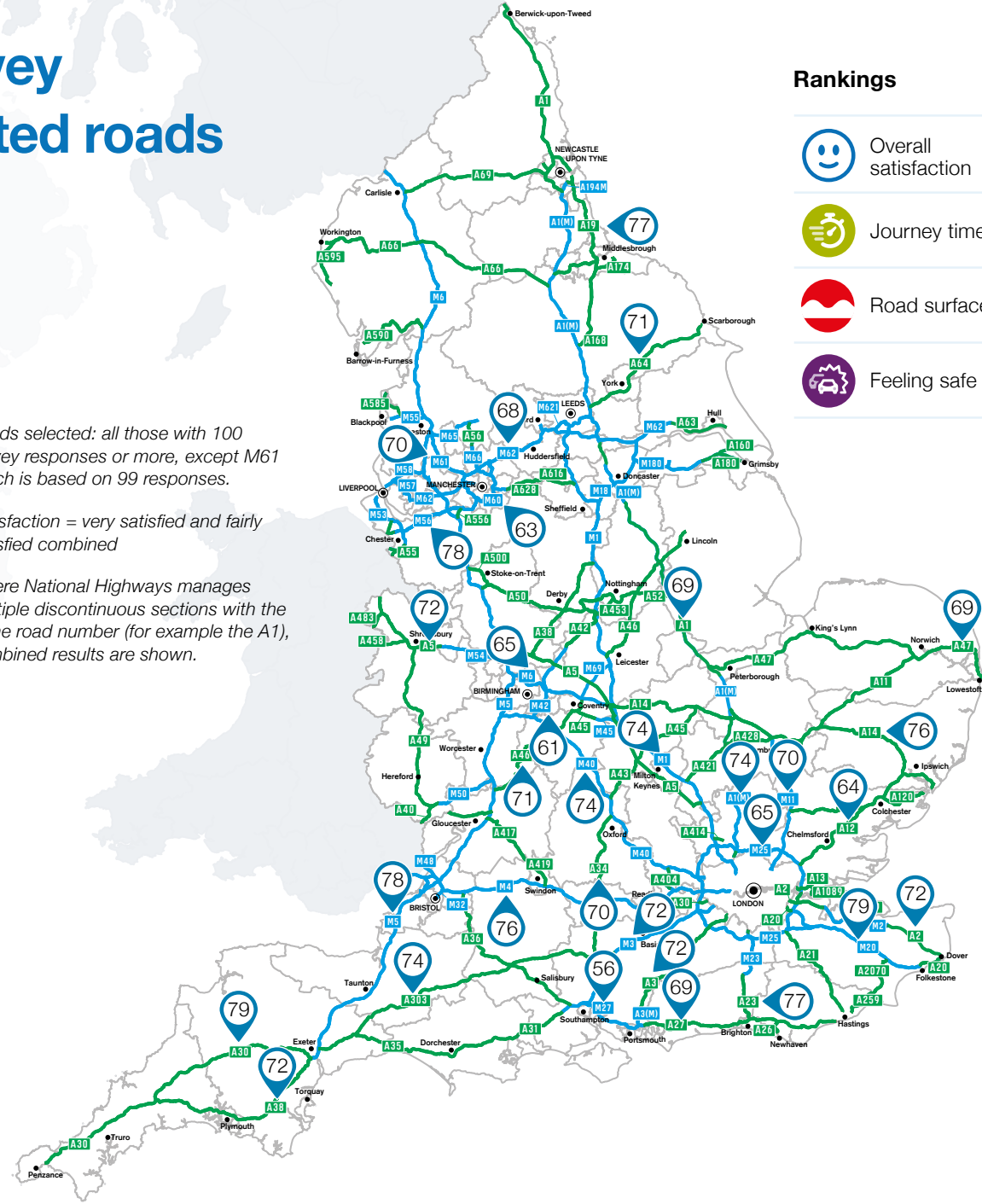
Journey time



Road surface



Feeling safe



Results for individual roads

The A30 retains its position at the head of the table (albeit with a lower satisfaction score than last year). The A30's score likely still benefits from upgrade programmes, including Chiverton-Carland Cross scheme, which was completed in 2024. The Chiverton-Carland scheme upgraded a further nine miles of the carriageway to dual carriage, likely leading to faster and more reliable journey times, a key driver of satisfaction within the survey.

The A30 shares top place with the highest rated motorway, the M20*, both scoring 79 per cent for overall satisfaction. The M20 is new to the results table this year, with a sample size of 102, just above our minimum of 100. Whilst the eastern section has been affected by Operation Brock from time to time in recent years, the road performs well and has benefitted from surface improvement work from junction 1 – junction 3. Additionally, users who responded to our survey reported greater weekday off-peak use of the M20 than was reported for the SRN as a whole. During weekday off-peak times roads tend to be less congested.

“Low traffic, dual carriageway, comfortable journey.”

A30, very satisfied

They are closely followed by the M56* and M5, both at 78 per cent satisfied. Users of the M56 and M5 both reported feeling safe with satisfaction of perceptions of safety scoring at 82 and 84 respectively.

Last year's highest rated motorway, the M40, has slipped down the table a little, but the level of satisfaction has remained similar (74 per cent versus 75 per cent last year). Additionally, the A19 once again holds onto top spot for road surface with 84 per cent satisfied. The A47, while no longer the worst ranked road overall, performs poorly for road surface, with 59 per cent satisfied, although this is an improvement on last year's 49 per cent. Bottom place for satisfaction with road surface is held by the A12 this year. The A12 showed significantly improved road surface scores last

year but has not continued this upward trajectory, with 52 per cent satisfied with the road surface this year versus 56 per cent last year.

“The traffic was light and the road was clear. No road works or restrictions were in place.”

M20, very satisfied

The M1, which was the poorest performing motorway last year, has dramatically improved its overall satisfaction rating - 74 per cent versus 57 per cent last year – and its position in the table. This is likely to be a direct result of the completion of the NEAR programme of roadworks; the M1 was disproportionately affected by this last year due to the long stretches of NEAR roadworks. It has also seen large increases in satisfaction with journey time and road surface.

The M42 is the second poorest performing road, scoring the lowest for journey time satisfaction, with a score of 52 per cent. Journey time is the biggest driver behind overall satisfaction, so low scores for journey time are likely to correlate to lower scores for overall satisfaction.

The poorest performing road overall this year is the M27, scoring 56 per cent overall satisfaction. The M27 has ongoing surfacing and changes to junctions. This potentially led to a low satisfaction rating within this year's scores.

** The M20 and M56 did not appear in last year's table of individual roads due to insufficient sample sizes.*

“It was very slow, very congested. It's a rare treat to have a pleasant journey on the A12 and I've sadly had to travel on it regularly for the last 34 odd years. A lot of wasted life hours.”

A12, very dissatisfied

CASE STUDY

A428 diversion routes

The A428 Improvement Scheme looked at how road users' experience of diversion routes could be improved. One route in particular could be reduced in length from 48 miles to 4.5 miles. National Highways presented a case to two local authorities in order to allow the proposed shorter diversion to travel through local authority owned roads and permission was granted. The proposal included permission to extinguish an existing weight ban and lower the speed limit on the diversion to 40mph.

The shorter diversion route was then promoted to customers through social media, the mobile visitors centre and articles published in the scheme newsletter.

National Highways regions

Road user satisfaction varies across National Highways regions. However, it is important to remember when comparing that each region has a different make up in terms of the split between motorways and 'A' roads, urban versus rural split, traffic volumes, types of journey completed and so on. These factors can all impact on the journey experience and therefore the scores.

The South West region has maintained its position as the region with the highest overall satisfaction at 75 per cent. Other regions score between 69 and 72 per cent for overall satisfaction, with the range of scores narrowing this year. The North West, Midlands and M25 regions scored lowest, all at 69 per cent. The South West also scored highest on the factors with greatest influence on overall satisfaction, including journey time (the main influence) where 73 per cent were satisfied. The Midlands scored lowest for journey time, with 66 per cent satisfied. However, the

South West region saw a significant decline in overall satisfaction with 'A' roads since last year (73 per cent versus 79 per cent last year).

Yorkshire and the North East has seen significant increases in overall satisfaction this year (72 per cent versus 66 per cent last year). This is primarily driven by a comparable increase in satisfaction with motorways (71 per cent versus 64 per cent last year), probably due to the completion of the NEAR programme of roadworks which had a strong presence in the region. Yorkshire and the North East also saw significant increases this year in satisfaction with journey time (71 per cent versus 65 per cent last year) and road surface (77 per cent versus 71 per cent last year), recovering from declines in the previous year.

The North West has seen a slight decline in a number of metrics this year, although the declines are only statistically significant for feelings of safety (78 per cent versus 81 per cent last year). It retains the joint highest score (along with the South West and South East regions) for satisfaction with management of roadworks (52 per cent), although most other regions score similarly on this.

The East remains the lowest ranked region for satisfaction with road surface, despite a small increase since last year (66 per cent satisfied versus 64 per cent last year). As was the case last year, this is driven by the poorly performing A12 and A47. It is also the lowest ranked region for management of roadworks. Notwithstanding this, East region now shares second place in the rankings for overall satisfaction.

The Midlands and M25 regions have also both seen statistically significant increases in overall satisfaction, both scoring 69 per cent (versus 66 per cent for Midlands and 63 per cent for the M25 region last year), although this is still lower than most other regions.

"The A47 is being turned into dual carriageway and is a bit of a mess at present but in years to come it will be a good road to travel on."

A47, fairly satisfied

Smart motorways

As in previous years, drivers were less satisfied when their journey included travelling on smart motorways – typically among the busiest and most congested parts of the road network – in comparison to journeys that did not include a smart section. The NEAR programme of roadworks is now complete and results for smart motorways – 66 per cent satisfaction – have largely recovered from the low levels seen during the NEAR roadworks (60 per cent satisfied last year).

Journeys involving a smart motorway section continue to be rated lower for feeling safe (smart 78 per cent; not smart 82 per cent), although the gap has narrowed now the NEAR roadworks are complete, particularly looking at all lane running (ALR) smart motorways (78 per cent), suggesting the programme has had some effect in improving drivers' perceptions of safety. There still remains little difference between the three types of smart motorway (all lane running, dynamic hard shoulder and controlled motorway) in terms of feeling safe.

CASE STUDY

Travel time variable message signs

After Transport Focus identified a potential opportunity to improve variable message signs (VMS) by displaying place names, National Highways gathered further feedback from road users. From this research, National Highways doubled the number of place names used on travel time variable message signs. As electronic signs typically receive lower satisfaction ratings than permanent signs, this work aimed to improve the user experience and make journey information easier to understand.

From an original 37 towns and cities that displayed on 68 different signs, now signs refer to 75 place names on up to 159 signs, helping people more easily locate the times to junctions.

TO J18 FOR M62
12 MILES
14 MINS

TO J2 COVENTRY
14 MILES
14 MINS

Journey satisfaction by National Highways region

England (%)

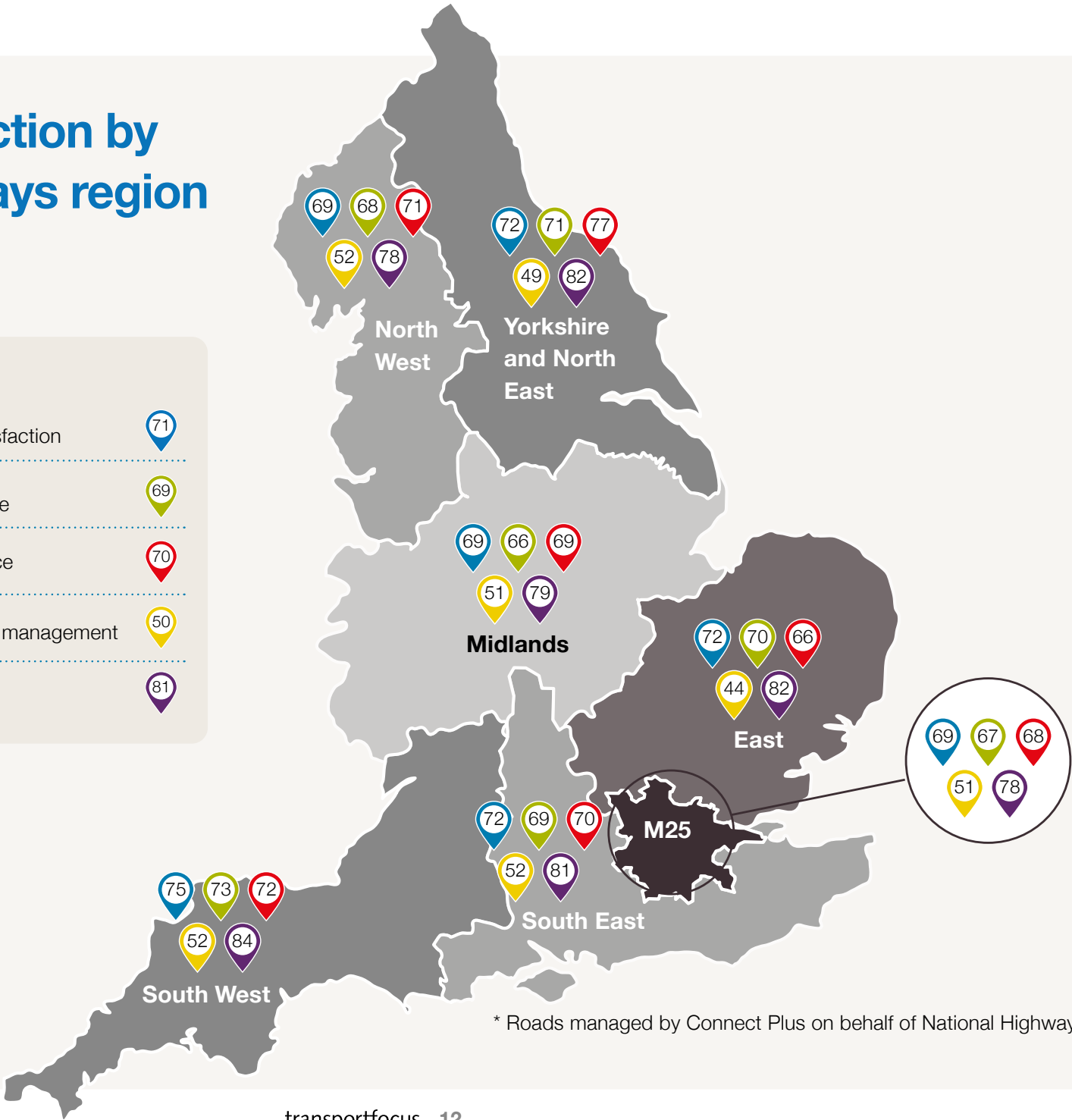
Overall satisfaction
71

Journey time
69

Road surface
70

Roadworks management
50

Feeling safe
81



Overall satisfaction in more detail (%)

 Overall satisfaction	71	 Passed through roadworks	58	 Car drivers	72
		 Did not pass through roadworks	77	 Vans	69
 Motorway	70			 LGV/HGV (3.5 tonnes or more)	59
 Major 'A' road	72	 Commuter	65	 Motorcycle	59
		 Any work reason	65	 Battery electric cars	73
 Motorway journey included a 'smart' section	66	 Leisure	74		
 - All-lane running	67			 Weekday AM peak	68
 - Dynamic hard shoulder	60			 Weekday PM peak	63
 - Controlled	64			 Weekday off-peak	72
 Motorway journey – no 'smart' section	75			 Weekend/bank holiday	75
 Male	71				
 Female	73				
 Age 17-34	70				
 Age 35-59	71				
 Age 60+	73				
 Disabled people	69				
 Non-disabled people	72				
 Prefer not to say	62				

CASE STUDY

Managing disruption: M4 Bath-Bristol Closure

The M4 between Bath and Bristol was closed for a weekend to enable construction of critical elements of the new A432 Badminton Road bridge. To manage the anticipated disruption, National Highways implemented a communications strategy designed to reduce traffic demand and encourage better journey planning. The campaign included media coverage, social media, resident mailshots along diversion routes, and real-time updates via Variable Message Signs. As a result, traffic volumes fell by approximately 52 per cent, ensuring smoother flow on diversion routes and significantly minimising delays for road users.

→ What influences road user satisfaction?

Analysis of SRUS data shows the following aspects of the journey to have the greatest influence on road users' overall satisfaction with their journey. In order, they are:

-  1. Satisfaction with journey time
-  2. Journey time compared to expectation (reliability)
-  3. Whether there were delays caused by things other than roadworks
-  4. Level of traffic
-  5. How safe it felt on the road
-  6. Road surface

The larger the icon size, the greater the influence on overall satisfaction

As in previous years, satisfaction with journey time is the aspect that has the greatest impact on overall satisfaction. 91 per cent of those satisfied with journey time were satisfied with the journey overall, whereas among those dissatisfied with journey time only 14 per cent were satisfied overall.

Among the 24 per cent of drivers who passed through roadworks during their journey, satisfaction with the management of those roadworks is also a key factor influencing overall satisfaction. 80 per cent of those satisfied with management of roadworks were satisfied overall, compared with only 25 per cent among those dissatisfied with their management.

Similarly, among drivers experiencing other forms of delay during their journey, satisfaction with the management of those delays is a key influencer of overall satisfaction. 78 per cent of those satisfied with management of other delays were satisfied overall, compared with just 20 per cent among those dissatisfied with their management.

Level of traffic is also key to overall satisfaction. Among those experiencing light or moderate traffic during their journey, 81 per cent were satisfied overall, compared with 53 per cent of those experiencing heavy traffic and just 27 per cent of those encountering congestion.

Factors influencing satisfaction are broadly consistent across regions.

The results of this analysis are consistent with previous years, with the top six factors the same as last year.

→ Focus on roadworks

Roadworks are an inevitable part of maintaining and improving the SRN. While road users generally accept that they are needed, they remain a source of dissatisfaction. For those who encounter them, the way roadworks are planned and managed is an important driver of overall satisfaction. They need to be delivered in a way that minimises disruption as far as possible.

The chart on the next page shows the proportion of drivers passing through roadworks on the SRN over the last four years, both at a total level and split by motorway journeys versus journeys on 'A' roads. The chart shows rolling annual data to smooth out variability across individual months.

"No prior warning. Limited signage and when passing through the impacted area, there didn't even appear to be any "work" going on. Seemed like a really pointless delay/disruption."

A12, fairly dissatisfied with roadworks management

The proportion passing through roadworks has decreased this year to 24 per cent, following a spike last year (31 per cent) and levels have returned to those seen during 2022/23, which is positive news for drivers. Much of the drop off in roadworks is likely to be a result of the completion of the NEAR programme of roadworks. A more detailed update on the impact of the NEAR roadworks can be found in the next section of this report.

"I've been through them lots of times. Fully aware they are there. Usual slow to 40 going through but no issues."

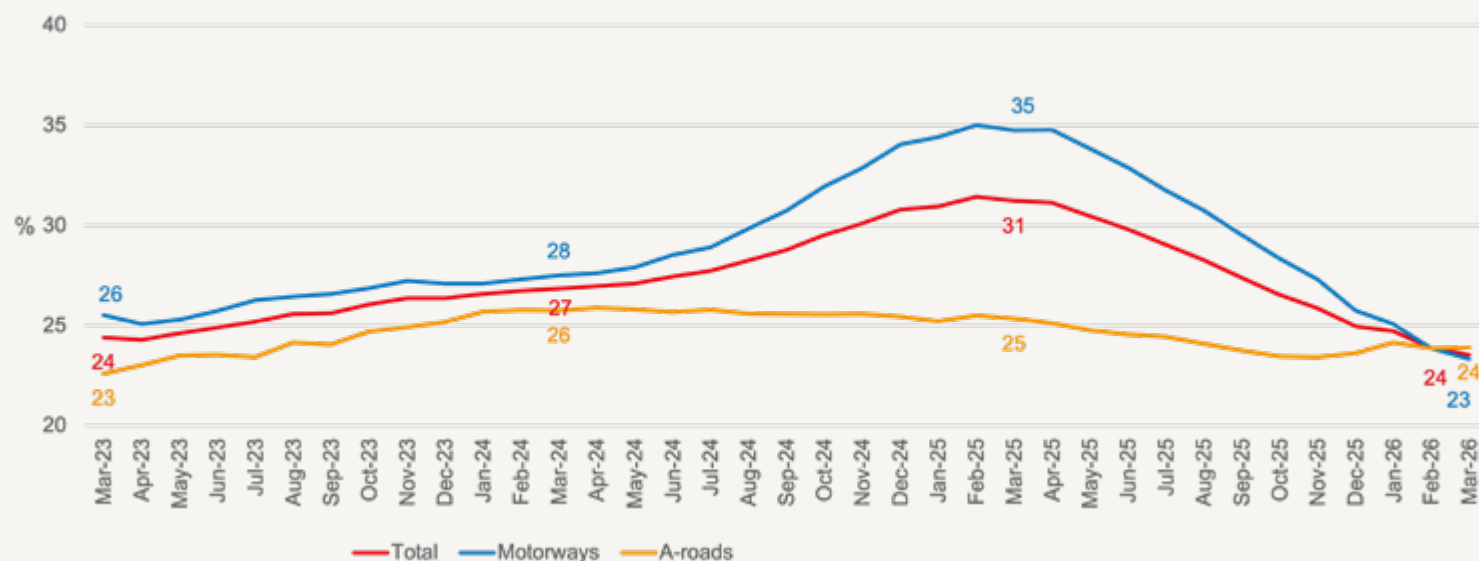
A417, very satisfied with roadworks management

"Clear visible signs about the changing speed limit, when the roadworks end and about which lanes to use."

M27, very satisfied with roadworks management



Passed through roadworks



Base sizes for chart:

Total: range from 9007 to 9519

Motorways: range from 4788 to 5105

'A' roads: range from 4202 to 4450

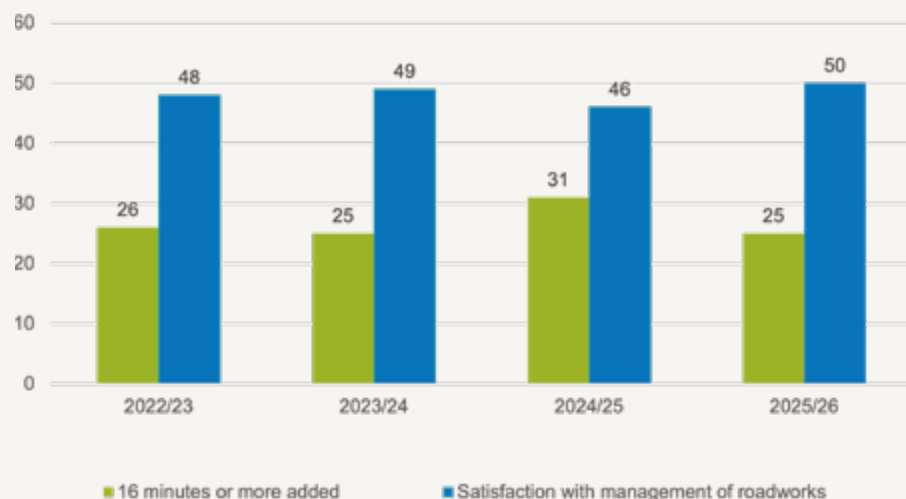
% passed through roadworks - rolling annual data

NB narrow scale to demonstrate the movement in the data

With the level of roadworks falling, road users are reporting that they are adding less time to their journeys. Roadworks are adding 16 minutes or more to 25 per cent of journeys affected, compared with 31 per cent last year. This is again likely to be related to the NEAR roadworks, so it is good news that completion has had a positive effect on drivers.

As was shown earlier in the report, satisfaction with how the roadworks are managed has risen this year from 46 per cent to 50 per cent satisfied. This appears to be directly linked to users reporting less time added as a result of the roadworks, which is perhaps not surprising given the importance of journey time to drivers.

Time added due to roadworks versus satisfaction with management of roadworks



% for which 16 minutes or more was added to journey time due to roadworks versus satisfaction with management of roadworks (among those who passed through roadworks)

Base sizes for chart:

Time added = 1898 to 2436; management of roadworks = 2033 to 2638

While the level of roadworks and the time added have both shown improvements this year, one area that has slipped back since the highs during the period of the NEAR roadworks is awareness of the roadworks prior to the start of the journey.

It remains important to provide appropriate information during journeys to keep drivers updated on roadworks ahead. Satisfaction with this information has risen to 50 per cent this year (from a consistent 47 per cent in the previous three years).

A large programme of renewals is planned in the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) for England's SRN, which runs from April 2026 to March 2031. It is important that lessons from previous works as well as insight sources such as SRUS are used, particularly for major renewals.

It is important that National Highways minimises the impact on road users by engaging with Transport Focus as part of wider engagement throughout the renewals programme. This process should begin with the planning and sequencing of works, followed by clear communication about how and when plans will be shared with users. Effective delivery is then vital, with works reviewed jointly afterwards to identify lessons and improvements for future roadworks, diversions or other forms of disruption.

CASE STUDY

A47 diversion routes

The A47 North Tuddenham and Blofield schemes both have lengthy diversion routes. To reduce driver anxiety signs were used to inform drivers of the distance to fuel and charging services along the diversion route.



What good roadworks management looks like for users

Road users have needs before, during and after roadworks. Good roadworks management involves planning and designing schemes to minimise disruption, keeping users informed throughout, and ensuring the benefits of the work are clear when it is complete.

At the design stage, users want roadworks to be designed with them in mind and planned in a way that reduces avoidable disruption and makes the best use of time spent on the network.

- Considering the cumulative impact of multiple schemes across the wider network, not just individual projects.
- Coordinating and combining works to avoid repeated or overlapping disruption.
- Minimising time on the network, setting credible completion dates and designing for the highest safe running speed.
- Early engagement with those affected and designing with different user groups in mind, including the freight and logistics sector, motorcyclists and people with accessibility needs.
- Ensuring road users can see that disruption was justified by the outcomes delivered.

Before setting off, users need information to give them the option to defer travel, take a different route or be better prepared for a potentially longer journey. This includes:

- Advance notice of roadworks and diversions through the channels they use.
- Simple explanations of what is happening and why.
- Consistent updates throughout the works.

Before they reach the roadworks, where users are not aware of roadworks or closures in advance, it is important that they are:

- Warned on approach and given the information they need to proceed with confidence.
- Given a clear understanding of the extent of the disruption.
- Able to follow diversion routes with confidence, supported by clear and consistent signage at key decision points, including junctions.

Going through roadworks, users should be able to travel with confidence and accurately predict their travel times, a key driver of satisfaction.

- Where it is safe to do so, speed restrictions should begin only where active and visible engineering work starts.
- Changes to the road environment should be intuitive, safe and easy to understand.
- Users value visible, active worksites.

In last year's annual report we examined the impact of the NEAR programme of roadworks on overall satisfaction. The NEAR roadworks involved building 151 additional emergency areas on sections of ALR motorway across the country, following concerns about the ability to find a safe place to stop in an emergency. The stretches of roadworks this included were completed by the end of March 2025.

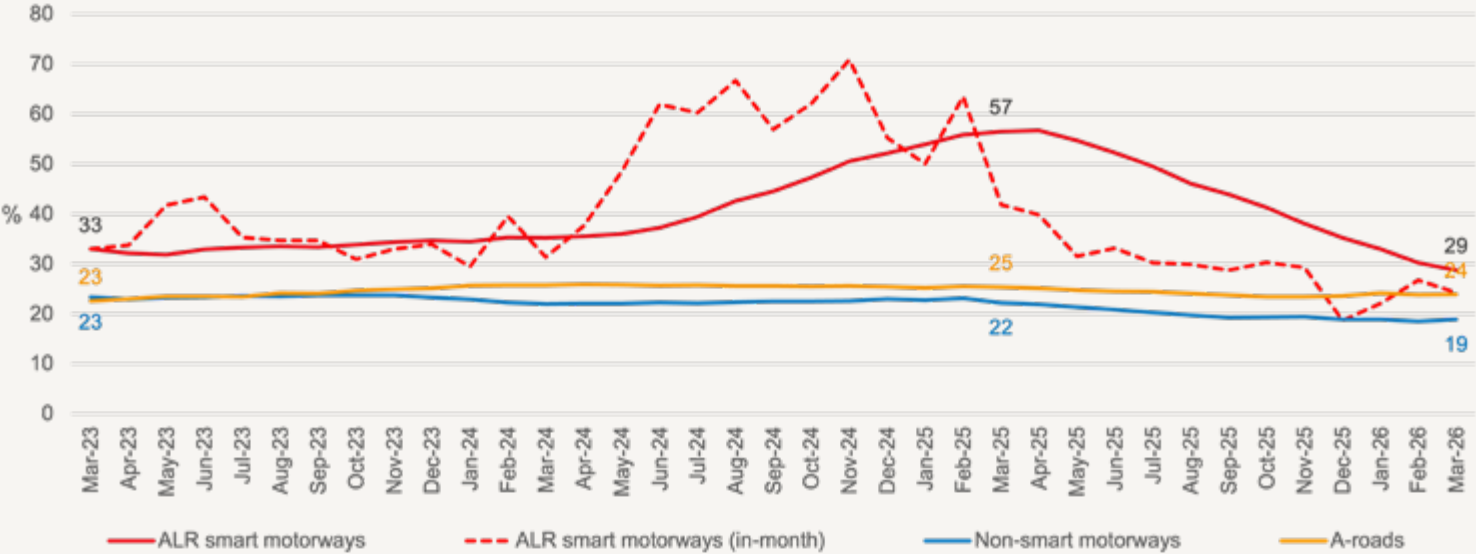
In order to examine the impact of the roadworks on overall satisfaction we looked at different road types, split by whether drivers experienced roadworks. Within SRUS data, ALR smart motorways are the best proxy for the roads affected by the NEAR programme. We have updated this information below to show how overall satisfaction has fared since the programme's completion and how smart motorways overall are performing.

It is important to remember that smart motorways are generally busy sections of motorway, so results should be considered in this context when comparing journeys on smart motorways with those on non-smart motorways.

The chart below shows the extent of the NEAR roadworks on ALR smart motorways. Roadworks on these types of roads have now returned to more usual levels.

Looking at the impact on smart motorways as a whole, overall satisfaction scores have largely recovered since the completion of the NEAR roadworks, with 66 per cent satisfied this year, compared to 60 per cent last year. Scores for journeys on non-smart motorways have remained stable over the last three years, with 75 per

Passed through roadworks



Base sizes for chart:

ALR smart motorways: range from 1245 to 1377

ALR smart motorways (in-month): range from 84 to 145

Non-smart motorways: range from 2788 to 2985

'A' roads: range from 4202 to 4450

% passed through roadworks - rolling annual data (plus in-month ALR data)

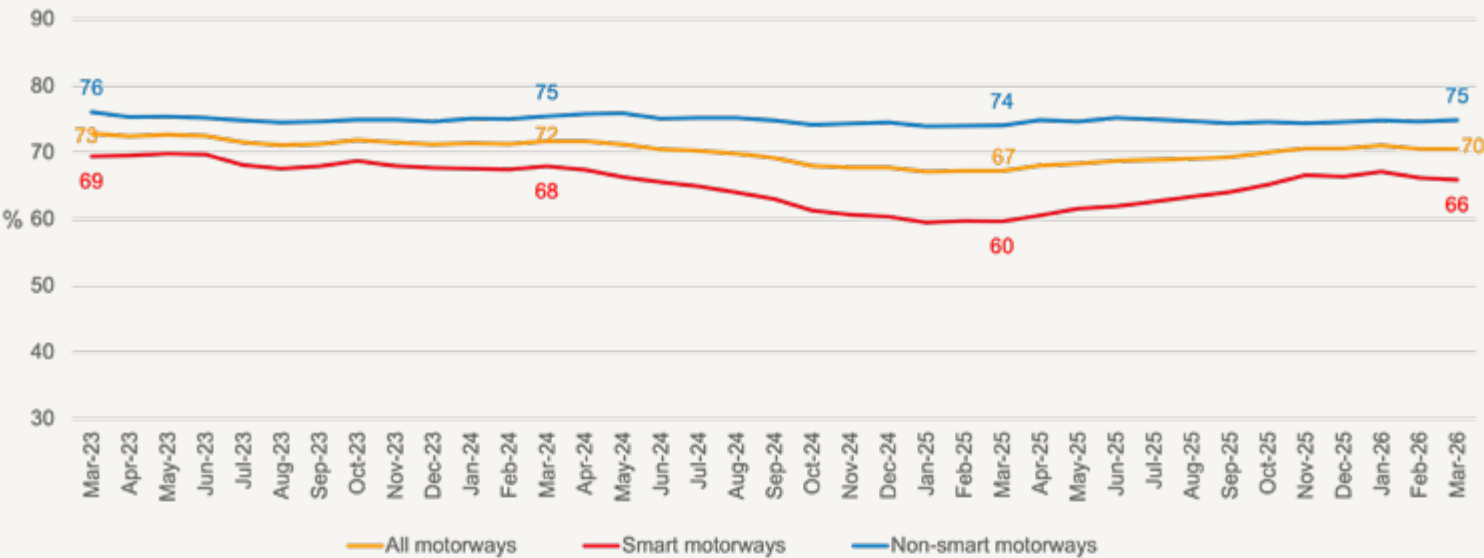
cent satisfied this year.

Given that smart motorways are busy sections of the road, while they still score lower than their non-smart counterparts, it is difficult to establish how much of this is because drivers are less keen on the smart aspects of the road or if it is down to the heavy traffic on the road and the impact this has on the driving experience. Last

year we looked specifically at journeys on ALR smart motorways, both with and without roadworks. On SRUS, ALR smart motorways with roadworks were the best proxy for roads affected by the NEAR programme.

The M1 has long stretches of ALR smart motorway and therefore had long sections of retrofit roadworks. In fact, 73 of the 151 new emergency areas are on the M1. In last year's report we therefore looked at overall satisfaction with journeys on the M1 and we have revisited this to see how it is faring now the NEAR programme is

Overall satisfaction – smart motorways



% very/fairly satisfied - rolling annual data

Base sizes for chart:

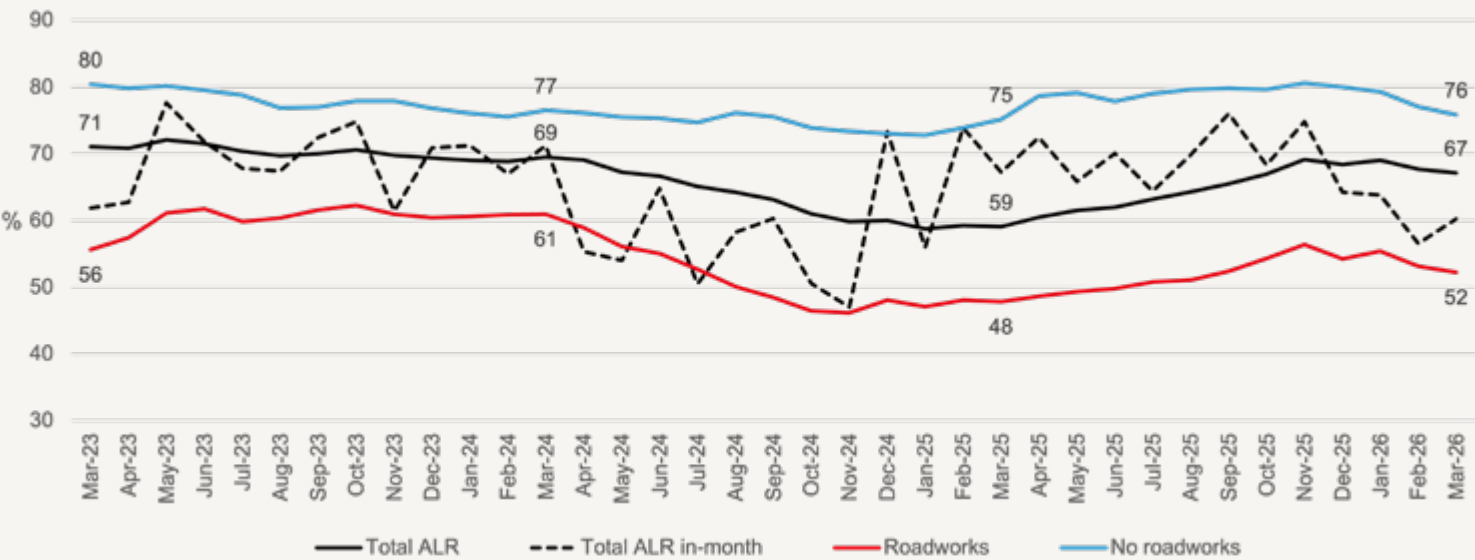
All motorways (all respondents giving a rating of a motorway journey): range from 4762 to 5088

Smart motorways (all respondents giving a rating of a motorway journey containing a smart motorway): range from 1990 to 2176

Non-smart motorways (all respondents giving a rating of a motorway journey containing no smart motorway sections): range from 2772 to 2975

The chart below shows that overall satisfaction with ALR smart motorways as a whole has almost returned to pre-NEAR levels, with 67 per cent satisfied this year, compared to 59 per cent last year. Satisfaction with ALR smart motorways affected by roadworks has recovered somewhat.

Overall satisfaction – All lane running smart motorways



Base sizes for chart:

Total ALR (based on all respondents giving a rating of a journey on an ALR smart motorway): range from 1240 to 1369

ALR (in-month) (based on all respondents giving a rating of a journey on an ALR smart motorway): range from 84 to 145

Roadworks (all respondents giving a rating of an ALR journey affected by roadworks): range from 381 to 674

No roadworks (all respondents giving a rating of an ALR journey not affected by roadworks): range from 344 to 614

% very/fairly satisfied - rolling annual data (plus in-month total ALR)

complete.

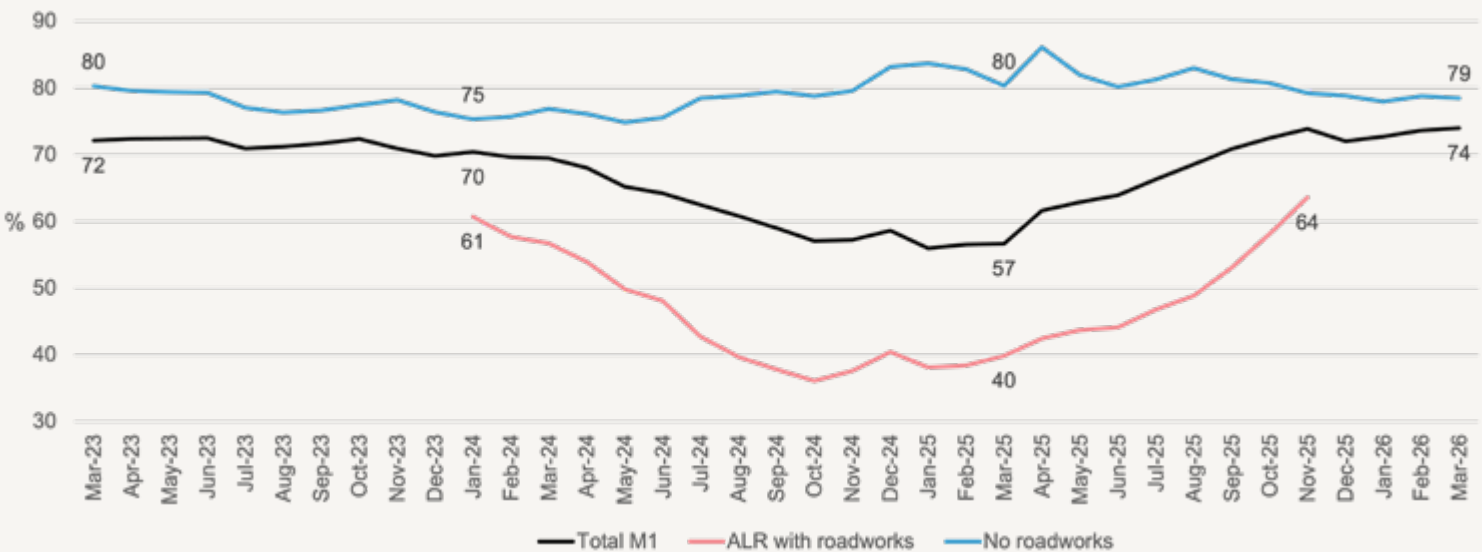
Looking at the M1 overall, satisfaction scores have fully recovered with 74 per cent satisfied this year, just above the scores in the two years before the NEAR roadworks began. While sample sizes don't permit robust analysis of ALR sections with roadworks across the full time period now the NEAR programme is complete, the chart below shows that scores had returned to previous levels after the steep decline during the programme. Satisfaction with journeys on the M1 where no roadworks were present have remained broadly stable throughout.

The retrofit of additional emergency areas on ALR smart motorways originated due to concerns about not being able to find a safe place to stop in an emergency. While the absolute levels of feeling safe haven't increased substantially, the gap between

"The main frustration is with regards the 50mph zone for the works taking place (I think is maybe for HS2 but not sure). It isn't that long since the M1 was 50mph for years whilst Smart Motorway was completed."

M1, fairly dissatisfied

Overall satisfaction – M1



Base sizes for chart:

Total M1 (all respondents giving a rating of a journey on the M1): range from 301 to 385

ALR with roadworks (all respondents giving a rating of a journey on an ALR stretch of the M1 affected by roadworks): range from 77 to 143

No roadworks (all respondents giving a rating of a journey on the M1 not affected by roadworks): range from 94 to 224

% very/fairly satisfied - rolling annual data

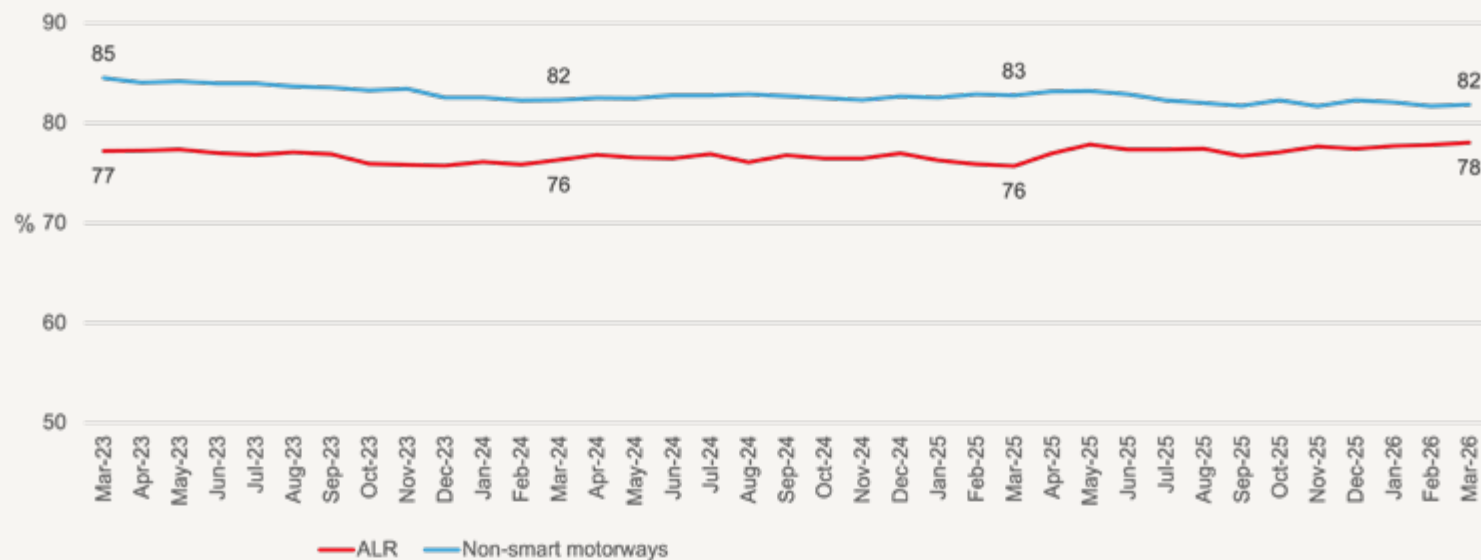
For ALR with roadworks, sample sizes during 2023 and from December 2025 onwards are less than 75 so too small for robust data analysis

"Roadworks reducing speed to 50 have recently been removed so journey seems much easier."

M1, fairly satisfied

ALR and non-smart motorways has narrowed since the retrofit was completed, so the extra emergency areas appear to be conveying a greater sense of security than existed before.

Feeling safe – all lane running smart motorways



% very/fairly safe - rolling annual data

Base sizes for chart:

ALR (all respondents giving a rating for a journey on an ALR smart motorway): range from 1237 to 1377

Non-smart motorway (all respondents giving a rating of a non-smart motorway journey): range from 2770 to 2957

CASE STUDY

Reducing roadside litter

SRUS measures road user satisfaction with the road and verge being clear of litter. Although litter is not a major driver of satisfaction, National Highways still work on ways to improve on this year's satisfaction score of 62 per cent.

Anti litter signage was deployed during the Great British Spring Clean 2025 at litter hotspots with 56 signs installed by National Highways and 22 deployed by local authorities.

Two compacting bins have been installed on laybys on the A303 and A2 respectively. These will reduce the likelihood of overflowing bins.



"The state of the surface of the road on the motorway is not good in places. It makes me very concerned that I won't see a pothole in time to avoid it and whilst travelling at motorway speeds this could result in both damage to my car and loss of control of the car causing an accident."

M1, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

"Some other drivers were dreadful. Cutting across 4 lanes at high speed to get to exit. Driving at 50 mph in 3rd lane. Lorries sitting in the 2nd or 3rd lanes. Failing to indicate."

A2, fairly dissatisfied

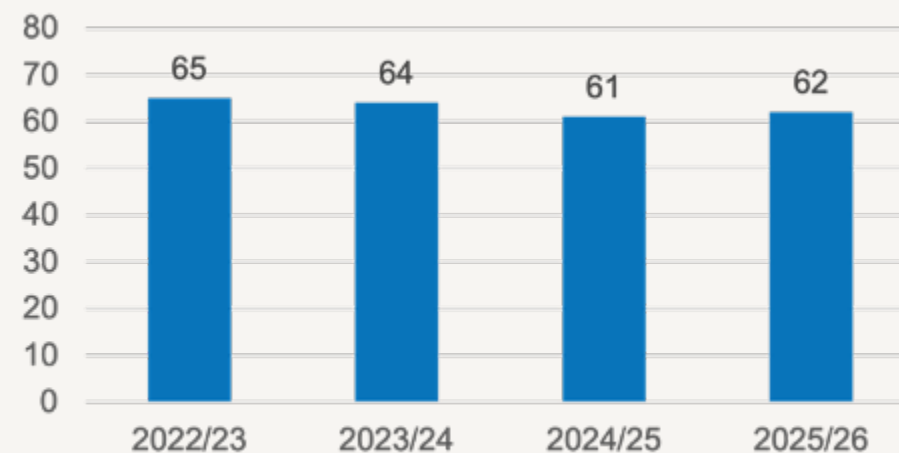
→ Road lighting

National Highways is aiming to cut carbon emissions from roadside lighting by switching most of its network lights to cleaner LED lights by 2027. In February 2022, it started a five-year £132m programme to retrofit 70 per cent of its road lights from traditional incandescent bulbs to greener, more efficient LED lights. This involves replacing over 50,000 lights. Depending on the type of bulbs being replaced, this could reduce the energy it uses for lighting by 65 per cent. This will significantly reduce its carbon footprint – making the SRN greener and more energy efficient.

As well as cutting carbon emissions, LED lights offer further benefits, such as needing less energy and being cheaper to run, being dimmable if required, concentrating light where it's needed (causing less light pollution), giving a more comfortable quality of light for road users, having a lower failure rate and needing less maintenance meaning less risk for its roadworkers.

These measures may have led to a decrease in user satisfaction during darkness. Since 2022/2023, satisfaction with road lighting (among those who have driven in the dark) has shown a statistically significant decline (62 per cent satisfied this year versus 65 per cent in 2022/2023).

Satisfaction with road lighting

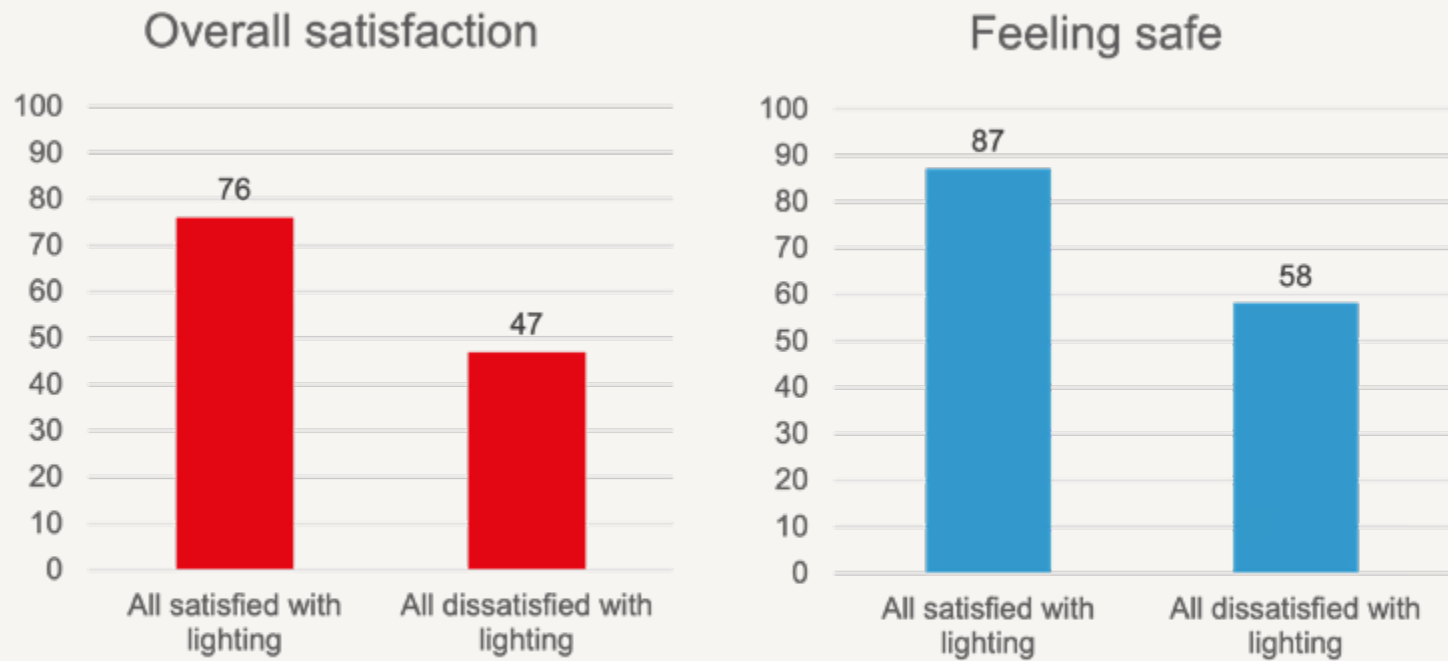


% very/fairly satisfied with road lighting (among those who drove after dark)

Base sizes: 1675 to 1838

Satisfaction with road lighting correlates with overall satisfaction. Among those satisfied with the road lighting, 76 per cent are satisfied overall versus 47 per cent among those dissatisfied with the lighting. Road lighting also impacts feelings of safety among drivers, with 87 per cent of those satisfied with the lighting feeling safe versus 58 per cent of those dissatisfied with the lighting.

Impact of road lighting on overall satisfaction and feelings of safety



% very/fairly satisfied overall / % feeling very/fairly safe by those satisfied/dissatisfied with road lighting

Base sizes: *All satisfied with lighting - 1111 to 1114; all dissatisfied with lighting – 307 to 308*

Regional satisfaction

National Highways regions - satisfaction breakdown

Ranking and per cent satisfied

Overall rank	Region	 Overall satisfaction	 Overall satisfaction with motorways	 Overall satisfaction with 'A' roads	 Journey time	 Road surface	 Management of roadworks	 Feeling safe
1	South West	1 75 (75)	1 76 (71)	1 73 (79) ↓	1 73 (72)	2 72 (71)	1 52 (52)	1 84 (85)
2	East	2 72 (69)	2 73 (69)	5 70 (69)	3 70 (68)	7 66 (64)	7 44 (42)	2 82 (82)
2	Yorkshire and North East	2 72 (66) ↑	3 71 (64) ↑	4 72 (70)	2 71 (65) ↑	1 77 (71) ↑	6 49 (49)	2 82 (81)
2	South East	2 72 (66) ↑	3 71 (65) ↑	1 73 (67) ↑	4 69 (65) ↑	4 70 (68)	1 52 (42) ↑	4 81 (78)
5	North West	5 69 (71)	5 69 (71)	7 69 (73)	5 68 (70)	3 71 (69)	1 52 (52)	6 78 (81) ↓
5	Midlands	5 69 (66) ↑	7 66 (63)	1 73 (69) ↑	7 66 (64)	5 69 (68)	4 51 (45)	5 79 (79)
5	M25	5 69 (63) ↑	5 69 (62) ↑	5 70 (68)	6 67 (60) ↑	6 68 (66)	4 51 (43)	6 78 (77)
	All regions	71 (69) ↑	70 (67) ↑	72 (71)	69 (67) ↑	70 (68) ↑	50 (46) ↑	81 (80)

↑ Denotes a significant increase in score (at a 95 per cent level) versus 2024 – 2025 score in brackets.

↓ Denotes a significant decrease in score (at a 95 per cent level) versus 2024 – 2025 score in brackets.

→ About the survey

- This report contains data from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 and is based on 9519 interviews with road users.
- SRUS uses a 'push to web' method where households within a representative sample of the driving population in England are sent a letter inviting them to complete the survey, which they then do online.
- The survey asks about various aspects of journey experience of users' most recent SRN journey.
- An interactive map is integrated into the questionnaire and 'understands' which part of a journey is on the Strategic Road Network.
- Results are weighted to ensure they are representative of vehicle mileage across the Strategic Road Network.
- Due to a change of research method in April 2021, results up to March 2020 are not directly comparable with those from April 2021.
- The factors influencing satisfaction are determined using a Gamma coefficient technique, a nonparametric bivariate test that quantifies the strength of relationship between the results for each individual SRUS question and overall satisfaction.
- Since April 2021 the delivery of the survey has been supported by the research agency BMG Research.
- Satisfaction = very satisfied and fairly satisfied combined.

More information, including drivers' comments, can be viewed in the Transport Focus data hub – new data is added each month.





Contact Transport Focus

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Transport Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council