



Department for Transport

Provisional Sea Passenger Statistics: 2015

About this release

This statistical release presents provisional statistics on sea passengers to and from the UK in 2014. This includes:

International short sea (ferry) routes:

These include all routes within Europe.

Domestic sea crossings: 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 international cruises, long sea journeys and domestic river crossings and inter-island routes.

In this publication

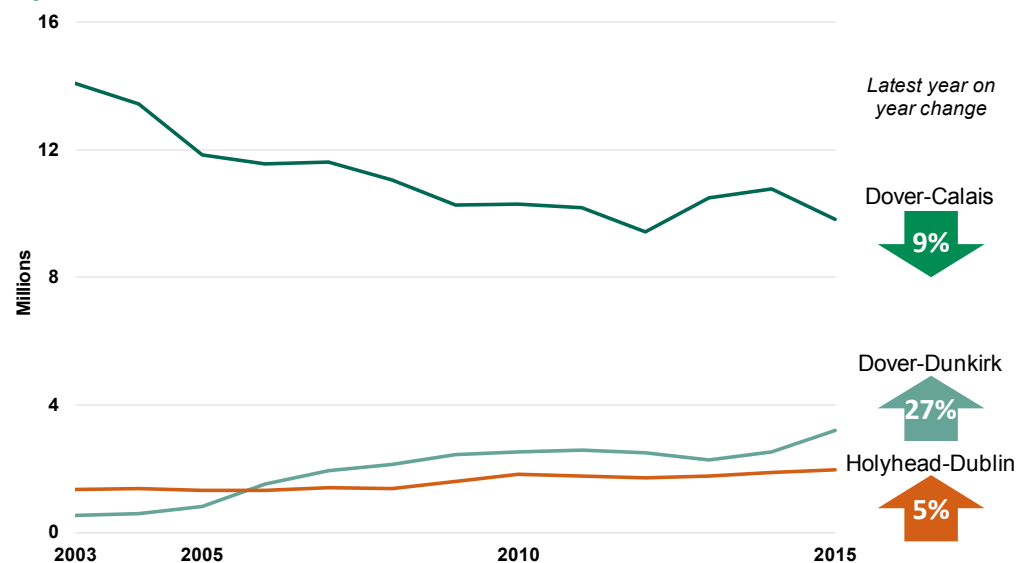
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International short sea passenger numbers decreased 1 per cent from 21.3 to 21.0 million

International Short Sea Passengers

- The total number of **international short sea passengers** travelling through UK ports **decreased by 1 per cent** from 21.3 million in 2014 to **21.0 million in 2015**.
- Passenger numbers at **Thames & Kent and West Coast** port groups **declined by 2 per cent**.
- **Dover-Calais** remained the busiest international short sea route, handling 47 per cent of all international short sea passengers, but **declined by 9 per cent to 9.8 million** compared with the previous year.
- The volume of international short sea passengers on the **Dover-Dunkirk** route **increased by 27 per cent** from 2.5 million in 2014 to **3.2 million** in 2015.

Top 3 busiest international short sea routes



Sea Passengers on International Routes

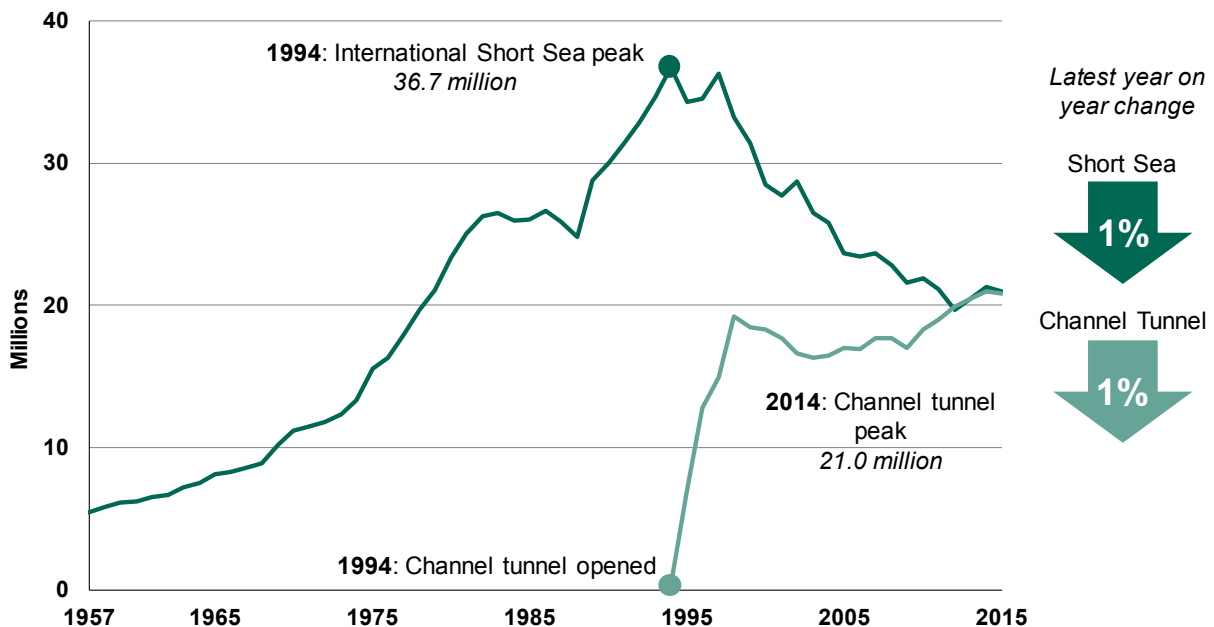
Summary

- This statistical publication provides data for international short sea (ferry) routes in 2015. Statistics for cruises and long sea journeys will not be available until **autumn 2016**.
- The latest year for which data are available for all international routes is 2014, when there were **23.2 million sea passengers on all international routes to and from the UK**, an increase of **3 per cent on 2013**.

International Short Sea Journeys

- In 2015, the number of **international short sea passengers decreased by 1 per cent to 21.0 million**, compared to 2014. This follows a brief period of growth in 2012-2014 of 1.6 million passengers, and a longer period of decline in 1995-2012 of 14.6 million passengers.
- In 2015, the number of passengers travelling via the **Channel Tunnel decreased by 1 per cent to 20.9 million**. This is marginally fewer than the number of sea passengers.
- Since opening in 1994, the trends in the number of passengers travelling via the **Channel Tunnel and by sea** have **steadily converged**. The volume of Channel Tunnel passengers exceeded the volume of passengers on international short sea journeys in 2012. However, sea passengers have outnumbered Channel Tunnel passengers by a small margin in the years since then.

International short sea passengers and Channel Tunnel passengers, 1957-2014

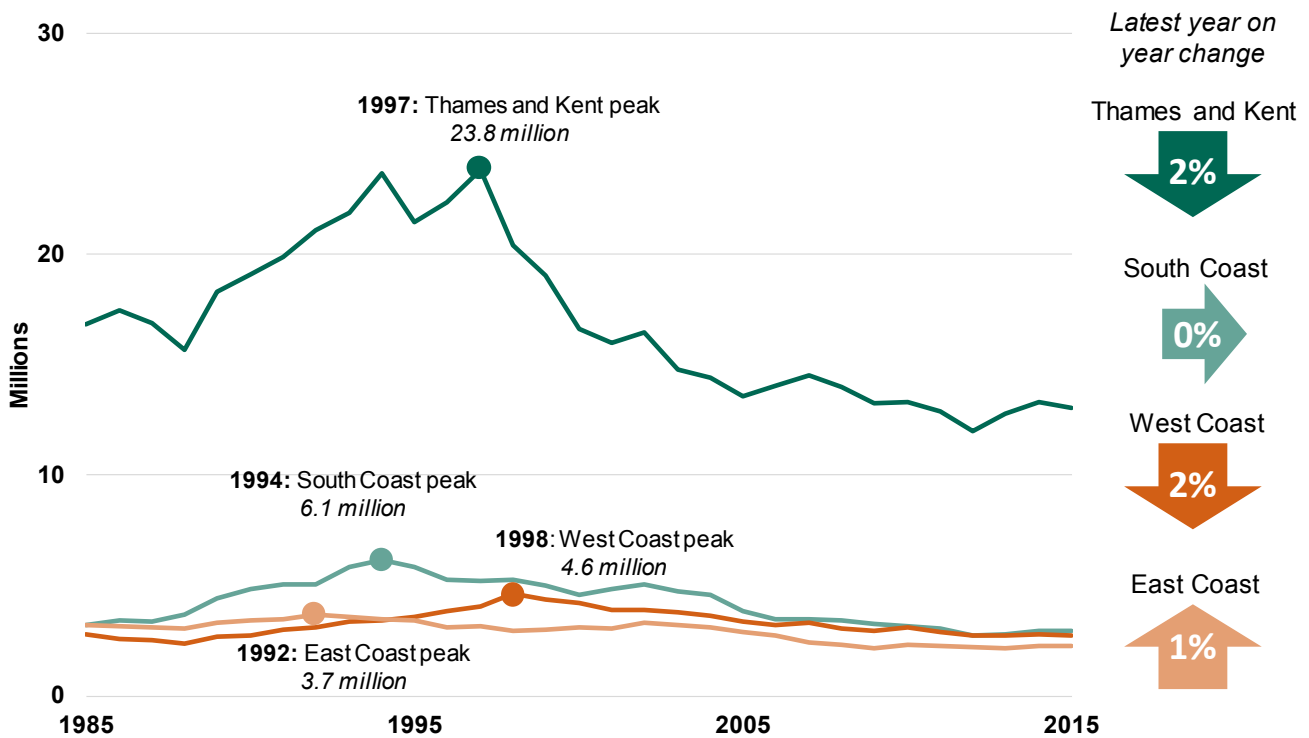


Detailed statistics on Channel Tunnel and International Short Sea Passengers can be found in web table [SPAS0301](#)

International Short Sea Journeys by Port Group

- Passenger numbers through the **Thames and Kent** port group **decreased by 2 per cent to 13.0 million**. This port group remained the **busiest** in 2015, accounting for 62 per cent of all international short sea passenger movements.
- The number of passengers travelling through **East Coast** ports **increased by 1 per cent to 2.3 million**.
- In 2015, **2.8 million passengers** travelled through the **West Coast** ports: a **decrease of 2 per cent**.
- The number of passengers who travelled through **South Coast** ports remained similar to the previous year at **2.9 million**.

International short sea passengers by port group, 1985-2015

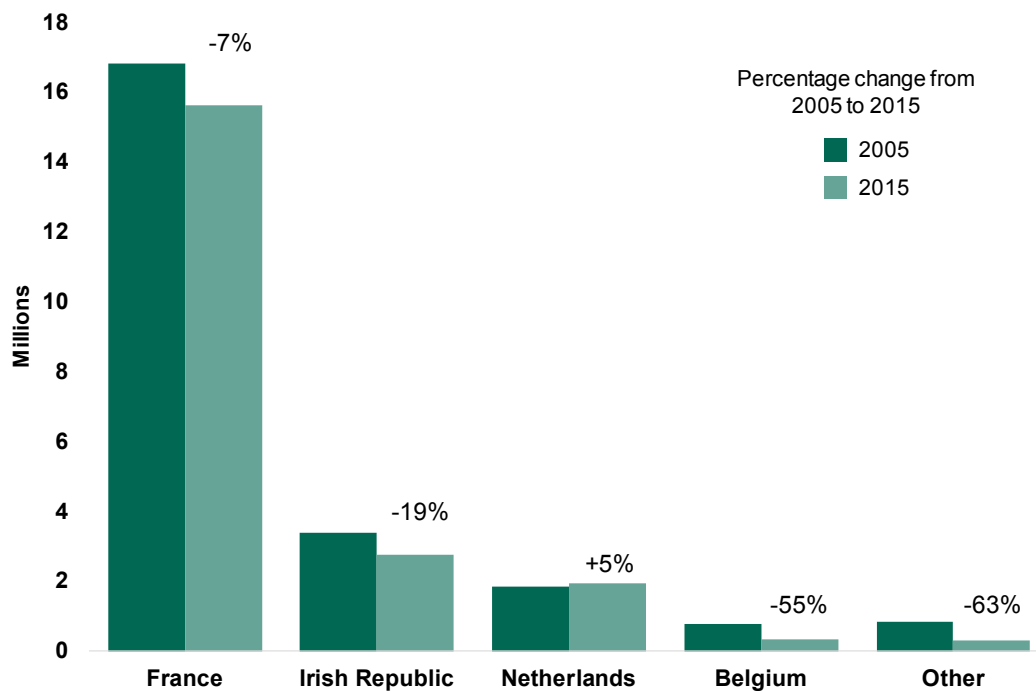


Detailed statistics on International Short Sea Passengers by port group can be found in web table [SPAS0101](#).

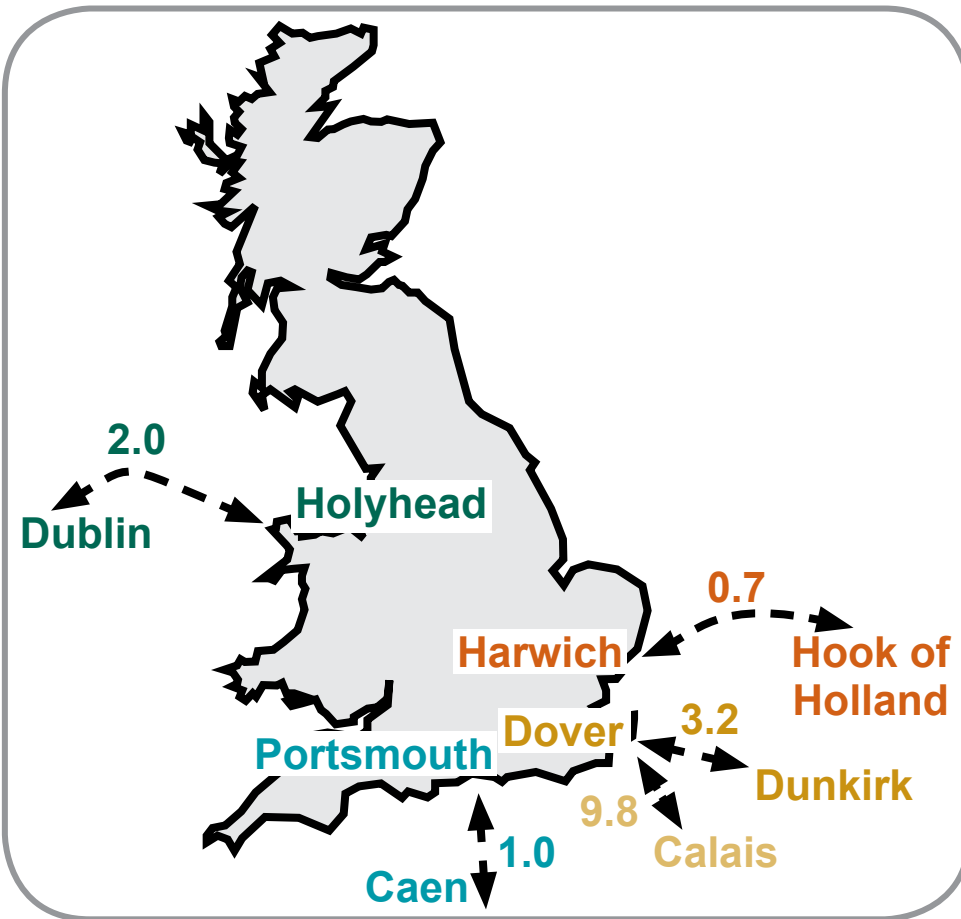
International Short Sea Journeys by Route

- **France remained the most popular country of destination** for UK international short sea routes, a trend which has been seen since the series began in 1950. In 2015, **74 per cent** of international short sea journeys were between the UK and France. Passenger numbers on these routes totalled **15.6 million**, **1 per cent lower** than in 2014.
- The second most popular destination was **The Irish Republic**, these routes accounted for **13 per cent** of all UK international short sea passengers. In 2015 these routes carried **2.8 million** passengers, a **decrease of 2 per cent** on the previous year.
- Compared with **ten years ago** short sea passenger numbers have **fallen by 11 per cent**. The volume of passengers to all destinations declined, except to the **Netherlands** which **increased by 5 per cent**.

UK international short sea passengers by country of origin/destination, 2015 compared to 2005



Top 5 short-sea routes by passenger number (millions), 2015



- Over the past decade **Dover-Calais** has continued to handle the **largest amount of passengers** of all international short sea ferry routes.
- In 2015, the number of passengers on the **Dover-Calais** route **decreased by 9 per cent to 9.8 million**, compared to 2014.
- This follows growth in the last two years but over the last decade the route has declined at an average rate of 2 per cent per year.

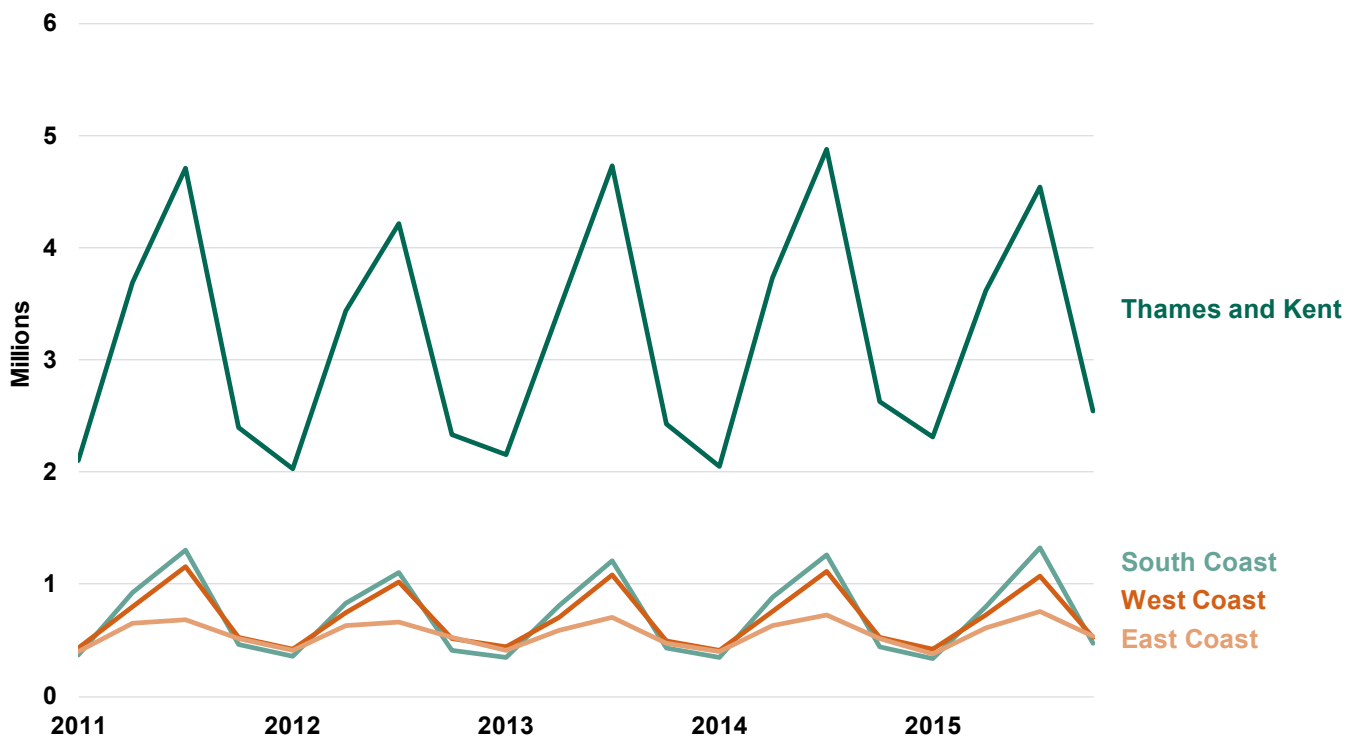
- In 2006, **Dover-Dunkirk** became the second busiest route between France and the UK. Passengers numbers on this route have since increased at an average annual rate of 9 per cent, making it one of the fastest growing routes. In 2015, whilst passenger numbers on the Dover-Calais route decreased by 0.9 million the number on travelling by Dover-Dunkirk **increased by 0.6 million (27 per cent) to 3.1 million**. This may reflect passengers avoiding the Dover-Calais route during the service disruptions in summer 2015, or may be the start of an unrelated trend change. We will not be able to determine this until data for 2016 becomes available.
- Passenger numbers on the **Holyhead-Dublin** route **increased by 5 per cent to 1.9 million** compared with 2014. This is a similar rate as observed in the previous year.
- The number of passengers using the **Portsmouth-Caen** route **rose 3 per cent to 1.0 million passengers**. This is the second consecutive year on year increase.
- Passenger numbers on the **Harwich-Hook of Holland** route have grown year on year since 2012. In 2015, these numbers **rose by 15 per cent to 0.7 million** compared to the previous year.

Seasonal trends in International Short Sea Journeys

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

- The third quarter of 2015 (July-September) continued to be busiest in terms of total international short sea passenger traffic. The least busy period of the year was the first quarter (January-March).
- In the third quarter of 2015, passenger numbers through the **Thames and Kent** port group were 2.2 million higher than in the first quarter of the year. The third quarter of the year accounted for 35 per cent of annual passengers, while the first quarter handled nearly half as many (18 per cent).
- Proportionally, the **South Coast** port group has the greatest variability in passenger numbers between quarters. In 2015, nearly half of all annual passenger traffic through South Coast group ports travelled in the third quarter compared with 11 per cent in the first quarter. A four-fold difference of 1.0 million passengers.

International short sea passengers by port group quarter in 2015



Long Sea Journeys and Cruise Passengers

- Statistics for passengers on **cruses and long sea journeys** will be published in **autumn 2016**.

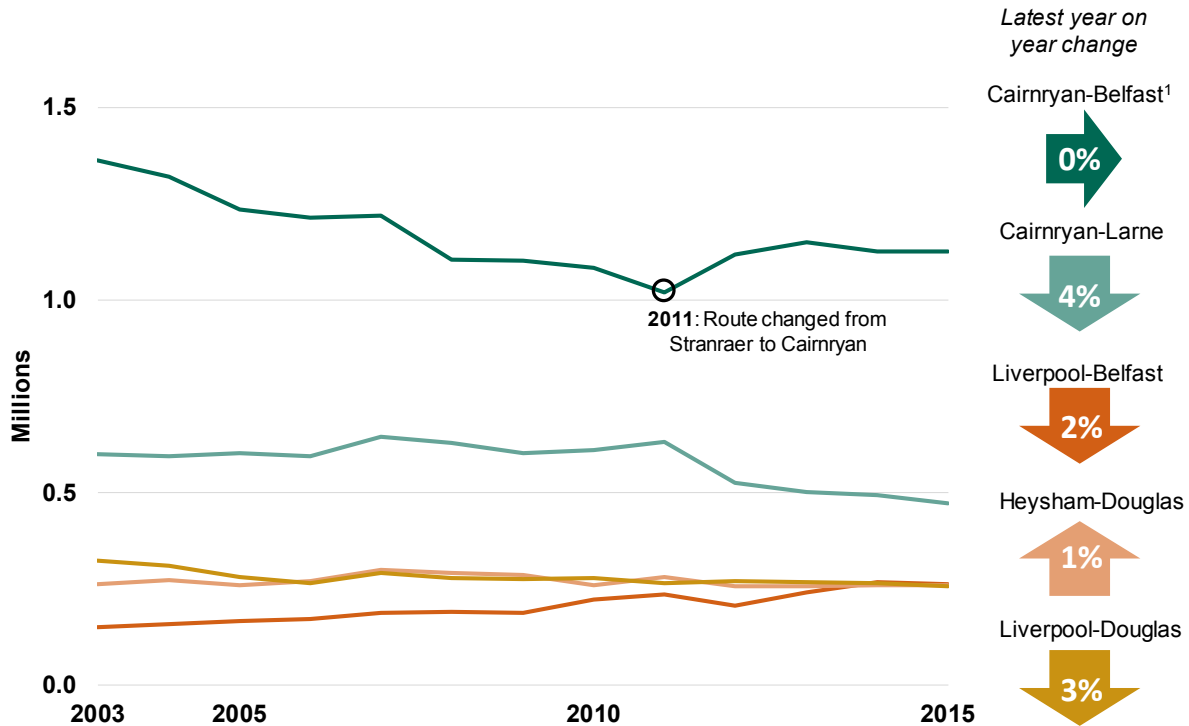
Summary

- The total number of sea passengers on domestic routes comprises of passengers on **domestic sea crossings, inter-island domestic routes and river ferries**. Statistics for inter island domestic routes, river ferries and Scottish domestic sea crossings will not be available until autumn 2016.
- This statistical publication provides data for passengers on domestic sea crossings to **Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands** in 2015.
- In 2014 (the latest year for which data is available) there were 42.7 million passengers travelling on domestic routes, a decrease of 1 per cent on the previous year. Full domestic sea passenger data for 2015 will be published in **autumn 2016**.

Domestic Sea Crossings

- In 2015, traffic between the **UK mainland and Northern Ireland decreased 3 per cent to 2.0 million** passengers. **Cairnryan-Belfast** remained the most popular route with **1.1 million** passengers, a similar number to the previous year.
- Total traffic between the **UK mainland and the Isle of Man decreased by 1 per cent to 0.3 million**.
- Overall the number of journeys between the **UK mainland and the Channel Islands decreased by 13 per cent to 0.3 million**. A large shift occurred in the traffic on these routes, with **Weymouth routes falling by 44.5 thousand (91 per cent)** and **Poole routes increasing by 121.9 thousand (105 per cent)** compared with the previous year. The number of passengers travelling through **Portsmouth** on routes with the Channel Islands also increased compared to the previous year, **increasing by 7.0 thousand passengers (17 per cent)**.

UK's top 5 busiest domestic sea crossing routes, 2003-2015



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

Seasonal trends in Domestic Sea Crossing Journeys

- As with international destinations, passenger numbers on routes with **Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands** had the highest volume in the third quarter of the year (July-September) and lowest in the first quarter.
- Of the three groups: routes with **Northern Ireland** had the least variability between quarters, with 38 per cent of passengers in 2015 travelling in the third quarter and 15 per cent travelling in the first quarter.
- Many ferry operators work to a winter timetable during quarter one due to the small number of passengers travelling.

Passengers on inter-island Domestic Routes and River Ferries

- Passenger numbers on **Inter-island domestic routes**, such as Hampshire to the Isle of Wight, will be published in **autumn 2016**.
- Statistics for passengers on **river ferries**, such as routes along the River Thames, will be published in **autumn 2016**.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

- ▶ The data for International Short-Sea passengers is collected from ferry operators, and is validated and published in aggregate on a monthly basis. At the end of the reference year the annual data is then validated for a final time for this publication. Due to data collection problems some of the figures for 2015 have been estimated. The proportional allocation of passengers between some routes was also estimated.
- ▶ Missing data for December were estimated using traffic volumes from the first 11 months of the year. These were grossed using the average proportion of passengers on the affected routes for December in recent years. Route shares for these years were assessed to be largely stable.
- ▶ Estimated data makes up 0.05 per cent of total international short sea passengers in 2015, and 3.6 per cent of domestic sea passengers on Channel Island routes. A large number of passengers travelling on the international short sea Poole-St Malo route could not be distinguished from domestic Channel Island traffic and so the split was estimated. The estimates account for 87 per cent of the total for the Poole-St Malo route in 2015.
- ▶ Data for international ferry passenger routes, domestic sea crossings and inter-island routes are collected regularly from operators. Data for crossings to Orkney and Shetland and Scottish inter-island routes, are supplied by the Scottish Government. These data sets are checked in detail by Department for Transport statisticians and considered to be very robust.
- ▶ Passenger numbers on river ferries are collected from operators and cover major routes, which are reviewed periodically. Data are considered to be fit for purpose.
- ▶ The cruise and long sea data are also supplied by operators and are regularly reviewed. The data are considered to be fit for purpose.

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>