

Covid-19

Local authority travel and transport data

Weekly digest



Week Commencing

25th May 2020

Introduction

Since the imposition of travel restrictions designed to help dramatically reduce the spread of Covid-19, the Transport Technology Forum has led the collation of transport data from local authorities into information used to understand changes in travel behaviour.

Authorities from cities, towns and counties across England are sharing urban traffic control and automated traffic counter data from the roadside, as well as information on cycling and car parks. Industry has also supplied video analytics and floating vehicle data patterns. This sits alongside data the Department receives about rail and air, public transport, freight and maritime to summarise how, where and when people and goods are moving around the country.

The Transport Technology Forum is now able to publish outcomes from this data set for interested parties, not least those bodies who went above and beyond the call to share their data with us.

About this Report

The report provides an ongoing snapshot of travel, summarising weekly, daily and hourly changes based on information shared by:

- Traffic – 26 data providers, geographically covering approximately 35 local authority areas.
- Cycling – 11 data providers, geographically covering approximately 25 local authority areas and nationwide canal and river paths.

This provides an overview of how public behaviour is changing as a result of restrictions being eased, whether travel habits are returning to normal or what new patterns are being experienced. Local Authorities can benefit by being able to compare what is happening in their areas with the national picture, allowing local and national comparisons to be drawn.

Highlights summary

The following provides a high-level summary of the key findings within the data for the week commencing 25th May:

Traffic Flow

- Overall traffic has reduced by an average of 49% for the period since the first of April, when compared to the baseline (first week of February 2020).
- Based on a seven-day rolling average from the 18th – 24th May, traffic flows have increased so there now is only a 36% reduction compared to baseline levels.
- The recent Spring bank holiday weekend (23rd – 25th May) experienced increased traffic levels when compared to the Early May Bank Holiday weekend (8th – 10th May).
- The week of the 18th May had an average of only 35% less than baseline traffic, the highest traffic volumes since lock-down began.
- Some Local Authorities show signs of returning to near baseline levels of traffic flows for weekdays.
- A small number of Local Authority datasets have demonstrated a significant reduction in average daily traffic counts (potentially due to roadworks or other local events). This is being investigated, however does not have a significant impact on the overall figures.

Cycling

- Cycling volumes continue to rise since the lockdown began. This is assumed to be due to a combination of improved weather and increased recreational cycling during lockdown.
- Cycling volumes remain highest during the afternoon / evening, which is a stark contrast to pre-lockdown which featured morning (0700-0900) and afternoon peaks (1600-1800). The lack of morning peaks during lockdown is suspected to be caused by commuter cycling falling well below baseline levels in urban areas.
- Cycling numbers on canal and river paths continue to significantly increase each week compared to early March.
- The significant drop in cycling on Tuesday the 28th of April appears to be due to wet weather. Based on Met Office data, the baseline Tuesday (4th February) was cold and dry, whereas the 28th April was comparably cold but wet.

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Figure 1 – Key Traffic Flow Dashboard Measures

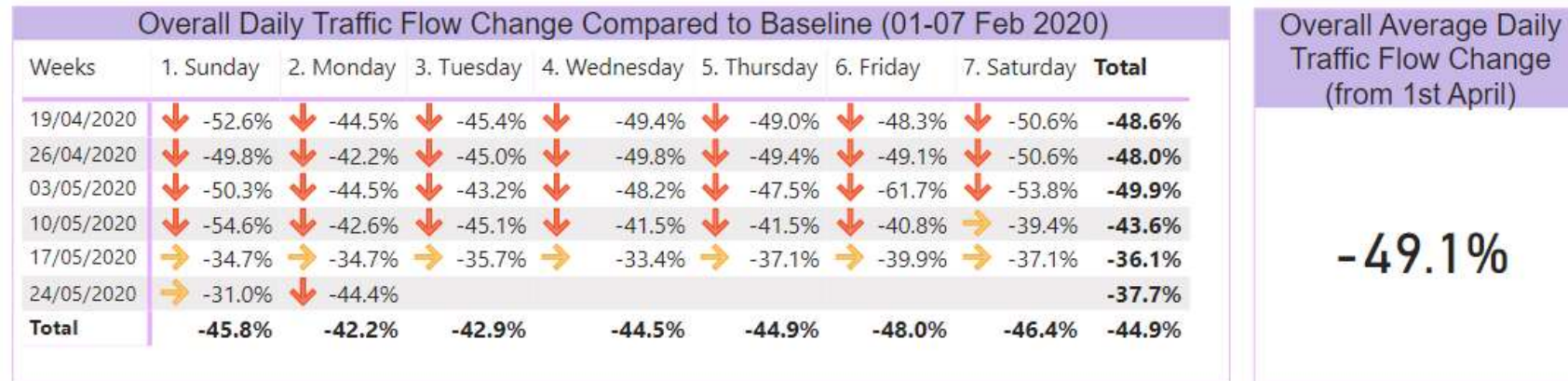


Figure 1: Key dashboard figures showing change in average daily traffic volumes compared to the baseline (first week of February 2020)

Figure 2 – Key Cycling Dashboard Measures

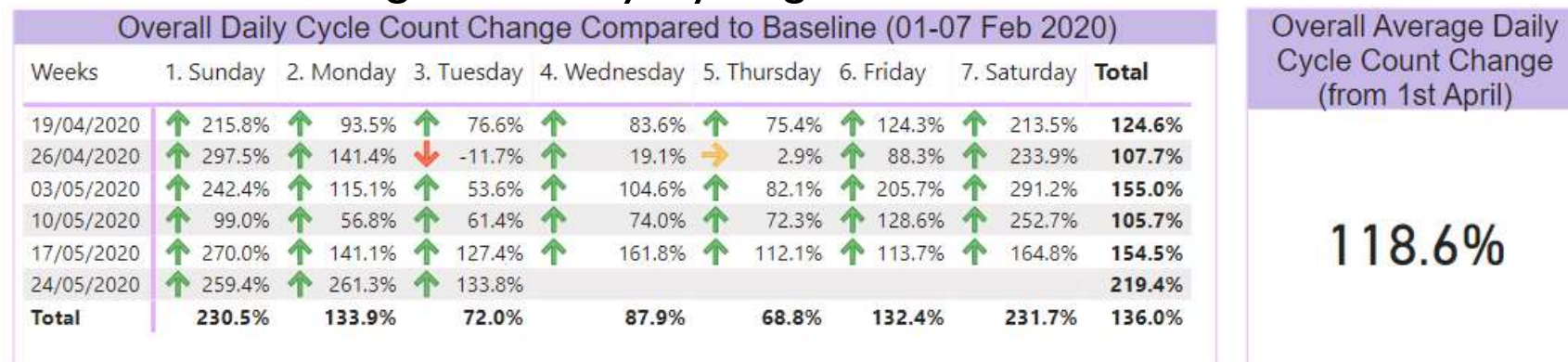


Figure 2: Key dashboard figures showing change in average daily cycle volumes compared to the baseline (first week of February 2020)

Figure 3 – Daily average traffic flow change from baseline

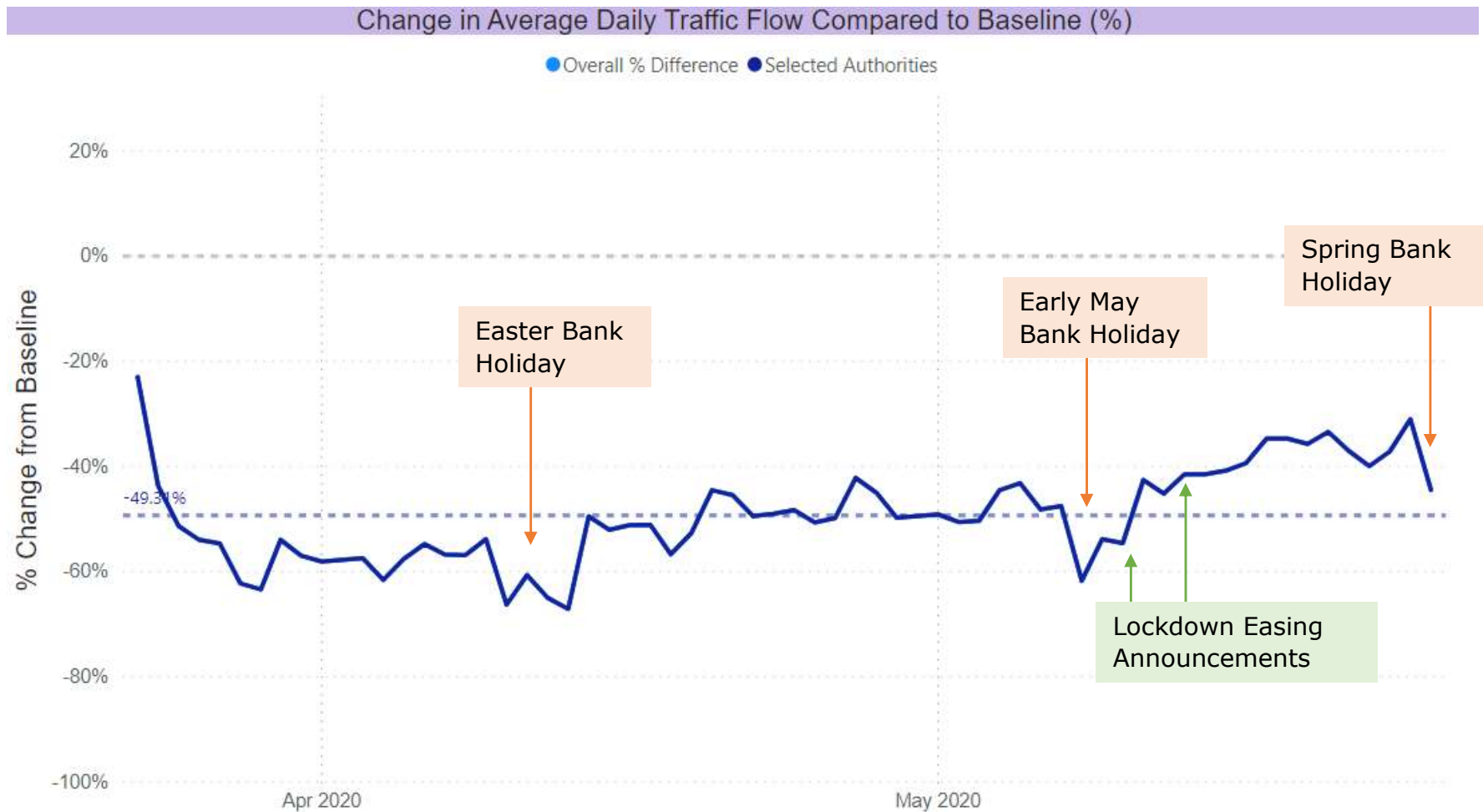


Figure 3: Change in average daily traffic volumes since 23rd March (lockdown) across all sources compared to the baseline (first week of February 2020)

Figure 4 – Hourly traffic flow comparison per week

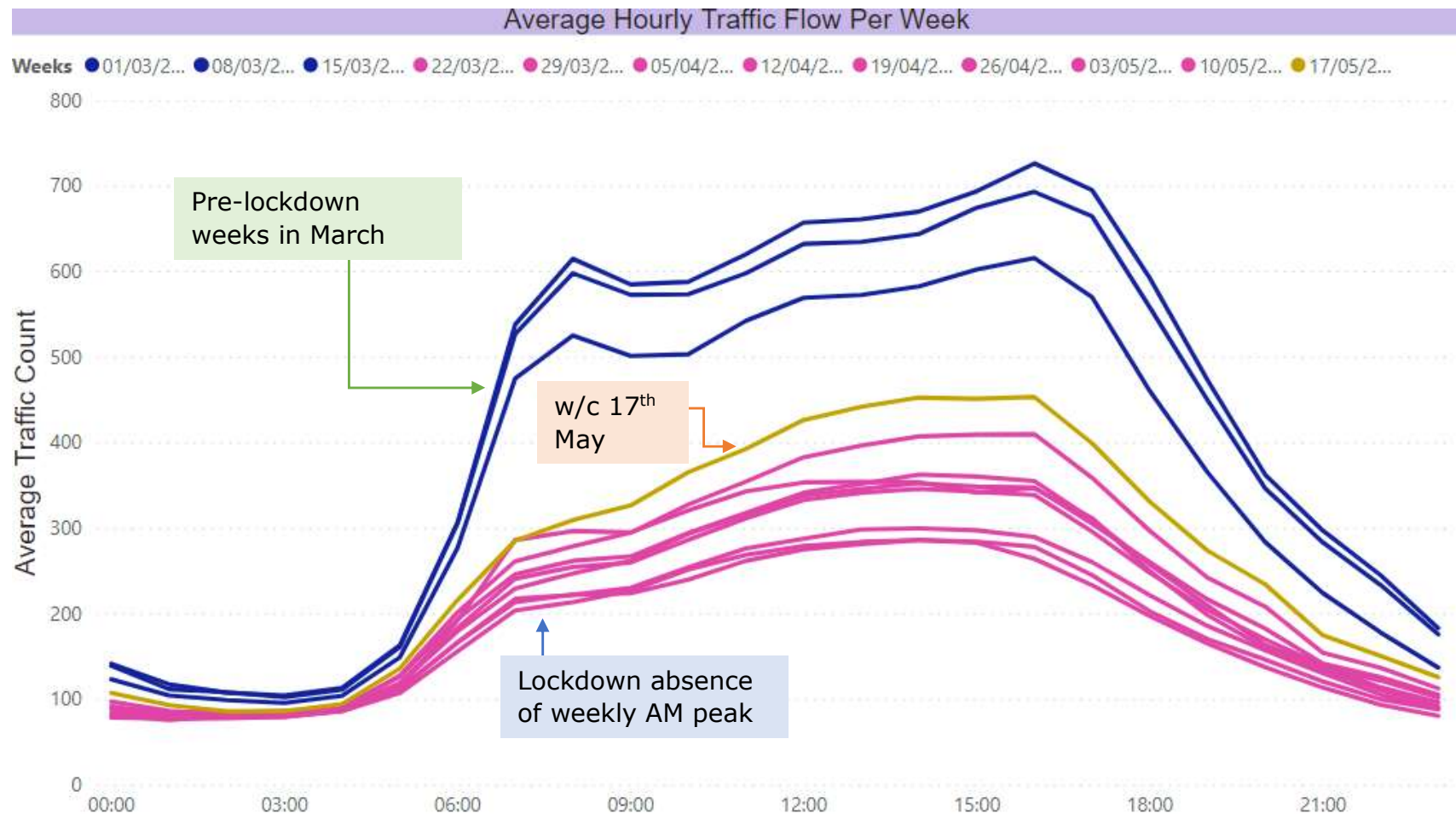


Figure 4: Change in average hourly traffic volumes per week since 1st March across all sources with w/c 17th May highlighted. All data series with greater volumes of traffic than the w/c 17th May are pre-lockdown weeks in March.

Figure 5 – Daily average cycling change from baseline

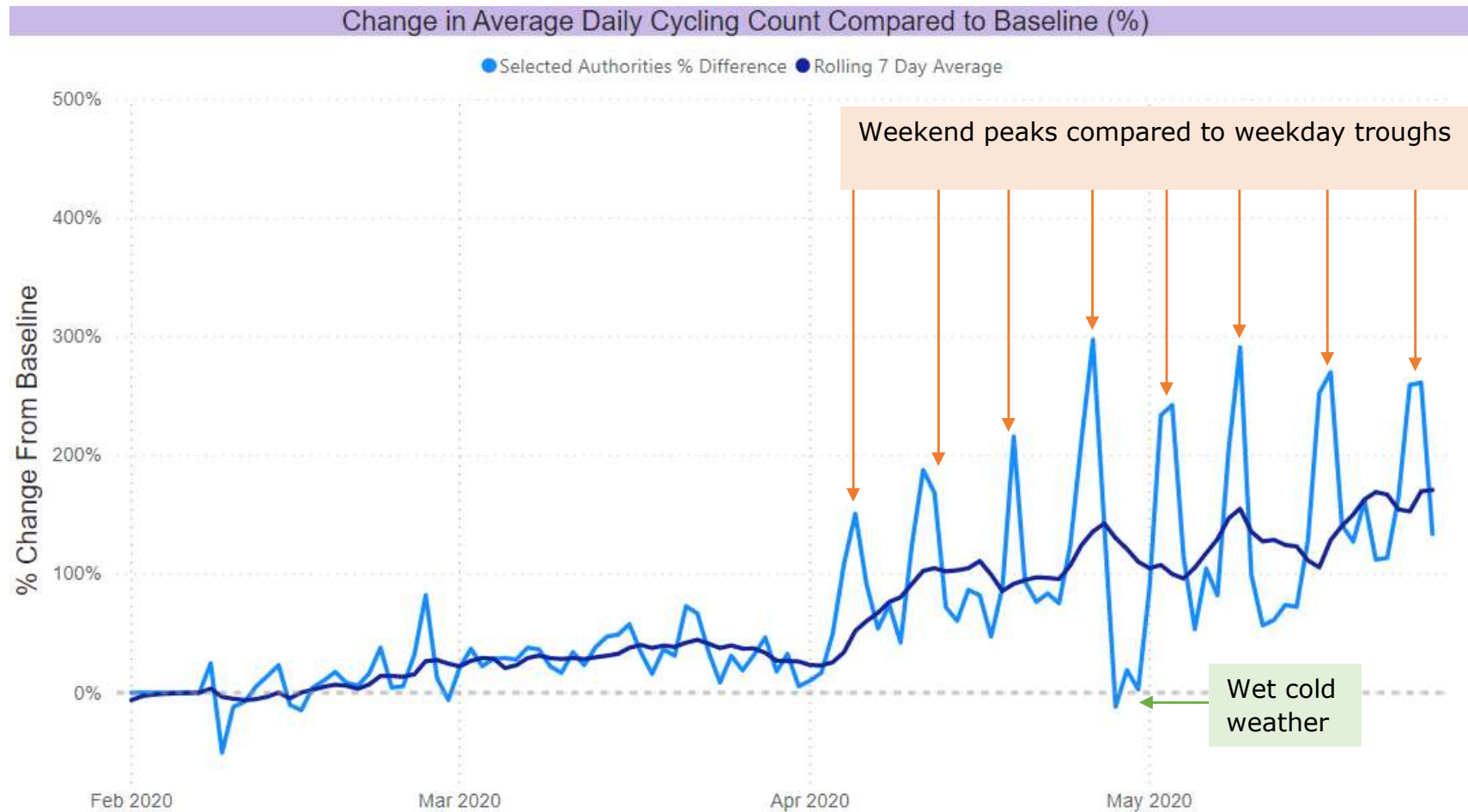


Figure 5: Change in average daily cycling volumes since 23rd March (lockdown) across all sources compared to the baseline (first week of February 2020)

Figure 6 – Hourly weekend cycling comparison per month

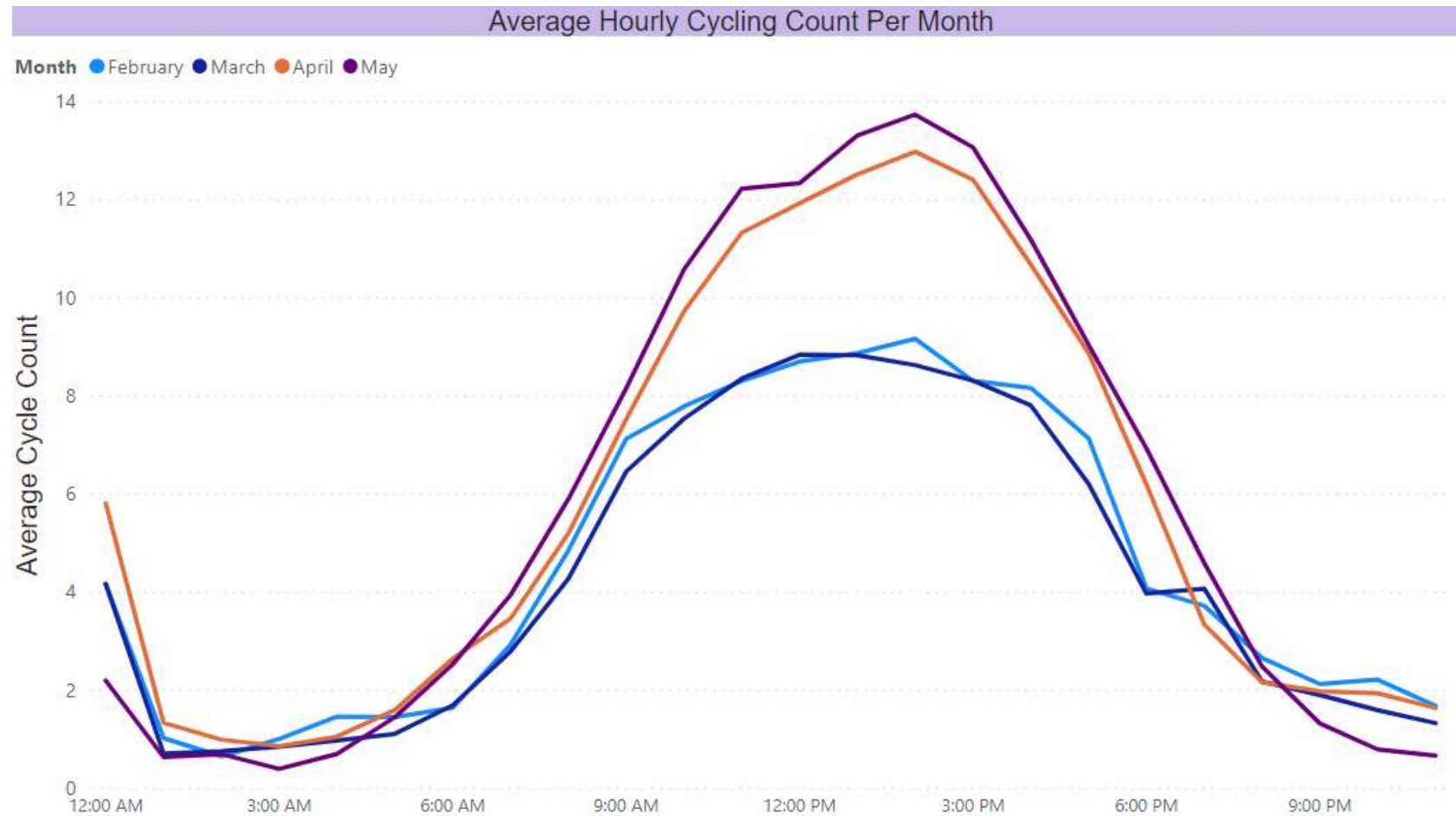


Figure 6: Change in average hourly weekend cycling volumes per month since 1st February across all sources

Data Method

The following provides some detail behind how the data has been analysed:

- The baseline for cycling has been defined as the first week of February 2020 (01/02 – 07/02) for the following reasons:
 - This is consistent with national reporting.
 - Not all data sources can provide baseline data from previous years.
 - The first week of February is considered a normal working week unaffected by poor weather and half term dates later in February.
- In this report, the baseline for traffic analysis is defined as the full month of February but will be changed in the next report to the first week of February to make it consistent with cycling and for the reasons outlined above.
- Each day of the week has its own baseline.
- Only those datasets for which data was available for the first week of February have been included in the baseline comparison outputs.
- Average daily traffic volumes have been used to minimise the impact of individual sensors changing between active and inactive states.

Please note that as we add new datasets, enhance validation of those we've received and refine the underlying methodology, the overall values may change, however we expect the trends to remain the same.

Coming Soon

The Transport Technology Forum is now looking at how these datasets can be collated in the long term as a national data asset to be used following the pandemic. We hope very soon to open up the data sets so authorities can compare their own data with others and the national picture online. Please let us know if you have any thoughts about this, or if you do not want your data being made available in this way.

If you have traffic flow data that you can provide on a daily basis at an hourly aggregation and would like to contribute, please see the contact section for details of how to get in touch.

New from local authorities

Introduction

In the weeks to come we will add a section of the weekly digest to share best practice amongst local authorities. Each week ideas and implementations promoted by authorities will be included, giving readers inspiration about policy they could use in their respective areas. The authors encourage all authorities to share a brief summary of what they are doing in their respective areas. This could simply be a link to a tweet, press release or other online post – it need not be onerous on officials' already busy workload.

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Covid-19 Timeline

FEBRUARY 2020	
04/02/2020	China Advice - All UK citizens advised to leave China
MARCH 2020	
10/03/2020	Italy Air Travel - Majority of flights to and from Italy suspended
12/03/2020	7-day Isolation - 7-day self-isolation for individuals presenting symptoms
16/03/2020	Social Distancing - Households to self-isolate for 14-days if symptoms present. Work from home where possible. Avoid pubs, clubs, theatres etc. 12-week isolation for elderly and vulnerable (commencing end of week)
17/03/2020	UK Foreign Travel 1 - Foreign Secretary advises against all non-essential travel overseas
21/03/2020	Schools Closed - Schools to remain closed until further notice (exception for key workers)
23/03/2020	UK Lockdown - Guidance provided for essential travel only. All non-essential businesses required to close. Public events banned
23/03/2020	UK Foreign Travel 2 - Foreign Secretary advises all British travelers to return to the UK
28/03/2020	PM's Letter - Prime Minister issues guidance letter to all UK households
APRIL 2020	
16/04/2020	NPCC Guidance - NPCC issues guidance clarifying reasonable excuses for leaving home
MAY 2020	
10/05/2020	Lockdown Relaxation #1 (PM Address). Those who cannot work from home, such as construction workers and those in manufacturing, are encouraged to return to work. Avoid public transport where possible and instead walk or cycle.
11/05/2020	Relaxation Document - The UK government publishes a 50-page document setting out further details of the phases for lifting the lockdown restrictions.
13/05/2020	Lockdown Relaxation #2 - Individuals can undertake unlimited exercise (and can travel to do so). Individuals can meet someone from another household providing it is on a one-to-one basis. Play physically distanced sports (e.g. Golf). All garden centres are allowed to open. House moves and viewings are now permitted.
18/05/2020	Rail Operators - Rail operators begin running more train services. Security guards trained in crowd control are placed on duty at some major railway stations

Contact us

All authorities are encouraged to share best practice for inclusion in this report. Authorities not yet contributing but who still have, in particular, cycling data to share are encouraged to do so.

Please contact info@ttf.uk.net

Thank you to...

All local authorities and their consultancies and contractors who have shared data with the Transport Technology Forum to enable this report to be collated, and those in the wider industry who also provided data directly. The TTF, which is sponsored by the Department for Transport and Innovate UK is grateful to ITS (UK) and its members for their swift support in recruiting Local Authorities to participate.

This report provides regularly updated intelligence and findings from the Transport Technology Forum Covid-19 Local Authority Travel Data Project. This project is collecting and analysing traffic and travel data from local highway authorities across England to present a national picture of travel patterns and behaviour, and local authority responses to the Covid-19 crisis.