

Statistical bulletin

International trade in UK nations, regions and cities: 2022

Estimated value of exports and imports of goods and services for 2022 for International Territory Levels 1, 2 and 3, and city regions. Includes EU and non-EU split along with data for top 20 partner countries. These are official statistics in development.

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1 . Main points

- In 2022, the UK total trade deficit was driven by a deficit in England, despite there being a surplus in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- The total trade balance in England decreased substantially from 2021 to 2022 by £61.9 billion to a deficit of £40.3 billion, driven by increased trade in goods imports to the South East.
- The value of services exports from London was higher than any UK region in 2022.
- Total trade imports were higher across all nations and regions within the UK in 2022 than pre-coronavirus levels (2018).

For comparisons, the year 2018 is used as the latest stable year in which trade was unaffected by stockpiling in the lead up to the UK leaving the EU, and trade disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

2 . Subnational trade analysis

International trade in UK nations and regions in 2022

In 2022, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland saw a total trade surplus, while England experienced a total trade deficit of £40.3 billion – a change of £61.9 billion from a surplus of £21.6 billion in 2021. The total UK trade deficit of £44.1 billion was largely driven by the South East of England, while the largest total trade surplus was from London.

The South East had a total trade deficit of £55.2 billion, with a trade in goods deficit of £75.5 billion and a trade in services surplus of £20.3 billion. This was because of larger goods imports at £125.6 billion, with the wholesale and motor trade industries accounting for £69.6 billion (55.4%) of this.

London had the highest total trade surplus of £56.0 billion. The value of services exported by London was £185.9 billion, driven by financial and insurance activities, and information and communication industries, with exports worth £63.1 billion and £50.2 billion, respectively.

Table 1: The UK trade deficit was driven by the total trade deficit in England in 2022
Trade in goods, trade in services and total trade split by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, current prices, 2022

£ billion

Region	Trade in goods: imports	Trade in goods: exports	Trade in services: imports	Trade in services: exports	Total trade: imports	Total trade: exports	Total trade: balance
North East	13.1	12	5.3	7.1	18.4	19.1	0.7
North West	48.9	37.3	22.3	31.2	71.2	68.5	-2.7
Yorkshire and The Humber	39.6	21.1	12	17.2	51.6	38.4	-13.2
East Midlands	35.6	26.6	8.5	9.7	44	36.2	-7.8
West Midlands (England)	46.2	35.5	13.3	17.4	59.5	52.9	-6.6
East of England	51	31.4	22.7	27.4	73.7	58.7	-15
London	89.5	49.7	90.1	185.9	179.6	235.6	56
South East	125.6	50.1	32.3	52.5	157.8	102.7	-55.2
South West	28.8	25.6	12.2	19.1	41	44.7	3.7
England	478.2	289.2	218.7	337.6	696.9	656.6	-40.3
Wales	24.9	22.3	5.5	9.4	30.4	31.7	1.3
Scotland	25.7	34.4	17.7	30.2	43.4	64.6	21.2
Northern Ireland	12.3	10.9	3.4	6.9	15.7	17.8	2.1
Unknown	72	50.5	6.2	0	78.2	50.5	-27.7
Extra-regio	27.6	26.9	0	0	27.6	26.9	-0.7
UK	640.7	434.1	251.5	413.9	892.2	848.1	-44.1

Source: International trade in UK nations, regions and cities from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Trade in goods plus trade in services may not sum exactly to total trade because of rounding.
2. Unknown region includes unmatched companies, trade in precious metals, national imports of gambling services and businesses who act within the UK on behalf of foreign companies overseas., Extra regio includes parts of the national economic territory which cannot be attached directly to a single region including some offshore oil transactions and territorial enclaves.

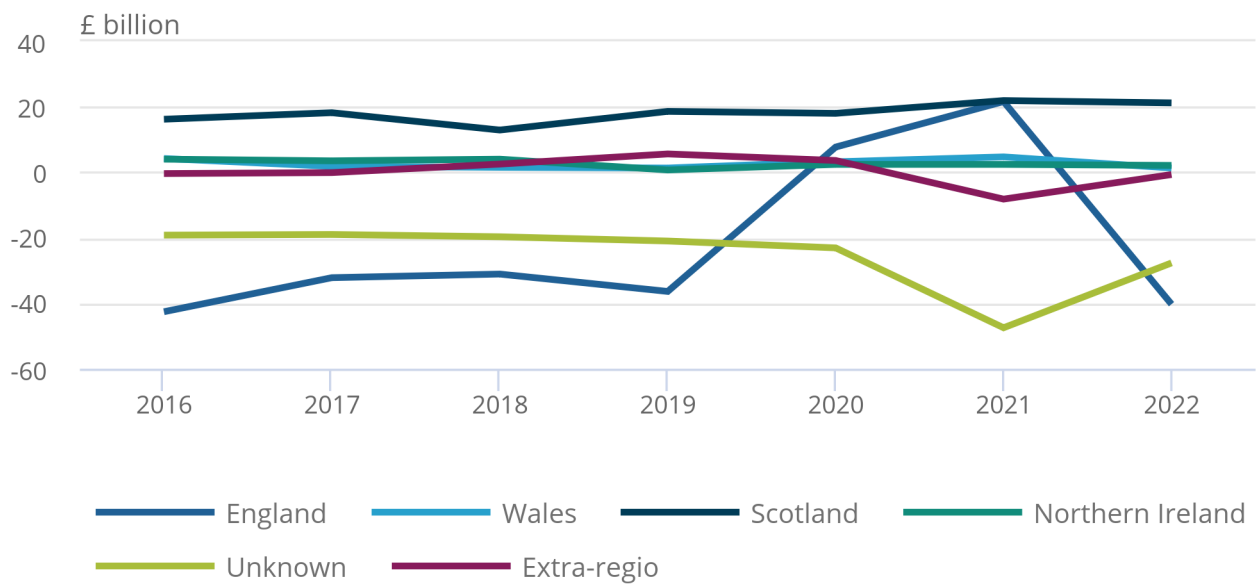
International trade in UK nations and regions over time

Figure 1: The total trade balance for England changed from surplus to deficit between 2021 and 2022

Total trade balance split by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, current prices, 2016 to 2022

Figure 1: The total trade balance for England changed from surplus to deficit between 2021 and 2022

Total trade balance split by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, current prices, 2016 to 2022



Source: International trade in UK nations, regions and cities from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Unknown region includes unmatched companies, trade in precious metals, national imports of gambling services and businesses who act within the UK on behalf of foreign companies overseas.
2. Extra-regio includes parts of the national economic territory which cannot be attached directly to a single region including some offshore oil transactions and territorial enclaves.

Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all had a total trade surplus from 2016 to 2022. Scotland had a surplus for both trade in goods and trade in services in 2022. Northern Ireland and Wales each had a trade in goods deficit in 2022, but this was offset by a larger surplus of trade in services.

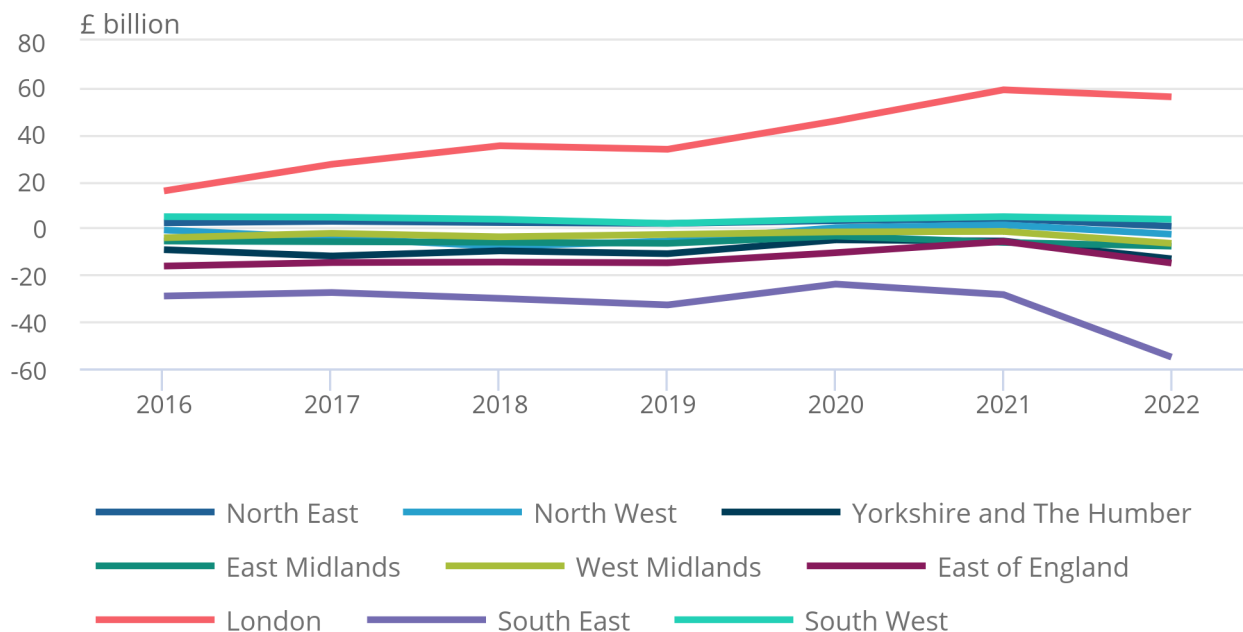
England had a total trade deficit in 2022, despite having a total trade surplus during 2020 and 2021. A trade deficit is more typical for England and is the first seen since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Figure 2: The South East of England had a trade deficit, while London had a trade surplus, from 2016 to 2022

Total trade balance split by England regions, current prices, 2016 to 2022

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Total trade balance split by England regions, current prices, 2016 to 2022



Source: International trade in UK nations, regions and cities from the Office for National Statistics

All regions of England saw a decrease in their total trade balance in 2022, with the North West moving from a trade surplus of £1.3 billion to a trade deficit of £2.7 billion. The South East had the largest total trade deficit of £55.2 billion, with the deficit increasing by £26.7 billion (93.8%) from 2021 caused by increased goods imports.

London continued to have the largest trade surplus in England, though this decreased by £3.0 billion (5.2%).

Comparing trade data to 2018 provides a comparison of UK trade estimates with the most recent "stable" period.

Both exports and imports increased in all nations and regions from 2021 to 2022. Total imports in 2022 are now above pre-coronavirus levels (2018) in all nations and regions within the UK. Total exports in 2022 are above pre-coronavirus levels for all nations and regions, except for the North East and Northern Ireland.

Figure 3: Total exports in all regions except Northern Ireland and North East England have surpassed pre- coronavirus levels

Total trade exports by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, UK, current prices, 2018 to 2022

London had the greatest increase in total exports from 2018 to 2022, by £59.7 billion, driven by a rise in services exports of £50.3 billion (37.1%).

Total exports in Scotland increased by £16.0 billion from 2018 to 2022, because of a £9.6 billion (38.5%) rise in goods exports and a £6.4 billion (27.0%) rise in services exports.

In the East of England, goods exports in the manufacturing industry were £4.8 billion (33.5%) higher in 2022 than in 2018, while services exports in the professional, scientific and technical activities industry were up by £3.9 billion (96.1%).

Wales' total exports increased by £3.7 billion (13.3%) between 2018 and 2022, which was driven by an increase in trade in goods exports of £2.9 billion (15.1%). The manufacturing industry was the largest contributor, up by £2.0 billion (11.9%).

The largest regional fall in total exports was in Northern Ireland between 2018 and 2022. The fall of £1.1 billion (5.8%) was from services exports, which decreased by £2.2 billion (24.2%).

The other decrease in total exports was in the North East of England with a fall of £1.0 billion (5.1%), from goods exports, which fell by £0.8 billion (6.4%).

Figure 4: Total imports in 2022 were higher than in 2018 for all nations and regions within the UK

Total trade imports by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, UK, current prices, 2018 to 2022

Goods imports accounted for 79.6% of the UK total imports increase. Trade in goods imports increased by £145.4 billion (29.3%), while trade in services imports increased by £37.3 billion (17.4%). In 2022, [the value of fuel imports saw a large increase](#) because of the price of gas reaching record levels. Natural gas is one of the products that is classified under Extra-Regio, as it cannot be attached directly to a single region.

The largest of the increases in total imports was in London, where services imports increased by £24 billion (36.2%). The largest industry increases were in the information and communication, and professional, scientific and technical activities industries. London also saw an increase in goods imports of £14.8 billion, because of an increase in wholesale and motor trade of £6.7 billion (18.4%) and financial and insurance activities industries of £3.9 billion (136%).

South East England had the second largest increase in total imports, up by £27.7 billion. The largest industry increase was in wholesale and motor trade, up by £9.5 billion (15.5%). Professional, scientific and technical activities had the second largest increase, up by £5.7 billion (84.6%).

3 . Explore UK international trade by International Territorial Levels for by 2022

Explore the 2022 trade data using our interactive tool. Our data break down UK trade by International Territorial Levels (ITL) 1, 2 and 3. Select a certain region by using the drop-down menu or hovering over it.

4 . Data on international trade in services and goods by subnational areas of the UK

[Subnational trade timeseries](#)

Dataset | Released 6 February 2025

Estimated value of exports, imports and balance of trade from 2016 to 2022 for total trade, trade in goods and trade in services for International Territorial Levels (ITLs) 1, 2 and 3, and city regions. Includes EU and non-EU split along with data for top 20 partner countries. These are official statistics in development.

[Subnational trade in goods](#)

Dataset | Released 6 February 2025

Estimated value of exports, imports and balance of goods for 2022 for International Territorial Levels (ITLs) 1, 2 and 3, and city regions. Includes EU and non-EU split along with data for top 20 partner countries. These are official statistics in development.

[Subnational trade in services](#)

Dataset | Released 6 February 2025

Estimated value of exports, imports and balance of services for 2022 for International Territorial Levels (ITLs) 1, 2 and 3, and city regions. Includes EU and non-EU split along with data for top 20 partner countries. These are official statistics in development.

5 . Glossary

ITL

The International Territorial Levels (ITL) is a hierarchical classification of administrative areas used for statistical purposes. ITL1 are major socio-economic regions, while ITL2 and ITL3 are progressively smaller regions. In the context of the UK, the ITL1 areas are Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the nine regions of England: East of England, East Midlands, London, North East, North West, South East, South West, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and The Humber.

Total trade

The value of total trade between two trading partners (that is, exports plus imports).

Trade balance

The trade balance is the difference between exports and imports or exports minus imports. When the value of exports is greater than the value of imports, the trade balance is in surplus. When the value of imports is greater than the value of exports, the trade balance is in deficit. The balance is sometimes referred to as "net exports".

A full [glossary of economic terms](#) is available.

6 . Data sources and quality

The UK leaving the EU and the subsequent transition period, along with the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, supply chain disruption and global recession, have caused higher levels of volatility in trade statistics in recent years.

Data collection changes

Since the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020, the arrangements for how the UK trades with the EU changed.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) implemented some data collection changes following Brexit, which affected statistics on UK trade in goods with the EU. We have made adjustments to our estimates of goods imports from the EU in 2021 and 2022 to account for these changes, however, a structural break remains in the full data time series for goods imports from and exports to the EU from January 2021.

We advise caution when interpreting and drawing conclusions from these statistics. Our article, [Impact of trade in goods data collection changes on UK trade statistics: summary of adjustments and the structural break from 2021](#), provides more detail.

Revisions

This article contains revised estimates for 2016 to 2021, along with our first subnational estimates for 2022.

These estimates are consistent with the [National Accounts Blue Book release for 2024](#). Previous publications on international trade in UK nations, regions and cities are based on old methodologies and as such should not be used to compare against this dataset.

Data sources

Trade is measured through both exports and imports of goods and services. Data are supplied by over 30 sources, including several administrative sources. HMRC is the largest data source for trade in goods, while trade in services sources include the International Trade in Services (ITIS) Survey and the International Passenger Survey (IPS).

View our [UK Trade Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) report](#) and [International trade in services QMI report](#) for more detail.

The Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) is the primary data source used to apportion trade value to the level of the local unit of a business from the level of the reporting unit. Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) and IPS data is also used to apportion trade in services data not covered by ITIS.

Method

This bulletin presents estimates of the value of goods and services imports and exports, and total trade from 2016 to 2022 to and from subnational areas of the UK.

These statistics are labelled as "official statistics in development". Until September 2023, these were called "experimental statistics". Read more about the change in the [Guide to official statistics in development](#).

We are developing how we collect and produce the data to improve the quality of these statistics. Once the developments are complete, we will review the statistics with the Statistics Head of Profession. We will decide whether the statistics are of sufficient quality and value to be published as official statistics, or whether further development is needed. Production may be stopped if they are not of sufficient quality or value. Users will be informed of the outcome and any changes.

We value your feedback on these statistics. Contact us at subnational.trade@ons.gov.uk

Trade in goods data includes a breakdown for Unknown and Extra-Regio regions, in addition to the International Territorial Level (ITL).

The Unknown region includes unmatched companies, government spending in trade in goods, and imports of gambling by households in trade in services. Precious metals (which are high-value, low-volume products) are allocated to the Unknown region as they can skew figures in regions such as London. Extra-Regio is made up of parts of the national economic territory that cannot be attached directly to a single region, including offshore oil transactions.

The import of gambling services by UK households have not currently been allocated to a specific region. These are currently included in the Unknown region for trade in services at the ITL1 and worldwide level only.

Reported spend data from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) is used to apportion national travel imports to each ITL1 region, based on the origin of travel for each UK-based survey respondent. Travel imports are only measured at the ITL1 level, and are not included in ITL2, ITL3 and city region estimates.

More information about the methodology and the strengths and limitations of our datasets can be found in our [International trade in UK nations, regions and cities Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#).

7 . Related links

[UK trade in goods, year in review, 2022](#)

Article | Released 17 February 2023

An analysis of UK trade in goods in 2022 in the context of rising price inflation and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

[International trade in UK nations and regions: the impact of coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 2020](#)

Article | Released 20 October 2022

An analysis looking at impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on subnational trade in goods and services in 2020.

[HM Revenue and Customs \(HMRC\) regional trade statistics](#)

Web page | Released 11 December 2024

Breakdown of the flows of imports and exports between regions of the UK and other countries.

[UK trade in goods by industry, country and commodity, exports](#)

Dataset | Released on 1 November 2024

Experimental dataset providing a breakdown of UK trade in goods by industry, country and commodity on a balance of payments basis.

[UK trade in goods by industry, country and commodity, imports](#)

Dataset | Released on 1 November 2024

Experimental dataset providing a breakdown of UK trade in goods by industry, country and commodity on a balance of payments basis.

[UK trade in services by industry, country and service type, exports](#)

Dataset | Released on 1 November 2024

Experimental dataset providing a breakdown of UK trade in services by industry, country and service type on a balance of payments basis..

[UK trade in services by industry, country and service type, imports](#)

Dataset | Released on 1 November 2024

Experimental dataset providing a breakdown of UK trade in services by industry, country and service type on a balance of payments basis.

8 . Cite this bulletin

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