



Department for Transport

# International Road Freight Statistics, United Kingdom 2014

## About this release

This Statistical release summarises the latest statistics on the international activity of UK HGVs. The information is derived from two continuous surveys run by the Department for Transport: the International Road Haulage Survey (IRHS) and the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport Northern Ireland (CSRGT NI).

## In this publication

Key results ..... p1

International activity of UK-registered HGVs ..... p2

Commodities carried on UK vehicles ..... p3

Goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe ..... p4

Goods vehicle operator licences ..... p5

Road haulage in the UK by foreign-registered vehicles ..... p6

Cabotage within the UK by foreign-registered vehicles ..... p7

Cabotage by UK-registered vehicles ..... p8

Background notes ..... p9

The amount of goods moved by road to or from the UK decreased by 9 per cent in 2014.

The total amount of goods lifted by road decreased by 8 per cent over the same period.

## Key results

In 2014 ...



4.3 million tonnes	↓	1 percent
exported from the UK		
4.6 million tonnes	↓	13 percent
imported to the UK		



2.95 billion tonne kilometres	↓	2 percent
moved from the UK		
2.92 billion tonne kilometres	↓	15 percent
moved to the UK		

- ▶ For the first time since 2000, more goods have been moved by road from the UK than to
- ▶ 1 out of every 3 tonnes of goods lifted by road were between the UK and France
- ▶ Foreign HGV cabotage accounted for just 1 per cent of road freight activity within the UK

## Definitions

**Goods lifted:** the weight of goods carried measured in tonnes.

**Goods moved:** a measure of activity taking into account the weight of the load and distance through which it is hauled. It is equal to the weight of goods multiplied by distance and is measured in tonne kilometres.

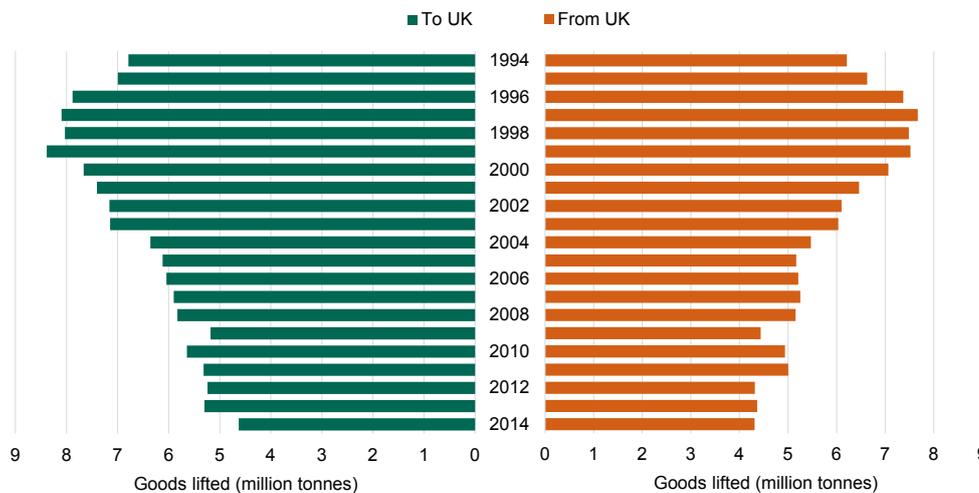
**Cabotage:** refers to road haulage solely within one country by a vehicle registered in another country.

## International activity of UK-registered HGVs

In 2014, the amount of **goods lifted** by UK-registered heavy goods vehicles travelling to or from the UK was 8.9 million tonnes, down 8 per cent on 2013. This is a fall of 44 per cent from the 1999 peak of 15.9 million tonnes [[Table RFS0201](#)].

Historically, UK registered vehicles have consistently brought more goods to the UK than from the UK. In 2014, of the 8.9 million tonnes of **goods lifted**, 4.3 million tonnes were exported, and 4.6 million tonnes were imported (Chart 1)

**Chart 1: Goods lifted by UK-registered vehicles, 2004-2014** [[Table RFS0201](#)]



There was a 9 per cent decrease in the amount of **goods moved** from 6.4 billion tonne kilometres in 2013 to 5.9 billion tonne kilometres in 2014. This is a fall of 65 per cent from the 1997 peak of 16.5 billion tonne kilometres.

In 2014, of the 5.9 billion tonne kilometres of **goods moved**, 2.95 billion tonne kilometres were from the UK and 2.92 billion tonne kilometres were to the UK. This is the first time since 2000 that more goods have been moved from, rather than to the UK. Similar patterns in the amount of goods moved to and from the UK have also been observed in the data of neighbouring European countries. There is currently insufficient information to assess whether this decrease is a new trend or a fluctuation associated with the intermittent disruptions at Calais.

In 2014, around 90 per cent of the tonnage leaving the UK in UK-registered vehicles was unloaded in one of five countries: France (25 per cent), Belgium (23 per cent), Irish Republic (18 per cent), Germany (16 per cent) and the Netherlands (8 per cent). The same five countries represented the origin of 91 per cent of inward goods (Chart 2 and Tables [RFS0202](#) and [RFS0203](#)).

## Definitions

**Goods lifted:** the weight of goods carried measured in tonnes

**Goods moved:** a measure of activity taking into account the weight of the load and distance through which it is hauled. It is equal to the weight of goods multiplied by distance and is measured in tonne kilometres

## Percentage change between 2013 and 2014

### Goods lifted



13 per cent decrease in the amount of **goods lifted** to the UK



1 per cent decrease in the amount of **goods lifted** from the UK

### Goods moved

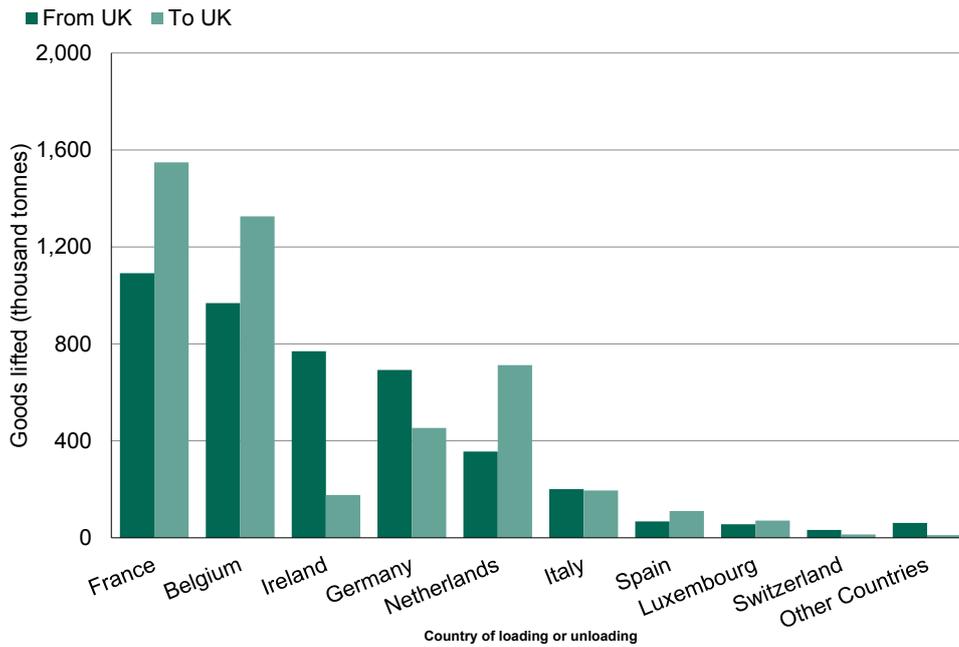


15 per cent decrease in the amount of **goods moved** to the UK



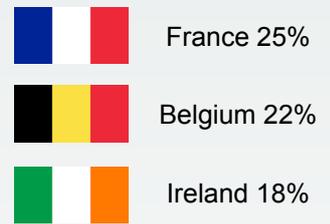
2 per cent decrease in the amount of **goods moved** from the UK

**Chart 2: Goods lifted by UK-registered vehicles by country of loading or unloading, 2014** [Table RFS0202]



**Goods lifted in 2014, origin and destination:**

From the UK to ...



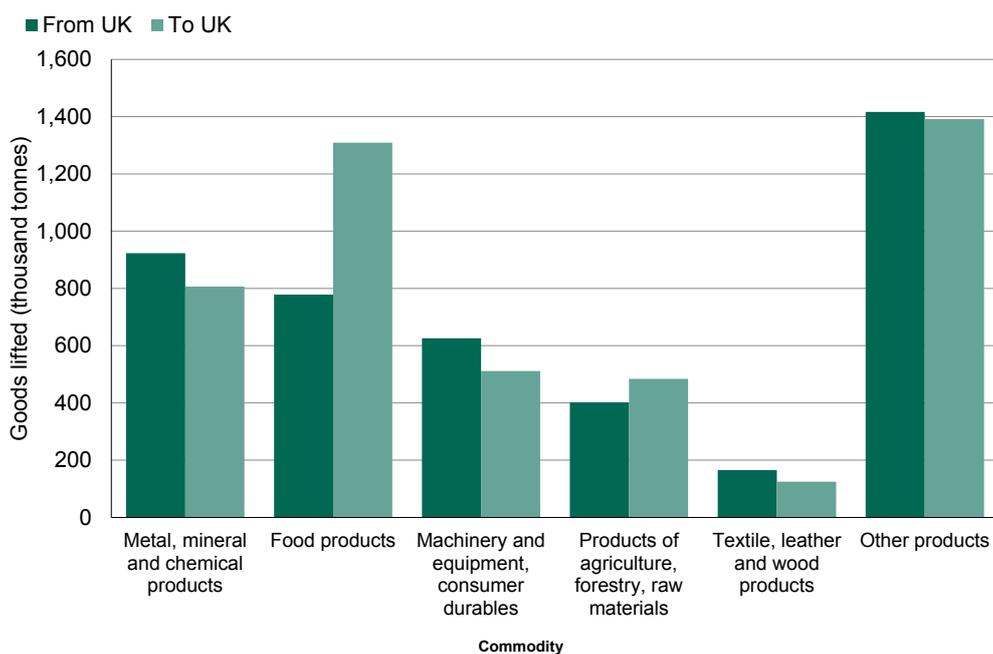
To the UK from ...



**Commodities carried by UK-registered vehicles**

The most common single category of commodity exported by UK vehicles in 2014 was “Metal, mineral and chemical products” (21 per cent). This was followed by “Food products” (18 per cent) and “Machinery and equipment, consumer durables” (15 per cent). The main commodities imported were ‘Food products’ (28 per cent), “Metal, mineral and chemical products” (17 per cent) and “Machinery and equipment, consumer durables” (11 per cent). Non-categorised “Other products” accounted for around 33 per cent of both exports and imports (Chart 3 and Table RFS0206).

**Chart 3: Goods lifted by UK-registered vehicle by commodity type, 2014** [Table RFS0206]



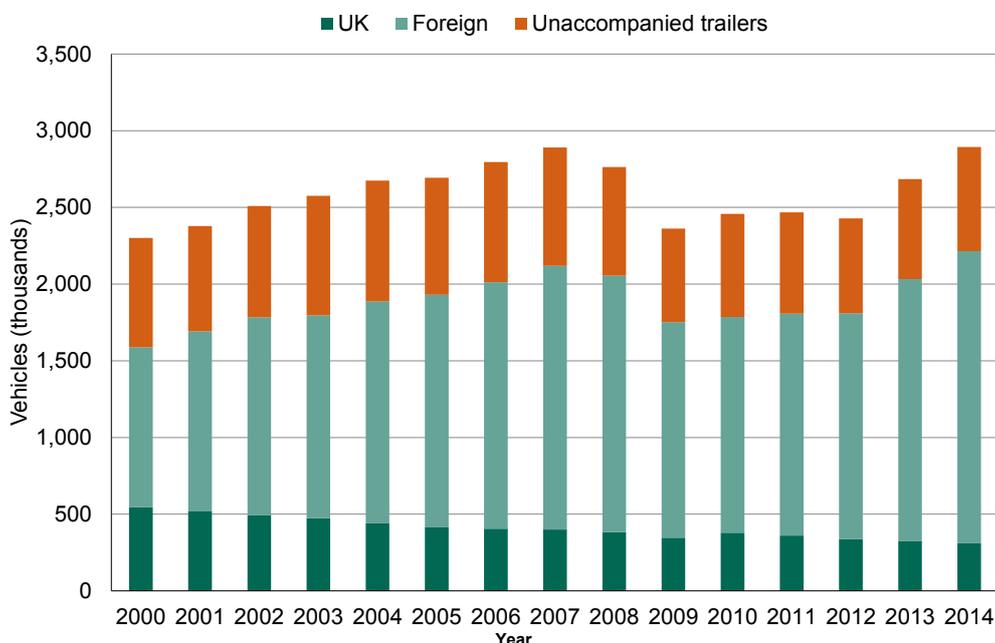
## Goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe

Chart 4 (Table [RORO0101](#)) shows that the number of goods vehicles (powered vehicles and unaccompanied trailers) travelling to mainland Europe from the UK rose by 8 per cent between 2013 and 2014, from 2.7 to 2.9 million. The number of UK-registered vehicles travelling to Europe fell by 4 per cent (326,000 to 313,000) while the number of foreign-registered vehicles rose by 11 per cent (1.7 million to 1.9 million).

Since the turn of the century, the total number of goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe from the UK has increased by 25 per cent; foreign-registered vehicles have increased by 82 per cent while the number of UK-registered vehicles has decreased by 43 per cent.

Of the foreign-registered powered vehicles travelling to mainland Europe from the UK in 2014, the most common (432 thousand) were Polish-registered, followed by vehicles registered in the Netherlands (208 thousand), Romania (172 thousand), Germany (146 thousand) and France (122 thousand) (Table [RORO0201](#)).

**Chart 4: Heavy goods vehicles travelling to mainland Europe from the UK, 2000-2014** [[Table RORO0101](#)]



### Definitions

#### Powered vehicles:

comprise rigid vehicles, lorries with semi-trailers (articulated units) and lorries with drawbar trailers (some vehicles under 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight are also included)



#### Unaccompanied trailers:

comprise trailers and semi-trailers not accompanied on the ferry by a powered unit. These trailers are moved on and off the ferry by means of a motive unit, often called a tug. After this they can be re-connected to a powered unit to continue their onward journey.

### Unaccompanied trailers



### Detailed statistics...

on road goods travelling to mainland Europe can be sourced from [roll-on, roll-off international freight statistics](#), [Department for Transport](#).

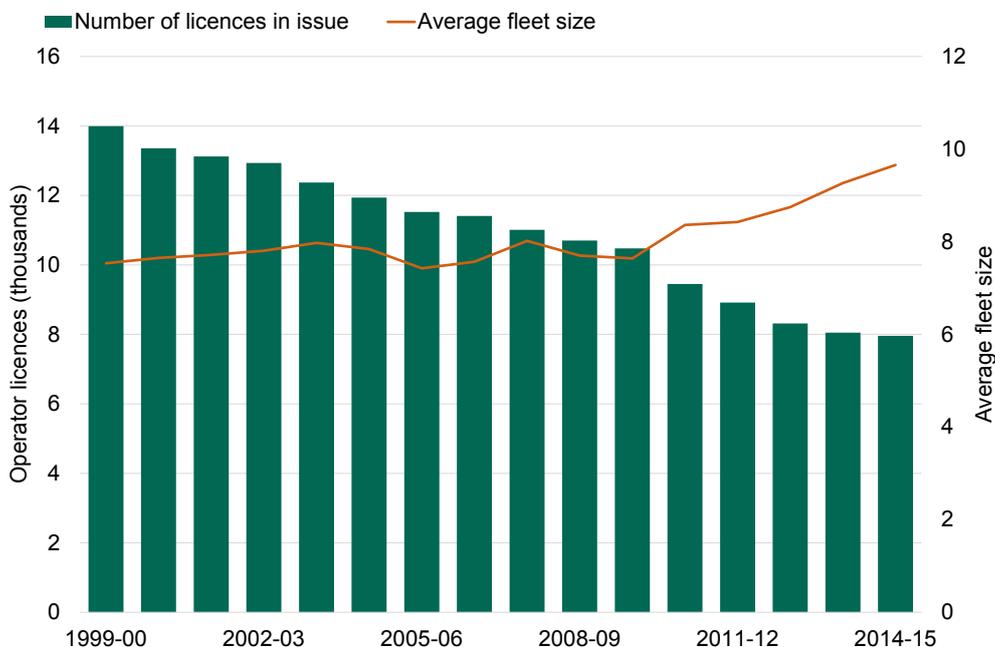
## Goods vehicle operator licences

The number of HGV Standard International (SI) Operator Licences in issue in Great Britain dropped from 8,048 in 2013-14 to 7,960 in 2014-15, a fall of one per cent. This continues the trend that has been seen for over a decade, with the number of licences declining by 43 per cent since 1999-00 when just under 14 thousand licences were in issue (Chart 5).

The highest number of licences were issued in the Eastern region, 1,716 in 2014-15, virtually unchanged from the 1,714 in issue in 2013-14. The large number of licences issued in the Eastern region maybe due in part to the proximity to port links to European destinations.

The total number of vehicles covered by SI licences increased by 3 per cent, from 74,578 in 2013-14 to 76,869 in 2014-15. The average size of operators' international fleet has increased from 7.5 vehicles in 1999-2000 to 9.7 vehicles in 2014-15. This means fewer licences are in issue but more vehicles are being specified under these licences (Chart 5).

**Chart 5: Standard International Licences in issue and average fleet size, Great Britain, 1999-2000 to 2014-2015** [[Traffic Commissioner's Annual Report](#)]



## Definitions

UK hauliers must obtain a Standard International Operator's Licence to carry goods for others, for hire or reward, within the UK and on international journeys. This applies to all vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating above 3.5 tonnes.

## Change between 2013 and 2014

↓ 1 per cent decrease in number of SI licences in issue

↑ 3 per cent increase in number of vehicles specified under SI licences

## Detailed statistics...

on the number of operator licences, broken down by issuing office, can be found within the [Traffic Commissioner's Annual Reports](#).

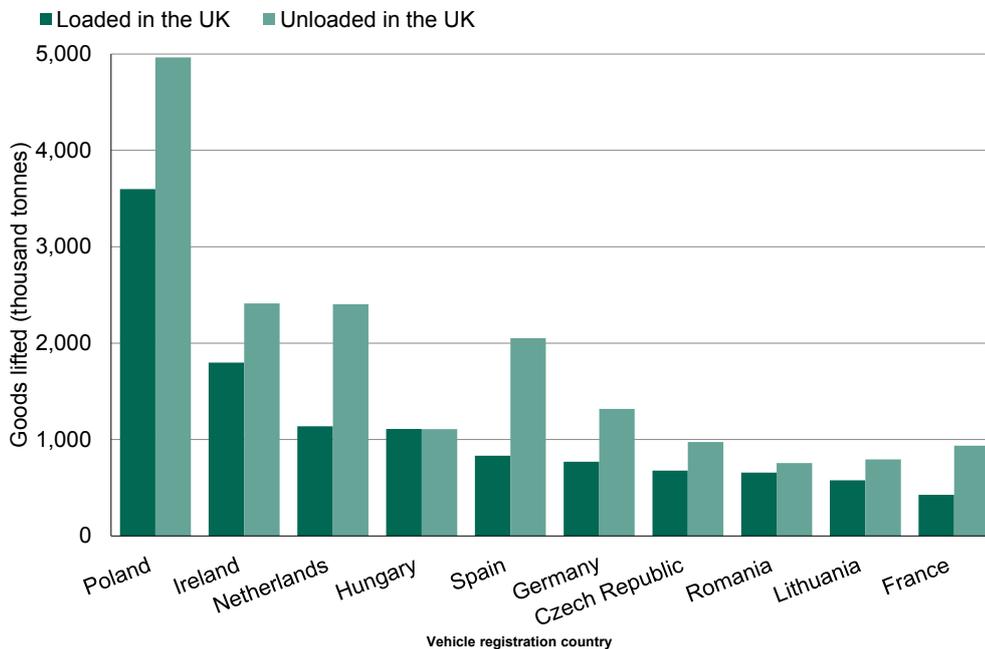
## Road haulage by foreign-registered HGVs in the UK

In 2014, 34.2 million tonnes of goods were lifted to and from the UK by foreign-registered HGVs, a fall of 7 per cent on 2013. Since 2009, Polish HGVs have lifted the largest tonnage of goods in total of all the EU28 countries, lifting 8.6 million tonnes in 2014. Prior to this, between 2002 and 2008, Irish HGVs carried the largest total weight of goods into or out of the UK, mostly across the Irish land boundary between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Irish vehicles continued to carry significant quantities in 2014, as did Dutch, Hungarian, Spanish and German HGVs (Chart 6 and Tables [RFS0208](#) and [RFS0209](#)).

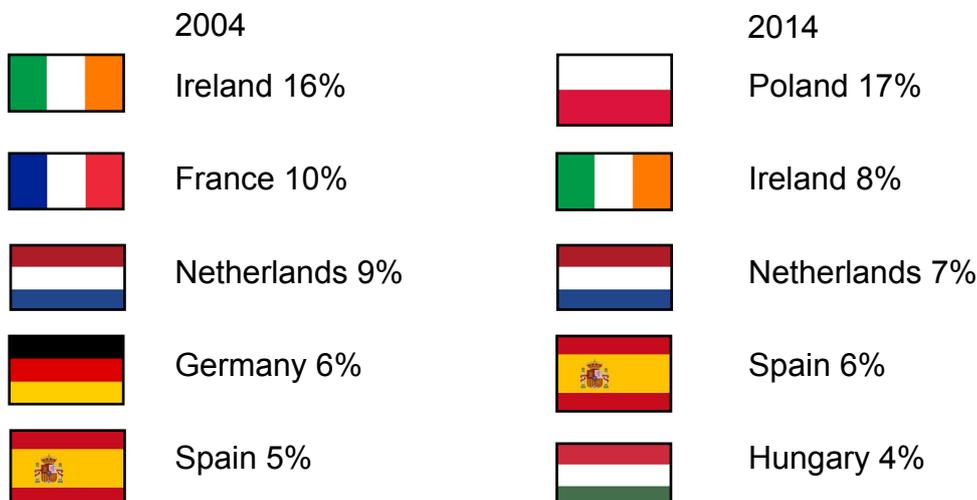
### Detailed statistics...

on the activity of foreign registered vehicles can be obtained from the [Eurostat Transport Database](#).

**Chart 6: Goods lifted to and from the UK by foreign-registered vehicle: by vehicle registration country, 2014** [Tables [RFS0208](#) and [RFS0209](#)]



## Total goods lifted to or from the UK by foreign-registered vehicles



## Cabotage within the UK by foreign-registered vehicles

In 2014, the overall level of cabotage **goods moved** in the UK was 1.4 billion tonne kilometres, just one per cent of all HGV activity with the UK. This was 35 per cent higher than in 2013, and 24 per cent lower than the peak in 2005 (Table [RFS0212](#)).

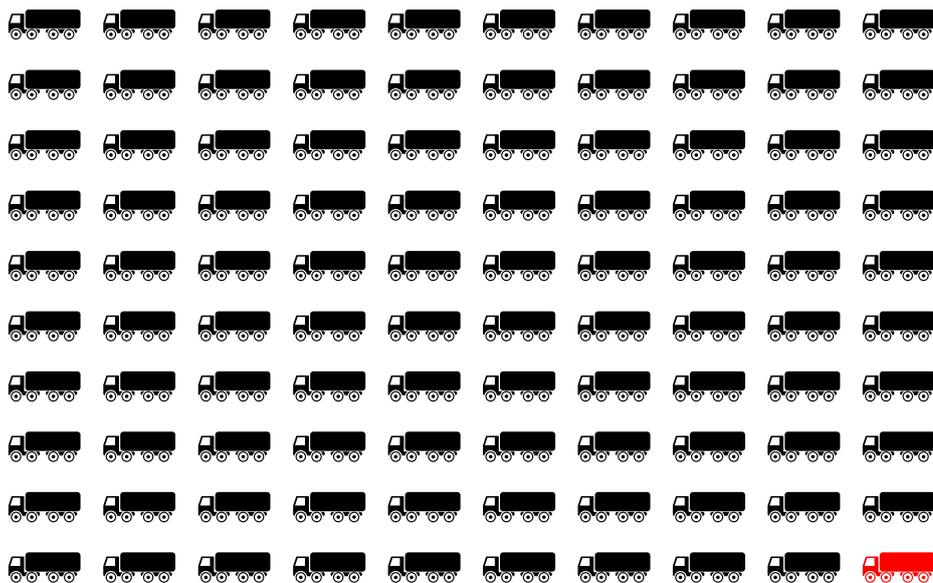
In terms of **goods moved**, the major participants to cabotage in the UK were vehicles from Poland, Netherlands and Ireland. These three countries accounted for 57 per cent of cabotage in the UK. France, Germany and Portugal together accounted for most of the remaining cabotage in 2014.

The amount of cabotage by Polish vehicles in the UK has increased seven fold between 2004 and 2014 from 52 million tonnes kilometres to 371 million tonne kilometres. Over the same period cabotage tonne kilometres from Belgium, the Netherlands and Ireland dropped by 80 per cent, 64 per cent and 61 per cent respectively.

### In 2014, cabotage accounted for just 1 per cent of UK HGV activity (Table [RFS0212](#))

 UK domestic activity

 Foreign cabotage



### Definitions

**Cabotage:** refers to road haulage solely within one country by a vehicle registered in another country.

### In 2014

Cabotage accounted for just 1 per cent of UK HGV activity

 35 per cent since 2013

 24 per cent since 2005 peak

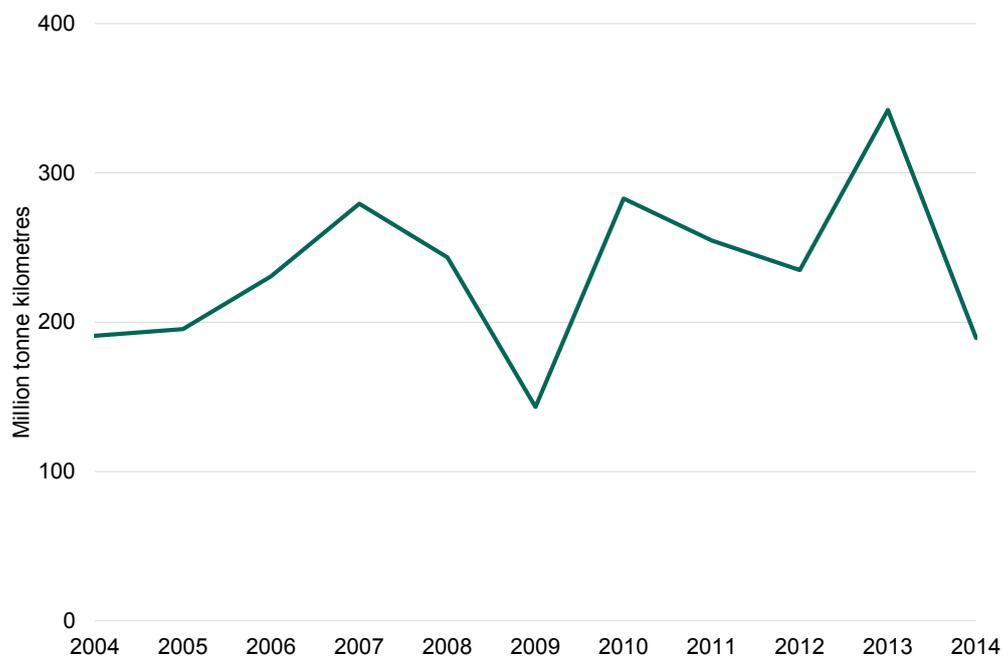
### Detailed statistics...

on cabotage in the UK by vehicle registration country can be sourced in Table [RFS0212](#)

## Cabotage by UK registered vehicles

UK vehicles did approximately 189 million tonne kilometres of cabotage in foreign countries in 2014, down from 342 million tonne kilometres in 2013 (Table [RFS0144](#) and Chart 7). This is around the same level of cabotage as seen in 2004.

**Chart 7: Cabotage by UK registered vehicles, 2004-2014** [[Table RFS0144](#)]



## Strengths and weaknesses of data

Details on the strengths and weaknesses of these statistics and further background information can be found in the Road Freight Statistics [Notes and Definitions](#).

## Background Notes

1. The web tables give further detail on the key results presented in this statistical release and statistics on other road freight topics, including domestic activity of GB-registered HGVs. They are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-freight-domestic-and-international-statistics>
2. The statistics on vehicles travelling to mainland Europe are available on the 'Roll on roll off International Freight' webpages via <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-freight-domestic-and-international-statistics>
3. The statistics on road freight undertaken by foreign-registered vehicles have been taken from the Eurostat Transport database at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/transport/data/database>
4. In 2009, the Department for Transport undertook a survey of foreign vehicle activity in the UK. The results from this survey are available here: <http://tna.europarchive.org/20110503185748/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/freight/foreignvehicle/>
5. Guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics and further background information can be found in the Road Freight Statistics [Notes and Definitions](#).
6. Between 2011 and 2012, a number of changes were made to how the three DfT road freight surveys were processed. Caution should therefore be used for statistics based on CSRGT GB, CSRGT NI and IRHS when making comparisons over time. See the [methodology note](#) for more information.
7. Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-freight-statistics-pre-release-access-list>
8. The next annual Road Freight Statistics release will be published in the Summer of 2016. It will contain statistics for 2015.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks go to all the respondents who completed the survey and to those who have contributed towards this release both through production and checking of the content.