

Statistical bulletin

# Interregional trade in goods and services, UK: 2019 and 2020

Estimated value of interregional exports and imports of goods and services for UK International Territorial Level 1. These are official statistics in development.

Contact:  
Subnational Trade team  
subnational.trade@ons.gov.uk

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# 1 . Main points

- This release contains interregional trade figures, which estimate trade in goods and services between UK regions at a consistent geographical and industry basis; this differs from subnational trade, which estimates UK regions' goods and services trade internationally.
- England was the only UK nation with a total trade surplus (£4.8 billion) in 2020; this was primarily the result of a trade in goods surplus of £6.3 billion.
- Scotland exported £18.4 billion of goods to England in 2020, more than any other UK country pair; this was mainly caused by exports of £3.6 billion in the manufacturing industry to the North West.
- The total trade balance for England increased by £3.3 billion between 2019 and 2020, more than any other UK nation; this was caused by a £9.1 billion decrease in imports and a £5.8 billion decrease in exports to other UK nations.
- Between 2019 and 2020, the only International Territorial Level 1 (ITL1) region that saw an increase in total trade exports was Northern Ireland, which increased by £74.0 million; this was caused by a £280.0 million increase in trade in services exports.
- Greater London total trade exports decreased by 25% (£127.2 billion) between 2019 and 2020, greater than any other region; this was caused by a £93.6 billion decrease in goods exports from the wholesale and motor trade industry.

## 2 . Interregional trade in UK nations and regions, 2020

England was the only nation with a total trade surplus in 2020. The total trade surplus was £4.8 billion and was mainly the result of a trade in goods surplus of £6.3 billion. Northern Ireland had the highest trade in services surplus of £1.7 billion, followed by Wales with £178.0 million. Northern Ireland had the highest trade deficit of £1.7 billion; this was caused by a trade in goods deficit of £3.4 billion.

**Figure 1: Interregional exports at the UK country level were highest between England and Scotland in 2020**

UK country-to-country interregional total trade exports, 2020

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UK country-to-country interregional total trade exports, 2020



Source: Interregional trade in goods and services from the Office for National Statistics

England was the largest exporter of both goods and services in 2020, led by exports to Scotland of £18.3 billion (47.1%) and £14.0 billion (76.3%). The manufacturing industry contributed 44.1% (£8.1 billion) of goods exports to Scotland. Similarly, the manufacturing industry accounted for the largest share of England's services exports to Scotland, totalling £4.3 billion (30.5%). [Scottish annual business statistics](#) for 2020, show that while the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had a negative impact on the manufacturing industry in Scotland, with gross value added (GVA) decreasing by 15.4%, it still made a contribution of £11.0 billion to Scottish GVA during this period.

UK interregional exports, at the International Territorial Level (ITL) 1, were led by Greater London, with exports of £379.9 billion (28.1%) in 2020, followed by the South East of England (£257.0 billion) and the East of England (£145.4 billion). Greater London exports were led by goods exports of £222.2 billion (58.5%). Of these goods exports, 86.7% (£192.6 billion) were in the wholesale and motor trades industry, with £83.5 billion going to the South East of England.

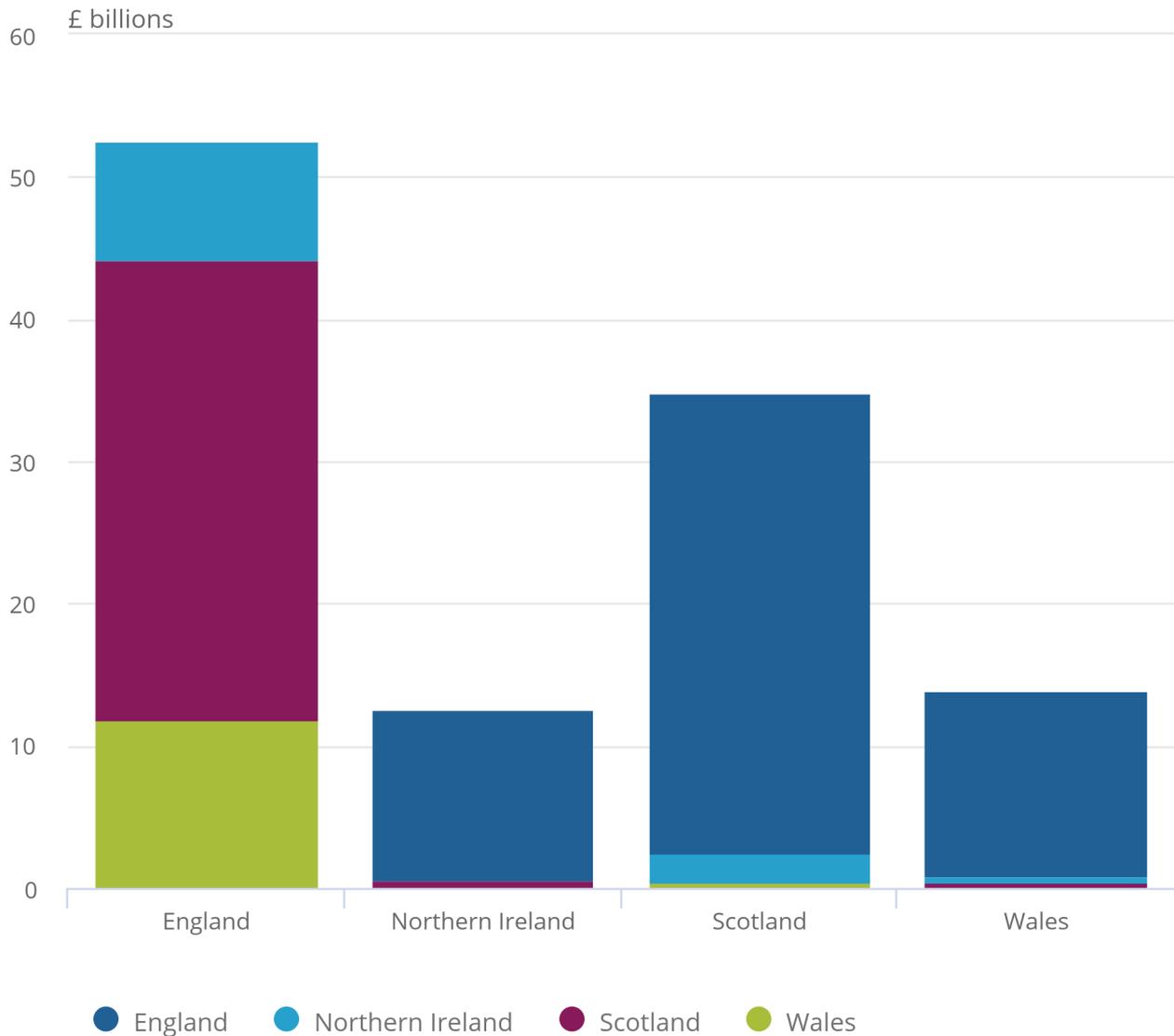
Northern Ireland saw the lowest total interregional exports among the ITL 1 regions, at £10.9 billion, led largely by exports of goods of £6.7 billion (60.9%). Northern Ireland's largest goods export partner in 2020 was Scotland, to which it exported £1.9 billion. Of these exports, £1.2 billion (65.4%) were in the manufacturing industry.

**Figure 2: Interregional imports in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales were largely from England**

UK country-to-country interregional total trade imports, 2020

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**Source: Interregional trade in goods and services from the Office for National Statistics**

England was also the largest importer of both goods and services at £32.6 billion and £19.9 billion, respectively. England's imports were led by goods imports from Scotland of £18.4 billion (56.3%), with £8.4 billion (45.6%) from within the manufacturing industry. £13.9 billion (69.8%) of England's services imports were also from Scotland, with £4.5 billion (32.6%) coming from the non-manufacturing production industry.

The South East of England saw the highest total imports at ITL1 level, at £227.6 billion (16.9%), £148.7 billion (65.3%) of which was goods trade. The South East imported the largest value of goods from Greater London in 2020 (£96.1 billion), the wholesale and motor trades industry accounted for £83.5 billion (86.8%) of this. The West Midlands saw the largest imports of services, at £132.7 billion (22.3%). This was led by a £39.1 billion imports of services from Greater London, £10.1 billion (25.9%) of which was from the "other service industries" category.

Northern Ireland saw the least total imports at ITL1 level, at £12.6 billion. This was largely led by £10.0 billion in goods imports. Of this, 33.8% (£3.4 billion) was from the North West of England, with £1.6 billion (47.2%) coming from the wholesale and motor trades sector.

Table 1: England had the only total interregional trade surplus in 2020  
Interregional trade in goods, trade in services, total trade, and balances split by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, 2020

£ billions

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
East Midlands	101.7	43.5	31.3	41	133	84.5	-48.5
East of England	123.7	84.1	47.9	61.3	171.6	145.4	-26.3
Greater London	59	222.2	126.7	157.7	185.7	379.9	194.2
North East	18.4	16.3	32.3	20	50.7	36.4	-14.4
North West	64	64.1	78.9	66.9	142.9	131	-11.9
Northern Ireland	10	6.7	2.6	4.3	12.6	10.9	-1.7
Scotland	20.4	19.1	14.5	14.2	34.9	33.3	-1.5
South East	148.7	148.3	79	108.6	227.6	257	29.4
South West	54.1	37.4	41.6	37.5	95.7	74.9	-20.8
Wales	11.8	10	2.1	2.3	13.9	12.3	-1.5
West Midlands	84.3	53.5	132.7	35.8	217.1	89.3	-127.8
Yorkshire and The Humber	60	50.8	4.5	44.5	64.5	95.3	30.8
UK	756.1	756.1	594.2	594.2	1350.3	1350.3	0

Source: Interregional trade in goods and services 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.

### 3 . Interregional trade in UK nations and regions over time

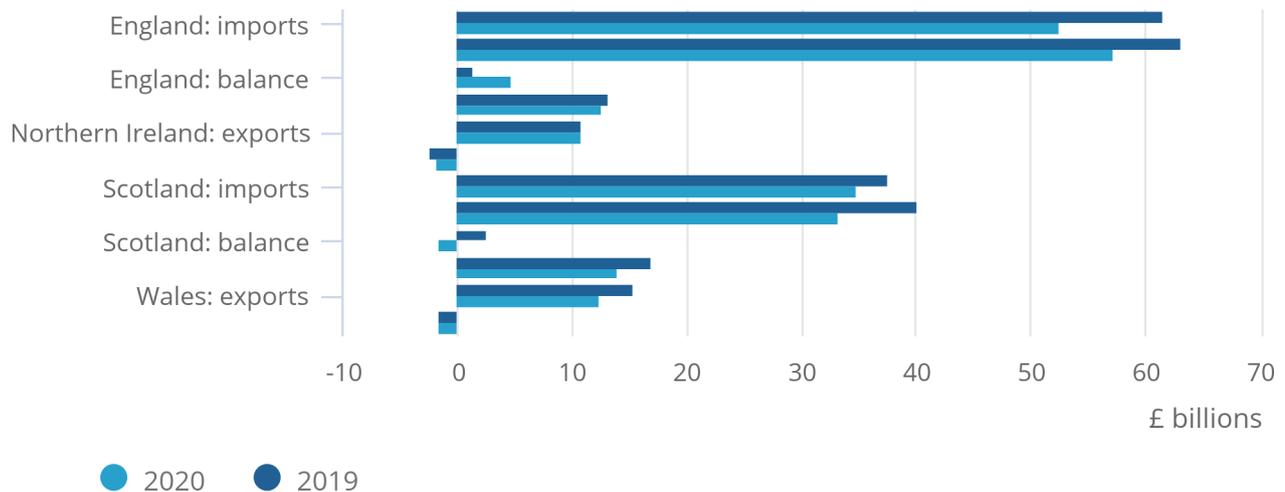
With the exception of Scotland, all UK countries saw a trade balance increase between 2019 and 2020. These increases were led by England, with a surplus increase of £3.3 billion, followed by Northern Ireland, which saw a reduced deficit of £742.0 million. Scotland's trade balance decreased by £4.1 billion, moving from a trade surplus to a trade deficit.

**Figure 3: From 2019 to 2020, England, Northern Ireland, and Wales increased in trade balances**

Imports, exports and balance, interregional trade in goods and services combined, by UK country, 2019 and 2020

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Imports, exports and balance, interregional trade in goods and services combined, by UK country, 2019 and 2020



Source: Interregional trade in goods and services from the Office for National Statistics

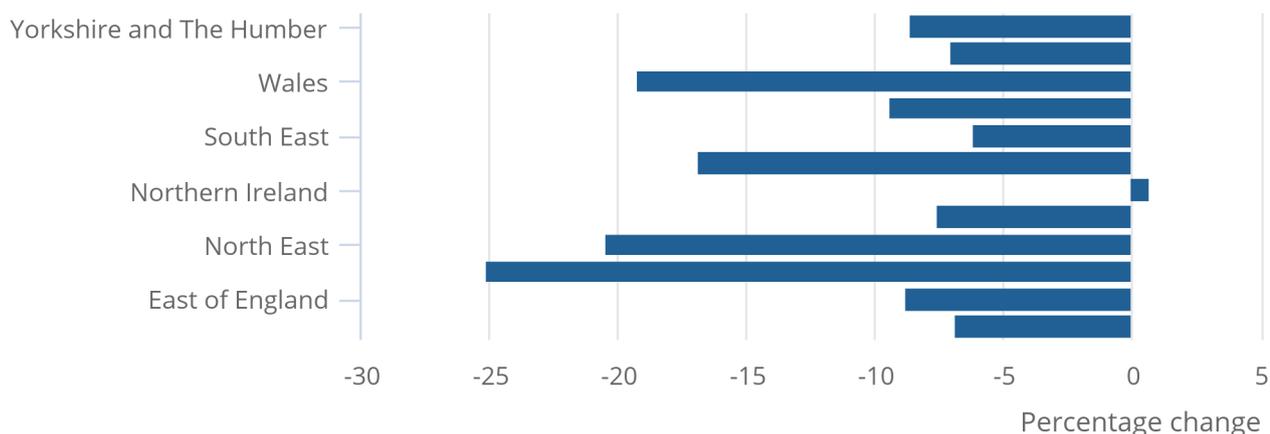
England's increased surplus was largely the result of a fall in total imports of £9.1 billion (14.7%), while its exports fell by £5.8 billion (9.2%). Trade in goods accounted for 86.6% of this, with a £5.0 billion fall in exports.

#### Figure 4: Total exports in 2020 were lower than 2019 for all regions of the UK, with the exception of Northern Ireland

Change in total trade exports by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, UK, 2019 to 2020

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Change in total trade exports by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, UK, 2019 to 2020



Source: Interregional trade in goods and services from the Office for National Statistics

Of all the UK International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 regions, only Northern Ireland had an increase in total exports between 2019 and 2020. The increase in total exports was £74.0 million (0.7%), with a fall of £206.0 million in trade in goods offset by a rise of £280.0 million in services trade. This was led by services exports to the North West of England, which increased by £138.0 million (27.9%), with non-manufacturing production exports increasing by £277.0 million (188.4%). This sector includes agriculture, mining (excluding crude oil), and electricity.

Despite the fall in total goods exports, Northern Ireland's goods exports to the East Midlands saw an increase of £1.3 billion (296.2%). The manufacturing industry, which includes the food and beverages, machinery and aerospace industries, accounted for £841.0 million (349.0%) of this increase. The East Midlands has seen improved growth in the manufacturing industry, including the food and beverages industry during this period.

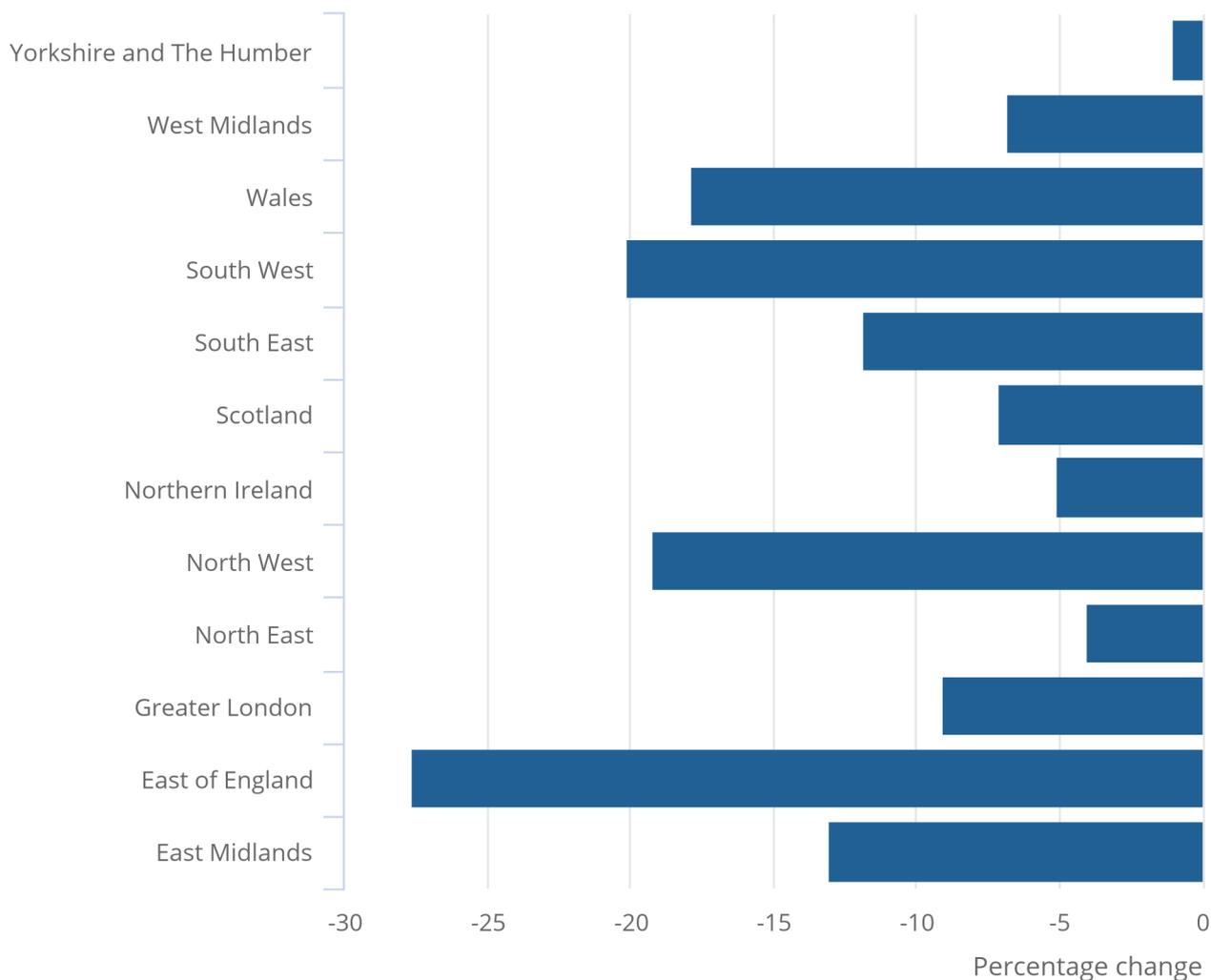
Greater London saw the largest fall in exports, which decreased by £127.2 billion (25.1%), between 2019 and 2020. This decrease was largely caused by goods exports, which decreased by £96.0 billion (30.2%) during this period, with the wholesale and motor trade sector decreasing by £93.6 billion (32.7%). Growth in the UK automotive sales industry slowed between 2019 and 2020, because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic lockdown.

**Figure 5: Total imports were lower in 2020 than in 2019 for all regions of the UK**

Change in total trade imports by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, UK, 2019 to 2020

Figure 5: Total imports were lower in 2020 than in 2019 for all regions of the UK

Change in total trade imports by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region, UK, 2019 to 2020



**Source: Interregional trade in goods and services from the Office for National Statistics**

Goods imported into Yorkshire and The Humber decreased less than goods imported into any other UK region between 2019 and 2020, with total imports decreasing by £643.0 million (1.0%). An increase in services imports of £194.0 million, £166.0 million (85.6%) of which was from Greater London, was offset by a decrease of £837.0 million in goods imports. Despite the overall fall in goods imports, Yorkshire and The Humber saw an increase of £2.0 billion in imports of goods from the East Midlands, which was led by a £2.1 billion (516.3%) increase in imports in the wholesale and motor trades industry.

The largest decrease in imports was seen in the East of England which decreased by £65.5 billion (27.6%) between 2019 and 2020, led by a £53.0 billion (30.0%) fall in goods imports. This included a reduction of £47.0 billion (34.2%) in imports from the wholesale and motor trades industry. This was largely the result of a decrease in goods imports of £41.0 billion (41.5%) from Greater London, within this industry.

Across all UK ITL1 regions, the wholesale and motor trades industry saw the largest fall in goods imports, decreasing by £112.3 billion (20.3%) from 2019 to 2020 between all UK ITL1 regions, as the pandemic lockdown slowed trade movements in 2020.

## 4 . Explore UK interregional trade

Explore the 2020 interregional trade data using our interactive tool. Our data break down UK interregional trade by International Territorial Levels (ITL) 1, industry and trade direction. Select a trade direction using the buttons, and select an industry using the drop-down menu.

## 5 . Data on interregional trade in goods and services, UK

[Interregional trade in goods and services, UK](#)

Dataset | Released 13 January 2025

Interregional trade in goods and services, UK, 2019 and 2020 International Territorial Level (ITL) 1.

## 6 . Glossary

### International Territorial Levels

The International Territorial Levels (ITL) are a hierarchical classification of administrative areas used for statistical purposes. ITL1 includes major socio-economic regions. In the context of the UK, they include the nine regions of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

### Total trade

The value of total trade between two trading partners (that is, 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.

## 7 . Data sources and quality

## Data sources

Our primary data sources include the [Northern Ireland Economic Trade Statistics \(NIETS\)](#), [Exports Statistics Scotland \(ESS\)](#), and the [Trade Survey for Wales \(TSW\)](#). More information on these data sources and the other administrative data that we use can be found in our [Interregional trade in goods and services UK quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#).

## More quality and methodology information

This bulletin presents estimates of the value of goods and services imports and exports, and total trade from 2019 and 2021 between UK nations and UK regions at the International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 level.

These statistics are labelled as "official statistics in development". Until September 2023, these were called "experimental statistics". Read more about the change in our [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](mailto:subnational.trade@ons.gov.uk).

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Interregional Trade in Goods and Services UK QMI](#).

Our timeseries data for 2019 and 2020 are published simultaneously. 2020 was an atypical year in trade in the UK because of the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and lockdown measures.

## 8 . Related links

### [International trade in UK nations, regions and cities: 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 5 February 2025

Estimates the value of exports and imports of goods and services for 2022 for UK International Territory Levels 1, 2 and 3, and city regions.

### [Experimental methodology for producing UK interregional trade estimates](#)

Methodology | Released 28 July 2023

Experimental methodology for estimating the value of UK interregional trade in goods and services at International Territorial Level 1.

### [Improving the Quality of Regional Economic Indicators in the UK: A Framework for Interregional Trade Data Collection and Estimation \(ESCoE TR-13\)](#)

Methodology | Released 9 December 2021

Technical report from the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence, defining a framework for measuring the UK interregional trade.

## 9 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 10 February 2025, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Interregional trade in goods and services, UK: 2019 and 2020](#)

