



Sea transport, 2019

21 Jan 2020
SB 1/2021

Key points

Note: These statistics relate to the 2019 calendar year, which was before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.



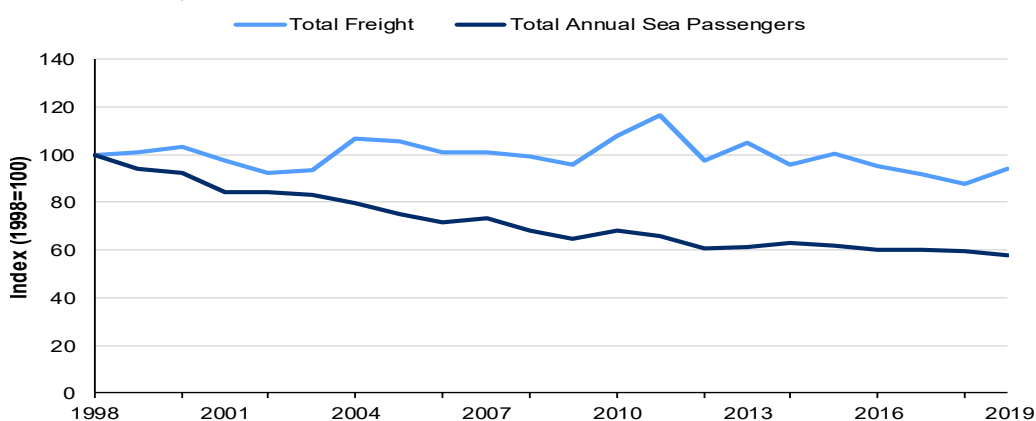
Total freight tonnage at Welsh ports rose by 7.7% in 2019 to 52.9 million tonnes (Mt).

- Of total freight at major ports in Wales, 88.7% was foreign tonnage with 66.0% being foreign imports. The majority of foreign imports and exports consisted of bulk products including crude oil, oil products, liquefied gas and ores.

Welsh ports also act as a gateway between the Republic of Ireland and the rest of Europe.

- Nearly three quarters of goods carried on Irish registered heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) between the Republic of Ireland and Europe passed through Welsh ports, equivalent to 0.4Mt. 70.2% of the total volume passed through Holyhead port.

Chart 1: Movement of sea freight and passengers between Wales and Ireland, 1998 - 2019



Source: Department for Transport

- Over the long term, total sea passenger movement between the Republic of Ireland and Wales has declined.
- 77.0% of passengers travelling between the Republic of Ireland and Wales in 2019 used the route between Holyhead and Dublin.

About this bulletin

This annual statistical bulletin sets out information about ports in Wales for 2019. It covers the freight traffic through these ports; passengers and freight traffic between Wales and the Republic of Ireland; and ship arrivals at Welsh ports. This bulletin provides key analysis with tables of underlying data available on the [StatsWales website](https://stats.wales.gov.uk/).

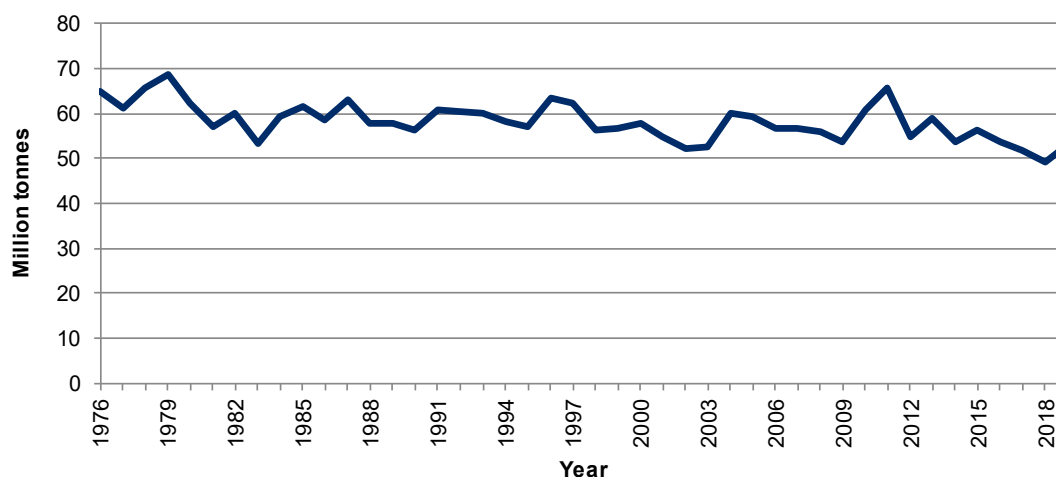
In this bulletin

The main ports in Wales	2
Quarterly imports and exports	3
Foreign and domestic cargo and Traffic	4
Ports in Wales compared with the rest of the UK	5
Freight movements to and from the Republic of Ireland through Welsh ports	6
Passenger movements through Welsh ports	7
Key quality information	10

Section 1: Sea Freight

Total freight tonnage through Welsh ports in 2019 was 52.9 million tonnes (Mt) (Chart 2). This has been gradually falling over the last 50 years. In 2019 freight tonnage rose by 7.7% compared to 2018.

Chart 2: Freight through Welsh ports, 1976 to 2019



Source: Department for Transport

Of the 52.9 Mt of freight through Welsh ports, 37.0 Mt were goods inwards and 15.9 Mt were goods outwards. Freight through Welsh ports accounted for 10.9% of the total tonnage through UK ports. The largest components of freight through Welsh ports were:

- oil products, with total volume of 17.8 Mt, of which nearly 10.5 Mt was goods outwards. 3.2 Mt were sent to destinations elsewhere in the UK and 7.3 Mt were exported to the rest of the world.
- crude oil, with total volume of 8.4 Mt, most of which was goods inwards. 0.4 Mt came from the rest of the UK and 7.9 Mt was imported from elsewhere in the world
- liquefied gas, with total volume of 8.6 Mt.

The main ports in Wales

Three of the main ports in Wales meet specialised shipping needs ([Map](#)):

- Milford Haven handles mainly crude oil, oil products and liquefied natural gas
- Port Talbot imports iron ore and coal mostly for the adjacent steelworks
- Holyhead is the main port for freight and sea passenger transport with the Irish Republic.

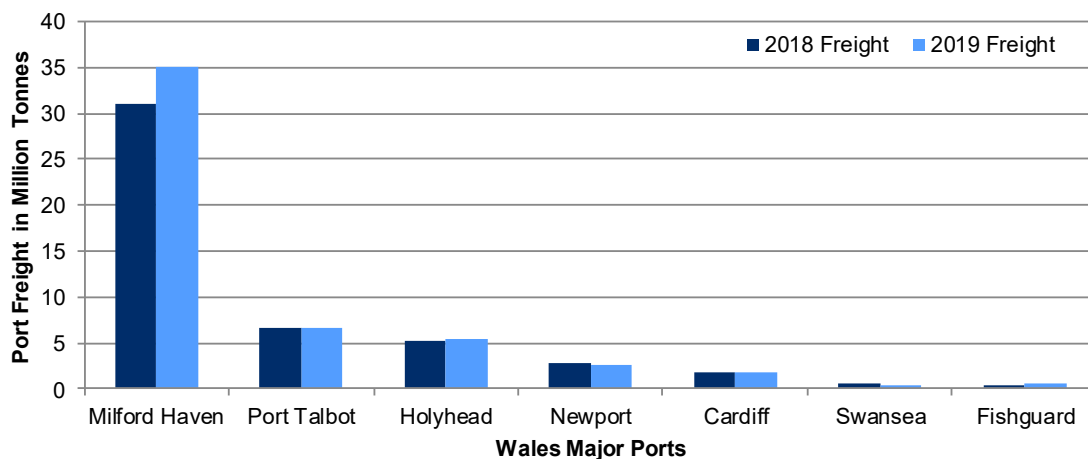
The other major ports include Fishguard, Swansea, Cardiff, and Newport ([Map](#)) and there are also a number of minor ports in Wales: Barry, Mostyn, Neath, Llanddulas, Port Penrhyn and Burry Port.

Map: Major sea ports locations in Wales, 2019



Milford Haven is the largest port in Wales and the third largest port in the UK by volume of freight as of 2019, predominantly through oil and gas. It handled 35.0 Mt of freight in 2019, which was 7.2% of the UK total for 2019. Freight tonnage at Milford Haven accounts for two thirds of all Welsh port freight. When compared with 2018, Milford Haven freight traffic increased by 4.0 Mt (13.0%) (see [StatsWales](#)) (Chart 3).

Chart 3: Total freight through major Welsh ports 2018 and 2019



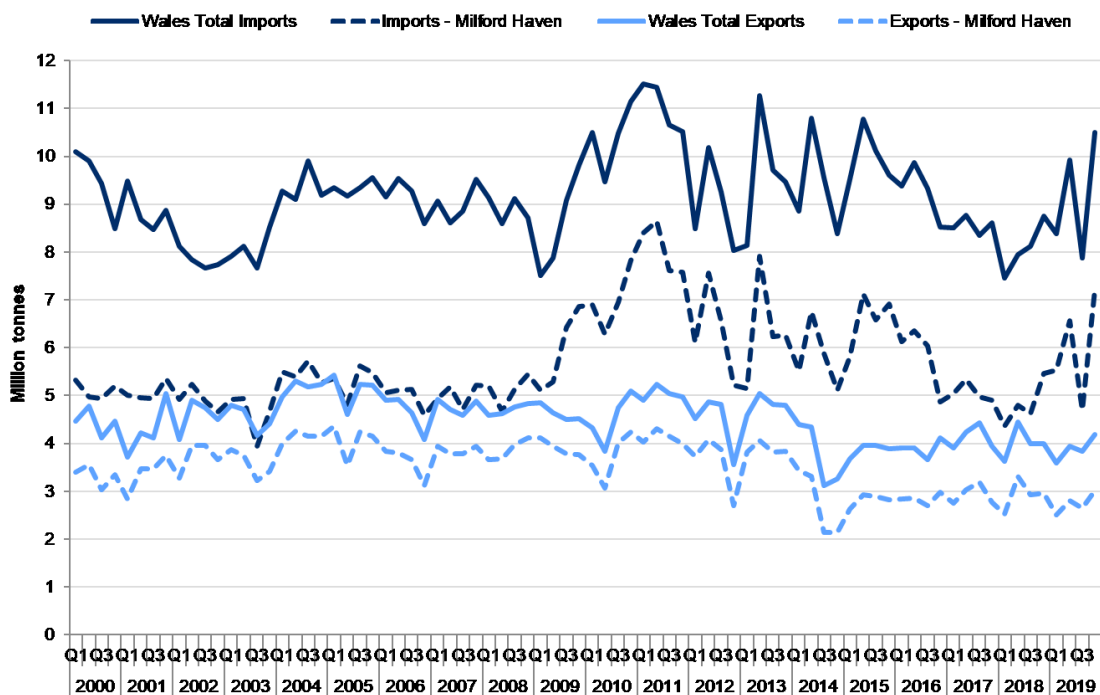
Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport data

Imports and exports

Figures for Wales largely reflect activity at Milford Haven. Imports to Milford Haven increased significantly from 2009 to 2011 and remained relatively high for a few years before falling again. However in 2019, they rose again to a level comparable to those seen between 2000 and 2010.

In 2019, Milford Haven saw a high of 7.21 Mt imports in quarter 4 and a low of 4.69 Mt imports in quarter 3. Exports from Milford Haven have been relatively stable in recent years with a 2019 high of 3.01 Mt exports in quarter 4 and a low of 2.51 Mt exports in quarter 1 ([Chart 4](#)).

Chart 4: Quarterly imports and exports from 2000 to 2019

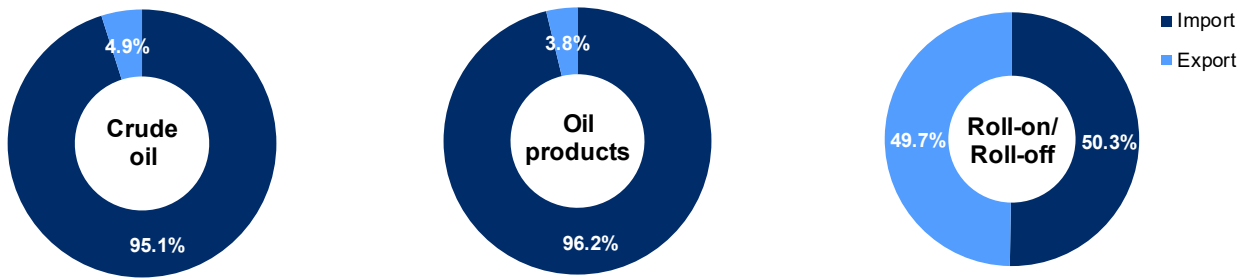


Foreign and domestic traffic and cargo

Sea traffic refers to the number of ship arrivals and departures at a port whilst cargo refers to goods. In 2019, 88.7% of traffic at major ports in Wales was foreign traffic with 66.0% carrying foreign imports. Comparing domestic and foreign traffic:

- 95.1% of crude oil traffic through the ports of Wales was for foreign imports and exports (94.3% imports, 0.8% exports). The remaining 4.9% consisted of domestic traffic ([Chart 5](#)).
- 96.2% of oil products traffic was foreign traffic, of which 50.7% was foreign exports and 45.5% was foreign imports.
- For roll-on/roll-off traffic there was an even split between foreign and domestic cargo.

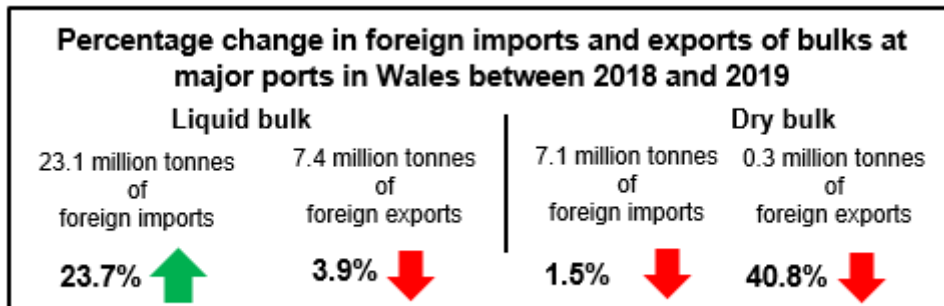
Chart 5: Domestic and Foreign Traffic at major Welsh ports, 2019



Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport data

When looking at foreign imports and exports

- imports were higher than exports, with 34 Mt and 12 Mt respectively
- the majority of traffic was either liquid bulk (30 Mt) or dry bulk (7 Mt). Liquid bulk includes products such as liquefied gas, crude oil, oil products, and dry bulk includes coal and ores.
- liquid bulk imports increased by 23.7% in 2019, whilst liquid bulk exports decreased by 3.9% compared with 2018. Dry bulk decreased during the same period.



Source: Department for Transport

More detail is available on [StatsWales](#).

Freight movements to and from the Republic of Ireland through Welsh ports

- In 2019, 567,000 lorries and unaccompanied trailers passed through Welsh ports to and from Ireland. Around half came from Ireland and half travelled to Ireland. 81.9% of this traffic went through Holyhead (see [StatsWales](#));
- Welsh ports act as a gateway between the Republic of Ireland and the rest of Europe. Nearly three quarters (0.4 Mt) of goods carried on Irish registered HGVs between the Republic of Ireland and Europe pass through Wales. 70.2% of this traffic passed through the port of Holyhead in North Wales'. (see [StatsWales](#) and [Table 1](#)).
- Of goods carried on Irish registered HGVs *from* the Republic of Ireland *to* the continent in 2019, 67.2% went through Wales Chart 6.
- Of goods carried on Irish registered HGVs *to* Ireland *from* the continent, 82.4% went through Wales. The majority of this HGV traffic between Wales and the Republic of Ireland passed through Holyhead¹.

Table 1: Goods carried on Irish registered HGVs between the UK and the Republic of Ireland, 2019

	<i>Million tonnes of goods</i>			All
	Via North Wales ports	Via South Wales ports	Via other routes	
From Ireland to:				
Northern Ireland	~	~	2.9	2.9
UK ex N. Ireland	0.4	0.0	0.1	0.5
Continent	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3
All	0.6	0.1	3.1	3.8
To Ireland from:				
Northern Ireland	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.5
UK ex N. Ireland	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.5
Continent	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.2
All	0.5	0.1	1.6	2.2

Note:

~ : Not applicable

Source: Central Statistical Office Ireland

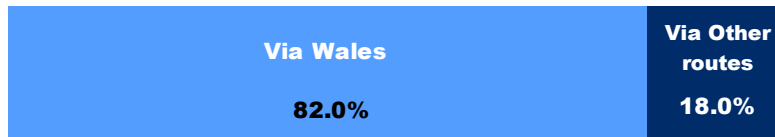
¹ Source: Central Statistical Office Ireland

Chart 6: Proportion of Goods carried from/to Republic of Ireland, 2019

From the Republic of Ireland



To the Republic of Ireland



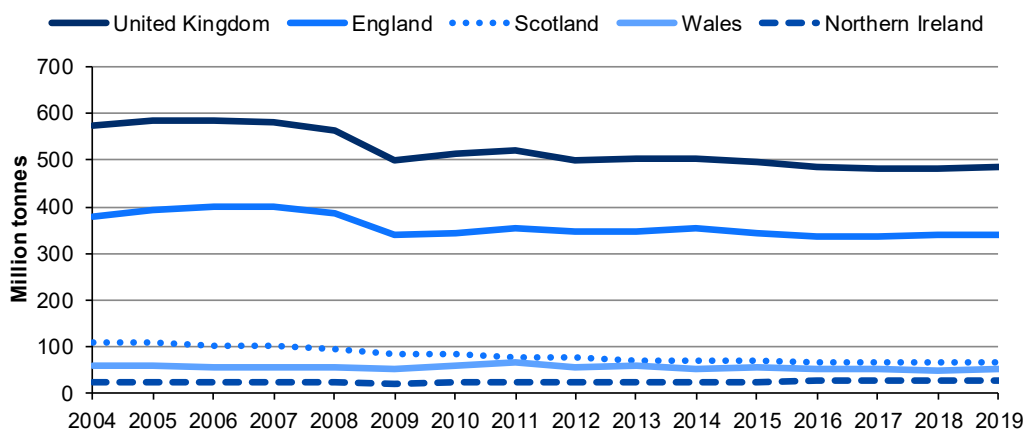
Source: Welsh Government analysis of Central Statistical Office

Welsh Ports compared with the rest of the United Kingdom Ports

For the UK as a whole, Grimsby and Immingham remained the UK's leading port in 2019 in terms of freight tonnage, handling 54.1 Mt (11.1% of UK tonnage). It was followed by London with 54.0 Mt (11.1% of UK tonnage), and the Welsh port of Milford Haven in 3rd position, handling 35.0 Mt of freight (7.2% of UK tonnage).

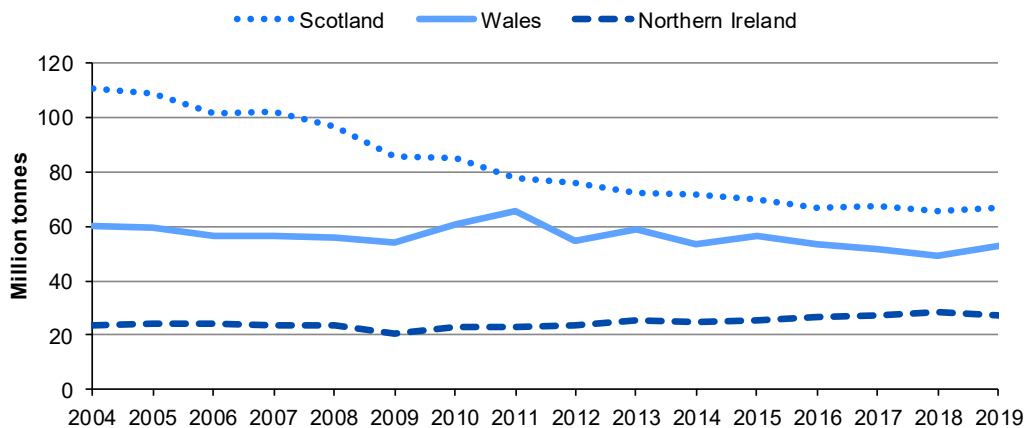
There was a slight downward trend between 2005 and 2009 in the volume of total sea freight tonnage in Wales ([Charts 7a and 7b](#)). This coincided with a decrease in port tonnage through the rest of the UK. Since 2010 the amount of tonnage has fluctuated annually in both Wales and the rest of the UK. Wales saw a peak in sea freight tonnage during 2011 where a total 65.5 Mt passed through Welsh ports. At UK level, there has been a slight decrease since 2010. Scotland has continued to see decreases whereas freight in Northern Ireland has increased gradually since 2009.

Chart 7a: All port tonnage through Wales and rest of UK, 2004 to 2019



Source: Department for Transport

Chart 7b: All port tonnage through Wales, Scotland and NI, 2004-2019



Source: Department for Transport

Total freight tonnage through UK ports in 2019 was 486.0 Mt (Table 2), a 0.6% increase on 2018, and 15.1% below the 2004 level. Compared with 2018, inwards tonnage increased by 1.6% to 315.0 Mt and outwards tonnage decreased by 1.2% to 171.1 Mt.

Wales saw a 13.3% increase (3.4% decrease) in freight traffic tonnage compared to 2018. The overall effect was a 7.7% increase in Wales's freight tonnage in 2019.

Table 2: All port traffic, inwards and outwards, by UK country, 2018 to 2019

	<i>Million tonnes</i>		<i>Per cent</i>	
	2018	2019	% change 2017 to 2018	
England				
Inwards	240	241	0.2%	▲
Outwards	100	98	-1.8%	▼
All	340	339	-0.4%	▼
Wales	0	0		
Inwards	33	37	13.3%	▲
Outwards	16	16	-3.4%	▼
All	49	53	7.7%	▲
Scotland	0	0		
Inwards	20	21	4.3%	▲
Outwards	45	46	1.2%	▲
All	65	67	2.1%	▲
Northern Ireland	0	0		
Inwards	17	17	-4.0%	▼
Outwards	11	11	-2.8%	▼
All	28	27	-3.5%	▼
United Kingdom	0	0		
Inwards	310	315	1.6%	▲
Outwards	173	171	-1.2%	▼
All	483	486	0.6%	▲

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Department for Transport data

[Statswales](#)

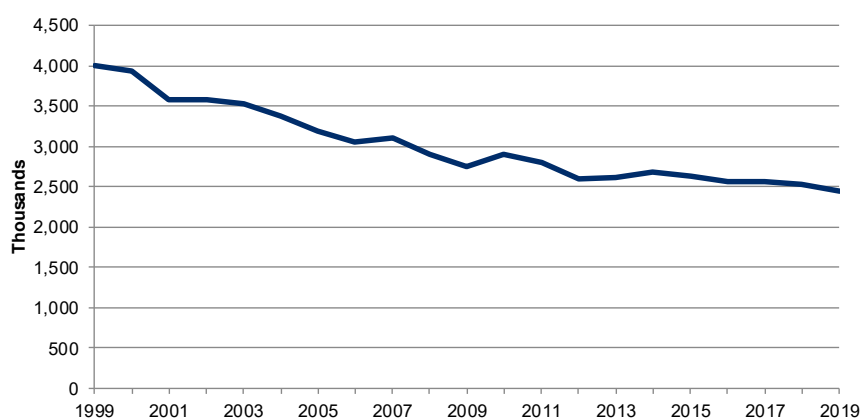
Section 2: Sea Passengers

The number of ferry passengers using Welsh ports fell consistently from 1999 to 2012 and has remained roughly stable since ([Table 3](#)) (Chart 8).

The main Welsh ports used by passengers are Fishguard, Milford Haven and Holyhead. Since 1999, passenger movements between Ireland and Welsh ferry ports fell by 71.6% at Fishguard, 34.0% at Milford Haven and 25.8% at Holyhead.

In 2019 sea passenger traffic through Holyhead and Fishguard decreased by 1.4% and 20.1% whilst Milford Haven registered a 0.3% increase.

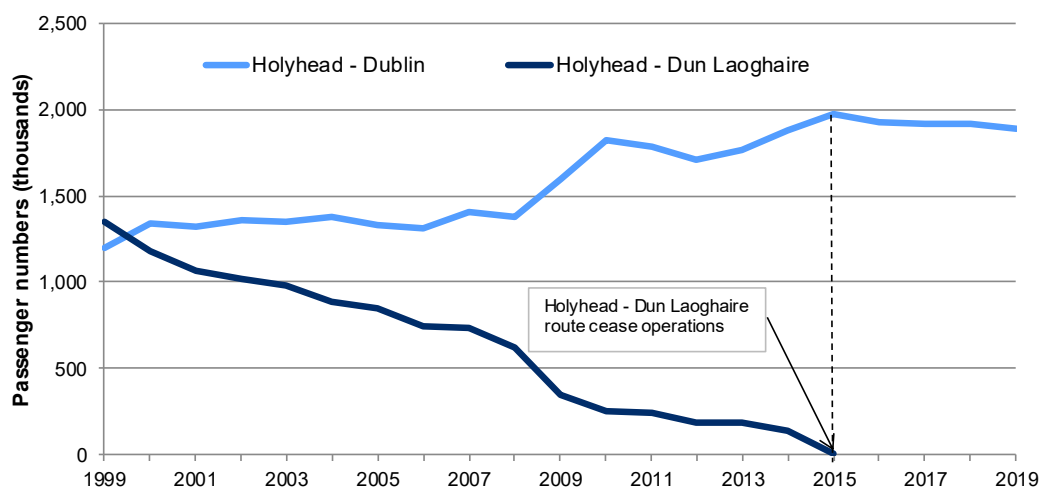
Chart 8: Sea Passengers between Wales and Irish Republic Ports, 1999 to 2019



Source: Department for Transport

Holyhead accounts for three quarters of passenger traffic between Wales and the Republic of Ireland. Historically, there were two routes between Holyhead and the Irish Republic (Dublin and Dun Laoghaire). The route to Dun Laoghaire was the busiest in 1998 with over 1.7 million passenger movements, however following a consistent decline it was removed in 2015. Alongside this, the Holyhead to Dublin route saw an overall increase in passenger numbers from just over 1 million in 1998 to just under 1.9 million in 2019, an increase of 79%. The number of passengers decreased from 1.91 million in 2018 to 1.89 million (1.4%) in 2019 ([Chart 9](#)).

Chart 9: Passenger numbers between Holyhead and the Republic of Ireland



Source: Department for Transport

Table 3: Sea passenger traffic between (both to and from) Wales and the Irish Republic by port, 1998 to 2019 (a)(b)

								<i>Thousands</i>
	Holyhead - Dublin	Holyhead - Dun Laoghaire	Holyhead - all routes	Mostyn - Dublin	Fishguard - Rosslare	Milford Haven - Rosslare	Swansea - Cork	Total Annual Sea Passengers
1998	1,051	1,724	2,775	-	810	512	158	4,255
1999	1,193	1,348	2,541	-	830	495	133	3,999
2000	1,342	1,176	2,518	-	832	463	124	3,937
2001	1,316	1,064	2,380	5	687	388	122	3,582
2002	1,354	1,017	2,371	44	662	387	121	3,585
2003	1,350	984	2,333	48	645	384	118	3,528
2004	1,376	887	2,262	10	614	378	116	3,380
2005	1,327	847	2,173	.	590	321	100	3,184
2006	1,311	745	2,057	.	584	333	81	3,055
2007	1,404	734	2,138	.	597	379	-	3,114
2008	1,374	622	1,996	.	554	345	-	2,895
2009	1,598	343	1,942	.	501	315	-	2,757
2010	1,821	252	2,073	.	419	325	94	2,910
2011	1,781	238	2,020	.	410	313	59	2,802
2012	1,709	189	1,898	.	364	329	.	2,591
2013	1,766	188	1,954	.	333	328	.	2,615
2014	1,875	139	2,013	.	351	322	.	2,686
2015	1,970	.	1,970	.	327	335	.	2,632
2016	1,927	.	1,927	.	298	339	.	2,564
2017	1,920	.	1,920	.	303	341	.	2,565
2018	1,914	.	1,914	.	295	326	.	2,534
2019	1,886	.	1,886	.	235	327	.	2,448

Notes:

(a) Totals may not add up due to rounding.

(b) '-' nil or less than half the final digit shown, '.' data is not applicable

Source: Department for Transport

- In 2019, a total of 2.4 million sea passengers travelled between Wales and Ireland. 1.9 million of these passed through Holyhead with the remainder using the ports of Fishguard and Milford Haven (see [StatsWales](#)). There were also 686,000 accompanied passenger vehicles in 2019, representing a 0.6% decrease compared to 2018 figure.

Key quality information

1 Context

1.1 Related publications

The Department for Transport produces a range of [statistics relating to the maritime sector](#) presenting information on domestic waterborne freight, ports, sea passengers, shipping fleets and sea farers.

Transport Scotland produce a compendium publication titled '[Scottish Transport Statistics](#)' which includes a chapter on Water Transport.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency publish an annual statistics bulletin titled '[Northern Ireland Ports Traffic](#)' providing statistics on passenger and freight traffic through Northern Ireland ports.

1.2 Symbols

In tables where figures have been rounded to the nearest final digit, there may be an apparent discrepancy between the sum of the constituent items and the total shown.

The following symbols have been used throughout the bulletin:

- nil or less than half the final digit shown
- .
- not applicable

2. Relevance

These figures are compiled by the Department for Transport (DfT) and Central Statistical Office Ireland (CSO Ireland). The UK-level data, together with a full description of the sources and methods used to compile these data can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#). These statistics are used within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor trends in sea transport and as a baseline for further analysis. They are also used by Welsh Government to assess the impact of the UK's departure from the European Union.

3. Accuracy

Freight data

Source of data: 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. The current collection arrangements for port freight traffic statistics were introduced on 1 January 2000 to meet the requirements of the European Commission (EC) Maritime Statistics Directive (Council Directive 95/64/EC on statistical returns in respect of the carriage of goods and passengers by sea, recast as Directive 2009/42/EC).

Coverage: The statistics relate to traffic to and from ports in Wales. UK-level figures do not cover ports in the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.

Major and minor ports: Ports are classified as either major or minor by DfT on the basis of current and historical trends in cargo volumes. More detailed data are collected for major ports than for the minor ports, and this is reflected in the statistics which can be produced.

Weights: All weights are tonnes gross, including crates and other packaging. The tare weights of containers, road goods vehicles, trailers and other items of transport equipment (i.e. the unloaded weight of the vehicle or equipment itself) are excluded.

Cargo types: Major port traffic is classified by cargo type. Cargo type is defined primarily in terms of the means by which the goods are loaded onto or off the vessel - although for some cargo types there is some further subdivision into broad commodities, the method of loading takes priority. A table of cargo types is shown below.

Category	Description	Cargo Code
Unitised traffic		
Containers	20 ft freight units	31
	40 ft freight units	32
	Freight units > 20 ft & < 40 ft	33
	Freight units > 40 ft	34
Roll-on/Roll-off (self-propelled)	Road goods vehicles with or without accompanying trailers	51
	Passenger cars, motorcycles and accompanying trailers/caravans	52
	Passenger buses	53
	Import/Export motor vehicles	54
	Live animals on the hoof	56
	Other mobile self-propelled units	59
Roll-on/Roll-off (non self-propelled)	Unaccompanied road goods trailers & semi-trailers	61
	Unaccompanied caravans and other road, agricultural and industrial vehicles	62
	Rail wagons, shipborne port to port trailers, and shipborne barges engaged in goods transport	63
	Other mobile non self-propelled units	69
Non-unitised traffic		
Liquid Bulk	Liquefied gas	11
	Crude oil	12
	Oil products	13
	Other liquid bulk products	19
Dry Bulk	Ores	21
	Coal	22
	Agricultural products	23
	Other dry bulk	29
Other general cargo	Forestry products	91
	Iron and steel products	92
	Other general cargo & containers < 20 ft	99

Unitised goods: Goods which are lifted on or off the vessel in large (20 foot or longer) shipping containers, or rolled on or off in one of a variety of self propelled or towed units are said to be unitised cargoes. For these cargo types, the number of units as well as the weight of goods is recorded. Subsets of unitised goods are main freight units consisting of all containers and those ro-ro units which are designed to carry freight (categories 51, 61 and 63 above). The purpose of the main freight unit classification is that it excludes those ro-ro units which are not freight carrying – i.e. passenger vehicles, trade vehicles, and other specialised vehicles and trailers.

Geographical classification of traffic: UK port traffic is classified geographically according to where the goods were last loaded or next unloaded at the other end of the sea journey. All traffic is either domestic or foreign.

Sea passenger data

These figures are compiled by the Department for Transport (DfT). UK-level data, together with a full description of the sources and methods used to compile these data can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Source of data: International ferry passenger statistics are collected monthly from ferry operators by DfT. They include drivers of lorries, coaches and other vehicles but exclude passengers on purely domestic routes.

Ship arrival statistics

They are compiled by the Department for Transport (DfT) and a link to the UK-level data, together with a full description of the sources and methods used to compile these data can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Source of data: The primary source used was commercially obtained vessel movement data from Lloyds List Intelligence (LLI) which is now merged with other information on ship movements obtained by DfT through the system described above for all cargo or passenger carrying movements at major ports and the sea passenger survey. The three data sources are merged at the level of individual vessels calling at each port. The maximum number of calls from any of the three sources is taken as the final estimate.

Coverage and quality: The data are considered a reasonably accurate estimate of the number of commercial shipping movements at UK ports, but are not necessarily exact, and the coverage of certain vessel or traffic types may be variable at the margins. Ship arrival data are not classified as National Statistics. The following table shows the classification of ships types and the ships arrival that are not covered.

Ship type	Trading status	Vessel types included
Tankers	Trading	Oil tanker, oil-chemical tanker, chemical tanker, liquid gas tanker, other tanker
Ro-Ro vessels	Trading	Ro-Ro passenger, Ro-Ro containers, Ro-Ro other cargo
Fully cellular container vessels	Trading	Container (fully cellular)
Other dry cargo vessels	Trading	Bulk carrier, bulk-oil carrier, refrigerated cargo, specialised carrier, general cargo, general cargo-passenger
Passenger*	Trading	Passenger, cruise
Other vessels*	Non-trading	Offshore supply, dredging, bunkering tanker
Not included: Work boats which are unlikely to be carrying cargoes	Non-trading	Fish catching, other fishing, offshore (except supply), tugs or towing/pushing craft, offshore vessels other than supply ships, such as drilling vessels, pilot vessels, research ships, fishing boats, military vessels, research, other work vessels, non-seagoing ships, non-merchant ships, non-propelled vessels, non-ship structures, vessels of unknown or unrecorded type

4. Timeliness and punctuality

This bulletin reports on Sea Transport in Wales during 2019. Information covers traffic to and from ports in Wales. UK-level figures do not cover ports in the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands. This bulletin is based on annual data which is published by the Department for Transport.

Related publications are available from the [Statistics and Research website](#).

Sea Transport statistics for Wales are available on the [StatsWales website](#).

5. Accessibility and clarity

This statistical bulletin is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics & Research website and is accompanied by tables on our [StatsWales website](#).

6. Comparability and coherence

The Department for Transport produces a range of [statistics relating to the maritime sector](#) presenting information on domestic waterborne freight, ports, sea passengers, shipping fleets and sea farers.

National Statistics status

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate. The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in July 2013 following a [full assessment against the Code of Practice](#).

Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Improved visuals by de-cluttering and standardising charts and tables

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016 and this release does not include any of the national indicators.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Further details

The document is available at: [Sea Transport](#)

Next update

November 2021 (provisional)

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided to: stats.transport@gov.wales

Open Government Licence

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated.

