Statistical Release 21 September 2016

Department for Transport

UK Port Freight Statistics: 2015

About this release

The importance of shipping and trade to the economy of the UK, an island nation, has resulted in the establishment of a large number of ports around the coast, which are very diverse in terms of size and type of cargo handled.

This statistical release provides information on trends and patterns in the handling of freight traffic at UK sea ports.

In this publication

Overall total freight tonnage declined by 1 per cent in 2015. Whilst tonnage fell marginally, reflecting reduced demand for coal and ores, changes in steel production, and lower dependency on food imports, unitised traffic experienced a third consecutive year of growth.

Port Freight Traffic (tonnage)

Total tonnage levels **decreased slightly by 1 per cent** compared to 2014, with **496.7 million tonnes** being handled by UK ports in 2015.

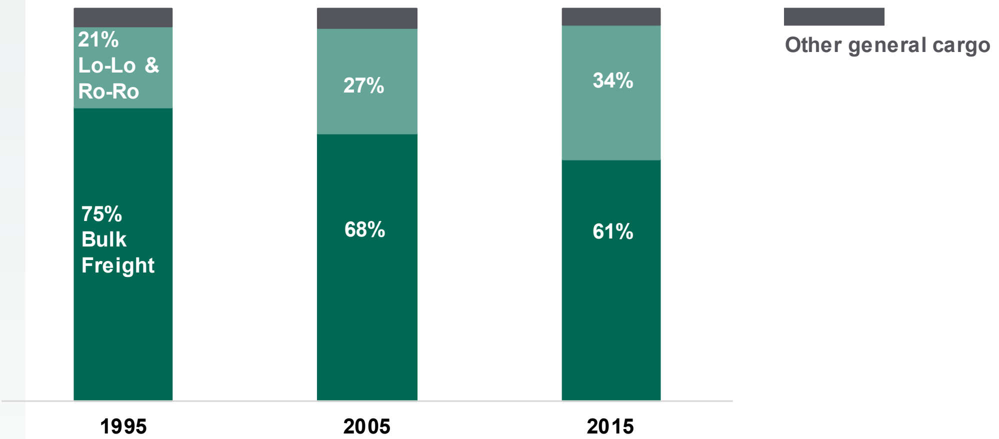
Unitised Traffic at Major Ports

Unitised traffic handled at UK major ports in 2015 **rose by 4 per cent,** with **23.6 million units** coming in and going out of UK major ports. The number of **main freight units** handled by UK major ports **rose** to **13.4 million units.**

Cargo types

The proportion of UK major port bulk freight fell to its lowest level since the mid-90s, and unitised traffic now accounts for one-third of all UK major port freight traffic.

Chart 1: UK major ports cargo tonnage proportions, 1995 - 2015



There have been **positive signs of growth in liquid bulk goods** and **increased imports of Other dry bulk goods** into UK ports. **Domestic trade** has also **increased** for the second consecutive year, with domestic traffic accounting for 107.9 million tonnes of goods (22 per cent of all traffic).

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Section 1: Port Freight Traffic

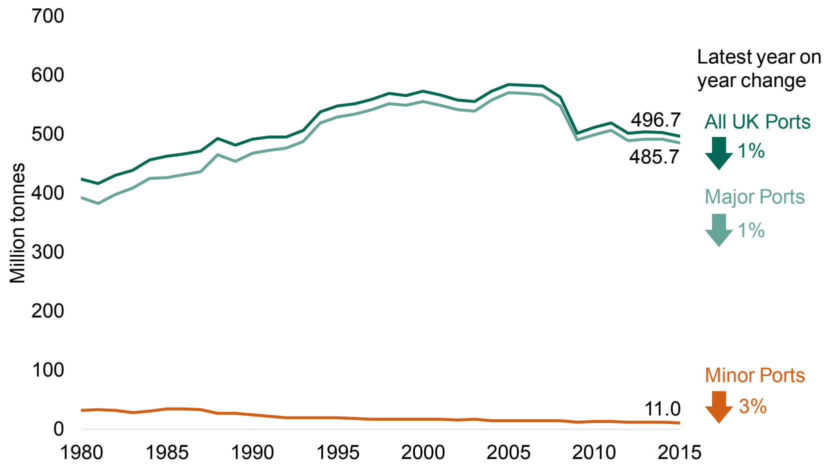
1.1 All UK Port Tonnage: Long Term Trends

Between the early 1980s and 2000 the total amount of freight tonnage increased by 35 per cent. The 2008 recession resulted in the largest year on year decline seen in the last 30 years, when port freight fell by 11 per cent between 2008 and 2009. Total tonnage levels stabilised in recent years at around half a billion tonnes. However, total freight tonnage traffic decreased by 1 per cent in 2015 to 496.7 million tonnes, this was the lowest level observed since 1992.

1.2 Major/ Minor Port Tonnage

There are 51 major ports. UK major port tonnage fell slightly, by 1 per cent in 2015 to 485.7 million tonnes. The major port share of UK port tonnage has remained stable at 98 per cent since 2005. Minor port tonnage decreased by 3 per cent compared to 2014 to 11.0 million tonnes. This was the lowest level since records began in 1965.

Chart 2: UK major and minor port traffic, 1980 – 2015



1.3 All UK Major Port Unitised Traffic

Unitised traffic handled at UK major ports in 2015 rose by 4 per cent with 23.6 million units coming in and out of UK major ports, the highest level since 2007. This was mainly due to large increases in the number of container units and import/ export motor vehicles handled at UK major ports.

1.4 Cargo Carrying Freight (Main Freight) Units

The number of main freight units handled by major ports rose for the third consecutive year, to 13.4 million units. Main freight accounted for 57 per cent of all unitised traffic. Main freight units travelling through UK major ports grew from the early 90s, increasing by 87 per cent between 1992 and 2007 to 13.3 million units. However, in 2009 traffic fell to 11.6 million units, following the global recession.

1.5 Non-Freight Units

A quarter of the units handled by UK major ports in 2015 were non-freight units in the form of passenger cars and buses (5.8 million units).

Definitions

Major/ minor ports: Major ports are those with cargo volumes of at least 1 million tonnes annually. More detailed data is collected for major ports than for the minor ports.

Unitised traffic: Unitised traffic can initially be broken down into **freight units** (those units which are used for trade) and **non-freight units** (e.g. passenger cars). Freight units can be further subdivided into **main freight** units (units which contain cargo) and **trade vehicles and other roll-on/ roll-off freight** (e.g. cars to be sold).

Statistics on freight tonnage can be found in data set, PORT0101. Statistics on unitised traffic can be found in data sets, PORT0203, PORT0204 and PORT0205.

Section 2: Direction of Freight Traffic

2.1 Inwards/ Outwards Tonnage

Inwards traffic for all UK ports decreased to 314.2 million tonnes, accounting for 63 per cent of all traffic in 2015. Inwards traffic through major ports amounted to 306.9 million tonnes, 63 per cent of overall major port traffic. Inwards traffic through minor ports decreased by 2 per cent to 7.2 million tonnes.

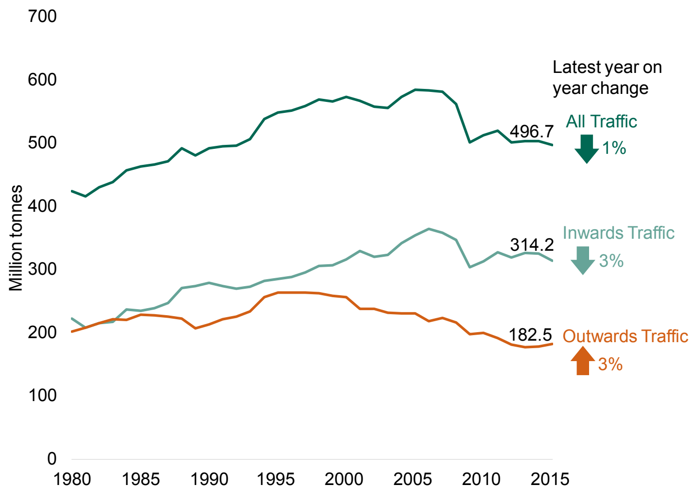
Definitions

Inwards/ Outwards: Inwards and outwards includes both domestic and international traffic.

Imports/ exports: International traffic only.

The amount of outwards freight traffic grew by 23 per cent between 1990 and 1996, then remained steady until 1998. However, outwards traffic declined steadily from 1998, resting at the lowest level in the last 30 years in 2013 (177.4 million tonnes). It has since increased by 3 per cent, to 182.5 million tonnes in 2015. Outwards traffic through major ports totalled 178.8 million tonnes, whilst outwards traffic from minor ports decreased by 5 per cent to 3.7 million tonnes.

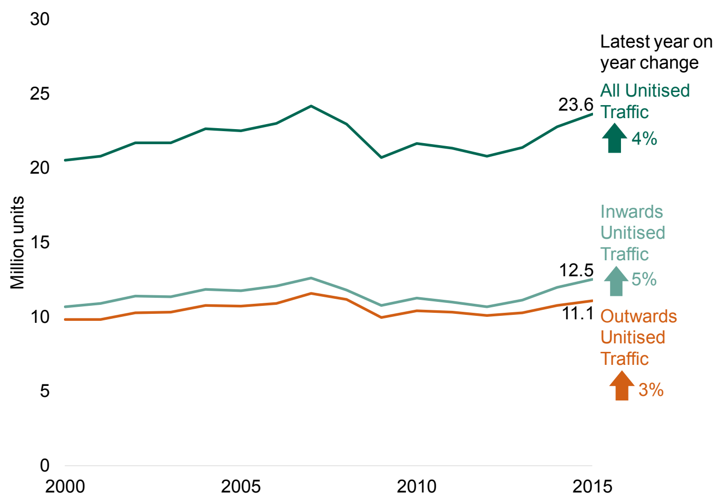
Chart 3: UK port traffic by direction, 1980 – 2015



2.2 Inwards/ Outwards Unitised Traffic

Inwards and outwards UK major port unitised traffic increased in 2000-2007 when it peaked with inwards unitised traffic at 12.6 million units and outwards unitised traffic at 11.6 million units. There was then a decline in 2008 and 2009 following the recession, although levels have been gradually increasing since then. In 2015, 12.5 million units came in to UK major ports: a 5 per cent increase compared to 2014. Also, 11.1 million units went out of UK major ports: a 3 per cent increase compared to 2014.

Chart 4: UK major port unitised traffic by direction, 1980 – 2015



Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) can be found in the statistical data sets, PORT0101 and statistics on unitised traffic in PORT0203.

2.3 Cargo Units Load Shares

In 2015, 95 per cent of cargo-carrying roll-on/ roll-off (Ro-Ro) main freight units travelling in to UK major ports were loaded (3.6 million units), compared to 75 per cent of those travelling out of the UK (2.9 million units). Overall, 85 per cent of Ro-Ro main freight units were loaded (6.5 million units).

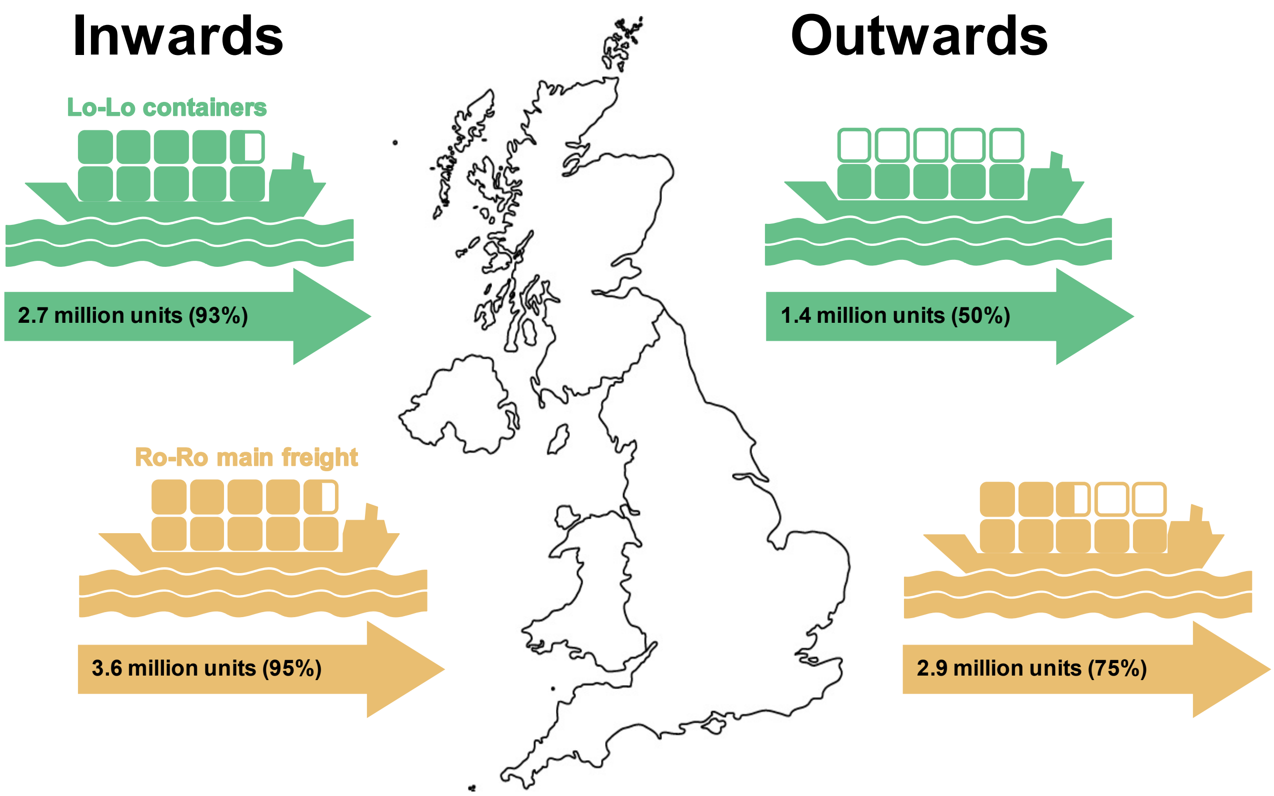
Definitions

TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units) is a standardised measure to allow for the different sizes of container boxes.

Size	TEU
20ft	1
40ft	2
>20ft & <40ft	1.5
>40ft	2.25

There have been increases in the number of loaded and empty lift-on/ lift-off (Lo-Lo) container units in 2015 (both up 3 per cent). However, the proportion of loaded and empty container units of total container units have remained the same as in the previous year at 72 per cent (4.1 million units) and 28 per cent respectively. Nine out of every 10 of container units (93 per cent) coming in to UK major ports were loaded compared to 50 per cent of those leaving.

Figure 5: Percentage of loaded Lo-Lo units and Ro-Ro main freight by direction, 2015



We continuously review the content of these statistics to ensure that they provide the most useful information whilst minimising burdens on data providers. We would be interested in knowing whether any of our users specifically use the analysis of 'main freight' units within this release. We propose ceasing use of this terminology, instead focusing simply on freight units and non-freight units (i.e. buses and passenger vehicles). However, we would also continue to provide headline and detailed reporting of subsections of unitised freight traffic. Please contact us if you have any views on this. We would welcome any feedback on these statistics by email to maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

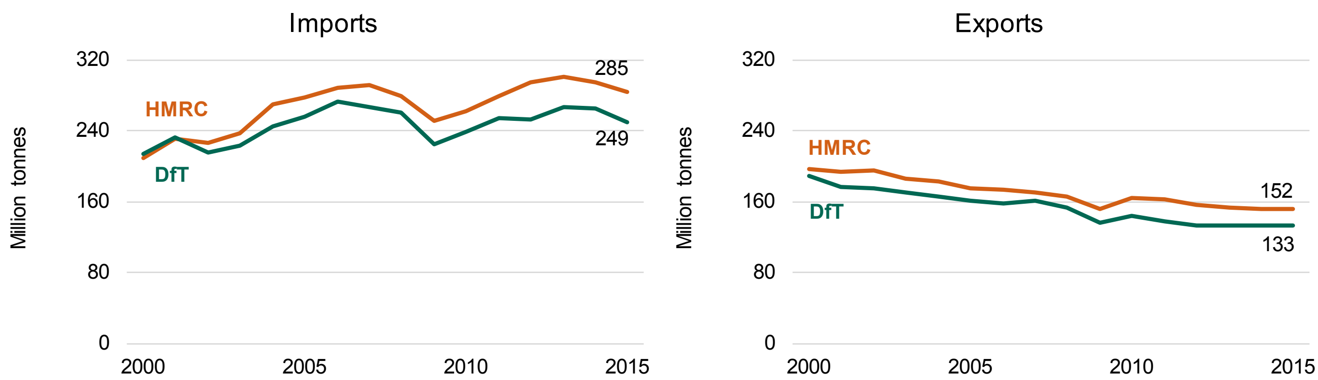
Detailed statistics on unitised traffic can be found in the statistical data set, PORT0206.

Section 3: Comparison to Other National Statistics

Port freight statistics can be compared with Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) data for international major port traffic, as HMRC also collects data on port freight traffic through customs systems. HMRC statistics record the movement of goods for trade purposes between the UK and both EU and non-EU countries. Detailed documentation of this system is available on the UK trade info website[1].

In 2015, HMRC statistics reported 437 million tonnes of international port freight traffic to or from major UK ports, compared to 382 million tonnes reported in DfT port freight statistics. Almost two thirds of the difference between the two data sources was for imports, where the two data sources have diverged in recent years.

Chart 6: UK major port international imports and exports from HMRC and DfT, 2000 - 2015



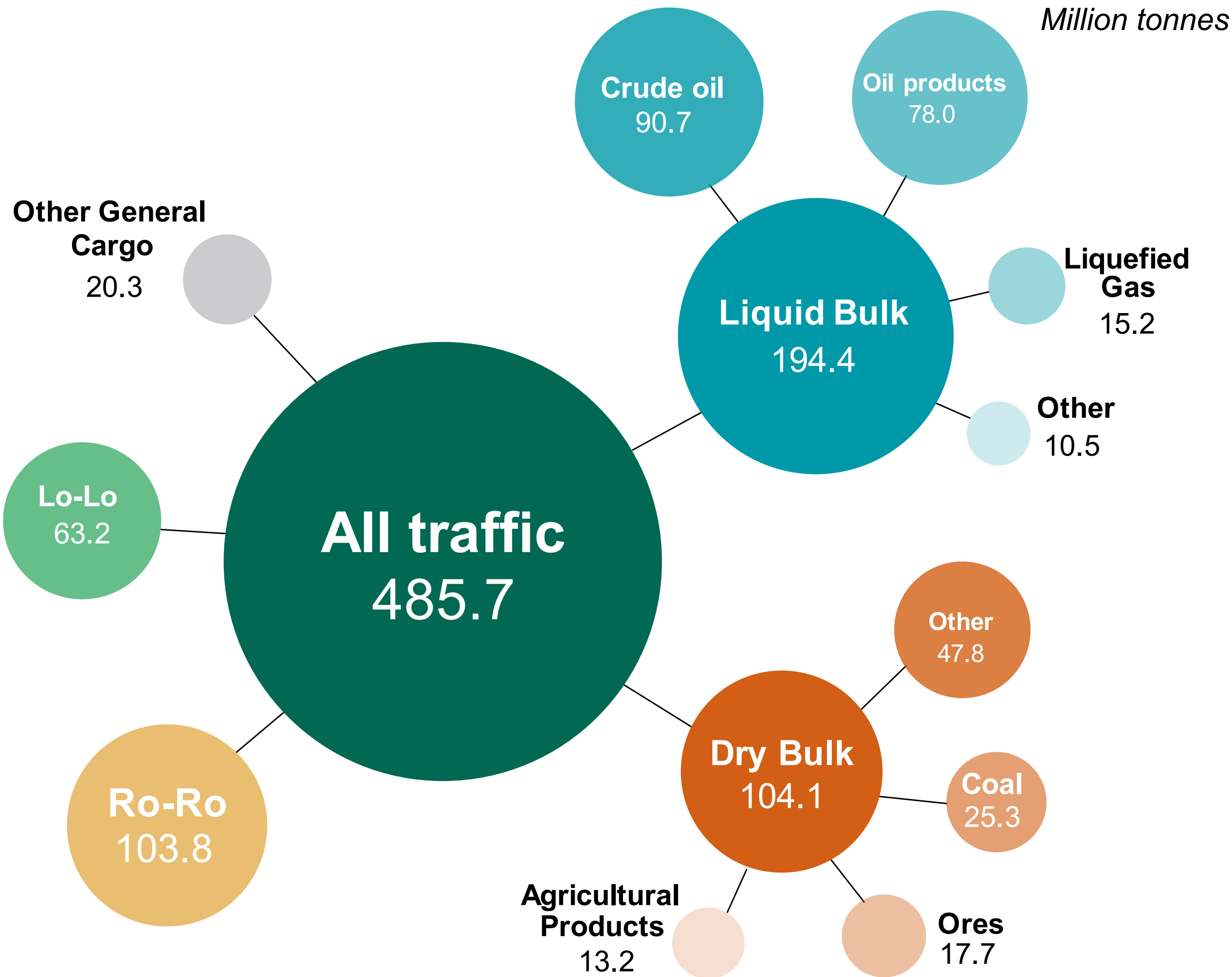
The two data sources follow a similar trend in recent years, however, HMRC statistics tend to be higher than those from the DfT port freight statistics.

It is possible to look at the HMRC data in more detail, at cargo category level, for example those produced in the Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics (DUKES) by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). DUKES is produced using HMRC data plus some data from surveys of energy companies and suppliers. For more detailed discussion on this please see the technical note[2].

Section 4: Major Port Freight Traffic by Cargo Type and Direction

A breakdown of cargo, including detailed information on the routes taken, is available for major ports only. The volume of UK major port bulk freight (liquid and dry bulk cargo categories) fell to its lowest level since 1994 when this time series began, with 298.4 million tonnes being handled in 2015. This is a 4 per cent decrease compared to the previous year. Unitised traffic (Lo-Lo and Ro-Ro cargo categories) now accounts for one-third of all UK major port freight traffic.

Chart 7: UK major port traffic by cargo type, 2015



4.1 Liquid Bulk

Liquid bulk was the largest of the main cargo types with 194.4 million tonnes being handled at UK major ports, accounting for 40 per cent of all major port traffic. Crude oil was the largest contributing subgroup. Liquid bulk tonnage has steadily declined in 2001-2014, due to large decreases in crude oil imports and exports, however, in 2015 liquid bulk tonnage increased by 3 per cent.

Definitions

Cargo Category: 5 main categories- liquid bulk, dry bulk, ro-ro traffic, lo-lo traffic and other general cargo.

Cargo is allocated a category in respect to how it is carried on the ship. The main categories are then are spilt into smaller subgroups of what the cargo particularly is eg crude oil.

Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) can be found in the statistical data set PORT0104.

Chart 8: UK major port liquefied gas tonnage by direction, 2000 - 2015

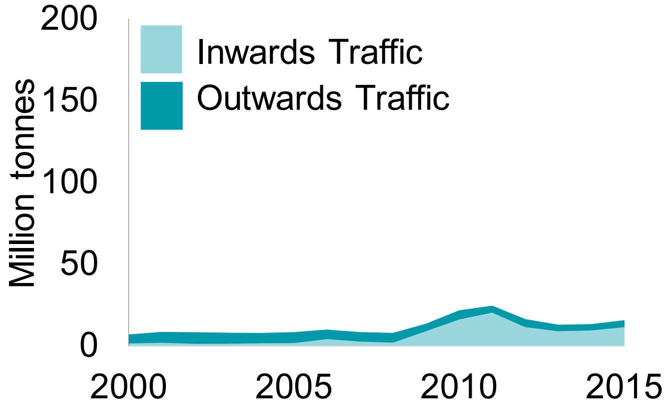


Chart 11: UK major port ores tonnage by direction, 2000 - 2015

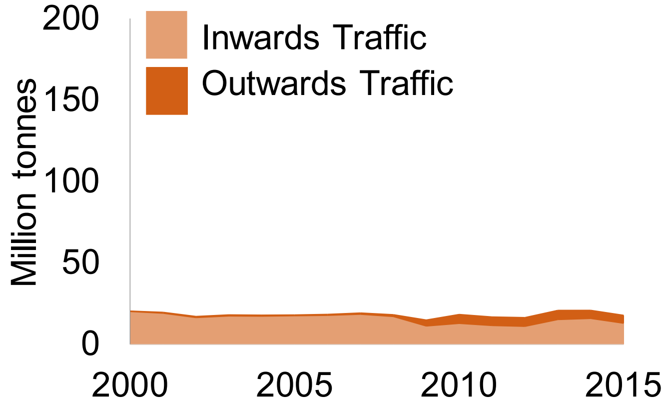


Chart 9: UK major port crude oil tonnage by direction, 2000 - 2015

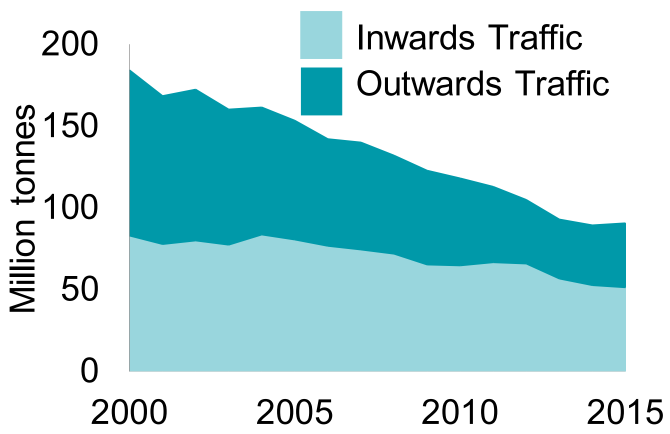


Chart 12: UK major port coal tonnage by direction, 2000 - 2015

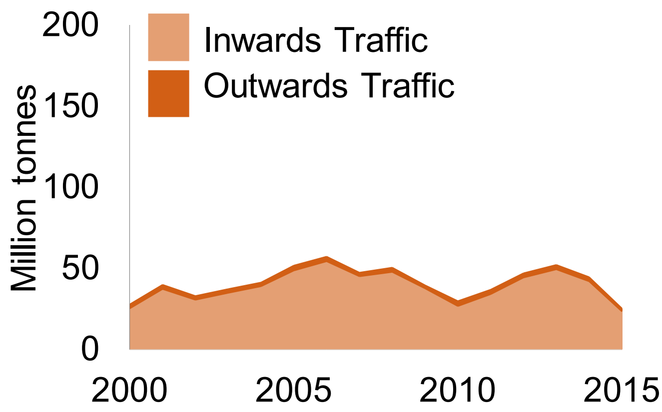


Chart 10: UK major port oil products tonnage by direction, 2000 - 2015

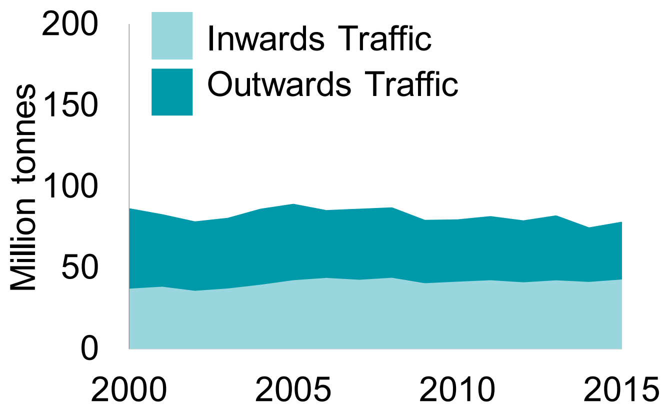
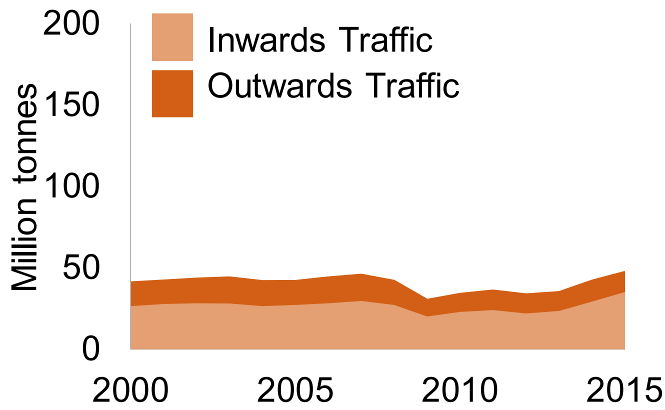


Chart 13: UK major port other dry bulk tonnage by direction, 2000 - 2015



Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) can be found in the statistical data sets PORT0104.

Liquefied Gas (Chart 8)

Liquefied gas handled by UK major ports increased by 19 per cent to 15.2 million tonnes in 2015. Liquefied gas arriving in to UK major ports increased by 21 per cent in 2015 to 11.8 million tonnes. Liquefied gas leaving UK major ports has steadily declined since 2003 with 3.1 million tonnes being handled in 2014: the lowest level in the last decade. However, in 2015, this amount increased by 12 per cent to 3.4 million tonnes. Milford Haven handled the largest absolute increase in the amount of liquefied gas arriving at the port of 1.7 million tonnes to 9.5 million tonnes in 2015. This is likely to be as a result of the former closed refinery at Milford Haven port being purchased by Puma Energy in March 2015 and having reopened as an oil storage facility.

Crude Oil (Chart 9)

The volume of crude oil passing through UK ports has halved since 2000, from 184.3 million tonnes to 90.7 million tonnes in 2015. However, in 2015 crude oil trade increased slightly, by 1 per cent compared to 2014: the first increase since 2004. Inwards crude oil traffic has fallen for the fourth year in a row to 51.3 million tonnes in 2015. Transportation of crude oil out of UK major ports declined by 46 per cent over the last decade. However, in 2015, outwards crude oil traffic increased by 7 per cent to 39.4 million tonnes. The largest increase in crude oil leaving a port was at Orkney, where there was a four-fold increase constituting an additional 2.8 million tonnes. This may be the result of a new North Sea deal at the Flotta oil terminal, under which extraction commenced in October 2014. Oil and gas firm Talisman Energy provide transportation and processing services to this development.

Oil Products (Chart 10)

Oil product tonnage increased by 5 per cent to 78.0 million tonnes in 2015, with increases in both inwards and outwards traffic. In 2015, 43.2 million tonnes of oil products arrived into UK major ports and 34.8 million tonnes left, similar amounts have been seen throughout the last decade. The port of Forth reported a large increase in the amount of oil products handled in both directions, with a total increase of 1.2 million tonnes to 5.7 million tonnes in 2015 (22 per cent). Forth Ports have recently made investments to help the city to capitalise on anticipated orders from renewables and decommissioning markets in the North East of the UK and across Britain.

4.2 Dry Bulk

Dry bulk was the second largest cargo category with 104.1 million tonnes being handled at UK ports, making up 21 per cent of all traffic. This category includes other dry bulk which accounts for the largest proportion at 46 per cent of dry bulk traffic, followed by coal at 24 per cent.
Dry bulk decreased by 15 per cent in 2015 compared to 2014. This was largely due to the increase in Other dry bulk, which countered decreases in coal.

Ores (Chart 11)

The amount of ores handled at UK major ports has decreased by 15 per cent in 2015 to 17.7 million tonnes, with decreases in both directions compared with the previous year. The largest decreases in the amount of ores handled were at Tees & Hartlepool and Port Talbot ports. This may be a result of a decline in world steel prices and the closure of Sahaviriya Steel Industries (SSI) Redcar Steelworks located near to Teesport in October 2015.

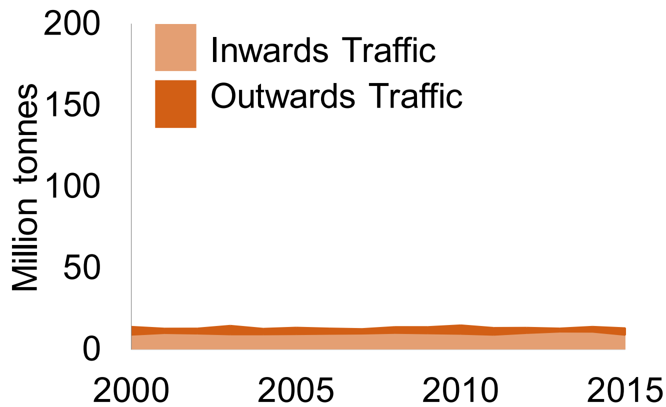
Coal and Other Dry Bulk (Charts 12 and 13)

In 2015, there was a 43 per cent decrease in the amount of coal handled at UK major ports to 25.3 million tonnes, continuing the decrease in the previous year. Far more coal entered UK major ports than left them – 92 per cent (23.4 million tonnes) of the coal handled arrived in to UK major ports. The amount of coal handled by UK major ports decreased in both directions. Conversely, Other dry bulk increased by 13 per cent to 47.8 million tonnes, the highest since records began. Inwards movements of Other dry bulk increased by 20 per cent compared to the previous year. Other dry bulk goods include biomass fuels, typically in the form of wood pellets or woodchips. Decisions at major 'coal fuelled' power stations in the North of England, including Drax and Lynemouth, to switch from burning coal to biomass, may be contributing to trends in these categories. Grimsby & Immingham and Tyne ports handle biomass destined for these power stations and have confirmed that coal imports are being replaced by biomass imports in relation to power station fuel supplies. Clyde port have also reported a large decrease in the amount of coal leaving and entering the port, which is likely to be the result of the lead up to the closure of Longannet coal-fired power station and the significant downsizing of coal generated power stations in the UK.

Agricultural Products (Chart 14)

Agricultural product traffic decreased in 2015 by 6 per cent compared with the previous year to 13.2 million tonnes. Inwards traffic fell by 18 per cent to 8.8 million tonnes, however, outwards traffic increased by 30 per cent to 4.4 million tonnes in 2015. This is supported by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) statistics on 'Agriculture in the UK in 2015' statistical report[3]. This report identified that a large wheat harvest and a continuing move back to the domestic milling of wheat by flour millers which reduced wheat imports by 10 per cent compared to 2014 (to just under 1.7 million tonnes). Exports of wheat were 74 per cent higher (2 million tonnes) in 2015, compared to 2014 and the highest level since 2011.

Chart 14: UK major port agricultural products tonnage by direction, 2000 - 2015



Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) can be found in the statistical data sets PORT0104, PORT0407, PORT0414, PORT0419, PORT0432, PORT0435, PORT0439, PORT0450 and PORT0451.

4.3 Other Cargo Category Trends (Tonnage)

Other general cargo, which includes forestry products, iron and steel products and all other cargo decreased slightly by 4 per cent compared to 2014. In 2015, there were 20.3 million tonnes of other general cargo handled.

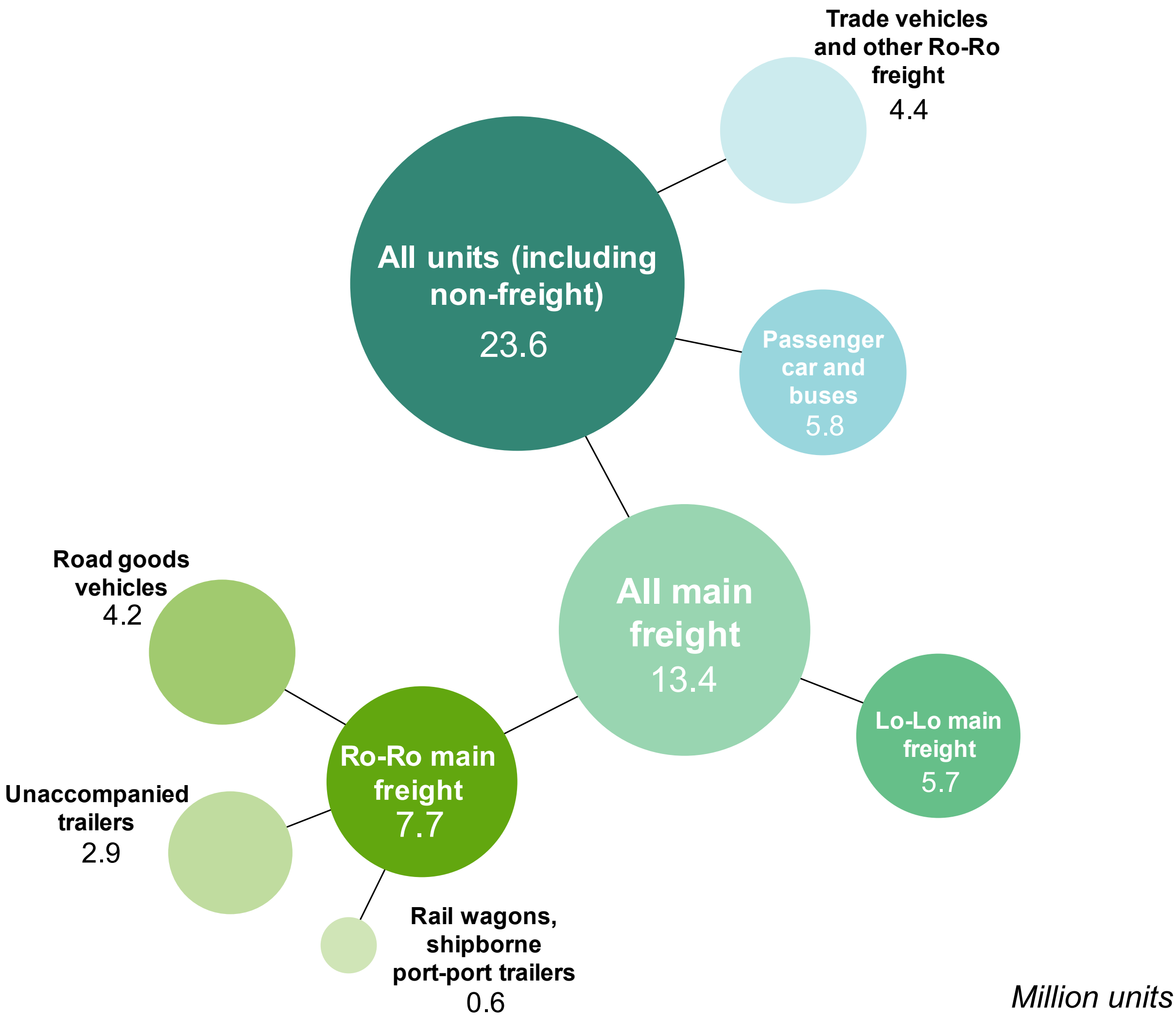
Lo-Lo units increased by 3 per cent to 63.2 million tonnes and Ro-Ro also increased, by 4 per cent to 103.8 million tonnes in 2015 compared to the previous year.

Bulk fuels (crude oil, oil products, liquefied gas and coal) fell for the fourth year, by 5 per cent to 209.2 million tonnes in 2015. The amount of coal (dry bulk) handled in 2015 decreased by 43 per cent which has countered increases in crude oil, oil products and liquefied gas in 2015.

Definitions

Unitised traffic is traffic that is **lifted (Lo-Lo)** or **rolled (Ro-Ro)** onto a ship inside a container or vehicle from which it is not unpacked. It is measured in terms of the number of units, as well as the weight of the goods they contain. This includes containers and all Ro-Ro (trade, passenger, import/export motor vehicles). These figures include both loaded and empty units.

Chart 15: Breakdown of UK major port's unitised traffic by cargo category, 2015



Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) can be found in the statistical data sets PORT0104 and unitised traffic in PORT0204.

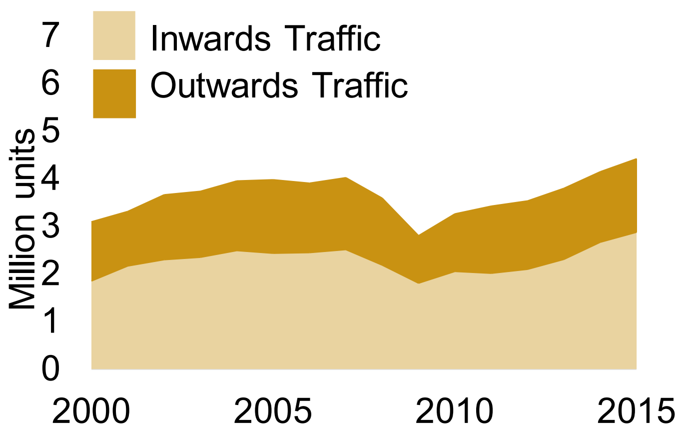
4.4 Trade Vehicles (Units)

In 2015, 4.4 million trade vehicles were handled by at UK ports. This was 7 per cent higher than in the previous year and 58 per cent higher than the 2.8 million units moved in 2009 following the global recession.

The volume of trade vehicles arriving at UK major ports increased by 8 per cent to 2.9 million units, whilst those leaving UK major ports also increased by 4 per cent to 1.5 million units.

The UK has benefitted from investments by many of the world's major vehicle manufacturers in recent years. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders reported 2015 as the best year in a decade for British car manufacturing, and noted that exports had reached a record high.

Chart 16: UK major port trade vehicles units by direction, 2000 - 2015



The Office for National Statistics[5] also reported that motor vehicle trade had increased throughout 2015, and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs statistics[6] stated that trade in road vehicles in England in the year ending December 2015 was up £4.7 million (11 per cent).

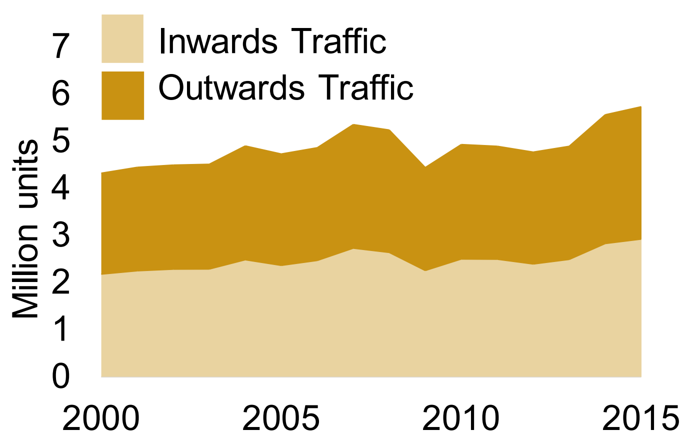
The largest increase in the number of trade vehicles was at Bristol port with an increase of 32 per cent to 0.6 million units in 2015.

4.5 Container Units

The number of container units handled by UK major ports has grown at an average annual growth rate of 3 per cent since 1990 and reached a record high of 5.7 million units in 2015. Lloyds List Intelligence[4] also reported an increase in the UK's container fleet in 2015.

Container units at the port of London increased by 11 per cent in 2015: possibly due to the opening of London Gateway in 2014. Units at Grimsby & Immingham also increased by 25 per cent following systems investments which have reduced turnaround times at the port.

Chart 17: UK major port container units by direction, 2000 - 2015



Detailed statistics on freight traffic (unitised) can be found in the statistical data sets PORT0209, PORT0211, PORT0404, PORT0419 and PORT0428.

Section 5: Busiest Port Traffic by Cargo Type

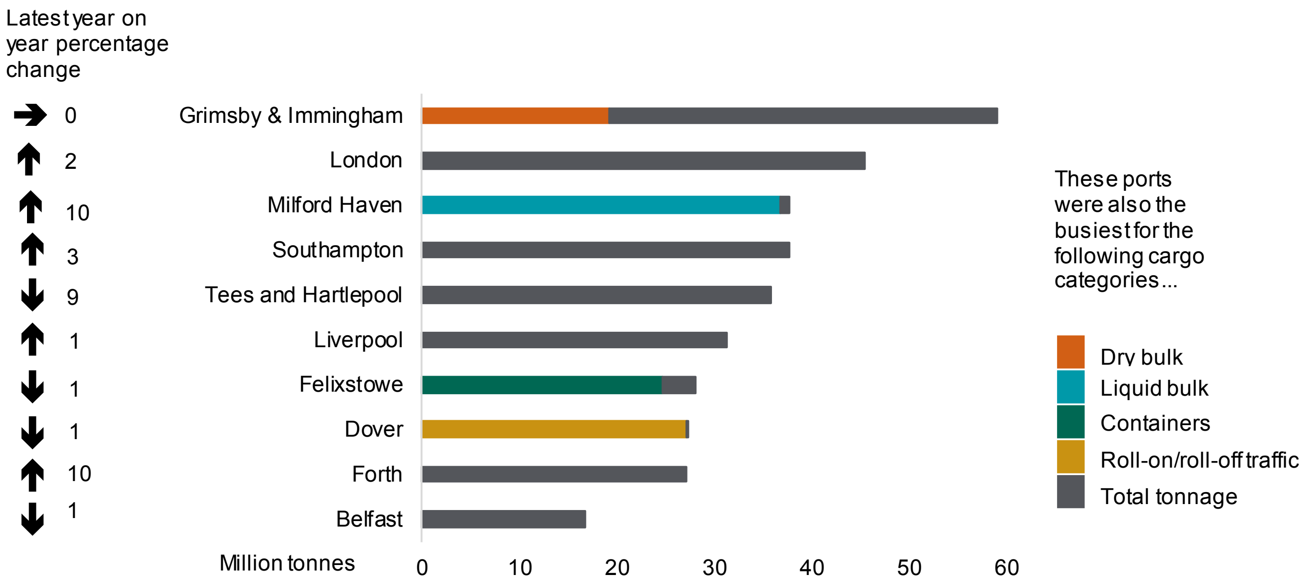
5.1 Busiest Ports by Tonnage and Cargo Type

Grimsby & Immingham remained the UK's busiest port in terms of tonnage handling 12 per cent of the UK market in 2015 with 59.1 million tonnes of goods. Grimsby & Immingham overtook London as the busiest port in 2000. It also accounted for the largest share of the UK's dry bulk traffic at 18 per cent (19.1 million tonnes). However, dry bulk tonnage at this port has decreased by 10 per cent compared to the previous year.

Of the top ten UK ports, Forth had the largest percentage increase in tonnage which was mostly due to the amount of crude oil being imported and exported. Milford Haven was the second largest growing port, driven largely by oil product trade. Milford Haven also remained the UK's busiest port in terms of liquid bulk, handling 19 per cent (36.7 million tonnes) of liquid bulk in 2015. Of the top ten busiest ports, Tees & Hartlepool experienced the largest decrease in tonnage. This was predominantly due to the decrease in the amount of coal handled at the port resulting from biomass conversion at the Lynemouth power plant based at Teesport.

Many of the UK major ports are specialised in the cargo categories they handle, as seen with Milford Haven, Felixstowe and Dover (Chart 18).

Chart 18: Top 10 busiest ports (tonnage) and by cargo type, 2015



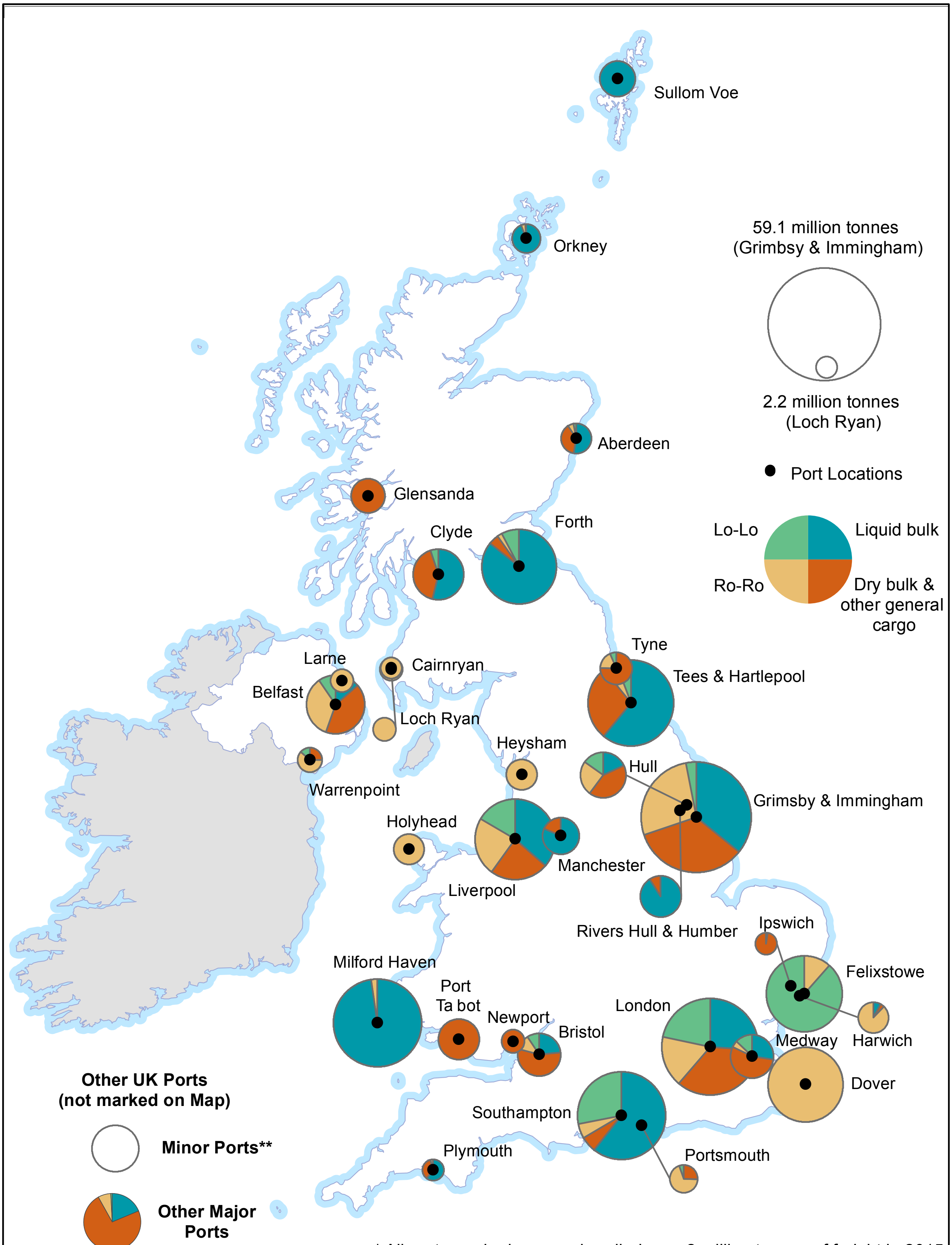
5.2 Major Port Unitised Traffic by Main Goods Type

Felixstowe port handled the most unitised main freight traffic in 2015 (2.6 million units), of which 91 per cent was Lo-Lo traffic. Felixstowe also handled the most Lo-Lo traffic compared to other UK major ports, with 2 out of every 5 Lo-Lo units being handled by Felixstowe.

Dover handled the largest amount of UK Ro-Ro main freight, with 2.6 million units being handled in 2015: 34 per cent of all main freight Ro-Ro traffic.

Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) and unitised traffic can be found in the statistical data sets PORT101, PORT0206, PORT0419 and PORT0432.

Chart 19: UK major ports by cargo category*, 2015



* All ports marked on map handled over 2 million tonnes of freight in 2015.

**Information on tonnage by cargo is not available for minor ports.

6.1 Domestic Traffic (Tonnage)

Domestic traffic within all UK ports increased for the second consecutive year in 2015, by 9 per cent to 107.9 million tonnes. Domestic traffic accounted for 22 per cent of all traffic.

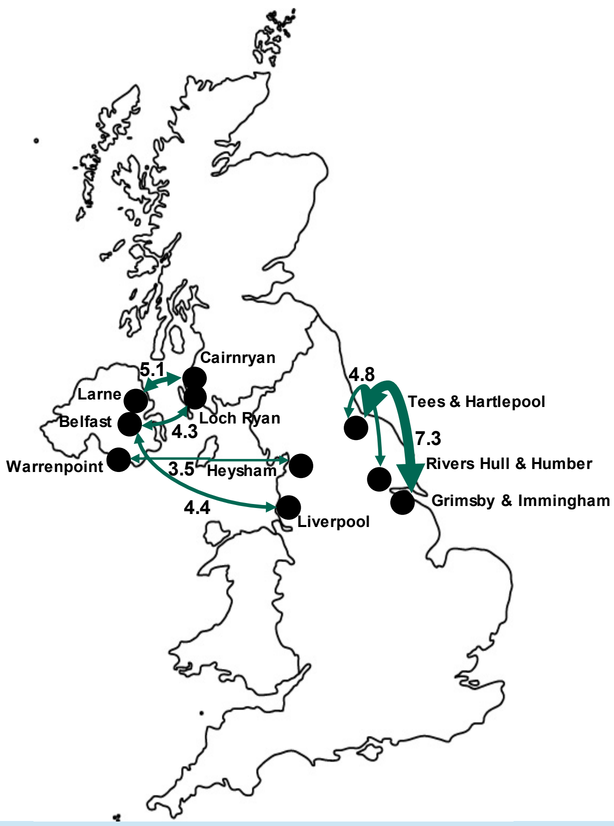
Domestic traffic is largely coastwise, accounting for 83 per cent of all domestic traffic. In 2015, there were 89.3 million tonnes of traffic transported coastwise between UK major ports. This was an 11 per cent increase compared to 2014.

One-port tonnage also increased by 5 per cent to 18.6 million tonnes.

UK major ports transported 103.6 million tonnes of domestic freight. The largest proportion of domestic major port traffic was transported by vessels with a Bahamas flag (27 per cent: 27.5 million tonnes). UK flagged vessels accounted for the second largest share of major port domestic traffic movements with 22.8 million tonnes of cargo. Other foreign registered vessels moved the remaining 51 per cent of domestic freight.

UK parent owned vessels carried the largest share of domestic port freight (14 per cent: 14.6 million tonnes). Collectively, the remaining 86 per cent of domestic port freight was moved by foreign-owned vessels.

Chart 20: Top UK domestic routes (million tonnes), 2015



Definitions

Domestic: Made up of coastwise and one-port traffic (see below).

Coastwise: Traffic travelling within UK waters between ports in the United Kingdom.

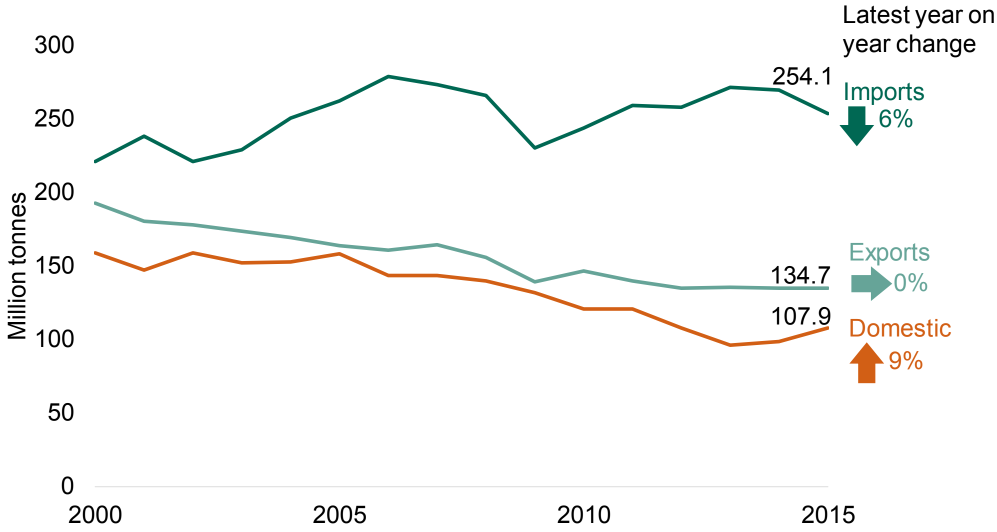
One-port: Sand and gravel etc dredged from sea bed and landed at a port for commercial purposes; and traffic to and from UK offshore locations eg oil & gas installations and wind farms.

Flag: Country of registration for which the UK vessel operates. Vessels may appear in more than one registry (parallel registry) although only one may be active at any one time.

UK parent owned: The nationality of the company having the controlling interest in the direct owner is United Kingdom.

Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) can be found in the statistical data sets, PORT0102, PORT0111 and unitised traffic in PORT0112.

Chart 21: All UK ports imports, exports and domestic traffic: 2000 – 2015



Definitions

International freight routes are split into three main categories:

EU: all members of the European union.

Non-EU short sea: includes European countries not in the EU, Mediterranean and North African countries such as Egypt.

Non-EU deep sea: includes all other routes.

6.2 International Traffic (Tonnage)

In 2015, just under 4 out of every 5 tonnes of freight handled by UK ports was imported from or exported to international ports. This was 12 per cent lower than the 2006 peak of 439.5 million tonnes.

Since 1987, the UK has imported more freight by sea than it has exported. In 2015, just under two thirds of international traffic were UK imports with 254.1 million tonnes, this was a 6 per cent decrease compared to the previous year. The remaining 134.7 million tonnes were exported.

6.3 International Traffic by Destination/ Route (Tonnage)

The Netherlands are the UK's largest trading partner in the world. In 2015, 56.4 million tonnes of freight passed to and from the Netherlands, accounting for 15 per cent of all international traffic. This may be in part due to cargo initially travelling to the Netherlands from worldwide ports of origin and being reloaded before continuing on to the UK (known as transhipment). France was the UK's largest trading partner until 2005 when it was exceeded by the Netherlands.

Liquid bulk and dry bulk accounted for over a half of international traffic moving in and out of UK major ports (38 per cent and 20 per cent of total international traffic, respectively). Imports of liquid bulk from Norway amounted to 22.0 million tonnes in 2015 (25 per cent of all liquid bulk imports), making it the largest cargo specific trading route; as it has been throughout the last decade.

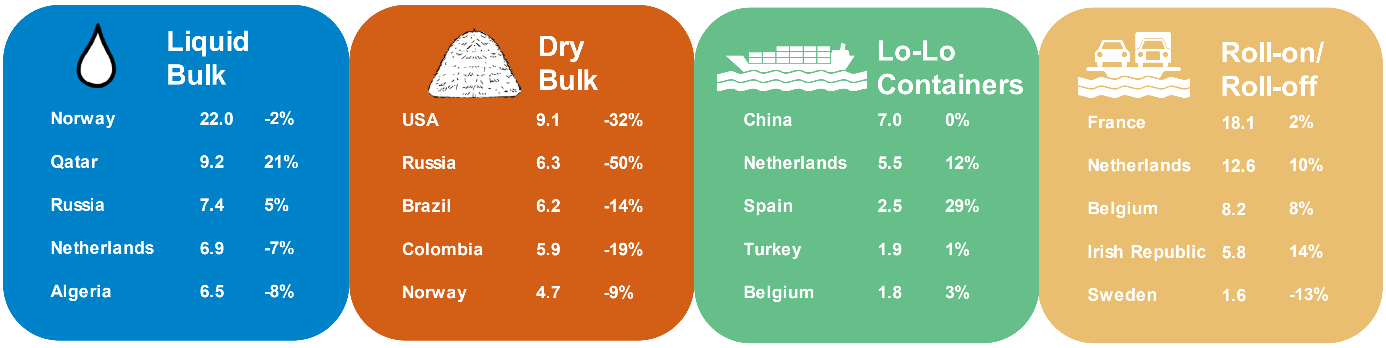
Deep sea traffic accounted for 113.5 million tonnes of goods: 30 per cent of international major port tonnage. Of the deep sea countries, the route between the UK and the USA was the busiest, primarily due to 9.1 million tonnes of dry bulk being imported into the UK from the USA in 2015.

The Netherlands was the largest exporting trade route with 27.8 million tonnes of exports in 2015 (this includes 28 per cent of all liquid bulk exports and 15 per cent of all dry bulk exports).

Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) can be found in the statistical data sets, PORT0102 and PORT0110.

Figure 22: Top 5 busiest international traffic for cargo coming in to UK major ports, 2015

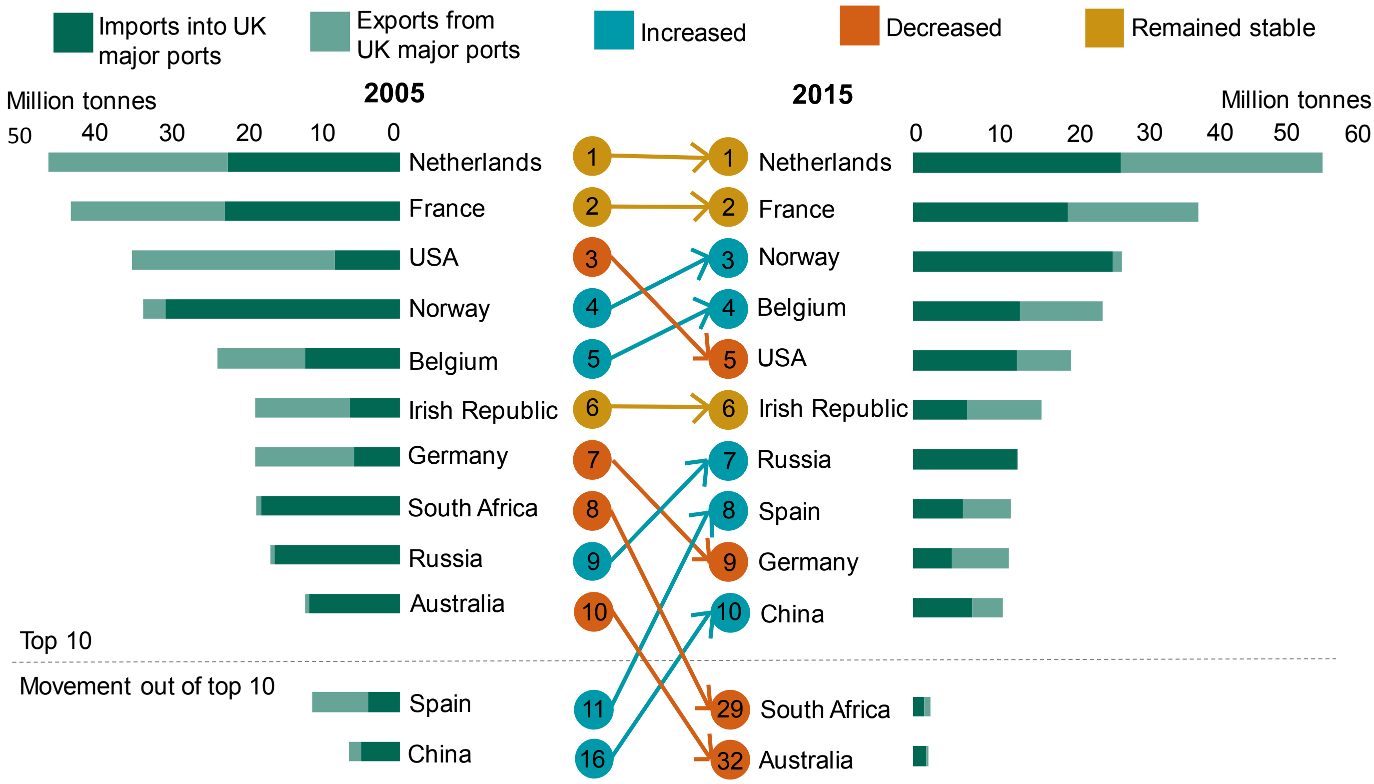
Million tonnes/percentage change compared to previous year



The majority of high volume international cargo movements were inwards, however, a few nearby European countries received relatively large volumes of exports, including the Netherlands, Belgium, France, the Republic of Ireland, Sweden and also China.

Over the last decade, the Netherlands and France remained the top two trading routes, with the UK. Trade between the UK and USA, Germany, South Africa and Australia decreased in 2015: 2005. The decrease in trade with Australia and South Africa was due to a large reduction in ores and coal trade. The fall in trade with Germany and the USA was the result of a decrease in the amount of crude oil and oil product imports and exports. In 2015, UK trade with Norway, Belgium, Russia, Spain and China had increased compared to 2005.

Chart 23: Top 10 country trade routes with the UK, 2005 and 2015

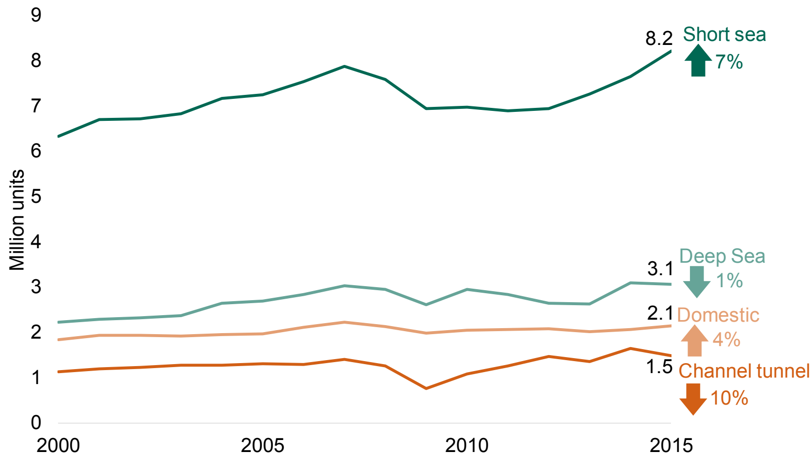


Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) can be found in the statistical data set PORT0110.

6.4 Trade Routes (Units)

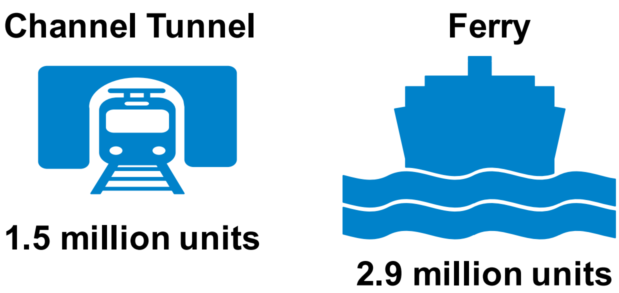
Main freight units travelling between UK ports and international ports (deep sea and short sea) increased for the third year in a row to 11.3 million units in 2015 - the highest level since records began in 1980. The number of domestic main freight units through UK ports increased by 4 per cent with 2.1 million units being handled (16 per cent of the total main freight traffic).

Chart 24: All UK ports, main freight units, 2000 – 2015



Some 1.5 million main freight units travelled through the Channel Tunnel in 2015, a decrease of 10 per cent since the previous year. However, the number of units moved by sea was still nearly twice the size. A further 1.4 million units travelled to France from the UK by sea than by the Channel Tunnel.

Figure 25: Main freight units travelling through the Channel Tunnel and by Ferry, 2015



6.5 Trade Routes by Cargo Category (Units)

Ninety-three per cent of Lo-Lo containers handled by UK major ports travelled to or from an international destination. In 2015, 5.3 million Lo-Lo units (9.1 TEUs) travelled between UK major ports and international ports, with a total weight of 59.0 million tonnes.

Nearly a quarter (22 per cent) of international unitised traffic was passenger vehicles. Freight units made up the remainder, of which import/export motor vehicles were the largest unit type with 4.2 million units.

In recent years overall unitised traffic has increased and tonnage has slightly decreased. One of the reasons for this is the increase in import/export motor vehicles traffic (now 21 per cent of all international traffic). These weigh considerably less than other unitised freight and therefore amount to an increase in volume of units but contribute considerably little towards tonnage.

Detailed statistics on freight traffic (unitised) can be found in the statistical data sets, PORT0202, PORT0204 and PORT0207.

Chart 26: Freight traffic by route and units, 2015

The most common unitised domestic commodity was passenger vehicles, of which there were 1.3 million units (36 per cent of domestic traffic). Unaccompanied road good trailers were a majority share of the remaining freight units, accounting for 29 per cent of domestic unitised freight traffic and weighing 13.9 million tonnes.

There were 4.4 million import/export motor vehicles moved through UK ports in 2015, an increase of 7 per cent, continuing the year-on-year annual growth observed since 2010.

Belgium is the busiest trading destination, accounting for 24 per cent of all import/export motor vehicles handled at UK major ports.

Figure 27: Import/export motor vehicles, by direction, 2015

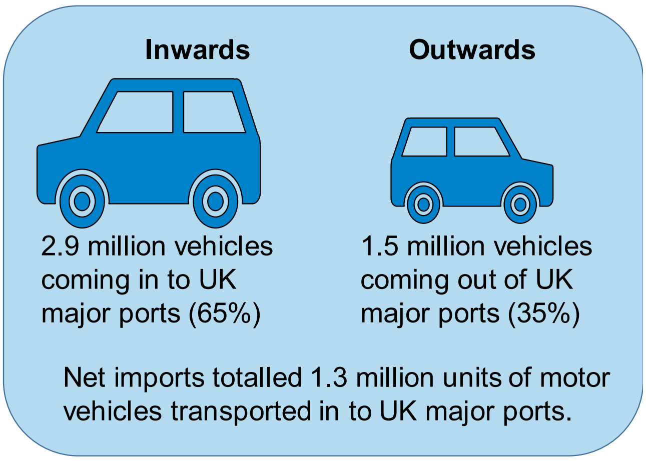
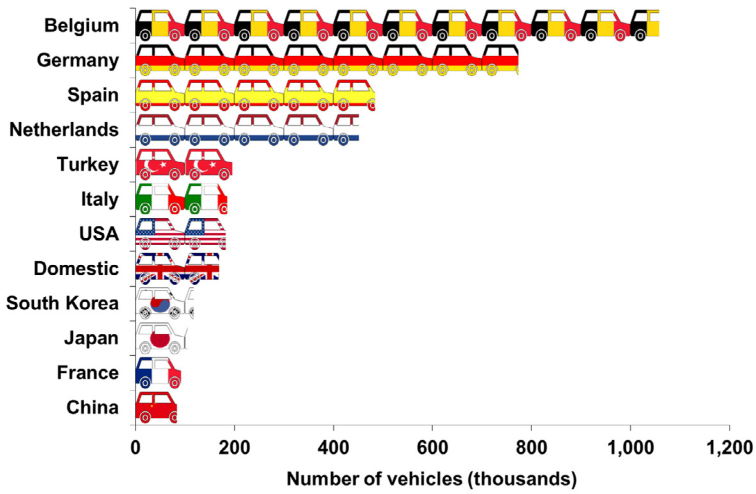


Chart 28: Import/export motor vehicle routes, 2015



Detailed statistics on freight traffic (unitised) can be found in the statistical data sets, PORT0204 and PORT0212.

7.1 Trade With EU Countries (Tonnage)

Trade with EU countries accounted for 53 per cent of all international traffic (203.2 million tonnes of freight). In 2015, 56.4 million tonnes of freight passed to or from the Netherlands, accounting for 28 per cent of all trade from European Union countries. The volume of imports and exports traded with the Netherlands was similar in both directions (51 per cent and 49 per cent respectively).

A majority of cargo traded with EU countries was roll-on/ roll-off traffic (39 per cent of all EU traffic). Some 50.1 million tonnes of roll-on/roll-off traffic were imported into UK major ports from EU countries and 30.0 million tonnes exported. France was the most important trading partner for roll-on/ roll-off traffic (29.8 million tonnes). Liquid bulk goods were the second most prevelant commodity, with just over a third of this (36 per cent) being traded with the Netherlands (22.9 million tonnes).

7.2 Trade With EU Countries (Units)

Very few trading routes are used for both Lo-Lo containers *and* roll-on/ roll-off main freight traffic (Chart 29). Roll-on/ Roll-off was the primary method of transporting units between the UK major ports and Europe in 2015 (73 per cent of main freight units).

Routes between UK major ports and Europe tend to be dominated by Ro-Ro, whilst routes outside of Europe/ world-wide ports tend to ship Lo-Lo containers.Virtually all of deep sea traffic is moved in Lo-Lo containers. A majority of these travel between the UK and China (45 per cent).

Chart 29: Main freight units travelling between UK's top 10 unitised traffic trading partners, 2015

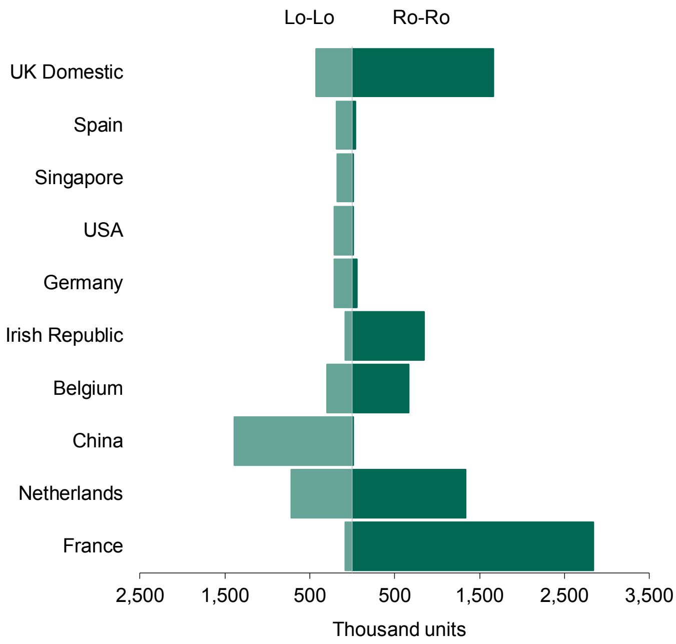
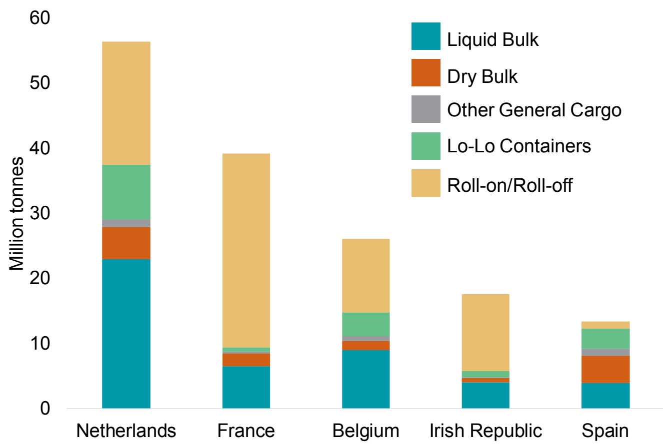


Chart 30: Top 5 EU trading routes, by cargo category, 2015



Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) can be found in the statistical data sets, PORT0110 and unitised traffic in PORT0207.

Section 8: Number of Arrivals

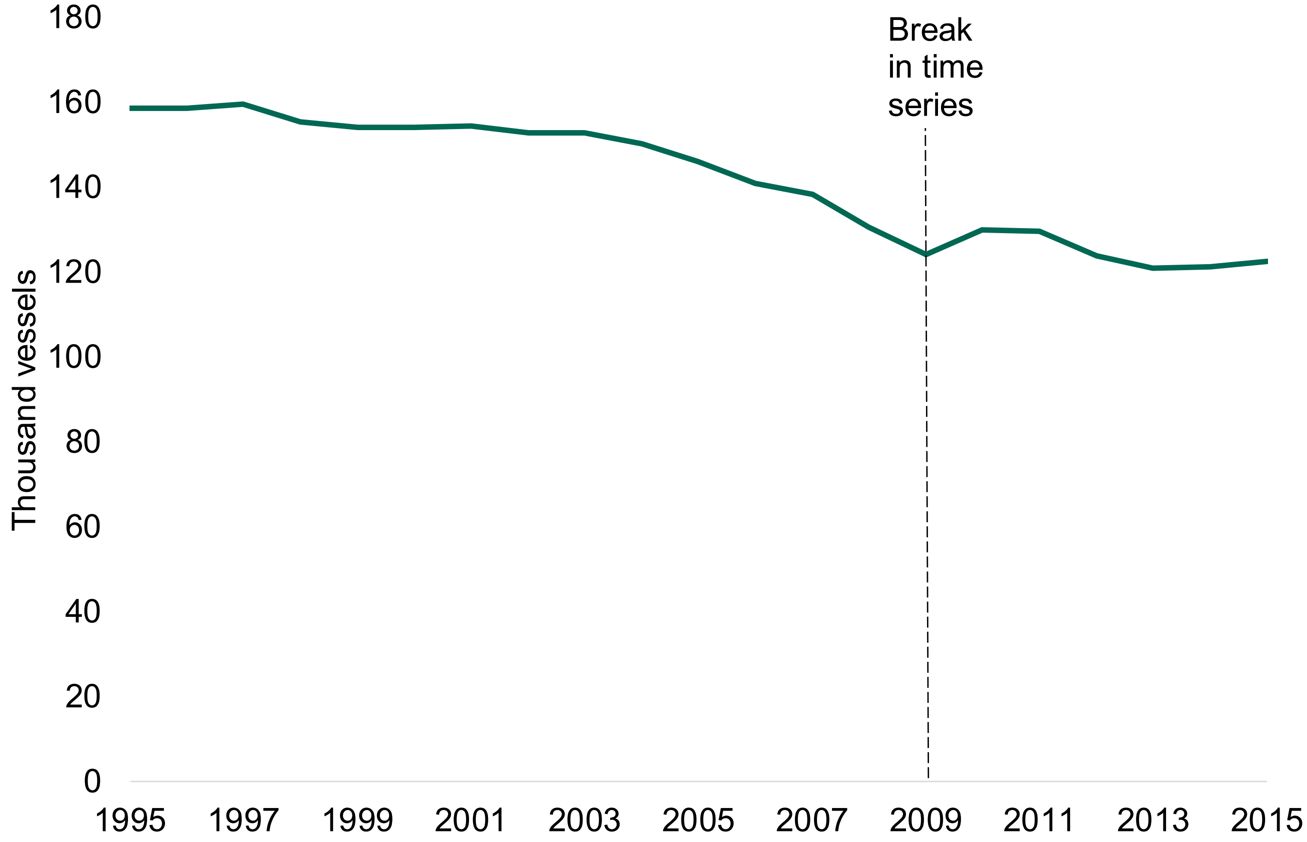
The number of cargo carrying vessels arriving at UK ports decreased from a recent high of 130 thousand in 2010 to 121 thousand in 2013 before stabilising in recent years. In 2015, the number of cargo carrying arrivals at UK ports fell by one per cent compared to the previous year (122 thousand).

Ro-Ro vessels made up the largest number of vessels arriving at UK ports: 66 thousand vessels (46 per cent).

Definitions

Deadweight tonnage: is the weight of cargo, stores, fuel, passengers and crew carried by the ship when loaded to its maximum summer loadline.

Chart 31: Number of cargo carrying vessel arrivals, 1995 to 2015

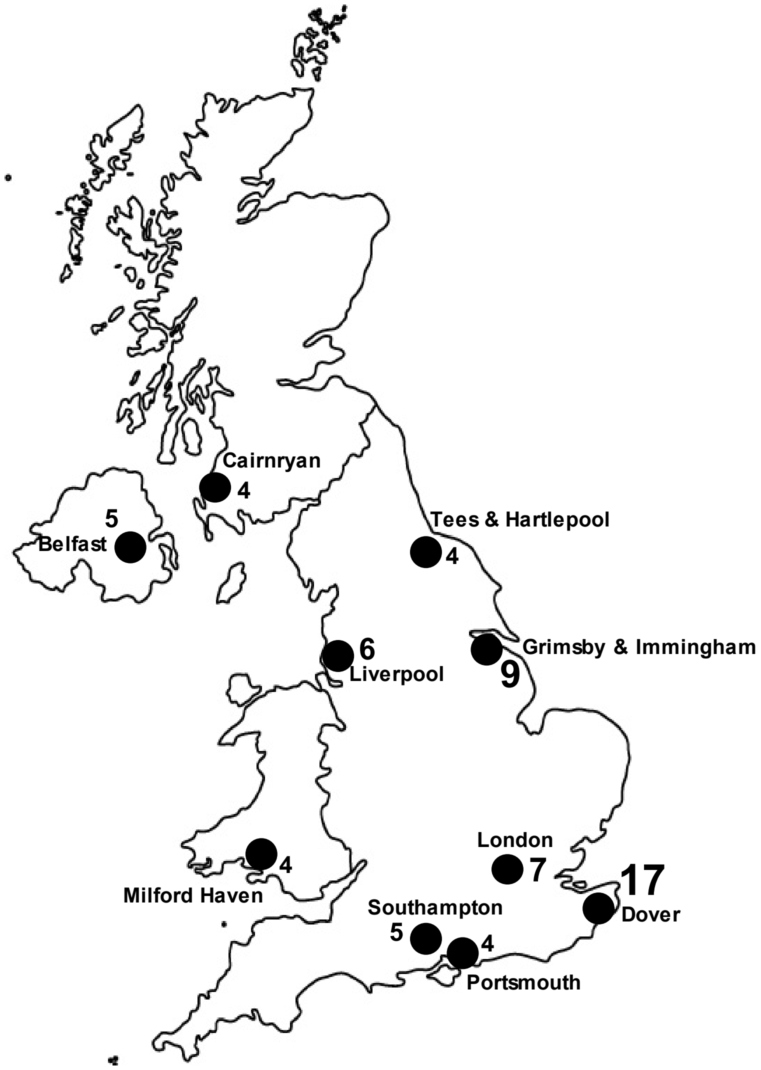


Detailed statistics on the number of vessel arrivals can be found in the statistical data sets, PORT0601 and PORT0602. These statistics on the number of arrivals are not classified as National Statistics.

Over half (62,487) of the vessels arriving at UK ports were at the top ten ports for the amount of tonnage handled. Dover received the largest number of ship arrivals (17 thousand vessels), however, this was 9 per cent lower than in the previous year. This may be the result of disruptions to the Dover - Calais route in summer 2015, and the cessation of MyFerryLink operations on this route. The large number of ship arrivals at Dover was largely comprised of 14 thousand Ro-Ro vessels sized between 5000 and 19,999 deadweight tonnes arriving at Dover port (i.e. ferries). Dover received more Ro-Ro vessels than any other UK port (25 per cent). The port of Grimsby & Immingham handled 9 thousand vessels and the port of London a further 7 thousand vessels.

Southampton accounted for the largest share (12 per cent) of deadweight tonnage arriving at UK ports in 2015 (165 million deadweight tonnage). Overall, the top ten ports received 69 per cent of total deadweight tonnage arriving at UK ports (965 million deadweight tonnage).

Chart 32: Cargo carrying vessels arriving at the busiest 10 UK ports (thousand vessels), 2015



Detailed statistics on the number of vessel arrivals can be found in the statistical data sets, PORT0601, PORT0602 and PORT0603. These statistics on the number of arrivals are not classified as National Statistics.

Section 9: Strengths and Weaknesses of the Data

- The port freight statistics relate to traffic travelling to and from ports in the United Kingdom, unless otherwise stated, and do not cover ports in the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.
- Final port freight statistics are published 9 months after the year end. At this stage a full reconciliation of port and shipping agent data will have been carried out, and the grossing procedures described in the Technical Note are completed and checked. The detailed results in this release are based on the grossed data and the full range of analyses, including those by route and vessel type are then available.

Section 10: Glossary

- Lo-Lo (lift-on lift-off) containers: standard shipping containers that are lifted on or off ships. Containers can also be carried on Ro-Ro (roll-on roll-off) services, usually on port-to-port trailers, road goods vehicles or unaccompanied trailers, in which case they will be treated as Ro-Ro traffic.
- Main freight units: all Lo-Lo containers and those Ro-Ro units intended mainly for carrying freight - road goods vehicles, unaccompanied trailers, rail wagons, shipborne port to port trailers and shipborne barges.
- Major ports: Ports handling over one million tonnes per year, and a small number of other key ports, together accounting for over 98% of UK port traffic. More detailed statistics are collected from these ports.
- Minor ports: All other ports handling freight traffic. Only total weight of goods loaded and unloaded is collected from these ports.
- Tonnage: The weight of goods transported, including crates and other packaging, but excluding the unloaded weight of any 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 port statistics outputs, freight-carrying roll-on roll-off units are normally reported separately from others, but this detail is not available at the time of publication of the quarterly statistics, in which combined totals are given

Section 11: Users and Uses of the Data

These statistics are collected to provide information on trends and patterns in the handling of freight traffic at UK sea ports. Users of the data include central government, the devolved administrations and local government, the maritime industry, transport consultants and academics, and international organisations. Uses, both inside and outside government, include:

- To provide general background to sector trends, and to inform the development and evaluation of policy, and to inform decision making

- In the development or testing of transport and environmental models and forecasts
- In market analysis by transport consultants and businesses.
- To respond to requests for information from Parliament, members of the public and international organisations, including Eurostat's compilation of maritime statistics for the EU

We would welcome any feedback on these statistics by email to maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

Section 12: Background Notes

- The web tables and charts give further detail of the key results presented in this statistical release. They are available here: Ports statistics.
- Full guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics can be found here: notes
- 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: Code of Practice
- Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: pre-release access list.
- Provisional summary quarterly statistics on freight handled by UK major ports are also updated quarterly. The latest tables can be found here: Quarterly summary.

Section 13: Footnotes

1. HMRC UK trade info website: https://www.uktradeinfo.com/Intrastat/AboutIntrastat/Pages/AboutIntrastat.aspx
2. Port freight technical note: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/517930/port-statistics-technical-note.pdf
3. Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) statistics on 'agriculture in the UK in 2015'. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agriculture-in-the-united-kingdom-2015
4. Lloyds List Intelligence http://www.lloydslistintelligence.com/llint/containers/index.htm.
5. Office for National Statistics UK Trade in goods by classification of product by activity time series dataset https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/internationaltrade/timeseries/p493/mq10
6. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, Regional Trade Statistics https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/505578/RTS_Q4_2015.pdf