



Department for Transport

## Road goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe: January to March 2016 (quarter 1)

### 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, including 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 data and statistics on the activity of overseas registered vehicles within the UK.

These statistics are updated on a quarterly basis.

**Next Update: August 2016**

### In this publication

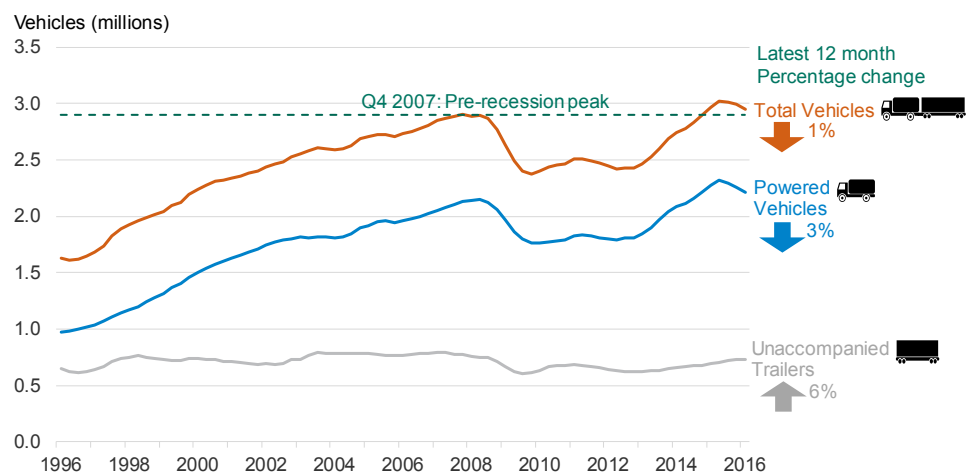
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## Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe decreased by 1 per cent in the year ending March 2016

### Rolling 12 month period (April 2015 - March 2016)

- Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe decreased by 24 thousand to **2.9 million**, however, this is still 1 per cent higher than in 2007 – the pre-recession peak.
- Of the total road goods vehicles, 2.2 million were **powered vehicles** and 0.7 million were **unaccompanied trailers**. This represents a 3 per cent decrease in powered vehicles and a 6 per cent increase in unaccompanied trailers over the last 12 months.

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



### Quarter 1 total (January - March 2016)

In quarter 1 2016, 716 thousand goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe: 540 thousand **powered vehicles** and 176 thousand **unaccompanied trailers**.

## Road goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe

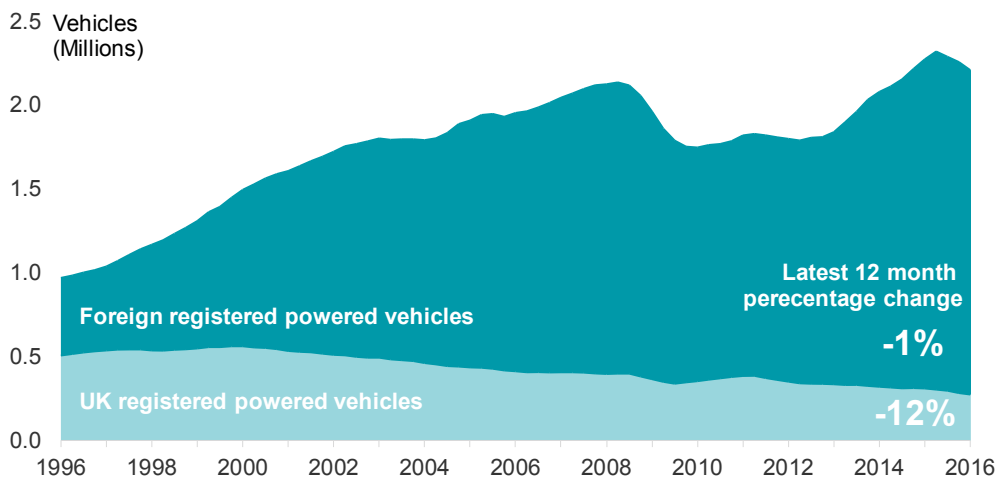
### Rolling 12 month period (April 2015 - March 2016)

There were just over 2.9 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 1 per cent lower than the previous 12 month total. The decrease was largely driven by a fall in the number of operators using the Dover to Calais route, which is part of the Dover Strait Port Group. Compared with the last 12 months, 95 thousand fewer goods vehicles travelled via the Dover Straits Port Group during this period.

The long term trend shows that the number of goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe increased by 79 per cent in the last 20 years.

During the latest 12 month period, powered vehicles fell by 3 per cent to 2.2 million. This was largely due to a decrease in the number of **foreign registered** powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, which fell by 1 per cent to just over 1.9 million, a change in direction to the long term upward trend that has been seen since 2009. **UK registered** powered vehicles were also down 12 per cent to 0.3 million. This was 21 per cent lower than in 2009.

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



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.

### Quarter 1 total (January - March 2016)

During quarter 1 2016, 716 thousand goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe (540 thousand **powered vehicles** and 176 thousand **unaccompanied trailers**). The volume of road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe in quarter 1 2016 was 6 per cent lower than the record high observed in quarter 1 2015.

### 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.

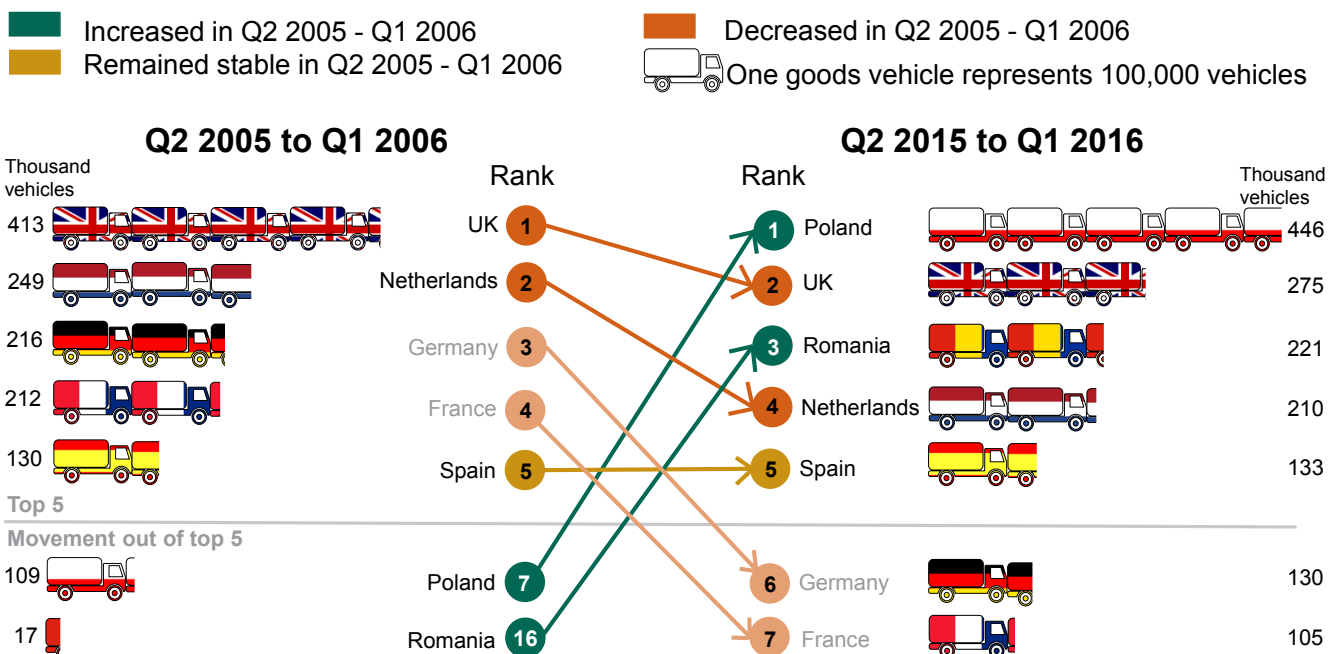
## Country of vehicle registration

### Rolling 12 month period (April 2015 - March 2016)

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 1.9 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 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 the latest 12 month period. This is a larger share than any other country, however, powered vehicles registered to Poland fell by 1 per cent on the previous 12 month period. Other countries which joined the EU since 2004 now account for 29 per cent of the total number of powered goods vehicles.

### Top 5 powered goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, by country of registration, rolling 12 month totals to March 2006 and March 2016



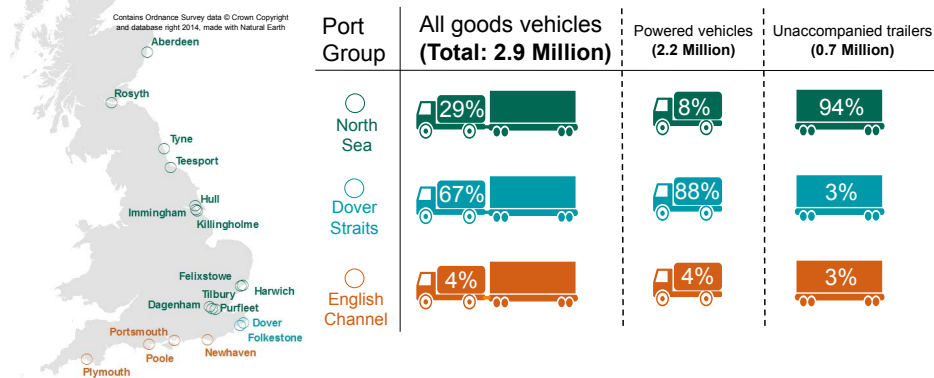
### Quarter 1 total (January - March 2016)

During the first quarter of 2016, 66 thousand powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe were **UK registered** (12 per cent of the total). This was a decrease of 34 per cent compared to ten years earlier (100 thousand).

**Foreign Registered** vehicles had a total of 474 thousand powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe in quarter 1 2016, accounting for 88 per cent of all powered vehicles. This was 8 per cent lower than quarter 1 2015, however, this was a 21 per cent increase since ten years ago. Generally, the volume of foreign registered vehicles have followed an upwards trend over the past ten years.

## Port group

### Goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe by port group, rolling 12 month period totals to March 2016



### Rolling 12 month period total (April 2015 - March 2016)

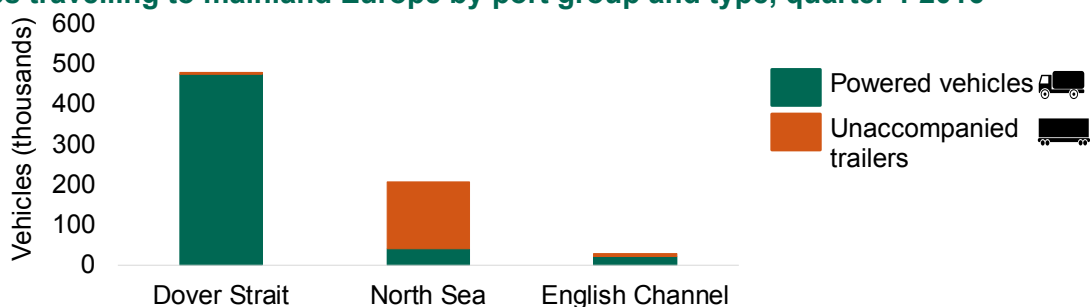
The proportions of goods vehicles travelling from each Great British port group to mainland Europe have remained broadly unchanged over the past decade.

Of the 2.9 million goods vehicles that travelled from Great Britain to mainland Europe, 0.9 million goods vehicles used the **North Sea Port Group** (29 per cent), 2.0 million used the **Dover Strait Port Group** (67 per cent) and 0.1 million used the **English Channel Port Group** (4 per cent). The majority of powered vehicles travelled via the Dover Strait Port Group: 1.9 million powered vehicles (88 per cent). Nine out of 10 unaccompanied trailers travelled from the North Sea Port Group: 0.7 million (94 per cent).

### Quarter 1 total (January - March 2016)

In quarter 1 2016; 480 thousand goods vehicles travelled from the Dover Strait Port Group, the majority of which were powered vehicles (99 per cent). Also, 28 thousand goods vehicles travelled from the English Channel Port Group, the majority of which were powered vehicles (80 per cent). In addition, 207 thousand goods vehicles travelled from the North Sea Port Group, the majority of which were unaccompanied trailers (80 per cent).

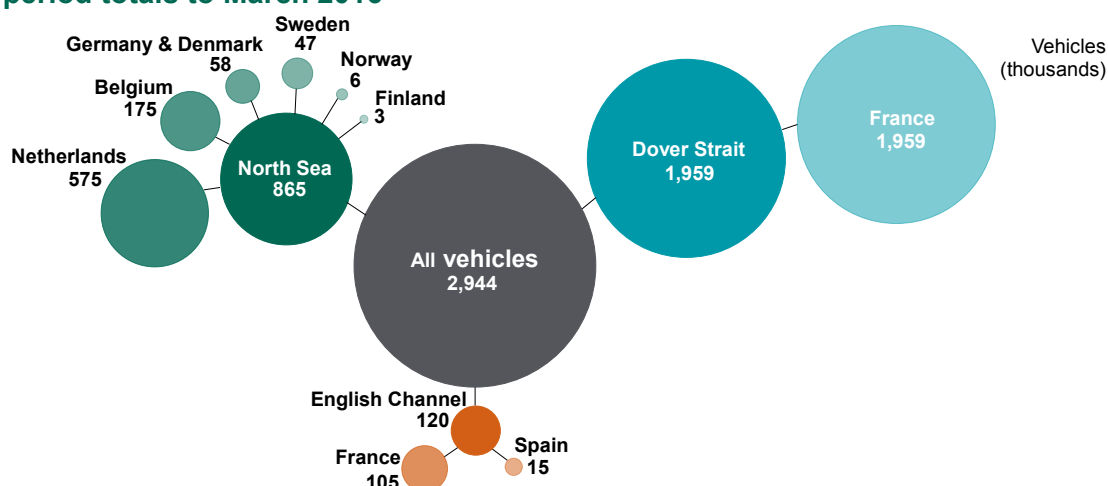
### Goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe by port group and type, quarter 1 2016



The trend seen in the Dover Strait and North Sea Port Groups may be associated with unaccompanied trailers being used for longer distances 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 the Dover Strait and North Sea Port Groups. Furthermore, the freight transport association have suggested that the UK has a growing shortage of qualified heavy goods vehicles drivers which may explain the increased tendency to use unaccompanied trailers.<sup>1</sup>

## Country of disembarkation

### Goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe by port group and country of disembarkation, rolling 12 month period totals to March 2016



### Rolling 12 month period total (April 2015 - March 2016)

Of all of the goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to mainland Europe, 70 per cent disembarked in **France**. The majority of those travelled from the **Dover Strait Port Group** (95 per cent), and the remainder from the **English Channel Port Group**. **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** (2.0 million).

Of the total goods vehicles which travelled from the **North Sea Port Group**, 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).

Of the smaller number of goods vehicles using the **English Channel Port Group**, 87 per cent disembarked in **France** and 13 per cent in **Spain**.

### Quarter 1 total (January - March 2016)

In quarter 1 2016, 496 thousand powered vehicles disembarked in **France** (92 per cent of the total). This is the third consecutive quarter-on-quarter decline, and represent a 9 per cent decrease compared to quarter 1 2015 (546 thousand powered vehicles) and the first quarter 1 decrease since 2012. This trend may be associated with disruptions at Calais in the summer of 2015.

In contrast, the number of powered vehicles disembarking in the **Netherlands** increased by 5 per cent compared to the same period a year earlier. This was an increase from 36 thousand in the first quarter of 2015, to 38 thousand. The volume of powered vehicles disembarking in other countries (most notably **Spain**, **Denmark** and **Sweden**) also increased by 12 per cent to 6 thousand.



This follows a similar trend in the number of sea passengers travelling to France, with decreases in the number of passengers travelling between Dover and Calais and an increase between Dover and Dunkirk. Sea passenger statistics can be seen [here](#).

## Background notes

1. 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](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>

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo formal statutory assessments to ensure they meet customer needs:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

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/roll-on-roll-off-international-freight-statistics-pre-release-access-list>

## 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, giving the number of powered vehicles and unaccompanied trailers carried on each route from GB to mainland Europe, and from monthly information supplied by Eurotunnel.

Disaggregation by country of registration of powered vehicles is supplied by most of the ferry operators and by Eurotunnel. Some operators identify 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.

Revised estimates for 2004 to 2007 were published in May 2008 following a data quality review. This resulted in a break in the series between 2003 and 2004. For full details see the Technical Note.

As a result of the review the survey was put on a statutory basis and since early 2008 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