



Department for Transport

Shipping Fleet Statistics 2016

About this release

This statistical release presents summary statistics for UK and world shipping fleets, including analyses by country of registration, UK ownership and management, and trading vessel type.

All figures are based on vessels of 100 gross tonnes (GT) or over.

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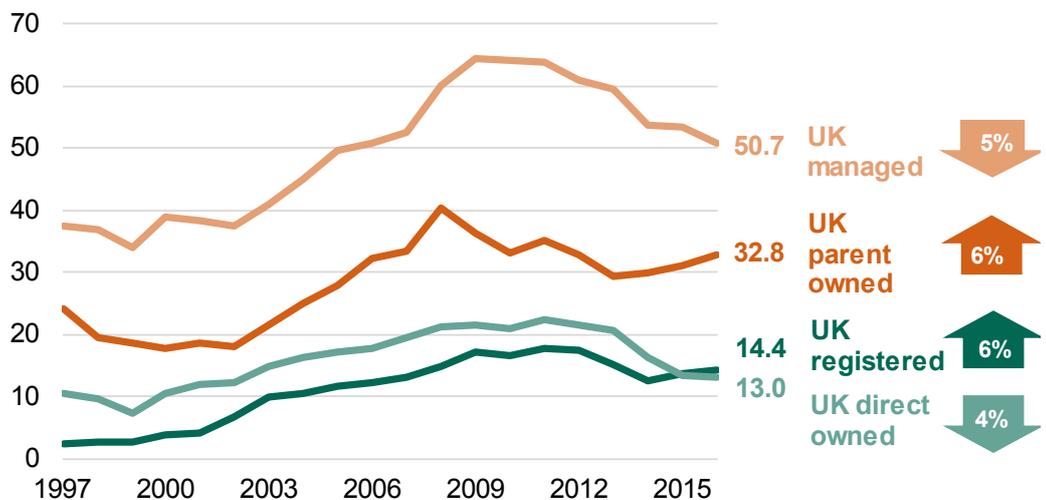
Further information

Detailed statistics covering the UK and world fleets can be found in the [statistical tables](#)

The UK registered trading fleet grew 6 per cent in 2016, to 14.4 million deadweight tonnes, and is now 14 per cent higher than the recent low in 2014.

At the end of 2016, the UK registered trading fleet was over five times the size it was at the end of 1999, though it remains a small proportion of the world total - it was the 19th largest trading fleet in the world at the end of 2016, accounting for 0.8 per cent of the total measured by deadweight tonnage (a measure of cargo carrying capacity).

UK interests in trading vessels, million deadweight tonnes: 1997-2016 (FLE0101)



The four measures of the UK trading fleet – relating to ownership and management as well as registration – have shown broadly similar trends in recent years. In general there was growth throughout the decade to 2009. UK tonnage tax, introduced in 2000, may have contributed to this growth through promoting the UK ship register. Decline from 2009 to 2014 followed, possibly related to the economic downturn. Since 2014, the registered trading fleet and UK parent ownership have grown, whereas UK direct ownership and management have continued to decline.

Things you need to know

These statistics provide different measures of UK shipping interests, set in the global context, including the number of UK registered (UK flagged) vessels. They are derived from commercial data sourced from IHS Global and predecessors.

Ship registration can, in part, be considered as an indicator of the overall health of a country's maritime sector; the 2015 [Maritime Growth Study](#) set out a vision for the UK maritime sector that aims to reinforce our status as a maritime centre. The [UK Ship Register Advisory Panel](#) recommended a growth target of around 2 per cent of the world gross tonnage for the UK flag, by 2020.

Coverage

These statistics relate to vessels of 100 gross tonnes or over. Figures relate to 31 December of each year.

Registry or flag

Every merchant ship must be registered in a country – registry or flag relates to this country.

Measuring ship size (tonnage)

There are two alternative ways that the size of ships is measured within these statistics:

Gross tonnage (gt) represents the size of a vessel, and is not a measure of weight. It is calculated using a formula based on the volume of enclosed spaces of the vessel. It is typically the measure used to assess the cost of vessel registration.

Deadweight tonnage (dwt) measures the cargo carrying capacity of a vessel, excluding the weight of the ship itself

In general, throughout this release we have generally used dwt rather than gt, as the trends shown are broadly similar for both measures. The data tables contain figures on both the dwt and gt basis.

Measures of shipping interests

A country's shipping interests can be measured in a number of different ways. In these statistics, the following, non-mutually exclusive, definitions are used:

UK registered: the vessel is UK registered

UK direct owned: the registered owner of the vessel is a company registered in the UK

UK parent owned: the nationality of the company having the controlling interest in the direct owner is United Kingdom

UK managed: The company managing the ship is a UK company

Trading vessels

Trading vessels are those which carry cargo or passengers for commercial purposes. In this release, figures relate to trading vessels though the data tables also cover non-trading vessels.

The UK registered trading fleet continued to grow in 2016 ...

The UK registered trading fleet grew in 2016, a second year of growth from the recent low in 2014, with similar trends for the two main measures of ship size, gross and deadweight tonnage.

Over the longer term, it was at historically low levels during the 1990s, but increased in the decade to 2009, which may reflect the success of the UK tonnage tax scheme introduced in 2000 in promoting the UK ship register. Tonnage tax companies are required to elect into the regime for a 10-year period and may extend that election on a rolling annual basis.

Between 2009 and 2014, the UK registered trading fleet declined, which in part may be associated with the economic downturn, though the UK share of the world fleet also fell in this period. The Maritime Growth Study was launched in 2014 in response to these trends, with the aim of growing the sector.

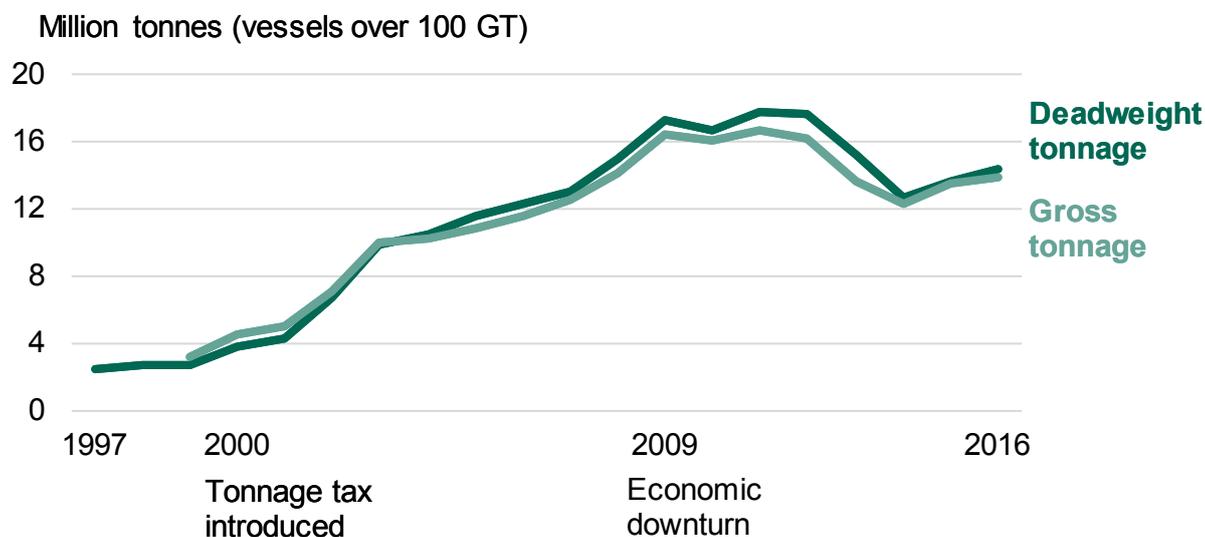
Statistical tables

[FLE01](#): UK interest in trading ships and fleets

[FLE03](#): UK and Crown Dependency registered vessels (by type)

[FLE05](#): World fleet registered vessels (by gross and deadweight tonnage), including UK registered trading fleet

UK registered trading vessels by tonnage: 1997-2016 (based on figures in FLE0501 and FLE0502)



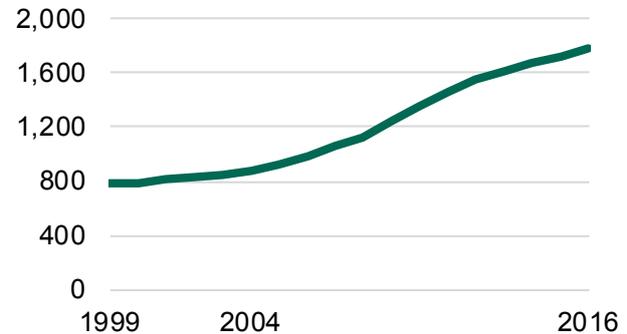
The World Trading Fleet

The world trading fleet continues to grow, but at a slower rate in recent years ...

At the end of 2016, there were around 58,000 vessels in the world trading fleet, with a total deadweight tonnage of 1,778 million.

By deadweight tonnage, the world fleet has doubled since 2004 though the rate of growth has slowed in recent years, with a 3 per cent increase in 2016.

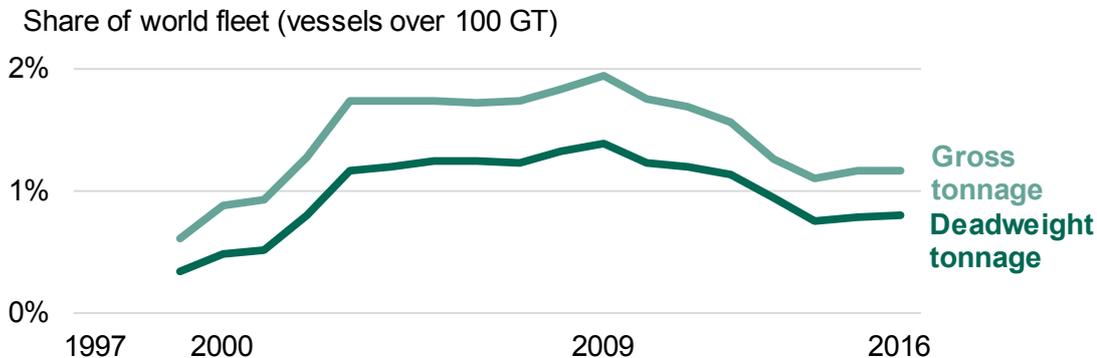
World trading vessels total deadweight tonnage: 1999 - 2016 (FLE0502)



The UK share of the world trading fleet remained stable in 2016 ...

Trends in the UK registered share of the world trading fleet have been stable over the last two years - the growth in the UK registered trading fleet has broadly matched the overall world trading fleet growth so that the UK share has remained similar – at 0.8 per cent on a deadweight tonnage basis, and 1.2 per cent when measured using gross tonnage.

UK registered trading vessels as a share of the world trading fleet: 1999-2016 (based on figures in FLE0501 and FLE0502)



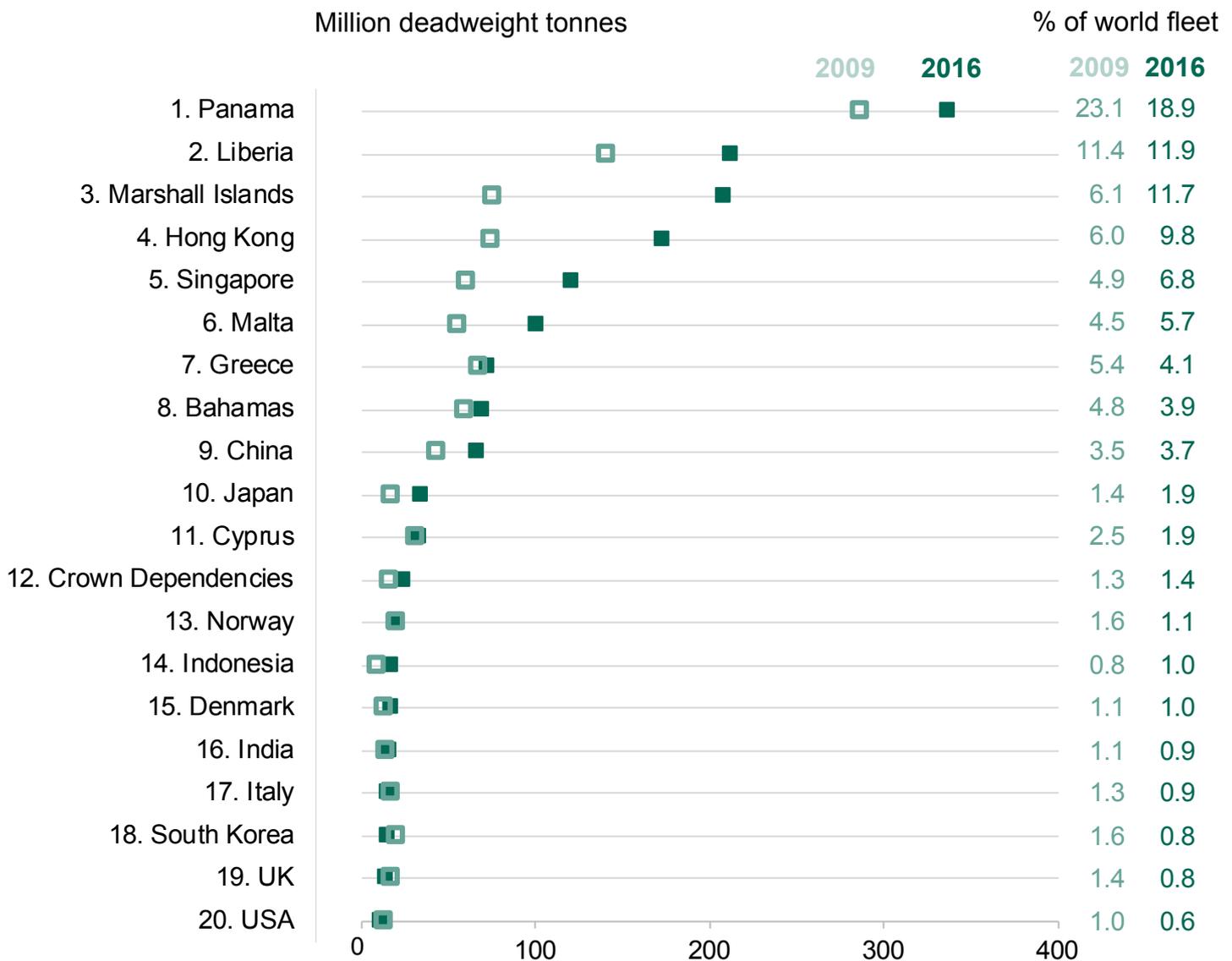
The UK registered trading fleet remained the 19th largest in the world in 2016, by deadweight tonnage

The largest trading fleets are open registers (referred to by some as 'flags of convenience'), available to all shipping regardless of the place of business of the owner. The UK register is a traditional, or national registry, which requires ships to be owned, at least in part, by national interests. The large open registers also account for a large proportion of the overall growth of the world fleet in recent years.

Statistical tables

[FLE05](#): World fleet registered vessels (by gross and deadweight tonnage)

The largest ship registers by deadweight tonnage: 2009 and 2016 (FLE0502)



The Red Ensign Group

Within the Red Ensign Group, recent growth patterns differ ...

The Red Ensign Group is the collective title for the shipping registers of the UK, the Crown Dependencies and the Overseas Territories. Registration with the Red Ensign Group provides vessels with the support of British consular services worldwide, and British Royal Navy protection.

The UK accounts for 26 per cent of the Red Ensign group deadweight tonnage; the Crown Dependencies (effectively Isle of Man) account for 43 per cent. In 2009 the UK and Isle of Man registered trading fleets were at a broadly similar level; since then the Isle of Man trading fleet has grown by more than 50 per cent, compared with overall decline during this period for the UK trading fleet, despite growth in the last two years.

Definitions

The **Crown Dependencies** are the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey. Of these, the Isle of Man accounts for over 99.9% of the combined deadweight tonnage.

The **Overseas Territories** are Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, St Helena and the Turks & Caicos Islands)

Red Ensign Group registered trading vessels by deadweight tonnage: 2009 and 2016 (FLE0402)



Statistical tables

[FLE03](#): UK and Crown Dependency registered vessels (by type)

[FLE04](#): Red Ensign Group

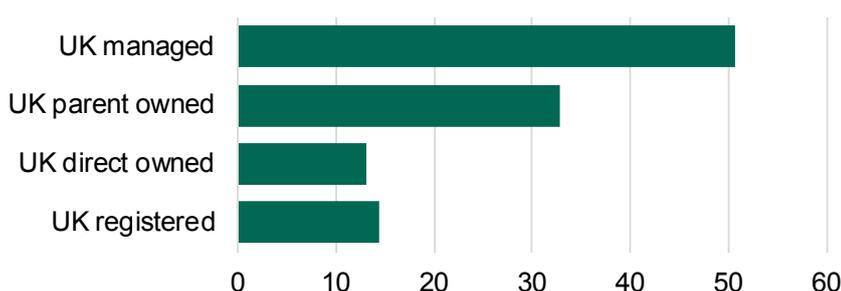
The Crown Dependencies (effectively Isle of Man) rank as the 12th largest registered trading fleet in the world measured by deadweight tonnage, and in combination, the Red Ensign Group would be in 10th place. Outside the UK, Red Ensign Group members, like many non-European open registries, are able to offer very attractive fiscal regimes to potential customers.

UK Shipping Interests

The 'UK fleet' of ships owned or managed in the UK is considerably larger than the UK registered trading fleet

Shipping is a complex international business, and many different parties, often based in different countries, may have a commercial interest in a single vessel. Both ownership and management of shipping can have economic value to the country in which they are located. In comparison to the UK, many of the large open flags typically have relatively small fleets of parent owned vessels.

UK interests in trading vessels, million deadweight tonnes: 2016 (FLE0102)



Statistical tables

[FLE01](#): UK interest in trading ships and fleets

[FLE02](#): UK owned vessels (by type)

[FLE07](#): UK managed vessels (by type)

The above categories are not mutually exclusive – a vessel could be both UK owned and UK managed, for example. In total, trading vessels totalling 67.5 million deadweight tonnes (3.8 per cent of the world total) are either owned or managed from the UK.

Related Information

The [Maritime and Coastguard Agency](#) is responsible for ship registration in the UK, and maintains the definitive UK ship register

The 2015 [Maritime Growth Study](#) report provides further analysis of the UK and world fleet data and background context

Detailed statistical tables containing breakdowns and time series of the number, deadweight tonnage and gross tonnage of vessels by type of vessel, size of vessel, fleet definition, and selected international fleets may be found at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/maritime-and-shipping-statistics

Further guidance on the methods used to compile these statistics may be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/maritime-and-shipping-statistics-guidance

Strengths and Weaknesses of these statistics

These statistics are derived from commercial data sourced from IHS. They are believed to be of good quality, but as the management of the data set is not within DfT control they are not eligible for National Statistics badging. The underlying dataset is validated by DfT and used in the production of other maritime statistics.

This release contains statistics on the size of the UK registered fleet. These data may differ slightly from the definitive information on the UK Ship Register administered by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), which is a more timely source for the UK flag but does not provide the world fleet context.

Contact us

We always welcome feedback on these statistics, and may be able to produce alternative analyses of the dataset to answer specific questions. Please contact the team via maritime.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk or using the contact details on the front page.

Next publication

Statistics for the world fleet at the end of 2017 are scheduled for publication in March 2018.