



Department for Transport

# Domestic Road Freight Statistics, United Kingdom 2018

## 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 economic statistics about HGVs and the road freight industry.

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## Domestic road freight activity increases in 2018

In 2018, for GB-registered HGVs operating in the UK. There were:



- ▶ **Goods lifted** in the UK by GB-registered heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) in the twelve months ending December 2018 increased by 1% to 1.41 billion tonnes compared with the previous twelve months
- ▶ **Goods moved** in the UK by GB-registered HGVs in the twelve months ending December 2018 increased by 3% to 152 billion tonne kilometres compared with the previous twelve months.

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

### Definitions



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

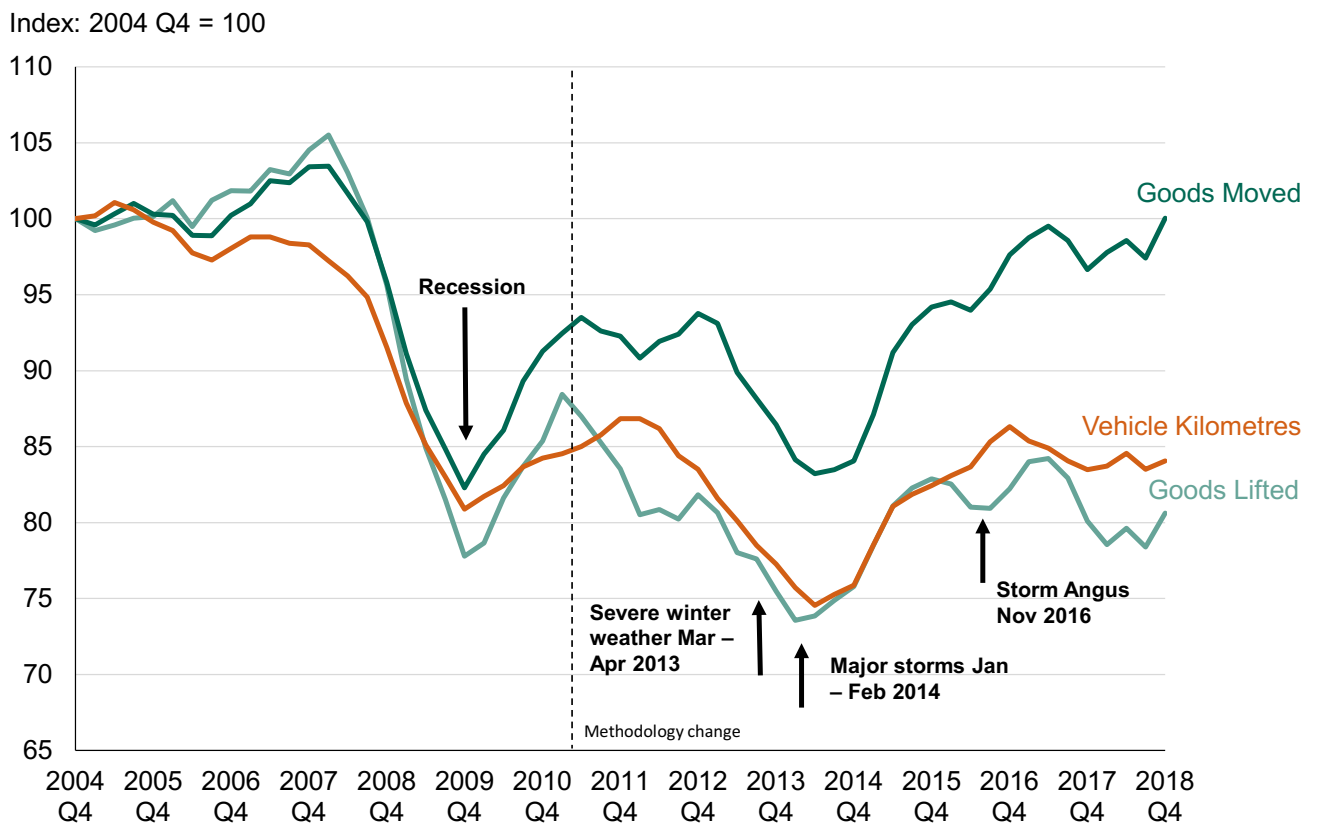


**Goods moved:** the weight of goods carried, multiplied by the distance hauled, measured in tonne kilometres.

## Overall trends in domestic road freight

Compared to ten years earlier (2008), the current level of goods lifted is 16% lower while the amount of goods moved is 4% higher. Since 2009 (post-recession), the level of goods lifted rose then gradually declined. Goods moved has been gradually increasing since recession period. Both series experienced weather-related declines (2013 - 2014).

**Chart 1: Trend in goods moved, goods lifted and vehicle kilometres by GB-registered HGVs, rolling 4 quarter totals, 2004 Q4 to 2018 Q4, indexed to 2004 Q4** [[Table RFS0101](#)]



### Note:

Between 2011 quarter 1 and 2, a number of changes were made to how the road freight survey data were processed. Caution should therefore be used when making comparisons over periods denoted by dotted lines within the charts in this publication. See the [Road Freight Statistics methodology note](#) for more information.

## Average Length of Haul

The **average length of haul** (108 kilometres) for GB-registered HGVs in 2018 was similar to that in 2017 (105 kilometres). The average length of haul for articulated HGVs (136 kilometres) continues to be longer than that of rigid HGVs (60 kilometres) [[Table RFS0108](#)].

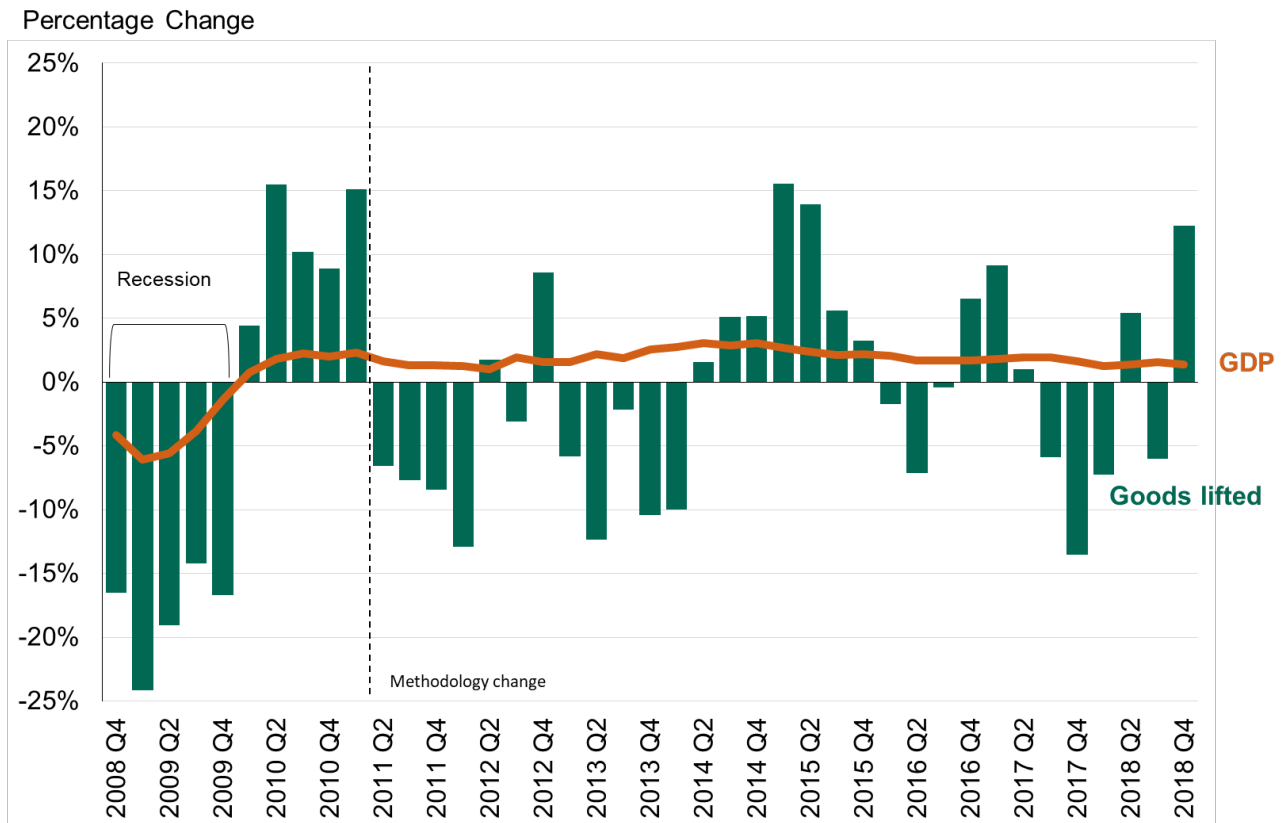
### Definitions

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

## Economic activity of the road freight sector

There has been an increase in the amount of **goods lifted** in the UK by GB-registered HGVs, while GDP has been fairly stable since the recession.

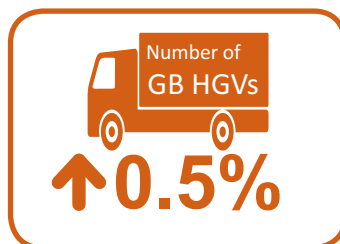
**Chart 2: Goods lifted and GDP, quarter on previous year's same quarter, 2008 Q4 to 2018 Q4**



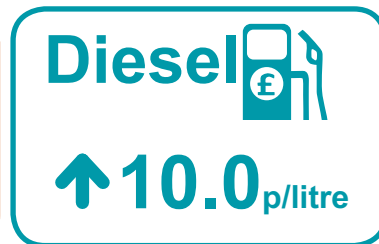
**In context** - The year 2018 compared to 2017:



Source: [Office for National Statistics](#)



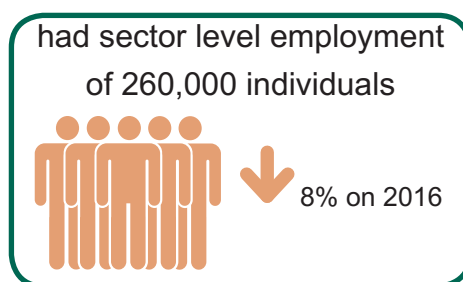
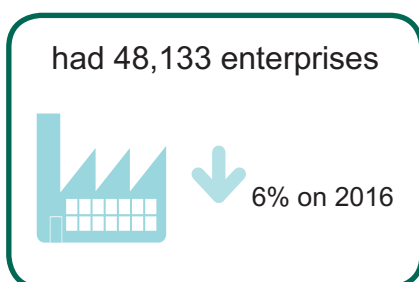
Source: [Department for Transport, Vehicle Licensing Statistics](#)



Source: [Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy](#)






## Road Freight Enterprises

Latest estimates from the [Annual Business Survey](#) show that in 2017 the road freight sector:



## Commodities

In 2018, the 5 most common commodity divisions (representing 64% of all goods) lifted by GB-registered HGVs in the UK were: [\[Table RFS0104\]](#)

Rank	Commodity	Goods lifted (million tonnes)	Proportion of all goods lifted
1	 Food products	282	20%
2	 Metal ore and other mining and quarrying	182	13%
3	 Waste related products	159	11%
4	 Groupage	141	10%
5	 Glass, cement and other non-metallic mineral products	135	10%

### Definitions

**Commodity:** goods are classified into commodity divisions and grouped by the 'standard goods classification for transport statistics 2007'.

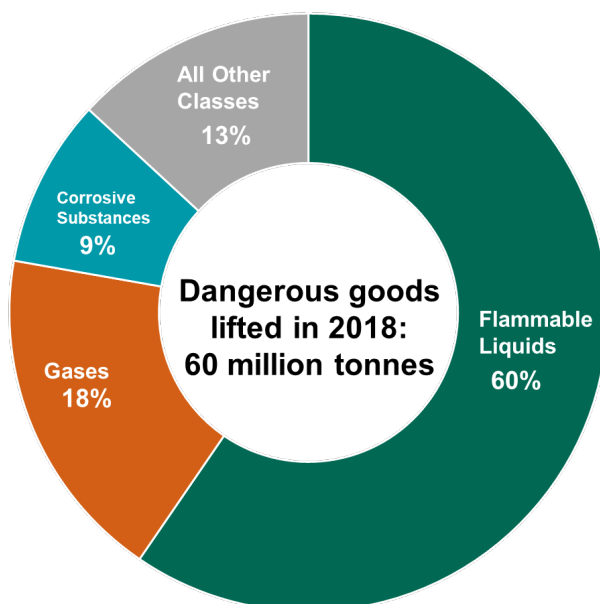
**Groupage:** when, for mixed consignments, no single commodity makes up 75% or more of the consignment weight.

In 2018, the largest sub-commodity category, at 176 million tonnes, was stone, sand, gravel, clay, peat and other mining/quarrying products; which represented 13% of all goods lifted in 2018.

## Dangerous goods

In 2018, 4% of all goods lifted domestically were declared as dangerous goods which accounts for 60 million tonnes. Dangerous goods in 2018, were predominantly flammable liquids (36 million tonnes, 60%) e.g. alcoholic beverages, crude petroleum, fuel and some chemicals.

**Chart 3: Dangerous goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs by dangerous goods class, 2018** [\[Table RFS0118\]](#)



### The 9 dangerous goods classes

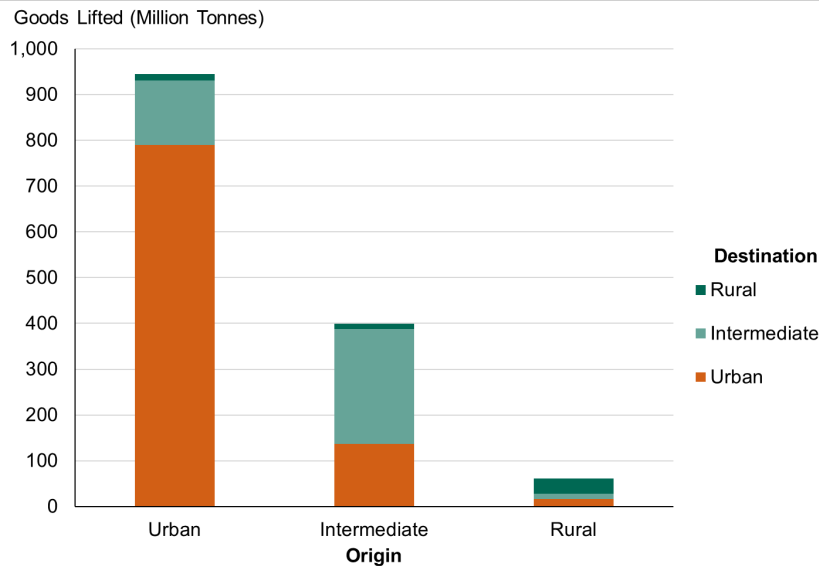
- Flammable liquids
- Gases
- Corrosive substances
- Flammable solids
- Oxidisers & organic peroxides
- Toxic & infectious substances
- Radioactive materials
- Explosives
- Miscellaneous substances

## Origin and Destination

### Urban and Rural

In 2018, of all goods lifted domestically by GB HGVs, 56% began in an urban origin and arrived at an urban destination, compared to 18% that began at an intermediate origin and were delivered to an intermediate destination. Only 2% of goods lifted were collected and delivered to a rural area.

**Chart 4: Goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs by origin and destination type, 2018** [Table RFS0124]



### Definitions

**Urban cluster:** population density of at least 300 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> and a minimum population of 5,000 inhabitants.

**Urban:** more than 80% of the population live in urban clusters

**Intermediate:** more than 50% and up to 80% of the population live in urban clusters

**Rural:** less than 50% of the population live in urban clusters

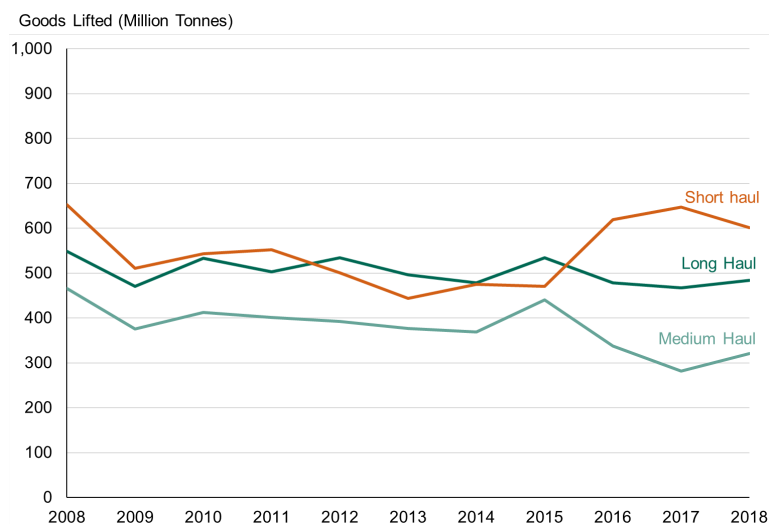
Full information can be found [here](#).

### Patterns of Movement

Of all goods lifted domestically by GB HGVs in 2018, 43% remained in the same NUTS3 region (broadly equivalent to combining 1-3 local authority districts and/or unitary authorities). Whereas, 23% moved to a different NUTS3 region, but remained within the same NUTS1 region (merge NUTS3 regions e.g. Wales, North East, London).

This helps to support the idea that the road haulage network consists of a mixture of long distance journeys to local distribution centres, followed by shorter journeys towards the goods' destination.

**Chart 5: Volume of goods lifted by GB-registered vehicles by length of haul, 2008 Q4 to 2018 Q4**



### Definitions

**NUTS3 region:** 173 regions in the UK, which are broadly equivalent to combining 1-3 local authorities districts and/or unitary authorities.

**NUTS1 region:** 12 regions in the UK, which merged NUTS3 regions into much larger regions (e.g. Wales, North East, London).

**Long haul:** goods move between two different NUTS1 regions.

**Medium haul:** goods change NUTS3 region, but remain in the same NUTS1 region.

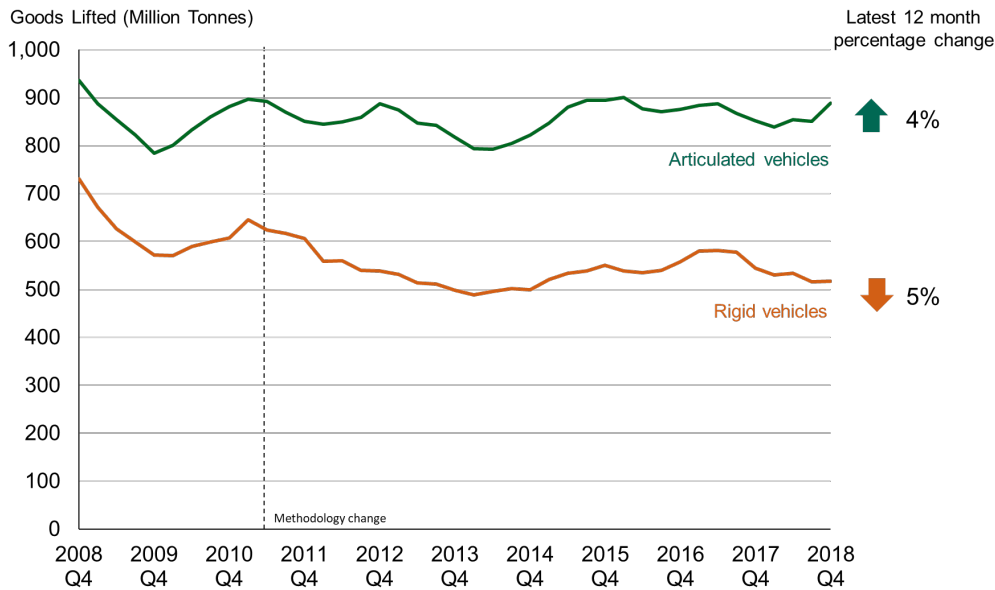
**Short haul:** goods remain within the same NUTS3 region.

## Types of vehicles and mode of operation

### Types of vehicles

HGVs in the UK range from a gross vehicle weight of 3.5 tonnes to 44 tonnes, with articulated vehicles - which tend to be longer, larger, heavier vehicles - carrying more freight. In 2018, articulated vehicles carried 889 million tonnes (63%) of freight, whereas rigid vehicles only carried 517 million tonnes (37%) of freight.

**Chart 6: Goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs, by type of vehicle, 2008 Q4 to 2018 Q4** [[Table RFS0109](#)]



#### Definitions

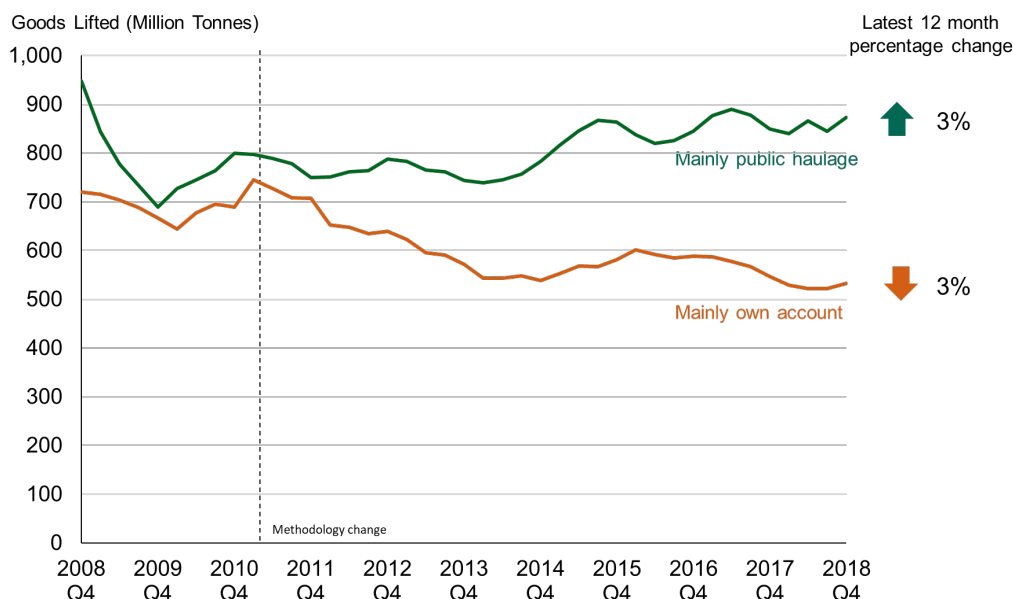
**Gross vehicle weight:** the total weight of the vehicle plus its carrying capacity (3.5 to 44t).



### Mode of operation

Road freight activity can be split between own account operators and public haulage operators. Public haulage operators usually account for a higher proportion of activity than own account operators, with public haulage operators representing 62% of all goods lifted in 2018.

**Chart 7: Goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs, by mode of working, 2008 Q4 to 2018 Q4** [[Table RFS0114](#)]



#### Definitions

**Own account operators:** those who carry goods only for their own trade or business.

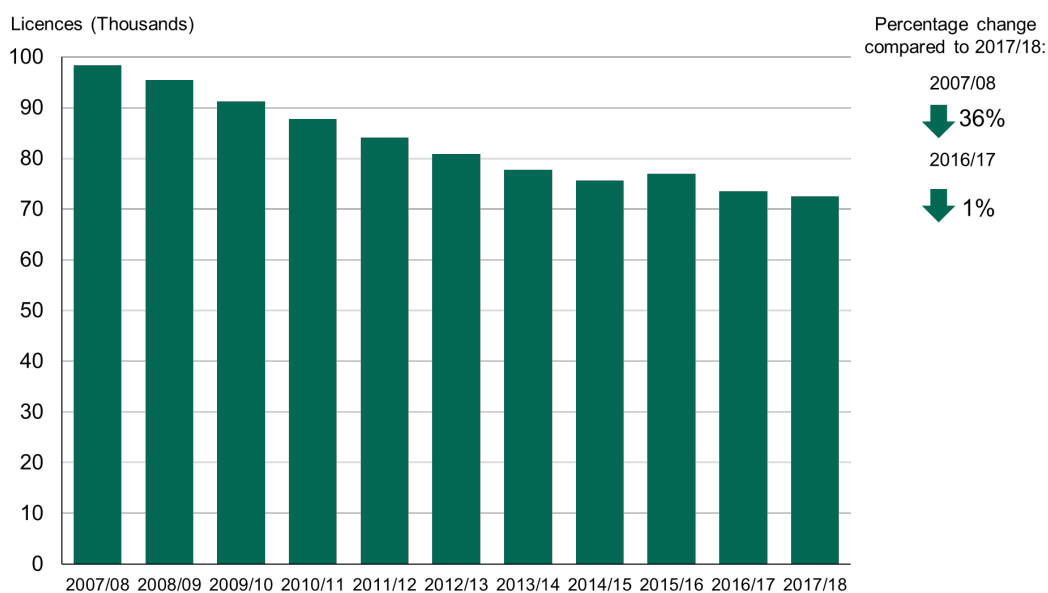
**Public haulage operators:** those who carry goods for other companies or individuals.

### Fleet size and operator licences

The latest [vehicle licensing statistics](#) show that at the end of 2018 there were around 500,300 HGVs licensed in Great Britain, of which around 406,500 were taxed as 'good vehicles' (remaining vehicles would be exempt from tax or taxed as private HGVs), a 0.5% decrease from 2017.

The number of goods vehicle operator licences in issue in Great Britain declined to under 100,000 in 2007/08 falling further to 72,500 in 2017/18. However, during this period the average size of an operators' fleet increased from 3.8 vehicles to 5.2 vehicles per licence, meaning fewer individual licences covering more vehicles.

**Chart 8: All goods vehicle operator licences in issue, Great Britain, 2007/08 to 2017/18** [[Traffic Commissioners' annual report](#)]



**Average fleet size increases**

**↑ 37%**

from 3.8 vehicles per licence in 2007/08 to 5.2 vehicles per licence in 2017/18.

### HGV driver numbers

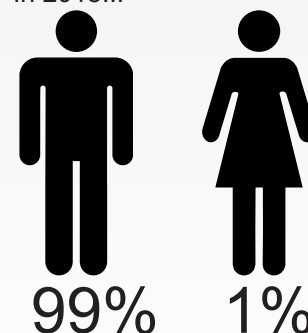
[Labour Force Survey](#) estimates show that there was around 322,700 HGV drivers employed across all sectors in 2018, 7% more than in 2017 where around 301,600 were employed.

### HGV driver working time and pay

In the Road Transport (Working Time) Regulations 2005 it is stated that HGV drivers must not exceed, in a weeks working, an average of 48 hours. The [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#) illustrates that the average (median) number of total paid hours worked per week by HGV drivers, including working overtime, has been 48 hours since the regulation was introduced and came into effect in 2005. In 2018, the average (median) gross hourly pay for an HGV driver was £11.68, an increase from £11.36 in 2017.

**Gender split**

In 2018...



...Most of the HGV drivers in employment in the UK were male.

## Inter-modal road freight activity

The 1.41 billion tonnes of goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs in the UK in 2018, equated to 160 million HGV journeys. Of which, 2% (3.1 million journeys) involved inter-modal activity. This equates to 56 million tonnes of freight (4%) using at least two different modes of transport, of which:



**88%** of inter-modal journeys (49 million tonnes) began or ended at a shipping dock



**9%** of inter-modal journeys (5 million tonnes) began or ended at a rail siding/terminal



**4%** of inter-modal journeys (2 million tonnes) began or ended at an airport

Percentages may not sum to 100%

### Definitions

#### Inter-modal:

There are multiple nuanced definitions of journeys involving freight movement across modes. Solely for the purpose of these statistics, these types of journeys and freight involved shall be referred to as "Inter-modal" freight.

#### Journey:

goods transported from an origin to a destination by an HGV.

#### Method of transportation

definitions can be found on page 9.

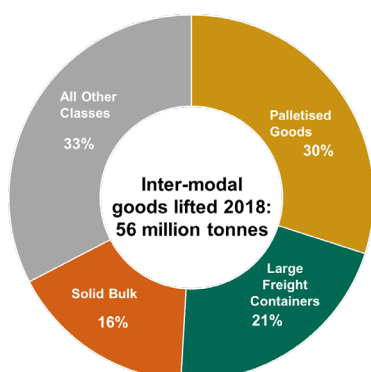
## Commodities

The three most common commodities transported on inter-modal trips in 2018 were:

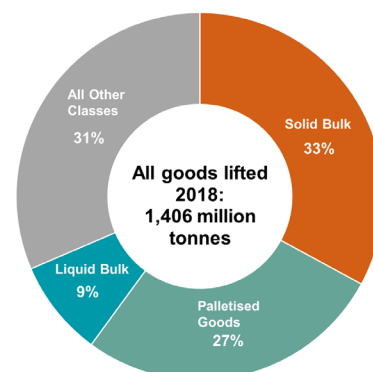
- ▶ Food products 12.2 million tonnes (22% of inter-modal tonnage)
- ▶ Groupage 8 million tonnes (14% of inter-modal tonnage)
- ▶ Agricultural products 4.9 million tonnes (9% of inter-modal tonnage)

## Method of transportation

**Chart 9: Goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs, by method of transportation, inter-modal journeys and all journeys, 2018**



The receptacle or method used to transport goods differs between all goods lifted and inter-modal goods reflecting the needs involved when transferring goods between modes of transport.



The most common method of transportation used to transfer goods between modes in inter-modal journeys is Palletised Goods (30%). Whereas, for all journeys the most common method of transportation is Solid Bulk (33%).



## Definitions

### Methods of Transportation:

**Solid Bulk** – commodity transported unpacked in large quantities. It refers to material in granular form e.g. coal

**Liquid Bulk** – similar to solid bulk, however the material it refers to is of liquid form e.g. petroleum/crude oil

**Palletised Goods** – commodity transported in a pallet, to support goods giving stability to commodity during transportation e.g. beverages

**Large Freight Containers** – also known as shipping containers, commodity transported in a container with strength suitable to withstand shipment, storage and handling e.g. large reusable steel boxes (intermodal shipments), corrugated boxes

## Strengths and weaknesses of data

The figures in this release are mainly derived from the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Great Britain (CSRGT GB) which provides information on the activity of GB-registered HGVs operating across the UK only. As such, the statistics exclude HGVs registered in Northern Ireland, foreign-registered HGVs and vehicles with a gross vehicle weight of 3.5 tonnes or less (Light Goods Vehicles and Vans). Also excluded from CSRGT GB is the activity of HGVs registered in Great Britain when operating outside of the UK.

The CSRGT GB is a continuous survey which collects 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 resulting figures are estimates with associated sampling error.

Guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics and further information can be found in the [Road Freight Statistics notes and definitions](#). Sample sizes that the statistics are based upon and sampling error estimates can be found within [Table RFS0129](#), broken down by type and weight of vehicle.

Between 2011 and 2012, a number of changes were made to how the three Department for Transport 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.

This release and its contents partly rely on the use of administrative data from DVLA and DVSA. DfT have assessed the impact of this on the quality of these statistics, a report on which can be found in the [Quality assurance of administrative data sources: Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency](#) and [Quality assurance of administrative data sources: Driver Vehicle Standards Agency](#).

## Users and uses of statistics

Road freight statistics are a key source of management information on the use of the country's infrastructure. Its 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 origins and destinations of journeys, 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 reducing congestion and pollution.

## Background notes

These statistics were [confirmed as National Statistics in December 2016](#). Accompanying 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 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 July 2018, and users can refer to the links below for the most recent or revised data available for each of the sources used, and also caveats relating to these sources.

- ▶ United Kingdom National Accounts; Office for National Statistics: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/naa1-rd/united-kingdom-national-accounts/index.html>
- ▶ Fuel prices, Monthly and annual prices of road fuels and petroleum products; Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/oil-and-petroleum-products-monthly-statistics>
- ▶ Annual Business Survey; Office for National Statistics: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/abs/annual-business-survey/index.html>
- ▶ Employment of HGV drivers, Labour Force Survey; Office for National Statistics: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-force-survey-employment-status-by-occupation/index.html>
- ▶ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings; Office for National Statistics: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/index.html>
- ▶ Vehicle licensing statistics for HGVs; Department for Transport: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/veh05-licensed-heavy-goods-vehicles>
- ▶ Goods vehicle operator licences; Traffic Commissioners' annual reports: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traffic-commissioners-annual-reports>

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->



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