



Department  
for Transport

# Port Freight Statistics – User Engagement Results

# 1 Contents

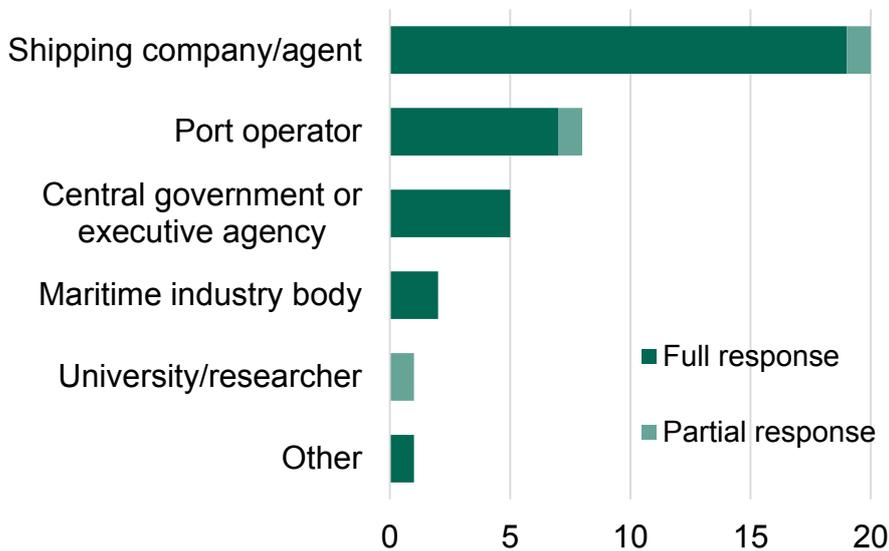
1	Contents .....	1
2	Background .....	2
3	Response to feedback .....	4
3.1	Summary .....	4
3.2	Data tables .....	4
3.3	Statistical release summary.....	4
3.4	Timeliness of data and outputs.....	6
3.5	Data supply process.....	6
3.6	Changes to methods .....	7
4	Next Steps .....	9
5	Annex A – detailed responses .....	10
5.1	Who responded? .....	10
5.2	Documentation and other materials.....	11
5.3	Data suppliers .....	13

## 2 Background

- 2.1.1 **This document contains the results and the response to the Port Freight Statistics User Engagement exercise.** A detailed breakdown of responses for each question can be found in [Annex A – detailed responses](#) of this document.
- 2.1.2 The Department acknowledges that there are known issues with the current data collection methods, which place burden upon shipping agents and operators. This exercise gave data suppliers the opportunity to feedback their views on these methods and to comment on possible methodological changes.
- 2.1.3 We also sought the views of users on their requirements of Port Freight Statistics, in particular their views on, documentation and guidance materials, and the structure and content of statistical releases.
- 2.1.4 The exercise ran from 14<sup>th</sup> November to 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2016. Users were invited to complete an online survey or to provide a response by telephone or email. We received 37 responses in total, including 3 partial responses, from shipping agents, port operators, central government, maritime industry bodies and academia.

**Figure 1: Responses to Q1. What field do you work in?**

Responses = 37



- 2.1.5 The responses received are viewed as broadly representative of data suppliers as a whole, with response from 13 per cent of ports and approximately 10 per cent of UK shipping agents. Although these response rates appear relatively low, for a non-mandatory exercise of this type, we consider this level of response to be acceptable.

2.1.6 Responses were received from all user groups, including at least one data supplier for each method of supply – note that shipping agents and ports are considered to be data suppliers, but they may also be considered to be users of outputs.

## 3 Response to feedback

### 3.1 Summary

3.1.1 The engagement exercise asked users for their views on the usefulness of three outputs which are produced as part of the Port Freight Statistics outputs:

- data tables
- statistical release summary
- technical notes

3.1.2 Of the respondents stating that they use each output, the data tables are viewed as the most useful, with over half of respondents finding them either extremely or very useful. For all three outputs the majority of respondents found them to be at least slightly useful.

3.1.3 Respondents also provided comments or sought further clarification on:

- the timeliness of data and outputs
- the data supply process
- changes to methods

3.1.4 More detailed information on the feedback and response to each of the six areas noted above can be found in each of the following sections. All responses to the engagement exercise have been considered and are published in detail in [Annex A – detailed responses](#) of this document.

### 3.2 Data tables

3.2.1 One user also requested monthly/quarterly data in data tables. Quarterly data are published in the [PORT05](#) series of data tables.

*Response: We will continue to produce data tables, the statistical release summary and technical notes in their current formats. We will however review the number of data tables we produce, assessing their level of usage by monitoring web analytics. At present it is not possible to publish monthly data.*

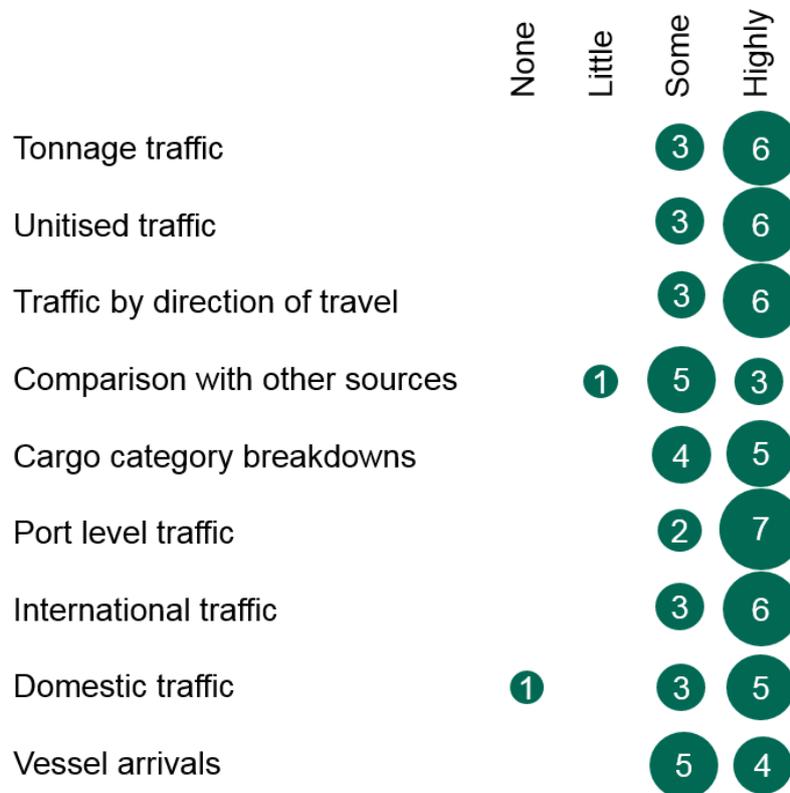
### 3.3 Statistical release summary

3.3.1 Respondents were asked for their views regarding the statistical release summary, in particular how useful each of the 9 chapters of the publication are.

3.3.2 Eight respondents answered these questions, indicating that they broadly find each chapter of at least some use. Of the total 72 responses there were only two responses which did not find a particular chapter to be of at least some use – one respondent indicated that they find the chapter comparing with other sources of data to be of little use, and one respondent finds the chapter on domestic traffic to be of no use.

**Figure 4: Responses to Q7. Please indicate the extent to which each of the topics covered in the release have proven useful to your work.**

Responses = 72 from 9 respondents



① Indicates one response

3.3.3 In response to question 8 regarding desired topics in statistical publications, respondents indicated a number of new areas which they would find useful. Some are possible to explore using existing data, such as:

- the full freight journey
- further separation of port level data (i.e. a breakdown for the 25 wharves and ports which are grouped together to represent London)
- port freight traffic by value (non-EU data are available from HMRC)

It is not currently possible to further explore the full freight journey, as the required data linkage between roads, rail, sea and air, is not yet possible. This is an area that we are currently exploring, any findings will be published on completion of this analysis.

It is also not possible to provide data which is further separated at the port level, as this data is considered commercially sensitive. Such data could only be published with the consent of the ports and agents concerned.

3.3.4 Data on port freight traffic by value is available on the [UK trade info website](#), for non-EU traffic.

We will explore whether it is practical to produce a chapter on value of port freight traffic in future statistical release summaries.

3.3.5 Other areas however are not possible to explore using existing data and would need either new data or methods, in order to investigate further. These topics included:

- transshipment of goods
- origin of shipments
- container contents tracking
- offshore wind-related traffic
- more detailed cargo category analysis

We will continue to produce a variety of chapters within the statistical release summary taking on board users' suggestions for new chapters. Feedback on the statistical release summary is always welcome and can be provided via email ([maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk)) at any time.

### 3.4 Timeliness of data and outputs

3.4.1 Two respondents noted that they would find it useful if annual data were published earlier. Another suggested that it is "pretty good" that the Department is able to publish port freight statistics to the timescale that they do given the complex nature of the data validation and the scope of the data.

The annual port freight statistical release summary and data table for 2016 are provisionally planned for publication in September 2017. Earlier publication of these outputs could not be guaranteed at present and may be detrimental to the overall quality of these National Statistics. We will continue to explore any potential efficiencies which could reduce the time it takes to validate data.

3.4.2 One user also raised the question of how useful other users find quarterly publications, implying that they do not find these updates particularly useful.

We will continue to seek feedback on our publications and monitor demand via web analytics services, in order to assess the need for quarterly publications.

### 3.5 Data supply process

3.5.1 The vast majority of respondents reported no issues with supplying data. Of those who indicated issues, each is described and is addressed in detail below:

- "We experience issues having to re-validate our own data when conflicting information is submitted by agents/shipping lines."

The fact that conflicting information is supplied suggests that at least one of the parties concerned holds inaccurate data. The Department tries to ensure that data suppliers are only contacted where absolutely necessary, but this process of quality assurance is essential to maintaining the quality of these statistics.

- "It is not always clear about amendments and how to send them."

Any amendments should be made in the same way as providing a normal data return – please contact the helpdesk during office hours for additional support if required.

- “Data can be supplied only via a dated internet platform.”  
“Occasionally web page has glitches.”  
This is an issue which we are aware of and will be taking steps to update the platforms on which the iSDES website can operate.
- “Understanding the correct specific cargo categories and commercial operations that require declaration.”  
Detailed guidance documentation is available on the Department’s website. Where this documentation does not answer any specific questions regarding which cargoes require declaration or how to categorise a cargo, please contact the helpdesk.
- “If port authorities are already making declarations then why are agents also making similar declarations?”  
The Department feels that this is currently necessary in order to quality assure the data we receive. We are undertaking analysis to explore how we can minimise the level of burden the validation process places upon data suppliers. We will update stakeholders of the progress of this work as soon as possible.
- “I hope the method of supplying information by fax is retained.”  
This function is retained for users who require it, however we recommend that users consider upgrading to another method of supply as we cannot guarantee that this function will be retained indefinitely.

3.5.2 For the respondents who indicated that they use the guidance documentation available, the majority said that they find it very useful.

The Department will continue to produce and update guidance materials as appropriate.

3.5.3 In response to question 20, would you like any additional support from DfT regarding supplying data, only one respondent indicated that they would like additional support. They stated that they would be interested in additional training if a new data collection system were to be adopted.

The Department acknowledges this request and will consider providing training should a new system be introduced.

3.5.4 No data suppliers indicated any dissatisfaction with their interaction with the Department or its collection agent with regard to data validation.

### **3.6 Changes to methods**

3.6.1 Respondents were also asked whether it would be possible for them to supply Bill of Lading or Cargo Manifest documents for the cargoes for which they are responsible. The aim of receiving these documents would be to cut down on the level of resource required for data suppliers to input or supply data. However, only 25% of suppliers stated that they would be able to provide these documents in full.

3.6.2 Suppliers stated that they were unable to provide these documents in full for a variety of reasons, including issues surrounding commercial sensitivity and an incomplete record of Bill of Lading documents.

[As most data suppliers indicated that they cannot provide a Bill of Lading for all cargoes this is not an option that we will pursue further at present.](#)

3.6.3 Respondents were asked to indicate their thoughts on whether a series of methodological changes would be feasible, the majority responded that they did not know. No respondents indicated that they felt the changes would be very useful.

[The Department will continue to explore methodological improvements and will seek users' views on any changes where appropriate.](#)

3.6.4 Respondents were asked whether there are any other suitable data sources on port freight which they are aware of. Other possible sources of data noted by respondents were data from:

- harbour authorities
- CERS data

3.6.5 Data is already collected from harbour authorities and the possibility of using CERS data was explored in detail in Section 7 of the [User engagement exercise document](#), and was assessed as being less suitable than other data sources.

3.6.6 All responses to the engagement exercise have been considered and are published in detail in [Annex A – detailed responses](#) of this document.

## 4 Next Steps

- 4.1.1 To summarise the responses, users indicated that generally they find the outputs produced to be useful. It would be desirable to some if outputs were published earlier. We will continue to explore potential efficiencies which could speed up the publication process. Respondents also suggested potential topics for us to explore in more detail within our statistical releases, which we will do over the coming year.
- 4.1.2 There were some issues raised with regard to data collection, as well as suggestions in relation to further developmental work and the improvement of processes. These are addressed in detail within this document – to summarise we will maintain the current systems and procedures in the short term whilst we further explore potential improvements.
- 4.1.3 The Department is developing a programme of work for 2017-18, which is aimed at addressing some of the issues raised in this exercise, or to further explore ways to improve the Port Freight statistics processes. This programme will include work to:
- improve the outputs we produce by reviewing the number of data tables which are produced and by reviewing the content and structure of the statistical release summary
  - consider including discussion of topics such as the value of port freight traffic, as requested by users, to improve the quality of our statistical release summary
  - make the validation process more efficient, with the aim of reducing the burden on data suppliers and improving the timeliness of published outputs
  - explore the full freight journey, as requested, providing an update to users on the completion of analysis
  - explore the use of additional data to improve processes, such as AIS data or Port Freight data from other countries
- 4.1.4 A further update on this work will be provided with the publication of Port Freight Statistics 2016, provisionally scheduled for September 2017.
- 4.1.5 If users have any further feedback or would like to speak to a member of the Maritime Statistics team please email us at [maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk) or call 020 7944 4863.

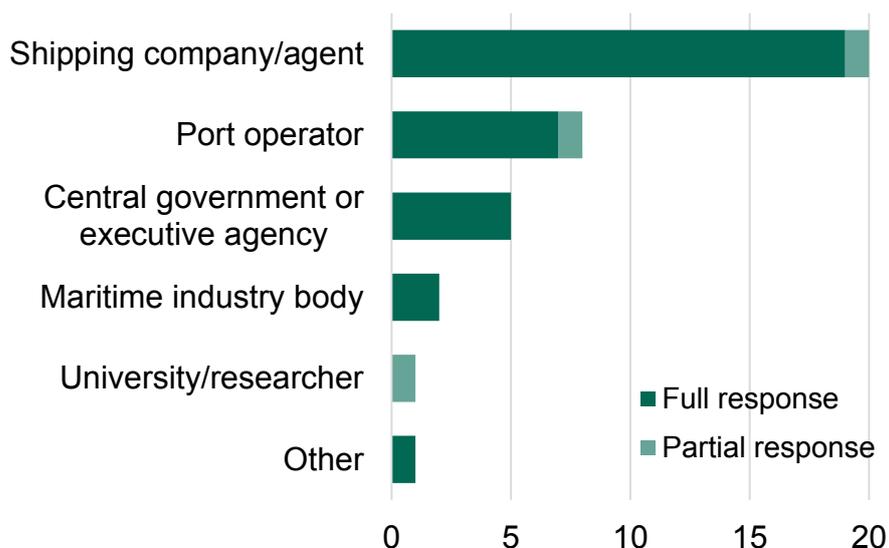
## 5 Annex A – detailed responses

### 5.1 Who responded?

5.1.1 A total of 37 responses were received - partial responses indicated by lighter colour - to the exercise.

**Figure 1: Responses to Q1. What field do you work in?**

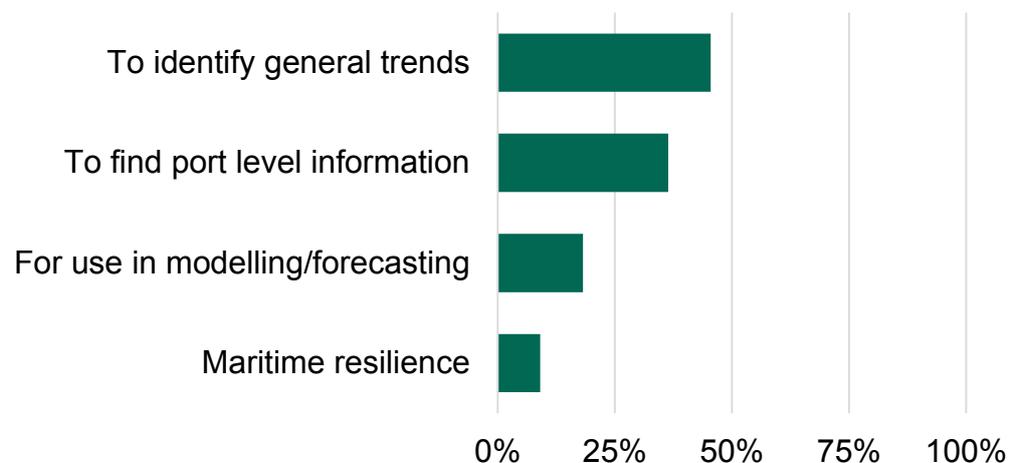
Responses = 37



5.1.2 Of the respondents who provided information regarding their purposes for using Port Freight Statistics, the most common uses are to identify general trends in port freight traffic and to find port level information.

**Figure 2: Responses to Q2. For what purpose(s) do you use Port Freight Statistics?**

Responses = 12 (from 11 respondents)

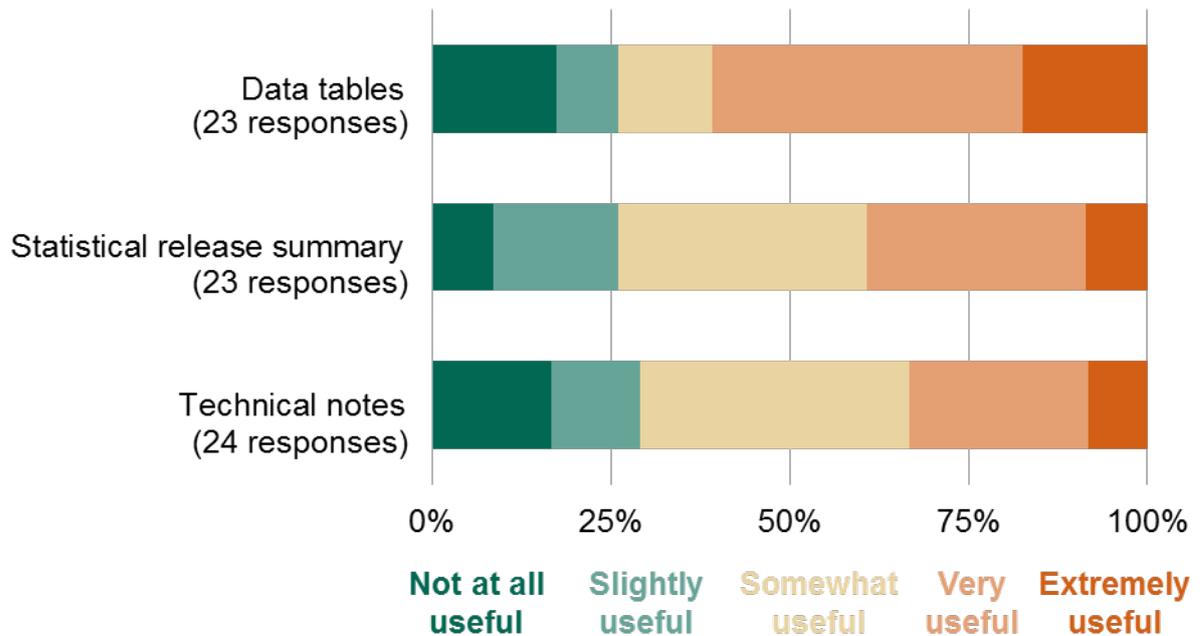


## 5.2 Documentation and other materials

5.2.1 The engagement exercise asked users for their views on the usefulness of three outputs which are produced as part of the Port Freight Statistics outputs:

- data tables
- statistical release summary
- technical notes

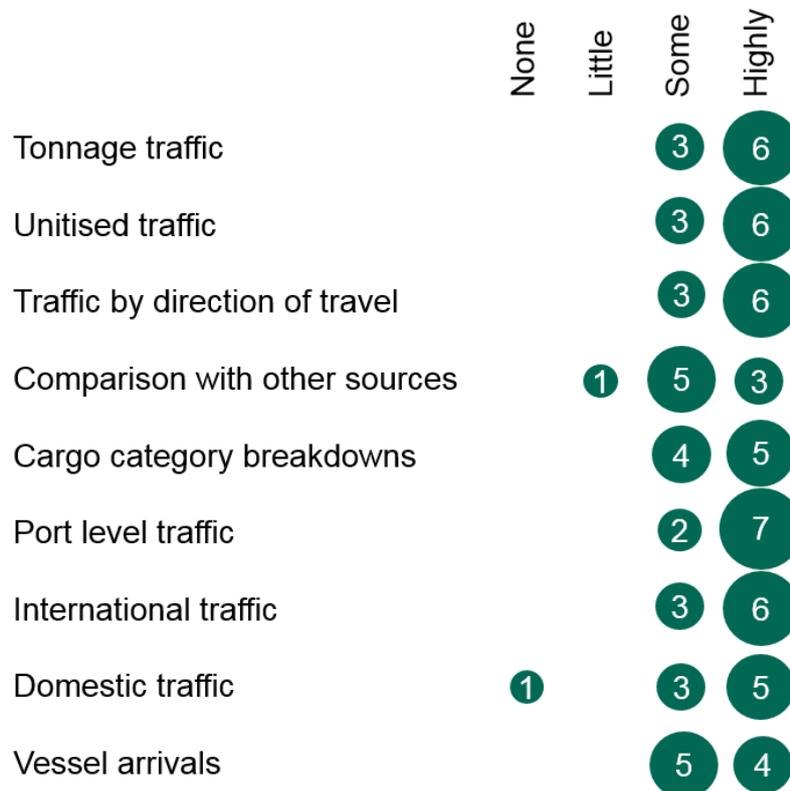
**Figure 3: Responses to Q3-5. How useful do you find the...**



5.2.2 Respondents were asked for their views of the Port Freight statistical releases, in particular how useful each of the 9 chapters of the publications are.

**Figure 4: Responses to Q7. Please indicate the extent to which each of the topics covered in the release have proven useful to your work.**

Responses = 72 from 9 respondents



① Indicates one response

5.2.3 In response to question 8 regarding desired topics in statistical publications, respondents indicated a number of new areas which they would find useful. Some of these are possible to explore using existing data such as:

- the full freight journey
- further separation of port level data (i.e. a breakdown for the 25 wharves and ports which are grouped together to represent London)
- port freight traffic by value (non-EU data are available from HMRC)

5.2.4 Other areas however are not possible to explore using existing data and would need either new data or methods to investigate. These topics included:

- transshipment of goods
- origin of shipments
- container contents tracking
- offshore wind-related traffic
- more detailed cargo category analysis

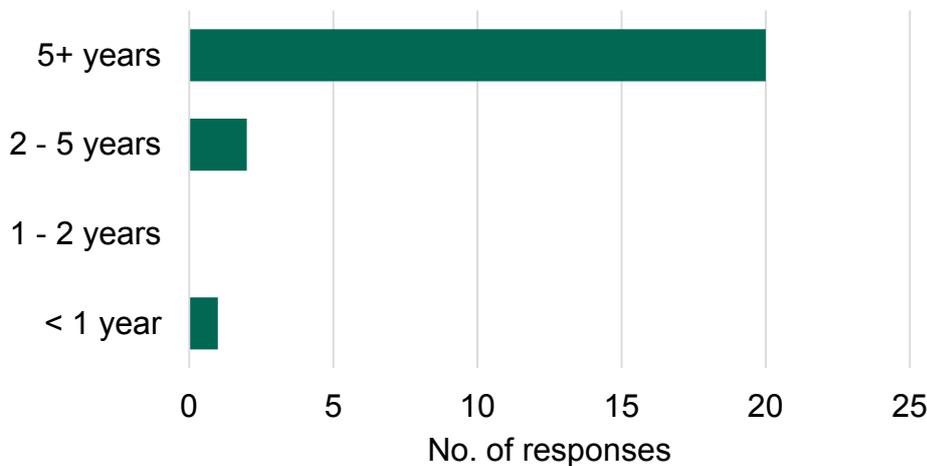
5.2.5 Two respondents (in response to Q9) noted that they would find it useful if annual data were published earlier. Another noted that they think it is “pretty good” that the Department is able to publish port freight statistics to the timescale that they do given the complex nature of the data validation and the scope of the data.

### 5.3 Data suppliers

5.3.1 There were 23 respondents who identified as a Port Freight data supplier, with the vast majority having provided data to the Department for at least 5 years.

**Figure 5: Responses to Q12. How long have you supplied data to the Department?**

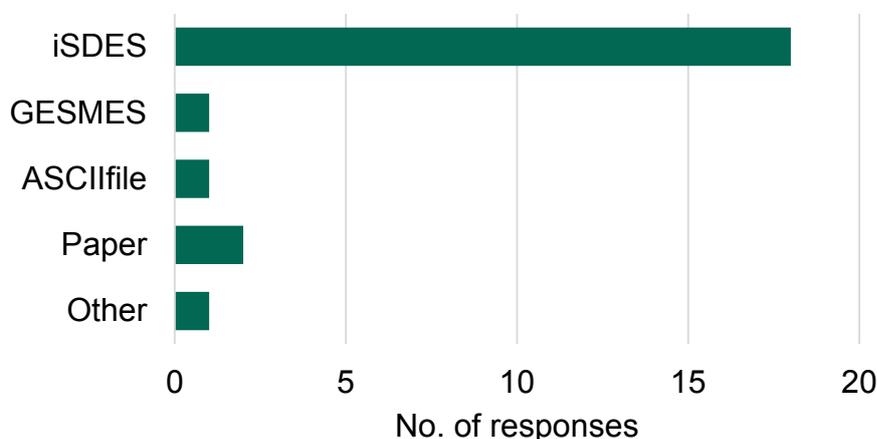
Responses = 23



5.3.2 Most data suppliers who responded use the Internet Statistical Data Entry System (iSDES) to provide data returns. This is broadly representative of all data suppliers. At least one user of each data supply method responded to this exercise.

**Figure 5: Responses to Q13. Which method do you use to provide data?**

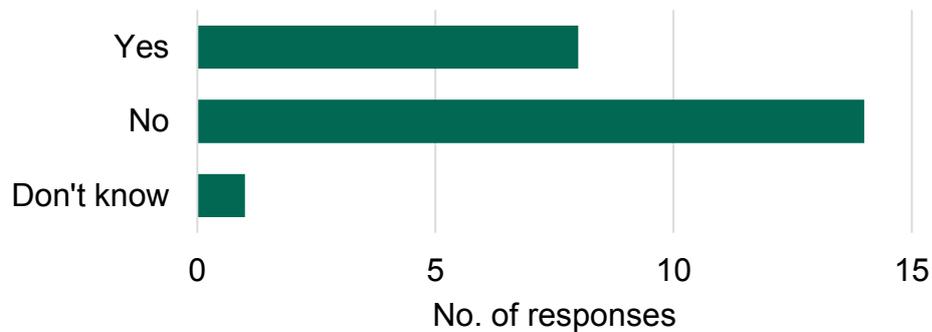
Responses = 23



5.3.3 The majority of data suppliers say that they only collect or produce information on port freight traffic for the purpose of providing this information to the Department.

**Figure 6: Responses to Q14. Do you collect or produce this information for purposes other than to provide DfT with this information?**

Responses = 23

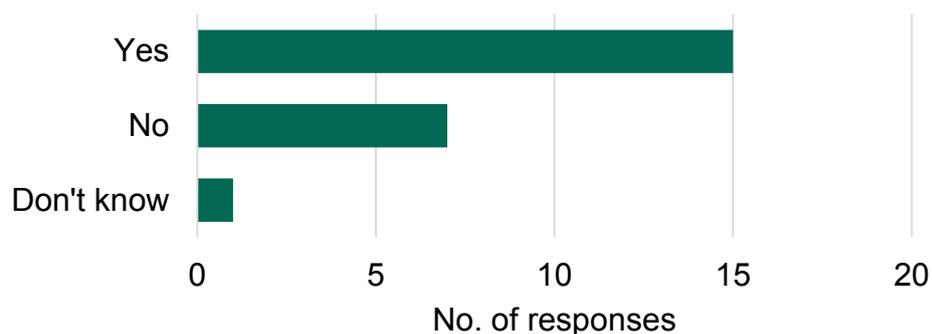


5.3.4 Analysing these results further it appears that shipping agents are less likely than port operators to collect this information for other purposes. Half of the port operators who responded said that they collect or produce port freight traffic information for additional purposes, compared to approximately one in three shipping agents.

5.3.5 Two thirds of data suppliers said that they carry out checks on their data before sending it to DfT.

**Figure 7: Responses to Q15. Do you carry out any checks on your data before sending it to DfT?**

Responses = 23

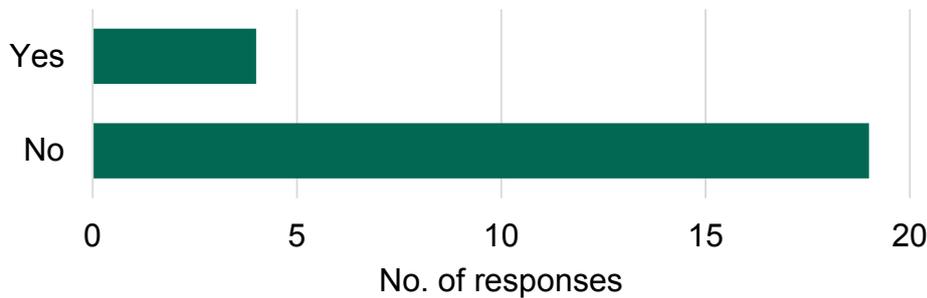


5.3.6 Of the free text explanations given to describe these checks most data suppliers described checks against invoicing or other internal systems, Bills of Lading/Cargo Manifests, and against the general trends in the relevant trades.

5.3.7 The vast majority of respondents reported no issues with supplying data.

**Figure 8: Responses to Q16. Do you have any issues when supplying data?**

Responses = 23

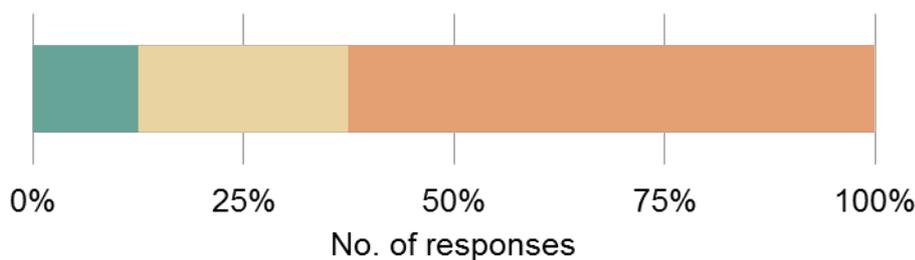


5.3.8 For the respondents who indicated that they use the guidance documentation available, the majority said that they find it very useful.

5.3.9 Only one respondent stated that they would prefer to provide data using another method. They clarified this further by stating that they would like an update to the internet browsers in which it is possible to provide data through the iSDES system.

**Figure 8: Responses to Q17. How useful do you find the guidance documentation?**

Responses = 16



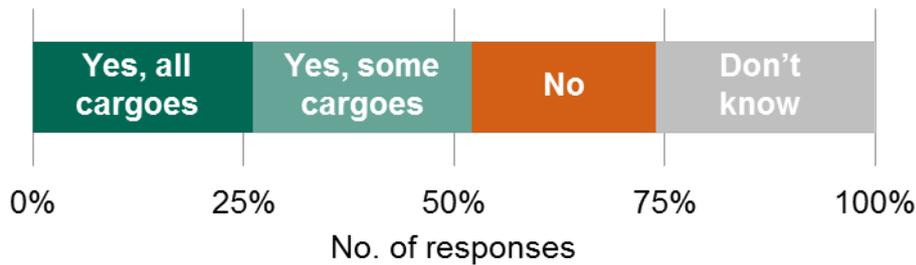
**Not at all useful**   **Slightly useful**   **Somewhat useful**   **Very useful**   **Extremely useful**

5.3.10 Respondents were asked whether it would be possible for them to supply Bill of Lading or Cargo Manifest documents for the cargoes for which they are responsible.

5.3.11 Suppliers stated that they were unable to provide these documents in full for a variety of reasons including issues surrounding commercial sensitivity and an incomplete record of Bill of Lading documents.

**Figure 9: Responses to Q19. Would it be possible for you to supply the Bill of Lading or Cargo Manifest documents for some or all cargoes for which you are responsible?**

Responses = 23

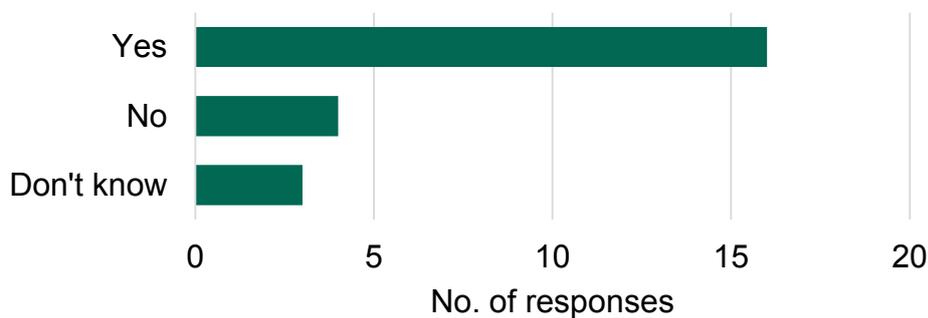


5.3.12 In response to question 20, would you like any additional support from DfT regarding supplying data, only one respondent indicated that they would like additional support.

5.3.13 Most respondents have been contacted by the Department or its collecting agent to validate their data.

**Figure 10: Responses to Q21. Has DfT or its collecting agent, BMT Reliability Consultants, contacted you to validate your data?**

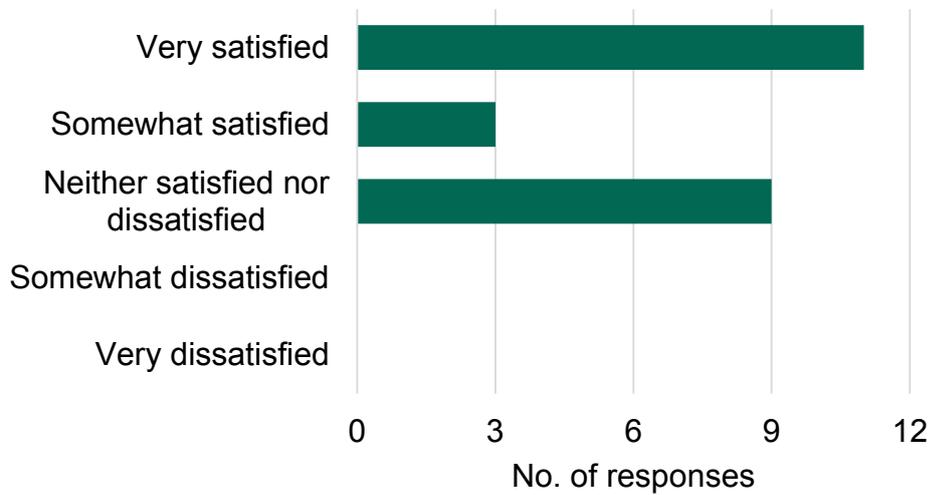
Responses = 23



5.3.14 No respondents indicated any dissatisfaction with this process.

**Figure 11: Responses to Q22. How satisfied were you with this interaction?**

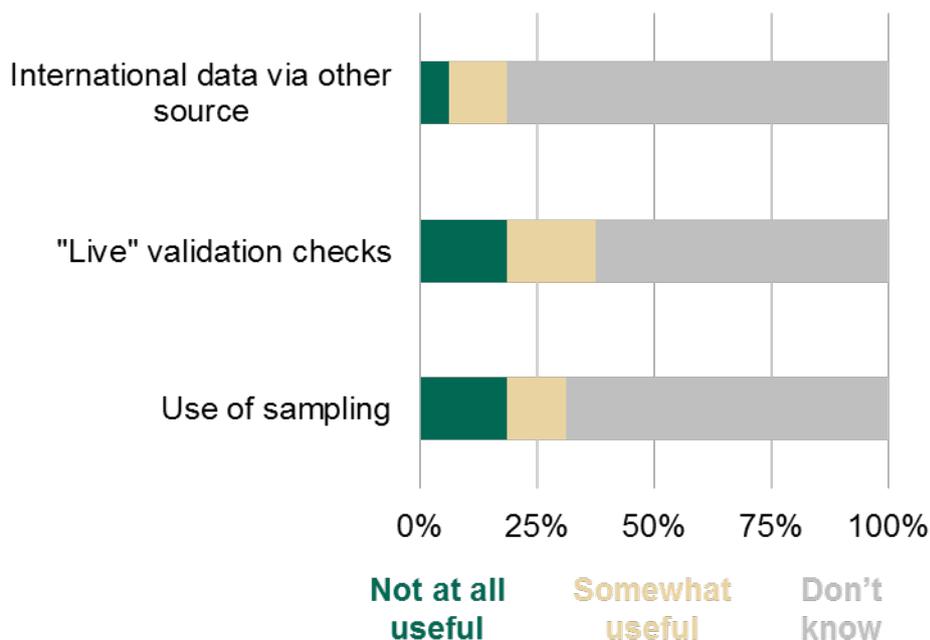
Responses = 23



5.3.15 When respondents were asked to indicate their thoughts on whether a series of methodological changes would be feasible, the majority responded that they did not know. No respondents indicated that they felt the changes would be very useful.

**Figure 12: Responses to Q23. Please indicate the extent to which you think each potential change would be suitable/feasible.**

Responses = 16



5.3.16 Respondents were asked whether there are any other suitable data sources on port freight which they are aware of. Other possible sources of data noted by respondents were data from:

- harbour authorities
- CERS data

5.3.17 In the final free-text response question of the survey, respondents raised a number of different points:

- clarification regarding the types of cargo which require declaration
- clarification on why ports and agents are both making data returns which cover similar information
- a desire to retain the function to supply data returns by fax
- the question of how useful other users find quarterly publications – respondent implied that they do not find these updates particularly useful
- a request for monthly/quarterly data in data tables
- further investigation of transshipment ("the Rotterdam effect")