

Article

# Indicative estimates of HM Revenue and Customs data corrections on ONS UK trade statistics: 2015 to 2019

The impact of HM Revenue and Customs data corrections on ONS UK trade statistics, providing high-level indicative estimates broken down by country and commodity.

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# 1 . Overview

Following the publication of [UK trade: April 2021](#) some errors were identified in the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) overseas trade data used to compile Office for National Statistics (ONS) UK trade statistics.

These errors were identified following routine HMRC quality assurance and checking procedures. The main error affecting overseas trade data involved goods exported on a temporary basis, such as works of art or jewellery for an exhibition, being erroneously included as trade since March 2019. Additionally, several areas were identified where businesses had submitted incorrect trade data on their original trade declarations from 2015 to 2019. More information on these corrections can be found in [HMRC's correction notice](#).

Revisions for the period January 2020 to February 2021 were published in [UK trade: May 2021](#) on 9 July 2021, taking place outside of the usual [national accounts revisions period](#) in order to ensure ONS trade statistics reflected the most up-to-date position.

Revisions for pre-2020 will be incorporated in the annual Blue Book publication in October 2022. This article provides users with an indicative estimate of the likely scale and impact of these corrections on the ONS trade statistics before their publication in the August 2022 UK trade statistics, due to be published in October 2022. This is the earliest publication possible to apply these revisions according to the [national accounts revisions period](#).

HMRC has incorporated these corrections in the [September 2021 Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics \(OTS\)](#) publication released on 11 November 2021.

Data in this article are in current prices and have not been seasonally adjusted, to remove the effects of inflation or seasonal fluctuations. Caution should be taken when interpreting these data and they should only be used as an indication of the likely impact of these corrections.

## 2 . Exports: non-EU

The revisions to remove the inclusion of goods exported on a temporary basis, such as works of art or jewellery for an exhibition, only affect the 2019 data for exports to non-EU countries. Exports to the EU are not affected. The total downward revision of £7.6 billion represents a 4.0% decrease to the annual value, from £187.3 billion to £179.7 billion.

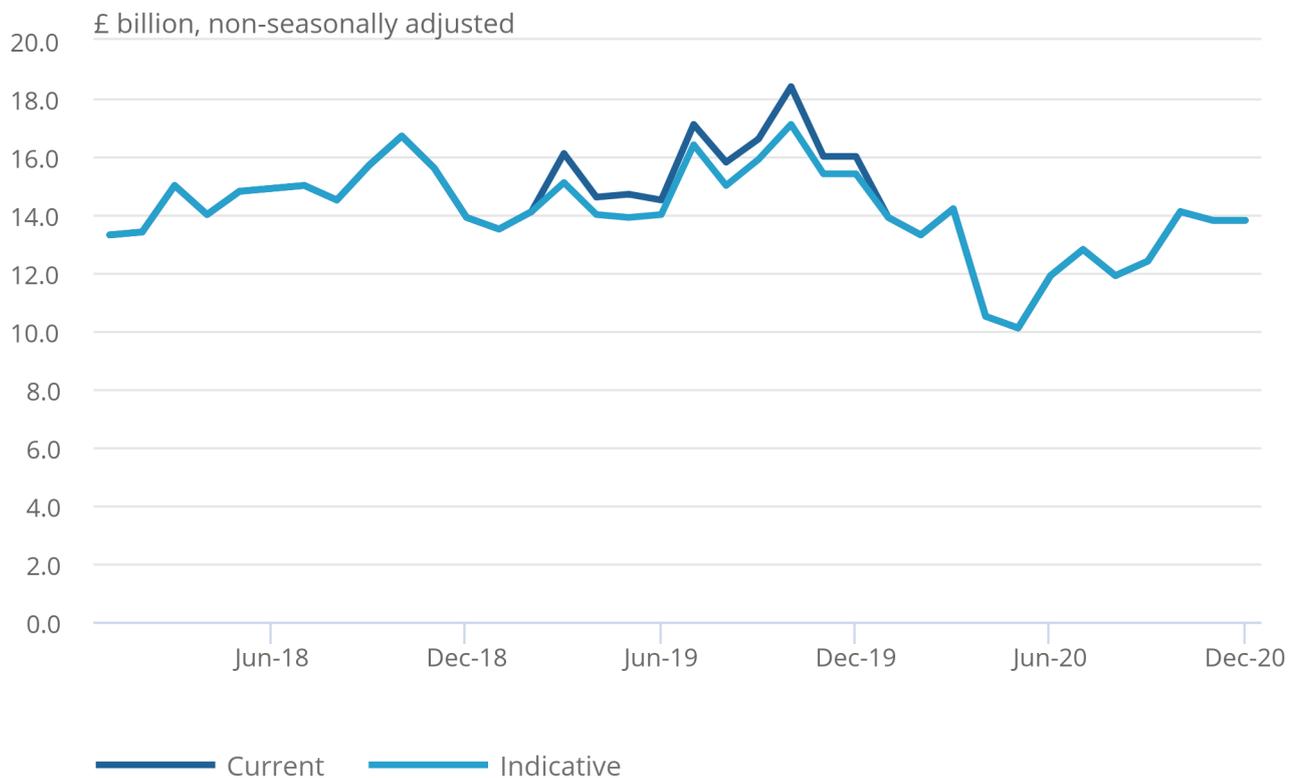
Figure 1 shows the indicative impact to the non-seasonally adjusted monthly series, with the largest monthly revision occurring in October 2019, a fall of £1.3 billion (7.3%).

### Figure 1: Indicative impact of HMRC data corrections on goods exports to non-EU countries

Goods exports to non-EU countries, excluding precious metals, non-seasonally adjusted, January 2018 to December 2020

#### Figure 1: Indicative impact of HMRC data corrections on goods exports to non-EU countries

Goods exports to non-EU countries, excluding precious metals, non-seasonally adjusted, January 2018 to December 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - UK trade indicative estimates, current prices, non-seasonally adjusted

Although there are no revisions to exports to the EU, a consequence of these revisions to exports to non-EU countries is that for May 2019 non-seasonally adjusted exports to the EU are now greater than exports to non-EU countries.

The revision to exports to non-EU countries was driven by a £6.1 billion fall to miscellaneous manufactures, with revisions to works of art, jewellery and clothing. There was also a £0.8 billion downward revision to material manufactures, led by mineral manufactures, and a £0.7 billion downward revision to machinery and transport equipment, with contributions from mechanical power generators (intermediate), aircraft and cars.

Table 1: Commodities that are most affected by HMRC data corrections

Indicative estimates of HMRC data corrections on ONS UK trade statistics, non-EU exports by commodity, 2019

Commodity	Revision value (£ billion)	Revision (%)	Current non-EU value (£ billion)	Indicative non-EU value (£ billion)
896 Works of art	-4.8	-48.7%	9.9	5.1
897C Jewellery	-0.7	-28.9%	3.8	3.1
66 Mineral manufactures	-0.7	-32.7%	2.1	1.4
84 Clothing	-0.3	-17.0%	1.8	1.5
71MI Mechanical power generators (intermediate)	-0.3	-1.3%	20.4	20.2
792 Aircraft	-0.1	-1.6%	6.1	6.0
78M Cars	-0.1	-0.5%	19.0	18.9

Source: Office for National Statistics - UK trade indicative estimates, current prices, non-seasonally adjusted

Under the [classification of product by activity \(CPA\)](#), the works of art revision is broken down into a £4.3 billion reduction in exports of paintings and sculptures, and a £0.5 billion reduction to antiques and collections.

The revisions mostly apply to the exports data from the United States, Switzerland and Hong Kong, with these three countries together accounting for a total downward revision of £5.9 billion.

Table 2: Countries that are most affected by HMRC data corrections

Indicative estimates of HMRC data corrections on ONS UK trade statistics, non-EU exports by country, 2019

Country	Revision value (£ billion)	Revision (%)	Current value (£ billion)	Indicative value (£ billion)
United States inc Puerto Rico	-3.4	-5.5%	61.8	58.4
Switzerland	-1.6	-14.2%	11.2	9.6
Hong Kong	-0.9	-10.3%	8.7	7.8
Japan	-0.2	-2.3%	6.9	6.8
Russia	-0.1	-5.0%	2.8	2.7

Source: Office for National Statistics - UK trade indicative estimates, current prices, non-seasonally adjusted

By country and commodity, the largest revisions are for exports of works of art to the United States (£2.6 billion), works of art to Switzerland (£1.3 billion) and works of art to Hong Kong (£0.5 billion).

### 3 . Imports: EU and non-EU

Revisions to imports from the EU and non-EU countries apply to data between 2015 and 2019 (Table 3). The largest revisions occur in 2019, with an increase of £0.2 billion of imports of railway equipment (capital) from Italy.

Table 3: Indicative impact of HMRC data corrections on goods imports from EU and non-EU countries  
Indicative estimates of HMRC data corrections on ONS UK trade statistics, imports, EU and non-EU, 2015 to 2019

Area	Year	Revision value (£ million)	Revision (%)	Current value (£ billion)	Indicative value (£ billion)
EU	2015	-2.1	0.0%	221.1	221.1
	2016	-14.2	0.0%	238.8	238.8
	2017	-6.8	0.0%	259.5	259.5
	2018	-45.3	0.0%	267.2	267.2
	2019	238.0	0.1%	269.6	269.8
Non-EU	2015	0.3	0.0%	180.7	180.7
	2016	-	-	194.0	194.0
	2017	-	-	216.0	216.0
	2018	0.0	0.0%	221.6	221.6
	2019	-	-	224.9	224.9

Source: Office for National Statistics - UK trade indicative estimates, current prices, non-seasonally adjusted

### 4 . Future developments

The revisions documented in this article provide an indicative view of the corrections to 2015 to 2019 in the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) overseas trade data used to compile Office for National Statistics (ONS) UK trade statistics.

These revisions are not currently incorporated into any trade datasets published by the ONS.

When these are incorporated into ONS statistics in October 2022, they will be alongside any revisions that may have occurred from other standard statistical processing, such as seasonal adjustment.

## 5 . Related links

### [UK trade](#)

Bulletin | Released 11 November 2021

Total value of UK exports and imports of goods and services in current prices, chained volume measures and implied deflators.

### [UK trade: goods and services publication tables](#)

Dataset | Released 11 November 2021

Monthly data on the UK's trade in goods and services, including trade inside and outside the EU.

### [UK trade in goods by classification of product by activity time series](#)

Dataset | Released 15 September 2021

Quarterly and annual time series of the value of UK imports and exports of goods grouped by product. Goods are attributed to the activity of which they are the principal products.