

Statistical bulletin

International trade in UK nations, regions and cities: 2023

Estimated value of exports and imports of goods and services for 2023 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

- The UK total trade deficit was caused by a deficit in England in 2023, despite there being a surplus in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.
- The value of services exports from London was higher than any UK region in 2023.
- The value of goods imports to South East England was higher than any UK region in 2023.

2 . Subnational trade analysis

International trade in UK nations and regions in 2023

Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland saw a total trade surplus in 2023. England was therefore the only UK nation to have larger imports than exports. England experienced a total trade deficit of £27.9 billion – a narrowing of £13.4 billion from a deficit of £41.3 billion in 2022. The total UK trade deficit of £29.1 billion was largely caused by South East England, while the largest total trade surplus was from London.

South East England had a total trade deficit of £59.0 billion, with a trade in goods deficit of £82.2 billion and a trade in services surplus of £23.1 billion. This was because of larger goods imports at £124.5 billion; the wholesale and motor trade industries accounted for £72.6 billion (58.3%) of this.

London had the highest total trade surplus of £59.4 billion. The value of services exported by London was £213.1 billion. This was comprised of financial and insurance activities, and information and communication industries, which had exports worth £66.4 billion and £61.7 billion, respectively.

Table 1: UK trade deficit was because of the total trade deficit in England in 2023
Trade in goods, trade in services and total trade split by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, current prices, 2023

£ 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 | 14.2 | 14 | 5.9 | 8.1 | 20.2 | 22.1 | 1.9 |
| North West | 47.3 | 36.3 | 26.5 | 32.2 | 73.9 | 68.5 | -5.4 |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 32.9 | 18.7 | 14.7 | 21 | 47.6 | 39.7 | -7.9 |
| East Midlands | 37.5 | 30.5 | 10.2 | 11.9 | 47.7 | 42.4 | -5.3 |
| West Midlands (England) | 44 | 37.1 | 15.2 | 20.6 | 59.2 | 57.7 | -1.6 |
| East of England | 55 | 33.4 | 25.7 | 31.7 | 80.7 | 65.1 | -15.6 |
| London | 89.8 | 41.8 | 105.7 | 213.1 | 195.5 | 254.9 | 59.4 |
| South East | 124.5 | 42.3 | 36.7 | 59.8 | 161.2 | 102.2 | -59 |
| South West | 28.6 | 26.9 | 14.2 | 21.5 | 42.8 | 48.4 | 5.6 |
| England | 473.9 | 281 | 254.9 | 389.4 | 728.8 | 700.9 | -27.9 |
| Wales | 20.9 | 21.1 | 6.3 | 10.5 | 27.2 | 31.6 | 4.5 |
| Scotland | 23.3 | 32 | 20.7 | 35.1 | 44 | 67.1 | 23.1 |
| Northern Ireland | 11.5 | 12.9 | 3.5 | 6.2 | 16 | 19.1 | 4.1 |
| Unknown | 60.7 | 38.3 | 6.8 | 0 | 67.4 | 38.3 | -29.2 |
| Extra-regio | 13.8 | 10.1 | 0 | 0 | 13.8 | 10.1 | -3.6 |
| UK | 604 | 395.4 | 292.1 | 471.6 | 896.1 | 867 | -29.1 |

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.
3. "Extra-regio" includes parts of the national economic territory that cannot be attached directly to a single region, including some offshore oil transactions and territorial enclaves.

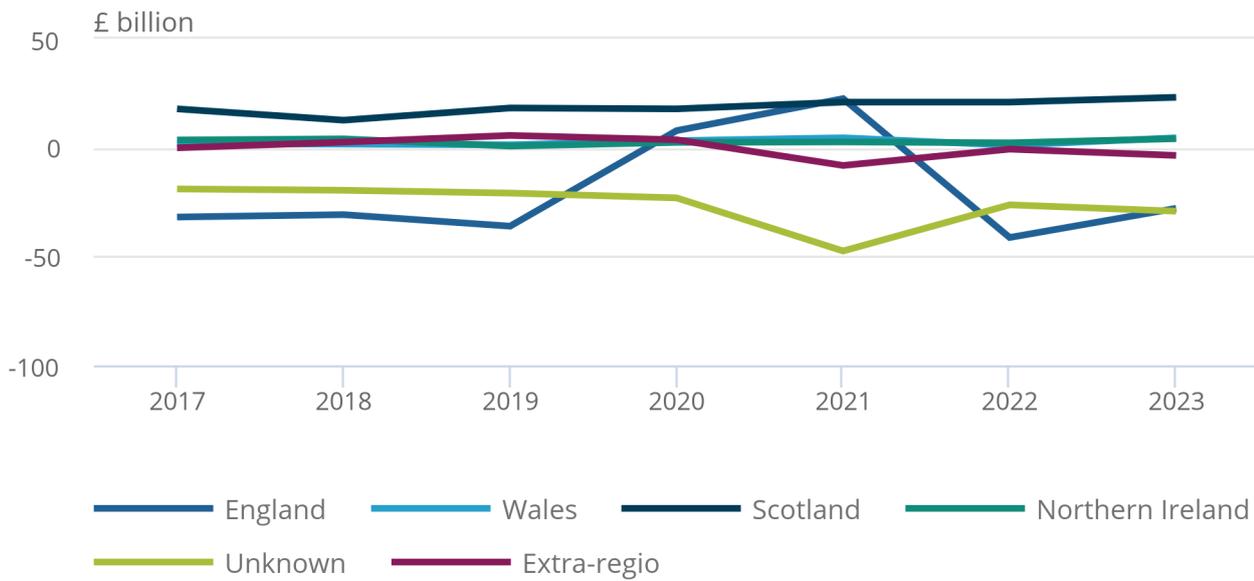
International trade in UK nations and regions over time

Figure 1: England’s total trade balance deficit narrowed between 2022 and 2023

Total trade balance split by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, current prices, 2017 to 2023

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

Notes:

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Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all had a total trade surplus from 2017 to 2023. They all had a surplus for both trade in goods and trade in services in 2023.

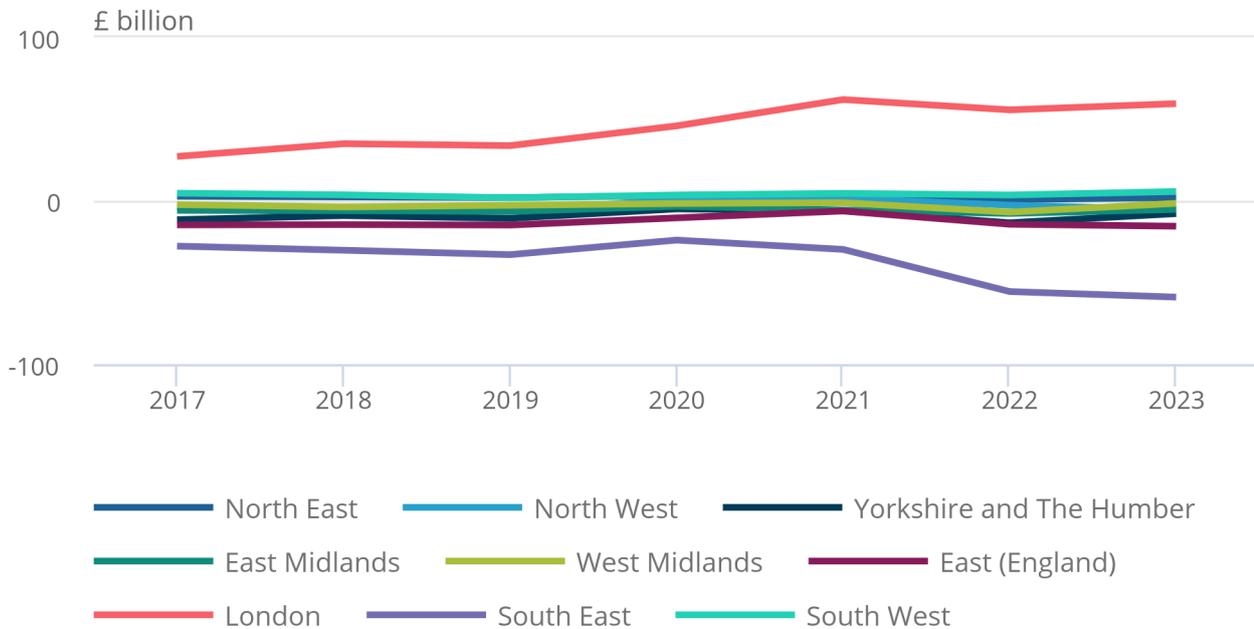
England had a total trade deficit in all years except for 2020 and 2021, which were affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. England had a total trade surplus in these two years, with more exports recorded than imports.

Figure 2: South East England had a trade deficit, while London had a trade surplus, from 2017 to 2023

Total trade balance split by England regions, current prices, 2017 to 2023

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Total trade balance split by England regions, current prices, 2017 to 2023



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

South East England had the largest total trade deficit of £55.2 billion. The deficit widened by £3.4 billion from 2022, caused by increased goods imports.

London continued to have the largest trade surplus in England, which increased by £3.8 billion to £59.4 billion.

Figure 3: Total exports for nations and regions between 2022 and 2023

Total trade exports by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, UK, current prices, 2022 to 2023

London had the greatest increase in total exports from 2022 to 2023, by £18.8 billion. This was caused by a rise in services exports of £26.9 billion.

Figure 4: Total imports for nations and regions between 2022 and 2023

Total trade imports by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, UK, current prices, 2022 to 2023

London had the greatest increase in total imports from 2022 to 2023, by £15.1 billion. This was caused by a rise in services imports of £15.3 billion.

The value of fuel imports and exports fell in 2023, because of falling gas and oil prices, as explained in our [UK trade in goods, year in review: 2023 article](#). Natural gas is one of the products that is classified under "extra-regio", as it cannot be attached directly to a single region.

3 . UK international trade by International Territorial Levels for 2023

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

Figure 5: Explore the 2023 data using our interactive tool

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

[Subnational trade time series](#)

Dataset | Released 6 August 2025

Estimated value of exports, imports and balance of trade from 2016 to 2023 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 August 2025

Estimated value of exports, imports and balance of goods for 2023 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 August 2025

Estimated value of exports, imports and balance of services for 2023 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 (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

There have been higher levels of volatility in trade statistics in recent years, because of Brexit and the subsequent transition period, the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, supply chain disruption, and global recession.

Data collection changes

The arrangements for how the UK trades with the EU have changed since the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020.

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 adjusted 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. We provide more detail in our [Impact of trade in goods data collection changes on UK trade statistics: summary of adjustments and the structural break from 2021 article](#).

Revisions

This bulletin contains revised estimates for 2016 to 2022, along with our first subnational estimates for 2023.

These estimates are consistent with our [UK trade: May 2025 bulletin](#), including revisions to trade in goods and services estimates for 2023, which have been published since our [UK National Accounts, The Blue Book: 2024 release](#).

Previous publications on international trade in UK nations, regions and cities are based on old methodologies. They 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. Trade in services sources include the International Trade in Services (ITIS) Survey and the International Passenger Survey (IPS).

For more detail, see our [UK Trade quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#) and our [International trade in services QMI](#).

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.

Official statistics in development

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

Method

Trade in goods data includes a breakdown for "unknown" and "extra-regio" regions, in addition to the International Territorial Level (ITL).

There have been several changes to the 2025 ITL boundaries. These changes mainly ensure that:

- ITLs continue to fall within the population thresholds
- English ITL2 boundaries align with Combined Authorities (where possible)
- Welsh ITL boundaries better reflect local areas
- Scottish ITL boundaries more closely align with administrative geographies

For more detail, please refer to our [International, regional and city statistics page](#).

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 is not 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 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, or 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 QMI](#).

7 . Related links

[UK trade in goods, year in review, 2023](#)

Article | Released 1 March 2024

Analysis of UK trade in goods in 2023 in the context of volatile pricing trends.

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

Release | Released on 1 May 2025

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](#)

Release | Released on 1 May 2025

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](#)

Release | Released on 1 May 2025

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](#)

Release | Released on 1 May 2025

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

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

Web page | Released 11 June 2025

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

8 . Cite this bulletin

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