Statistical Release 22nd November 2017

Department for Transport

Sea Passenger Statistics: Final 2016

About this release

This statistical release presents final statistics on sea passengers on both international and domestic routes to and from the UK in 2016.

International passengers are broken down into those on short sea (ferry) routes and passengers travelling for pleasure on cruises and long sea journeys.

Domestic passengers include those on domestic sea crossings, river ferries and inter-island journeys.

These statistics include all vehicle drivers, their passengers and foot passengers on ferries.

In this publication

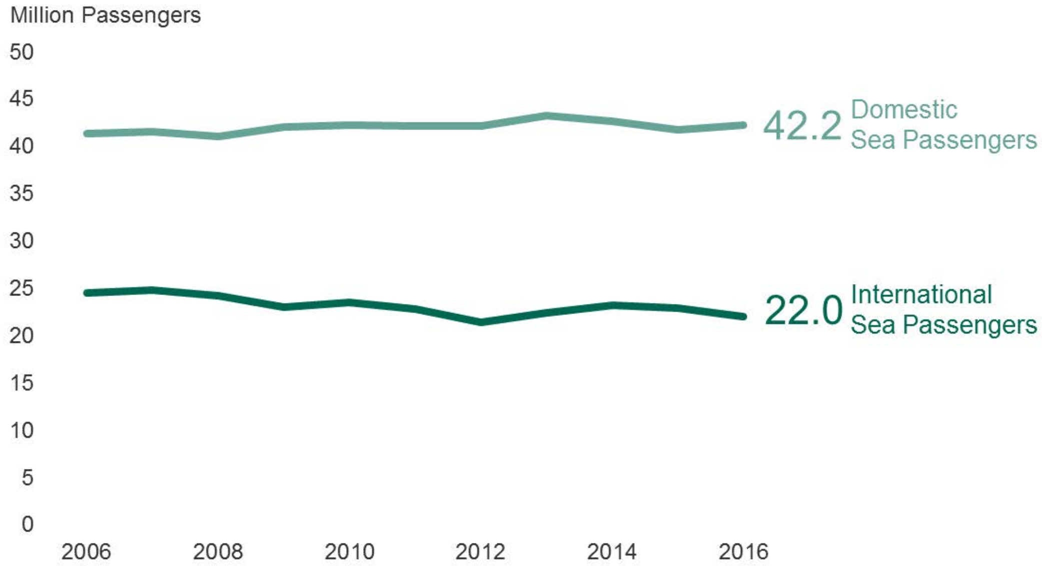
International sea passenger numbers fell for a second year in 2016, decreasing by 4 per cent from 23.0 to 22.0 million.

Domestic sea passenger numbers increased marginally by 1 per cent to 42.2 million.

International Passengers

- In 2016 the total number of **international short sea passengers decreased** by 5 per cent to 20.0 million.
- **Cruise passengers increased** by 5 per cent to 2.0 million, after fluctuating growth in recent years.

UK Domestic and international sea passengers, 2006-2016



Domestic Passengers

- Total passenger numbers on **domestic routes increased marginally to 42.2 million**. This figure has changed little in recent years; passenger numbers were only 1 per cent higher than those in 2006.
- Within this total, **Domestic sea crossing** passenger numbers **decreased by 1 per cent to 3.5 million**. Over the past decade domestic sea crossing passenger numbers have had an overall downward trend.

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Sea Passengers on International Routes

Summary

The **total** number of sea passengers on international routes is comprised of passengers on **international short sea** (ferry) routes, **cruises** and **long sea** journeys.

In 2016 **international sea passenger** numbers **decreased by 4 per cent to 22.0 million**. This figure has remained fairly stable over the previous five years following a general decreasing trend.

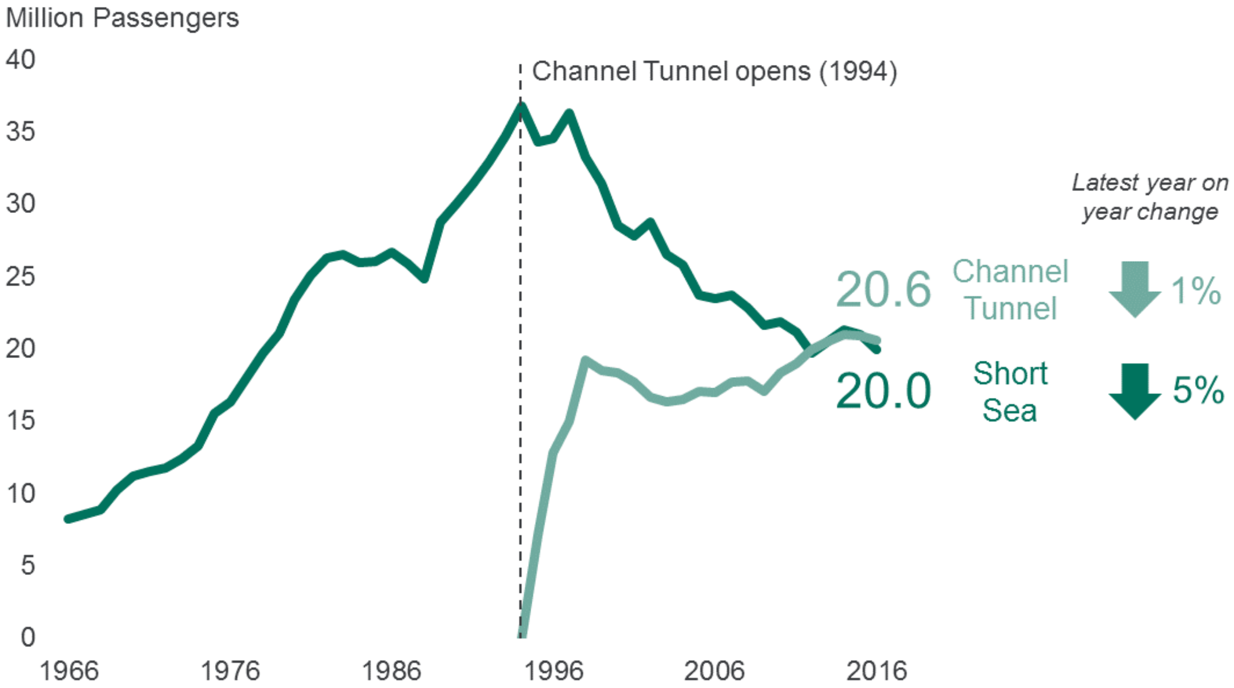
International Short Sea Journeys

In 2016 the number of **international short sea passengers decreased by 5 per cent to 20.0 million**, compared to 2015. This follows a longer period of decline between 1995 and 2012, following the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994.

The number of passengers travelling via the **Channel Tunnel decreased by 1 per cent to 20.6 million**. This is marginally higher than the number of sea passengers.

Since opening in 1994, the trends in the number of passengers travelling via the **Channel Tunnel and by sea** have **steadily converged**. The volume of Channel Tunnel passengers exceeded the volume of passengers on international short sea journeys in 2012. However, sea passengers then outnumbered Channel Tunnel passengers by a small margin until 2016.

UK International short sea passengers and Channel Tunnel passengers, 1966-2016



Detailed statistics on Channel Tunnel and international short sea passengers can be found in web table SPAS0301

International Short Sea Journeys by Port (

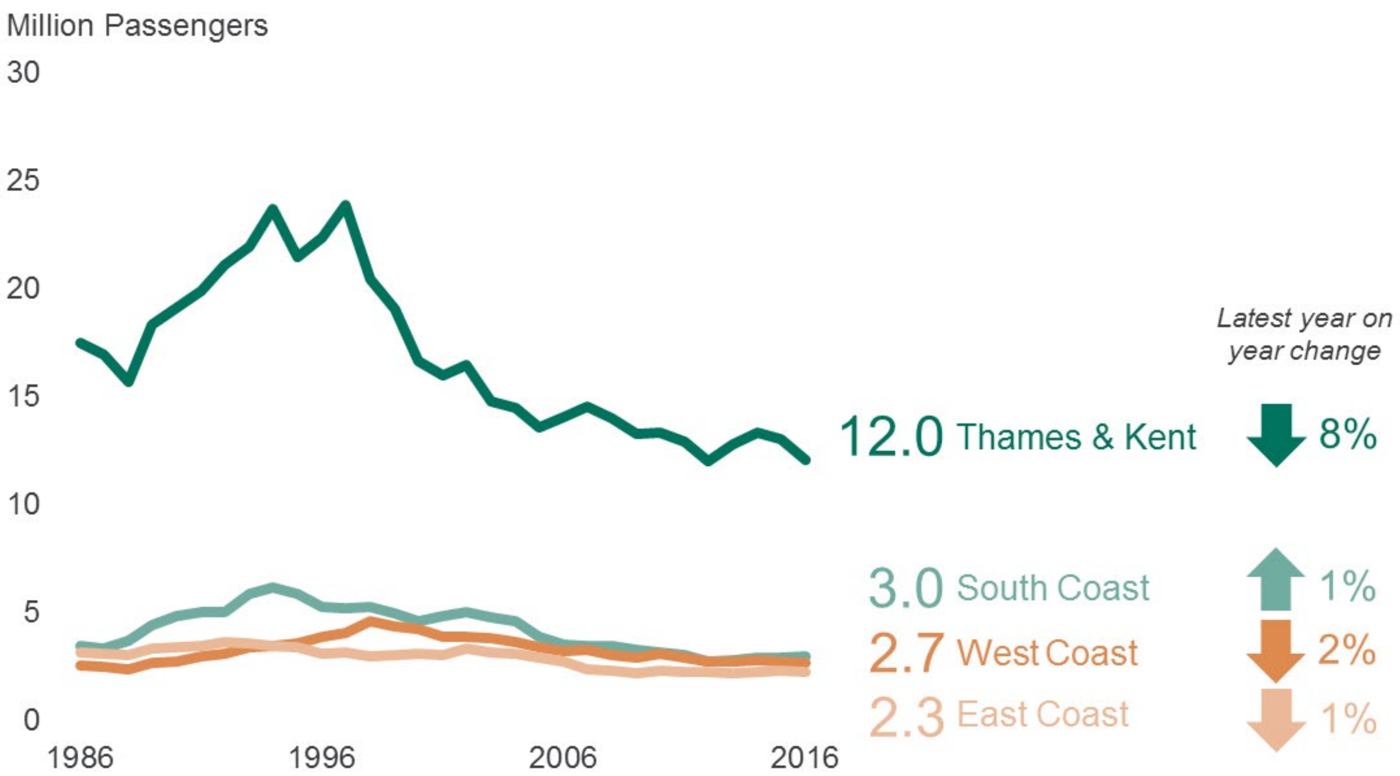
Passenger numbers at **Thames and Kent** ports **decreased by 8 per cent to 12.0 million.** This port group remained the **busiest** in 2016, accounting for 60 per cent of all international short sea passenger movements.

The number of passengers travelling through **East Coast** ports in 2016 **fell by 1 per cent** to **2.3 million**.

In 2016 **2.7 million passengers** travelled through the **West Coast** ports: a **decrease of 2 per cent.**

The number of passengers who travelled through **South Coast** ports in 2016 **increased by 1 per cent** to **3.0 million**.

International short sea passengers by port group, 1986 - 2016



Detailed statistics on international short sea passengers by port group can be found in web table SPAS0101.

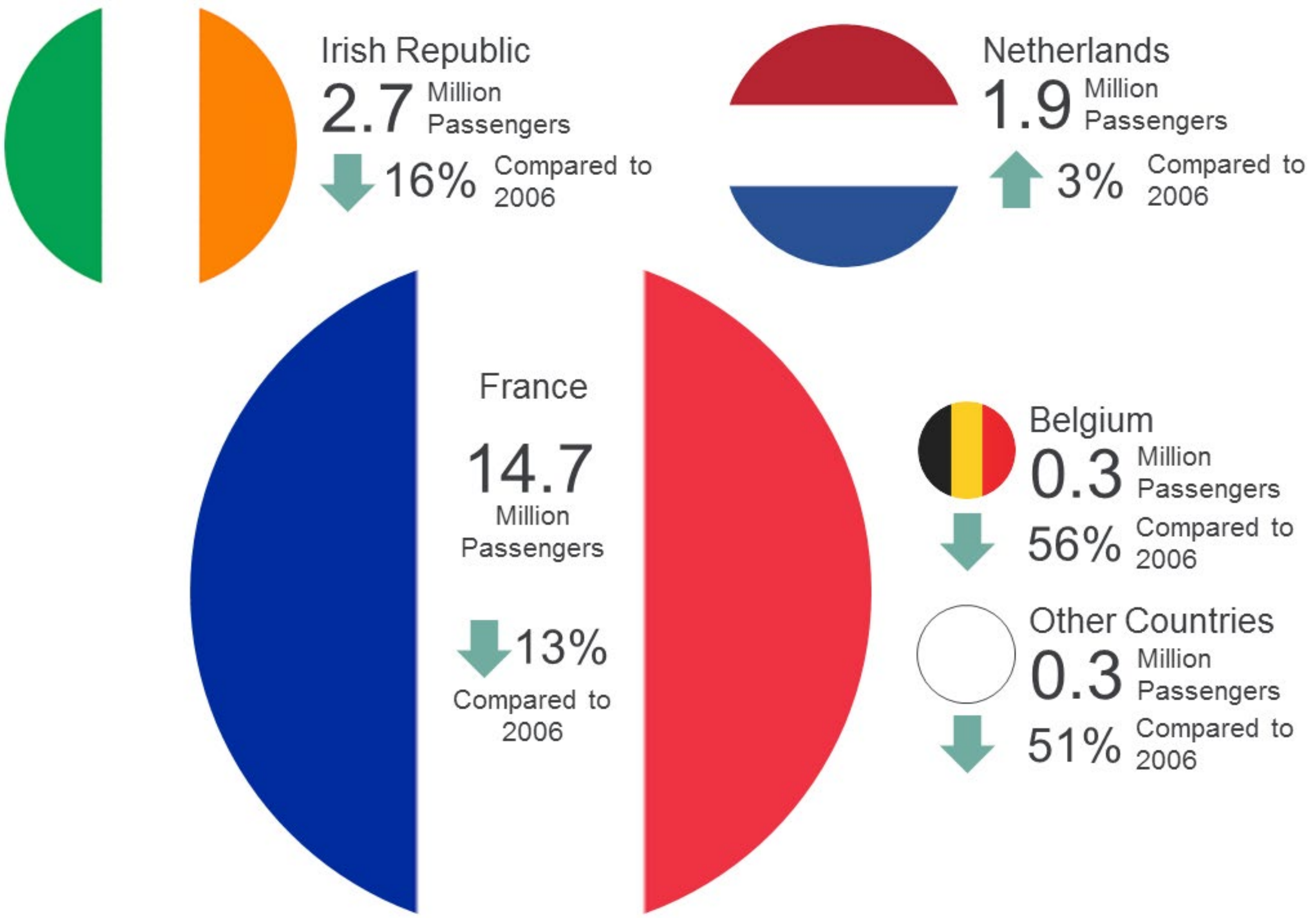
International Short Sea Journeys by Route

France is the most popular country of destination for UK international short sea routes, and has been since the series began in 1950. In 2016, **73 per cent** of international short sea journeys were between the UK and France. Passenger numbers on these routes totalled **14.7 million**; **6 per cent lower** than in 2015.

The second most popular destination was **the Irish Republic**; these routes accounted for **13 per cent** of all UK international short sea passengers. In 2016 these routes carried **2.7 million** passengers; a **decrease of 2 per cent** on the previous year.

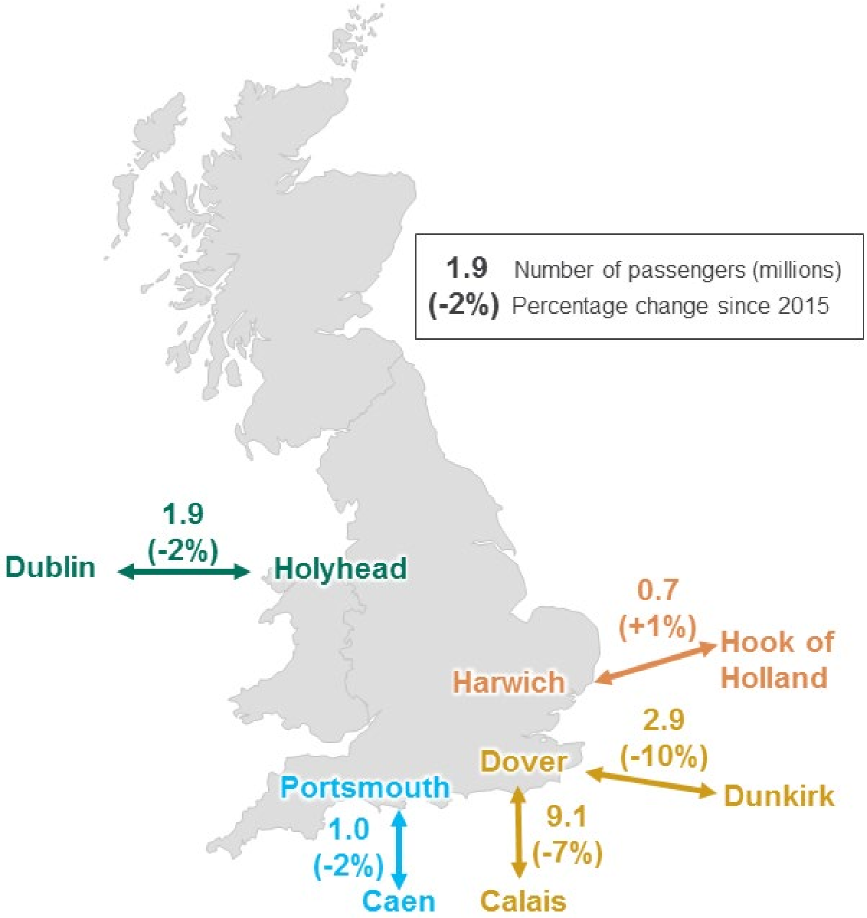
Over the last decade short sea passenger numbers have **fallen by 15 per cent**. The volume of passengers to all destinations declined, except to the **Netherlands** which **increased by 3 per cent.** However passengers to the Netherlands represented just 10 per cent of all international short sea passengers in 2016.

UK international short sea passengers by country of origin/destination, 2016 compared to 2006



Detailed statistics on international short sea passengers by country can be found in web table SPAS0103

Top 5 short-sea routes by passenger number (millions), 2016



Over the past decade the **Dover-Calais** route has continued to handle the **largest amount of passengers** of all international short sea ferry routes.

In 2016 the number of passengers on the **Dover-Calais** route **decreased by 7 per cent to 9.1 million**, compared to 2015.

This follows a fall in the previous two years, and over the last decade the route has declined from 11.6 million passengers in 2006.

In 2006 **Dover-Dunkirk** became the second busiest route between France and the UK. In 2016, the number travelling on the Dover-Dunkirk route **decreased by 10 per cent to 2.9 million**, following a 27 per cent increase between 2014 and 2015.

Passenger numbers on the **Holyhead-Dublin** route **decreased by 2 per cent to 1.9 million** compared with 2015**.** This is a similar pattern to falling passenger numbers on the other West Coast routes with the Irish Republic.

The number of passengers using the **Portsmouth-Caen** route **fell 2 per cent to 1.0 million passengers**. This is the first fall in passenger numbers since 2013.

Passenger numbers on the **Harwich-Hook of Holland** route have grown year on year since 2011. In 2016 these numbers **rose by 1 per cent to 0.7 million.**

Possible Disruption at Calais

There were service disruptions in March 2016 and to a lesser degree in September 2016, which affected the Dover-Calais route. Passenger numbers on the Dover-Calais route decreased by 0.7 million, whilst the number travelling on the alternative Dover-Dunkirk route also decreased 0.3 million.

Detailed statistics on international short sea passengers by route can be found in web table SPAS0102

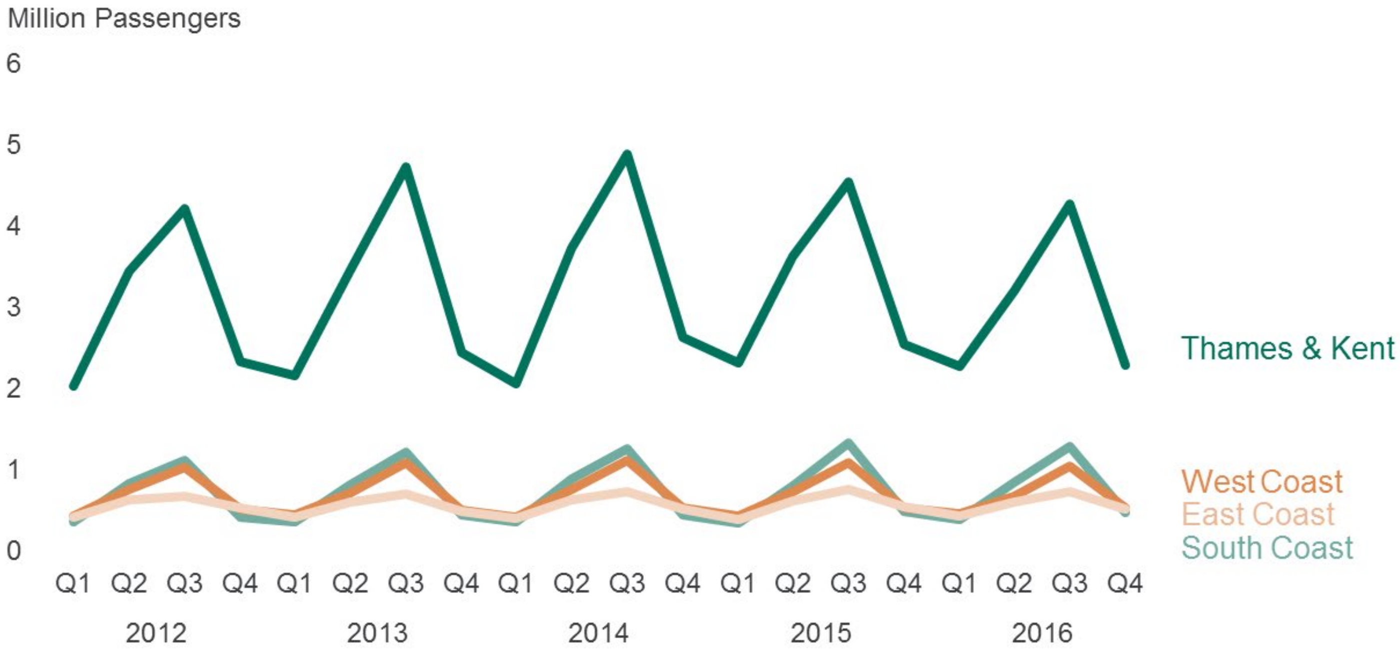
Seasonal trends in International Short Sea Journeys

International short sea journeys tend to be highly seasonal due to factors such as holiday making and weather patterns.
The third quarter of 2016 (July-September) was the busiest in terms of total international short sea passenger traffic. The least busy period of the year was the first quarter (January-March).

In the third quarter of 2016 passenger numbers through **Thames and Kent** ports were 2.0 million higher than in the first quarter of the year. The third quarter of the year accounted for 36 per cent of annual passengers, while the first quarter handled just over half as many (19 per cent).

Proportionally, **South Coast** ports have the greatest variability in passenger numbers between quarters. In 2016, 43 per cent annual passenger traffic through South Coast ports travelled in the third quarter, compared with 13 per cent in the first quarter. This represents a difference of 0.9 million passengers.

International short sea passengers by port group and quarter, 2012 - 2016



Detailed statistics on international short sea passengers by port group and quarter can be found in web table SPAS0105.

Definition

Cruise passenger figures include all passengers on international cruise journeys who start and finish their cruise journey at a UK port as well as cruises which begin or end at a European or Mediterranean port.

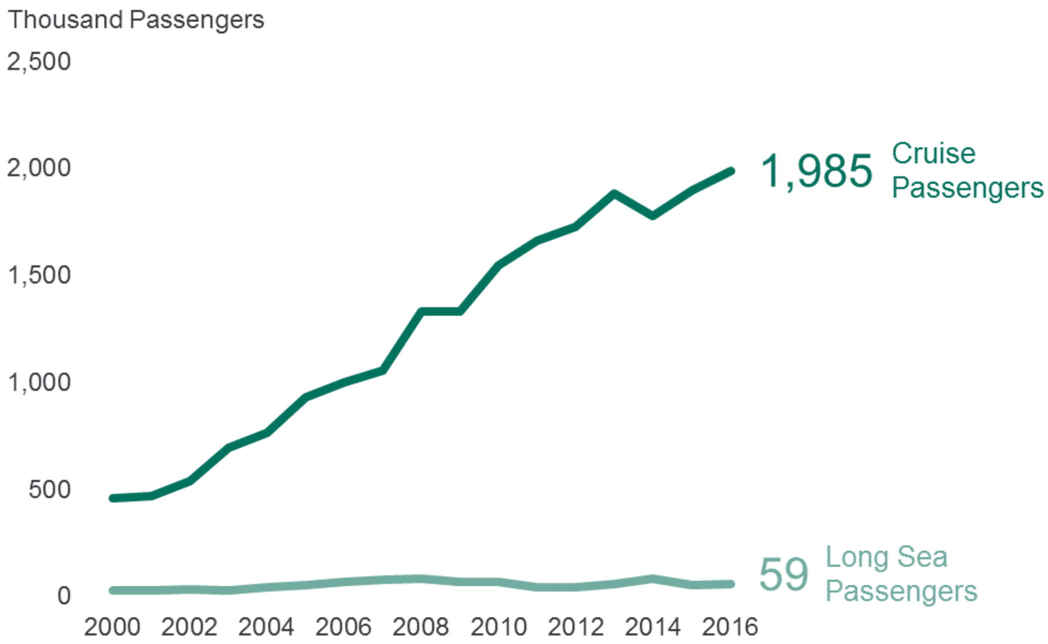
Cruise passenger numbers increased to 2.0 million in 2016, a 5 per cent increase from 2015, and nearly twice as many as in 2006. This is a return to the historic trend of largely continuous growth and is the second consecutive year of record breaking cruise passenger numbers.

The majority of cruise passengers passed through **Southampton**. In 2016 the number of passengers through Southampton **increased by 3 per cent to 1.7 million** - a third consecuive year of growth. Southampton continues to increase its share of the cruise market, from 65 per cent of passengers in 2006, to 85 per cent in 2016.

Long sea passenger numbers increased to 59 thousand in 2016, an 11 per cent increase from 2015. This is more than twice the amount of long sea passengers in 2000 (27 thousand).

Long sea figures vary greatly over time, in part because operators can use these trips to reposition vessels around the world as needed. The number of long sea passengers increased through the early 2000s to 82 thousand in 2008 before falling to 44 thousand in 2011, and then rose again to 84 thousand in 2014.

Cruise and long sea passengers, 2000 - 2016



Definition

Long sea voyage passengers are those travelling on one-way scheduled voyages to and from ports outside Europe/ Mediterranean.

In general, the long sea passengers were travelling on the Southampton to New York route: 69 per cent in 2016.

Detailed statistics on cruise and long sea passengers by port group can be found in web table SPAS0101.

Sea Passengers on Domestic Routes

Summary

The total number of sea passengers on domestic routes comprises of passengers on **domestic sea crossings, inter-island domestic routes and river ferries**.

The **total** number of sea passengers on **domestic** routes in 2016 increased by 1 per cent to **42.2 million**. There was also a **1 per cent increase in passengers on river ferries** to **20.0 million**.

The largest components of domestic sea passenger numbers in 2016 were river ferry journeys (47 per cent) and inter-island (44 per cent).

Domestic Sea Passenger Routes in 2016

Passengers on Inter-island Domestic Routes

Passenger numbers on **inter-island domestic routes** increased by 2 per cent to **18.7 million**.

Scottish inter-island routes increased by 3 per cent to **8.1 million**, reversing the drop of 3 per cent in 2015.

Passenger numbers between **Hampshire and the Isle of Wight** increased by 1 per cent to **8.8 million**. **Other inter island** routes however fell by 1 per cent to **1.8 million** in 2016, with some changes in reporting (see note on page 10).

Passengers on River Ferries

Passenger numbers on **river ferries** increased by 1 per cent to **20.0 million**. In the last decade passenger numbers have increased by 11 per cent with consecutive increases in the three years preceding 2014.

In 2013 the passenger numbers rose by 5 per cent, primarily as the result of improved reporting methods, and rose again in 2016 following two consecutive years of falling passenger numbers.

Definitions

Inter-island:
Covers routes between the mainland and UK islands, such as Isle of Skye and the Isle of Wight. It also covers internal ferry routes on lochs such as Strangford to Portaferry in Northern Ireland.

River ferries:
Figures for river ferries are collected annually from the operators. Routes are generally included in this statistical release when the passenger km figure is greater than 500 passenger kms.

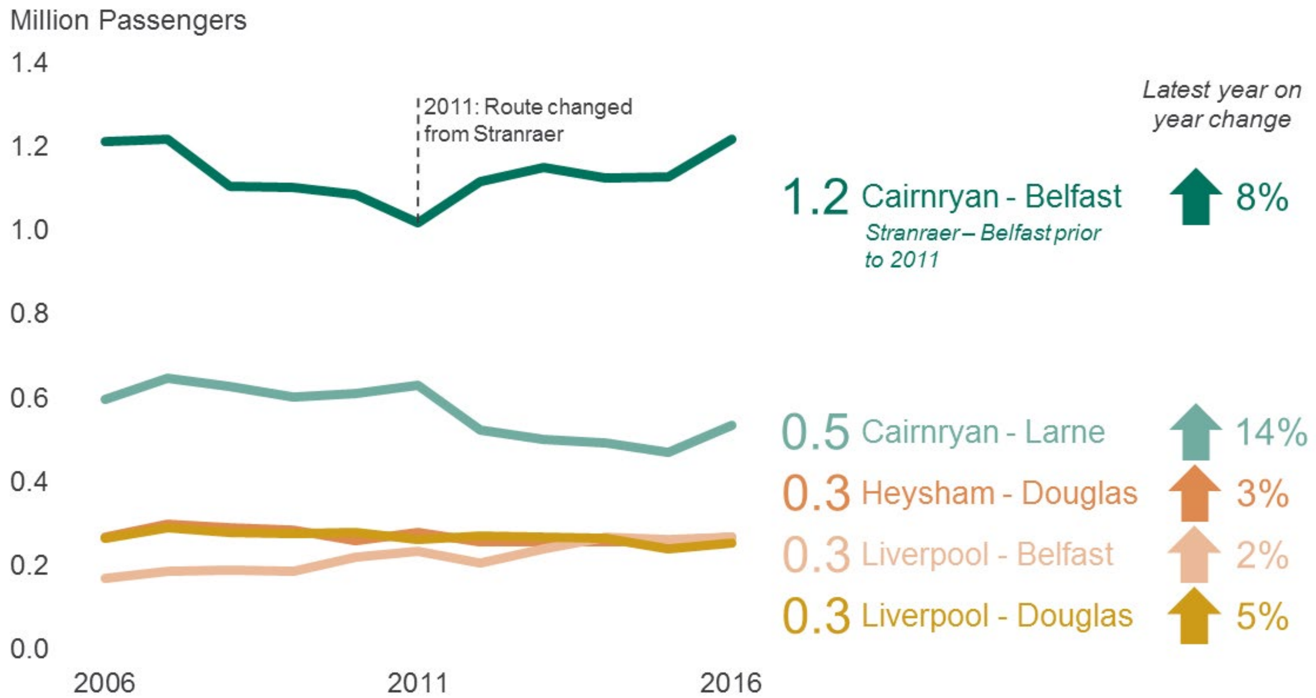
Domestic Sea Crossings

In 2016 traffic between the UK mainland and **Northern Ireland** increased 2 per cent to **2.0 million** passengers. **Cairnryan-Belfast** remained the most popular route with **1.2 million** passengers, an increase of 8 per cent. **Troon-Larne** ferries were stopped in 2016 by the operator.

Total traffic between the UK mainland and **the Isle of Man** increased by 4 per cent to **0.5 million**.

Overall the number of journeys between the UK mainland and **the Channel Islands** decreased by 15 per cent to **0.3 million**, with **Poole** routes falling in passenger numbers by 15 per cent to **0.2 million** compared with the previous year. The number of passengers at **Portsmouth** travelling on routes to the Channel Islands increased compared to the previous year, to **53 thousand** passengers. There were no Channel Island passengers at **Weymouth** in 2016, following Condor Ferries' switch of operations to Poole in March 2015.

UK's top 5 busiest domestic sea crossing routes, 2003 - 2016



Seasonal trends in Domestic Sea Crossing Journeys

As with international destinations, passenger numbers on routes with **Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands** have the highest volumes in the third quarter of the year (July-September) and lowest in the first quarter.

Of the three groups, routes to **Northern Ireland** had the least variability between quarters, with 37 per cent of passengers in 2016 travelling in the third quarter and 17 per cent travelling in the first quarter.

Many ferry operators work to a winter timetable during the first quarter due to the small number of passengers travelling.

Detailed statistics on Domestic Sea Passengers can be found in web tables SPAS0201 (annual) and SPAS0202 (quarterly).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Data

- The data for International Short-Sea passengers is collected from ferry operators, and is validated and published in aggregate on a monthly basis. At the end of the reference year the annual data is then validated for a final time for this publication. The proportional allocation of passengers between some routes was also estimated.

- Data for international ferry passenger routes, domestic sea crossings and inter-island routes are collected regularly from operators. Data for crossings to Orkney and Shetland and Scottish inter-island routes, are supplied by the Scottish Government. These data sets are checked in detail by Department for Transport statisticians and considered to be very robust.

- As a result of improvements in the accuracy of recording for foot passengers on the Cowes ferry, the number of passengers recorded for 2016 (included in 'other inter-island journeys') is not directly comparable with previous years, though the impact on the overall number of domestic passengers is likely to be small.

- Passenger numbers on river ferries are collected from operators and cover major routes, which are reviewed periodically. Data are considered to be fit for purpose.

- The cruise and long sea data are also supplied by operators and are regularly reviewed. The data are considered to be fit for purpose. In 2016, one cruise operator was non-respondent, and their passenger numbers have been estimated based upon historical returns.

- International figures include passengers on routes beginning or ending in Great Britain or Northern Ireland. Routes with foreign countries beginning or ending in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man are not included.

- Some passengers travel between Great Britain and St Malo in France by going to the Channel Islands on one vessel and then transferring to another. Prior to 2016, where these passengers could be distinguished from other traffic they were subtracted from the domestic route with the Channel Islands and added to the direct international route between Great Britain and France. From 2016 onward these passenger numbers are attributed to the domestic route with the Channel Islands rather than the direct international route. The main routes affected are Poole-St Malo and Weymouth-St Malo. In recent years these routes accounted for less than 0.1 per cent of the total international short sea traffic.

- We would welcome any feedback on these statistics by email to maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

Background Notes

- The web tables for sea passenger statistics can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/maritime-and-shipping-statistics#data-tables-associated-with-this-series

- Full guidance on the methods used in the publication of these releases, and the quality of the data, can be found in the Technical Note at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maritime-and-shipping-statistics-guidance

- National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs.

- Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-maritime-and-shipping-series

- Provisional summary totals for international sea passenger traffic are released monthly via the DfT website at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/spas01-uk-international-sea-passengers#table-spas0107

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