

Press release: July figures show UK exports remain at record high

In data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on Monday 10 September, UK exports to the world rose by £30.9 billion – an increase of 5.2% compared to the same time last year. Other main points from the release include:

- The country's renowned service sector continues to thrive with exports up 3.9% to a record high of £283.4 billion, increasing the service surplus to £117.1 billion
- Goods exports also rose strongly by 6.2% to £345.9 billion
- On a rolling annual basis, annual exports continue to grow faster than imports for the twelfth consecutive month, with the overall trade deficit narrowing by £13.8 billion in the year to July 2018

The news comes after the launch of the Export Strategy last month, which sets out a new ambition to increase exports as a proportion of UK GDP to 35%, making the UK one of the G7's most successful exporters.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP said:

Today's trade figures show demand for UK goods and services is continuing to grow, as overall exports rose to £629.3 billion – up 5.2% on this time last year – and the trade deficit continued to narrow by £13.8bn over the last 12 months.

As we open consultations for future trade relationships with key markets around the world, we're seeing the UK shift towards selling more than we buy, with exports increasing faster than imports. My international economic department will continue work with companies across the country to ensure they're making the most of global opportunities.

Separate figures released by the ONS in June showed UK exports of goods and services to non-EU countries amounted to around £344 billion in the 12 months ending March 2018, showing the worldwide demand for British goods and services remains. Exports to EU countries were around £276 billion in the same period.

Overall, exports of goods and services to non-EU countries have nearly trebled since 2000 – exports of goods and services to EU countries by

comparison have nearly doubled. The UK also operates a trade surplus of more than £40 billion with non-EU countries, with this having been a deficit as recently as 2010.

In 2017, 8 of the 10 fastest growing markets for UK exports since 2010 were outside of the EU (figures include only countries with more than £1 billion in export value in 2017, and exclude Crown Dependencies and Gibraltar). Exports of services to the key non-EU markets of USA, China and Japan have all increased by more than 45% since 2010.

The UK's current account deficit also narrowed to £79 billion in 2017, down by £24 billion from 12 months earlier. This is the narrowest deficit as a percentage of GDP since 2012.

Further information

[View the latest ONS statistics on UK trade](#)

[News story: IPO top employer for working families](#)



The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) was named as one of the UK's top 10 employers for working families today. The [Top Employers for Working Families 2018](#) award recognises organisations that lead the way in creating flexible, family friendly workplaces.

We understand flexible working schemes bring benefits to our people and the business. Home working, flexible hours and shared parental leave are all available at the IPO. Support networks and staff counsellors are also on hand to provide support.

Dominic Houlihan, Director of People, Places and Services, IPO said:

The IPO is a great place to work. We are committed to the physical and mental wellbeing of our people. This includes policies that

support our people to balance work and family life. An environment where people can meet their full potential is also one which delivers for customers. We retain valuable skills and are better able to respond to changes in the business environment.

[The IPO also made it to the top ten in 2017](#). The award is run by Working Families, the UK's leading work-life balance organisation. The charity helps working parents, carers and employers achieve a better balance between responsibilities.

If you're interested in working at the IPO, search for jobs on the [civil service vacancy website](#).

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News story: International education study highlights UK strength

Almost 1 in 5 of all students in tertiary education in the UK are international, with the UK having one of the highest proportions of international students according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) annual Education at Glance report — demonstrating the quality and reputation of our universities and their success as a global export.

The study of education systems in 36 leading countries also found that our schools get more funding per pupil than France, Germany or Japan and the United Kingdom is now among the top three countries for education spending as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP).

Thanks to the Government's reforms and the hard work of staff across our education system we are helping to provide a world-class education for everyone. There are now 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools since 2010; the results gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has shrunk by 10% since 2011; England has risen to joint 8th in the world's primary-level reading league table; GCSEs have been reformed to match the best performing education systems in the world; and A Levels now ensure students have the knowledge and skills they need, creating qualifications parents, universities and employers can trust.

Today's publication from the OECD contains a number of findings which show even more progress, including:

- Teachers – Teachers with 15 years' experience not only earn more than

the OECD average, but also more than their counterparts in European education systems, such as France, Italy and Sweden. This follows the recent announcement of a 3.5% pay increase for classroom teachers, funded by a £500 million Government grant, in addition to the tax-free bursaries worth up to £26,000 for trainee teachers in priority subjects.

- Higher education – The OECD found that the United Kingdom offers some of the most generous financial support for students. The Government has also taken steps to make the system better for graduates, including by increasing the repayment threshold, saving them up to £360 a year, and a record proportion of disadvantaged 18-year-olds accepted a place at university on A Level results day earlier this year.
- Lifelong learning – The UK has one of the highest enrolment rates of adults over 40 in education, and an above average percentage of students over 20 in vocational programmes.
- Early years – The UK has almost universal enrolment in early education at ages 3 and 4. This builds on more than 1.3 million children in England benefiting from some form of government funded early education, with more than 340,000 benefitting from our 30 hours free childcare offer, and 93% of childcare settings rated good or outstanding.
- Autonomy – Nearly two third of decisions are taken at school level in the UK meaning that, unlike the majority of other countries, schools have flexibility over timetables, as well as personnel and resource management.
- Opportunities – The percentage of young adults not in education, employment or training continues to fall. It is currently at the lowest level ever among 16- to 18-year-olds.

Secretary of State for Education Damian Hinds said:

I have been clear that I want to see a world class education for every child, whatever their background and this OECD study showing the great progress we have made in our efforts, highlighting the many strengths of our education system.

Since 2010 there are 1.9 million more children taught in good or outstanding schools, the attainment gap between rich and poor has shrunk by 10% and we have reformed qualifications to make them something parents, universities and employers can trust.

The result of this is that, as the report recognises, we have high levels of young people in education or employment, the financial

gains from going to university outstrip the cost and people are more likely to continue learning throughout their lives.

The Government is continuing to invest in education in order to drive up standards even further. By 2020, school funding will rise to a record £43.5 billion, which is 50% more in real terms per pupil than it was in 2000 and by the end of the decade we will have created one million more school places since 2010 – the fastest increase for two generations. This is backed by £23 billion by 2021 to ensure every child has access to a good school place and means the average primary class size is 27.1 and the average secondary class is 21.2.

The Education Secretary has also made it a key priority to deliver a world-class technical education system, creating new T Level qualifications that will be available from 2020 and backed by an additional £500 million a year once the programme is fully rolled out. This builds on the 3.7 million apprenticeship starts since 2010, giving more people the skills they need for employment, to get on in life and strengthen the UK economy.

The report today proves that education continues to be one of the country's best exports, with ministers travelling across the world – from China to Jordan to Argentina – to share England's successes and learn from the best systems. Last week the Education Secretary visited Ireland to learn more about how they teach children to read, resulting in a strong performance in the international literacy league table. This follows England's rise in last year's PIRLS study.

[News story: Human Rights Council 39: UK statement for the Item 2 General Debate](#)

The United Kingdom warmly welcomes the High Commissioner to her first session of the Council and thanks her for her report.

The UK fully supports the OHCHR and the central role the High Commissioner's independent mandate plays in the international human rights system.

We remain concerned by human rights violations in Bangladesh, including restrictions on freedom of expression. We welcome Bangladesh's continued support to the Rohingya refugees, but call on Bangladesh to fulfil its commitments made at the Universal Periodic Review.

We also remain concerned at the continued erosion of democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law in the Maldives. It is critical that the

authorities respect fundamental freedoms. Upcoming elections must be free, fair and credible.

The national election in Cambodia was neither free nor fair. We urge the authorities to lift restrictions on political debate and media freedom, drop all charges against and restrictions on opposition leader Kem Sokha, and create the conditions for a proper functioning democracy.

Vietnam has imprisoned a number of bloggers and activists, often with heavy sentences. This further restricts the space for people to freely express their views on matters of public interest.

We urge the Philippines to conduct thorough investigations into killings associated with the “war on drugs”. We are concerned by recent reports concerning land rights defenders and call on the Government to ensure their safety.

We urge the Venezuelan Government to take immediate action to facilitate humanitarian aid; the international community stands ready to assist. We also call on the Government to respect the National Assembly and release all political prisoners.

In Cameroon we are deeply concerned at further reports of the burning of villages and schools in the Anglophone regions, and an increasing number of IDPs and refugees. We call for all parties to show restraint and reject violence.

Finally, on Sri Lanka, our views have been set out in the earlier joint statement.

Official Statistics: UK and England soil nutrient balances, 2017

Updated: Minor revisions to the figures for both the UK and England results.

Soil nutrient balances provide a method for estimating the annual nutrient loadings of nitrogen and phosphorus to agricultural soils.

Next update: see the [statistics release calendar](#)

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