



Department for Transport

Domestic Road Freight Statistics, United Kingdom 2019

About this release

This statistical release summarises the latest statistics on the domestic activity of GB-registered HGVs operating in the UK, up to year ending 31 December 2019. The information is derived from the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Great Britain (CSRGT GB).

This release also summarises economic statistics about HGVs and the road freight industry.

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Domestic road freight activity increases in 2019

In 2019, for GB-registered HGVs operating in the UK. There were:

Compared to 2018



1.44

↑ 2%

billion tonnes of goods lifted



154

↑ 1%

billion tonne kilometres of goods moved



19.1

↑ 2%

billion vehicle kilometres travelled

- ▶ **Goods lifted** in the UK by GB-registered heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) in the twelve months ending December 2019 increased by 2% to 1.44 billion tonnes compared with the previous twelve months
- ▶ **Goods moved** in the UK by GB-registered HGVs in the twelve months ending December 2019 increased by 1% to 154 billion tonne kilometres compared with the previous twelve months.

[See [Table RFS0101](#) for detailed statistics]

Definitions



Goods lifted: the weight of goods carried, measured in tonnes.



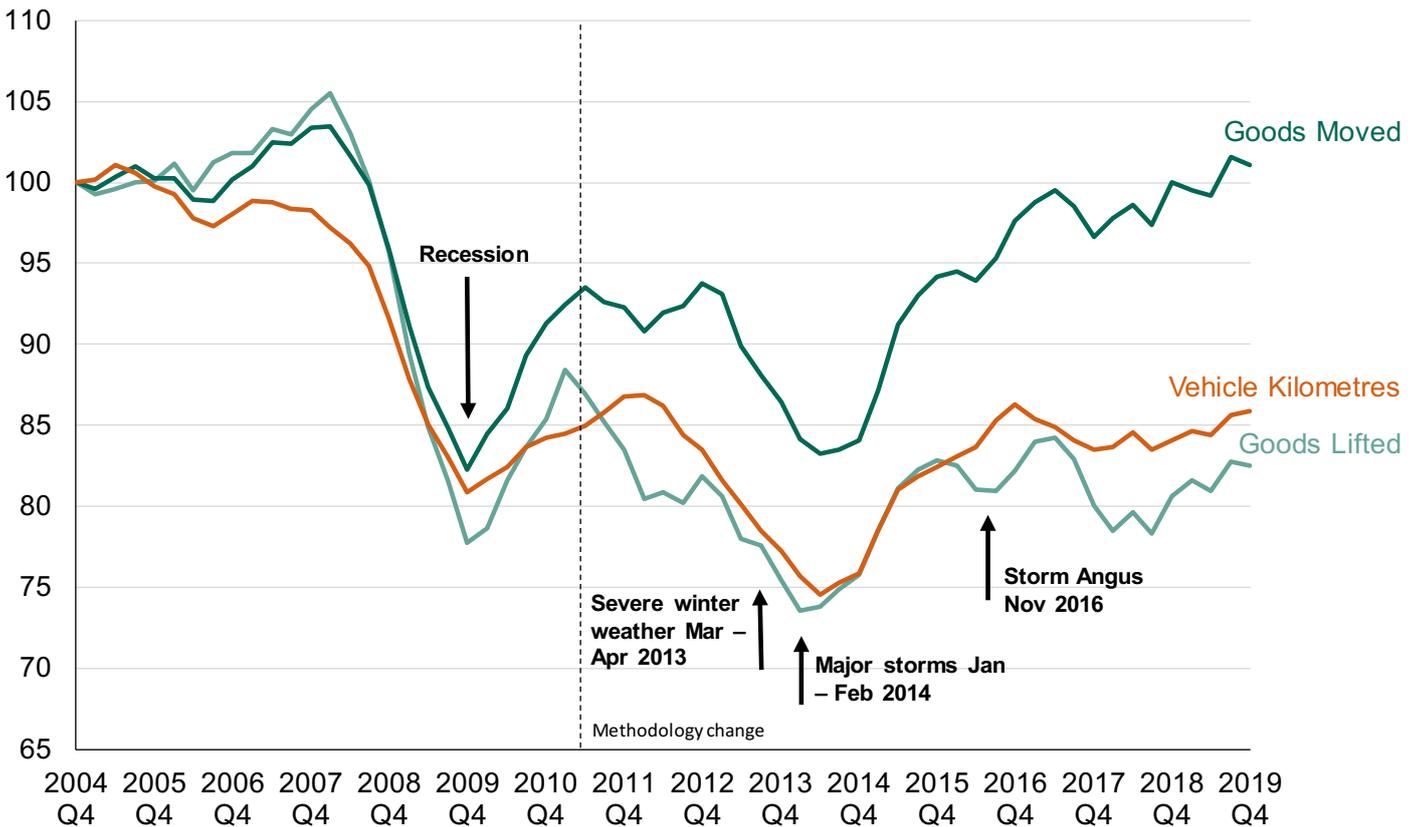
Goods moved: the weight of goods carried, multiplied by the distance

Overall trends in domestic road freight

Compared to ten years earlier, 2009 (recession period), the level of goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs is 6% higher, while the amount of goods moved is 23% higher in 2019. Goods lifted and goods moved have been gradually increasing since the recession period, however, both series experienced weather related declines (2013 - 2014 and 2016).

Chart 1: Trend in goods moved, goods lifted and vehicle kilometres by GB-registered HGVs, rolling 4 quarter totals, 2004 Q4 to 2019 Q4, indexed to 2004 Q4 [[Table RFS0101](#)]

Index: 2004 Q4 = 100



Note:

Between 2011 quarter 1 and 2, a number of changes were made to how the road freight survey data were processed. Caution should therefore be used when making comparisons over periods denoted by dotted lines within the charts in this publication. See the [Road Freight Statistics methodology note](#) for more information.

Average Length of Haul

The **average length of haul** (107 kilometres) for GB-registered HGVs in 2019 was similar to that in 2018 (108 kilometres). The average length of haul for articulated HGVs (136 kilometres) continues to be longer than that of rigid HGVs (59 kilometres) [[Table RFS0108](#)].

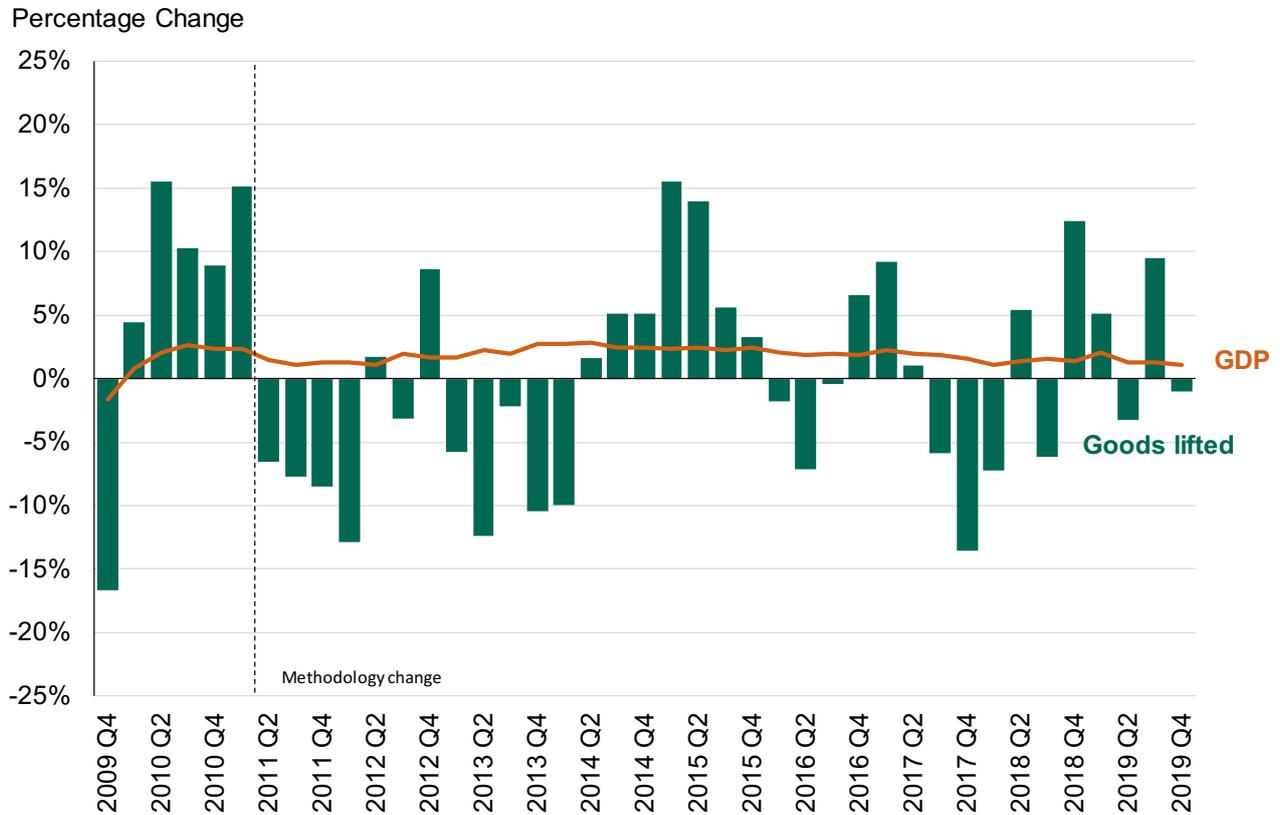
Definitions

Length of haul: measured in kilometres is defined as tonne kilometres divided by tonnes lifted.

Economic profile of the road freight sector

Between the 2009 recession and 2019, GDP has been fairly stable. There have been fluctuations in the amount of **goods lifted** in the UK by GB-registered HGVs,

Chart 2: Goods lifted and GDP, quarter on previous year's same quarter, 2009 Q4 to 2019 Q4



In context - The year 2019 compared to 2018:



Source: [Office for National Statistics](#)



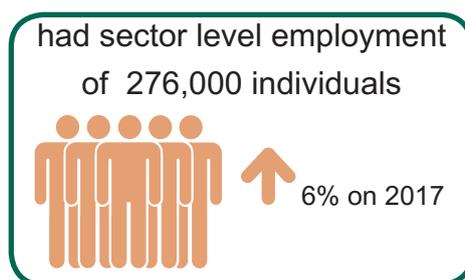
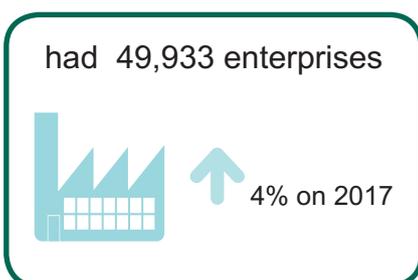
Source: [Department for Transport, Vehicle Licensing Statistics](#)



Source: [Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy](#)

Road Freight Enterprises

Latest estimates from the [Annual Business Survey](#) show that in 2018 the road freight sector:



Commodities

In 2019, the 5 most common commodity divisions, representing 68% of all goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs in the UK, were: [\[Table RFS0104\]](#)

Rank	Commodity	Goods lifted (million tonnes)	Proportion of all goods lifted
1	 Food products	261	18%
2	 Groupage	230	16%
3	 Waste related products	183	13%
4	 Metal ore and other mining and quarrying	155	11%
5	 Glass, cement and other non-metallic mineral products	143	10%

Definitions

Commodity: goods are classified into commodity divisions and grouped by the 'standard goods classification for transport statistics 2007'.

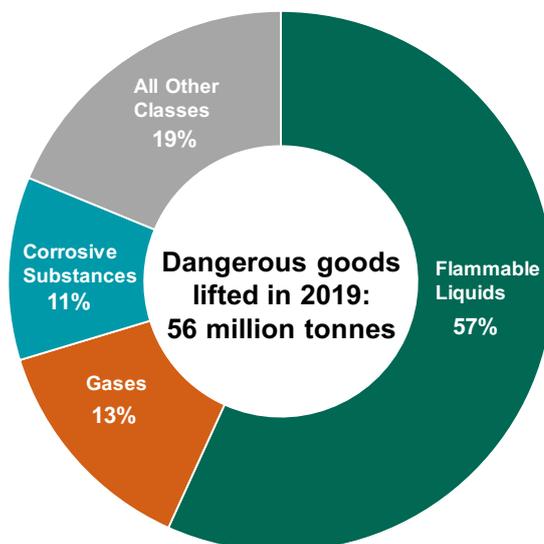
Groupage: when, for mixed consignments, no single commodity makes up 75% or more of the consignment weight.

In 2019, the largest sub-commodity category, at 147 million tonnes, was stone, sand, gravel, clay, peat and other mining/quarrying products; which represented 10% of all goods lifted in 2019.

Dangerous goods

In 2019, 4% of all goods lifted domestically were declared as dangerous goods, accounting for 56 million tonnes. Dangerous goods in 2019, were predominantly flammable liquids (32 million tonnes, 57%) e.g. alcoholic beverages, crude petroleum, fuel and some chemicals.

Chart 3: Dangerous goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs by dangerous goods class, 2019 [\[Table RFS0118\]](#)



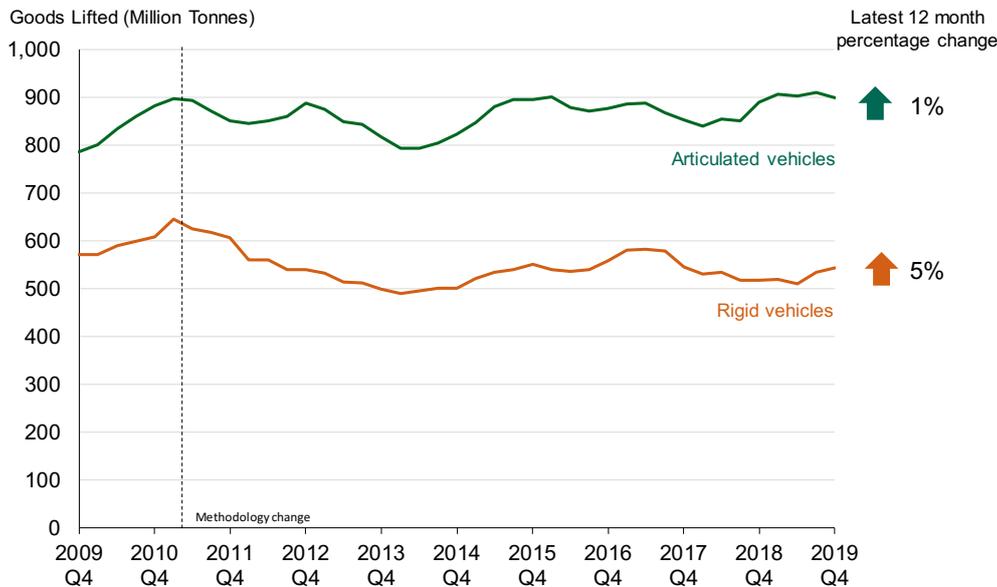
The 9 dangerous goods classes

- Flammable liquids
- Gases
- Corrosive substances
- Flammable solids
- Oxidisers & organic peroxides
- Toxic & infectious substances
- Radioactive materials
- Explosives
- Miscellaneous substances

Types of vehicles

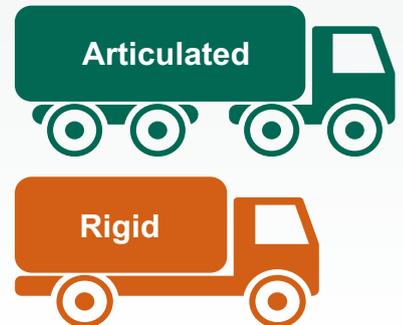
GB-registered HGVs range from a gross vehicle weight of 3.5 tonnes to 44 tonnes, with articulated vehicles - which tend to be longer, larger and heavier - carrying more freight compared to rigid HGVs. In 2019, articulated vehicles carried 62% of freight (897 million tonnes), whereas rigid vehicles only carried 38% of freight (542 million tonnes).

Chart 4: Goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs, by type of vehicle, 2009 Q4 to 2019 Q4 [[Table RFS0109](#)]



Definitions

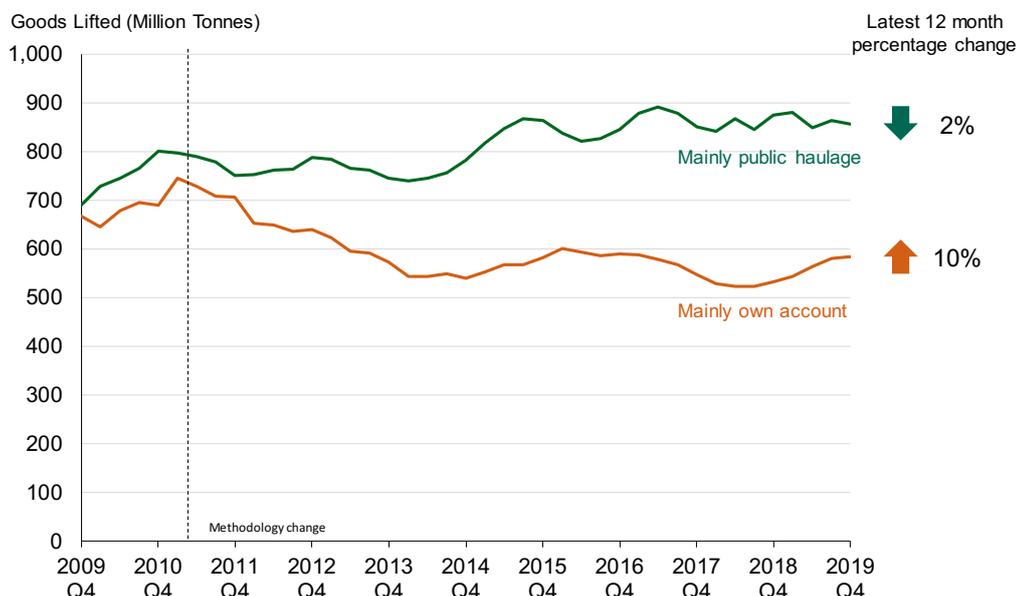
Gross vehicle weight: the total weight of the vehicle plus its carrying capacity (3.5 to 44t).



Mode of operation

Road freight activity can be split between own account operators and public haulage operators. Public haulage operators usually account for a higher proportion of activity than own account operators, with public haulage operators representing 59% (856 million tonnes) of all goods lifted in 2019.

Chart 5: Goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs, by mode of working, 2009 Q4 to 2019 Q4 [[Table RFS0114](#)]



Definitions

Own account operators: those who carry goods only for their own trade or business.

Public haulage operators: those who carry goods for other companies or individuals.

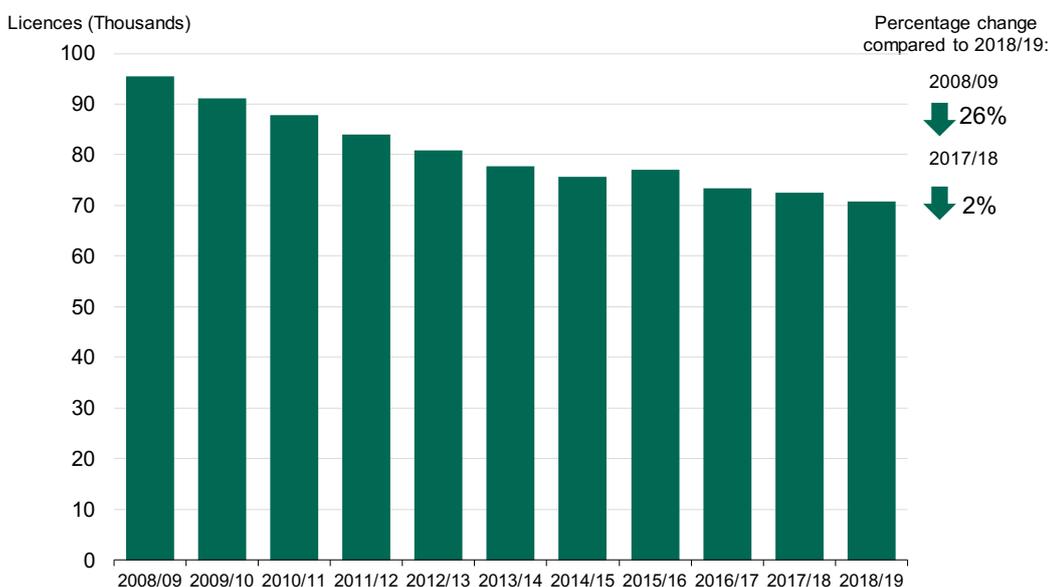
Overview of the road freight sector

Fleet size and operator licences

The latest [vehicle licensing statistics](#) show that at the end of 2019 there were around 501,500 HGVs licensed in Great Britain, of which around 405,400 were **taxed** as 'good vehicles' (remaining vehicles would be exempt from tax or taxed as private HGVs), a small decrease from 2018.

The number of goods vehicle operator licences in issue in Great Britain declined to under 100,000 in 2008/09 falling further to 70,800 in 2018/19. However, during this period the average size of an operators' fleet increased from 3.7 vehicles to 5.2 vehicles per licence, meaning fewer individual licences covering more vehicles.

Chart 6: All goods vehicle operator licences in issue, Great Britain, 2008/09 to 2018/19 [[Traffic Commissioners' annual report](#)]



Average fleet size increases

↑ 39%

from 3.7 vehicles per licence in 2008/09 to 5.2 vehicles per licence in 2018/19.

HGV driver numbers

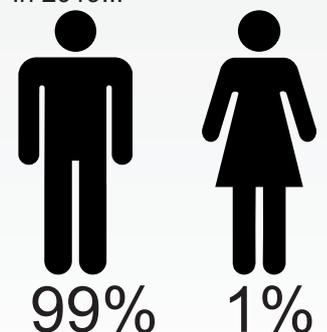
[Annual population survey](#) estimates show that there was around 300,100 HGV drivers employed across all sectors in 2019, 3% less than in 2018 where around 308,500 were employed.

HGV driver working time and pay

In the Road Transport (Working Time) Regulations 2005 it is stated that HGV drivers must not exceed, in a weeks working, an average of 48 hours. The [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#) illustrates that the average (median) number of total paid hours worked per week by HGV drivers, including working overtime, has been 48 hours since the regulation was introduced and came into effect in 2005. In 2019, the average (median) gross hourly pay for an HGV driver was £12.00, an increase from £11.68 in 2018.

Gender split

In 2019...



...Most of the HGV drivers in employment in the UK are male.

Inter-modal road freight activity

The 1.44 billion tonnes of goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs in the UK in 2019, equated to 167 million HGV journeys, of which 3% (4.4 million journeys) involved at least one element of inter-modal activity. This equates to 77 million tonnes of freight (5%) using road and at least one other different mode of transport, of which:



87% of inter-modal journeys (67 million tonnes) began or ended at a shipping dock



9% (7 million tonnes) began or ended at a rail siding/terminal



4% (3 million tonnes) began or ended at an airport

Percentages may not sum to 100%

Definitions

Inter-modal:

There are multiple nuanced definitions of journeys involving freight movement across modes. Solely for the purpose of these statistics, these types of journeys and freight involved shall be referred to as "Inter-modal" freight.

Journey:

goods transported from an origin to a destination by an HGV.

Method of transportation

definitions can be found on page 9.

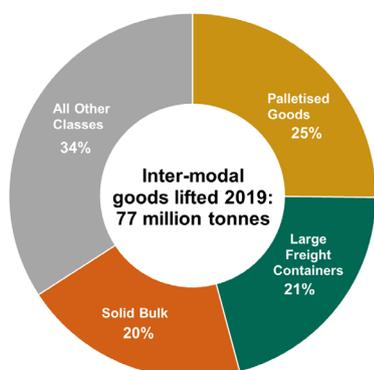
Commodities

The three most common commodities transported on inter-modal trips in 2019 were:

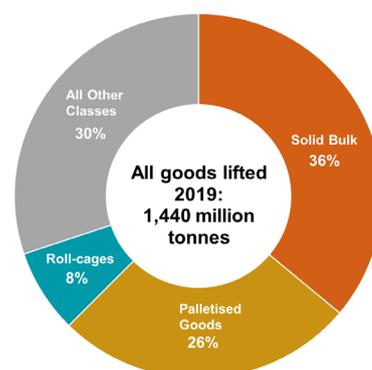
- ▶ Food products 11.6 million tonnes (15% of inter-modal tonnage)
- ▶ Groupage 10.3 million tonnes (13% of inter-modal tonnage)
- ▶ Chemical products 8.8 million tonnes (11% of inter-modal tonnage)

Method of transportation

Chart 7: Goods lifted by GB-registered HGVs, by method of transportation, inter-modal journeys and all journeys, 2019



The receptacle or method used to transport goods differs between all goods lifted and inter-modal goods reflecting the needs involved when transferring goods between modes of transport.



The most common method of transportation used to transfer goods between modes in inter-modal journeys is Palletised Goods (25%). Whereas, for all journeys the most common method of transportation is Solid Bulk (36%).

Definitions

Methods of Transportation:

Solid Bulk – commodity transported unpacked in large quantities. It refers to material in granular form e.g. coal

Liquid Bulk – similar to solid bulk, however the material it refers to is of liquid form e.g. petroleum/crude oil

Palletised Goods – commodity transported in a pallet, to support goods giving stability to commodity during transportation e.g. beverages

Large Freight Containers – also known as shipping containers, commodity transported in a container with strength suitable to withstand shipment, storage and handling e.g. large reusable steel boxes (intermodal shipments), corrugated boxes

Strengths and weaknesses of data

The figures in this release are mainly derived from the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Great Britain (CSRGT GB) which provides information on the activity of GB-registered HGVs operating across the UK only. As such, the statistics exclude HGVs registered in Northern Ireland, foreign-registered HGVs and vehicles with a gross vehicle weight of 3.5 tonnes or less (Light Goods Vehicles and Vans). Also excluded from CSRGT GB is the activity of HGVs registered in Great Britain when operating outside of the UK.

The CSRGT GB is a continuous survey which collects a range of information on freight movements from a stratified sample of HGVs. Figures are weighted to be representative of the HGV population however, like any statistical source, there are limitations. For example, as a sample survey resulting figures are estimates with associated sampling error.

Guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics and further information can be found in the [Road Freight Statistics notes and definitions](#). Sample sizes that the statistics are based upon and sampling error estimates can be found within [Table RFS0129](#), broken down by type and weight of vehicle.

Between 2011 and 2012, a number of changes were made to how the three Department for Transport road freight surveys were processed. Caution should therefore be used for statistics based on the three freight surveys when making comparisons over time. See the [Road Freight Statistics methodology note](#) for more information.

This release and its contents partly rely on the use of administrative data from DVLA and DVSA. DfT have assessed the impact of this on the quality of these statistics, a report on which can be found in the [Quality assurance of administrative data sources: Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency](#) and [Quality assurance of administrative data sources: Driver Vehicle Standards Agency](#).

Users and uses of statistics

Road freight statistics are a key source of management information on the use of the country's infrastructure. Its main use occurs across various types of public and private bodies: the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat); local and central government, such as the Office for National Statistics and Highways England; local town and transport planning bodies; commercial organisations, such as haulage operators and transport consultants; and academics.

Users are mainly interested in information such as the origins and destinations of journeys, length of haul, empty running and the pattern of freight from abroad on UK roads. The statistics also support policies on freight, road safety and reducing congestion and pollution.

Background notes

These statistics were [confirmed as National Statistics in December 2016](#). Accompanying data tables give further detail on the key results presented in this statistical release and statistics on other road freight topics, including the international activity of UK-registered HGVs. These data tables are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-freight-domestic-and-international-statistics>

This release also collates statistics from a number of published sources that are revised and updated throughout the year. The data for this release were extracted in July 2019, and users can refer to the links below for the most recent or revised data available for each of the sources used, and also caveats relating to these sources.

- ▶ United Kingdom National Accounts; Office for National Statistics: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/naa1-rd/united-kingdom-national-accounts/index.html>
- ▶ Fuel prices, Monthly and annual prices of road fuels and petroleum products; Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/oil-and-petroleum-products-monthly-statistics>
- ▶ Annual Business Survey; Office for National Statistics: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/businessservices/bulletins/nonfinancialbusinesseconomyukandregionalannualbusinesssurvey/2018revisedresults>
- ▶ Employment of HGV drivers, Labour Force Survey; Office for National Statistics: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/standard-reports>
- ▶ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings; Office for National Statistics: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/index.html>
- ▶ Vehicle licensing statistics for HGVs; Department for Transport: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/veh05-licensed-heavy-goods-vehicles>
- ▶ Goods vehicle operator licences; Traffic Commissioners' annual reports: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traffic-commissioners-annual-reports>

Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours



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