



Road goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe: October to December 2016 (quarter 4)

About this release

This statistical release summarises results from the survey of road goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe from Great Britain. It includes all the main ferry routes between Great Britain and mainland Europe, plus the Channel Tunnel. Ferry routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland are not included.

These statistics are used by the Department for Transport, regional bodies, academics and transport consultants to obtain a better understanding of the trends and complexities of freight transport, in order to advise on transport policy. The haulage industry also has a particular interest in statistics on the activity of overseas registered vehicles within the UK.

These statistics are updated on a quarterly basis.

Next Update: May 2017

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In 2016, 3 million road goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe, a similar level to the previous year.

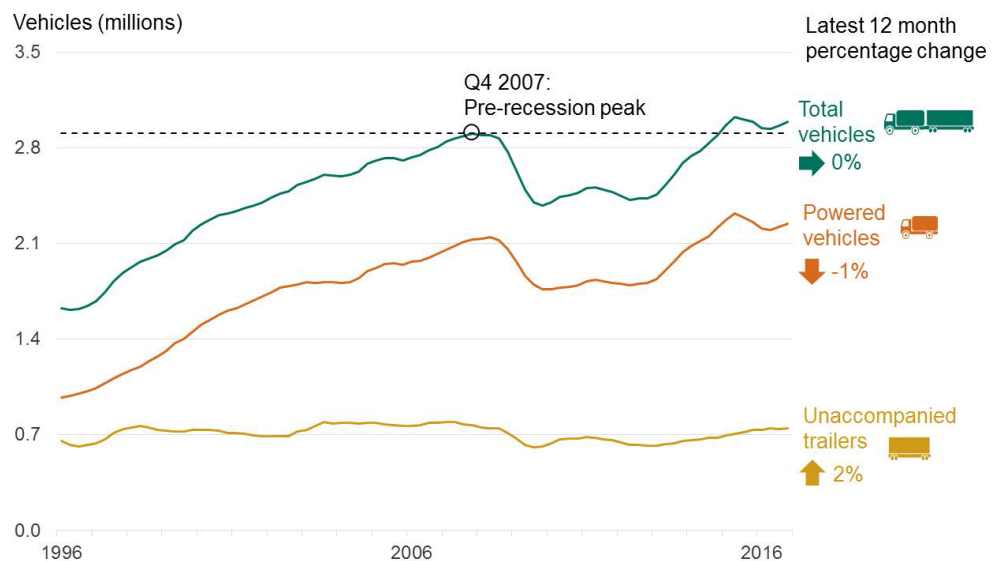
Of the total volume of road goods vehicles, 2.2 million were **powered vehicles** and 0.7 million were **unaccompanied trailers**. This represents a 1 per cent decrease in powered vehicles and a 2 per cent increase in unaccompanied trailers over the last 12 months.

Quarter 4 total (October - December 2016)

In quarter 4 2016, 764 thousand goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe, representing a 4 per cent increase on quarter 4 2015.

Of these vehicles, there were 575 thousand **powered vehicles** and 189 thousand **unaccompanied trailers** - respective increases of 4 per cent and 2 per cent on the same quarter of the previous year.

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, rolling 12-month totals to December 2016



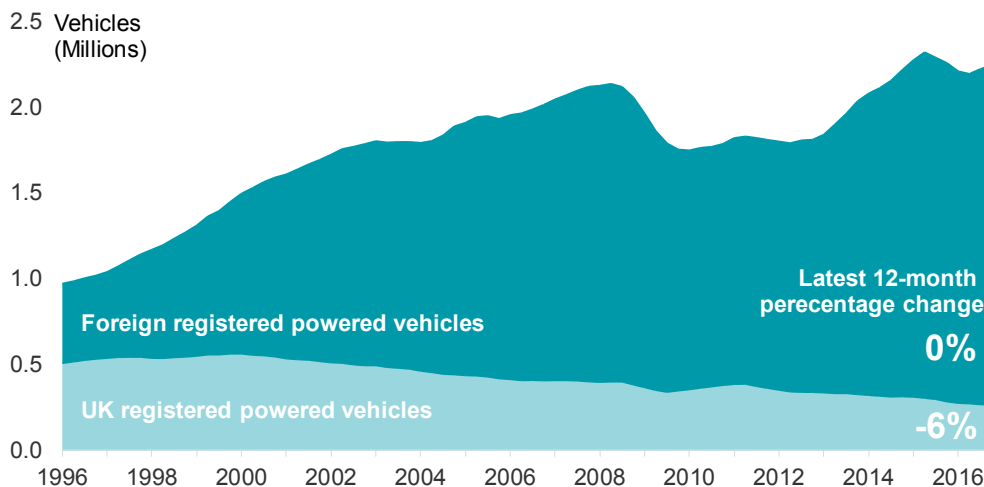
Road goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe

There were just under 3.0 million goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe during the last 12 months (2.2 million **powered vehicles** and 0.7 million **unaccompanied trailers**). This was a similar amount to the previous 12-month total.

The long term trend shows that the number of goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe increased by 80 per cent in the last 20 years.

During the latest year the volume of powered vehicles fell by 1 per cent to 2.2 million. This was largely due to a decrease in the number of **UK registered** powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, which fell by 6 per cent to 0.3 million. This change continues the long term downward trend that has been seen since 2000. There were 2.0 million **foreign registered** powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, a similar level to the previous year. The long term trend has been generally upwards since 2009, with record figures of foreign registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe in recent years.

Powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe by registration, rolling 12-month totals to December 2016



Quarter 4 total (October - December 2016)

During quarter 4 2016, 764 thousand goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe (575 thousand **powered vehicles** and 189 thousand **unaccompanied trailers**). This was the highest quarter 4 volume of road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe and 4 per cent higher than quarter 4 2015 (738 thousand goods vehicles).

What are powered vehicles and unaccompanied trailers?



Powered vehicles

comprise rigid vehicles, lorries with semi-trailers (articulated units) and lorries with drawbar trailers (some vehicles under 3.5 tonnes gross vehicles weight are also included).



Unaccompanied trailers

comprise trailers and semi-trailers not accompanied on the ferry by a powered unit.

Over the last 20 years large increases in the number of foreign registered vehicles travelling to Europe have seen the UK's percentage share drop to 12 per cent of the total from a peak of 52 per cent in 1996.

Roll-on/roll-off "RoRo" traffic definition

Road goods vehicles, as covered in this series, are sometimes referred to as roll-on/roll-off traffic or "RoRo" traffic in other statistics published by the Department.

Country of vehicle registration

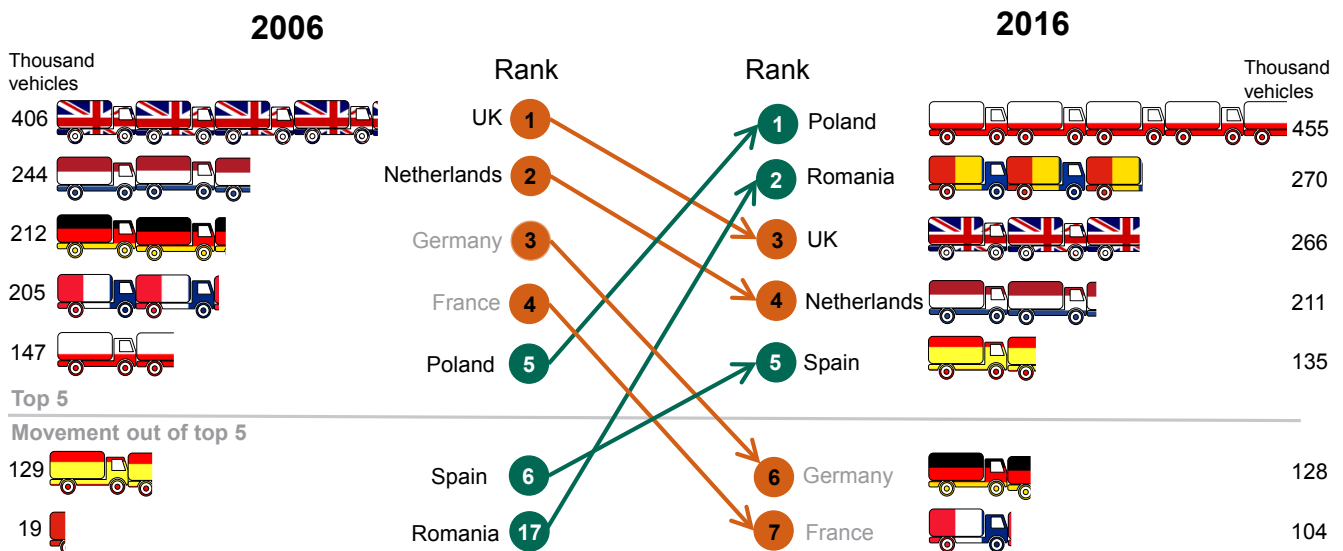
Over the last twenty years there was a four fold increase in the number of **foreign registered** powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe (from 0.5 million in 1996 to 2.0 million in the latest 12-month period).

The proportion of vehicles registered to countries such as the **UK, Netherlands, Germany and France** have fallen as a number of countries have increased their share since joining the European Union (EU). The number of powered goods vehicles registered to **Poland** has increased from 3 per cent in 2004 when it first joined the EU, to 20 per cent in 2016. This is a larger share than any other country, however, powered vehicles registered to Poland fell by 3 per cent from 468 thousand in 2015 to 455 thousand in 2016. Other countries (excluding Poland) which joined the EU since 2004 now account for 31 per cent of the total number of powered goods vehicles.

Since **Romania** joined the EU in 2007, its share of powered goods vehicles has risen from 1 per cent to 12 per cent. In 2016 Romania surpassed the UK for the first time to have the second largest share of powered goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe.

Top 5 powered goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, by country of registration, 2006 and 2016

■ Increased between 2006 and 2016 ■ Decreased between 2006 and 2016
 One goods vehicle represents 100,000 vehicles



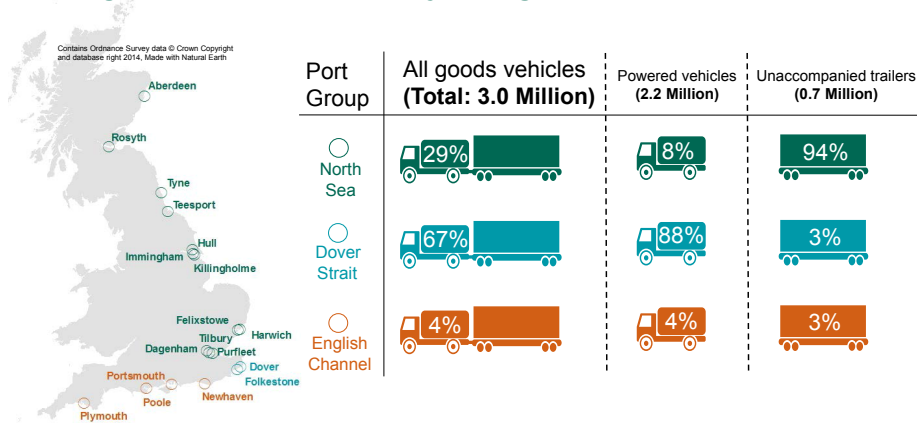
Quarter 4 total (October - December 2016)

During the final quarter of 2016, 63 thousand powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe were **UK registered** (12 per cent of the total). This was a decrease of 36 per cent compared to ten years earlier (100 thousand), and the lowest quarter 4 volume observed on record.

There were 512 thousand **foreign registered** powered goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe in quarter 4 2016, accounting for 89 per cent of all powered vehicles. This was 5 per cent higher than quarter 4 2015, and was the highest quarter 4 volume observed on record. Generally, the volume of foreign registered vehicles has followed an upwards trend over the past ten years increasing on average by 2 per cent per annum.

Port group

Goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe by port group, 2016



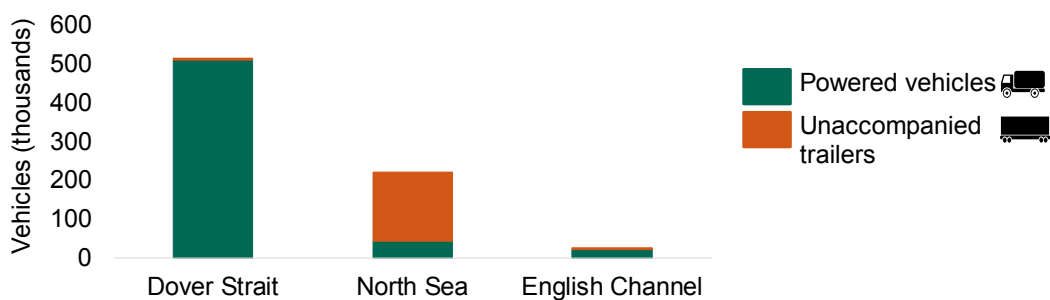
There has been a small shift over the last ten years in the proportion of goods vehicles travelling from the North Sea port group, towards the Dover Strait port group. Of the total 3.0 million goods vehicles that travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe in the last 12 months, 0.9 million goods vehicles used **North Sea ports** (29 per cent), 2.0 million used **Dover Strait ports** (67 per cent) and 0.1 million used **English Channel ports** (4 per cent). This compares with 32 per cent from North Sea ports in 2006 and 63 per cent from Dover Strait ports.

The majority of powered vehicles travelled from Dover Strait ports: 2.0 million powered vehicles (88 per cent). The vast majority (94 per cent) of unaccompanied trailers travelled from North Sea ports: 0.7 million.

Quarter 4 total (October - December 2016)

In quarter 4 2016; 516 thousand goods vehicles travelled from Dover Strait ports, the majority of which were powered vehicles (99 per cent). Also, 28 thousand goods vehicles travelled from English Channel ports, the majority of which were powered vehicles (77 per cent). In addition, 221 thousand goods vehicles travelled from North Sea ports, the majority of which were unaccompanied trailers (80 per cent).

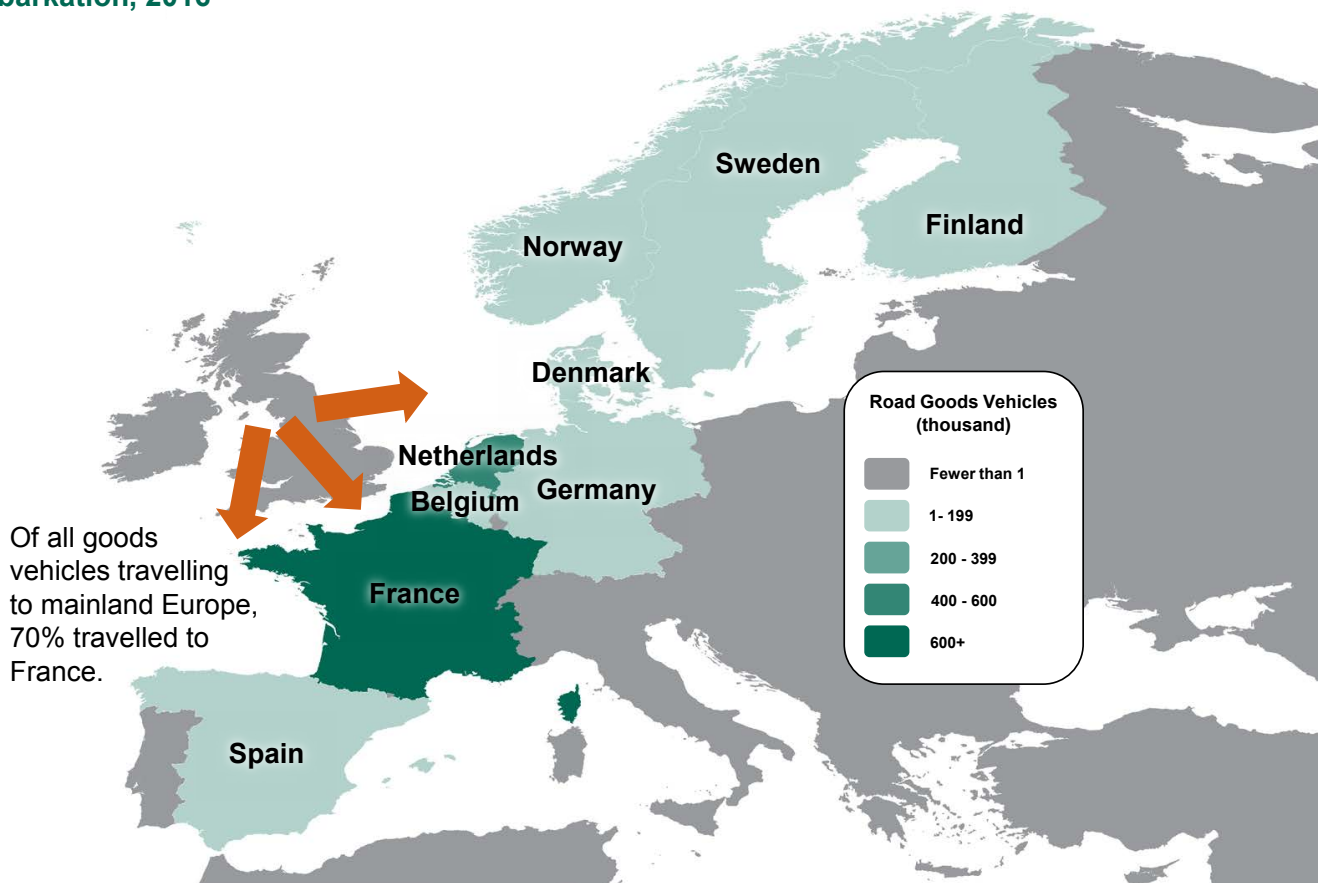
Goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe by port group and type, quarter 4 2016



This chart shows that there has been a prevalence of powered vehicles on routes from Dover Strait ports and unaccompanied trailers on routes from North Sea ports. This may be associated with unaccompanied trailers being used for longer distance journeys than powered vehicles. This may also be due to regulations on the number of hours drivers can operate, whereby there is a wage and time cost to hauliers when drivers take rest periods. There are also additional costs in the use of powered vehicles. These are relevant factors which consider the average journey length from Dover Strait and North Sea ports. Furthermore, the Freight Transport Association has suggested that the UK has a growing shortage of qualified heavy goods vehicles drivers which may explain the increased tendency to use unaccompanied trailers.¹

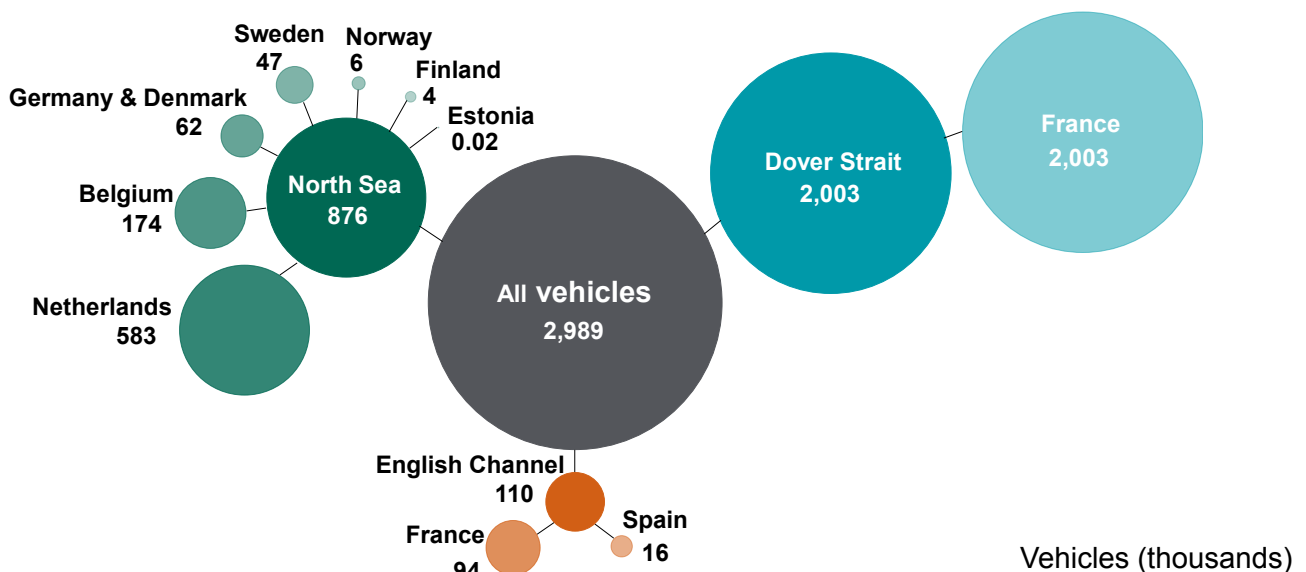
Country of disembarkation

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, by country of disembarkation, 2016



France is the most common destination for goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe. Of all of the goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, 70 per cent disembarked in **France**. The majority of these French destined goods vehicles travelled from **Dover Strait ports** (95 per cent), and the remainder from **English Channel ports**. **France** is the only country of disembarkation for the **Channel Tunnel**. Ninety-two per cent of all powered road goods vehicles which travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe disembarked in **France** (2.1 million).

Road goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe by port group and country of disembarkation, 2016



The majority of goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe via North Sea ports are destined for the Netherlands. Of the total goods vehicles which travelled from **North Sea ports**, 67 per cent disembarked in the **Netherlands** (0.6 million). Over half (57 per cent) of all unaccompanied trailers which travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe disembarked in the **Netherlands** (0.4 million).

Goods vehicles travelling through **English Channel ports** are largely destined for France, 87 per cent disembarked in **France** and 13 per cent in **Spain**.

Quarter 4 total (October - December 2016)

In quarter 4 2016, 529 thousand **powered vehicles** disembarked in **France** (92 per cent of the total). This is a 4 per cent increase compared to quarter 4 2015 (507 thousand powered vehicles), and is the second highest number of vehicles disembarking in France in the fourth quarter.

The number of powered vehicles disembarking in the **Netherlands** was unchanged compared to a year earlier, at 39 thousand.

By contrast, 10 thousand **unaccompanied trailers** disembarked in **France** (5 per cent of the total), unchanged on the previous year, compared to 108 thousand in the **Netherlands** (57 per cent of the total), an increase of 4 per cent on quarter 4 2015.

Background notes

Further information on the article published by the freight transport association on driver shortages can be viewed here:

http://www.fta.co.uk/media_and_campaigns/campaigns/driver_shortage.html

The web tables for these statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-freight-domestic-and-international-statistics>

Full guidance on the methods used in the publication of these releases, the quality of the data, and the revisions published in 2007 can be found in the Technical Note at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-freight-domestic-and-international-statistics-guidance>

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/roll-on-roll-off-international-freight-statistics-pre-release-access-list>



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Strengths and weaknesses of the data

The results in this bulletin are compiled from quarterly returns provided by the roll-on / roll-off ferry operators, who provide the number of powered vehicles and unaccompanied trailers carried on each route from Great Britain to mainland Europe, and from quarterly information supplied by the Office of Rail and Road for Eurotunnel.

Disaggregation by country of registration of powered vehicles is supplied by most of the ferry operators and by the Office of Rail and Road for Eurotunnel. Some operators derive this from the registration number pattern whilst others extract the nationality from the manifest or waybill. A few operators use the country of booking as a proxy for the country of registration of the powered vehicle.

Following a data quality review in early 2008 survey returns have been supplied by all operators, resulting in more complete reporting of country of registration. The quality of the data is therefore thought to have been substantially improved and the data are considered fit for purpose.