

# The Impact of Covid-19 on the Road Freight Sector

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Centre for Sustainable Road Freight

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## Impacts on...

- road freight's relationship with the economy
- work force
- operations and traffic levels
- cross-border freight movements
- financial viability
- emissions

mainly UK and European perspective

LIFE WITHOUT TRUCKS:

THE IMPACT OF A TEMPORARY DISRUPTION OF ROAD FREIGHT TRANSPORT  
ON A NATIONAL ECONOMY.

[https://www.alanmckinnon.co.uk/story\\_layout.html?IDX=637&s=y](https://www.alanmckinnon.co.uk/story_layout.html?IDX=637&s=y)

In evidence to a government enquiry on pandemic influenza, the British Retail Consortium has recently argued *‘the main points of vulnerability in the food supply chain would be heavy goods vehicle drivers....’*

PROBABLE EFFECTS OF THE TRUCK STOPPAGE OVER THE FIRST FIVE DAYS.

without panic buying

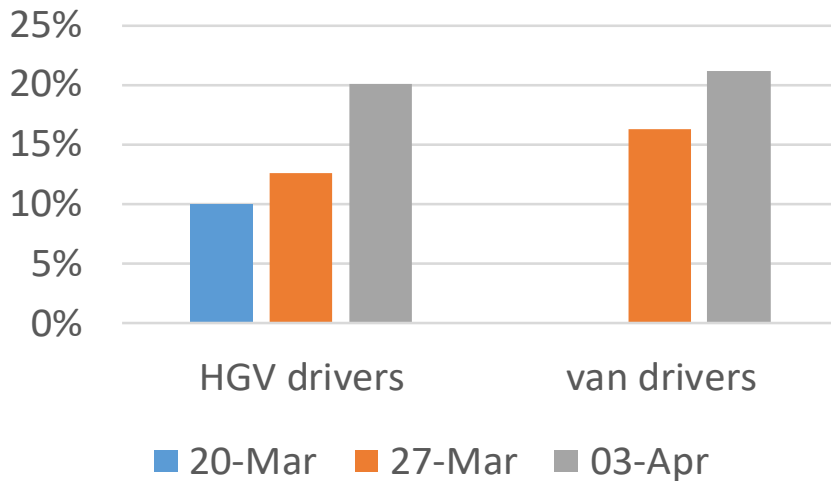
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
All movements of trucks over 3.5 tonnes cease at 12am	Supermarket stocks of many perishable / short shelf-life product run out, including bread, milk and eggs	Most petrol stations run out of fuel	Petrol stations run dry	Half of the car fleet without fuel
Most mail services and parcel deliveries stop	Milk disposal on farms	Around 15% of the car fleet without fuel	Most of the manufacturing sector shut-down	Large proportion of the labour force laid-off or unable to travel to work
No newspapers	More manufacturing in low-inventory sectors closes down	Supermarket stocks of fast-moving grocery lines exhausted	Most non-electrified rail services suspended	Retail stocks of most grocery products exhausted
Manufacturers operating on a just-in-time basis suspend operations	Shortage of cash in banks and ATMs	Introduction of rationing for fuel and some food products	Serious cash shortages	Almost all manufacturing closed down
No supplies of fresh produce in grocery outlets	Construction work ceases on most building sites	Fast food outlets close	Bus companies reduce off-peak frequencies, esp. in rural areas	Severe disruption of the health service
	Growth of farmers' markets	Widespread lay-offs from manufacturing sector	Gas and water utilities disrupted by lack of fuel and spare parts	Serious problems from the accumulation of waste
		Busier pubs run out of beer	Congestion at ports stops off-loading of vessels	Range of non-food products in shops substantially depleted
		Slaughter of poultry on farms		

Catastrophic collapse has not happened in UK coronavirus crisis – why not?

- proportion of truck drivers affected by the virus much less than in my worst case scenario
- road freight sector is the **victim** rather than the **cause** of sharp economic contraction
- drop in economic activity due mainly to the government effort to contain the virus  
*e.g. by 18 March car plants producing two-thirds of UK automotive output were closed*

# Impact of Covid19 on the road freight labour force

## UK drivers in self-isolation due to Coronavirus



Source: FTA Coronavirus Logistics Impact Surveys

<https://fta.co.uk/coronavirus/fta-coronavirus-logistics-impact-survey>

Could have exacerbated truck driver shortage

## a Covid-vulnerable occupational group

Published in final edited form as:

*Am J Ind Med.* 2014 June ; 57(6): 615–626. doi:10.1002/ajim.22293.

### Obesity and Other Risk Factors: The National Survey of U.S. Long-Haul Truck Driver Health and Injury

W. Karl Sieber, PhD, MS<sup>1,\*</sup>, Cynthia F. Robinson, PhD, MS<sup>1</sup>, Jan Birdsey, MPH<sup>1</sup>, Guang X.

	obesity	smoking
long haul truck drivers	69%	51%
adult population	31%	19%

Average age of truck drivers

United States	55
UK	48
Germany	47
Europe	44

trucking operations can be a '*pandemic vector*' (Jean-Paul Rodrigue)

In coronavirus crisis, truck drivers are being classed as essential workers

truck driving = inherently self-isolating job – but risk of infection at collection / delivery points

initial Covid19 issues in UK: 'toilet denial' - *refusal to let drivers use warehouse toilet*

waiting room requirement – *refusal to let driver stay in cab during loading / offloading operations*

# Impact of coronavirus crisis on the road freight operations

'almost half of the UK's lorries are parked up because of a plunge in demand' (Road Haulage Association)  
(*Financial Times*, 12 April 2020)



GPS data from 1 million US trucks

Average truck speed significantly higher through major bottlenecks in US highway network due mainly to:

large reduction in car commuter traffic

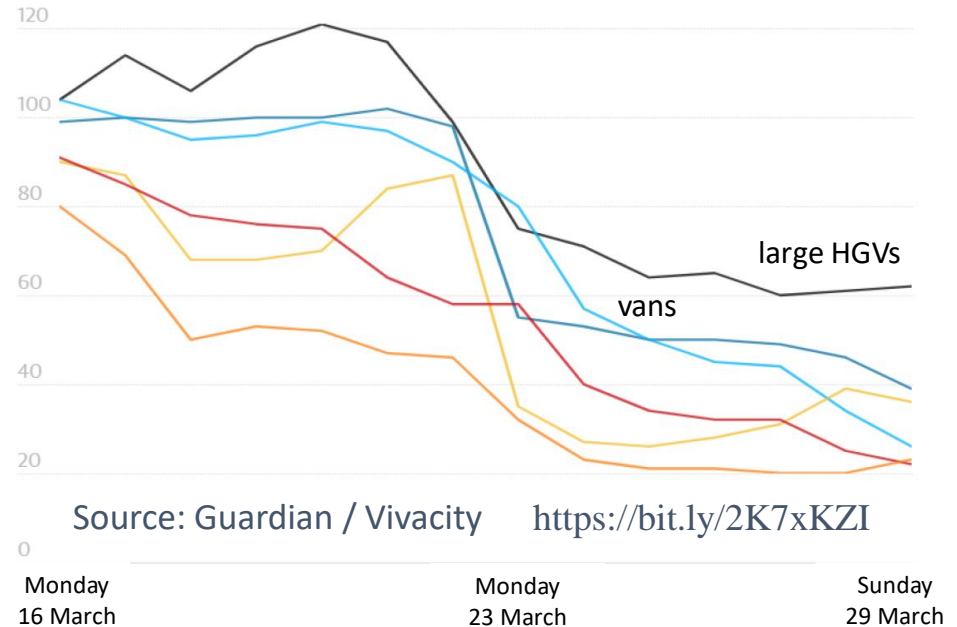
<https://bit.ly/2RBoq4H>

fuel efficiency gains / CO<sub>2</sub> reductions?

traffic levels in England (based on video monitoring)

Index: average for same day of the week over previous six weeks = 100

■ Large HGVs ■ Buses ■ Vans ■ Cyclists ■ Cars ■ Pedestrians



Source: Guardian / Vivacity <https://bit.ly/2K7xKZI>

## Temporary relaxation of UK rules on road freight operations

- daily driver's hours limit increased from 10 to 11 hours
- removal of night curfews on deliveries to supermarkets
- suspension of night lorry ban in London

# Impact of European Covid19-related Border Restrictions on Road Freight



Major EU border crossing points

Many closures to personal traffic also affected trucks

## Flow of goods slows as Poland tightens borders

Truck drivers face queues of up to 40km following virus measures



Trucks queue on the A12 highway between Berlin and the Polish border in Frankfurt Oder, Germany. © Michael Sohn/AP

Financial Times 17-3-2020



## COVID-19

Guidelines for border management measures to protect health and ensure the availability of goods and essential services

Border 'green lanes' for trucks

<https://bit.ly/2wDD97K>



9-16 March 2020  
3-7% reduction in on-time delivery

Border delays 10 April 2020

- **Poland → Germany**  
About 10 minutes
- **Germany → Poland**  
About 10 minutes
- **Romania → Hungary**  
About 1 hour
- **Hungary → Romania**  
4km queues detected

<https://covid-19.sixfold.com/>

# Impact of coronavirus on the financial viability of trucking industry

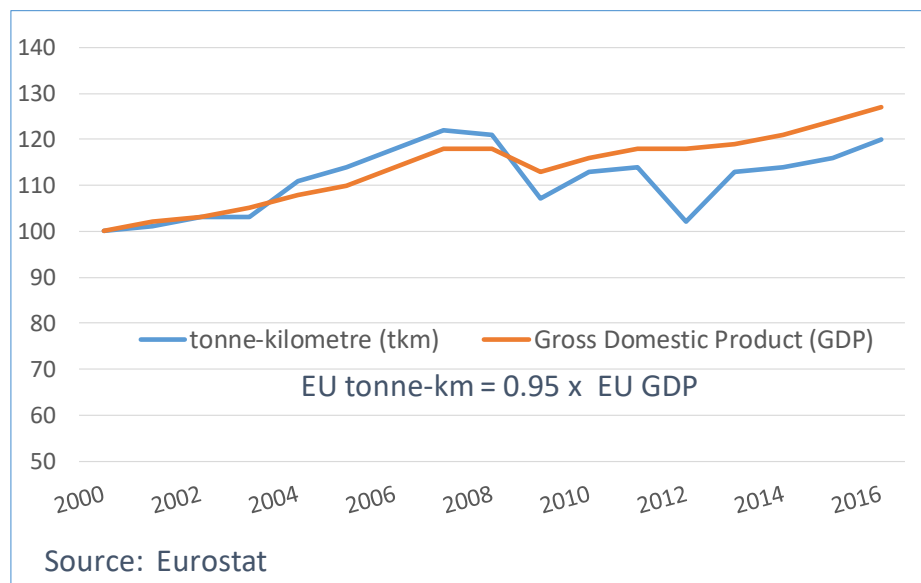
2-3% profit margins typical across EU road haulage sector

38% of 2000 larger UK road haulage businesses in financially *'cautious or dangerous state'*,  
28% of 318 larger German trucking companies in similar state (Plimsoll, 2019)

55% of UK hauliers are owner drivers – *self-employed, many reliant on government rescue schemes*  
- *many truck drivers furloughed in UK 'job retention scheme'*

Richard Burnett, head of UK Road Haulage Association *'We're seeing cash flow run out. Hauliers have reached a tipping point.'* *'Sector needs a cash injection of £4bn to survive.'* (FT 11-4-2020)

State of road haulage industry a 'barometer' of economic activity

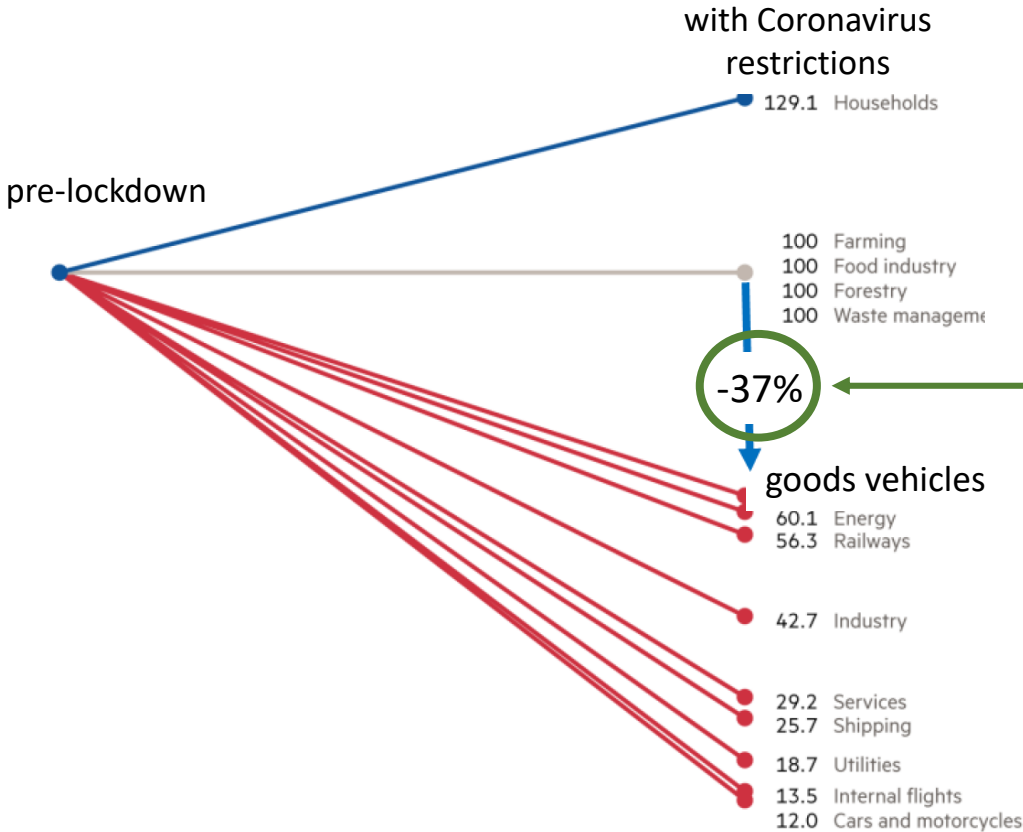


EU emissions data suggests level of road freight activity already dropped by much greater margin

European Central Bank: *3 month lock-down will cause 5% contraction of EU economy*

# Impact of EU road freight CO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub> and PM emissions

## Daily CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as % of normal for EU27



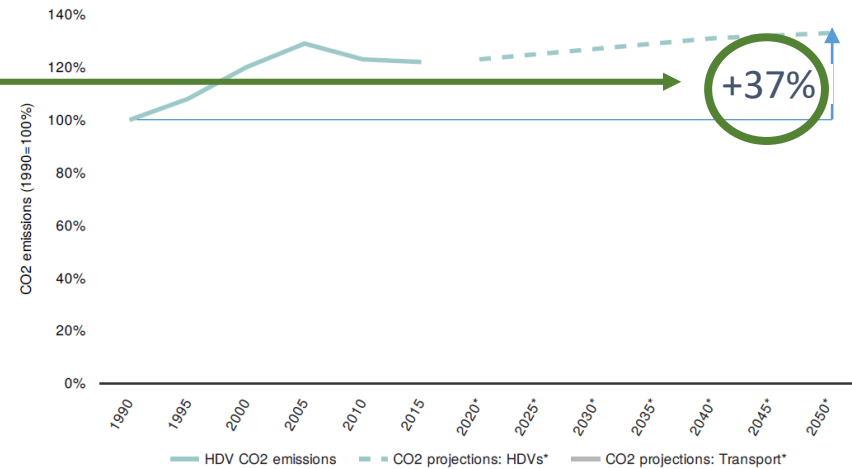
Source: SIA Partners / Financial Times 8-4-2020

**Transport** European Environment Agency 

Heavy-duty vehicles

**Carbon dioxide emissions from Europe's heavy-duty vehicles**

## EEA forecast growth of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from HDVs between 1990 and 2050



Keeping trucks off the road may help to reduce Covid19 death toll

## Air pollution plummets by up to 50% as virus curbs traffic, new data reveals

By Sam Morgan | EURACTIV.com

25-03-2020 (updated: 02-04-2020)



## Air pollution 'likely' to increase mortality from COVID19: experts

Air pollution from petrol and diesel vehicles is likely to increase mortality from the novel coronavirus in cities, public health experts told AFP Monday (16 March).

Source: Euractiv <https://bit.ly/3ab8xIm>



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Impact of Covid19 on logistics and supply chains - issues and information sources

<https://bit.ly/34jS3wi>