



Library Note

UK-Commonwealth Trade

This House of Lords Library briefing examines the trade relationship between the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth countries. It provides a brief overview of UK trade, including information on its largest export market and largest source of imports. It then discusses Commonwealth trade, focussing on intra-Commonwealth trade. Finally it examines UK-Commonwealth trade relations and summarises a range of recent statements and commentary pertaining to the future of those trade relationships in the context of the European Union referendum result.

UK Trade

In 2015, the UK exported £512 billion of goods and services and imported a total of £548 billion. Consequently, the UK had a trade deficit of £37 billion. The EU is the UK's largest trading partner. In 2015, 44 percent of the UK's goods and services were exported to the EU, while 53 percent of the UK's imports came from the EU. The value of the UK's trade deficit with the EU was £68 billion. In 2015, the UK had a trade surplus in goods and services worth £31 billion with non-EU countries. The UK exported goods and services valued at £288 billion, while its imports were worth £257 billion. In terms of trade with individual countries, the UK's largest export market in 2014 was the US, to which UK exports totalled £84 billion. Germany was the largest source of imports into the UK in 2014, with the UK importing £69.8 billion of goods and services.

Commonwealth Trade

The Commonwealth Secretariat reports that in 2013, the total global exports of goods and services of the 53 Commonwealth members were valued at \$3.4 trillion, which it stated was about 15 percent of the world's total exports. Intra-Commonwealth trade of goods and services totalled \$592 billion in 2013. The total of intra-Commonwealth trade as a share of the Commonwealth's total global trade increased from 13 percent in 1995 to 18 percent in 2013. The Secretariat estimates that this trade had increased to \$687 billion in 2015 and projects it to exceed \$1 trillion by 2020.

UK-Commonwealth Trade Relations

In 2014, total UK exports to Commonwealth countries were worth £48 billion, approximately 9 percent of the UK's total exports worldwide. Imports from the Commonwealth were £47 billion, also around 9 percent of the UK total. The UK has had a trade surplus with the Commonwealth since 2011. In the context of the EU referendum, some commentators have suggested that an exit from the EU would enable the UK to establish bilateral agreements with countries such as India, Australia and New Zealand. Following the referendum result, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Baroness Scotland of Asthal, has argued that the Commonwealth will become "more pivotally important than it has ever been". However, she cautioned that the UK's relationship with Commonwealth countries will be a "modern one", where all partners will be "equals".

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I. Trade in the UK

I.1 Overview

In 2015, the UK exported goods and services worth £512 billion, and imported a total of £548 billion.¹ The UK had a trade deficit of £37 billion.

Total trade can be broken down into goods and services. In 2015, the UK had a worldwide trade deficit in goods but a trade surplus in services. UK exports of goods totalled £286 billion and goods imports totalled £411 billion.² The UK's deficit on trade in goods was therefore £125 billion. In contrast, the UK exported £226 billion worth of services in 2015, and imported £137 billion, giving a surplus of £89 billion. This data is illustrated in the table below.

UK Trade, 2015: Goods and Services

	Exports (£ billions)	Imports (£ billions)	Balance (£ billions)
Goods	285.5	410.8	-125.4
Services	226.0	137.3	+88.7
Total	511.5	548.2	-36.7

(Source: Office for National Statistics, [Balance of Payments: Oct to Dec and Annual 2015](#), 31 March 2016, Table B)

The European Union is the UK's largest trading partner.³ In 2015, 44 percent of the UK's goods and services were exported to the EU, while 53 percent of the UK's imports came from the EU. UK exports to the EU were valued at £223 billion and UK imports from the EU totalled £291 billion. The UK therefore had a trade deficit of £68 billion with the EU in 2015.

In 2015, the UK had a trade surplus in goods and services of £31 billion with non-EU countries.⁴ The UK exported goods and services valued at £288 billion, while its imports were worth £257 billion.

UK Trade with EU and non-EU Countries 2015: Goods and Services

	Exports		Imports		Balance
	£ billion	Percentage %	£ billion	Percentage %	£ billion
EU	223.3	44	291.1	53	-68
Non-EU	288.2	56	257.1	47	+31
Total	511.5	100	548.2	100	-37

(Source: Office for National Statistics, [Balance of Payments: Oct to Dec and Annual 2015](#), 31 March 2016, Tables B and C; and House of Commons Library, [UK-EU Economic Relations](#), 13 June 2016)

¹ Office for National Statistics, [Balance of Payments: Oct to Dec and Annual 2015](#), 31 March 2016, Table B.

² *ibid.*

³ Office for National Statistics, ['UK Perspectives 2016: Trade with the EU and Beyond'](#), 25 May 2016.

⁴ *ibid.*

1.2 UK Trading Partners

Regional Trade

In 2014, the EU was the UK's largest trading partner, accounting for 44 percent of UK exports of goods and services and 53 percent of imports.⁵ The rest of Europe, those countries not included in the group of 28 EU member states, accounted for 11 percent of the UK's exports and 10 percent of its imports in 2014. Asia accounted for 20 percent of UK imports and 19 percent of exports, and the Americas (including the US) accounted for 21 percent of UK exports in 2014 and 13 percent of imports.

UK Export Partners

In terms of trade with individual countries, the UK's largest export market in 2014 was the US. Exports to the US in 2014 totalled £84 billion.⁶ Germany was the second largest export market in 2014 at £45 billion. This data is illustrated by the table below.

UK Export Markets 2014: Goods and Services

Name of Country	£ billion	Percentage of Exports (%)
United States	84.0	16.4
Germany	44.9	8.7
Netherlands	36.0	7.0
France	30.9	6.0
Ireland	26.9	5.2
Switzerland	21.6	4.2
China	18.8	3.7
Italy	16.4	3.2
Belgium	15.1	2.9
Spain	14.8	2.9
Japan	9.5	1.9
Sweden	9.1	1.8
India	8.6	1.7
United Arab Emirates	8.5	1.7
Hong Kong, China	8.5	1.7
Australia	8.5	1.7
Korea, Republic of	7.3	1.4
Norway	6.9	1.3
Russian Federation	6.8	1.3
Canada	6.4	1.2
Singapore	6.1	1.2

(Source: Office for National Statistics, '[Annual Imports and Exports of UK Trade by Country from 1999 to 2014](#)', 2 March 2016; and House of Commons Library, '[Geographical Pattern of UK Trade](#)', 24 May 2016, p 6)

⁵ Office for National Statistics, '[United Kingdom Balance of Payments: The Pink Book—Compendium](#)', 31 October 2015, Table 9.3; and House of Commons Library, '[Geographical Pattern of UK Trade](#)', 24 May 2016, pp 5–6.

⁶ Office for National Statistics, '[Annual Imports and Exports of UK Trade by Country from 1999 to 2014](#)', 2 March 2016; and House of Commons Library, '[Geographical Pattern of UK Trade](#)', 24 May 2016, p 6.

UK Import Partners

Germany was the largest source of imports into the UK in 2014.⁷ The UK imported £69.8 billion of goods and services from Germany. The US was the second largest source at £52 billion and China was the third at £38 billion.

UK Import Markets 2014: Goods and Services

Name of Country	£ billion	Percentage of Exports (%)
Germany	69.8	12.7
United States	52.2	9.5
China	38.1	6.9
Netherlands	37.7	6.9
France	36.8	6.7
Spain	24.0	4.4
Belgium	23.1	4.2
Italy	21.3	3.9
Norway	19.6	3.6
Ireland	17.1	3.1
Switzerland	11.3	2.1
India	10.3	1.9
Sweden	10.0	1.8
Japan	9.9	1.8
Poland	9.5	1.7
Hong Kong, China	9.3	1.7
Canada	8.8	1.6
Turkey	7.9	1.4
Russian Federation	7.0	1.3
Denmark	6.0	1.1
Czech Republic	5.2	1.0
Singapore	5.2	0.9
Portugal	4.3	0.8
Australia	4.2	0.8

(Source: Office for National Statistics, '[Annual Imports and Exports of UK Trade by Country from 1999 to 2014](#)', 2 March 2016; and House of Commons Library, '[Geographical Pattern of UK Trade](#)', 24 May 2016, p 6)

2. Trade in the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is an [association of 53 independent states](#). These vary in size, from the G20 economies such as Australia, Canada, India, South Africa and the UK, to small economies such as Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Nauru.⁸

⁷ Office for National Statistics, '[Annual Imports and Exports of UK Trade by Country from 1999 to 2014](#)', 2 March 2016; and House of Commons Library, '[Geographical Pattern of UK Trade](#)', 24 May 2016, p 6.

⁸ House of Commons Library, '[Geographical Pattern of UK Trade](#)', 24 May 2016, p 12; and the World Bank.

2.1 Global Trade

In November 2015, the Commonwealth Secretariat published the report, [The Commonwealth in the Unfolding Global Trade Landscape](#), which examined trade in the Commonwealth.⁹

The Secretariat reported that in 2013, the 53 Commonwealth members' combined global exports of goods and services were valued at \$3.4 trillion, which it stated was about 15 percent of the world's total exports in 2013.¹⁰

The report found that between 2000 and 2013, the combined total exports of goods and services from Commonwealth countries had almost tripled from \$1.3 trillion in 2000 to \$3.4 trillion in 2013.¹¹ Nearly half of the Commonwealth's total exports had come from its developed members (defined as Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Malta, New Zealand and the UK). In relation to the developing countries in the Commonwealth, the report stated that:

The share of developing countries in the total trade of Commonwealth members has also increased, from 36 percent in 2000 to just above 50 percent in 2013. This has been mainly driven by the Asian members, which account for more than four-fifths of the exports of all Commonwealth developing countries.¹²

Overall, 76 percent of Commonwealth exports were merchandise goods, whereas the share of services was 24 percent.¹³

The report also found that for many Commonwealth countries, trading with China had been "one of the defining features of global trade".¹⁴ It stated that between 2000 and 2013, total Commonwealth exports to China increased from \$19 billion to \$268 billion, and imports from China had risen from \$46 billion to \$359 billion.

2.2 Intra-Commonwealth Trade

Although the Commonwealth is not a trading-bloc, the Commonwealth Secretariat has argued that the association can act to stimulate trade:¹⁵

Historical ties, long-established trading relations, familiar administrative and legal systems, the use of largely one language as a means of communicating with foreign partners and large and dynamic diasporic communities all suggest the association can boost trade and investment flows.¹⁶

⁹ Commonwealth Secretariat, [The Commonwealth in the Unfolding Global Trade Landscape: Prospects, Priorities and Perspectives](#), November 2015. This publication was prepared under the supervision of Deodat Maharaj, Deputy Secretary-General (Economic and Social Development). The project and its technical work were led by the International Trade Policy section. It is based on an analysis of statistics drawn from sources such as UNCTADStat, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

¹⁰ Commonwealth Secretariat, [The Commonwealth in the Unfolding Global Trade Landscape: Prospects, Priorities and Perspectives](#), November 2015, p xvi.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p xix.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p 20.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p xxi.

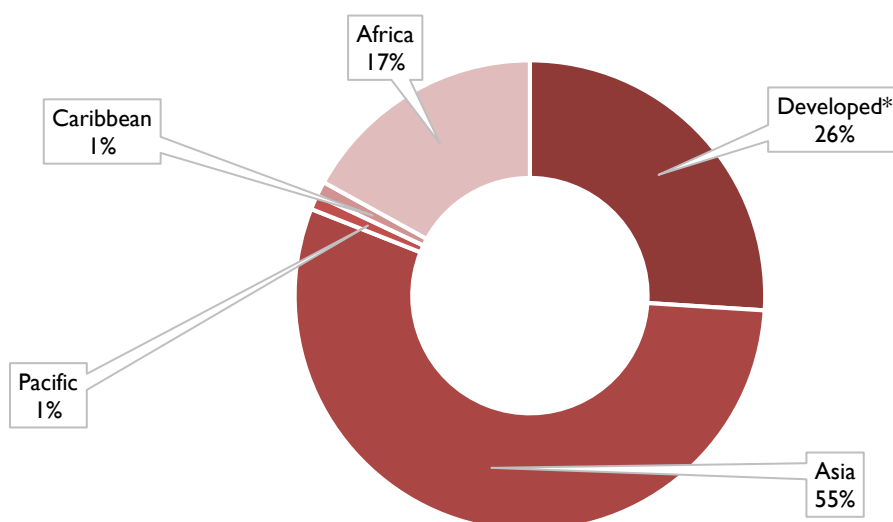
¹⁶ *ibid.*

The Secretariat reported that in 2013, intra-Commonwealth trade of goods and services totalled \$592 billion.¹⁷ Total intra-Commonwealth trade as a share of the Commonwealth's total global trade increased from 13 percent in 1995 to 18 percent in 2013. The Secretariat estimated that trade had increased to \$687 billion in 2015, and projected it to exceed \$1 trillion by 2020.¹⁸

Goods Trade

Exports of goods reportedly accounted for \$450 billion of intra-Commonwealth trade in 2013.¹⁹ The Commonwealth Asian members were the largest source of intra-Commonwealth goods exports in 2013, accounting for 55 percent. India, Malaysia and Singapore collectively contributed more than half of the total intra-Commonwealth goods exports. The UK had a share of 10 percent, Australia 8 percent, Nigeria and South Africa each 6 percent and Canada 5 percent. Intra-Commonwealth trade in goods in 2015 is estimated at \$525 billion. The Secretariat has published the following charts to illustrate the share of merchandise exports by region and the largest ten exporting countries in the Commonwealth.

Share of Merchandise Exports of Commonwealth Countries by Regions, 2013 (\$450 billion)



* Note: Developed Commonwealth countries comprise Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Malta, New Zealand and the UK

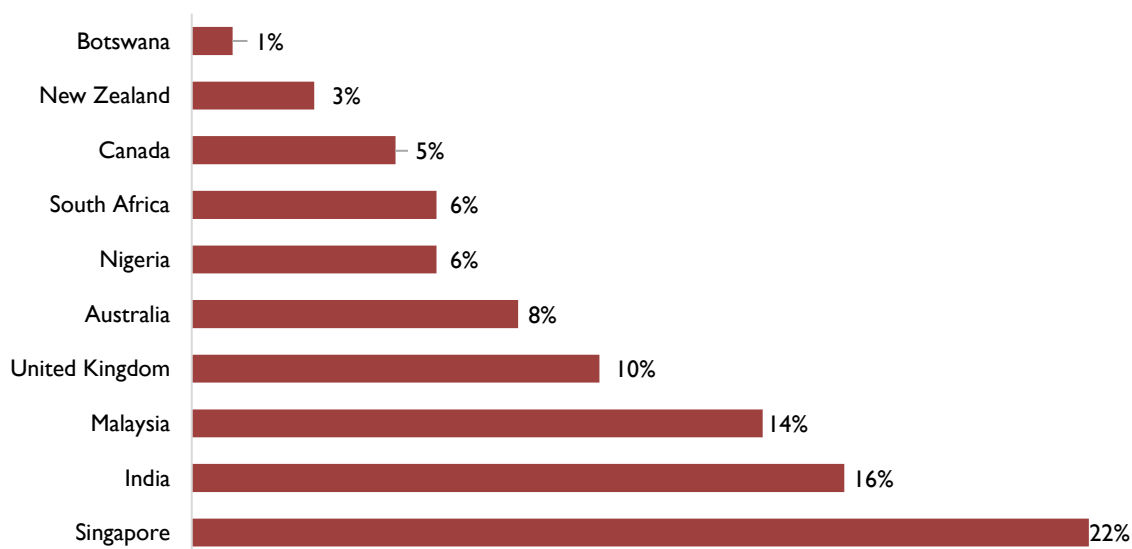
(Source: Commonwealth Secretariat: calculations using data from UNCTADStat)

¹⁷ Commonwealth Secretariat, [The Commonwealth in the Unfolding Global Trade Landscape: Prospects, Priorities and Perspectives](#), November 2015, p xxi.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p 42.

¹⁹ *ibid*.

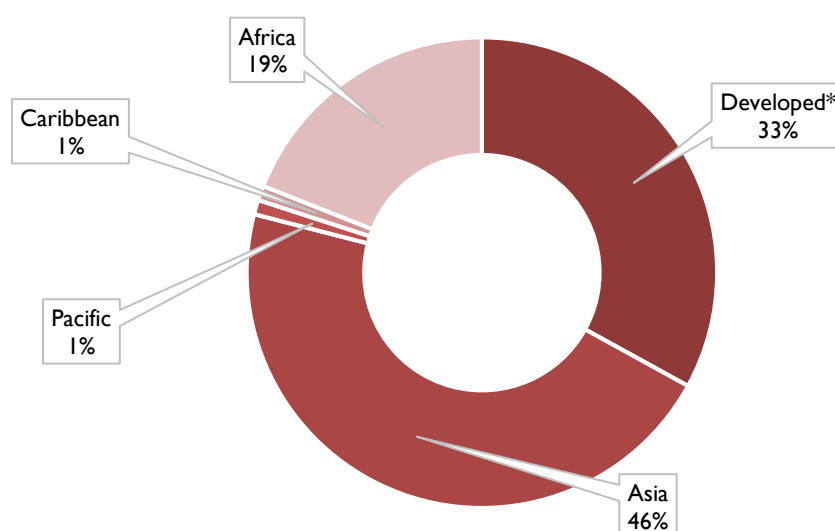
Top Ten Countries, 2013 (% Share of Intra-Commonwealth Trade of Merchandise Exports)



(Source: Commonwealth Secretariat: calculations using data from UNCTADStat)

The Commonwealth Secretariat has stated that “Asia’s dominance of the goods trade” is also reflected in the figures for intra-Commonwealth imports, accounting for 46 percent of the total value in 2013.²⁰ The largest importer of Commonwealth goods in 2013 was India, accounting for 15.2 percent of intra-Commonwealth imports. India was followed by Singapore (14.8 percent), the UK (14 percent), Australia (10.5 percent), Malaysia (9 percent) and Canada (6 percent). The Secretariat has illustrated this data in the following two charts:

Share of Merchandise Imports of Commonwealth Countries by Regions, 2013

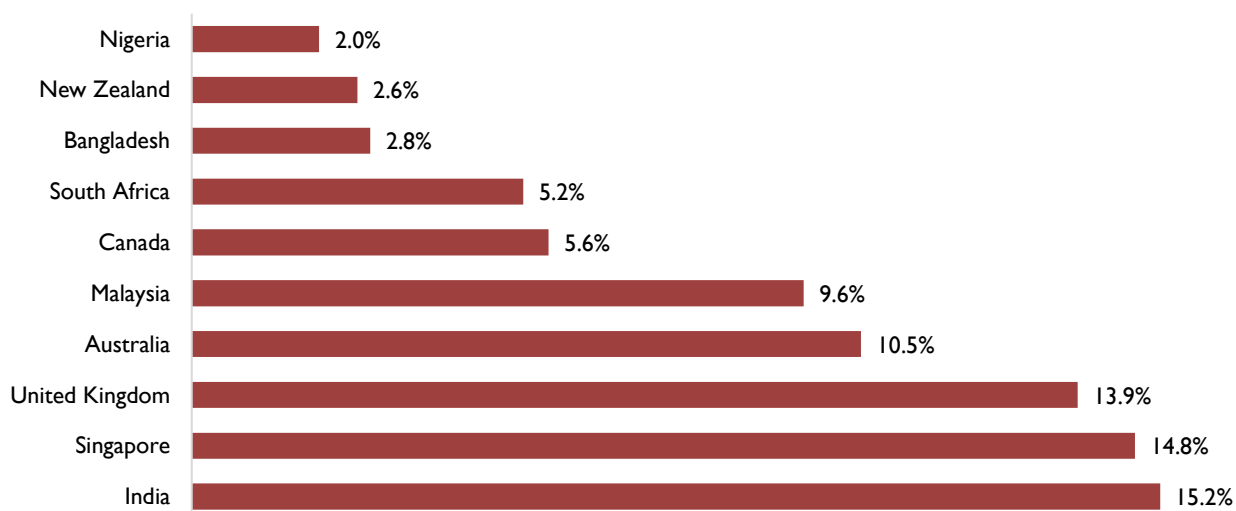


* Note: Developed Commonwealth countries comprise Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Malta, New Zealand and the UK

(Source: Commonwealth Secretariat: calculations using data from UNCTADStat)

²⁰ Commonwealth Secretariat, [The Commonwealth in the Unfolding Global Trade Landscape: Prospects, Priorities and Perspectives](#), November 2015, p 42.

Top Ten Countries, 2013 (% Share of Intra-Commonwealth Trade of Merchandise Imports)



(Source: Commonwealth Secretariat: calculations using data from UNCTADStat)

Services Trade

The Commonwealth Secretariat found that intra-Commonwealth services exports totalled \$139 billion in 2013.²¹ Collectively, five countries accounted for over 80 percent of total such trade: the UK (32 percent), Singapore (17 percent), India (12 percent), Australia (11 percent) and Canada (9 percent). The Secretariat predicted that trade had risen to \$162 billion in 2015.²²

The Secretariat found that nine intra-Commonwealth services traders were amongst the largest ten in both 2000 and 2009.²³ It states that in that period, India and Singapore became “more important” service exporters. This information is presented in the following tables.

Intra-Commonwealth Service Traders 2000

Country	Percentage of Total Trade (%)
United Kingdom	31.2
Australia	18.6
Canada	12.5
Singapore	10.6
New Zealand	5.5
Malaysia	4.8
India	4.8
South Africa	4.5
Cyprus	2.7
Barbados	1.9

(Source: Commonwealth Secretariat, calculations using data from UNCTADStat)

²¹ Commonwealth Secretariat, [The Commonwealth in the Unfolding Global Trade Landscape: Prospects, Priorities and Perspectives](#), November 2015, p 42.

²² *ibid*, p 46.

²³ *ibid*.

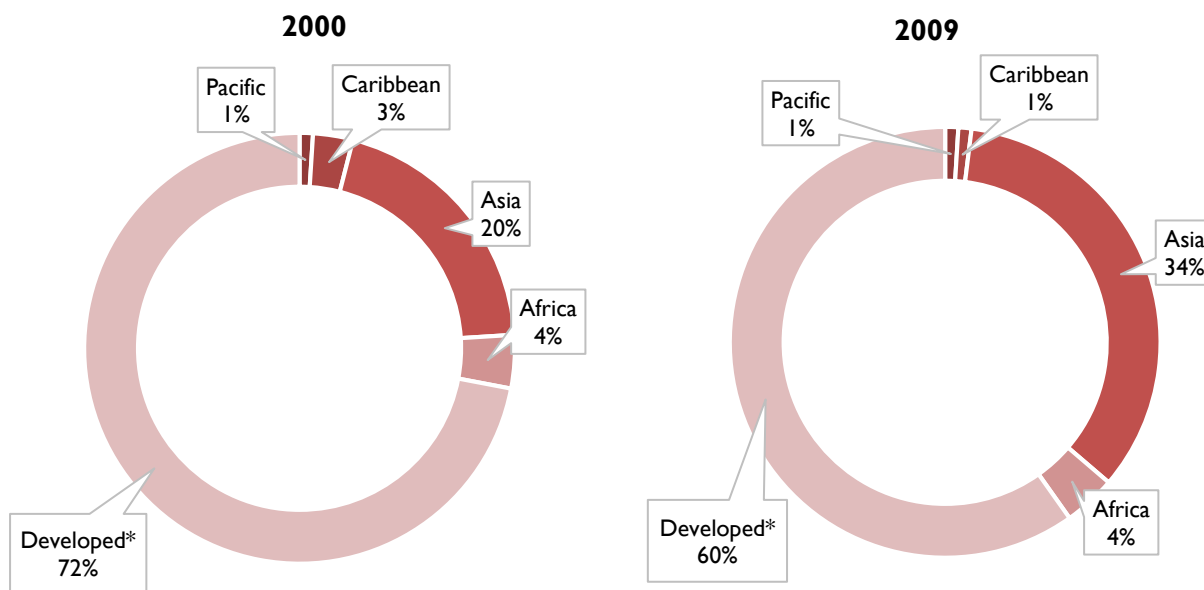
Intra-Commonwealth Service Traders 2009

Country	Percentage of Total Trade (%)
United Kingdom	31.6
Singapore	17
India	12.4
Australia	10.8
Canada	9.2
Malaysia	4.7
South Africa	3.6
New Zealand	2.1
Cyprus	2.0
Nigeria	1.7

(Source: Commonwealth Secretariat, calculations using data from UNCTADStat)

The Secretariat has published the following graphs to illustrate the direction of intra-Commonwealth services trade by region between 2000 and 2009.

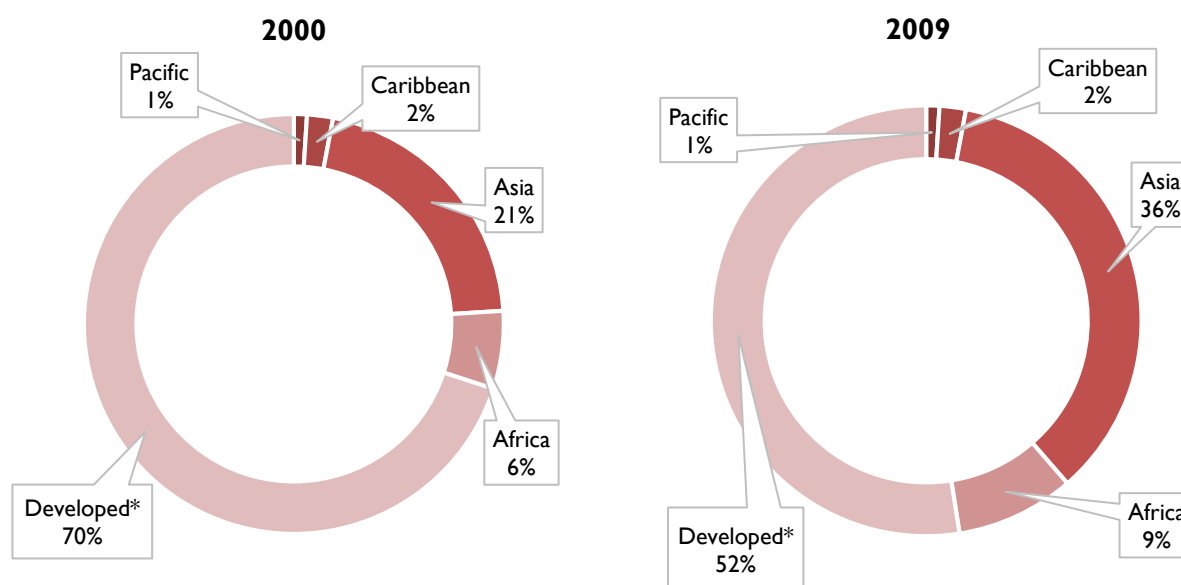
Share of Intra-Commonwealth Services Imports by Region, 2000 vs 2009 (%)



* Note: Developed Commonwealth countries comprise Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Malta, New Zealand and the UK

(Source: Commonwealth Secretariat)

Share of Intra-Commonwealth Services Exports by Region, 2000 vs 2009 (%)



* Note: Developed Commonwealth countries comprise Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Malta, New Zealand and the UK

(Source: Commonwealth Secretariat)

3. UK Trade with the Commonwealth

3.1 Trade with the Commonwealth in 2014

The following tables present data on the UK's ten largest Commonwealth trading partners for both exports and imports. In 2014, India, Australia, Canada, Singapore and South Africa were the largest trading partners for both.²⁴

Ten Largest Commonwealth Export Markets for UK Goods and Services

Country	£ billion	Percentage of UK Exports (%)
India	8.8	1.7
Australia	8.3	1.6
Canada	6.4	1.2
Singapore	5.6	1.1
South Africa	4.2	0.8
Malaysia	2.5	0.5
Nigeria	2.4	0.5
Malta	1.8	0.3
Pakistan	1.1	0.2
Cyprus	1.1	0.2

(Source: Office for National Statistics, '[Trade in Services and Goods by Commonwealth 2004 to 2014](#)', 17 November 2015; and House of Commons Library, '[Geographical Pattern of UK Trade](#)', 24 May 2016, p 13)

²⁴ Office for National Statistics, '[Trade in Services and Goods by Commonwealth 2004 to 2014](#)', 17 November 2015.

Ten Largest Commonwealth Import Markets for UK Goods and Services

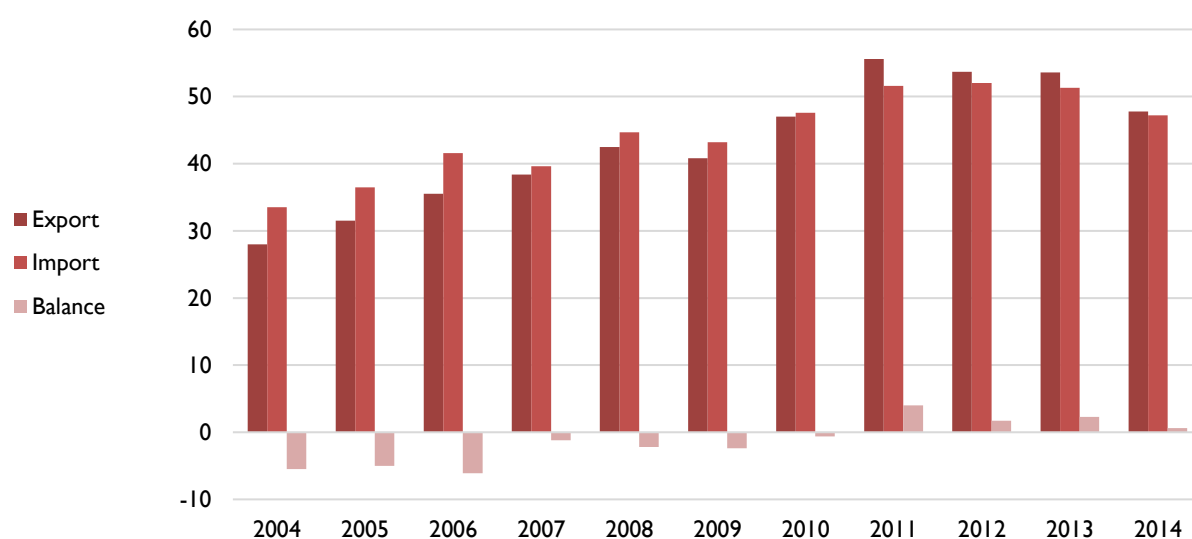
Country	£ billion	Percentage of UK Exports (%)
India	10.3	1.9
Canada	8.9	1.6
Singapore	5.2	0.9
Australia	4.0	0.7
South Africa	3.6	0.7
Nigeria	2.7	0.5
Malaysia	2.1	0.4
Bangladesh	1.6	0.3
Pakistan	1.5	0.3
Sri Lanka	1.2	0.2

(Source: Office for National Statistics, '[Trade in Services and Goods by Commonwealth 2004 to 2014](#)', 17 November 2015; and House of Commons Library, '[Geographical Pattern of UK Trade](#)', 24 May 2016, p 13)

In 2014, UK exports to the Commonwealth as a whole were £48 billion, approximately 9 percent of the UK's global total.²⁵ Imports from the Commonwealth were £47 billion, also around 9 percent of the UK total. The UK has had a trade surplus with the Commonwealth since 2011. The Office for National Statistics has illustrated the balance of trade between the UK and other Commonwealth countries in the table and graph below.

Balance of Trade between the UK and Other Commonwealth Countries (£ billion)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Export	28.0	31.5	35.5	38.4	42.5	40.8	47.0	55.6	53.7	53.6	47.8
Import	33.5	36.5	41.6	39.6	44.7	43.2	47.6	51.6	52.0	51.3	47.2
Balance	-5.5	-5.0	-6.1	-1.2	-2.2	-2.4	-0.6	+4.0	+1.7	+2.3	+0.6



(Source: Office for National Statistics, '[Four Facts about Trade and Business Links between the UK and the Commonwealth](#)', 11 March 2016)

²⁵ House of Commons Library, '[Geographical Pattern of UK Trade](#)', 24 May 2016, p 13.

3.2 Future Trading Relationship

Prior to the EU referendum, held on 23 June 2016, some commentators suggested that if the UK voted to leave the EU, trade links with the Commonwealth could be more easily exploited and it would enable the UK to establish bilateral agreements with countries such as India, Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand.²⁶ For example, in February 2016, 80 community figures and business leaders wrote an open letter to the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, which suggested that “vested interests on the continent” had sustained a “relatively protectionist policy”.²⁷ It argued that the referendum was “an opportunity to rediscover Britain’s global vocation”. Signatories included Pasha Khandaker, President of the UK Bangladesh Caterers Association, Moni Varma, owner of rice producer Veetee, and Gurmail Singh Mahli, President of Shri Guru Sing Sabha.²⁸

However, on 25 May 2016, in a speech on the UK’s relationship with both the EU and the Commonwealth before the referendum, the then Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Hugo Swire, argued that it was “quite wrong” to suggest that trade with other Commonwealth countries would be a substitute for the EU single market, and he further suggested that the UK was a “gateway” to the EU for other Commonwealth countries.²⁹ He stated that:

Access to the Single Market doesn’t just matter to UK businesses and the UK’s economic future. It matters to the Commonwealth too. As businesses up and down the country will attest, we are a gateway to trade with the EU, as well as an important market in our own right. It’s the reason why Australia is a disproportionately large investor in the UK for the size of its economy. India too sees this gateway role as vital.³⁰

This argument was reiterated by the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, who stated that the UK was India’s entry point to the EU, and by Australia’s former Deputy Prime Minister, Wayne Swan, who argued that international companies based themselves in the UK “in no small part” to access the wider European market.³¹

The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee also examined, prior to the EU referendum, the effect that the UK’s exit from the EU would have on its trade relations with the Commonwealth. In its report, [Implications of the Referendum on EU Membership for the UK’s Role in the World](#), the Committee stated that it had received evidence that “cast doubt on the suitability of the Commonwealth as a potential framework for new trading relationships”, given the political and economic differences between its members.³²

²⁶ BBC News, [‘Commonwealth Community Leaders Back British Exit from EU’](#), 17 February 2016.

²⁷ *ibid*; Zlata Rodionova, [‘EU Referendum: The Business Arguments For and Against UK Membership’](#), *Independent*, 18 February 2016; and Kate Allen, [‘Business Groups Up the Ante in Brexit Battle’](#), *Financial Times*, 17 February 2016.

²⁸ *ibid*, the *Independent* reports that Shri Guru Sing Sabha is the largest Sikh place of worship outside India located in Southall.

²⁹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [‘The EU and the Commonwealth—The UK’s Place in Both’](#), 25 May 2016.

³⁰ *ibid*.

³¹ Wayne Swan, [‘Why Australia Wants Britain to Stay in the EU’](#), *Telegraph*, 12 February 2016.

³² House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Implications of the Referendum on EU Membership for the UK’s Role in the World](#), 26 April 2016, HC 545 of session 2015–16, p 30.

Nevertheless, the Committee also concluded that:

Updating and modernising the Commonwealth framework to engage in a more sustained way with these countries, however—using the full range of foreign policy instruments including diplomacy, trade and development aid—could make the UK more flexible and adaptable in a world where states such as India, South Africa and Nigeria are likely to become ever more important players. However, it is the bilateral relationships with these relatively rising powers, assisted by the historical and cultural links through the Commonwealth as a background, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which should be developed by the UK as it pursues a definitively global role having left the EU.³³

Following the result of the EU referendum, and the vote to leave the EU, various leaders of Commonwealth countries have expressed an interest in negotiating new trade agreements with the UK. For example, the Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, has reportedly told the UK Prime Minister, Theresa May, that he would be interested in starting trade talks.³⁴ New Zealand's Prime Minister, John Key, has also stated that they would work with Australia in arranging new trade links with the UK as it withdraws from the EU.³⁵

In July 2016, during an evidence session with the House of Lords International Relations Committee, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations, Baroness Scotland of Asthal, discussed the potential effects of the UK leaving the EU on its trading relationship with the Commonwealth. Baroness Scotland told the Committee that:

I did not hear one leader in the Commonwealth suggest that they thought it would be good for the Commonwealth if the United Kingdom were to leave Europe [...] Most of the Commonwealth took the view that they had developed over the last 40 years a very mature relationship with the United Kingdom, a relationship that was interdependent on the United Kingdom remaining with one foot firmly planted in Europe and the other firmly planted in the wider world, acting as a bridge for many commonwealth countries between the Commonwealth and Europe.³⁶

Baroness Scotland further said that the view that trade would either be conducted with the EU or with other Commonwealth countries was a “false dichotomy”, and that “the twin track was seen as materially important and advantageous” by the Commonwealth.³⁷

However, she suggested that following the result of the referendum, she believed that the Commonwealth would become “more pivotally important than it has ever been”, and “much more energy” would be put into “enriching the Commonwealth relationship”.³⁸ Nevertheless, she cautioned that it needed to be recognised that the UK's relationship with the

³³ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Implications of the Referendum on EU Membership for the UK's Role in the World](#), 26 April 2016, HC 545 of session 2015–16, p 30.

³⁴ BBC News, [UK Offered Brexit Free Trade Deal with Australia](#), 17 July 2016; and Tim Ross, [Brexit Free-trade Deals Planned with the USA and Australia](#), *Telegraph*, 16 July 2016.

³⁵ Peter Spence, [New Zealand Offers UK its Top Trade Negotiators for Post-Brexit Deals](#), *Telegraph*, 30 June 2016.

³⁶ House of Lords International Relations Committee, [Unrevised Transcript of Evidence: Inquiry on the Priorities for the Commonwealth General-Secretary](#), 25 July 2016, Q 4.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*

Commonwealth was a “modern one”. She argued that:

It is a Commonwealth of equals; people are interdependent and, just as people will be looking to get something, they will be looking to give something. One thing that I know a lot of people are looking at is whether the Commonwealth will get back the migration preferences on access to the United Kingdom that they had before, and whether there will be additional benefits in having reignited the Commonwealth family.³⁹

The chair of the House of Lords International Relations Committee, and President of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Lord Howell of Guildford, has suggested that the Commonwealth is an organisation more suited than the EU to the “expansion of trade and commerce in the digital age”, because of its “growing emphasis on information and data exchange”.⁴⁰ He argued that the time for a “sharply increased focus on the Commonwealth and adjacent markets is now ripe”, and “crucial” for the UK’s prosperity, and suggested that the Commonwealth network was a “gateway” to “fast-growing economies” such as Asia, Africa and Latin America. However, Lord Howell emphasised that when negotiating trade deals with Commonwealth countries, the UK needed to avoid “sounding Anglo-centric” and should take into account the “Commonwealth perspective”. He further argued that the deals should also cover non-economic relations, including in many cases security.

He advocates that a Commonwealth unit be established in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and that the Commonwealth be given a “place and a voice at the Brexit negotiating table”.⁴¹

³⁹ House of Lords International Relations Committee, [Unrevised Transcript of Evidence: Inquiry on the Priorities for the Commonwealth General-Secretary](#), 25 July 2016, Q 4.

⁴⁰ Lord Howell, [‘A Bright Future Awaits Britain Post-Brexit in the Commonwealth Markets’](#), *Independent*, 29 July 2016.

⁴¹ *ibid.*