Freight rail usage and performance

July to September 2025

16 December 2025

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.

Sources: Network Rail, freight operators, Department for Transport

Latest quarter: 1 July to 30 September 2025

Contents:

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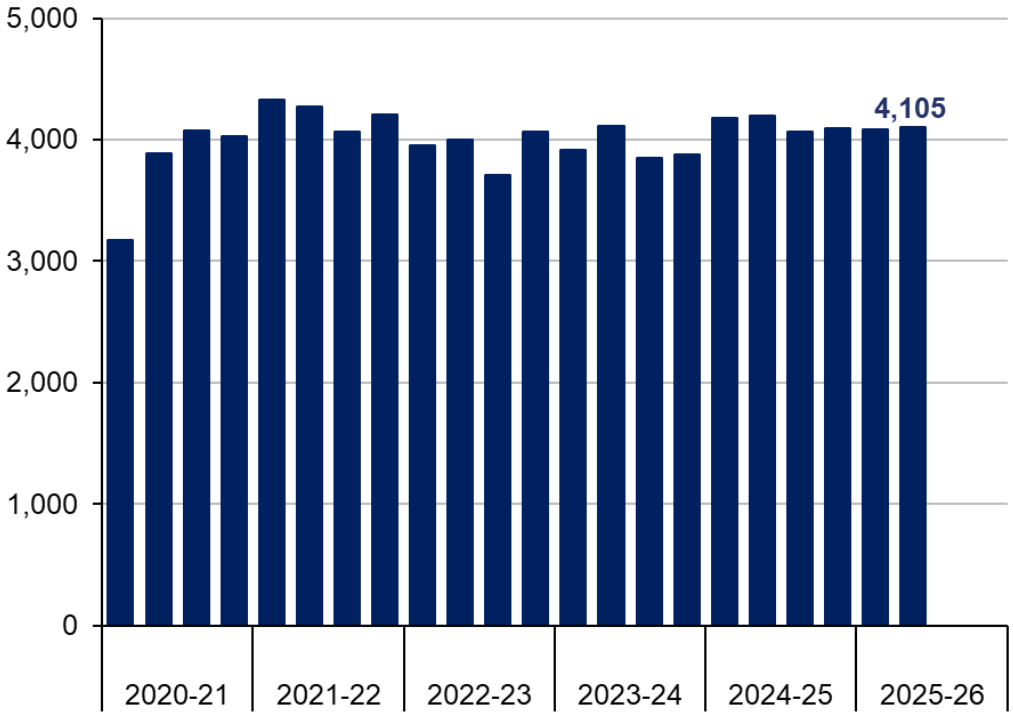
Next publication:
12 March 2026

In the latest quarter (July to September 2025), total **freight moved** was **4,105 million net tonne kilometres**. This was down 2% compared with the same quarter last year. Of this, by commodity, construction had the largest absolute reduction in freight moved (down 144 million net tonne kilometres).

Figure 1 Freight moved decreased compared with the same quarter the previous year

Freight moved (million net tonne kilometres), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2020 to September 2025 (Table 1310)



Total **freight lifted** was **17.9 million tonnes** in the latest quarter, a decrease of 4% compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Freight cancellations was **0.9%** in the latest quarter. This was 0.3 percentage points lower (i.e. better) than the same quarter in the previous year.

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.

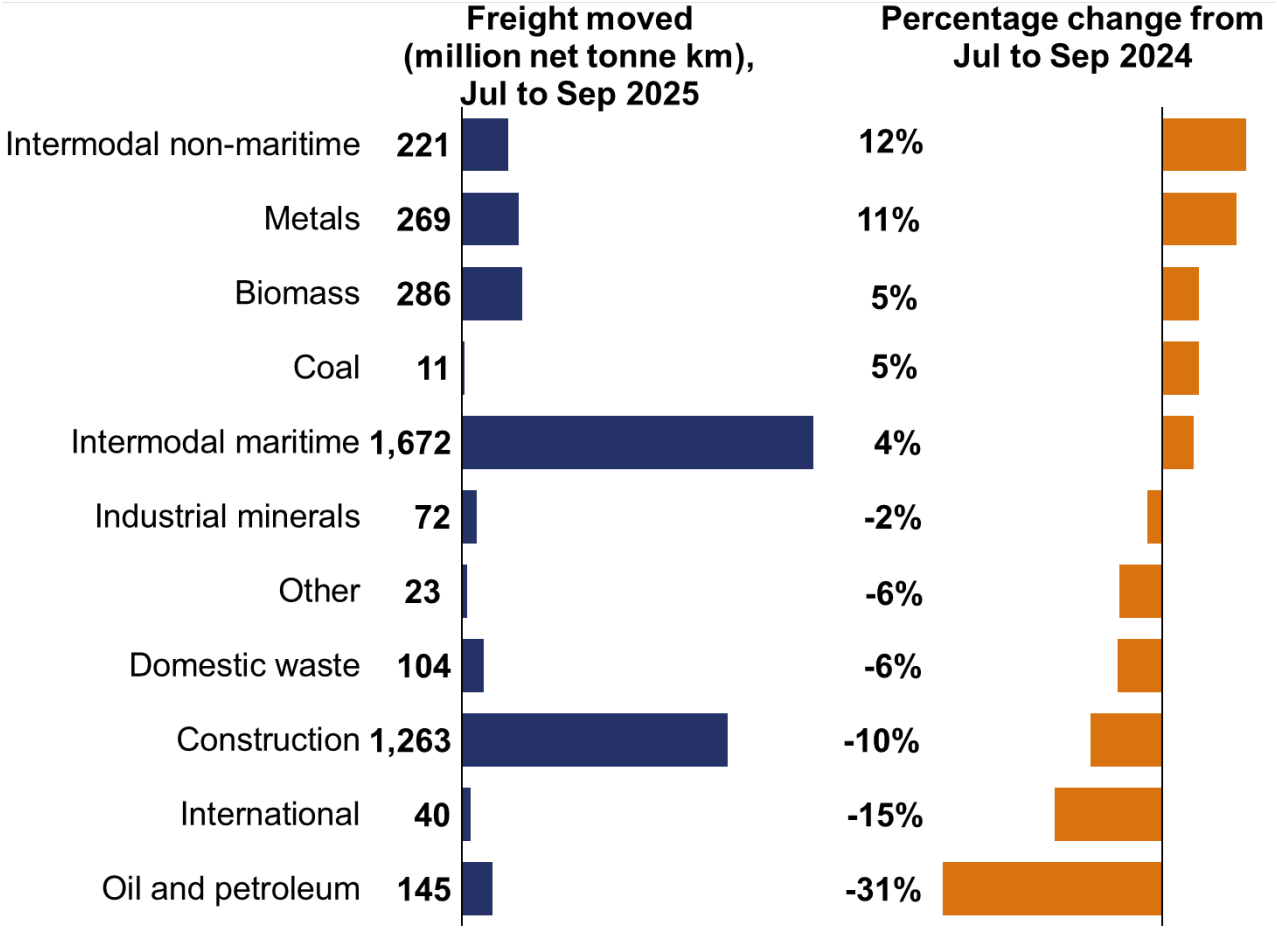
1. Freight moved

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.

In the latest quarter, total freight moved was 4,105 million net tonne kilometres. This was down 2% compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Figure 1.1 Freight moved decreased for the majority of commodities

Freight moved (million net tonne kilometres) by commodity, Great Britain, July to September 2025 and percentage change from July to September 2024 (Table 1310)



Freight moved decreased for six commodities compared with the same quarter in the previous year. Of this, construction (down 10%) had the largest impact on the overall reduction with a market share of 31% of all freight moved. Construction had the lowest July to September quarter since 2022. Urban high-rise development remained subdued in part due to delays in processing building applications following the new tall buildings regulations, impacting the transport of concrete by freight.

Oil and petroleum (down 31%) and industrial minerals (down 2%) freight moved also had notable reductions. Oil and petroleum recorded 145 million net tonne kilometres, which was the lowest quarter since the time series began in 1998. The cessation of the Lindsey oil refinery from late June resulted in lower levels of fuel oil traffic. Industrial minerals freight moved was the lowest July to September quarter since 2013.

Freight moved increased for five commodities compared with the same quarter in the previous year. Of this, intermodal maritime (up 4%) had the largest impact on the overall increase, given its market share of 41% of all freight moved. Intermodal maritime recorded 1,672 million net tonne kilometres, which was the highest quarter since the start of the time series.

Intermodal non-maritime (up 12%) and biomass (up 5%) were amongst the commodities that increased in freight moved. Intermodal non-maritime freight moved was the highest July to September quarter since 2013. Biomass recorded 286 million net tonne kilometres, which was the highest July to September quarter since the time series began.

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

Data by railway period is available on the data portal:

- Table 1314 – Freight moved by commodity
- Table 1311 – Freight moved by Network Rail region

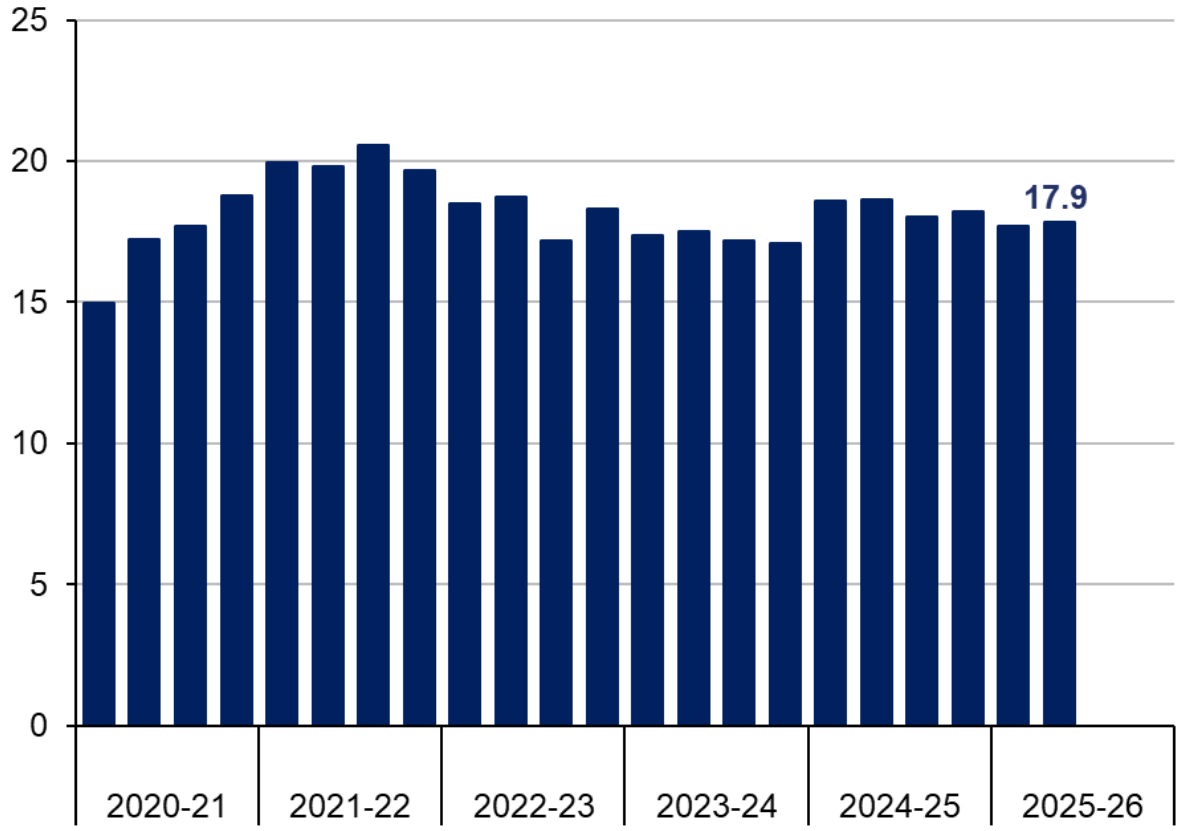
2. Freight lifted

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

The total amount of freight lifted in the latest quarter was 17.9 million tonnes. This was down 4% compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Figure 2.1 Freight lifted was lower than the same quarter in the previous year

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



Of total freight lifted, 1.2 million tonnes was coal, which was up 23% compared with the previous year. The remaining 16.7 million tonnes were other commodities. This was down 6% compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

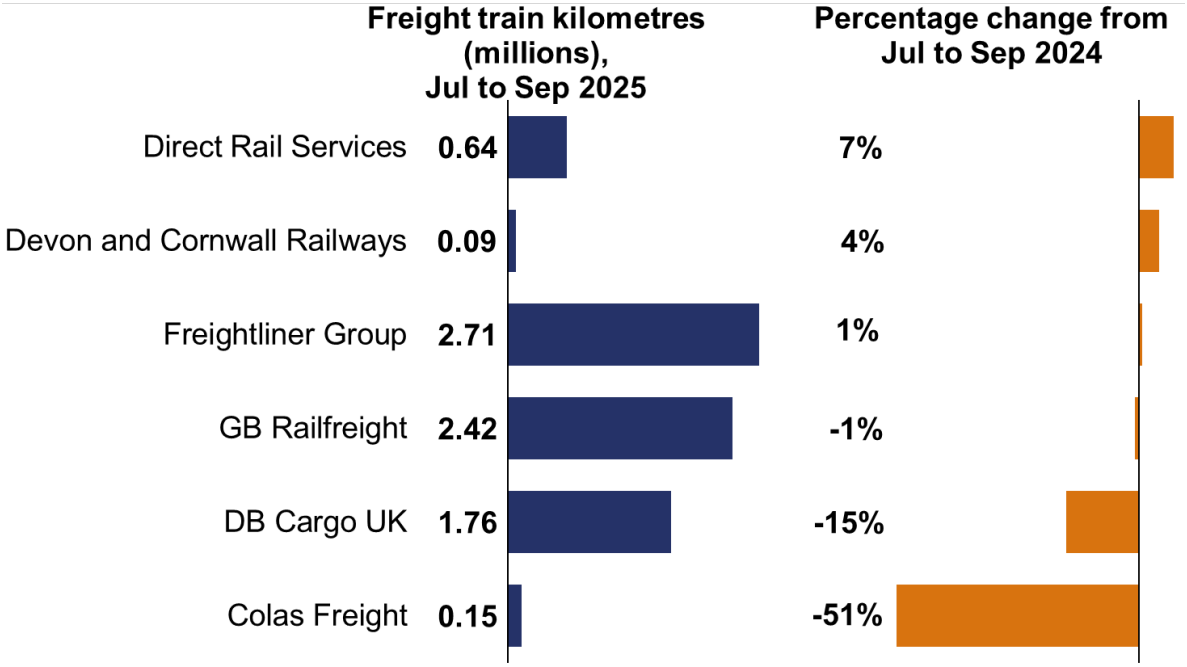
3. Freight train and vehicle kilometres

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

In the latest quarter, freight operators recorded 7.76 million train kilometres. This was down 5% compared with than the same quarter in the previous year. It was the second lowest July to September quarter since the start of the time series in 2010 (the lowest was during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020).

Figure 3.1 Colas Freight reported the largest percentage decrease in train kilometres compared with last year

Freight train kilometres (millions) by operator, Great Britain, July to September 2025 and percentage change from July to September 2024 (Table 1333)

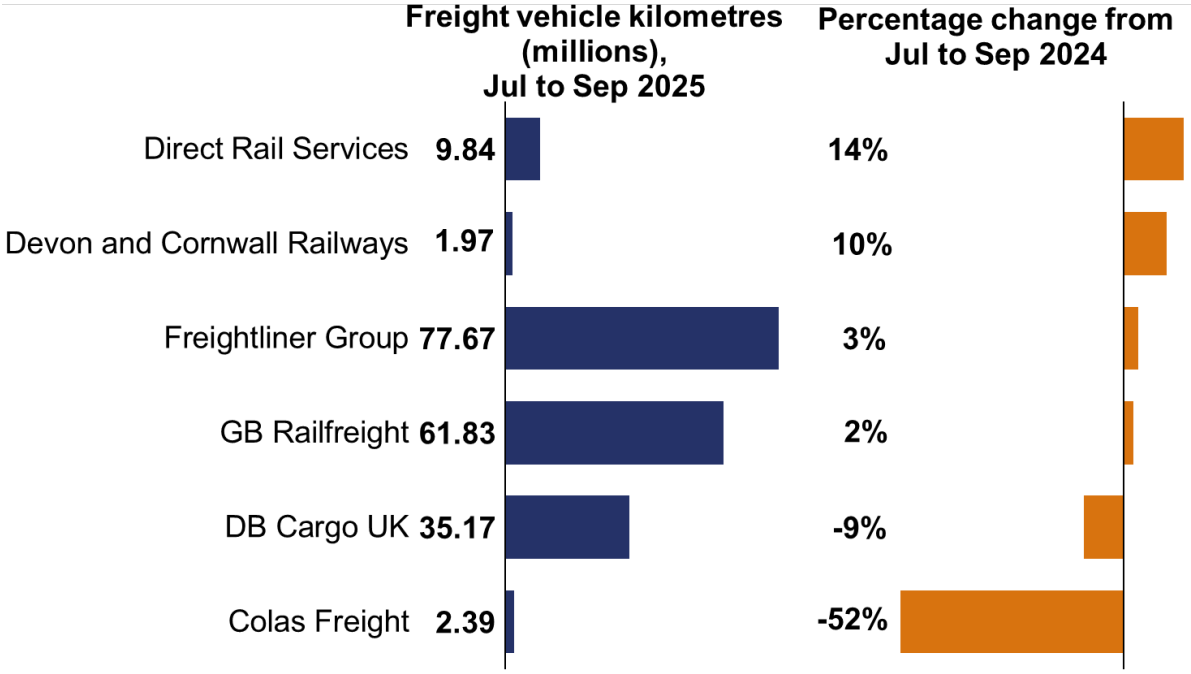


Freight vehicle kilometres is the actual vehicle kilometres travelled by freight operators on all mainline infrastructure, terminals and yards. This is calculated by multiplying the number of rail vehicles (e.g. coaches) by the distance travelled.

A total of 188.87 million freight vehicle kilometres were recorded in the latest quarter. This was a decrease of less than 1% compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Figure 3.2 Colas Freight also recorded the largest percentage decrease in vehicle kilometres compared with last year

Freight vehicle kilometres (millions) by operator, Great Britain, July to September 2025 and percentage change from July to September 2024 (Table 1343)



In the latest quarter, Direct Rail Services reported the largest percentage increase in train and vehicle kilometres, reflecting the operator's new services. It recorded the highest vehicle kilometres of any quarter since the time series began in 2010. There were also increases in both train and vehicle kilometres for Devon and Cornwall Railways and Freightliner Group compared with the same quarter last year.

For Direct Rail Services, Devon and Cornwall Railways, and Freightliner Group, the increase in vehicle kilometres was larger than in train kilometres, which suggests there were more vehicles (i.e. longer trains). Freightliner Group recorded the highest number of vehicle kilometres in a quarter since 2014.

Meanwhile, DB Cargo UK and Colas Freight both reported a reduction in freight train and vehicle kilometres. This follows DB Cargo UK having stopped running the electric-powered Royal Mail services since October 2024. This was the lowest 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.

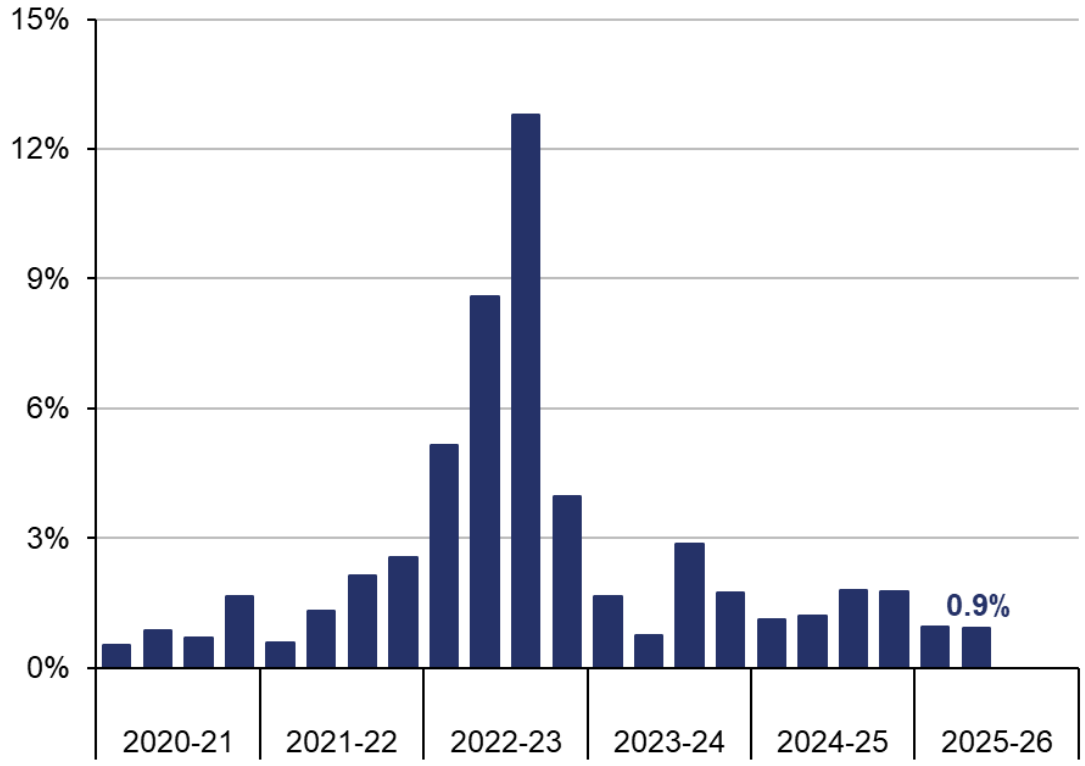
4. Freight cancellations

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.

In the latest quarter, freight cancellations was 0.9%. This was down 0.3 percentage points (i.e. better) compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Figure 4.1 Freight cancellations has decreased compared with the same quarter in the previous year

Freight cancellations (percentage), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2020 to September 2025 (Table 1355)

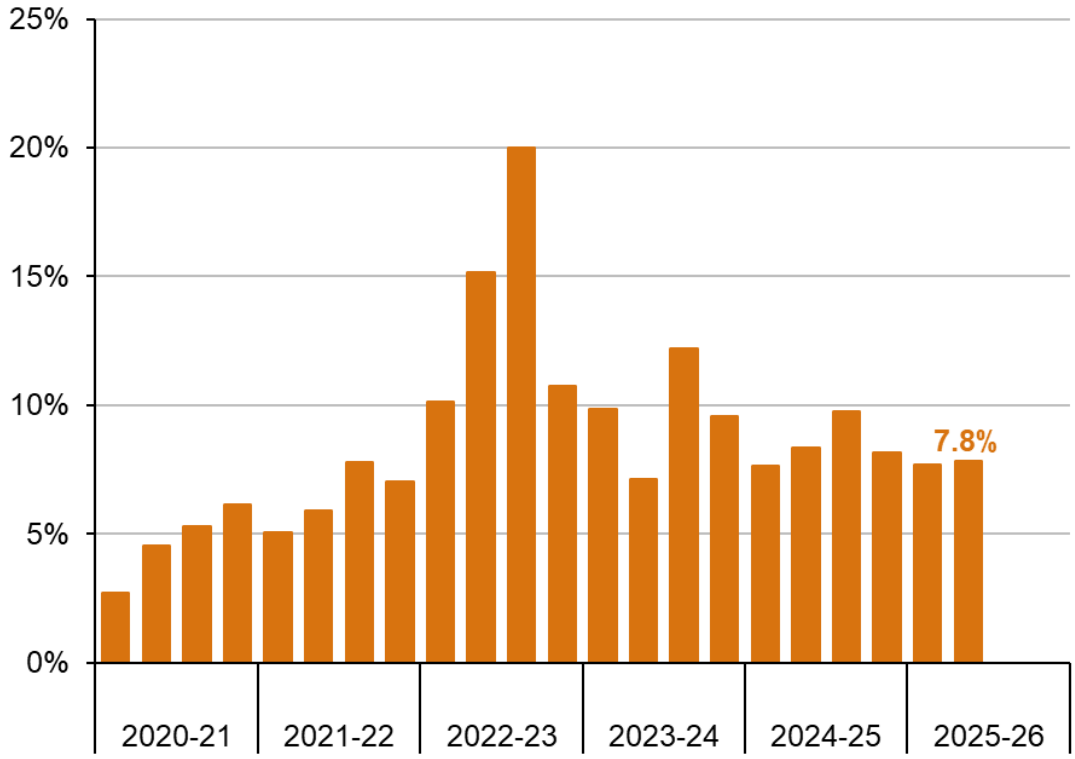


Freight cancellations and lateness (FCaL) is the percentage of commercial freight services that are *either*: cancelled by the infrastructure manager or another operator that is not a commercial freight operator; *or* arrive at their planned destination 15 minutes or more after their booked arrival time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

In the latest quarter, the proportion of freight trains cancelled or arriving after 15 minutes was 7.8%. This was down 0.5 percentage points (i.e. better) compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

Figure 4.2 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 September 2025 (Table 1365)



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

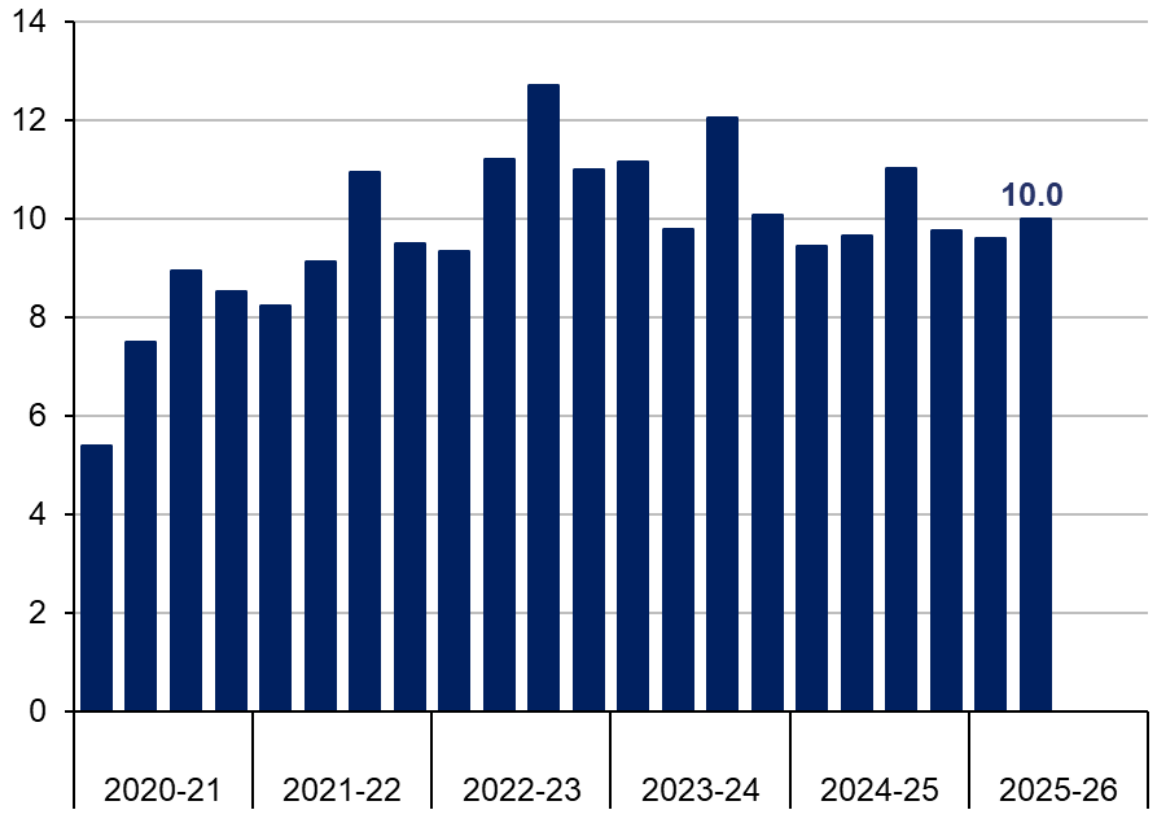
5. Freight delay per 100 train kilometres

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.

In the latest quarter, freight operators experienced 10.0 minutes of delay per 100 train kilometres. This was 4% higher (i.e. worse) than the same quarter the previous year and was the highest July to September quarter since 2022.

Figure 5.1 Freight delay has increased compared with the same quarter in the previous year

Freight delay per 100 train kilometres (minutes), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2020 to September 2025 (Table 1325)



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

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 1355: This includes updated data from Network Rail for October 2020 to March 2021. Moving annual averages have been updated accordingly.
- Table 1365: This includes updated data from Network Rail for October 2020 to March 2021. 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 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; 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