

# | The Value of Shipping 2025

| **UK Shipping:** Powering global trade  
& delivering a more prosperous nation

# The UK's shipping industry is the lifeblood of the country's economy

95% of UK trade is transported by ship and shipping is vital to ensure the country has the energy, food and medicines we need.

We connect British enterprise with the world, provide highly skilled, high-quality jobs for every nation and region, and support our swift transition towards Net Zero.

The sector is truly UK-wide, supporting direct and indirect jobs across the supply chain – from coastal towns to inland communities.

**About the UK Chamber of Shipping:**  
 The UK Chamber of Shipping is the trade association for the UK shipping industry, providing a voice for over 200 members of all sizes, sectors and flags, including some of the country's largest cruise, ferry and freight operators.  
 Our purpose is to support the creation of a more prosperous, greener UK.

As an island nation, we all depend on a vibrant and resilient shipping industry and the UK Chamber of Shipping is intent on ensuring that the industry has the tools it needs to deliver benefits for communities across the country:

**Our work is centred on three key themes:**



**People:** Fostering productive, highly skilled jobs across the UK.



**Planet:** Delivering emission reductions while enabling our energy sector to thrive.



**Prosperity:** Contributing to the long-term prosperity of the UK.

## ◆ THE VALUE OF SHIPPING: AT A GLANCE



## ◆ THE LIFEBLOOD OF THE UK ECONOMY

The UK's shipping industry is the lifeblood of the country's economy – connecting enterprise with the world, providing highly skilled, high-quality jobs to every nation and region, and supporting our swift transition towards Net Zero.

We move materials, goods and people to and from, and around the UK, with millions of passengers travelling on ships and millions of tonnes of essential products moved by sea each year.



In 2023, UK ports handled a total of

**434.9 million tonnes** of vital cargo



**169.3 million tonnes**

of liquid bulks, including liquified gas, crude oil and products essential to energy supply



**76 million tonnes**

of essential cargo, including all containerised goods and other general cargo including steel and construction materials



**84.4 million tonnes**

of bulk products including ores and agricultural products, supporting industry and manufacturing



**96.2 million tonnes**

of freight including trailers, cars and vehicles, keeping Britain moving



**55.9 million passengers**

use our transport network, including ferry and cruise routes to and from, and around the UK <sup>i</sup>

## ◆ A VITAL PART OF OUR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

The ferry and cruise sectors are essential to the movement of people, goods and vital supplies to and from, and around, our island nation



**Ferries are a lifeline for millions:**

**2.4 million people** in the UK depend on the operations of ferry services as a lifeline for access to healthcare, education, food and other essential goods.<sup>v</sup>

**18.1 million**

international passengers pass through UK ports every year, on average **50,000 each day**

**2.9 million**

passengers begin or end an **international cruise** in UK ports

**37.8 million**

passengers travel on **domestic ferries** each year

**£170 million**

directly every year to our coastal economies, with **every passenger** adding on average **£80 each** with each port call. <sup>iii</sup>

That's more than

**100,000 journeys per day**

as we **support island communities** throughout the UK <sup>ii</sup>

For example, in Southampton – often regarded as Europe's capital of cruise – the **wider economic impact** of the **cruise industry** totals

**£1 billion**<sup>iv</sup>



**BRINGING VALUE, JOBS AND BENEFITS TO THE SUPPLY CHAIN**

## ◆ FOSTERING PRODUCTIVE, HIGHLY SKILLED JOBS THROUGHOUT THE UK

**+98,000**

The shipping industry directly employs 98,200 people at sea and ashore in the UK

**+728,000**

Over 728,200 jobs within the UK economy are therefore supported by the shipping industry

**20%+**

Shipping pays on average 21% more than the average full-time employee

**+630,000**

Across our wider supply chain, that amounts to 630,000 jobs

**1=6**

Every job in shipping supports six in the wider UK economy

**120%+**

Jobs in the industry are over twice – 121.8% – as productive than the UK average

### There's always more to sea:

There are a broad range of careers and opportunities available within the maritime sector – from seafarer to lawyer; logistics operators to hospitality; and safety specialist to data-analyst – all form a vital part of shipping's complex landscape.

As an industry we are firmly committed to improving the diversity, safety and wellbeing of our workforce, regardless of their role.

As technology continues to influence our industry, we are working to adapt our workforce – retraining, re-skilling and attracting the brightest and the best talent to the sector. This includes an ever-greater focus on data, technology and green jobs – with new employment opportunities being created throughout the UK.

The UK is a global leader when it comes to the international shipping services industry. Our unrivalled professional expertise in chartering, insurance, financial services, and legal matters is called on by businesses from across the globe.

### Securing future skills:

There is a predicted global shortfall of 90,000 seafarers by 2026. To ensure we meet the skills needs of the future and protect the long-term health of the UK shipping industry, we must train 2,000 UK cadets a year, yet current figures are well below this.<sup>vi</sup>

The **Support for Maritime Training (SMarT)** scheme was established in recognition of the strategic importance UK Seafarer training to meet the nation's economic and security requirements. It is essential that this funding be protected to safeguard the future of our vital industry.



Find out more about our national careers awareness campaign, "There's always more to sea".

## ◆ DELIVERING PROSPERITY, SUPPORTING JOBS

Our operations and supply chains are vital to the prosperity of every corner of the UK



In England, shipping directly contributes **80,445 jobs** and adds **£13.56 billion** to the economy.

In the wider economy, shipping supports nearly **520,000 jobs** and adds **£33.8 billion** to the economy.

### Around England, shipping directly contributes:



North East, Yorkshire and the Humber: **1,390 jobs, £182 million** economic contribution



East of England & East Midlands **11,976 jobs, £2 billion** economic contribution



London: **15,488 jobs, £3.68 billion** economic contribution



South East: **33,254 jobs, £4.9 billion** economic contribution



South West: **5,471 jobs, £675 million** economic contribution



West Midlands: **2,941 jobs, £462 million** economic contribution



North West: **9,925 jobs, £1.64 billion** economic contribution



In Scotland, shipping directly contributes **12,568 jobs** and adds **£1.86 billion** to the economy.

In the wider economy, shipping supports over **80,000 jobs** and adds **£4.69 billion** to the economy.



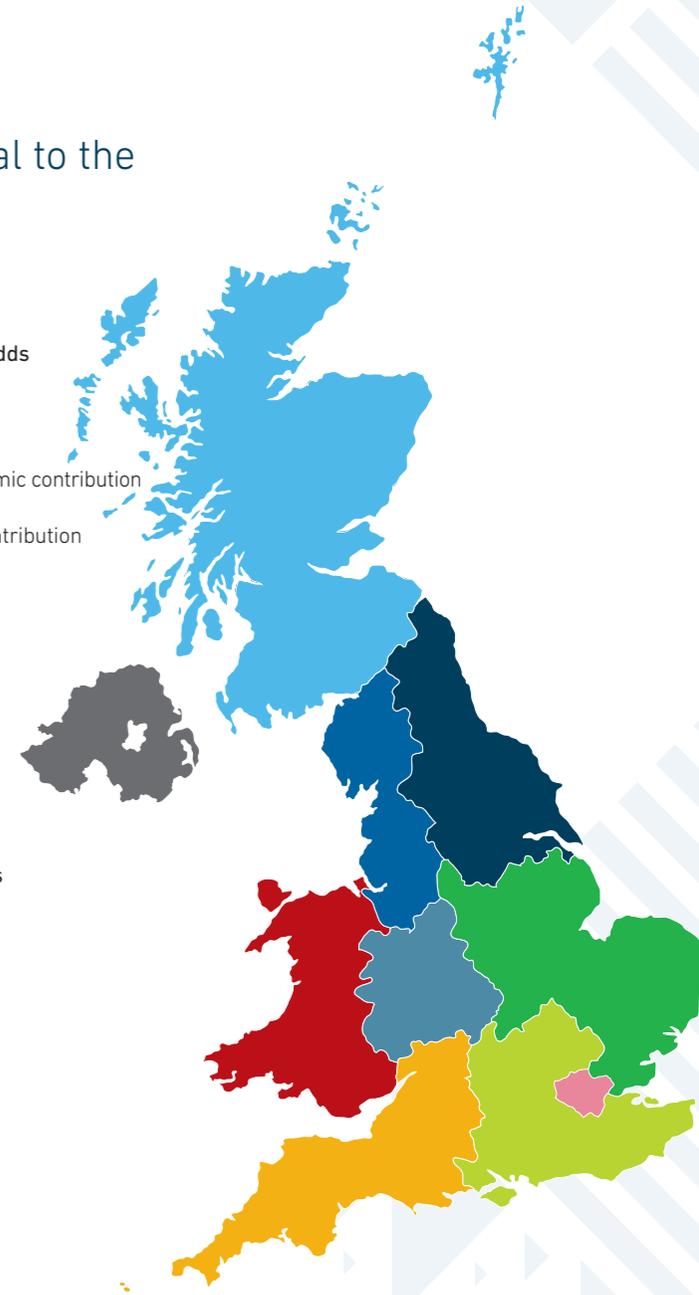
In Northern Ireland, shipping directly contributes **1,528 jobs** and adds **£226 million** to the economy.

In the wider economy, shipping supports over 11,000 jobs and adds **£616 million** to the economy.



In Wales, shipping directly contributes **3,679 jobs** and adds **£429 million** to the economy.

In the wider economy, shipping supports over **26,000 jobs** and adds **£1.18 billion** to the economy.



## ◆ A DIVERSE AND NON-STOP OPERATION

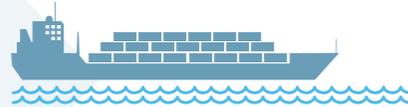
Vessels arrive at UK ports 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with port calls on average every five minutes, or nearly 300 vessels each day

Approximately 100,000 trading vessels call in the UK each year:



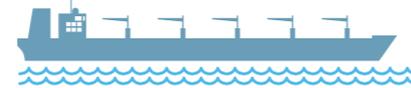
53,270  
Ferries

Each ferry call at a UK port, carries goods and people around the UK and Europe and provides lifeline services to the island communities and economies of the UK.



7,670  
Container ships

Transporting essential products such as manufactured goods, components, medicines and consumer products.



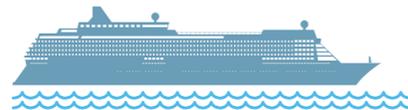
17,700  
Cargo vessels

Moving essential materials to support the UK's manufacturing, construction and energy industry.



12,150  
Tankers

Keeping the UK's energy supply moving. <sup>vii</sup>



2,193  
Cruise ships

Adding £170 million directly to Britain's coastal economies through the benefits of cruise tourism. <sup>viii</sup>

Alongside trading vessels, our maritime ecosystem also relies on:



220  
Tugs

Ensuring the safety movement of vessels in ports and harbours and providing vital emergency capability.



650  
Workboats

Operating in all types of roles, from dredging to buoy laying and harbour maintenance.



400  
Offshore vessels

Supporting the UK's varied offshore activity, supporting renewable energy projects, conducting seismic surveys, or laying vital telecommunications and electricity cabling. <sup>ix</sup>



62  
Royal Navy  
vessels



11  
Royal Fleet Auxiliary  
vessels

The Royal Navy and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary are key to Britain's security, prosperity and success.

## ◆ ENABLING UK TRADE AROUND THE GLOBE

In times of political uncertainty and instability, shipping has a critical role in keeping trade moving, enabling access for goods to the UK and for export overseas.

In 2024, ships facilitated over **£957.3 billion** of UK trade<sup>x</sup>

▶ Total UK goods exports in 2024: **£365.7 billion** | ◀ Total UK goods imports in 2024: **£591.6 billion**

### Delivering the goods:

Shipping helps **Over 142,000 businesses**

in the UK **export** their goods, and

**Over 350,000 businesses**

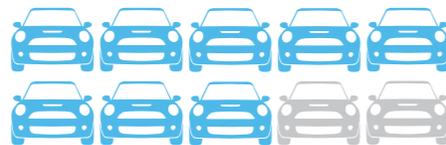
who **import** raw materials, consumer products and other goods.<sup>xi</sup>



Shipping is essential to the functioning of many sectors and industries within the UK economy, bringing vital materials, component parts and facilitating exports, for example:



Shipping exports of UK **pharmaceutical** products supports **over 125,000 highly skilled jobs** in that sector.<sup>xii</sup>



**8 in 10 cars** manufactured in the UK are exported, supporting **over 190,000 highly skilled and manufacturing jobs** in the UK.<sup>xiii</sup>

We support jobs and local economies in every city town and village around the country by ensuring that world-famous products such as Scotch whisky, Welsh lamb, English sparkling wine and Northern Irish beef, can reach global markets.

We are an essential part of the dialogue on global trade

### We support:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| ▶ Exports to the EU worth <b>£174 billion</b> in 2024  | ▶ Exports to the USA worth <b>£59.3 billion</b> in 2024  | ▶ Exports from China worth <b>£16.7 billion</b> in 2024  |
| ◀ Imports from the EU worth <b>£313 billion</b> in 2024   | ◀ Imports from the USA worth <b>£57.1 billion</b> in 2024   | ◀ Imports from China worth <b>£65.4 billion</b> in 2024   |
| ◀▶ Overall trade in goods with the EU worth <b>£487 billion</b> in 2024   | ◀▶ Overall trade in goods with USA worth <b>£116.4 billion</b> in 2024 <sup>xiv</sup>   | ◀▶ Overall trade in goods with China worth <b>£82.1 billion</b> in 2024 <sup>xv</sup>   |

The EU remains a significant trading partner for the UK in 2024, accounting for **48%** of the UK's goods exports and **54%** of imported goods<sup>xvi</sup>

### ▶ Shipping transports £billions of products and goods from the UK:

-  **£31.8 billion** in mechanical power generators
-  **£31.7 billion** in cars
-  **£15.1 billion** in crude oil and **£11 billion** in refined oil
-  **£24.7 billion** in medicines and pharmaceutical products
-  **£24.6 billion** in food, feed and beverages
-  **£13.4 billion** in non-ferrous metals

### ◀ And we facilitate £billions of imports:



-  **£22.3 billion** in mechanical power generators
-  **£44.6 billion** in cars
-  **£26 billion** in refined oil and **£24.9 billion** in crude oil
-  **£27.1 billion** in medicines and pharmaceutical products
-  **£64.1 billion** in food, feed and beverages
-  **£21.7 billion** in telecoms and sound equipment

In 2024, the **UK exported £5.4 billion of Scotch Whisky**, equivalent to 1.4 billion bottles exported globally<sup>xvii</sup>

## ◆ LEADING THE UK'S NET ZERO TRANSITION

The UK offshore shipping sector is essential to providing energy to the UK, whether domestic production of oil and gas offshore, or in driving the energy transition in the UK.

**The UK Chamber of Shipping was proud to lead the way on committing to reduce carbon emissions, becoming the first voice to call on the International Maritime Organization to double its target of 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 – an ambition which has now been realised. The UK is well placed to seize this opportunity for growth.**

The sector is integral in the development and maintenance of offshore energy projects, including in the UK's existing, critical, oil and gas energy infrastructure and in the drive to increase our renewable energy capability.

Shipping provides a range of services to install, maintain and decommission platforms and installations around the UK coastline.

This sector is also vital to the safe transportation of fuels to and from the UK – and plays a key role in the supply of energy and in driving the green transition, through the development of technology and adoption of greener fuels to support our commitment to reach net zero.

### Supporting our ambition to be a green energy superpower:

There are **49** active offshore wind farm developments comprising **2,800** turbines around the UK coast, with generating capacity of **15.7 GW**, and a further 10 developments with generating capacity of **11.8 GW** under development.

#### Current capacity:

**49** wind farms | **2,800** turbines

⚡ Generating **15 GW**

#### Future capacity:

**147** wind farms | **7,800** turbines

⚡ Generating **105 GW**<sup>xviii</sup>

In planning stages, there are **88** potential wind farms comprising **5,000** turbines with a potential generating capacity of **77.5GW**. This equates to a total pipeline of **105GW** in future.

**The UK has the world's largest fleet of Crew Transfer Vessels (CTVs) which are essential for offshore energy development.**

The green transition presents an opportunity for significant growth in the UK, both ashore and afloat. Estimates suggest that the projected growth in offshore wind by 2050 will require more than **2,000 CTVs and 400 Service Operation Vessels**<sup>xix</sup> to meet global offshore wind vessel demand for operations and maintenance. These new vessels present a great opportunity for hybridisation and alternative fuel use.

## ◆ SECURING THE UK'S ENERGY SUPPLY

With increased global energy insecurity and the mission to become a green energy hub, the role of shipping in supporting the UK's energy imports and exports has never been more important.



Over **43%** of the UK's imported natural gas was carried by ship as LNG in 2023, totalling almost **20 billion** cubic metres.<sup>xx</sup>



The UK imports **46.3 million** tonnes of crude oil, equivalent to **930,000** barrels arriving every day, almost all carried by ship, ensuring our national energy infrastructure keeps moving.



In 2023, **496,000** barrels of crude oil were exported each day, making the UK the second largest exporter in Europe.



**100%** of our crude oil exports go by ship, with more than **70%** being exported to the EU, in particular Netherlands, Germany, Poland and Sweden.<sup>xxi</sup>



And we support the UK's vital energy interconnector infrastructure between the UK and continental Europe, installing and maintaining key equipment.

### Securing our nation:

In times of peace and conflict, Royal Navy warships and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) are key to Britain's prosperity and success. They help to keep maritime trade that is the lifeblood of the UK economy flowing. They act as a guardian and a diplomat, as a humanitarian force for good, and a peacekeeper on the global stage.

The RFA delivers worldwide logistics and operational support to Royal Navy military operations. They are the uniformed civilian branch of the naval service, staffed by UK merchant sailors. Fully integrated with warships, the RFA is an essential element of how the Royal Navy operates autonomously around the globe.

The UK Chamber works closely with the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Navy to support their operations, share information and supports the work of several Navy charities.

## ◆ ABOUT THE DATA

The Value of the Shipping report provides insights on the size and performance of the UK shipping industry, presenting a wide range of indicators which demonstrate the economic value brought by the industry to the UK economy.

The report considers the direct and supply chain contributions of the industry across a set of economic indicators, including business turnover, gross value added (GVA), employment and the compensation of employees.

Building on our previous study published in 2022, this updated analysis offers a refreshed evidence base that captures both the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the sector's subsequent recovery, allowing for comparisons across time and across key segments of the industry.

## ◆ ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS RESEARCH (Cebr)

Cebr is a leading independent economics consultancy, trusted by businesses and policymakers for over 30 years. We provide rigorous economic analysis and forecasting to a broad range of private and public sector clients. Our work helps organisations navigate complex strategic decisions, shape public policy, and engage meaningfully with key stakeholders.

Our Economic Advisory specialises in economic impact assessments, having advised several government departments, as well as FTSE and multi-national firms. Cebr's Forecasting team delivers award-winning forecasts of the UK and global economies, helping our clients stay ahead of the game in anticipating future economic developments.



## ◆ REFERENCES

All data, unless referenced below is based on the Value of Shipping 2025 CEBR report, **The economic contribution of the UK Shipping industry**, May 2025

<sup>i</sup> **Port freight annual statistics 2023: Overview of port freight statistics and useful information**, Department for Transport, 17 July 2024

<sup>ii</sup> **Sea passenger statistics: International sea passengers 2023**, Department for Transport, 11 December 2024

<sup>iii</sup> **Solid Cruise 2024: Cruise Season for Britain as port calls and embarkations increase again**, Cruise Britain, 3 April 2025

<sup>iv</sup> **£1bn+ generated for the city of Southampton by record cruise year**, Cruise Britain, 8 January 2024

<sup>v</sup> **Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021**, Office for National Statistics, 28 June 2022

<sup>vi</sup> **Seafarers in the UK Shipping Industry: 2024**, Department for Transport, 26 February 2025

<sup>vii</sup> **Port and domestic waterborne freight statistics: data tables (PORT)**, Department for Transport, 12 March 2025

<sup>viii</sup> **Solid Cruise 2024: Cruise Season for Britain as port calls and embarkations increase again**, Cruise Britain, 3 April 2025

<sup>ix</sup> **UK Chamber of Shipping analysis of Clarkson's Research Services**, April 2025

<sup>x</sup> **UK trade in numbers (web version)**, Department for Business and Trade, 22 April 2025

<sup>xi</sup> **Customs Importer and Exporter Population 2023**, HM Revenue & Customs, 10 April 2024

<sup>xii</sup> **Growing Britain's life sciences sector through international and trade policy**, Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI), January 2025

<sup>xiii</sup> **Powering the economy**, Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders (SMMT), Date Accessed: 16 May 2025

<sup>xiv</sup> **UK trade with the United States: 2024**, Office for National Statistics, 25 April 2025

<sup>xv</sup> **Trade and Investment Factsheet – China**, Department for Business and Trade, 2 May 2025

<sup>xvi</sup> **Statistics on UK-EU trade**, House of Commons Library, 22 April 2025

<sup>xvii</sup> **UK trade in numbers (web version)**, Department for Business and Trade, 22 April 2025

<sup>xviii</sup> **Clarkson's Research Services**, April 2025

<sup>xix</sup> **Daughter Craft: an integral addition to the offshore wind vessel family**, Chartwell Marine, 3 April 2025

<sup>xx</sup> **Port freight annual statistics 2023: Overview of port freight statistics and useful information**, Department for Transport, 17 July 2024

<sup>xxi</sup> **Digest of UK Energy Statistics (DUKES): petroleum**, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 22 July 2024

For full references and links please visit the UK Chamber of Shipping website:



# UNITING UK SHIPPING

The UK Chamber of Shipping is the trade association for the UK shipping industry, providing a voice for over 200 members of all sizes, sectors and flags, including some of the country's largest cruise, ferry and freight operators.

We work to unite, promote, and champion the shipping sector, helping create the best possible environment for our industry to flourish to the benefit of the wider UK.

We enable the shipping industry to speak with one voice, ensuring decision makers are educated and informed about the positive social, economic, and environmental impact our industry has on the rest of the world.



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