

# Rail freight moved across Britain's railway returns to pre-pandemic levels

September 23, 2021



The amount of freight moved across Britain's railway has returned to pre-pandemic levels according to statistics published by the Office of Rail and Road.

The regulator's *Freight Rail Usage and Performance* stats show that in the first quarter of this year (April to June 2021) a total of 4.33 billion net tonne-kilometres of rail freight was moved across the network.

This is an increase of 36.5% on the same quarter last year (2020-21 Q1), and an increase by 1.3% compared with the same quarter two years ago (2019-20 Q1).

ORR's stats also show rail freight continued to have a punctuality figure above 90%, despite a drop in performance compared to the same quarter in 2020-21 and 2019-20.

Freight operators also experienced 8.27 minutes of delay per 100 train kilometres in 2021-22 Q1. This was 52.8% higher (i.e. worse) than the same quarter a year earlier (2020-21 Q1). It was also 3.0% higher than the same quarter two years ago (2019-20 Q1).

Construction products moved by rail freight companies increased the most compared with 2020-21 Q1 due to high levels of demand for aggregates to fulfil the start of HS2 work.

Domestic intermodal, which includes the transporting of goods to and from Britain's ports, had the largest share of freight moved at 37.9%. Despite a 22.5% increase in volumes since 2020-21 Q1, there has been a reduction of 3.8% compared with 2019-20 Q1.

Coal continues its downward trend, reducing by 65.2% compared to 2019-20.

ORR also found that freight lifted increased by nearly five million tonnes over the last year.

Reacting to the stats, Andy Bagnall, Director General at the Rail Delivery Group, said: "With the current HGV driver shortage the role of rail freight has never been more crucial in transporting goods and keeping supermarket shelves stocked. And whether it's goods or people, to build back better and to create a fair, clean economy for tomorrow, the country relies on a thriving railway.

"To realise its commitment to net zero by 2050 and support economic growth, government should set an ambitious target to encourage the shifting of goods from road to rail."

The full statistical release can be found on the ORR Data

Portal: <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/freight-rail-usage-and-performance/>

*Photo credit: Office of Rail and Road*