



MONITORING RAIL FREIGHT TRANSPORT – 2023 FIGURES

01 » THE DEVELOPMENT OF RAIL FREIGHT TRANSPORT

02 » COMPETITION IN RAIL TRANSPORT

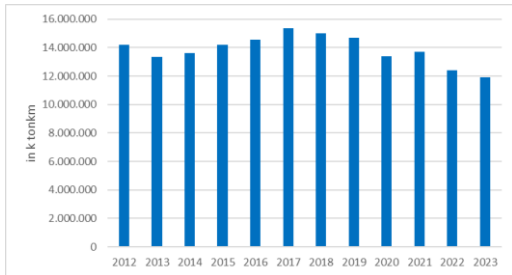
03 » SOME INDICATORS FOR THE FREIGHT SEGMENT

04 » CHARGES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE USE

01 » THE DEVELOPMENT OF RAIL FREIGHT TRANSPORT

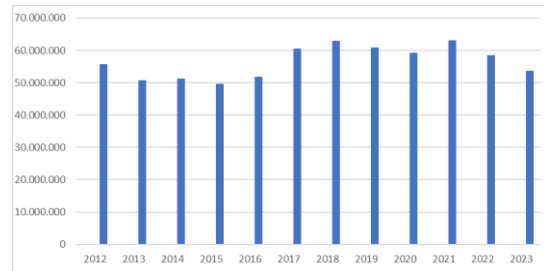
The evolution of gross ton-kilometers

In 2023, **11,909,170.68 k ton-km** were transported. This represents a decrease of **4.1% compared to 2022** and **19% compared to 2019**. This downward trend has been observed since 2017.



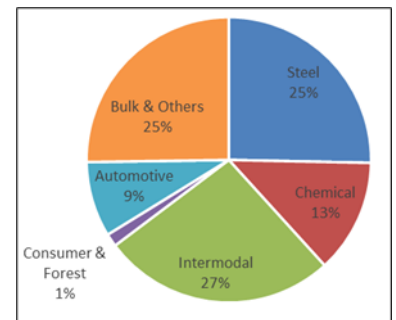
The evolution in net tonnages

The net volume of goods transported was **53.5 million tons**, representing an 8% decrease compared to 2022. It can be observed that the tonnage transported is at its lowest level since 2017. This may be linked to the macro-economic situation, with a decrease of 14 billion in imports and exports particularly affecting the metal and chemical sectors.



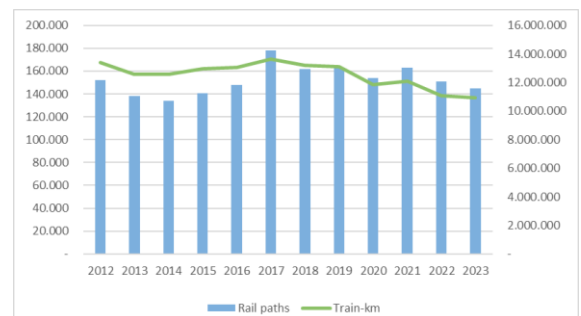
Goods transported

90% of the goods transported are concentrated in four categories: chemicals, metallurgy, bulk and intermodal. The share of intermodal transport has significantly decreased from 43% to 27% (as well as the volumes of containers handled in Antwerp or Athus, for instance, in 2023). Furthermore, there has also been a significant decline in the share of goods from the chemical sector, from 19% to 13%. The share of products from the metallurgy sector has slightly decreased from 26% to 25%. These respective falls are offset by an increase in the share of bulk products (and miscellaneous), which now accounts for 25%.



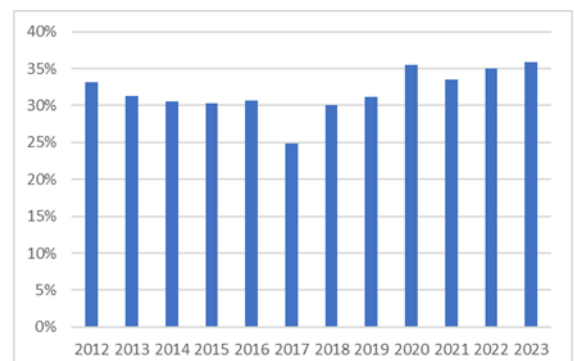
The evolution in train paths and train-km

In 2023 there were **144,774 train paths** for **10,946,189 train kilometers**. Compared to 2022, the decrease in train paths by 4% is greater than the 1% fall in train-km.



The proportion of non-effective train-km

35.8% of train-km were not effective (i.e. reserved but not used) in 2023, compared to 35% in 2022. Moderate fluctuations, both upward and downward, have been observed in this percentage since 2012. Since 2017, however, there has been an general upward trend.

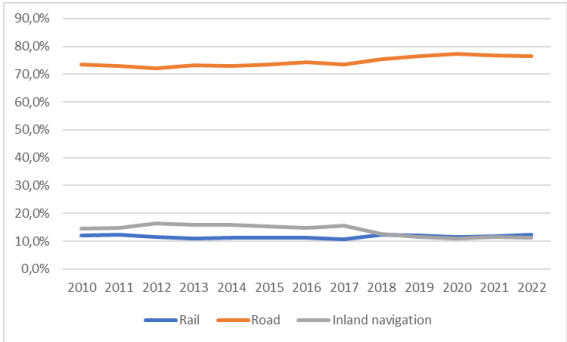


02 » COMPETITION IN RAIL TRANSPORT

The modal share of the rail sector

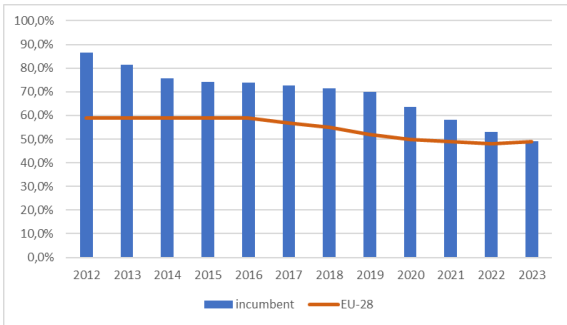
The modal share of rail in Belgium saw a very slight increase in 2022, reaching 12.2%. In Europe, rail's modal share remains stable at 17.1%. Since 2010, rail's modal share has been relatively stable. If this trend continues, the goal of doubling rail's share by 2030¹ seems impossible to achieve.

In neighboring countries, the modal share of rail is 10.6% in France, 19.8% in Germany and 6.6% in the Netherlands.



The incumbent's market share

The market share of the incumbents, calculated based on ton-km, has further decreased to 49.1% compared to 53.2% in 2022. This percentage has been declining since 2012 and is approaching the European average (48% in 2022).

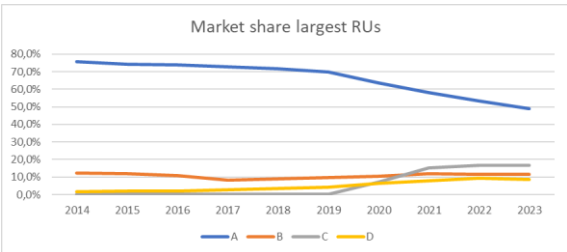
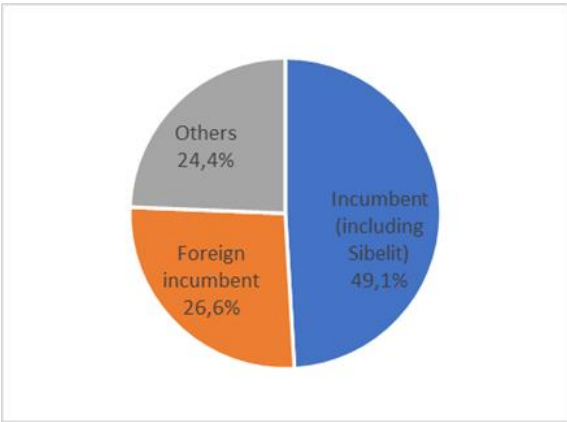


Market share by type of railway undertakings

Many railway companies operating in Belgium are owned by or have as major shareholders foreign incumbents..

In 2023, "other" operators (i.e. those that are not subsidiaries of a historical operator such as DB or SNCF) held a market share of 24.4%, compared to 19.9% in 2022. Railway companies owned by a foreign incumbent operator held a market share of 26.6%, compared to 26.9% in 2022. There has therefore been an increase in the share of the "other" or independent category at the expense of the historical operators.

It is also interesting to examine the evolution of the market shares of the four main freight railway companies in Belgium since 2014. There is a constant and significant decline in the market share of the leading railway company, alongside a significant increase in the market share of two competing companies.

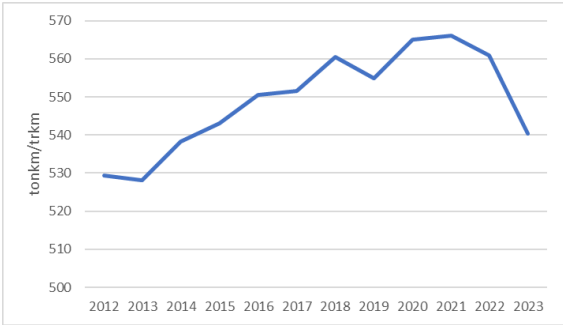


¹ Federal government agreement of 30 September 2020.

03 » SOME INDICATORS FOR THE FREIGHT SEGMENT

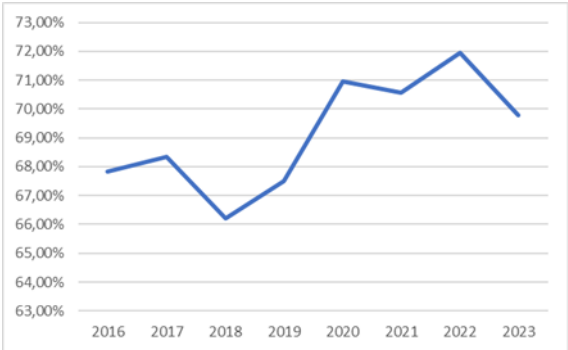
Freight load factor (tons-km/tr-km)

The freight load factor gives an initial indication of the efficiency of rail transport. It continues to decline compared to 2022, reflecting an overall decrease in the volume of goods transported. This trend could imply an impact on the profitability of railway companies, which should be confirmed or not through an analysis of said companies' financial results.



Punctuality

In 2023, the average punctuality of trains was **69.8%** (trains with a delay of less than 30 minutes). Freight train punctuality deteriorated in 2023, while the overall trend had been improving since 2016.

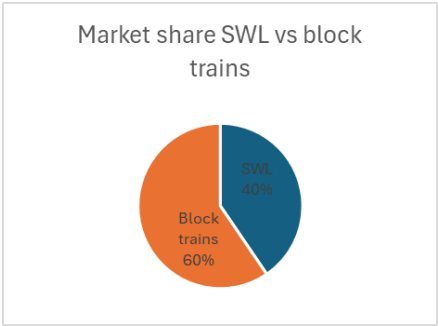
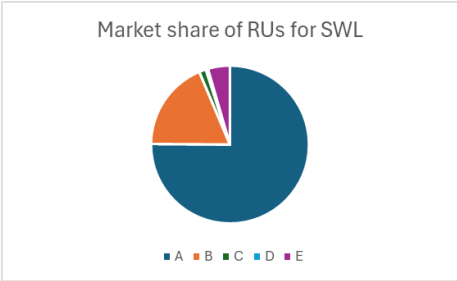


Average speed

The average speed in 2023 was 51.4 km/h. This figure reflects a slight increase compared to the previous year.

Block trains vs Single Wagon Load (SWL) trains.²

In 2023, 60% of trains were block trains, compared with 40% made up of single wagon loads (SWL). The proportion of block trains increased compared to 2022, when they accounted for 57% of the total number of trains.



It is interesting to note that only 5 railway undertakings were running SWL trains in 2023, and nearly 95% of trains made up of SWL were organized by two railway undertakings, indicating a high concentration in the SWL market.

² Source: Survey of freight railway companies conducted by the Regulatory Service (July-September 2024).

Train formation locations

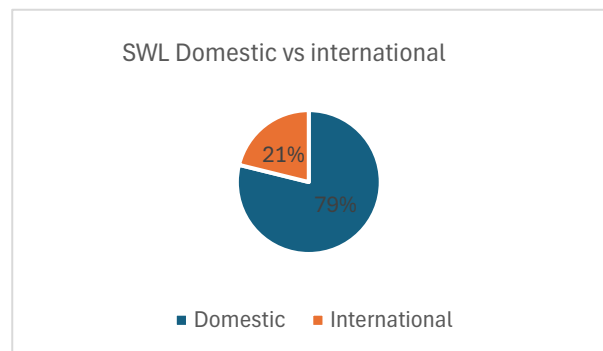
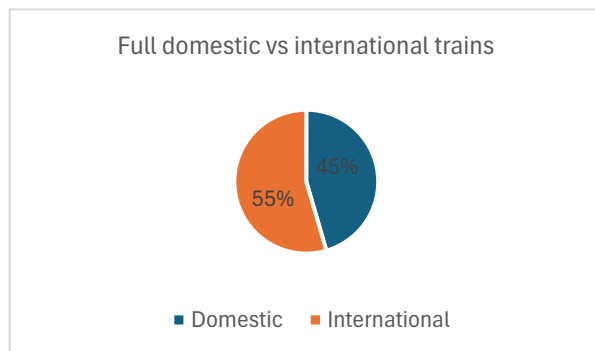
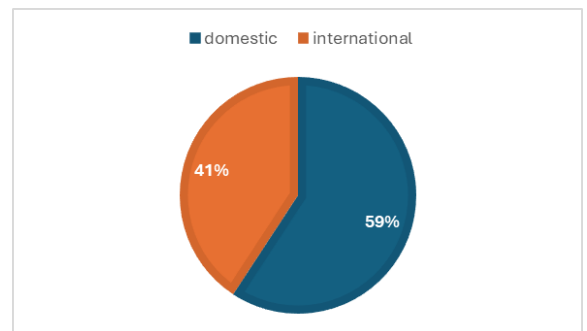
More than 166,000 wagons will be handled at the Antwerp marshalling yard in 2023, compared to over 187,000 in 2022. The number of wagons corresponds to the number of wagons that leave the station regardless of their destination. For example, some wagons leave from marshalling yard b2 to marshalling yard c2.

The main formation locations are Antwerp, Zeebrugge and Kinkempois. Almost 35% of the reported trains leave from Antwerp.

Distribution between domestic and international trains in 2023

It should be noted that 59% of the trains reported by the rail companies were domestic, while 41% were international.

It is interesting to observe that this distribution varies significantly depending on whether the trains are block trains or consist of single wagons. For complete trains, 55% are international, while 45% are domestic. For SWL trains, the distribution is completely different, with only 21% being international and 79% domestic.

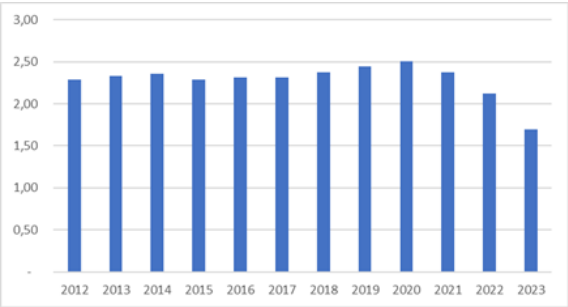


The main destinations for goods transported by rail are, and in order of importance: Italy, Germany, France and the Netherlands.

04 » CHARGES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE USE

Evolution of charges per train-km

The charge is calculated based on costs directly attributable to the use of rail infrastructure (direct costs). In 2023, the average gross charge for a freight train in **Belgium was €2.28 per train-km**, representing an increase of 8% compared to 2022. This increase needs however be considered in context. Indeed, subsidies have been granted to railway companies, through the infrastructure manager, to make rail freight more competitive. If these subsidies are included in the calculation of the charges, which could then be referred to as the net charge, the average charge (after the subsidies are factored in) is only **€1.69 per train-km** (as reflected in the graph). This amount is 20% lower than in 2022. On average, subsidies represent 26% of the charges. The subsidy program is in place until the end of 2025.

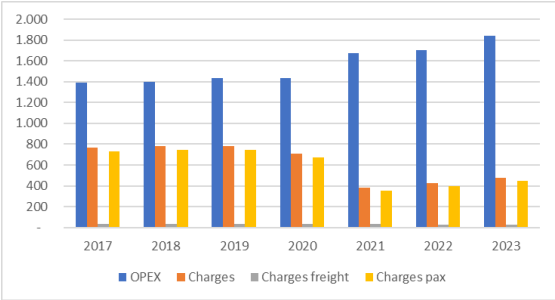


It is worth noting that in some countries, average charges are generally lower. The European average is €2.00 (2022 figures). This comparison should however be contextualized in light of the level of the subsidy granted to the infrastructure manager.

The share of charges in the Infrastructure Manager's operating costs.

In 2023, the total amount of charges covered 24% of the infrastructure manager's operating costs, representing a slight decrease compared to the previous year (25%).

Freight charges amounted to **€29.5 million**. This represents **7% of the total infrastructure charges, compared to 6.5% in 2022**.



Distribution of operating revenues

Track access charges represent 32% of Infrabel's operating revenues which include operating subsidies (40%) and other revenues (28%) such as energy. Compared to the previous year, there has been an increase in the proportion of subsidies and a decrease in the proportion of charges. The proportion of "other" revenues has slightly decreased.

