Department for Transport

UK Port Freight Statistics: 2018

About this release

The importance of shipping and trade to the economy of the UK, an island nation, has resulted in the establishment of a large number of ports around the coast, which are very diverse in terms of size and type of cargo handled.

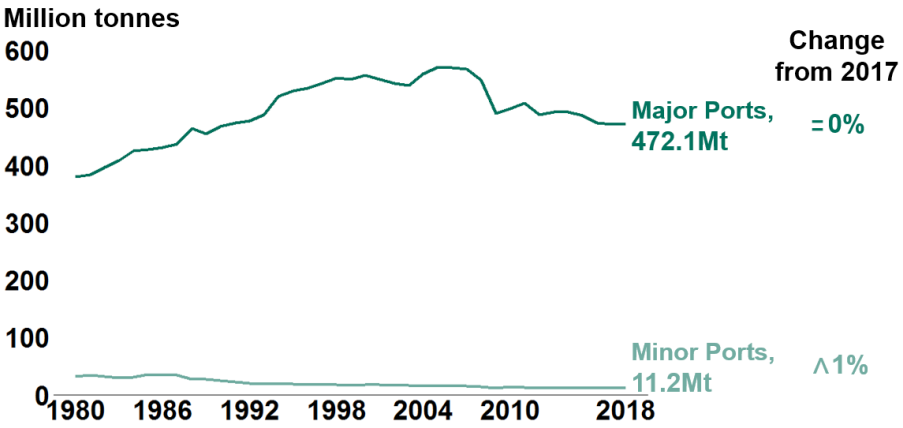
This statistical release provides information on trends and patterns in the handling of freight traffic at UK sea ports, in terms of cargo as well as the route taken.

In this publication

Tonnage handled by UK ports was relatively stable in 2018

All ports handled: **483.3** Million tonnes

Major ports handled: **23.9** Million units

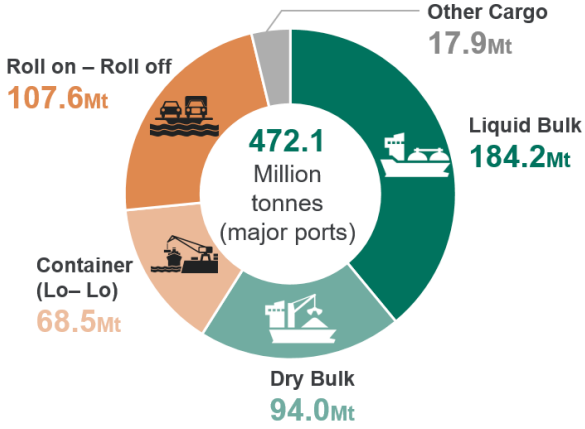


The EU remained the largest trade partner

More goods were moved between UK major ports and the EU than any other region in 2018, accounting for 44% (206.2 million tonnes) of total major port traffic.

Bulk traffic continues long term decline

The majority of traffic is bulk goods, which have declined each year since 2012, driven by changes in bulk fuels such as crude oil and coal, which made up 39% of major port traffic in 2018.



Unitised traffic - mostly containers and vehicles - declined for the first time (units down 1%) after a 5 year period of growth, which had been slowing. A reduction in trade vehicles contributed to this decline.

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1. Things You Need to Know

This release provides information on trends and patterns in the handling of freight traffic at UK sea ports. Ports are essential to the UK economy, with around 95% of all imports and exports being transported by sea.

Uses and users of these statistics

These statistics are used for several purposes, such as:

- to inform policy development and assess the impact of proposed legislative changes.
- to provide baseline information and/or calibration data for forecasts and transport models, such as the port freight traffic forecasts.
- inform policy in the maritime industry representative bodies and individual businesses to make their case to Government and internationally, such as the latest Freight Transport Association's Logistics Report.
- supplying UK figures to Eurostat as part of the Maritime Statistics Directive, for comparison against other member states.
- provide data for market analysis by transport consultants and businesses outside Government.

Users

Users of the data include central government, the devolved administrations and local government, the maritime industry, transport consultants and academics, and international organisations.

Port freight data has recently been used in the following documents:

- Maritime 2050: the government's vision for the future of the British maritime sector.
- Port connectivity study: assessed the current ability of inland rail and road networks to move freight to and from ports, identifying issues and proposing recommendations for improvement.
- Future of Freight: the National Infrastructure Commission's review of existing infrastructure and recommendations of ways to transform how freight moves to and around the UK.

Data and definitions

Port freight statistics are based on a combination of data reported to the DfT by port authorities and shipping lines, or their agents.

Ports are split into major and minor ports. Major ports (51) are strategically important and/or deal with at least 1 million tonnes of cargo annually. The majority of this publication covers major port data, as more detail is collected from these ports, such as cargo category and type.

Cargo categorisation

Cargo is categorised based on the means by which goods are loaded onto or off the vessel. See page 7 onwards for further information and analysis of cargo categories.

Unitised traffic: only lift-on/lift-off (Lo-Lo) and roll-on/roll-off (Ro-Ro) freight services can be expressed in terms of units, which relates to how the cargo was contained. For example, a container, a trailer, or a passenger car is assigned a value of 1 unit.

All other categories (liquid bulk, dry bulk and other general cargo) are only expressed in tonnage.

Bulk cargo tends to be unpackaged and transported in large quantities, either in liquid or granular form, as a mass of solids. Examples include crude oil, coal, gravel, etc. This is typically dropped or poured into a hold, and is unloaded via suctions, screw or grabber.

Direction of travel

Inwards and outwards traffic refers to the direction of travel at UK ports, and includes both domestic (for example traffic between Liverpool and Belfast) and international traffic.

These statistics cover freight handled at UK major ports. The port of loading or unloading is also recorded - this may not be the port of ultimate origin or destination. For example, if a ship carrying cargo from Asia unloads/loads the cargo at a European port which is then put on another ship to the UK, our statistics will state the port of load as the European port, rather than the port in Asia. This is known as **transhipment**.

Imports and exports only relate to international traffic and is explored in more detail on page 11.

Ship types and arrivals

For the purposes of these statistics, cargo is categorised depending upon how it is transported on the ship. As such, no distinction is made on the type of ship that transports goods. However, information is available on the ship type and the number of times ships arrived at UK ports (see PORT06 tables and page 6). This part of the publication is considered to be outside the scope of National Statistics.

Related data sources

HMRC publishes **tonnage and value** to a much more **granular commodity** level for goods moved between the UK and countries outside the EU.

The Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy publish the Digest of UK Energy Statistics (DUKES) which covers the production and consumption of fuels and energy in the UK.

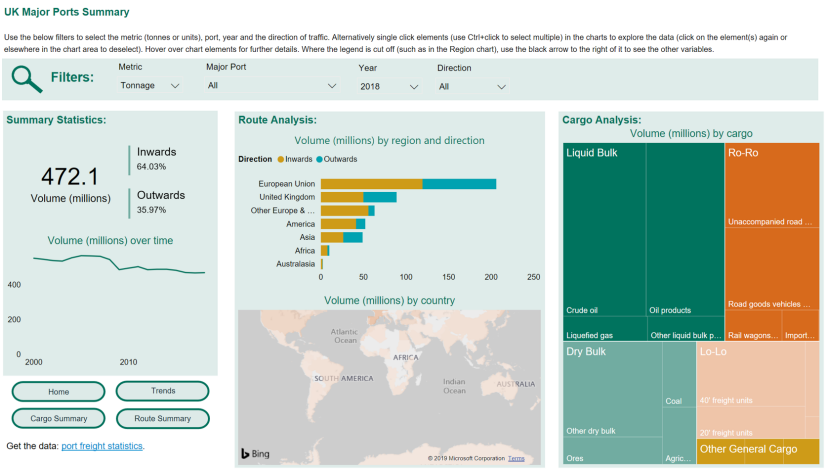
Information on freight moved by different modes, including a breakdown of domestic freight is available in **Transport Statistics Great Britain** chapter 4.

Eurostat publish comparative port freight data for other **European Union** countries, enabling UK ports to be compared to those in other EU countries.

Dashboard and tables

Detailed Port Freight statistics data is published in filterable tables, at the top of the linked webpage is a table index to help you identify which table contains the data you need.

The Port Freight Statistics dashboard allows you to explore the most detailed data available for major ports more visually.

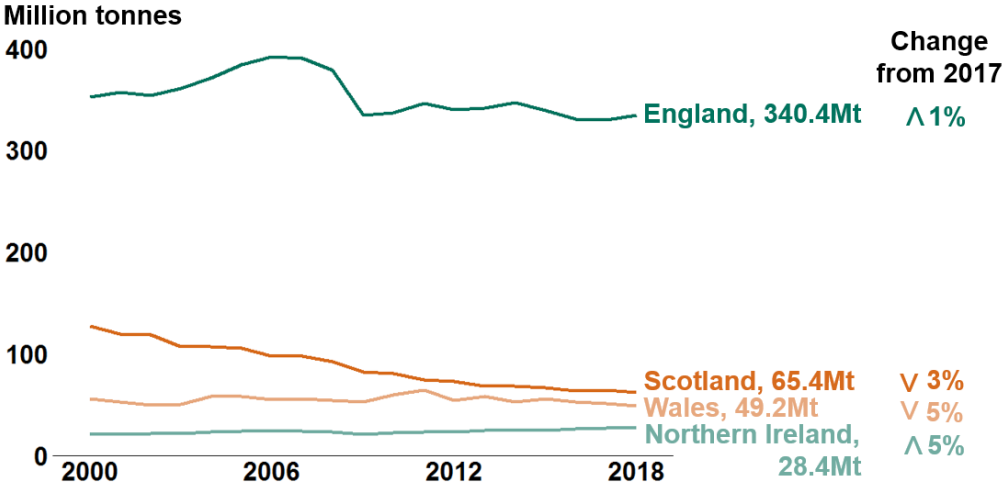


2. UK Major Ports

Following a dip during the 2008 recession, **overall tonnage** handled by UK ports has **remained relatively stable since 2009**, declining only 4% since 2009. Major ports accounted for 98% of this tonnage in 2018.

The UK trend is mostly driven by trends in English major ports, which made up 70% of tonnage handled in 2018. However, this masks trends in other countries: total tonnage handled by Scottish major ports has declined by 24% in the past decade driven by declines in liquid bulk, with Forth and Orkney both declining in 2018.

Tonnage handled by UK countries since 2000 (PORT0101)



Northern Irish major ports tonnage traffic have increased 37% over the past decade as both Belfast and Warrenpoint have shown consistent growth.

These trends continue in 2018. The slight increase in English tonnage is driven by relatively large increases at Grimsby & Immingham, London and Tyne. London's 7% increase in tonnage can be attributed to expansion at London Gateway. Similarly, new facilities at Tyne have enabled larger throughput of dry bulk (up 70% in 2018).

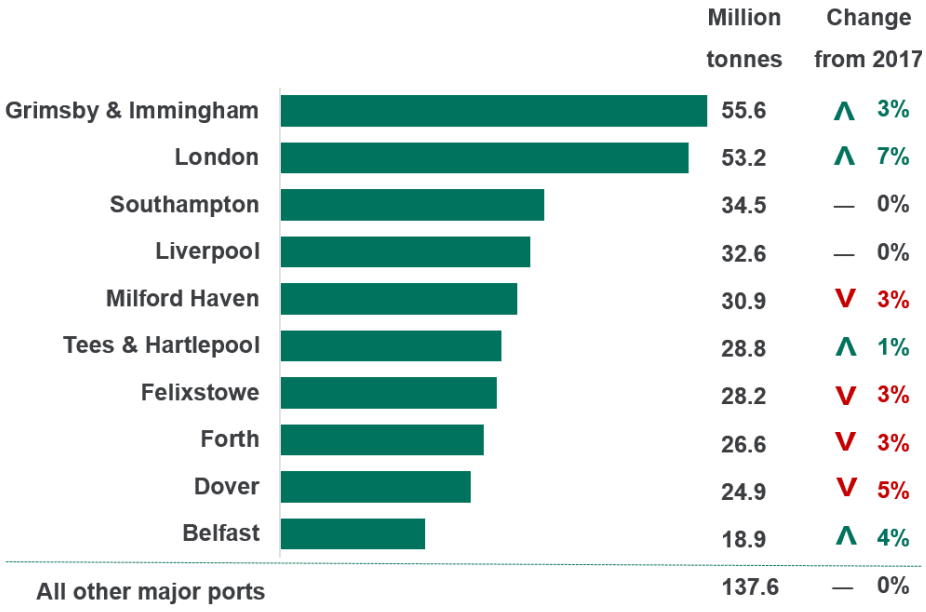
The trend in Wales mirrors Milford Haven tonnage, which accounts for two-thirds of Welsh traffic. 97% of tonnage at Milford Haven is liquid bulk, making it the largest liquid bulk port in the UK.

The top 10 major ports, in terms of the amount of tonnage handled in 2018, remain unchanged from 2017.

The only change in the ranking was due to a fall in tonnage handled at Felixstowe, dropping from 6th to 7th. However Felixstowe remains the largest container port, handling 37% of all container units.

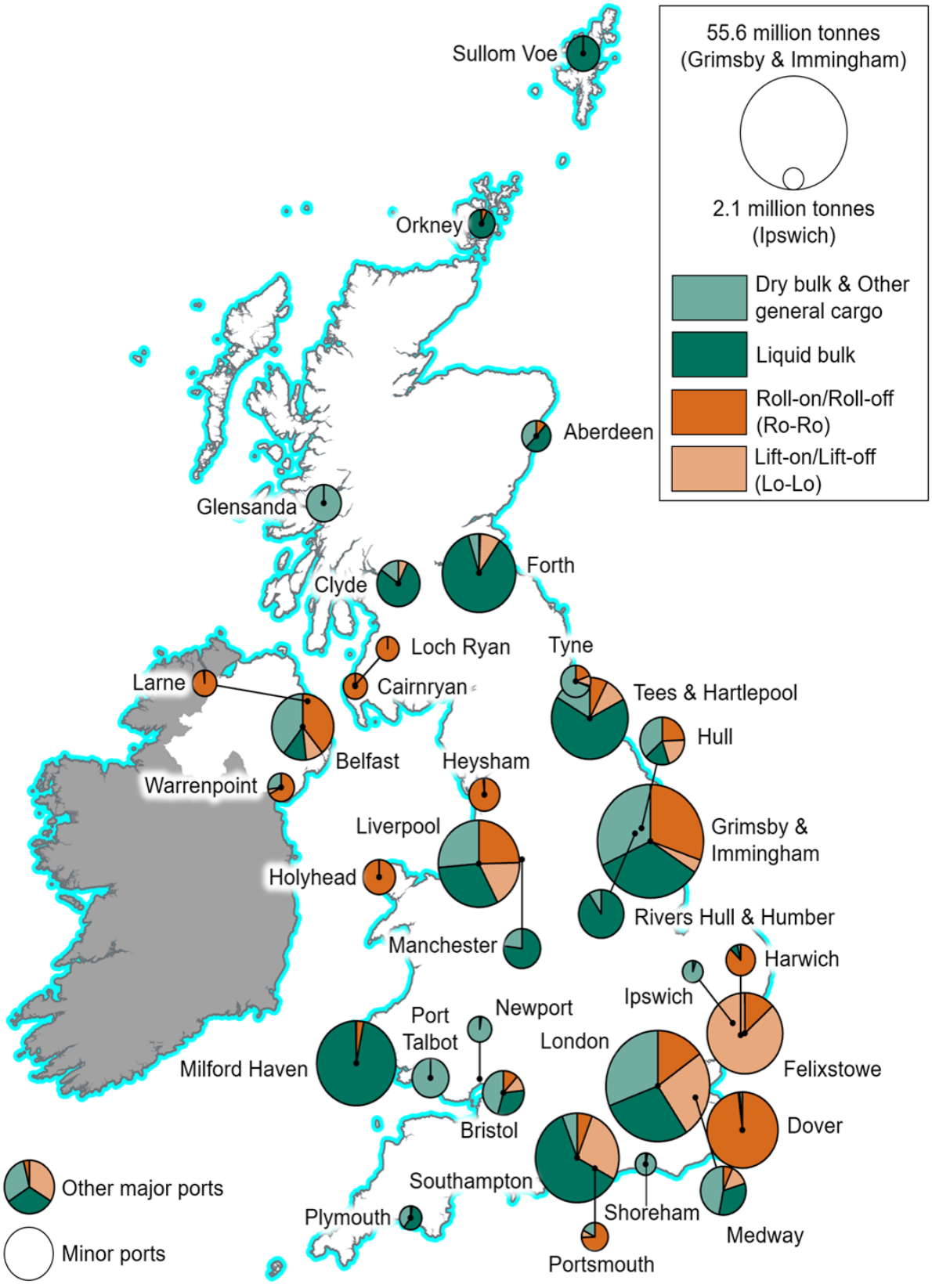
Dover remains the largest Ro-Ro port in the UK, handling 23% of UK Ro-Ro tonnage in 2018.

Top 10 UK major ports by tonnage, 2018 (PORT0303)



The Port Freight Dashboard allows you to further explore trends for individual ports; table PORT0400 has detailed figures for each major port; table PORT0303 ranks ports by cargo type and PORT0302 provides route totals for each port.

UK major ports*: tonnage by cargo type, 2018 (PORT0304)



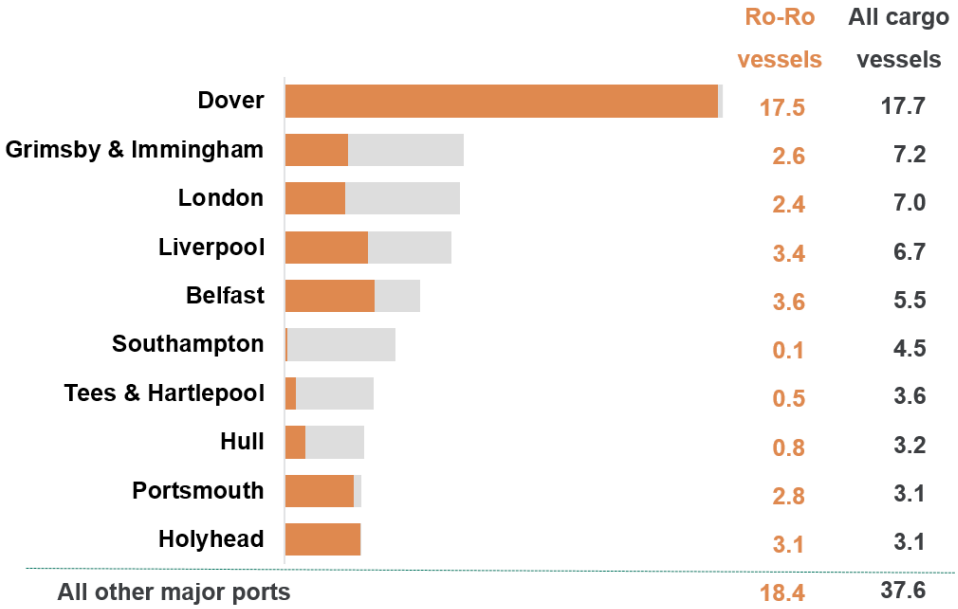
* All ports marked on map handled over 2 million tonnes of freight in 2018.

Vessel arrivals at UK major ports

An estimated total of 98,300 cargo vessels arrived at UK major ports during 2018, broadly similar to the 2017 level. Over a sixth of these were at Dover, which alone handled nearly 18,000 vessel arrivals in 2018.

The ports with the highest number of vessel arrivals tend to be those with regular ferry (Ro-Ro) services; ports with the highest number of other cargo vessels included those handling the most tonnage - Grimsby and Immingham, London and Southampton.

Top 10 UK major ports with most cargo vessel arrivals, 2018 (thousands) (PORT0602)



Arrivals statistics

Statistics on vessel arrivals are based on data from a number of sources including the Maritime and Coastguard Agency CERS system. They are outside the scope of National Statistics. The methods used to compile these figures in 2018 differs from previous years. 2017 figures using the previous and current method are provided in the tables for this section for comparison. Further details are provided in the notes and definitions document. These figures largely exclude domestic ferries such as to and from the Isle of Wight.

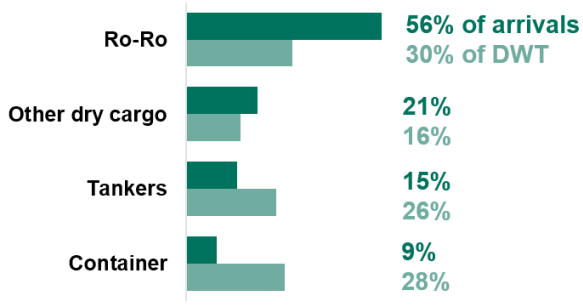
Arrivals statistics are available in tables in the PORT06 section of the data tables. These tables cover all vessels arriving at all UK ports however this page focuses on cargo vessels arriving at major ports.

Over all major ports, Ro-Ro vessels accounted for over half of cargo vessel arrivals in 2018. However, in terms of deadweight tonnage (DWT) - a measure of cargo carrying capacity - container ships accounted for almost the same amount, despite having far fewer arrivals.

Since 2010, the number of cargo vessels arriving at UK major ports has fallen overall, whereas the total deadweight tonnage arriving has remained broadly stable - reflecting an increase in average vessel size, particularly for container ships.

Trends in deadweight tonnage of vessels arriving (shown in table PORT0601) tend to broadly mirror trends in cargo handled, with a fall in tankers and other dry bulk ships, and increase in container ships over the past decade.

Cargo vessels arriving at UK major ports by ship type, 2018 (PORT0601)



3. Major Port Freight by Cargo Type

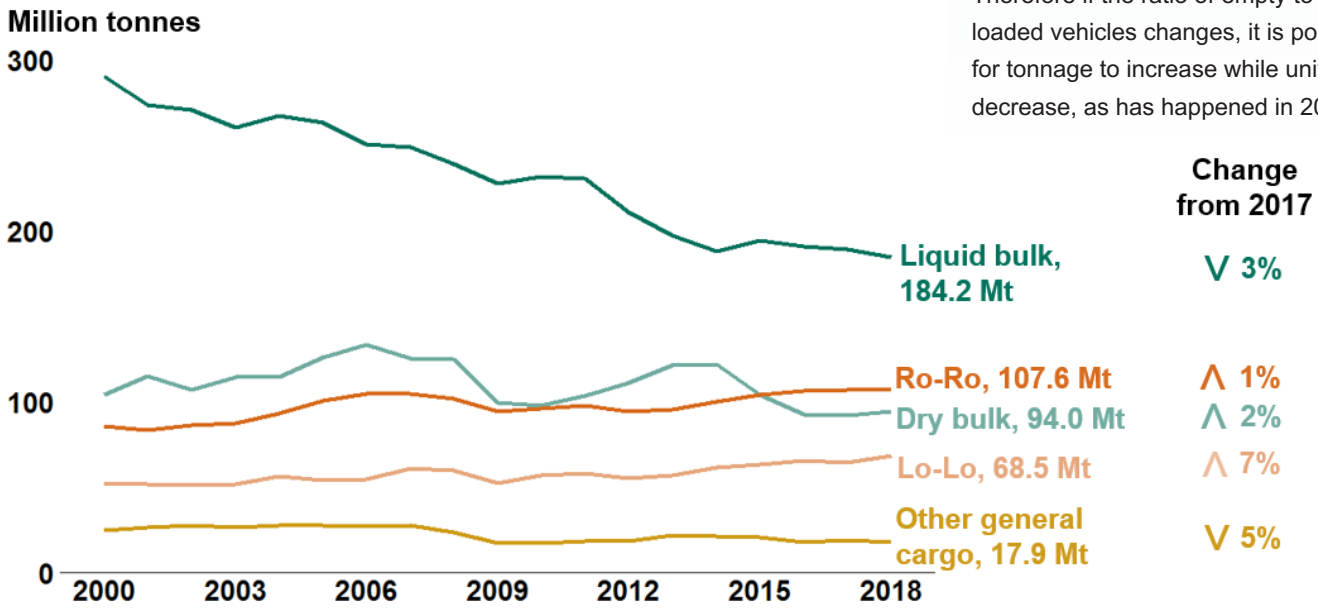
In 2018, all cargo types continued recent trends. Liquid bulk continued a general downward trend. The only other cargo to have declined over the past year was other general cargo, whilst tonnage in other categories increased.

In units, Ro-Ro traffic declined 1%, with a fall in the number of import/export trade vehicles contributing to this, whilst Lo-Lo traffic (containers) increased slightly driven by an increase in 40ft containers on deep sea routes.

How can tonnage increase while units decrease?

For unitised traffic, the number of carrying units (e.g. a lorry or shipping container) are recorded as well as the weight of the cargo being carried, excluding the weight of the carrying unit itself. Passenger vehicles are recorded with no weight and empty containers/goods vehicles are recorded as one unit with no weight. Therefore if the ratio of empty to loaded vehicles changes, it is possible for tonnage to increase while units decrease, as has happened in 2018.

UK major port tonnage by cargo since 2000 (PORT0201)



Liquid Bulk

Liquid bulk consists of any liquid or gas that is transported in a tank.

Liquid bulk traffic accounted for 39% of tonnage handled at UK major ports in 2018 (184.2 million tonnes), more than any other cargo group.

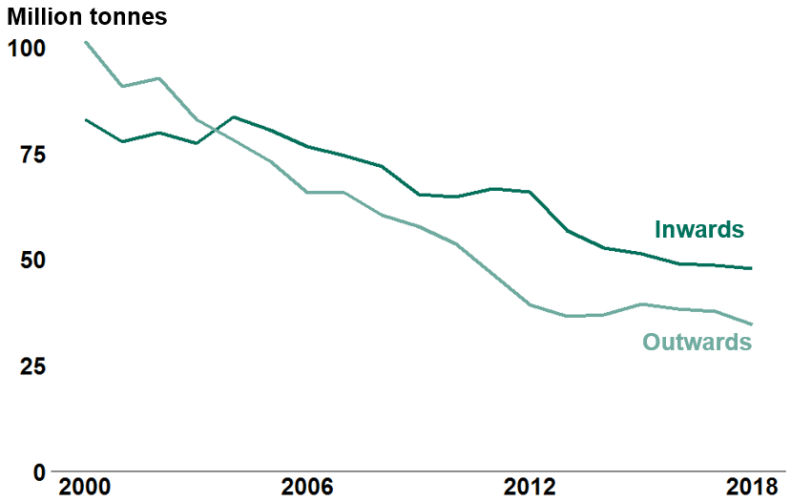
Liquid bulk traffic has declined in recent decades, mainly driven by falling levels of crude oil handled, which together with oil products make up the majority of the liquid bulk category, accounting for 87% in 2018.

Liquid bulk can be broken down into:

Crude oil tonnage traffic fell 5% to 82.4 million tonnes in 2018. This decline was mainly due to reductions in outwards traffic, where the ports of Forth (8%), Orkney (31%) and Tees & Hartlepool (5%) experienced notable declines. These three ports together accounted for 83% of total outwards crude oil tonnage in 2018.

Over the longer term, decline in North Sea oil is a factor contributing to a 55% fall in overall crude oil tonnage handled compared with 2000.

Crude oil handled since 2000 by direction (PORT0201)



Dry Bulk

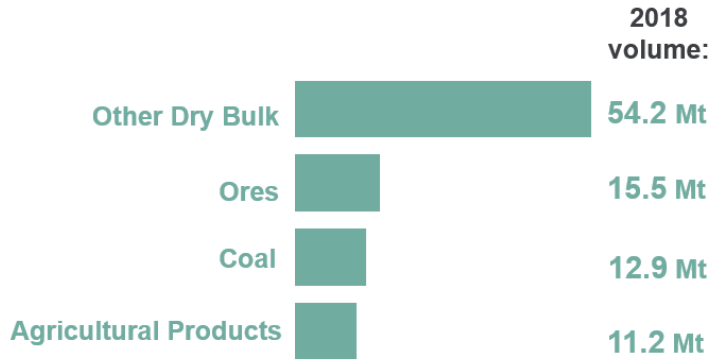
Dry bulk consists of cargo that is in bulk, so can be scooped up, not bagged items.

Overall dry bulk volumes have varied considerably over the past decade, largely due to fluctuating volumes of coal and ores. However, since 2016, the trend has somewhat flattened. Volumes of coal have remained broadly stable during this period which may indicate a new general trend for the cargo.

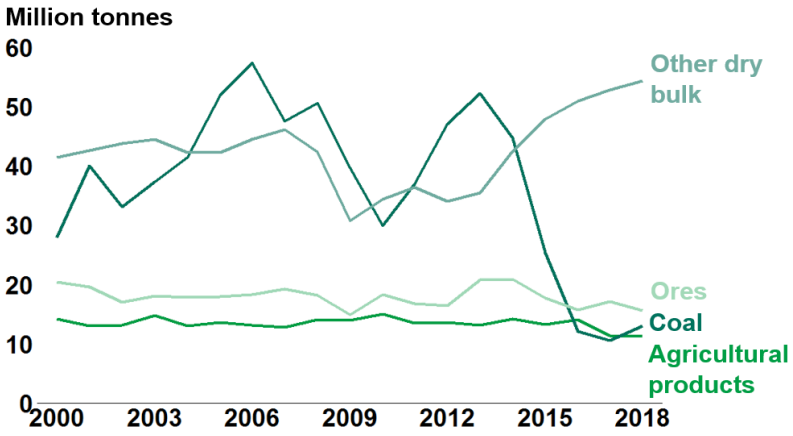
Changes in dry bulk largely reflect changes in fuels used for energy generation. Closure of coal power stations to meet the 2025 emissions target[1] caused a large fall in the tonnage of coal imported between 2013-2016. Conversely, other dry bulk, which includes biomass, has continued to increase steadily.

More information on energy statistics, including coal supply and consumption, can be found in the Energy Trends Publications produced by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.

Dry bulk can be broken down into:



Dry bulk handled since 2000 (PORT0201)



1 https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-plans-to-close-coal-power-stations-by-2025

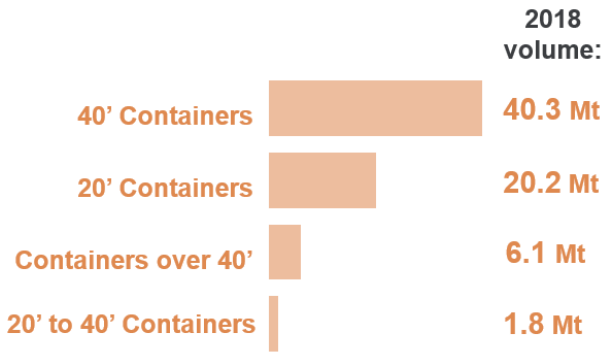
Lift-on/Lift-off (Lo-Lo) Cargo

Lo-Lo consists of container traffic. Information about the cargo transported in the containers is not collected in the port freight series, but can be found in HMRC data for goods moved to and from outside the EU.

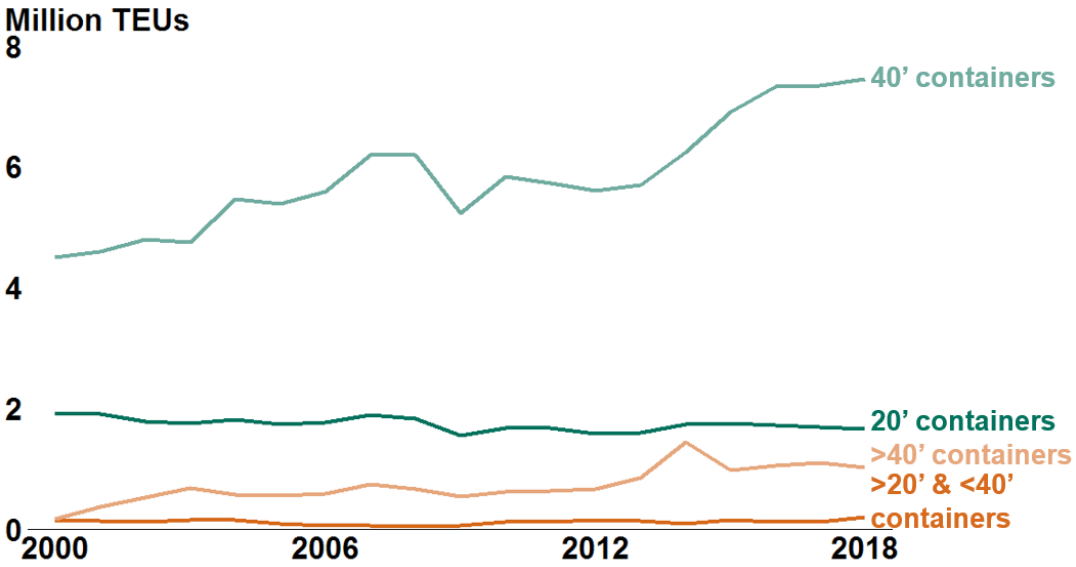
When measured in twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), **Lo-Lo traffic increased slightly (by 1%) to 10.3 million TEUs compared to 2017**, continuing the upwards trend since 2012. However, this upwards trend has been slowing in recent years.

Felixstowe continues to handle the largest amount of containerised traffic in the UK, handling 37% of container units in 2018, although there was a 9% fall in traffic in 2018 compared to the previous year.

Lift-on Lift-off traffic can be broken down into:



Lo-Lo traffic since 2000, in TEUs and by cargo (PORT0201)



Definitions

TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units) is a standardised measure to allow for the different sizes of container boxes. See the Technical Note for TEU values for each of the container categories.

Lo-Lo tonnage excludes the weight of the container itself, so an empty container has a weight of 0.

Lo-Lo tonnage has generally been increasing since 2009, and on this basis all types of Lo-Lo traffic continued to increase in 2018. 40 feet containers rose the most in absolute terms from 37.7 million tonnes in 2017 to 40.3 million tonnes in 2018 (up by 7%) (PORT0201).

London experienced a notable increase in 40 foot containers in 2018, due to increased traffic at London Gateway which handles larger containers for deep sea journeys (see p14 for more information on deep sea traffic) (PORT0400).

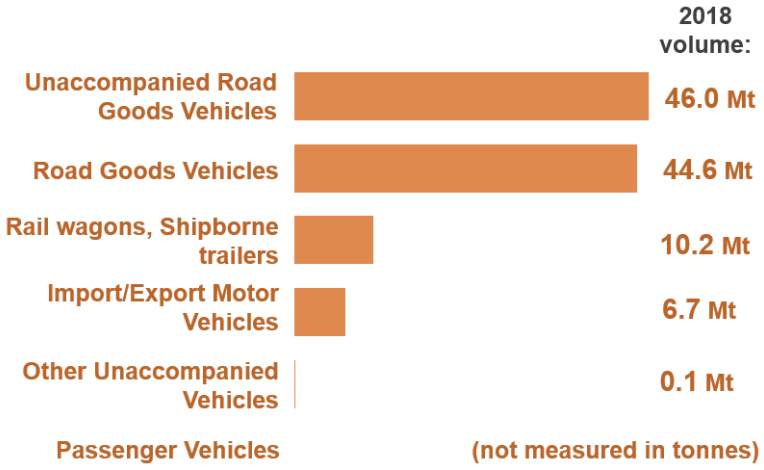
Roll-on/Roll-off (Ro-Ro) Cargo

Ro-Ro traffic consists of cargo that can be moved on to, or off, a vessel either by their own propulsion (such as a passenger car) or with assistance (such as an unaccompanied trailer).

Overall tonnage for Ro-Ro traffic has been growing since 2012, however growth has been slowing in recent years. Compared to 2017, tonnage increased slightly, mainly due to an increase in unaccompanied road goods trailers, up by 5%, continuing a recent trend.

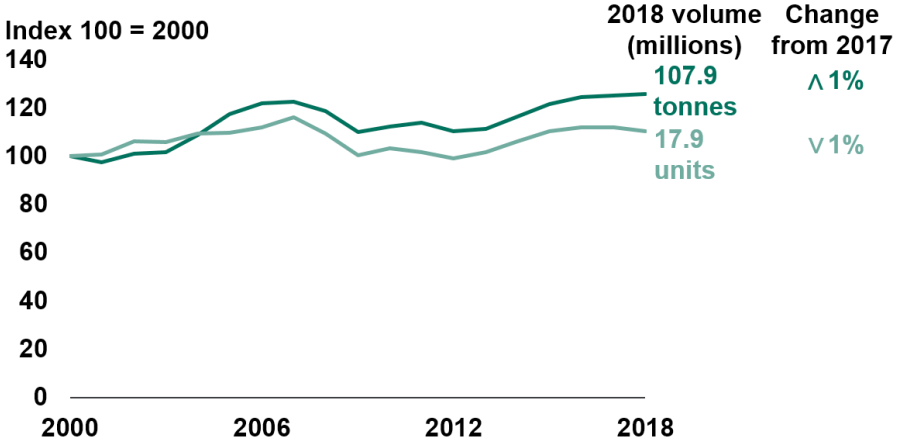
This is consistent with DfT's International Road Freight Statistics which show an increase in international activity in 2018.

Roll-on Roll-off traffic can be broken down into:



Trade vehicles handled at UK ports have decreased from 4.3 to 4 million units in 2018. This is the second year of decline after strong growth between 2010 and 2016. This is consistent with trends in UK vehicle manufacturing[1] which show a 9% decline and registration of new vehicles[2] which show a 5% decline over the same period.

Index of Ro-Ro traffic handled at UK ports since 2000, in tonnes and units (PORT0201)



The number of passenger vehicles increased 6% to 5.9 million units in 2018, although the trend has been largely flat over the last 5 years.

These statistics do not include the number of passengers carried, which are available in the DfT Sea Passenger Statistics series[3], which show a slight increase in passengers on international routes in 2018.

For further information on the movement of goods by heavy goods vehicles from ports, see the "Inter-modal road freight activity" section in the Domestic Road Freight Statistics. In 2018, 56 million tonnes of goods lifted by GB-registered heavy goods vehicles in the UK involved inter-modal activity - of these journeys, 88% began or ended at a shipping dock.

1 SSMT Motor Industry Facts 2019

2 DfT Vehicle Licensing Statistics: Annual 2018

3 DfT Sea Passenger Statistics 2018: Short sea routes

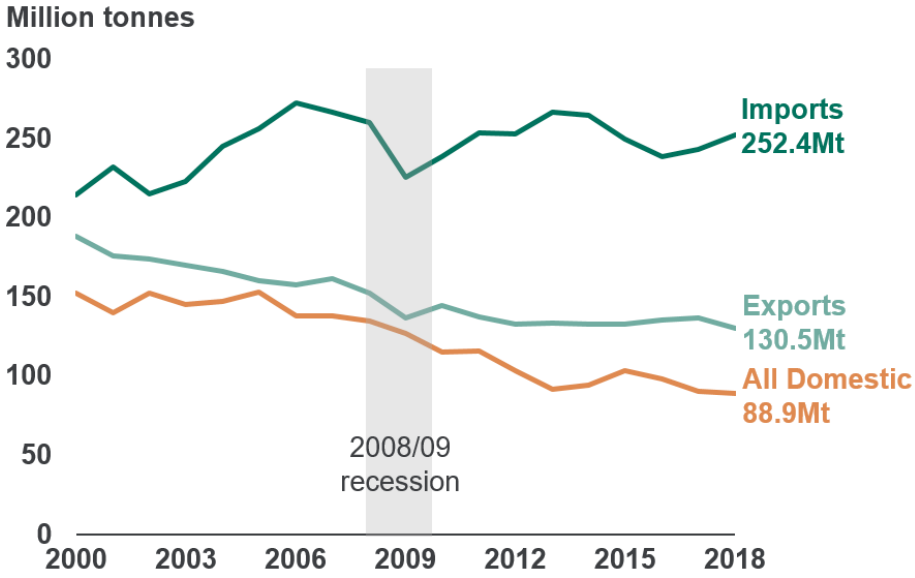
4. Major Port Freight by Direction and Route

The majority (64%) of traffic through UK major ports in 2018 was in an inwards direction.

The route on which freight cargo travelled can be split into international and domestic.
International tonnage handled by UK major ports rose 1% to 383.2 million tonnes in 2018, accounting for 81% of all port freight traffic.

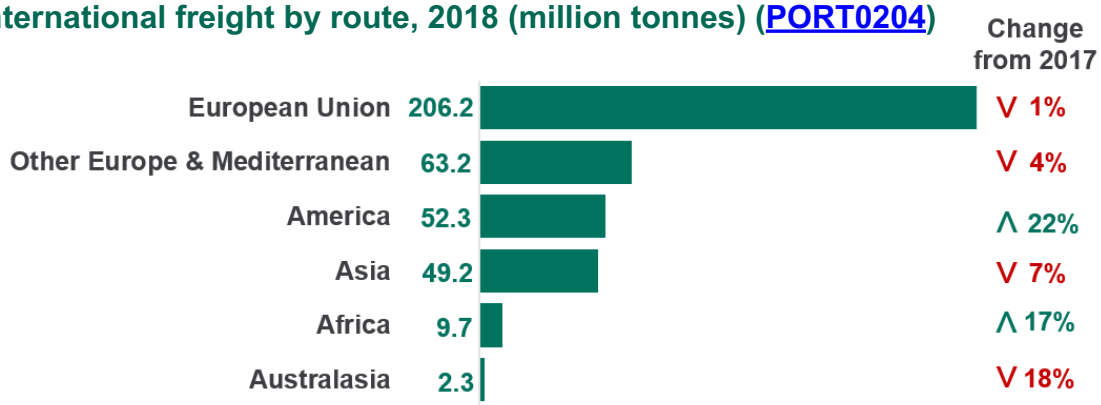
The UK continues to import more than it exports by sea; imports accounted for 66% of international traffic in 2018.

Major port international freight by direction and domestic freight since 2000 (PORT0205)



The EU continues to be our largest continental trading partner, accounting for 54% of all international trade at UK major ports in 2018. However, trade with America has increased noticeably by 22% since 2017, mostly due to a large increase in the amount of liquid bulk being traded with the USA and Canada.

International freight by route, 2018 (million tonnes) (PORT0204)



Definitions

Inwards/ outwards: Inwards and outwards includes both domestic and international traffic.

Imports/ exports: International traffic only.

Domestic: Goods moved between two UK ports (coastwise) and one-port traffic to or from UK offshore locations such as wind farms or sea dredging.

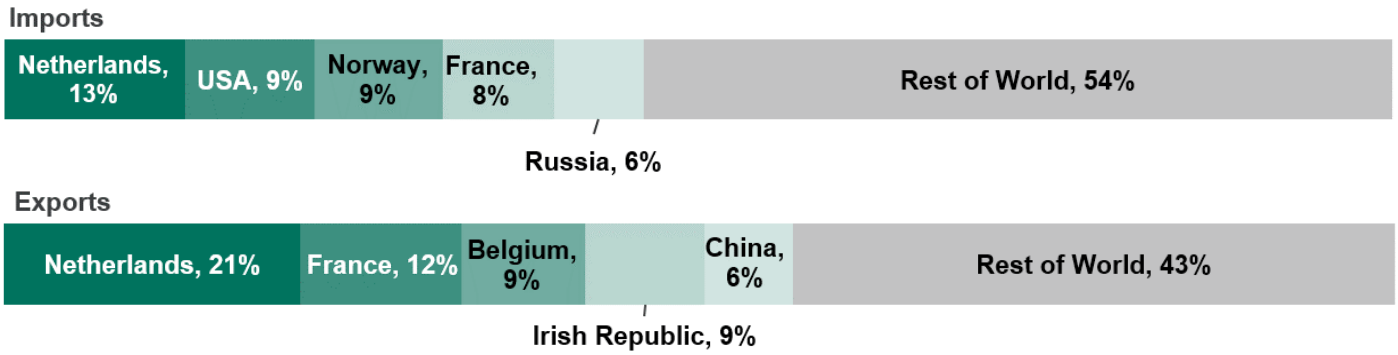
Note on Routes

In this series, route refers to the port of load/unload, not the final destination or source of the goods. Sometimes goods are shipped to an intermediate destination (e.g. Rotterdam), and then to another destination (e.g. UK ports), this is known as transhipment. Numerous attempts have been made to quantify the effects of transhipment with limited success. An example is a 2014 article UK Trade in goods estimates and the 'Rotterdam Effect', published by the Office for National Statistics.

Liquid bulk accounted for largest proportion of both imports and exports at UK major ports in 2018 (37% and 44% respectively). The largest proportion (41%) of imported liquid goods came from 'Other Europe and Mediterranean countries' (44% of which came from Norway). For exported liquid goods, the majority went to European Union countries (43% of which went to the Netherlands). Further information can be found in table PORT0204.

The top 5 countries the UK **imported** goods from accounted for nearly half (46%) of total imports, totalling 116 million tonnes. Similarly, the top 5 countries the UK **exported** goods to accounted for 57% of total exports from UK major ports in 2018, totalling 74 million tonnes.

Share of top 5 countries UK major ports imported from and exported to, 2018 (PORT0206)



Other sources of trade statistics. These port freight statistics provide information on trade volumes through sea ports. Further information on the value of goods traded via all modes by country and commodity is available from the ONS monthly UK trade statistics.

A breakdown of the value of goods imported and exported by UK region and further information on businesses is available from HMRC trade statistics. HMRC also publish tonnage of goods moved between the UK and countries outside the EU. The technical note accompanying these statistics includes comparisons between port freight and HMRC for specific cargo types.

ONS trade statistics 2018

Value of goods traded for all modes

Imports	Exports
£489 billion	**£351 billion**
Top trading partners	Top trading partners
1. Germany	1. United States
2. China	2. Germany
3. Netherlands	3. Netherlands
4. Unites States	4. France
5. France	5. Ireland

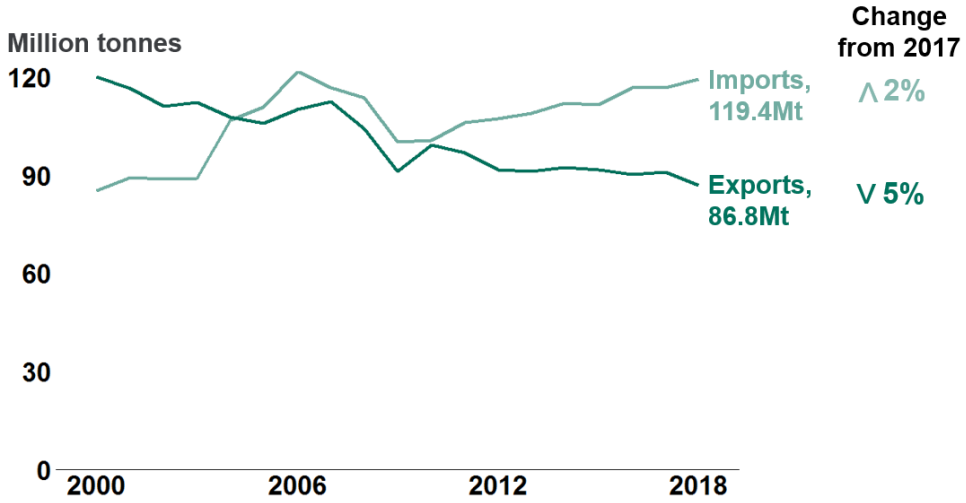
1. Whilst trends align, the HMRC and ONS estimates of value are not directly comparable due to differences in coverage and methodology.

Short Sea Freight with EU, Non-EU European and Mediterranean Countries

All short sea freight fell by 2% to 269.4 million tonnes in 2018, largely due to a 5% decrease in the amount of liquid bulk being traded. The Netherlands and Norway saw the largest falls in liquid bulk trade on short sea routes (down by 12% and 21% respectively).

The large majority of short sea freight is trade with the EU, which fell by 1% to 206.2 million tonnes in 2018. More than half (58%) of trade with the EU is imports (119.4 million tonnes). Prior to 2005, the majority of trade with the EU was historically exports. Imports from the EU have generally risen since 2009 whilst exports declined slightly in 2018 following a period of relative stability since 2012.

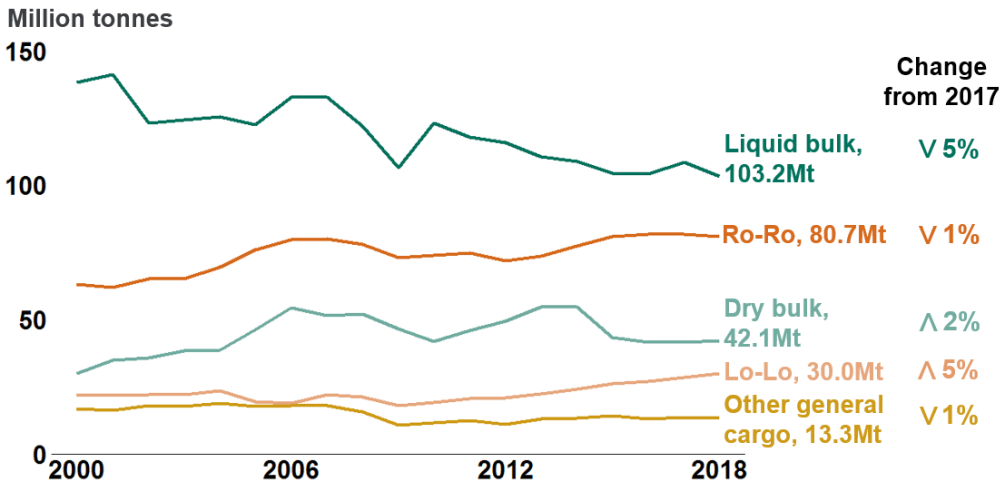
European Union traffic by direction since 2000 (PORT0499)



Short sea freight by cargo type. There has been a relatively steady, consistent increase in short sea Lo-Lo traffic since 2009. Traffic through Grimsby & Immingham, Liverpool and London contributed to this rise over this period (PORT0499).

Ro-Ro trade with France drives much of the Ro-Ro trend for short sea traffic, accounting for a third of all Ro-Ro trade with the EU. Ro-Ro traffic between the UK and France has fallen 9% since 2016. 90% of Ro-Ro traffic between the UK and France passes through Dover.

Short sea traffic by cargo type since 2000 (PORT0499)



Definitions

Short Sea: Maritime traffic that moves cargo along a coast without having to cross an ocean. This consists of European Union (EU) and 'Other Europe and Mediterranean' (Extra-EU) countries.

Extra-EU: A Eurostat term encompassing all European and Mediterranean countries that are not part of the European Union

Transhipment

These statistics cover freight handled at UK major ports. The port of loading or unloading is also recorded - this may not be the port of ultimate origin or destination. For example, if a ship carrying cargo from Asia unloads/loads the cargo at a European port which is then put on another ship to the UK, our statistics will state the port of load as the European port, rather than the port in Asia.

Deep Sea International Freight

Deep sea traffic increased 6% to 113.5 million tonnes in 2018. Apart from other general cargo, all cargo categories saw an increase in the latest year.

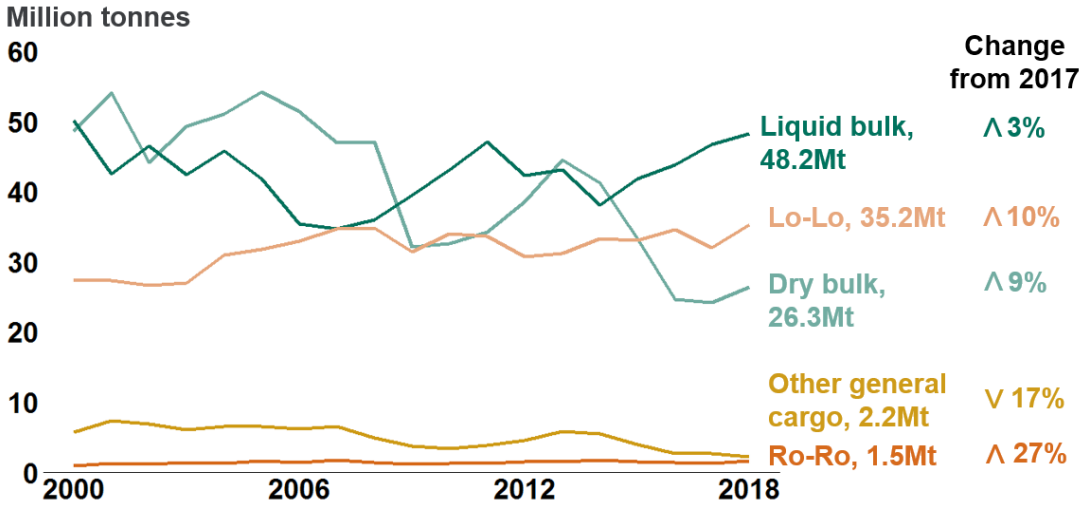
Since 2000, trade with deep sea countries has fluctuated only slightly, but with notable differences between cargo types:

- Dry bulk has followed the national trend, declining 41% since 2013, with reduced coal imports contributing to this pattern
- Liquid bulk has increased steadily for four consecutive years, up 27% since 2014.

Definitions

Deep Sea: Maritime traffic that crosses oceans. This consists of countries in Africa, America, Asia and Australasia. Mediterranean countries are classed under short sea in the port freight series.

International deep sea traffic by cargo type since 2000 (PORT0499)



In 2018, there was an increase in the amount of liquid bulk being traded with the USA and Canada, by 37% (to 16.3 million tonnes) and 57% (to 2.8 million tonnes) respectively in 2018. However, there was an 18% decrease in the amount of liquid bulk being traded with Asian countries (to 20.4 million tonnes) with notable decreases for Qatar, Singapore and Kuwait.

The fall in trade with Qatar could be linked to the diplomatic crisis that started in 2017, where several Qatari ports were blockaded by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Lo-Lo container traffic accounts for a larger proportion of deep sea traffic, accounting for 31% of deep sea tonnage compared to 15% of all tonnage. Deep sea Lo-Lo traffic experienced the largest increase of any cargo category compared to 2017. The countries which saw the largest rise were the USA, Singapore and India. China accounts for just under a third of all deep sea Lo-Lo traffic with the UK; following rapid increase between 2000 and 2007 the trend has levelled off, with some fluctuations.

5 biggest deep sea container trade routes, 2018 tonnage

			Change from 2017
1.	China	9.1Mt	V 5%
2.	Singapore	3.9Mt	Λ 24%
3.	USA	3.6Mt	Λ 34%
4.	India	3.2Mt	Λ 25%
5.	Malaysia	2.1Mt	Λ 4%

Further information can be found in tables PORT0204 and PORT0205.

Domestic Port Traffic

Tonnage carried on domestic routes made up 19% of all traffic handled by UK major ports in 2018, totalling 88.9 million tonnes. Tonnage fell 2% in 2018, continuing the longer term decline, mainly driven by a fall in one-port traffic.

The majority of domestic traffic is coastwise - 69.2 million tonnes in 2018, a similar level to the previous year. Since 2000, coastwise traffic has declined steadily, mainly as a result of a fall in oil products being moved. This is likely to be associated with lower volumes of crude oil being refined in the UK.

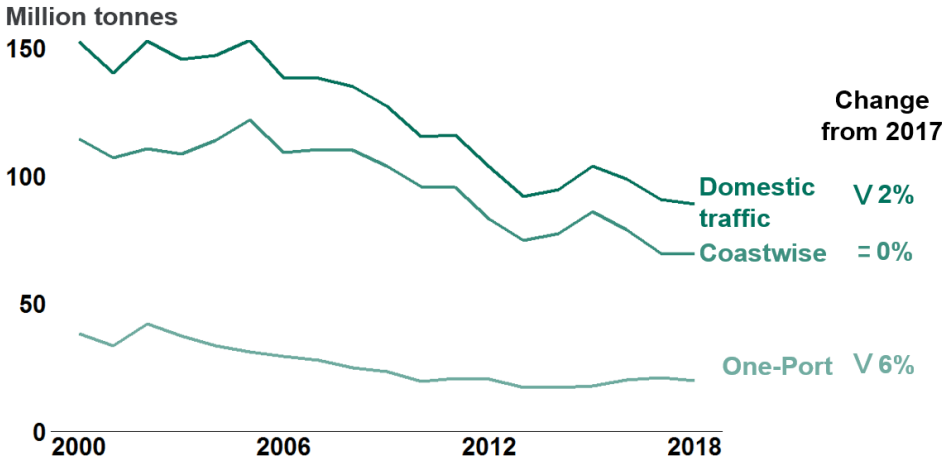
Definitions

Coastwise: Traffic carried around the coast from one UK port to another, including domestic ferry services.

One-port: Traffic to and from offshore locations - such as oil rigs and sea dredging.

One port tonnage is largely aggregates from the sea bed (12.7 million tonnes in 2018) and movements to offshore oil and gas installations (6.8 million). The latter category has declined considerably since 2000, which is likely to be due to the reduction in North Sea oil and gas production, while offshore aggregates traffic has remained relatively unchanged over the same period.

Domestic traffic by type since 2000 (PORT0499)



Since 2013, Belfast has handled the most domestic traffic of any UK port - 12.1 million tonnes in 2018. The vast majority of this traffic is coastwise which has increased steadily since 2009, and is mainly Ro-Ro traffic (PORT0400).

London saw the largest fall in domestic traffic in 2018. London's domestic traffic is mainly inwards one-port traffic - aggregates from the seabed (PORT0499).

Top 10 UK major ports by domestic tonnage, 2018

	Million tonnes	Change from 2017
Belfast	12.1	∧ 3%
London	9.4	V 11%
Liverpool	5.1	∧ 2%
Grimsby & Immingham	4.2	V 8%
Milford Haven	4.0	V 16%
Heysham	3.9	∧ 2%
Aberdeen	3.3	V 2%
Larne	2.9	— 0%
Cairnryan	2.9	— 0%
Southampton	2.9	V 23%
All other major ports	38.4	∧ 3%

Domestic Waterborne Freight

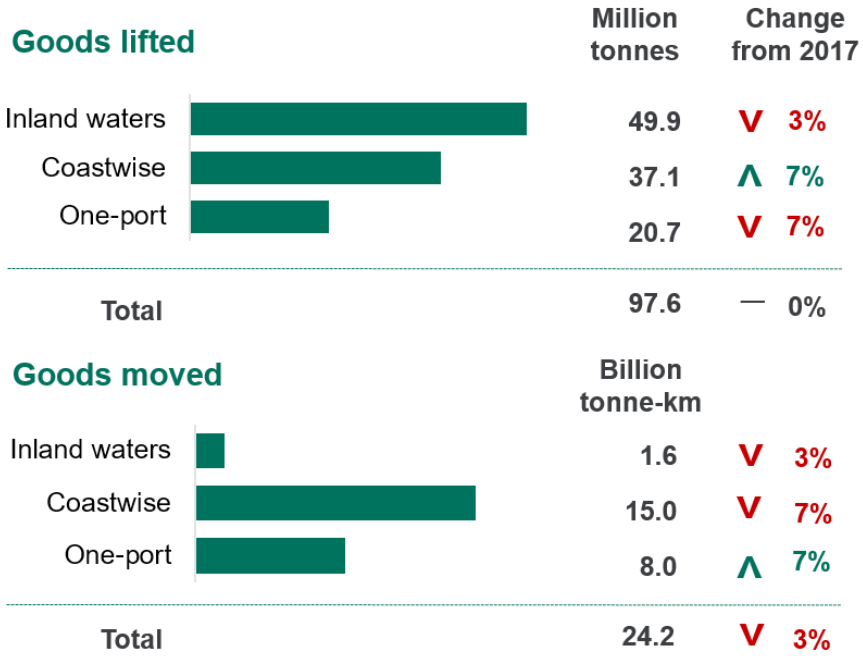
Domestic waterborne freight covers freight moved by water in the UK, and includes traffic on inland waterways in addition to coastwise and one port traffic. These figures are calculated using a different method to those presented above and include freight handled on rivers and canals, and by minor ports.

The total amount of goods moved by water within the UK declined by 3% to 24.2 billion tonne-kilometres (bt-k) in 2018, a third consecutive year of decline and continuing an overall downward trend over the past decade.

Although inland waters traffic accounts for the majority of goods lifted (i.e. tonnage), the majority of tonne-kilometres moved are on coastwise routes (this is because in these figures, distance moved for international traffic which travels on inland waterways only includes distance to the smooth water boundary).

The trends over time for goods moved on coastwise and one-port routes broadly mirror those for tonnage (shown on the previous page).

Domestic waterborne freight goods moved and lifted, 2018 (PORT0701)



Note: Coastwise and one port traffic which travels on inland waterways is counted twice in the above figures (so total goods lifted is less than the sum of the three individual categories).

About Domestic Waterborne Freight

Figures in this section are based on re-analysis of the port freight statistics, and also include data for inland waterway movements collected from barge operators and for minor ports.

In contrast to the domestic figures above, coastwise traffic between two ports is only counted in one direction, and international traffic which travels on inland waters is included.

For further information regarding the figures in this section, see the Domestic Waterborne Technical Note.

Data tables for DWF can be found in the PORT07 section.

Definitions

Inland waterways traffic: movement of freight on a ship or barge along one of British inland waterways, such as rivers or canals.

Where coastwise or one-port traffic is handled by a port classified as being on inland waters (e.g. on a river) this is also included in the inland waters within this section.

Goods moved: metric used for freight traffic. It is the tonnage of goods lifted multiplied by the distance travelled, expressed as tonne-kilometres. For foreign traffic, distance is counted to the smooth water boundary only.

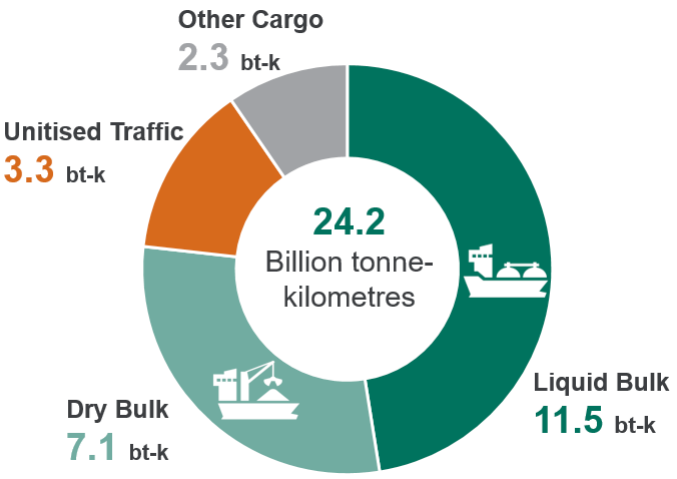
Water accounts for a relatively small share of domestic goods moved across all modes (where road dominates) - around 13% of goods moved, and 6% of goods lifted, based on data for 2017 published in Transport Statistics Great Britain.

Liquid bulk traffic accounted for most of the cargo transported along domestic waterborne routes (47%) in 2018, followed by dry bulk (29%).

The majority of the liquid bulk cargo came from crude oil and oil products. The overall declining trend over time in domestic freight moved by water reflects a reduction in these categories, which is likely to be associated with the decline in North Sea oil.

Unitised traffic - including Ro-Ro and containers - accounted for 14% of all tonne-kilometres, and 20% for coastwise routes.

Domestic waterborne freight goods moved by cargo, 2018 (PORT0702)



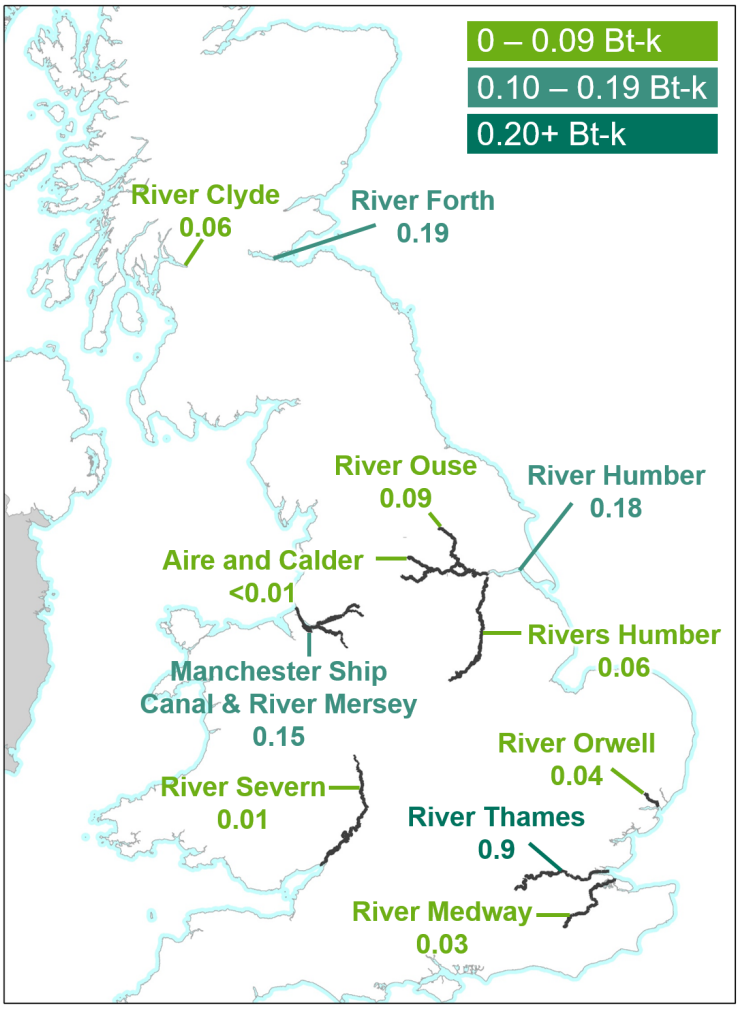
Inland waters traffic overall accounts for a relatively small proportion of domestic waterborne freight traffic measured by goods moved. This traffic can be carried by barges or seagoing vessels on inland waterways.

Compared to 2017, goods moved on inland waters traffic fell 3% to 1.6 billion tonne kilometres.

Of the navigable waterways, the Thames handled the most domestic traffic in the UK, accounting for over half (57%) of all goods moved by inland waterway in 2018.

In terms of goods lifted, the River Thames handled around 25 million tonnes of freight (over half of all total traffic on UK waterways - table PORT0704).

Major inland waterway routes, goods moved, 2018 (PORT0705)



6. Background Notes

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

- Overall the port freight statistics are believed to be fit for the purposes outlined on page 2, though data are known to be less reliable at lower levels of aggregation e.g. port, route and country level. The notes and defintions document includes comparisons with other sources which illustrate some differences.
- Final port freight statistics are published 8 months after the year end. At this stage a full reconciliation of port and shipping agent data will have been carried out, and the grossing procedures described in the Technical Note and Background Quality Report are completed and checked. The detailed results in this release are based on this grossed data
- Vessel arrivals statistics are consider less robust, and are outside the scope of National Statistics as a result, though are believed to give a good general indication of the more significant seagoing movements
- Domestic waterborne freight (DWF) statistics are National Statistics, and draw largely on data from the same collection as port freight statistics. Further details of the coverage and compilation of these statistics are given in the DWF notes and definitions document

Related information

- The web tables and charts give further detail of the key results presented in this statistical release. They are available here: port and domestic waterborne freight statistics
- These notes provide further information such as definitions and a list of UK ports.
- The Background Quality Report provides further information on how the data is collected, quality assured and comparisons with relevant data sources.
- National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs: Code of Practice. The arrivals statistics included in this release are not National Statistics.
- These statistics were designated as National Statistics in February 2013. The continued designation was confirmed in December 2018.
- Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: pre-release access list
- Provisional summary quarterly statistics on freight handled by UK major ports are also updated quarterly. The latest tables can be found here: port freight quarterly statistics

Feedback

We welcome any feedback on these statistics by email to maritime.stats@dft.gov.uk, or fill in our two-minute user feedback survey which aims to make Maritime Statistics better, more informative and more user friendly.

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