



Department for
Business & Trade

Trade and Investment Factsheets

South Africa

This factsheet provides the latest statistics on trade and investment between the UK and South Africa.

Date of release: 2 August 2024; Date of next planned release: 22 August 2024

Total trade in goods and services (exports plus imports) between the UK and South Africa was **£10.3 billion** in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, a decrease of 7.1% or £785 million in current prices from the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023. Of this £10.3 billion:

- Total UK **exports** to South Africa amounted to £4.5 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024 (a decrease of 0.8% or £37 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023);
- Total UK **imports** from South Africa amounted to £5.8 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024 (a decrease of 11.4% or £748 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023).

South Africa was the UK's 29th largest trading partner in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024 accounting for 0.6% of total UK trade.¹

In 2021, the **outward stock of foreign direct investment (FDI)** from the UK in South Africa was £21.5 billion accounting for 1.2% of the total UK outward FDI stock.

In 2021, the **inward stock of foreign direct investment (FDI)** in the UK from South Africa was £7.9 billion accounting for 0.4% of the total UK inward FDI stock.²

¹ Trade data sourced from the latest ONS publication of [UK total trade: all countries seasonally adjusted](#) data.

² Investment data sourced from ONS publication on [Foreign Direct Investment Involving UK Companies](#).

About these statistics

This factsheet presents the latest statistics on trade and investment between the UK and South Africa. It summarises a wide range of publicly available data, from data providers such as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), as well as international data providers.

This factsheet is part of a wider range produced by the Department for Business and Trade which draws together many data sources into one single compendium document for each individual trade and investment partner. The full set of factsheets for different individual partners can be found on the [Trade and Investment Factsheets website](#) on GOV.UK.

Where data are available, these factsheets contain metrics on:

- [Headline trade statistics between the UK and each trading partner for the latest four quarters.](#)
- [Trade statistics by commodity and service type.](#)
- [Trade between the UK and each trading partner, broken down by UK country and English region.](#)
- [Trade in services between the UK and each trading partner, broken down by mode of supply](#)
- [UK's market share as a total of all imports for each trading partner.](#)
- [Number of VAT-registered businesses trading goods.](#)
- [UK's Foreign Direct Investment \(FDI\) with each investment partner.](#)
- [Summary trade and investment data as reported by each trade and investment partner, as well as economic data and projections.](#)

All statistics are correct at the time of publication, with upcoming release dates available on the [Government update schedule for Official Statistics](#). The Department for Business and Trade strongly recommends users download the latest factsheet to ensure the most up-to-date statistics are used. Please do not use previous factsheets to analyse earlier time periods than those shown in the most recent factsheets, as the data will have been revised and previous factsheets will no longer be correct. For analysis of earlier time periods, please use the published source data.

For the most up to date snapshot of the UK's trade and investment position with all partners, please see the [UK trade in numbers](#) publication or the [trade and investment core statistics book](#). These statistics are based on the same data sources as this factsheet and therefore are comparable. A list of all [Official Statistics](#) publications from the Department for Business and Trade can be found online.

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Summary trade and investment statistics for South Africa

[UK trade](#) with South Africa, in current prices (based on the latest four quarters)³:

Trade	Value in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024	Change from the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023
Total trade	£10.3 billion	a decrease of 7.1% or £785 million
Ranking out of all the UK's trading partners	29th	
Total UK exports	£4.5 billion	a decrease of 0.8% or £37 million
Ranking out of all the UK's export partners	29th	
UK exports in goods (percentage of total UK exports that were goods)	£1.8 billion (41.0%)	a decrease of 1.4% or £27 million
UK exports in services (percentage of total UK exports that were services)	£2.7 billion (59.0%)	a decrease of 0.4% or £10 million
Total UK imports	£5.8 billion	a decrease of 11.4% or £748 million
Ranking out of all the UK's import partners	29th	
UK imports in goods (percentage of total UK imports that were goods)	£4.3 billion (73.9%)	a decrease of 14.9% or £757 million
UK imports in services (percentage of total UK imports that were services)	£1.5 billion (26.1%)	an increase of 0.6% or £9 million

[UK trade](#) with South Africa, in current prices (based on the latest calendar year)⁴:

Trade	Value in 2023	Change from 2022
Total trade	£10.4 billion	a decrease of 7.8% or £884 million
Ranking out of all the UK's trading partners	28th	
Total UK exports	£4.6 billion	an increase of 3.8% or £170 million
Ranking out of all the UK's export partners	30th	
UK exports in goods (percentage of total UK exports that were goods)	£1.9 billion (41.4%)	an increase of 1.0% or £19 million
UK exports in services (percentage of total UK exports that were services)	£2.7 billion (58.6%)	an increase of 5.9% or £151 million
Total UK imports	£5.8 billion	a decrease of 15.3% or £1.1 billion
Ranking out of all the UK's import partners	29th	
UK imports in goods (percentage of total UK imports that were goods)	£4.3 billion (74.2%)	a decrease of 20.2% or £1.1 billion
UK imports in services (percentage of total UK imports that were services)	£1.5 billion (25.8%)	an increase of 2.9% or £43 million

[UK market share](#) in South Africa⁵:

UK market share for total trade	Value in 2022	Change from 2021
Total UK market share	4.3%	a decrease of 0.6 percentage points
UK market share for goods only	2.1%	a decrease of 0.5 percentage points
UK market share for services only	17.4%	a decrease of 2.6 percentage points

³ Trade data sourced from Office for National Statistics data on [UK total trade \(seasonally adjusted data\)](#).

⁴ Trade data sourced from Office for National Statistics data on [UK total trade \(seasonally adjusted data\)](#).

⁵ UK market share data calculated using the methodology outlined in the [market share section](#) in the factsheet, based on data from the Office for National Statistics and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

UK Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) with South Africa⁶:

UK FDI	Value in 2021	Change from 2020
Total UK outward FDI	£21.5 billion	an increase of 11.9% or £2.3 billion
Total UK inward FDI	£7.9 billion	an increase of 17.3% or £1.2 billion

Economic statistics and projections using gross domestic product (GDP) for South Africa⁷:

Economic statistics	2020	2021	2022	2023
Economic growth, using GDP in real terms, compared to the previous year	-6.0%	4.7%	1.9%	<i>0.6%</i>
GDP per capita in \$USD (in thousands)	5.7	7.0	6.7	<i>6.1</i>

South Africa was the 40th largest economy in 2023, in terms of gross domestic product (GDP).

⁶ FDI data sourced from the Office for National Statistics publication [Foreign Direct Investment Involving UK Companies](#).

⁷ Economic data sourced from the International Monetary Fund [World Economic Outlook](#) databases; Estimates and projections are given in italics; GDP rankings where provided are based on values in current prices (nominal terms) in \$USD, where some partner values are based on estimates which may influence the rankings when revised.

Trade with South Africa, in current prices (ONS)^{8 9 10}

Trade definitions

UK exports - Goods and services that were produced or sourced in the UK, which were sold to South Africa.

UK imports - Goods and services that were sold to the UK, which were produced or sourced by South Africa.

Total or 'bilateral' trade - The value of total trade between the UK and South Africa (exports plus imports).

Trade balance - The difference between exports and imports, calculated by UK exports minus UK imports.

Trade surplus - This occurs when the value of UK exports to South Africa is greater than the value of UK imports from South Africa.

Trade deficit - This occurs when the value of UK exports to South Africa is less than the value of UK imports from South Africa.

Headline trade statistics include trade in non-monetary gold (reported within the unspecified goods category), which can significantly affect trends for some partners. Please see the factsheet [quality and methodology report](#) for more information. These statistics are given on a balance of payments (change of ownership) basis.

Note: *The latest data include trade between January 2023 and December 2023. Trade has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdown measures globally. Consequently, data quality has been affected and may be subject to larger revisions than normal. All figures are reported in current prices (not adjusted for inflation), unless otherwise stated. We recognise that some of the recent increases in UK trade values will be partly due to price increases.*

Total trade in goods and services (exports plus imports) between the UK and South Africa was £10.3 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, a decrease of 7.1% or £785 million in current prices from the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023.

In the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, **total UK exports** to South Africa amounted to £4.5 billion (a decrease of 0.8% or £37 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023).

Of all UK exports to South Africa in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, £1.8 billion (41.0%) were **goods** and £2.7 billion (59.0%) were **services**. In the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, **UK exports of goods** to South Africa decreased by 1.4% or £27 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023 while **UK exports of services** to South Africa decreased by 0.4% or £10 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023.

In the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, **total UK imports** from South Africa were £5.8 billion (a decrease of 11.4% or £748 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023).

Of all UK imports from South Africa in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, £4.3 billion (73.9%) were **goods** and £1.5 billion (26.1%) were **services**. In the same period, **UK imports of goods** from South Africa decreased by 14.9% or £757 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023 while **UK imports of services** from South Africa increased by 0.6% or £9 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023.

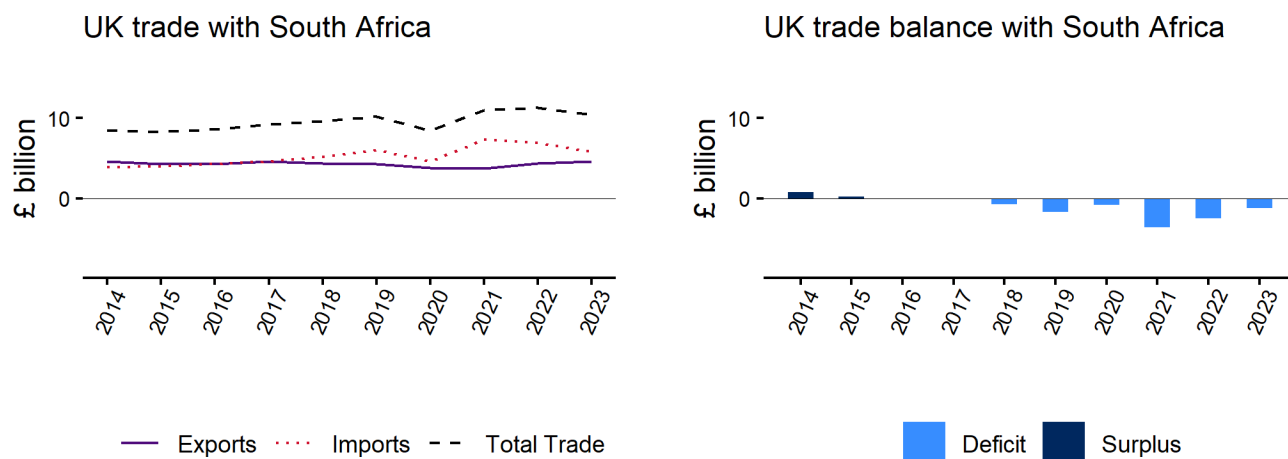
This means the UK reported a **total trade deficit** of £1.3 billion with South Africa, compared to a trade deficit of £2.0 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023. In the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, the UK had a **trade in goods deficit** of £2.5 billion with South Africa, compared to a trade in goods deficit of £3.2 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023. Meanwhile, in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024 the UK reported a **trade in services surplus** of £1.1 billion with South Africa, compared to a trade in services surplus of £1.2 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023.

⁸ Office of National Statistics (ONS) data source for total trade: [UK total trade data \(seasonally adjusted\)](#).

⁹ This factsheet contains data as reported by the UK, users are advised to use UK-reported data where possible for consistency between partners. These data are subject to [asymmetries](#) e.g. the value of UK exports to South Africa (reported by the UK) may not match the value of South Africa imports from the UK (reported by South Africa).

¹⁰ Data are in nominal terms, meaning no adjustment has been made to account for changes in inflation or exchange rate. The totals may not exactly match the sum of their parts due to rounding.

The charts below present a time series for trade between the UK and South Africa for each year between 2014 and 2023:



Source: ONS, UK trade in goods and services, Q1 2024

The data that are presented in the charts above are given in the table below in £ billion:

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Value of total trade	8.5	8.3	8.6	9.2	9.6	10.2	8.4	11.0	11.3	10.4
Value of exports	4.6	4.3	4.3	4.6	4.4	4.3	3.8	3.7	4.4	4.6
Value of imports	3.9	4.0	4.3	4.6	5.2	6.0	4.6	7.3	6.9	5.8
Trade balance	+0.8	+0.2	+0.0	+0.0	-0.7	-1.7	-0.8	-3.6	-2.5	-1.2

In the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, South Africa was the UK's:¹¹

- **29th largest trading partner** (accounting for 0.6% of total UK trade).
 - 27th largest **goods** trading partner (0.6% of UK goods trade).
 - 34th largest **services** trading partner (0.5% of UK services trade).
- **29th largest export market** (accounting for 0.5% of total UK exports).
 - 29th largest **goods** export market (0.5% of UK goods exports).
 - 33rd largest **services** export market (0.6% of UK services exports).
- **29th largest import market** (accounting for 0.7% of total UK imports).
 - 24th largest **goods** import market (0.8% of UK goods imports).
 - 32nd largest **services** import market (0.5% of UK services imports).

More timely data, for trade in goods only¹², show that UK exports of goods to South Africa decreased by 7.2% the 12 months to May 2024 in current prices, compared to the same period the previous year. UK imports of goods from South Africa decreased by 5.9%, in current prices, over the same period.

Note: As these data are presented for the 12 months ending May 2024, the UK and its trading partners have been affected by lockdown and other measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data quality has also been affected and may be subject to larger revisions than usual. Please note, these data are in current prices.

¹¹ Rankings are based on the ONS dataset which contains data for all individual partners: [UK total trade data \(seasonally adjusted\)](#).

¹² ONS data source for trade in the latest 12 months up to May 2024: [UK Trade data \(seasonally adjusted\)](#).

Trade in goods by commodity, in current prices (ONS)^{13 14}

Please note, these data are presented on a non-seasonally adjusted basis and are not directly comparable to seasonally adjusted data, including the headline trade statistics presented before.

The **top 5 goods exported from the UK to South Africa** in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024 were as follows:

Commodity	Exports in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024	Percentage of total goods exports	Change from the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023
78M - Cars	£189.3 million	10.3%	a decrease of 8.4%
71MI - Mechanical power generators (intermediate)	£141.4 million	7.7%	an increase of 36.9%
72K - Specialised machinery (capital)	£128.7 million	7.0%	an increase of 17.5%
78K - Road vehicles other than cars (capital)	£113.2 million	6.2%	-
54 - Medicinal & pharmaceutical products	£87.8 million	4.8%	a decrease of 4.0%

The **top 5 goods imported to the UK from South Africa** in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024 were as follows:

Commodity	Imports in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024	Percentage of total goods imports	Change from the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023
68 - Non-ferrous metals	£1.8 billion	41.6%	a decrease of 20.9%
05 - Vegetables & fruit	£639.8 million	14.8%	an increase of 7.6%
28 - Metal ores & scrap	£577.3 million	13.4%	a decrease of 14.9%
78M - Cars	£561.2 million	13.0%	-
1 - Beverages & tobacco	£137.5 million	3.2%	an increase of 7.7%

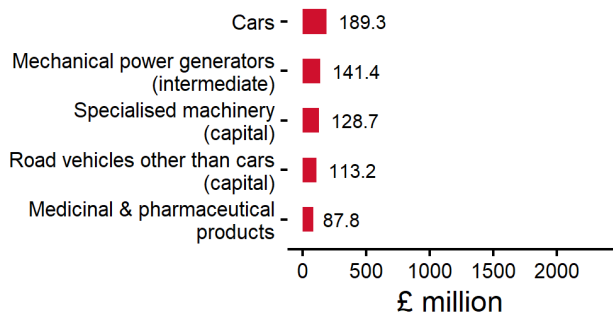
Note: Percentage changes between the current and previous period that exceed 100% have been omitted. This is to avoid presenting small value changes from a low base as fast growing.

¹³ Data on trade in goods by commodity are sourced from data by the ONS: [UK trade release \(non-seasonally adjusted\)](#). These statistics for [exports](#) and [imports](#) present the latest data from the May 2024 ONS publication which are given on a monthly basis.

¹⁴ The commodities are categorised based on [SITC](#) codes using a mixture of level 2 and level 3 codes.

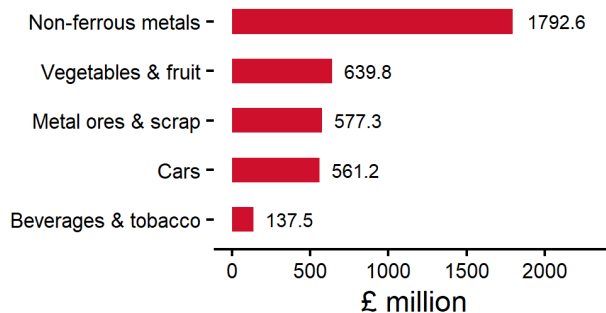
The chart below shows the top 5 products exported from the UK to South Africa and the top 5 products imported to the UK from South Africa, by value, in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024. All data shown in the chart are provided in the text above.

The top 5 UK goods exports, in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, to South Africa



Source: ONS, May 2024

The top 5 UK goods imports, in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, from South Africa



Source: ONS, May 2024

Trade in services by service type, in current prices (ONS)^{15 16 17}

Please note, these data are presented on a non-seasonally adjusted basis and are not directly comparable to seasonally adjusted data, including the headline trade statistics presented before.

The **top 5 service types exported from the UK to South Africa** in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024 were as follows:

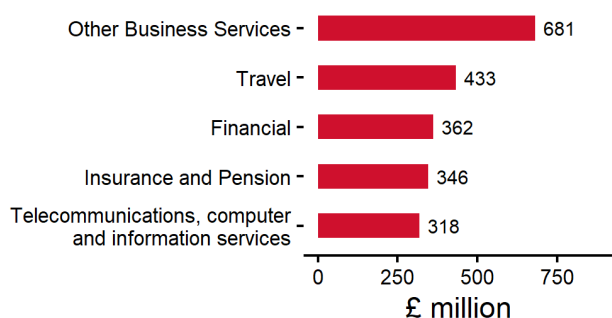
Service type	Exports in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024	Percentage of total services exports	Change from the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023
Other Business Services	£681 million	25.6%	an increase of 11.3%
Travel	£433 million	16.3%	an increase of 4.1%
Financial	£362 million	13.6%	a decrease of 22.2%
Insurance and Pension	£346 million	13.0%	an increase of 13.4%
Telecommunications, computer and information services	£318 million	11.9%	an increase of 6.0%

The **top 5 service types imported to the UK from South Africa** in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024 were as follows:

Service type	Imports in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024	Percentage of total services imports	Change from the four quarters to the end of Q1 2023
Travel	£587 million	38.7%	an increase of 13.1%
Other Business Services	£542 million	35.8%	an increase of 0.2%
Telecommunications, computer and information services	£181 million	11.9%	an increase of 9.7%
Insurance and Pension	£100 million	6.6%	a decrease of 28.1%
Financial	£36 million	2.4%	a decrease of 7.7%

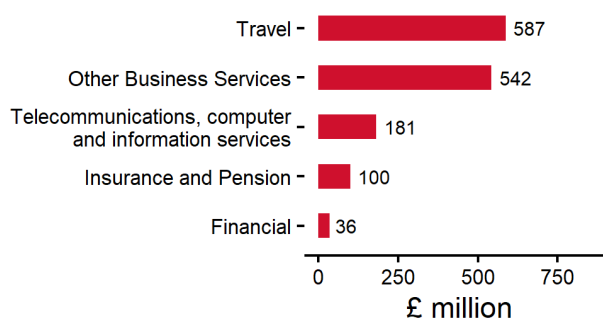
The chart below shows the top 5 service types exported from the UK to South Africa and the top 5 service types imported to the UK from South Africa, by value, in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024. All data shown in the chart are provided in the text above.

The top 5 UK services exports, in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, to South Africa



Source: ONS, Q1 2024

The top 5 UK services imports, in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2024, from South Africa



Source: ONS, Q1 2024

¹⁵ Trade in services by service type is sourced from data by the ONS: [UK trade in services by partner country \(non-seasonally adjusted\)](#).

¹⁶ Data are classified on the [EBOPS 2010](#) basis. 'Other business services' include: Research and development, professional and management consulting services, technical services and trade related services. A full description of all service types can be found on the [UN Statistics Division website](#).

¹⁷ Service type data may be unavailable for some quarters, due to the suppression of figures for the confidentiality of individual traders.

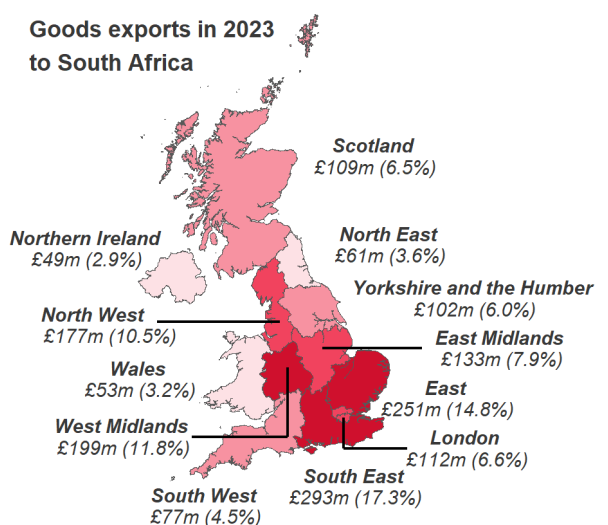
Trade in goods by UK countries and English regions, in current prices (HMRC)^{18 19}

Regional trade definitions

UK regions - The UK is categorised into 12 regions based on the International Territorial level 1 (ITL1). This level includes 9 regions in England, as well as Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

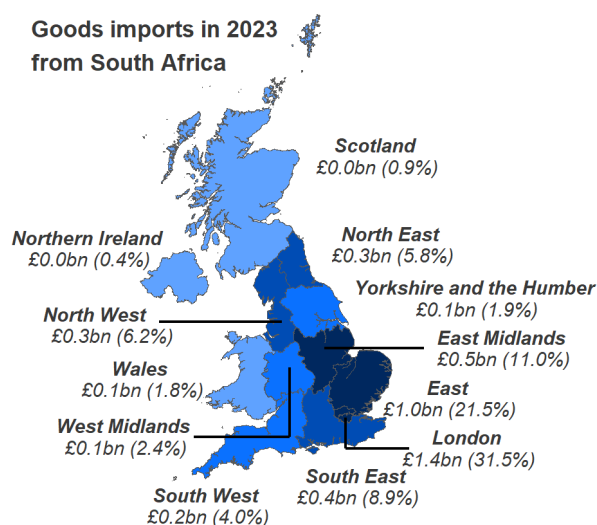
Regional trade data - The data are compiled by merging HM Revenues & Customs (HMRC) trade data with employment data from the Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR) so a business' trade can be allocated to a UK region based on the proportion of its employees employed in that region. Where a trader is not matched with the IDBR, its trade is matched with ONS postcode data to obtain the UK region in which the Head Office of the VAT-registered business is based.

The maps below show the value of UK goods exports and imports between each UK region and South Africa in 2023. The maps are shaded with the 3 UK regions with the highest amount of trade as the darkest colour, and the 3 UK regions with the lowest amount of trade as the lightest colour.



Contains Ordnance Survey and National Statistics data © Crown copyright and database right [2017]

Source: HMRC, June 2024



Contains Ordnance Survey and National Statistics data © Crown copyright and database right [2017]

Source: HMRC, June 2024

The data that are presented in the maps above for 2023 in £ million for exports and £ billion for imports are also given in the table below:

UK country or English region	North East	North West	Yorkshire and the Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East	London	South East	South West	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Value of goods exports to South Africa	61	177	102	133	199	251	112	293	77	53	109	49
Percentage of total goods exports to South Africa	3.6%	10.5%	6.0%	7.9%	11.8%	14.8%	6.6%	17.3%	4.5%	3.2%	6.5%	2.9%
Value of goods imports from South Africa	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.5	0.1	1.0	1.4	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0
Percentage of total goods imports from South Africa	5.8%	6.2%	1.9%	11.0%	2.4%	21.5%	31.5%	8.9%	4.0%	1.8%	0.9%	0.4%

Note that these figures from HMRC are reported on a physical movement basis and are **not directly comparable** to trade data from ONS which are reported on a change of ownership basis. **Percentages will not total 100%** as data not allocated to a single UK country or English region are not presented.

¹⁸ HMRC data source for regional UK trade data: [HMRC Regional Trade Statistics](#) (data extracted from the spreadsheet download using the HMRC [interactive tables](#)).

¹⁹ Totals presented here will differ from overall HMRC trade figures due to the exclusion of trade in non-monetary gold and non-response estimates and the exclusion of data not allocated to a UK country or region. Figures for 2023 are provisional and subject to change.

Trade in services by mode of supply, in current prices (ONS)^{20 21}

Trade in Services by Mode of Supply definitions

Modes of Supply define the way services trade is conducted. The World Trade Organisation's [General Agreement on Services](#) categorises methods for trade in services into four different modes of supply, which depend upon on the territorial presence of the supplier and the consumer at the time of transaction.

Mode 1 - Remote trade (a supplier in one country sells a service to a customer in another, without the movement of people).

Mode 2 - Consumption abroad (the person receiving the service travels to the supplier's country).

Mode 3 - Commercial presence (e.g. a company subsidiary) - this mode is not counted as part of UK services trade on a balance of payments basis and is not reported in this release. This means that total figures are only the total of Modes 1, 2 and 4.

Mode 4 - Presence of natural persons (a supplier sends its personnel to the customer's country to provide service).

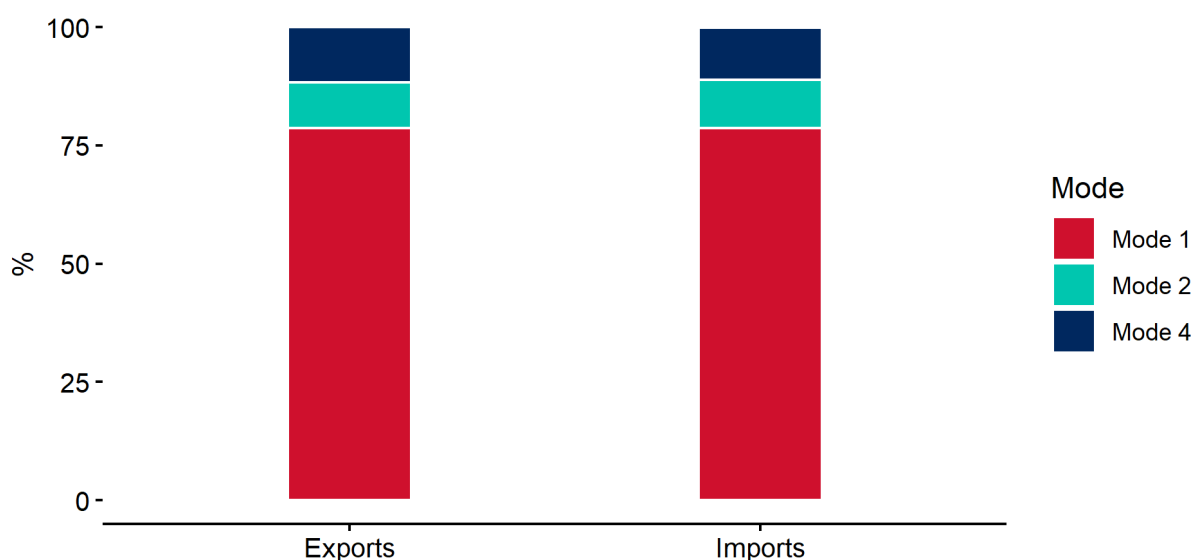
UK services exports to South Africa by mode of supply in 2021:

- £1.5 billion of services exports to South Africa were delivered by Mode 1 (78.6%).
- £180 million of services exports were delivered by Mode 2 (9.7%).
- £217 million of services exports were delivered by Mode 4 (11.7%).

UK services imports from South Africa by mode of supply in 2021:

- £570 million of services imports from South Africa were delivered by Mode 1 (78.6%).
- £75 million of services imports were delivered by Mode 2 (10.3%).
- £80 million of services imports were delivered by Mode 4 (11%).

Proportion of total trade flows of services with South Africa by Modes 1, 2, & 4 in 2021 (%)



Source: ONS, 2021

²⁰ ONS data source for UK Trade in Services by Mode of Supply: [ONS Imports and exports of services by country, by modes of supply, UK](#)

²¹ Data included in this ONS release are experimental estimates.

UK Market Share (ONS and UNCTAD)^{22 23}

Market Share definitions

UK market share – Imports from the UK as a percentage of all the goods and services imported by South Africa. Market share is provided for total imports from the UK, as well as for goods and services separately.

Market share methodology – These UK market share statistics are derived by the Department for Business and Trade, using publicly available data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). These new statistics allows users to estimate the importance of UK trade on imports to each trading partner. Market share is calculated as the value of imports from the UK using data from [ONS](#), divided by the value of total imports using data from [UNCTAD](#). Data from UNCTAD are converted from US dollars into pounds sterling by using the annual average spot exchange rate²⁴.

The UK's market share for South Africa in 2022 was as follows:

- **The total UK market share in South Africa was 4.3% in 2022 for goods and services.** This is a decrease of 0.6 percentage points from 2021.
- The UK market share in South Africa was 2.1% in 2022 for **goods only**. This is a decrease of 0.5 percentage points from 2021.
- The UK market share in South Africa was 17.4% in 2022 for **services only**. This is a decrease of 2.6 percentage points from 2021.

The table below presents the UK's market share for South Africa between 2013 and 2022. Values presented in italics are based on UNCTAD estimates of imports.

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total goods and services	5.7%	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%	5.9%	5.4%	5.3%	6.2%	4.8%	4.3%
Goods only	3.6%	3.9%	4.1%	4.1%	3.6%	2.9%	2.9%	2.8%	2.6%	2.1%
Services only	18.1%	21.8%	19.6%	18.0%	17.6%	18.7%	18.1%	26.6%	20.0%	17.4%

²² ONS data source for market share: [UK total trade data \(seasonally adjusted\)](#).

²³ UNCTAD data source for market share: [Goods and Services \(BPM6\): Exports and imports of goods and services, annual](#). Some UNCTAD data may be based on estimates.

²⁴ Annual average spot exchange rates for \$USD to £GBP are sourced from the [Bank of England](#).

Number of VAT-registered businesses trading goods (HMRC)^{25 26 27}

Business counts definition (Regional Trade in Goods Statistics)

Business counts report UK VAT-registered business exporting and importing goods. Data is collected primarily from customs declarations (using the Intrastat survey and VAT returns for Northern Ireland businesses trading with the EU).

Counts exclude businesses trading below the statistical value thresholds for customs declarations and exclude trade in non-monetary gold.

Businesses trading with South Africa in 2023:

- In 2023, around 7,800 UK VAT-registered businesses exported goods to South Africa.
- In 2023, around 3,100 UK VAT-registered businesses imported goods from South Africa.

Businesses trading with the world in 2023:

- In 2023, around 125,500 UK VAT-registered businesses exported goods to the world.
- In 2023, around 251,200 UK VAT-registered businesses imported goods from the world.

²⁵ HMRC data source for Regional Trade Statistics business counts data: [UK trade in goods statistics](#).

²⁶ Data for UK businesses engaged in trade of services with South Africa are not available. A single business may trade with multiple trading partners abroad, so care should be taken when adding figures for multiple trading partners.

²⁷ HMRC does not receive partner country information for customs declarations with commodity line values that fall under the statistical value threshold of £873 (in value) and 1,000kg (in net mass). Therefore, these counts of exporting/importing businesses only capture those businesses with exports/imports (respectively) above the statistical value threshold. The number of businesses has been rounded to the nearest 100.

Trade in Value Added (OECD)^{28 29}

Trade in Value Added definitions

Trade in Value Added (TiVA) - TiVA is a statistical approach to examine supply chains, which is not possible with conventional ('gross') trade statistics. This is because TiVA treats international trade flows as flows of value added rather than gross flows of final goods and services.

Domestic and foreign value added - In TiVA, gross exports are decomposed into domestic and foreign value added. Domestic value added measures the value added generated by the domestic economy in the production of its exports (e.g. the value added by UK car manufacturers and their UK supply chains in car exports). Foreign value added measures the value added contribution that foreign suppliers make to these exports (e.g. the import of foreign car parts).

TiVA statistics - Although TiVA offers advantages over traditional ways of measuring trade, these statistics are not fully developed. These results are estimates which should be considered complementary to conventional trade statistics and not be over-interpreted. In addition, the geographical detail is limited for developing countries. More information on TiVA can be found in a recent [research report](#) by the Department for Business and Trade and Cambridge Econometrics.

UK forward linkages for exports - Measures the reliance of foreign exporters on UK value added (inputs).

UK backward linkages for exports - Measures the reliance of UK exporters on foreign value added (inputs).

Employment supported by exports - This provides an estimate of the number of employees in exporting industries, and their domestic supply chains that are supported by exporting activity.

UK forward linkages for exports:

- **In 2020, 0.6% of the total value added in gross exports from South Africa originated in the UK.**
- In 2020, 20.3% of the value added content in gross exports from South Africa reflected foreign imports from abroad. The largest sources of foreign value added for gross exports from South Africa were China (3.0%), Germany (1.6%), and United States (1.5%).

UK backward linkages for exports:

- **In 2020, 0.1% of the total value added in gross exports from the UK originated in South Africa.**
- In 2020, 14.3% of the value added content in gross exports from the UK reflected foreign imports from abroad. The largest sources of foreign value added for gross exports from the UK were United States (2.4%), Germany (1.5%), and China (1.2%).

Employment supported by exports:³⁰

- Exporting activity in South Africa supported 3.3 million persons in 2020 (22% of total South Africa employment). Exports to the UK supported around 135,900 jobs in South Africa in 2020.
- Exporting activity in the UK supported 6.7 million persons in 2020 (20.6% of total UK employment). Exports to South Africa supported around 28,400 jobs in the UK in 2020.

²⁸ The estimates in this factsheet are based on Trade in Value Added statistics published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): a) [Trade in Value Added database \(origin of value added in gross exports\), January 2024](#); and b) [Trade in Employment \(TiM\) database: Principal indicators, January 2024](#), indicators EXGR_DEM and EMPN_EXGRDEM.

²⁹ The data shown in this factsheet is from 2020.

³⁰ These estimates measure employees directly and indirectly supported by exports i.e. workers employed in exporting businesses and in other domestic businesses supplying inputs to the exporting businesses. The estimates should be interpreted as employment *supported* by exports, rather than employment *created* by exports, as the jobs may have previously existed to serve the domestic market. Employees may also be supported by exports from a multiple number of trading partners. As with the core TiVA data, these estimates are based on a number of assumptions and modelling, so should be interpreted with caution.

Foreign Direct Investment with South Africa (ONS)^{31 32 33}

Foreign direct investment definitions

Foreign direct investment (FDI) - Investment made by a firm or individual in one economy ('direct investor') to acquire a 'lasting interest' in an enterprise operating in another economy. The lasting interest is deemed to exist if the direct investor acquires at least 10% of equity, or equivalently 10% of the voting rights, of the company.

FDI stock - The accumulated value of all previous investments at the end of a reference period. Figures are net, that is the value of investment minus disinvestment. **UK outward FDI stock** provides the total value of FDI by UK investors in economies abroad (investment of a UK parent company in South Africa), while **UK inward FDI stock** provides the total value of FDI by non-UK investors in the UK (investment of a South Africa parent company in the UK).

Data disclosure - It can happen that FDI is coming from only a few investors. In that case, figures are suppressed by the ONS to avoid disclosure of information relating to individual enterprises.

Note: *The FDI data for 2020 have been affected by changes in sampling methodology. Improvements have been made to the population which has been sampled and the way that businesses are sampled from the population, capturing a wider range of businesses. This means data from 2020 and onward are more representative of UK FDI with overseas partners and are comparable.*

More information about the methodology changes can be found on the [ONS website](#).

UK outward FDI stock:

- In 2021, the **stock of FDI from the UK in South Africa** was £21.5 billion, 11.9% or £2.3 billion higher than in 2020. In 2021, South Africa accounted for 1.2% of the total UK outward FDI stock.
- In 2021, the total UK FDI abroad was £1.8 trillion. In 2021, the **top destination for UK FDI** was United States, accounting for 26.1% of the total UK outward FDI stock, followed by Netherlands (8.8%) and Luxembourg (7.2%).

UK inward FDI stock:

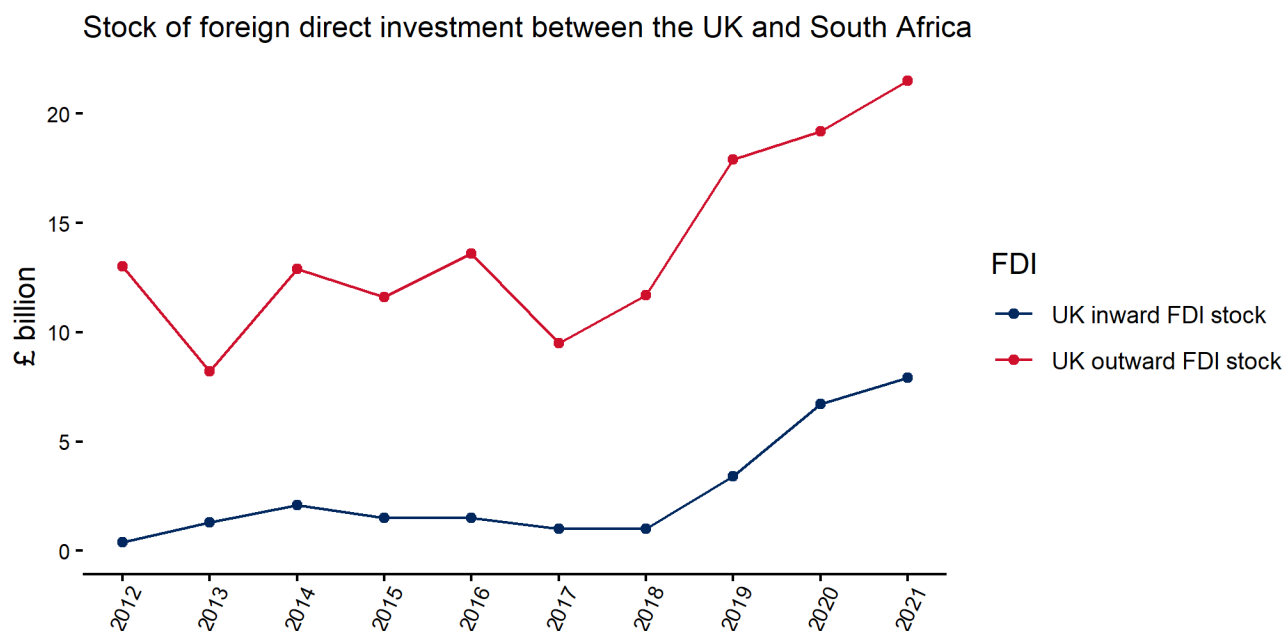
- In 2021, the **stock of FDI from South Africa in the UK** was £7.9 billion, 17.3% or £1.2 billion higher than in 2020. In 2021, South Africa accounted for 0.4% of the total UK inward FDI stock.
- In 2021, the total FDI in the UK in was £2.0 trillion. In 2021, the **top investor in the UK** was United States, accounting for 33.7% of the total UK inward FDI stock, followed by Netherlands (10.9%) and Jersey (9.6%).

³¹ ONS data source for FDI statistics: [Foreign Direct Investment involving UK companies](#).

³² Data are presented on a directional basis which means they are not directly comparable to the asset/liability report prepared by ONS as part of the Balance of Payments statistical release. Figures are on net basis (investments minus disinvestments) and are given in nominal terms. Negative FDI values occur when disinvestments are greater than investments. Data are on an immediate destination/source basis and not an ultimate destination/source, which is likely to overstate financial centres such as the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

³³ This factsheet contains data as reported by the UK and are subject to asymmetries e.g. UK outward FDI to South Africa (reported by the UK) may not match South Africa inward FDI from the UK (reported by South Africa). For consistency when comparing between partners, users are advised to use UK-reported data as far as possible.

The chart below shows FDI between the UK and South Africa between 2012 and 2021:



Source: ONS, 2021 FDI main release. Data are on a directional basis, data suppression can cause breaks in the trends.

The data that are presented in the charts above are given in the table below in £ billion:

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
UK outward FDI stock	13.0	8.2	12.9	11.6	13.6	9.5	11.7	17.9	19.2	21.5
UK inward FDI stock	0.4	1.3	2.1	1.5	1.5	1.0	1.0	3.4	6.7	7.9

Economic statistics (as reported by South Africa)

Trade and investment data for South Africa (UNCTAD)^{34 35 36}

The following data are reported by South Africa and are for reference only. Whenever possible use data from UK sources for trade and investment. All data below are presented in \$USD in billions.

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
TRADE								
Nominal exports	91.1	104.2	111.5	105.9	93.3	130.7	135.9	-
Nominal imports	89.7	99.8	109.4	104.0	78.5	104.9	127.7	-
Nominal trade balance	1.4	4.4	2.1	2.0	14.8	25.8	8.2	-
INVESTMENT								
Inward FDI stock	135.5	156.4	138.6	145.2	133.1	174.8	172.2	124.0
Outward FDI stock	175.6	273.0	246.4	215.0	251.0	223.8	208.0	157.8

³⁴ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) data sources for trade: [Goods and Services \(BPM6\): Exports and imports of goods and services, annual](#); and for investment: [Foreign direct investment: Inward and outward flows and stock, annual](#).

³⁵ Estimates are given in italics. Historic data pre-2016 can be found on the [UNCTAD website](#).

³⁶ All trade data are on a Balance of Payments basis. The FDI data are on a directional and net (investment minus disinvestment) basis. These figures are given in current prices and are rounded to the nearest \$0.1 billion, with missing data represented by dashes.

Economic data and projections for South Africa (IMF)^{37 38}

The following table presents economic statistics for South Africa. Projections include assumptions of the effects of COVID-19 and may be subject to change in the future. Estimated data, as well as projections up to 2029, are presented in italics and are subject to revision.

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
TRADE GROWTH										
Change in exports (%)	-12.0	9.1	7.4	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7
Change in imports (%)	-17.6	9.6	14.9	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8
CURRENT ACCOUNT										
Current account balance (% of GDP)	1.9	3.7	-0.5	-1.6	-1.8	-1.9	-2.0	-2.1	-2.1	-2.2
GDP										
Change in real GDP (%)	-6.0	4.7	1.9	0.6	0.9	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
GDP per capita (1,000 \$USD)	5.7	7.0	6.7	6.1	6.0	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.6
GDP PPP (Int'l \$billion)	797.3	873.1	952.4	993.0	1,025.9	1,056.7	1,091.4	1,127.6	1,165.0	1,203.9
INFLATION										
Inflation, year average (CPI %)	3.3	4.6	6.9	5.9	4.9	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
UNEMPLOYMENT										
Unemployment rate (% of total labour force)	29.2	34.3	33.5	32.8	33.5	33.9	34.2	34.5	34.7	35.0
POPULATION										
Population (million)	59.6	60.1	60.6	61.5	62.5	63.4	64.4	65.4	66.4	67.4
INVESTMENT-SAVINGS										
Total investment (% of GDP)	12.5	13.0	15.4	15.6	15.4	15.7	15.9	15.9	16.0	16.2
Gross national savings (% of GDP)	14.5	16.7	14.9	14.0	13.7	13.8	13.9	13.9	13.9	14.0
BUDGET DEFICIT-DEBT										
General government net lending/borrowing (% of GDP)	-9.6	-5.5	-4.3	-6.0	-6.1	-6.3	-5.6	-5.4	-5.6	-5.8
General government gross debt (% of GDP)	68.9	68.8	71.1	73.9	75.4	77.9	80.0	81.9	83.8	85.7

South Africa was the 40th largest economy in 2023, in terms of gross domestic product (GDP). The UK was the 6th largest economy in 2023.³⁹

³⁷ International Monetary Fund (IMF) provide economic commentary in their [World Economic Outlook reports](#). The latest data presented here can be found in the [World Economic Database, April 2024](#).

³⁸ Projections and estimates are given in italics. More information for each metric and each partner, as well as historic data pre-2020, can be found on the [IMF website](#).

³⁹ GDP ranking based on values in current prices (nominal terms) in \$USD. Some GDP values for partners are based on estimates which may influence the rankings when revised.

Top goods traded with the world by South Africa, in current prices (UN Comtrade)^{40 41}

Data presented here show the top commodities traded with the world, not solely the UK, by South Africa. These data are based on a different commodity classification system to the ONS commodity data used earlier in this factsheet, and the two sections should therefore not be directly compared.

Top goods exported to the world by South Africa in 2023:

Rank	HS Commodity	\$USD billion	% of total goods exported
1	71 - Precious stones and metals	19.6	17.7%
2	26 - Ores, slag and ash	16.3	14.7%
3	87 - Vehicles other than railway or tramway stock	12.7	11.5%
4	27 - Mineral fuels or oils, products of their distillation	11.9	10.7%
5	72 - Iron and steel	6.5	5.9%
6	84 - Machinery and mechanical appliances	6.3	5.7%
7	08 - Edible fruit and nuts	4.4	3.9%
8	76 - Aluminum and articles thereof	2.3	2.0%
9	85 - Electrical machinery and equipment	2.0	1.8%
10	10 - Cereals	1.5	1.4%
	All goods exported	110.6	100.0%

Top goods imported from the world by South Africa in 2023:

Rank	HS Commodity	\$USD billion	% of total goods imported
1	27 - Mineral fuels or oils, products of their distillation	22.5	21.0%
2	84 - Machinery and mechanical appliances	12.9	12.0%
3	85 - Electrical machinery and equipment	12.3	11.5%
4	99 - Commodities not specified according to kind	8.8	8.2%
5	87 - Vehicles other than railway or tramway stock	8.4	7.8%
6	39 - Plastics and articles thereof	2.6	2.5%
7	30 - Pharmaceutical products	2.4	2.3%
8	90 - Optical, photographic, cinematographic and medical equipment	2.3	2.2%
9	38 - Miscellaneous chemical products	2.0	1.8%
10	49 - Printed books, papers, printing industry products	1.9	1.8%
	All goods imported	107.1	100.0%

⁴⁰ United Nations (UN) Comtrade data are sourced from the online [UN Comtrade Database](#). The data reported above are for 2023, but as the data upload to UN Comtrade is continuous, more timely data may be available from the source.

⁴¹ Data are classified using the [Harmonized System](#) and are given on a physical movement basis, with UK data comparable to HMRC data sources rather than the headline trade figures presented here from ONS.

Top services traded with the world by South Africa, in current prices (ITC Trade Map)^{42 43 44}

Data presented here shows the top service types traded to the world, not solely the UK, by South Africa.

Top services exported to the world by South Africa in 2022:

Rank	EBOPS Service Type	\$USD billion	% of total services exported
1	Travel	4.7	37.6%
2	Other business services	3.1	24.5%
3	Transport	1.6	12.7%
4	Financial services	1.1	9.0%
5	Telecommunications, computer, and information services	0.9	7.5%
	All services exported	12.6	100.0%

Top services imported from the world by South Africa in 2022:

Rank	EBOPS Service Type	\$USD billion	% of total services imported
1	Transport	8.0	44.4%
2	Telecommunications, computer, and information services	3.5	19.5%
3	Travel	2.2	12.3%
4	Other business services	1.7	9.2%
5	Charges for the use of intellectual property n.i.e.	1.5	8.0%
	All services imported	18.1	100.0%

⁴² International Trade Centre (ITC) Trade Map data are sourced from the online [ITC Trade Map tool](#). The data above are for 2022, but as the data upload to ITC is continuous, more timely data may be available from the source.

⁴³ Data are classified on the [EBOPS 2010](#) basis. 'Other business services' include: Research and development, professional and management consulting services, technical services and trade related services. A full description of all service types can be found on the [UN Statistics Division website](#).

⁴⁴ Estimates are shown in italics, where for some partners only estimates are available - These data have been included for information and should be treated with caution.

Background Notes

This document is one of a wider set of factsheets between the UK and its individual trade and investment partners which can be found on the [Trade and Investment Factsheets website](#). All of these factsheets are published as [Official Statistics](#) as defined by the [UK Statistics Authority](#).

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Future updates of these factsheets can be found on the [Government update schedule for Official Statistics](#). These scheduled updates are in line with significant updates from UK data providers when they release new data. Unscheduled releases of the factsheets may also be necessary to accommodate data updates where little or no advanced notice are given, such as in the case of international data updates. Please see the data update schedule and revisions policy in the [quality and methodology report](#) for more information. Please note that there may be occasions where more recent data than is provided here can be found directly from the data providers.

The Department for Business and Trade welcome any feedback or comments on these factsheets, please send these to statistics@businessandtrade.gov.uk.



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