



Department for Transport

# Domestic Road Freight Statistics, United Kingdom 2014

## About this release

This statistical release summarises the latest road freight statistics from the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Great Britain (CSRG T GB). The survey measures the activity of GB-registered heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) operating in the UK.

This release also summarises a number of economic, environmental and safety statistics about HGVs and the road freight industry.

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## Heavy Goods Vehicles lifted more goods in 2014 than 2013 but travelled shorter distances

### Key results

HGVs in 2014 ...



**1.49**  
billion tonnes

Compared to 2013

↑ 1 per cent



**136**  
billion tonne kilometres

↓ 2 per cent



**16.9**  
billion kilometres

↓ 2 per cent

- ▶ Between 2013 and 2014, the amount of **goods lifted** by GB-registered heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) operating in the UK increased by 1 per cent to 1.49 billion tonnes.
- ▶ Over the same period, the amount of **goods moved** decreased by 2 per cent to 136 billion tonne kilometres and the distance travelled by HGVs in the UK decreased by 2 per cent to 16.9 billion vehicle kilometres.

### Definitions

**Goods lifted:** the weight of goods carried measured in tonnes.

**Goods moved:** a measure of activity taking into account the weight of the load and distance through which it is hauled. It is equal to the weight of goods multiplied by distance and is measured in tonne kilometres.

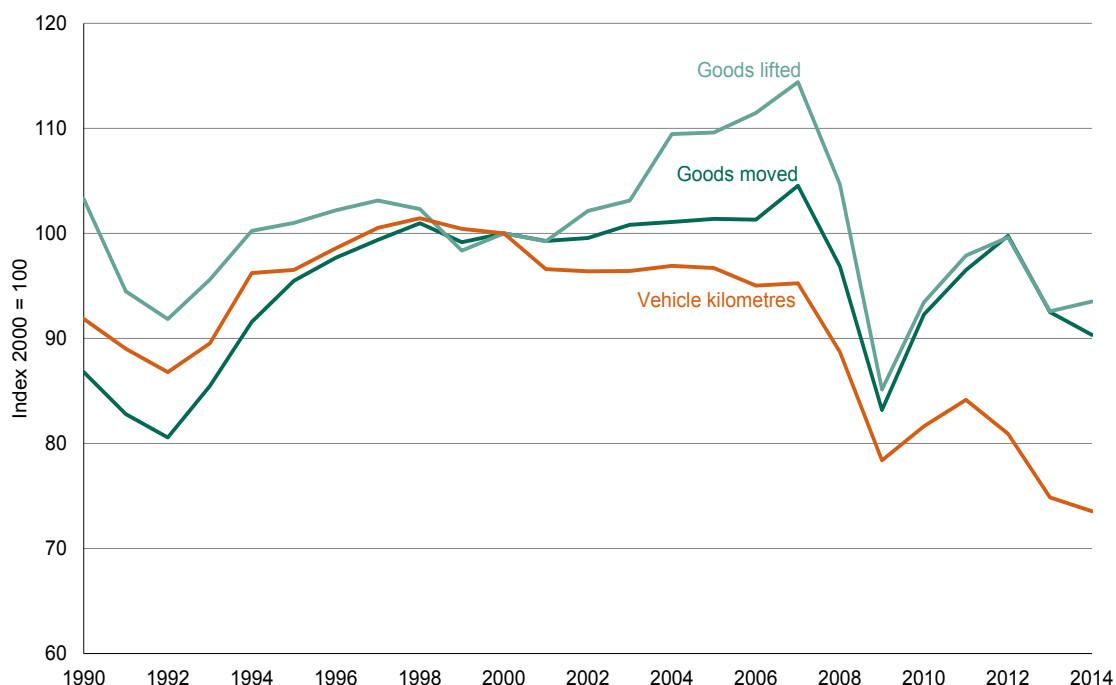
## Overall trends in domestic road freight

Between 2013 and 2014, the amount of **goods moved** by GB-registered heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) operating in the UK decreased by 2 per cent to 136 billion tonne kilometres. This is 14 per cent lower than the peak of 157 billion tonne kilometres in 2007 (**Chart 1**).

Over the same period between 2013 and 2014, the amount of **goods lifted** increased by 1 per cent to 1.49 billion tonnes. This is still 18 per cent lower than the peak in 2007 of 1.82 billion tonnes.

The distance travelled by HGVs in the UK decreased by 2 per cent to 16.9 billion vehicle kilometres in 2014. This continues the general downward trend since the peak of 23.3 billion vehicle kilometres in 1998.

**Chart 1: Goods moved, goods lifted and vehicle kilometres by GB-registered HGVs, 1990-2014** [[Table RFS0101](#)]



The average length of haul (91 kilometres) for GB-registered HGVs decreased by 3 per cent in 2014 so **overall while HGVs lifted more goods in 2014 than 2013 they travelled shorter distances**.

The average length of haul for articulated HGVs (121 kilometres in 2014) continues to be longer than that of rigid HGVs (50 kilometres) [[Table RFS0105](#)].

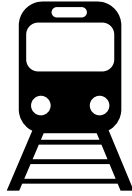
### Definitions

**Average length of haul:** measured in kilometres is defined as tonne kilometres divided by tonnes lifted.

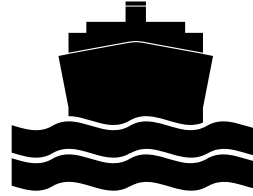
Road freight continues to be the main method of transporting freight across the UK ...



151 billion tonne kilometres by road<sup>1</sup>



23 billion tonne kilometres by rail



29 billion tonne kilometres by water

### Detailed statistics ...

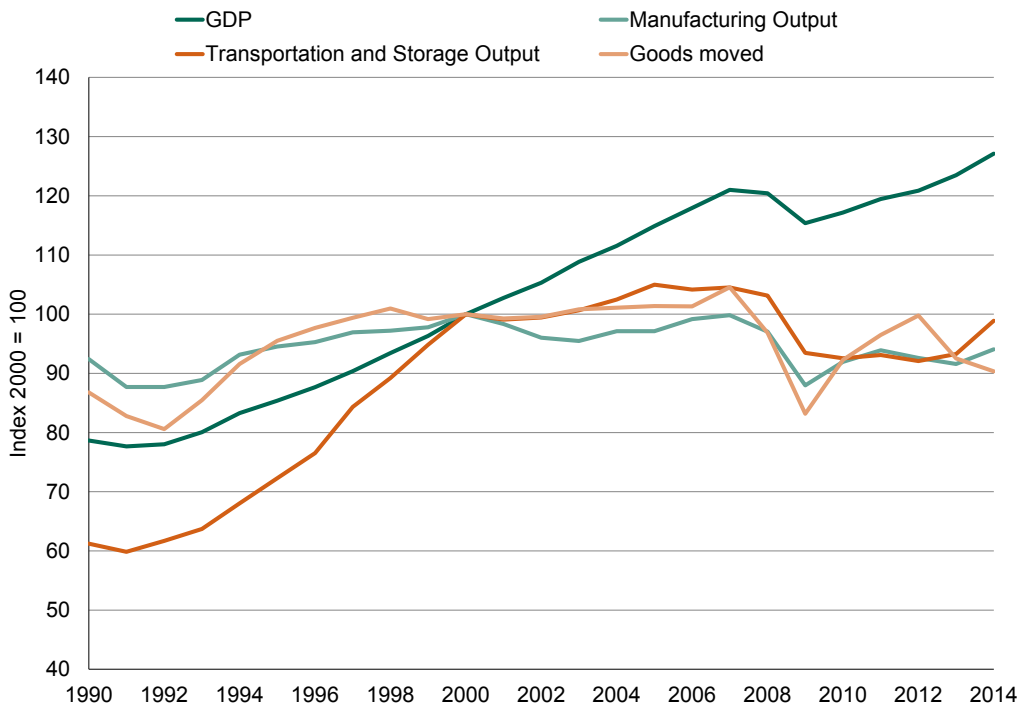
on freight transport by mode can be sourced from chapter 4 of [Transport Statistics Great Britain 2014](#)

... with almost three times as much **goods moved** by road than by rail and water combined [[Table TSGB0401](#)].

## Road freight and broader economic activity

Over recent years, the trend in the amount of **goods moved** (tonne kilometres) by road has generally been in line with both **manufacturing output** and **transport and storage output** components of GDP with deviation seen in some years (**Chart 2**).

**Chart 2: Goods moved by GB-registered HGVs and economic indicators, 1990-2014** [[Table RFS0102](#)]



### Percentage change between 2013 and 2014

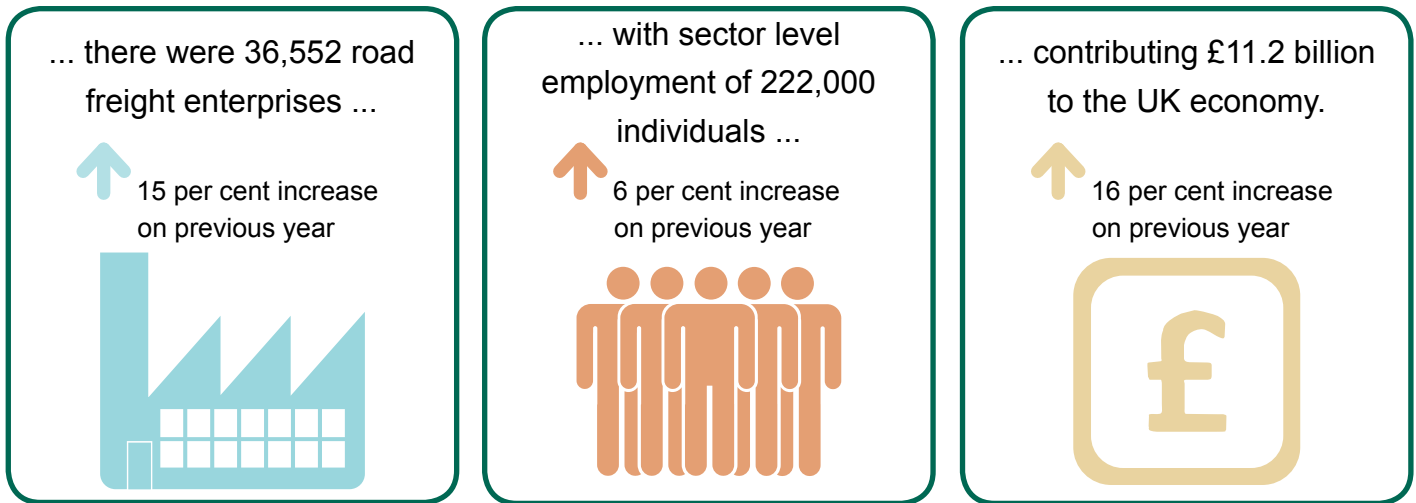
- 3 per cent increase in GDP
- 6 per cent increase in Transportation and Storage output
- 3 per cent increase in Manufacturing output
- 2 per cent decrease in the amount of **goods moved**

Since the 1990s annual growth in the amount of **goods moved** has generally been **slower than growth in GDP**. The exceptions to this trend can be seen between 1993-94 and between 2010-12 where growth in GDP was slower than growth in the amount of **goods moved**.

## Overview of the road freight sector

### Road freight enterprises

The latest estimates from the [Annual Business Survey](#) show that in 2014 within the road freight sector ...

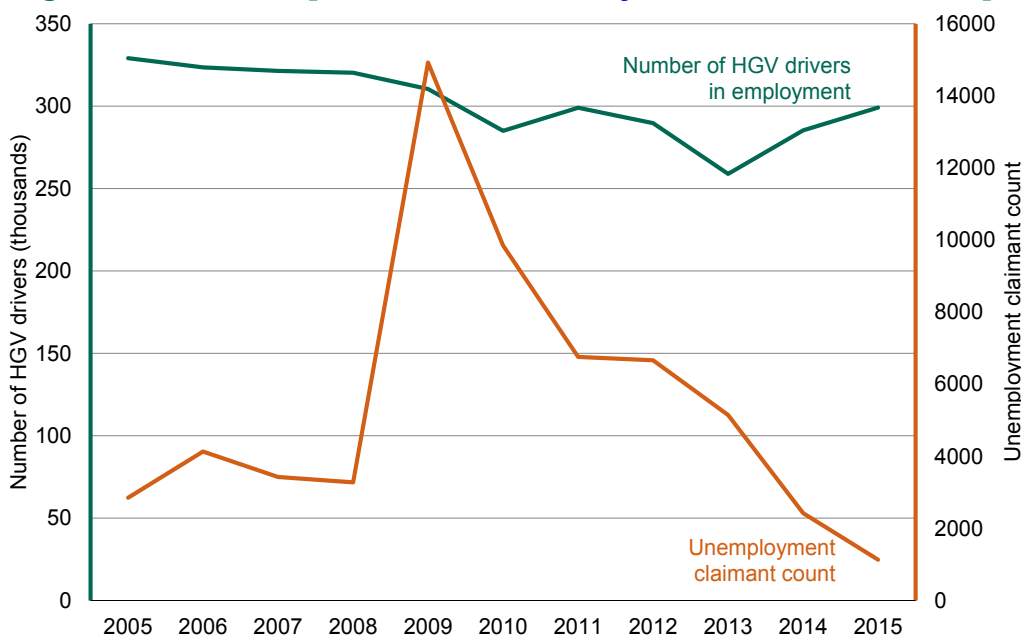


### HGV driver numbers

The latest estimates (April to June) from the Labour Force Survey showed that the number of HGV drivers employed across all sectors such as manufacturing and retail has continued to grow since the 259,000 low in 2013 to 299,000 drivers in 2015. Prior to the recession there had been around 320,000 HGV drivers, in 2009 driver numbers started to decline (**Chart 3**).

The number of people claiming Jobseekers' Allowance who stated that "HGV driver" was their usual occupation has continued to fall since 2009. In April 2015, 1,135 people claiming Jobseekers' Allowance stated that "HGV driver" was their usual occupation, this was 65 per cent lower than pre-recession levels.

**Chart 3: Employment and unemployment of HGV drivers, United Kingdom, 1999-2015** [[Labour Force Survey, ONS](#) and [Nomis, ONS](#)]



#### Percentage change between 2014 and 2015

- ↑ 5 per cent increase in the number HGV drivers in employment
- ↓ 53 per cent decrease in number of people claiming Jobseekers' Allowance who stated that HGV driver was their usual occupation

## HGV driver working time

The provisions of the Road Transport (Working Time) Regulations 2005 state that HGV drivers weekly working time must not exceed an average of 48 hours. Estimates from the [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#) show that the average (median) number of total paid hours worked per week by HGV drivers, including overtime, has been 48 hours since the regulation came into effect in 2005. Prior to this the average was slightly higher at 50 hours per week.

## Fleet size and operator licences

The latest [vehicle licensing statistics](#) show that at the end of 2014 there were 473,900 heavy goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight licensed in Great Britain, of which 389,800 were taxed as 'goods vehicles' (the remaining vehicles would be HGVs exempt from tax and those taxed as private HGVs). Of those HGVs taxed as goods vehicles, 115,200 were articulated and 274,600 were rigid. Just under a quarter of rigid goods vehicles were licensed as box vans.

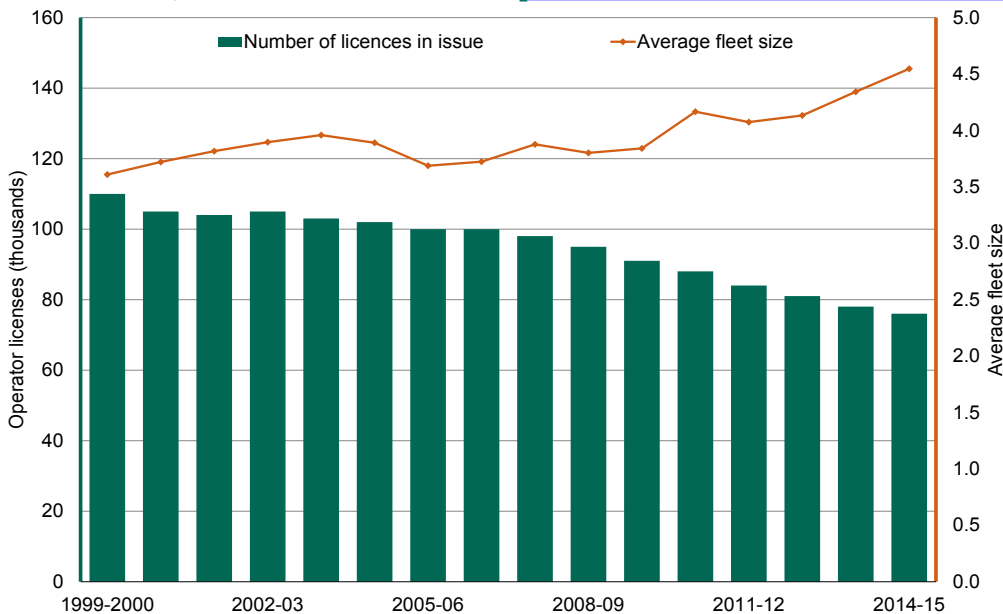
### Definitions

**Box van:** a van with rigid sides and a "box" mounted to the chassis



The number of goods vehicle operators in Great Britain declined from 110,000 in 1999-00 to 76,000 in 2014-15. The average size of operators' fleets has increased from 3.6 vehicles in 1999-2000 to 4.5 vehicles in 2014-15. This means fewer licences are in issue but more vehicles are being specified under these licences (**Chart 4**).

**Chart 4: Goods vehicle operator licences in issue and average fleet size, Great Britain, 1999-2000 to 2014-15** [[Traffic Commissioners' annual report](#)]



**Percentage change between 2013-14 and 2014-15**

↑ 5 per cent increase average fleet size

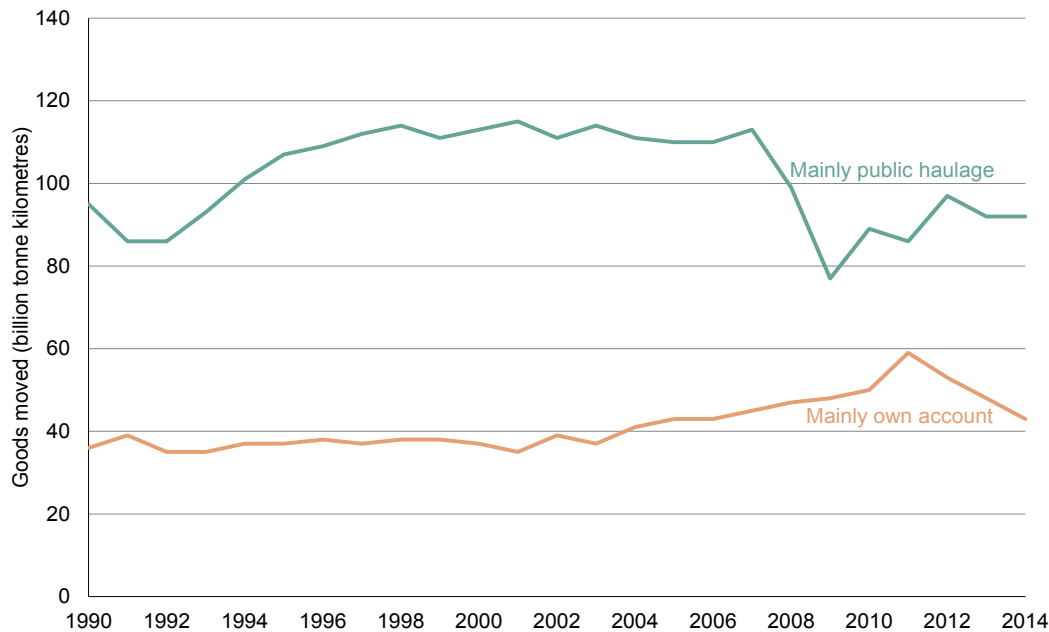
↓ 3 per cent decrease in number of operator licences in issue

## Mode of operation

Road freight activity can be split between own account operators and public haulage operators. The recession had a greater impact on public haulage operators who experienced a fall in **goods moved** in 2008 and 2009 compared to increases in **goods moved** by own account operators in the same years.

This could be down to businesses relying more on their own fleets to transport goods during the recession rather than using public haulage operators. However public haulage operators continue to have the greater share (68 per cent in 2014) of total **goods moved** than own account operators (**Chart 5**).

**Chart 5: Goods moved by GB-registered HGVs, by mode of working, 1990-2014 [Table RFS0108]**



## Definitions

**Own account operators:** those who carry goods only in the course of their own trade or business.

**Public haulage operators:** those who carry goods for other companies or individuals.

## Percentage change between 2013 and 2014

↑ 1 per cent increase in the amount of **goods moved** by public haulage operators

↓ 9 per cent decrease in the amount of **goods moved** by own account operators

## Road freight activity by commodity group

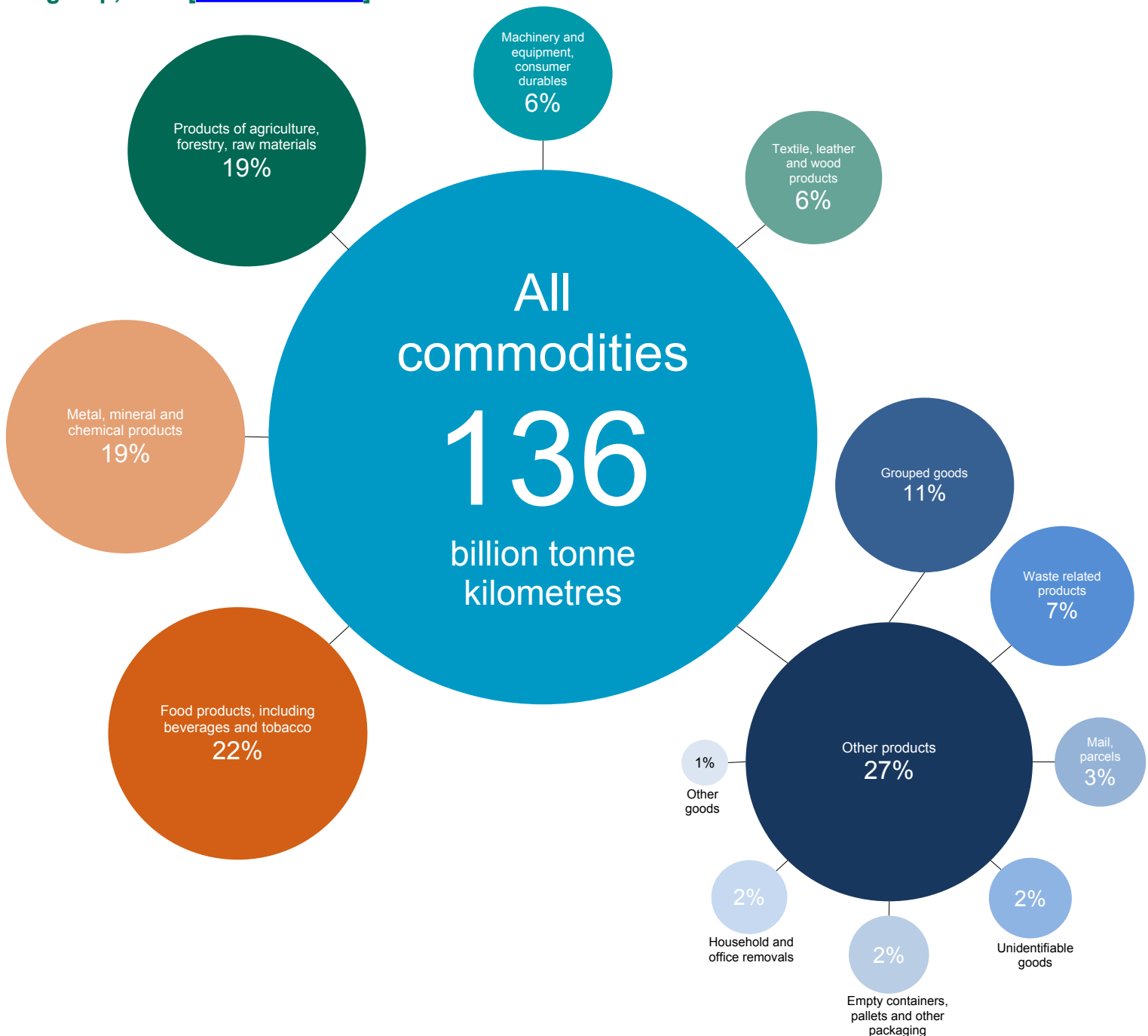
In 2014, the most common single category of commodity moved within the UK was “Food products” (22 per cent). This was followed by “Metal, mineral and chemical products” (19 per cent) and “Products of agriculture, forestry, raw materials” (19 per cent) (**Chart 6**).

Grouped goods (11 per cent) and waste related products (7 per cent) made up the majority of the “Other products” commodity category.

### Definitions

**Grouped goods (groupage):** the consolidation of several different types of goods into a single load.

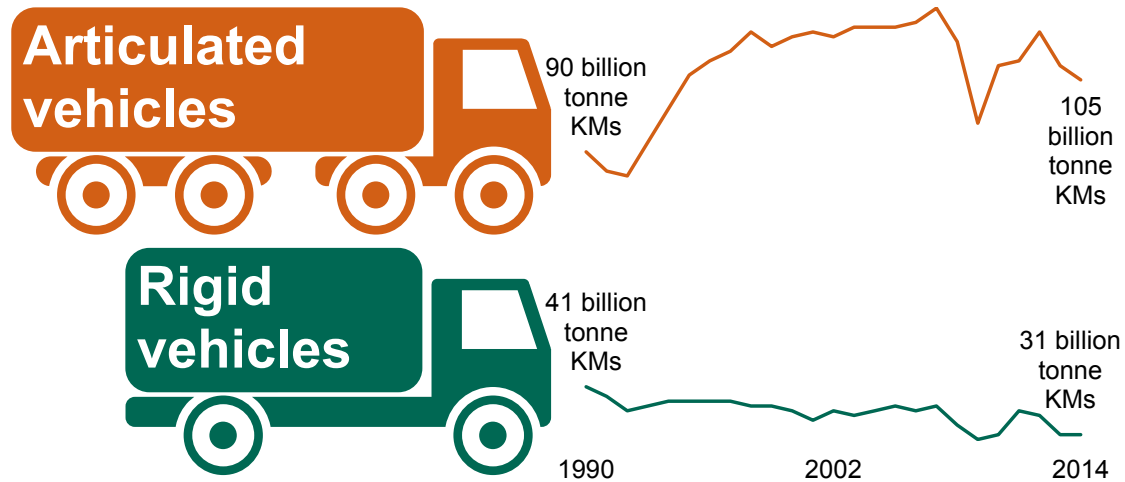
**Chart 6: Goods moved by GB-registered HGVs, by commodity group, 2014** [[Table RFS0111](#)]



## Road freight activity by type of vehicle

Since 1990 there has been a change in the type of vehicle accounting for road freight activity; the amount of **goods moved** by rigid vehicles has decreased by 24 per cent compared to a 17 per cent increase for articulated vehicles (**Chart 7**). The percentage share of **goods moved** by rigid vehicles declined from just under a third in 1990 to just under a quarter in 2014.

**Chart 7: Goods moved by GB-registered HGVs, by type of vehicle, 1990-2014** [[Table RFS0107](#)]

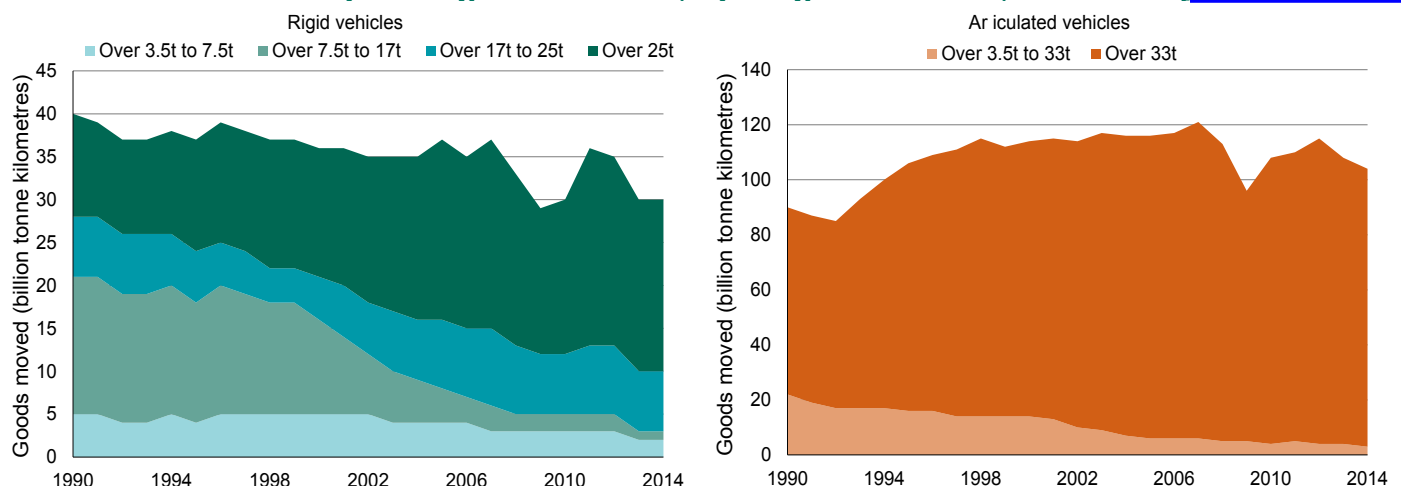


Since 1990, there has been a clear shift towards using larger vehicles when transporting goods. The amount of goods moved by **large, rigid HGVs** (over 25 tonnes) and **large, articulated HGVs** (over 33 tonnes) has increased by 67 and 49 per cent respectively between 1990 and 2014 (**Chart 8**).

In contrast the amount of goods moved by **small, rigid HGVs** (less than 17 tonnes) and **small articulated HGVs** (less than 33 tonnes) both declined by 86 per cent.

The fall in freight activity by smaller HGVs may also be due to an increase in light van traffic which was 45 billion vehicle miles in 2014, the highest level ever. This is 5.6 per cent higher than in 2013, and 20.2 per cent higher than 10 years ago, although not all of these vans would be carrying freight.

**Chart 8: Goods moved by GB-registered HGVs, by weight of vehicle, 1990-2014** [[Table RFS0107](#)]

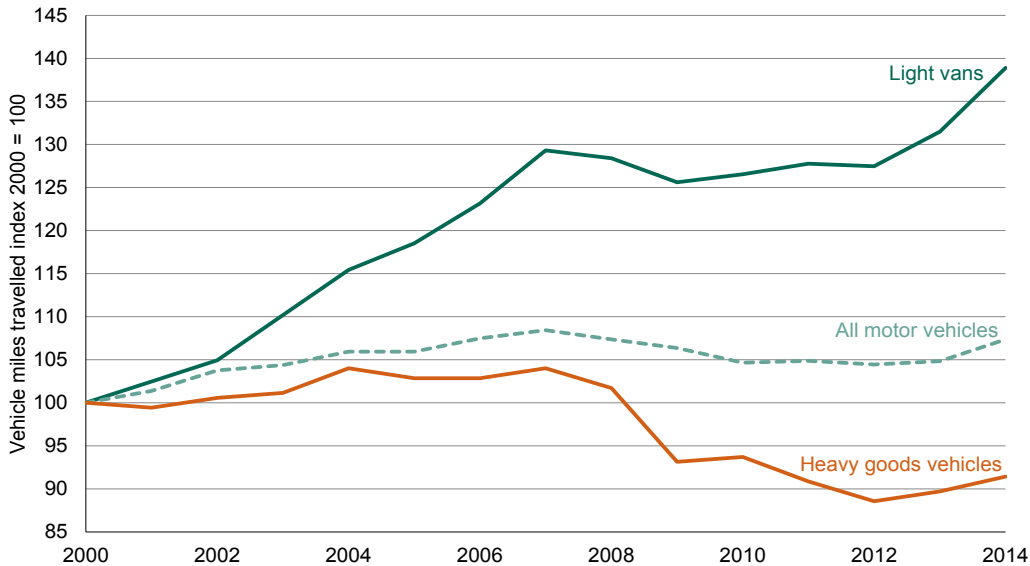




### HGVS and LGV traffic

The latest [Road Traffic Statistics](#) estimate HGVS traffic to have increased by 2 per cent between 2013 and 2014 to 16 billion vehicle miles, which is the largest year-on-year increase since 2004. Over the medium term however, HGVS traffic has fallen by 12.1 per cent since its highest value ever in 2004, of 18.2 billion vehicle miles (**Chart 9**).

**Chart 9: Road Traffic for HGVS and LGVs in Great Britain, 2000 to 2014** [[Table TRA0101](#)]



### Percentage change between 2013 and 2014

5.6 per cent increase in light van traffic

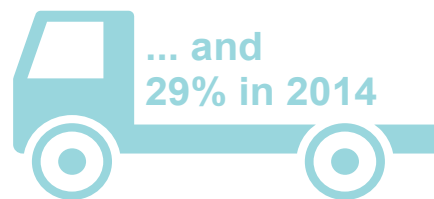
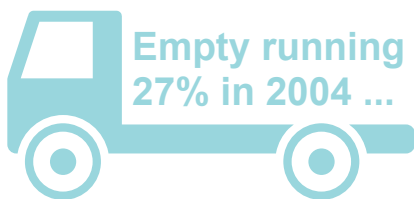
2 per cent increase in heavy goods vehicle traffic

The proportion of HGVS traffic made up by foreign registered vehicles is higher than for other vehicle types. In 2013, 3.3 per cent of HGVS vehicle miles were driven by a foreign registered vehicle. This has decreased from 3.6 per cent in 2011 and 4.0 per cent in 2009.

The Road Traffic Statistics estimates are different to those derived from the Department's road freight surveys mainly due to differing coverage; further information on the differences is available in the [methodology note on discrepancies between Road Freight and Road Traffic HGVS traffic estimates](#).

### Empty running

Empty running among heavy goods vehicles has been around 29 per cent of total vehicle distance since 2008, prior to this it was slightly lower at around 27 per cent [[Table RFS0117](#)].



### Definitions

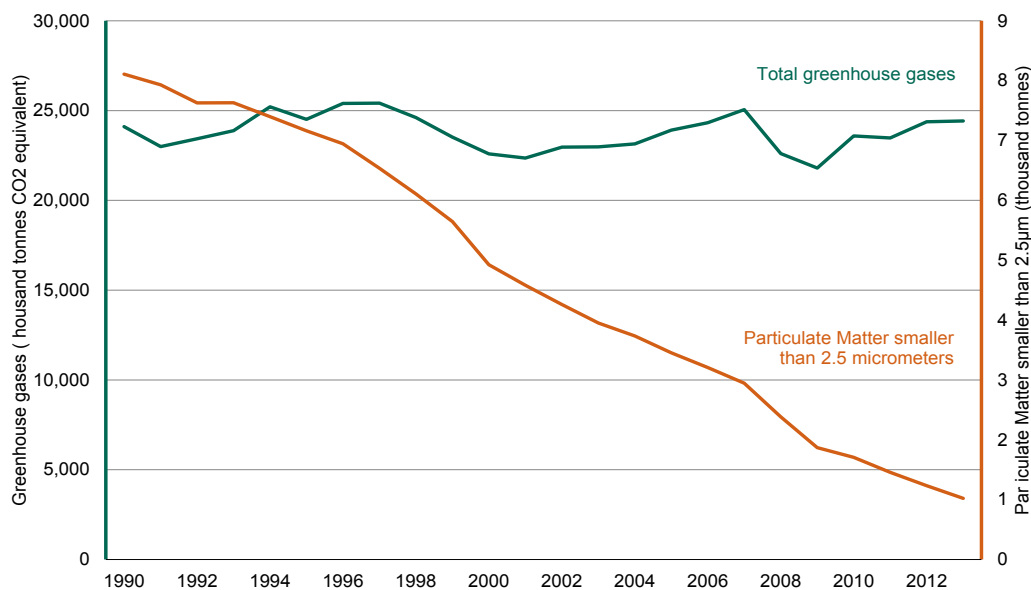
**Empty running:** defined as carrying zero tonnes for whole journey from origin to destination.

## HGV emissions

The latest UK emissions data from the [National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory \(NAEI\)](#), DECC/DEFRA, estimate Greenhouse gas emissions from HGVs to have remained stable at around 24 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent between 2012 and 2013, the latest data available (**Chart 10**).

HGVs contributed around 1 thousand tonnes of Particulate Matter smaller than 2.5 micrometers in 2013, this was a decrease of 17 per cent from 2012 and continues the downward trend in particulate emissions.

**Chart 10: Greenhouse gases and Particulate Matter emissions from HGVs, United Kingdom, 1990-2013** [[NAEI](#)]



## Definitions

**Particulate Matter:** is a complex mixture of small particles and liquid droplets. Their size is directly linked to their potential for causing health problems. Fine particles (2.5 micrometers in diameter and smaller) can form from gases emitted from vehicles.

## Percentage change between 2012 and 2013

→ no percentage change in greenhouse gas emissions

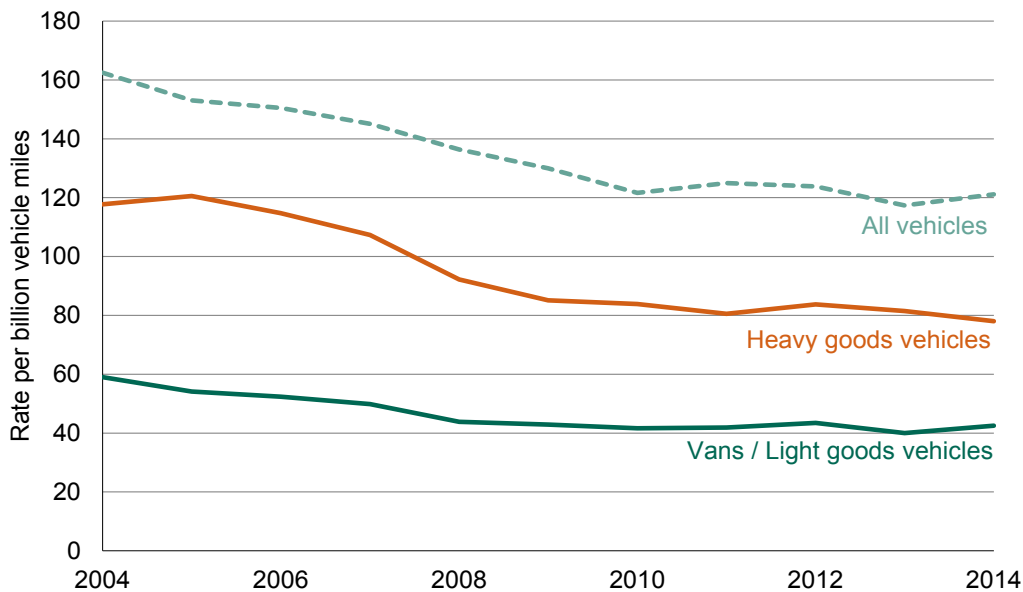
↓ 17 per cent decrease in Particulate Matter emissions smaller than 2.5 micrometers

## Road accidents involving HGVs

The latest [Road Accidents and Safety Statistics](#) show that in 2014, there were 6,389 accidents involving at least one HGV in Great Britain, and 8,906 casualties. Of those casualties, 268 were fatalities.

There were around 78 fatal or serious accidents involving HGVs per billion vehicle miles in 2014. This figure was lower than the rate for all vehicles (121 fatal or serious accidents per billion vehicle miles) and has decreased from 118 per billion vehicle miles in 2004 (**Chart 11**).

**Chart 11: Involvement rates in reported road accidents, by vehicle type 2004-2014** [Table RAS20001]



**Percentage change between 2013 and 2014**

↓ 4 per cent decrease in accident involvement rate for HGVs

↑ 6 per cent increase in accident involvement rate for LGVs

**Background notes**

1. The figures in this release are mainly derived from the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Great Britain (CSRGT GB) which provides information on HGVs registered in Great Britain only so will exclude HGVs registered in Northern Ireland, foreign-registered vehicles and vehicles 3.5 tonnes or less gross vehicle weight (Light Goods Vehicles). Also excluded from CSRGT GB are HGVs registered in Great Britain operating outside of the UK.
2. The data tables give further detail on the key results presented in this statistical release and statistics on other road freight topics, including the international activity of UK-registered HGVs. These are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-freight-domestic-and-international-statistics>
3. Guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics and further background information can be found in the [Road Freight Statistics notes and definitions](#). Sample sizes that estimates are based on can be found within [Table RFS0143](#) broken down by vehicle type and size.
4. Between 2011 and 2012, a number of changes were made to how the three DfT road freight surveys were processed. Caution should therefore be used for statistics based on the three freight surveys when making comparisons over time. See the [Road Freight Statistics methodology note](#) for more information.
5. This release also collates statistics from a number of published sources that are revised and updated throughout the year. The data for this release were extracted in November 2015, and users can refer to the links overleaf for the most recent or revised data available for each of the sources used, and also caveats relating to the sources.

- ▶ United Kingdom National Accounts, Office for National Statistics (ONS): <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/naa1-rd/united-kingdom-national-accounts/index.html>
- ▶ Annual Business Survey, ONS: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/abs/annual-business-survey/index.html>
- ▶ Employment of HGV drivers, Labour Force Survey (LFS), ONS: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-force-survey-employment-status-by-occupation/index.html>
- ▶ Unemployment of HGV drivers, Claimant count data, ONS: <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>
- ▶ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), ONS: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/index.html>
- ▶ Goods vehicle operator licences, Traffic Commissioners' annual reports: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traffic-commissioners-annual-reports>
- ▶ Vehicle licensing statistics for HGVs, Department for Transport (DfT): <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/veh05-licensed-heavy-goods-vehicles>
- ▶ Road traffic statistics, Department for Transport (DfT): <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-traffic-statistics>
- ▶ National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory, Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) and Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA): <http://naei.defra.gov.uk/>
- ▶ Road accidents and safety statistics, Department for Transport: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-accidents-and-safety-statistics>

6. Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-freight-statistics-pre-release-access-list>

7. The next annual Road Freight Statistics release will be published in the summer of 2016. It will contain statistics for 2015.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks go to all the respondents who completed the survey and to those who have contributed towards this release both through production and checking of the content.