



Department for Transport

Road Freight Statistics, United Kingdom: October 2015 - September 2016

About this release

This statistical release summarises statistics on the domestic and international activity of UK-registered heavy goods vehicles (HGVs).

Domestic road freight data are derived from the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Great Britain (CSRG T GB) which measures the domestic activity of GB - registered HGVs operating in the UK.

International road freight data are derived from: The International Road Haulage Survey (IRHS) which measures the international activity of GB-registered HGVs and the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Northern Ireland (CSRG T NI) which measures the domestic and international activity of NI-registered HGVs.

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Domestic road freight: main results

In the year ending September 2016 for **GB-registered HGVs** there were...

Compared to the year ending September 2015

1.76

billion tonnes of



↑ 8%

161

billion tonne kilometres of



↑ 8%

19.0

billion vehicle kilometres travelled



↑ 4%

- ▶ The amount of **goods lifted** in the UK by GB-registered heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) increased by 8% compared with the previous year to 1.76 billion tonnes. This is unchanged compared to 10 years earlier but 30% higher than the recessionary low of 2009.
- ▶ The amount of **goods moved** in the UK by GB-registered HGVs increased by 8% compared with the previous year to 161 billion tonne kilometres. This is 7% higher than 10 years earlier and 29% higher than the recessionary low of 2009.

[See [Table RFS0101](#) for detailed statistics]

Definitions

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

Goods moved: the weight of goods carried multiplied by the distance hauled, measured in tonne kilometres.

International road freight: main results

In the year ending September 2016 for **UK-registered HGVs** there were...

Compared to the year ending
September 2015

3.8
million tonnes
exported from the UK

4.0
million tonnes
imported to the UK



↓ 7%

↓ 9%

2.6
billion tonne kilometres
moved from the
UK (exported)

2.6
billion tonne kilometres
moved to the UK
(imported)



↓ 9%

↓ 8%

- ▶ The amount of **goods lifted** to or from the UK by UK-registered HGVs decreased by 8% compared with the previous year ending September 2015 to 7.8 million tonnes (3.8 million tonnes exported and 4.0 million tonnes imported). This is 29% lower than the same period 10 years earlier and 19% lower than in 2009 during the recession.
- ▶ The amount of **goods moved** to or from the UK by UK-registered HGVs decreased by 9% compared with the previous year ending September 2015 to 5.2 billion tonne kilometres. This is 40% lower than the same period 10 years earlier and 23% lower than in 2009 during the recession.
- ▶ UK-registered HGVs consistently **import more goods than they export** (Goods lifted and goods moved). The amount of imports lifted to the UK has been higher than the amount of exports, for every rolling year since data has been available (Q4 2004).

[See [Table RFS0144](#) and [Table RFS0201](#) for detailed statistics]

[Detailed information can be found in the [annual release](#)]

In context - the year ending September 2016 compared to the year ending September 2015:



Users and uses of the statistics

Road freight statistics are a key source of management information on the use of the country's infrastructure. Their main use occurs across various types of public and private bodies: the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat); local and central government, such as the Office for National Statistics and Highways England; local town and transport planning bodies; commercial organisations, such as haulage operators and transport consultants; and academics.

Users are mainly interested in information such as the length of haul, empty running and the pattern of freight from abroad on UK roads. The statistics also support policies on freight, road safety and on reducing congestion and pollution.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

The figures in this release are derived from the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Great Britain/Northern Ireland (CSRGT GB/NI) and the International Road Haulage survey (IRHS) which provide information on the domestic and international activity of UK-registered. Foreign-registered vehicles and vehicles with a gross vehicle weight of 3.5 tonnes or less, are excluded from the survey (Light Goods Vehicles).

The CSRGT GB/NI are continuous surveys which collect a range of information on freight movements from a stratified sample of HGVs. Figures are weighted to be representative of the HGV population however, like any statistical source, there are limitations. For example, as a sample survey the resulting figures are estimates with associated sampling error.

The International Road Haulage Survey (IRHS) is a continuous business-level survey of road freight activity. It collects information on international journeys made by HGVs, transporting freight by road, that are registered to businesses in GB. This data is combined with international trip data from the CSRGT NI survey to build a picture of all international activity by UK registered vehicles.

Businesses are identified for inclusion in the IRHS from records of HGV operator licences owned by the Office of the Traffic Commissioner (OTC) and provided to DfT by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA). Only firms possessing a "Standard International" HGV operator's licence (which permits them to carry their own goods and those of others in the UK and internationally) are surveyed under the IRHS. Firms in possession of a "Restricted" or "Standard National" licence (which permit them to move their own goods internationally but not those of others) are excluded from the survey on the basis of balancing cost, resources and coverage time.

This does mean there may be some under-reporting of international road freight activity as well as the potential for bias in the road freight data if the activities, type of work or nature of freight moved by firms with standard international licences differs to that of firms carrying other licence types.

Discussions DfT have held with the OTC, DVSA and the Road Haulage Association throughout 2016 suggested that the majority of international work is conducted by HGVs holding “Standard International” licences. This has given DfT confidence in its methodology as most HGV activity should be captured, therefore under-reporting and resultant bias is likely to be low. However, DfT will continue to investigate this and take actions as appropriate and will update these strengths and weaknesses in future publications to reflect any findings.

Figures from the IRHS are weighted to be representative of the volume of HGV traffic travelling from GB to mainland Europe using ferry routes and the Channel Tunnel. This information is collected from returns provided by the roll-on / roll-off ferry operators (RORO), giving the number of powered vehicles and unaccompanied trailers carried on each route from GB to mainland Europe and from monthly information supplied by Eurotunnel.

The survey has been carried out on a statutory basis since early 2008. See the [RoRo survey: methods and quality](#) document for more information.

Disaggregation by country of registration of powered vehicles is supplied by most of the ferry operators and by Eurotunnel. Some operators identify this from the registration number pattern whilst others extract the nationality from the manifest or waybill. A few operators use the country of booking as a proxy for the country of registration of the powered vehicle. RORO data is only able to disaggregate between UK and foreign vehicles, whereas the IRHS is restricted to GB registered vehicles. This means that to ascertain the proportion of traffic which is Northern Irish freight an assumption is required. To do this, a scaling factor is applied in the weighting whereby each port group route (from the RoRo survey) is adjusted by a factor to account for the proportion of NI traffic estimated to be travelling on these routes. These factors are set out below:

Table 1: Northern Ireland Vehicles Scaling Factors

Port Group Route	Factor
Channel Tunnel	0.988
Dover and Ramsgate	0.988
Hull	0.988
Irish Sea	0.7
North and East	0.988
Plymouth and Poole	0.988
Portsmouth, Newhaven and Southampton	0.988

Up to 1978, inward RORO traffic to GB was also recorded, but because it was similar to outward traffic, the data requirement was discontinued to save respondent effort. The use of RORO traffic to weight the IRHS data may introduce a small bias due to the fact that post-stratification is applied based only on the outward route of the vehicle. This may affect vehicles which return to the UK using a route different than that for the outward journey.

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.

Users should note that the freight statistics in this publication have not been seasonally adjusted and quarterly figures are prone to fluctuation therefore quarterly percentage changes are not displayed. Comparisons between 12 month periods are likely to be more informative and have been presented for this reason.

Guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics and further information can be found in the [Road Freight Statistics methodology note](#).

Background notes

The data tables give further detail on the key results presented in this statistical release and statistics on other road freight topics. These data tables are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-freight-domestic-and-international-statistics>

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 March 2017, and users can refer to the links below for the most recent or revised data available for each of the sources used, and also view any caveats relating to the sources.

- ▶ United Kingdom National Accounts, Office for National Statistics (ONS): <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/compendium/unitedkingdomnationalaccountsthebluebook/2016edition>
- ▶ Vehicle licensing statistics for HGVs, Department for Transport (DfT): <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/veh05-licensed-heavy-goods-vehicles>
- ▶ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/quarterly-energy-prices>
- ▶ Exchange rate, Office for National Statistics (ONS): <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/balanceofpayments/timeseries/thap/mret>
- ▶ 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>.



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