



Department  
for Transport

# UK Port Freight Statistics: 2017

## About this release

The importance of shipping and trade to the economy of the UK, an island nation, has resulted in the establishment of a large number of ports around the coast, which are very diverse in terms of size and type of cargo handled.

This statistical release provides information on trends and patterns in the handling of freight traffic at UK sea ports, in terms of cargo as well as the route taken.

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## Port freight traffic at all UK ports

**Total tonnage levels remained level in 2017 compared to 2016, with 481.8 million tonnes passing through all UK ports.**

A total of 470.7 million tonnes of tonnage passed through UK major ports in 2017, unchanged from 2016.

The total tonnage passing through minor ports in the UK fell by 1% from 2016 to 11.1 million tonnes.

Both liquid bulk and dry bulk passing through UK major ports fell by 1% to 189.1 million tonnes, and 91.7 million tonnes in 2017 respectively. Other general cargo rose by 8% to 18.8 million tonnes in 2017.

## Unitised traffic at major ports

**In 2017, 24.1 million units of traffic passed through UK major ports.**

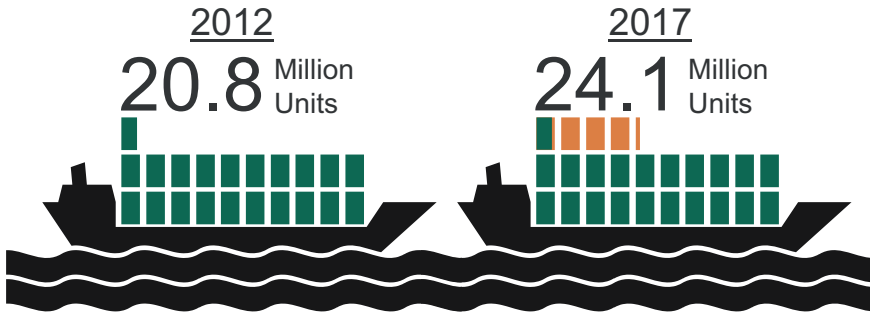
This figure is very marginally higher than the amount of unitised traffic in 2016 (by 10,000 units), and so represents the fifth consecutive year of growth in this cargo category.

A total of 4.6 million units of road goods vehicles passed through UK major ports in 2017, up 5% from 2016. This was the fifth consecutive year where there was growth in this category.

# UK Port Freight Statistics: 2017 headlines

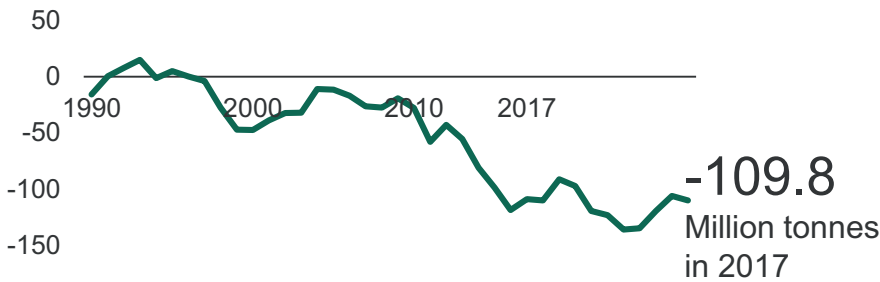


## Port Freight Traffic Overview (Page 4)



**Unitised traffic has increased for five consecutive years** since 2012, representing 16% growth in the amount of lift-on/lift-off and roll-on/roll-off traffic passing through UK major ports

Difference between exports and imports (million tonnes)

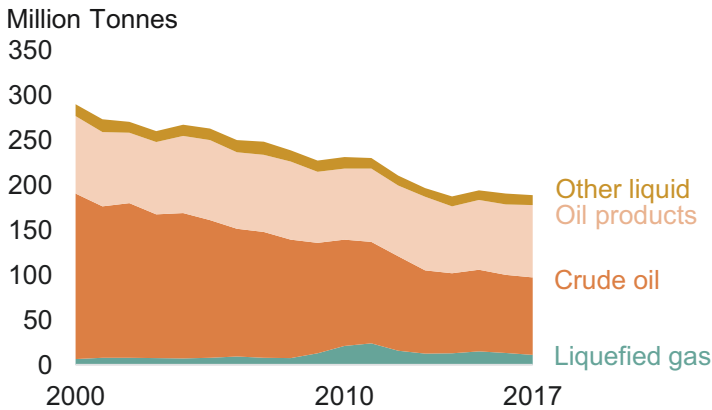


**The UK continues to import more than it exports.** A total of 248.3 million tonnes entered UK ports (both major and minor) from international sources, compared to 138.5 million tonnes exported.

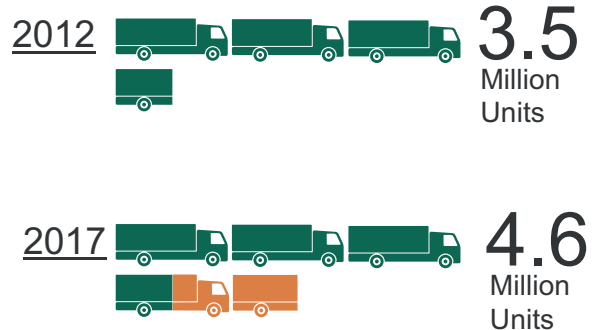


## Major Ports, Traffic by Cargo (Page 10)

### Liquid bulk continues to fall

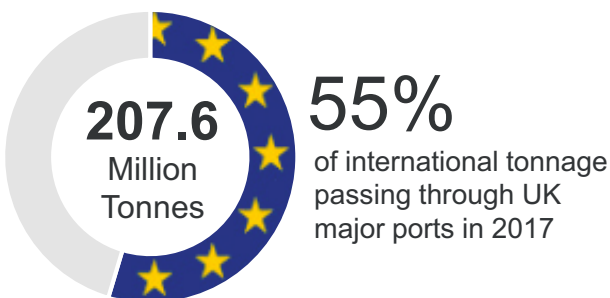


### Growth in road goods vehicles

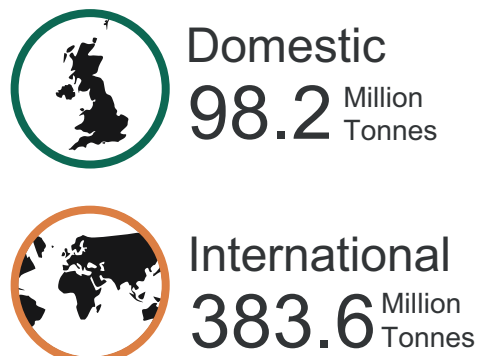


## Major Ports, Traffic by Route (Page 20)

### Traffic with the EU remains the largest international route



### One-fifth of all port freight traffic is between UK ports



## Things you need to know

The statistics presented here on port freight in the United Kingdom (UK) provide information on trends and patterns in the handling of freight traffic at UK sea ports. Ports are essential to the UK economy, with around 95% of all imports and exports being transported by sea.

Port freight statistics are based on a combination of data reported to the DfT by port authorities and shipping lines, or their agents. Ports are split into major ports and minor ports. Major ports are those with cargo volumes of at least 1 million tonnes annually (as well as some strategically important ports);. More detailed data is collected for major ports, such as breakdown by cargo type.

Uses of this data are explained in the [Background Notes](#). Guidance notes and comparison with data published by other government departments are in the [Port Statistics: Notes and Definitions](#).

### Cargo categorisation in port freight statistics

In the port freight statistics series, cargo is categorised based on the means by which goods are loaded onto or off of the vessel. For some cargo types there is further subdivision into broad commodities. Cargo category is only available for major ports. There were 51 major ports in 2017.

#### Unitised traffic

Only lift-on lift-off freight (i.e. container traffic) and roll-on roll-off freight services can be expressed in terms of units, that is the exact amount of cars, lorries, containers etc. that were transported.

Roll-on roll-off traffic are vehicles and trailers either driven on under their own power (self propelled) or transported on via a platform vehicle (non-self propelled).

#### Non-unitised cargo

Liquid bulk, dry bulk and other general cargo are all expressed only in tonnage.

Other General Cargo consists primarily of break-bulk cargo, that is cargo which is composed of separate pieces that must be loaded individually, and not in intermodal containers or in bulk, such as with oil or grain. These are typically transported in bags, boxes, crates, drums or barrels.

Bulk cargo is that which is transported unpackaged in large quantities, either in liquid or granular, particulate form, as a mass of solids. Examples include crude oil, coal, gravel, cement powder etc.. This is typically dropped or poured into a hold, and is unloaded via suctions, screw or grabber.

### Ship types and arrivals

For the purposes of these statistics, cargo is categorised depending upon how it is transported on the ship. Because of this, no distinction is made on the type of ship that transports goods such as ferries, cruiseferries, RoPAX (Hybrid RoRo and Passenger transport), ConRO (Hybrid RoRo and container) or RoLo vessels (Hybrid RoRo and LoLo services). Information is available on the number of times ships arrived at UK ports, separated by the type of ship. This is available in the [PORT06](#) data series.

More information on how cargo is categorised can be found in the [Port Statistic Notes and Definitions](#).

### Users

Users of the data include central government, the devolved administrations and local government, the maritime industry, transport consultants and academics, and international organisations.

## 1. Port Freight Traffic

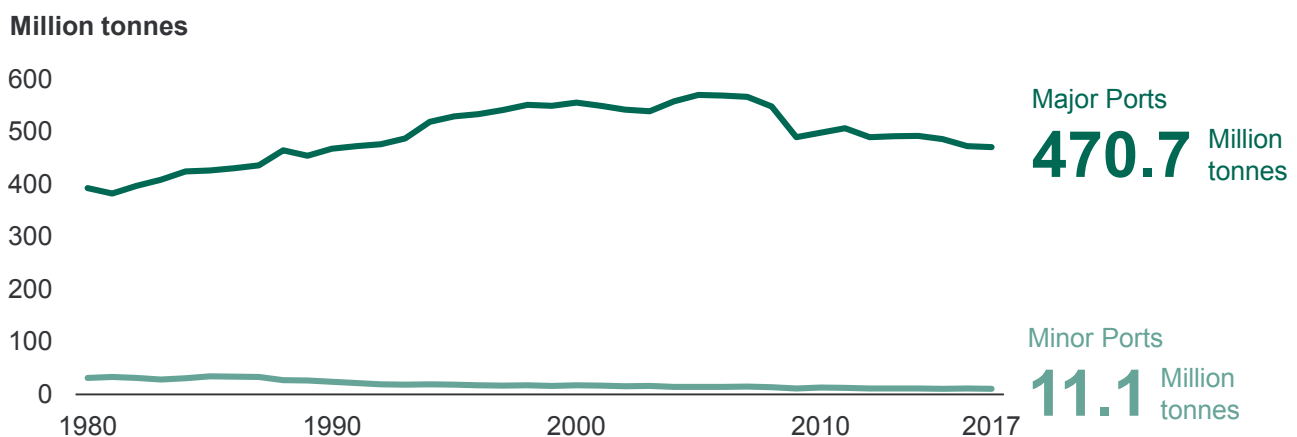
### In 2017, major port tonnage steady whilst minor port tonnage fell

UK major port tonnage remained level in 2017 at 470.7 million tonnes. Major ports handled 98% of UK port freight tonnage in 2017. Minor port tonnage fell from 11.3 million tonnes in 2016 to 11.1 million tonnes in 2017, a fall of 1%.

### UK port tonnage long term trend shows lowest figure since 1999

Between the early 1980s and 2000 the total amount of freight tonnage handled by UK ports increased by 35%. The 2008 recession resulted in the largest year on year decline seen in the last 30 years, when port freight fell by 11% between 2008 and 2009. Total tonnage levels stabilised in recent years at around half a billion tonnes. However, total freight tonnage decreased by 3% in 2016 to 484.0 million tonnes, and marginally further to 481.8 million tonnes in 2017.

#### Tonnage handled by UK ports since 1980, by port type ([port0101](#))



### Unitised traffic increased for the fifth consecutive year

Unitised traffic handled at UK major ports grew very marginally in 2017 to 24.1 million units in 2017, which marks the fifth consecutive year of growth. Unitised traffic has risen 16% since 2012.

Unitised traffic can also be measured in terms of tonnage handled - 171.1 million tonnes passed through UK major ports in 2017, a very marginal fall on the previous year where 171.8 million tonnes were handled by the same ports.

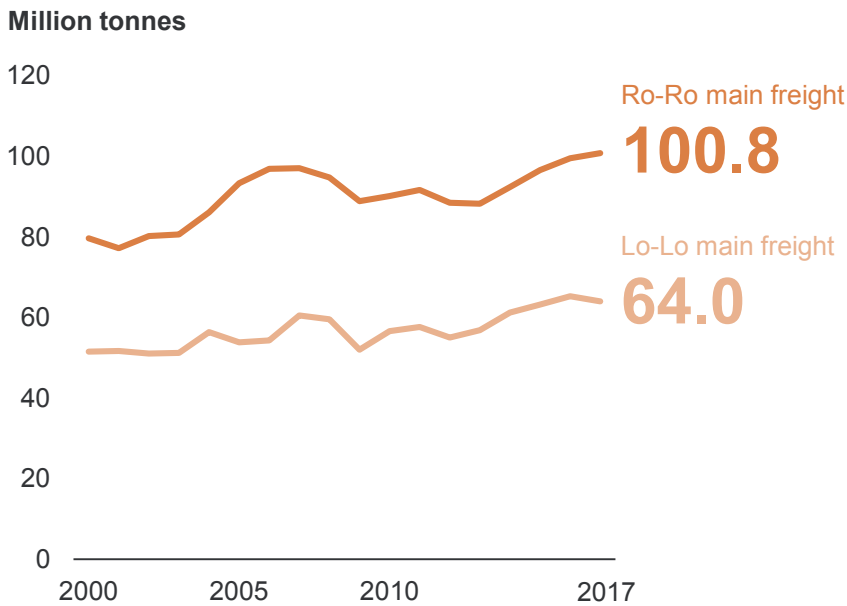
Main freight units passing through UK major ports have risen to 14.2 million units in 2017, a 3% rise on 2016 and the highest number of main freight units on record. In terms of tonnage, 164.8 million tonnes of main freight were handled in 2017, a less than 1% fall from 2016. Main freight makes up 35% of all UK major port tonnage handled.

#### Definitions

**Unitised traffic:** Unitised traffic can initially be broken down into **freight units** (those units which are used for trade) and **non-freight units** (e.g. passenger cars). Freight units can be further broken down into lift-on lift off (lo-lo) a.k.a containers, and roll-on, roll-off (ro-ro) e.g. lorries.

Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) by port can be found in the statistical data sets, [PORT0101](#) and statistics on unitised traffic in [PORT0203](#), [PORT0204](#) and [PORT0205](#).

## UK major port freight by type: 2000 to 2017 ([port0201](#))



### Definitions

#### Main freight units:

Unitised traffic which transports commercial goods. This includes:

Roll-on / roll-off

- Road goods vehicles
- Unaccompanied road goods trailers
- Rail wagons & shipborne trailers

Load-on/load-off

- Lo-Lo containers

The top 10 major ports in the UK by tonnage remain unchanged from 2016, however there has been a change in ranking for 5 ports. The top three ports retained their rankings in 2017.

## All UK major ports by tonnes, ranking in 2016 and 2017 ([port0303](#))



	2016		2017		
	Million Tonnes	Rank	Million Tonnes	Rank	
Grimsby & Immingham	54.4	1	54.0	1	Grimsby & Immingham
London	50.4	2	49.9	2	London
Southampton	36.0	3	34.5	3	Southampton
Milford Haven	34.8	4	32.5	5	Liverpool
Liverpool	31.9	5	32.0	4	Milford Haven
Felixstowe	28.2	6	29.0	6	Felixstowe
Forth	27.4	7	28.4	8	Tees & Hartlepool
Dover	27.3	8	27.5	7	Forth
Tees & Hartlepool	26.9	9	26.2	9	Dover
Belfast	17.6	10	18.2	10	Belfast
-----					
All other UK major ports	137.9		138.3		All other UK major ports

Detailed statistics on freight traffic by port can be found in the statistical data sets, [PORT0101](#), [PORT0203](#), [PORT0301](#), [PORT0302](#) and [PORT0303](#).

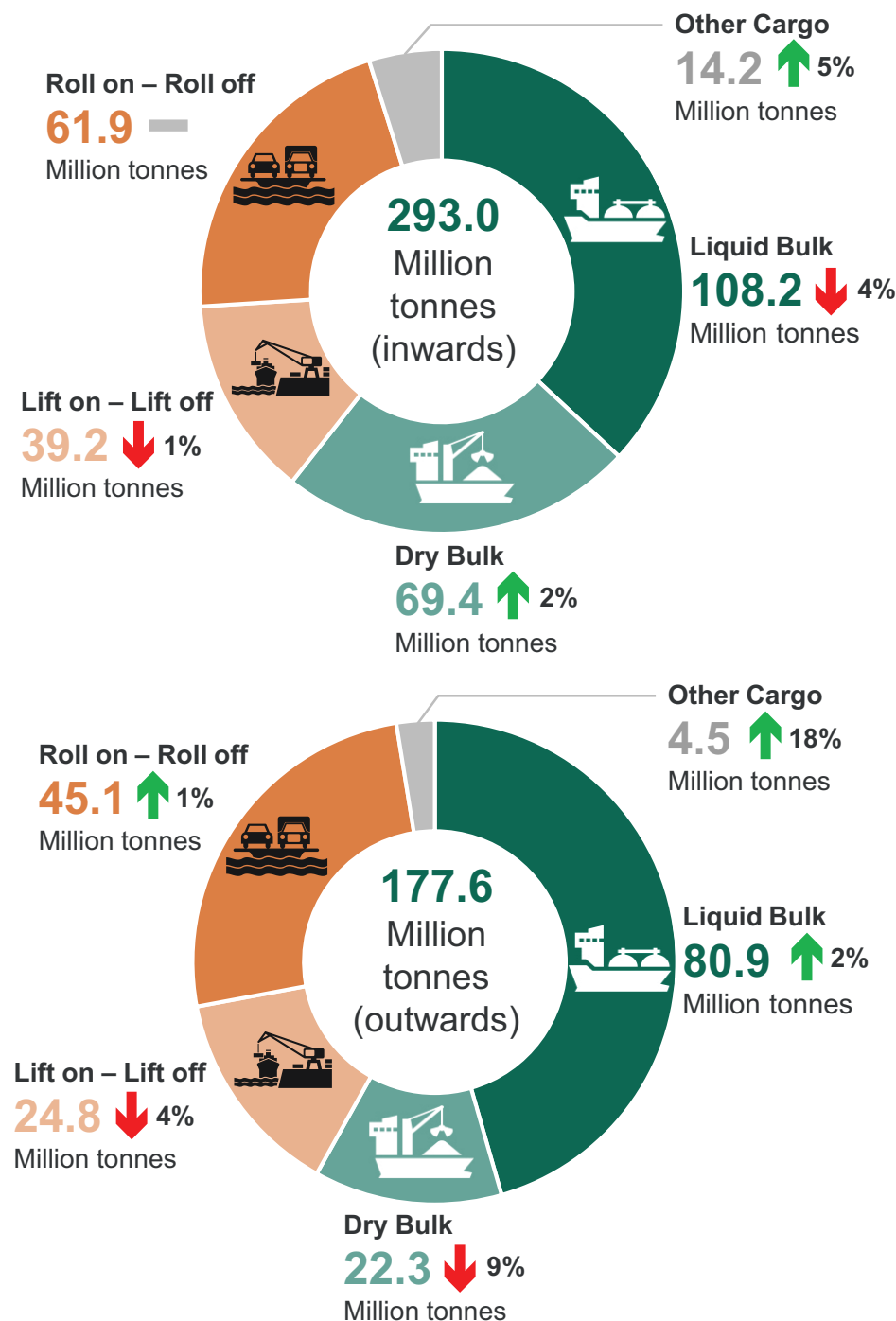
## 2. Direction of Port Freight Traffic

Approximately two-thirds of UK port traffic is in an inwards direction. A total of 300.9 million tonnes entered UK major ports in 2017, compared to 180.9 million tonnes departing.

For UK major ports, there is an overall downwards trend in traffic along coastwise routes: A total of 76.2 million tonnes of cargo were transported via coastwise routes, evenly split between inwards and outwards traffic. This figure is 7% smaller than in 2016.

As we can only determine cargo categories and details of international routes with regards to major ports, for the rest of the release we will discuss major ports only.

### UK major port tonnage by cargo and direction, 2017 and change since 2016 ([port0201](#))



### Definitions

**Coastwise:** Traffic which takes place entirely between two UK ports, including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

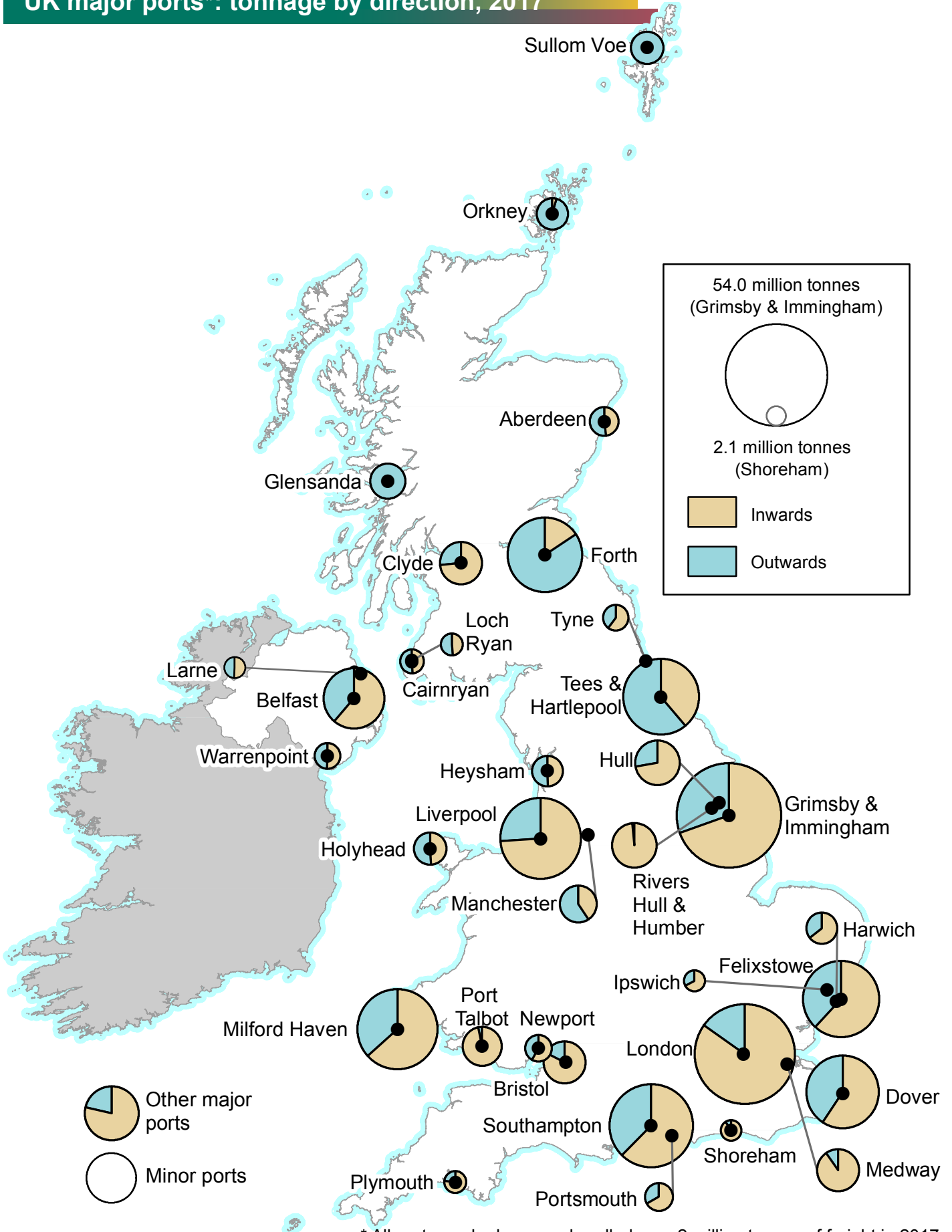
Further details of coastwise routes can be found on [page 22](#)

### Definitions

**Inwards/ outwards:** Inwards and outwards includes both domestic and international traffic.

**Imports/ exports:** International traffic only.

# UK major ports\*: tonnage by direction, 2017



\* All ports marked on map handled over 2 million tonnes of freight in 2017.

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Made with Natural Earth.

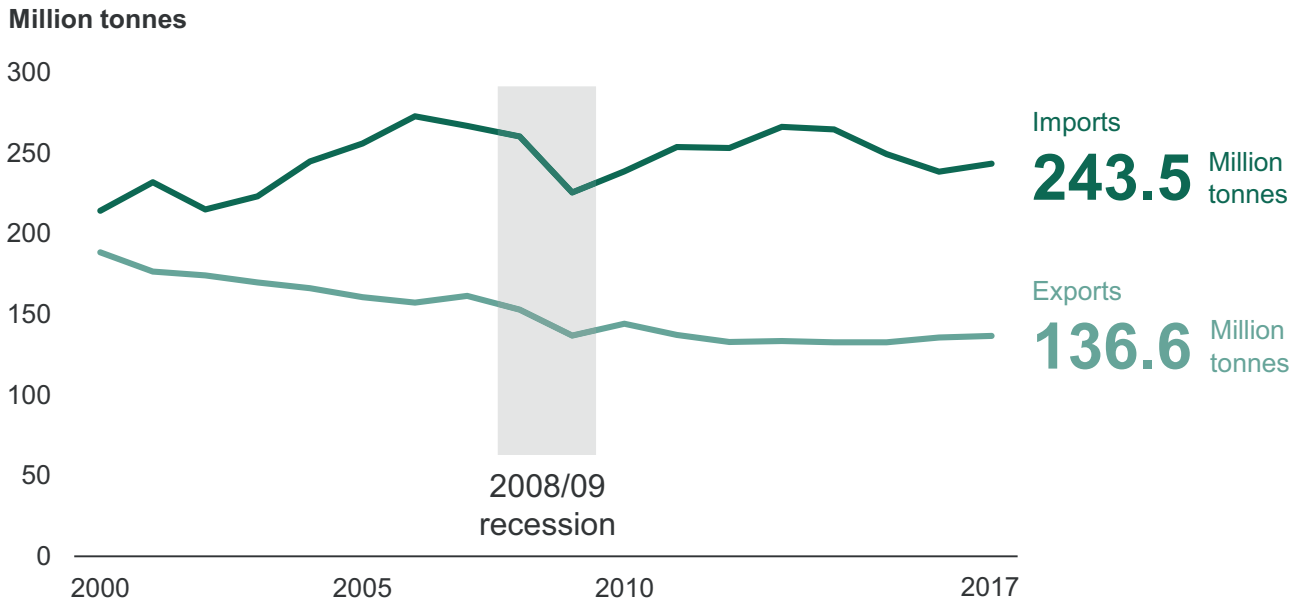
### 3. International Freight Trends

#### Import/Export Balance

243.5 million tonnes of international imports entered UK major ports in 2017. This figure is up by 2% from 2016, with crude oil being the largest imported cargo category (17% of all international imports).

136.6 million tonnes of exports left UK major ports in 2017, a 1% increase from 2016. Nearly half of all international exports are in the form of liquid bulk (62.6 million tonnes, 46% of total international exports).

#### International freight by direction from 2000 ([port0201](#))



The EU continues to be our largest trading partner, but Africa, Australasia and non-EU European partners show growth.

#### International freight by route ([port0205](#))



Americas  
**42.8** Million tonnes  
↓ 1% from 2016



European union  
**207.6** Million tonnes  
Unchanged from 2016



Africa  
**8.3** Million tonnes  
↑ 11% from 2016

Non-EU Europe  
And Mediterranean  
**65.8** Million tonnes  
↑ 9% from 2016



Australasia  
**2.8** Million tonnes  
↑ 51% from 2016

Asia  
**52.7** Million tonnes  
↓ 2% from 2016

Further details of international trade can be found from [HMRC](#) and from [ONS](#) statistics.

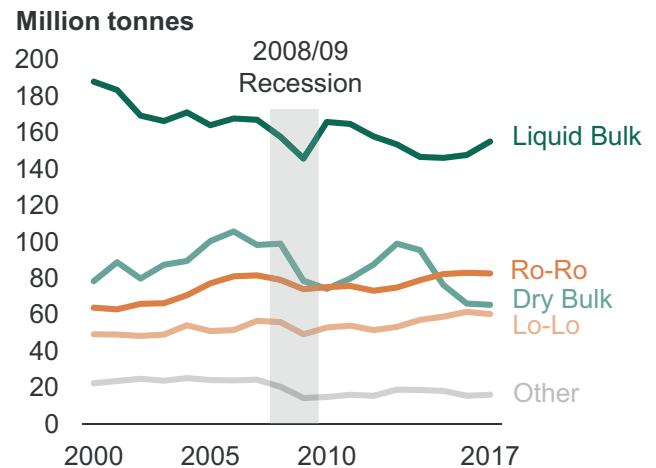


## International trends vary between cargo types

Both liquid and dry bulk showed a sharp drop during the 2007/2008 recession. Liquid bulk initially rebounded before returning to 2009 recession levels, however in 2017 we see a rise as a result of imports from non-EU European countries. Dry bulk tonnage recovered slower, and then fell from 2014 to below recession levels due to a fall in coal imports.

Unitised tonnage has generally been rising since 2009. However, in 2017 Lo-Lo traffic fell by 2% to 60.4 million tonnes, and international Ro-Ro traffic remained level at 82.8 million tonnes.

### International traffic by cargo type, from 2000 ([port0201](#))



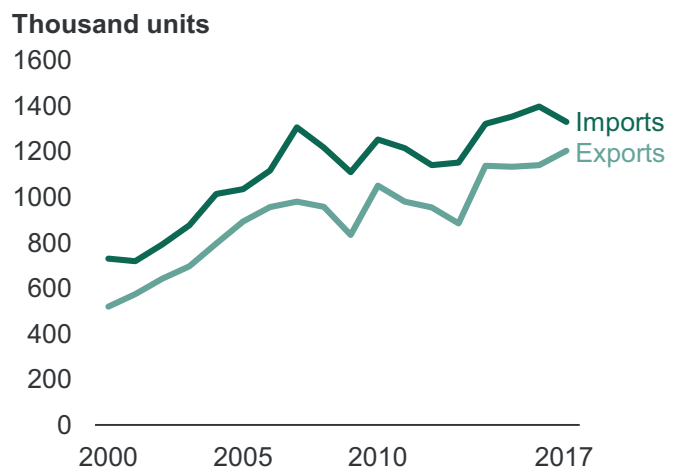
## Main freight traffic with Asia continues to grow

2.5 million units of main freight traffic were moved between UK major ports and ports within Asia in 2017. This makes up 21% of all international main freight traffic in that year.

Despite a 5% decrease in main freight imports from Asia, in 2017 both imports and exports have almost doubled since 2000.

More than half, 1.4 million units, of this main freight traffic with Asia was to or from China. Almost all of this is container traffic, accounting for 26% of all international container traffic in the UK.

### Asia main freight traffic, from 2000 ([port0205](#))

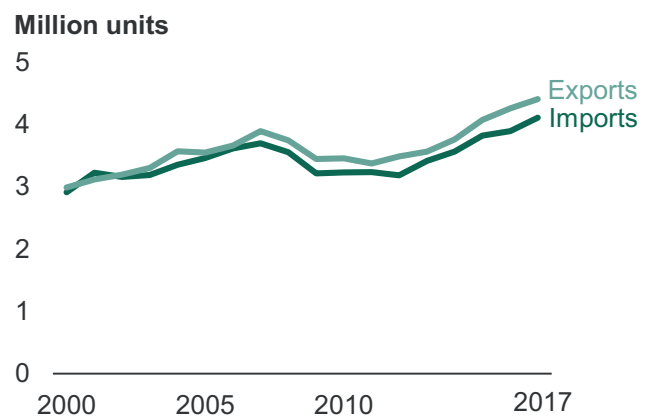


## Main freight traffic with the EU continues to grow

8.5 million units of main freight traffic were moved between UK major ports and ports within the EU in 2017. 71% of all main freight traffic through UK major ports is with the EU, 6.5 million units of which are in the form of roll-on roll-off traffic.

Whilst imports from Asia are larger than exports, the UK exports more to the EU, and overall the difference between import and export is smaller.

### EU main freight traffic, from 2000 ([port0205](#))

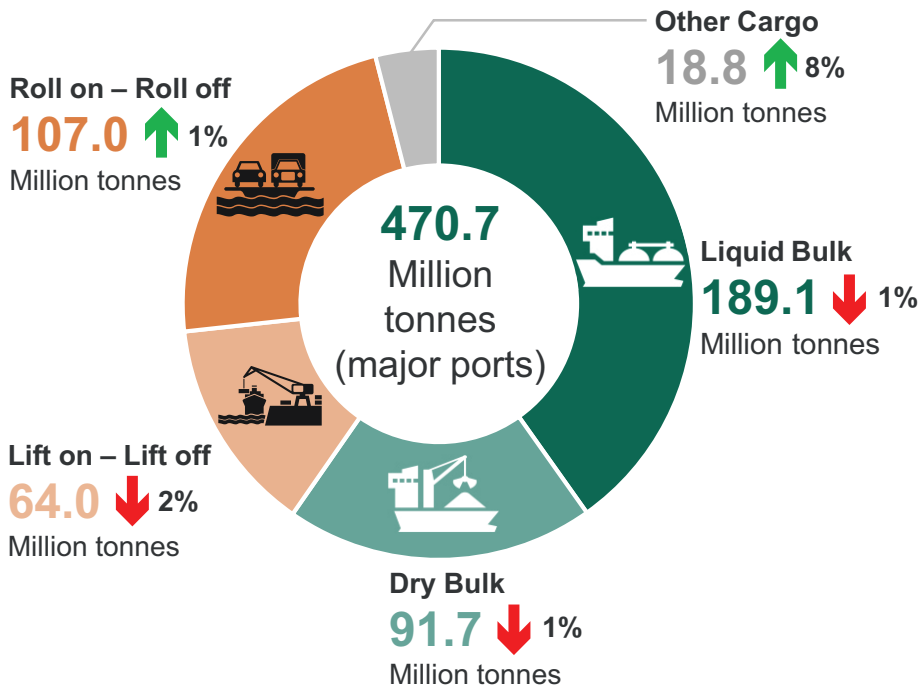
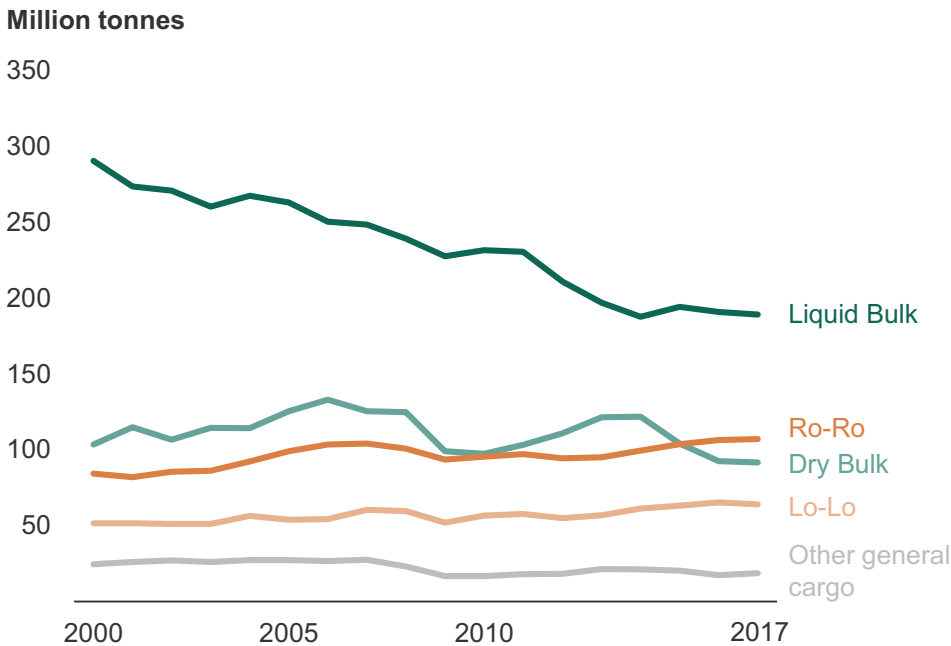


Statistics on international trade can be found in the [PORT0204](#), [PORT0205](#) and [PORT0206](#) tables.

## 4. Major Port Freight by Cargo Type

470.7 million tonnes passed through UK major ports in 2017, remaining level compared to 2016. Most of the five cargo categories show only small changes from 2016, and continue the trends evidenced in the past 5 years. One notable change is the 8% increase in "Other general cargo" to 18.8 million tonnes, a rise mostly due to an increase in cargo categorised under "Other cargo" to 6.3 million tonnes.

### UK major port freight by cargo type ([port0201](#))



## Definitions

### Cargo Category:

**5 main categories-** Liquid Bulk, Dry Bulk, Ro-Ro traffic, Lo-Lo traffic and Other General Cargo.

Cargo is allocated a category in respect to how it is handled at ports i.e. how it is loaded and carried on the ship. The main categories are then split into smaller subgroups e.g. crude oil. Breakdown by cargo category is only available for major ports.

### Major ports:

Ports handling over one million tonnes per year, and a small number of other key ports, together accounting for over 97% of UK port traffic. All figures in this section relate to major ports

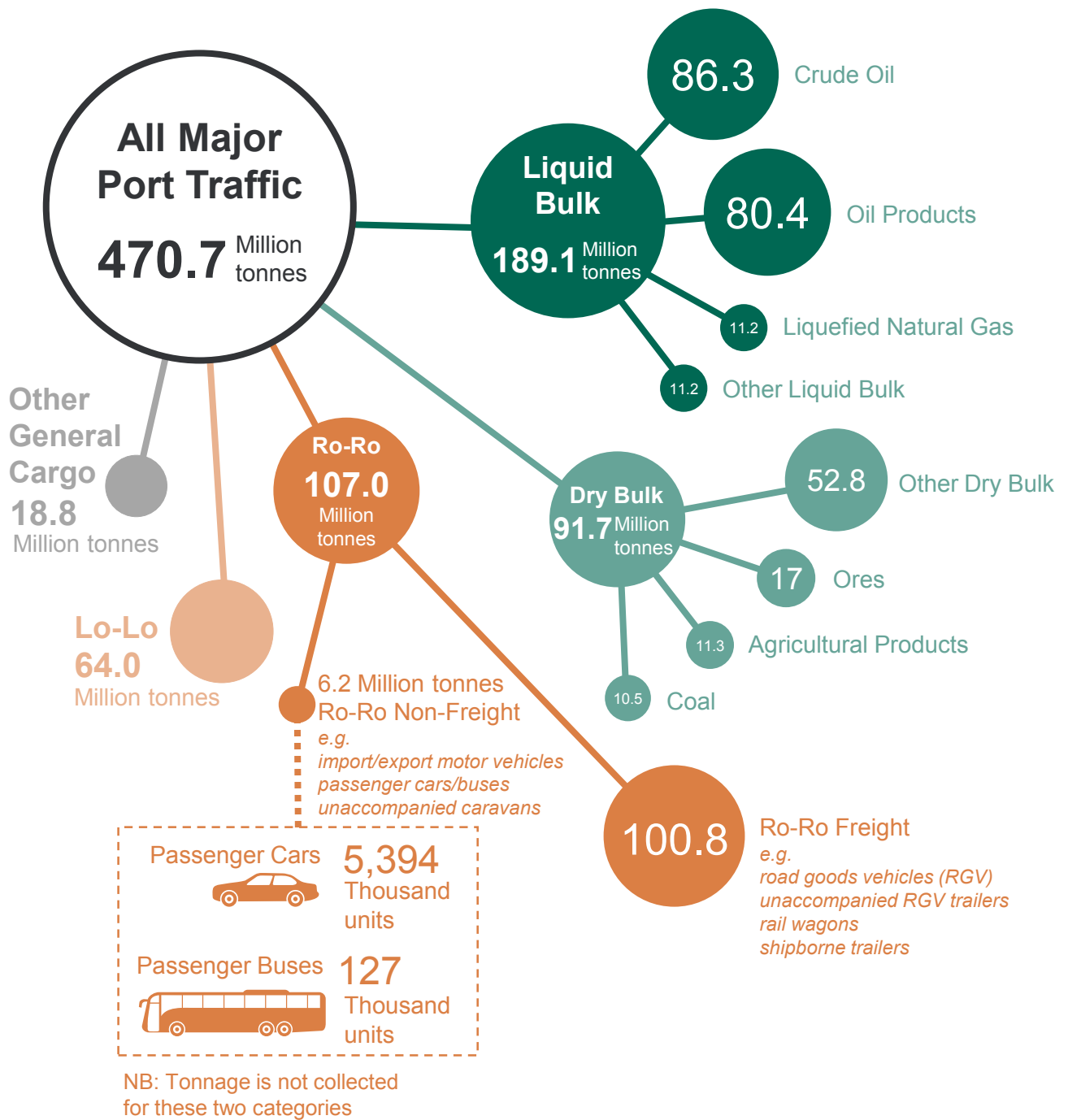
Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) by cargo type and unitised traffic can be found in the statistical data sets [PORT0201](#) and [PORT0206](#).

## Cargo Categories

Most of the cargo categories described within this release can be described using tonnage. In addition, unitised traffic (Lo-Lo and Ro-Ro) can be described in terms of units.

Cargo is primarily categorised depending upon how it is transported on the ship. There is limited categorisation into broad commodity categories as shown in the graphic below, however it is not possible to describe cargo down to individual commodities in the Port Freight Statistics.

### UK major port freight by cargo category, in million tonnes, 2017 ([port0201](#))



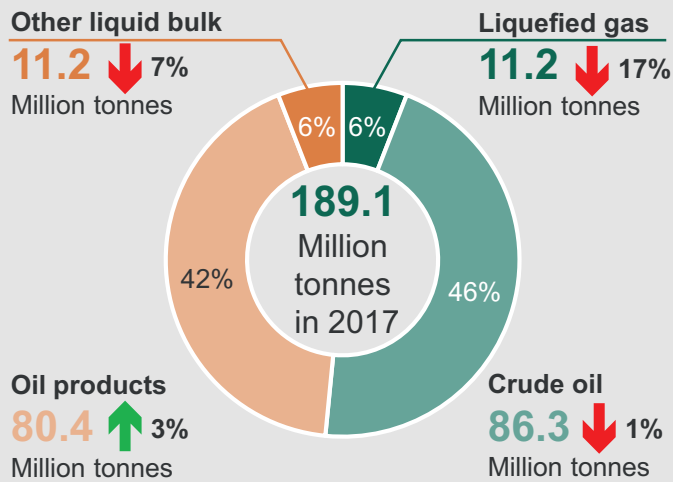
More information on how cargo is categorised can be found in the [Port Statistic Notes and Definitions](#).



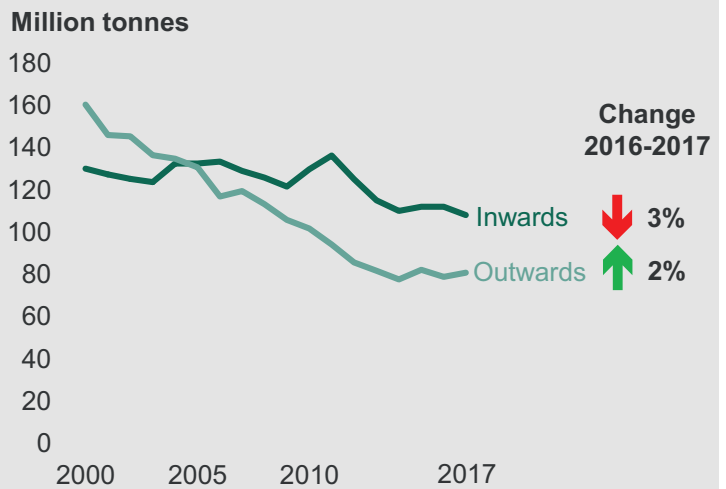
## Liquid Bulk

In 2017, 189.1 million tonnes of liquid bulk were handled by UK major ports, down 1% from 2016.

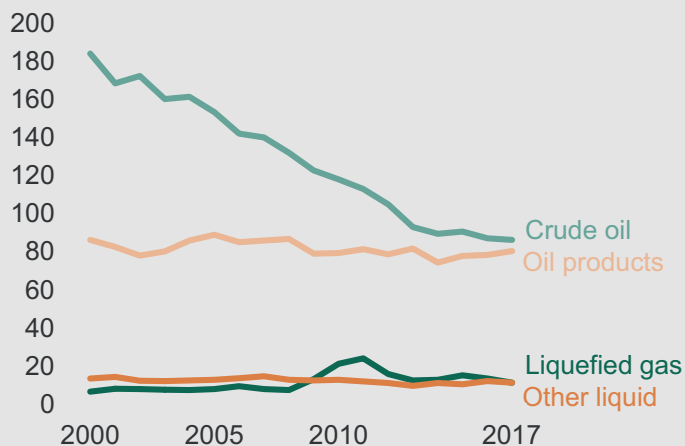
### Liquid bulk categories 2017, change from 2016



### Liquid bulk categories, 2017



### Liquid bulk categories since 2000



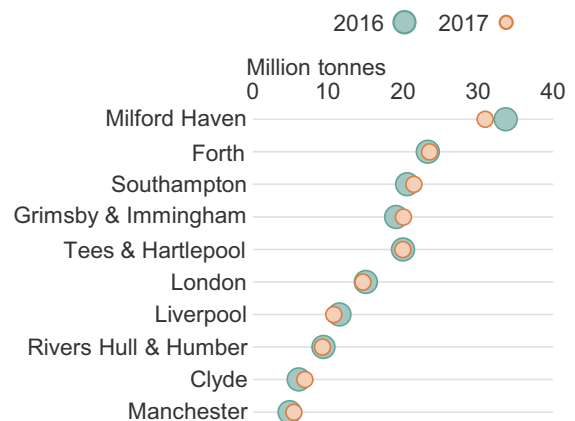
### Changes in liquid bulk categories

Category	10 year change (since 2007)	5 year change (since 2012)
Liquefied gas	↑ 42%	↓ 30%
Crude oil	↓ 38%	↓ 18%
Oil products	↓ 6%	↑ 2%
Other liquid bulk	↓ 23%	0%

Liquid bulk is the largest of the main cargo category types, accounting for 40% of all tonnage.

Whilst the quantity of liquid bulk handled by UK ports has been generally falling, there has been a slow increase in the level of outwards liquid bulk in 2017. Milford Haven remains the top port for this category, handling 31.0 million tonnes, which is 16.4% of all liquid bulk passing through UK major ports.

### Top 10 UK major ports handling liquid bulk in 2017, and change from 2016



Detailed statistics on freight traffic (tonnage) can be found in the statistical data set [PORT0201](#).

## Crude oil continues to fall

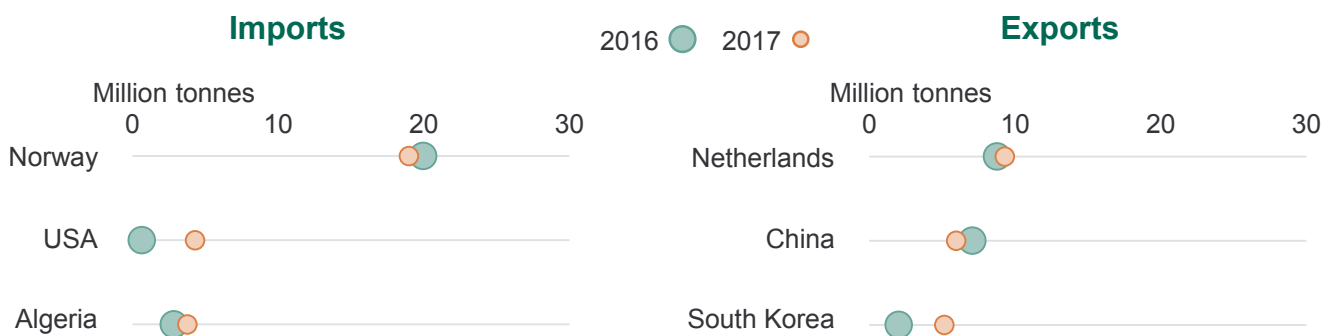
Crude oil tonnage has more than halved since 2000 and continues to fall. In 2017 this is the largest contributor to the overall 1% fall in liquid bulk traffic passing through UK major ports.

Forth handled the most crude oil in 2017, with 15 million tonnes passing through the port, which was 17% of the total crude oil handled by UK ports. All of this is in the outwards direction; the largest port for crude oil passing in the inwards direction is Southampton, with 11.9 million tonnes passing through its services in 2017. Counting both directions, 12.2 million tonnes of crude oil were handled by Southampton, an increase of 15% from 2016.

A total of 19.2 million tonnes of crude oil passed through UK major ports from Norway, which was 22% of the total amount handled.

The second largest international route for crude oil is the Netherlands, with 9.5 million tonnes passing through UK major ports, 11% of all crude oil traffic. The story is reverse however to that of Norway: where nearly all crude oil traded with Norway was imported to the UK, in contrast, the majority of crude oil traded with the Netherlands was exports, with 9.3 million tonnes entering their ports from UK major ports in 2017.

### Top 3 crude oil import and export countries, 2017 and change from 2016 ([port0205](#))

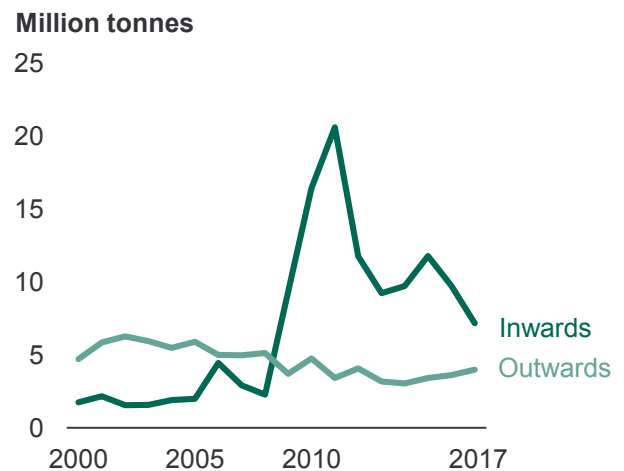


## Liquefied gas continues to fall

Liquefied gas handled by UK major ports continues to fall following a peak in 2011, falling 17% in 2017, driven by a fall in imports from Qatar. Following an initial peak of Qatari supply of 16.7 million tonnes in 2011, values have generally fallen to 4.4 million tonnes in 2017. Total liquefied gas passing through UK major ports is now near to its pre-2008 levels.

This fall in Qatari supply could possibly be linked to the 2017 Qatari diplomatic crisis, which resulted in several Qatari ports being blockaded by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

### Inwards and outwards liquefied gas traffic from 2000 ([port0205](#))



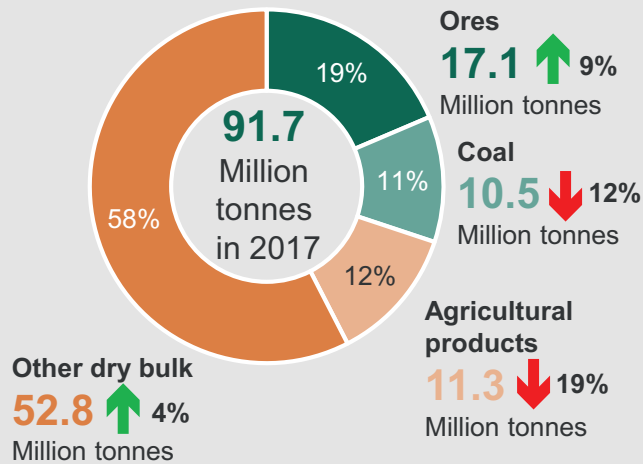
More information on the 2017 Qatari diplomatic crisis can be found [online](#), including [statements](#) by the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\)](#).



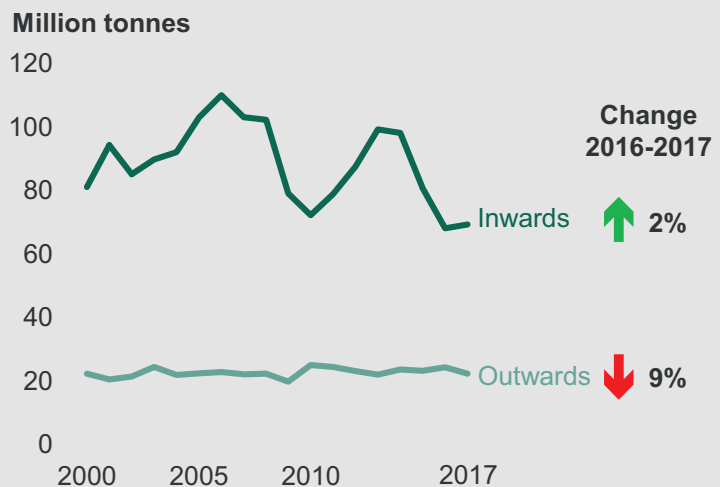
## Dry Bulk

In 2017, 91.7 million tonnes of dry bulk cargo passed through UK major ports, down 1% compared to 2016.

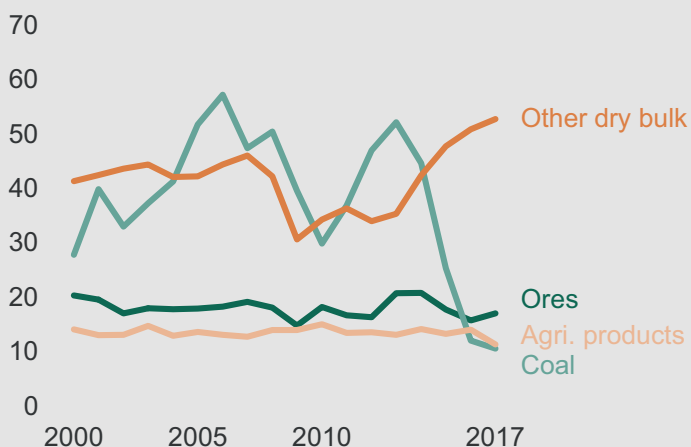
### Dry bulk categories, 2017



### Dry bulk categories, 2017



### Dry bulk categories since 2000

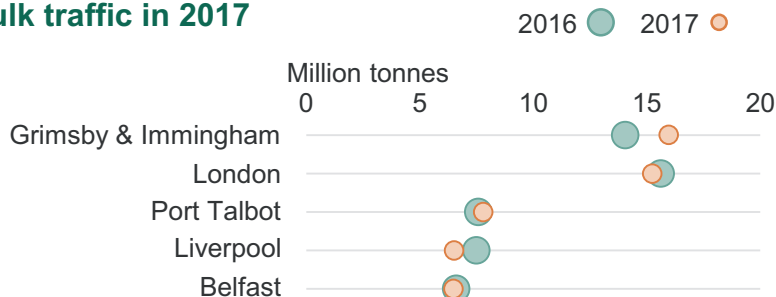


### Changes in dry bulk categories

Category	10 year change (since 2007)	5 year change (since 2012)
Ores	↓ 11%	↑ 4%
Coal	↓ 78%	↓ 78%
Agri. products	↓ 11%	↓ 16%
Other dry bulk	↑ 15%	↑ 55%

Volume of dry bulk goods handled by UK ports has varied considerably over the past decade, largely due to a steep decline in the amount of coal handled. This has resulted in the amount of dry bulk goods handled by UK ports reaching its lowest point since 2000.

### London and Grimsby & Immingham remain the top UK major ports for dry bulk traffic in 2017



### Definitions

#### Other Dry Bulk

Cargo in this category includes:

- Sea-dredged aggregate
- Cement
- Fertiliser

Information about what goods are classified under each cargo category can be found in the [Port Freight Statistics 2017: Notes and Definitions](#).

## Other dry bulk

Both inwards and outwards other dry bulk fell in 2008. Since then, outwards has remained approximately level at 12 million tonnes, however from 2012 there was a sharp rise in the amount of inwards traffic. This was due to an increase in the amount of trade with the USA, and to a lesser degree Norway and Spain.

The amount of cargo categorised under "Other dry bulk" continues to grow steadily, now accounting for 58% of all UK dry bulk cargo passing through UK major ports.

## Biomass imports/exports

Other dry bulk includes biomass, however we do not explicitly collect data on biomass in Port Freight Statistics. We can however use Overseas Trade Statistics from HMRC to identify biomass passing through import/export clearance centres. Due to limitations in their data collection, biomass data cannot be obtained for EU countries, but this can be used to investigate non-EU routes.

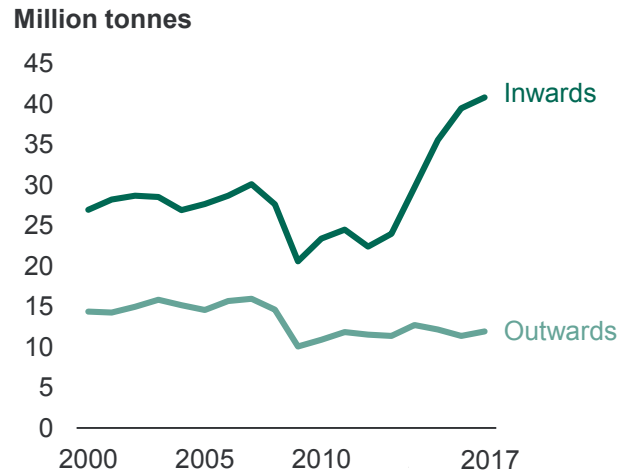
This data shows that there was negligible trade in biomass until around 2008 and 2009, when there was an increase in biomass passing through UK ports. The second large change occurs around 2013 driven by a large increase in trade with the United States.

The UK published biomass strategies in 2007 and 2013, where a focus was placed on using sustainably-produced biomass and bioenergy for use within the UK.

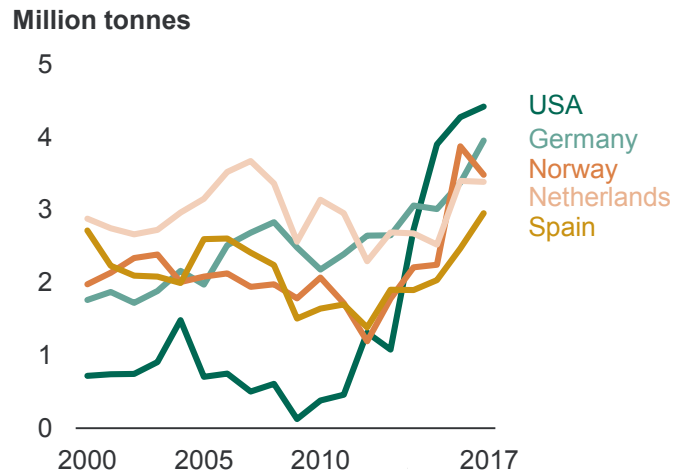
### Definitions

**Biomass:** Biological material that can be used as fuel or for industrial production. Includes solid biomass from wood, plant & animal products, as well as derived liquids and gases.

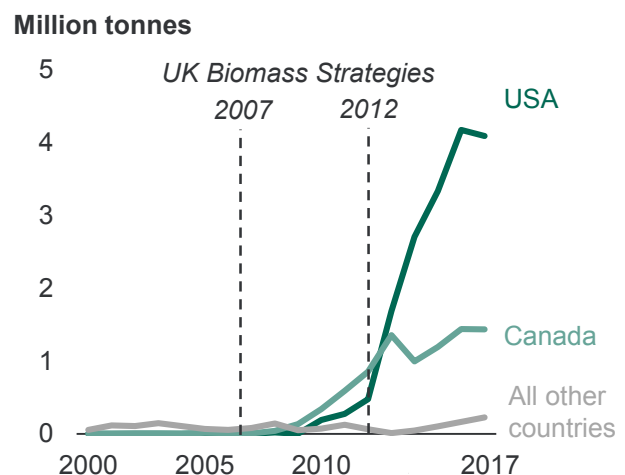
## Direction of "Other dry bulk" handled by UK major ports, from 2000 ([port0201](#))



## Top 5 countries trading "Other dry bulk" with the UK, from 2000 ([port0205](#))



## Biomass trade with the UK by international country (non-EU only)



Source: Overseas Trade Statistics, HMRC, 2018

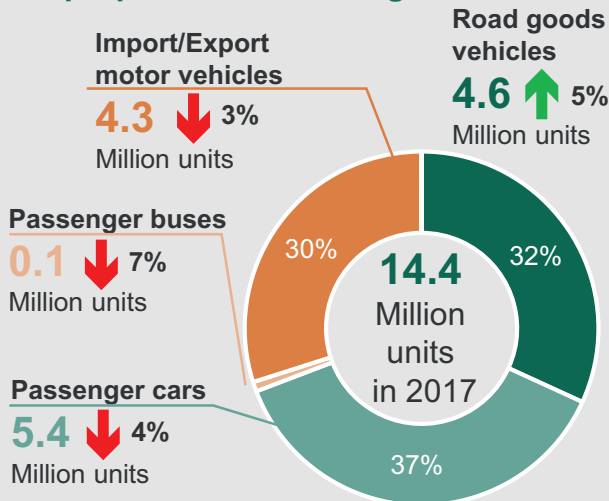
UK Biomass Strategy papers can be found in [National Archives \(2007 paper\)](#) as well as on the [Department of Energy & Climate Change webpage \(2013 paper\)](#)



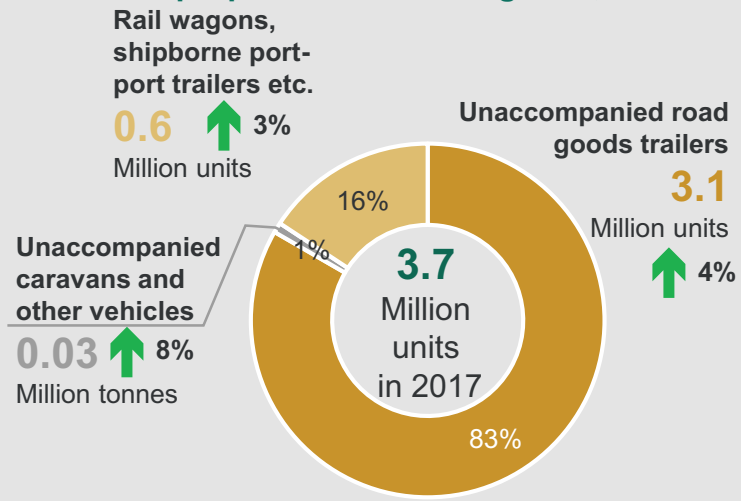
## Roll-on Roll-off (Ro-Ro) Cargo

In 2017, 18.2 million Ro-Ro units passed through UK major ports via roll-on roll-off services, unchanged from 2016.

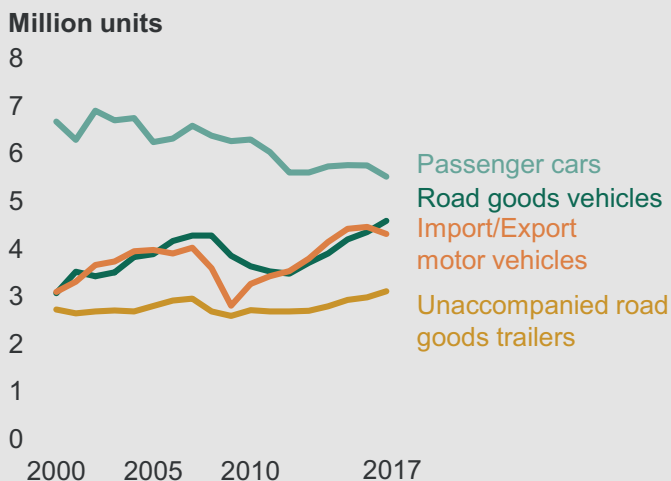
### Self-propelled Ro-Ro categories, 2017



### Non self-propelled Ro-Ro categories, 2017



### Key Ro-Ro categories since 2000



### Changes in key Ro-Ro categories

Category	10 year change (since 2007)	5 year change (since 2012)
Road goods vehicles	↑ 7%	↑ 32%
Unaccompanied road goods trailers	↑ 5%	↑ 16%
Passenger cars	↓ 16%	↓ 1%
Import/Export motor vehicles	↑ 7%	↑ 22%

Roll-on roll-off (Ro-Ro) traffic has been rising in terms of units since 2012, but this is still 3% below the pre-recession peak in 2007. In terms of tonnage, 107.0 million tonnes of Ro-Ro freight passed through UK major ports in 2017, up 1% on 2016.

Domestic Ro-Ro, that is Ro-Ro entirely between UK ports, makes up nearly one-fifth of all Ro-Ro units passing through UK major ports.

Passenger cars and buses, which make up the largest proportion of Ro-Ro passing through UK major ports, continued to decline steadily by 4% to 5.5 million units in 2017, the lowest value to date.

Main freight Ro-Ro traffic (road goods vehicles and trailers, and rail wagons) has been increasing since 2012, following a 14% fall post-recession. 2017 is the first year that main freight vehicles have risen above the previous maximum.

### Definitions

**Ro-Ro Tonnage** Ro-Ro tonnage doesn't include the weight of the vehicle itself, only the cargo. No tonnage is recorded for passenger vehicles.

**Ro-Ro Main Freight** Cargo in this category includes:

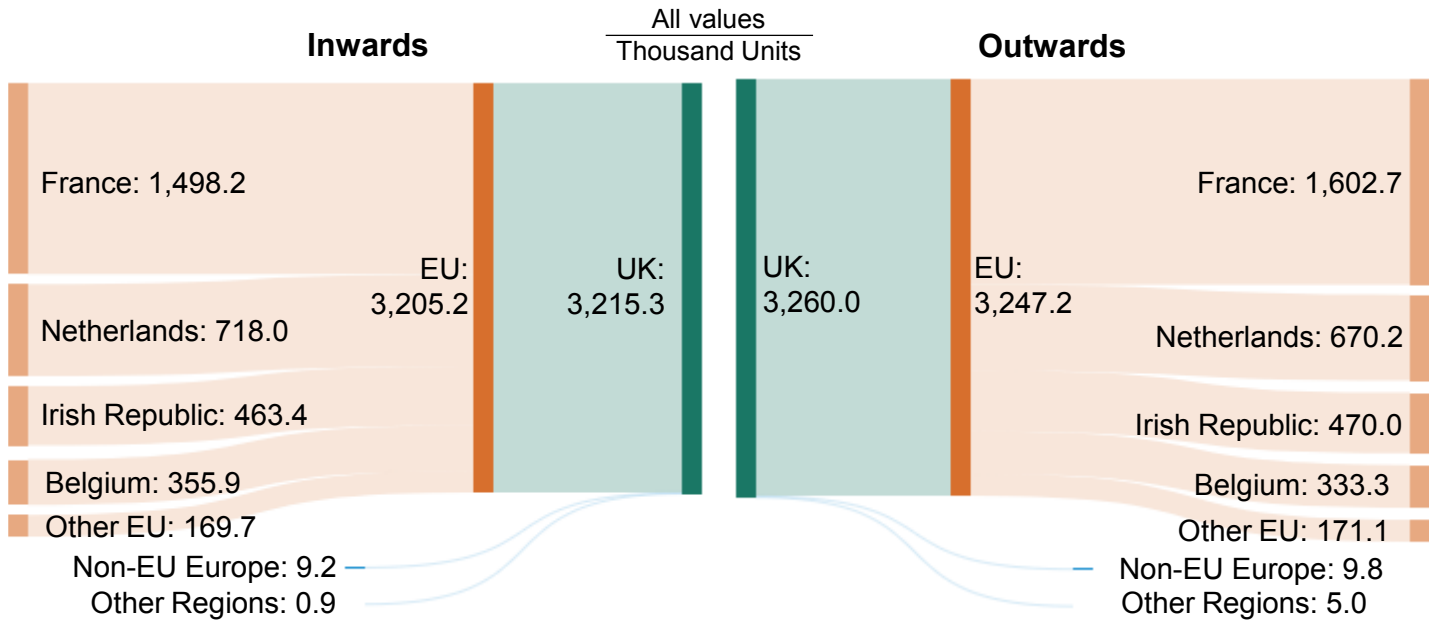
- Road goods vehicles (with accompanying trailers)
- Unaccompanied road goods trailers
- Rail wagons, Shipborne trailers etc.



## Ro-Ro Main Freight

Ro-Ro main freight tonnage passing through UK major ports has been steadily increasing since 2013. Between 2013 to 2017 this rose 14% to 100.8 million tonnes. Dover also saw a rise in 2017, rising 9% to 2.9 million units in 2017, retaining its position as the largest Ro-Ro port in the UK. This is also the largest increase of any port in this category.

### International Ro-Ro Main freight units, 2017



### Top 10 UK major ports handing Ro-Ro main freight, and 2016 to 2017 comparison ([port0303](#))

	2016		2017		
	Thousand Units	Rank	Thousand Units	Rank	
Dover	2,641.9	1	2,891.5	1	Dover
Grimsby & Immingham	853.0	2	872.5	2	Grimsby & Immingham
Liverpool	538.7	3	572.5	3	London
London	536.1	4	539.5	4	Belfast
Belfast	530.7	5	537.0	5	Liverpool
Holyhead	422.6	6	450.3	6	Holyhead
Harwich	354.5	7	334.8	7	Harwich
Heysham	249.7	8	281.2	8	Heysham
Portsmouth	244.2	9	264.9	9	Felixstowe
Felixstowe	243.4	10	232.1	10	Portsmouth
All other UK major ports	1,292.9		1,312.6		All other UK major ports

- Decreased ranking
- Stable ranking
- Increased ranking

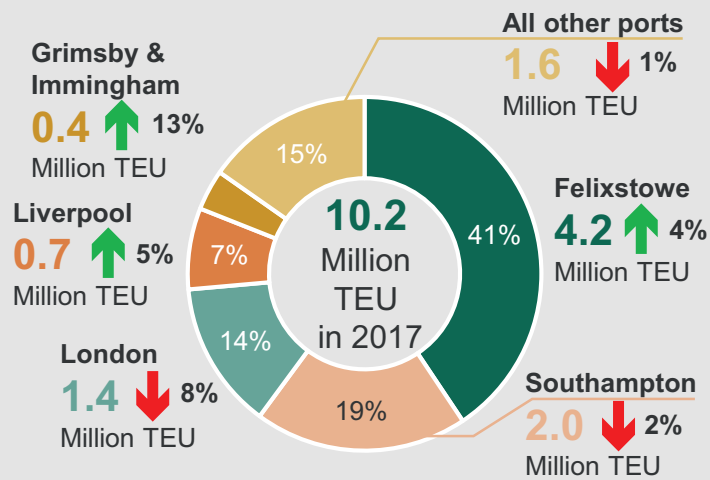
Detailed statistics on freight traffic (unitised) can be found in the statistical data sets [PORT0201](#), and [PORT0301](#).



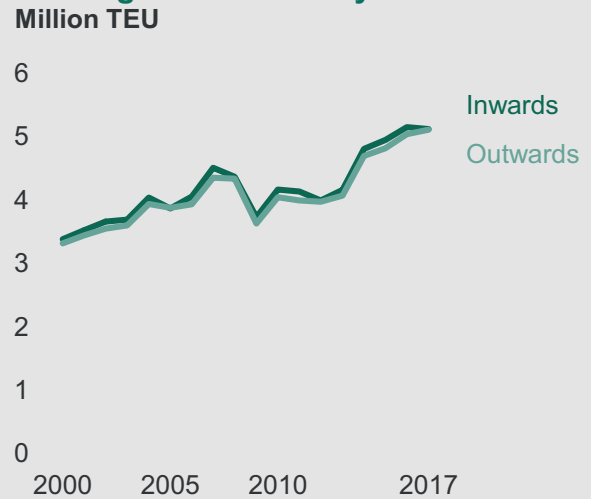
## Lift on - Lift off (Lo-Lo) Cargo

**10.2 million TEUs of container traffic passed through UK major ports in 2017, unchanged from 2016.**

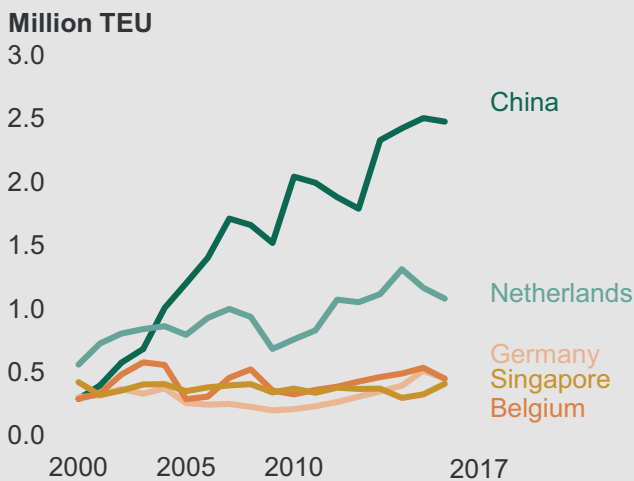
### Lo-Lo freight (million tonnes) 2017



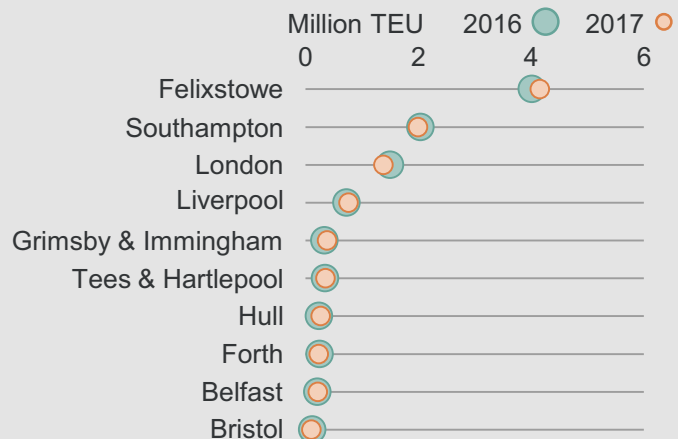
### Lo-Lo freight from 2000 by direction



### Lo-Lo routes from 2000



### Top 10 Lo-Lo major ports in 2017, with change from 2016



Measured in twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), lift-on lift-off (Lo-Lo) traffic has increased 28% since 2012, after five consecutive years of growth.

Felixstowe continues to handle the largest amount of containerised traffic in the UK, handling 41% of all UK containers in both directions in 2017.

Grimsby & Immingham experienced the largest percentage growth in 2017 by TEU, handling 380.4 thousand TEUs, which is a 13% increase on 2016.

Hull also experienced a 13% growth in 2017 to 268.2 thousand TEUs, which is its highest container traffic since 2007.

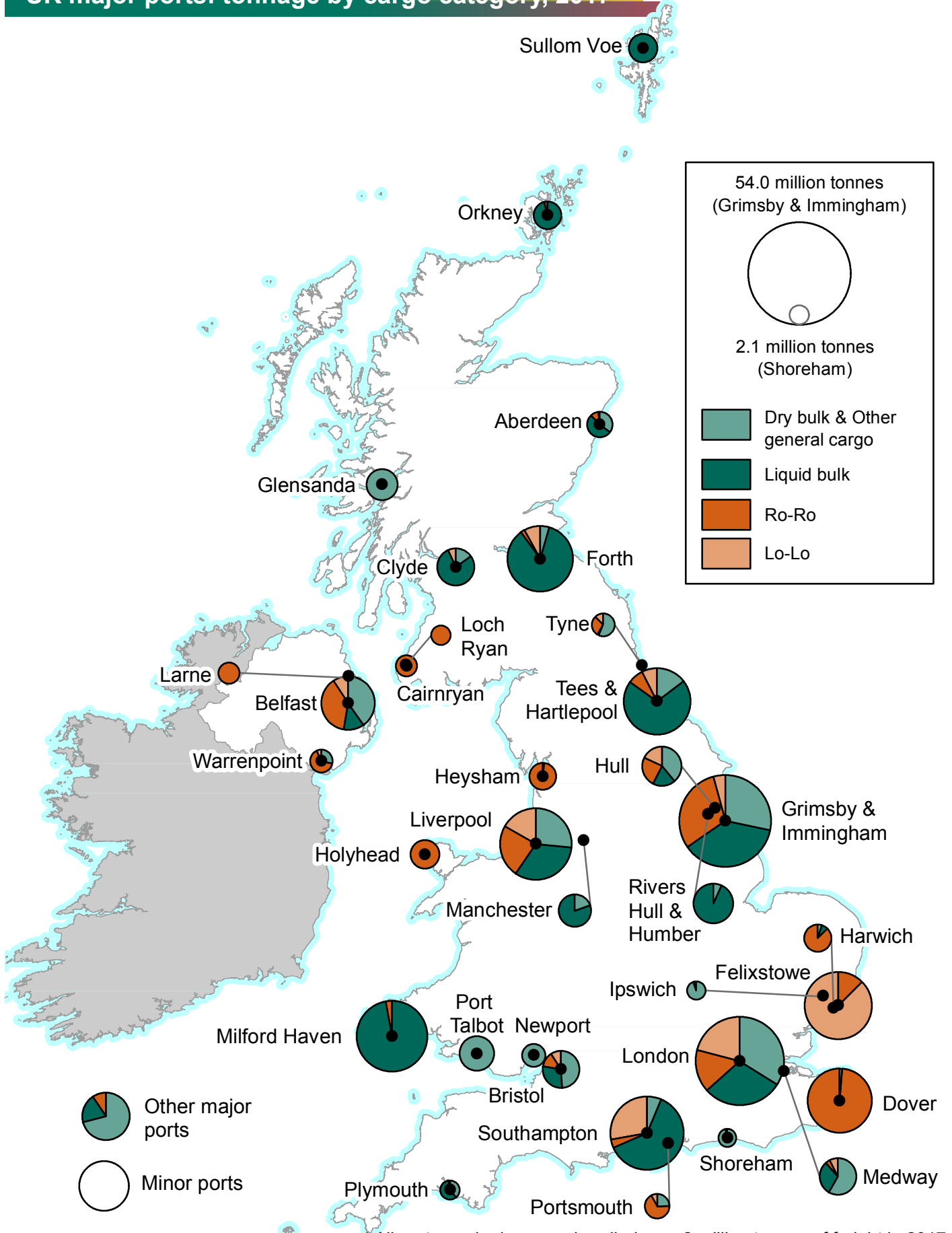
### Definition

**TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units)** is a standardised measure to allow for the different sizes of container boxes.

Size	TEU
20ft	1
40ft	2
>20ft & <40ft	1.5
>40ft	2.25

Detailed statistics on freight traffic (unitised) can be found in the statistical data sets [PORT103](#) and [PORT0303](#).

# UK major ports: tonnage by cargo category, 2017



\* All ports marked on map handled over 2 million tonnes of freight in 2017.

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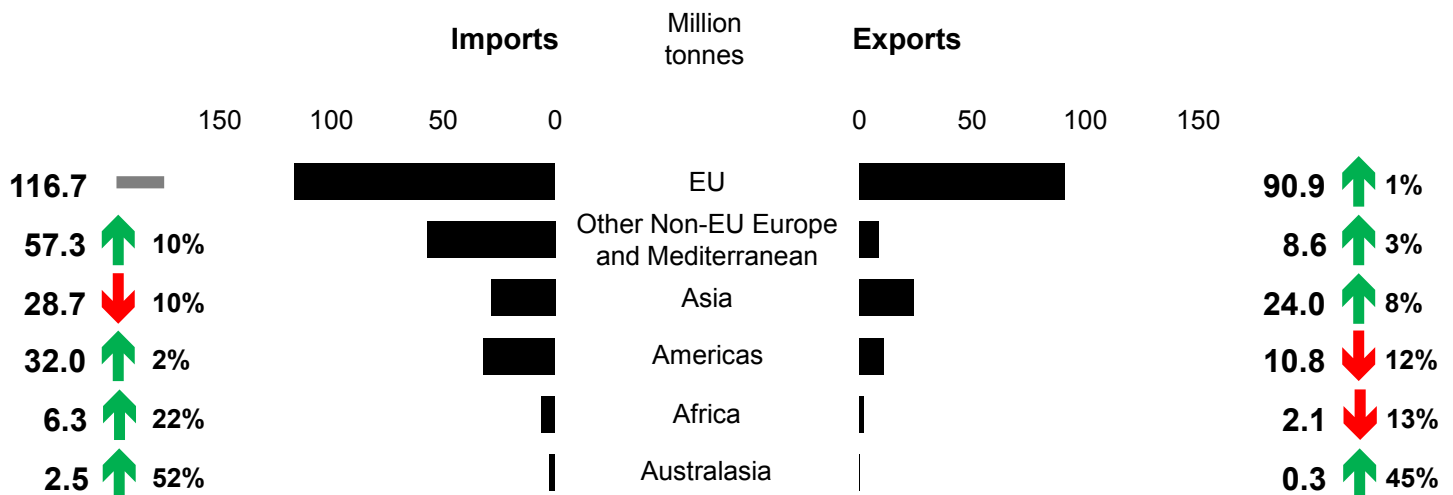
## 4. Port Freight by Route

Domestic tonnage (between two UK major ports or one-port traffic) amounted to 90.5 million tonnes in 2017, which was 19% of all tonnage through UK major ports, a fall of 2 percentage points from 2016.

International tonnage handled by UK major ports rose 2% to 380.1 million tonnes in 2017. The majority of this was with the European Union (EU), a total of 207.6 million tonnes. This figure remained unchanged compared to 2016, and accounted for 55% of all international cargo moved.

A total of 65.8 million tonnes was handled between UK major ports and ports in European and Mediterranean countries that are not part of the EU. This is a rise of 9% from 2016, largely due to a 12% increase in the amount of liquid bulk cargo that is imported from those countries in 2017. Amongst these countries, we see an increase in the amount of crude oil being imported from Russia (up 71% to 3.1 million tonnes), Libya (more than doubled to 2.7 million tonnes), and Algeria (up 33% to 3.8 million tonnes).

### UK major port freight with world regions by direction, 2017 and comparison with 2016



#### Definitions

**Domestic:** Made up of coastwise and one-port traffic (see below).

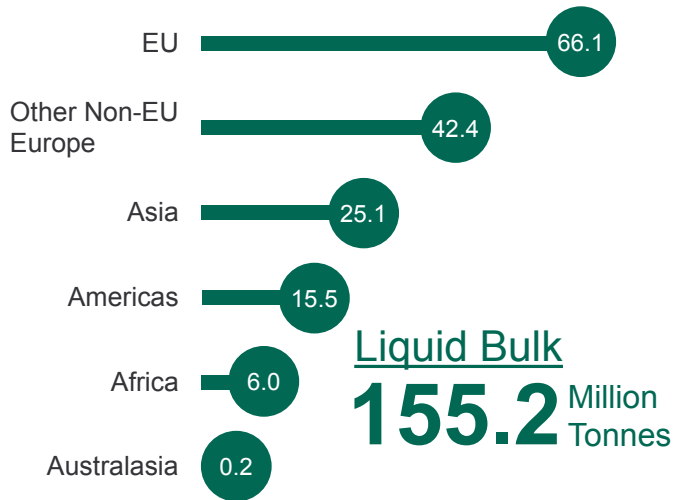
**Coastwise:** Traffic travelling within UK waters between ports in the United Kingdom.

**One-port:** Sand and gravel etc dredged from sea bed and landed at a port for commercial purposes; and traffic to and from UK offshore locations eg oil & gas installations and wind farms.

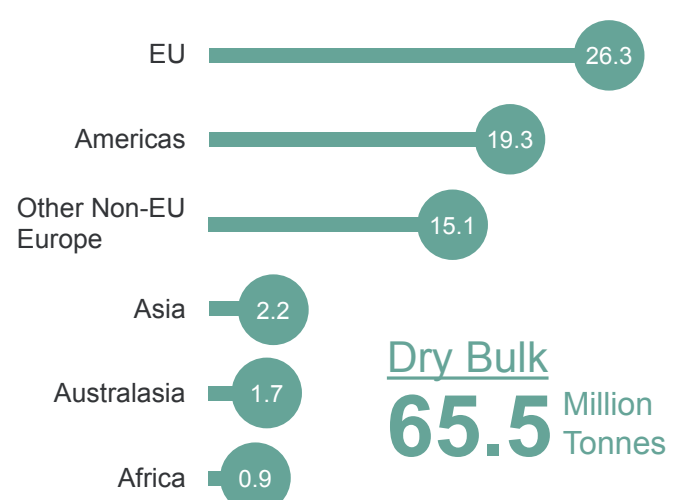
Detailed statistics on freight traffic by route can be found in tables [PORT0204](#), [PORT0205](#), [PORT0206](#), and [PORT0302](#). A detailed filterable breakdown of port and country can be found in [PORT0499](#).

# International traffic by cargo type and world region, 2017

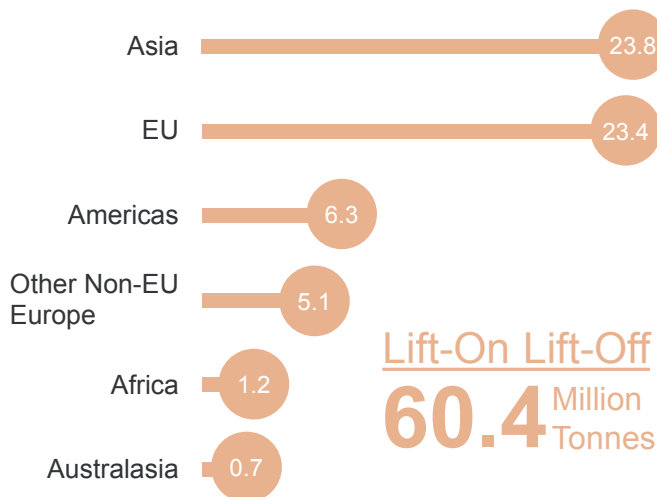
## Liquid Bulk traffic by world region, 2017



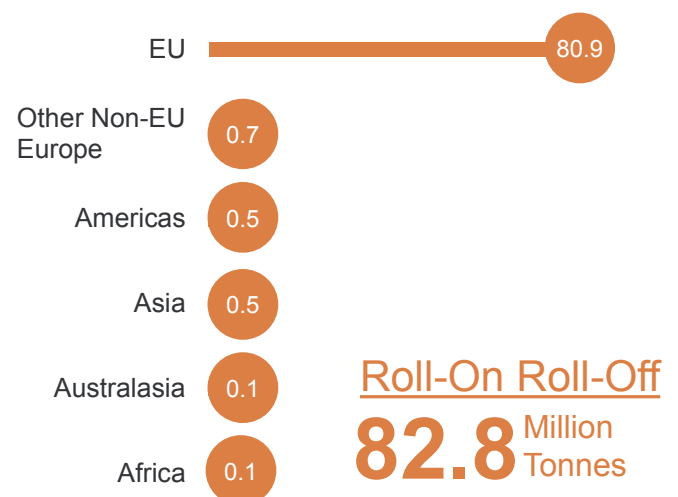
## Dry Bulk traffic by world region, 2017



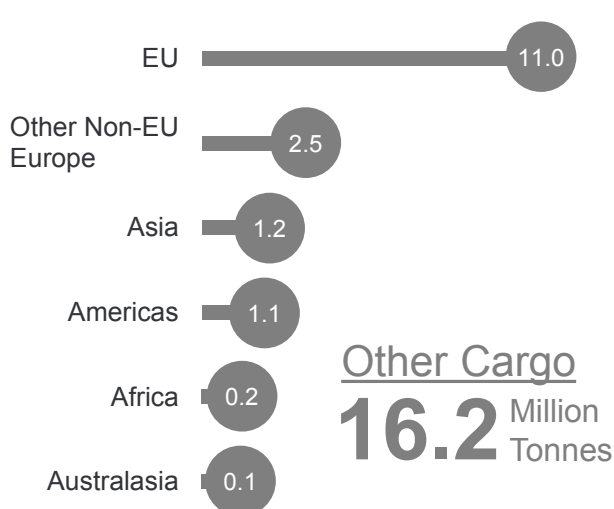
## Lift-on Lift-off traffic by world region, 2017



## Roll-on roll-off traffic by world region, 2017



## Other General Cargo by world region, 2017



International traffic through UK major ports continues to be dominated by liquid bulk traffic, a total of 155.2 million tonnes. 70% of the liquid bulk passing through UK major ports to or from countries in Europe, both EU and non-EU.

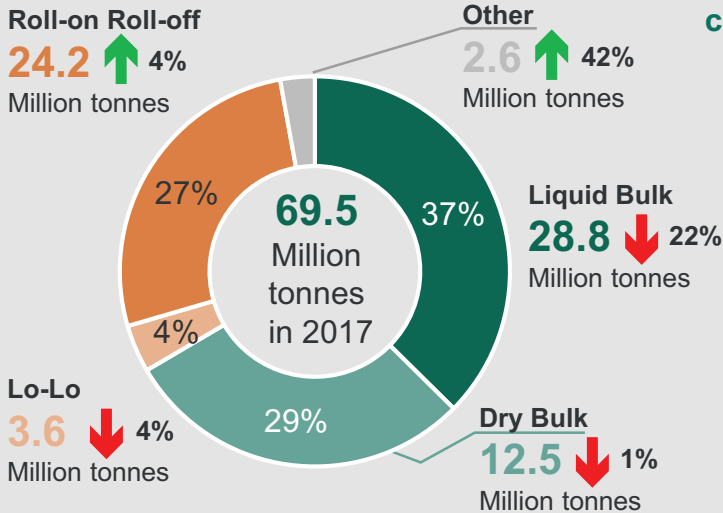
Containerised (lift-on/lift-off) traffic is the only cargo group where the EU is not the number one trading partner. 23.8 million tonnes of our containers are to or from Asia, predominantly China. 23.4 tonnes of containers were to or from the EU, however, some of this cargo may have originated in other countries, but then stopped at a European port such as Rotterdam, and was "trans-shipped" to a UK port.



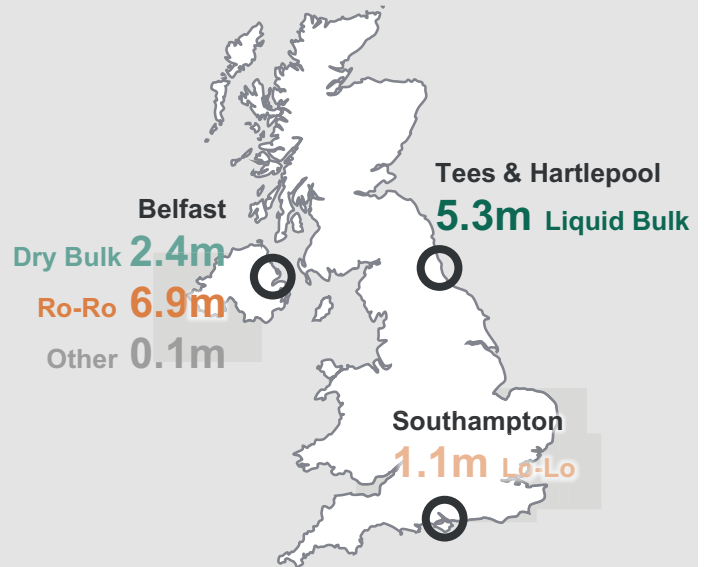
## Domestic Major Port Traffic

Overall domestic major port traffic - coastwise and one-port - fell to 90.5 million tonnes in 2017. However, one-port traffic rose 5% to 21.0 million tonnes in 2017.

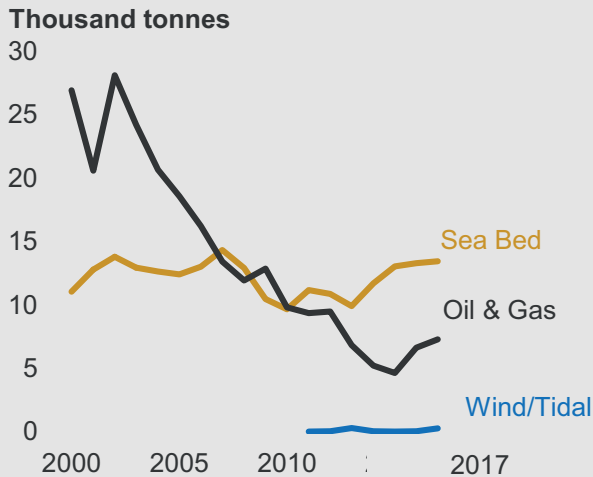
### Coastwise tonnage by cargo type



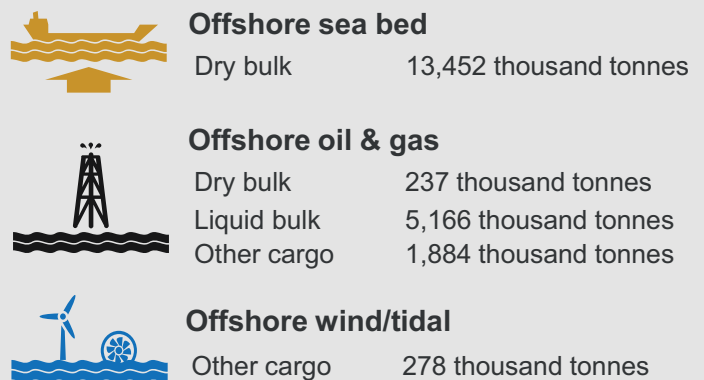
### Top major port handling each cargo type on coastwise routes (tonnes)



### One-port activity by year and type



### One-port activity by type and cargo



Coastwise traffic makes up the majority of domestic traffic. Overall coastwise traffic between UK ports has fallen to 69.5 million tonnes, down 12% from 2016. The largest contributor to this fall is liquid bulk movements; the amount of crude oil being transported coastwise fell 41% to 14.8 million tonnes. A similar pattern can be seen in the amount of coal transported, down 29% to 1.2 million tonnes, mirroring international trends in coal.

Domestic container services also saw a fall in traffic, with 585 thousand TEUs transported between UK major ports in 2017, 7% lower than in 2016. A total of 3.3 million domestic Ro-Ro units passed through UK major ports, up 2% from 2016. Ro-Ro unit traffic has grown by 10% since 2013, where 3.0 million tonnes passed through UK major ports.

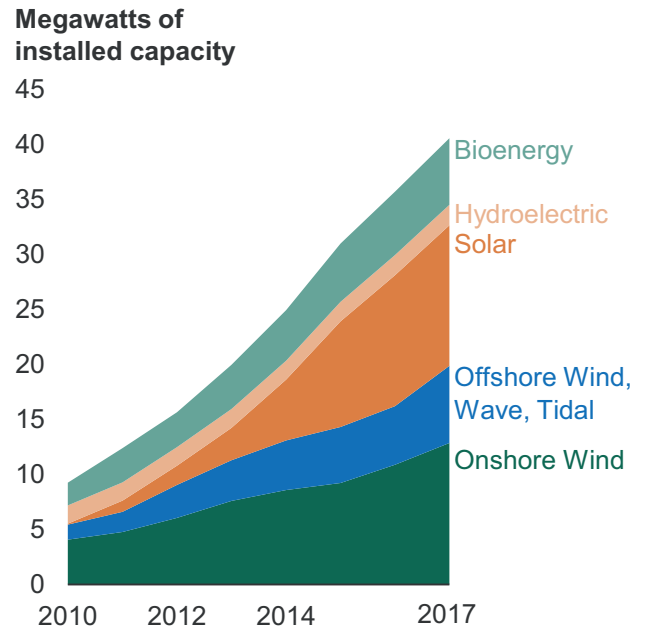
Detailed statistics on domestic freight can be found in the statistical data set [PORT0201](#).

## One-port operations

In 2017 a total of 21.0 million tonnes were transported through UK major ports related to one-port activities, an increase of 5% on the previous year.

The largest increase was in the amount of offshore wind, wave and tidal installations being served by UK major ports. In 2017, 277 thousand tonnes of cargo were transported to these sites, compared to 47 thousand tonnes in 2016. This is reflected in other statistics; the Digest of UK Energy Statistics shows that in 2017 there were a total of 7.0 Terawatts of installed capacity for offshore wind, wave and tidal installations, up 32% from 2016. 20.9 GWh of energy was produced via these installations in 2017, up 28% from 2016, and accounting for 21% of all renewable energy production.

## Renewable energy in the UK - Installed renewable sources from 2010



Source: Digest of UK Energy Statistics 2018, table 6.4

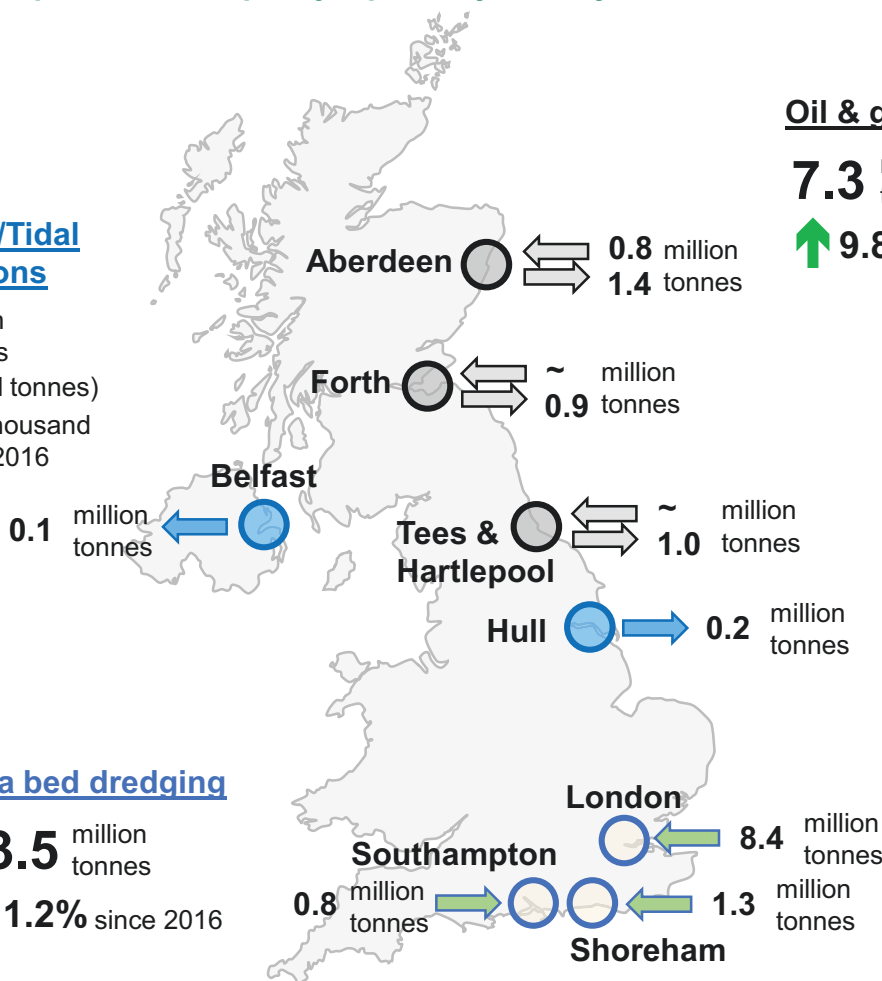
## UK One-port operations - Top major ports by activity in 2017

### Wind/Wave/Tidal installations

**0.3** million tonnes  
(278 thousand tonnes)  
↑ From 47 thousand tonnes in 2016

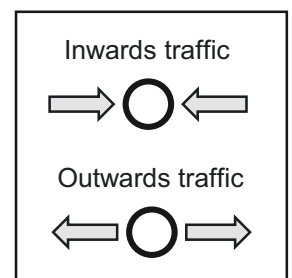
### Oil & gas terminals

**7.3** million tonnes  
↑ 9.8% since 2016



### Sea bed dredging

**13.5** million tonnes  
↑ 1.2% since 2016



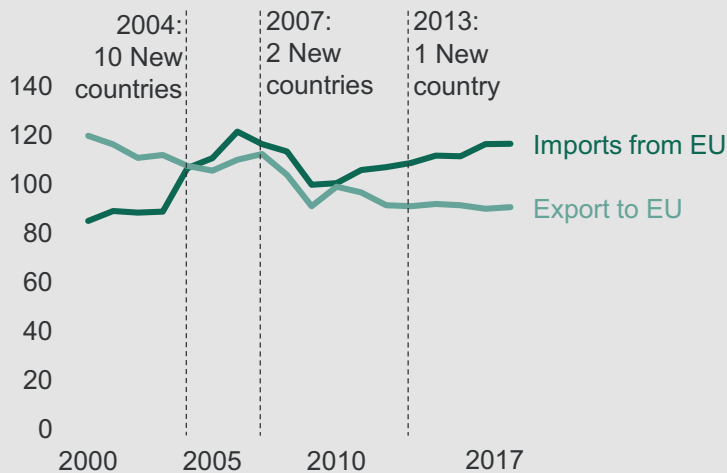


## Short Sea Freight with the European Union

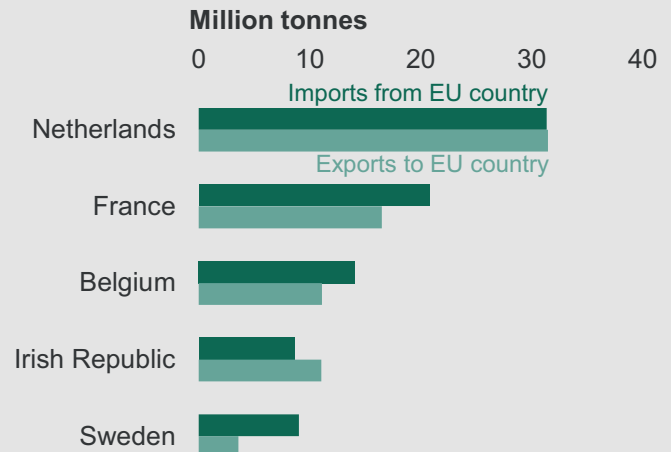
UK major port traffic with the European Union remained level at 207.6 million tonnes in 2017, which accounts of 55% of all international traffic, and 44% of all traffic (including domestic), through UK major ports.

### EU Imports/Exports from 2000

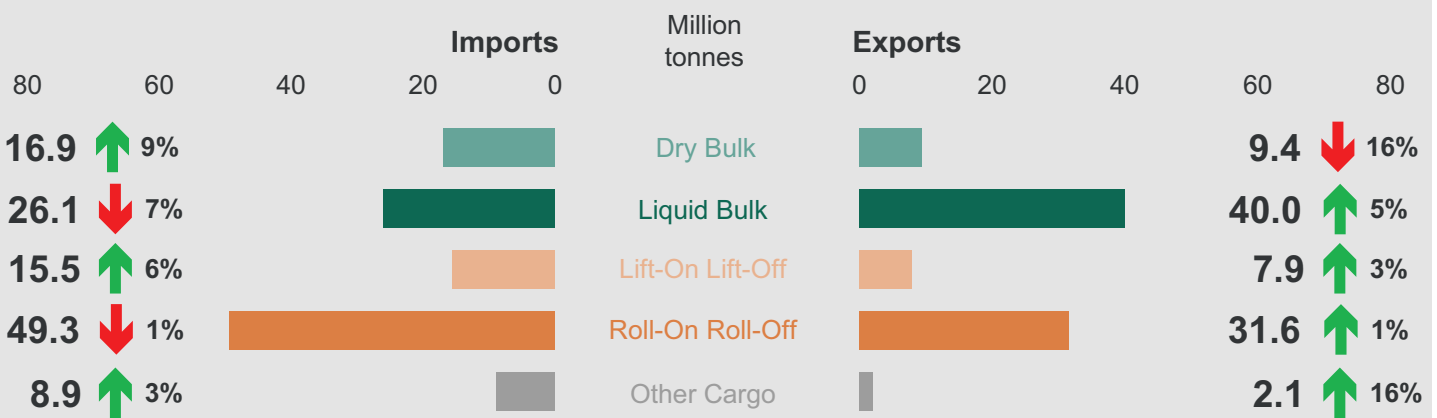
Million tonnes



### Top 5 EU countries trading with the UK, 2017



### Imports/Exports with EU countries by cargo category, 2017 and change from 2016



Imports made up 56% of all tonnage handled between the EU and UK major ports. A total of 116.7 million tonnes entered UK major ports from ports in EU countries, remaining level from 2016. A total of 90.9 million tonnes of cargo was sent to EU ports in 2017, up 1% from 2016.

Trade with ports in the Netherlands accounted for 30% of all EU traffic with UK major ports in 2017, up one percentage point from 2016. A total of 62.8 million tonnes were handled to/from ports in the Netherlands, up 3%. However, some of this cargo may have originated in other countries, but then stopped at a port in the Netherlands, and was "trans-shipped" to a UK port.

Grimsby and Immingham handled 29.1 million tonnes to/from EU ports in 2017, the highest of any port. Around half of this tonnage was oil products and unaccompanied road goods trailers.



## Fall in agricultural product exports

Agricultural product traffic to or from ports in the EU fell by 61% to 1.9 million tonnes in 2017.

Agricultural product exports fell by 53% to 1.7 million tonnes in 2017. This has been largely the result of falling exports to Spain and the Netherlands, who between them received 2.3 million tonnes from UK major ports in 2016, falling 69% to 0.7 million tonnes in 2017.

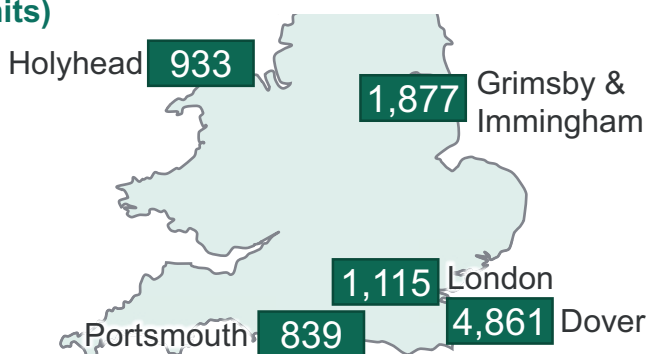
This contributed to Spain falling two places on the rank of top EU trading partners from 5th place in 2016, to 7th place in 2017, being replaced by Sweden which rose to 5th place due to an increase in ore traffic to UK major ports from 25 thousand tonnes in 2016, to 363 thousand tonnes in 2017.

## Roll-on roll-off traffic

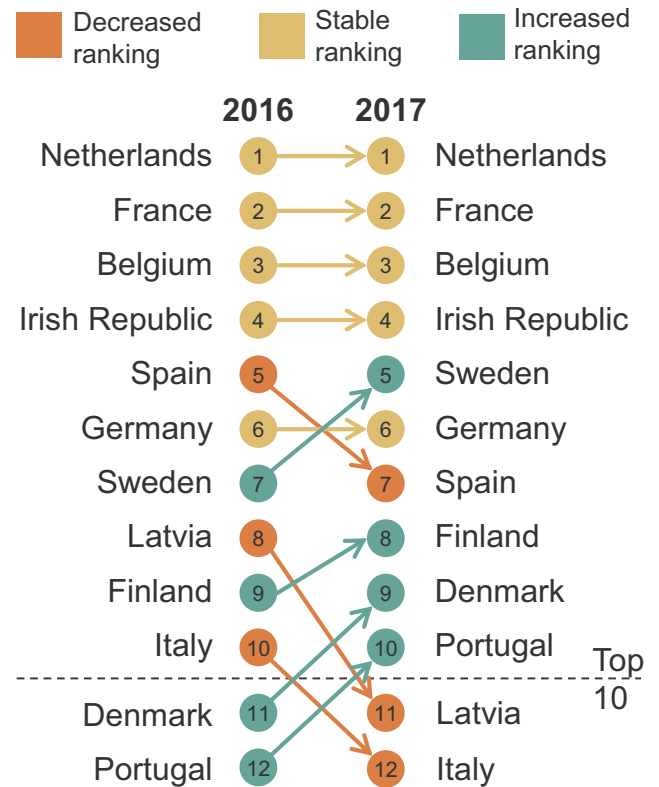
In aggregate more roll-on roll-off traffic enters the UK from the EU, than in the opposite direction. A total of 7.5 million units enter the UK as opposed to 6.3 million units leaving.

Dover is the largest UK port for Ro-Ro traffic with the EU, handling 4.9 million units in 2017. The next largest port is Grimsby & Immingham, who handled 1.9 million units.

## Top 10 RoRo ports with the EU (thousand units)



## Top 10 EU countries, by tonnage handled by UK major ports, 2016 & 2017 ([port0206](#))



## Definitions

**Transshipment:** The shipment of goods and containers to an intermediate destination (e.g. Rotterdam), and then to another destination (e.g. UK ports), without leaving the boundary of the port. In UK maritime statistics, as only the port of load/unload is recorded, not the final destination or source of the goods, we are unable to measure the effects of transshipment.

Numerous attempts have been made to quantify this with limited success. An example is a 2014 article [UK Trade in goods estimates and the 'Rotterdam Effect'](#), published by the Office for National Statistics.

Detailed statistics on maritime freight between the European Union and the United Kingdom, as well as freight within the Union itself, can be found on the [Eurostat website](#). The UK is required to share statistical information with the Union via Eurostat under [Directive 2009/42/EC](#).

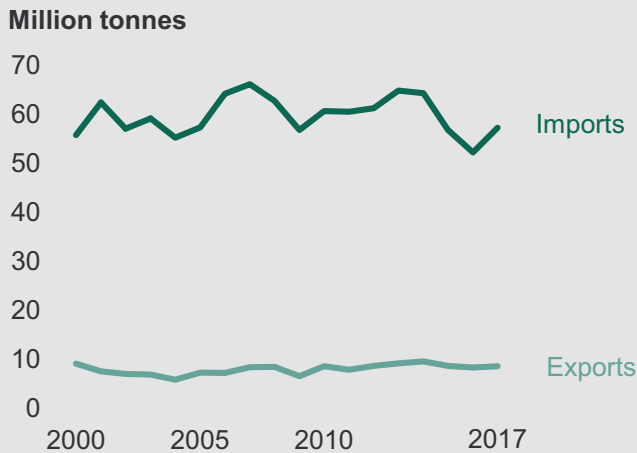
Detailed information on specific traded commodities is available on the [HM Revenue and Customs \(HMRC\) website](#).



## Short Sea Freight with Non-EU European and Mediterranean Countries

Trade with other European and Mediterranean (extra-EU) countries rose 9% to 65.8 million tonnes in 2017 compared to the previous year, due to a 12% increase in imports of liquid bulk to 41.0 million tonnes.

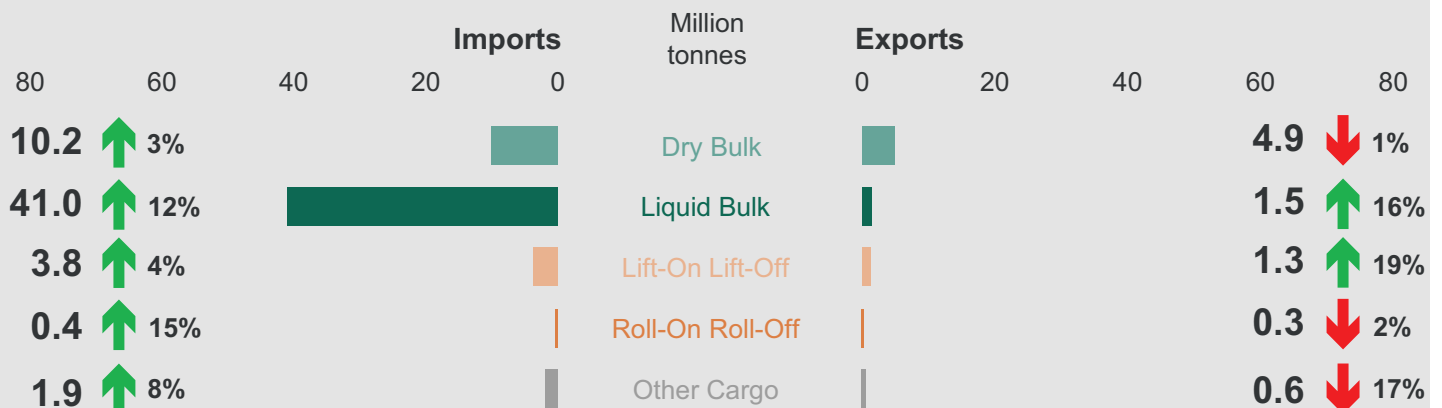
### Extra-EU Imports/Exports from 2000



### Top 5 Extra-EU countries trading with the UK, 2017



### Imports/Exports with Extra-EU countries by cargo category, 2017 and change from 2016



Imports to extra-EU countries outweigh exports over six-fold, and have increased 10% from 2016 to 57.3 million tonnes in 2017. 53% of imports are in the form of crude oil. 30.4 million tonnes of crude oil were imported from Non-EU European countries in 2017, a figure 9% higher than in 2016. Oil product imports also continue to grow, with 8.4 million tonnes received by UK major ports in 2017, up 23% from 2016.

There were 8.6 million tonnes of exports to extra-EU countries in 2017, a figure 3% higher than in 2017. 43% of all exports are ores, with 3.7 million tonnes leaving UK major ports in 2017, up 20% from 2016. Liverpool is responsible for around a third of ore exports to extra-EU countries with 1.2 million tonnes leaving its port.

### Definitions

**Short Sea:** Maritime traffic that moves cargo along a coast without having to cross an ocean, in contrast to *deep sea* traffic that must cross an ocean to reach its destination.

**Extra-EU:** A Eurostat term encompassing all European and Mediterranean countries that are not part of the European Union

## Liquid Bulk Imports

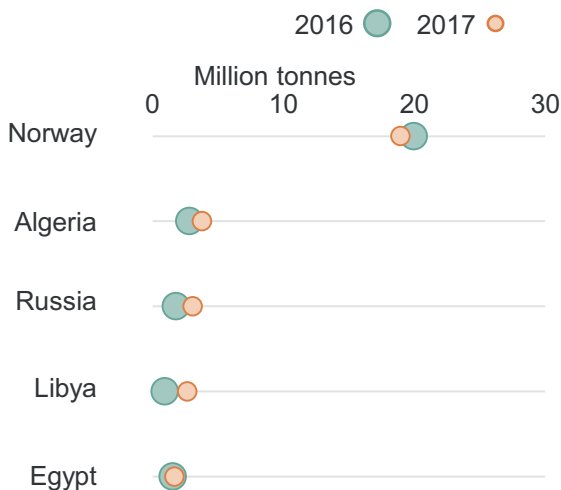
The majority of the increase in liquid bulk imports is the result of a 9% growth in crude oil imports to 30.4 million tonnes, and a 23% increase in oil product imports to 8.4 million tonnes. These two categories account for 95% of all liquid bulk imports from extra-EU countries.

### Crude Oil

Norway continues to dominate crude oil imports from extra-EU countries, with 19.0 million tonnes arriving at UK major ports in 2017, however this is down 5% from 2016.

An increase in oil being sent from four other countries contributed to a 9% increase in crude imports to 2017:

#### Extra-EU crude oil imports, 2017 compared to 2016 ([port0206](#))



Southampton imported the largest share of the extra-EU crude oil in 2017, handling 8.2 million tonnes, which is an increase of 32% compared to 2016. The previous top importer, Rivers Hull and Humber, remained level on 6.6 million tonnes.

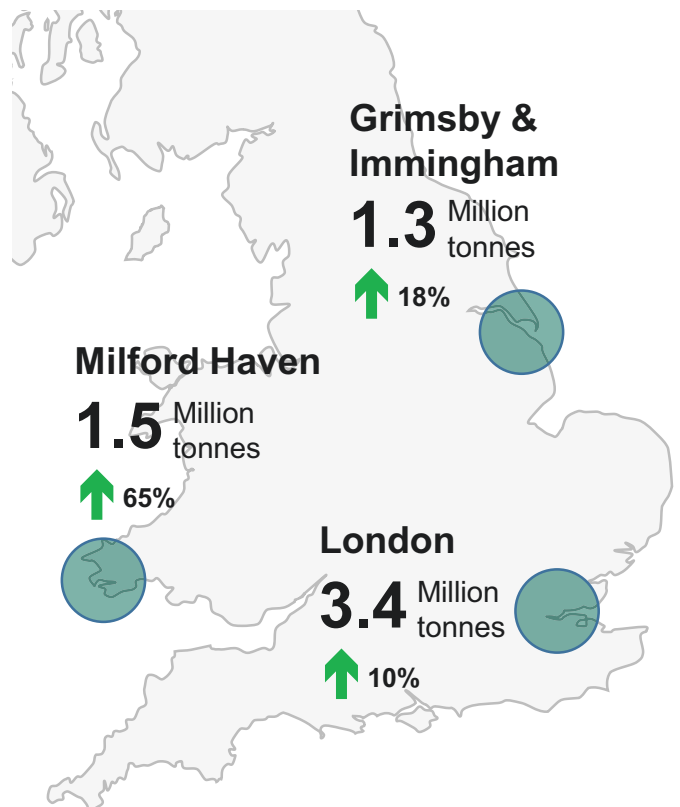
Prior to this increase between 2016 and 2017, crude oil imports had been steadily declining from 33 million tonnes in 2012, driven by decline at the Port of London. This decline was partly due to the retirement of the Coryton refinery, which was the last Thames Estuary refinery in operation.

### Oil Products

Imports of oil products continue to be dominated by traffic from Russian ports. In 2017 there were 5.8 million tonnes imported from Russia, which increased by 10% compared to 2016. Russian oil product imports account for 69% of the traffic in this category.

The Port of London continues to receive the largest share of oil product imports, receiving 3.4 million tonnes in 2017, an increase of 10% since 2016. and 41% of the total oil product imports.

#### Top 3 ports for oil product imports, 2017 and change from 2016 ([port0303](#))



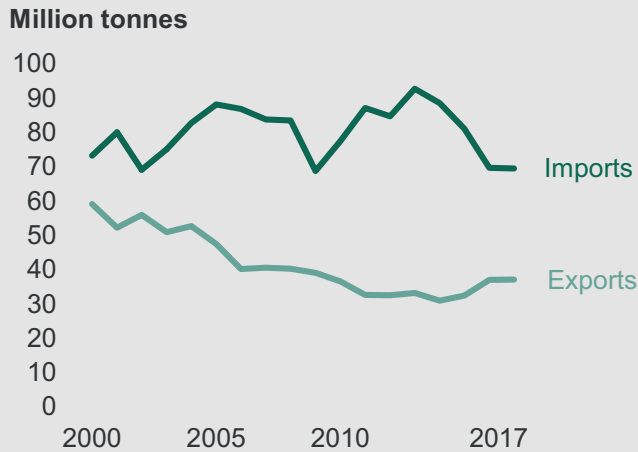
More information on 2017 trends regarding petroleum imports, exports, storage and usage, can be found in the [Digest of UK Energy Statistics 2018, Chapter 3](#). Details of UK major ports and countries handling liquid bulk can be found in tables [PORT0201](#), [PORT0205](#), [PORT0206](#) and [PORT0302](#).



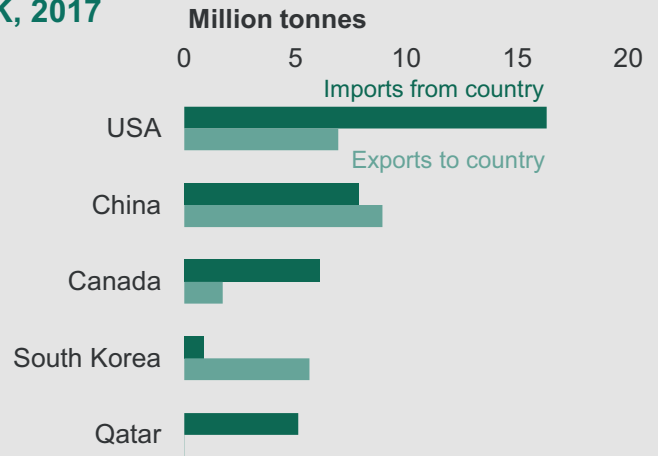
## Deep Sea International Freight

**106.7 million tonnes is traded with deep sea partners, unchanged from 2017. Trade with Asia accounts of 49% of all deep sea freight, down two percentage points from 2016.**

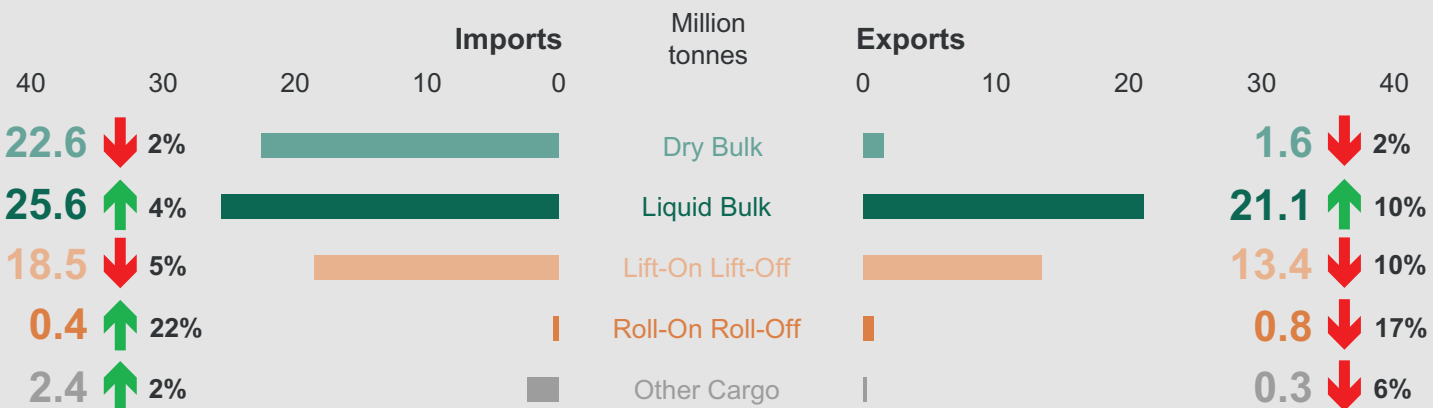
### Deep Sea Imports/Exports from 2000



### Top 5 Deep Sea countries trading with the UK, 2017



### Imports/Exports with Deep Sea countries by cargo category, 2017 and change from 2016



In 2017 a total of 69.5 million tonnes of freight was received from deep sea countries. This is evenly split between the Americas (32.0 million tonnes, up 2%) and Asia (28.7 million tonnes, down 10%).

Of imports from the Americas, 18.5 million tonnes is in dry bulk, however there has also been a doubling in the amount of crude oil imported (4.9 million tonnes in 2017).

A total of 37.2 million tonnes of exports were sent to deep sea countries, 65% of which was sent to countries in Asia. 11.6 million tonnes of crude oil was sent to Asia, up 26% on 2016.

### Definitions

**Deep Sea:** Maritime traffic that crosses oceans, as opposed to *short sea* traffic that can move along a coast within a continent.

Detailed statistics on international freight traffic can be found in the statistical data sets [PORT0201](#), [PORT0202](#), and [PORT0204](#).

## Liquid Bulk Exports

Exports to Asia increased 34% since 2016 to 13.1 million tonnes in 2017. The largest contributor to this change has been an increase in the exports to South Korea, up to 5.2 million tonnes in 2017 from 2.1 million tonnes in 2016. The majority of this increase is in the form of crude oil. This increase is entirely due to crude oil exports.

Exports to the American continent have been steadily decreasing to its current low of 6.7 million tonnes, down 17% from 2016. 67% of this was with the United States of America: 3.8 million tonnes of oil products and 0.6 million tonnes of crude oil were sent to the USA in 2017. 136 thousand tonnes of crude oil were also sent to the US Virgin Islands for the first time since 2011.

In addition to US territories, 0.5 million tonnes of crude oil were sent to Canada in 2017, down by 52% from 2016.

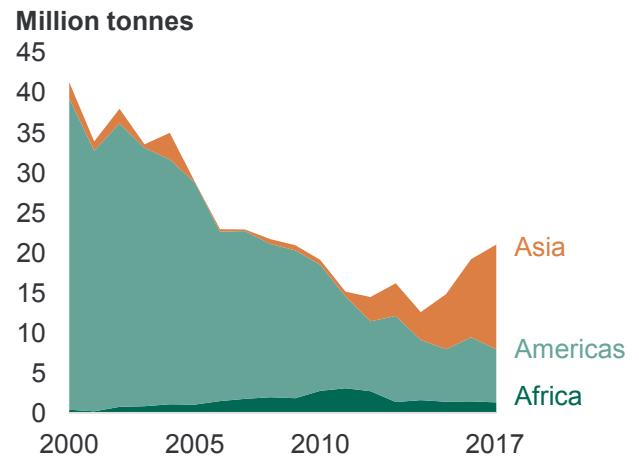
## Containerised Traffic

A total of 5.3 million TEU was transported to/from UK major ports and deep sea ports. 47% of these are to/from China, 2.5 million TEU in total, down 1% from 2016. Of this total, 1.3 million TEU of goods were imported into UK major ports, and 1.2 million TEU were exported.

Container traffic with Singapore rose 26% to 408 thousand TEU in 2017. This is mostly due to a 35% increase in imports from Singapore over that time to 189 thousand TEU.

Containerised traffic with the United States of America fell 1% to 402 thousand TEU. The amount imported from the USA however rose by 3% to 233 thousand TEU.

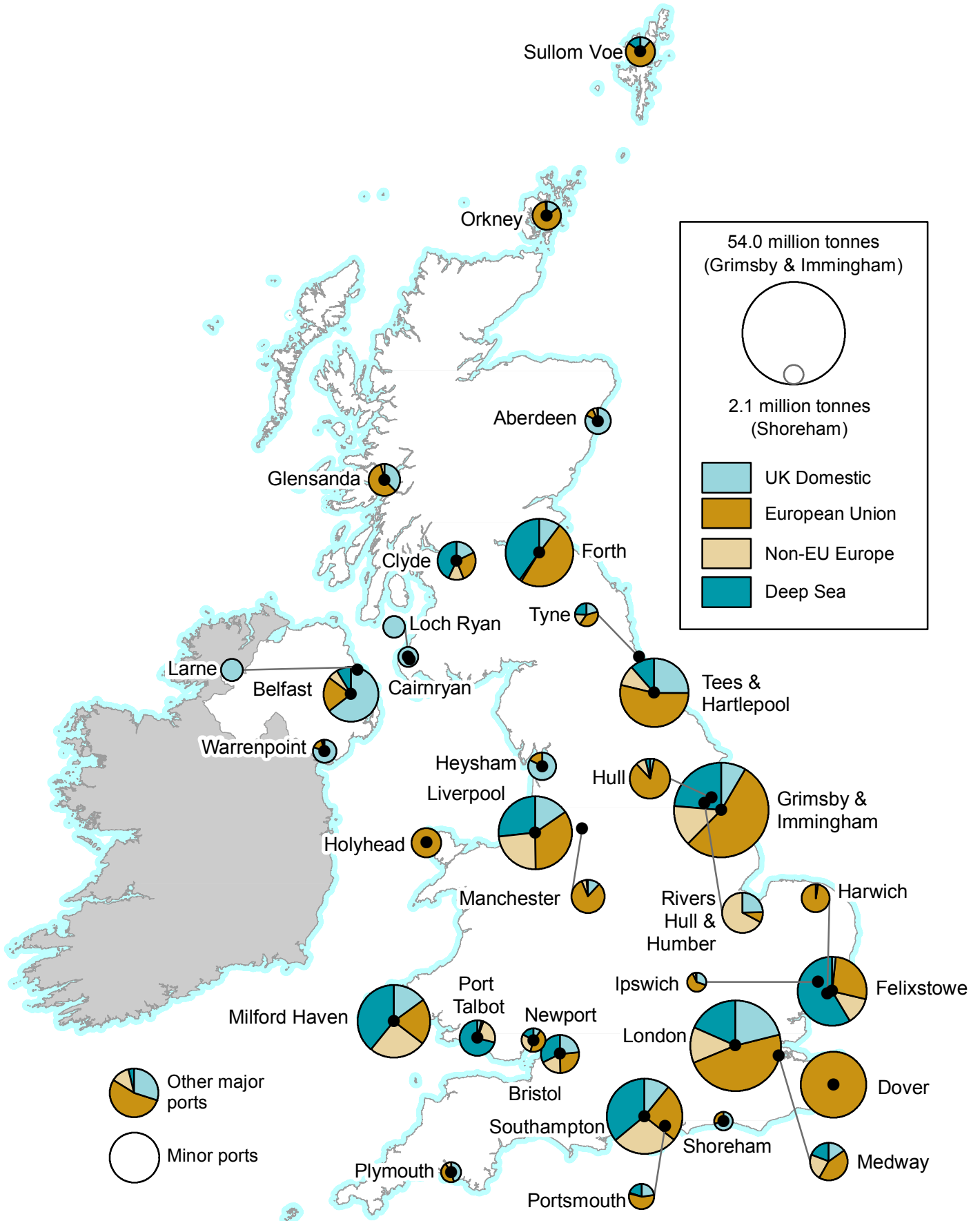
## Liquid bulk exports to top 3 deep sea regions, from 2000 ([port0499](#))



## Deep sea containerised traffic with the UK in TEU - Rank and change from 2016 ([port0205](#))



# UK major ports: domestic and international tonnage, 2017



\* All ports marked on map handled over 2 million tonnes of freight in 2017.

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## 5. Arrivals Data

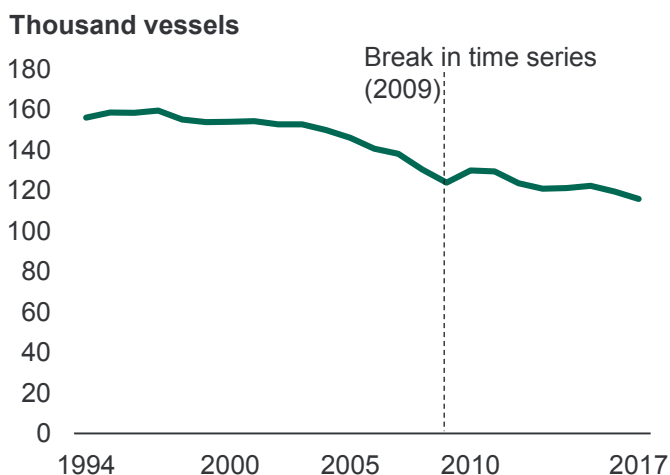
A total of 116.0 thousand cargo carrying vessels arrived at UK ports in 2017, 3% lower than the 119.7 thousand vessels in 2016. This was also 11% lower than the recent peak of 130.1 thousand vessels in 2013. These figures exclude 'other' vessels to ensure a comparable time series.

Ro-Ro vessels were the most common vessel to arrive at UK ports, with 63.6 thousand arrivals in 2017, down 1% from 2016. The next numerous arrivals were by closed-cellular container vessels, making 8.7 thousand arrivals, a figure which is unchanged from 2016.

In terms of deadweight tonnage (dwt.) however, closed-cellular container vessels have provided an increasing fraction of UK port freight arrivals, rising from 281.5 million dwt. in 2013 to 388.4 million dwt. in 2017, a rise of 38%. This places closed-cellular containers as the second most numerous vessel type in terms of deadweight tonnage in 2017, only just behind Ro-Ro vessels (390.0 million dwt.)

Tankers saw a fall in provided deadweight tonnage from a peak of 444.7 million dwt. in 2010, and stabilised between 2014 to 2017, to around 340 million dwt.

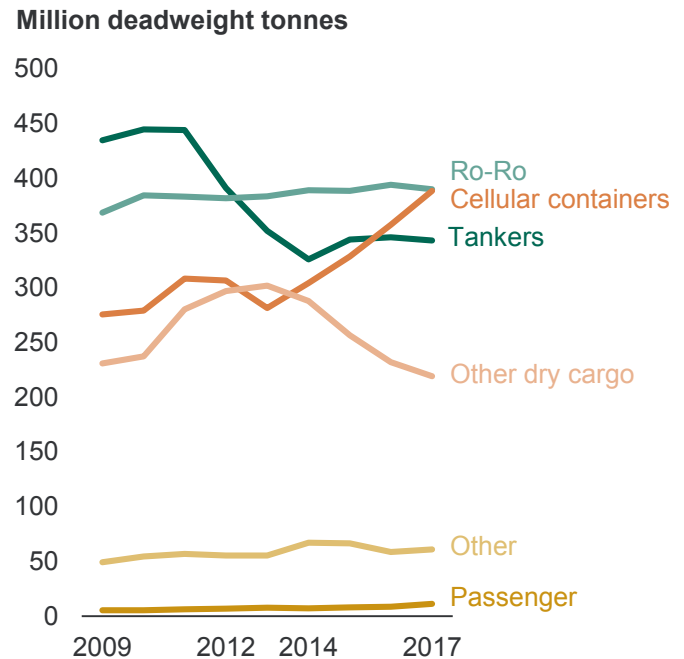
### Cargo vessel arrivals at UK ports since 1994 ([port0602](#))



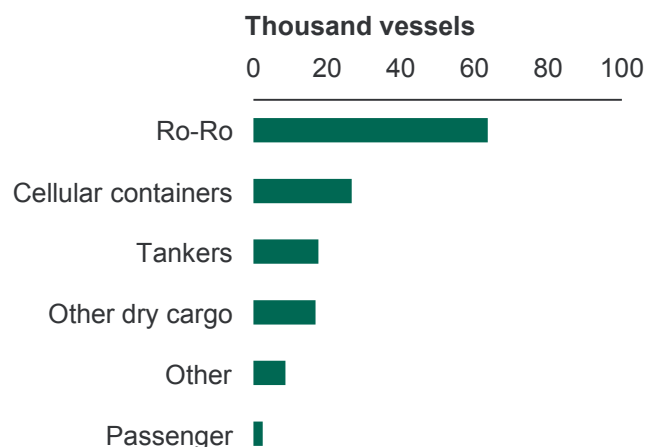
## Definitions

**Deadweight tonnage:** is the weight of cargo, stores, fuel, passengers and crew carried by the ship when loaded to its maximum summer loadline.

### Deadweight tonnage arriving at UK ports by ship type from 2009 ([port0603](#))



### Vessels arriving at UK ports by ship type, 2017 ([port0601](#))



Detailed statistics on the number of vessel arrivals can be found in the statistical data sets, [PORT0601](#), [PORT0602](#) and [PORT0603](#). These statistics on the number of arrivals are not classified as National Statistics.

## Section 6: Strengths and Weaknesses of the Data

- The port freight statistics relate to traffic travelling to and from ports in the United Kingdom, unless otherwise stated, and do not cover ports in the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.
- Final port freight statistics are published 9 months after the year end. At this stage a full reconciliation of port and shipping agent data will have been carried out, and the grossing procedures described in the [Technical Note](#) are completed and checked. The detailed results in this release are based on the grossed data and the full range of analyses, including those by route and vessel type, are then available.
- Arrivals statistics are not, at present, National Statistics. All of our other port freight statistics have been certified as meeting the standards of the Office of Statistics Regulation, and are thus National Statistics.

## Section 7: Glossary

- **Lo-Lo (lift-on lift-off) containers:** standard shipping containers that are lifted on or off ships. Containers can also be carried on Ro-Ro (roll-on roll-off) services, usually on port-to-port trailers, road goods vehicles or unaccompanied trailers, in which case they will be treated as Ro-Ro traffic.
- **Major ports:** Ports handling over one million tonnes per year, and a small number of other key ports, together accounting for over 98% of UK port traffic. More detailed statistics are collected from these ports.
- **Minor ports:** All other ports handling freight traffic. Only total weight of goods loaded and unloaded is collected from these ports.
- **Tonnage:** The weight of goods transported, including crates and other packaging, but excluding the unloaded weight of any shipping containers, road goods vehicles, trailers and other items of transport equipment where these are used.
- **Units:** Includes all roll-on roll-off (Ro-Ro) units whether carrying freight or not (road goods vehicles, unaccompanied trailers, shipborne port-to-port trailers, passenger vehicles, trade vehicles, and other Ro-Ro units), as well as lift-on lift-off (Lo-Lo) containers. In most port statistics outputs, freight-carrying roll-on roll-off units are normally reported separately from others, but this detail is not available at the time of publication of the quarterly statistics, in which combined totals are given.



## Section 8: Users and Uses of the Data

These statistics are collected to provide information on trends and patterns in the handling of freight traffic at UK sea ports. Users of the data include central government, the devolved administrations and local government, the maritime industry, transport consultants and academics, and international organisations.

These statistics are used both inside and outside government to aid decision making, including:

- To provide general background to sector trends, and to inform the development and evaluation of policy, and to inform decision making.
- In the development or testing of transport and environmental models and forecasts.
- In market analysis by transport consultants and businesses.
- To respond to requests for information from Parliament, members of the public and international organisations, including Eurostat's compilation of maritime statistics for the EU.

For example, recently these statistics have been used to inform:

- The Transport Connectivity to Ports Review of the current status and future infrastructure recommendations<sup>1</sup>
- Promotional materials and handbooks for London International Shipping Week<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-connectivity-to-ports-review-of-the-current-status-and-future-infrastructure-recommendations](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-connectivity-to-ports-review-of-the-current-status-and-future-infrastructure-recommendations)

<sup>2</sup> [londoninternationalshippingweek.com/](http://londoninternationalshippingweek.com/)

We welcome any feedback on these statistics by email to [maritime.stats@dft.gov.uk](mailto:maritime.stats@dft.gov.uk).

## Section 9: Background Notes

- The web tables and charts give further detail of the key results presented in this statistical release. They are available here: [Ports statistics](#).
- Full guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics can be found here: [notes](#)
- National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs: [Code of Practice](#)
- Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: [pre-release access list](#).
- Provisional summary quarterly statistics on freight handled by UK major ports are also updated quarterly. The latest tables can be found here: [Quarterly summary](#).