



## About this release

This article reports on the registered trader population for 2020, explaining the numbers of businesses who have declared to HMRC trade in goods with EU and

Non-EU countries, and the combination therein.

[Additional tables are available.](#)

## In this publication

- Summary p.1
- Notes on 2020 publication p.1
- Data sources p.1
- Trader counts by partner country p.2-3
- Trader counts by trade flow p.4-5
- Trader counts by partner country and trade flow p.6
- Explanatory notes p.7

## An Official Statistics release

Coverage: United Kingdom  
Theme: Government  
Released: 22 April 2021  
Next release: April 2022

## Summary

In 2020, there was a total of 299,000 businesses who traded goods:

- 196,000 businesses traded with EU Member States and 172,000 businesses traded with Non-EU countries.
- 127,000 businesses traded only with EU Member States, whilst 103,000 traded only with Non-EU countries and 69,000 businesses traded with both.
- 246,000 businesses imported goods and 144,000 businesses exported goods.
- 155,000 businesses only imported, 53,000 only exported and 92,000 businesses both imported and exported.

## Notes on 2020 Publication

International trade experienced a unique combination of factors throughout 2019 and 2020. These included, but are not limited to, COVID-19 lockdowns across the UK and many of our international trading partner countries throughout 2020; businesses preparing for the upcoming changes in the trading relationship with Europe for January 2021; and evidence of stockpiling throughout 2019. It is impossible to say what impact each of these factors had in isolation on the 2020 trader population make up.

For a more in-depth look at the UK Overseas Trade Statistics (OTS) in 2020 including the types of goods moved and the countries traded with, please see the [Summary of 2020 Trade in Goods publication](#). This analysis supplements the December 2020 OTS monthly publication and contains the first estimates of the whole of 2020 and how this compares to 2019.

Website: <https://www.uktradeinfo.com>

Email: [uktradeinfo@hmrc.gov.uk](mailto:uktradeinfo@hmrc.gov.uk)

Statistical contacts: Chris Cribbett ([christopher.cribbett@hmrc.gov.uk](mailto:christopher.cribbett@hmrc.gov.uk))

Media contact: HMRC Press Office 03000 585018

# Trader Counts by Partner Country

**Table 1: UK's importer and exporter population for trade in goods, 2017 to 2020 by partner country**

Partner Country	No. of Traders			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
EU Member States Only	144,000	150,000	149,000	127,000
With Both EU & Non-EU	72,000	73,000	74,000	69,000
Non-EU Countries Only	77,000	83,000	93,000	103,000
Total EU	217,000	223,000	223,000	196,000
Total Non-EU	150,000	156,000	168,000	172,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>294,000</b>	<b>306,000</b>	<b>317,000</b>	<b>299,000</b>

Source: HMRC Trade Statistics and Customs Analysis

**Notes:**

1. Due to values being rounded to nearest thousand, numbers presented may not sum to the totals provided
2. Intrastat and Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) data was compiled on a special trade basis, excluding trade that enters a customs warehouse but does not enter free circulation in the UK

196,000 businesses traded goods with EU Member States and 172,000 businesses traded goods with Non-EU countries in the calendar year of 2020.

- The number of businesses trading with EU Member States grew by 6,000 (3%) from 2017 to 2018, remained constant from 2018 to 2019, then fell by 27,000 (12%) from 2019 to 2020.
- The number of businesses trading with Non-EU countries grew by 6,000 (4%) from 2017 to 2018, by 12,000 (8%) from 2018 to 2019, then by a further 4,000 (2%) from 2019 to 2020.

127,000 businesses traded goods with only EU Member States, 69,000 businesses traded goods with both EU and Non-EU countries, whilst 103,000 traded goods with only Non-EU countries in the calendar year of 2020.

- The number of businesses trading with only EU Member States grew by 6,000 (4%) from 2017 to 2018, fell by 1,000 (1%) from 2018 to 2019, then fell by a further 22,000 (15%) from 2019 to 2020.
- The number of businesses trading with Both EU and Non-EU countries grew by 1,000 (1%) in both 2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019, then fell by 5,000 (7%) from 2019 to 2020.
- The number of businesses trading with only Non-EU countries grew by 6,000 (8%) from 2017 to 2018, by 10,000 (12%) from 2018 to 2019, then grew by a further 10,000 (11%) from 2019 to 2020.

**Number of traders in 2020 compared with 2019:**

↓ **Total EU trading population fell by 12%**

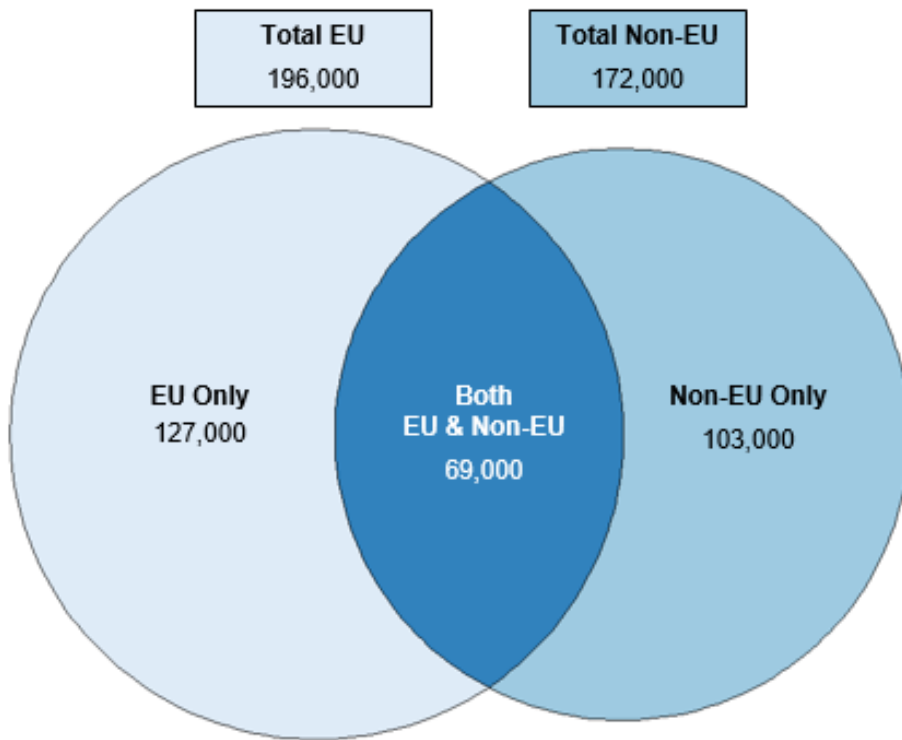
↑ **Total Non-EU only trading population grew by 2%**

↓ **EU only trading population fell by 15%**

↓ **Both EU and Non-EU trading population fell by 7%**

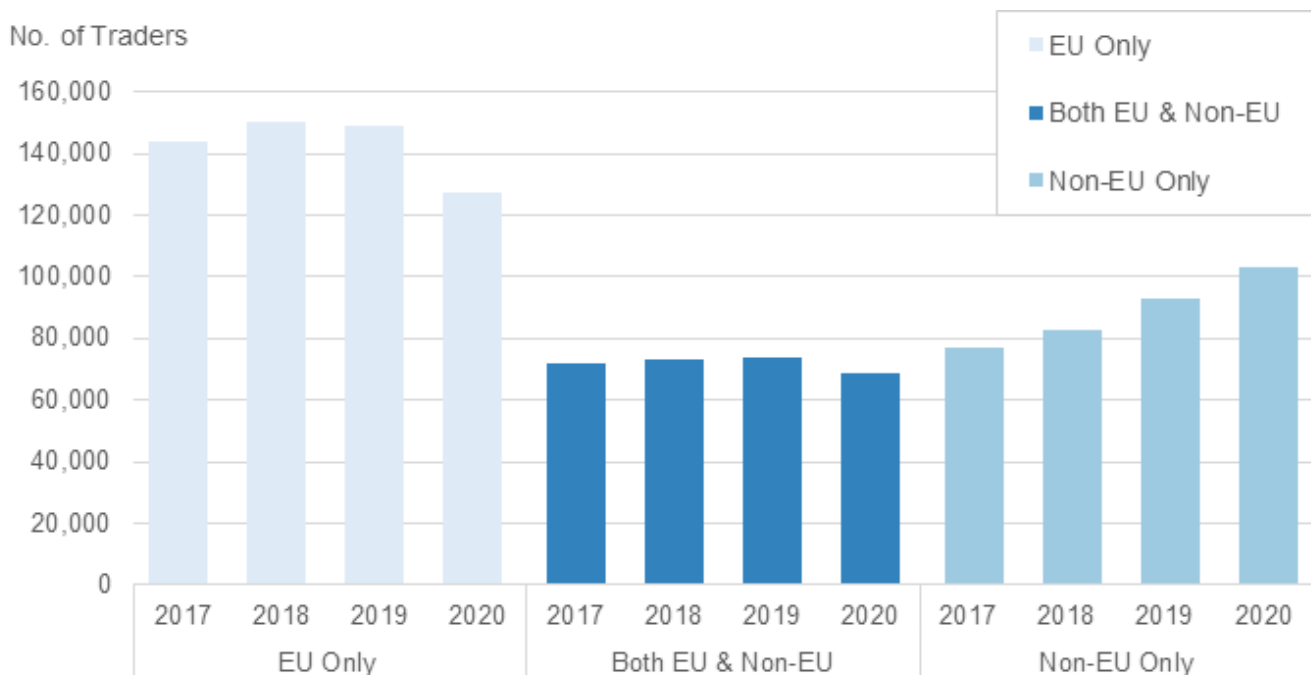
↑ **Non-EU only trading population increased by 11%**

**Figure 1: UK's importer and exporter population for trade in goods in 2020 by trade partner**



- Of the 196,000 businesses who traded with EU Member States, 127,000 traded only with the EU.
- Of the 172,000 businesses who traded with Non-EU countries, 103,000 traded only with Non-EU countries.
- There were 69,000 businesses who traded with both EU Member States and Non-EU countries and were therefore counted within both the total EU and the total Non-EU populations.

**Figure 2: Time series of the UK's importer and exporter population for trade in goods from 2017 to 2020 by trade partner**



# Trader Counts by Trade Flow

**Table 2: UK's importer and exporter population for trade in goods, 2017 to 2020 by trade flow**

Trade Pattern	No. of Traders			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Only Importing	139,000	148,000	157,000	155,000
Importing and Exporting	96,000	99,000	100,000	92,000
Only Exporting	58,000	60,000	60,000	53,000
Total Importers	236,000	247,000	257,000	246,000
Total Exporters	155,000	158,000	160,000	144,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>294,000</b>	<b>306,000</b>	<b>317,000</b>	<b>299,000</b>

Source: HMRC Trade Statistics and Customs Analysis

**Notes:**

1. Due to values being rounded to nearest thousand, numbers presented may not sum to the totals provided
2. Importing refers to both EU and Non-EU imports and Exporting refers to both EU and Non-EU exports
3. Intrastat and Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) data was compiled on a special trade basis, excluding trade that enters a customs warehouse but does not enter free circulation in the UK

246,000 businesses imported goods and 144,000 businesses exported goods in the calendar year of 2020.

- The number of importing businesses grew by 11,000 (5%) between 2017 and 2018, by 10,000 (4%) between 2018 and 2019, and then fell by 11,000 (4%) between 2019 and 2020.
- The number of exporting businesses grew by 3,000 (2%) from 2017 to 2018, by 2,000 (1%) from 2018 to 2019, then fell by 16,000 (10%) from 2019 to 2020.

155,000 businesses only imported goods, 92,000 both imported and exported goods, and 53,000 businesses only exported goods in the calendar year of 2020.

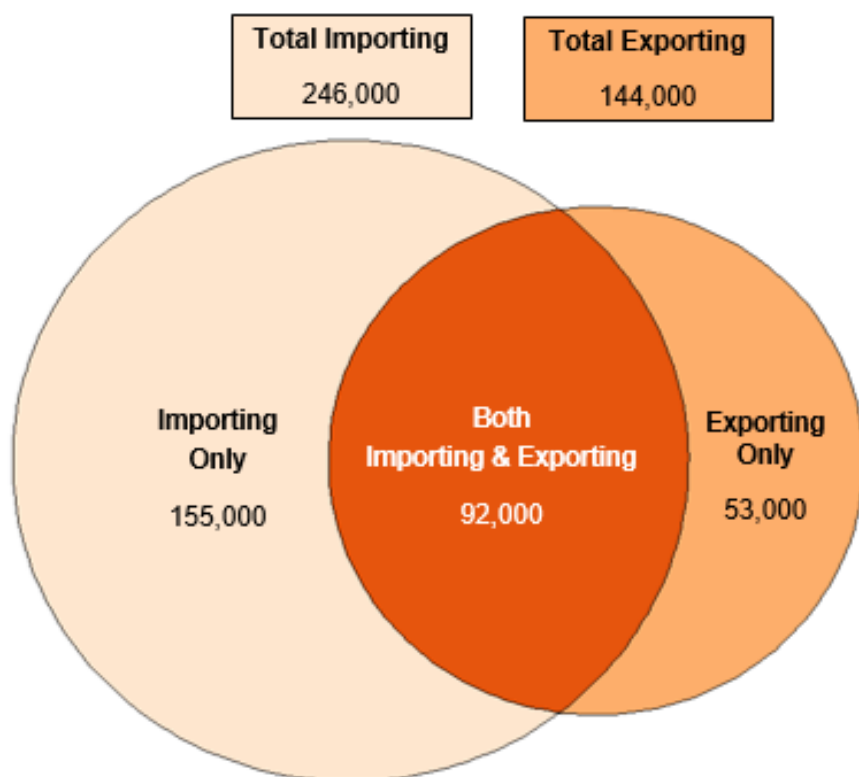
- The number of importing only businesses grew by 9,000 (6%) in both 2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019, then fell by 2,000 (1%) from 2019 to 2020.
- The number of both importing and exporting businesses grew by 3,000 (3%) from 2017 to 2018, by 1,000 (1%) from 2018 to 2019, then fell by 8,000 (8%) from 2019 to 2020.
- The number of exporting only businesses grew by 2,000 (3%) from 2017 to 2018, remained constant from 2018 to 2019, then fell by 7,000 (12%) from 2019 to 2020.

**Number of traders in 2020 compared with 2019:**

- ↓ **Total Importing trading population fell by 4%**
- ↓ **Total Exporting trading population fell by 10%**
- ↓ **Importing only trading population fell by 1%**
- ↓ **Importing and exporting trading population fell by 8%**
- ↓ **Exporting only trading population fell by 12%**

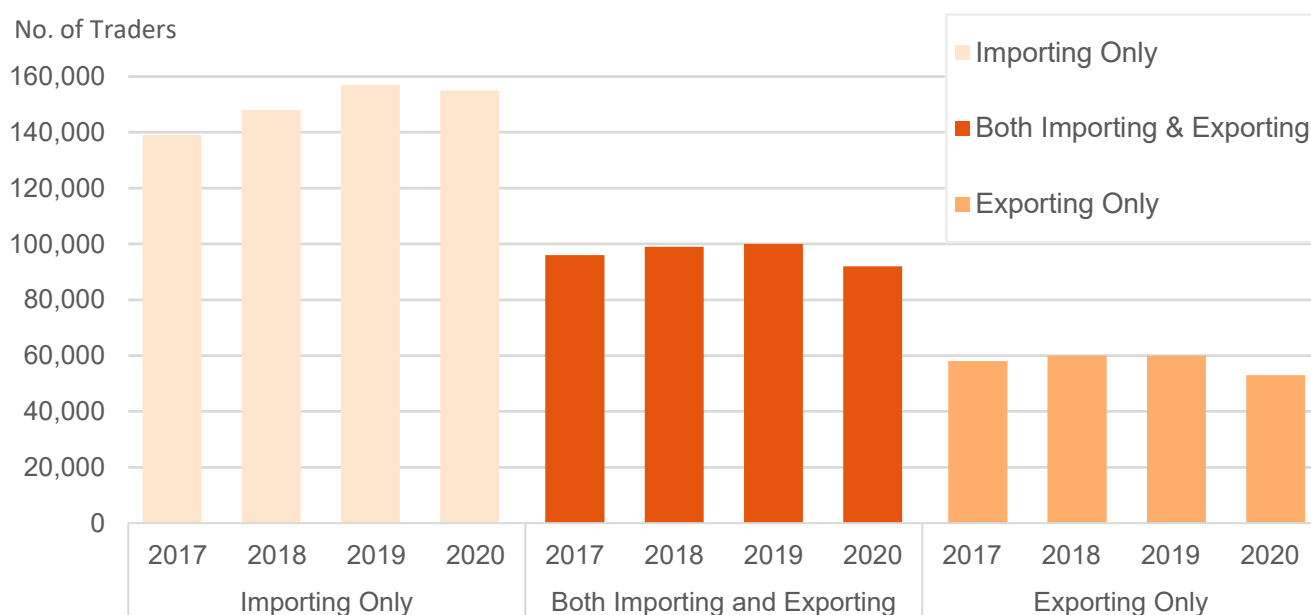
# Trader Counts by Trade Flow

Figure 3: UK's importer and exporter population for trade in goods in 2020 by trade flow



- Of the 246,000 importing business population, 155,000 only import.
- Of the 144,000 exporting business population, 53,000 only export.
- There were 92,000 businesses who both imported and exported and were therefore counted within both the importing and exporting populations.

Figure 4: Time series of the UK's importer and exporter population for trade in goods from 2017 to 2020 by trade flow



# Trader Counts by Partner Country and Trade Flow

**Table 3: UK's importer and exporter population for trade in goods in 2020 by partner country and flow of trade**

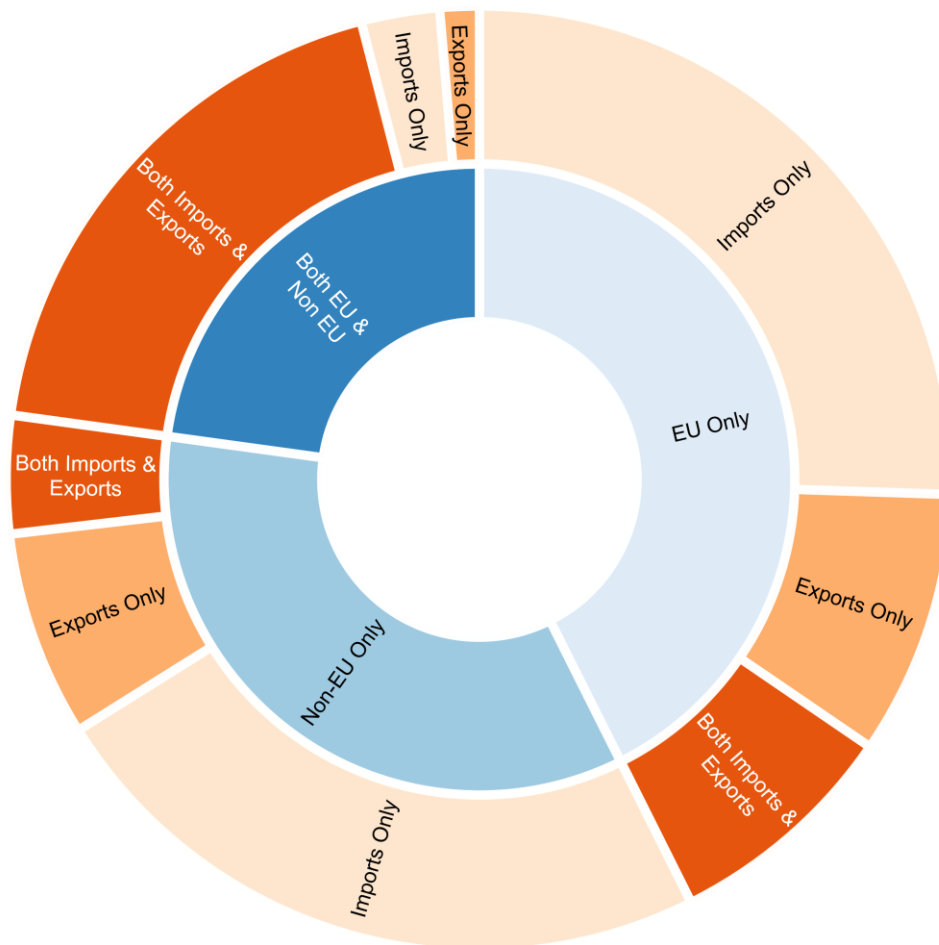
Trade Partner	Trade Flow	No. of Traders
With EU Countries Only	Imports only	76,000
	Both Imports & Exports	24,000
	Exports only	27,000
With Both EU & Non-EU	Imports only	8,000
	Both Imports & Exports	56,000
	Exports only	4,000
With Non-EU Countries Only	Imports only	70,000
	Both Imports & Exports	12,000
	Exports only	21,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>299,000</b>

Source: HMRC Trade Statistics and Customs Analysis

**Notes:**

1. Due to values being rounded to nearest thousand, numbers presented may not sum to the totals provided
2. Importing refers to both EU and Non-EU imports and Exporting refers to both EU and Non-EU exports
3. Intrastat and Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) data was compiled on a special trade basis, excluding trade that enters a customs warehouse but does not enter free circulation in the UK

**Figure 5: UK's importer and exporter population for trade in goods in 2020 by partner country and flow of trade**



## Explanatory notes

- Impact of the Coronavirus and EU exit on 2020:** A unique combination of factors throughout 2019 and 2020 made it inevitable that trade in goods with the EU would be lower in 2020, compared to previous years. These include, but are not limited to, COVID-19 lockdowns across the UK and Europe throughout 2020, businesses adjusting to the upcoming changes in the trading relationship with Europe for January 2021, and evidence of stockpiling through 2019. It is however, impossible to say to what extent each of these factors in isolation has had on the 2020 importer and exporter make up. For a more in-depth look at the UK overseas trade statistics (OTS) in 2020, further exploring the types of goods moved and the countries traded with, please see the [Summary of 2020 trade in goods publication](#). This analysis supplements the December 2020 UK Overseas Trade in Goods statistics monthly publications and contains the first estimates of the whole of 2020 and how this compares to 2019.
- Data sources:** The unique business count for UK businesses trading goods with EU countries was collected from VAT data and the Intrastat survey. All VAT registered businesses must submit VAT returns, which include values of EU trade. Businesses whose annual value of imports and exports of goods from/to EU countries exceed a given value threshold (EU imports: £1.5 million, EU exports: £250,000) are required to provide a more detailed Intrastat declaration each month. These counts therefore do not include businesses only trading with the EU below the VAT registration threshold.  
The unique business count for UK businesses trading goods with Non-EU countries was collected from customs declarations presented to HMRC using the Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system.  
The data presented will differ to that in HMRC's Regional Trade Statistics (RTS) which presents business counts compiled on a quarterly basis and uses a different methodology.
- Trader counts:** The trader count is derived from trade declarations and is a count of businesses importing and exporting trade in goods. The Non-EU and total figures will not include businesses whose Non-EU trade is made up entirely of consignments below the statistical threshold (£873 and 1000kg) for 2019.
- VAT status of businesses:** EU trade in goods data for the period 2017 to 2020 is only collected from VAT registered businesses. In contrast, Non-EU trade in goods data for the same period is collected from both VAT and Non-VAT registered businesses.
- Special trade compilation:** UK Intrastat and Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) data was compiled on a special trade basis, excluding trade that enters a customs warehouse but does not enter free circulation in the UK.
- Population Segmentation:** The population of businesses that trade with both EU and Non-EU countries, and undertake both imports and exports in Table 3, is formed from seven bespoke groups that have been summed for this commentary. These bespoke populations are presented separately in the additional tables published with this release.
- This data is provisional and may be subject to change.**

Next release: April 2022

© Crown copyright 2021

If using specific facts contained in this release please check the information is still current.