

# Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic April to June 2023

27 September 2023

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland  
Theme: Business  
Frequency: Quarterly

## Introduction

The Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic is an analysis of the Department for Transport's [UK Port Freight Quarterly Statistics](#), at a Northern Ireland level. It provides provisional quarterly statistics on the volume and tonnage of traffic at Northern Ireland major ports during 2023, and finalised 2022 quarterly data. This Northern Ireland quarterly release has been made possible by the Department for Transport recently starting to publish experimental quarterly data. The annual Northern Ireland Ports Traffic statistics for 2023 will be published in the autumn of 2024. This release provides provisional information relating to January to March (quarter 2) 2023 which facilitates an analysis of the second quarter of 2023.

## Key points

### Comparing rolling year, twelve months to June 2023 and 2022

- The estimated total tonnage through Northern Ireland (NI) major ports in the rolling twelve months to June 2023 was 26.7 million tonnes, a decrease of 6.5% compared to 28.5 million tonnes in the same period of the previous year (i.e. the twelve months to June 2022). Estimated total tonnage through United Kingdom (UK) major ports in the rolling twelve months to June 2023 was 442.8 million tonnes, compared to 448.1 million tonnes in the same period of the previous year, a decrease of 1.2%. NI major ports handled an estimated 6.0% (26.7 million tonnes) of total tonnage handled at UK major ports (442.8 million tonnes).
- In the twelve months to June 2023 in NI, the estimated total tonnage of inward traffic decreased by 8.0% to 15.8 million tonnes, and outward traffic decreased by 4.3% to 10.9 million tonnes. For the UK as a whole, the volume of inward traffic in the twelve months to June 2023 decreased by 0.6% to 293.7 million tonnes and outward traffic decreased by 2.3% to 149.1 million tonnes.
- The majority of total NI tonnage came through the Belfast Port (66.6%), while the Port of Larne accounted for the second highest level of total tonnage (14.2%), followed by 11.2% through Warrenpoint and 7.1% through Londonderry. The most popular UK port was London, which handled 12.0% of total UK port tonnage in the twelve months to June 2023.

- An estimated 14.1 million tonnes on ro-ro freight vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports in the twelve months to June 2023 – an increase of 2.0% from 13.8 million tonnes in the twelve months to June 2022. In total, 92.6 million tonnes on ro-ro freight vehicles passed through UK ports in the twelve months to June 2023 – a decrease of 0.8% from the twelve months to June 2022.
- An estimated 894,261 ro-ro freight vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports in the twelve months to June 2023 – a decrease of 3.3% from 924,389 in the twelve months to June 2022. In total, 7.5 million ro-ro freight vehicles passed through UK ports in the twelve months to June 2023 – a decrease of 1.2% in the twelve months to June 2022.
- An estimated 610,970 non-freight vehicles<sup>1</sup> passed through Northern Ireland ports in the twelve months to June 2023; compared with a figure of 639,624 in the same period of the previous year – a decrease of 4.5%.

### **Comparing year to date, January to June 2023 and 2022**

- The estimated total tonnage through Northern Ireland (NI) major ports during January to June 2023 was 13.3 million tonnes, a decrease of 6.5% compared to 14.3 million tonnes in the same period of the previous year. Estimated total tonnage through United Kingdom (UK) major ports during January to June 2023 was 219.8 million tonnes, compared to 226.6 million tonnes in the same period of the previous year, a decrease of 3.0%. NI major ports handled an estimated 6.1% (13.3 million tonnes) of total tonnage handled at UK major ports (219.8 million tonnes).
- During January to June 2023 in NI, the estimated total tonnage of inward traffic decreased by 8.4% to 7.8 million tonnes compared to the same period in 2022, whilst outward traffic decreased by 3.8% to 5.6 million tonnes. For the UK as a whole, the volume of inward traffic during January to June 2023 decreased by 2.7% to 146.7 million tonnes and outward traffic decreased by 3.6% to 73.2 million tonnes.
- Between January and June 2023 the majority of total NI tonnage came through the Belfast Port (67.7%). The Port of Larne accounted for the second highest level of total tonnage (13.7%), followed by 11.7% through Warrenpoint and 6.4% through Londonderry. The most popular UK port was London, which handled 11.9% of total UK port tonnage during January to June 2023.
- An estimated 7.2 million tonnes on ro-ro freight vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports during January to June 2023 – a decrease of 0.8% from 7.2<sup>2</sup> million tonnes in the same period of the previous year. In total, 46.9 million tonnes on ro-ro freight vehicles passed through the UK during January to June 2023 – a decrease of 2.6% from the same period of the previous year.
- An estimated 450,693 ro-ro freight vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports during January to June 2023 – a decrease of 1.5% from 457,701 in the same period of the previous year. In total, 3.8 million ro-ro freight vehicles passed through

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<sup>1</sup> Non-freight vehicles include passenger cars, motorcycles and accompanying trailers or caravans, passenger buses and trade motor vehicles.

<sup>2</sup> Percentage change calculated using unrounded numbers

the UK during January to June 2023 – a decrease of 0.8% from the same period of the previous year.

- An estimated 266,622 non-freight vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports during January to June 2023; compared with a figure of 264,904 in the same period of the previous year – an increase of 0.6%.

### **Comparing quarter, April to June 2023 and 2022**

- The estimated total tonnage through Northern Ireland (NI) major ports during April to June 2023 was 6.8 million tonnes, a decrease of 1.0% compared to 6.9 million tonnes in the same period of the previous year. Estimated total tonnage through United Kingdom (UK) major ports during April to June 2023 was 110.3 million tonnes, compared to 114.0 million tonnes in the same period of the previous year, a decrease of 3.2%. NI major ports handled an estimated 6.2% (6.8 million tonnes) of total tonnage handled at UK major ports (110.3 million tonnes).
- During April to June 2023 in NI, the estimated total tonnage of inward traffic decreased by 3.6% to 3.9 million tonnes, and outward traffic increased by 2.9% to 2.9 million tonnes when compared to April to June 2022. For the UK as a whole, the volume of inward traffic during April to June 2023 decreased by 3.2% to 74.0 million tonnes and outward traffic decreased by 3.1% to 36.3 million tonnes compared to the same quarter in 2022.
- The majority of total NI tonnage came through the Belfast Port (67.7%), while the Port of Larne accounted for the second highest level of total tonnage (12.6%), followed by 12.1% through Warrenpoint and 6.8% through Londonderry. The most popular UK port was London, which handled 12.2% of total UK port tonnage during April to June 2023.
- An estimated 3.6 million tonnes on ro-ro freight vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports during April to June 2023 – a decrease of 1.8% from 3.7 million tonnes in the same period of the previous year. In total, 23.7 million tonnes on ro-ro freight vehicles passed through UK ports during April to June 2023 – a decrease of 1.5% from the same period of the previous year (24.1 million tonnes).
- An estimated 231,203 ro-ro freight vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports during April to June 2023 – an increase of 0.1% from 231,001 in the same period of the previous year. In total, 1.9 million ro-ro freight vehicles passed through UK ports during April to June 2023 – an increase of 2.3% from the same period of the previous year.
- An estimated 162,361 non-freight vehicles passed through Northern Ireland ports during April to June 2023; compared with a figure of 162,594 in the same period of the previous year – a decrease of 0.1%.

## 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 (September 2023) are available on the DfT Statistics website:

[UK Port Freight Quarterly Statistics: April to June 2023](#)

Following publication of the provisional quarterly release by DfT, statisticians within the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency analyse the data which relate to Northern Ireland ports and release this provisional information as the 'Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic'.

This Northern Ireland Quarterly 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 both freight and non-freight traffic through NI Ports and is based on already published data. For information on external visitors to NI please see:

[Annual Tourism Statistics 2019](#)

This publication provides statistics on passenger and freight traffic through Northern Ireland major ports. However, more information relating to estimates of the cargo group breakdowns can be found in the new [NISRA Data Portal](#) and in Tables 2 and 7 of the NI Quarterly Ports Traffic downloadable tables:

[NI Quarterly Ports Traffic tables](#)

# Contents

<b>Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic January to March 2023 .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Goods through principal ports .....</b>	<b>6</b>
In the twelve months to March 2023.....	7
January to March 2023.....	8
<b>2 RoRo Freight tonnage through principal ports .....</b>	<b>9</b>
In the twelve months to March 2023.....	10
January to March 2023.....	11
<b>3 RoRo Freight units through principal ports.....</b>	<b>12</b>
In the twelve months to March 2023.....	13
January to March 2023.....	14
<b>4 Non-freight vehicles through principal ports .....</b>	<b>15</b>
In the twelve months to March 2023.....	16
January to March 2023.....	17
<b>5 Further information.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>6 Index of tables.....</b>	<b>19</b>

## Experimental Statistics

This report provides estimates of cargo group breakdowns by Northern Ireland major ports. These estimates are experimental statistics. Users should be aware of the experimental status and exert caution when using the statistics. Further details on Experimental statistics can be found in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) [Guide to Experimental Statistics](#).

### Note to users

Users should also note that some data for previous quarters has been revised in this release.

### NISRA Consultation

NISRA has launched a consultation on proposed changes to a range of statistical outputs and is seeking the views of users on these proposals. Further information on the consultation and how to respond can be found on the [consultation page](#).

The Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic statistics is one of the outputs included in the consultation.

# 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.

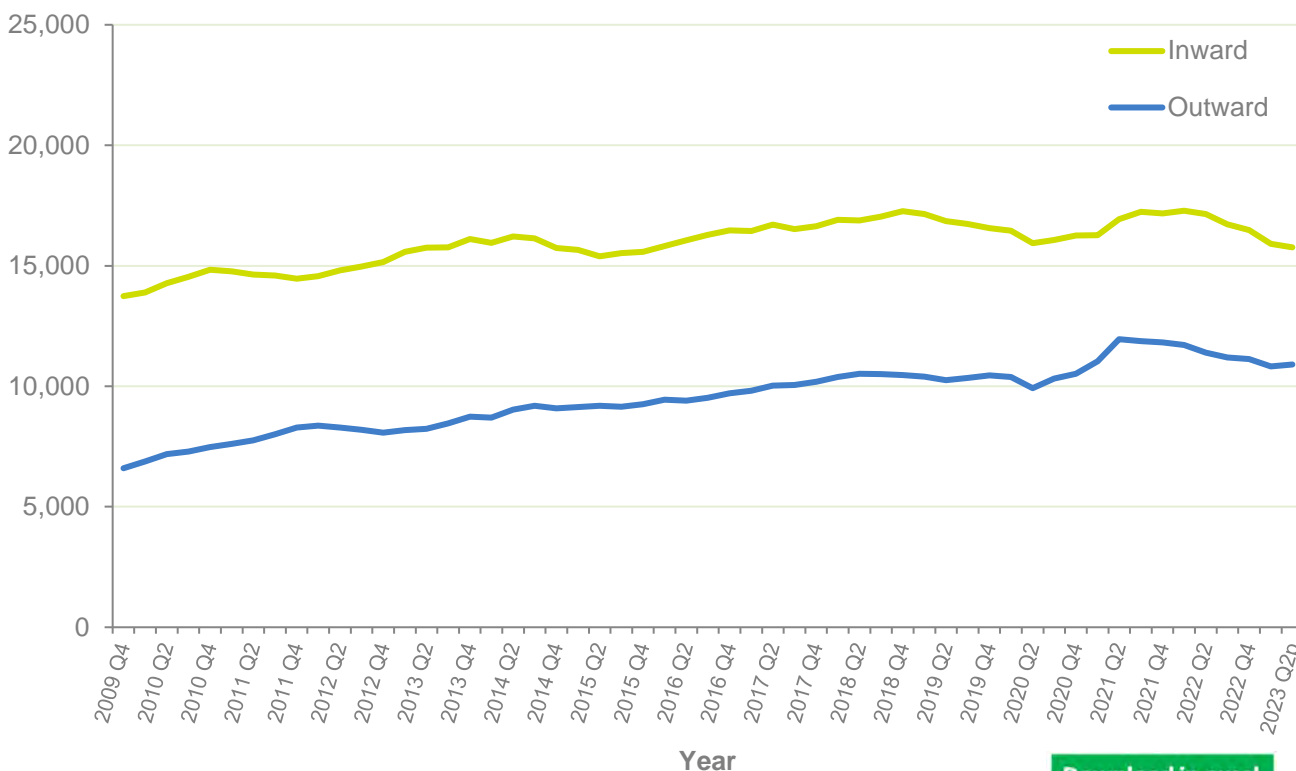
**Outward traffic** covers all goods taken out through Northern Ireland ports, destined for Great Britain or for foreign countries. The origin of the goods is not necessarily in Northern Ireland.

Figure 1 shows that the total tonnage handled at Northern Ireland ports has been increasing over the last 14 years. Inward tonnage has slightly increased over the 14 year period, from 13.7 million tonnes in the twelve months to quarter four 2009 to 15.8 million tonnes at quarter one 2023. Outward tonnage has seen a strong growth over the last 14 years, from some 6.6 million tonnes in the twelve months to quarter four 2009 to 10.9 million tonnes in the twelve months to June 2023.

**Figure 1: Total tonnage through NI Ports has been gradually increasing over the last 14 years**

**Total thousand tonnes for inward and outward traffic for Northern Ireland, 2009 to the twelve months to June 2023**

Thousand tonnes



## In the twelve months to June 2023

The **total tonnage** through **Northern Ireland** ports amounted to 26.7 million tonnes, which:

- was a decrease of 6.5% in the same period of the previous year (28.5 million tonnes);
- comprised 15.8 million tonnes of inward traffic (a decrease of 8.0%) and 10.9 million tonnes of outward traffic (a decrease of 4.3%);
- had the majority of total traffic coming through Belfast Port (66.6%), with the remainder coming through the Port of Larne (14.2%), Warrenpoint (11.2%), Londonderry (7.1%) and other minor ports (0.9%).

The **total tonnage** through **UK ports** was 442.8 million tonnes, which:

- was a decrease of 1.2% in the same period of the previous year (448.1 million tonnes);
- comprised 293.4 million tonnes of inward traffic (a decrease of 0.6%) and 149.1 million tonnes of outward traffic (a decrease of 2.3%);
- seen London as the UK's leading port, handling 53.3 million tonnes (12.0% of UK tonnage).

## January to June 2023

The **total tonnage** through **Northern Ireland** ports amounted to 13.3 million tonnes, which:

- represented a decrease of 6.5% in the same period of 2022 (14.3 million tonnes);
- comprised 7.8 million tonnes of inward traffic (a decrease of 8.4%) and 5.6 million tonnes of outward traffic (a decrease of 3.8%);
- had the majority of total traffic coming through Belfast Port (67.7%), with the remainder coming through the Port of Larne (13.7%), Warrenpoint (11.7%), Londonderry (6.4%) and other minor ports (0.5%).

The **total tonnage** through **UK ports** was 219.8 million tonnes, which:

- was a decrease of 3.0% in the same period of the previous year (226.6 million tonnes);
- comprised 146.7 million tonnes of inward traffic (a decrease of 2.7%) and 73.2 million tonnes of outward traffic (a decrease of 3.6%);
- seen London as the UK's leading port, handling 26.1 million tonnes (11.9% of UK tonnage).

## April to June 2023

The **total tonnage** through **Northern Ireland** ports amounted to 6.8 million tonnes, which:

- represented a decrease of 1.0% in the same period of 2022 (6.9 million tonnes);
- comprised 3.9 million tonnes of inward traffic (a decrease of 3.6%) and 2.9 million tonnes of outward traffic (an increase of 2.9%);
- had the majority of total traffic coming through Belfast Port (67.7%), with the remainder coming through the Port of Larne (12.6%), Warrenpoint (12.1%), Londonderry (6.8%) and other minor ports (0.8%).

The **total tonnage** through **UK ports** was 110.3 million tonnes, which:

- was a decrease of 3.2% in the same period of the previous year (114.0 million tonnes);
- comprised 74.0 million tonnes of inward traffic (a decrease of 3.2%) and 36.3 million tonnes of outward traffic (a decrease of 3.1%);
- seen London as the UK's leading port, handling 13.4 million tonnes (12.2% of UK tonnage).

Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports data contained in this section can be found in Tables 1 and 6 of the Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic 2023 file on the [NISRA Quarterly Ports Traffic](#) webpage.

UK Port Data contained in this section can be found in table port0502 of the Department for Transport's [Port Freight Quarterly Statistics: April to June 2023 tables](#).



## 2 RoRo Freight tonnage through principal ports

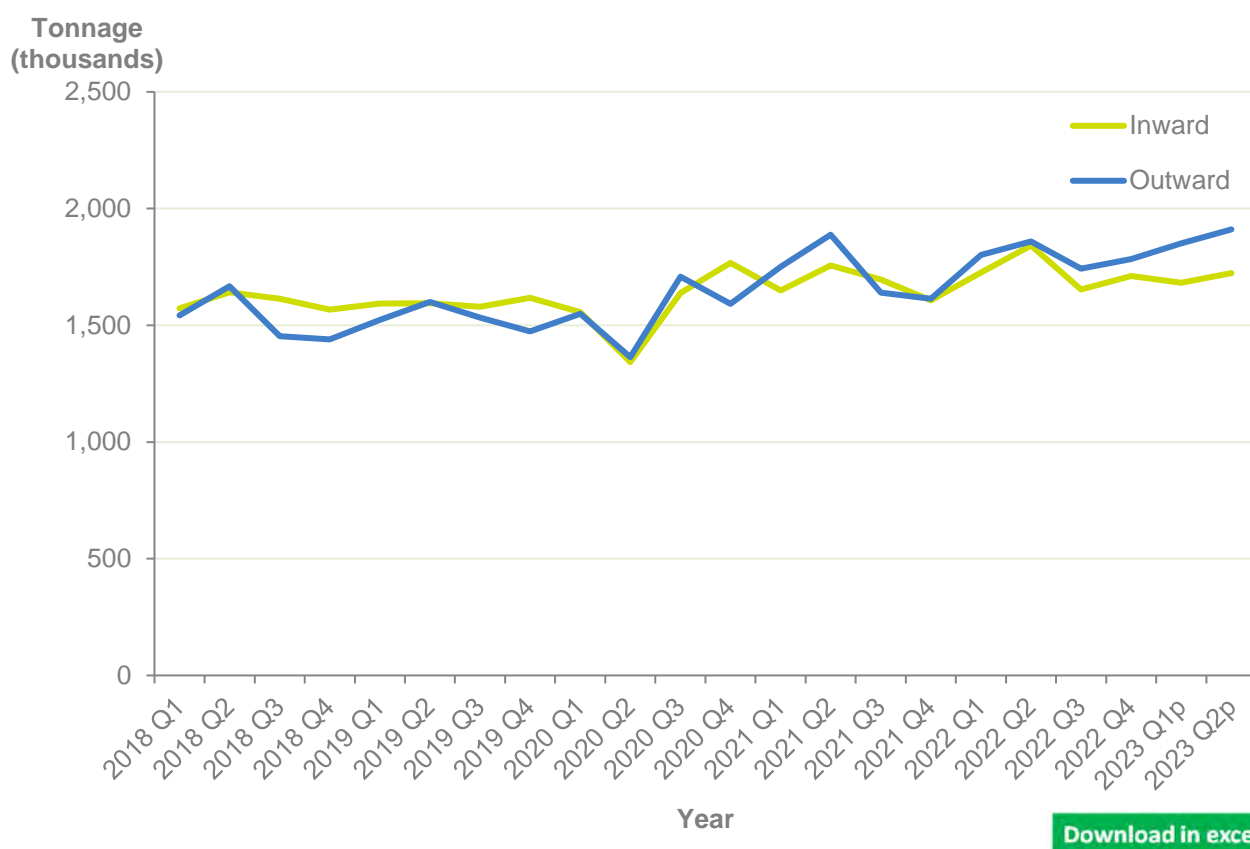
**RoRo Freight** covers all roll-on/roll-off traffic that carries cargo, both accompanied and unaccompanied. In these statistics, this covers road good vehicles, unaccompanied trailers, rail wagons and shipborne trailers, and other non-self propelled mobile units.

**Statistics presented from this point forward are classified as experimental statistics.**

Figure 2 below shows the tonnage on roro freight vehicles passing through Northern Ireland ports each quarter from quarter one 2018. Total tonnage on roro freight vehicles has increased by 16.7%<sup>3</sup>, from 3.1 million tonnes in quarter one 2018 to 3.6 million tonnes in quarter two 2023. Tonnage on inward roro freight vehicles has increased over the period by 9.6% from 1.6 million tonnes (quarter one 2018) to 1.7 million tonnes in quarter two 2023. Tonnage on outward roro freight vehicles has increased over the period by 23.9%, from 1.5 million tonnes (quarter one 2018) to 1.9 million tonnes in quarter two 2023.

**Figure 2: Increase in the tonnage of goods on roro freight vehicles at Northern Ireland ports since 2018**

**RoRo Freight Vehicles (tonnage) - Northern Ireland, Quarter 1 2018 to Quarter 2 2023**



<sup>3</sup> Percentage change calculated using unrounded numbers

## In the twelve months to June 2023

A total of 14.1 million tonnes on **roro freight vehicles** passed through **Northern Ireland** ports, which:

- accounted for 52.7% of total tonnage handled at NI ports;
- represented an increase of 2.0% in the same period of the previous year (13.8 million tonnes);
- consisted of 6.8 million tonnes of inward traffic (a decrease of 1.5%) and 7.3 million tonnes of outward traffic (an increase of 5.4%);
- had the majority of total tonnage on road goods vehicles coming through Belfast Port (58.1%), with the remainder coming through the Port of Larne (26.6%) and Warrenpoint (15.3%).

A total of 92.6 million tonnes on **roro freight vehicles** passed through **UK ports**, which:

- was a decrease of 0.8% in the same period of the previous year (93.4 million tonnes);
- consisted of 56.3 million tonnes of inward traffic (an increase of 0.4%) and 36.2 million tonnes of outward traffic (a decrease of 2.9%);
- seen Dover as the UK's leading port, handling 18.3 million tonnes (19.7% of UK units).

## January to June 2023

A total of 7.2 million tonnes on **roro freight vehicles** passed through **Northern Ireland** ports, which:

- accounted for 53.8% of total tonnage handled at NI ports;
- represented a decrease of 0.8%<sup>4</sup> in the same period of 2022 (7.2 million tonnes);
- consisted of 3.4 million tonnes of inward traffic (a decrease of 4.5%) and 3.8 million tonnes of outward traffic (an increase of 2.8%);
- had the majority of total tonnage on road goods vehicles coming through Belfast Port (59.5%), with the remainder coming through the Port of Larne (25.3%) and Warrenpoint (15.2%).

A total of 46.9 million tonnes on **roro freight vehicles** passed through **UK ports**, which:

- was a decrease of 2.6% in the same period of the previous year (48.2 million tonnes);
- consisted of 28.6 million tonnes of inward traffic (a decrease of 1.3%) and 18.2 million tonnes of outward traffic (a decrease of 5.1%);

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<sup>4</sup> Percentage change calculated using unrounded numbers

- seen Dover as the UK's leading port, handling 9.6 million tonnes (20.5% of UK units).

## April to June 2023

A total of 3.6 million tonnes on **roro freight vehicles** passed through **Northern Ireland** ports, which:

- accounted for 53.5% of total tonnage handled at NI ports;
- represented a decrease of 1.8% in the same period of 2022 (3.7 million tonnes);
- consisted of 1.7 million tonnes of inward traffic (a decrease of 6.4%) and 1.9 million tonnes of outward traffic (an increase of 2.8%);
- had the majority of total tonnage on road goods vehicles coming through Belfast Port (60.9%), with the remainder coming through the Port of Larne (23.3%) and Warrenpoint (15.8%).

A total of 23.7 million tonnes on **roro freight vehicles** passed through **UK ports**, which:

- was a decrease of 1.5% in the same period of the previous year (24.1 million tonnes);
- consisted of 14.5 million tonnes of inward traffic (a decrease 0.01%) and 9.1 million tonnes of outward traffic (a decrease of 4.4%);
- seen Dover as the UK's leading port, handling 4.9 million tonnes (20.5% of UK units).

Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports data contained in this section can be found in Tables 3b and 8b of the Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic 2023 file on the [NISRA Quarterly Ports Traffic](#) webpage.

UK Port Data contained in this section can be found in table port0503 of the Department for Transport's [Port Freight Quarterly Statistics: April to June tables](#).

### 3 RoRo Freight units through principal ports

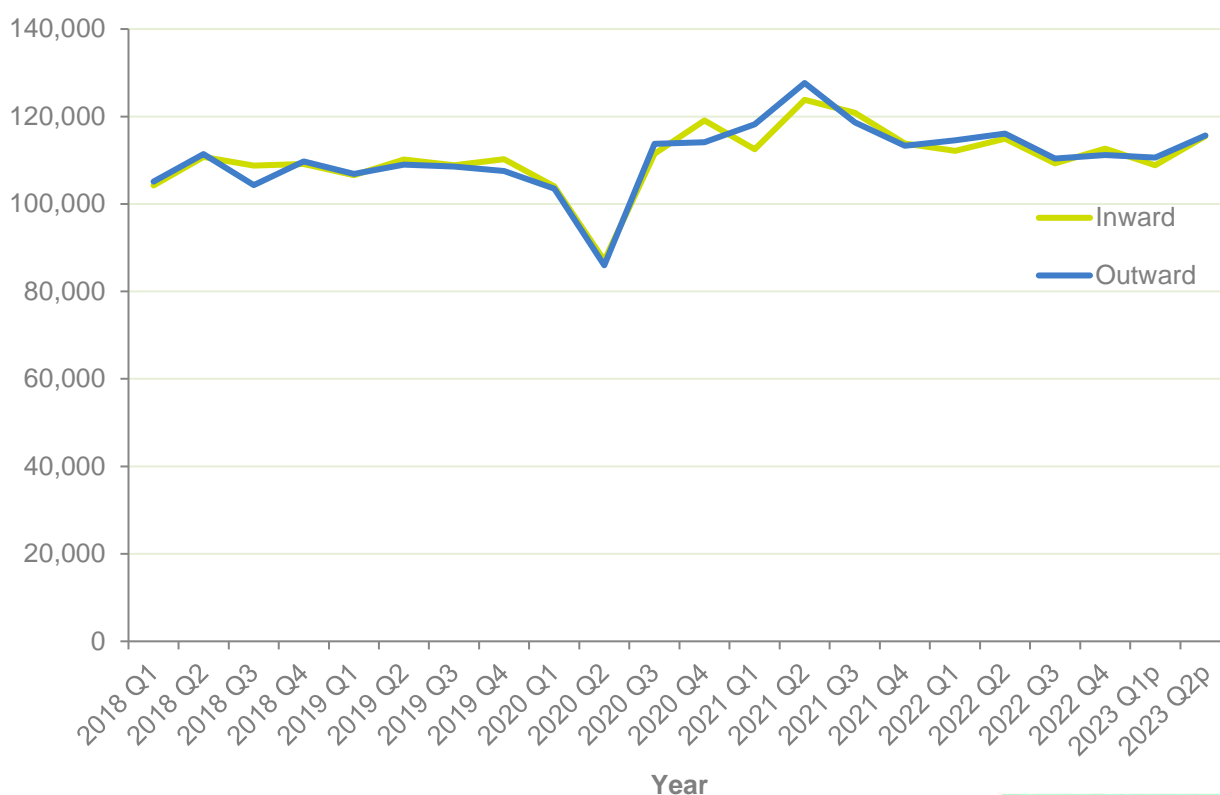
**RoRo Freight** covers all roll-on/roll-off traffic that carries cargo, both accompanied and unaccompanied. In these statistics, this covers road good vehicles, unaccompanied trailers, rail wagons and shipborne trailers, and other non-self propelled mobile units.

Figure 3 below shows the number of units of roro freight vehicles passing through Northern Ireland ports each quarter from quarter one 2018. Total roro freight vehicles have increased by 10.4%, from 209,000 units in quarter one 2018 to 231,000 units in quarter two 2023. Inward roro freight vehicles has increased over the period by 10.8% from 104,000 units (quarter one 2018) to 116,000 units in quarter two 2023. Outward roro freight vehicles has increased over the period by 10.1%, from 105,000 units (quarter one 2018) to 116,000 units in quarter two 2023.

**Figure 3: Increase in the number of roro freight vehicles at Northern Ireland ports since 2018**

**RoRo Freight Vehicles (units) - Northern Ireland, Quarter 1 2018 to Quarter 2 2023**

Number of units



[Download in excel](#)

## In the twelve months to June 2023

A total of 894,000 **roro freight vehicles** passed through **Northern Ireland** ports, which:

- represented a decrease of 3.3% in the same period of the previous year (924,000 units);
- consisted of 446,000 units of inward traffic (a decrease of 3.3%) and 448,000 units of outward traffic (a decrease of 3.2%);
- had the majority of total road goods vehicles coming through Belfast Port (70.4%), with the remainder coming through Larne (18.0%) and Warrenpoint (11.6%).

A total of 7.5 million **roro freight vehicles** passed through **UK ports**, which:

- was a decrease of 1.2% in the same period of the previous year (7.6 million units);
- consisted of 3.8 million units of inward traffic (a decrease of 1.8%) and 3.7 million units of outward traffic (a decrease of 0.7%);
- seen Dover as the UK's leading port, handling 2.1 million units (28.2% of UK units).

## January to June 2023

A total of 451,000 **roro freight vehicles** passed through **Northern Ireland** ports, which:

- represented a decrease of 1.5% in the same period of 2022 (458,000 units);
- consisted of 224,000 units of inward traffic (a decrease of 1.2%) and 226,000 units of outward traffic (a decrease of 1.9%);
- had the majority of total road goods vehicles coming through the Belfast Port (71.1%), with the remainder coming through the Port of Larne (17.2%) and Warrenpoint (11.6%).

A total of 3.8 million **roro freight vehicles** passed through **UK ports**, which:

- was a decrease of 0.8% in the same period of the previous year (3.8 million units);
- consisted of 1.9 million units of inward traffic (a decrease of 1.4%) and 1.9 million units of outward traffic (a decrease of 0.2%);
- seen Dover as the UK's leading port, handling 1.1 million units (29.7% of UK units).

## April to June 2023

A total of 231,000 **roro freight vehicles** passed through **Northern Ireland** ports, which:

- represented an increase of 0.1%<sup>5</sup> in the same period of 2022 (231,000 units);
- consisted of 116,000 units of inward traffic (an increase of 0.5%) and 116,000 units of outward traffic (a decrease of 0.4%);
- had the majority of total road goods vehicles coming through the Belfast Port (72.2%), with the remainder coming through the Port of Larne (15.9%) and Warrenpoint (11.9%).

A total of 1.93 million **roro freight vehicles** passed through **UK ports**, which:

- was an increase of 2.3% in the same period of the previous year (1.89 million units);
- consisted of 1.0 million units of inward traffic (an increase of 1.3%) and 1.0 million units of outward traffic (an increase of 3.4%);
- seen Dover as the UK's leading port, handling 0.6 million units (30.1% of UK units).

Note that the figures above referring to units are rounded whilst the percentage changes are calculated based on unrounded figures.

Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports data contained in this section can be found in Tables 3a and 8a of the Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic 2023 file on the [NISRA Quarterly Ports Traffic](#) webpage.

UK Port Data contained in this section can be found in table port0503 of the Department for Transport's [Port Freight Quarterly Statistics: April to June 2023 tables](#).

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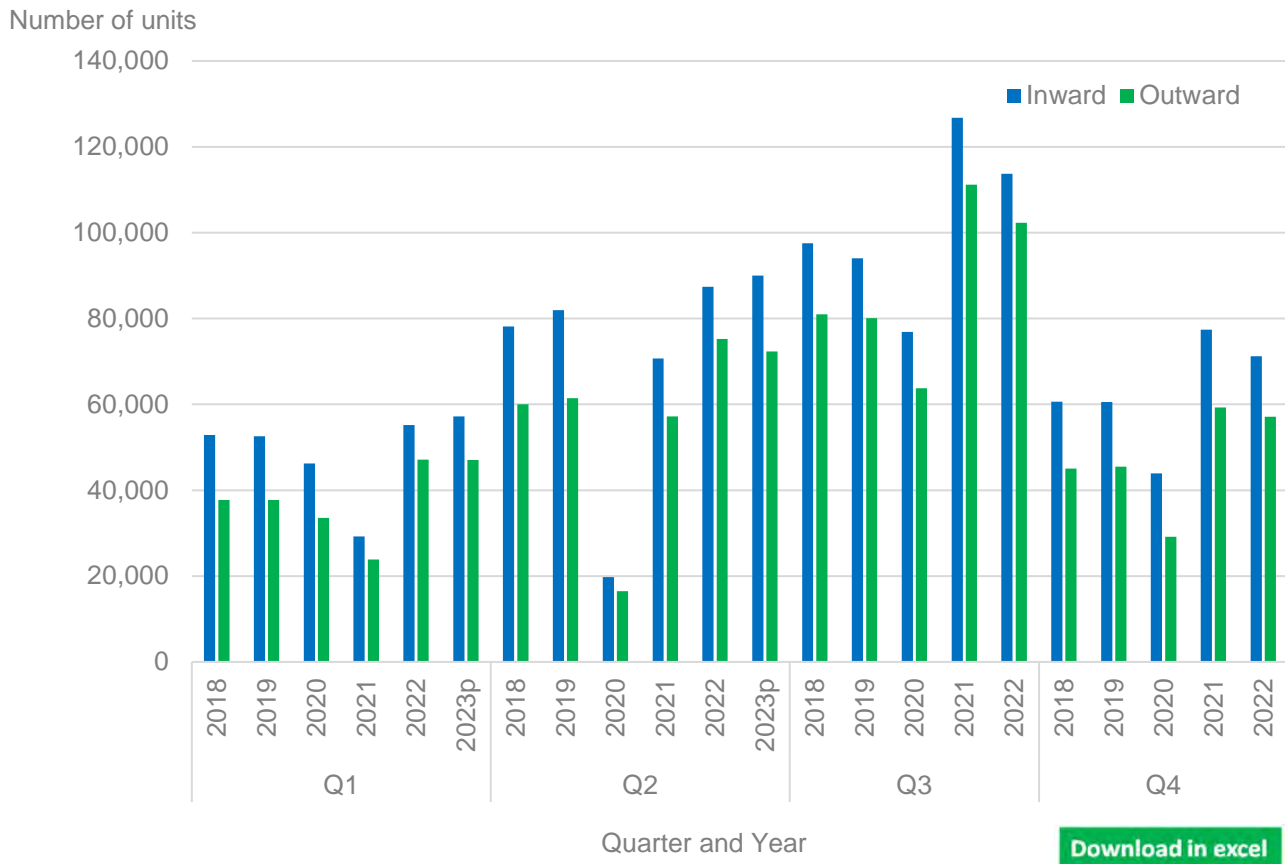
<sup>5</sup> Percentage change calculated using unrounded numbers

## 4 Non-freight vehicles through principal ports

**Non-freight vehicles** include passenger cars, motorcycles and accompanying trailers or caravans, passenger buses and trade motor vehicles.

Figure 4 on the following page shows that there was a decline in the number of non-freight vehicles passing through Northern Ireland ports during each quarter of 2020 and quarter one of 2021, likely due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns and travel restrictions in place in each UK nation. However, total non-freight vehicle units increased in quarters two, three and four of 2021, when comparing each quarter with the equivalent quarter in 2020; and in quarters one and two of 2022 when compared to quarter one of 2021. Non-freight vehicle units decreased by 9.2% in quarter three 2022, when compared to quarter three 2021; and decreased by 6.1% in quarter four 2022 compared to quarter four of 2021. Non-freight vehicle units increased 1.9% in quarter one of 2023, when compared to quarter one of 2022; and have decreased slightly by 0.1% in quarter two of 2023 when compared to quarter two of 2022. The peak of 238,000 non-freight vehicles handled by NI ports in quarter three of 2021, may have been boosted by the temporary ferry service operated by Stena Line between Belfast and Holyhead between the 18<sup>th</sup> June and 25<sup>th</sup> July 2021. Additionally, the 2023 statistics are based on experimental agent data which may change when finalised in summer 2024. The number of non-freight vehicles in January to March 2022 will have been impacted by the temporary halt of services by P&O Ferries from the 17<sup>th</sup> March.

**Figure 4: Slight decrease in non-freight vehicles through Northern Ireland ports in quarter two of 2023, when compared to quarter two of 2022**  
**Unit load carrier non-freight vehicles - Northern Ireland, Quarter 1 2018 to Quarter 2 2023**



## In the twelve months to June 2023

A total of 611,000 **non-freight vehicles** passed through **Northern Ireland** ports, which:

- represented a decrease of 4.5% in the same period of the previous year (640,000 units);
- consisted of 332,000 units of inward traffic (a decrease of 4.2%) and 279,000 units of outward traffic (a decrease of 4.8%);
- had the majority of total non-freight vehicles coming through Belfast Port (79.6%), with the remainder coming through Larne (19.3%) and Warrenpoint (1.1%).

A total of 7.6 million **non-freight vehicles** passed through **UK ports**, which:

- was an increase of 28.2% in the same period of the previous year (6.0 million units);
- consisted of 4.4 million units of inward traffic (an increase of 27.5%) and 3.2 million units of outward traffic (an increase of 29.4%);
- seen Dover as the UK's leading port, handling 1.4 million units (18.5% of UK units).



## January to June 2022

A total of 267,000 **non-freight vehicles** passed through **Northern Ireland** ports, which:

- represented an increase of 0.6% in the same period of 2021 (265,000 units);
- consisted of 147,000 units of inward traffic (an increase of 3.3%) and 119,000 units of outward traffic (a decrease of 2.4%);
- had the majority of total non-freight vehicles coming through the Belfast Port (78.9%), with the remainder coming through Larne (18.6%) and Warrenpoint (2.5%).

A total of 3.4 million **non-freight vehicles** passed through **UK ports**, which:

- was an increase of 11.0% in the same period of the previous year (3.0 million units);
- consisted of 2.0 million units of inward traffic (an increase of 11.9%) and 1.4 million units of outward traffic (an increase of 10.3%);
- seen Dover as the UK's leading port, handling 0.5 million units (15.4% of UK units)

## April to June 2023

A total of 162,000 **non-freight vehicles** passed through **Northern Ireland** ports, which:

- represented a decrease of 0.1% in the same period of 2022 (163,000 units);
- consisted of 90,000 units of inward traffic (an increase of 3.0%) and 72,000 units of outward traffic (a decrease of 3.8%);
- had the majority of total non-freight vehicles coming through the Belfast Port (78.4%), with the remainder coming through Larne (19.4%) and Warrenpoint (2.2%).

A total of 2.0 million **non-freight vehicles** passed through **UK ports**, which:

- was an increase of 7.5% in the same period of the previous year (1.9 million units);
- consisted of 1.2 million units of inward traffic (an increase of 6.9%) and 0.9 million units of outward traffic (an increase of 7.8%);
- seen Dover as the UK's leading port, handling 0.3 million units (17.1% of UK units).

Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports data contained in this section can be found in Tables 4 and 9 of the Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic 2023 file on the [NISRA Quarterly Ports Traffic](#) webpage.

UK Port Data contained in this section can be found in table port0503 of the Department for Transport's [Port Freight Quarterly Statistics: April to June 2023 tables](#).

## 5 Further information

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.

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 or are strategically important), by route, ship and cargo type. Much less information is required for smaller ports. Route and ship information is collected from shipping lines, operators and shipping agents, because it is only generally available from them. The ports supply total tonnage and units quarterly and cargo type 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 annual Northern Ireland Ports Traffic bulletin, including final estimates for 2023, will be published in autumn 2024.

## 6 Index of tables

The following tables containing Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic data for quarter one 2018 to quarter two 2023 can be found on the website:

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

[\*\*Table 2\*\*](#) - Tonnage of goods through the principal ports in Northern Ireland by cargo description

[\*\*Table 3a\*\*](#) - Number of roro freight vehicles through the principal ports in Northern Ireland

[\*\*Table 3b\*\*](#) - Tonnage of goods on roro freight vehicles through the principal ports in Northern Ireland

[\*\*Table 4\*\*](#) – Number of non-freight vehicles through the principal ports in Northern Ireland

[\*\*Table 5\*\*](#) – Total number of vehicles (road goods vehicles and non-freight vehicles) through the principal ports in Northern Ireland

[\*\*Table 6\*\*](#) - Tonnage of goods through the principal ports in Northern Ireland, rolling four quarters quarter 4 2009 to quarter 2 2023

[\*\*Table 7\*\*](#) - Tonnage of goods through the principal ports in Northern Ireland by cargo description, rolling four quarters quarter 1 2018 to quarter 2 2023

[\*\*Table 8a\*\*](#) - Number of roro freight vehicles through the principal ports in Northern Ireland, rolling four quarters quarter 1 2018 to quarter 2 2023

[\*\*Table 8b\*\*](#) - Tonnage of goods on roro freight vehicles through the principal ports in Northern Ireland, rolling four quarters quarter 1 2018 to quarter 2 2023

[\*\*Table 9\*\*](#) - Number of non-freight vehicles through the principal ports in Northern Ireland, rolling four quarters quarter 1 2018 to quarter 2 2023

[\*\*Table 10\*\*](#) - Total number of vehicles (roro freight and non-freight vehicles) through the principal ports in Northern Ireland, rolling four quarters quarter 1 2018 to quarter 2 2023

### Notes and definitions:

Tables 1, 2 and 3b give tonnage of goods through the ports and exclude weights of containers and weights of materials shipped for dumping at sea.

## **Tonnage**

The weight of goods transported, including crates and other packaging.

## **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.

## **Roro freight vehicles**

RoRo freight vehicles covers all roll-on/roll-off traffic that carries cargo, both accompanied and unaccompanied. In these statistics, this covers road good vehicles, unaccompanied trailers, rail wagons and shipborne trailers, and other non-self propelled mobile units.

## **Non-freight vehicles**

Non-freight vehicles include passenger cars, motorcycles and accompanying trailers / caravans, passenger buses and trade motor vehicles.

## **Northern Ireland Major Ports Traffic Data**

The microdata for Northern Ireland Ports Traffic provides data from 2000-2022 and can be found on the website:

[Northern Ireland Major Ports Traffic Data 2022](#)

The file contains a number of pivot tables that have been generated using the different variables available for the NI Major Ports Traffic data. These pivot tables can then be further manipulated by selecting the variables that are of interest and / or the particular elements of these variables that are of interest.

More information and a demonstration can be found on the 'User Guide' tab of the data file.

The variables included in the data set are:

**Year:** calendar year data from 2018 to 2022

**Quarter:** calendar quarter data from quarter one 2018 to quarter two 2023

**Major Port:** the name of the Northern Ireland Major Port (excludes any minor ports)

**Direction:** Direction of port traffic (inwards or outwards)

**Cargo Group:** Cargo category based on the means by which goods are loaded onto or off of the vessel

**Cargo Category:** Numerical classification of port freight traffic on statistical returns in respect of the carriage of goods and passengers by sea (see Department for Transport's [Categorisation Flowchart](#) for more information).

**Cargo Description:** Matching description for cargo category

**Tonnage (thousands):** Weight of cargo in tonnes (thousands). Ro-Ro and Lo-Lo tonnage does not include the weight of the vehicle itself, only the cargo. No tonnage is recorded for passenger vehicles

**Total Units (thousands):** The total number of units (thousands) handled for each category (Loaded and Empty)