



## About this release

These statistics provide 1st provisional estimates for the breakdown of the flows of goods imported and exported between regions of the UK and partner countries. Supporting tables, visuals and data can be found at [www.uktradeinfo.com](http://www.uktradeinfo.com)

The combined effects of coronavirus (COVID-19) national and international lockdown restrictions and EU exit uncertainty have all been contributing factors to the erratic nature of recent UK and global trade. We encourage users to apply caution when making comparisons of trade movements over time

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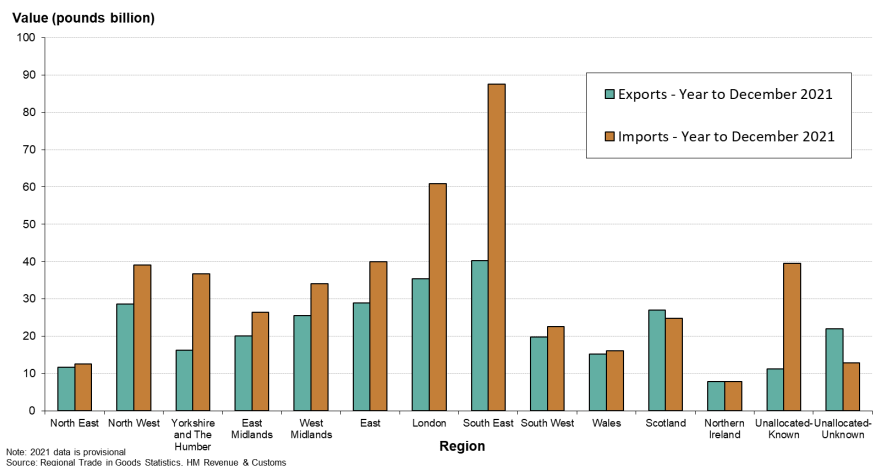
## Summary

In the year ending December 2021, the overall value of UK trade in goods exports increased by 6.6% compared with the previous year. The overall value of imports increased by 9.0% over that same period. Although both export and import trade values increased in 2021, they were still lower than 2018 and 2019 levels.

On a regional basis:

- All UK countries apart from Northern Ireland saw an increase in the value of exports. There was an increase in annual export value for all English regions apart from the East Midlands.
- All UK countries saw an increase in the value of imports. There was also an increase in annual import value for all English regions apart from the East.

**Figure 1: UK Imports and Exports by Region, year ending December 2021**



Coverage: United Kingdom  
 Theme: Business and Energy  
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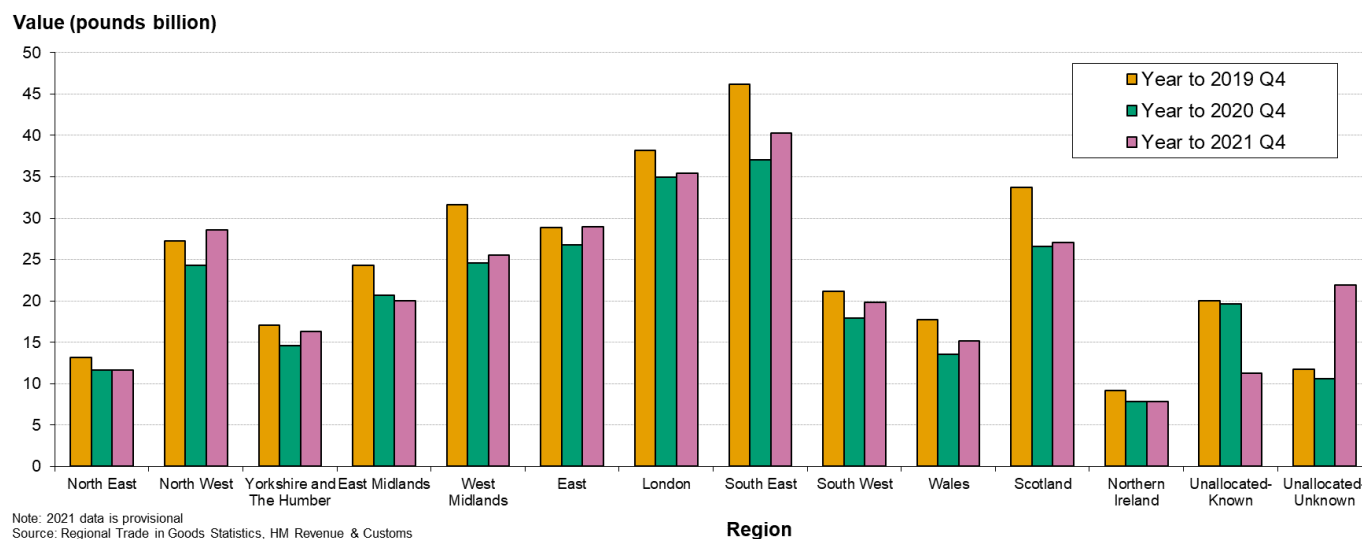
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# Overview Exports

The total value of UK exports increased by £19 billion (6.6%) to £310 billion in the year ending December 2021 compared with the same period the previous year.

Figure 2 shows the total value of UK exports by region for the 3 annual periods ending December 2019, December 2020, and December 2021.

**Figure 2: UK Exports by Region, 2019 Q1 to 2021 Q4**



When comparing the annual period ending December 2021 with the annual period ending December 2020:

- The value of exports from England, Wales and Scotland increased by 6.7%, 12%, and 1.6% respectively, whereas Northern Ireland's exports decreased by 0.9%.
- All English regions apart from the East Midlands experienced increases in the value of exports.

When comparing the annual period ending December 2021 with the annual period ending December 2019, there was a decrease in the value of UK exports of £30 billion (8.9%).

- The value of exports from England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland decreased by 8.6%, 14%, 20%, and 15% respectively.
- All English regions apart from the North West and the East experienced decreases in the value of exports.

This can be seen in more detail in Table 1 of the accompanying tables.

The increase in Unallocated-Unknown exports since Q1 2021 is largely due to 'low-value trade'. With GB exports to EU now falling under a Customs regime, declarations with commodity line values of less than £873 or where the weight of the goods are less than a tonne (1,000kg), go into 'low value aggregates'. This is explained in more detail in explanatory note 12<sup>b</sup>.

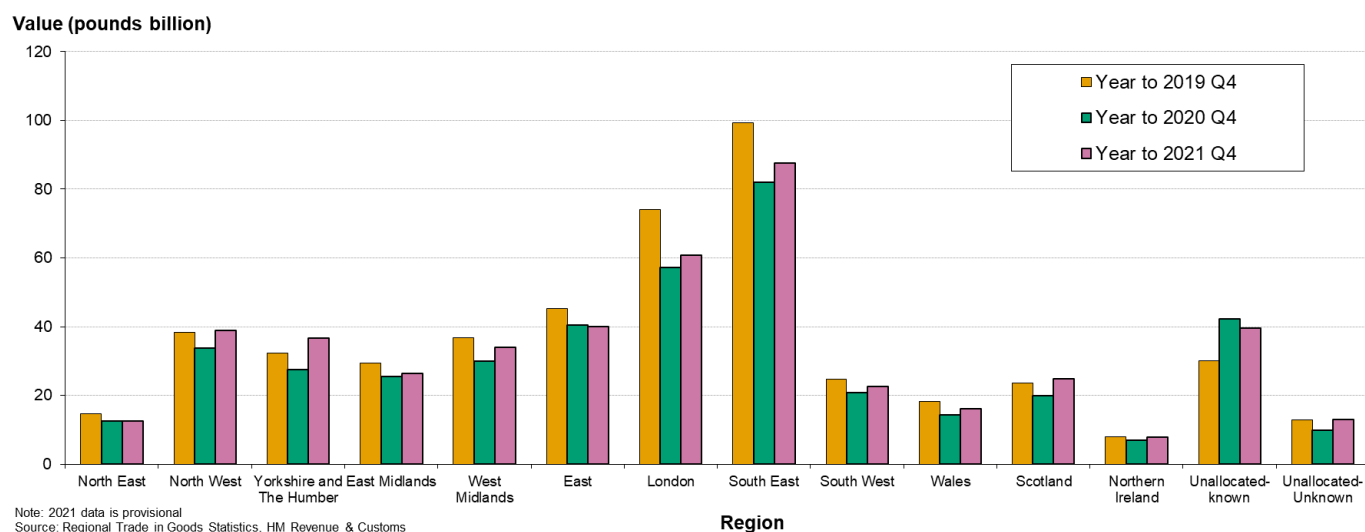
Table 3 in the accompanying tables shows the total number of exporting businesses by region. Comparing Q4 2021 with Q4 2020, the total number of businesses exporting to non-EU countries from the UK decreased by 0.8%. According to both methods used for counting a multi-branch business, the number of businesses exporting to non-EU countries increased across all UK countries, apart from Wales.

# Overview Imports

The total annual value of UK imports increased by £38 billion (9.0%) to £461 billion in the year ending December 2021 compared with the same period of the previous year.

Figure 3 shows the total value of UK imports by region for the 3 annual periods ending December 2019, December 2020, and December 2021.

**Figure 3: UK Imports by Region, 2019 Q1 to 2021 Q4**



When comparing the annual period ending December 2021 with the annual period ending December 2020:

- The value of imports from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland increased by 9.2%, 13%, 24%, and 13% respectively.
- All English regions apart from the East experienced increases in the value of imports.

When comparing the annual period ending December 2021 with the annual period ending December 2019, there was a decrease in the value of UK imports of £27 billion (5.5%).

- The value of imports from England, Wales and Northern Ireland decreased by 8.8%, 11%, and 3.0% respectively, whereas the value of imports from Scotland increased by 4.8%.
- All English regions apart from the North West and Yorkshire and The Humber experienced decreases in the value of imports.

This can be seen in more detail in Table 2 of the accompanying tables.

Table 4 in the accompanying tables shows the total number of importing businesses by region. Comparing Q4 2021 with Q4 2020, the total number of businesses importing from non-EU countries to the UK increased by 6.2%. According to both methods used for counting a multi-branch business, the number of businesses importing from non-EU countries increased across all UK countries, apart from Northern Ireland. All English regions experienced increases in the number of businesses importing from non-EU countries.

# Trends in UK's regional goods trade with EU and Non-EU

**Figure 4: England's goods trade, 2018 Q1 to 2021 Q4**

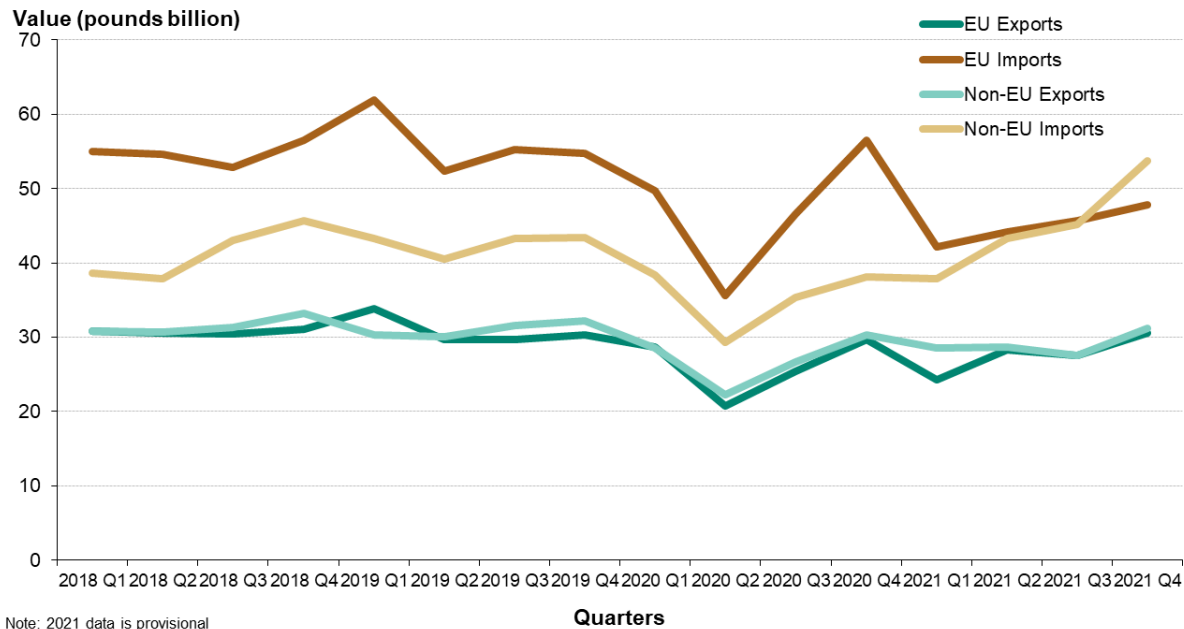


Figure 4 shows England's goods trade with EU and non-EU countries. In the latest quarter, **Exports** to the EU and non-EU rose by £3.1bn (11%) and £3.6bn (13%) respectively compared with the previous quarter. **Imports** from the EU and non-EU rose by £2.2bn (4.7%) and £8.7bn (19%) respectively.

**Figure 5: Wales' goods trade, 2018 Q1 to 2021 Q4**

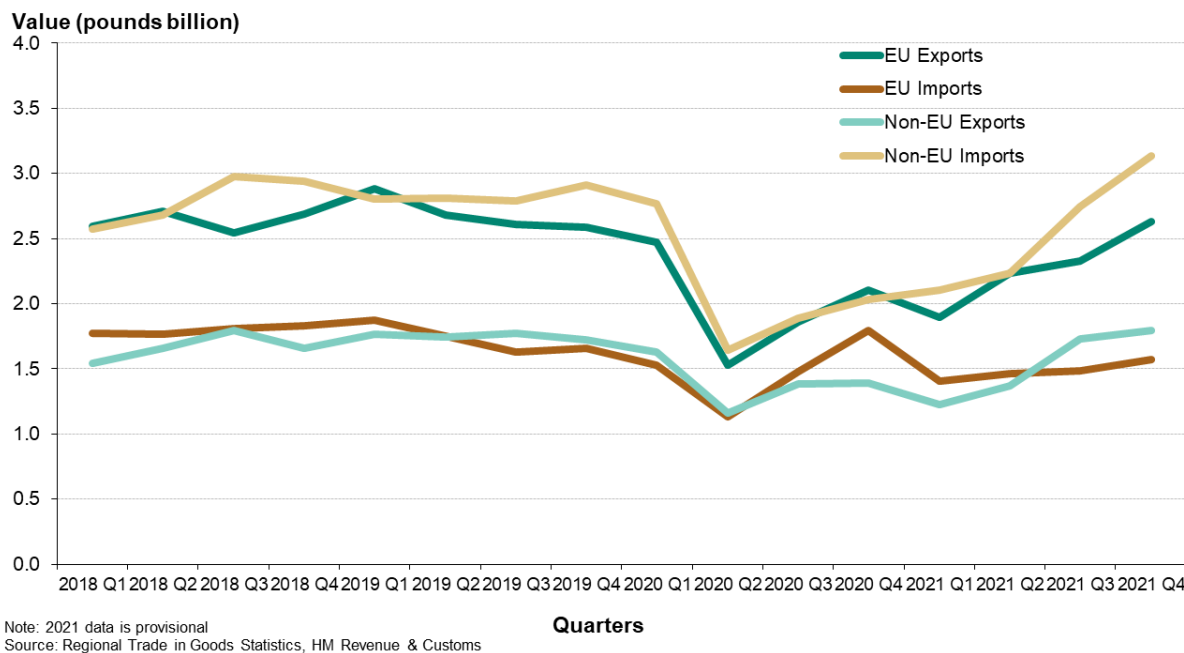
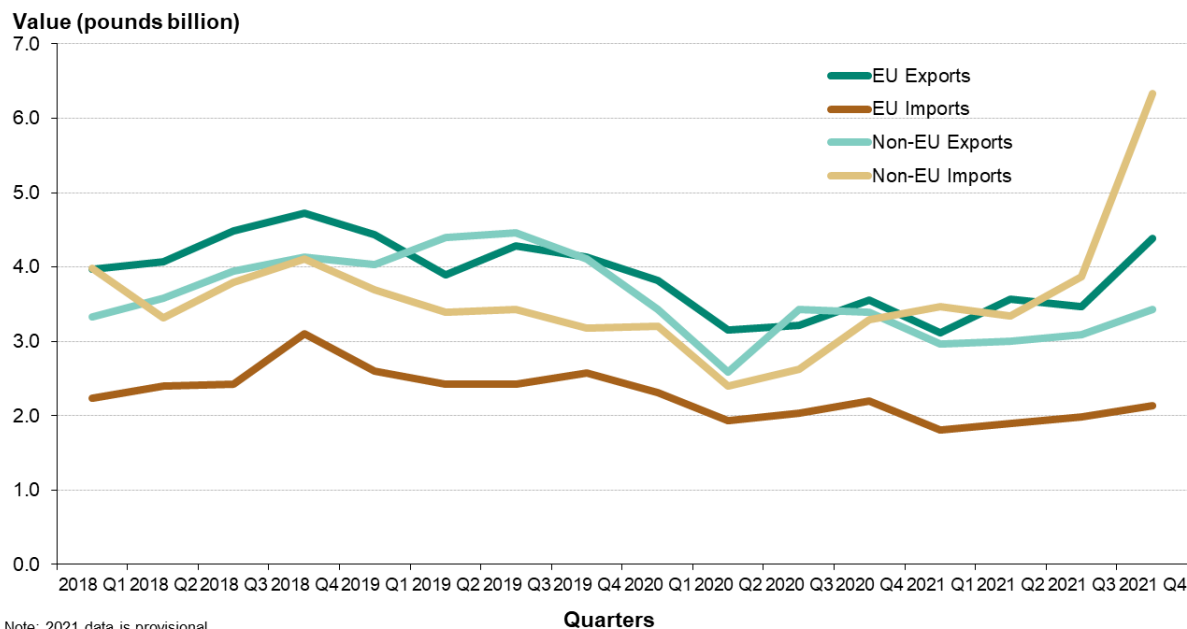


Figure 5 shows Wales' goods trade with EU and non-EU countries. In the latest quarter, **Exports** to the EU and non-EU rose by £303m (13%) and £64m (3.7%) respectively compared with the previous quarter. **Imports** from the EU and non-EU rose by £86m (5.8%) and £390m (14%) respectively.

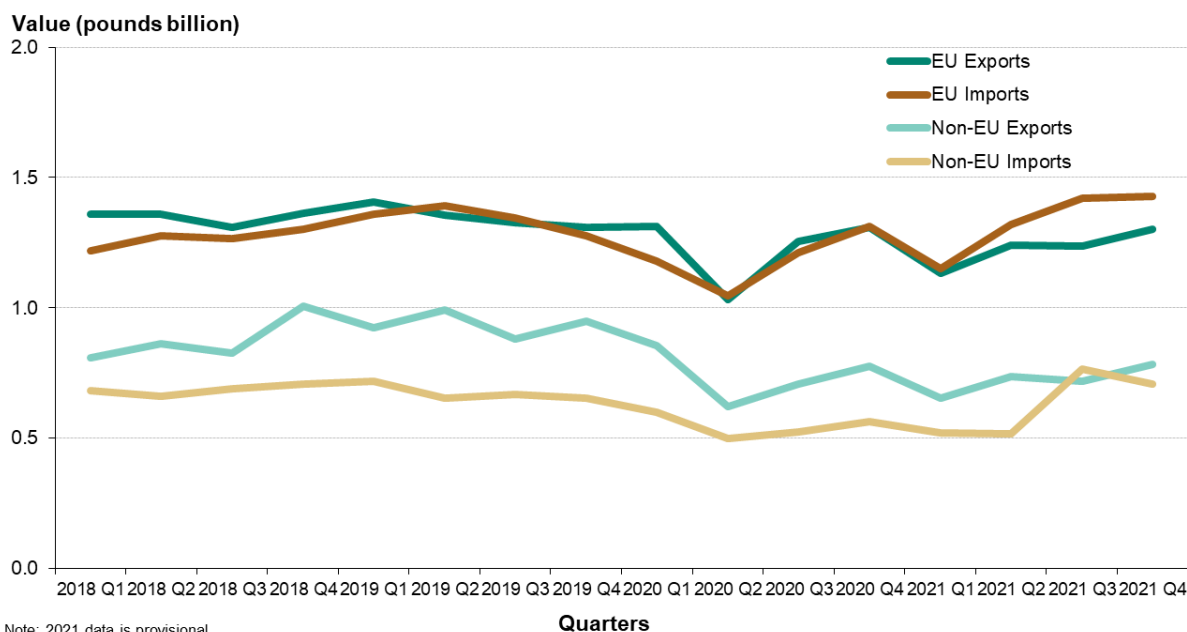
**Figure 6: Scotland's goods trade, 2018 Q1 to 2021 Q4**



Note: 2021 data is provisional  
Source: Regional Trade in Goods Statistics, HM Revenue & Customs

Figure 6 shows Scotland's goods trade with EU and non-EU countries. In the latest quarter, **Exports** to the EU and non-EU rose by £921m (27%) and £340m (11%) respectively compared with the previous quarter. **Imports** from the EU and non-EU rose by £151m (7.6%) and £2,455m (63%) respectively.

**Figure 7: Northern Ireland's goods trade, 2018 Q1 to 2021 Q4**

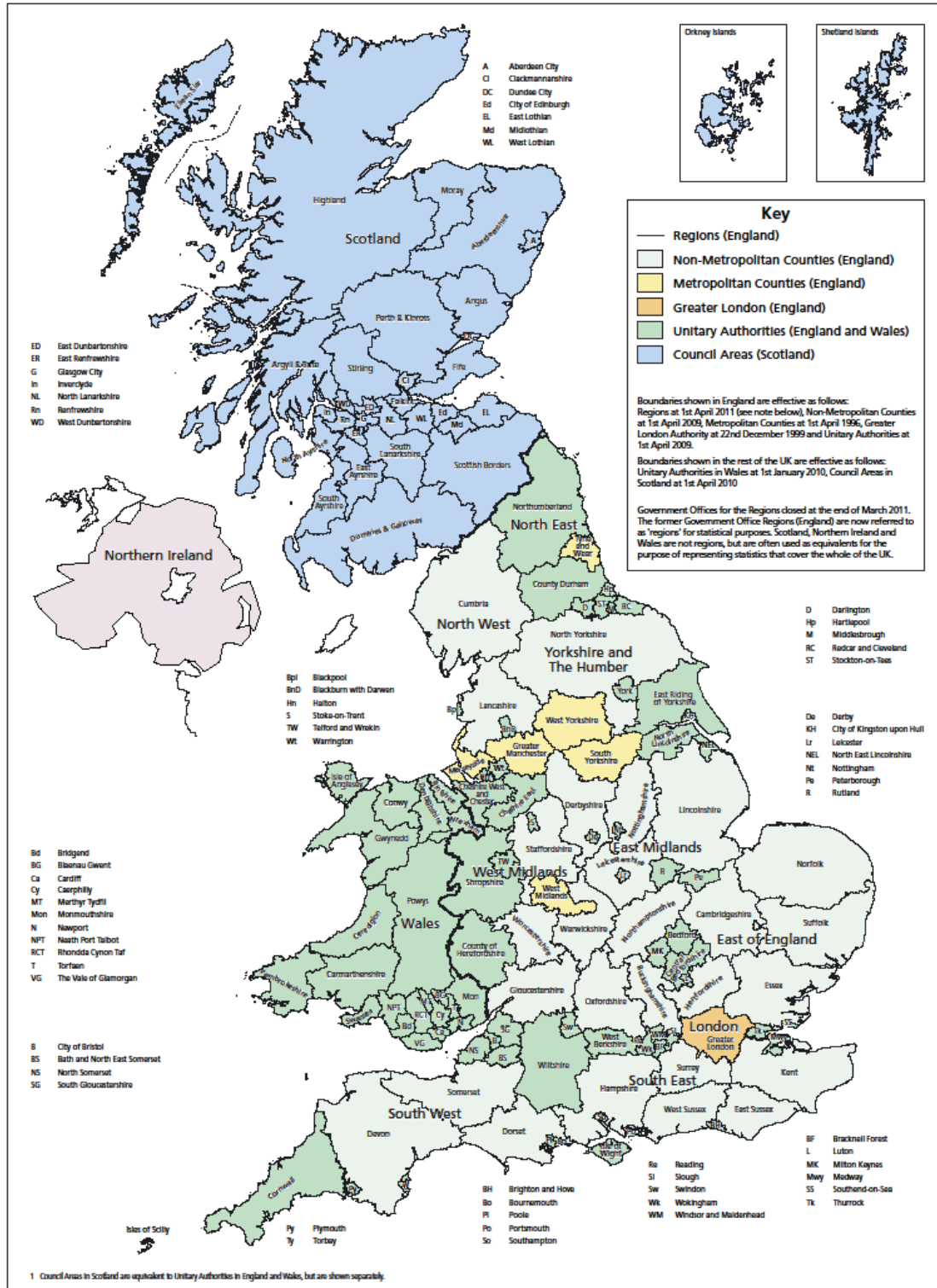


Note: 2021 data is provisional  
Source: Regional Trade in Goods Statistics, HM Revenue & Customs

Figure 7 shows Northern Ireland's goods trade with EU and non-EU countries. In the latest quarter, **Exports** to the EU and non-EU rose by £63m (5.1%) and £64m (8.9%) respectively compared with the previous quarter. **Imports** from the EU rose by £6.2m (0.4%), whereas imports from non-EU countries fell by £57m (7.5%).

# Map of UK Regions

United Kingdom: Regions, Counties and Unitary Authorities,<sup>1</sup> 2011



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2015  
 Source of boundary for Northern Ireland: UNEP (2014):  
 UNEP Environmental Data Explorer, United Nations  
 Environment Programme. <http://geodata.grid.unep.ch>

# Explanatory Notes

## Introduction

1. HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is responsible for collecting the UK's international trade in goods data, which are published as two National Statistics series - the 'Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics (OTS)' and the 'Regional Trade in Goods Statistics (RTS)'. The RTS is published quarterly showing trade at summary product and country level, split by UK regions and devolved administrations.
2. The latest statistics on Regional Trade in Goods were released by HMRC under arrangements set out in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). This release includes the first provisional estimates of trade in goods for Q4 2021. At the same time, revisions for previously published regional data for 2021 Q1, Q2 and Q3 are being released.
3. Aggregated tables are produced to allow time series analysis; these tables are provided in a separate document released in conjunction with this release.
4. The following tables can be found in the 'Accompanying Tables' document.

Table 1 Value (£ millions) of Exports (EU / Non-EU) by Region

Table 2 Value (£ millions) of Imports (EU / Non-EU) by Region

Table 3 Count of Exporters (EU / Non-EU) by Region for both Whole Number method and Proportion method

Table 4 Count of Importers (EU / Non-EU) by Region for both Whole Number method and Proportion method

Table 5 Value (£ millions) of Trade by SITC Section and Country Group (separate tables for each region)

Please note, the count of EU exporters and EU importers are unavailable from Q1 2021 onwards. See explanatory note 12<sup>a</sup> for more details.

## Changes to data sources

### UK to EU exports

5. Up to 31 December 2020, UK to EU export statistics were collected via the Intrastat statistical survey, which required traders to declare the value and volume of commodities exported to EU Member States within the relevant month of physical goods movement.
6. For goods moving from 1 January 2021, GB to EU export statistics are compiled direct from customs export declarations made according to the requirements of the Taxation (Cross Border Trade) Act. The customs declaration requirements are more complex than the single monthly aggregated Intrastat return, and can result in differences between dates of declaration and actual movement of the goods out of the country.
7. The OTS compilation methodology relies upon the acceptance date of the customs export declaration for its inclusion within the relevant month of account, rather than the declared physical movement date used from the Intrastat survey.
8. Intrastat survey returns continue to be collected for goods exported from Northern Ireland to the EU, under the terms of the [Northern Ireland Protocol](#).
9. Both the GB to EU customs export declaration data and NI Intrastat export (dispatch) data are incorporated into the overall UK to EU export dataset.

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10. As a result of the changes and differences outlined above, there is a break in the timeseries for published UK to EU export statistics from January 2021. Users are advised to note this change when making comparisons to previous quarters/years.

### UK imports from EU

11. For UK imports from the EU, the Intrastat survey continued to operate in 2021 for all UK (GB and NI) imports (arrivals) from the EU, to mitigate the effects of staged customs controls, and to comply with the Northern Ireland Protocol.

### Subsequent changes to the RTS

12. From the 2021 Q1 publication, there are 2 consequences of the changes in data sources:

- a. EU and total UK business counts will no longer be available. However, business counts will continue to be available for trade with non-EU countries.

With moving to the custom declarations for GB exports from the EU, we no longer receive detailed business level information for low-value trade. This is already the case for UK imports and exports with non-EU countries. However, for EU exports, the number/proportion of businesses carrying out these smaller trade transactions is much larger and therefore has a much greater impact on the accuracy of the count for EU exporters. We are also unable to produce any data prior to 2021, meaning the figure in isolation has no comparator/baseline, and would not be comparable on any level with previous figures.

For EU imports, it is the change in the VAT collection that impacts here. Without this data, we are unable to identify the businesses (and therefore allocate to the regions) solely trading under the Intrastat threshold, which equates to around 90% of businesses. Therefore, not a true representation of the number of businesses undertaking EU imports.

- b. Customs export declarations to the EU that fall under the statistical value threshold of £873 (in value) or 1,000kg (in net mass), cannot be assigned to a UK region and therefore will be reported under “Unallocated-unknown” category.

Declarations with commodity line values of less than £873 and where the weight of the goods are less than a tonne (1,000kg), go into ‘low value aggregates’. We do not receive business information on these traders as part of the UK trade in goods processing. As a result, we cannot assign this trade to a UK region, therefore the value is assigned to the Unallocated-unknown ‘region’.

This is in line with the RTS methods used for trade with non-EU countries, which are also sourced from Customs declarations.

13. These changes result in a break in time series. For further information on the RTS changes taking place, please refer to the updated [RTS methodology](#).



# Explanatory Notes

## Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics

14. Data is taken primarily from Customs systems (for non-EU trade and GB exports to EU countries) and the Intrastat survey (for EU imports trade and Northern Ireland exports to EU countries). HMRC does not receive information in respect of goods that move wholly within the UK, nor in intangibles and services such as banking or tourism.
15. The Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics (OTS) were published on a Special Trade basis from May 2016 account onwards. This change has been reflected in the RTS from 2016 Q2 release onwards. All data in this release has been compiled on a Special Trade basis to allow comparisons across periods to be made. More information on general and special trade systems can be found in the [OTS and RTS methodologies](#).
16. Trade in non-monetary gold (NMG) is now included in OTS data, however this trade will continue to be excluded from RTS data. This is because the majority of NMG trade would be assigned to the London region and this would distort the RTS figures. The following reconciliation table shows the differences at total trade level between OTS and RTS by quantifying the elements of OTS that are excluded from RTS.

**Table A: RTS/OTS Reconciliation Table**  
Quarter 4, 2021

	EU Exports £ millions	Non-EU Exports £ millions	EU Imports £ millions	Non-EU Imports £ millions
<b>OTS total value</b>	43,714.4	54,077.2	59,684.7	81,178.7
<b>RTS total value</b>	42,927.9	42,867.1	57,950.1	73,034.6
Allocated to a region	38,918.2	37,181.8	52,946.8	63,972.3
Unallocated region	4,009.7	5,685.2	5,003.3	9,062.3
<b>Late response estimates</b>	41.2	-	1,240.6	
<b>Non-monetary gold</b>	745.2	11,210.20	494.0	8,144.1
<b>RTS total plus exclusions</b>	<b>43,714.4</b>	<b>54,077.2</b>	<b>59,684.7</b>	<b>81,178.7</b>

Note 1: There may be rounding differences between the total shown and the sum of its components.

Note 2: Late Response estimates are for UK imports from the EU, and Northern Ireland exports to the EU. This will reduce over time. They are excluded from RTS trade

Note 3: Non-Monetary Gold is excluded from RTS trade

Note 4: 2021 data is provisional and subject to update.

Source: Regional Trade in Goods Statistics and Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics, HM Revenue & Customs

## Balance of Payments

17. The Balance of Payments (BoP) figures published by the ONS are calculated on a different basis to the OTS. Therefore, adjustments are made when producing BoP which means that the RTS and BoP are not comparable. The ONS website provides an overview of [BoP](#), and is where you can find their detailed monthly UK Trade Releases.

## Methodology

18. Following an informal public consultation on Regional Trade in Goods Statistics (RTS), releases from the 2016 Q3 release incorporates changes to the methodology and presentation that resulted from this consultation. The main changes were:

## Explanatory Notes

- Allocating a business' trade to a region based on their proportion of employees in that region rather than where the location of the Head Office of the business is.
  - Dividing trade that cannot be allocated to a region into 'Known' and 'Unknown'.
  - For specific energy goods using data received by HMRC direct from interconnector and rig operators rather than the business doing the trade.
  - The number of businesses now includes all VAT Registered traders rather than just those who are required to make full declarations to HMRC for their EU trade. Please see explanatory note 7 above for changes to business counts from Q1 2021 onwards.
19. RTS data is compiled by merging trade data collected by HMRC with employment data from the Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR). A business' trade is allocated to a region based on the proportion of its employees employed in that region. Where a trader is not matched with the IDBR, its trade is matched with Office for National Statistics postcode data to obtain the region in which the Head Office of the VAT registered business (importer or exporter) is based.
20. Not all trade can be assigned to one of the 9 English Regions, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Where appropriate, this is referred to in the tables as the 'Unallocated Trade'. Unallocated Trade is split into:
- i. 'Unallocated – Known': where we have virtually full details of the trade but it is not appropriate to allocate it to a region. This covers:
    - Trade going into or out of the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man;
    - Trade carried out by overseas based traders who have a VAT presence in the UK;
    - Trade carried out by the UK Government; and
    - Parcel post trade that is dealt with centrally (trade with non-EU countries and GB exports to EU).
  - ii. 'Unallocated – Unknown': This includes:
    - Trade where business details submitted are invalid
    - Un-registered businesses (trade with non-EU countries and GB exports to EU)
    - Private Individuals (trade with non-EU countries and GB exports to EU); and
    - Low Value Trade (trade with non-EU countries and GB exports to EU).
21. For specific energy goods only, trade is allocated to the region where the goods enter or leave the UK rather than the location / employment of the business doing the trade. This is because HMRC receives details of the trade in these goods directly from grid operators rather than the business. The goods concerned are Electrical energy, Natural Gas in a gaseous state and Crude Oil exported directly from offshore oil rigs. Crude Oil imported to the UK and exported from terminals is still allocated to the region of the business.
22. The business count is derived from trade declarations and is a count of all VAT Registered businesses importing and exporting. Please see explanatory note 7 above for changes to business counts from Q1 2021 onwards.

## Explanatory Notes

Where businesses have branches in multiple regions, there are two ways of deriving the count:

- **Whole Number Method:** A business will be counted as one in every region they have employees. This represents the actual count of businesses in any region. However, it will mean the sum of the trader count for each region will be greater than that for the UK.
- **Proportion Method:** A business will be counted as a fraction in each region they trade based on the proportion of their employees in each region. An individual business counts as one business in the UK. The sum of businesses (whole and fractions) gives the total business count for a region.

We show results from both methods in the table 3 of the accompanying data tables

23. RTS data is categorised by partner country and [Standard International Trade Classification, Rev.4](#). (SITC) at division level (2-digit). The SITC is a relatively broad classification of goods and is not as detailed as the commodity classification available in the OTS. In this release RTS data is analysed at partner country and SITC section (1-digit) level, with references to SITC divisions where appropriate.
24. More information can be found in the [RTS methodology document](#).
25. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) publish the Broad Economic Sales and Exports Statistics (BESES). These are an experimental measure, based on an annual survey of local businesses' sales to markets outside Northern Ireland. Due to methodological differences, the BESES and the RTS are not directly comparable.

### Governance

26. The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:
  - meet identified user needs;
  - are well explained and readily accessible;
  - are produced according to sound methods, and
  - are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

27. The Regional Trade in Goods figures undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs. These reviews are published as a Government Statistical Service Quality report.
28. The RTS has been reviewed as part of an [assessment](#) made of the OTS by the [UK Statistics Authority](#).

## Explanatory Notes

29. There is a limited service to provide RTS outputs directly from HMRC Trade Statistics where the data cannot be obtained from other sources. This service is subject to HMRC standard disclosure rules applied to previously un-published data.
30. Now that the UK has left the EU, it is important that our statistics continue to be of high quality and are internationally comparable. All releases continue to be produced in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics as well as internationally agreed statistical guidance and standards.

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The OTS and RTS data series are published in HMRC's trade data website [www.uktradeinfo.com](http://www.uktradeinfo.com). Detailed data is available within an [interactive database](#).

Next release: 7 July 2022 at 9:30am

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