Freight rail usage and performance

January to March 2025

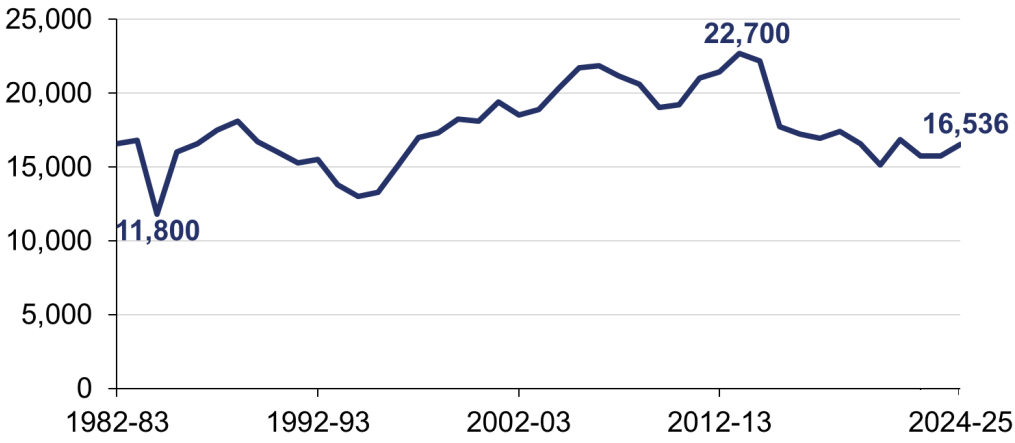
1 July 2025

In this release, freight rail usage and performance levels in the latest year (1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025) are compared with the previous year. Freight rail usage and performance levels in the latest quarter (1 January to 31 March 2025) are compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Total **freight moved** was **16,536 million net tonne kilometres** in the latest year, up 5% compared with the previous year. Intermodal maritime has contributed to the trend, increasing by 8%. It was the highest recorded volume for six years.

Figure 1 Freight moved has generally decreased over the last decade but has risen in each of the last two years

Freight moved (million net tonne kilometres), Great Britain, annual data, April 1982 to March 2025 (Table 1310)



Total **freight lifted** was **73.5 million tonnes** in the latest year, an increase of 6% compared with a year ago.

The proportion of freight trains cancelled or arriving after 15 minutes, **freight cancellations and lateness (FCaL)**, was **8.4%** in the latest year. This was the best annual performance in three years.

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 data portal. Key definitions are in Annex 1 of this release.

Background:

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

The statistics cover **freight moved** and **freight lifted (by commodity)**, **freight cancellations and lateness**, **freight delays**, **freight train kilometres (by operator)**, **freight vehicle kilometres (by operator)** and **freight market indicators (freight trains run, rail freight impact on road haulage, rail freight market share)**.

Sources: Network Rail, freight operators, Department for Transport

Latest quarter:

1 January to 31 March 2025

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Next publication:
18 September 2025

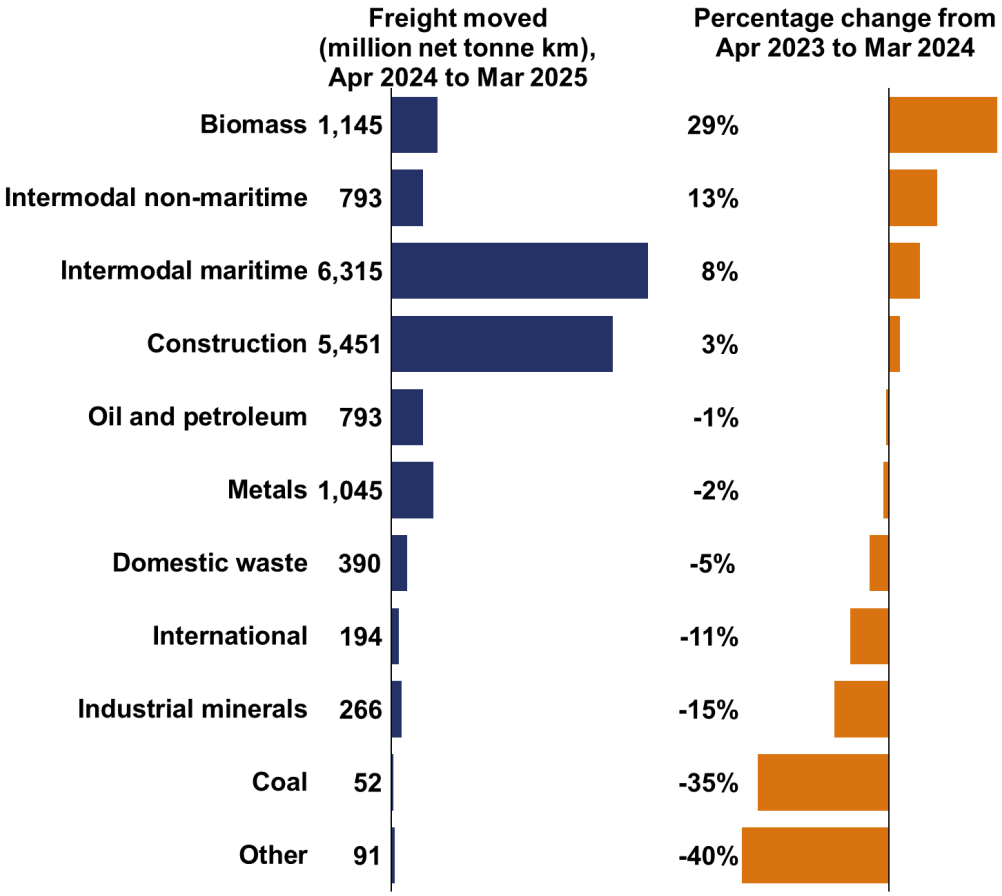
1. Freight moved

April 2024 to March 2025 annual

Freight moved in Great Britain was 16,536 million net tonne kilometres between April 2024 and March 2025. This was a 5% increase compared with the previous year.

Figure 1.1 Biomass saw the largest percentage increase compared with a year ago

Freight moved (million net tonne kilometres) by commodity, Great Britain, April 2024 to March 2025 and change compared with April 2023 to March 2024 (Table 1310)



Most commodity groups had a reduction in freight moved volumes compared with the previous year. However, the three commodity groups with the largest share of freight moved (intermodal maritime, construction, biomass) all saw increases in freight moved.

Intermodal maritime increased by 8%. It was the highest recorded volume for six years. Rail freight serving Southampton port is contributing to this as a result of the DP World Modal Shift Programme incentive package, which has increased rail freight's share of the market at the port. There have been new services, such as between Tilbury and Manchester. Furthermore, a new intermodal maritime service started between Felixstowe

and Daventry. Intermodal maritime had the largest share (38%) of all freight moved between April 2024 and March 2025. Its market share increased by 1 percentage point compared with the previous year.

Construction, which had the second largest share of all freight moved (33%), saw an increase of 3%. It was the largest volume recorded since the time series began in April 1998, with a total of 5,451 million net tonne kilometres. There have been new regular flows of constructions spoils to Stewartby. The transfer of materials to HS2 construction sites remains a significant factor in construction volumes. The market share for Construction traffic decreased by 1 percentage point from a year ago.

Biomass had the largest year-on-year percentage increase, rising by 29% compared with the previous year. It recorded 1,145 million net tonne kilometres, which is the highest since the start of the time series. There is increasing use of biomass at Drax as a result of additional generating units being converted from burning coal. Biomass use at Lynemouth is also increasing. Biomass has a market share of 7%, which was a rise of 1 percentage point compared with the previous year.

Metals recorded a reduction of 2%, in the context of weaker trading conditions affecting UK steelworks. There was a reduced demand for iron ore at Scunthorpe. The volume of 1,045 million net tonne kilometres was the lowest annual figure recorded.

Intermodal non-maritime saw an uplift of 13%. There have been progressive increases in the use of rail by retailers such as Tesco and by manufacturers like Coca Cola.

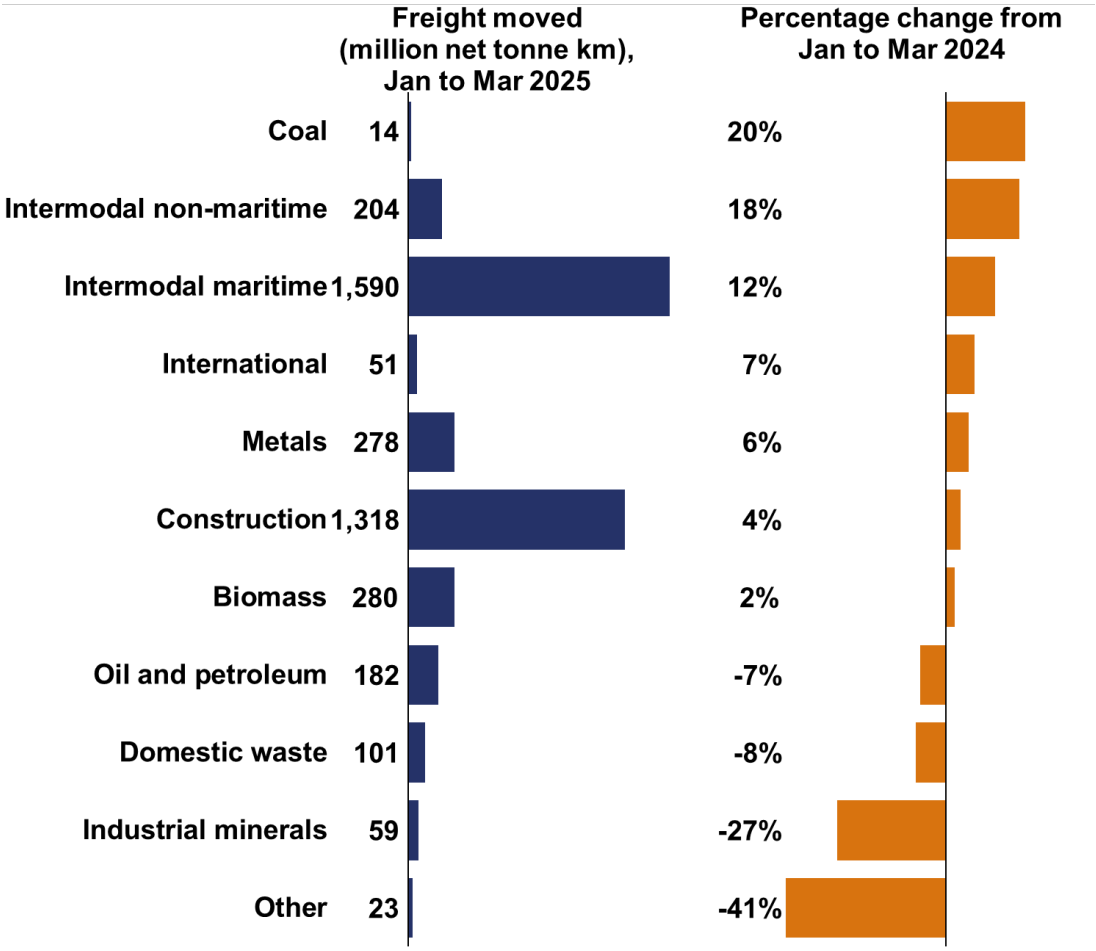
Coal continued its decline with a reduction of 35%. It accounted for 52 million net tonne kilometres, which is the lowest value since the time series began.

January to March 2025 quarter

The total volume of freight moved was 4,098 million net tonne kilometres in the latest quarter. This was a 6% increase compared with the same quarter the previous year.

Figure 1.2 Intermodal maritime and construction have the largest market share of freight moved and both saw increases in freight moved

Freight moved (million net tonne kilometres) by commodity, Great Britain, January to March 2025 and percentage change compared with January to March 2024 (Table 1310)



Intermodal maritime increased by 12% compared with the same quarter the previous year. It was the highest January to March quarter since 2019, with a volume of 1,590 million net tonne kilometres. Continued security concerns in the Red Sea have made the re-routed shipping around the Cape of Good Hope an established practice with comparatively less disruption, which has contributed to high intermodal maritime volumes at all three primary deep-sea ports – Felixstowe, Southampton and London Gateway.

Construction saw an uplift of 4%, despite the recorded volume of 1,318 million net tonne kilometres being lower than the total in the three preceding quarters.

Biomass volumes rose by 2%. It saw the highest January to March quarter in four years. Greater demands for electricity resulting from colder weather and shorter days is a contributing factor in the rise.

Data for freight moved by commodity by railway period is available on the data portal in Table 1314. Data for freight moved by Network Rail region by railway period is available in Table 1311.

2. Freight lifted

April 2024 to March 2025 annual

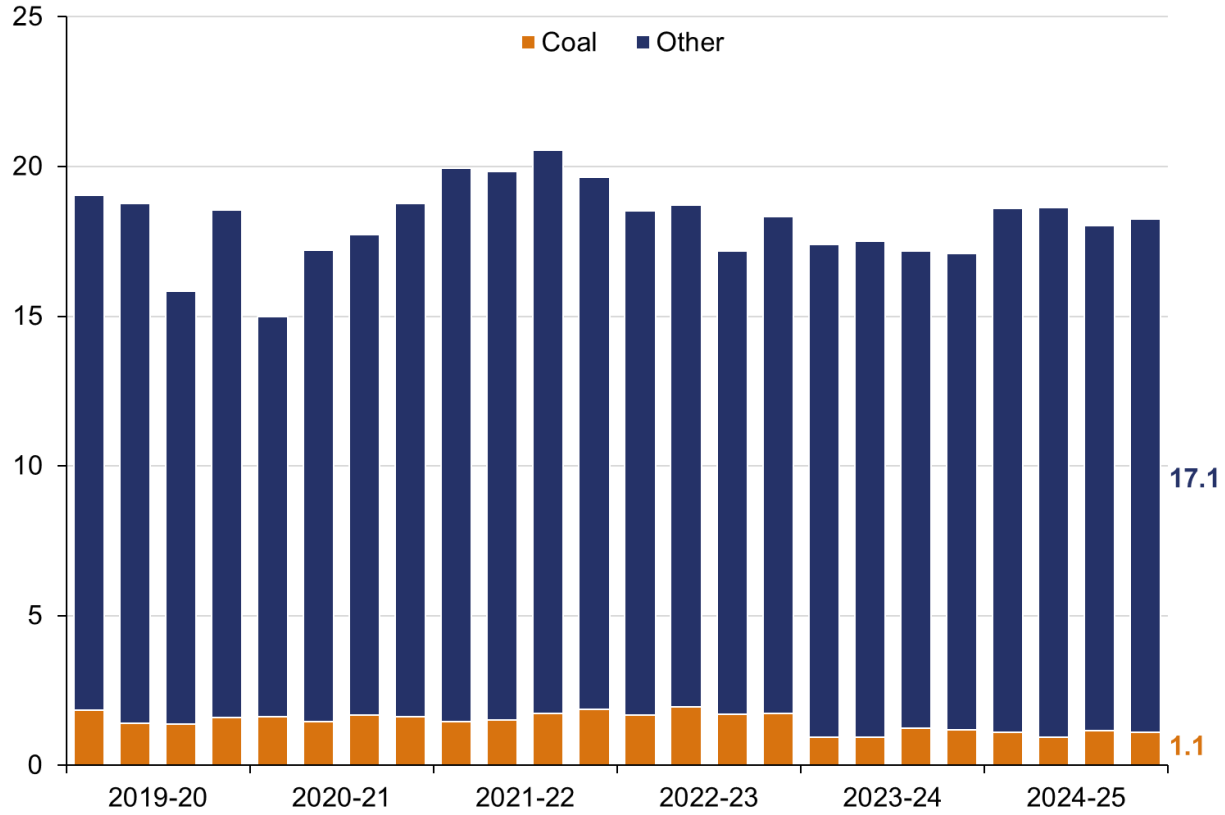
There were 73.5 million tonnes of freight lifted in April 2024 to March 2025. This was an increase of 6% compared with a year ago.

Other freight lifted accounts for 94% of all freight lifted, which amounts to 69.2 million tonnes in the latest year. It increased by 7% compared with the previous year. Coal freight lifted was 4.3 million tonnes in the latest year, which is unchanged compared with a year ago.

January to March 2025 quarter

Figure 2.1 Total freight lifted was higher in all quarters of the latest year compared with the previous year

Freight lifted (million tonnes) by commodity (coal and other), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2019 to March 2025 (Table 1315)



The total amount of freight lifted in the latest quarter was 18.2 million tonnes. It increased by 7% compared with the same quarter the previous year.

Other freight lifted was 17.1 million tonnes, which was 8% higher compared with the previous year.

3. Freight cancellations and lateness

April 2024 to March 2025 annual

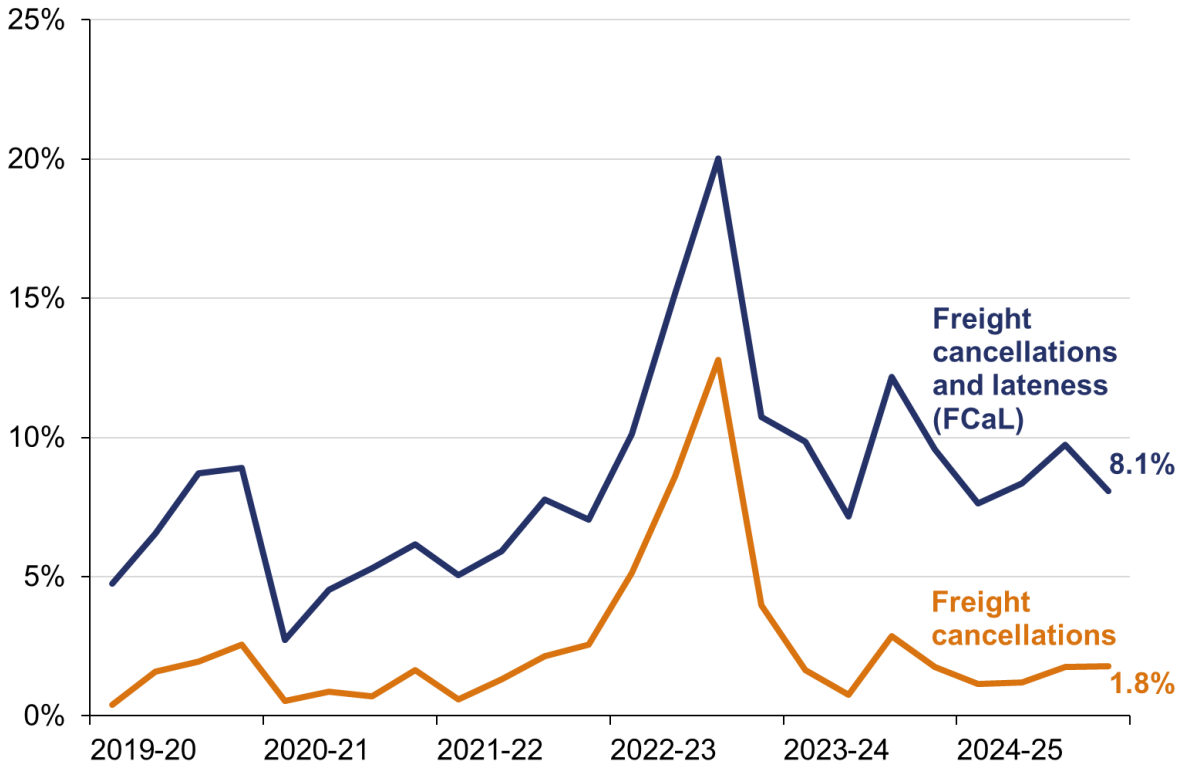
Freight reliability, as measured by Freight cancellations and lateness (FCaL), was 8.4% between April 2024 and March 2025. This was the best annual performance in three years.

Freight cancellations were 1.5% in the latest year. It was the lowest rate of annual cancellations in four years.

January to March 2025 quarter

Figure 3.1 FCaL improved compared with the same quarter in the previous two years

Freight cancellations (percentage) and FCaL (percentage), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2019 to March 2025 (Table 1355 and Table 1365)



Freight cancellations and lateness (FCaL) was recorded as 8.1% between January and March 2025. It was 1.5 percentage points lower (i.e. better) compared with the same quarter the previous year.

Freight cancellations were 1.8% in the latest quarter. It remained unchanged compared with the same quarter the previous year.

Data by railway period is available on the data portal:

- Table 1351 – Freight cancellations by Network Rail region
- Table 1352 – Freight cancellations by Network Rail route
- Table 1361 – Freight cancellations and lateness by Network Rail region
- Table 1362 – Freight cancellations and lateness by Network Rail route

4. Freight delay per 100 train kilometres

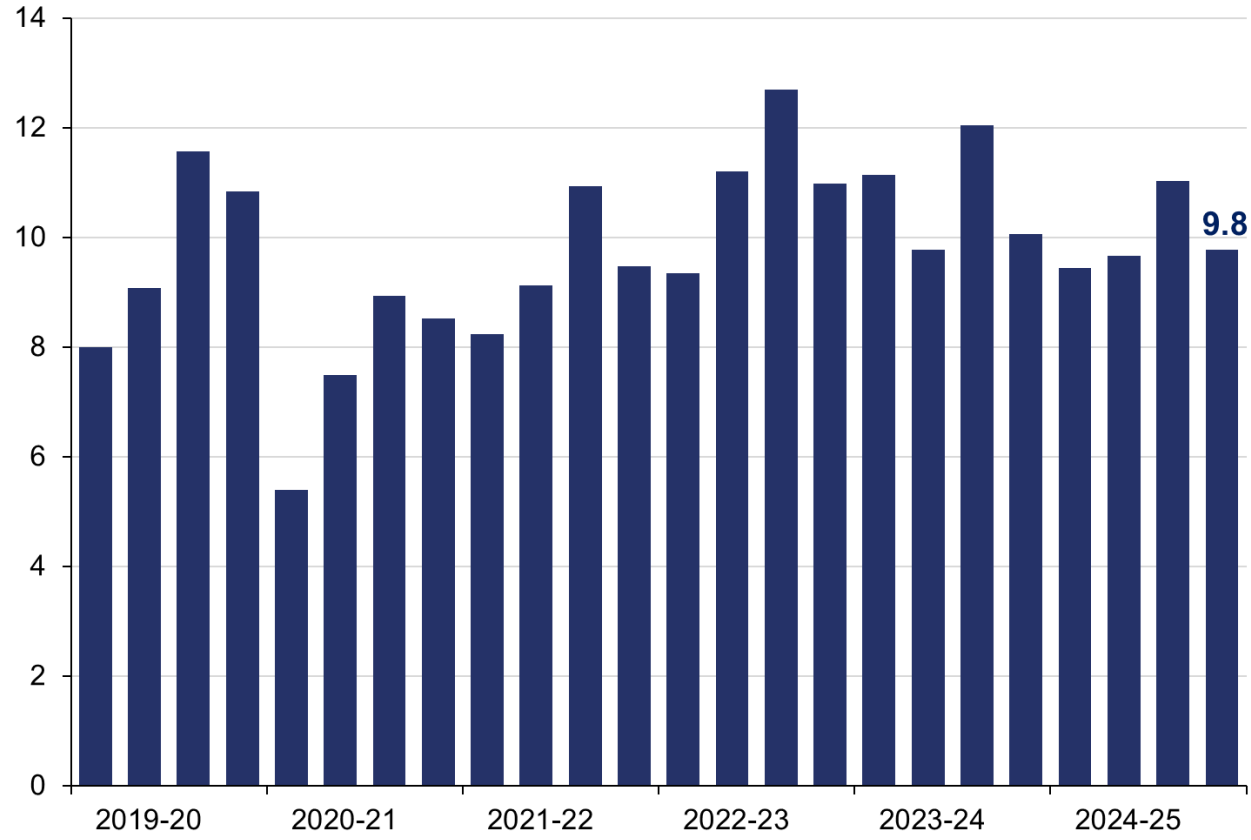
April 2024 to March 2025 annual

Freight delay per 100 train kilometres fell to 10.0 minutes in the year to March 2025. This was an improvement of 7% compared with a year ago and an absolute decrease of 0.8 minutes per 100 train kilometres.

January to March 2025 quarter

Figure 4.1 Freight delay was the lowest January to March quarter for three years

Freight delay per 100 train kilometres, Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2019 to March 2025 (Table 1325)



Freight operators experienced 9.8 minutes of delay per 100 train kilometres in the latest quarter. This was 3% lower (i.e. better) than the same quarter the previous year and an absolute decrease of 0.3 minutes per 100 train kilometres.

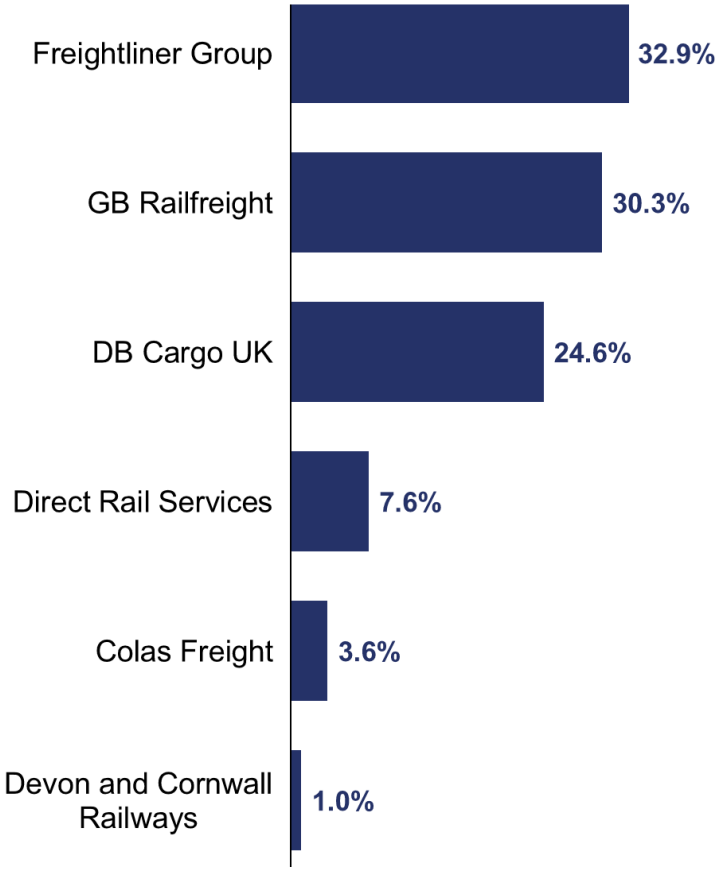
5. Freight train kilometres

April 2024 to March 2025 annual

Freight train kilometres across Great Britain rose by 0.51 million to 31.95 million between April 2024 and March 2025, an increase of 2% compared with a year ago.

Figure 5.1 Freightliner Group make up nearly a third of freight train kilometres

Proportion of freight train kilometres by operator, Great Britain, annual data, April 2024 to March 2025 (Table 1333)



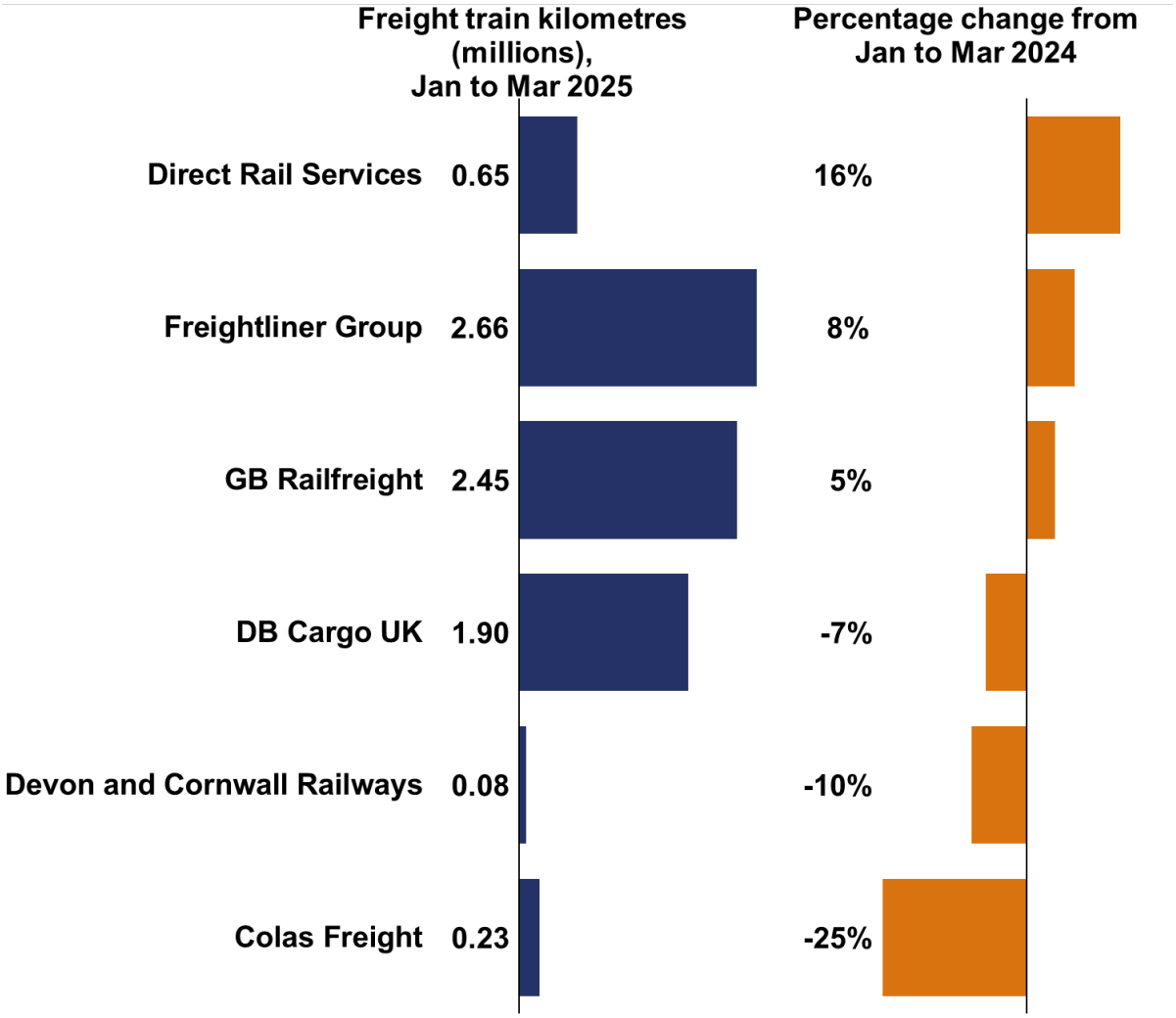
The operator with the largest share of train kilometres is Freightliner Group with 32.9%, slightly up on its share (31.6%) in the previous year.

January to March 2025 quarter

Freight operators recorded 7.96 million freight train kilometres in the latest quarter. It was 2% higher compared with the same quarter the previous year.

Figure 5.2 Direct Rail Services had the largest percentage increase in train kilometres

Freight train kilometres (millions) by operator, Great Britain, January to March 2025 and percentage change compared with January to March 2024 (Table 1333)



Direct Rail Services saw an increase in freight train kilometres of 16% and had its highest January to March quarter since 2022. Freightliner Group had its highest January to March quarter since 2021. There is continued impact from the new services for both Direct Rail Services and Freightliner Group. GB Railfreight recorded its highest quarter since the start of the time series in 2010.

Freight train kilometres fell by 7% for DB Cargo UK. DB Cargo have stopped running the electric-powered Royal Mail services since October. The operator recorded 1.90 million freight train kilometres, which was the lowest January to March quarter since the time series began.

Data on the breakdown of freight train kilometres by traction type (electric or diesel) is available on the data portal in Table 1333.

6. Freight vehicle kilometres

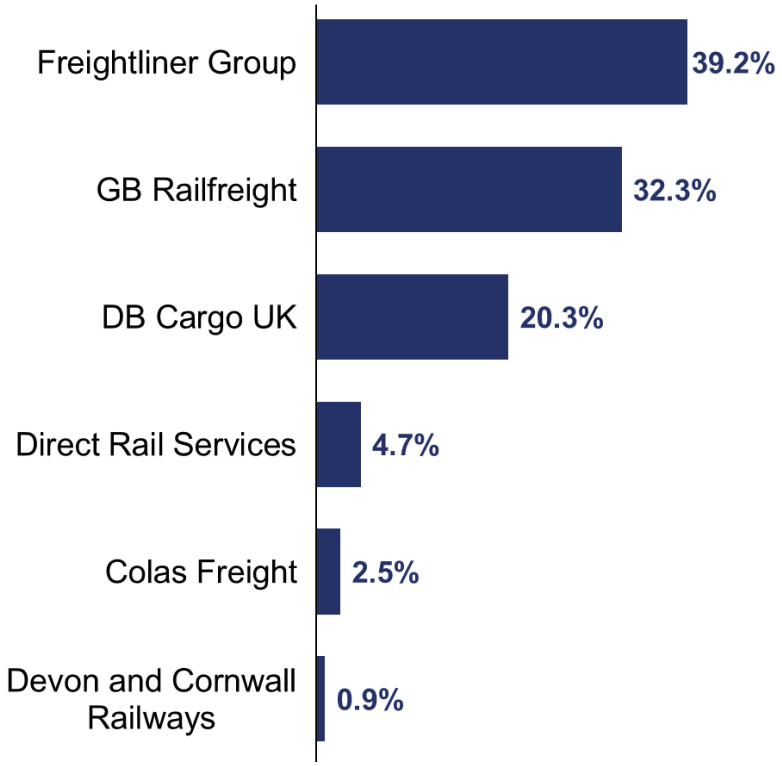
April 2024 to March 2025 annual

Freight vehicle kilometres increased by 40.84 million to 744.27 million between April 2024 and March 2025, a rise of 6% compared with the previous year.

The percentage increase in vehicle kilometres is higher than the equivalent percentage increase in train kilometres, which indicates that freight operators are using longer trains to transport their freight.

Figure 6.1 Freightliner Group make up over a third of the share of freight vehicle kilometres

Proportion of freight vehicle kilometres by operator, Great Britain, annual data, April 2024 to March 2025 (Table 1343)



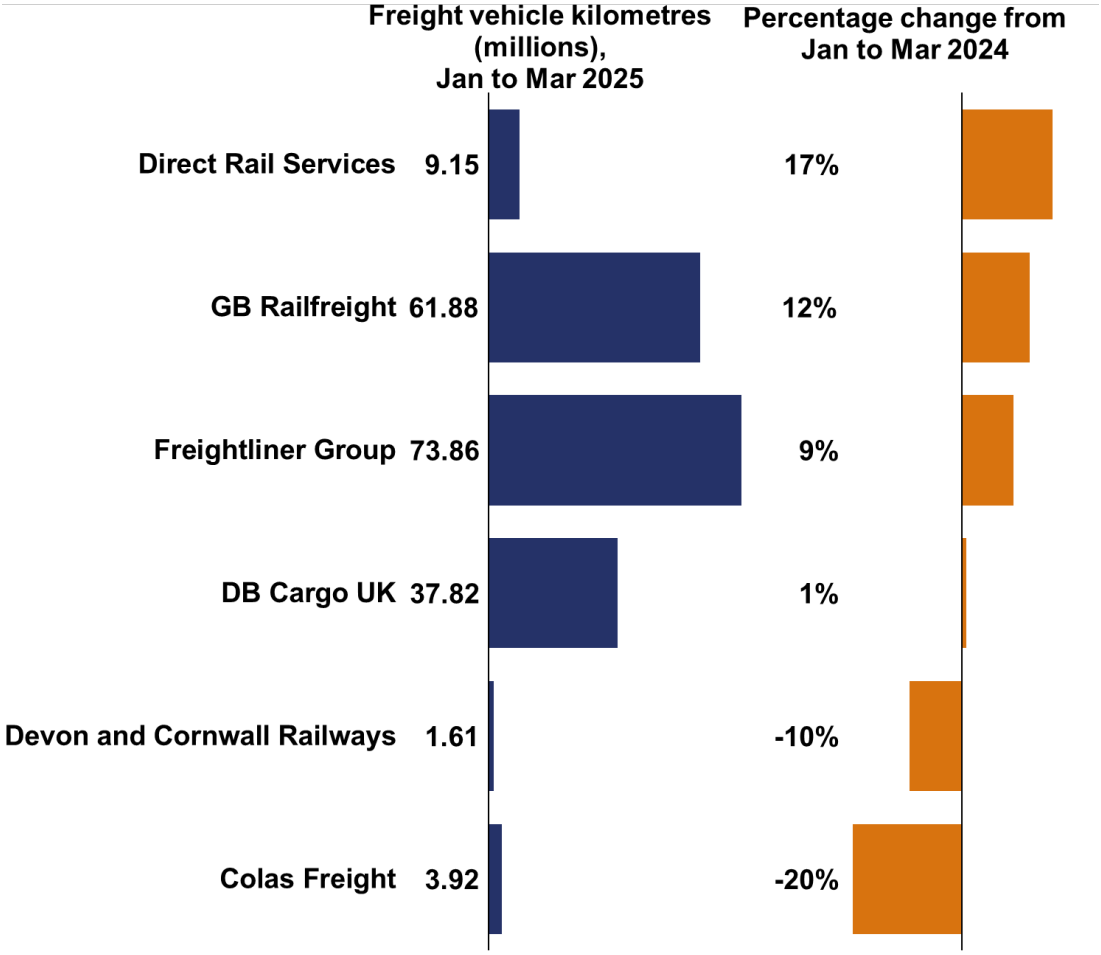
Freightliner Group had the largest share of vehicle kilometres, with a share of 39.2% This is marginally higher than its share of 38.9% in the previous year.

January to March 2025 quarter

Freight operators recorded 188.24 million freight vehicle kilometres in the latest quarter. It increased by 8% compared with the same quarter the previous year.

Figure 6.2 Four operators saw an increase in vehicle kilometres compared with the same quarter in 2024

Freight vehicle kilometres (millions) by operator, Great Britain, January to March 2025 and percentage change compared with January to March 2024 (Table 1343)



Freight vehicle kilometres increased by 17% for Direct Rail Services, which saw its highest January to March quarter since 2022. GB Railfreight recorded its highest quarter since the start of the time series. Freightliner Group had its highest January to March quarter since 2015.

Freight vehicle kilometres decreased by 20% for Colas Freight. It recorded 3.92 million freight vehicle kilometres, which was its lowest January to March quarter in three years.

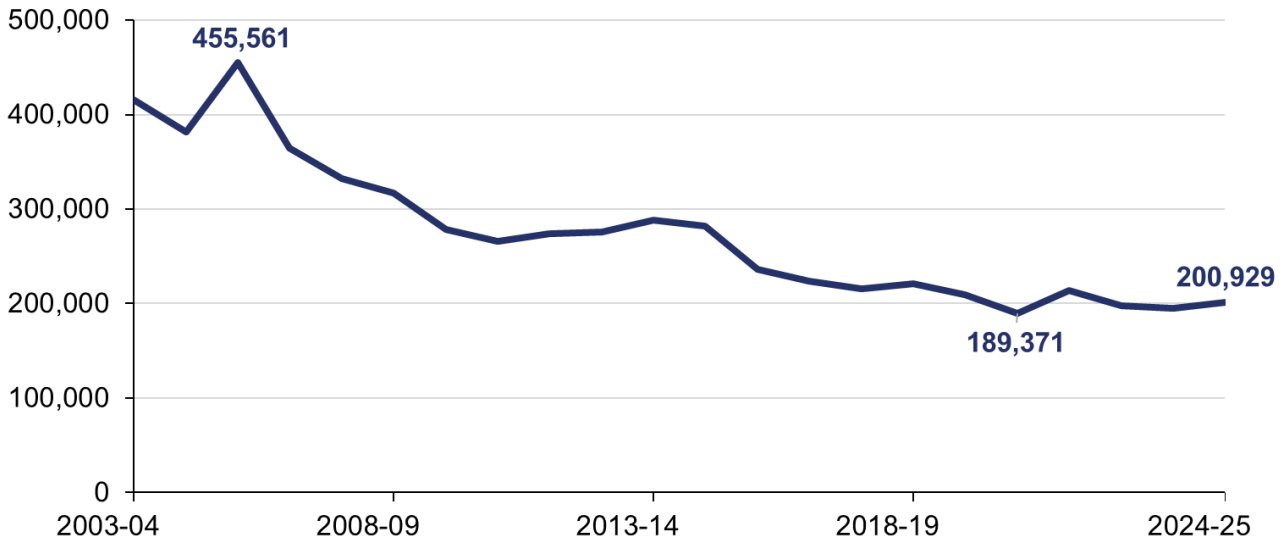
Data on the breakdown of freight vehicle kilometres by traction type (electric or diesel) is available on the data portal in Table 1343.

7. Freight market indicators

Freight train movements (April 2024 to March 2025 annual)

Figure 7.1: The number of freight trains ran was higher than the previous two years

Freight trains run, Great Britain, annual data, April 2003 to March 2025 (Table 1330)



There were 200,929 freight trains that ran on the mainline network between April 2024 and March 2025. This was an increase of 3% compared with the previous year.

Rail freight impact on road haulage (April 2023 to March 2024 annual)

There were 5.35 million lorry journeys avoided in April 2023 to March 2024 through transporting freight by rail rather than road.

Between April 2023 to March 2024, the number of lorry kilometres required to transport the volumes of freight moved by rail was 1.31 billion kilometres, a 1% increase compared with the previous year.

Rail freight market share (2023)

Figure 7.2: Rail accounted for 8% of freight moved by all transport modes

Rail freight moved market share, Great Britain, annual data, January 2023 to December 2023 (Table 1350)

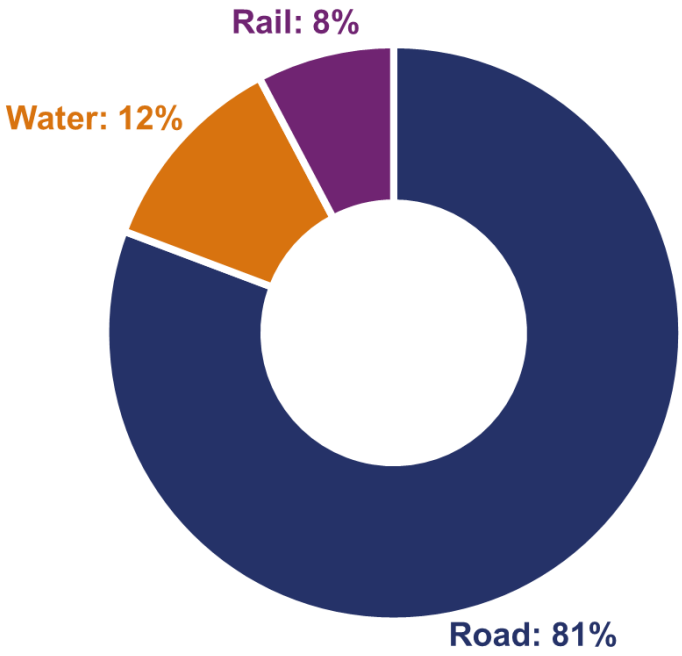
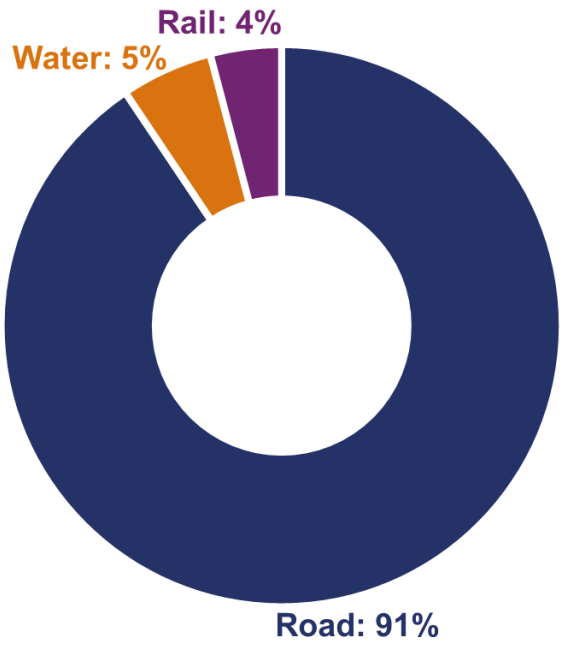


Figure 7.3: Rail accounted for 4% of freight lifted by all transport modes

Rail freight lifted market share, Great Britain, annual data, January 2023 to December 2023 (Table 1350)



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.

- **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 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 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. *A lower score indicates better performance.*

- **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 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 are investigating the possibility of providing a more disaggregated set of commodities in future.

Revisions

There have been revisions to previously published data:

- Table 1340: Data for April 2021 to March 2022 and April 2022 to March 2023 for Avoided lorry journeys have been revised as a result of revisions to freight lifted data. The Rail freight lorry kilometres equivalent data for April 2022 to March 2023 has also been revised. This is due to an error in the previous figure used to calculate the average road payload for one of the commodities.
- Table 1350: There have been minor revisions in the rail freight lifted market share. The value for Water for January to December 2021 has been revised due to a minor revision in the supplied data. Data for January to December 2022 has been revised due to one rail freight operator submitting refreshed data for April 2022 onwards.
- Table 1355: There has been refreshed data from Network Rail for: October to December 2022; and October 2023 to March 2024. Moving annual averages have been updated accordingly.
- Table 1365: There has been refreshed data from Network Rail for: October to December 2022; and October 2023 to March 2024. 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 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
- Rail freight impact on road haulage (annual) – Table 1340
- 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

Freight traffic

- Freight trains run (annual) – Table 1330
- Freight train kilometres by operator (quarterly) – Table 1333
- Freight vehicle kilometres by operator (quarterly) – Table 1343

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 (CO2e) 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 Thirteenth 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 statistics; 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 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