



UK Port Freight Statistics: January to March 2013 (Quarter 1)

This Statistical Release summarises the latest quarterly statistics on freight handled by major UK sea ports. At the end of June more detailed provisional annual statistics and commentary are published in a separate release and detailed final annual statistics are published in September.



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Key findings from these provisional statistics included:-

Quarter 1 2013 :-

Comparing Quarter 1 2013 (Jan – March) with Quarter 1 2012:

- **Total major port traffic (tonnage)** was 119 million tonnes, a decline of 3 per cent.
- Total tonnage fell despite a 1 per cent **increase in inward traffic**, the first year on year increase since quarter 4 2011.
- The **number of units** handled during quarter 1 2013 was 4,567 thousand units, remaining **constant**.

Rolling Annual Total:-

Comparing the four quarters ending quarter 1 2013 (Q2 2012-Q1 2013) with the four quarter ending quarter 1 2012 (Q2 2011- Q1 2012):

- Total **major port traffic (tonnage)** has fallen by 4 per cent. This continues the decline seen throughout 2012.
- A total of **20,617 thousand units** were handled, a **fall of 3 per cent** and continuing the decline seen in 2012.

RESPONSIBLE STATISTICIAN
Margaret Talbot

FURTHER INFORMATION

Media Enquiries:
020 7944 3066

Public Enquiries:
Margaret Talbot
020 7944 4131
maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk

1. Major Port Freight Traffic (Tonnage)

1.1 Summary

- The decline seen throughout 2012 has continued in quarter 1 of 2013, both for total port freight traffic and outwards freight traffic.
- The quarterly 1 total for inwards freight traffic has shown a year on year increase for the first time since quarter 4 2011.

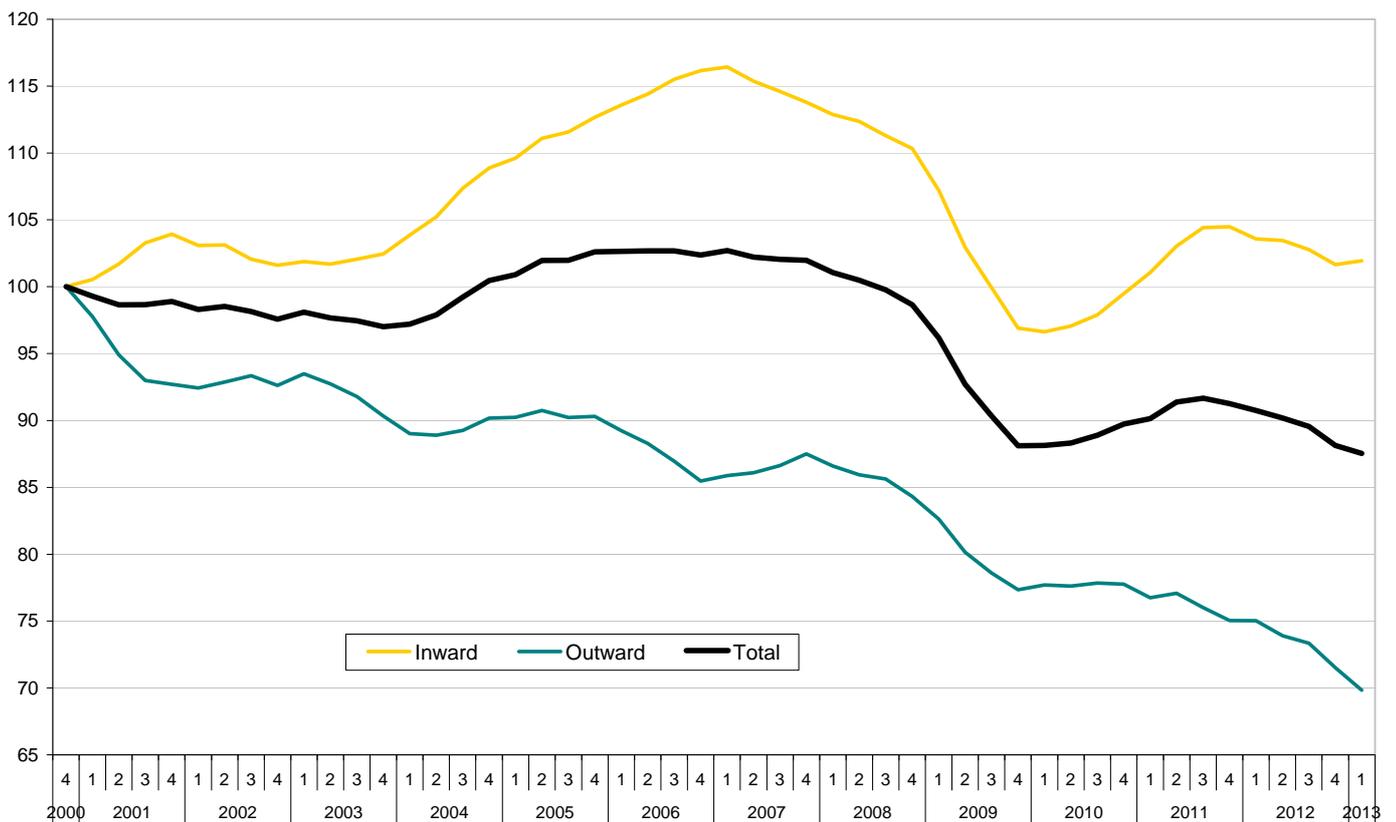
1.2 Quarterly Trend: January – March 2013

- **Total freight traffic decreased** by 3 per cent when compared to the same quarter in 2012, to 119 million tonnes. This continues the year on year decline seen throughout 2012.
- **Inwards freight traffic**, accounting for 64 per cent of the total traffic, **increased by 1 per cent** to 77 million tonnes. This is the first year on year percentage increase in inwards freight traffic since quarter 4 2011.
- **Outwards traffic decreased by 9 percent** compared to quarter 1 2012, from 47 million tonnes to 43 million tonnes. This continues the year on year decline seen throughout 2012.

1.3 Annual (Rolling) Trend: quarter 1 2013 through to quarter 2 2012

- **Total** major port traffic **decreased by 4 per cent** compared to the four quarters ending quarter 1 2012, to 486 million tonnes. This continues the decline seen since quarter 2 2012.
- **Inward** freight traffic to major ports was 312 million tonnes, a **2 per cent decrease** compared to the previous four quarters. This continues the decline seen in the second half of 2012.
- **Outwards traffic decreased** in comparison to the previous four quarters from 187 million tonnes to 174 million tonnes. This continues the long term downward trend seen since 2008.

Chart 1: Major Port traffic indices, tonnage - rolling four quarter totals to Q1 2013 (2000 = 100)



2. Major Port Freight Traffic (Unitised Traffic)

2.1 Summary

- Major port unitised traffic has been falling throughout 2012. In quarter 1 2013, the rolling annual trend has continued this decline.
- However the figures for quarter 1 2013, for both total unitised traffic and outward traffic, have remained constant compared to quarter 1 2012.

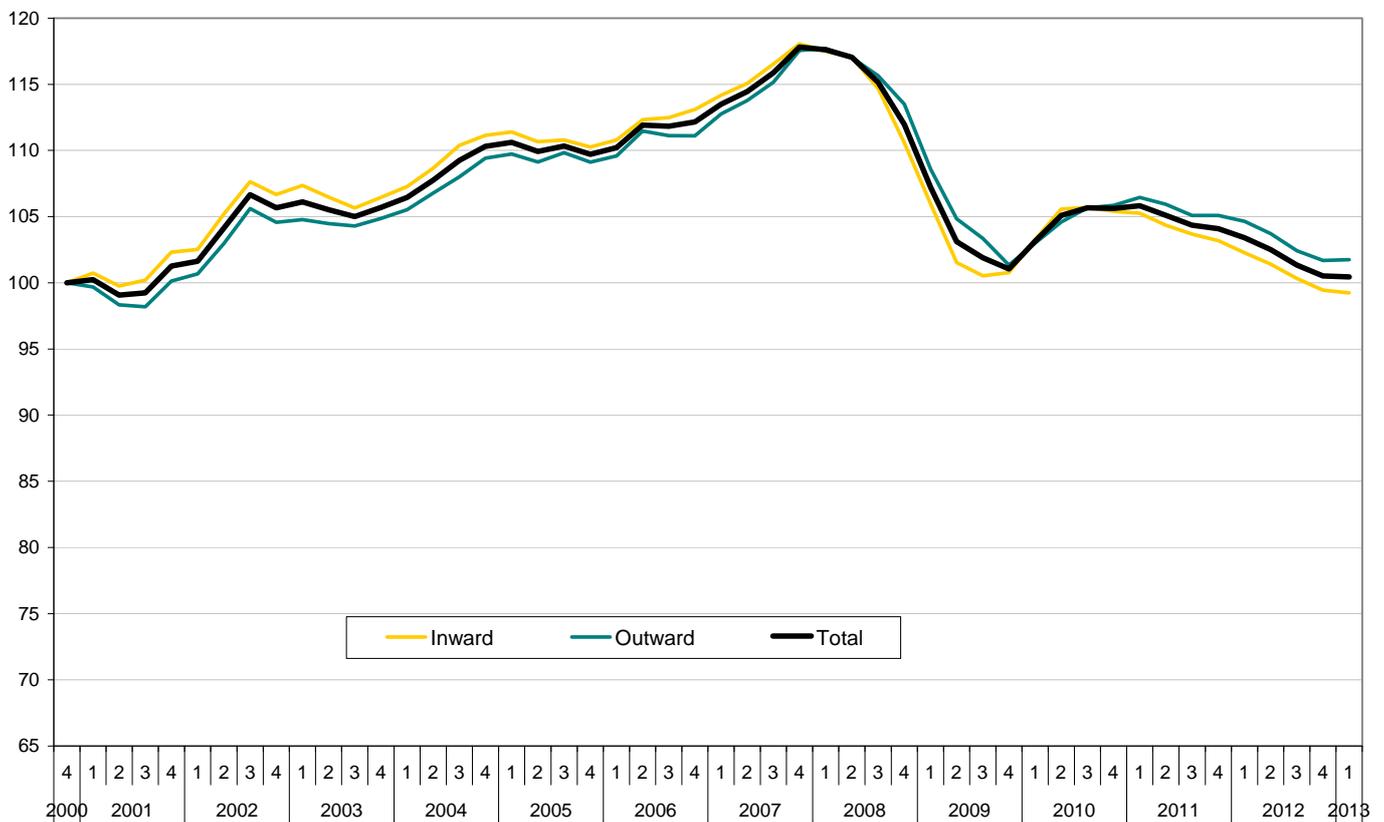
2.2 Quarterly Trend: January – March 2013

- **In total** 4,567 thousand units were handled in quarter 1 2013, **remaining constant** in comparison to quarter 1 2012 (4,582 thousand). This stability follows a downward trend seen in 2011 and 2012.
- **Inwards traffic decreased** by 1 per cent to 2,371 thousand units compared to 2012. This continues the decline seen throughout 2011 and 2012.
- **Outwards traffic also remained constant** in comparison to 2012 at 2,196 thousand units. This stability follows a downward trend seen throughout 2012.

2.3 Annual (Rolling) Trend: Q1 2013 through to Q2 2012

- **In total** 20,617 units were handled over the four quarters ending Q1 2013. This was a **3 per cent decrease** compared with the corresponding four quarters ending Q1 2012 and continues the decline seen throughout 2012.
- **Inwards units decreased** to 10,600 thousand compared to 10,923 thousand in the previous four quarters, continuing the decline seen since quarter 2 2011.
- **Outwards traffic also decreased** by 3 per cent from 10,300 thousand units to 10,016 thousand, continuing the decline seen since quarter 3 2011.

Chart 2: Major Port traffic indices, units - rolling four quarter totals to Q1 2013 (2000 = 100)



Detailed statistics (tables) on 'Quarterly Port Freight statistics' can be found in the web tables, [port0501-port0509](#).

3. Strengths and weaknesses of the data

- The port freight statistics relate to traffic to and from ports in the United Kingdom, unless otherwise stated, and do not cover ports in the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.
- The provisional quarterly port data relate to all cargoes loaded or unloaded by ship at major ports in the UK, including both international and domestic traffic.
- These statistics are based on data provided by major ports. Data are available for total weight of goods and number of units inwards and outwards for each responding port. These figures may be subject to revision if subsequent checks against data provided by agents, or data provided by ports at the year end, highlight anomalies. More in depth commentary will be provided with the release of the final port statistics.
- Typically a very small number of ports do not provide data in time for publication, in which case the national trend is estimated based on the trend for those ports which have provided data for the latest quarter. **The provisional figures for freight traffic at each major UK port in quarter 1 2013 are based on 100 per cent of expected traffic as all ports had made complete returns for this quarter at the time of publication.**

4. Glossary

- **Major ports:** Ports handling over one million tonnes per year, and a small number of other key ports, together accounting for over 97% of UK port traffic in 2011.
- **Tonnage:** The weight of goods transported, including crates and other packaging, but excluding the unloaded weight of shipping containers, road goods vehicles, trailers and other items of transport equipment where these are used.
- **Units:** Includes all roll-on/roll-off (ro-ro) units whether carrying freight or not (road goods vehicles, unaccompanied trailers, shipborne port-to-port trailers, passenger vehicles, trade vehicles, and other ro-ro units), as well as lift-on lift-off (lo-lo) containers. In most published port statistics freight carrying roll-on/roll-off units are reported separately, however, this detail is not available at the time of the quarterly statistics publication, in which combined totals are given.

5. Background notes

- The web tables and charts give further detail of the key results presented in this statistical release. They are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/ports-statistics>
- Full guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics can be found on the ports series page here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/ports-statistics>

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- National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Port Freight Statistics were assessed by the UK Statistics Authority against the Code of Practice and were confirmed as National Statistics in February 2013.
 - Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found on the ports series page here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/ports-statistics>
 - The next update in this series will be published in September 2013. It will contain provisional quarterly figures for the second quarter of 2013.
 - Annual statistics on freight handled by UK sea ports are updated twice a year; provisional in June and detailed final figures in September. The final 2011 figures can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/port-freight-statistics-2011-final-figures>