Northern Ireland Ports Traffic 2019

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland
Theme: Business
Frequency: Annual

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Ports Traffic is an analysis of the Department for Transport's UK Port Freight Statistics, at a Northern Ireland level. It provides statistics on the volume and tonnage of traffic at Northern Ireland ports.

Key points

- The total tonnage through Northern Ireland (NI) ports in 2019 was 27.4 million tonnes[1], a decrease of 3.5% compared to 28.4 million tonnes the previous year. Total freight traffic through United Kingdom (UK) ports in 2018 was 486.1 million tonnes, compared to 483.3 million tonnes the previous year, an increase of 0.6%.

- Over the year in NI, in 2019 the total tonnage of inward traffic decreased by 4.0% to 16.6 million tonnes, and outward traffic decreased by 2.8% to 10.8 million tonnes. For the UK as a whole, the volume of inward traffic for 2019 increased by 1.6% to 315.0 million tonnes and outward traffic decreased by 1.2% to 171.1 million tonnes.

- The majority of total NI traffic came through the Belfast Port (68%), while Warrenpoint accounted for the second highest level of total traffic (12%), followed by 10% through the Port of Larne. The most popular UK port was Grimsby & Immingham, which handled 11% of total UK port traffic in 2019.

- A total of 867,698 road goods vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports in 2019 – an increase of 0.5% from 863,511 in 2018. In total, 7.4 million road goods vehicles passed through the UK in 2019 – a decrease of 0.7% from 2018.

- A total of 468,165 non-freight vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports in 2019. This compared with a figure of 464,286 in 2018 – an increase of 0.8%. In total, 5.5 million non-freight vehicles passed through the UK in 2019 – a decrease of 5.7% from 2018.

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[1] Please note that this figure includes all major and minor ports

Context

The Department for Transport (DfT) collects and publishes statistics about passenger and freight traffic through the ports of the UK.

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. Around 95 per cent by volume of the UK's international trade is transported by sea, and, at least until recently, the UK port sector handled a greater weight of goods than any other in Europe.

Statistics on UK port traffic (2019) are available on the DfT Statistics website:

UK Port Freight Statistics 2019

Following publication of the detailed final annual release by DfT, statisticians within the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency analyse the data which relate to Northern Ireland ports and release this information as the 'Northern Ireland Ports Traffic' publication in Autumn each year.

This Northern Ireland Ports Traffic publication provides statistics on passenger and freight traffic through Northern Ireland ports. Full details including information on quality and methodology can be found in the Ports Traffic section of the NISRA website:

NI Ports Traffic

This release includes information on non-freight traffic through NI Ports and is based on already published data. For information on external visitors to NI please see:

Annual Tourism Statistics 2018

This Ports Traffic report contains the following chapters:

National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is a producer's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

1 Goods through principal ports

Inward traffic refers to all goods taken into Northern Ireland from Great Britain and elsewhere through the Northern Ireland ports. Northern Ireland is not necessarily the ultimate destination for these goods.

Outward traffic covers all goods taken out through Northern Ireland ports, destined for Great Britain or for foreign countries. The origin of the goods is not necessarily in Northern Ireland.

Key points

- The **total tonnage** through Northern Ireland ports in 2019 was 27.4 million tonnes
- This represented a decrease of 3.5% on the figure of 28.4 million tonnes for 2018
- In 2019, the majority of total NI traffic came through Belfast Port (68%)

Figure 1: Total inward and outward traffic for Northern Ireland, 1998-2019
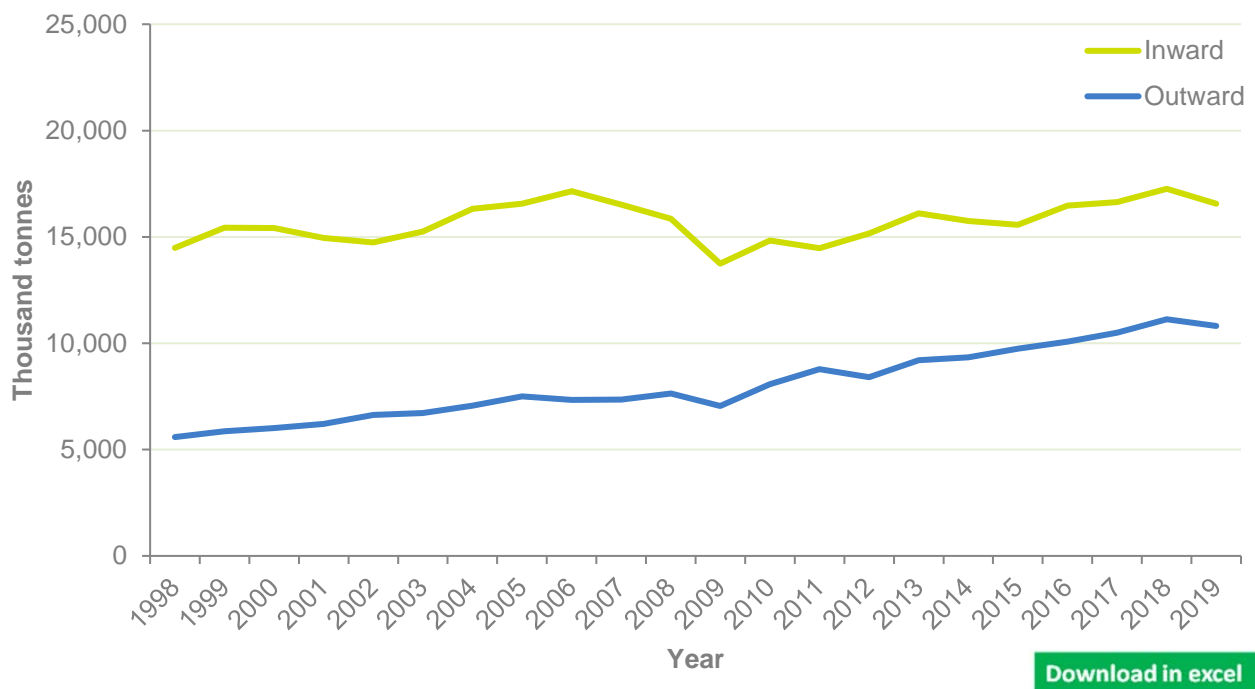
The **total tonnage** through Northern Ireland ports in 2019 was 27.4 million tonnes, which:

- comprised 16.6 million tonnes of inward traffic and 10.8 million tonnes of outward traffic
- represented a decrease of 3.5% on the figure of 28.4 million tonnes in 2018, which comprised 17.3 million tonnes of inward traffic and 11.1 million tonnes of outward traffic
- has exceeded 25 million tonnes of total traffic in each of the last seven years.

Of all **NI ports** in 2019:

- the majority of **total traffic** came through the Belfast Port (67.6%), with the remainder coming through Warrenpoint (12.1%), Larne (10.1 %), Londonderry (7.0%) and other minor ports (3.2%)
- the majority of **inward traffic** came through the Belfast Port (66.7%), with 10.3% through Warrenpoint, 11.0% through Londonderry, 9.0% through Larne and the remainder through other minor ports (3.0%)
- 69.1% of **outward traffic** went through the Belfast Port, with 14.9% through Warrenpoint, 11.7% through Larne and the remainder through Londonderry (0.9%) and other minor ports (3.5%).

In 2019, total freight traffic through **UK ports** was 486.1 million tonnes, which:

- was an increase of 0.6% on the figure in 2018 (483.3 million tonnes)
- was some 16.8% below the peak in the series in 2005 (584.5 million tonnes)
- comprised 315.0 million tonnes of inward traffic, an increase of 1.6% since 2018
- comprised 171.1 million tonnes of outward traffic, a decrease of 1.2% since 2018.

Of all **UK ports** in 2019:

- Grimsby and Immingham was the UK's leading port, handling 54.1 million tonnes (11.1% of UK traffic), followed by London with 54.0 million tonnes (11.1%), Milford Haven with 35.0 million tonnes (7.2%) and Liverpool with 34.3 million tonnes (7.1%).
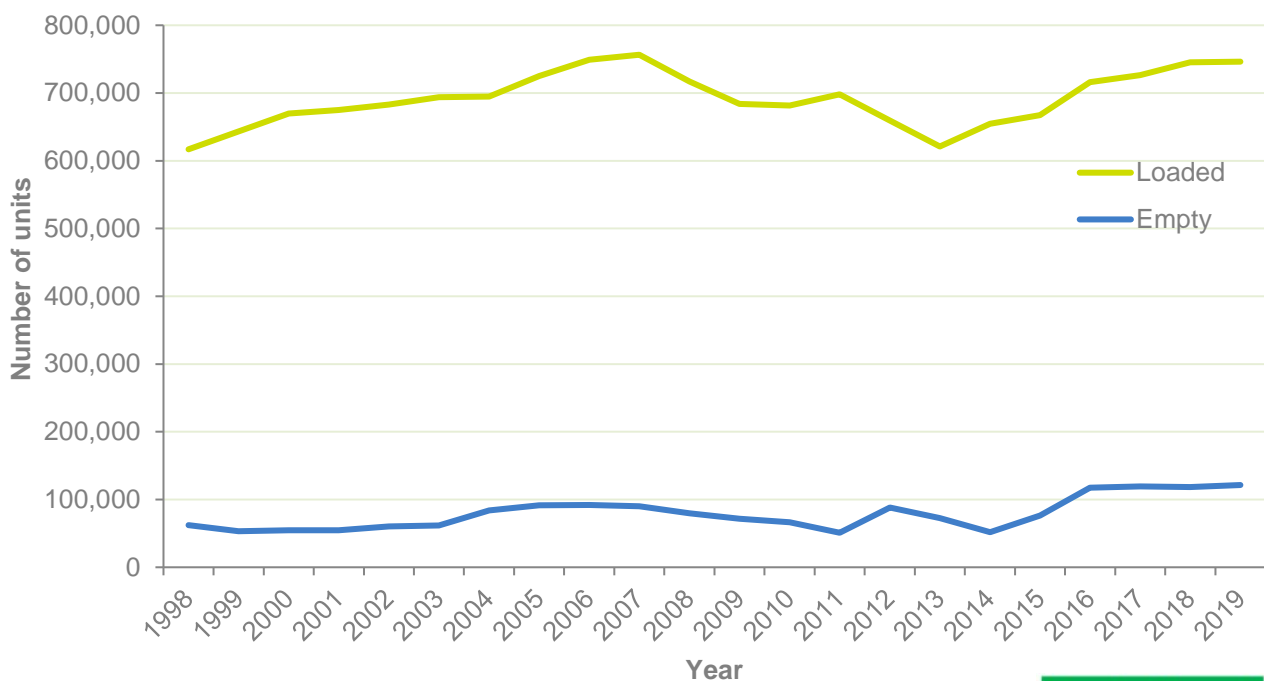
2 Road goods vehicles through principal ports

> **Road goods vehicles** include road goods vehicles (with accompanying trailers) and unaccompanied road goods trailers.

Key points

- Almost 868 thousand **road goods vehicles** passed through NI ports
- Belfast accounted for 66% of this traffic

Figure 2: Road goods vehicles (units) - Northern Ireland, 1998-2019

A total of 867,698 **road goods vehicles** passed through **Northern Ireland ports** in 2019, which:

- represented an increase of 0.5% on 2018 figures
- comprised 435,810 road goods vehicles arriving in NI and 431,888 leaving
- included 746,303 loaded and 121,395 empty road goods vehicles
- mostly passed through the Belfast Port (65.7%), with the remainder passing through the Port of Larne (22.2%) and Warrenpoint (12.1%)
- was 24.5% above the number of road goods vehicles passing through ports in 1999.

A total of 7.4 million road goods vehicles passed through **UK ports** in 2019, which:

- represented a decrease of 0.7% on 2018 figures
- comprised 3.7 million road goods vehicles inward and 3.7 million outward
- passed in largest numbers through the Port of Dover, accounting for 2.4 million road goods vehicles or 33.0% of the total UK road goods vehicle traffic.
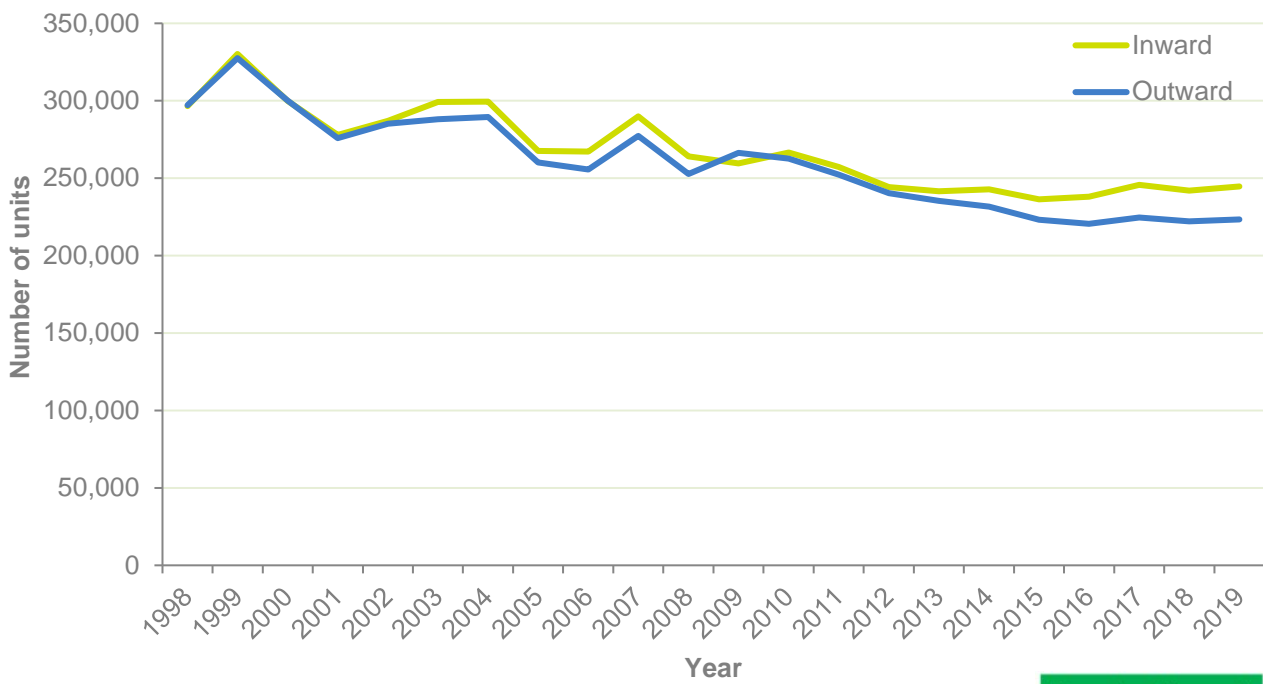
3 Non-freight vehicles through principal ports

> **Non-freight vehicles** include passenger cars, motorcycles and accompanying trailers / caravans and passenger buses.

Key points

- Over 468 thousand **non-freight vehicles** passed through NI ports
- Belfast accounted for 73.3% of the traffic

Figure 3: Unit load carrier non-freight vehicles - Northern Ireland, 1998-2019

A total of 468,165 non-freight vehicles passed through **Northern Ireland ports** in 2019, which:

- represented an increase of 0.8% on 2018 figures
- comprised 244,714 vehicles arriving in NI and 223,451 leaving
- mostly passed through the Belfast Port (73.3%), with the remainder passing through the Port of Larne (26.7%) and Warrenpoint (0.02%)
- was 28.8% below the number of non-freight vehicles passing through ports in 1999.

A total of 5.5 million non-freight vehicles passed through **UK ports** in 2019, which:

- represented a decrease of 5.7% on 2018 figures
- comprised 2.7 million non-freight vehicles inward and 2.8 million outward
- passed in largest numbers through the Port of Dover, accounting for 2.0 million vehicles or 36.7% of the total UK non-freight vehicle traffic.

4 Lift on-Lift off (Lo-Lo) traffic through principal ports

> **Lift on-Lift off (Lo-Lo)** traffic refers to standard shipping containers that are lifted on or off ships.
>
> **TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units)** is a standardised measure to allow for the different sizes of container boxes.

Key points

- 265,400 TEUs of **container traffic** passed through Northern Ireland Ports in 2019
- This represents an increase of 7.6% on the 246,600 TEUs of container traffic in 2018
- Belfast accounted for 86.5% of TEUs container traffic

Figure 4: Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) traffic - Northern Ireland, 2000-2019

A total of 265,400 TEU containers passed through **Northern Ireland ports** in 2019, which:
- represented an increase of 7.6% on 2018 figures
- comprised 131,800 TEUs inward and 133,600 outward
- mostly passed through the Belfast Port (86.5%), with the remainder passing through Warrenpoint (13.5%)
- was 21.1% above the number of TEU containers passing through NI ports in 2000.

A total of 10.5 million TEU containers passed through **UK ports** in 2019, which:

- was a decrease of 2.1% on 2018 figures
- comprised 5.3 million TEUs inward and 5.3 million outward
- passed in largest numbers through Felixstowe, accounting for 3.8 million TEUs or 36.4% of the total UK TEUs traffic.

5 Further information

Port freight traffic statistics are based on a combination of data reported to the DfT by port authorities and shipping lines or their agents. Prior to 2000, reporting was by port authorities only.

In January 2000, an EC Maritime Statistics Directive (Council Directive 95/64/EC on statistical returns in respect of the carriage of goods and passengers by sea, recast as Directive 2009/42/EC) was implemented in the UK. This required a complete overhaul of data collection methods. The information in this report has been shown as far as possible on the same or similar basis as previously published, but it should be noted that the different collection system for freight traffic has resulted in some discontinuities in the data series between 2000-2019 and previous years.

Under the Directive, information is required quarterly on foreign and domestic tonnages and freight units, for major ports (i.e. those that have over one million tonnes of freight per annum), by route, flag and cargo type. Much less information is required for smaller ports. Most of the detailed freight information is collected from shipping lines, operators and shipping agents, because the detailed route and ship flag information required by the Directive is only generally available from them. The ports supply more limited information quarterly and annually, which is used to provide control totals and also to publish more timely provisional results.

A technical note, published by the Department for Transport, provides further information on the current and previous data collection systems, and explains the methods and quality standards implemented in the DfT Port Freight Statistics publication, and the Northern Ireland Ports Traffic publication. It is available at:

[DfT Port Freight Statistics notes and definitions](#)

Contact information

If you require further information about the figures contained in this publication or the accompanying tables, please contact:

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The next Northern Ireland Ports Traffic bulletin, including estimates for 2020, will be published in November 2021.

6   Index of tables

The following tables containing Northern Ireland Ports Traffic data for 1998-2019 can be found on the NISRA website:

Notes and definitions:

Tables 1-5 give tonnage of goods through the ports and exclude weights of containers and weights of materials shipped for dumping at sea.

Inward traffic

Inward traffic refers to all goods taken into Northern Ireland from Great Britain and elsewhere through the Northern Ireland ports. Northern Ireland is not necessarily the ultimate destination for these goods.

Outward traffic

Outward traffic covers all goods taken out through Northern Ireland ports, destined for Great Britain or for foreign countries. The origin of the goods is not necessarily in Northern Ireland.

Tonnage

The weight of goods transported, including crates and other packaging.

Road goods vehicles

Road goods vehicles include road goods vehicles (with accompanying trailers) and unaccompanied road goods trailers.

Non-freight vehicles

Non-freight vehicles include passenger cars, motorcycles and accompanying trailers / caravans and passenger buses.

Lift on-Lift off (Lo-Lo) traffic

Lift on-Lift off (Lo-Lo) refers to standard shipping containers that are lifted on or off ships.

TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units)

This 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