Freight rail usage and performance

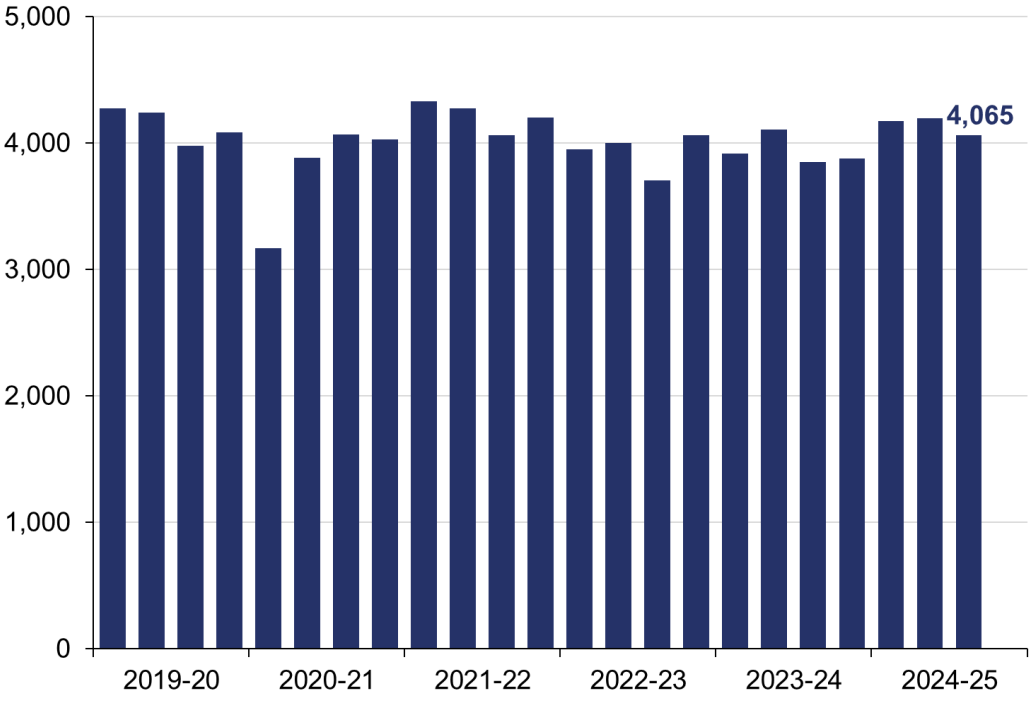
October to December 2024

13 March 2025

Total **freight moved** was **4,065 million net tonne kilometres** in the latest quarter (1 October to 31 December 2024), up 6% compared with the same quarter the previous year. Intermodal non-maritime and biomass had the largest percentage increases in freight moved.

Figure 1 Freight moved was the highest October to December quarter in four years

Freight moved (million net tonne kilometres), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2019 to December 2024 (Table 1310)



Total **freight lifted** was **18.0 million tonnes** in the latest quarter, an increase of 5% compared with the same quarter the previous year.

The proportion of freight trains cancelled or arriving after 15 minutes, **freight cancellations and lateness (FCaL)**, was **9.7%**. This was 2.5 percentage points lower (i.e. better) than October to December 2023.

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)** and **freight vehicle kilometres (by operator).**

Sources: Network Rail, freight operators, Department for Transport

Latest quarter:

1 October to 31 December 2024

Contents:

Author: O. Lowe

Responsible statistician:

P. Moran

Public enquiries:
rail.stats@orr.gov.uk

Media enquiries:
Tel: 07856 279808

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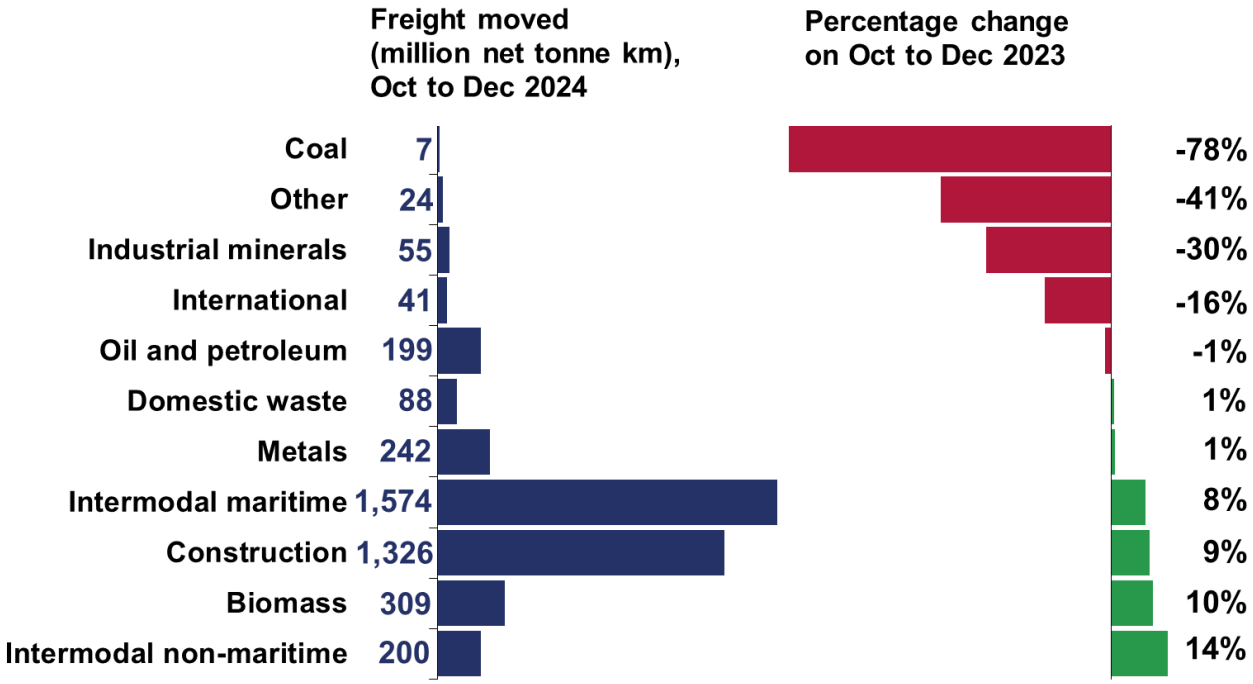
19 June 2025

1. Freight moved

The total volume of freight moved was 4,065 million net tonne kilometres in the latest quarter. This was a 6% increase compared with the same quarter the previous year, with six of the commodity groups seeing a rise in freight moved volumes.

Figure 1.1 Intermodal non-maritime had the largest percentage increase in freight moved

Freight moved (million net tonne kilometres) by commodity, Great Britain, October to December 2024 and percentage change compared with October to December 2023 (Table 1310)



Intermodal non-maritime increased by 14% compared with the same quarter the previous year. It was the highest October to December quarter volume since 2020. Retailers using rail in December to keep stores stocked for Christmas boosted volumes.

Biomass volumes rose by 10%. It saw the highest October to December quarter since 2010 when biomass was first reported as a separate commodity in the published data. Greater demands for electricity resulting from colder weather and shorter days is a contributing factor in the rise. The biomass consuming generators at Drax and Lynemouth were both online in 2024, whereas Lynemouth was offline in 2023.

Construction saw an uplift of 9%, recording 1,326 million net tonne kilometres, which is the highest October to December quarter since the time series began in 1998. There have been new regular flows of constructions spoils to Stewartby. The transfer of materials to

HS2 construction sites continues to be a significant factor in construction volumes. Construction made up just under a third of all freight moved in the quarter, representing the second largest share of all freight moved.

Intermodal maritime increased by 8%. There were 1,574 million net tonne kilometres in the latest quarter, which stands as the highest October to December quarter since 2018. Imports to keep retail warehouses stocked in the months leading up to Christmas started early in the context of continued global shipping disruption. 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. Furthermore, in November a new intermodal maritime service was introduced between Felixstowe and Daventry. As the commodity with the largest share of freight moved, it accounted for 39% of all freight moved between October and December 2024.

Coal continued its decline with a fall of 78% compared with the same quarter last year. It accounted for 7 million net tonne kilometres, which is the lowest value since the time series began.

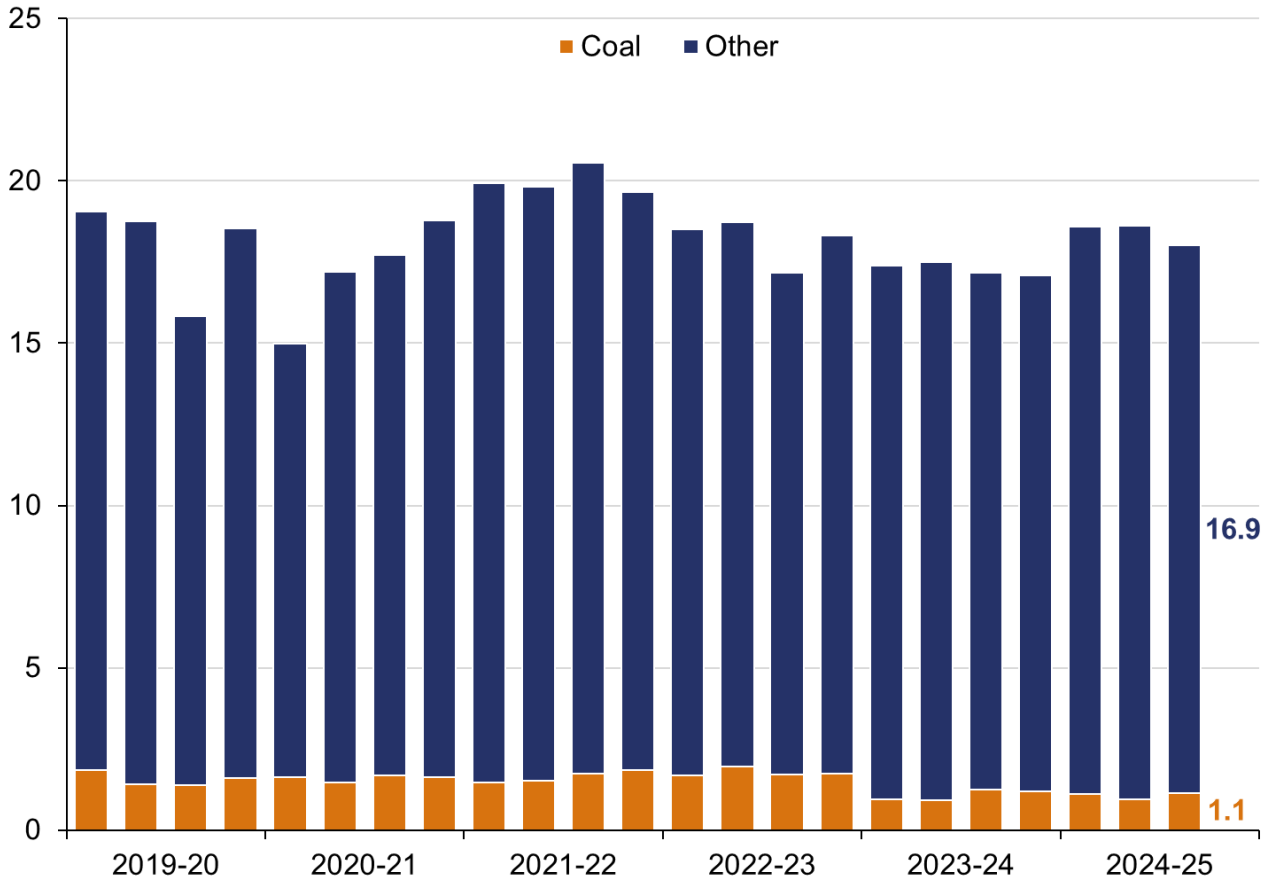
Data for freight moved by commodity by railway period is available on the data portal in Table 1314. Data for freight moved by Network Rail region by railway period is available in Table 1311.

2. Freight lifted

The total amount of freight lifted in the latest quarter was 18.0 million tonnes. It increased by 5% compared with the same quarter the previous year.

Figure 2.1 Total freight lifted was the highest October to December quarter for three years

Freight lifted (million tonnes) by commodity (coal and other), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2019 to December 2024 (Table 1315)



Other freight lifted was 16.9 million tonnes, which was 6% higher compared with the previous year.

The amount of coal lifted was 1.1 million tonnes. It fell by 7% compared with the same quarter the previous year.

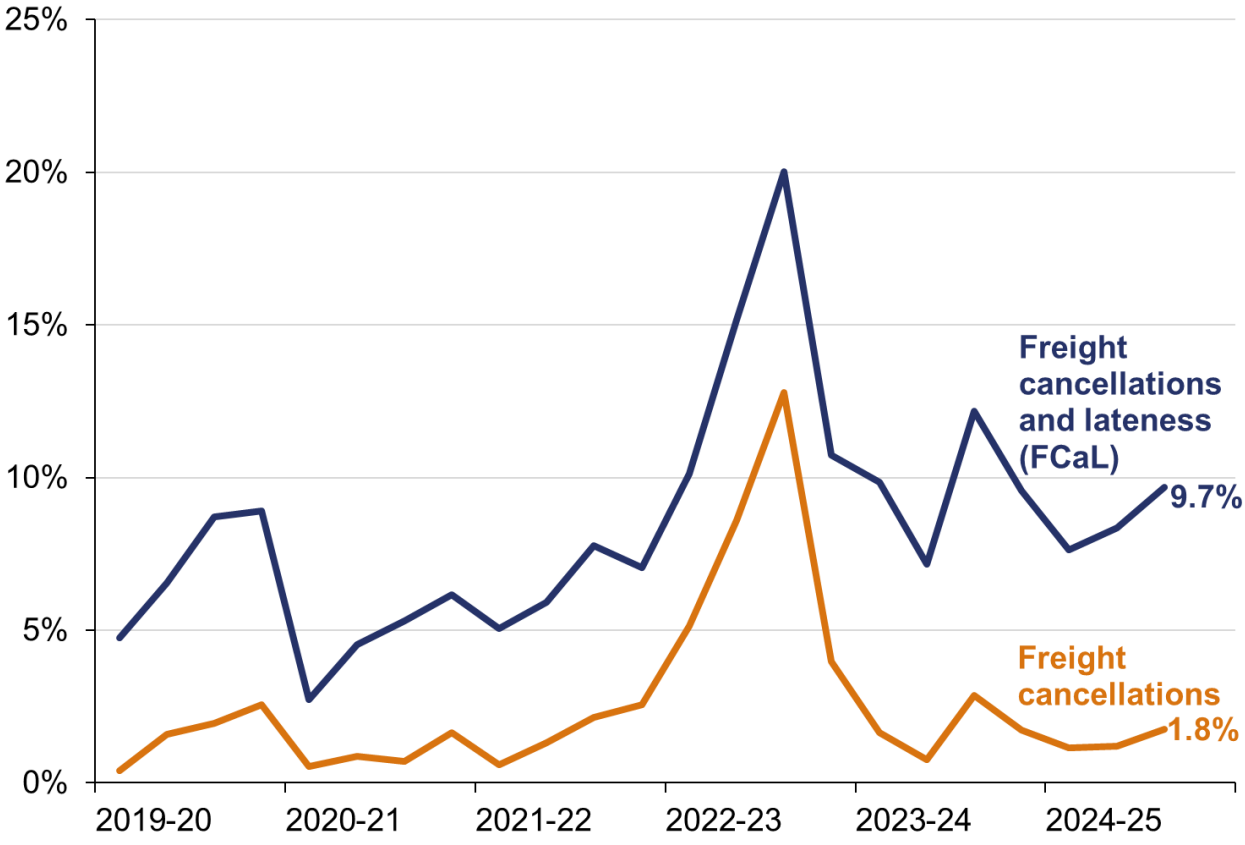
3. Freight cancellations and lateness

Freight reliability, as measured by Freight cancellations and lateness (FCaL), was 9.7% between October and December 2024. It was 2.5 percentage points lower (i.e. better) compared with the same quarter the previous year. The moving annual average (MAA) stood at 8.8% at the end of December 2024.

Freight cancellations were 1.8% in the latest quarter. It was 1.1 percentage points lower (i.e. better) compared with the same quarter the previous year. The MAA for the twelve months to end of December 2024 was 1.5%.

Figure 3.1 FCaL improved compared with the same quarter the previous year

Freight cancellations (percentage) and FCaL (percentage), Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2019 to December 2024 (Table 1355 and Table 1365)



Data by railway period is available on the data portal:

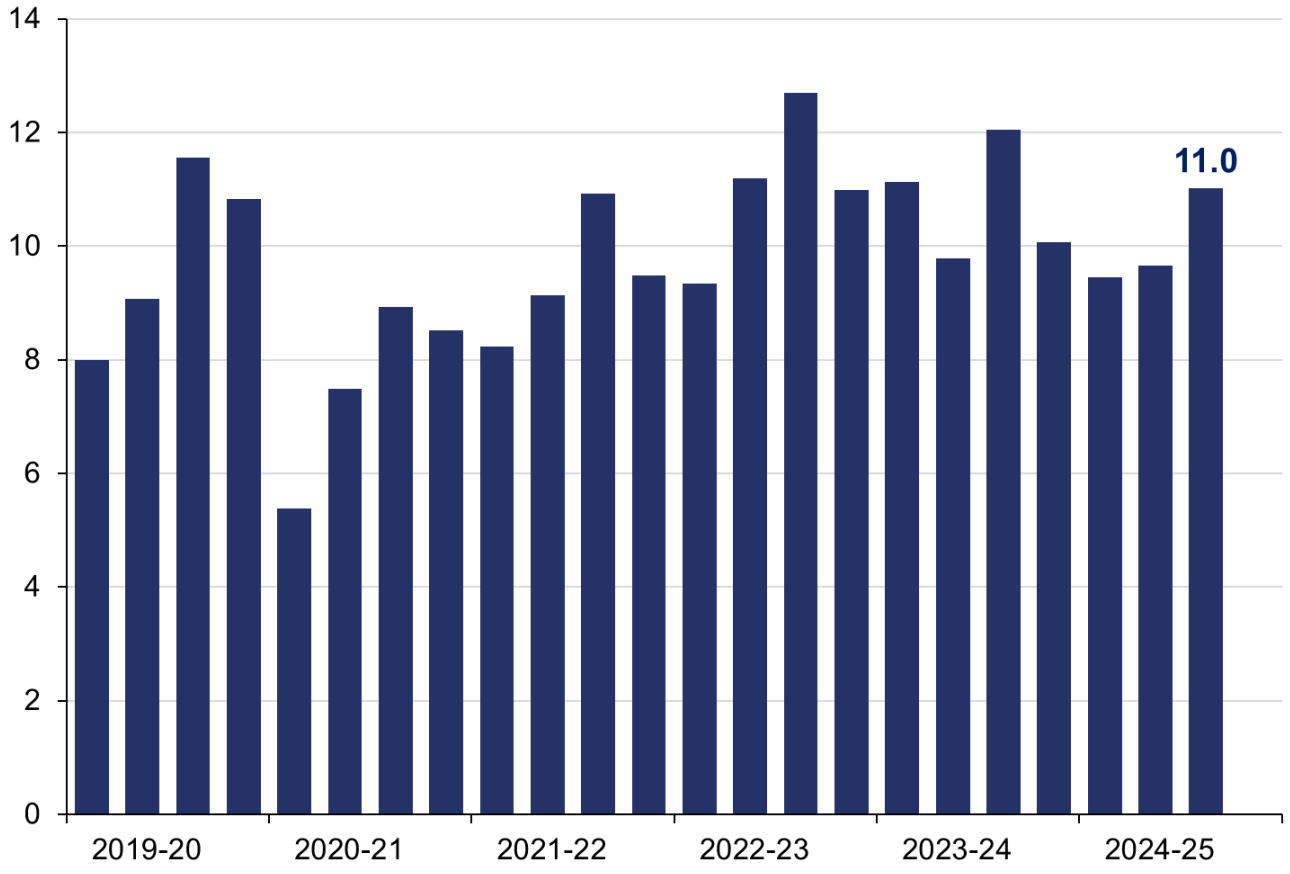
- Table 1351 – Freight cancellations by Network Rail region
- Table 1352 – Freight cancellations by Network Rail route
- Table 1361 – Freight cancellations and lateness by Network Rail region
- Table 1362 – Freight cancellations and lateness by Network Rail route

4. Freight delay per 100 train kilometres

Freight operators experienced 11.0 minutes of delay per 100 train kilometres in the latest quarter. This was 8% lower (i.e. better) than the same quarter the previous year; and an absolute decrease of 1.0 minutes per 100 train kilometres.

Figure 4.1 Freight delay was the lowest October to December quarter for three years

Freight delay per 100 train kilometres, Great Britain, quarterly data, April 2019 to December 2024 (Table 1325)

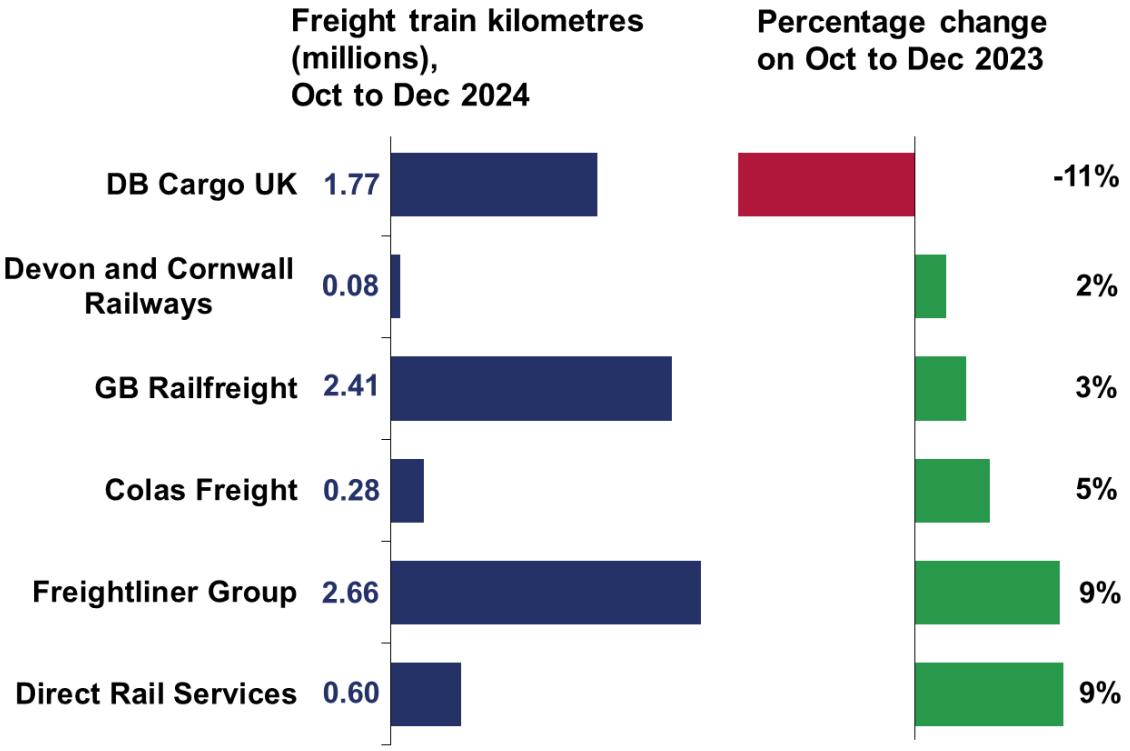


5. Freight train kilometres

Freight operators recorded 7.80 million freight train kilometres in the latest quarter. It was 2% higher compared with the same quarter the previous year.

Figure 5.1 All operators increased in train kilometres, with the exception of DB Cargo UK

Freight train kilometres (millions) by operator, Great Britain, October to December 2024 and percentage change compared with October to December 2023 (Table 1333)



Five operators saw an increase in freight train kilometres. Direct Rail Services saw its highest October to December quarter since 2021. Freightliner Group had its highest October to December quarter since 2020. New services commenced for both Direct Rail Services and Freightliner Group. Colas Freight, GB Railfreight and Devon and Cornwall Railways recorded their highest October to December quarter since the start of the time series in 2010.

Freight train kilometres fell by 11% for DB Cargo UK. DB Cargo have stopped running the electric-powered Royal Mail services since October. The operator recorded 1.77 million freight train kilometres, which was the lowest value since the time series began.

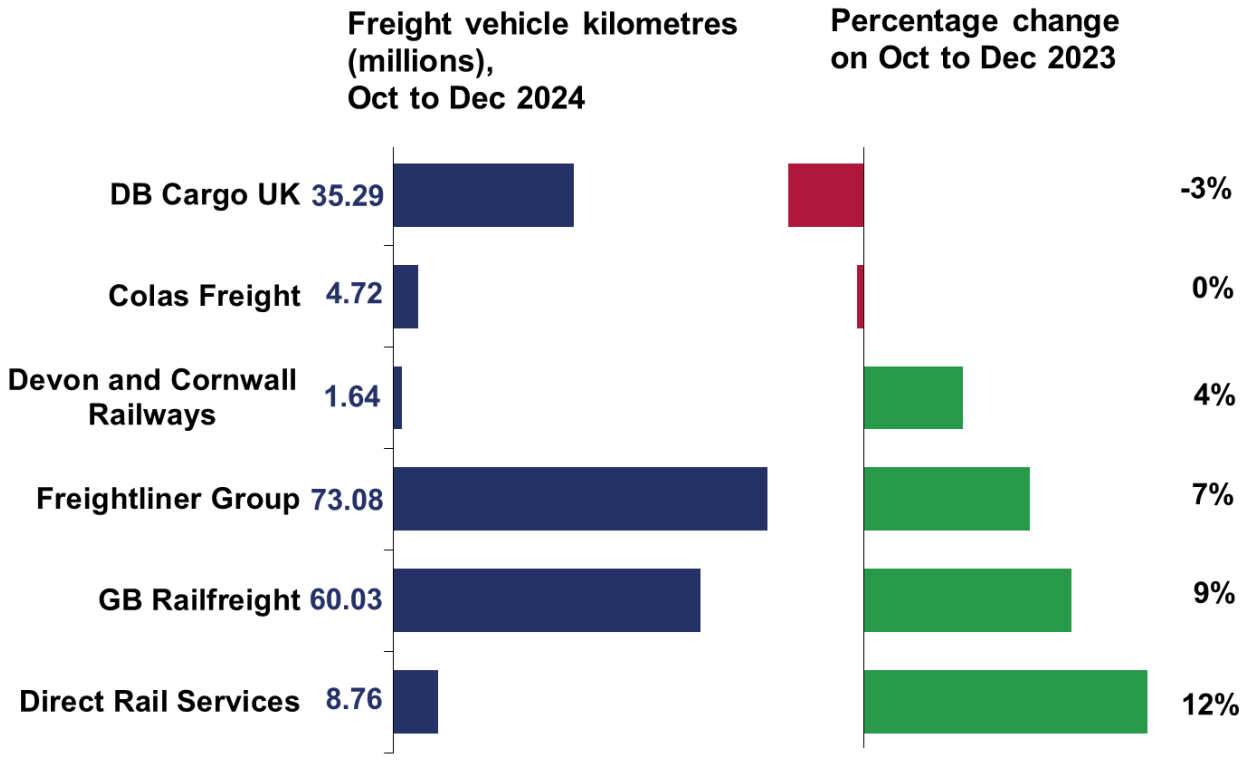
Data on the breakdown of freight train kilometres by traction type (electric or diesel) is available on the data portal in Table 1333.

6. Freight vehicle kilometres

Freight operators recorded 183.52 million freight vehicle kilometres in the latest quarter. It increased by 6% compared with the same quarter the previous year. Comparing this with the 2% increase in train kilometres indicates operators are increasing capacity by using longer trains.

Figure 6.1 The two operators with the largest share of vehicle kilometres both saw an increase compared with the same quarter in 2023

Freight vehicle kilometres (millions) by operator, Great Britain, October to December 2024 and percentage change compared with October to December 2023 (Table 1343)



Four operators saw an increase in freight vehicle kilometres. Direct Rail Services saw its highest October to December quarter since 2021. GB Railfreight and Devon and Cornwall Railways had their highest October to December value since the start of the time series. Freightliner Group recorded its highest October to December quarter since 2013.

Freight vehicle kilometres decreased by 3% for DB Cargo UK. It recorded 35.29 million freight vehicle kilometres, which was the lowest value since the time series began.

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

7. 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 1365: There has been refreshed data from Network Rail for: July 2019 to March 2020; July to September 2020; January 2021 to March 2022; July to September 2022; and January 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 Twelfth 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