

2016

# Northern Ireland Ports Traffic

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland  
Theme: Business  
Frequency: Annual

## Key points

- The total tonnage through Northern Ireland (NI) ports in 2016 was 26.6 million tonnes, compared to 25.3 million tonnes the previous year. Total freight traffic through United Kingdom (UK) ports in 2016 was 484.0 million tonnes, compared to 496.7 million tonnes the previous year.
- Over the year in NI, the total tonnage of inward traffic increased to 16.5 million tonnes, and outward traffic increased to 10.1 million tonnes. For the UK as a whole, the volume of inward traffic for 2016 decreased to 303.1 million tonnes and outward traffic decreased to 180.9 million tonnes.
- The majority of total NI traffic came through the Belfast Port (66%), 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 2016.
- A total of 458,664 non-freight vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports in 2016. This compared with a figure of 459,601 in 2015 – a decrease of 0.2%. In total, 5.8 million non-freight vehicles passed through the UK in 2016 – a decrease of 0.2% from 2015.

## 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 (2016) are available on the DfT Statistics website:

### [UK Port Freight Statistics 2016](#)

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 November each year.

The 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. For information on external visitors to NI please see:

### [Annual Tourism Statistics 2016](#)

**This Ports Traffic report contains the following chapters:**

- 1. Goods through principal ports**
- 2. Non-freight vehicles through principal ports**
- 3. Further information**
- 4. Index of tables**

## **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

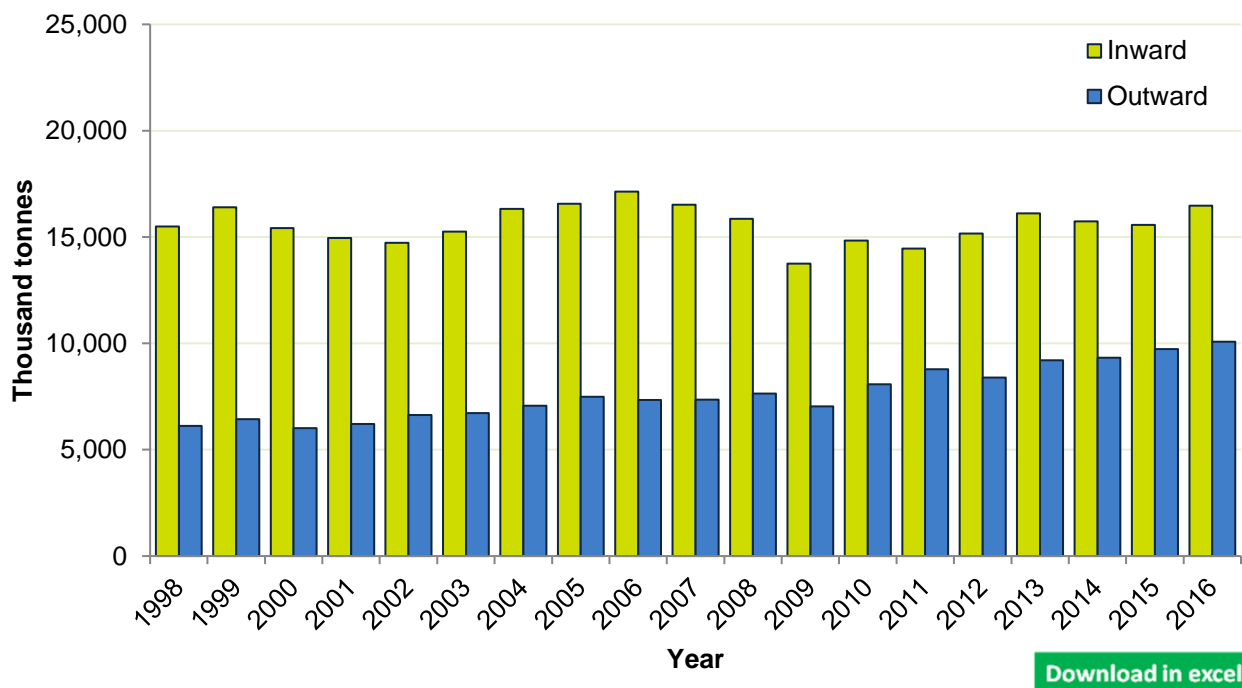
**Inward traffic** refers to all goods taken into Northern Ireland from Great Britain and elsewhere through the Northern Ireland ports. Northern Ireland is not necessarily the ultimate destination for these goods.

**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 2016 was 26.6 million tonnes, the highest on record
- This represented an increase of 4.9% on the figure of 25.3 million tonnes for 2015
- In 2015, the majority of total NI traffic came through the Belfast Port (66%)

Figure 1: Total inward and outward traffic for Northern Ireland, 1998-2016



The total tonnage through Northern Ireland ports in 2016 was 26.6 million tonnes, which:

- comprised 16.5 million tonnes of inward traffic and 10.1 million tonnes of outward traffic
- represented an increase of 4.9% on the figure of 25.3 million tonnes in 2015, which comprised 15.6 million tonnes of inward traffic and 9.7 million tonnes of outward traffic
- has exceeded 25 million tonnes of total traffic in each of the last four years.

Of all NI ports in 2016:

- the majority of total traffic came through the Belfast Port (66.1%), with the remainder coming through Warrenpoint (11.9%), Larne (10.4%), Londonderry (7.0%) and other minor ports (4.6%)
- the majority of inward traffic came through the Belfast Port (65.7%), with 10.7% through Londonderry, 9.6% through Warrenpoint, 8.9% through Larne and the remainder through other minor ports (5.0%)
- 66.8% of outward traffic came through the Belfast Port, with 15.8% through Warrenpoint, 12.9% through Larne and the remainder through Londonderry (0.8%) and other minor ports (3.8%).

In 2016, total freight traffic through UK ports was 484.0 million tonnes, which:

- was lower than the figure in 2015 (496.7 million tonnes)
- was some 17.2% below the peak in the series in 2005 (584.5 million tonnes)
- comprised 303.1 million tonnes of inward traffic, a decrease of 3.5% since 2015
- comprised 180.9 million tonnes of outward traffic, a decrease of 0.9% since 2015.

Of all UK ports in 2016:

- Grimsby and Immingham was the UK's leading port, handling 54.4 million tonnes (11.2% of UK traffic), followed by London with 50.4 million tonnes (10.4%), Southampton with 36.0 million tonnes (7.4%) and Milford Haven with 34.8 million tonnes (7.2%)

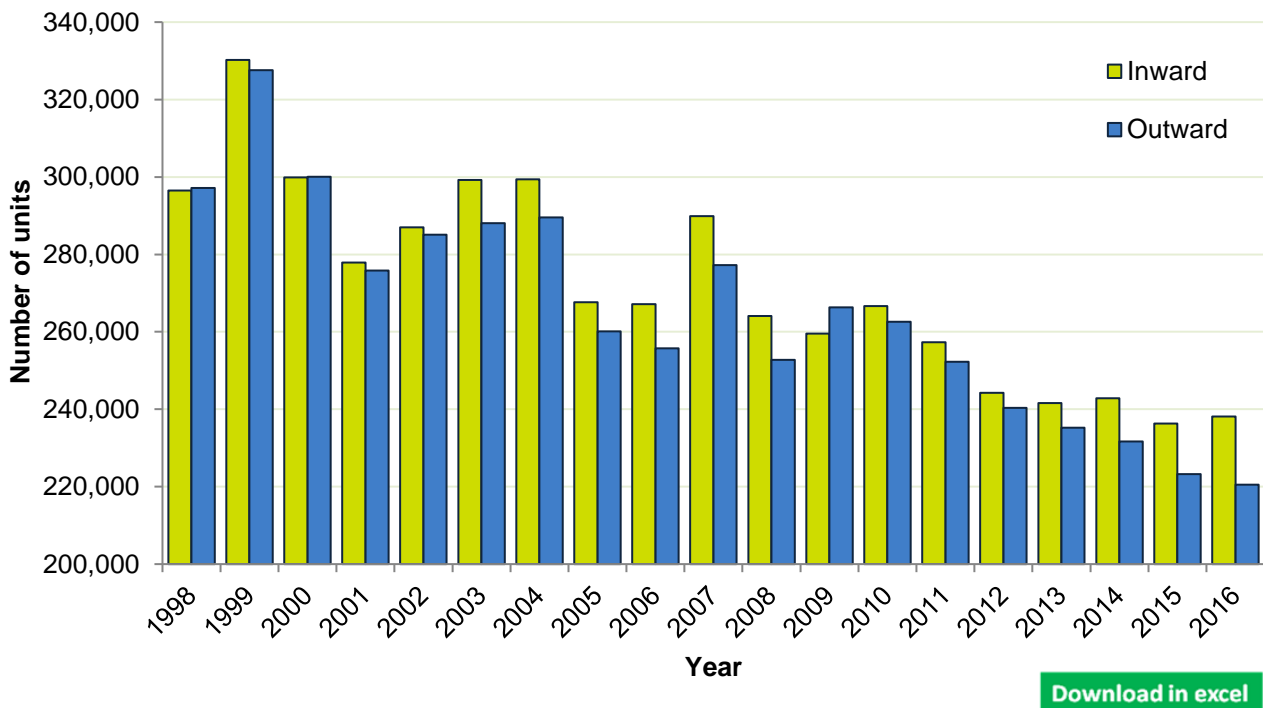
## 2 Non-freight vehicles through principal ports

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

### Key points

- Over 450 thousand non-freight vehicles passed through NI ports
- Belfast accounted for 70% of the traffic

**Figure 2: Unit load carrier non-freight vehicles - Northern Ireland, 1998-2016**



A total of 458,664 non-freight vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports in 2016, which:

- represented a decrease of 0.2% on 2015 figures
- comprised 238,130 vehicles arriving in NI and 220,534 leaving
- mostly passed through the Belfast Port (70.0%), with the remainder passing through the Port of Larne (30.0%).
- was 30.3% below the number of non-freight vehicles passing through ports in 1999

A total of 5.8 million non-freight vehicles passed through UK ports in 2016, which:

- represented a decrease of 0.2% on 2015 figures
- comprised 2.8 million non-freight vehicles inward and 2.9 million outward
- passed in largest numbers through the Port of Dover, accounting for 2.2 million vehicles or 38.4% of the total UK non-freight vehicle traffic.

## 3 Further information

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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 2000-2016 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 2017, will be published in November 2018.

## 4 Index of tables

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The following tables containing Northern Ireland Ports Traffic data for 1998-2016 can be found on the website:

[Table 1 - Tonnage of goods through the principal ports in Northern Ireland](#)

[Table 2 - Unit load carrier cross channel traffic](#)

[Table 3 - Unit load carrier foreign traffic](#)

[Table 4 - Unit load carrier total traffic](#)

[Table 5 - Other traffic \(cross channel, foreign and total\)](#)

[Table 6 - Unit load carrier traffic non-freight vehicles](#)

### 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.