Freight Rail Usage and Performance 2019-20 Q3 Statistical Release

Background

This release contains information on rail freight usage and performance in Great Britain with the latest quarterly data from October, November and December 2019 (Q3).

The statistics cover:

- **freight moved**,
- **freight lifted**,
- **freight delivery metric (FDM)**,
- **freight delays per 100 train km**, and
- **freight train km by operator**.

Data are sourced from Network Rail, Freight Operating Companies (FOCs) and Department for Transport (DfT).
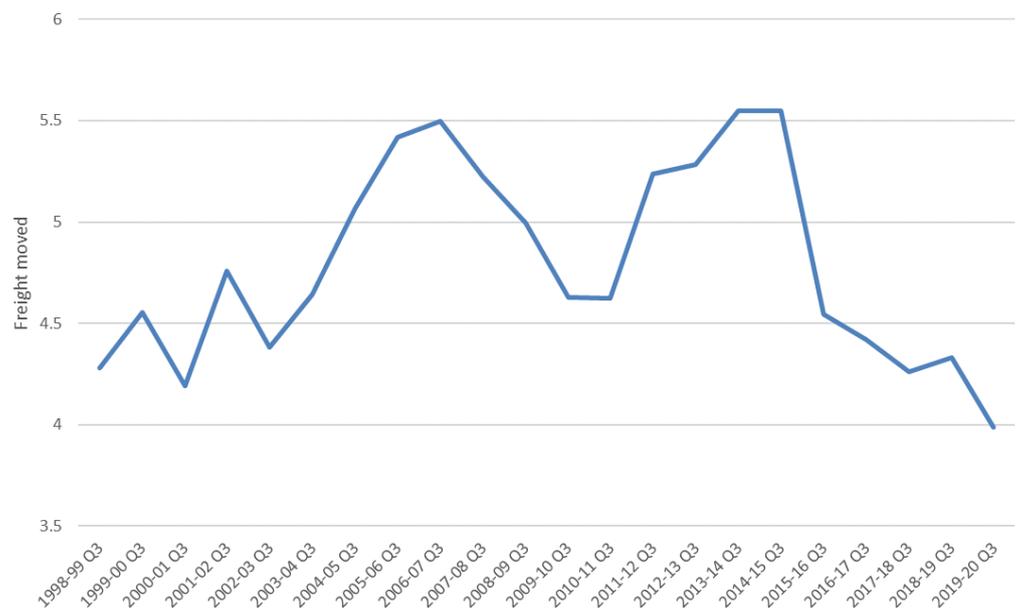
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Quarter 3 freight moved (billion net tonne kilometres), 1998-99 Q3 to 2019-20 Q3

The total volume of rail **freight moved** was 3.99 billion net tonne kilometres in 2019-20 Q3, an 8% decrease compared with 2018-19 Q3.

Domestic Intermodal accounted for 42% of all freight moved in 2019-20 Q3. The share for Domestic Intermodal has increased by 13 percentage points over the last five years (since 2014-15 Q3).

The total amount of **freight lifted** was 15.3 million tonnes in 2019-20 Q3, a 20% decrease compared with 2018-19 Q3. This is the lowest total for any quarter since the time series began in 1996-97.

In 2019-20 Q3, 91.4% of trains met the **Freight Delivery Metric** (trains arriving within 15 minutes of their scheduled arrival time), which is the lowest for six years (since 2013-14 Q3).

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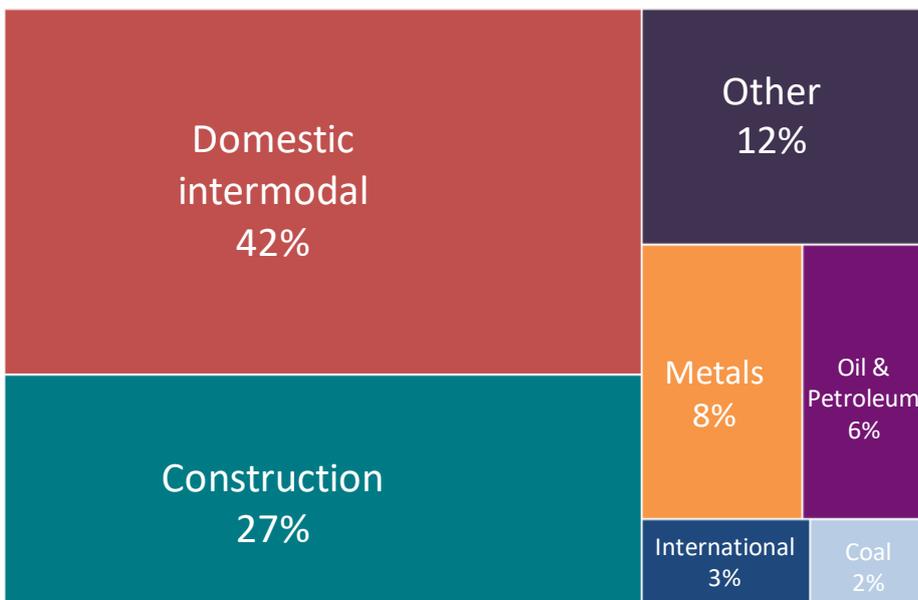
1. Freight moved

2019-20 Q3

Total freight moved by rail was 3.99 billion net tonne kilometres in 2019-20 Q3, which is the lowest recorded in any quarter for over 20 years. This is an 8% decrease compared to Q3 last year. This was affected by the continued decline in coal.

Domestic Intermodal[1] (42%) accounts for the largest commodity share of rail freight moved, followed by Construction (27%).

Whilst the year-on-year absolute total for Domestic Intermodal remains the same (1.67 billion net tonne kilometres), its market share has risen by 13 percentage points over the last five years (since 2014-15 Q3).

There were decreases in International (down 11%), Oil & Petroleum (down 9%), Metals (down 6%) and Construction (down 2%), compared to 2018-19 Q3.

Figure 1.01: Share by commodity: volume of rail freight moved, 2019-20 Q3 (Table 13.7)

Freight moved data, measured in net tonne kilometres, shows the amount of freight which is moved on the railway network, taking into account the weight of the load and the distance carried.

Freight moved is disaggregated by seven commodities which are also summed to provide an overall total freight moved. The seven commodities are coal, metals, construction, oil and petroleum, international, domestic intermodal and other.

In addition to the seven commodities listed above, the amount of goods used for railway engineering work is also reported, under the 'infrastructure' category. This is not included in the totals published in the freight moved tables and charts.

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[1] Domestic Intermodal is traffic not destined through or to the Channel Tunnel (containerised goods transported by two or more modes of transport within the UK)

2. Freight lifted

2019-20 Q3

The total amount of freight lifted in 2019-20 Q3 was 15.3 million tonnes, a 20% decrease compared to Q3 last year. This is the lowest total since the time series began in 1996-97.

There were 13.9 million tonnes of 'other' (non-coal) freight lifted in 2019-20 Q3. This was the lowest quarterly figure in over seven years; down 13% on the same quarter last year.

The long-term downward trend for coal continued in 2019-20 Q3 with 1.4 million tonnes lifted. This is a reduction of 56% compared with 3.1 million tonnes of coal lifted in 2018-19 Q3.

Freight lifted is the mass of goods carried on the rail network measured in tonnes, excluding the weight of the locomotives and wagons. Unlike freight moved it takes no account of the distance travelled.

Freight lifted information is sourced from the four major Freight Operating Companies (FOCs): DB Cargo UK, Freightliner Ltd, Direct Rail Services (DRS) and GB Railfreight.

Figure 2.01: Freight lifted (million tonnes), Great Britain, 2008-09 Q3 to 2019-20 Q3 (Table 13.6)
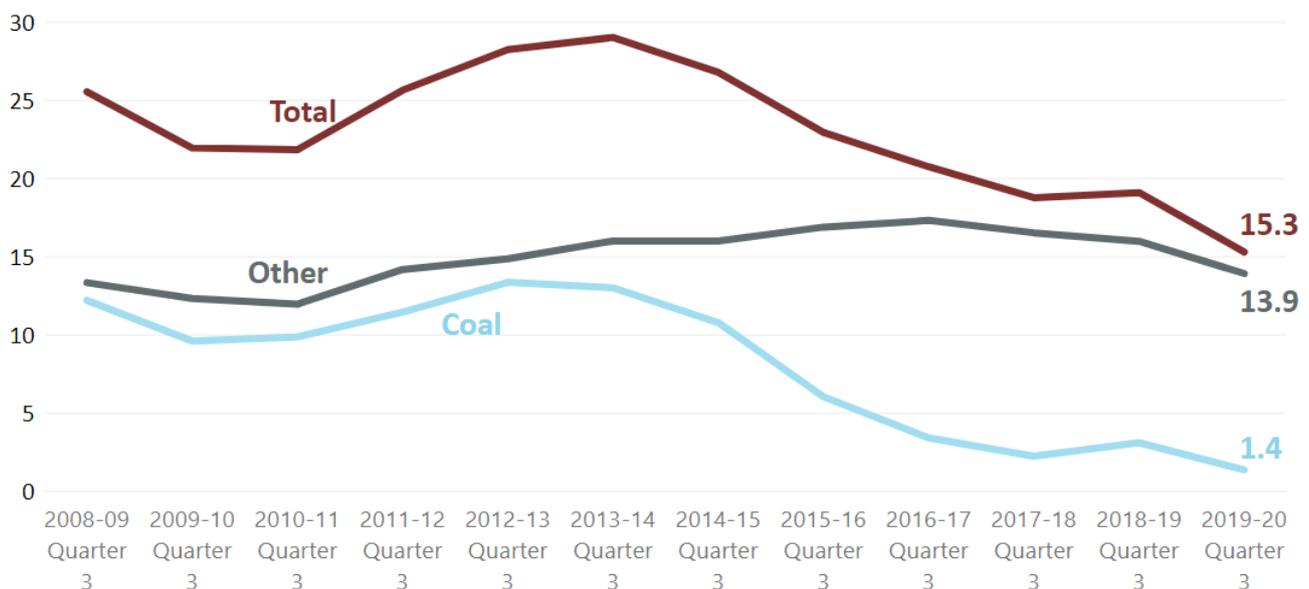
3. Freight Delivery Metric

The **Freight Delivery Metric (FDM)** is the percentage of freight trains that arrive at their destination within 15 minutes of their scheduled arrival time. Freight trains are only considered to have failed FDM where the delay was attributed to Network Rail. The **moving annual average (MAA)** reflects the proportion of trains that met FDM in the past 12 months. In Q4, the MAA also represents the FDM for the financial year.

A higher score indicates better performance.

2019-20 Q3

In 2019-20 Q3, the Freight Delivery Metric was 91.4%, which is the lowest for six years (since 2013-14 Quarter 3). This FDM was down 1.6 percentage points compared to a year ago.

For the first time since 2018-19 Q2, the quarterly FDM was lower compared with the same quarter a year earlier. The quarterly FDM moving annual average (MAA) stands at 93.8%, which is 0.8 percentage points higher than 2018-19 Q3.

Figure 3.01: FDM, Great Britain, 2017-18 Q1 to 2019-20 Q3 (Table 3.41)
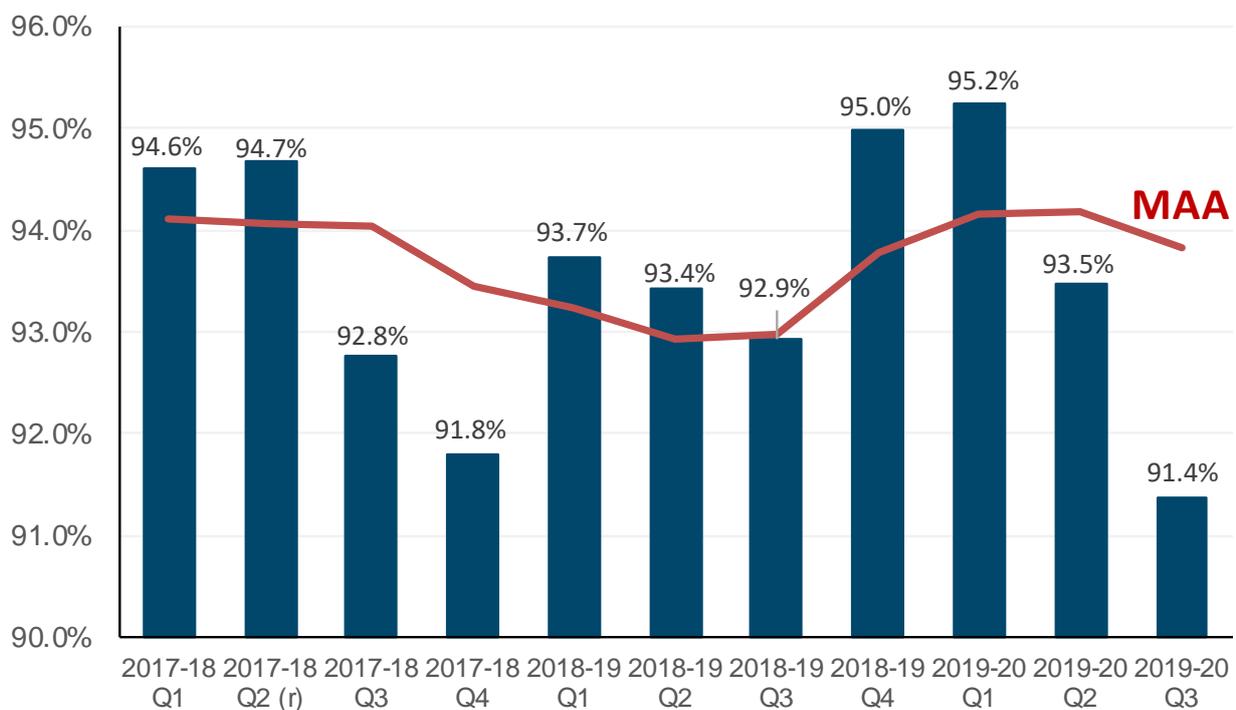
4. Freight delay per 100 train kilometres

2019-20 Q3

Freight delay in 2019-20 Q3 was 13.18 minutes per 100 train kilometres. This represents a 3% increase in delays since 2018-19 Q3.

There has been slight increase in freight delay (deterioration) over the past four years in Quarter 3. Since 2015-16 Q3 there has been a rise of 1.2 minutes per 100 train kilometres.

Freight delay per 100 train kilometres is a normalised measure of delay experienced by FOCs.

The measure is calculated from the total delay experienced by all GB freight operators divided by their train mileage.

Freight train mileage can fluctuate depending on demand so a normalised measure allows for comparison over time regardless of changing levels of freight traffic on the network.

Freight delay per 100 train kilometres usually peaks in Q3 and Q4 each year, coinciding with the expected periods of adverse weather, during autumn and winter.

Figure 4.01: Normalised freight delay per 100 train kilometres, Great Britain, 2007-08 Q3 to 2019-20 Q3 (Table 13.5)
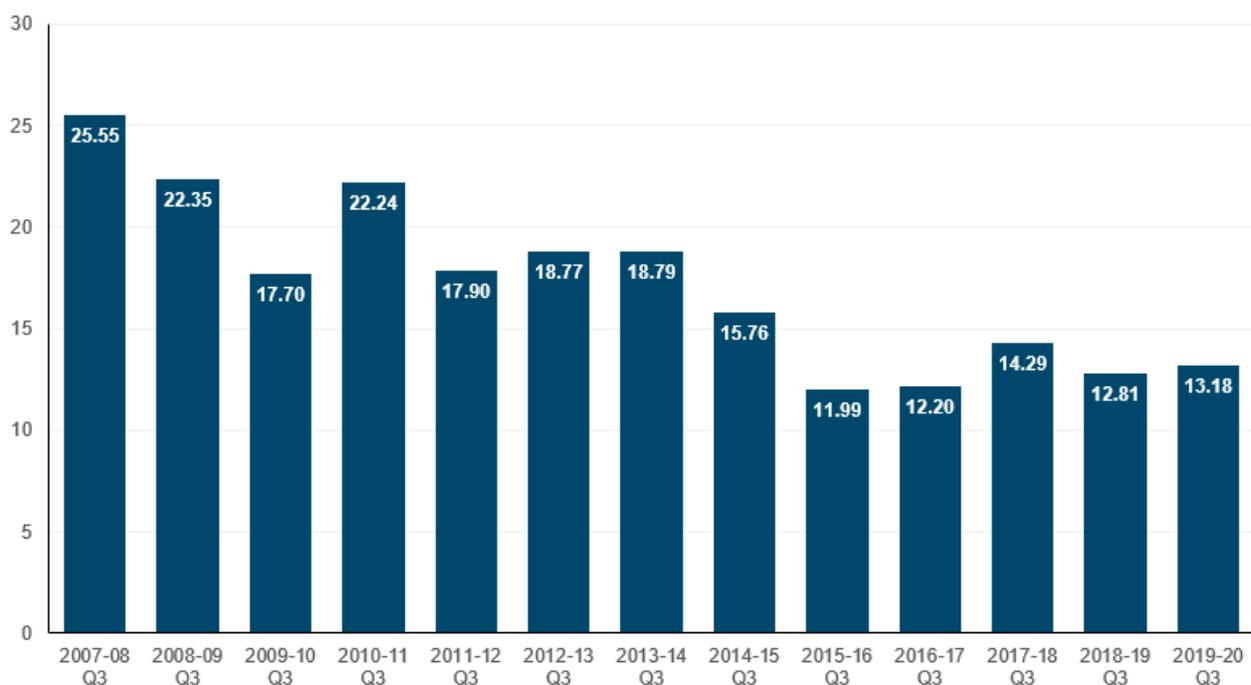
5. Freight train kilometres by operator

Freight train kilometres is the actual mileage in kilometres operated by FOCs on Network Rail infrastructure

The data is sourced from Network Rail's Track Access Billing System (TABS) and covers only the mileages charged through TABS.

Please see the accompanying quality report for more information.

2019-20 Q3

Total freight train kilometres in 2019-20 Q3 was 8.1 million kilometres, which is a 3% decrease compared with the same quarter last year.

DB Cargo UK (2.9 million km), Freightliner (2.1 million km) and GB Railfreight (1.7 million km) have the highest freight train kilometres. The most notable change in kilometres travelled is for Direct Rail Services with an increase of 41%.

DB Cargo UK retained the highest market share of kilometres travelled (36%), a reduction of 10 percentage points over the last five years (since 2014-15 Q3). Whilst DB Cargo UK has seen a reduction in market share, both Freightliner and GB Railfreight have risen.

Figure 5.01: Percentage share of freight train kilometres by FOC, Great Britain, 2014-15 Q3 and 2019-20 Q3 (Table 13.25)
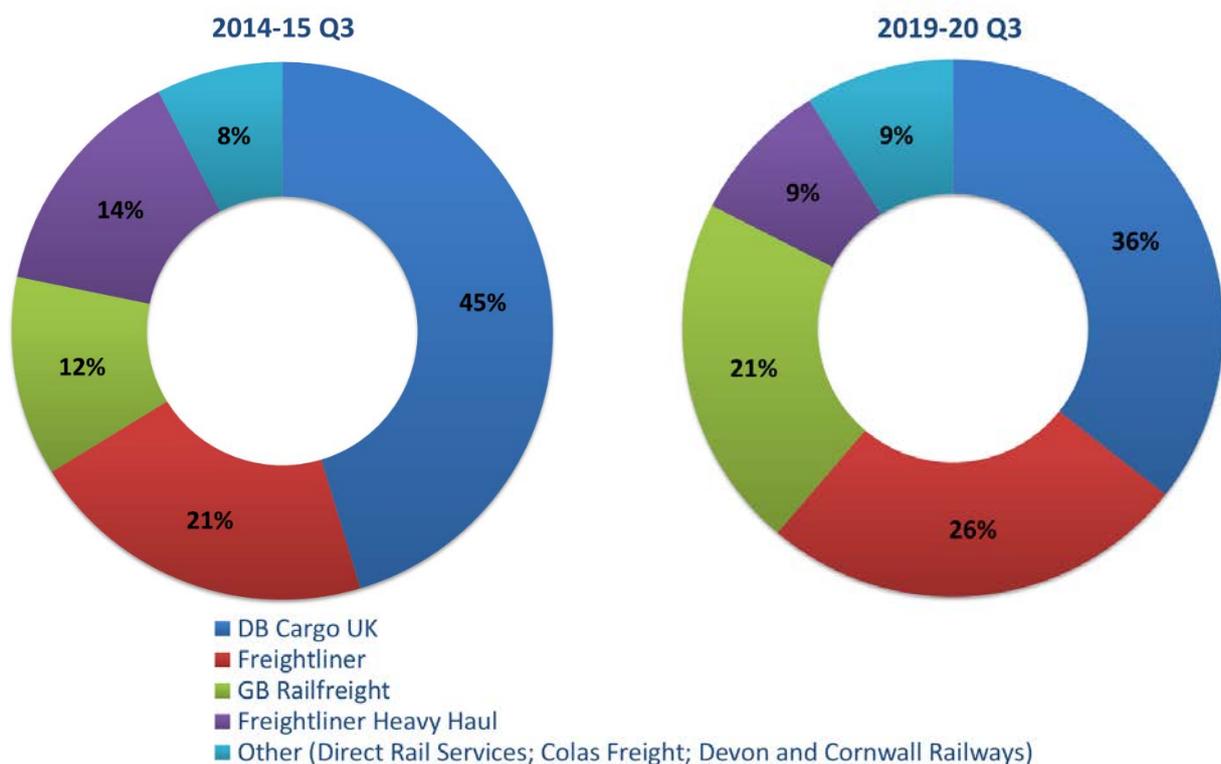
Annex 1 – List of data tables available on the ORR data portal

All data tables can be accessed on the ORR data portal free of charge and can be downloaded in Excel format. We can provide data in csv or ods format on request.

Freight moved

- Freight moved, 1982-83 to 2018-19 (annual), 1998-99 Q1 to 2019-20 Q3 (quarterly) – Table 13.7

Freight lifted

- Freight lifted, 1982-83 to 2018-19 (annual), 1996-97 Q1 to 2019-20 Q3 (quarterly) – Table 13.6

Freight delivery metric (FDM)

- FDM, 2012-13 Q4 to 2019-20 Q3 (quarterly) – Table 3.41

Freight delay minutes per 100 train kilometres

- Normalised freight delay, 2007-08 to 2018-19 (annual), 2007-08 Q1 to 2019-20 Q3 (quarterly) – Table 13.5

Freight train kilometres by operator

- Freight train kilometres, 2010-11 to 2018-19 (annual), 2010-11 Q1 to 2019-20 Q3 (quarterly) – Table 13.25

Freight market indicators (Q4/annual publications only)

- Number of freight train movements, 2003-04 to 2018-19 – Table 13.10
- Impact on rail haulage, 2004-05 to 2017-18 – Table 13.8
- Rail market share, 1998 to 2017 – Table 13.12

Revisions

There are minor revisions to the previously published data. Further details can be found at: Revisions Log.

Methodology and Quality

For more information on data collection and the methodology used to calculate the statistics in this release please see the accompanying Quality Report.

Annex 2 – Statistical Releases

ORR's National Statistics accredited statistical releases consist of annual and quarterly themed releases:

Annual

- Rail Finance

- Rail Fares Index

- Rail Safety Statistics

- Rail Infrastructure and Assets

- Rail Emission

- Regional Rail Usage

Quarterly

- Passenger Rail Performance

- Freight Rail Usage and Performance

- Passenger Rail Usage

- Passenger Rail Service Complaints

In addition to the above, ORR publishes the following Official Statistics on the data portal:

Annual

- Estimates of Station Usage

- Train Operating Company Key Statistics

- Rail Statistics Compendium

- Occupational Health

Quarterly

- Signals passed at danger (SPADS)

- Delay Compensation Claims

- Disabled Person's Railcard (DPRC)

- Passenger assistance

A full list of publication dates for the next twelve months can be found in the [release schedule](#) on the data portal.

The Department for Transport (DfT) also publishes a range of rail statistics which can be found at [DfT Rail Statistics](#). For example, Rail passenger numbers and overcrowding on weekdays in major cities. They also publish road freight statistics which can be found at [Road freight: domestic and international statistics](#) and includes statistics on freight transported between road and rail.

Transport Focus publish the [National Rail Passenger Survey](#) (NRPS).

National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority 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 Official Statistics.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm - Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). The OSR considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is ORR'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 OSR promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Our statistical releases hold National Statistics status since being assessed[2] in 2012. Since our assessment we have improved the content, presentation and quality of our statistical releases. Also, in July 2019 we launched our new data portal. Therefore in late 2019 we worked with the OSR to conduct a compliance check to ensure we are still meeting the standards of the Code. A letter[3] was published on 4 November 2019 confirming that ORR's statistics should continue to be designated as National Statistics. OSR found many positive aspects in the way that we produce and present our statistics and welcomed the range of improvements made since the statistics were last assessed in 2012. OSR identified some areas that we could consider that may enhance the value of the statistics further and we are working on these.

For more information on how we adhere to the Code please see our compliance statements at: dataportal.orr.gov.uk/code-of-practice/.

For more details, please contact the Statistics Head of Profession Lyndsey Melbourne at rail.stats@orr.gov.uk.

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[2] https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/media/1334/uksa-assessment.pdf

[3] https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/compliance-check-office-rail-and-road-statistics/