



Sea Passenger Statistics: 2012 Final Figures

This statistical release presents the final statistics on the number of sea passengers on both international and domestic routes, to and from the UK in 2012.

International passengers are broken down into those on short sea (ferry) routes and passengers travelling for pleasure on cruises and long sea journeys. Domestic passengers include those on domestic sea crossings, river ferries and inter-island journeys.

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



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The main findings for 2012 include:

Sea Passengers in International routes to and from the UK:

- International sea passenger movements have **steadily declined** over the last decade and, in 2012, numbers continued to **fall by 6 per cent to 21.4 million**.
- The decline in passenger movements in 2012 was in part caused by a **fall in the number of international short sea passengers**, which fell by 7 per cent to 19.7 million. **Channel Tunnel passengers exceeded** those on international short sea journeys for the first time in 2012.
- Despite the overall decline, **cruise** passenger numbers have been **growing in popularity** over the last 30 years, with a total of 1.7 million in 2012. This was over 20 times the amount in 1982.

Sea Passengers on Domestic routes:

- The number of **domestic sea passengers has remained stable** for the last 9 years. In 2012, there were 42.1 million domestic sea passengers.
- Passengers on domestic sea crossings and inter-island journeys both fell for the second year in 2012, whereas the number of passengers on **river ferries rose** for the second consecutive year by 2 per cent to 20.1 million.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Media Enquiries:
020 7944 3066

Public Enquiries:
Ella Taylor
020 7944 3087
maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk

1. Sea Passengers on International Routes

1.1 Summary

The total number of international sea passengers fell for the second consecutive year in 2012 to 21.4 million, 6 per cent lower than 2011. The total number of international passenger movements steadily fell between 2002 and 2009, with an overall decline of 20 per cent. The number of movements in 2012 were 27 per cent lower than 2002, despite the slight increase in 2010.

Figure 1: International sea passengers by journey type, 2002 and 2012

	<i>Thousand passengers</i>		
	2002	2012	<i>Percentage Change</i>
Short Sea	28,726	19,680	⬇️ -31%
Long Sea	32	32	↔️ 1%
Cruise	540	1,737	⬆️ 221%
Total	29,298	21,444	⬇️ -27%

1.2 International Short Sea Journeys

In 2012, 19.7 million passengers travelled on international short sea routes, a fall of 7 per cent from 2011. **International short sea** passenger numbers have grown steadily since 1950 (the start of the series) and are five times greater than the 3.9 million passengers in 1950. Passenger numbers peaked at 36.7 million in 1994 but have fallen steadily since 1997, down by 31 per cent in the last decade.

The number of Channel Tunnel passengers rose by 5 per cent in 2012, to a peak of 20 million passengers. This was the first year since the Channel Tunnel opened in 1994 that Channel Tunnel passengers exceeded international short sea passengers.

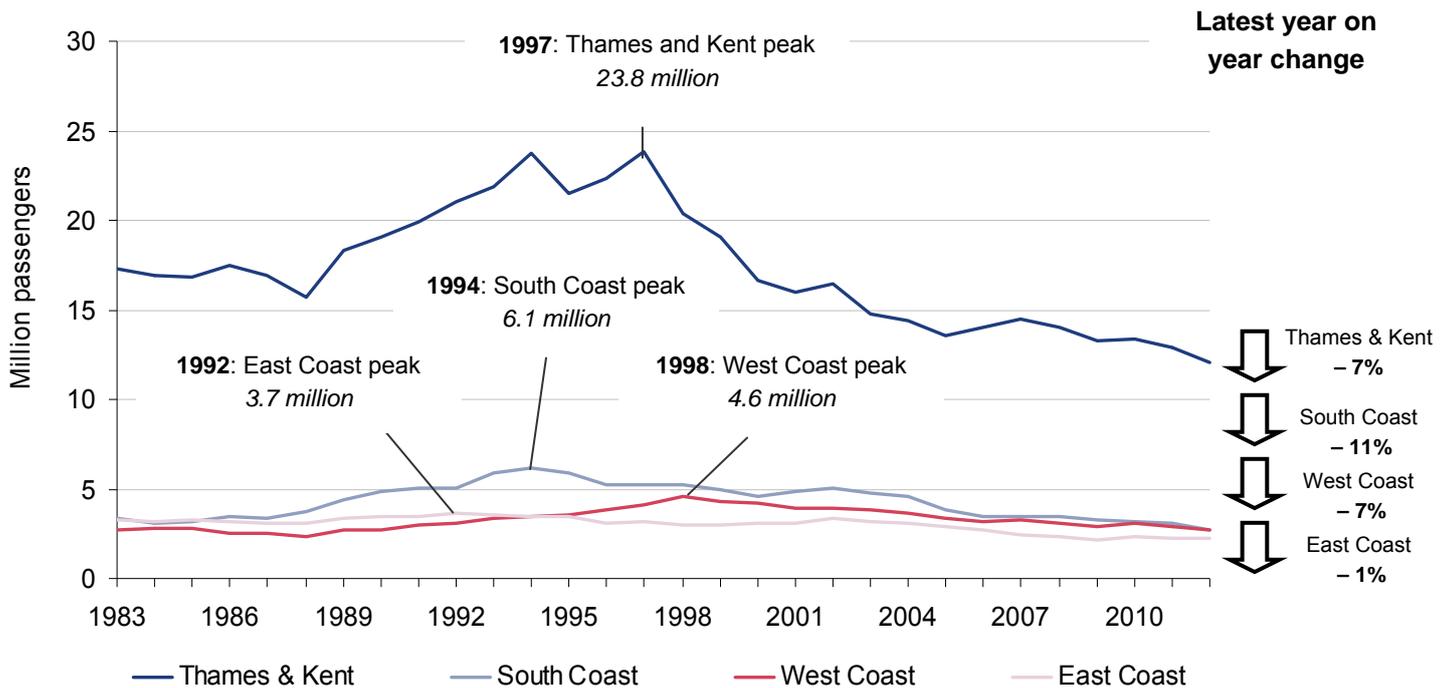
Chart 1: Passengers on international short sea routes and Channel Tunnel passenger traffic, 1957–2012



1.3 International Short Sea Journeys by Port Group

The number of passengers on **international short sea journeys fell for all port groups**. Although **Thames and Kent** held their position as the **busiest port group**, handling 12.0 million passengers (*chart 2*), this was a 7 per cent decline compared with 2011. This decline was primarily due to **Dover, the UK's busiest ferry port**, which handled 11.9 million passengers in 2012 compared with 12.8 million in 2011. South Coast ports experienced the greatest decline, falling by 11 per cent to 2.7 million passengers.

Chart 2: Short sea international sea passengers by port group, 1983-2012



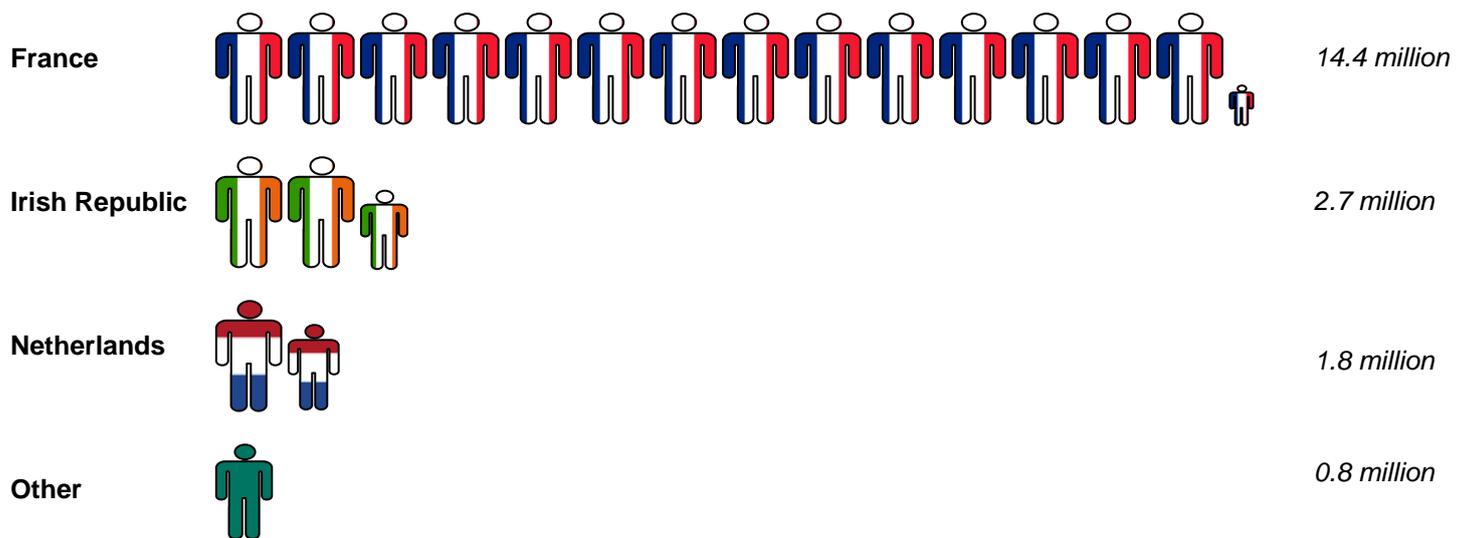
1.4 International Short Sea Journeys by Route

In 2012, **passengers travelling to or from France accounted for 73 per cent** of all international short sea passengers (14.4 million). Over the last decade the number of passengers beginning or ending journeys in France has fallen by 30 per cent, similar to the decline of 31 per cent seen for all international short sea passengers.

Dover to Calais remained the **most popular international passenger route**. In 2012 this route carried 9.4 million passengers, accounting for 48 per cent of all international short sea passengers. However numbers on this route fell by 7 per cent between 2011 and 2012 and have fallen by 39 per cent over the last decade.

Travel to and from ports in the **Irish Republic (the second busiest destination)** accounted for 14 per cent of all international short sea passengers (2.7 million). Passengers travelling these routes have also seen long term decline and in 2012 were 30 per cent lower than in 2002.

Figure 2: Short sea international sea passengers by country destination, 2012



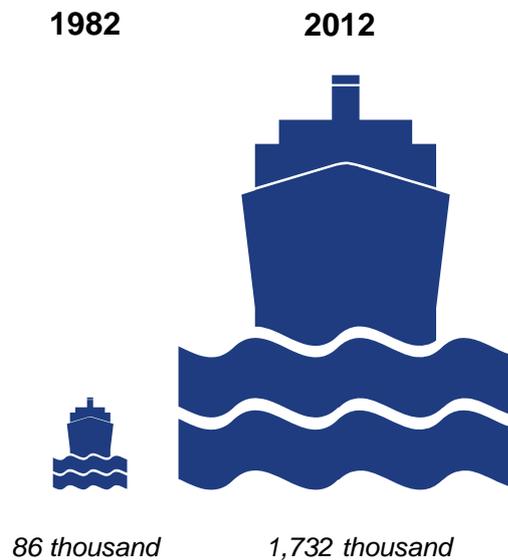
1.5 Seasonal trends in International Short Sea Journeys

Quarter 3 (**July-September**) was the **most popular period** for international sea travel. This quarter accounted for over a third of all short sea travel in 2012 (7 million) and over twice the amount of passengers than in quarter one (January-March). This seasonal trend has been seen over a number of years.

1.6 Long Sea Journeys and Cruise Passengers

In 2012, 1.7 million people started or ended a cruise trip at UK ports, an increase of 4 per cent compared with 2011. **Cruises have been growing in popularity** since the early 1980s and in 2012 there were over 20 times more cruise passengers than 30 years previously.

Figure 3: Proportional increase in cruise passengers, 1982 and 2012



The number of **passengers on long sea journeys has been decreasing** since 2008. In 2012 the number of passengers fell to 32 thousand, a 6 per cent decline compared with 2011 and 56 per cent lower than the previous peak of 72 thousand in 2008.

Detailed statistics (tables and charts) on passengers on international sea routes can be found in the web tables, [SPAS0101 - SPAS0108](#) and charts can be found in [SPAS301 and SPAS302](#)

2. Sea Passengers on Domestic Routes

2.1 Summary

In 2012, there were 42.1 million domestic sea passengers. The number of passengers on domestic routes has grown by 6 per cent over the last decade. The majority of growth was between 2002 and 2003 when movements increased by 4 per cent. Since 2003 movements have steadily increased, with a slight dip in 2009.

Figure 4: Domestic sea passengers by route, 2002 and 2012

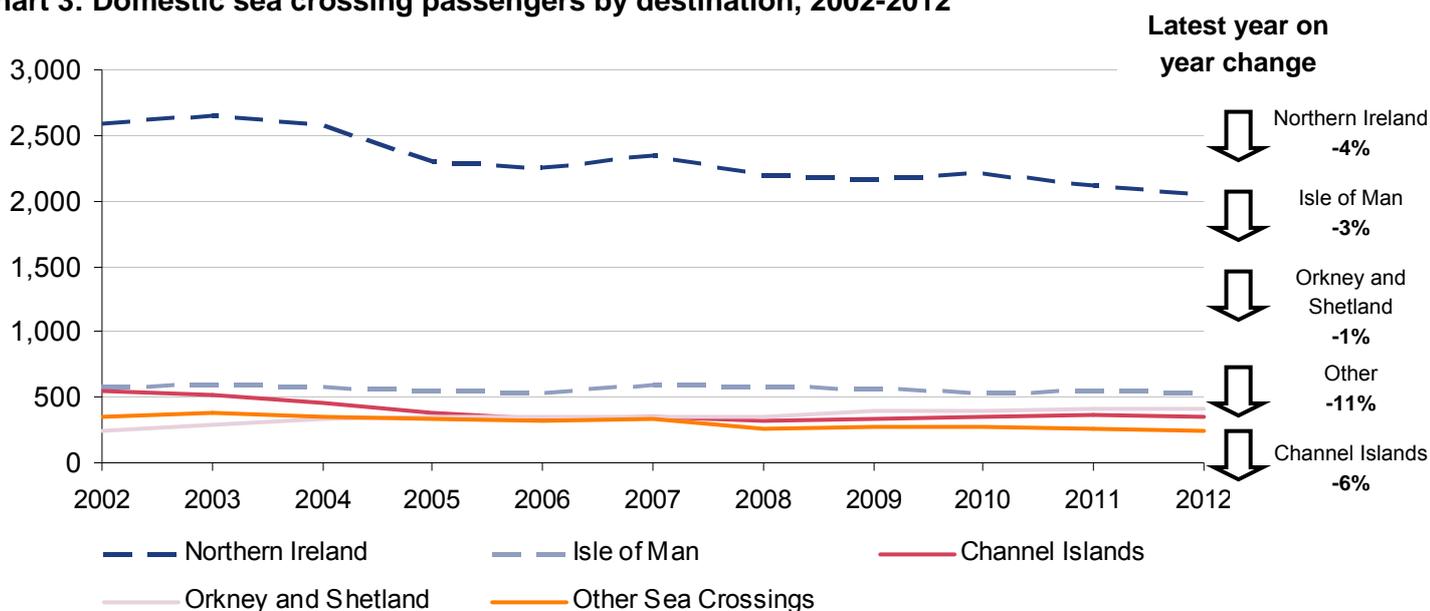
	<i>Thousand passengers</i>		
	2002	2012	Percentage change
Domestic Sea Crossings	4,314	3,551	⬇️ -18%
Inter-island	17,658	18,413	⬆️ 4%
River Ferries	17,877	20,146	⬆️ 13%
Total	39,850	42,110	⬆️ 6%

2.2 Domestic Sea Crossing by Route

The number of passengers on domestic sea crossings fell for the second year in 2012 to 3.6 million. Movements declined by 14 per cent between 2003 and 2006 and, despite a 5 per cent growth in 2007, levels were 18 per cent lower in 2012 than in 2003.

The number of passengers on **domestic sea crossings fell for all routes**, with 'other sea crossings' (which includes Northern Ireland to the Isle of Man and Penzance to Hughtown, for example) experiencing the largest decline of 11 per cent.

Chart 3: Domestic sea crossing passengers by destination, 2002-2012



Northern Ireland remained the **busiest destination** for domestic sea crossings in 2012, carrying 2 million passengers. **Cairnryan and Belfast** was the **busiest route**, accounting for 55 per cent of all passenger movements between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This route opened in 2011 and has taken the passenger traffic previously seen between Stranraer and Belfast.

In 2012, there were only 6 thousand passengers between Weymouth and Jersey/Guernsey, compared to 228 thousand in 2011. This was a result of the port closing due to safety concerns over the structure of the port. The passengers who would have been sailing from Weymouth were temporarily sailing from Poole. Passenger movements between Poole and Jersey/Guernsey increased from 91 thousand in 2011 to 283 thousand in 2012.

2.3 Seasonal trends in Domestic Sea Crossing Journeys

Quarter three (July-September) was the **most popular** period for domestic sea crossings, accounting for 38 per cent of annual domestic sea crossing passengers. Comparatively only 14 per cent occurred within quarter one (January – March).

2.4 Passengers on Inter-island Domestic Routes

The total number of passengers on inter-island domestic routes fell by 1 per cent in 2012 compared with the previous year, down to 18.4 million passengers, despite the slight incline of passengers on Scottish routes. Passengers travelling between Hampshire and the Isle of Wight fell by 3 per cent to 8.8 million.

2.5 Passengers on River Ferries

The number of people travelling on river ferries grew for the second consecutive year in 2012 to 20.1 million, a 2 per cent annual increase. River ferries have been growing in popularity over recent years, with 13 per cent more passengers in 2012 than 10 years previously.

Detailed statistics (tables and charts) on passengers on domestic routes can be found in the web tables, [SPAS0201](#) and [SPAS0202](#)

3. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Data

- The data for international ferry passenger routes, domestic sea crossings and inter-island routes are collected regularly from the operators or, in the case of the crossings to Orkney and Shetland and Scottish inter-island routes, supplied by the Scottish Government. These data sets are checked in detail and considered to be very robust.
- Passenger numbers on river ferries are collected from the operators and cover major routes, which are reviewed periodically. Data are considered to be fit for purpose.
- The cruise and long sea data are also supplied by the operators and are regularly reviewed. The data are considered to be fit for purpose.
- Channel Tunnel passenger data are collected from the Office of Rail Regulation and are provided for comparison purposes only.
- In 2012, a number of revisions were made following the identification of a processing error. These revisions have been marked in the corresponding tables.

4. Background Notes

1. The web tables for sea passenger statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/sea-passengers-statistics>

2. Full guidance on the methods used in the publication of these releases, and the quality of the data, can be found in the Technical Note at

<https://www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-sea-passengers>

3. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Sea Passenger Statistics were recently assessed against the Code of Practice by the UK Statistics Authority. The assessment report can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/maritime-and-shipping-statistics>

4. Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/68892/pre-release-access-for-sea-passengers-statistics.pdf

5. Provisional summary totals for international sea passenger traffic are released monthly via the DfT website at, refer to link in note (1) above