



About this release

This release includes the 1st provisional estimates of trade-in-goods between the UK and both countries of the EU and those outside the EU for December 2020.

Supporting tables, visuals and data can be found at www.uktradeinfo.com

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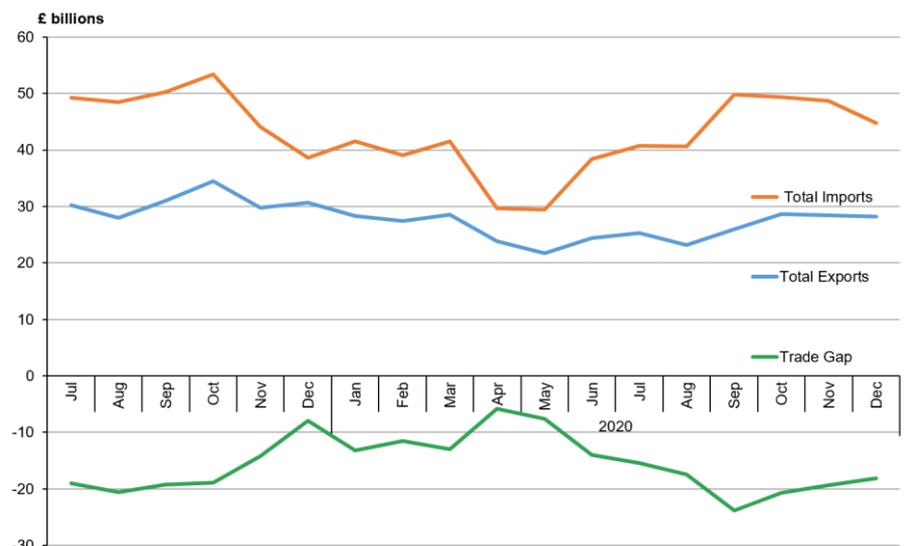
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Trade in Goods, December 2020

- Total **exports** of goods for December 2020 were £28.2 billion. This was a decrease of £0.2 billion (0.8%) compared with last month, and a decrease of £2.4 billion (8.0%) compared with December 2019.
- Total **imports** of goods for December 2020 were £44.8 billion. This was a decrease of £3.9 billion (8.0%) compared with last month, but an increase of £6.2 billion (16%) compared with December 2019.
- The UK was a net importer this month, with **imports** exceeding **exports** by £16.5 billion, narrowing by £3.6 billion on last month.

Figure 1: Total UK monthly Trade in Goods



Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods and Statistics
Note: 2020 data is provisional



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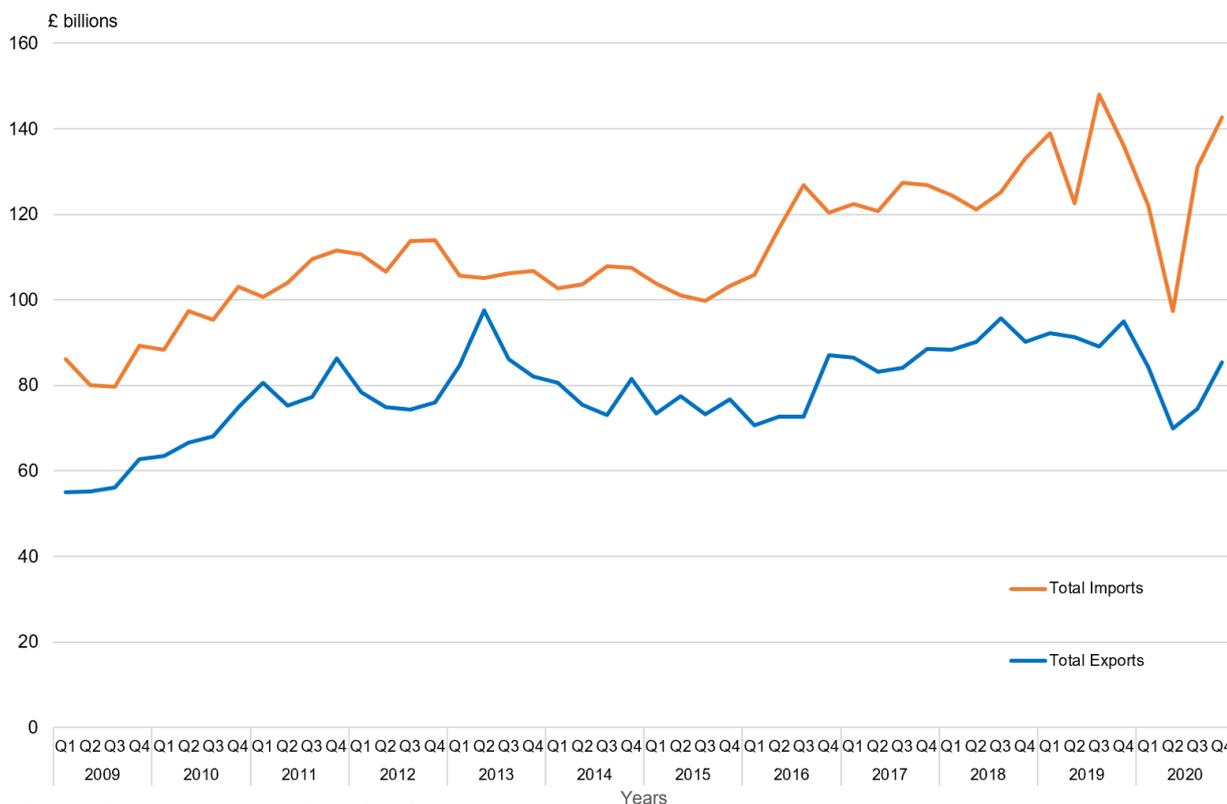
Trade in Goods Trends

Following the global economic crisis, UK trade in goods dropped in 2009. Both imports and exports then steadily increased until 2012. From the start of 2013, imports remained relatively flat until a very sharp increase in Q3 of 2016. It has experienced large quarterly fluctuations since Q1 of 2019 and Q2 of 2020 saw the lowest quarterly imports value since Q3 of 2010. Exports peaked in Q2 of 2013, with a steady rise from Q2 of 2017 to Q3 of 2018. Q2 of 2020 also saw the lowest quarterly exports value since Q3 of 2010. Imports showed a recovery in Q3, while exports have remained low.

- The total **export** trade for Q4 of 2020 was £85.3 billion, which was a decrease of 10% compared with £95.0 billion for Q4 of 2019.
- The total **import** trade for Q4 of 2020 was £143 billion, which was an increase of 4.9% compared with £136 billion for Q4 of 2019.
- There was a trade deficit of £57.4 billion for Q4 of 2020. This was a widening of 40% compared with £41.1 billion for Q4 2019.
- For many years Germany has been our largest trading **import** partner by value, and the USA has been the dominant trading **export** partner.
- Mechanical appliances and Motor vehicles have generally been the largest **import** commodities by value. For **exports**, Mechanical appliances has also predominantly been the largest valued commodity, with occasional peaks for Precious metals.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, trade in goods in 2020 experienced significant decreases, affecting our largest trade partners and commodity groups at differing magnitudes, although more recent months have shown some recovery.

- ↓ **Exports down 10% on Q4 2019**
- ↑ **Imports up 4.9% on Q4 2019**
- **Trade deficit widened by 40% on Q4 2019**

Figure 2: Quarterly UK Trade in Goods, 2009 – 2020



Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics
 Note: 2020 data is provisional

Non-EU & EU Trade in Goods

Non-EU Trade in Goods:

- **Non-EU exports** for December 2020 were £15.2 billion. This was an increase of £0.9 billion (6.4%) on last month, and a decrease of £2.6 billion (15%) compared with December 2019.
- **Non-EU imports** for December 2020 were £22.3 billion. This was a decrease of £2.8 billion (11%) on last month, but an increase of £2.4 billion (12%) compared with December 2019.
- For **non-EU trade** the UK was a net importer this month, with imports exceeding exports by £7.1 billion.

↓ **Non-EU exports down 15% on December 2019**

EU Trade in Goods:

- **EU exports** for December 2020 were £13.0 billion. This was a decrease of £1.1 billion (8.1%) on last month, and an increase of £0.2 billion (1.3%) compared with December 2019.
- **EU imports** for December 2020 were £22.5 billion. This was a decrease of £1.0 billion (4.4%) on last month, and an increase of £3.7 billion (20%) compared with December 2019.
- For **EU trade** the UK was a net importer this month, with imports exceeding exports by £9.5 billion.

↑ **EU imports up 20% on December 2019**

Figure 3: Total UK Trade in Goods, with EU and Non-EU, December 2020



Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics

Note: 2020 data is provisional

Exports: Country Analysis

- The USA remained as the largest export partner country. It experienced the largest value decrease on December 2019, down £1,633 million (29%).
- Switzerland experienced the largest value increase on last month, and the 2nd largest value increase on December 2019, up £1,080 million (3 times the value) and £308 million (24%) respectively.
- The Republic of Ireland experienced the largest value increase on December 2019, up £499 million (27%).
- Germany experienced the largest value decrease on last month, down £414 million (14%).
- China showed the 2nd largest value decrease on December 2019, down £770 million (37%).
- Saudi Arabia (23rd place) experienced the 2nd largest value decrease on last month, down £249 million (51%).
- Japan (12th place) showed the 2nd largest value increase on last month, up £124 million (27%).

↑ **Exports to Switzerland up 3 times the value on last month**

↓ **Exports to China down 37% on December 2019**

Table 1: UK exports of goods to the top 10 countries, December 2020

Partner Country	December 2020		November 2020		December 2019	
	Total (£ millions)	Total (£ millions)	Change from November 2020 (%)	Total (£ millions)	Change from December 2019 (%)	
USA	3,987	4,184	-4.7	5,621	-29.1	
Germany	2,642	3,056	-13.6	2,765	-4.5	
Republic of Ireland	2,374	2,584	-8.1	1,875	26.6	
Netherlands	1,746	1,874	-6.8	1,958	-10.8	
France	1,636	1,527	7.1	1,873	-12.6	
Switzerland	1,587	507	213.1	1,279	24.1	
China	1,307	1,463	-10.6	2,077	-37.1	
Belgium	943	986	-4.4	896	5.3	
Italy	777	806	-3.6	715	8.6	
Spain	717	841	-14.7	773	-7.3	
Others	10,514	10,638	-1.2	10,841	-3.0	
Total EU	13,019	14,165	-8.1	12,854	1.3	
Total Non-EU	15,212	14,301	6.4	17,818	-14.6	
Total Exports	28,230	28,466	-0.8	30,672	-8.0	

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics
 Note: 2020 data is provisional

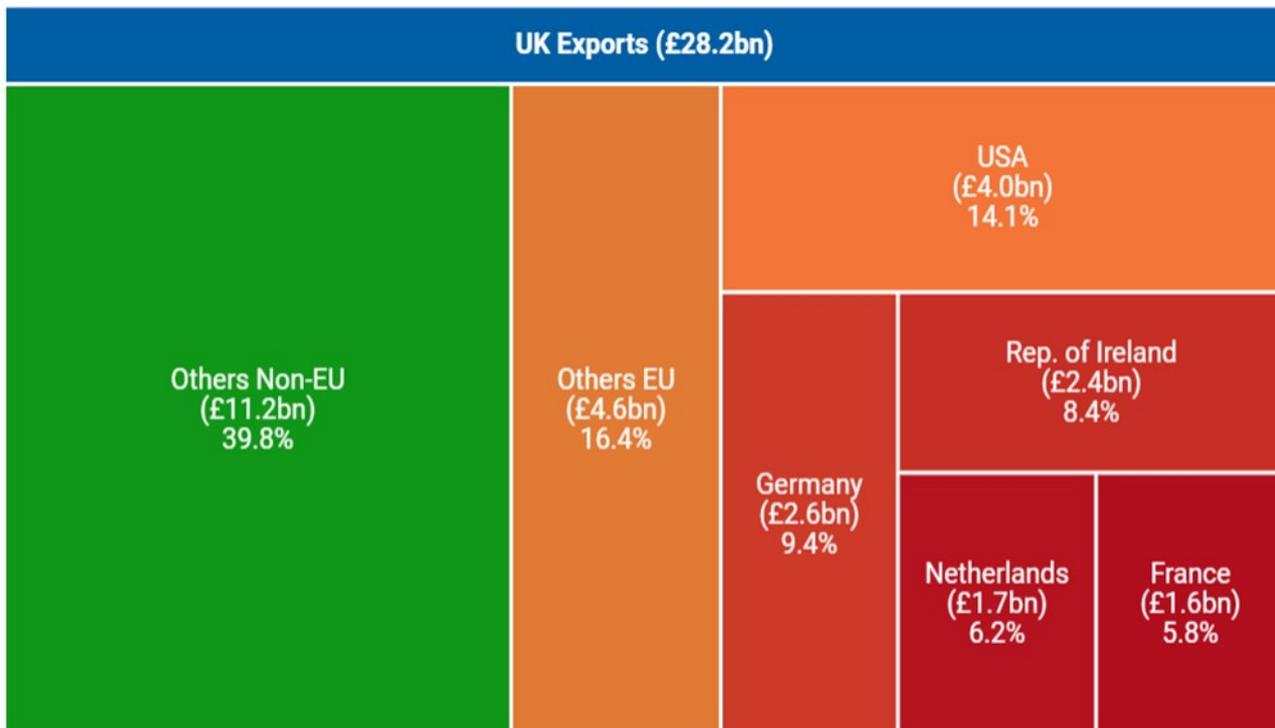
Exports: Country Analysis

- The top 5 export partners accounted for 44% of total exports in goods in December 2020. This was a decrease from a 47% share in December 2019.
- The USA accounted for 14% of the total value of exports from the UK. This was a decrease from an 18% share in December 2019.
- Germany had the 2nd largest proportion, accounting for 9.4%. This was an increase from a 9.0% share in December 2019.
- The top 10 export partner countries (ranked by value) changed compared with last month. Most notably, Switzerland rose to 6th place from 12th.
- The top 10 export partner countries (ranked by value) changed compared with December 2019. Most notably, the Republic of Ireland rose to 3rd place from 5th, while China fell to 7th place from 3rd.

↓ **The USA had a 14% share of total exports in December 2020**

↑ **Germany had a 9.4% share of total exports in December 2020**

Figure 4: Share of UK exports of goods to the top 5 countries, December 2020



Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics
 Note: 2020 data is provisional

Exports: Country Analysis – 3 Months

- In the 3 months to December 2020, the USA remained the largest export partner country. Among the top 10, it experienced the 3rd largest percentage increase on the 3 months to September 2020, up 18%. Conversely, it showed the 2nd largest decrease on the 3 months to December 2019, down 26%.
- Among the top 10, Switzerland experienced the largest percentage increase on the 3 months to September 2020, up 50%.
- Among the top 10, the Republic of Ireland experienced the 2nd largest percentage increase on the 3 months to September 2020, and the largest percentage increase on the 3 months to December 2019, up 42% and 27% respectively.
- Among the top 10, China experienced the largest percentage decrease on the 3 months to December 2019, down 39%.
- All of the top 10 exports partners experienced increases on the 3 months to September 2020.
- 7 of the top 10 export partners experienced decreases on the 3 months to December 2019. The exceptions were the Republic of Ireland, Belgium and Italy.

↑ **Exports to Switzerland up 50% on the 3 months to September 2020**

↓ **Exports to China down 39% on the 3 months to December 2019**

Table 2: UK exports of goods to the top 10 countries, 3 months to December 2020

Partner Country	3 months to Dec 2020		3 months to Sep 2020		3 months to Dec 2019	
	Total (£ millions)	Total (£ millions)	Change on September 2020 (%)	Total (£ millions)	Change on December 2019 (%)	
USA	12,163	10,332	17.7	16,402	-25.8	
Germany	8,802	7,589	16.0	9,019	-2.4	
Republic of Ireland	7,333	5,178	41.6	5,770	27.1	
Netherlands	5,340	4,569	16.9	5,957	-10.3	
France	4,963	4,660	6.5	5,952	-16.6	
China	4,101	3,672	11.7	6,762	-39.3	
Switzerland	3,322	2,213	50.2	3,761	-11.7	
Belgium	3,013	2,634	14.4	2,996	0.6	
Italy	2,452	2,206	11.2	2,429	0.9	
Spain	2,323	2,010	15.6	2,694	-13.8	
Others	31,492	29,412	7.1	33,213	-5.2	
Total Exports	85,306	74,476	14.5	94,956	-10.2	

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics

Note: 2020 data is provisional

Exports: Commodity Analysis

- Mechanical appliances remained as the largest export commodity. It experienced the 3rd largest decrease on December 2019, down £544 million (12%).
- Precious metals experienced the largest value increase on last month, up £295 million (13%). Conversely, it showed the largest decrease on December 2019, down £1,562 million (38%).
- Mineral fuels experienced the 2nd largest value decrease on December 2019, down £677 million (26%).
- Motor vehicles experienced the largest value decrease on last month, down £345 million (11%).
- Art and antiques (11th place) showed the 2nd largest value increase on last month, up £234 million (46%).
- Arms and ammunition (55th place) experienced the 2nd largest value decrease on last month, down £229 million (84%).
- Miscellaneous chemical products (13th place) experienced the largest value increase on December 2019, up £228 million (63%).

↓ Exports of Motor vehicles down 11% on last month

↓ Exports of Precious metals down 38% on December 2019

Table 3: UK exports of goods for the top 10 commodities, December 2020

Commodity Description	December 2020		November 2020		December 2019	
	Total (£ millions)	Total (£ millions)	Change from November 2020 (%)	Total (£ millions)	Change from December 2019 (%)	
Mechanical appliances	4,049	4,092	-1.1	4,593	-11.8	
Motor vehicles	2,921	3,266	-10.6	3,272	-10.7	
Precious metals	2,600	2,305	12.8	4,162	-37.5	
Mineral fuels	1,949	1,902	2.4	2,626	-25.8	
Electronic equipment	1,820	1,851	-1.7	1,797	1.3	
Pharmaceutical products	1,682	1,712	-1.8	1,470	14.4	
Measuring devices and gauges	1,262	1,254	0.6	1,294	-2.5	
Other products	983	861	14.1	862	14.0	
Aircraft	877	801	9.4	1,077	-18.6	
Organic chemicals	813	683	19.0	1,135	-28.4	
Others	9,275	9,738	-4.7	8,384	10.6	
Total Exports	28,230	28,466	-0.8	30,672	-8.0	

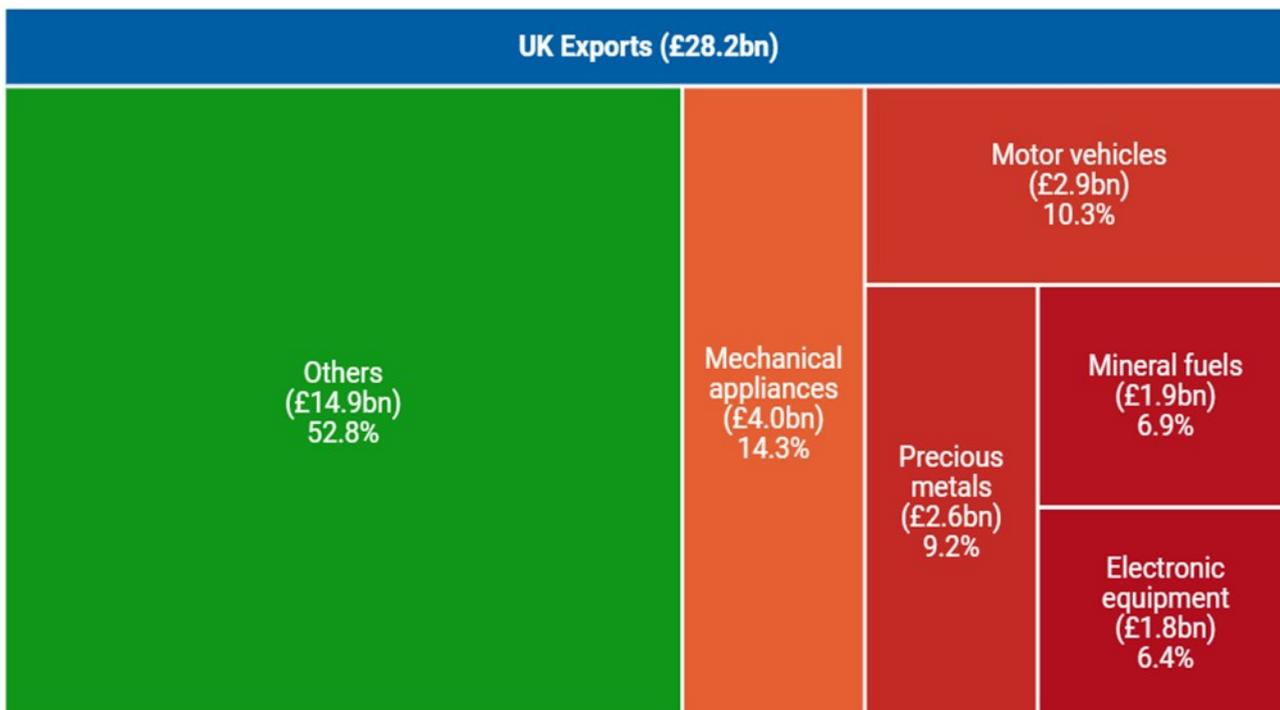
Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics

Exports: Commodity Analysis

- The top 5 export commodities (ranked by value) accounted for 47% of exports in December 2020, this was a decrease from a 54% share in December 2019.
- Mechanical appliances had the largest proportion, accounting for 14% of total exports. This was a decrease from a 15% share in December 2019.
- Motor vehicles had the 2nd largest proportion, accounting for 10% of total exports. This was a decrease from an 11% share in December 2019.
- Precious metals had the 3rd largest proportion, down from 2nd in December 2019. It accounted for 9.2% of total exports. This was a decrease from a 14% share in December 2019.
- The top 10 export commodities (ranked by value) changed compared with last month, although the top 9 are unchanged. Organic chemicals rose to 10th place from 11th, while Plastics and plastic products fell to 12th place from 10th.
- The top 10 export commodities (ranked by value) changed compared with December 2019. Most notably, Other products rose to 8th place from 10th, while Organic chemicals fell to 10th place from 8th.

- ↓ **Mechanical appliances accounted for 14% of total exports in December 2020**
- ↓ **Precious metals accounted for 9% of total exports in December 2020**

Figure 5: Share of UK exports by the top 5 commodities, December 2020



Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics
 Note: 2020 data is provisional

Exports: Commodity Analysis – 3 Months

- In the 3 months to December 2020, Mechanical appliances remained the largest export commodity, experiencing an increase on the 3 months to September 2020, up 10%.
- Among the top 10, Motor vehicles experienced the largest percentage increase on the 3 months to September 2020, up 36%.
- Among the top 10, Pharmaceutical products experienced the 2nd largest percentage increase on the 3 months to December 2019, up 16%.
- Among the top 10, Precious metals experienced the 3rd largest percentage increase on the 3 months to September 2020, up 15%. In contrast, it showed the 3rd largest decrease on the 3 months to December 2019, down 25%.
- Among the top 10, Aircraft experienced the largest percentage decrease on the 3 months to December 2019, down 27%.
- Among the top 10, Mineral fuels experienced the 2nd largest percentage decrease on the 3 months to December 2019, also down 27%.
- All of the top 10 commodities experienced increases on the 3 months to September 2020.
- Among the top 10, Other products experienced the only percentage increase on the 3 months to December 2019, up 8.0%.

↑ **Motor vehicles exports up 36% on the 3 months to September 2020**

↓ **Aircraft exports down 27% on the 3 months to December 2019**

Table 4: UK exports of goods for the top 10 commodities, 3 months to December 2020

Commodity Description	3 months to Dec 2020		3 months to Sep 2020		3 months to Dec 2019	
	Total (£ millions)	Total (£ millions)	Change on September 2020 (%)	Total (£ millions)	Change on December 2019 (%)	
Mechanical appliances	12,317	11,196	10.0	14,547	-15.3	
Motor vehicles	9,572	7,063	35.5	10,651	-10.1	
Precious metals	7,395	6,408	15.4	9,920	-25.4	
Electronic equipment	5,495	4,920	11.7	5,712	-3.8	
Mineral fuels	5,410	4,734	14.3	7,431	-27.2	
Pharmaceutical products	5,183	4,469	16.0	5,383	-3.7	
Measuring devices and gauges	3,760	3,417	10.0	4,055	-7.3	
Other products	2,669	2,407	10.9	2,471	8.0	
Aircraft	2,552	2,268	12.5	3,508	-27.3	
Organic chemicals	2,272	2,179	4.3	2,578	-11.9	
Others	28,682	25,416	12.9	28,700	-0.1	
Total Exports	85,306	74,476	14.5	94,956	-10.2	

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics
Note: 2020 data is provisional

Exports: Combined Commodity & Country Analysis

Country to commodity:

- The increase in exports to Switzerland on last month and on December 2019 was dominated by Precious metals, up £925 million (nearly 8 times in value), and £469 million (79%) respectively.
- The increase in exports to the Republic of Ireland on December 2019 was led by Pharmaceutical products, up £118 million (more than 3.5 times the value).
- The decrease in exports to Germany compared with last month was led by Mineral fuels, down £99 million (53%).
- The decrease in exports to the USA compared with December 2019 was dominated by Precious metals, down £1,311 million (79%).

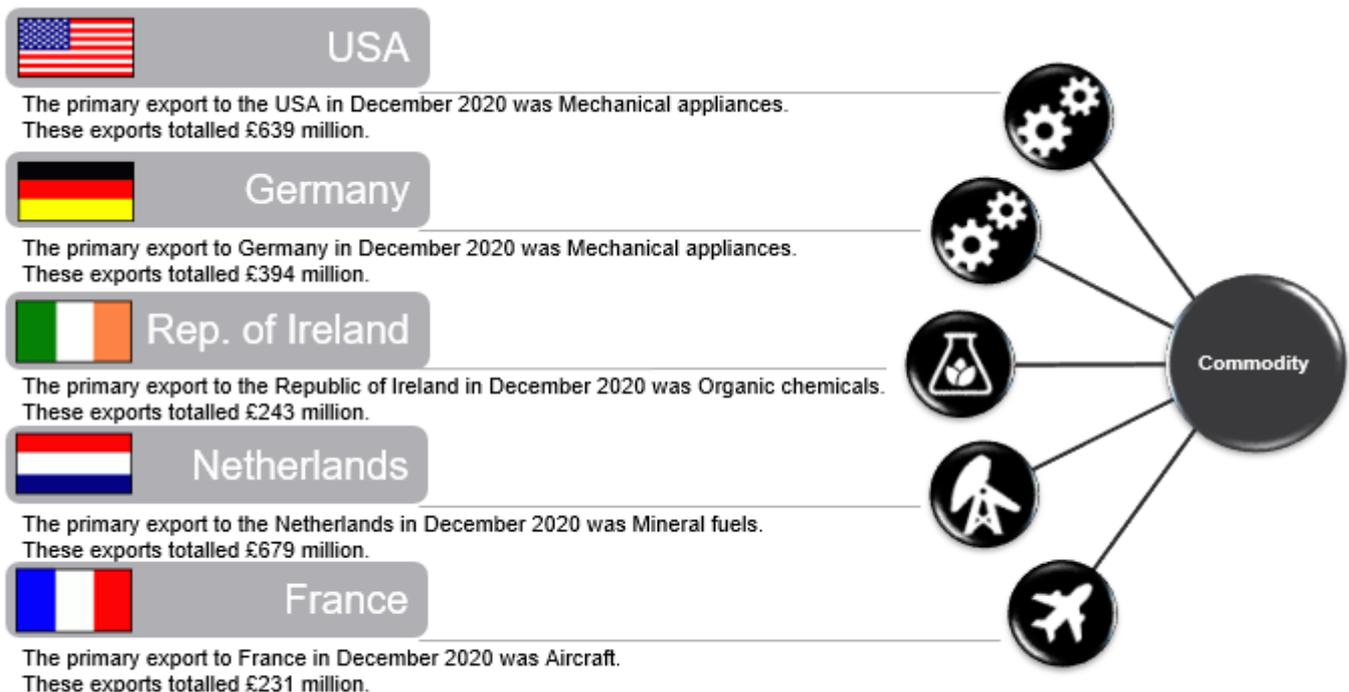
↑ Exports of Precious metals to Switzerland up 8 times in value on last month

Commodity to country

- The decrease in exports of Motor vehicles on last month was driven by the USA, down £182 million (25%).
- The increase in exports of Miscellaneous chemical products on December 2019 was led by the USA, up £59 million (more than double the value).
- The increase in exports of Art and antiques on last month was led by Switzerland, up £136 million (more than 2.5 times the value).
- The decrease in exports of Mineral fuels on December 2019 was led by Germany and the Netherlands, down £271 million (76%) and £232 million (25%) respectively.

↓ Exports of Motor vehicles to the USA down 25% on last month

Figure 6: The UK's top commodity exports to the top 5 countries



Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics
Note: 2020 data is provisional

Imports: Country Analysis

- Germany replaced China as the largest import partner. It experienced the 2nd largest value increase on December 2019, up £828 million (18%).
- China experienced the largest value decrease on last month, down £970 million (16%). Conversely, it experienced the largest value increase on December 2019, up £2,106 million (67%).
- Norway experienced the largest value increase on last month, up £338 million (30%).
- Uzbekistan (169th place) experienced the largest value decrease on December 2019, down £371 million (to £0.1 million).
- The USA experienced the 2nd largest value decreases on last month and on December 2019, down £601 million (15%) and £285 million (7.5%) respectively.
- Russia experienced the 3rd largest value decreases on last month and on December 2019, down £543 million (26%) and £145 million (8.7%) respectively.
- Belgium experienced the 3rd largest value increase on December 2019, up £711 million (41%).

↑ Imports from China up 67% on December 2019

↓ Imports from Russia down 26% on last month

Table 5: UK imports of goods from the top 10 countries, December 2020

Partner Country	December 2020		November 2020		December 2019	
	Total (£ millions)	Total (£ millions)	Change on November 2020 (%)	Total (£ millions)	Change on December 2019 (%)	
Germany	5,525	5,769	-4.2	4,697	17.6	
China	5,266	6,235	-15.6	3,159	66.7	
USA	3,502	4,103	-14.6	3,787	-7.5	
Netherlands	3,421	3,641	-6.0	2,892	18.3	
Belgium	2,435	2,335	4.3	1,724	41.2	
France	2,220	2,274	-2.4	2,111	5.2	
Italy	1,807	1,761	2.6	1,527	18.3	
Russia	1,519	2,062	-26.3	1,664	-8.7	
Norway	1,454	1,116	30.3	1,423	2.1	
Canada	1,396	1,585	-11.9	991	40.8	
Others	16,225	17,759	-8.6	14,631	21.4	
Total EU	22,486	23,514	-4.4	18,752	19.9	
Total Non-EU	22,283	25,126	-11.3	19,855	12.2	
Total Imports	44,769	48,640	-8.0	38,608	16.0	

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics

Note: 2020 data is provisional

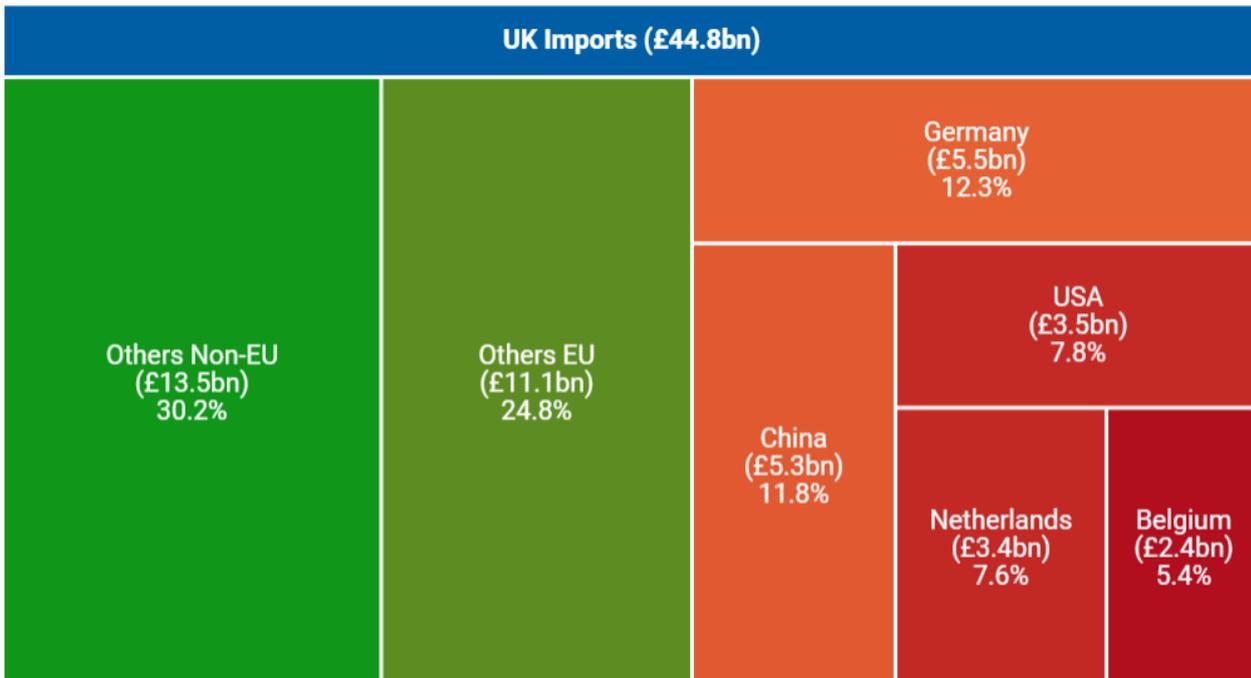
Imports: Country Analysis

- The top 5 import partners accounted for 45% of the total value of goods imported in December 2020. This was an increase from 43% in December 2019.
- Germany accounted for 12% of the total value of goods imported to the UK. This was an increase of less than one percentage point on December 2019.
- China had the 2nd largest proportion, accounting for 12%. This was an increase from 8.2% in December 2019.
- The top 10 import partner countries (ranked by value) have changed compared with last month. Most notably, Germany rose to 1st place from 2nd, China fell to 2nd place from 1st, and Norway rose to 9th from 13th.
- The top 10 import partner countries (ranked by value) have changed compared with December 2019. Most notably, China rose to 2nd place from 3rd, and Canada rose to 10th place from 12th.

↑ **The top 5 partners accounted for 45% of total imports in December 2020**

↑ **Germany accounted for 12% of total imports in December 2020**

Figure 7: Share of UK imports of goods from the top 5 countries, December 2020



Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics
 Note: 2020 data is provisional

Imports: Country Analysis – 3 Months

- In the 3 months to December 2020, China replaced Germany as the largest import partner country. Among the top 10, it experienced the 2nd largest percentage increase on the 3 months to December 2019, up 46%.
- Among the top 10, Spain experienced the largest percentage increase on the 3 months to September 2020, up 34%.
- Among the top 10, Hong Kong experienced the largest percentage decrease on the 3 months to September 2020, down 42%. Conversely, it experienced the largest percentage increase on the 3 months to December 2020, up 76%.
- Among the top 10, the USA experienced the largest percentage decrease on the 3 months to December 2019, down 10%.
- 8 of the top 10 countries experienced an increase on the 3 months to September 2020. The exceptions were Russia and Hong Kong.
- 7 of the top 10 countries experienced an increase on the 3 months to December 2019. The exceptions were the USA, the Netherlands, and France.

↑ Imports from Spain up 34% on the 3 months to September 2020

↑ Imports from Hong Kong up 76% on the 3 months to December 2019

Table 6: UK imports of goods from the top 10 countries, 3 months to December 2020

Partner Country	3 months to Dec 2020		3 months to Sep 2020		3 months to Dec 2019	
	Total (£ millions)	Total (£ millions)	Change on September 2020 (%)	Total (£ millions)	Change on December 2019 (%)	
China	18,086	15,022	20.4	12,420	45.6	
Germany	16,963	15,038	12.8	16,041	5.7	
USA	11,535	10,038	14.9	12,875	-10.4	
Netherlands	10,318	8,464	21.9	10,662	-3.2	
Belgium	6,926	5,566	24.4	5,957	16.3	
France	6,784	5,552	22.2	7,205	-5.8	
Russia	5,814	6,053	-3.9	4,421	31.5	
Italy	5,288	4,436	19.2	5,170	2.3	
Spain	4,371	3,269	33.7	4,062	7.6	
Hong Kong	4,116	7,153	-42.5	2,341	75.8	
Others	52,538	50,551	3.9	54,911	-4.3	
Total Imports	142,738	131,142	8.8	136,065	4.9	

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics

Note: 2020 data is provisional

Imports: Commodity Analysis

- Precious metals remained the largest import commodity despite experiencing the largest value decrease on last month, down £1,151 million (16%). In contrast, it experienced the largest value increase on December 2019, up £1,277 million (26%).
- Mineral fuels experienced the largest value increase on last month, up £748 million (35%). Conversely, it experienced the largest value decrease on December 2019, down £671 million (19%).
- Motor cars experienced the 2nd largest value increase on December 2019, up £1,039 million (29%).
- Electronic equipment experienced the 2nd largest value decrease on last month, down £666 million (13%). Conversely, it experienced the 3rd largest value increase on December 2019, up £884 million (24%).
- Pharmaceutical products experienced the 4th largest value increase on December 2019, up £733 million (63%).
- Mechanical appliances experienced the 3rd largest value decrease on last month, down £528 million (9.7%).

↓ Imports of Precious metals down 16% on last month

↑ Imports of Motor cars up 29% on December 2019

Table 7: UK imports of goods for the top 10 commodities, December 2020

Commodity Description	December 2020	November 2020		December 2019	
	Total (£ millions)	Total (£ millions)	Change on November 2020 (%)	Total (£ millions)	Change on December 2019 (%)
Precious metals	6,113	7,264	-15.8	4,836	26.4
Mechanical appliances	4,898	5,426	-9.7	4,896	0.0
Motor vehicles	4,651	5,030	-7.5	3,612	28.8
Electronic equipment	4,510	5,176	-12.9	3,625	24.4
Mineral fuels	2,874	2,126	35.2	3,545	-18.9
Pharmaceutical products	1,901	2,110	-9.9	1,168	62.8
Measuring devices and gauges	1,407	1,465	-4.0	1,151	22.3
Plastics and plastic products	1,240	1,374	-9.7	938	32.2
Miscellaneous chemical products	910	595	52.9	386	135.6
Other products	789	745	5.9	739	6.8
Others	15,476	17,330	-10.7	13,710	12.9
Total Imports	44,769	48,640	-8.0	38,608	16.0

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics

Note: 2020 data is provisional

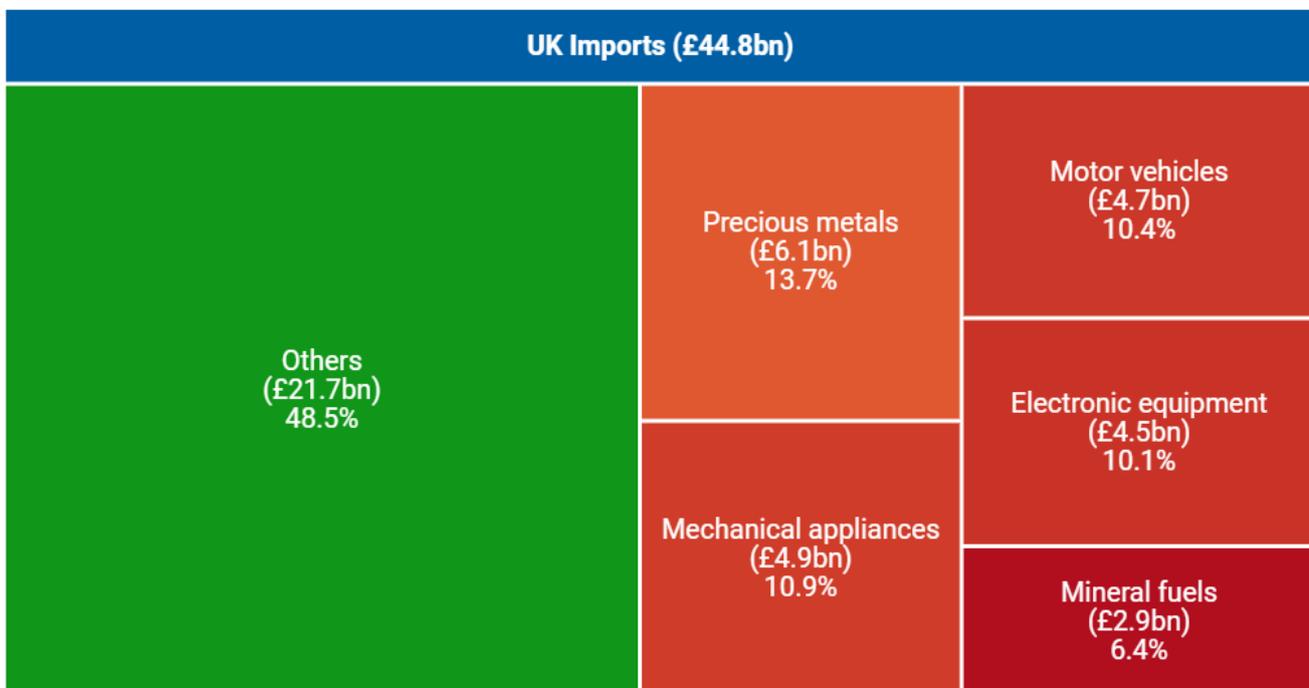
Imports: Commodity Analysis

- The top 5 import commodities (ranked by value) accounted for 51% of the total value of goods imported in December 2020. This was a decrease from a 53% share in December 2019.
- Precious metals accounted for 14% of the total value of goods imported to the UK. This was an increase from a 13% share in December 2019.
- Mechanical appliances had the 2nd largest proportion, accounting for an 11% share. This is a decrease from a 13% share in December 2019.
- The top 10 commodities (ranked by value) changed compared with last month. Most notably, Miscellaneous chemical products rose to 9th place from 18th and Other products rose to 10th place from 14th.
- The top 10 commodities (ranked by value) changed compared with December 2019. Most notably, Precious metals rose to 1st place from 2nd, Mechanical appliances fell to 2nd place from 1st, and Miscellaneous chemical products rose to 9th place from 20th.

↓ **The top 5 import commodities accounted for 51% of total imports in December 2020**

↑ **Precious metals accounted for 14% of total imports in December 2020**

Figure 8: Share of UK imports for the top 5 commodities, December 2020



Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics
 Note: 2020 data is provisional

Imports: Commodity Analysis – 3 Months

- In the 3 months to December 2020, Precious metals remained the largest import commodity. It was the only commodity among the top 10 to experience a percentage decrease on the 3 months to September 2020, down 23%. In contrast, it experienced the 2nd largest percentage increase on the 3 months to December 2019, up 20%.
- Among the top 10, Mineral fuels experienced the largest percentage increase on the 3 months September 2020, up 34%. Conversely, it experienced the largest percentage decrease on the 3 months to December 2019, down 35%.
- Among the top 10, Clothes (not knitted) experienced the largest percentage increase on the 3 months to December 2019, up 35%.
- Among the top 10, Pharmaceutical products experienced the 2nd largest percentage increase on the 3 months to September 2020 and the 3rd largest percentage increase on the 3 months to December 2019, up 32% and 19% respectively.
- 7 of the top 10 commodities experienced increases on the 3 months to December 2019. The exceptions were Mechanical appliances, Mineral fuels, and Knitwear.

↑ Imports of Mineral fuels up 34% on the 3 months to September 2020

↑ Imports of Clothes (not knitted) up 35% on the 3 months to December 2019

Table 8: UK imports of goods for the top 10 commodities, 3 months to December 2020

Commodity Description	3 months to Dec 2020		3 months to Sep 2020		3 months to Dec 2019	
	Total (£ millions)	Total (£ millions)	Change on September 2020 (%)	Total (£ millions)	Change on December 2019 (%)	
Precious metals	22,552	29,325	-23.1	18,784	20.1	
Mechanical appliances	15,086	12,870	17.2	16,356	-7.8	
Motor vehicles	14,673	11,623	26.2	13,428	9.3	
Electronic equipment	13,793	10,754	28.3	13,460	2.5	
Mineral fuels	7,080	5,279	34.1	10,907	-35.1	
Pharmaceutical products	5,933	4,494	32.0	4,976	19.2	
Measuring devices and gauges	4,401	3,631	21.2	3,725	18.1	
Plastics and plastic products	4,022	3,912	2.8	3,489	15.3	
Clothes, not knitted	3,063	2,785	10.0	2,275	34.7	
Knitwear	2,745	2,520	9.0	2,904	-5.5	
Others	49,390	43,950	12.4	45,761	7.9	
Total Imports	142,738	131,142	8.8	136,065	4.9	

Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics

Note: 2020 data is provisional

Imports: Combined Commodity & Country Analysis

Country to commodity:

- The decrease in imports from China on last month was driven by Electronic equipment, down £496 million (28%). The increase on December 2019 was driven by Mechanical appliances and Electronic equipment, up £477 million (76%) and £448 million (56%) respectively.
- The decrease in imports from the USA on last month was driven by Mechanical appliances and Aircraft, down £287 million (34%) and £275 million (71%) respectively.
- The decrease in imports from Uzbekistan on December 2019 was dominated by Precious metals, down £363 million (to nil trade).

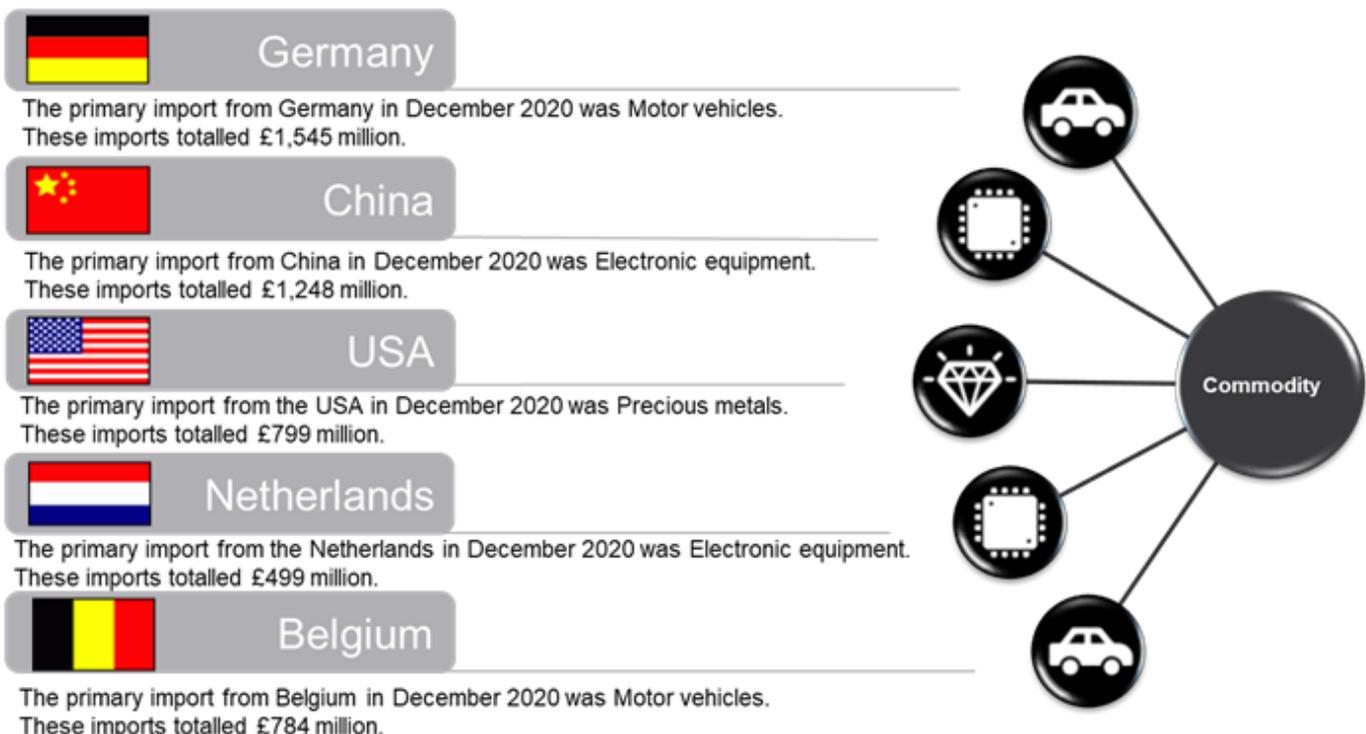
↓ Imports of Electronic equipment from China down 28% on last month

Commodity to country:

- The decrease in imports of Precious metals on last month was driven by Russia and Australia, down £539 million (31%) and £303 million (36%) respectively. The increase on December 2019 was driven by Hong Kong and Canada, up £446 million (5.5 times the value) and £440 million (68%) respectively.
- The increase in imports of Mineral fuels on last month was dominated by Norway and the USA, up £353 million (39%) and £208 million (double the value) respectively. The decrease on December 2019 was driven by Russia, down £304 million (61%).
- The increase in imports of Motor vehicles on December 2019 was driven by Belgium, up £421 million (more than double the value).
- The increase in imports of Pharmaceutical products on December 2019 was driven by the Netherlands, up £302 million (more than 3.5 times the value).

↑ Imports of Precious metals from Hong Kong up 5.5 times the value on December 2019

Figure 9: The UK's top commodity imports from the top 5 countries



Source: HM Revenue & Customs Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics
 Note: 2020 data is provisional

Methodology Notes

Metadata

Data behind this bulletin is available through our [uktradeinfo](#) web site:

- Detailed Trade Statistics data at 8-digit commodity code level is available in our [interactive database](#).
- Aggregate OTS data is available in [pre-prepared Excel tables](#).

Data sources

The **EU figures** provided in this publication of the December 2020 Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics are collected from the Intrastat survey. They include:

- Estimates for businesses who have yet to submit detailed data on the trade they had with other EU Member States this month.
- Estimates for businesses who do not have to submit detailed data on the trade they have with other EU Member States.
- An adjustment for trade associated with Missing Trader Intra Community fraud. More details of this can be found in the OTS methodology paper [here](#).

Estimates are included in all high-level totals including commodity (HS2) and country totals.

The **Non-EU figures** provided in this publication of the December 2020 Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics are presented by customs declarations and collected by the CHIEF (Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight) system. From August 2020 month of account, import declarations collected via the Customs Declaration Service (CDS) are also included.

These data sources remain unchanged as trade conducted in December 2020 was within the Transition Period.

Detailed trade information is presented according to the [Harmonised System \(HS\)](#) nomenclature.

Methodology

This methodology paper covers all aspects of the Overseas Trade Statistics methodology – data sources, classifications and definitions, quality assurance, publications and governance. It is a useful companion to the trade data, providing the definitions and methodologies on which the data are based. The Overseas Trade Statistics Methodology paper (October 2019) is available [here](#).

From the May 2016 month of account, there was a methodological change to the way our trade-in-goods statistics are compiled. Following a change in legislation, trade-in-goods statistics switched from the 'general trade' system of compilation to the 'special trade' system. More information can be found in the OTS methodology paper [here](#).

Non-Monetary Gold (NMG) can form a substantial part of the non-EU Overseas Trade Statistics (OTS). For further information, see [Inclusion of Non-Monetary Gold in OTS](#). Data relating to monthly non-EU and EU import and export totals for January 2008 onwards with a breakdown of non-monetary gold and other trade is available in an [OTS time series spreadsheet](#).

Relationship with other statistical publications

The aggregate estimates here will differ slightly from those that are published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as part of the Balance of Payments (BoP), as the 2 sets of data are compiled to different sets of rules. The ONS website provides an overview of [BoP](#), where you can find their detailed monthly [UK Trade Releases](#). The BoP publication shows a high-level picture of UK trade-in-goods, whereas the OTS publication shows a detailed picture of the UK's trade-in-goods by commodity and partner country.

The aggregate estimates here will differ from the Eurostat publication [Euro area external trade](#). The OTS was published up until the May 2016 month of account as 'general trade' based upon goods recorded as they enter or leave the UK. This will include goods imported into and exported from a freezone or customs warehouse, regardless of their future use. The Eurostat EU external trade data are published as 'special trade' where goods are recorded as trade only when they enter free circulation or are declared to specific Customs regimes such as Inward Processing (IP) or Processing under Customs Control (PCC). Imports from a free zone or customs warehouse are similarly recorded in 'special trade'.

National Statistics Publication

HM Revenue & Customs released these latest statistics on Overseas Trade with countries on 12 February 2021 under arrangements set out in the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#). The 1st release is published on HMRC's trade data website www.uktradeinfo.com.

This release includes the 1st provisional estimates of trade-in-goods between the UK and both countries of the EU and those outside the EU for December 2020. At the same time revisions for all previously published non-EU and EU data for 2020 are also being released in line with the [HM Revenue & Customs Policy on Revisions](#).

The next three publications are due for release on the following days:

Month of account	First release date
January 2021	12 March 2021
February 2021	13 April 2021
March 2021	12 May 2021

The OTS has been reviewed as part of an assessment made of Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics by the [UK Statistics Authority](#). The report of that assessment can be found [here](#).

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- Are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

Now that the UK has left the EU, it is important that our statistics continue to be of high quality and are internationally comparable. As this release relates to December 2020 UK trade in goods, which was before the end of the transition period, these statistics were compiled in line with EU practices and rules. Future releases based on data from after the end of the transition period will continue to be produced in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics as well as internationally agreed statistical guidance and standards.