



Department for Transport

UK Port Freight Statistics: January to March 2015 (Quarter 1)

About this release

This statistical release summarises the latest provisional quarterly statistics on freight handled by major UK sea ports.

Detailed final annual statistics for 2015 will be published in August 2016, when the quarterly series will also be finalised.

This statistical release compares results for the latest quarter to the same quarter a year earlier to avoid the misinterpretation of seasonal effects.

Definitions:

Major ports-

Ports handling over one million tonnes of freight per year and a small number of other key ports.

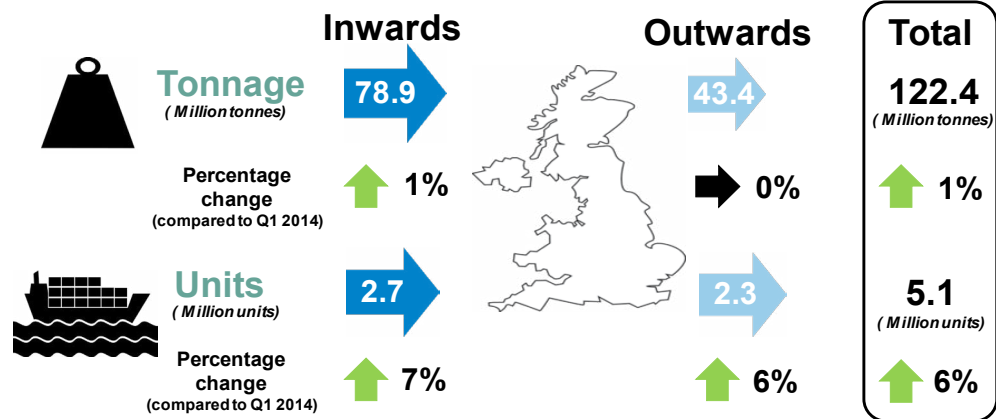
Together these ports accounted for 98% of total UK port traffic in 2013.

Unitised traffic-

This includes containers and all Ro-Ro (trade, passenger, import/export motor vehicles). These figures include both loaded and empty units.

UK Major Ports: Quarter 1 2015 main findings Quarterly Trend (latest quarter to same quarter a year earlier)

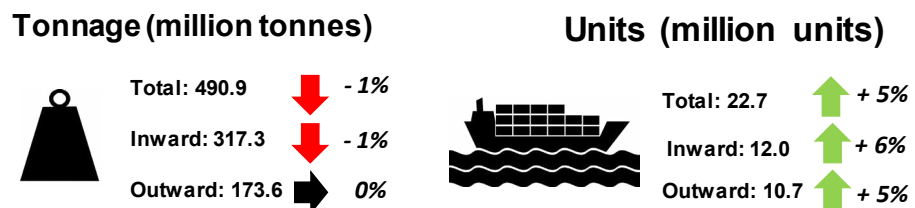
Quarter 1 2015:



Total freight tonnage handled at UK major ports **increased by 1 per cent to 122.4 million tonnes**. Traffic trends had generally been decreasing since 2000 but have stabilised in recent years.

Total unitised traffic **increased by 6 per cent to 5.1 million units**, continuing to grow for the eighth consecutive quarter.

Rolling Four Quarter Total (Latest 4 quarters compared to previous 4 quarters)



Major port freight traffic decreased **by 1 per cent to 490.9 million tonnes** after largely positive changes in 2014.

UK major port unitised traffic continued to rise steadily, **increasing by 5 per cent to 22.7 million units**.

Major Port Freight Traffic (Tonnage)

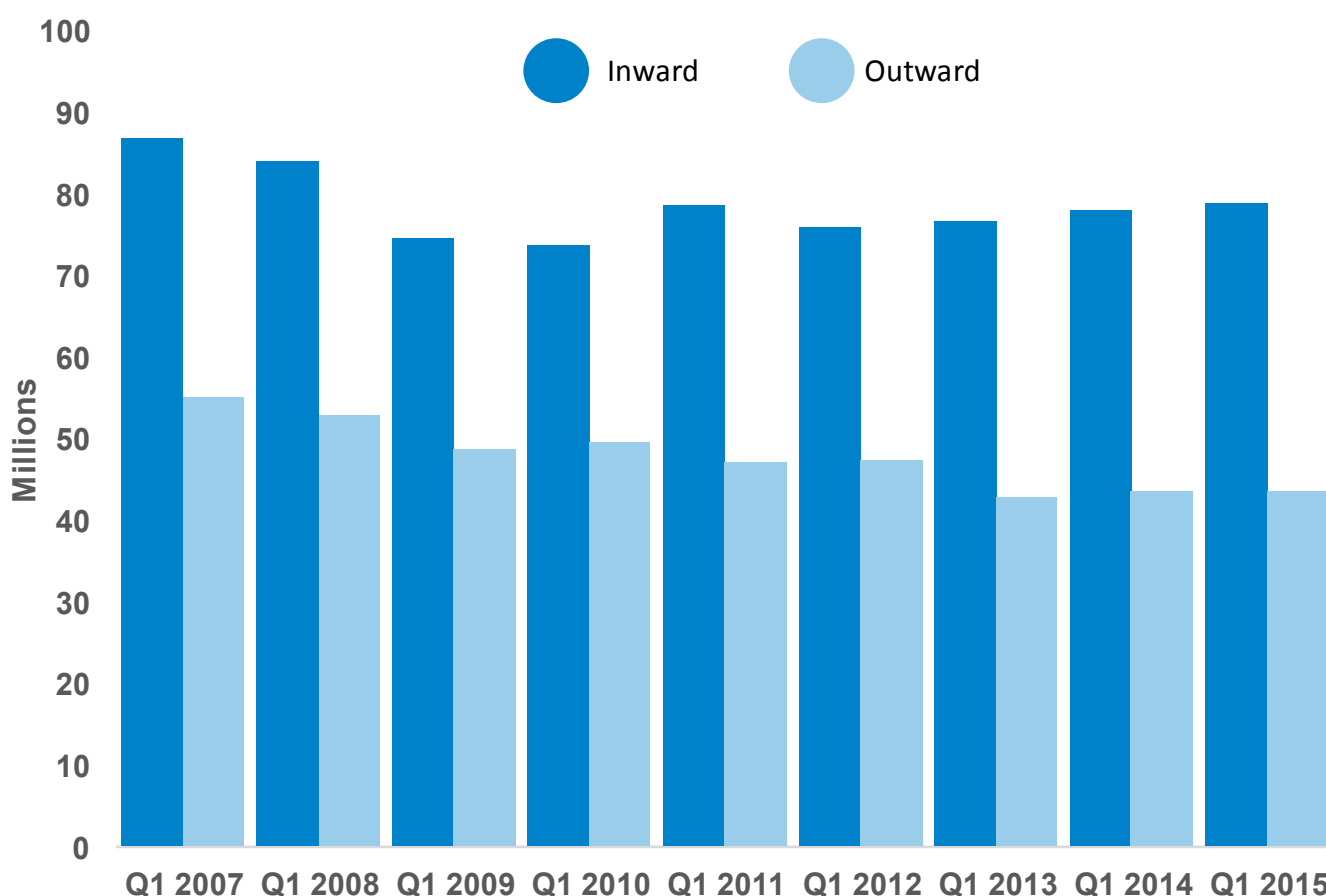
Quarterly Trend (Latest quarter compared to same quarter a year earlier)

Total freight tonnage handled at UK major ports **increased by 1 per cent to 122.4 million tonnes**. Traffic trends have been generally decreasing since 2000 but have stabilised in recent post recession years.

Inward freight traffic **increased by 1 per cent to 78.9 million tonnes**. In recent years inward traffic has accounted for an increasing proportion of total traffic; in this quarter 64.5 per cent of the total freight tonnage was inward.

Outward freight traffic remained stable at **43.4 million tonnes**. Outward traffic generally decreased prior to the recession. It continued to decline between 2009 and 2012, but appears to have stabilised in recent years.

Major port traffic for quarter 1, 2007-2015



Detailed statistics (tables) on Quarterly Tonnage Port Freight Statistics can be found in the web tables [PORT0501 & PORT0504-PORT0506](#)

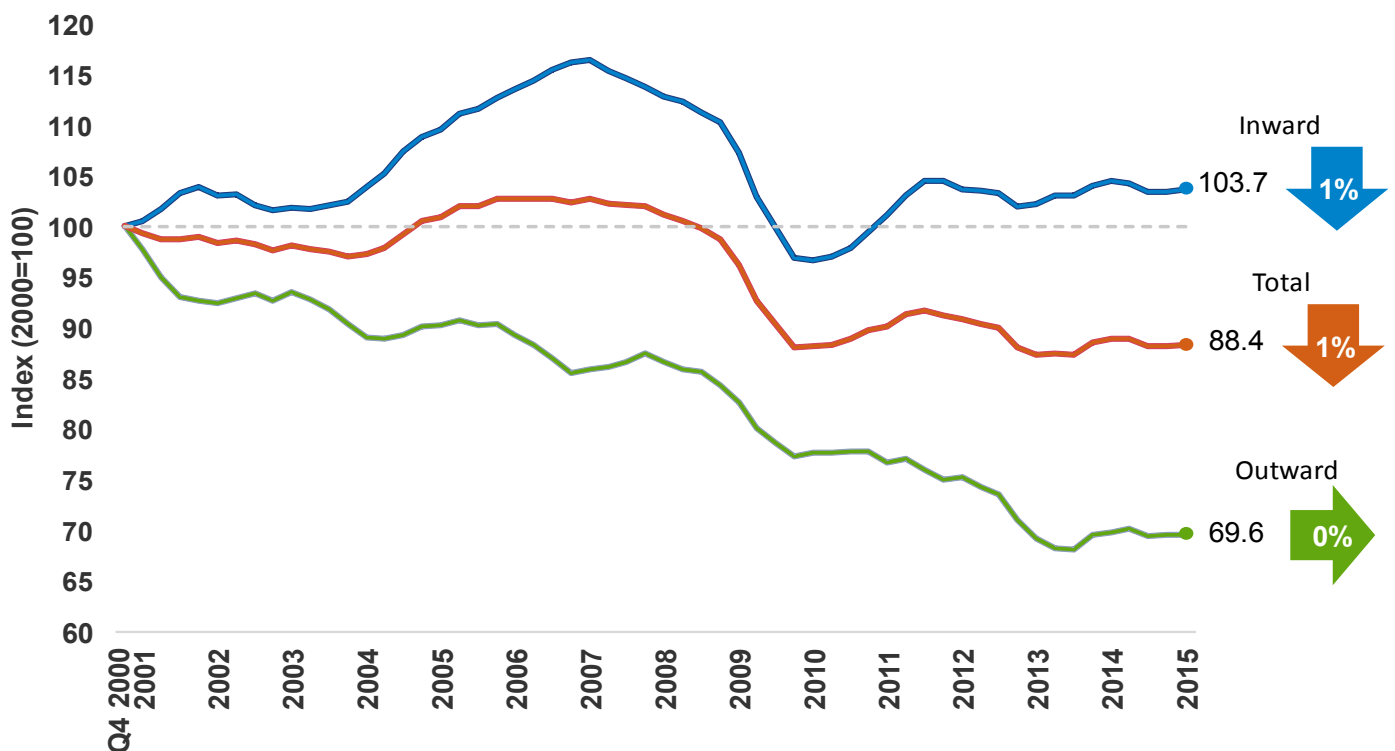
Rolling Four-Quarter Trend (Latest 4 quarters compared to previous 4 quarters)

Major port freight traffic **decreased by 1 per cent to 490.9 million tonnes** following slow but steady growth on previous periods in the first 3 quarters of 2014. Longer term trends include a large drop in major port traffic in 2009; potentially a delayed impact of the recession. In recent years the total tonnage in each rolling 4-quarter period has stabilised.

Freight travelling into UK major ports **decreased by 1 per cent to 317.3 million tonnes**. Until the recession, the rolling four-quarter total had been increasing consistently from the end of 2003. In recent years inward freight has generally stabilised, with a slight dip in 2012.

Freight travelling out from UK major ports remained steady at **173.6 million tonnes**. In 2014 the volume of outward traffic increased following a decline in previous years.

Major port traffic indices, tonnage: rolling 4 quarter totals to March 2015 (2000=100)



Major Port Freight Traffic (Units)

Quarterly Trend (latest quarter to same quarter a year earlier)

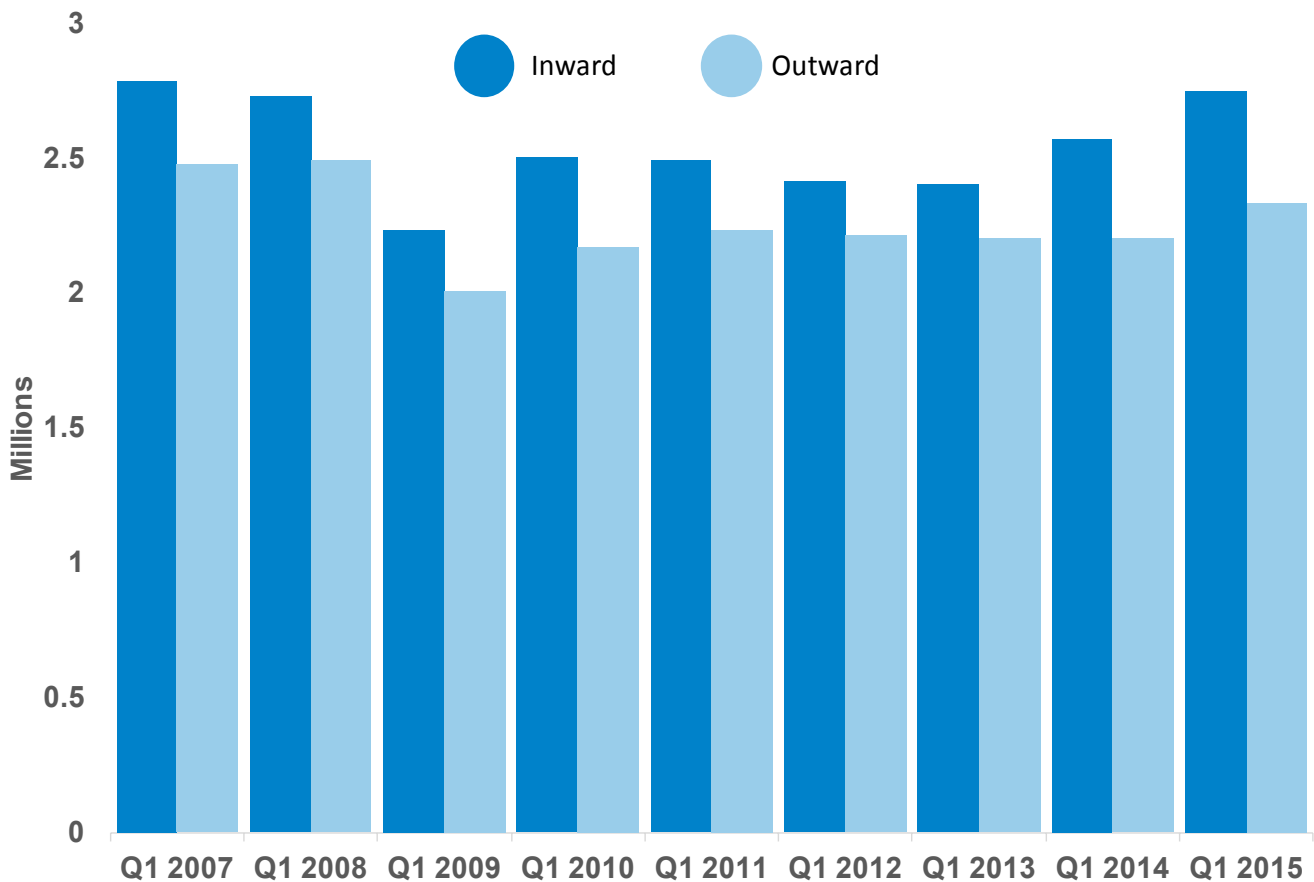
Since the series began in 2000, unitised traffic generally increased until the recession where it decreased rapidly: unitised traffic in the first quarter of 2009 fell by 19 per cent compared with the first quarter of 2008. In 2015, first-quarter unitised traffic **rose by 6 per cent to 5.1 million units**, continuing to grow for the eighth consecutive quarter.

Unitised traffic travelling in to UK major ports **rose by 7 per cent to 2.7 million units**, continuing growth seen in the last 3 quarters of 2013 and throughout 2014.

Unitised traffic travelling out of UK major ports **increased by 6 per cent to 2.3 million units**, continuing the recent upward trend.

Inward traffic made up 54 per cent of total units in the first quarter of 2015, and similarly in the same quarter in 2014. In recent years inward unitised traffic by quarter has always been larger than outward, with the exception of the fourth quarter of 2008. The proportions of inward to total unitised traffic in the first quarters of 2014 and 2015 are the largest since the series began in 2000.

Major port unitised traffic for quarter 1, 2007-2015



Detailed statistics (tables) on Quarterly Unitised Port Freight Statistics can be found in the web tables [PORT0502 & PORT0507-PORT0509](#)

Rolling Four-Quarter Trend (Latest 4 quarters compared to previous 4 quarters)

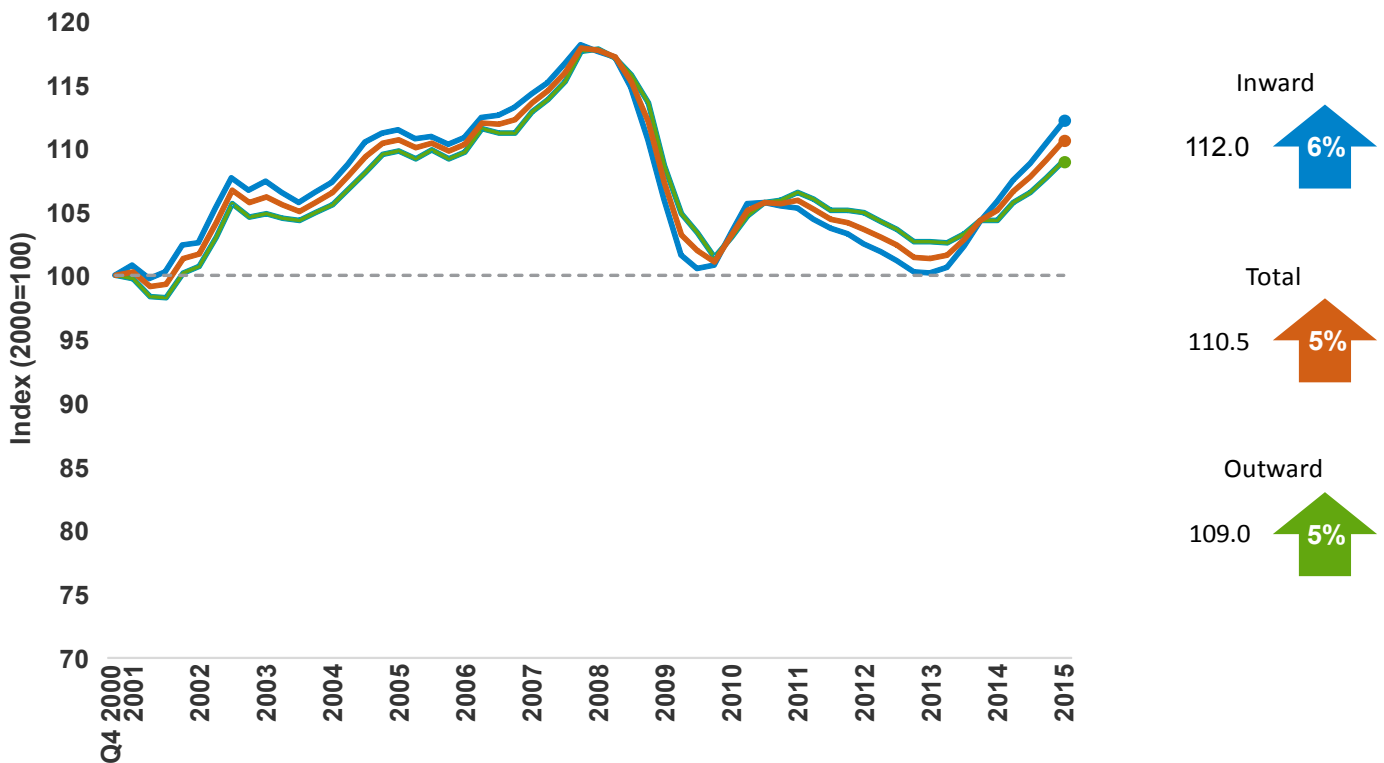
The rolling four-quarter total consistently increased on each previous period throughout 2014. This trend has continued with the latest four-quarter total **rising by 5 per cent to 22.7 million** compared with the four quarters ending in March 2014.

The inward unitised traffic **increased by 6 per cent to 12.0 million units** compared with the previous four-quarter period.

Outward unitised traffic **increased by 5 per cent to 10.7 million units** compared with the previous four-quarter period.

Since the recession, the rolling four-quarter total has fluctuated. After the recent low in 2013 unitised freight appears to be growing again.

Major Port traffic indices, units - rolling 4 quarter totals to March 2015 (2000=100)



Strengths and weaknesses of the data

- ▶ The port freight statistics relate to traffic to and from major ports in the United Kingdom, unless otherwise stated, and do not cover ports in the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.
- ▶ The provisional quarterly port data relate to all cargos loaded or unloaded by ship at major ports in the UK, including both international and domestic traffic.
- ▶ These statistics are based on data provided by major ports. Data are available for total weight of goods and number of units inwards and outwards for each responding port. These figures may be subject to revision if subsequent checks against data provided by agents, or data provided by ports at the year end, highlight anomalies. More in depth commentary will be provided with the release of the final port statistics.
- ▶ Typically a very small number of ports do not provide data in time for publication, in which case the national trend is estimated based on the trend for those ports which have provided data for the latest quarter. The provisional figures for freight traffic at each major UK port in quarter 1 2015 are based on 100 per cent of expected returns.

Glossary

- ▶ **Major ports:** Those ports handling over one million tonnes per year, and a small number of other key ports, together accounted for 98 per cent of UK port traffic in 2013.
- ▶ **Tonnage:** The weight of goods transported, including crates and other packaging, but excluding the unloaded weight of shipping containers, road goods vehicles, trailers and other items of transport equipment where these are used.
- ▶ **Units:** Includes all roll-on/roll-off (ro-ro) units whether carrying freight or not (road goods vehicles, unaccompanied trailers, shipborne port-to-port trailers, passenger vehicles, trade vehicles, and other ro-ro units), as well as lift-on lift-off (lo-lo) containers. In most published port statistics, freight carrying roll-on/roll-off units are reported separately, however, this detail is not available at the time of the quarterly statistics publication, in which combined totals are given.

Background notes

- ▶ The web tables and charts give further detail of the key results presented in this statistical release. They are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/port05-traffic-indices-and-quarterly-breakdowns>
- ▶ Full guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics can be found on the ports series page here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maritime-and-shipping-statistics-guidance>
- ▶ National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Port Freight Statistics were assessed by the UK Statistics Authority against the Code of Practice and were confirmed as National Statistics in February 2013.
- ▶ Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found on the ports series page here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-maritime-and-shipping-series>
- ▶ The next update in this series will be published in September 2015. It will contain provisional quarterly figures for the second quarter of 2015.
- ▶ Annual statistics on freight handled by UK sea ports are released in August. The final 2013 figures can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-statistics-2013-final-figures>
- ▶ These statistics are also sent to EuroStat on a quarterly basis and used in a table alongside data from other EU member countries. For further information and data tables see link below: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/transport/data/database>