



Department for Transport

UK Port Freight Statistics: January to March 2016 (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 2016 will be published in August 2017, 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.

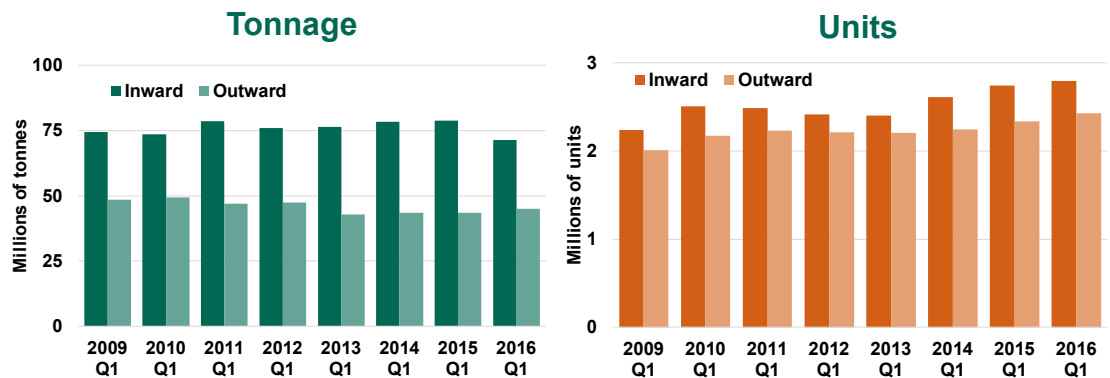
Total freight tonnage through UK major ports decreased by 5 per cent to 116.5 million tonnes, compared with the first quarter of 2015. The number of units increased by 3 per cent to 5.2 million, over the same period.

Inward freight tonnage **decreased by 9 per cent to 71.4 million tonnes.** Inward tonnage has decreased quarter on quarter since the second quarter of 2015.

Outward freight tonnage **increased by 4 per cent to 45.1 million tonnes,** this follows similar growth in the last two quarters and is the highest first quarter outward tonnage since 2012.

These opposing changes have reduced the proportion of tonnage inward to **61 per cent** of the total, compared with 64 per cent in the same quarter in 2015.

Quarter 1 UK major port traffic, by direction: 2009 to 2016



Since 2014, first quarter unitised traffic has increased in both inwards and outwards directions.

Inward unitised traffic **increased 2 per cent to 2.8 million units** - as high as the pre-recession first quarter of 2007.

Outward unitised traffic **increased 4 per cent to 2.4 million units.** First quarter outward traffic is now at its highest since 2008.

Major Port Freight Traffic (Rolling 4 quarter trend)

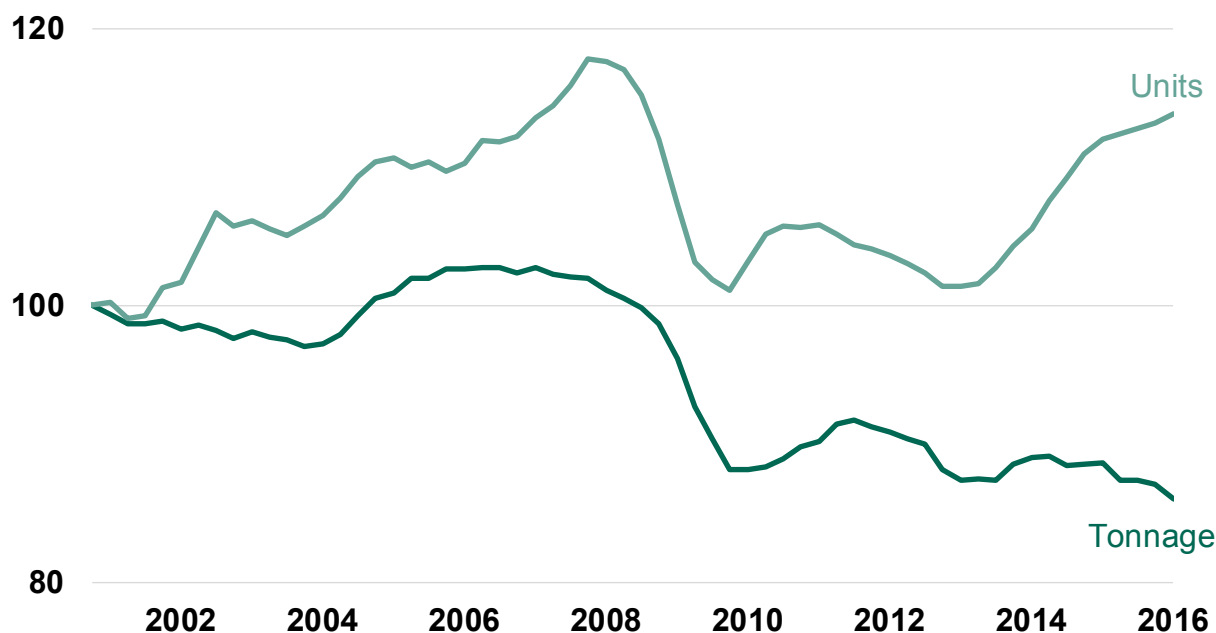
The total freight tonnage through UK major ports in the 4 quarters ending quarter 1 of 2016 **decreased by 3 per cent to 477.9 million tonnes**, compared with the previous four quarters.

Inward freight tonnage **decreased by 6 per cent to 298.2 million tonnes**. This is the largest quarter on quarter decline in the rolling total since 2010. Outward freight tonnage **increased by 3 per cent to 179.6 million tonnes**, the highest four quarter total since 2012.

Unitised freight traffic through UK major ports in the same period **increased by 2 per cent to 23.4 million units**, compared with the previous four quarters. The rolling four quarter unit totals are now at the highest levels since before the recession.

Inward unitised traffic **increased by 2 per cent to 12.4 million units**, 2 per cent below the peak in 2007. The number of outward units **increased by 1 per cent to 11.0 million tonnes**.

Major port traffic indices, tonnage and units: rolling 4 quarter totals to March 2016 (4 quarters to Q4 2000 = 100)



In recent years the rolling four quarter units index has consistently increased but tonnage generally decreased. Before 2013, tonnage and units exhibited similar trends, for example the steep decline after the recession, except around 2002 and 2007, where there were overall increases in total units while tonnage declined.

The majority of freight tonnage is non-unitised traffic (bulk freight and general cargo), 67 per cent in 2014. This does not contribute to total units. Trends in bulk freight and general cargo will have a greater influence on total port freight tonnage and therefore changes in unitised traffic tonnage may be masked by bulk freight trends. Unitised traffic also includes passenger vehicles which are not included in tonnage figures, in 2014 these accounted for 25 per cent of the total number of units.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

- ▶ These 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.
- ▶ These statistics are based on data provided by major ports. Data is available for total weight of goods and number of units inwards and outwards for each responding port. More in depth commentary will be provided with the release of the final port statistics which will include details on cargo categories.
- ▶ The data provided for 2015 and 2016 is provisional and may be subject to revision if subsequent checks against data provided by agents, or data provided by ports at the year end, highlight anomalies.

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 2016. It will contain provisional quarterly figures for the second quarter of 2016.
- ▶ 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>. The final 2015 figures will be published in August 2016.
- ▶ 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>