



BRIEFING PAPER

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Statistics on UK trade with Ireland

By Matthew Ward

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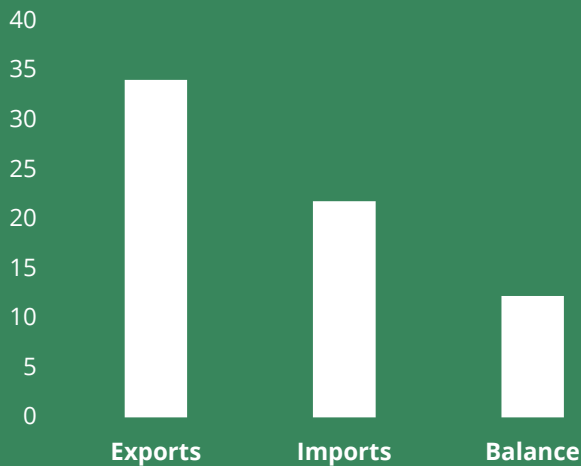


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UK trade with Ireland: a summary

UK trade in goods and services with Ireland, 2017 (£ bn)



The UK recorded a trade surplus of £12.2 billion with Ireland in 2017.

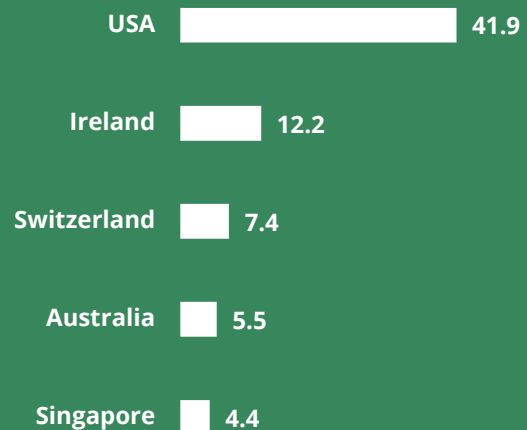
UK exports of goods and services to the Ireland were worth £34.0 billion (5.5% of all UK exports), while imports were worth £21.8 billion (3.4% of all UK exports).

The UK recorded a trade surplus with Ireland in both goods and services and has done every year since 1999.

The UK trade surplus with Ireland was the UK's second largest trade surplus in 2017.

Ireland was one of four EU countries the UK had a trade surplus with in 2017 - the remaining three were Sweden, Denmark and Luxembourg. Overall, Ireland was the UK's fourth largest export market and ninth largest source of imports in 2017.

The UK's five largest trade surpluses 2017 (£ bn)



Trade in goods with Ireland compared, 2017 (% of total goods trade)



Northern Ireland's trade with the Republic of Ireland is particularly pronounced.

In 2017, 33% of Northern Ireland's goods exports were to the Republic of Ireland (compared to 6% for the UK as a whole) while 28% of Northern Ireland's goods imports were from the Republic of Ireland (compared to 3% for the UK as a whole).

1. Key Statistics, 2017

In 2017, UK exports to Ireland were worth £34.0 billion, a record high, up from £28.1 billion in 2016. This is the first year on year increase in British exports to Ireland since 2010. UK Imports from Ireland in 2017 were £21.8 billion, a record high. This is the fifth successive year UK imports from Ireland have grown.

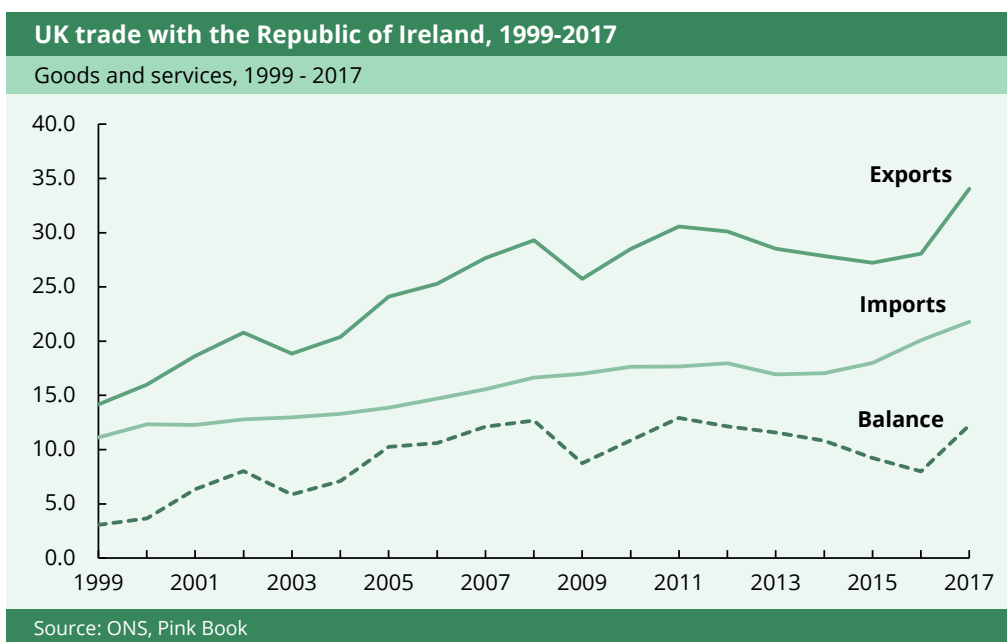
The UK’s trade surplus with Ireland was £12.2 billion in 2017. This was the UK’s second highest trade surplus, after the surplus with the United States. Ireland was one of four EU states the UK had a trade surplus with in 2017 – the other three were with Luxembourg, Sweden and Denmark.

Overall, UK exports to Ireland represented 5.5% of all UK exports and 12.4% of all UK exports to the EU. UK imports from Ireland represented 3.4% of all UK imports and 6.4% of all UK imports from the EU.

Looking at trade in goods only, the UK exported £20.3 billion to Ireland in 2017, a record high. UK imports of goods from Ireland were £14.5 billion, also a record high resulting in a trade surplus of £5.8 billion in trade in goods.

The UK had a surplus of £6.4 billion on trade in services with Ireland in 2017, exporting £13.7 billion of services to Ireland and importing £7.3 billion. UK imports of services from Ireland reached a record high in 2017 and have now grown every year since 2000.

In cash terms, UK exports to Ireland have increased from £16.0 billion in 1999; imports from Ireland have increased from £12.3 billion.



2. International context

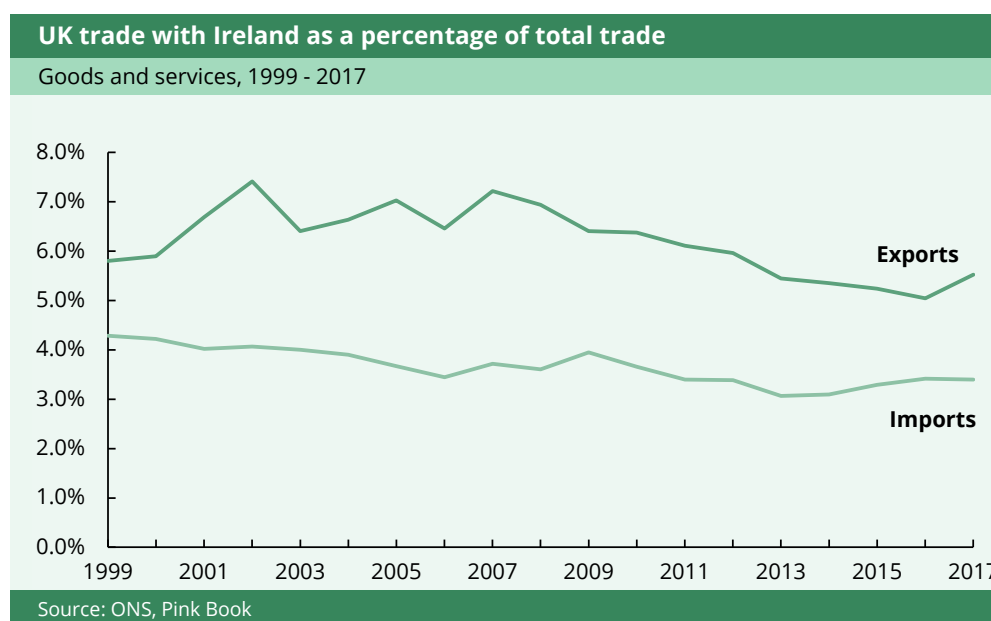
In 2017, Ireland was the UK's fifth largest export market and 9th largest source of imports.

UK top 10 trading partners 2017, goods and services					
Exports	£ billions	% of total	Imports	£ billions	% of total
USA	112.2	18.2%	Germany	78.1	12.7%
Germany	56.8	9.2%	USA	70.4	11.2%
France	40.4	6.6%	Netherlands	46.9	7.2%
Netherlands	39.0	6.3%	China	45.2	7.2%
Ireland	34.0	5.5%	France	40.8	6.4%
China	22.3	3.6%	Spain	31.3	4.7%
Switzerland	19.0	3.1%	Belgium	28.2	4.4%
Italy	18.9	3.1%	Italy	24.0	3.8%
Belgium	18.7	3.0%	Ireland	21.8	3.5%
Spain	16.1	2.6%	Norway	21.3	2.5%
EU	274.0	44.5%	EU	341.0	53.9%
World	615.9	100.0%	World	641.8	100.0%

Source: ONS Pink Book

UK exports to Ireland were equal to 5.5% of all UK exports in 2017, up from 5.0% in 2016, though UK exports to Ireland as a percentage of total UK exports have generally fallen in recent years, from a high of 7.4% in 2002.

UK imports from Ireland as a percentage of all UK imports are now at their highest level since 2013.



6 Statistics on UK trade with Ireland

In 2017, UK exports to Ireland accounted for 12.4% of all UK exports to the EU. This is Ireland's lowest percentage share UK exports to the EU since 2012.

UK imports from Ireland as a percentage of all UK imports from the EU have fluctuated in recent years, but are now at their highest level since 2012.



3. Trade in goods

3.1 Exports

In 2017, the UK's single largest export to Ireland was petroleum and petroleum products, valued at £1.5 billion; this represented 7.7% of all UK goods exports to Ireland.

Other British goods exports to Ireland included "miscellaneous manufactured articles", valued at £1.3 billion (6.9% of goods exports) – this category includes manufactured plastic goods – and medicinal and pharmaceutical products valued at £1.3 billion (6.7% of all goods exports).

UK goods exports to Ireland, 2017		
	£ millions	% of total
Petroleum, petroleum products	1,503	7.7%
Miscellaneous manufactured articles	1,341	6.9%
Medicinal & pharmaceutical products	1,307	6.7%
Essential oils & perfume materials; toilet preps	935	4.8%
Articles of apparel & clothing accessories	922	4.7%
Road vehicles	845	4.3%
Electrical machinery & appliances	743	3.8%
Cereals & cereal preparations	633	3.2%
Telecomms & sound recording equipment	619	3.2%
Office machines & adp machines	612	3.1%

Source: HMRC, UK Trade Info

3.2 Imports

In 2017, the UK's single largest import from Ireland was medicinal and pharmaceutical products, valued at £2.8 billion, representing 19.5% of all UK goods imports from Ireland.

UK goods imports from Ireland, 2017		
	£ millions	% of total
Medicinal & pharmaceutical products	2,826	19.5%
Meat & meat preparations	1,591	11.0%
Telecomms & sound recording equipment	1,260	8.7%
Dairy products & birds' eggs	777	5.4%
Miscellaneous manufactured articles	627	4.3%
Organic chemicals	529	3.6%
Miscellaneous edible products & preparations	509	3.5%
Essential oils & perfume materials; toilet preps	506	3.5%
Office machines & adp machines	450	3.1%
Live animals other than animals of division 03	406	2.6%

Source: HMRC, UK Trade Info

Other imports from Ireland included meat, valued at £1.6 billion (11.0% of goods imports), telecoms equipment, valued at £1.3 billion (8.7% of goods imports) and dairy products and eggs, valued at £0.8 billion (5.4% of all goods imports).

8 Statistics on UK trade with Ireland

Ireland was the UK's second largest source of imported food and live animals (after the Netherlands), accounting for 11% of the UK's total imports of food and live animals.

4. Trade in Services

4.1 Exports

In 2017, the UK's single largest service export to Ireland was "other business services", valued at £8.0 billion; this represented 59% of all UK service exports to Ireland. This category includes legal, accounting, advertising, research and development, architectural, engineering and other professional and technical services.

Other British service exports to Ireland included financial services, valued at £1.5 billion (11% of service exports) and travel services, valued at £1.6 billion (12% of service exports). Travel services include services provided by hotels and restaurants, travel agencies and tour operators and will include services consumed by a resident of one country in another – for example an Irish tourist staying in a hotel in the UK will count as a British service export; a British tourist staying in an Irish hotel would count as a service import.

UK service exports to Ireland, 2017		
	£ millions	% of total
Other business services	8,044	58.6%
Travel	1,632	11.9%
Financial	1,461	10.6%
Transportation	688	5.0%
Telecommunications, computer and information services	688	5.0%
Intellectual Property	653	4.8%
Construction	251	1.8%
Insurance & Pension	97	0.7%
Personal, cultural and recreational	67	0.5%
Government	17	0.1%
Total	13,725	100%

Source: ONS, Pink Book

4.2 Imports

In 2017, the UK's single largest service import to Ireland was "other business services" followed by travel services. Combined, these categories made up 57% of UK service imports from Ireland.

UK service imports from Ireland, 2017		
	£ millions	% of total
Other business services	2,457	33.7%
Travel	1,662	22.8%
Telecommunications, computer and information services	894	12.2%
Transportation	890	12.2%
Financial	599	8.2%
Intellectual Property	539	7.4%
Construction	169	2.3%
Personal, cultural and recreational	46	0.6%
Government	16	0.2%
Total	7,300	100%

Source: ONS, Pink Book

5. Regional trade

HMRC publish data on trade for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English regions. These figures are for trade in goods only – they do not include services.¹

UK trade in goods with Ireland, 2017					
Exports	£ millions	% of total	Imports	£ millions	% of total
Northern Ireland	2,882	14.8%	Northern Ireland	2,052	14.1%
South East	2,390	12.3%	East	2,008	13.8%
London	1,938	9.9%	London	1,569	10.8%
North West	1,828	9.4%	South East	1,476	10.2%
East	1,623	8.3%	West Midlands	940	6.5%
West Midlands	1,458	7.5%	North West	902	6.2%
Scotland	1,290	6.6%	Yorkshire and the Humber	818	5.6%
East Midlands	1,216	6.2%	South West	582	4.0%
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,065	5.5%	East Midlands	573	4.0%
Wales	992	5.1%	Scotland	527	3.6%
South West	791	4.1%	Wales	301	2.1%
North East	456	2.3%	North East	228	1.6%
Unallocated	1,579	8.1%	Unallocated	2,541	17.5%
UK	19,507	100.0%	UK	14,517	100.0%

Source: HMRC, UK Trade Info

Northern Ireland accounted for 15% of all UK goods exports to Ireland and 14% of all UK goods imported from Ireland.

London, the South East and the East of England also had relatively high shares of the UK's trade in goods with Ireland.

¹ HMRC, [Regional Trade Statistics](#)

6. Northern Ireland

Data published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) indicates that in 2016 the total value of Northern Ireland's exports of goods and services (i.e. sales outside the UK) was £10.1 billion, of which £3.4 billion (34%) were to the Republic of Ireland.²

This makes the Republic of Ireland Northern Ireland's largest export market. It is estimated that 21% of businesses in Northern Ireland either exported to or imported from the Republic of Ireland in 2016.³

Northern Ireland's exports to the rest of the EU (i.e. excluding the Republic of Ireland) were worth £2.3 billion (23% of NI exports); exports to the rest of the world were worth £4.4 billion (44% of NI exports).

Data from the Irish Central Statistics Office indicates that in 2016 1.4% of the Republic of Ireland's goods exports were to Northern Ireland, while 1.5% of its goods imports were from Northern Ireland.⁴

6.1 Trade in goods

Exports

Northern Ireland's goods exports to the Republic of Ireland by type of good are shown in the table below.

Northern Ireland goods exports to the Republic of Ireland, 2017		
	£ millions	% of total
Dairy products & birds' eggs	310.4	11.4%
Road vehicles	179.9	6.6%
Meat & meat preparations	162.6	6.0%
Miscellaneous manufactured articles	151.2	5.5%
Beverages	139.6	5.1%
Cereals & cereal preparations	120.9	4.4%
Machinery specialized for particular industries	109.7	4.0%
Feeding stuff for animals	101.8	3.7%
Manufactures of metal	100.3	3.7%
Vegetables & fruit	83.3	3.1%
All goods	2,728.6	100%
Source: HMRC, UK Trade Info		

Overall, food and live animals made up 33% of all Northern Ireland's goods exports to the Republic of Ireland, followed by machinery and transport equipment, which made up 16%.

32% of Northern Ireland's total goods exports were to the Republic of Ireland (compared to 6% for the UK as a whole).

² NISRA, [Northern Ireland Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics 2016](#), December 2017,

³ Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland), [Cross-Border Supply Chain Report \(2015, 2016\)](#), 21 June 2018, pg. 5

⁴ Figures taken from the [Irish Central Statistics Office statistical database](#)

Imports

Food and live animals made up 41% of all Northern Ireland's goods imports from the Republic of Ireland, followed by manufactured goods, which made up 14%.

28% of Northern Ireland's total goods imports were from the Republic of Ireland (compared to 3% for the UK as a whole).

Northern Ireland goods imports from the Republic of Ireland, 2017

	£ millions	% of total
Meat & meat preparations	302.6	14.7%
Dairy products & birds' eggs	150.5	7.3%
Cereals & cereal preparations	147.7	7.2%
Non-metallic mineral manufactures	102.0	5.0%
Miscellaneous manufactured articles	78.8	3.8%
Vegetables & fruit	71.1	3.5%
Articles of apparel & clothing accessories	70.0	3.4%
Essential oils & perfume materials; toilet preps	65.0	3.2%
Beverages	61.5	3.0%
Manufactures of metal	58.9	2.9%
All goods	2,059.7	100.0%

Source: HMRC, UK Trade Info

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