Freight rail usage and performance

January to March 2026

11 June 2026

Background:

This quarterly statistical release contains information on the usage and performance of rail freight in Great Britain.

It also contains more detailed information by freight operator.

Numbers presented in this release are rounded.

Sources: Network Rail, freight operators, Department for Transport

Latest quarter: 1 January to 31 March 2026

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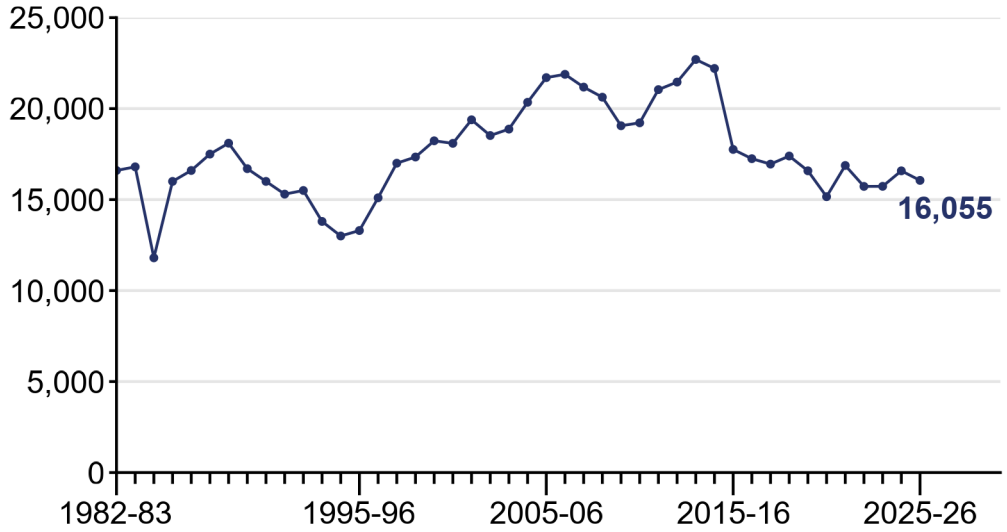
Next publication:
22 September 2026

In this release, freight rail usage and performance levels are presented for the latest year (1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026) and for the latest quarter (1 January to 31 March 2026).

Total **freight moved** was **16,055 million net tonne kilometres** in the latest year, down 3% compared with the previous year. Of this, by commodity, construction had the largest absolute reduction in freight moved (down 398 million net tonne kilometres).

Figure 1 Freight moved has generally decreased over the last decade

Freight moved (million net tonne kilometres), Great Britain, annual data, April 1982 to March 2026 (Table 1310)



Total **freight lifted** was **69.5 million tonnes** in the latest year, a decrease of 5% compared with the previous year.

Freight cancellations was **1.0%** in the latest year. This was the lowest level of cancellations in five years. We are proposing a change relating to the freight cancellations and lateness (FCaL) metric. Please see page 2 for more information.

All data tables, a quality and methodology report and an interactive dashboard associated with this release are published on the Freight rail usage and performance page on the ORR data portal.

1. Context

Proposed change to these statistics

We are proposing to remove content relating to **freight cancellations and lateness (FCaL)** from the next publication.

There has been a recent shift away from the use of FCaL in the rail industry. We would continue to focus on freight cancellations as a performance measure in future statistical releases. This would make the release more aligned with a similar measure in the 'Passenger rail performance' release. FCaL data will continue to be published on the data portal in:

- Table 1361 – Freight cancellations and lateness by Network Rail region (periodic)
- Table 1362 – Freight cancellations and lateness by Network Rail route (periodic)
- Table 1365 – Freight cancellations and lateness (quarterly)

Please provide any feedback on this proposal by contacting us at rail.stats@orr.gov.uk by 31 July 2026.

2. Freight moved

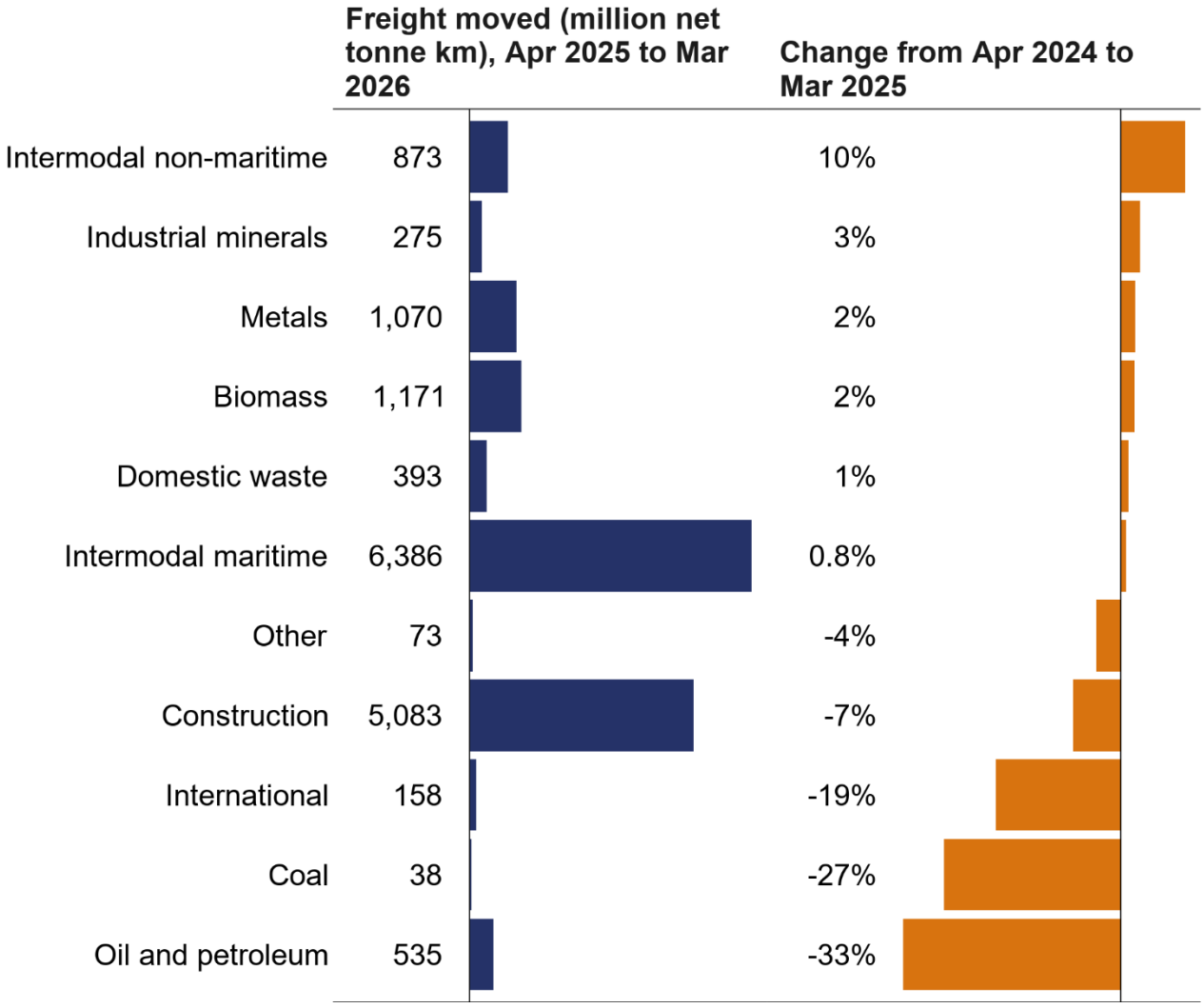
Freight moved measures the amount of freight moved on the railway network, taking into account the weight of the load and the distance carried, measured in net tonne kilometres.

April 2025 to March 2026 annual

Total freight moved was 16,055 million net tonne kilometres in the latest year. This was down 3% compared with the previous year.

Figure 2.1 Oil and petroleum freight moved decreased by a third compared with a year ago

Freight moved (million net tonne kilometres) by commodity, Great Britain, April 2025 to March 2026 and percentage change (rounded) from April 2024 to March 2025 (Table 1310)



Freight moved decreased for five commodities compared with the previous year. Of this, construction (down 7%) had the largest impact on the overall reduction with a market share of 32% of all freight moved. Urban high-rise development was subdued in part due to delays in processing building applications following the new tall buildings regulations, impacting the transport of concrete by freight. The reset of the HS2 programme led to a temporary pause in the transfer of materials to HS2 construction sites.

Oil and petroleum (down 33%) and international (down 19%) freight moved also had notable reductions. Oil and petroleum recorded 535 million net tonne kilometres, which was the lowest annual total since the time series began in 1998. The closure of the Grangemouth oil refinery in April 2025 and the cessation of the Lindsey oil refinery from June 2025 resulted in lower levels of fuel oil traffic. International recorded 158 million net tonne kilometres, which similarly was the lowest annual total since the start of the time series.

Freight moved increased for six commodities compared with the previous year. Of this, intermodal non-maritime (up 10%) had the largest impact on the overall increase (up 78 million net tonne kilometres). Retailer rail volumes were boosted by an additional service between Daventry and Coatbridge from November 2025 run by Direct Rail Services. Intermodal non-maritime recorded 873 million net tonne kilometres, which was the highest annual total since 2013.

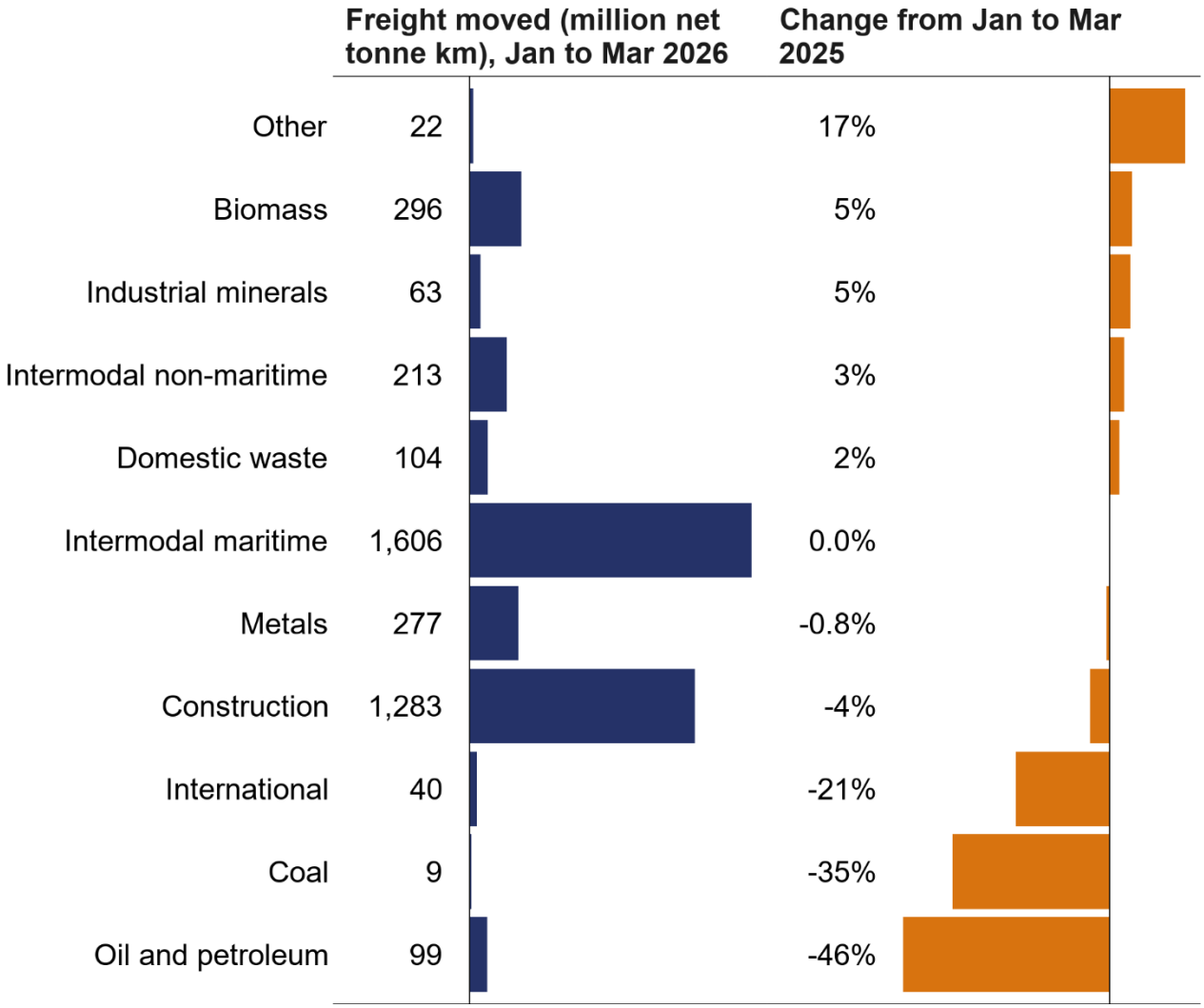
Intermodal maritime (up 0.8%) freight moved also increased. Retailers are utilising post-pandemic warehousing capacity to protect against supply chain shocks by moving from just-in-time to just-in-case inventory management. Intermodal maritime recorded 6,386 million net tonne kilometres, which was the highest annual total since 2018.

January to March 2026 quarter

In the latest quarter, total freight moved was 4,013 million net tonne kilometres. This was down 3% compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Figure 2.2 Oil and petroleum freight moved had the largest percentage decrease

Freight moved (million net tonne kilometres) by commodity, Great Britain, January to March 2026 and percentage change (rounded) from January to March 2025 (Table 1310)



Freight moved decreased for five commodities compared with the same quarter in the previous year. Of this, oil and petroleum (down 46%) had the largest impact on the overall reduction (down 85 million net tonne kilometres). Oil and petroleum recorded 99 million net tonne kilometres, which was the lowest quarter since the time series began in 1998.

International (down 21%) and construction (down 4%) freight moved also had notable reductions. International recorded 40 million net tonne kilometres, which was the lowest January to March quarter since the start of the time series. Construction has been affected

by continued low levels of construction activity in commercial, retail and residential developments.

Freight moved remained unchanged for intermodal maritime. It represents 40% of all freight moved, which is the largest market share of all the commodities.

Freight moved increased for five commodities compared with the same quarter in the previous year. Of this, biomass (up 5%) had the largest impact on the overall increase (up 14 million net tonne kilometres). Biomass recorded 296 million net tonne kilometres, which was the highest January to March quarter since 2021. The operation of both Drax and Lynemouth power stations since 2024 continues to influence this. Lynemouth was not generating power for a number of months in 2022 and 2023.

More information on the commodity groups can be found in the Freight quality and methodology report.

3. Freight lifted

Freight lifted is the mass of goods carried on the rail network measured in tonnes, excluding the weight of the locomotives and wagons.

April 2025 to March 2026 annual

There were 69.5 million tonnes of freight lifted in the latest year. This was down 5% compared with a year ago.

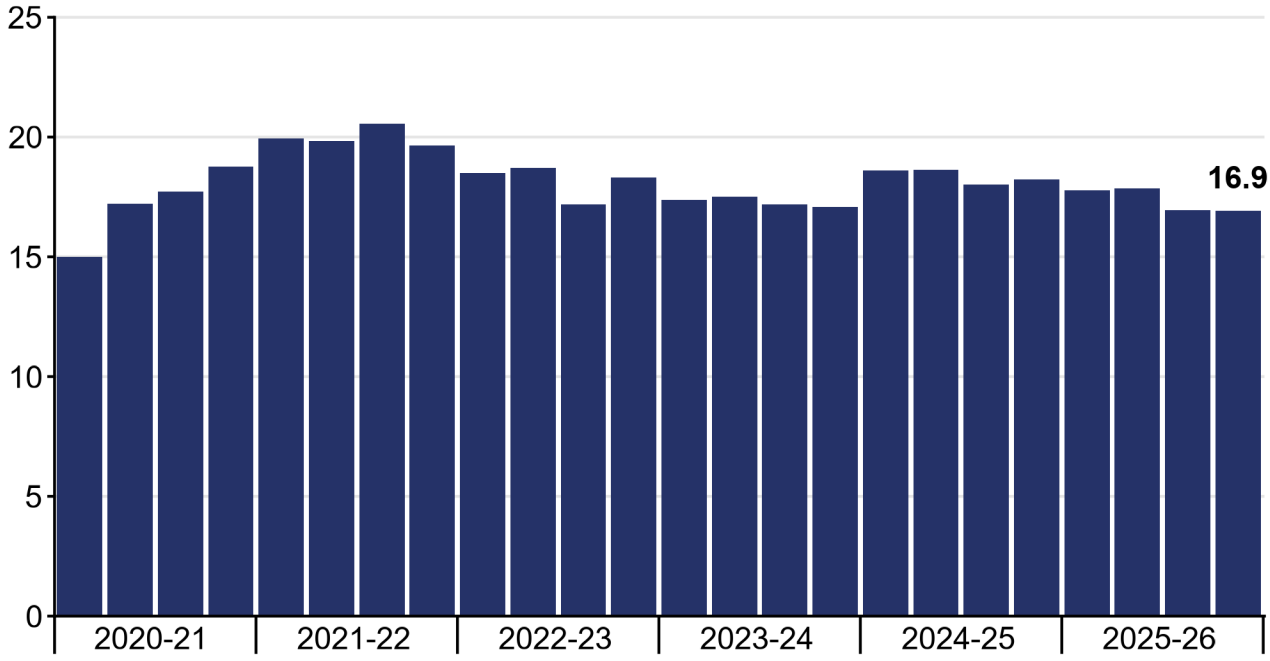
Of total freight lifted, 4.7 million tonnes was coal, which was up 9% compared with the previous year. The remaining 64.8 million tonnes were other commodities. This was down 6% compared with the previous year.

January to March 2026 quarter

The total amount of freight lifted in the latest quarter was 16.9 million tonnes. This was down 7% compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Figure 3.1 Freight lifted was lower than any quarter since April to June 2020

Freight lifted (million tonnes), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2020 to December 2025 (Table 1315)



Of total freight lifted, 1.1 million tonnes was coal, which was up 2% compared with the same quarter in the previous year. The remaining 15.8 million tonnes were other commodities. This was down 8% compared with the previous year.

4. Freight train and vehicle kilometres

Freight train kilometres is the actual kilometres travelled by freight operators on all mainline infrastructure, terminals and yards.

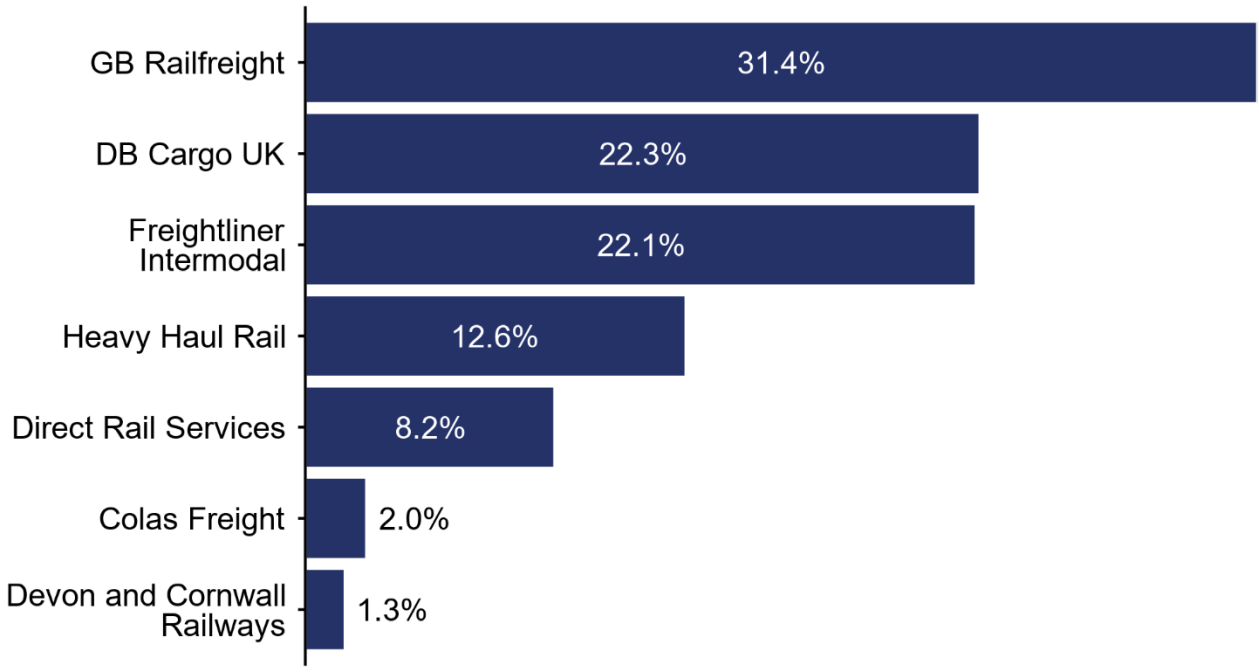
Freight vehicle kilometres is the actual vehicle kilometres travelled by freight operators on all mainline infrastructure, terminals and yards. This is calculated by multiplying the number of rail vehicles (e.g. coaches) by the distance travelled.

April 2025 to March 2026 annual

There were 30.3 million freight train kilometres in the latest year. This was down 5% compared with a year ago.

Figure 4.1 GB Railfreight make up nearly a third of freight train kilometres

Proportion of freight train kilometres by operator, Great Britain, annual data, April 2025 to March 2026 (Table 1333)

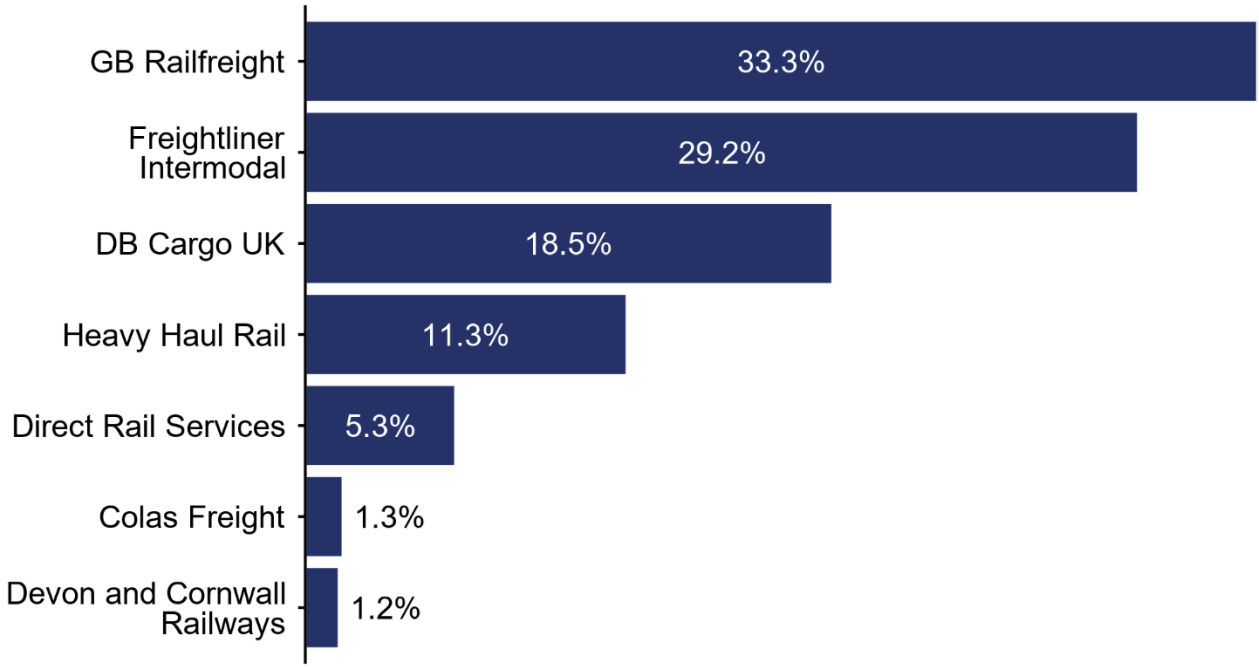


The operator with the largest share of train kilometres is GB Railfreight with 31.4%, slightly up on its share (30.3%) in the previous year.

There were 736.0 million freight vehicle kilometres in the latest year. This was down 1% compared with a year ago.

Figure 4.2 GB Railfreight make up a third of the share of freight vehicle kilometres

Proportion of freight vehicle kilometres by operator, Great Britain, annual data, April 2025 to March 2026 (Table 1343)



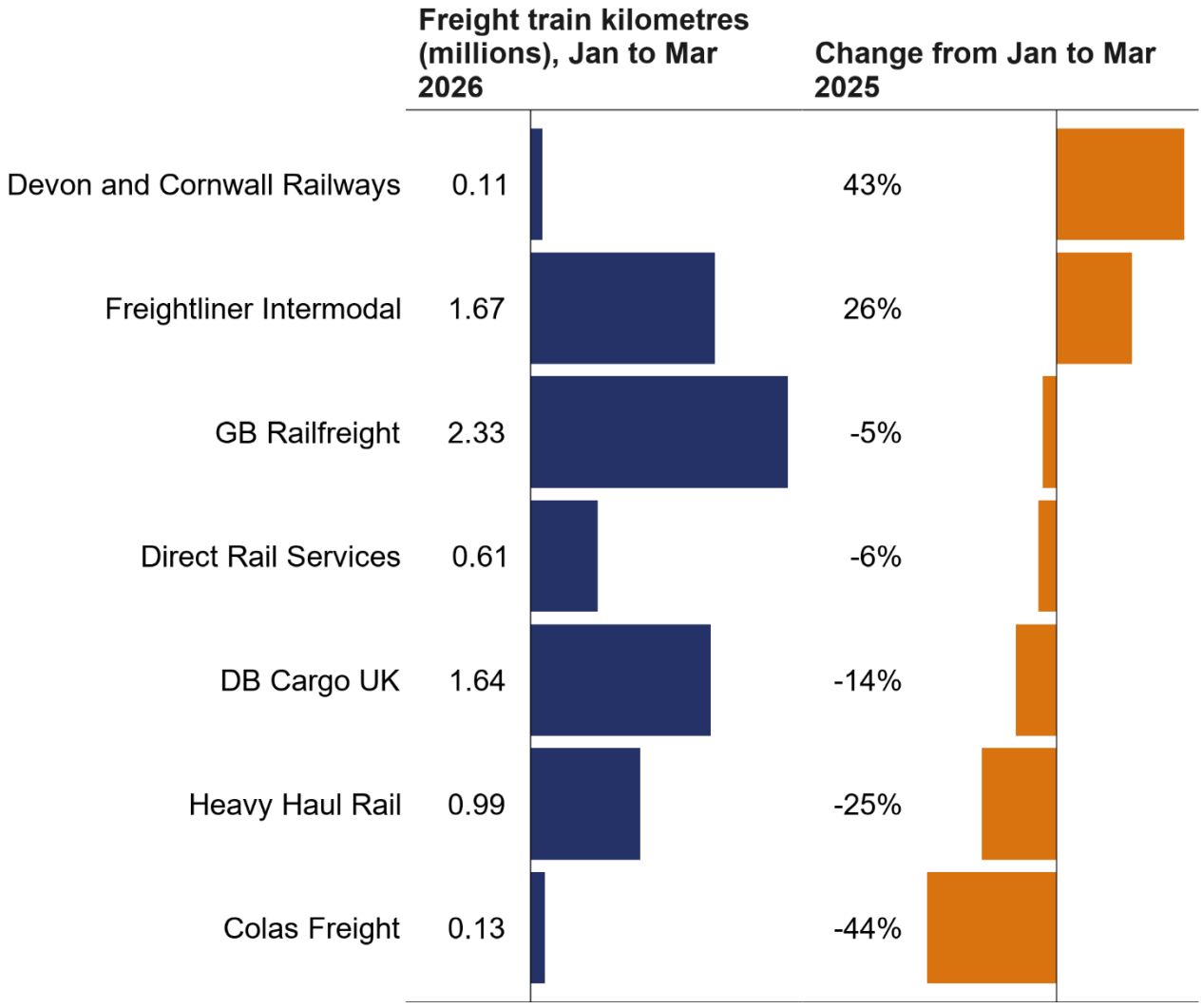
GB Railfreight had the largest share of vehicle kilometres, with a share of 33.3% This is higher than its share of 32.3% in the previous year.

January to March 2026 quarter

In the latest quarter, freight operators recorded 7.5 million train kilometres. This was down 6% compared with than the same quarter in the previous year. It was the lowest January to March quarter since the start of the time series in 2010.

Figure 4.3 Freight train kilometres decreased for a majority of operators compared with last year

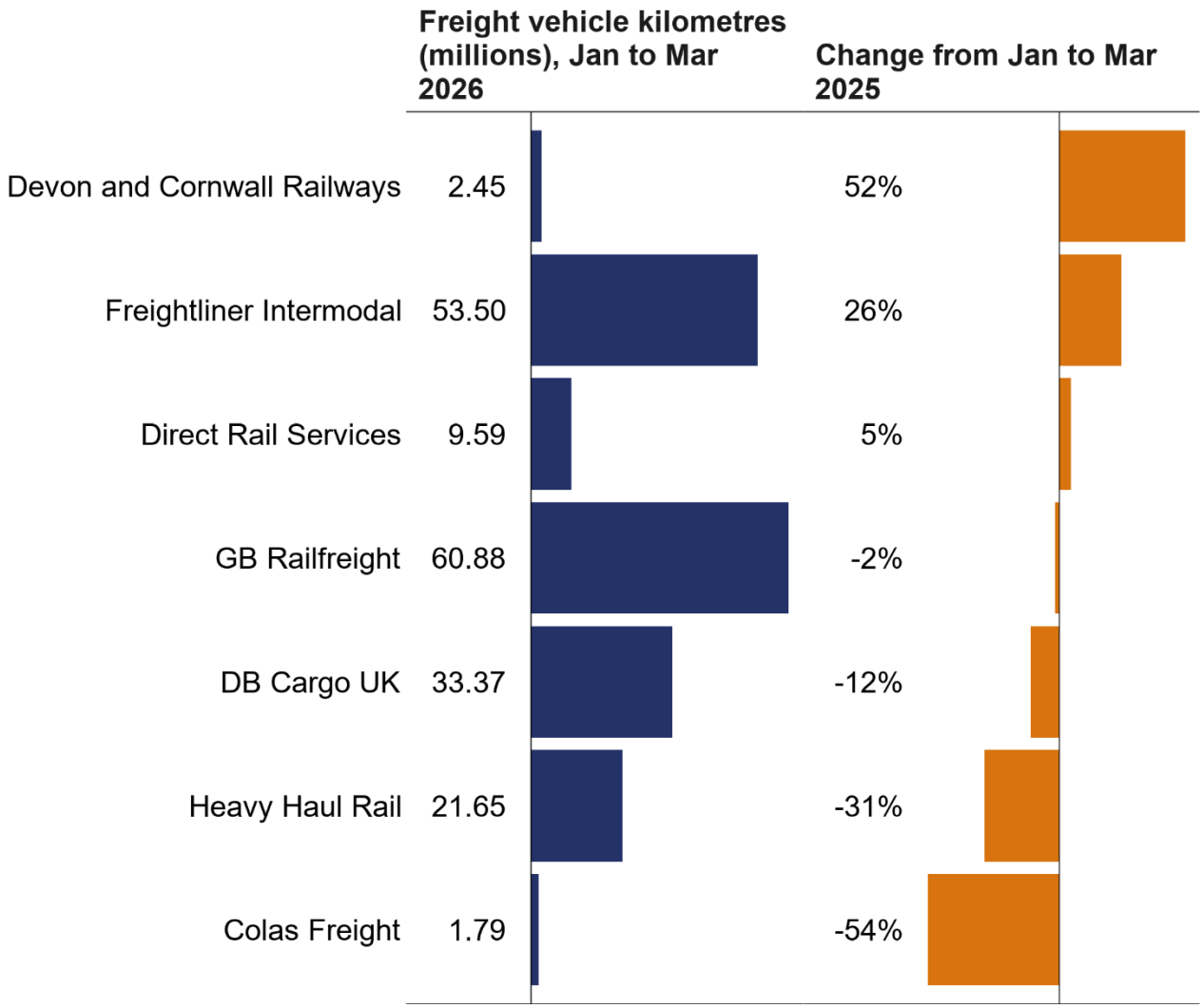
Freight train kilometres (millions) by operator, Great Britain, January to March 2026 and percentage change (rounded) from January to March 2025 (Table 1333)



A total of 183.2 million freight vehicle kilometres were recorded in the latest quarter. This was down 3% compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Figure 4.4 Freight vehicle kilometres decreased for a majority of operators compared with last year

Freight vehicle kilometres (millions) by operator, Great Britain, January to March 2026 and percentage change (rounded) from January to March 2025 (Table 1343)



In the latest quarter, the freight operator with the largest percentage increase in train and vehicle kilometres was Devon and Cornwall Railways. It had the highest train and vehicle kilometres of any quarter since the time series began in 2010. There was also an increase in both train and vehicle kilometres for Freightliner Intermodal. For both operators, the increase in vehicle kilometres was larger than in train kilometres, which suggests there were more vehicles (i.e. longer trains) in the latest quarter compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Direct Rail Services reported a decrease in train kilometres, alongside an increase in vehicle kilometres. It had the highest vehicle kilometres of any January to March quarter since the start of the time series.

Meanwhile, freight train and vehicle kilometres decreased for Colas Freight, Heavy Haul Rail, DB Cargo UK and GB Railfreight. This was the lowest January to March quarter of train and vehicle kilometres recorded by DB Cargo UK since the time series began.

Data broken down by traction type (electric or diesel) is available on the data portal. Table 1333 shows the breakdown for freight train kilometres and Table 1343 shows the breakdown for freight vehicle kilometres.

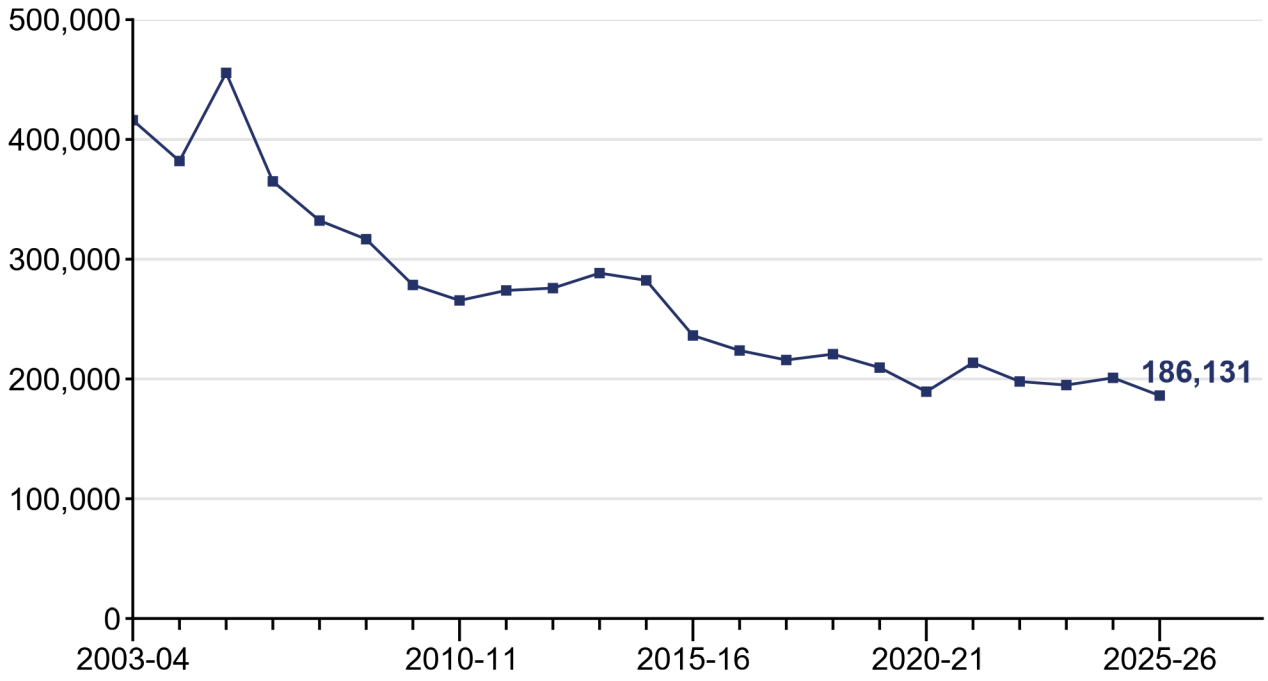
5. Freight market indicators

Freight train movements (April 2025 to March 2026 annual)

Freight train movements measures the number of freight trains run on the mainline rail network.

Figure 5.1: The number of freight trains ran was lower than any previous year

Freight trains run, Great Britain, annual data, April 2003 to March 2026 (Table 1330)



There were 186,131 freight trains that ran on the mainline network between April 2025 and March 2026. This was a decrease of 7% compared with the previous year.

Rail freight impact on road haulage / Rail freight market share

Updates on rail freight impact on road haulage (April 2024 to March 2025) and rail freight market share (2024) are not available for inclusion in this statistical release and supporting data tables (Table 1340 and Table 1350). These updates are expected to be available for the April to June 2026 release.

6. Freight cancellations

Freight cancellations measures the percentage of commercial freight services that are cancelled by the infrastructure manager or another operator that is not a commercial freight operator.

Freight cancellations and lateness (FCaL) is the percentage of commercial freight services that are *either*: cancelled by the infrastructure manager or another operator that is not a commercial freight operator; *or* arrive at their planned destination 15 minutes or more after their booked arrival time with 15 minutes or more delay caused by the infrastructure manager or another operator that is not a commercial freight operator.

April 2025 to March 2026 annual

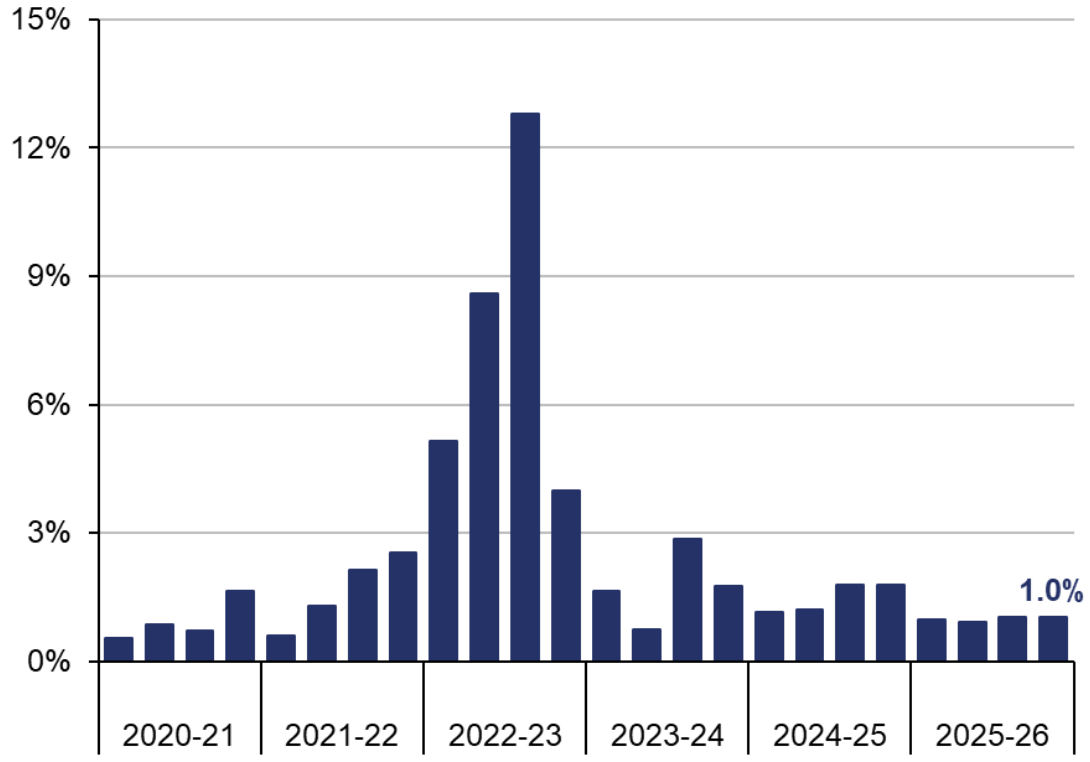
Freight cancellations was 1.0% in the latest year. This was the lowest annual percentage in five years.

The proportion of freight trains cancelled or arriving after 15 minutes was 8.2% (FCaL) in the latest year. This was the lowest annual percentage for FCaL in four years.

January to March 2026 quarter

Figure 6.1 Freight cancellations has decreased compared with the same quarter in the previous year

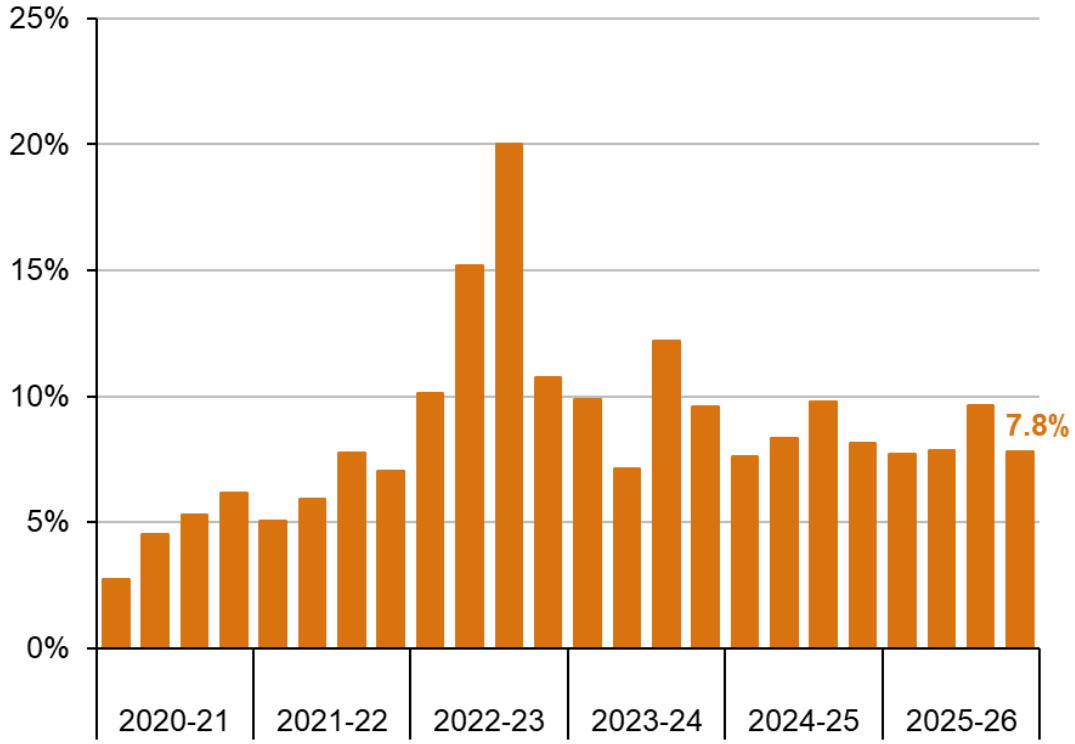
Freight cancellations (percentage), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2020 to March 2026 (Table 1355)



In the latest quarter, freight cancellations was 1.0%. This was down 0.7 percentage points (i.e. better) compared with the same quarter in the previous year. It was the best January to March quarter since the start of the time series in April 2019.

Figure 6.2 Freight cancellations and lateness (FCaL) has decreased compared with the same quarter in the previous year

FCaL (percentage), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2020 to March 2026 (Table 1365)



In the latest quarter, the proportion of freight trains cancelled or arriving after 15 minutes was 7.8% (FCaL). This was down 0.3 percentage points (i.e. better) compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

7. Freight delay per 100 train kilometres

Freight delay per 100 train kilometres is a normalised measure of delay experienced by freight operators. It is calculated from the total delay experienced by all Great Britain freight operators divided by their train mileage.

April 2025 to March 2026 annual

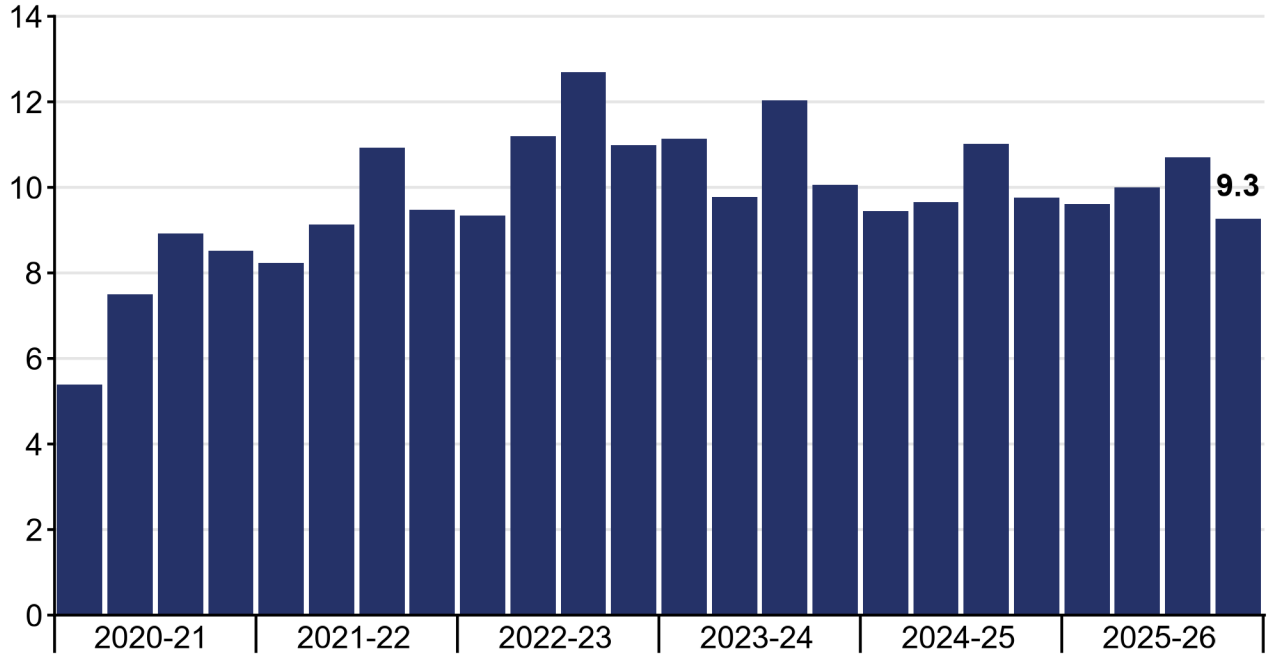
Freight delay per 100 train kilometres fell to 9.9 minutes in the year to March 2026. This was an improvement of 1% compared with a year ago and an absolute decrease of 0.1 minutes per 100 train kilometres.

January to March 2026 quarter

In the latest quarter, freight operators experienced 9.3 minutes of delay per 100 train kilometres. This was 5% lower (i.e. better) than the same quarter the previous year. It was the second lowest January to March quarter since the start of the time series in 2010 (the lowest was during the pandemic in 2021).

Figure 7.1 Freight delay has decreased compared with the same quarter in the previous year

Freight delay per 100 train kilometres (minutes), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2020 to March 2026 (Table 1325)



8. Annexes

Annex 1 – Definitions

- **Freight moved** measures the amount of freight moved on the railway network, taking into account the weight of the load and the distance carried. It is measured in net tonne kilometres. It is based on the contracted distance, which is the number of kilometres agreed upon between Network Rail and the freight operator, regardless of whether a train is diverted onto a route with a different distance.

- **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 train kilometres** is the actual kilometres travelled by freight operators on all mainline infrastructure, terminals and yards**.** The data is sourced from Network Rail's Track Access Billing System (TABS). The data in the table covers electric, diesel and all traction. Competition between freight operators means we would expect a greater level of variation in mileage from year to year than in the passenger market.

- **Freight vehicle kilometres** is the actual vehicle kilometres travelled by freight operators on all mainline infrastructure, terminals and yards. This is calculated by multiplying the number of rail vehicles (e.g. coaches) by the distance travelled. A train with a locomotive and four carriages travelling one kilometre will generate one **train kilometre** and five **vehicle kilometres**. The data is sourced from Network Rail's Track Access Billing System (TABS). The data in the table covers electric, diesel and all traction. Competition between freight operators means we would expect a greater level of variation in mileage from year to year than in the passenger market.

- **Freight cancellations** measures the percentage of commercial freight services that are cancelled by the infrastructure manager or another operator that is not a commercial freight operator. *A lower score indicates better performance.* **Moving annual average (MAA)** reflects the proportion of freight cancellations in the past 12 months. In the final quarter of the year (January to March), the MAA also represents the freight cancellations for the financial year.

- **Freight cancellations and lateness (FCaL)** is the percentage of commercial freight services that are *either*: cancelled by the infrastructure manager or another operator that is not a commercial freight operator; *or* arrive at their planned destination 15 minutes or more after their booked arrival time with 15 minutes or more delay caused by the infrastructure manager or another operator that is not a commercial freight operator. *A lower score indicates better performance.* **Moving annual average (MAA)** reflects the FCaL performance in the past 12 months. In the final quarter of the year (January to March), the MAA also represents the FCaL percentage for the financial year.

- **Freight delay per 100 train kilometres** is a normalised measure of delay experienced by freight operators. It is calculated from the total delay experienced by all Great Britain 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. *A lower score indicates better performance.*

The remaining measures are updated on the data portal annually and included in the January to March quarter statistical release and associated data tables.

- **Freight train movements** measures the number of freight trains run on the mainline rail network. The data is sourced from Network Rail annually and covers only trains that are chargeable. Each freight train is designated into a chargeable or non-chargeable category. Non-chargeable categories include empty trains to/from depots, operators moving equipment to/from site for Network Rail engineering work and unplanned train schedules (i.e. last minute).

- Rail freight impact on road haulage is measured using two metrics:

  - **Rail freight lorry kilometres equivalent** measures the distance that road vehicles (HGVs) would need to travel to move the volumes of freight carried on rail.

  - **Avoided lorry journeys** measures the number of road vehicle trips that would need to be made to move freight carried on rail.

- **Rail freight market share** compares the volumes of freight lifted (tonnes) and freight moved (net tonne kilometres) on road (HGVs), waterways and rail. These shares are calculated using Department for Transport's annual figures published in Transport Statistics Great Britain.

Further information on each of these measures and other definitions can be found in the Freight quality and methodology report.

Annex 2 – Quality and methodology

Data sources and methodology

Most of the quarterly data, and annual data on freight train movements, is sourced from Network Rail, with the exception of freight lifted data. This data is sourced directly from the seven largest freight operators (DB Cargo UK, Freightliner Intermodal, Freightliner Heavy Haul, GB Railfreight, Direct Rail Services, Colas Freight, and Devon and Cornwall Railways).

Annual data used to calculate rail freight impact on road haulage and rail freight market share is sourced from Department for Transport. This is included in the final quarter of the financial year (January to March) releases only.

Due to a methodology change, data calculated using Department for Transport's domestic road freight statistics pre-2021 and post-2021 should not be compared. We have continued to present the full time series within our supporting data tables (tables 1340 and 1350) but have marked the relevant years with a series break to indicate that data pre and post series break should not be compared. For more details on the change, please see Department for Transport's methodology note.

To provide more comprehensive coverage of the freight market, estimates of freight lifted have been calculated for Colas Freight (April 2010 to March 2020) and Devon and Cornwall Railways (April 2011 to March 2024). From April 2020 Colas Freight are providing actual freight lifted data, and from April 2024 Devon and Cornwall Railways are also providing actual freight lifted data. The estimates were based on calculating the number of freight train movements in a quarter for each operator (estimated from their actual train mileage data) and multiplying that by the average tonnes lifted per train for the latest full year, at a national level.

Network Rail provides data to ORR within 21 days of the end of each of the 13 railway reporting periods (each period lasts four weeks). The quarterly data in this release sourced from Network Rail are derived by splitting the periodic data according to the number of days of the period that fall within each quarter.

The latest freight train kilometres data, freight vehicle kilometres data and freight delay per 100 train kilometres data should be treated as provisional. Freight operators can provide Network Rail with additional data (e.g. cancellations) and Network Rail may re-attribute delays over time.

Further development of these statistics

Our freight lifted statistics are currently disaggregated between Coal and Other. Following the slowdown in Coal traffic, this split has limited value. We investigated the possibility of

providing a more disaggregated set of commodities in future, however we have been unable to source the required data.

Revisions

Data presented in this release is correct at the time of publication but may change due to subsequent revisions.

There have been revisions to previously published data:

- Table 1315: This is due to refreshed data from an operator for January to March 2025 which has resulted in a revision for that quarter and the financial year April 2024 to March 2025.
- Table 1355: Data has been revised for April to June 2024 due to a re-attribution by Network Rail. Moving annual averages have been updated accordingly.
- Table 1365: Data has been revised for April to June 2024 due to a re-attribution by Network Rail. Moving annual averages have been updated accordingly.

Details of previous revisions can be found in the revisions log.

Further information on data sources, quality, and the methodology used to calculate the data within the release can be found in the Freight quality and methodology report.

How these statistics can be used

- Measuring rail freight volumes and market share by commodity over time
- Comparing distances run by freight operators over time
- Monitoring the impact of Network Rail and passenger operator caused delay on freight reliability
- Comparing the size of the rail freight market relative to other modes

How these statistics cannot be used

- Using freight trains ran as an indication of freight volumes due to train lengthening schemes and more efficient use of the network
- Using freight train kilometres by operator as a proxy for market share of volumes due to the variation in freight train distances
- Identifying origin and destination of freight flows
- Estimating freight revenues (refer to rail industry finance)
- Estimating freight emissions (refer to rail environment)

Annex 3 – List of data tables associated with this release and other related statistics

Data tables

All data tables can be accessed on the ORR data portal free of charge in OpenDocument Spreadsheet (.ods) format. We can also provide data in csv format on request.

All tables associated with this release can be found under the Data tables heading at the bottom of the Freight rail usage and performance page.

Freight usage

- Freight moved by commodity (quarterly) – Table 1310
- Freight moved by Network Rail region (periodic) – Table 1311
- Freight moved by commodity (periodic) – Table 1314
- Freight lifted (quarterly) – Table 1315
- Freight trains run (annual) – Table 1330
- Freight train kilometres by operator (quarterly) – Table 1333
- Rail freight impact on road haulage (annual) – Table 1340
- Freight vehicle kilometres by operator (quarterly) – Table 1343
- Rail freight market share (annual) – Table 1350

Freight performance

- Freight delays per 100 train kilometres (quarterly) – Table 1325
- Freight cancellations by Network Rail region (periodic) – Table 1351
- Freight cancellations by Network Rail route (periodic) – Table 1352
- Freight cancellations (quarterly) – Table 1355
- Freight cancellations and lateness by Network Rail region (periodic) – Table 1361
- Freight cancellations and lateness by Network Rail route (periodic) – Table 1362
- Freight cancellations and lateness (quarterly) – Table 1365

Other related statistics

Passenger rail usage statistics are published on the Passenger rail usage page on the data portal.

Passenger rail performance statistics are published on the Passenger rail performance page on the data portal.

Estimates of passenger and freight energy consumption and carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e) emissions are published on the Rail environment page on the data portal.

The Department for Transport (DfT) also publishes some multimodal freight statistics as part of the Transport Statistics Great Britain publication.

European comparisons

Due to differences in how freight punctuality is measured in other countries, opportunities to make direct comparisons with statistics in this release are limited. Data from other European countries is published in the IRG-Rail Fourteenth Annual Market Monitoring Report, including comparable traffic volume data based on freight train kilometres.

Annex 4 – ORR's statistical publications

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards by emailing rail.stats@orr.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

Statistical releases

This publication is part of ORR's 'accredited official statistics', which consist of seven annual publications: **Estimates of station usage; Rail industry finance (UK); Rail fares index; Rail safety; Rail infrastructure and assets; Rail environment; Regional rail usage**; one biannual publication: **Passenger rail service complaints**; and three quarterly publications: **Passenger rail performance; Freight rail usage and performance; Passenger rail usage.**

ORR also publishes a number of other official statistics, which consist of five annual publications: **Common Safety Indicators; Passenger satisfaction with complaints handling; Train operating company key statistics; Occupational health**; **Rail trends (formerly Rail statistics compendium)**; one biannual publication: **Passenger lifts at stations** (official statistics in development); and four quarterly publications: **Signals passed at danger (SPADs); Delay compensation claims; Disabled Persons Railcards (DPRC); Passenger assistance.**

All the above publications are available on the data portal along with a list of publication dates for the next 12 months.

Accredited official statistics

Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. They are official statistics that have been independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation and found to comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

The majority of our statistical releases were independently reviewed by the OSR in June 2012. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and are labelled accredited official statistics.

Since our review we have improved the content, presentation and quality of our statistical releases. In addition, 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. On 4 November 2019, OSR published a

letter confirming that ORR's statistics should continue to be accredited official 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.

Estimates of station usage statistics were independently reviewed by OSR in November 2020 and their accreditation was confirmed on 1 December 2020.

For more information on how we adhere to the Code please see our compliance statements.

If you have any feedback or questions please email rail.stats@orr.gov.uk.

This publication is available at dataportal.orr.gov.uk

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at orr.gov.uk/contact-us