



South Africa

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

Date of release: 31 October 2025; Date of next planned release: TBC

Total trade in goods and services (exports plus imports) between the UK and South Africa¹ was **£11.8 billion** in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025, an increase of 4.5% or £508 million in current prices from the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024. Of this £11.8 billion:

- Total UK **exports** to South Africa amounted to £5.0 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025 (an increase of 6.8% or £318 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024);
- Total UK **imports** from South Africa amounted to £6.8 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025 (an increase of 2.9% or £190 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024).

South Africa was the UK's 28th largest trading partner in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025 accounting for 0.6% of total UK trade.²

At the end of 2023, the **stock of FDI from the UK in South Africa** was £23.7 billion, 3.1% or £705 million higher than the end of 2022. At the end of 2023, South Africa accounted for 1.2% of the total UK outward FDI stock.

At the end of 2023, the **stock of FDI from South Africa in the UK** was £3.6 billion, 9.0% or £302 million higher than the end of 2022. At the end of 2023, South Africa accounted for 0.2% of the total UK inward FDI stock.³

¹'the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025' refers to the 12 months to the end of June 2025

²Trade data sourced from the latest ONS publication of [UK total trade: all countries seasonally adjusted](#) data.

³Investment data sourced from ONS publication on [Foreign Direct Investment Involving UK Companies](#).

Contents

About these statistics	3
Summary trade and investment statistics for South Africa	4
Trade with South Africa, in current prices (ONS)	6
Trade in goods by commodity, in current prices (ONS)	8
Trade in services by service type, in current prices (ONS)	9
Trade in goods by UK countries and English regions, in current prices (HMRC)	10
Trade in services by mode of supply, in current prices (ONS)	11
UK Market Share (ONS and UNCTAD)	12
Number of VAT-registered businesses trading goods (HMRC)	13
Trade in Value Added (OECD)	14
Foreign Direct Investment with South Africa (ONS)	15
Economic statistics (as reported by South Africa)	17
Background Notes	19

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 in goods 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.](#)

International statistics for goods traded with the world are published in the [UN Comtrade database](#) and services by [ITC Trademap](#).

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.

Contact Details

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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)⁴

Trade	Value in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025	Change from the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024
Total trade	£11.8 billion	an increase of 4.5% or £508 million
Ranking out of all the UK's trading partners	28th	
Total UK exports	£5.0 billion	an increase of 6.8% or £318 million
Ranking out of all the UK's export partners	28th	
UK exports of goods (percentage of total UK exports to South Africa)	£1.8 billion (34.9%)	a decrease of 11.0% or £216 million
UK exports of services (percentage of total UK exports to South Africa)	£3.3 billion (65.1%)	an increase of 19.5% or £534 million
Total UK imports	£6.8 billion	an increase of 2.9% or £190 million
Ranking out of all the UK's import partners	29th	
UK imports of goods (percentage of total UK imports from South Africa)	£4.9 billion (72.3%)	a decrease of 4.1% or £212 million
UK imports of services (percentage of total UK imports from South Africa)	£1.9 billion (27.7%)	an increase of 27.0% or £402 million

'the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025' refers to the 12 months to the end of June 2025

UK trade with South Africa, in current prices (based on the latest calendar year)⁵

Trade	Value in 2024	Change from 2023
Total trade	£11.5 billion	an increase of 5.9% or £644 million
Ranking out of all the UK's trading partners	27th	
Total UK exports	£5.1 billion	an increase of 9.7% or £450 million
Ranking out of all the UK's export partners	28th	
UK exports of goods (percentage of total UK exports to South Africa)	£1.9 billion (36.5%)	a decrease of 9.4% or £192 million
UK exports of services (percentage of total UK exports to South Africa)	£3.2 billion (63.5%)	an increase of 24.9% or £642 million
Total UK imports	£6.4 billion	an increase of 3.1% or £194 million
Ranking out of all the UK's import partners	30th	
UK imports of goods (percentage of total UK imports from South Africa)	£4.8 billion (74.3%)	a decrease of 0.8% or £38 million
UK imports of services (percentage of total UK imports from South Africa)	£1.6 billion (25.7%)	an increase of 16.4% or £232 million

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

⁵Trade data sourced from Office for National Statistics data on [UK total trade \(seasonally adjusted data\)](#).

UK market share in South Africa⁶

UK market share for total trade	Value in 2024		Change from 2023
Total UK market share	5.4%	an increase of 0.8 percentage points	
UK market share for goods only	2.4%	unchanged	
UK market share for services only	20.8%	an increase of 3.6 percentage points	

UK Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) with South Africa⁷

UK FDI stock	Value at the end of 2023		Change from the end of 2022
Total UK outward FDI stock	£23.7 billion		an increase of 3.1% or £705 million
Total UK inward FDI stock	£3.6 billion		an increase of 9.0% or £302 million

Economic statistics and projections using gross domestic product (GDP) for South Africa⁸

Economic statistics	2023	2024	2025	2026
Economic growth, using GDP in real terms, compared to the previous year	0.8%	0.5%	<i>1.1%</i>	<i>1.2%</i>
GDP per capita in \$USD (in thousands)	6.1	6.4	6.7	6.8
GDP in current prices (billion \$USD)	381.3	401.1	426.4	443.6
Global GDP Ranking	41	41	40	41

Figures for 2025 and 2026 are forecast projections.

⁶UK 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.

⁷FDI data sourced from the Office for National Statistics publication [Foreign Direct Investment Involving UK Companies](#).

⁸Economic data sourced from the International Monetary Fund [World Economic Outlook](#) data portal; 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)^{9 10 11}

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: UK trade statistics experienced higher levels of volatility between 2019 and 2022, due to the pandemic, global recession, supply chain disruption, EU Exit, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, price inflation, conflict in the Middle East, and data collection changes. All figures are reported in current prices (not adjusted for inflation), unless otherwise stated. We recognise that some changes in UK trade values will be partly due to price changes.

Total trade in goods and services (exports plus imports) between the UK and South Africa was £11.8 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025, an increase of 4.5% or £508 million in current prices from the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024.

In the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025, **total UK exports** to South Africa amounted to £5.0 billion (an increase of 6.8% or £318 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024).

Of all UK exports to South Africa in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025, £1.8 billion (34.9%) were **goods** and £3.3 billion (65.1%) were **services**. In the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025, UK **exports of goods** to South Africa decreased by 11.0% or £216 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024 while UK **exports of services** to South Africa increased by 19.5% or £534 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024.

In the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025, **total UK imports** from South Africa were £6.8 billion (an increase of 2.9% or £190 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024).

Of all UK imports from South Africa in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025, £4.9 billion (72.3%) were **goods** and £1.9 billion (27.7%) were **services**. In the same period, UK **imports of goods** from South Africa decreased by 4.1% or £212 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024 while UK **imports of services** from South Africa increased by 27.0% or £402 million in current prices, compared to the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024.

This means the UK reported a **total trade deficit** of £1.8 billion with South Africa, compared to a trade deficit of £1.9 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024. In the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025, the UK had a **trade in goods deficit** of £3.2 billion with South Africa, compared to a trade in goods deficit of £3.2 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024. Meanwhile, in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025 the UK reported a **trade in services surplus** of £1.4 billion with South Africa, compared to a trade in services surplus of £1.2 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024.

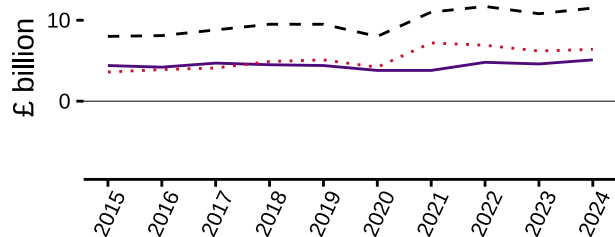
⁹Office for National Statistics (ONS) data source for total trade: [UK total trade data \(seasonally adjusted\)](#).

¹⁰This 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).

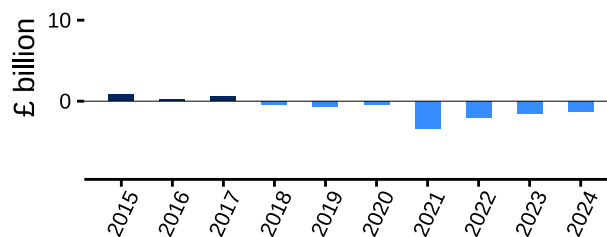
¹¹Data are in current prices, meaning no adjustment has been made to account for changes in inflation or exchange rate. The totals may not exactly match the sum of their parts due to rounding.'

The charts below present a time series for trade between the UK and South Africa for each year between 2015 and 2024:

UK trade with South Africa



UK trade balance with South Africa



— Exports ··· Imports - - Total Trade

■ Deficit ■ Surplus

Source: ONS, UK trade in goods and services, Q2 2025

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

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Value of total trade	8.0	8.1	8.8	9.5	9.5	8.0	11.0	11.7	10.8	11.5
Value of exports	4.4	4.2	4.7	4.5	4.4	3.8	3.8	4.8	4.6	5.1
Value of imports	3.6	3.9	4.1	4.9	5.1	4.2	7.2	6.9	6.2	6.4
Trade balance	+0.8	+0.2	+0.6	-0.4	-0.7	-0.4	-3.4	-2.0	-1.6	-1.3

In the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025, South Africa was the UK's:¹²

- **28th largest trading partner** (accounting for 0.6% of total UK trade).
 - 27th largest **goods** trading partner (0.7% of UK goods trade).
 - 31st largest **services** trading partner (0.6% of UK services trade).
- **28th largest export market** (accounting for 0.5% of total UK exports).
 - 35th largest **goods** export market (0.5% of UK goods exports).
 - 31st largest **services** export market (0.6% of UK services exports).
- **29th largest import market** (accounting for 0.7% of total UK imports).
 - 23rd largest **goods** import market (0.8% of UK goods imports).
 - 28th largest **services** import market (0.6% of UK services imports).

More timely data, for trade in goods only¹³ is published by the [ONS](#).

¹²Rankings are based on the ONS dataset which contains data for all individual partners: [UK total trade data \(seasonally adjusted\)](#).

¹³ONS data source for trade in the latest 12 months up to August 2025: [UK Trade data \(seasonally adjusted\)](#).

Trade in goods by commodity, in current prices (ONS)^{14 15}

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 Q2 2025 were as follows:¹⁶

Commodity	Exports in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025	Percentage of total goods exports	Change from the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024
54 - Medicinal & pharmaceutical products	£224.4 million	12.9%	an increase of 23.4%
78M - Cars	£200.0 million	11.5%	an increase of 10.4%
33R - Refined oil	£116.6 million	6.7%	an increase of 48.1%
71MI - Mechanical power generators (intermediate)	£98.3 million	5.6%	a decrease of 30.9%
1 - Beverages & tobacco	£79.7 million	4.6%	a decrease of 10.2%

* = Percentages removed where these may total over 100%, due to total exports being rounded to the nearest £million and commodity values at a greater level of accuracy;

† = Comparison unavailable as commodity was not traded in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024;

‡ = Not reported (over 100%) to prevent showing small value changes from a low base as fast growing

The **top 5 goods imported to the UK from South Africa** in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025 were as follows:

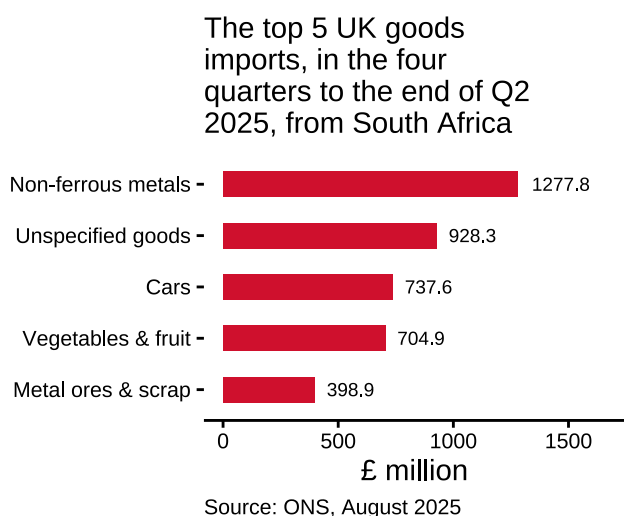
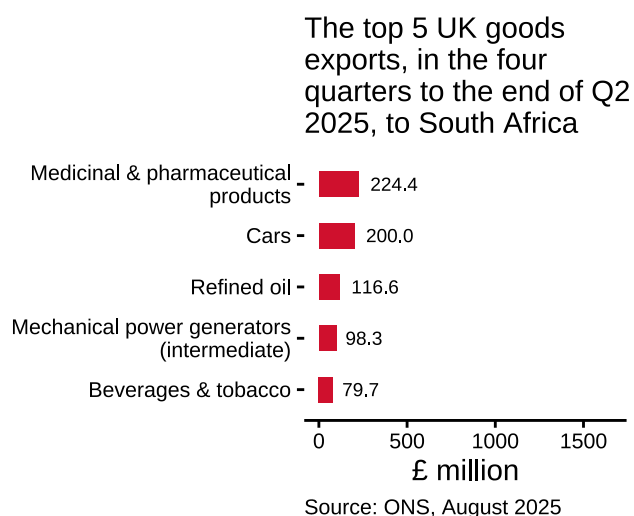
Commodity	Imports in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025	Percentage of total goods imports	Change from the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024
68 - Non-ferrous metals	£1.3 billion	25.9%	a decrease of 30.9%
9 - Unspecified goods	£928.3 million	18.8%	‡
78M - Cars	£737.6 million	15.0%	an increase of 13.9%
05 - Vegetables & fruit	£704.9 million	14.3%	an increase of 3.2%
28 - Metal ores & scrap	£398.9 million	8.1%	a decrease of 29.4%

* = Percentages removed where these may total over 100%, due to total imports being rounded to the nearest £million and commodity values at a greater level of accuracy;

† = Comparison unavailable as commodity was not traded in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024;

‡ = Not reported (over 100%) to prevent showing small value changes from a low base as fast growing

The chart below shows the top 5 goods exported from the UK to South Africa and the top 5 goods imported to the UK from South Africa, by value, in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025. All data shown in the chart are provided above.



¹⁴Data 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 ONS publication which are given on a monthly basis.

¹⁵Commodity classifications as reported by the ONS, derived from [Standard International Trade Classifications \(SITC\)](#)

¹⁶'the four quarters the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025' refers to the 12 months to the end of June 2025

Trade in services by service type, in current prices (ONS)^{17 18 19}

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 Q2 2025 were as follows:²⁰

Service type	Exports in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025	Percentage of total services exports	Change from the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024
Other Business Services	£796 million	24.4%	an increase of 15.4%
Financial	£538 million	16.5%	an increase of 34.8%
Intellectual property	£471 million	14.4%	an increase of 61.9%
Travel	£447 million	13.7%	an increase of 13.2%
Insurance and Pension	£341 million	10.5%	an increase of 4.6%

* = Comparison unavailable due to data suppressions;

† = Comparison unavailable as trade in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024 was below £500 thousand;

‡ = Not reported (over 100%) to prevent showing small value changes from a low base as fast growing

The **top 5 service types imported to the UK from South Africa** in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025 were as follows:

Service type	Imports in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025	Percentage of total services imports	Change from the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024
Other Business Services	£774 million	41.1%	an increase of 56.0%
Travel	£631 million	33.5%	an increase of 4.8%
Telecommunications, computer and information services	£219 million	11.6%	an increase of 21.0%
Financial	£78 million	4.1%	an increase of 50.0%
Insurance and Pension	£75 million	4.0%	*

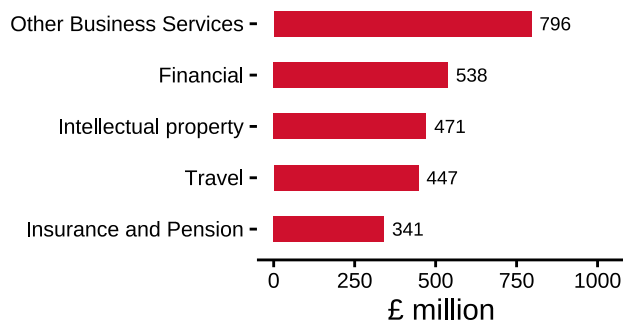
* = Comparison unavailable due to data suppressions;

† = Comparison unavailable as trade in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2024 was below £500 thousand;

‡ = Value removed (over 100%) to prevent showing small value changes from a low base as fast growing

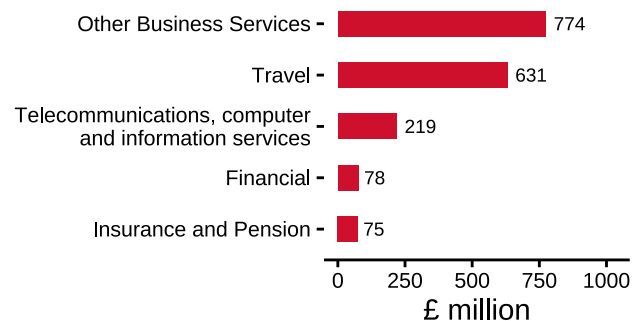
The chart below shows the top 5 service types exported from the UK to South Africa and the top 5 service types imported to the UK from South Africa, by value, in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025. All data shown in the chart are provided above.

The top 5 UK services exports, in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025, to South Africa



Source: ONS, Q2 2025

The top 5 UK services imports, in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025, from South Africa



Source: ONS, Q2 2025

¹⁷Trade in services by service type is sourced from data by the ONS: [UK trade in services by partner country \(non-seasonally adjusted\)](#).

¹⁸Data 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](#).

¹⁹Service type data may be unavailable for some quarters, due to the suppression of figures for the confidentiality of individual traders.

²⁰'the four quarters the four quarters to the end of Q2 2025' refers to the 12 months to the end of June 2025

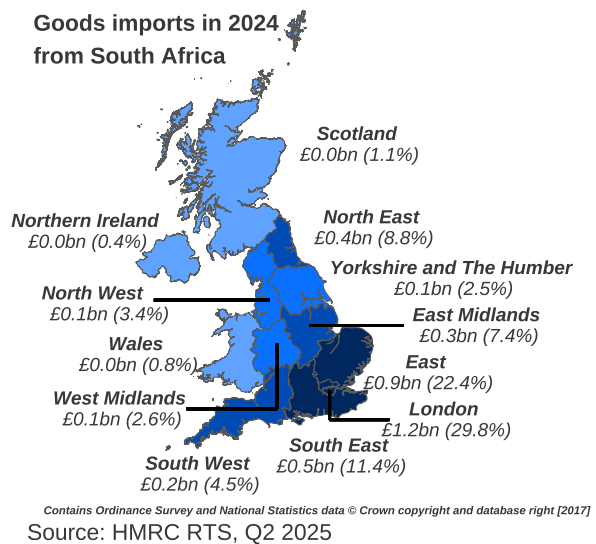
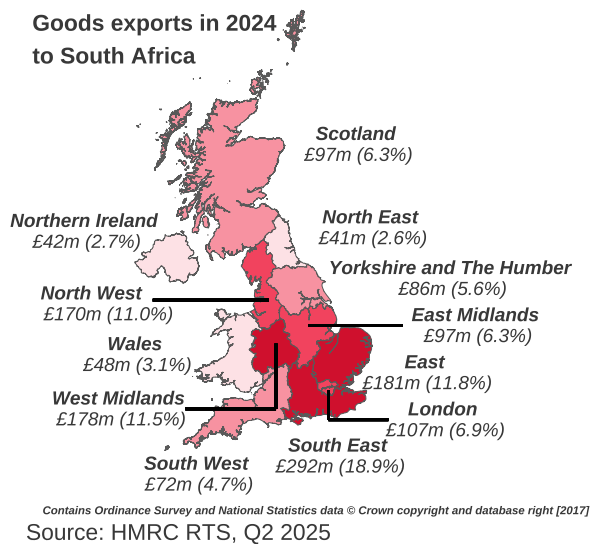
Trade in goods by UK countries and English regions, in current prices (HMRC)²¹

22

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 2024. 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.



The data that are presented in the maps above for 2024 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	41	170	86	97	178	181	107	292	72	48	97
Percentage of total goods exports to South Africa	2.6%	11.0%	5.6%	6.3%	11.5%	11.8%	6.9%	18.9%	4.7%	3.1%	6.3%	2.7%
Value of goods imports from South Africa	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.9	1.2	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Percentage of total goods imports from South Africa	8.8%	3.4%	2.5%	7.4%	2.6%	22.4%	29.8%	11.4%	4.5%	0.8%	1.1%	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.

²¹HMRC data source for regional UK trade data: [HMRC Regional Trade Statistics](#) (data extracted from the spreadsheet download using the HMRC interactive tables).

²²Totals 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 2024 are provisional and subject to change.

Trade in services by mode of supply, in current prices (ONS)²³

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).

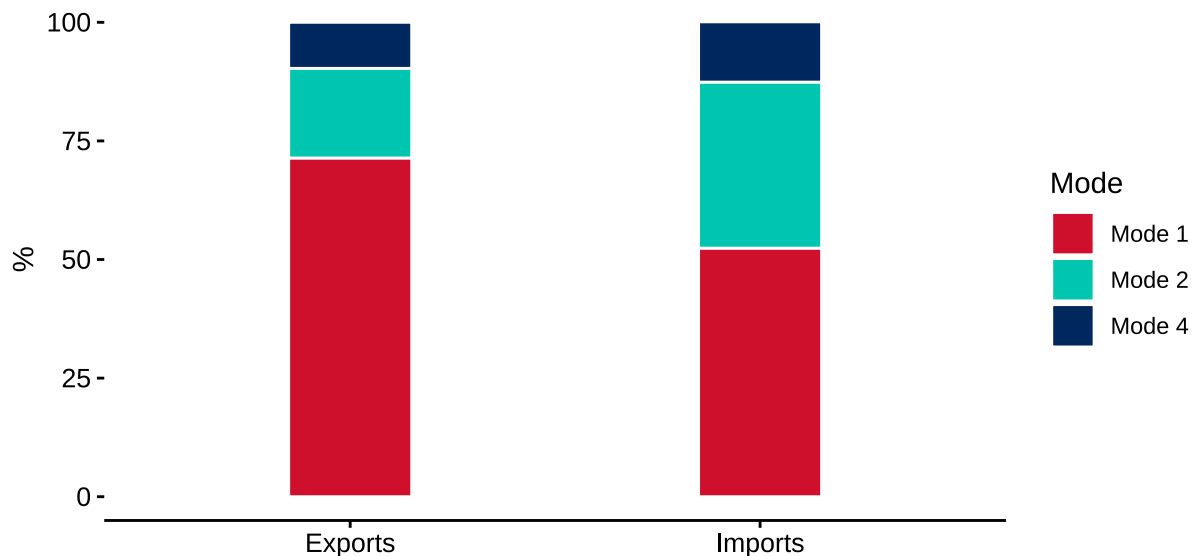
UK services exports to South Africa by mode of supply in 2022:

- £1.9 billion of services exports to South Africa were delivered by Mode 1 (71.4%).
- £509 million of services exports were delivered by Mode 2 (18.9%).
- £261 million of services exports were delivered by Mode 4 (9.7%).

UK services imports from South Africa by mode of supply in 2022:

- £683 million of services imports from South Africa were delivered by Mode 1 (52.4%).
- £456 million of services imports were delivered by Mode 2 (35.0%).
- £165 million of services imports were delivered by Mode 4 (12.7%).

Proportion of total trade flows of services with South Africa by Modes 1, 2, & 4 in 2022 (%)



Source: ONS, 2022

²³ONS data source for UK Trade in Services by Mode of Supply: [ONS Imports and exports of services by country, by modes of supply, UK](#)

UK Market Share (ONS and UNCTAD)^{24 25}

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 for 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 rate ²⁶.

The UK's market share for South Africa in 2024 was as follows:

- **The total UK market share in South Africa was 5.4% in 2024 for goods and services.** This is an increase of 0.8 percentage points from 2023.
- The UK market share in South Africa was 2.4% in 2024 for **goods only**. This is unchanged from 2023.
- The UK market share in South Africa was 20.8% in 2024 for **services only**. This is an increase of 3.6 percentage points from 2023.

The table below presents the UK's market share for South Africa between 2015 and 2024. Values presented in italics are based on UNCTAD estimates of imports.

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total goods and services	6.6%	6.3%	6.1%	5.5%	5.4%	6.2%	5.0%	4.7%	4.7%	5.4%
Goods only	4.2%	3.9%	3.8%	3.1%	3.0%	2.9%	2.7%	2.3%	2.4%	2.4%
Services only	19.6%	17.9%	17.6%	18.9%	18.2%	25.9%	20.2%	19.2%	17.2%	20.8%

²⁴ ONS data source for market share: [UK total trade data \(seasonally adjusted\)](#).

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ Annual average spot exchange rates for \$USD to £GBP are sourced from the [Bank of England](#)

Number of VAT-registered businesses trading goods (HMRC)^{27 28 29}

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 goods with South Africa in 2024:

- In 2024, around 7,600 UK VAT-registered businesses exported goods to South Africa.
- In 2024, around 3,100 UK VAT-registered businesses imported goods from South Africa.

²⁷HMRC data source for Regional Trade Statistics business counts data: [UK trade in goods statistics](#).

²⁸Data 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.

²⁹HMRC 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)³⁰

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 2022, 0.8% of the total value added in gross exports from South Africa originated in the UK.**
- In 2022, 25.8% 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 (3.8%), Saudi Arabia (2.4%), and United States (1.9%).

UK backward linkages for exports:

- **In 2022, 0.1% of the total value added in gross exports from the UK originated in South Africa.**
- In 2022, 18.9% 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 (2.6%), China (1.9%), and Germany (1.7%).

Employment supported by exports:³¹

- Exporting activity in South Africa supported 3.4 million jobs in 2020 (22.2% of total South Africa employment). Exports to the UK supported around 137,200 jobs in South Africa in 2020.
- Exporting activity in the UK supported 6.7 million jobs in 2020 (20.6% of total UK employment). Exports to South Africa supported around 28,400 jobs in the UK in 2020.

³⁰The 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 \(origin of value added in gross exports\), October 2025](#); and b) [Trade in employment \(TiM\) database, January 2025](#), indicators EXGR_DEM.

³¹These 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)^{32 33 34}

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:

- At the end of 2023, the **stock of FDI from the UK in South Africa** was £23.7 billion, 3.1% or £705 million higher than the end of 2022. At the end of 2023, South Africa accounted for 1.2% of the total UK outward FDI stock.

UK inward FDI stock:

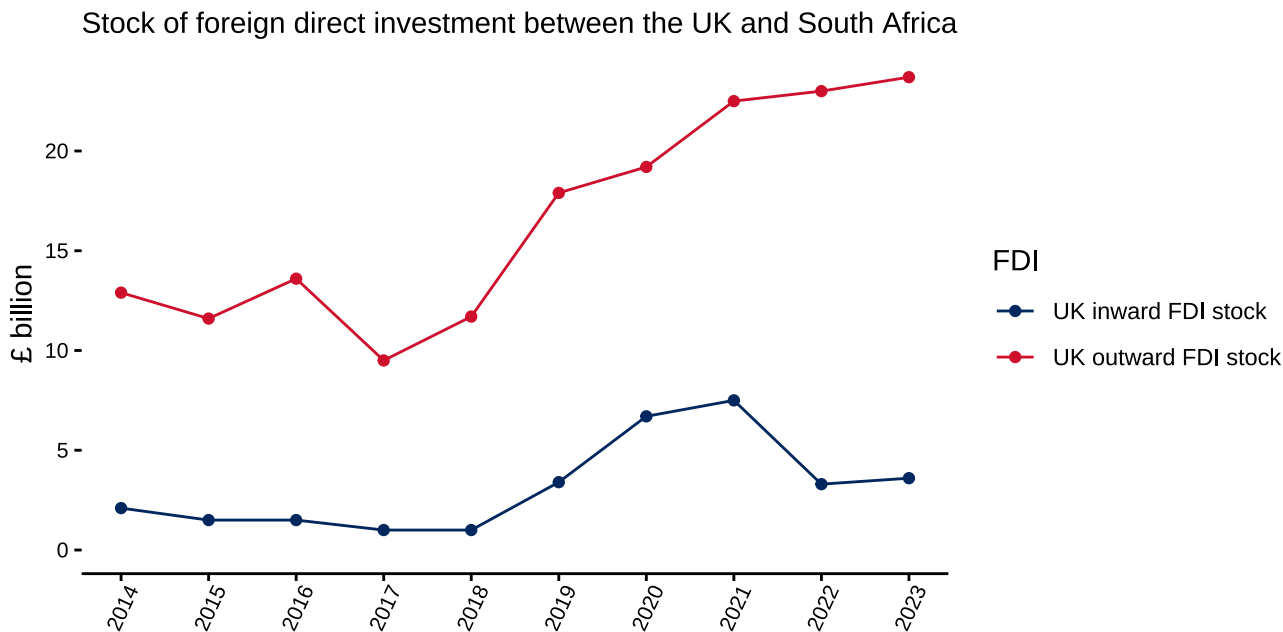
- At the end of 2023, the **stock of FDI from South Africa in the UK** was £3.6 billion, 9.0% or £302 million higher than the end of 2022. At the end of 2023, South Africa accounted for 0.2% of the total UK inward FDI stock.

³²ONS data source for FDI statistics: [Foreign Direct Investment involving UK companies](#).

³³Data 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.

³⁴This 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 2014 and 2023:



Source: ONS, 2023 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	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UK outward FDI stock	12.9	11.6	13.6	9.5	11.7	17.9	19.2	22.5	23.0	23.7
UK inward FDI stock	2.1	1.5	1.5	1.0	1.0	3.4	6.7	7.5	3.3	3.6

Economic statistics (as reported by South Africa)

Trade and investment data for South Africa (UNCTAD)^{35 36 37}

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	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Nominal exports	104.3	111.4	105.9	93.4	130.9	135.7	124.7	127.5
Nominal imports	100.0	109.3	103.9	78.4	104.9	127.7	123.4	119.5
Nominal trade balance	4.4	2.1	2.0	14.9	26.0	8.0	1.3	8.0
Inward FDI stock	156.4	138.6	145.2	133.1	174.8	166.5	111.4	113.0
Outward FDI stock	273.0	246.4	215.0	251.0	223.8	208.0	150.7	147.8

³⁵United 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](#).

³⁶Estimates are given in italics. Historic data pre-2017 can be found on the [UNCTAD website](#).

³⁷All 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)^{38 39}

The following table presents economic statistics for South Africa. Figures from 2025 onwards are forecast projections.

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Change in exports (%)	7.8	5.1	-2.8	-2.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Change in imports (%)	15.0	3.9	-6.4	-1.0	3.3	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.3
Current account balance (% of GDP)	-0.3	-1.1	-0.7	-0.9	-1.2	-1.6	-1.8	-1.9	-1.9
Global GDP ranking (current prices)	38	41	41	40	41	40	41	41	42
GDP in current prices (billion \$USD)	407.4	381.3	401.1	426.4	443.6	458.4	475.5	493.3	512.0
Change in real GDP (%)	2.1	0.8	0.5	1.1	1.2	1.5	1.7	1.8	1.8
GDP per capita (1,000 \$USD)	6.6	6.1	6.4	6.7	6.8	7.0	7.1	7.3	7.4
GDP PPP (Int'l \$billion)	919.9	961.6	990.7	1,026.5	1,057.0	1,091.0	1,127.6	1,168.4	1,212.1
Inflation, year average (CPI %)	6.9	5.9	4.4	3.4	3.7	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.0
Unemployment rate (% of total labour force)	33.5	32.4	32.6	32.7	32.7	32.6	32.5	32.4	32.2
Population (million)	61.4	62.2	63.0	64.0	64.9	65.9	66.9	67.9	68.9
Total investment (% of GDP)	15.7	15.4	14.1	13.1	13.4	13.7	13.9	14.1	14.3
Gross national savings (% of GDP)	15.3	14.3	13.4	12.2	12.2	12.1	12.1	12.2	12.3
General government net lending/borrowing (% of GDP)	-4.3	-5.5	-5.8	-6.0	-5.6	-5.3	-5.0	-4.8	-4.7
General government gross debt (% of GDP)	70.7	73.2	76.0	77.3	79.5	81.9	83.9	85.5	87.1

³⁸International Monetary Fund (IMF) provide economic commentary in their [World Economic Outlook reports](#). The latest data presented here can be found in the [IMF Data Portal](#).

³⁹Projections and estimates are given in italics. More information for each metric and each partner, as well as historic data pre-2022, can be found on the [IMF Data Portal](#).

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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As a requisite of publishing as Official Statistics, a [quality and methodology report](#) has been produced which outlines the quality of these factsheets, as well as providing more information on the methodology of the data sources presented here. This report contains hyperlinks to information on the strengths and weaknesses for each data source. Statistics contained in the factsheets from UK data providers all come from Official Statistics publications, with some sources also being from National Statistics publications.

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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