



Department for Transport

Provisional Sea Passenger Statistics: 2016

About this release

This statistical release presents provisional statistics on sea passengers to and from the UK in 2016. This includes:

International short sea (ferry) routes: These include all routes within Europe.

Domestic short sea routes: All routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

Final sea passenger statistics will be published in November 2016, including data on cruises, long sea journeys, domestic river crossings and inter-island routes.

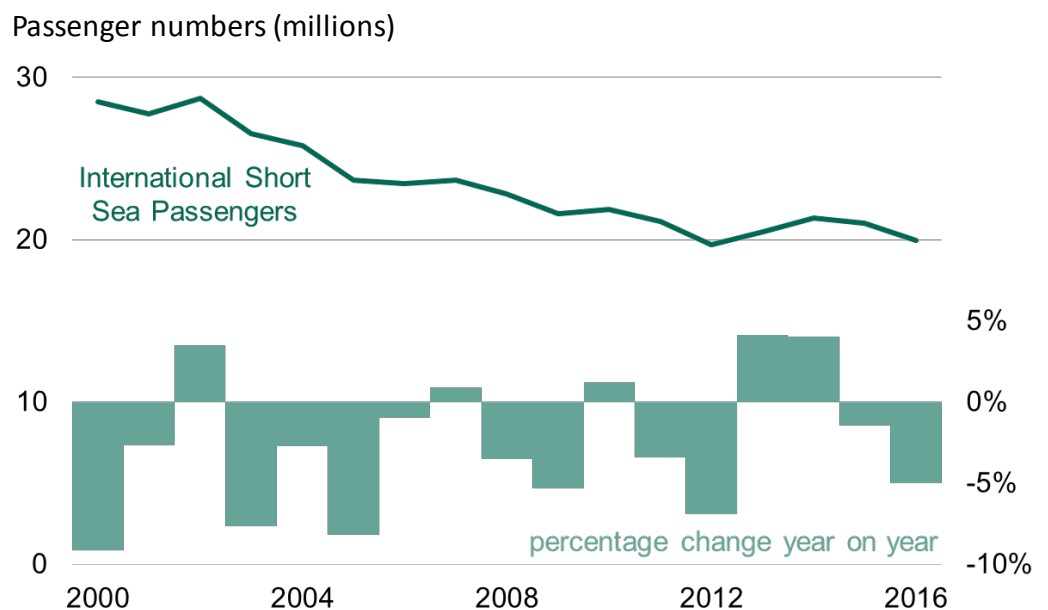
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International short sea passenger numbers decreased 5 per cent to 20.0 million in 2016.

- Since peaks in the 1990s the overall trend in international short sea passenger numbers has been generally downward. The decrease in 2016 is similar to the proportional decreases in earlier years.
- International short sea passenger numbers in 2016 decreased to the lowest level since 2012.
- The busiest route was Dover-Calais, with 46 per cent of international short sea passenger numbers. In 2016 traffic on this route decreased 7 per cent to 9.1 million.

UK International Sea Passenger numbers and percentage change on previous year, 2000 - 2016

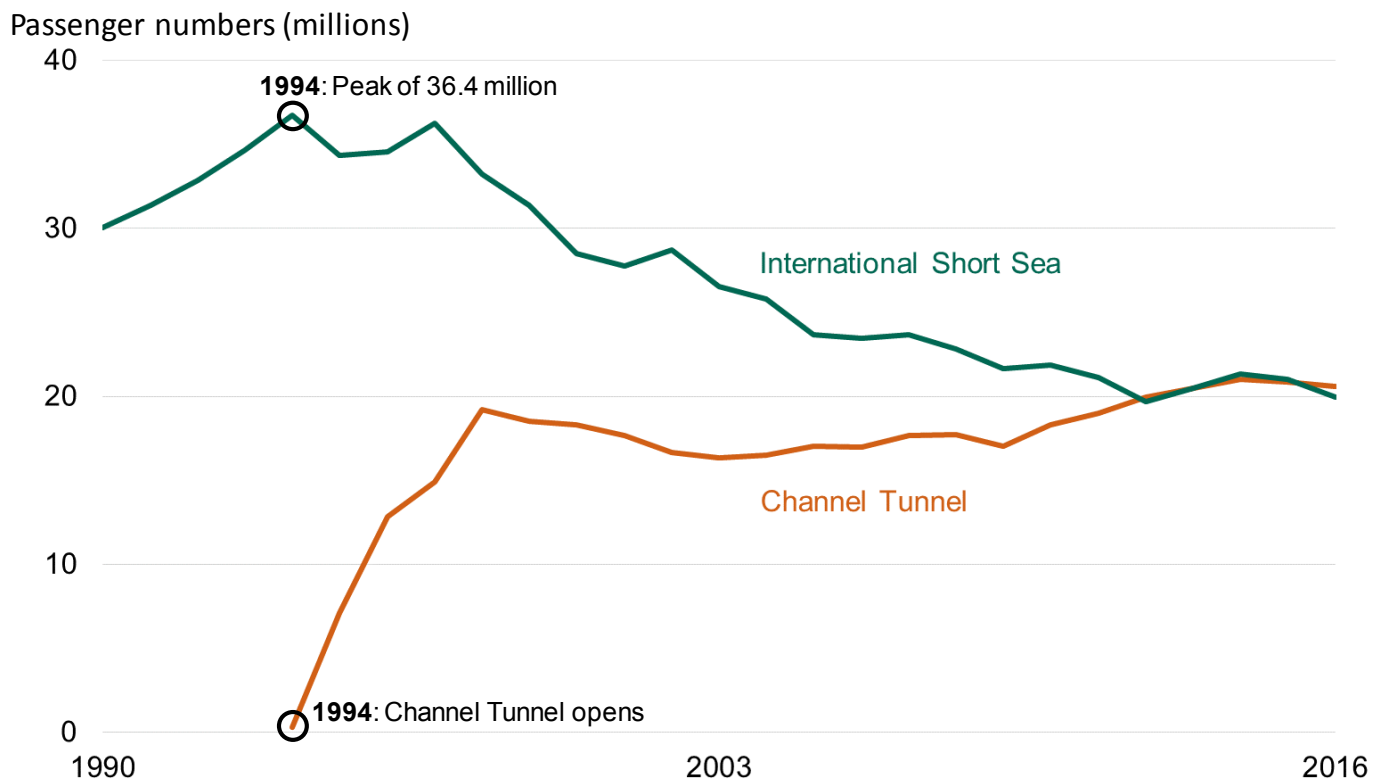


Passengers on International Short Sea Routes

In 2016 the number of international short sea passengers decreased by 5 per cent to 20.0 million, compared to 21.0 million in 2015.

The number of passengers travelling via the Channel Tunnel decreased by 1 per cent to 20.6 million. In 2016 passenger numbers on international short sea routes were lower than those through the Channel Tunnel for the second time since the Tunnel opened.

International short sea passengers and Channel Tunnel passengers, 1990-2016



Statistics on Channel Tunnel and international short sea passengers can be found in web table [SPAS0301](#).

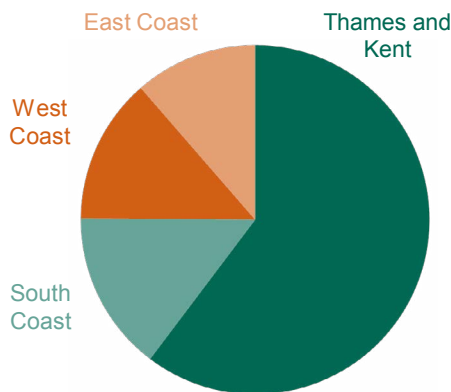
In 2016 passenger numbers through the Thames and Kent port group decreased by 8 per cent to 12.0 million passengers, compared with the year before.

Thames and Kent accounted for 60 per cent of total international short sea passenger numbers in 2016. This large proportion means trends in this group are often reflected in the total.

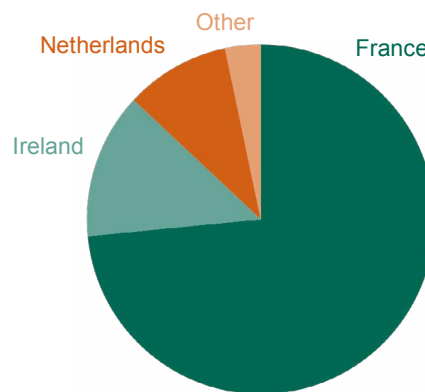
Since 2006 the number of passengers through each port group has decreased between 14 to 16 per cent. The total number of international short sea passengers decreased 15 per cent over this period.

Port Group	Passengers in 2016 (millions)	Change (on year before)	Change (on 2006)
Thames and Kent	12.0	-8%	-14%
South Coast	3.0	+1%	-15%
West Coast	2.7	-2%	-16%
East Coast	2.3	-1%	-16%

UK international short sea passengers by port group in 2016



UK international short sea passengers by country of origin/destination in 2016



Country	Passengers in 2016 (millions)	Change (on year before)	Change (on 2006)
France	14.7	-6%	-13%
Ireland	2.7	-2%	-16%
Netherlands	1.9	0%	+3%
Other	0.7	-2%	-54%

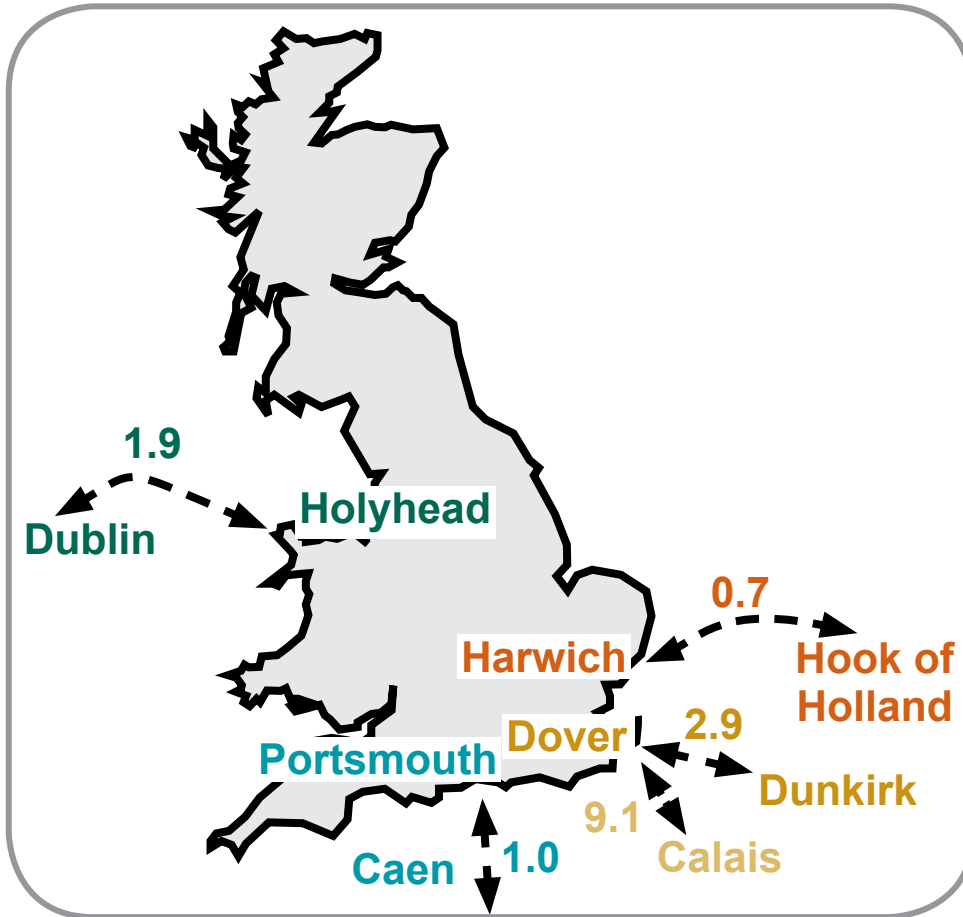
In 2016 passenger numbers on routes with France decreased 6 per cent to 14.7 million. Routes with France have consistently made up the majority of international short sea passenger numbers, accounting for 73 per cent of the total in 2016.

The ranking of the top three countries has been consistent over the decade from 2006 to 2016.

Since 2016, passenger numbers with France and Ireland have decreased 13 per cent and 16 per cent respectively while passenger numbers with the Netherlands increased by 3 per cent.

Detailed statistics on international short sea passengers by port group can be found in web table [SPAS0101](#). Statistics on international short sea passengers by country can be found in [SPAS0103](#).

Top 5 short-sea routes by passenger number (millions), 2016

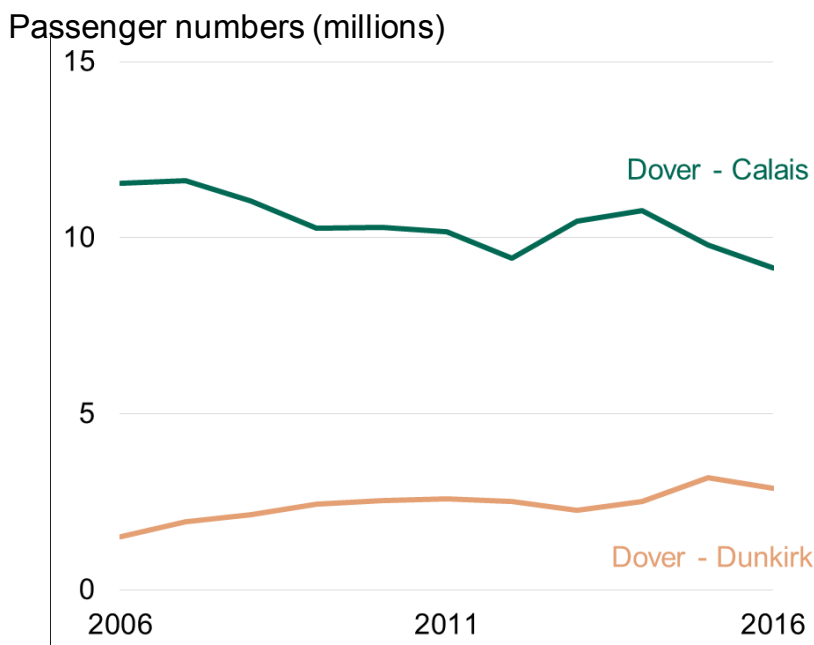


Dover-Calais passenger numbers decreased by 7 per cent to 9.1 million passengers in 2016.

Over the last decade Dover-Calais has consistently been the busiest route with 46 to 51 per cent of the annual international short sea passenger traffic. However, passenger numbers on this route in 2016 were 21 per cent lower than in 2006.

Dover-Dunkirk passenger numbers decreased 10 per cent to 2.9 million passengers in 2016.

UK international short sea passengers on Dover-Calais and Dover-Dunkirk routes 2006-2016



There was increased traffic on the Dover-Dunkirk route in 2015, 27 per cent higher than the year before. The decrease in 2016 may therefore in part reflect the high numbers in 2015.

Passenger numbers on the Dover-Dunkirk route were 90 per cent higher in 2016 than in 2006.

In 2016, Holyhead-Dublin passenger numbers decreased 2 per cent to 1.9 million.

The 2016 Holyhead-Dublin numbers were 47 per cent higher than in 2006.

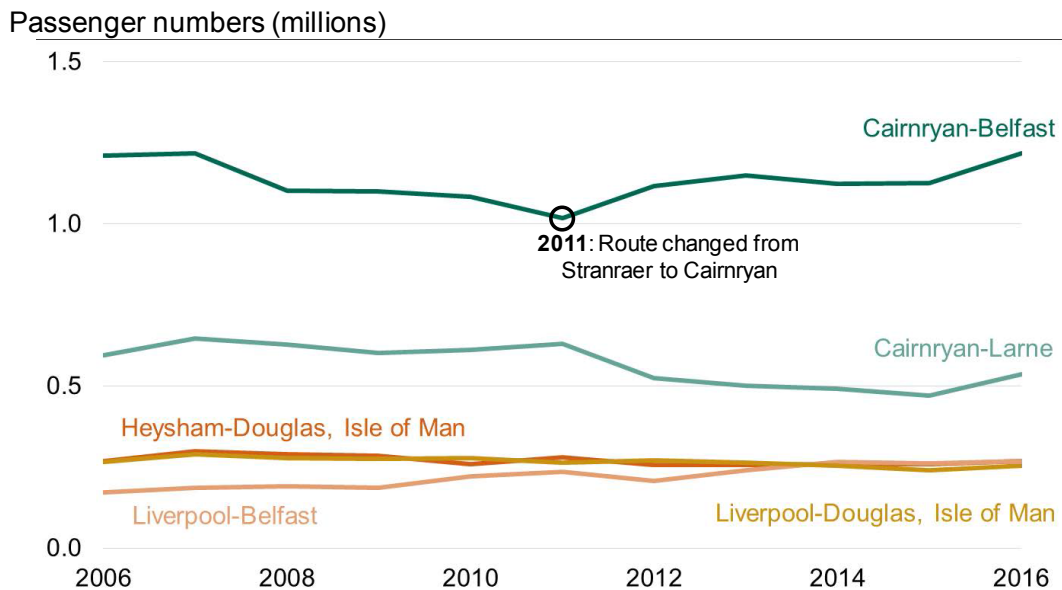
Detailed statistics on international short sea passengers by route can be found in web table [SPAS0102](#). This table includes Channel Tunnel passengers for comparison.

Passengers on Domestic Short Sea Routes

In 2016 the busiest domestic short sea route was Cairnryan-Belfast with 1.2 million passengers, an increase of 8 per cent on the year before.

Compared with the year before, passenger numbers on the Cairnryan-Larne route in 2016 increased 14 per cent to 0.5 million.

UK's top 5 busiest domestic sea crossing routes, 2006 - 2016



Passengers on the Cairnryan-Belfast route travelled from Stranraer to Belfast before 2012.

Top 5 Domestic Short Sea Routes	Passengers in 2016 (millions)	Change (on year before)	Change (on 2006)
Cairnryan-Belfast	1.2	+8%	0%
Cairnryan-Larne	0.5	+14%	-10%
Heysham-Douglas	0.3	+3%	0%
Liverpool-Belfast	0.3	+2%	+57%
Liverpool-Douglas	0.3	+5%	-4%

Detailed statistics on domestic sea passengers can be found in web tables [SPAS0201](#) and [SPAS0202](#).

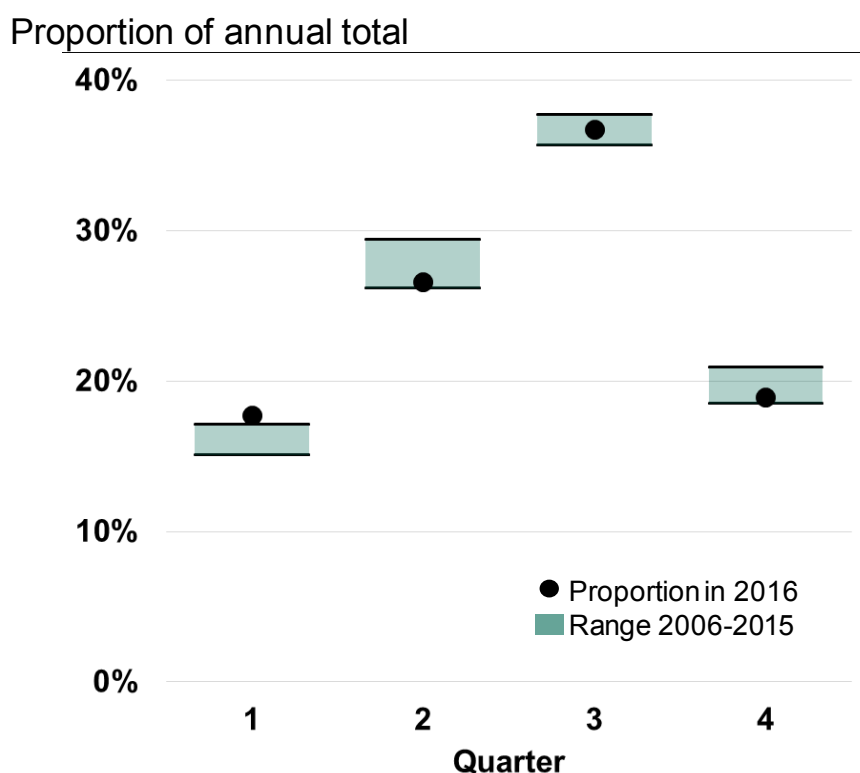
Seasonal Variation on Short Sea Routes

International short sea journeys tend to be highly seasonal due to factors such as holiday making and weather patterns.

In 2016 the third quarter accounted for 37 per cent of the total international short sea passenger numbers while the first quarter only accounted for 18 per cent.

Although the exact proportion fluctuates between different years, in general the quarterly distribution remains relatively similar, with the highest passenger numbers in the third quarter and the lowest in the first.

Quarterly proportion of international annual total in 2016 against the range of proportions over 2006-2015



As with international short sea traffic, passenger numbers on domestic short sea routes vary over the course of the year with the highest passenger numbers in the third quarter and the lowest in the first. Many ferry operators work to a different winter timetable due to the small number of passengers travelling.

Of the five busiest routes in 2016, Liverpool-Douglas has the largest proportional difference between busy and quiet quarters with 25 per cent of passengers travelling in the third quarter and only 2 per cent in the first quarter.

The greatest difference in terms of passenger numbers is Cairnryan-Belfast, with 255 thousand more passengers in the third quarter than in the first.

Detailed statistics for international sea passengers by quarter can be found in [SPAS0105](#). Quarterly domestic sea passenger statistics can be found in [SPAS0202](#).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Data

- ▶ The data for international and domestic short-sea passengers is collected from ferry operators and is validated on a monthly basis. At the end of the reference year the annual data is then validated for a final time for this publication.
- ▶ Validation processes focus on comparing reference periods with the same period in the previous year, to allow for seasonal differences. Anomalies are followed up with the operators.
- ▶ Passengers are counted in both directions. It is not possible to distinguish passengers travelling by foot from those in vehicles or those travelling as the driver of a goods vehicle.
- ▶ Data collection is limited to vessels over 100 gross tonnes and so does not include services operated by small boats.
- ▶ International figures include passengers on routes beginning or ending in Great Britain or Northern Ireland. Routes with foreign countries beginning or ending in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man are not included.
- ▶ Some passengers travel between Great Britain and St Malo in France by going to the Channel Islands on one vessel and then transferring to another. Prior to 2016, where these passengers could be distinguished from other traffic they were subtracted from the domestic route with the Channel Islands and added to the direct international route between Great Britain and France. From 2016 onward these passenger numbers are attributed to the domestic route with the Channel Islands rather than the direct international route. The main routes affected are Poole-St Malo and Weymouth-St Malo. In recent years these routes accounted for less than 0.1 per cent of the total international short sea traffic.

Background Notes

- ▶ The web tables for sea passenger statistics can be found at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/maritime-and-shipping-statistics#data-tables-associated-with-this-series>
- ▶ 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/government/publications/maritime-and-shipping-statistics-guidance>
- ▶ National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs.
- ▶ 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/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-maritime-and-shipping-series>
- ▶ Provisional summary totals for international sea passenger traffic are released monthly via the DfT website at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/spas01-uk-international-sea-passengers#table-spas0107>



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