



Road goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe: July to September 2017 (Quarter 3)

About this release

This statistical release summarises results from the survey of road goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe. It collects information from roll-on / roll-off (also called 'RoRo') ferry operators and Eurotunnel, on the number of powered vehicles and unaccompanied trailers, carried (outbound) on all the main ferry routes between Great Britain and mainland Europe, plus the Channel Tunnel. Ferry routes between Great Britain, and Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland are not included.

In this publication

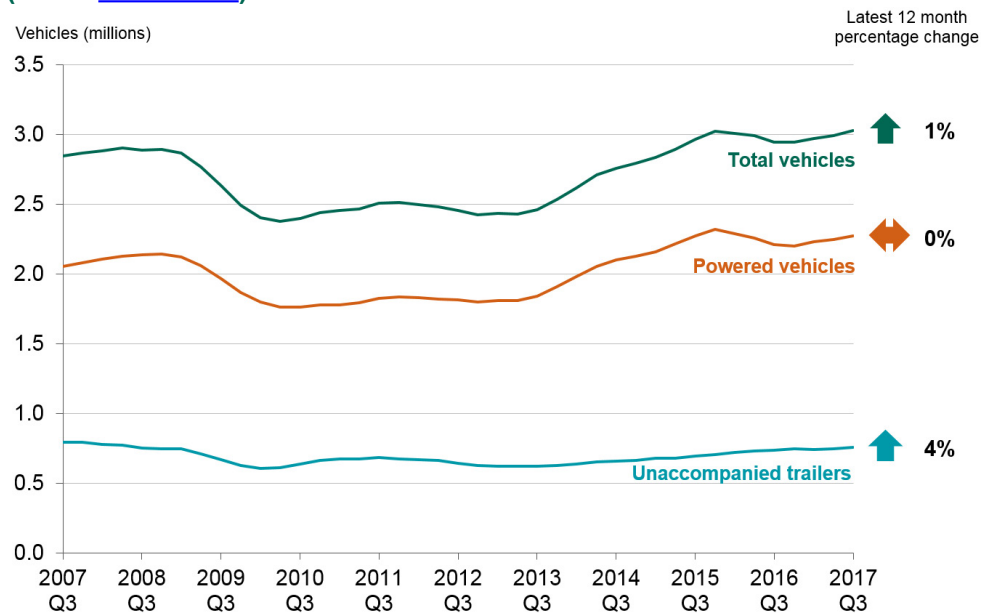
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In the year ending September 2017, just over 3 million road goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe, a 1% increase compared to the year ending September 2016.

Of the total volume of road goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe, 2.2 million were **powered vehicles**, a similar level to the year ending September 2016. There were also 0.8 million **unaccompanied trailers**, which corresponds to a 4% increase to the year ending September 2016.

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, rolling 12 month totals, September 2007 to September 2017

(Table [RoRo0101](#))



July - September 2017 (Quarter 3 totals)

Between July and September 2017 (Quarter 3), 748 thousand road goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe, 1% fewer than in Quarter 3 2016. Of these vehicles, 547 thousand were **powered vehicles** and 200 thousand were **unaccompanied trailers** - representing a 1% decrease and a 6% increase respectively on Quarter 3 2016.

Definitions



Powered vehicles (over 3.5 tonnes) includes: Rigid lorries, Tractors & Trailers (counted as one unit) and Tractive units only.



Unaccompanied trailers includes: tow-bar trailers and articulated semi trailers, not accompanied on the ferry by a powered unit.

Overall trend in road goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe

Around 3.0 million road goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe in the year ending September 2017 (comprising 2.2 million powered vehicles and 0.8 million unaccompanied trailers). This was 1% more than in the year ending September 2016.

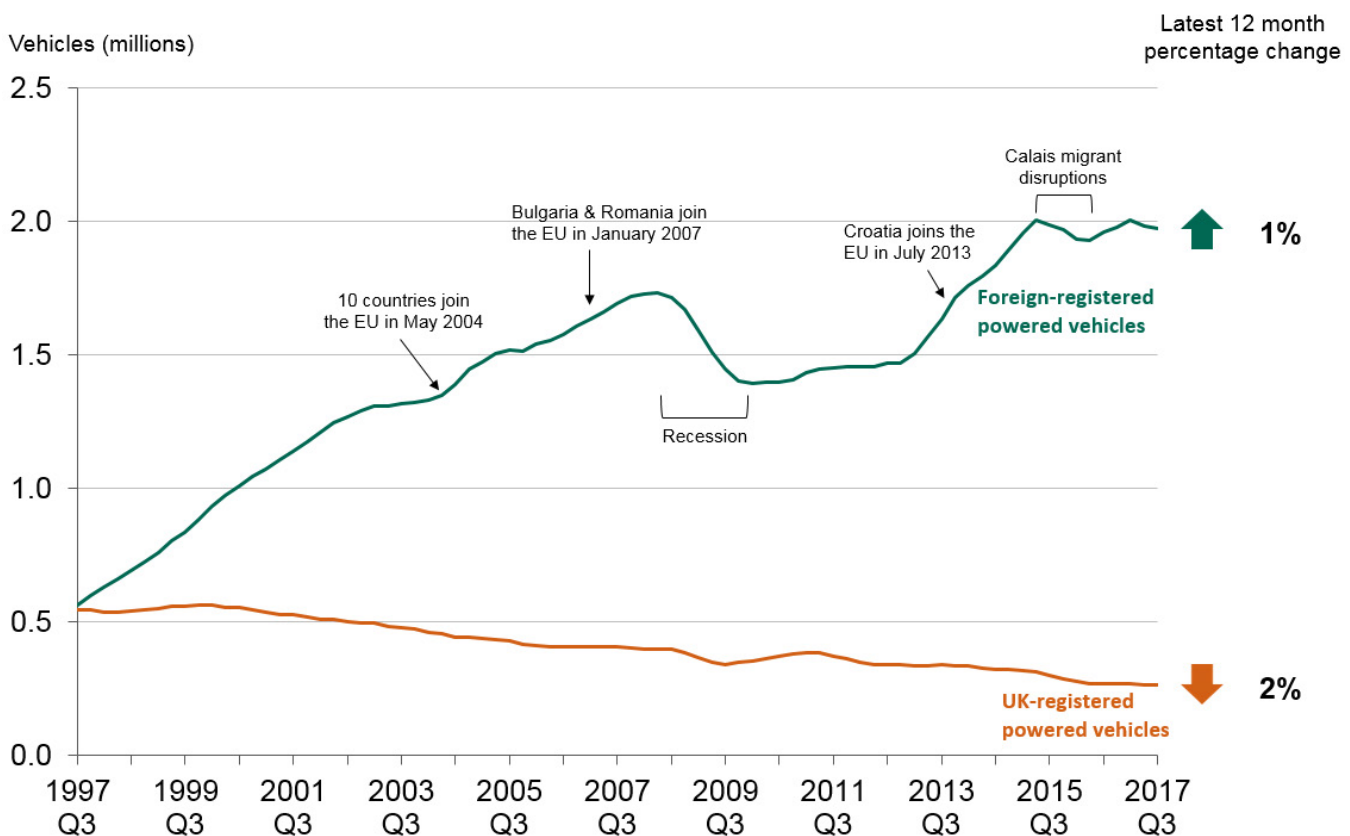
The long term trend shows that the total number of road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe has been increasing, with the figure in the year ending September 2017 being 65% higher than the figure 20 years earlier.

During the year ending September 2017 the number of foreign registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe increased by 1% to just under 2 million. In comparison, the number of UK registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe fell by 2% (to 0.3 million) compared to the previous year.

Over the last 20 years, the number of UK-registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe has been in gradual decline, while the number of foreign-registered powered vehicles has been steadily increasing, with the exception of a recession related dip between 2008 and 2009. Since 2015, the number of foreign-registered vehicles has remained around 1.9 to 2.0 million, suggesting the upward trend may be starting to peak.

Back in 1996, over half of the powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe were UK-registered vehicles (52%), compared to only 12% in the latest 12 month period.

Powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe by registration, rolling 12 month totals, September 1997 to September 2017 (Table [RoRo0101](#))



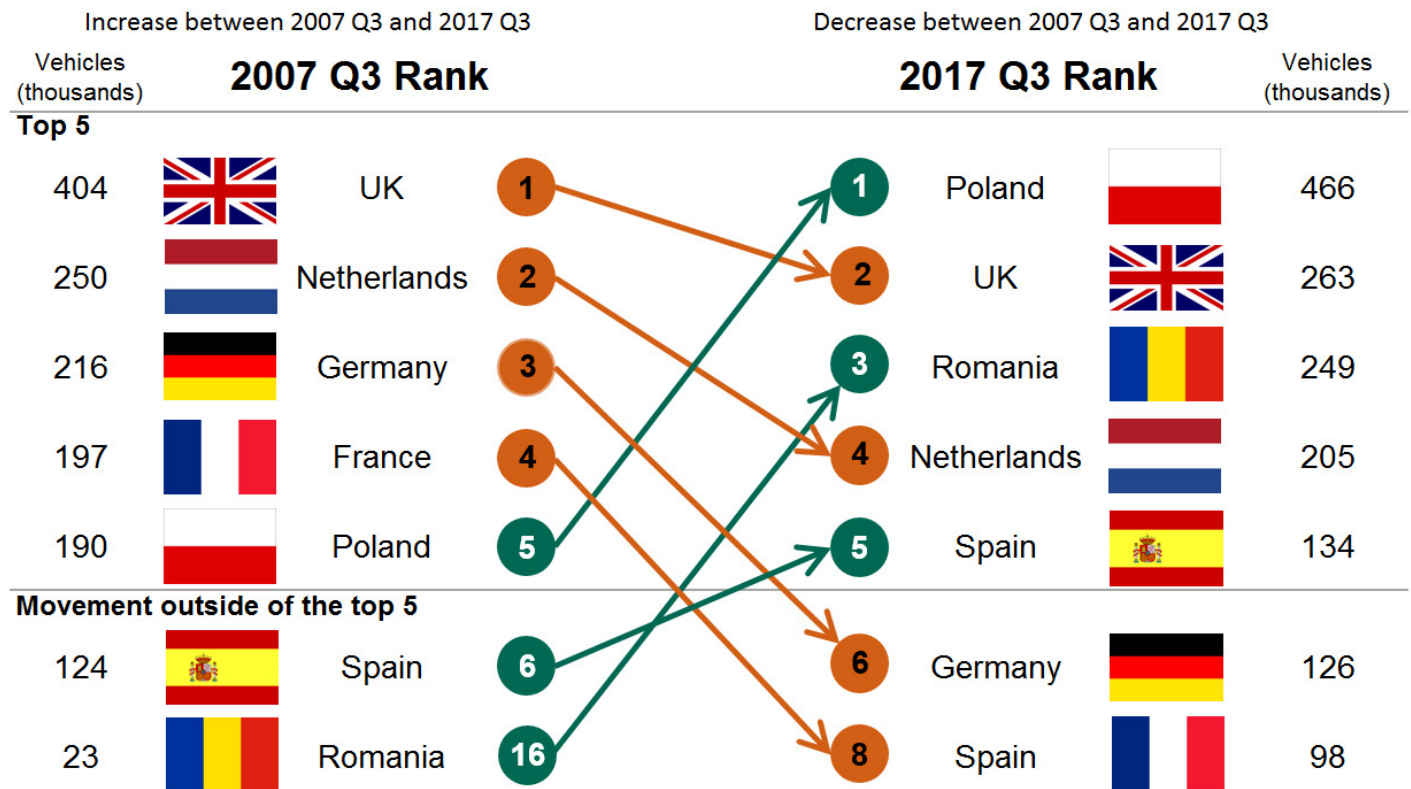
Country of vehicle registration

Over the last 20 years there has been a four fold increase in the number of foreign-registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe (from 0.6 million in the year ending September 1997, to just under 2.0 million in the latest 12 month period).

The proportion of powered vehicles registered to countries such as the **UK, Netherlands, Germany** and **France** that travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe has fallen as a number of other countries have greatly increased their share since joining the European Union (EU).

The volume of powered goods vehicles registered to **Poland** has increased from 3% in 2004 when it first joined the EU, to 21% in the year ending September 2017 - the largest share of any country. The number of powered vehicles registered to Poland travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe increased by 2% from 457 thousand in the year ending September 2016 to 466 thousand in the year ending September 2017. Since **Romania** joined the EU in 2007, its share of powered goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe has risen from 1% to 11% in the year ending September 2017.

Powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, by country of registration, rolling 12 month totals, September 2007 to September 2017 (Table [RoRo0201](#))



July - September 2017 (Quarter 3 total)

Between July and September 2017 (Quarter 3), 547 thousand powered vehicles travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe. Of these powered vehicles, 67 thousand were **UK-registered** (12% of the total), a decrease of 34% compared to 10 years earlier (101 thousand).

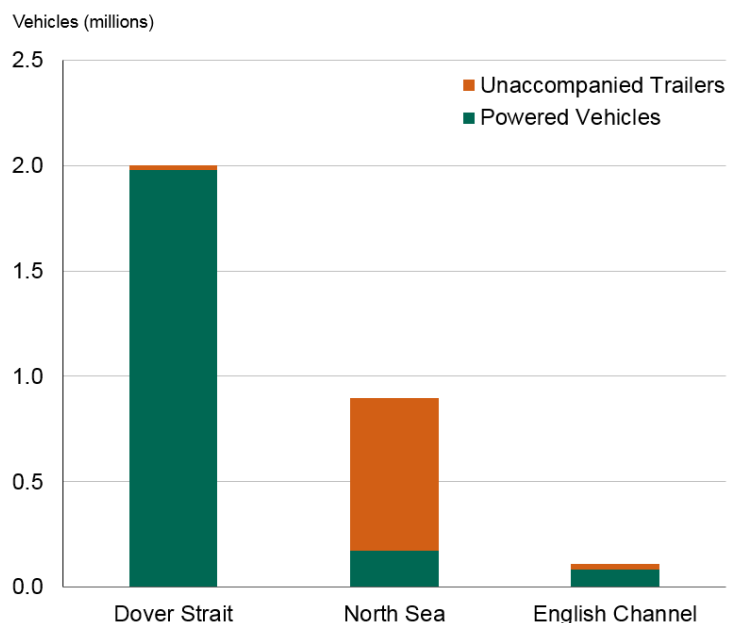
A total of 480 thousand **foreign-registered** powered vehicles travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe in Quarter 3 2017, accounting for 88% of all powered vehicles. This was 1% fewer than Quarter 3 2016 but 13% more than 10 years earlier.

In the year ending September 2017, just over 2 million road goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe used the **Dover Strait** ports (67% of the total), 897 thousand used **North Sea** ports (30% of the total) and 111 thousand used **English Channel** ports (4% of the total).

The majority (88%) of **powered vehicles** travelling to mainland Europe left via the Dover Strait ports, while the vast majority (94%) of **unaccompanied trailers** travelled from the North Sea ports.

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe by port group and type, October 2016 to September 2017 (Tables [RoRo0401](#), [RoRo0501](#))

■ North Sea ports ■ Dover Strait ports ■ English Channel ports



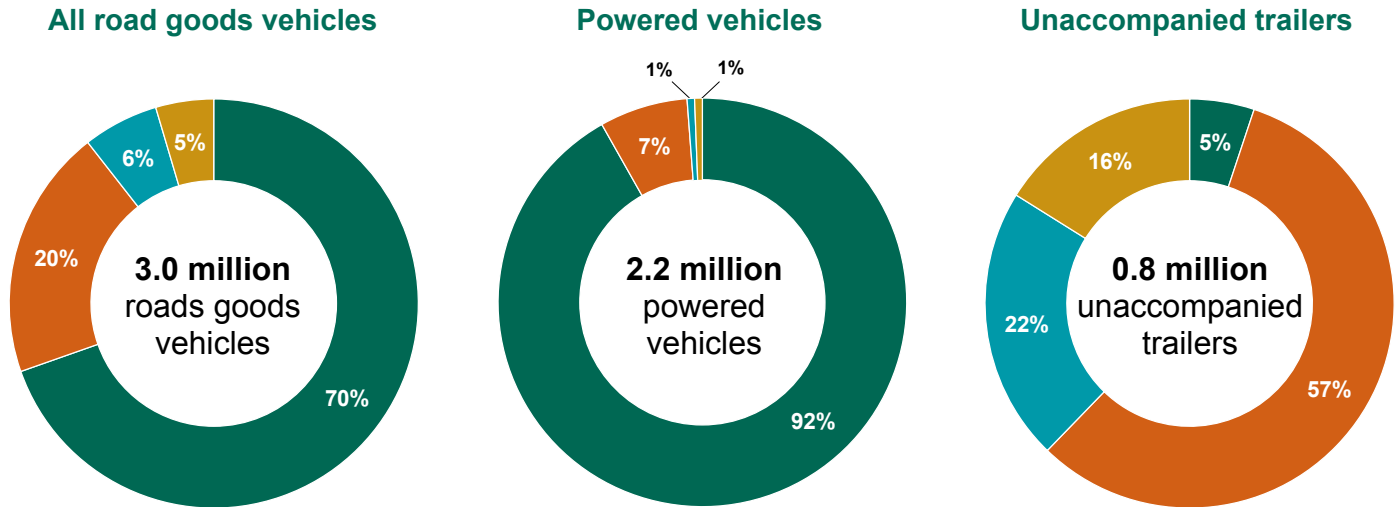
The chart shows that there is a prevalence of powered vehicles on the shorter routes, such as to France from the **Dover Strait** ports, and a prevalence of unaccompanied trailers on the longer routes, for example to the Netherlands from the **North Sea** ports. This is largely due to the fact that unaccompanied trailers are used on longer distance journeys instead of powered vehicles for less urgent cargo. There are also **cost factors** whereby haulage firms may seek to be more efficient by not using powered vehicles on longer routes due to driver's cost constraint and the regulations on the number of hours drivers can operate.

July - September 2017 (Quarter 3 total)

Between July and September 2017 (Quarter 3), 489 thousand road goods vehicles travelled from the **Dover Strait** ports, the majority of which were powered vehicles (99%). In comparison, 232 thousand road goods vehicles travelled from the **North Sea** ports, the majority of which were unaccompanied trailers (81%); and 27 thousand road goods vehicles travelled from the **English channel** ports, the majority of which were powered vehicles (76%).

Country of disembarkation

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, by country of disembarkation, October 2016 to September 2017 (Tables [RoRo0302](#), [RoRo0402](#), [RoRo0502](#))



Key: ■ France ■ Netherlands ■ Belgium ■ Other

Other includes: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Norway, Russia, Spain and Sweden

Percentages are subject to rounding

France is the most common country of disembarkation for all road goods vehicles and powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, accounting for 70% of all road goods vehicles and 92% of powered vehicles. The majority of these road goods vehicles destined to France travelled from the **Dover Strait** ports (96%) and the remainder from the **English Channel** ports. **France** is the only country of disembarkation for the Channel Tunnel.

In comparison, the **Netherlands** is the most common country of disembarkation for unaccompanied trailers travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, accounting for 57% of all unaccompanied trailers. **Belgium** is the second most common country of disembarkation for unaccompanied trailers (22%); whilst only 5% of unaccompanied trailers disembarked in France.

July - September 2017 (Quarter 3 total)

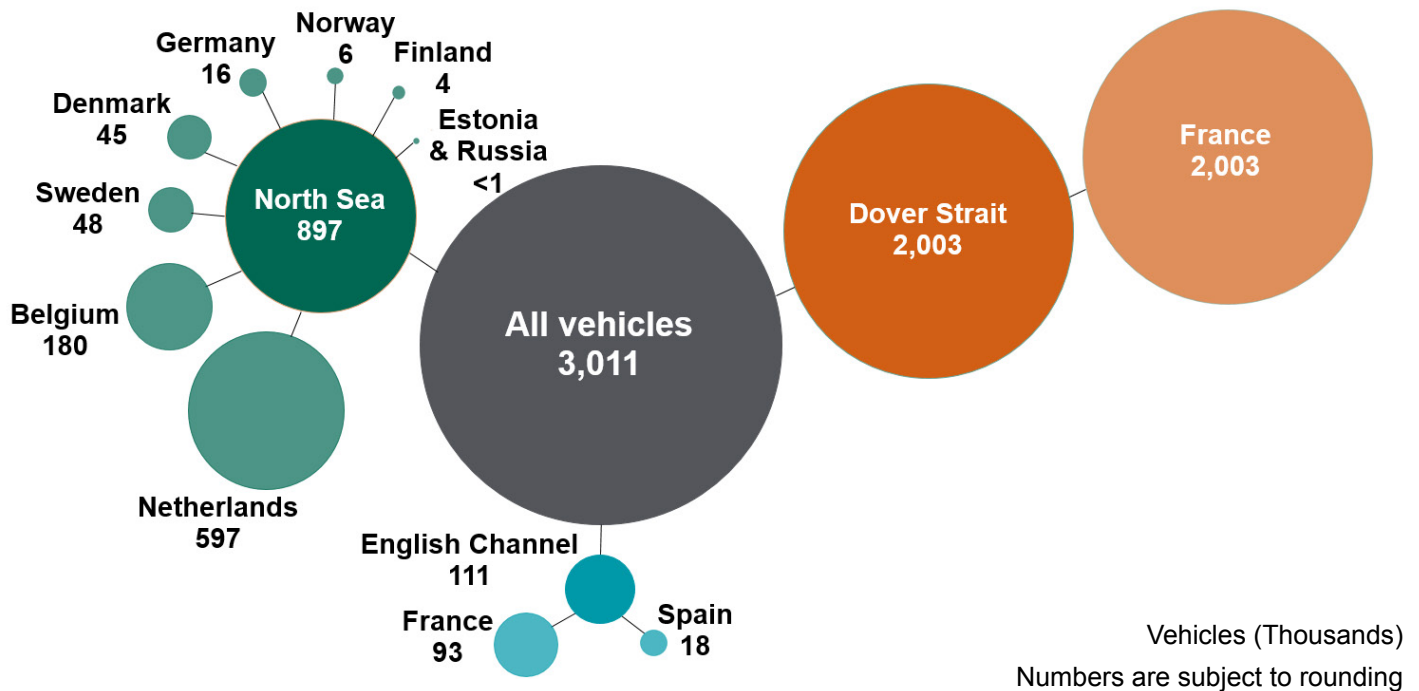
Between July and September 2017 (Quarter 3), 511 thousand **road goods vehicles** disembarked in **France** (68% of the total), which was a 1% decrease compared to Quarter 3 2016 (515 thousand road goods vehicles).

A total of 501 thousand **powered vehicles** disembarked in **France** (92% of the total), a 1% decrease compared to Quarter 3 2016 (506 thousand powered vehicles). The number of powered vehicles disembarking in the **Netherlands** was 39 thousand, a 2% decrease compared to the same quarter last year (40 thousand powered vehicles).

In comparison, only 10 thousand **unaccompanied trailers** disembarked in **France** (5% of the total), while 115 thousand unaccompanied trailers disembarked in the **Netherlands** (57% of the total).

Country of disembarkation

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe by port group and country of disembarkation, October 2016 to September 2017 (Table [RoRo0302](#))



The majority of road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe via the North Sea ports in the year ending September 2017 were destined for the **Netherlands** (67%, 0.6 million), whilst 20% disembarked in Belgium (0.2 million).

Most road good vehicles travelling through the **English Channel** ports in the year ending September 2017 were destined for **France** (83%) with the remainder destined for **Spain** (17%); whilst all road goods vehicles travelling through the **Dover Strait** ports were destined for France.

July - September 2017 (Quarter 3 total)

Between July to September 2017 (Quarter 3), 489 thousand road goods vehicles travelled via the **Dover Strait** ports to **France**, the only country of disembarkation for this port group.

There were 155 thousand road goods vehicles that travelled via the **North Sea** ports to the **Netherlands**, while 22 thousand road goods vehicles travelled via the **English Channel** to **France**.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

The figures in this release are derived from quarterly returns provided by the roll-on roll-off ferry operators, who provide the number of powered vehicles (by country of registration) and unaccompanied trailers carried on each ferry route from Great Britain to mainland Europe. Equivalent information for the number of powered vehicles travelling through the Channel Tunnel are provided by the Office of Rail and Road.

Ferry routes to countries outside mainland Europe, such as Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, are not included. Figures for outward traffic only are presented here; up to 1978 inward traffic was also recorded, but as it was similar to outward traffic, the data requirement was discontinued to save respondent effort.

Since a data quality review in early 2008, survey returns have been supplied by all roll-on roll-off ferry operators, which has resulted in more complete reporting of country of registration. Information on the country of registration for powered vehicles is derived by some operators 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.

In the previous statistical publication in this series, for 2017 Quarter 2, revisions were made to the historic series following the identification of issues in an operators' quarterly data submission to the Department of Transport. See page 7 on the statistical release [here](#) for further details.

Background notes

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

Further information about the statistics and methodology in this report can be found in the [Roll-on Roll-off International Freight Statistics notes and definitions](#).

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/roll-on-roll-off-international-freight-statistics-pre-release-access-list>.



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