



Road goods vehicles travelling to Europe: October to December 2017 (Quarter 4)

Change of scope

The scope of this series has been expanded to report the activity of road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe, rather than to only mainland Europe, with the inclusion of activity in the Irish Sea port group since 2004. This change in coverage has meant an increase in the total number of road goods vehicles now and historically being reported since 2004, particularly in the number of UK and Irish-registered powered vehicles, due to their prevalence on these routes. As such, the findings in this release are not directly comparable with previous publications in this series.

About this release

This statistical release summarises the number of road goods vehicles travelling to Europe. It collects information from roll-on roll-off (also called 'RoRo') ferry operators and Eurotunnel, on the number of powered vehicles and unaccompanied trailers, carried (outbound only) on all the ferry routes between Great Britain and Europe, plus the Channel Tunnel.

Domestic routes within the UK are excluded from the main findings, however information on routes to Northern Ireland is contained in a separate section, on [page 7](#) of this release.

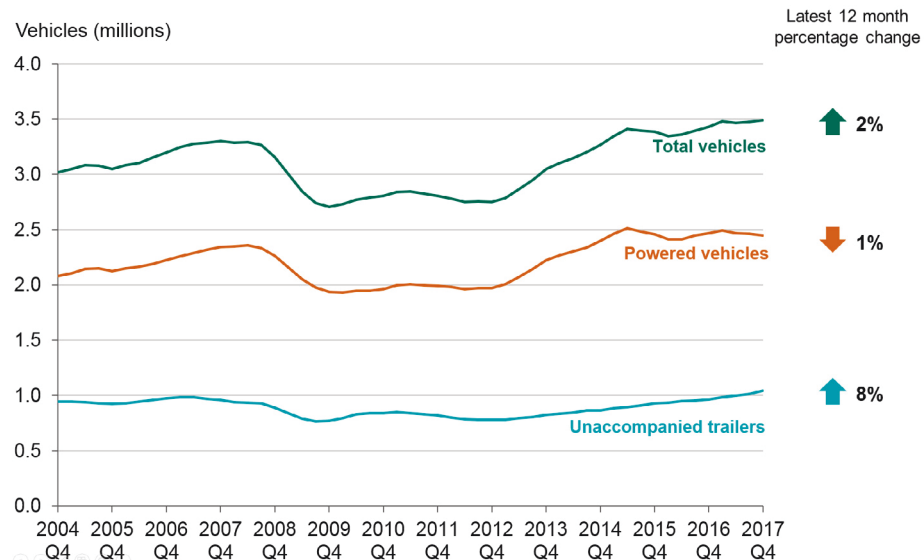
In this publication

Overall trends	p2
Country of vehicle registration	p3
Port group	p4
Country of disembarkation	p5
Island of Ireland	p7
Strengths and weaknesses	p8
Background notes	p8

In the year ending December 2017, 3.5 million road goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to Europe, a 2% increase compared to the previous year, of which:

- ▶ A total of 2.4 million were **powered vehicles**, which represents a 1% decrease compared to the year ending December 2016.
- ▶ A total of 1.0 million were **unaccompanied trailers**, which represents an 8% increase compared to the year ending December 2016.

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe, rolling 12 month totals, December 2004 to December 2017 (Table [RoRo0101](#))



Definitions



Powered vehicles (over 3.5 tonnes) includes: Rigid lorries, Tractors & Trailers (counted as one unit) and Tractive units only.



Unaccompanied trailers includes: tow-bar trailers and articulated semi trailers, not accompanied on the ferry by a powered unit.



Travelling to Europe: International ferry and Channel Tunnel routes leaving Great Britain for the commonly held geographical description of Europe, including all associated islands. See [background notes](#) for more details.

Overall trend in road goods vehicles travelling to Europe

A total of 3.5 million road goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to Europe in the year ending December 2017, comprising 2.4 million powered vehicles and 1.0 million unaccompanied trailers. This was 2% more than in the year ending December 2016.

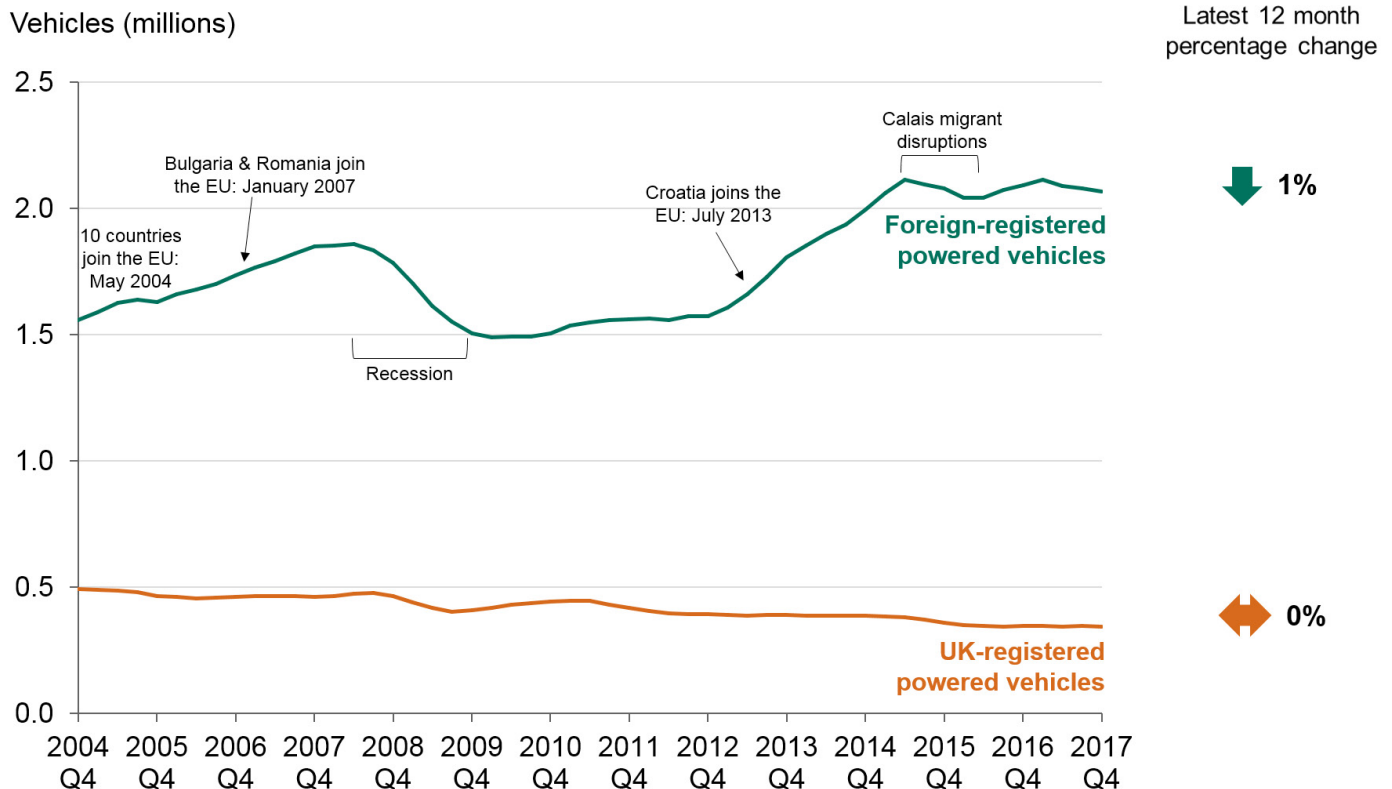
The long term trend shows that the total number of road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe has been increasing, with the figure in the year ending December 2017 being 16% higher than the figure in 2004.

During the year ending December 2017 the number of **foreign-registered** powered vehicles (2.1 million) travelling from Great Britain to Europe decreased by 1%. In comparison, the number of **UK-registered** powered vehicles (0.3 million) travelling from Great Britain to Europe remained unchanged compared to the previous year.

Since 2004, the number of UK-registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe had been in gradual decline, while the number of foreign-registered powered vehicles had been steadily increasing, with the exception of a recession related dip between 2008 and 2009. However, since 2015, the number of foreign-registered vehicles has remained between 2.0 and 2.1 million, suggesting the trend may be starting to level.

In 2004, 24% of powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe were UK-registered, compared to 14% in the latest 12 month period.

UK and foreign-registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe, rolling 12 month totals, December 2004 to December 2017 (Table [RoRo0101](#))



Country of vehicle registration

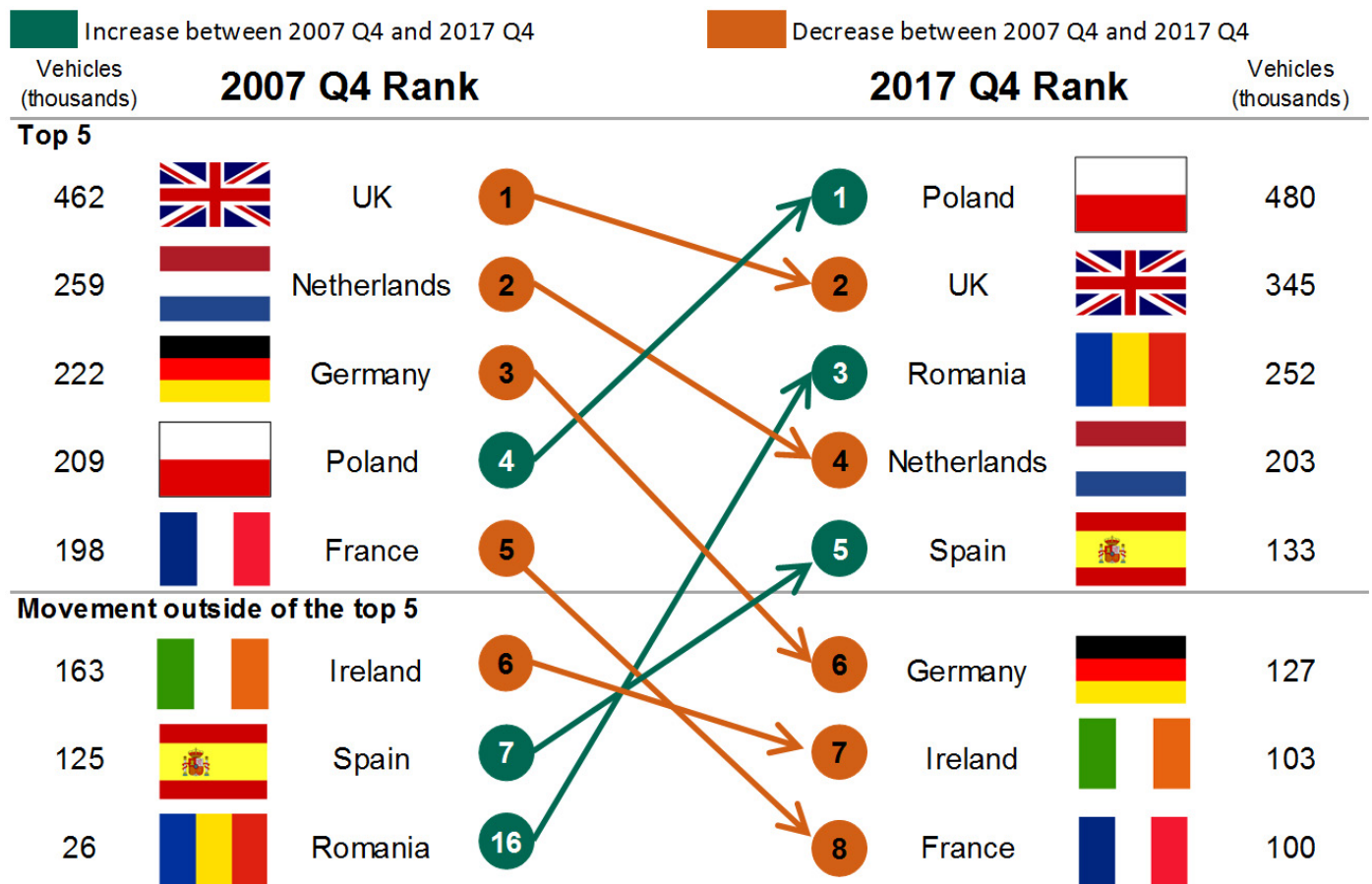
The proportion of powered vehicles, registered to countries such as the **UK, Netherlands, Germany** and **France**, that travelled from Great Britain to Europe has fallen as a number of other countries have greatly increased their share since joining the European Union (EU).

The volume of powered goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe registered to **Poland** has increased from 3% in 2004 when it first joined the EU, to 20% in the year ending December 2017 - the largest share of any country.

Since **Romania** joined the EU in 2007, its share of powered goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe has risen from 1%, to 10% in the year ending December 2017, making it the third largest nationality of HGVs leaving Great Britain to Europe.

The volume of powered vehicles registered to the **Republic of Ireland** decreased from 7% in 2004, to 4% in 2017.

Powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe, by country of registration, rolling 12 month totals, December 2007 to December 2017 (Table [RoRo0201](#))



In the year ending December 2017, the majority of powered vehicles that used the Dover Strait, the English Channel and the North Sea port groups were foreign-registered (88%), while the majority of powered vehicles that used the Irish Sea port group were UK-registered (59%).

In 2017, the volume of UK-registered powered vehicles that travelled to the Republic of Ireland accounted for 24% of all the UK-registered powered vehicles travelling to Europe. Foreign-registered vehicles, excluding Irish-registered vehicles, accounted for only 16% of all powered vehicles that disembarked in the Republic of Ireland.

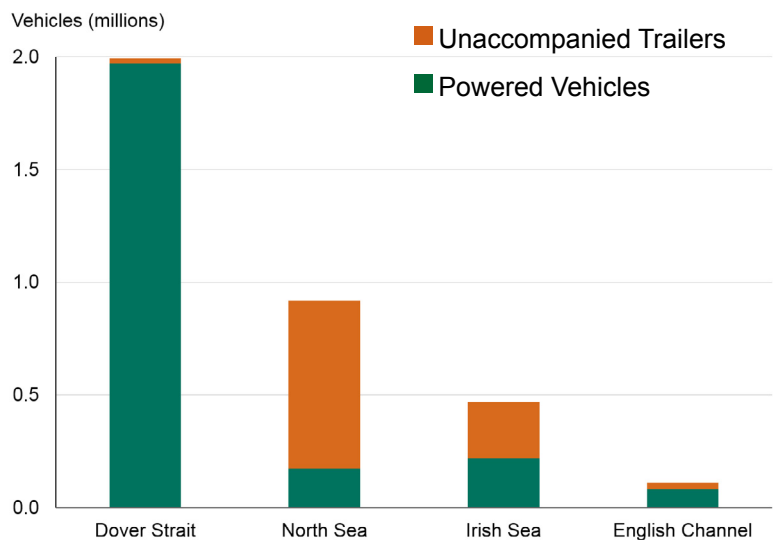
Port Group

In the year ending December 2017, more vehicles left through the Dover Strait port group than all of the other port groups combined. Around 2 million road goods vehicles travelling to Europe used the **Dover Strait** port group (57% of the total), 920 thousand used the **North Sea** port group (26% of the total), 468 thousand used the **Irish Sea** port group (13% of the total) and 111 thousand used the **English Channel** port group (3% of the total).

The majority of **powered vehicles** travelling to Europe left via the Dover Strait port group (81%), while the majority of **unaccompanied trailers** travelled from the North Sea port group (71%).

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe by port group and type, January 2017 to December 2017 (Tables [RoRo0401](#), [RoRo0501](#))

- Irish Sea
- North Sea ports
- English Channel
- Dover Strait ports

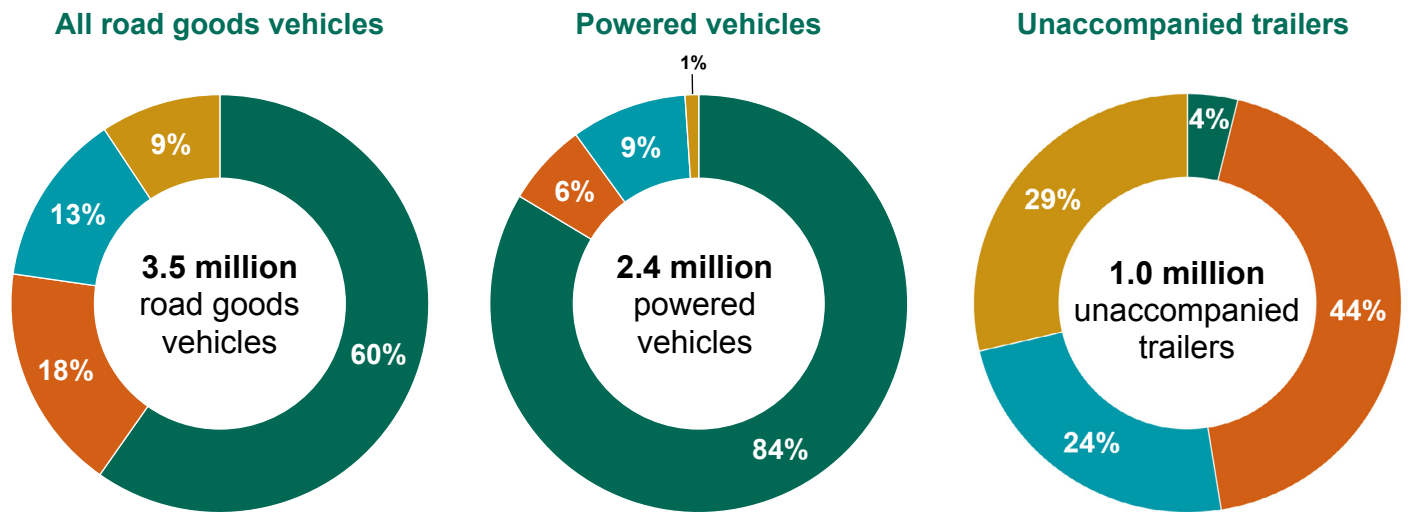


The chart shows that there is a prevalence of powered vehicles on shorter routes, such as to France from the **Dover Strait** port group, and a prevalence of unaccompanied trailers on longer routes, for example to the Netherlands from the **North Sea** port group. This is largely due to the fact that unaccompanied trailers are used on longer distance journeys instead of powered vehicles for less urgent cargo. There are also cost factors whereby haulage firms may seek to be more efficient by not using powered vehicles on longer routes due to the cost constraints of employing drivers, and the regulations on the number of hours drivers can operate. For the **Irish Sea** port group the overall number of powered vehicles and unaccompanied trailers is approximately equal.

All the patterns outlined above regarding the dominance of activity in the Dover Strait port group as well as the overall split between powered vehicles and unaccompanied trailers, are long term established trends which have been present for the previous 10 years.

Country of disembarkation

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe, by country of disembarkation, January 2017 to December 2017 (Tables [RoRo0302](#), [RoRo0402](#), [RoRo0502](#))



Percentages are subject to rounding

■ France ■ Netherlands ■ Republic of Ireland ■ Other

'Other' predominantly includes Belgium, along with Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Norway, Russia, Spain and Sweden.

France is the most common country of disembarkation for all road goods vehicles and powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe, accounting for 60% of all road goods vehicles and 84% of powered vehicles. The majority of road goods vehicles which disembarked in France travelled from the **Dover Strait** port group (96%) with the remainder from the **English Channel** port group. In contrast only 4% of unaccompanied trailers were destined to France. France is the only country of disembarkation for the Channel Tunnel.

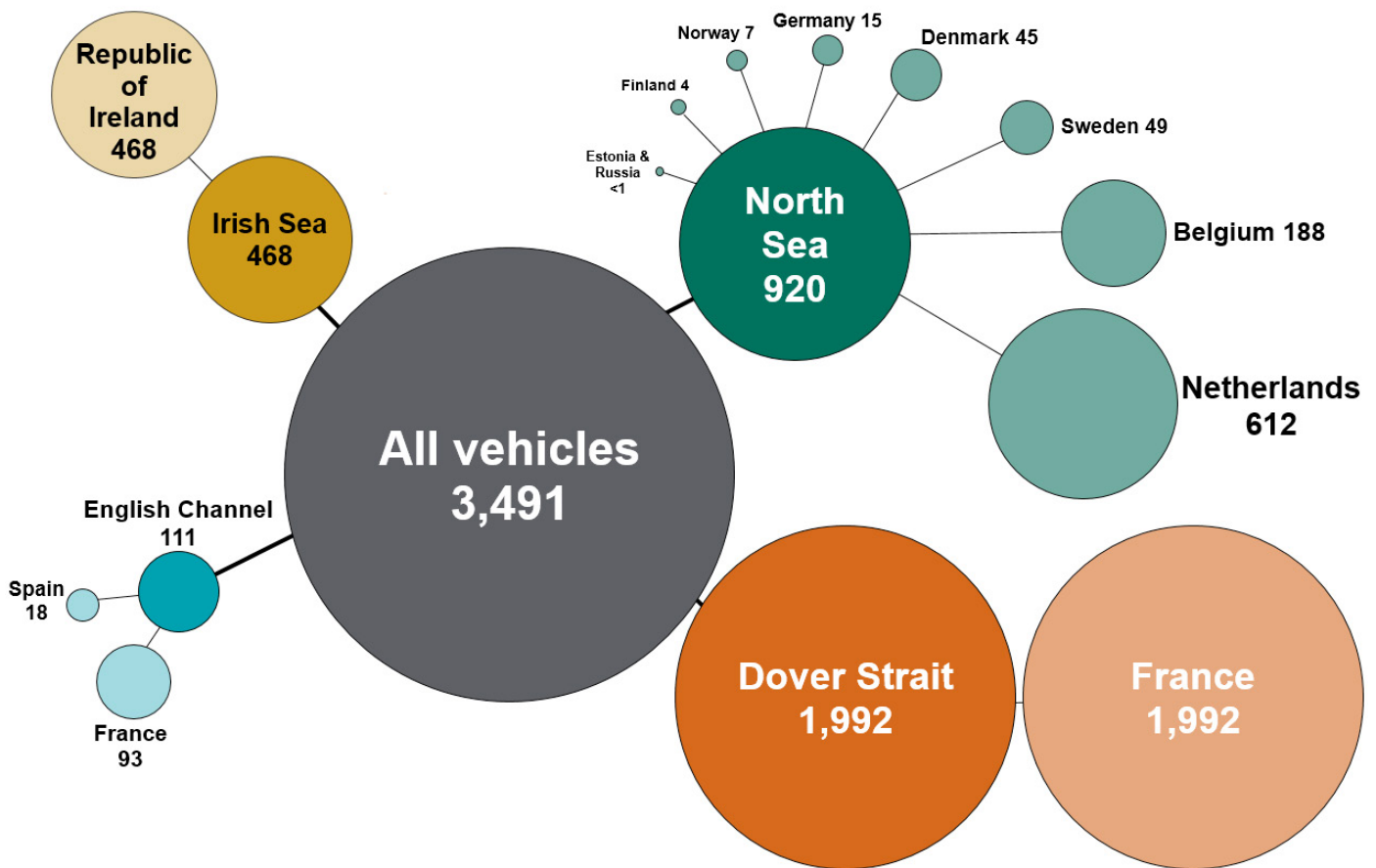
In comparison, the **Netherlands** is the most common country of disembarkation for unaccompanied trailers travelling from Great Britain to Europe, accounting for 44% of all unaccompanied trailers. In contrast only 6% of powered vehicles disembarked in the Netherlands.

The Republic of Ireland is the second most common country of disembarkation for both powered vehicles (9%) and unaccompanied trailers (24%).

Belgium is the most predominant country in the 'Other' category, accounting for 58% of all road goods vehicles in this category. More information on different countries of disembarkation can be found in Tables [RoRo0302](#), [RoRo0402](#), [RoRo0502](#) online.

Country of disembarkation

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe by port group and country of disembarkation, January 2017 to December 2017 (Table [RoRo0302](#))



Road goods vehicles (Thousands)
Numbers are subject to rounding

The majority (67%) of road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe via the **North Sea** port group in the year ending December 2017 were destined for the **Netherlands** (0.6 million), whilst 20% disembarked in **Belgium** (0.2 million).

Most road goods vehicles travelling through the **English Channel** port group in the year ending December 2017 were destined for **France** (84%) with the remainder destined for **Spain**; whilst all road goods vehicles travelling through the **Dover Strait** port group were destined for France.

Since 2008, the **Republic of Ireland** has been the only country of disembarkation for the **Irish Sea** port group - prior to this there was also a single route to Portugal. The total number of vehicles ultimately travelling to the Republic of Ireland from Great Britain will be higher than what is reported here as vehicles that travel through the Irish Sea port group and continue on to the Republic of Ireland via Northern Ireland are not captured by these data. However, there is information detailing activity between Great Britain and the island of Ireland as a whole on page 7 of this release.

Island of Ireland

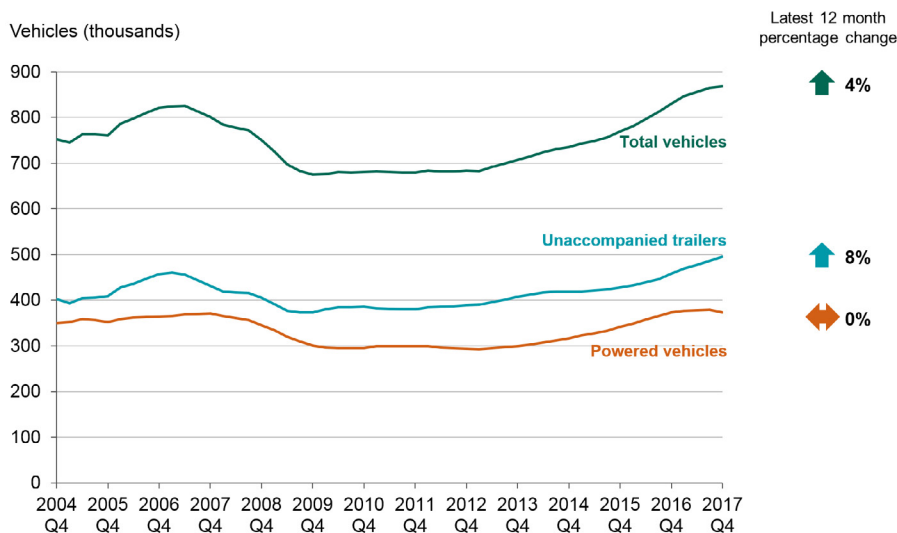
Vehicles travelling on domestic ferry routes from Great Britain to Northern Ireland are not included in the main part of this release; however this section includes statistics on those vehicles in order to give a complete picture of activity travelling from Great Britain to the **island of Ireland**, i.e. both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland combined. Detailed statistics can be found in Table [RoRo1001](#).

Overall trends

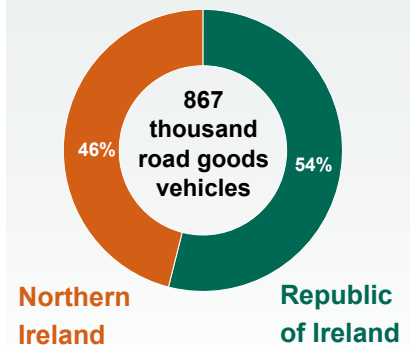
In the year ending December 2017, a total of 867 thousand road goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to the island of Ireland, a 4% increase compared to the year ending December 2016, of which:

- ▶ A total of 373 thousand (43%) were **powered vehicles**, a similar level compared to the year ending December 2016. Of these, 219 thousand (59%) disembarked in the Republic of Ireland and 154 thousand (41%) disembarked in Northern Ireland.
- ▶ A total of 494 thousand (57%) were **unaccompanied trailers**, an 8% increase compared to the year ending December 2016. Of these, 249 thousand (50%) disembarked in the Republic of Ireland and 246 thousand (50%) disembarked in Northern Ireland.

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to the island of Ireland, rolling 12 month totals, December 2004 to December 2017 (Table [RoRo1001](#))



Country of disembarkation for Irish Sea ports, 2017

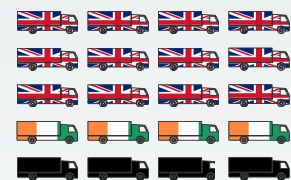


Country of vehicle registration

In the year ending December 2017, powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to the island of Ireland were predominantly either UK or Irish-registered (80% in total). However, there are stark contrasts in the proportion of UK and Irish-registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain using the Irish Sea port group:

- ▶ The proportion of **UK-registered powered vehicles** disembarking in Northern Ireland is 89%, compared to only 38% for the Republic of Ireland.
- ▶ Conversely, the proportion of **Irish-registered powered vehicles** disembarking in Northern Ireland is only 7%, compared to 30% for the Republic of Ireland.

Country of vehicle registration to the island of Ireland, 2017



In 2017, powered vehicles travelling to the island of Ireland were predominantly UK-registered (59%), with a further 21% being Irish-registered, and 20% registered elsewhere or being unknown.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

The figures in this release are derived from quarterly returns provided by the roll-on roll-off ferry operators, who provide the number of powered vehicles (by country of registration) and unaccompanied trailers carried on each ferry route from Great Britain to Europe. Equivalent information for the number of powered vehicles travelling through the Channel Tunnel are provided by Eurotunnel.

Figures for outward traffic only are presented here; up to 1978 inward traffic was also recorded, but as it was similar to outward traffic, the data requirement was discontinued to save respondent effort. Ferry routes to countries outside Europe, such as Morocco, are not included here.

Since a data quality review in early 2008, survey returns have been supplied by all roll-on roll-off ferry operators, which has resulted in more complete reporting of country of registration. Information on the country of registration for powered vehicles is derived by some operators 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.

Further information about the statistics and methodology in this report can be found in the [Roll-on Roll-off International Freight Statistics notes and definitions](#).

The scope of this publication series has been expanded to report activity in the Irish Sea port group since 2004, which includes routes to the Republic of Ireland and Portugal. This change in coverage has meant an increase in the total number of road goods vehicles now and historically being reported since 2004, particularly in the number of UK and Irish-registered powered vehicles, due to their prevalence on routes in the Irish Sea port group. As such, the findings in this release are not directly comparable with previous publications in this series. To accompany this release, a new table (Table [RoRo1001](#)) shows statistics on the number of road goods vehicles travelling to the island of Ireland. The scope of this series has been expanded as part of an ongoing quality review to meet changes in users needs.

Background notes

Accompanying data tables which give further detail on the key results presented in this statistical release are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-freight-domestic-and-international-statistics>.

Further information such as definitions and background on the statistics can be found in the [Roll-on Roll-off International Freight Statistics notes and definitions](#).

Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/roll-on-roll-off-international-freight-statistics-pre-release-access-list>.



To hear more about DfT statistics publications as they are released please follow us on Twitter via our @DfTstats account: <http://www.twitter.com/DfTstats>. TWITTER, TWEET, RETWEET and the Twitter logo are trademarks of Twitter, Inc. or its affiliates.