



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**  
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

# Scottish Transport Statistics 2023

## Water Transport

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Key Points</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Main Points</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Freight Tonnage .....	3
Ports and Destinations.....	4
<b>Passenger Services</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Routes to Northern Ireland and Europe .....	5
Routes within Scotland .....	5
Operators on subsidised routes within Scotland .....	5
Local authority ferry services .....	6
Ferry routes within and to/from Scotland .....	6
Ferry Punctuality .....	7
Coastguard callouts .....	7

## Introduction

This chapter provides information about foreign and domestic freight traffic at Scottish ports and inland waterways by type of freight and country of origin and destination. It also includes statistics on passengers and vehicles carried on ferry routes operating in Scotland and routes between Scotland and Northern Ireland and Europe as well as some statistics on HM Coastguard search and rescue operations.

Port traffic statistics methodology changed in 2000, to comply with the requirements of a new EC Maritime Statistics Directive. This produced large changes in the figures for one-port and coastwise traffic, and in the split between domestic and foreign traffic, between 1999 and 2000. Details of the method and notes on the effect of the change are given in the water transport section of the user guide.

From 2015 DfT no longer publish a Scottish data for coastwise, one port and inland waterway traffic and we are unable to update tables 9.1, 9.9 and 9.11 as fully as we previously did.

**Transport and travel habits in Scotland were profoundly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with restrictions on travel and daily activity in place for large parts of 2020. However, with restrictions being lifted in 2021 travel patterns started to recover.**

## Key Points

- There were 59 million tonnes of freight handled by ports in Scotland in 2022.
- There was a total of 7.6 million passengers and 2.6 million vehicles carried on ferry routes within Scotland in 2021.
- There were 1.7 million passengers and 0.48 million vehicles carried between Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2022.

## Main Points

### Freight Tonnage

Exports through major (see section 9.16.3 page 278) Scottish ports rose from 61 million tonnes in 1997 to 68 million tonnes in 2002 before steadily falling to 26 million tonnes in 2022 (there has been a 18% fall in the last ten years) - eight ports were counted as major ports in 1997 and 1998, there were nine in 1999 and 11 from 2000

onwards. Imports totalled 11.5 million tonnes, considerably less than the volume of exports. (*Table 9.2*)

Waterborne freight (both incoming and outgoing) passing through all ports increased by 2% in 2022 to 59 million tonnes. This was 17% less than in 2013, continuing a steady fall. In 2022, the eleven major ports accounted for 94% of the total traffic through Scottish ports. Exports accounted for 46% of the total freight through major Scottish ports and domestic traffic accounted for 33%. Imports, and incoming domestic freight were much lower, together accounting for 33% of the total freight through major Scottish ports. (*Table 9.2*)

## Ports and Destinations

Forth (21 million tonnes) and Clyde (10 million tonnes) accounted for the highest freight traffic in 2022. Forth traffic is 4% higher than 2021, and is 19% below 2012. Clyde's freight traffic has fluctuated between 2012 and 2022, falling overall from 15 million tonnes to 10 million tonnes in 2022. Again, as these figures are for the total volume of traffic, they are unaffected by the change in the method of compiling the statistics. (*Table 9.3*)

Bulk fuel accounted for 34 million tonnes (61%) of the total traffic through major Scottish ports in 2022. (*Table 9.4*)

Top ports for foreign traffic were: Forth (18.8 million tonnes); Clyde (8.1 million tonnes) and Sullom Voe (4.6 million tonnes). Clyde (6.7 million tonnes) and Forth (3.8 million tonnes) together accounted for almost all the imports from foreign traffic. Glensanda (3.0 million tonnes), Cairnryan (2.0 million tonnes), Aberdeen (1.4 million tonnes) and Loch Ryan (1.3 million tonnes), had most outward domestic traffic; Cairnryan (1.5 million tonnes) and Loch Ryan (1.3 million tonnes) were the main ports for inwards domestic traffic. (*Table 9.6b*)

The main types of traffic through the major ports in 2022 were crude oil (24 million tonnes), other dry bulk (8 million tonnes) and oil products (7 million tonnes). (*Table 9.7*)

In 2022 most exports were destined for Netherlands (9.7 million tonnes), Asia (3.2 million tonnes), Germany (3.0 million tonnes) and Belgium (1.9 million tonnes) while most imports arrived from the USA (2.8 million tonnes) and the Norway (2.6 million tonnes). (*Table 9.8*)

## Passenger Services

### Routes to Northern Ireland and Europe

In 2022, 1.7 million passengers were carried on ferry services between Scotland and Northern Ireland. There were 0.48 million vehicles carried between Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2022, a 7 per cent increase on 2021. Until its closure in 2018 the Rosyth to Zeebrugge freight route was the only ferry route between Scotland and Europe. (*Tables 9.13 (a) & (b)*)

### Routes within Scotland

This section covers all routes within Scotland for which data is available, for example data is not available for Pentland Ferries. These statistics include routes within Scotland that are subsidised by Scottish Government, local authority ferry services and privately run services. More detail is available in the water transport section of the user guide.

There were 7.6 million passengers carried on routes within Scotland in 2022, a rise of 22 per cent compared to 2021 and 10 per cent below the recent peak in numbers in 2007. Caledonian MacBrayne carried 4.9 million of these passengers (64%) and Western Ferries carried a further 16 per cent on the Gourock-Dunoon route. (*Table 9.12a*)

There were 2.6 million vehicles carried on routes within Scotland in 2021, a 42 per cent increase on 2020. Of these vehicles, 51 per cent were carried by Caledonian MacBrayne and a further 21 per cent by Western Ferries on the Gourock-Dunoon route. (*Table 9.12b*)

### Operators on subsidised routes within Scotland

Caledonian MacBrayne ferries carried 4.9 million passengers in 2022, 0.9 million (24%) more than in 2021. There were 1.4 million cars carried, (13%) more than 2021, and 88,000 commercial vehicles and buses, 4% more than 2020. (*Table 9.14a*)

Serco Northlink Ferries carried 339,000 passengers in 2022, a 47 per cent increase compared to 2021. There were 82,000 cars carried on these routes in 2022, 30% more than 2021. (*Table 9.14a*)

## Local authority ferry services

Shetland Islands Council services carried 656,500 passengers in 2022, 5% more than 2021. There were 338,000 vehicles carried, a rise of 2% on 2021.

Orkney Ferries services carried 321,000 passengers in 2022, 37% more than in 2021. There were 101,000 vehicles carried on these routes, 25% more than the previous year. (*Table 9.14b*)

Ferries operated by Argyll and Bute Council carried 167,000 passengers in 2022. (*Table 9.14b and 9.16a*)

## Ferry routes within and to/from Scotland

The busiest ferry route within Scotland in terms of passengers and vehicles carried is the service between Gourock and Dunoon, operated by Western Ferries, which carried 1.2 million passengers in 2022. There were 610,000 cars carried on this route and 27,800 commercial vehicles and buses in 2022. (*Table 9.16*)

The second busiest Scottish ferry route over recent years in terms of passenger numbers has been the Cairnryan / Belfast route. This route carried 1.3 million passengers in 2022. (*Table 9.13a*)

The second busiest route in terms of cars carried was the Corran Ferry from Ardgour to Nether Lochaber operated by Highland Council with 190,000 carried in 2021. (*Table 9.16*)

The busiest subsidised ferry routes are operated by Caledonian MacBrayne. The busiest route in terms of passengers in 2022 was Ardrossan-Brodick, with 692,518 passengers. Largs - Cumbrae was the busiest subsidised route for car traffic in 2022 with 185,052 car crossings, an increase of 5 per cent over the previous year. (*Table 9.15*)

The Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) scheme involves setting ferry fares on the basis of the cost of travelling an equivalent distance by road, more detail on RET can be found in the water transport section of the user guide. The West Coast routes where Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) has been rolled out carried 2,311,300 passengers in 2021 and 722,200 cars. The Clyde routes where Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) has been rolled out carried 2,586,900 passengers in 2022 and 701,100 cars. (*Table 9.15*)

## Ferry Punctuality

The level of reliability (the number of timetabled sailings actually operated, see table footnote in table for more detail) for Caledonian MacBrayne lifeline ferry services was 98.7% in 2022-23 and the level of punctuality (against the published timetable) was 99.6%. For Northlink the level of lifeline ferry services that were both punctual and reliable was 99.7% for Aberdeen routes and 99.8% for the Pentland Firth in 2022-23. (*Table 9.17*)

## Coastguard callouts

Overall there were 4,241 incidents in 2019, 63 less than the previous year. (*Table 9.18*)



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**

CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

© Crown copyright 2024

You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> or e-mail: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Further copies of this document are available, on request, in audio and visual formats and in community languages. Any enquiries regarding this document / publication should be sent to us at [info@transport.gov.scot](mailto:info@transport.gov.scot)

This document is also available on the Transport Scotland website: [www.transport.gov.scot](http://www.transport.gov.scot)

Published by Transport Scotland, March 2023

Follow us:



**[transport.gov.scot](http://transport.gov.scot)**