

Northern Ireland Annual Coal Inquiry 2020

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland

Theme: Economy

Frequency: Annual

Key Points

- In 2020, 1.500 million tonnes of coal and other solid fuels were shipped into Northern Ireland through the four main ports, which was 12% less than the 1.700 million tonnes imported in 2019.
- Approximately two thirds (65%) were imported for domestic or industrial use in 2020, and one third (35%) was for the generation of electricity. Imports for domestic or industrial use were similar to the average for the 33-year series (1988-2020), while those for electricity generation were lower on only three previous occasions (1988, 2009 and 2019).
- The amount of coal and solid fuels imported in 2020 was just over half that imported in 1995 (2.798 million tonnes), but still over 40% above the lowest recorded (1.055 million tonnes in 2009).
- Following a 10-year period when tonnages for each were broadly similar, for the last four years the amount of coal and solid fuels imported annually for domestic or industrial use has been significantly higher than that imported for the generation of electricity. By contrast, between 1995 and 2006, coal imports for electricity generation were well above those for domestic or industrial use.

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Notes

The Annual Coal Inquiry collects information on all coal and other solid fuels shipped into Northern Ireland each year, and the purpose for which it was imported: for domestic or industrial use, or for the generation of electricity. It covers all types of solid fuels including coal, anthracite, lignite, coke and manufactured smokeless fuels. Figures are inclusive of all sources of coal shipped (bulk cargo and containerised) to Northern Ireland, including cross channel and foreign imports.

The information is obtained by surveying all coal importing ports in Northern Ireland annually (in January to collect data for the previous year). This is a voluntary census and the response rate for 2020 was 100 per cent.

The latest publication presents statistics for the years 1988 to 2020. Splits for 'Domestic Use' and 'Industrial Use' are available up until 2014.

Figure 1: Imports of coal and other solid fuels into Northern Ireland ports, 1988 to 2020

