



Department for Transport

# Sea Passenger Statistics 2018: Short Sea Routes (Provisional)

## About this release

This statistical release presents statistics on short sea passengers to and from the UK in 2018. This includes:

**International short sea routes:** These include all ferry routes within Europe.

**Domestic short sea major routes:** These include all routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

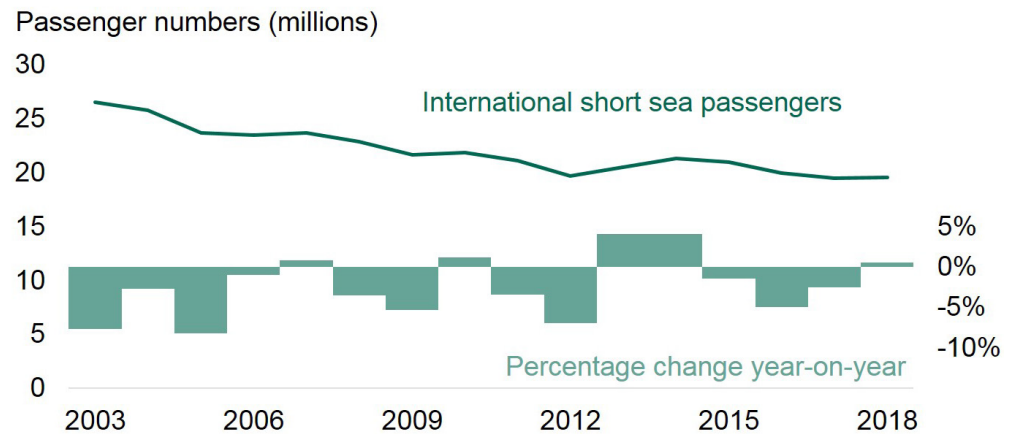
These do not include data on routes between Great Britain and Scottish islands, domestic river crossings and inter-island routes. These are scheduled to be published in November 2019 along with statistics on cruises and long sea journeys.

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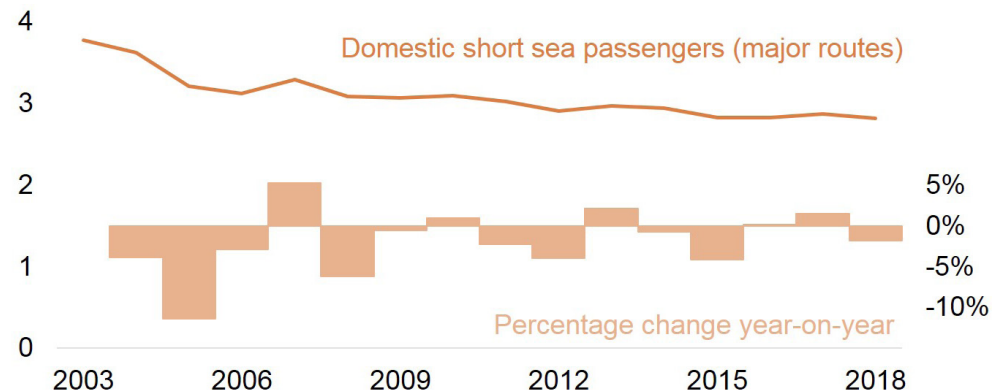
**International short sea passenger numbers increased 1% to 19.6 million in 2018, following three years of steady decline.**

### UK international short sea passenger numbers and year-on-year change, 2003 - 2018 ([SPAS0101](#))



**Domestic short sea passenger numbers for major routes decreased 2% to 2.8 million in 2018 and have decreased by 9% overall in the last ten years.**

### UK domestic short sea passenger numbers for major routes and year-on-year change, 2003 - 2018 ([SPAS0201](#))



### Breakdown of scheduled publications of sea passenger statistics in 2019.

#### Sea Passenger Statistics 2018: Short Sea Routes (Provisional)

This statistical release presents statistics on short sea passengers to and from the UK in 2018.

This includes:

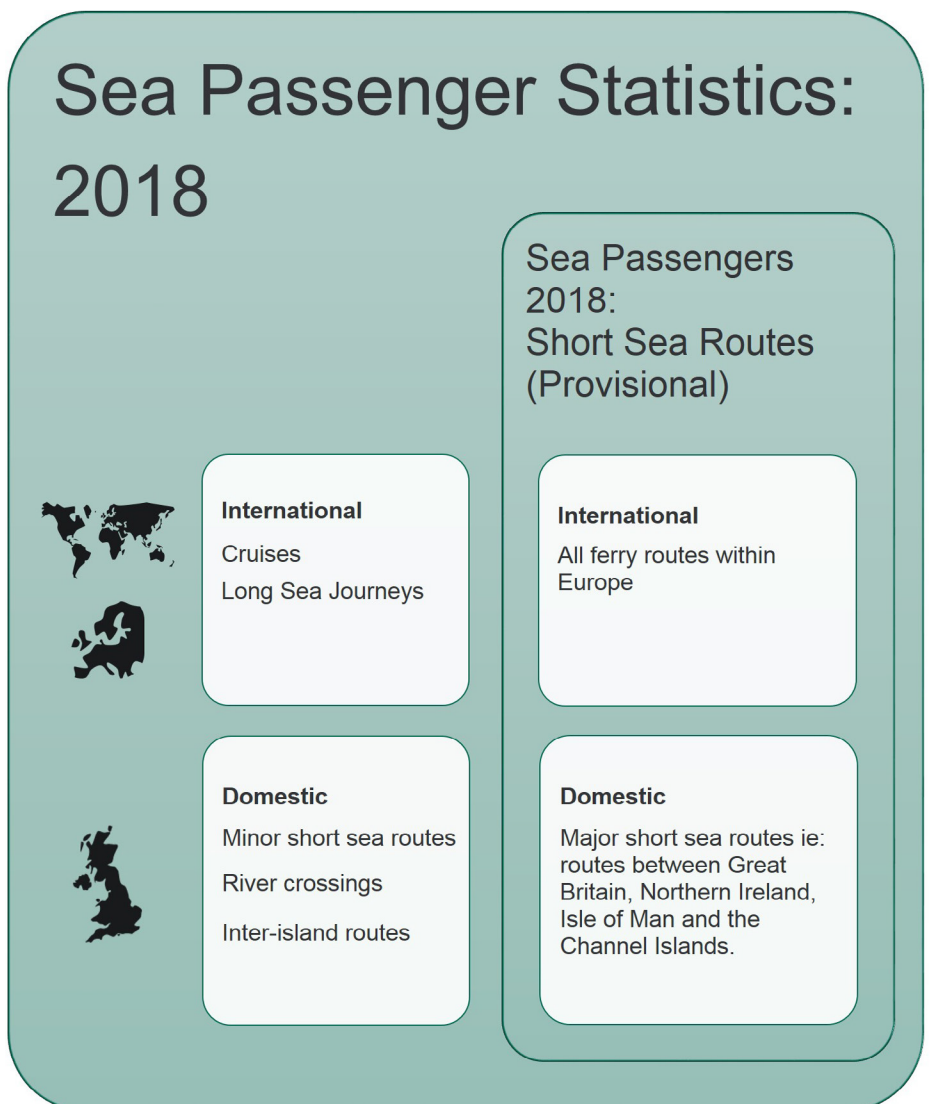
##### International short sea routes:

These include all ferry routes between the UK and the rest of Europe.

##### Domestic short sea major routes:

All ferry routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

Other domestic short sea routes, including routes between Great Britain and the Orkney and Shetland Islands, are not included in this release and are scheduled to be published in November 2019.



#### Sea Passenger Statistics: 2018 (Planned publication date: November 2019)

This statistical release will present the complete statistics on all sea passengers to and from the UK in 2018. In addition to the **short sea passenger statistics** included in this publication, it will also include:

**International routes:** These include all passengers travelling for pleasure on **cruises** and **long sea journeys** to and from the UK.

**Domestic routes:** All other short sea passenger routes, including routes between Great Britain and the Orkney and Shetland Islands, **domestic river** crossings and **inter-island routes**. These will be added to the previously published major short sea routes for a complete picture of domestic routes.

For more details, please see the [Sea Passenger Statistics: Notes and Definitions](#).

## Passengers on International Short Sea Routes

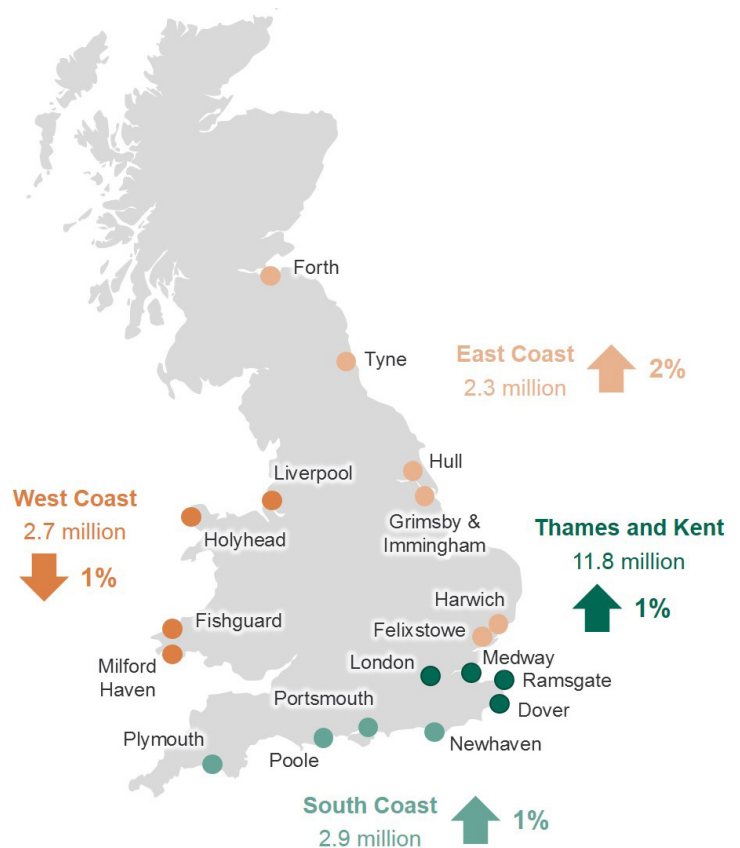
In 2018, the number of international short sea passengers increased by 1% to 19.6 million, compared to 19.5 million in 2017.

This increase was largely driven by a 1% increase in the number of passengers travelling between Dover - Calais. This is consistently the busiest route, accounting for 47% of all international short sea passengers in 2018.

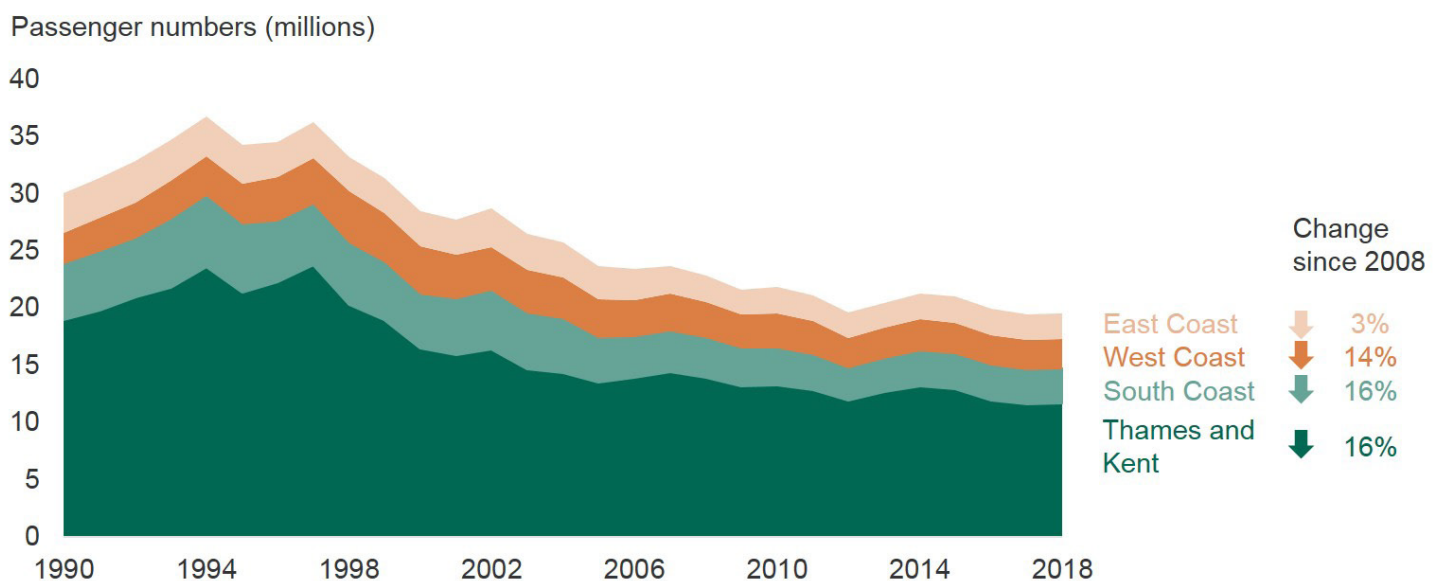
The total number of international short sea passengers has decreased by 14% since 2008.

In 2018, international passenger numbers through the Thames and Kent port group increased by 1% compared with the previous year. The East Coast and South Coast port groups also experienced increased international passenger numbers of 2% and 1% respectively, more than counteracting the 1% decrease in passengers travelling through the West Coast port group.

### UK international short sea passengers by port group in 2018 and change from 2017 ([SPAS0101](#))



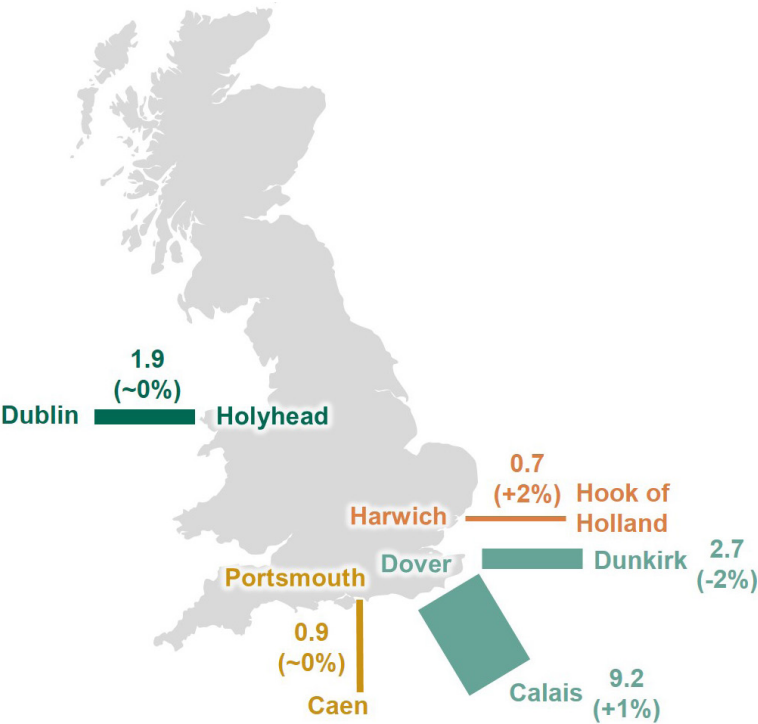
### UK international short sea passengers by port group, 1990 - 2018 and 10 year change ([SPAS0101](#))



Statistics on international short sea passengers by port group can be found in web table [SPAS0101](#).

## Top 5 international short sea routes

### Top 5 international short sea routes by number of passengers (millions) in 2018 and change from 2017 ([SPAS0102](#))



The top 5 international short sea routes accounted for 78% of all international short sea passengers in 2018.

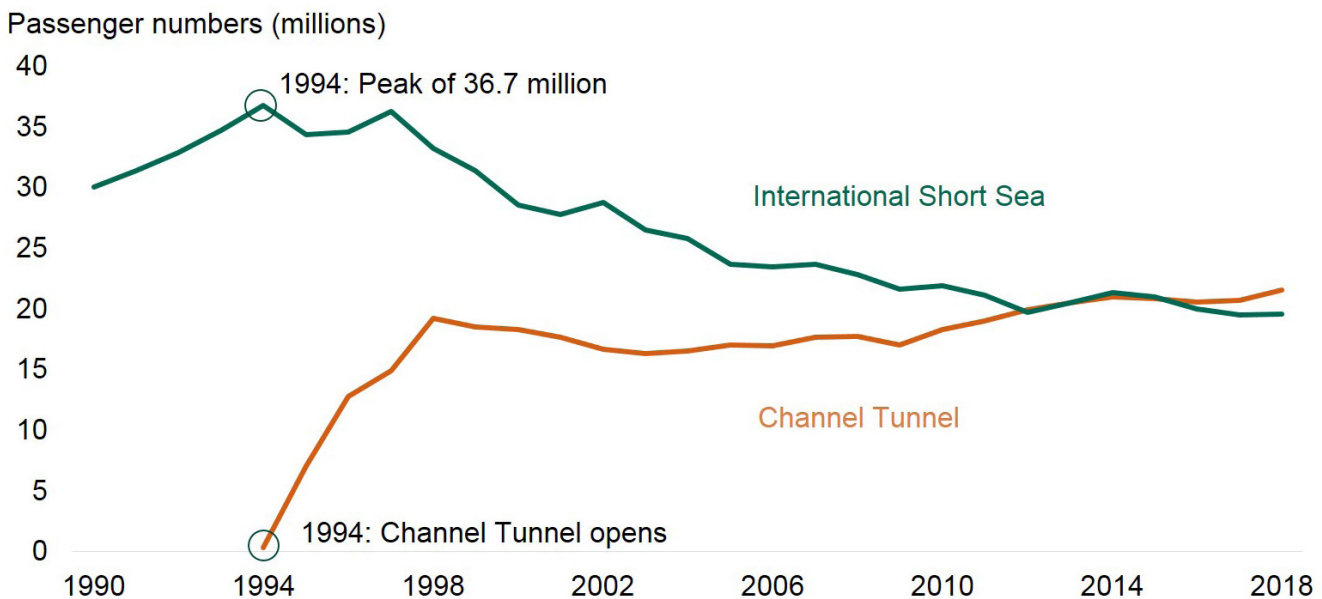
Over the last decade, Dover - Calais has consistently been the busiest route with between 46% and 51% of the annual international short sea passenger traffic. 9.2 million passengers travelled on this route in 2018, 17% lower than a decade previous.

Passenger numbers on the second largest route, Dover - Dunkirk, decreased 2% to 2.6 million passengers in 2018, but have increased 23% over the 10 years to 2018.

In 2018, Holyhead - Dublin passenger numbers remained level at 1.9 million, 4% fewer than a decade previous (when taking into account passenger numbers for the now discontinued Dun Laoghaire route).

The number of passengers travelling via the Channel Tunnel increased 4% to 21.6 million in 2018. Passenger numbers on international short sea routes were lower than those through the Channel Tunnel for the third consecutive year, and the fourth time since the Tunnel opened.

### International short sea passengers and Channel Tunnel passengers, 1990 - 2018 ([SPAS0101](#))



Detailed statistics on international short sea passengers by route can be found in web table [SPAS0102](#).

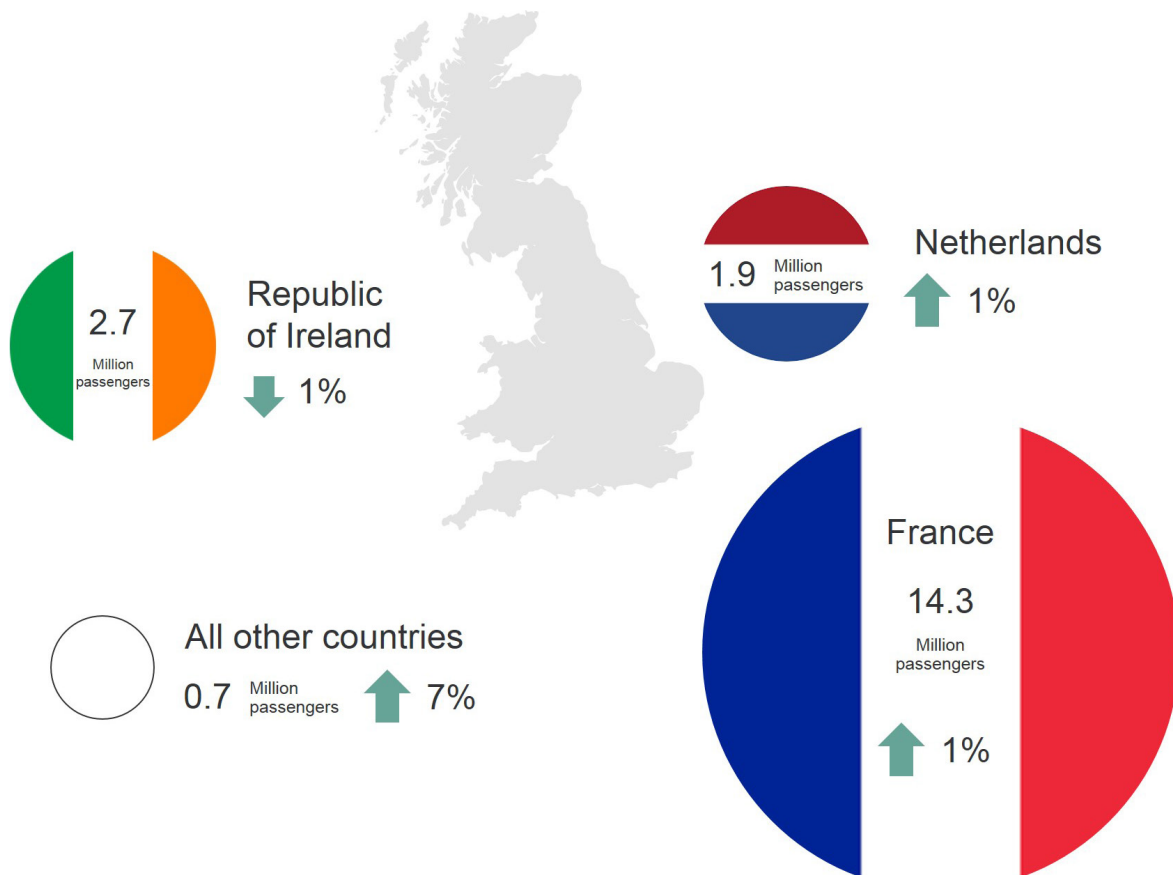
## Top 5 foreign countries of origin/destination

In 2018, passenger numbers on routes with France increased 1% to 14.3 million. Routes with France have consistently made up the majority of international short sea passenger numbers, accounting for 73% of the total in 2018, as in the previous year.

The ranking of the top three countries, France, the Republic of Ireland and the Netherlands, has been consistent since the beginning of the DfT time series in 1998.

Since 2008, passenger numbers with France, the Republic of Ireland and the Netherlands have decreased between 14% and 16%, reflecting the total 10 year decrease of 14% for international short sea passenger numbers.

### UK international short sea passengers by country of origin/destination in 2018 and change from 2017 ([SPAS0108](#)).



### Seasonal trends ([SPAS0107](#)).

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

International short sea passenger numbers are consistently highest in the third quarter and lowest in the first. Although the exact quarterly proportion fluctuates between different years, in general the distribution remains similar from year to year.

Detailed statistics on international short sea passengers by country can be found in [SPAS0108](#).  
Provisional statistics on international short sea passengers by month can be found in [SPAS0107](#).



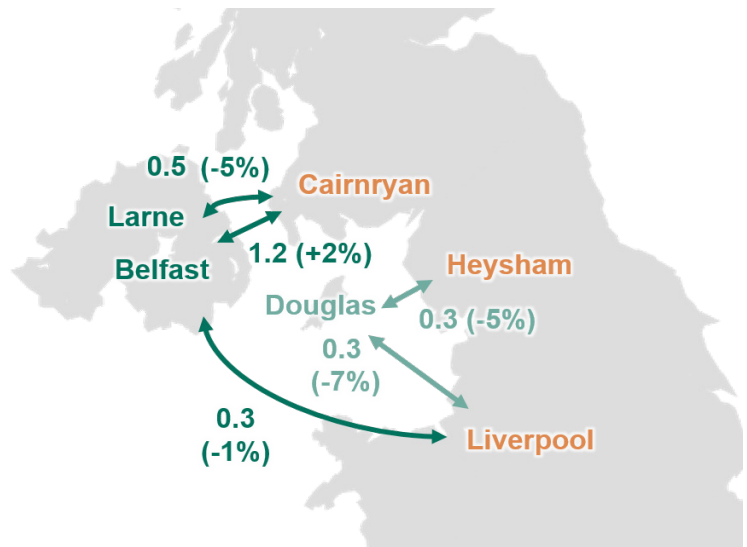
## Passengers on Major Domestic Short Sea Routes

In 2018, 2.8 million passengers travelled on major domestic short sea routes, a 2% decrease from the year before. This change was largely driven by a 6% decrease in passengers travelling between Great Britain and the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, while the number of passengers travelling between Great Britain and Northern Ireland remained steady.

Passengers travelling between Great Britain and Northern Ireland made up 73% of domestic short sea passengers on major routes in 2018. Cairnryan - Belfast (previously Stranraer - Belfast) is consistently the busiest domestic short sea route, with passenger numbers increasing 2% in 2018 to 1.2 million.

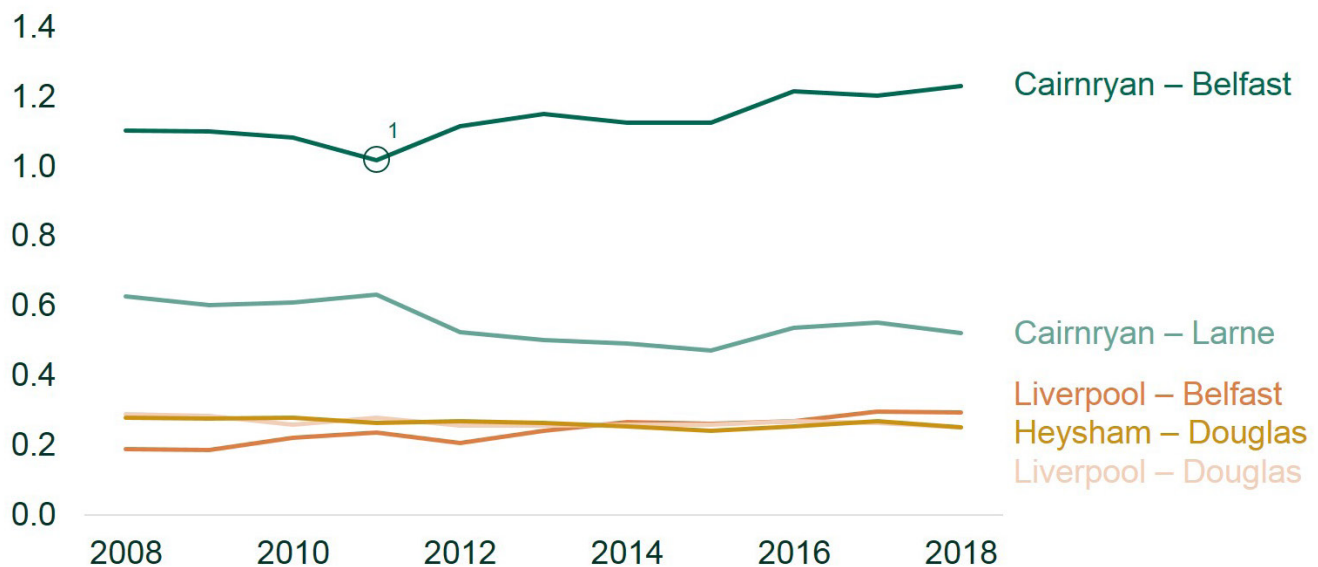
As with international short sea traffic, passenger numbers on domestic short sea routes vary over the course of the year, with the highest passenger numbers in the third quarter and the lowest in the first. Several ferry operators work to a different winter timetable due to the small number of passengers travelling.

### Top 5 busiest UK domestic short sea routes in 2018 by number of passengers (millions) and change from 2017 ([SPAS0201](#)).



### Top 5 busiest UK domestic sea crossing routes, 2008 - 2018 ([SPAS0201](#)).

Passenger numbers (millions)



<sup>1</sup>Passengers on the Cairnryan-Belfast route travelled from Stranraer to Belfast before 2012.

Detailed statistics on domestic sea passengers can be found in web tables [SPAS0201](#).

## Strengths and Weaknesses of the Data

- ▶ The data for international and domestic short sea passengers is collected from ferry operators and is validated on a monthly basis. At the end of the reference year, the annual data is then validated for a final time for this publication. The proportional allocation of passengers between some routes is occasionally estimated.
- ▶ Validation processes focus on comparing reference periods with the same period in the previous year, to allow for seasonal differences. Anomalies are followed up with the operators.
- ▶ Passengers are counted in both directions. It is not possible to distinguish passengers travelling by foot from those in vehicles or those travelling as the driver of a goods vehicle.
- ▶ Data collection is limited to vessels over 100 gross tonnes and so does not include services operated by small boats.
- ▶ International figures include passengers on routes beginning or ending in Great Britain or Northern Ireland. Routes with foreign countries beginning or ending in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man are not included.
- ▶ Some passengers travel between Great Britain and St Malo in France by going to the Channel Islands on one vessel and then transferring to another. From 2016 onwards, these passenger numbers are attributed to the domestic route with the Channel Islands rather than the direct international route. Please see the [Sea Passengers Notes and Guidance](#) for more details.

## Changes to Sea Passengers Statistics

- ▶ In 2018, the Department carried out a review of the content of the annual sea passenger statistics, including the data tables published as part of this release.
- ▶ Following a consultation with users, the decision was made to discontinue a number of the previously published data tables where there was little user interest or the information included was already covered in other tables.
- ▶ Please refer to the [User Feedback Summary](#) for further information, including a list of retained and discontinued tables.

## Background Notes

- ▶ We would welcome any **feedback** on these statistics by email to [maritime.stats@dft.gov.uk](mailto:maritime.stats@dft.gov.uk). We will attempt to address any comments in a subsequent release.
- ▶ 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>
- ▶ 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>
- ▶ Full guidance on the methods used in the publication of these releases, and the quality of the data, can be found in the documents available 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>



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