



Department  
for Transport

# TSGB 2019 Notes and Definitions: Freight

## Introduction

These notes and definitions relate to the detailed statistics (tables and charts) on “freight” that can be found on the Transport Statistics Great Britain web page, table numbers TSGB0401 to TSGB0435.

## In this publication

Domestic Freight..... page 1

Freight Transported  
by Road..... page 2

Rail Freight..... page 6

Roll-On Roll-Off  
Statistics..... page 7

## Further information

### Road Freight

roadfreight.stats@dft.gov.uk

### Rail Freight

rail.stats@dft.gov.uk

### Waterborne Freight

maritime.stats@dft.gov.uk

This section provides notes and definitions for the Freight statistics tables in Transport Statistics Great Britain published on 17 December 2019. Notes and Definitions include:

- Information on sources.
- Information on accuracy of the statistics.
- Definitions.
- General information for the tables including links to background information.

## Domestic Freight

### Freight transport by mode: TSGB0401 to TSGB0403

The lines on the tables TSGB0401 refer to discontinuities in the series since 1953. Details on these discontinuities are given below.

#### Road:

2004: Due to changes in grossing methodology, figures for 2004 onwards are not fully comparable with those prior to 2004. Detailed comparisons should be made with caution between these years.

2014: From 2014 statistics are for heavy goods vehicles only, those over 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight, prior to this an adjustment was made to include a light goods vehicle component.

#### Rail:

1984/85: The figure for rail is low because the amount of coal lifted was significantly reduced due to the UK miner’s strike in 1984/85.

1996/97: Exact rail comparisons pre and post privatisation are not possible.

1999/00: Change in source data from 1999/00

2003/04: Break in the rail ‘Goods Lifted’ series. The increase was largely due to changes in collection methods.

2005/06: Break in the rail ‘Goods Lifted’ series. Figures from 2005/06 onwards include some of the tonnes lifted by GB Railfreight.

## Domestic Freight

2007/08: Break in the rail 'Goods Lifted' series. Coal data was not supplied by GB Railfreight prior to 2007/08.

### Water:

1972: Figures from 1972 onwards are not comparable with earlier years. From 1972, water includes all UK coastwise and one-port freight movements by sea, and inland waterway traffic. Earlier years include only GB coastwise traffic and internal traffic on BWB waterways.

### Pipeline:

1989: The increase in pipeline data compared to the corresponding figure for 1989 is largely due to changes in coverage.

2013: Pipeline figures are not available from 2013 onwards.

## Further information

**Road:** The figures for TSGB0401 include the activity of GB-registered goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight (heavy goods vehicles) and an adjustment for light goods vehicles up to that weight for years to and including 2013. Figures for TSGB0402 and TSGB0403 are for heavy goods vehicles only. The estimates for heavy goods vehicles are derived from the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Great Britain (CSRGT GB) and, for light goods vehicles, from surveys carried out in 1976, 1987, 1992/93, and from 2003 to 2005 with data being interpolated for the intervening years.

**Rail:** Figures up to 1962 include non-revenue earning traffic carried by British Rail for its own purposes. Figures for rail are for each financial year. Data for goods moved and goods lifted come from different sources and caution should be exercised if making comparisons between the two series. The figures in TSGB0401 are not directly comparable with TSGB0402 and TSGB0403.

**Air:** Domestic air cargo (freight and mail) within the United Kingdom, while sometimes important in terms of speed of delivery, is insignificant in volume compared with other modes and is not presented in tables in this chapter. More information on the volume of air freight carried is in Chapter 2.

**Water:** More information on domestic waterborne freight and port freight statistics are available in Chapter 5.

## Freight Transported by Road

**Domestic road freight transport by goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes gross weight:** TSGB0404 to TSGB0407, TSGB0429 to TSGB0433

The data in these tables are derived from the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Great Britain (CSRGT GB) as well as the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Northern Ireland (CSRGT NI).

## Freight Transported by Road

In these tables, freight activity is either measured in terms of the weight of goods (tonnes) carried taking no account of the distance they are carried (termed 'goods lifted'), or as 'goods moved' (tonne kilometres) which does take into account distance. 'Goods moved' for each loaded journey is the weight of the load multiplied by the distance it is carried, and therefore a better measure of the activity done by heavy goods vehicles.

'Mode of working' relates to whether goods are being carried on either a "hire or reward" or "own account" basis. The former relates to the carriage of goods owned by people other than the operator. The latter covers goods carried by operators in the course of their own trade or business, for example lorries owned and operated by supermarkets to transport goods to and from their premises.

The tonnes lifted and tonne kilometres moved estimates shown in these tables are not directly comparable to those of heavy goods vehicle kilometres derived from the traffic census. For more information on the differences between the two sources, please refer to the methodology note available here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/527810/hgv-traffic-estimates-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/527810/hgv-traffic-estimates-report.pdf)

The estimates of road freight for 2015 derived from the CSRGT GB were based on average returned sample of some 230 heavy goods vehicles per week. The samples are drawn from the vehicle licence records held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). Questionnaires are sent to the registered keepers of the sampled vehicles asking for details of its activity during the survey week. The estimates are grossed to the vehicle population. The latest annual results are published in Road Freight Statistics 2017 at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/road-freight-statistics-2017>.

More information on can be found in the separate road freight notes & definitions document at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-freight-domestic-and-international-statistics-guidance>.

### Methodological changes

A key component of National Statistics outputs is a programme of quality reviews carried out at least every five years to ensure that such statistics are fit for purpose and that their quality and value continue to improve. A quality review of the Department for Transport's road freight surveys, including the CSRGT, was carried out in 2003. A copy of the report can be accessed at [www.statistics.gov.uk/nsbase/methods\\_quality/quality\\_review/downloads/NSQR30FinalReport.doc](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/nsbase/methods_quality/quality_review/downloads/NSQR30FinalReport.doc) The quality review made a number of recommendations about the CSRGT GB.

## Freight Transported by Road

The main methodological recommendation was that, to improve the accuracy of survey estimates, the sample strata should be amended to reflect current trends in vehicle type, weight and legislative groups. These new strata are described more fully in the survey report. For practical and administrative reasons, changes were also made to the sample selection methodology. These changes have resulted in figures from 2004 onwards not being fully comparable with those for 2003 and earlier years. Detailed comparisons should therefore be made with caution.

### United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) Assessment of 'Statistics on Road Freight'

In July 2009, the UK Statistics Authority confirmed that the statistics published in Road Goods Vehicles Travelling to Mainland Europe (quarterly series and annual bulletin), the Survey of Foreign Vehicle Activity in Great Britain, and Road Freight Statistics are designated as National Statistics, subject to the implementation of certain enhancements. The assessment report is published at: [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-6---road-freight-statistics--27-july-2009.pdf](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-6---road-freight-statistics--27-july-2009.pdf). In September 2014, due to changes in processing and subsequent delays in publication of Road Freight Statistics, the DfT Head of Profession for Statistics wrote to the UK Statistics Authority recommending the voluntary suspension of National Statistics Status for the Road Freight Statistical series until the series can undergo re-assessment in 2016. The response from the UKSA can be found: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/index.html>

Further information on the changes in processing of Road Freight Statistics can be found at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/405241/road-freight-statistics-methodology-note.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/405241/road-freight-statistics-methodology-note.pdf)

## Freight Transported by Road

**International Roads Goods Transport:** TSGB0411 to TSGB0421, TSGB0433

These tables show the international activity of UK-registered vehicles. The statistics for GB-registered vehicles are derived from the International Road Haulage Survey (IRHS), which has been conducted by the Department for Transport (and its predecessors) since 1979.

The IRHS is carried out by asking hauliers who undertake international work to report the details of recently completed international trips travelling to mainland Europe or the Republic of Ireland via roll-on/roll-off ferry services or through the Channel Tunnel. The sample is weighted to the total of British powered vehicles on all ferry routes and the Channel Tunnel from the Roll-on/Roll-off survey (TSGB0434 and TSGB0435).

Statistics derived from the IRHS for 2004 onwards were revised in 2010 following a methodological review of grossing procedures by the Office for National Statistics under a Quality Improvement Fund (QIF) Project. Figures for 2004 onwards are therefore not fully comparable with those prior to 2004. Detailed comparisons should be made with caution between these years.

The department took the opportunity to review more thoroughly the grossing procedures through the QIF project which was commissioned by the DfT in response to the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) assessment of Road Freight statistics described above.

For full details on the revisions, and a copy of the final QIF methodology report, please refer to Section 7 in Road Freight Statistics 2009 at:

<http://tna.europarchive.org/20110503185748/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/freight/goodsbyroad/roadfreightstatistics2009>

Vehicles registered to hauliers operating in Northern Ireland are covered by the CSRGT (NI) and activity by NI-registered vehicles is included in these tables, except where the journey is solely confined to the island of Ireland.

A substantial amount of traffic goes by unaccompanied trailers (as well as in the foreign powered vehicles) for which statistics are not obtained in this survey. In particular, trade across the North Sea is mainly carried on unaccompanied trailers. Freight carried by foreign vehicles in the UK is not included in the IRHS (or CSRGT) tables. Other EU countries obtain comparable statistics which are published by Eurostat and are shown in Tables TSGB0417 to TSGB0421.

## Freight Transported by Road

**International Roads Goods Transport by Foreign-Registered Vehicles:** TSGB0417 to TSGB0421

These show road freight activity for goods loaded and unloaded in the UK by foreign-registered HGVs. TSGB0421 shows levels of cabotage in the UK by foreign-registered HGVs. The term 'cabotage' refers to road haulage within one country by a vehicle registered in another country and is measured in tonne kilometres.

This information is collected by EU member states (and some non-EU states such as Norway, Switzerland and Croatia) under EC Regulation 70/2012. These are data that are routinely published on the Eurostat website at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

## Rail Freight

**National Railways Freight Traffic:** TSGB0422 to TSGB0423

These tables summarise the performance of the freight business in terms of freight 'lifted' (measured in tonnes) and freight 'moved' (measured in tonne kilometres).

In February 1996, British Rail's (BR) bulk freight operations were sold to North and South Railways, subsequently called English, Welsh and Scottish Railway (EWS). In 2007, EWS was bought by Deutsche Bahn and in January 2009 was re-named DB Schenker, which is now operating as DB Cargo UK. The other major companies in the rail freight sector are Freightliner Ltd (formerly the BR container business), Direct Rail Services (DRS) and First GB Railfreight.

Freight moved is measured in net tonne kilometres (NTKm). This takes into account the net weight (excluding the weight of the locomotive and wagons) of the goods carried (the freight lifted, measured in tonnes) and the distance carried. Although it is not included in the total NTKm, we have included a separate series on infrastructure traffic (goods used for railway engineering work). International comprises trains travelling through the Channel Tunnel; Domestic intermodal includes goods that have arrived by sea at ports.

Following the move of BR's bulk freight operations to the private sector there have been some changes in the way estimates of freight traffic have been compiled. In particular, the method of estimating tonne kilometres is different, with the result that recent estimates are not consistent with those for earlier periods.

Freight lifted is the mass of goods carried on the network. It excludes the weight of the locomotives and wagons. Unlike freight moved it takes no account of the distance travelled. Data pre and post-privatisation are not directly comparable.

## Rail Freight

These data are updated on a quarterly basis and can be found via the Office of Rail and Road's (ORR) Data Portal: <http://dataportal.orr.gov.uk>. A quarterly statistical release accompanies the statistics which can be found at the following link <http://orr.gov.uk/statistics/published-stats/statistical-releases>.

### National Railways freight train movements, impacts on road haulage and Freight

**Performance Measure:** TSGB0424

This table shows the total number of train movements (including infrastructure trains) on the network and the equivalent distance that road vehicles would need to have travelled to move the amounts of freight carried on rail. It also shows the equivalent number of road vehicle trips necessary to move this freight. These measures provide an alternative to the traditional deadweight-based approach.

A new metric for rail freight performance was introduced in 2013/14, the Freight delivery metric (FDM). This gives the percentage of commercial freight trains that arrive at planned destination within 15 minutes of scheduled time. Freight trains are only considered to have failed FDM where a delay is caused by Network Rail. This metric has superseded the previous metric, the Freight Performance Measure, which gave the percentage of freight trains arriving at their final destination on time, each train being 'on time' if it arrives within 10 minutes of its scheduled arrival time. Further details can be found via the ORR's Data Portal: <http://dataportal.orr.gov.uk>

## Roll-On Roll-Off Freight

Statistics on the number of lorries and unaccompanied trailers travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe are compiled from quarterly returns provided by roll-on/roll-off ferry operators and information supplied by Eurotunnel. (Unaccompanied trailers are not carried by Eurotunnel.) Disaggregation by the country of registration of powered vehicles is provided by ferry operators and by Eurotunnel. On some routes the operators can extract the nationality directly from the manifests or waybills, while on others each one is identified from the registration number pattern. The results are broken down by country of vehicle registration, by country of disembarkation and by GB port group. Separate figures are given for powered vehicles and unaccompanied trailers. Powered vehicles comprise rigid vehicles, lorries with semi-trailers (articulated units) and lorries with drawbar trailers. (Some vehicles under 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight are also included). Unaccompanied trailers are trailers and semi-trailers not accompanied on the ferry by a powered unit. Up to 1978 inward traffic was also recorded, but because it was similar to outward traffic the data requirement was discontinued to save respondent effort; consequently the statistics in these tables are for outward traffic only.

## Roll-on Roll-off Statistics

Revised estimates for 2004 to 2007 were published in May 2008 following a data quality review. This resulted in a break in the series between 2003 and 2004 and comparisons by country of registration should therefore be treated with caution.

Further details of the review are available in the Technical Note which accompanies the Ro-Ro publication. Both this note and more detailed analyses are provided in the quarterly bulletins of this publication; both the quarterly and annual bulletins are available on the Department's website:

[www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/roll-on-roll-off-international-freight/](http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/roll-on-roll-off-international-freight/)



To hear more about DfT statistics publications as they are released please follow us on Twitter via our @DfTstats account: <http://www.twitter.com/DfTstats>. TWITTER, TWEET, RETWEET and the Twitter logo are trademarks of Twitter, Inc. or its affiliates