



UK Port Freight Statistics: October to December 2012 (Quarter 4)

This Statistical Release summarises the latest quarterly statistics on freight handled by major UK sea ports. In June more detailed provisional annual statistics and commentary are published in a separate release and detailed final annual statistics are published in September.



Key findings	1
Quarterly Port Statistics	2
Strengths & weaknesses of the data	6
Glossary	6
Background notes	6

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Key findings from these provisional statistics included:-

Rolling Annual total:-

- In 2012 total major port traffic (**tonnage**) has fallen by **3 per cent** compared to 2011, following two consecutive years of slight growth. The total major port traffic (tonnage) in 2012 was 490 million tonnes, similar to levels seen in 2009 but 14 per cent lower than the peak in 2005.
- Between 2000 and 2007 there was an upwards trend in **unitised traffic** at UK major ports. Since 2007 the trend has been downwards and the number of units handled during 2012 (20,632 thousands) are at levels seen in 2000.

Quarter 4 2012 :-

- During quarter 4 2012, total port traffic (**tonnage**) was 119 million tonnes, **a decline of 6 per cent** compared with quarter 4 2011 (127 million tonnes). This continues the decline seen during the previous quarters of 2012. The decline in quarter 4 is the largest quarter on quarter fall seen during 2012.
- The **number of units** of all types handled during quarter 4 2012 was 4,735 thousand units, **down by 3 per cent** compared with quarter 4 2011 (4,902 thousand units).

1. Quarterly Port Freight Traffic

1.1 Summary

- The decline in freight traffic seen at the onset of the recession (2007) started to recover through 2010 and 2011. However the quarter on quarter decline in both tonnage and unitised traffic, seen in the first 3 quarters of 2012, has continued in **quarter 4 of 2012**.

1.2 October to Dec 2012 trend

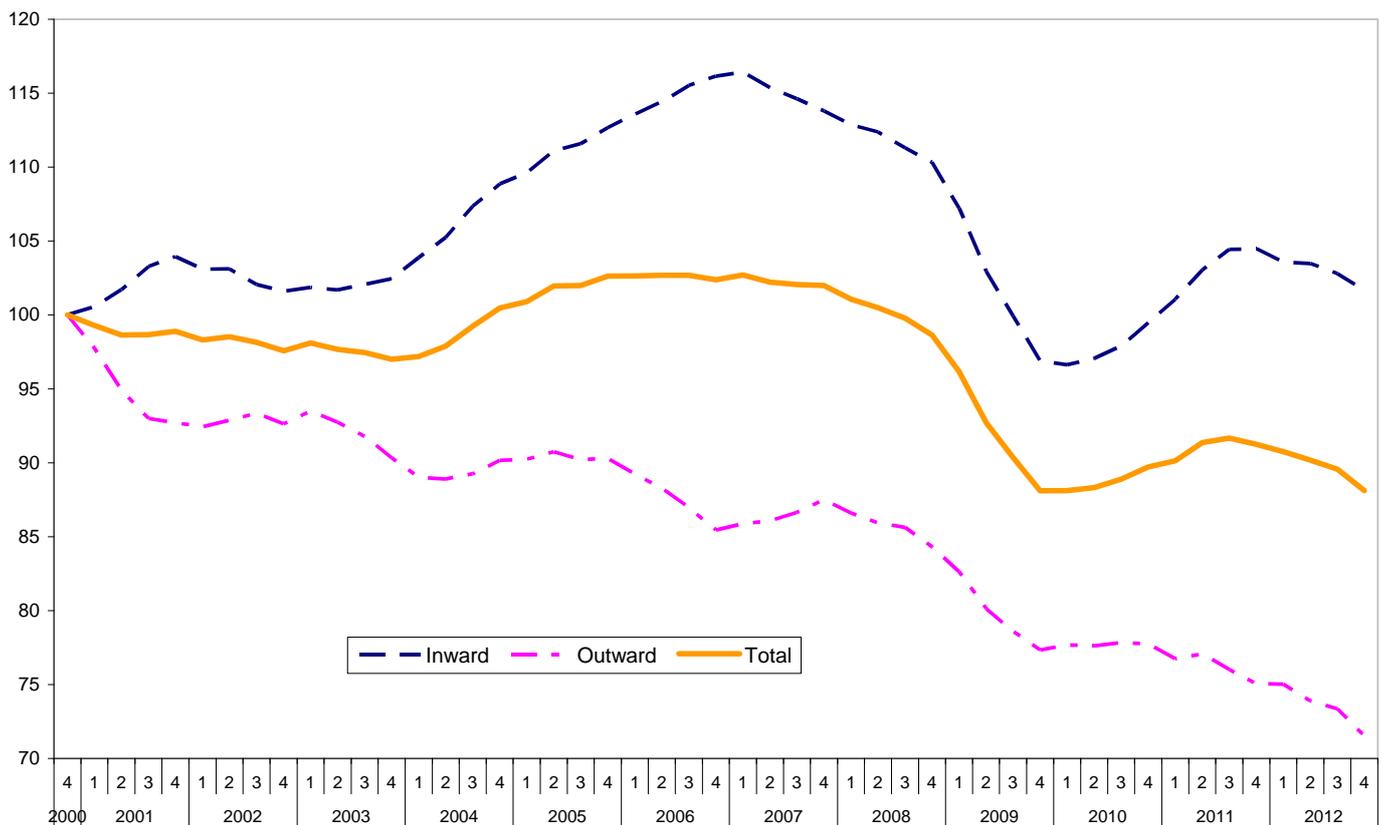
- Both inwards and outwards **quarterly major port traffic (tonnage)** has fallen in each quarter of 2012 compared with the corresponding quarter of 2011. However in quarter 4 this fall (4 per cent for inwards traffic and 10 per cent for outwards) was larger than in any other quarter of 2012.
- Both inwards and outwards **quarterly major port unitised traffic** has fallen in each quarter of 2012 compared with the corresponding quarter of 2011. The quarter on quarter fall has not changed substantially over the four quarters: inwards traffic fell by around 3.5 per cent in each quarter and the fall in outwards unitised traffic varied from 2.0 per cent in quarter 1 to 4.2 per cent in quarter 3.

2. Annual (Rolling) Port Freight Traffic by Tonnage

2.1 Inwards/Outwards tonnage

- **Inwards major port traffic (tonnage)** in 2012 (311 million tonnes) fell by 3 per cent compared with 2011 (320 million tonnes). However, inwards tonnage in 2012 is still above the 2009 level (297 million tonnes) which was the lowest since 1999.
- **Outwards traffic** in 2012 (178 million tonnes) fell by 5 per cent compared with 2011 (187 million tonnes). This continues the long-term downward trend in outwards traffic.

Chart 1: Major Port traffic indices, tonnage - rolling four quarter totals to Q4 2012 (2000 = 100)



2.2 Tonnage by port

Top ten busiest ports by tonnage in 2012

Port	2012 ^P
1 Grimsby & Immingham	60.1
2 London	43.7
3 Milford Haven	39.8
4 Southampton	38.1
5 Tees and Hartlepool	34.0
6 Liverpool	32.9
7 Felixstowe	26.3
8 Forth	25.3
9 Dover	22.9
10 Clyde	15.4

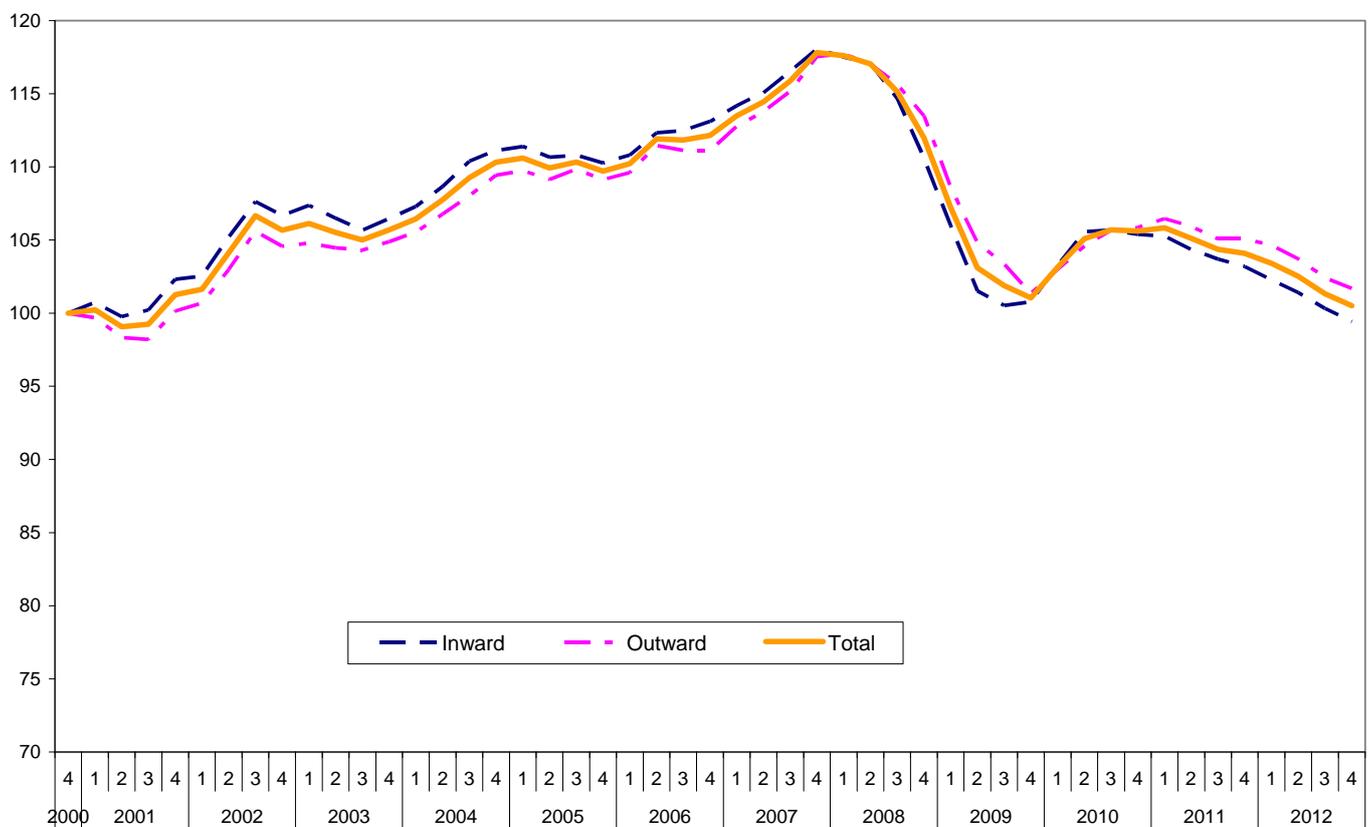
- Based on provisional figures, the **top 20 ports** in 2012, were the same as in 2011, with the top 6 in exactly the same positions in 2012 as in 2011.

3. Annual (Rolling) Port Freight Traffic by **Unitised Traffic**

3.1 Inwards/ Outwards units

- The **number of inwards units** handled in 2012 (10,622 thousand units) fell by 4 per cent compared with 2011 (11,022 units). Inwards unitised major port traffic increased steadily between 2000 and 2007 but the trend since then has been downwards despite a slight recovery in 2010.
- The **number of outwards units** handled in 2012 (10,010 units) fell by 3 per cent compared with 2011 (10,344 units). Outwards unitised major port traffic increased between 2000 and 2007 but since then has followed a downwards trend despite a slight recovery in 2010.

Chart 2: Major Port traffic indices, units - rolling four quarter totals to Q4 2012 (2000 = 100)



3.2 Unitised Traffic by Port

Top ten busiest ports in 2012 (all unitised traffic)

Thousand units

	2012 ^P
Dover	4,338
Felixstowe	2,205
Grimsby & Immingham	1,642
London	1,555
Southampton	1,540
Liverpool	1,035
Belfast	922
Portsmouth	893
Tyne	822
Holyhead	746

- Based on provisional figures the **top 20 ports for unitised traffic** in 2012 were the same as in 2011, with the top 6 in exactly the same positions in 2012 as in 2011

Detailed statistics (tables) on 'Quarterly Port Freight statistics' can be found in the web tables, [port0501-port0509](#).

4. Strengths and weaknesses of the data

- The port freight statistics relate to traffic 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.
- The provisional quarterly port data relate to all cargoes loaded or unloaded by ship at major ports in the UK, including both international and domestic traffic.
- These statistics are based on data provided by major ports. Data are available for total weight of goods and number of units inwards and outwards for each responding port. These figures may be subject to revision if subsequent checks against data provided by agents, or data provided by ports at the year end, highlight anomalies. More in depth commentary will be provided with the release of the final port statistics.
- Typically a very small number of ports do not provide data in time for publication, in which case the national trend is estimated based on the trend for those ports which have provided data for the latest quarter. **The provisional figures for freight traffic at each major UK port in quarter 4 2012 are based on 100 per cent of expected traffic as all ports had made complete returns for this quarter at the time of publication.**

5. Glossary

- **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.
- **Tonnage:** The weight of goods transported, including crates and other packaging, but excluding the unloaded weight of 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 published port statistics freight carrying roll-on/roll-off units are reported separately, however, this detail is not available at the time of the quarterly statistics publication, in which combined totals are given.

6. Background notes

- The web tables and charts give further detail of the key results presented in this statistical release. They are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/ports-statistics>
- Full guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics can be found on the ports series page here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/ports-statistics>

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- National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Port Freight Statistics were assessed by the UK Statistics Authority against the Code of Practice and were confirmed as National Statistics in February 2013.
 - Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found on the ports series page here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/ports-statistics>
 - The next update in this series will be published in June 2013. It will contain provisional quarterly figures for the first quarter of 2013.
 - Annual statistics on freight handled by UK sea ports are updated twice a year; provisional in June and detailed final figures in September. The final 2011 figures can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/port-freight-statistics-2011-final-figures>