



Road goods vehicles travelling to Europe: October 2017 to September 2018

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 on all the ferry routes from 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 4](#) of this release.

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3.5 million road goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to Europe in the twelve months ending September 2018, unchanged from the previous year. This comprised of:

Compared to the 12 months ending September 2017

2.4 million powered vehicles



↓ 2%

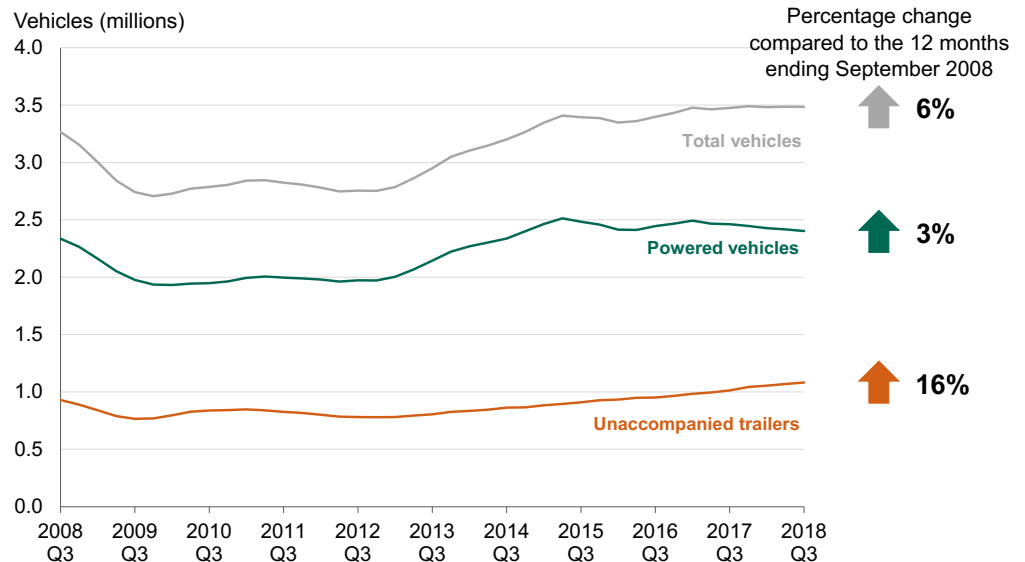
1.1 million unaccompanied trailers



↑ 7%

The number of road goods vehicles that travelled from Great Britain to Europe in the twelve months ending September 2018 is now 6% higher than the pre-recession levels, 10 years earlier. Over the last 3 years, the number of road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe, has been broadly stable at around 3.5 million.

Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe, rolling 12 month totals, September 2008 to September 2018 (Table RORO101)



Definitions



Powered vehicles (over 3.5 tonnes) includes: Rigid lorries, tractors & trailers (counted as one unit) and tractive units only.



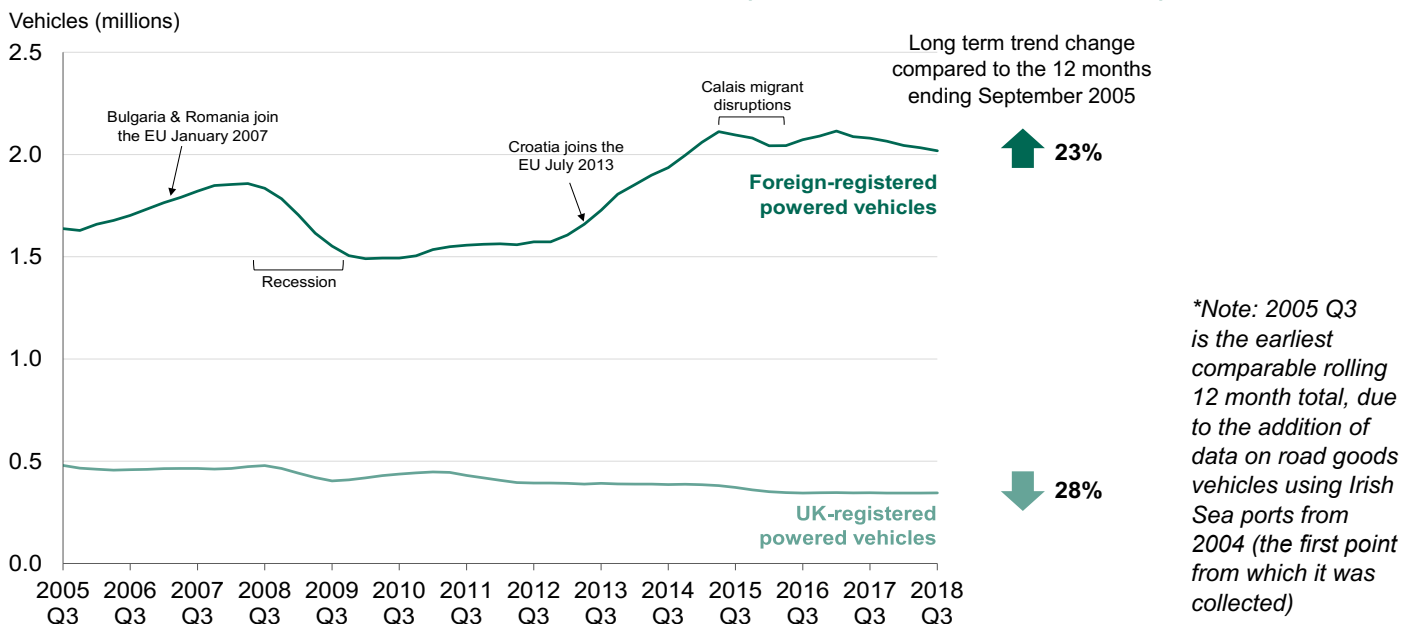
Unaccompanied trailers includes: tow bar trailers and articulated semi trailers, not accompanied on the ferry by a powered unit.

Country of vehicle registration

There have been more **foreign-registered** vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe than **UK-registered** vehicles since 1997. In the twelve months ending September 2018, the number of foreign-registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe (2.0 million) decreased by 3% compared to the previous year. The number of UK-registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe (0.3 million) remained unchanged. Note: These figures will not sum to the total number of powered vehicles (2.4 million) given in previous page due to a combination of rounding and the omission of unknown vehicles.

Generally, the number of UK-registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe has been in gradual decline since 2005, while the number of foreign-registered powered vehicles has been steadily increasing with the exception of the recession related fall between 2008 and 2013. However, since 2015, the number of foreign-registered vehicles travelling to Europe has remained between 2.0 and 2.1 million, which reflects the stabilising trend of road goods vehicles travelling to Europe.

Chart 1: UK and foreign-registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe, rolling 12 month totals, September 2005 to September 2018 (Table [RORO0601](#), [RORO0701](#))



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



The volume of powered goods vehicles registered to **Poland** has increased from when it first joined the EU in 2004 (3%), to 20% in the twelve months ending September 2018 - **the largest share of any country**.



The **UK** was the most prevalent country of vehicle registration ten years ago. However, it is now second with a 14% (0.3 million) share of all powered goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe.



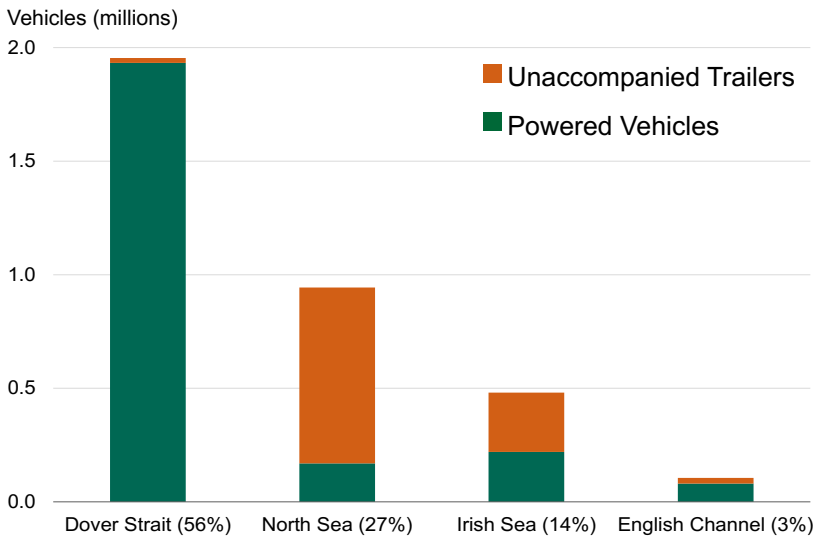
Since **Romania** joined the EU in 2007, its share of powered goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe has risen from 2% to 10% in the twelve months ending September 2018, making it the third largest country of vehicle registration.

More information on country of vehicle registration for other EU countries can be found in Table [RORO0201](#).

Country of disembarkation

In the twelve months ending September 2018, more vehicles left Great Britain via the Dover Strait port group (56%) than all of the other port groups combined. The majority (80%) of **powered vehicles** travelling to Europe left via the shorter routes on the Dover Strait port group, whereas the majority (72%) of **unaccompanied trailers** travelled via the longer North Sea port group routes.

Chart 2: Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe by port group and type, October 2017 to September 2018 (Tables [RORO0401](#), [RORO0501](#))

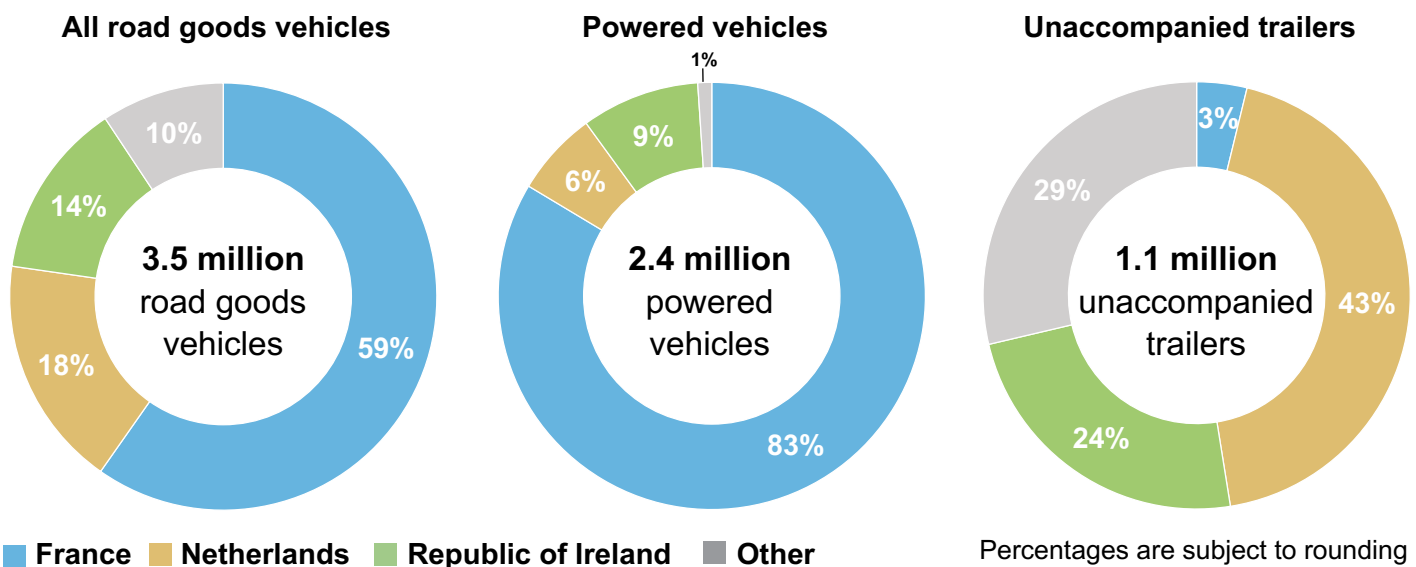


Port Groups

There are four port groups: **Dover Strait** (Ferry routes from Dover, Folkestone and Ramsgate; along with road goods vehicles using the Channel Tunnel), **North Sea** (All ports on the east coast of Great Britain, north of and including the Thames estuary), **Irish Sea** (All ports on the west coast of Great Britain), and **English Channel** (All ports on the south coast of Great Britain, west of Folkestone).

The prevalence of powered vehicles (those accompanied by drivers to allow a continuous, faster journey) on shorter routes is a result of these routes being used to transport more urgent freight such as machine parts or perishable goods. France is the most common country of disembarkation for powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe, accounting for 83% of all powered vehicles. Freight which is less time critical is often shipped on the longer and slower routes, using unaccompanied trailers which are subject to stoppages in transition. Netherlands is the most common country of disembarkation for unaccompanied trailers travelling from Great Britain to Europe, accounting for 43% of all unaccompanied trailers. Detailed statistics on road goods vehicles travelling to Europe by country of disembarkation and port group can be found [here](#).

Chart 3: Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to Europe by country of disembarkation, October 2017 to September 2018 (Tables [RORO0301](#), [RORO0401](#), [RORO0501](#))



Percentages are subject to rounding

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

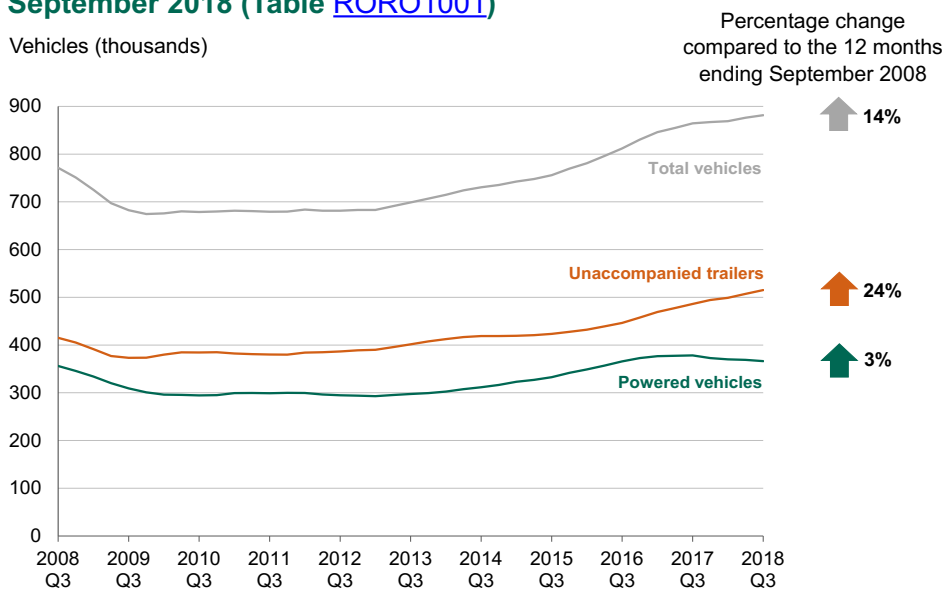
Vehicles travelling on domestic ferry routes from Great Britain to Northern Ireland are not included in the main part of this release; however this section includes statistics on those vehicles in order to give a complete picture of activity travelling from Great Britain to the **island of Ireland**, i.e. both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland combined. Detailed statistics can be found in Table [RORO1001](#).

Overall trends

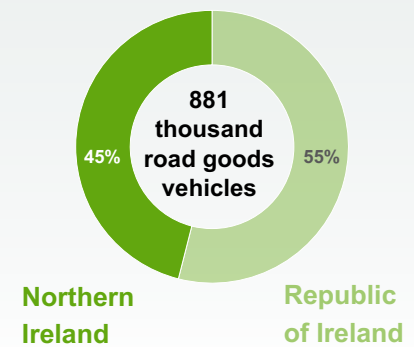
In the twelve months ending September 2018, a total of 881 thousand road goods vehicles travelled from Great Britain to the island of Ireland, a 2% increase compared to the year ending September 2017, of which:

- ▶ 366 thousand (42%) were **powered vehicles**, a 3% decrease compared to the twelve months ending September 2017. Of these, 220 thousand (60%) disembarked in the Republic of Ireland and 146 thousand (40%) disembarked in Northern Ireland.
- ▶ 515 thousand (58%) were **unaccompanied trailers**, a 6% increase compared to the twelve months ending September 2017. Of these, 261 thousand (51%) disembarked in the Republic of Ireland and 254 thousand (49%) disembarked in Northern Ireland.

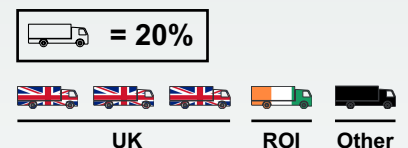
Chart 4: Road goods vehicles travelling from Great Britain to the island of Ireland, rolling 12 month totals, September 2008 to September 2018 (Table [RORO1001](#))



Country of disembarkation for Irish Sea port group, October 2017 - September 2018



Country of vehicle registration to the island of Ireland, October 2017 - September 2018



*ROI = Republic of Ireland

In the twelve months ending September 2018, powered vehicles travelling to the island of Ireland were predominantly UK-registered (59%), with a further 21% being Irish-registered, and 21% registered elsewhere or unknown.

Country of vehicle registration

In the twelve months ending September 2018, powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to the island of Ireland were predominantly either UK or Irish-registered (79% in total). However, there are stark contrasts in the proportion of UK and Irish-registered powered vehicles travelling from Great Britain to the island of Ireland:

- ▶ 146 thousand powered vehicles disembarked in Northern Ireland, of which 90% were UK-registered and 7% were Irish registered.
- ▶ 220 thousand powered vehicles disembarked in the Republic of Ireland, of which 38% were UK-registered and 30% were Irish registered.

Note: Remaining proportion of powered vehicles disembarking in Northern Ireland or in the Republic of Ireland were registered elsewhere or unknown

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

The figures in this release are derived from quarterly returns provided by the roll-on roll-off (also called 'RoRo') ferry operators, who are requested to provide the number of powered vehicles by country of vehicle 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. A list of active routes recorded since 2004 can be found in Table [RORO0901](#).

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 the country of vehicle registration. However, while information on the country of registration for powered vehicles is derived by some operators from the vehicle registration mark, others estimate the nationality from the manifest or waybill, or in some cases, use the country of booking as a proxy for the country of registration. This means there may be discrepancies in the reported nationality of powered heavy goods vehicles and their actual nationality of registration. Users should exercise caution if using country of vehicle registration for analysis.

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](#).

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>.



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