



Department for Transport

# UK Port Freight Statistics: April to June 2015 (Quarter 2)

## About this release

This statistical release summarises the latest provisional quarterly statistics on freight handled by major UK sea ports.

Detailed final annual statistics for 2015 will be published in August 2016, when the quarterly series will also be finalised.

This statistical release compares results for the latest quarter to the same quarter a year earlier to avoid the misinterpretation of seasonal effects.

## Definitions:

### Major ports-

Ports handling over one million tonnes of freight per year and a small number of other key ports.

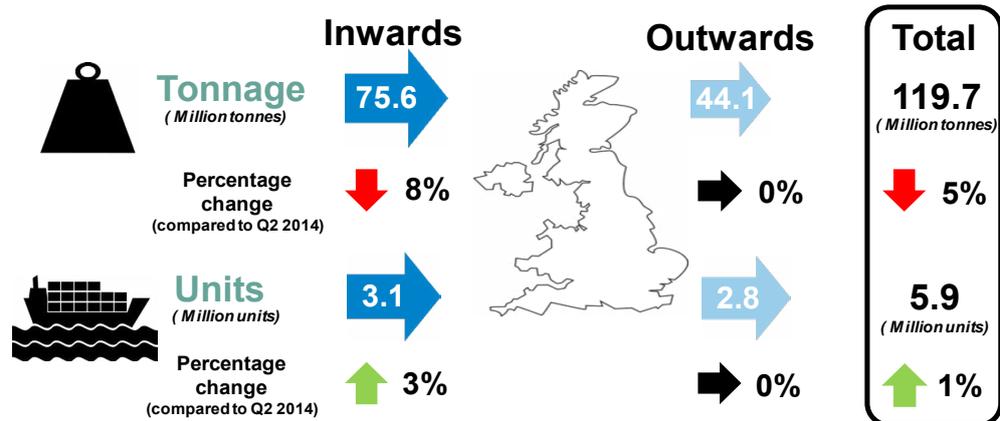
Together these ports accounted for 98% of total UK port traffic in 2014.

### Unitised traffic-

This includes containers and all Ro-Ro (trade, passenger, import/export motor vehicles). These figures include both loaded and empty units.

## UK Major Ports: Quarter 2 2015 main findings Quarterly Trend (latest quarter compared to same quarter a year earlier)

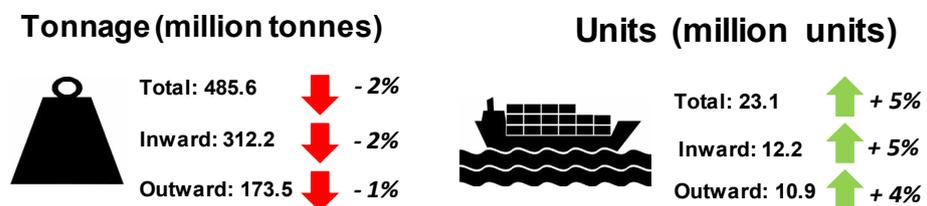
Quarter 2 2015:



Compared with the second quarter of 2014, total freight tonnage at UK major ports **fell by 5 per cent to 119.7 million tonnes**. This is the largest decrease between corresponding quarters since 2012.

Total unitised traffic **increased by 1 per cent to 5.9 million units**, compared with the same quarter in 2014. This continues the generally upward trend in the second quarter since the sharp fall in 2009.

## Rolling Four Quarter Total (Latest 4 quarters compared to previous 4 quarters)



The total volume of UK Major port freight traffic in the four quarters to the second quarter of 2015 **decreased by 2 per cent to 485.6 million tonnes** compared with the previous four quarters.

Total UK major port unitised traffic continued to rise steadily and **increased by 5 per cent to 23.1 million units**.

## Major Port Freight Traffic (Tonnage)

### Quarterly Trend (Latest quarter compared to same quarter a year earlier)

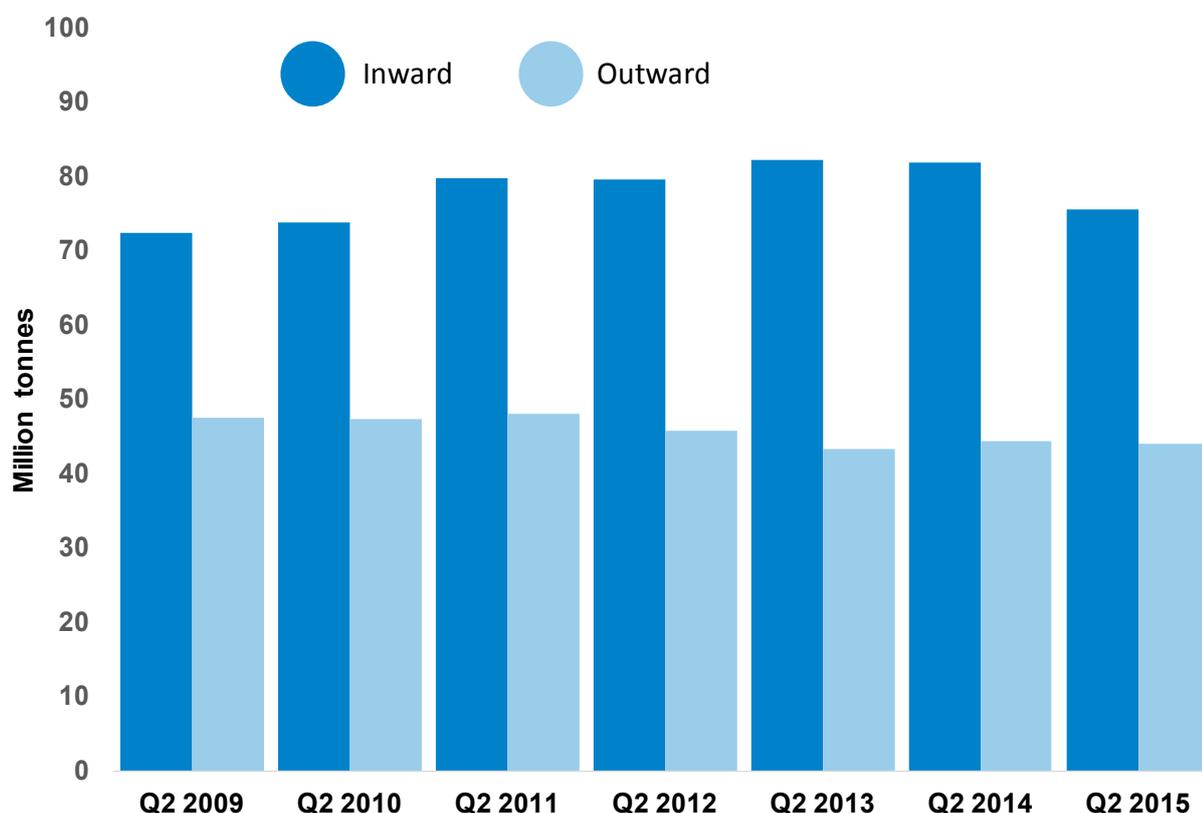
Compared with the second quarter of 2014, total freight tonnage at UK major ports **fell by 5 per cent to 119.9 million tonnes**. This is the largest decrease between corresponding quarters since 2012.

Inward traffic **fell by 8 per cent to 75.6 million tonnes**. The inward proportion of total freight traffic has reduced to 63 per cent from 65 per cent.

Outward freight traffic remained stable at **44.1 million tonnes**.

Quarterly major port freight tonnage declined sharply following the 2008 recession - falling by 12 per cent between Q2 2008 and Q2 2009.

### Major port traffic for quarter 2, 2009-2015



Detailed statistics (tables) on Quarterly Tonnage Port Freight Statistics can be found in the web tables [PORT0501](#) & [PORT0504-PORT0506](#)

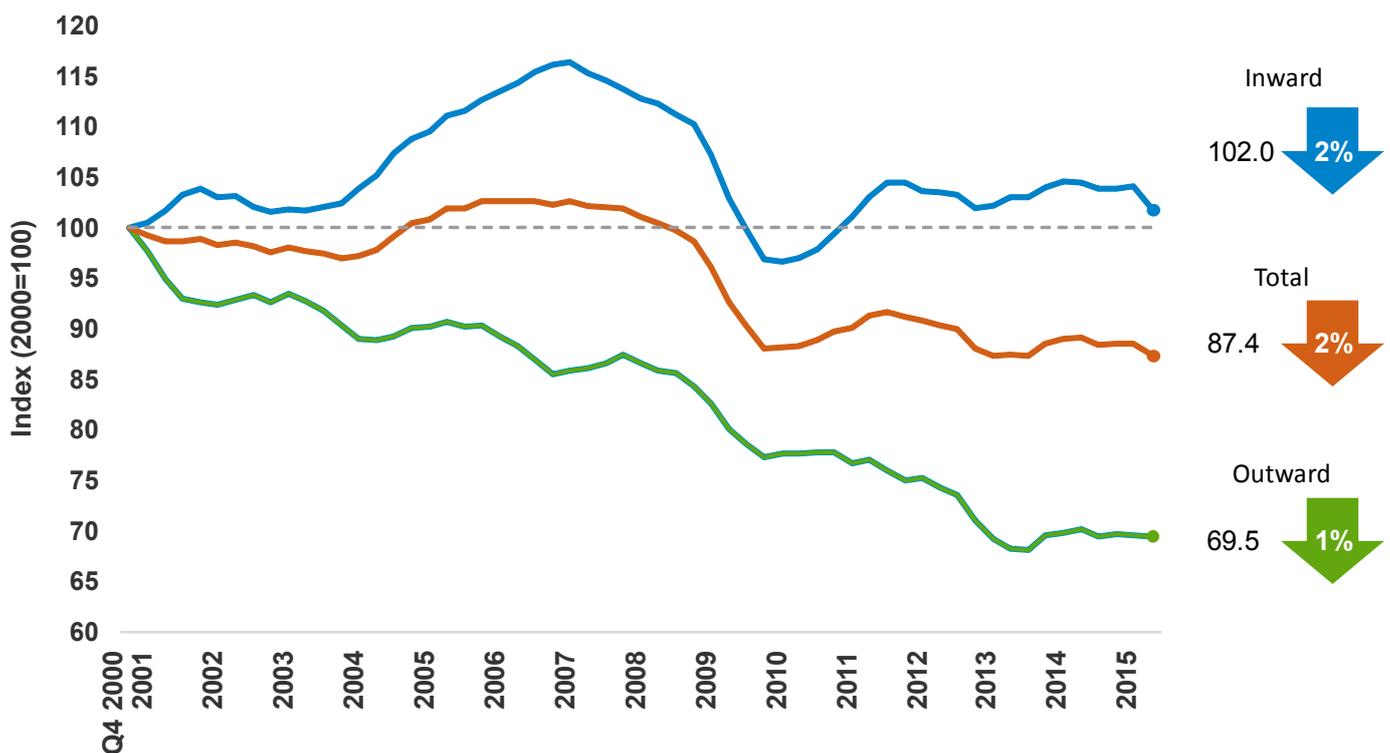
## Rolling Four-Quarter Trend (Latest 4 quarters compared to previous 4 quarters)

Total UK Major port traffic **decreased by 2 per cent to 485.6 million tonnes**, following growth in 2014.

Inward freight tonnage **decreased by 2 per cent to 312.2 million tonnes**. This the largest decrease in the rolling four-quarter total on a previous period since 2012. The rolling four-quarter total had been largely stable since the post-recession low in 2009.

Outward freight tonnage **decreased by 1 per cent to 173.5 million tonnes**. Outward freight traffic has generally declined over the past decade but the rate has slowed in recent years.

## Major port traffic indices, tonnage: rolling 4 quarter totals to June 2015 (2000=100)



## Major Port Freight Traffic (Units)

### Quarterly Trend (latest quarter to same quarter a year earlier)

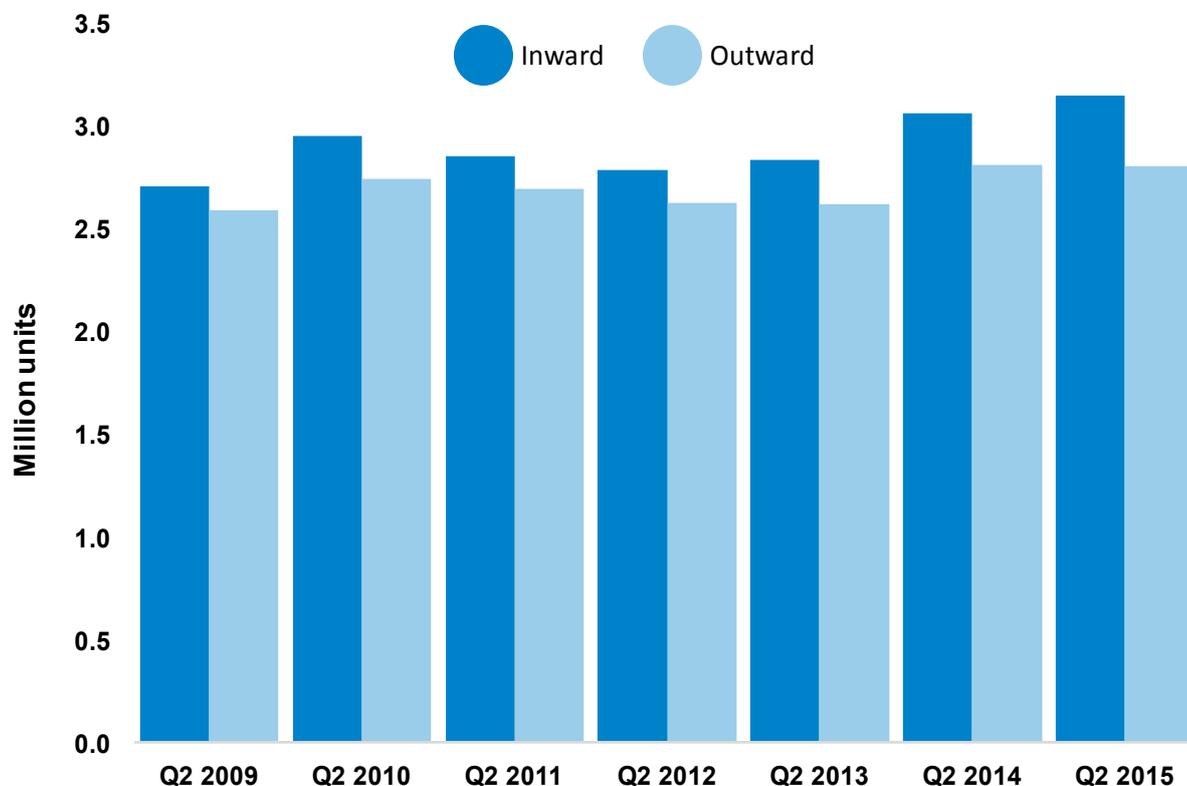
Total unitised traffic **increased by 1 per cent to 5.9 million**, compared with the same quarter in 2014. This continues the generally upward trend in the second quarter since the sharp fall in 2009.

Inward unitised traffic **increased by 3 per cent to 3.1 million units**. Compared with the corresponding quarter of the previous year, inward unitised traffic grew for the 9th consecutive quarter, though at a lower rate than previously.

Outward unitised traffic remained stable at **2.8 million units**. Throughout 2014 and the first quarter of this year, outward unitised freight was greater than in the corresponding quarter in the previous year.

The trends in the tonnage of freight through UK major ports and the number of units continue to diverge. Whilst we do not collect the level of detail to investigate the drivers behind the quarterly data, the latest final statistical release for 2014 showed that 67 per cent of the total freight tonnage through UK major ports was accounted for by bulk freight and general cargo, which does not contribute to the total number of units, with the remainder made up of unitised freight. This suggests that trends in bulk freight and general cargo tonnage are likely to have a greater impact on total freight tonnage than trends in unitised freight. This could explain why the increase in the number of units is not being accompanied by an increase in total freight tonnage.

### Major port unitised traffic for quarter 2, 2009-2015



Detailed statistics (tables) on Quarterly Unitised Port Freight Statistics can be found in the web tables [PORT0502 & PORT0507-PORT0509](#)

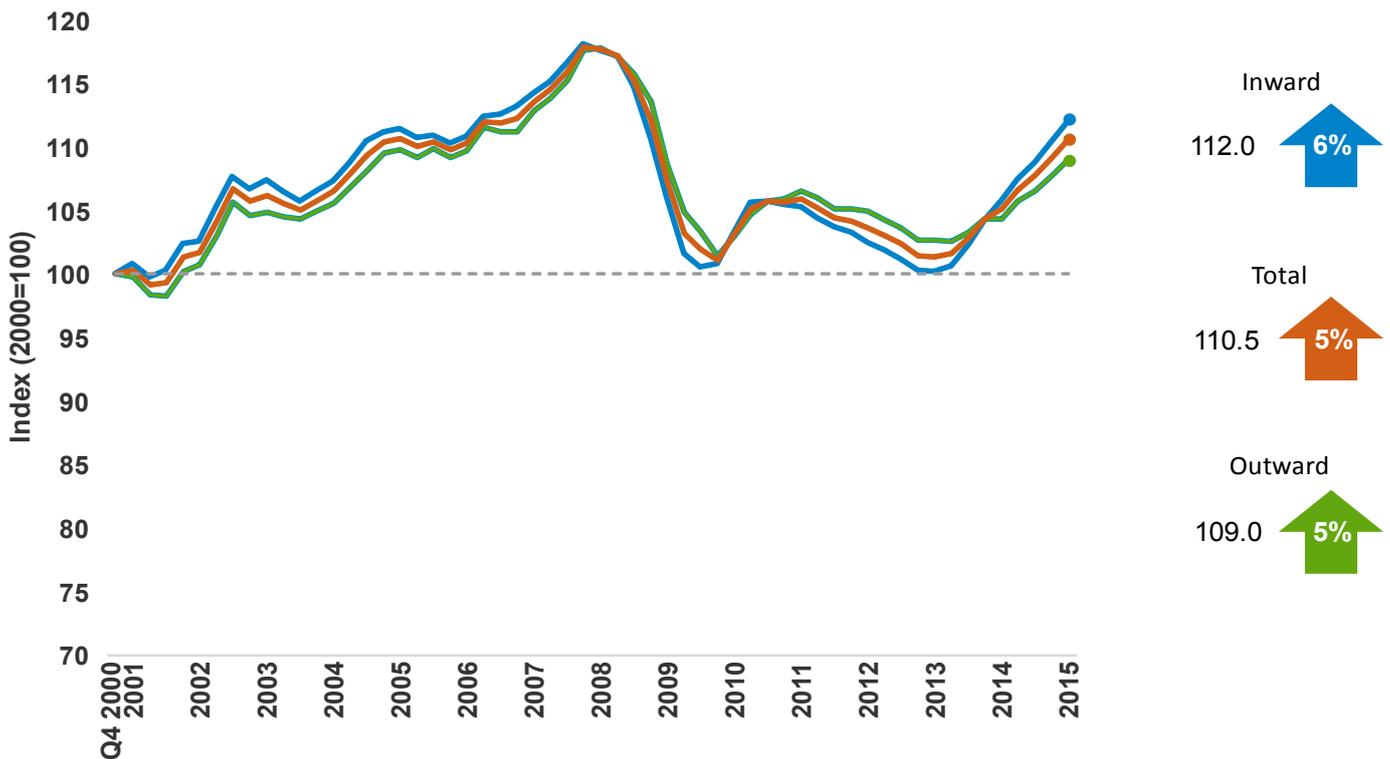
## Rolling Four-Quarter Trend (Latest 4 quarters compared to previous 4 quarters)

The latest unitised traffic four-quarter total **rose by 5 per cent to 23.1 million units**, compared with the previous period to the second quarter of 2014. This is the highest level since 2008. The rolling four-quarter total of unitised freight generally increased on each previous period between 2000 and 2007, with an average annual growth rate of 2 per cent, and then declined sharply through 2008 and 2009, at an average annual rate of 6 per cent. Since the recent low in 2013, the rolling four-quarter total has increased at an average annual rate of 5 per cent.

Inward unitised traffic **increased 5 per cent to 12.2 million units** compared with the previous four-quarter period, this continued the upward trend for the 9th consecutive quarter.

Outward unitised traffic **increased 4 per cent to 10.9 million units** compared with the previous four-quarter period.

## Major Port traffic indices, units - rolling 4 quarter totals to June 2015 (2000=100)



## Strengths and weaknesses of the data

- ▶ The port freight statistics relate to traffic to and from major 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 cargos 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 2 2015 are based on 100 per cent of expected returns.

## Glossary

- ▶ **Major ports:** Those ports handling over one million tonnes per year, and a small number of other key ports, together accounted for 98 per cent of UK port traffic in 2013.
- ▶ **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.

## 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/statistical-data-sets/port05-traffic-indices-and-quarterly-breakdowns>
- ▶ Full guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics can be found on the ports series page here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maritime-and-shipping-statistics-guidance>
- ▶ 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/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-maritime-and-shipping-series>
- ▶ The next update in this series will be published in December 2015. It will contain provisional quarterly figures for the third quarter of 2015.
- ▶ Annual statistics on freight handled by UK sea ports are released in August. The final 2014 figures can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/port-freight-statistics-2014-final-figures>
- ▶ These statistics are also sent to EuroStat on a quarterly basis and used in a table alongside data from other EU member countries. For further information and data tables see link below: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/transport/data/database>