



Department for Transport

# UK Port Freight Statistics: July to September 2015 (Quarter 3)

## 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.

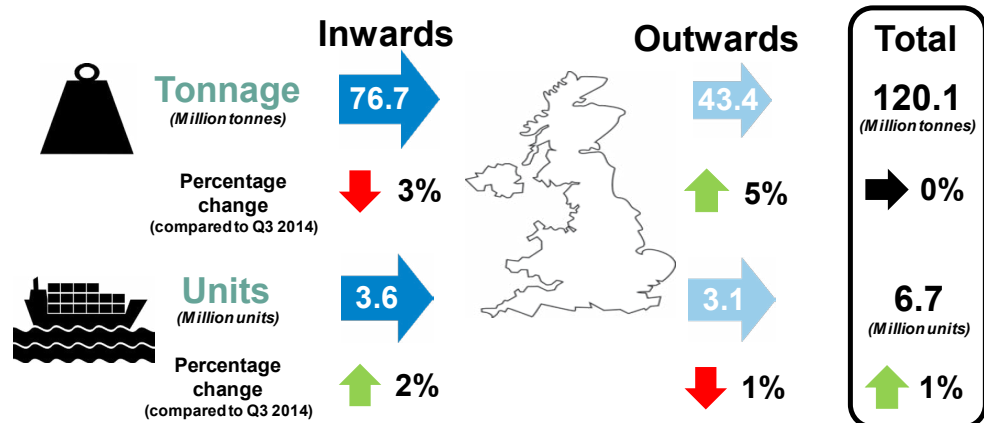
Together these ports accounted for 98% of total UK port traffic in 2014.

### 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 3 2015 main findings

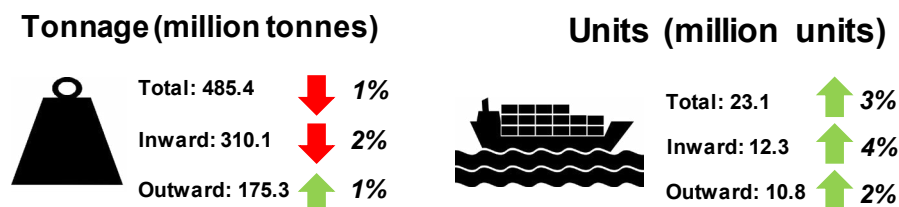
### Third Quarter Total (latest quarter compared to same quarter a year earlier)



Compared with the same quarter in 2014, total freight tonnage through UK major ports remained relatively unchanged at **120.1 million tonnes**.

Total unitised traffic through UK major ports **increased by 1 per cent to 6.7 million units**. Since the fall in 2012, the general trend in total unitised freight has been upward.

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



Total tonnage of traffic through UK major ports in the 4 quarters ending in the third quarter of 2015 **decreased by 1 per cent to 485.4 million tonnes**, compared with the previous 4 quarters.

Total unitised traffic in the latest 4 quarters **increased by 3 per cent to 23.1 million units**, continuing the upward trend of recent years.

## Major Port Freight Traffic (Tonnage)

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

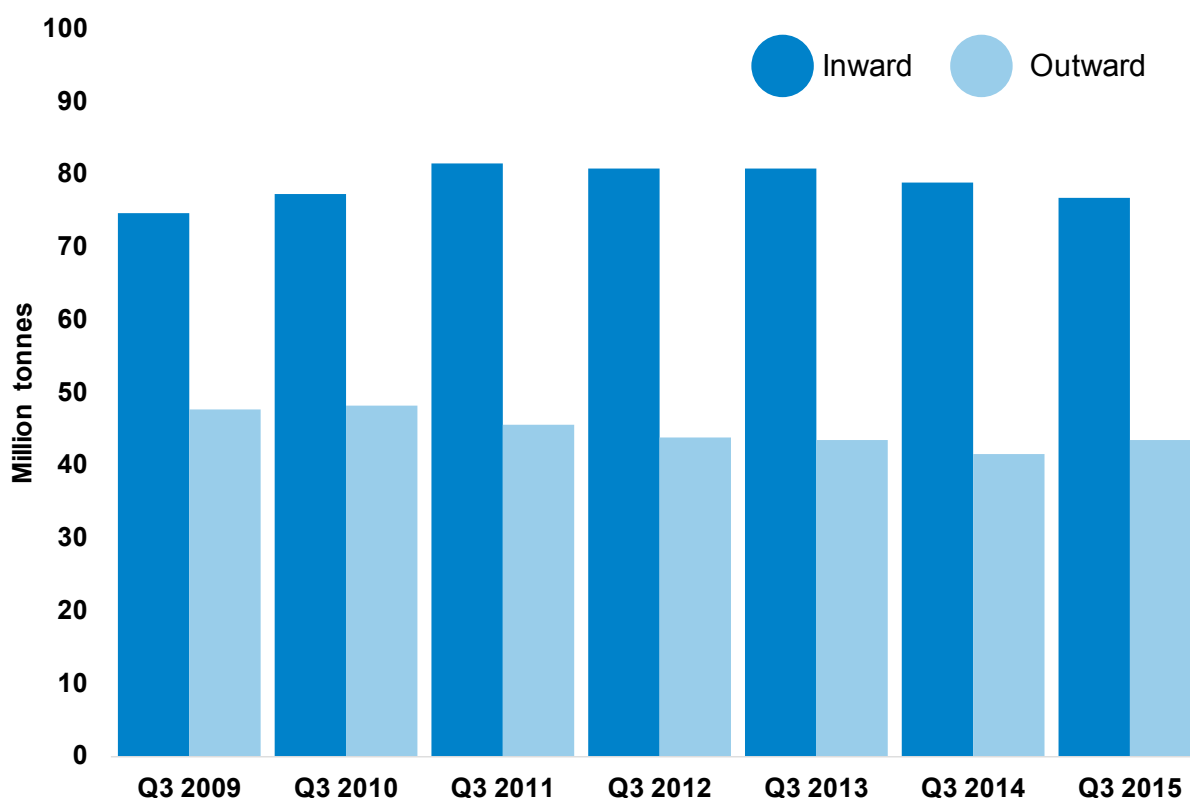
Compared with the same quarter in 2014, total freight tonnage in quarter 3 2015 remained relatively unchanged at **120.1 million tonnes**.

Inward freight tonnage **decreased by 3 per cent to 76.7 million tonnes**, after a similar decrease in the same quarter in the previous year.

Outward freight outward **increased by 5 per cent to 43.4 million tonnes** compared with the third quarter in 2014, returning to the same level as in the third quarter of 2013.

Inward traffic made up **64 per cent** of total tonnage, compared with 66 per cent in the same quarter in 2014. This is similar to the proportions seen in the third quarter of the previous 4 years.

### Major port traffic for quarter 3, 2009-2015



Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) can be found in the statistical data sets: [PORT0501 & PORT0504-PORT0506](#)

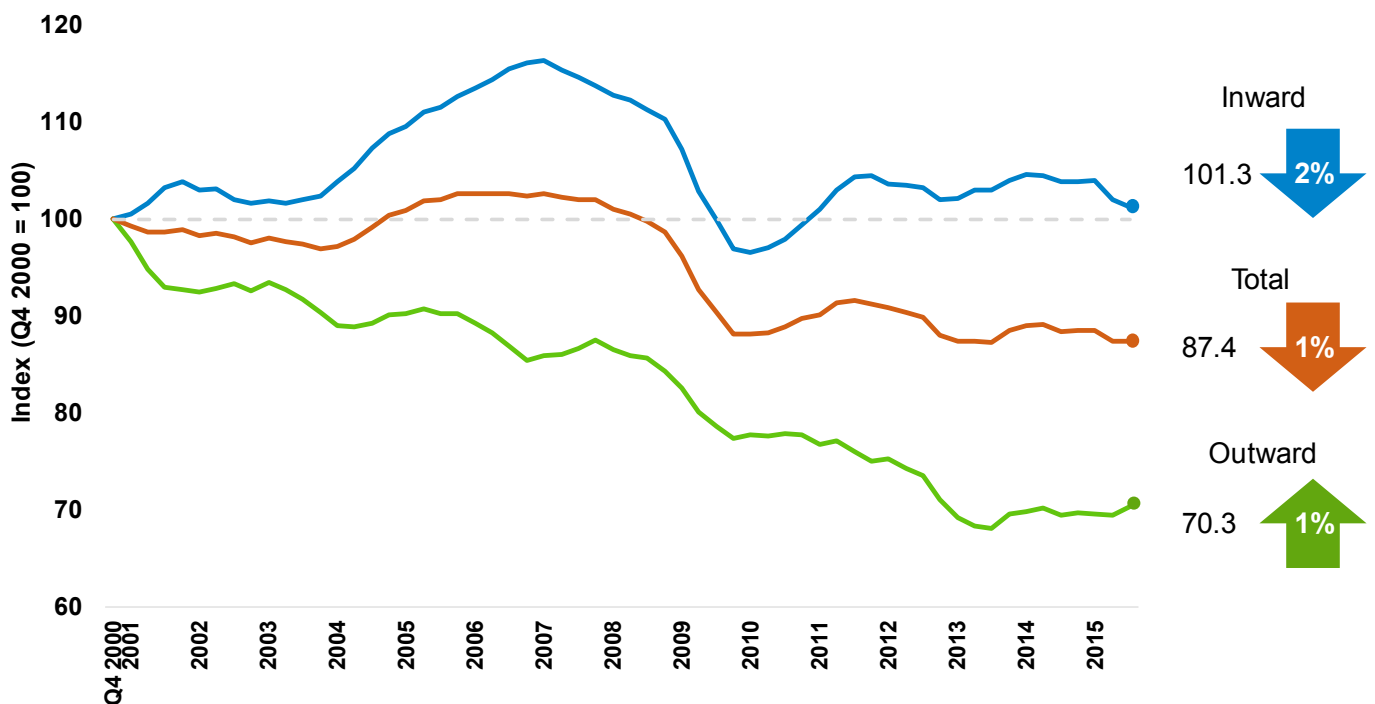
## Rolling Four-Quarter Trend (Latest 4 quarters compared to previous 4 quarters)

The total tonnage of freight traffic through UK major ports in the 4 quarters ending in the third quarter of 2015, **decreased by 1 per cent to 485.4 million tonnes**, compared with the previous four quarters.

The inward freight tonnage **decreased by 2 per cent to 310.1 million tonnes**, the lowest four quarter total since 2011.

The outward freight tonnage **increased by 1 per cent to 175.3 million tonnes** after declining in early 2015.

## Major port traffic indices, tonnage: rolling 4 quarter totals to September 2015 (4 quarters to Q4 2000 = 100)



## Major Port Freight Traffic (Units)

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

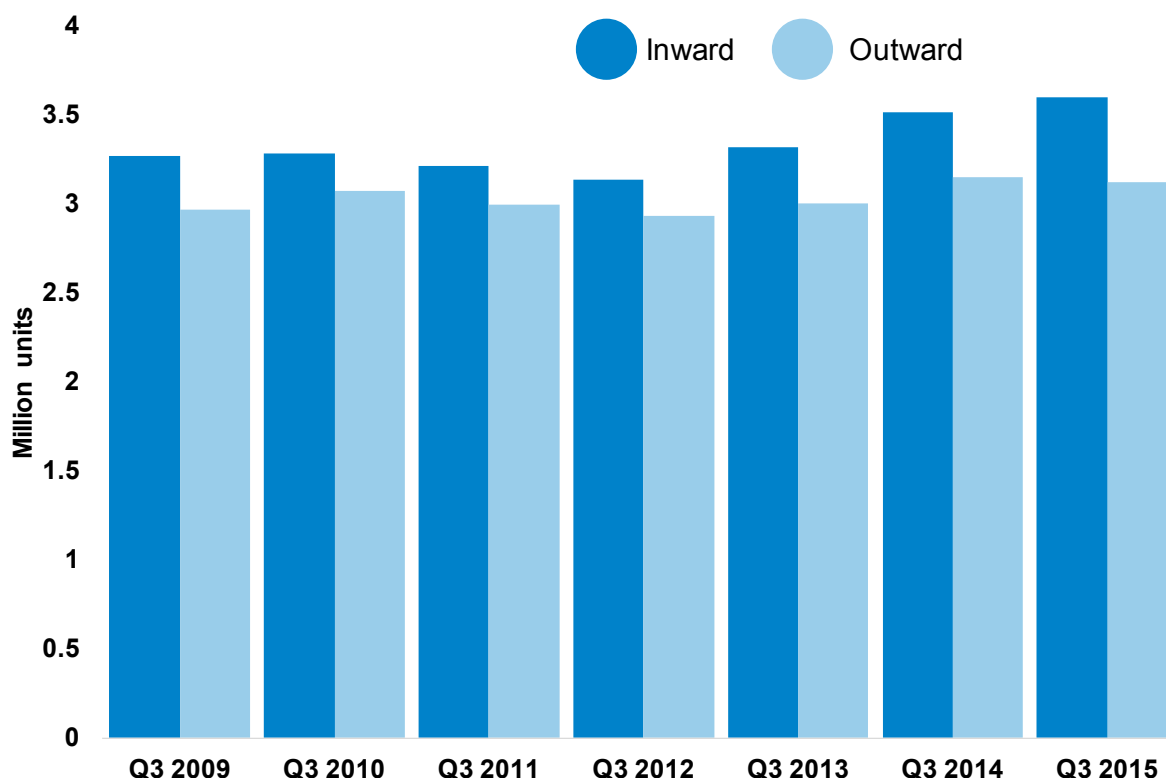
Compared with the same quarter in 2014, total unitised traffic through UK major ports **increased by 1 per cent to 6.7 million units** in quarter 3 2015. Total unitised traffic has increased, quarter on quarter, consistently since 2013.

Inward unitised traffic **increased by 2 per cent to 3.6 million units**, this follows the upward trend from 2013 but is smaller than the 8 per cent quarter on quarter increases seen in late 2013 and early 2014.

Outward unitised traffic **decreased by 1 per cent to 3.1 million units**, after increasing 5 per cent in the third quarter of 2014.

The trends in the tonnage of freight through UK major ports and the number of units continue to differ. Whilst we do not collect the level of detail required to investigate the drivers behind the quarterly data, the final annual statistical release for 2014 showed that 67 per cent of the total freight tonnage through UK major ports was accounted for by bulk freight and general cargo, which does not contribute to the total number of units, with the remainder made up of unitised freight. This suggests that trends in bulk freight and general cargo tonnage are likely to have a greater impact on total freight tonnage than trends in unitised freight. In addition, this could also explain why the increase in outward tonnage was not accompanied by an increase in outward units.

### Major port unitised traffic for quarter 3, 2009-2015



Detailed statistics on unitised traffic can be found in the statistical data sets: [PORT0502 & PORT0507-PORT0509](#)

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

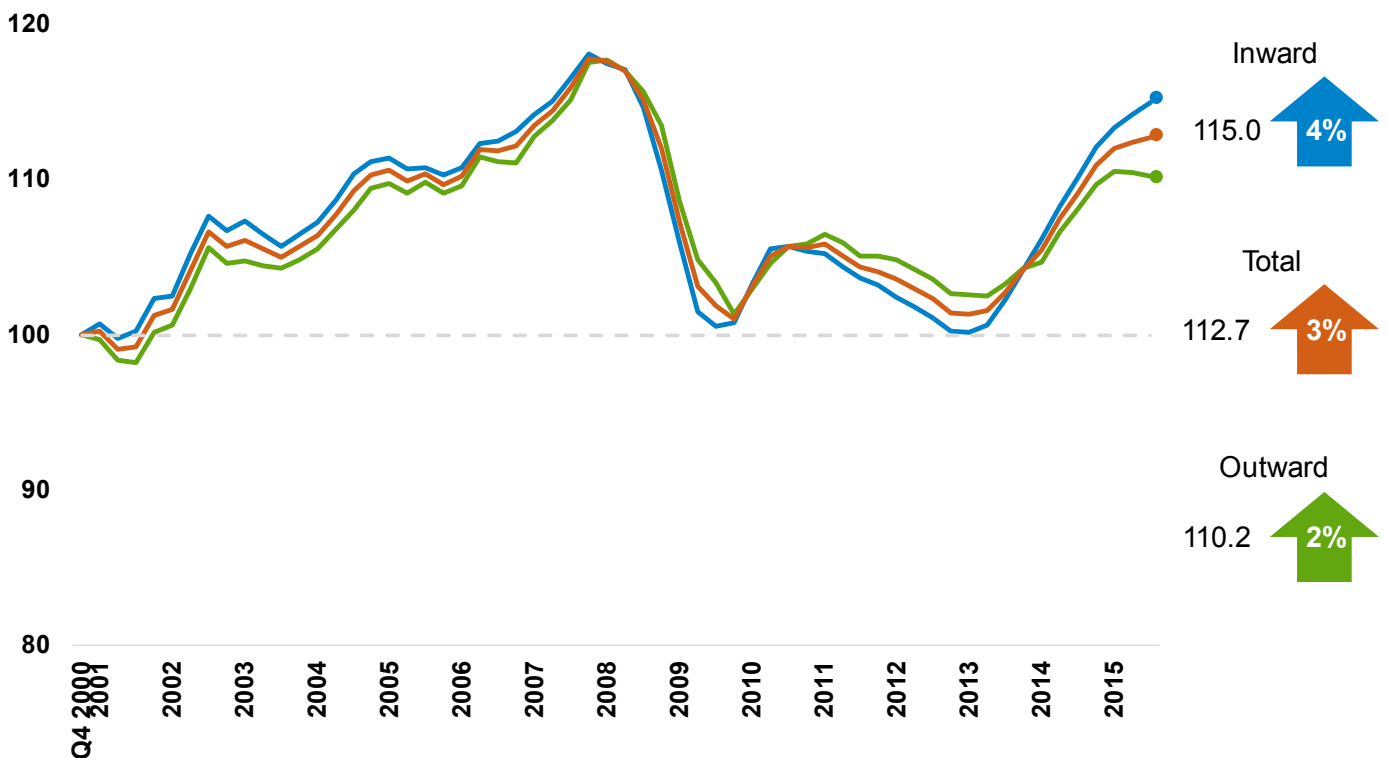
The total unitised traffic in the latest 4 quarters **increased by 3 per cent to 23.1 million units**. The rolling 4 quarter total has increased on the previous 4 quarters consistently since 2013 and is now at the highest level since 2008 and 4 per cent below the peak in the fourth quarter of 2007.

Inward unitised traffic **increased by 4 per cent to 12.3 million units** and outward unitised traffic **increased by 2 per cent to 10.8 million units**.

Since 2013 the inward and outward rolling 4 quarter totals have increased on the previous four quarters, with the largest increases in 2014. Over this period proportional increases in inward traffic have consistently been larger than in outward traffic.

Inward unitised traffic accounted for **53 per cent** of the total unitised freight traffic in the latest 4 quarters. This continues the trend of broadly similar inward and outward unitised traffic, with inward traffic slightly higher than outward.

## Major Port traffic indices, units - rolling 4 quarter totals to September 2015 (4 quarters to Q4 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 3 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 2014.
- ▶ **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 March 2016. It will contain provisional quarterly figures for the fourth quarter of 2015.
- ▶ Annual statistics on freight handled by UK sea ports are released in August. The final 2014 figures can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-statistics-2014-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>