

# Northern Ireland Inter Departmental Business Register, 2017

Date: 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland and United Kingdom

Theme: Business and Enterprise

Frequency: Annual

## Key Points

- The number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses operating in Northern Ireland in 2017 is estimated to have risen by 1,560 (2.2%) since 2016 to 71,615. This marks the third consecutive year of increase following a period of decline from 2008 to 2014.
- The increase in the number of businesses in Northern Ireland over the year was lower than that of the UK (4.5%).
- The largest increases in the number of businesses since 2016 were in Construction (+355) and Production (+260) whilst the only decreases were in Wholesale (-60), Retail (-10) and Health (-5).
- Both Construction and Retail have experienced large declines since 2009. Construction has experienced the largest decrease of all industries since 2009 in terms of absolute number of businesses (-2,590). The Retail industry remains 11% (760 businesses) smaller than in 2009.
- The largest increases since 2009 have been in Agriculture, forestry and fishing (+1,480 businesses or 9%); Professional, scientific and technical (+760 businesses or 16%) and Information and Communication (+525 businesses or 39%).
- In 2016 (latest available business demography data), Northern Ireland had the lowest business birth rate (10.2%) and death rate (9.2%) of all UK regions. Northern Ireland saw the largest increase in its birth rate from 2015 (+0.5 percentage points), whilst the birth rate in Scotland decreased (-0.1 percentage points) over the year. Northern Ireland experienced the largest increase in death rates since 2015 (+1.5 percentage points). This follows a period of declining death rates in Northern Ireland since 2012; however all UK regions saw an increase in death rates in 2016 in comparison with 2015.
- Of the 71,615 businesses operating in Northern Ireland in March 2017, 2.3% were non-Northern Ireland owned. However, these businesses accounted for almost one quarter (23.6%) of Northern Ireland employees.

**The Inter Departmental Business Register Bulletin contains the following chapters:**

- 1. Introduction and Context**
- 2. Executive Summary**
- 3. Business Population and Structure**
- 4. Business Demography**
- 5. Foreign Ownership**
- 6. Background Notes**
- 7. Contact Information**

### **National Statistics**

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is a producer's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

# 1 Introduction and Context

**This bulletin provides an overview of the number and characteristics of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland at March 2017 from the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) - a central register of all businesses in the UK.**

This bulletin has been designed to supplement a set of tables which provide a comprehensive breakdown of businesses by geographical and industrial detail. Three sets of Excel tables are available - 'VAT and/or PAYE tables', 'Business Demography tables' and 'Foreign Ownership tables'. These tables are available via the [IDBR webpage](#).

## **Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR)**

The IDBR contains information on all businesses in the United Kingdom which are either VAT registered or operating a PAYE scheme. The register is located in the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Newport but the Northern Ireland element of the register is updated and maintained by the Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch (ELMSB) within the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), an agency of the Department of Finance (DoF).

The IDBR covers most of the economy including the Agriculture, Production and Service sectors in Northern Ireland. It does not, however, include very small businesses which fall below the VAT threshold (£83,000 in 2016/2017) or do not operate a PAYE scheme. This means that many self-employed workers will not be included on the IDBR. Latest figures published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which include an estimate of the number of unregistered businesses in the private sector<sup>1</sup>, indicate that at the start of 2017 the number of unregistered businesses in Northern Ireland was 64,695 (58,545 in 2016). Further information on the characteristics of these businesses can be found on the BEIS website via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2017>

The register holds information on the characteristics, structure and location of Northern Ireland businesses. This information includes, amongst other things, legal registration status, country of ownership, turnover, employment, employees and industrial classification (SIC 07).

The IDBR enables Government to conduct efficient and cost effective surveys/inquiries whilst minimising the burden on businesses. It is used for national accounts and labour market statistics, as well as providing basic information on the structure of the economy. It is used in four main ways:-

- to select businesses to be included in official statistics surveys/inquiries;
- to mail forms;
- to enable estimates to be made for businesses who do not respond or those not asked to participate in any particular inquiry; and
- to produce analyses of business activity.

Further information on the IDBR is included within the Background Notes of this publication (Section 6) and via the [IDBR webpage](#).

The definition of a 'Northern Ireland business' in this publication is an enterprise that operates in Northern Ireland: distinct from an enterprise that has its registered address in Northern Ireland. Please see Background Notes (Section 6) for further definitions.

<sup>1</sup>In this publication the private sector includes a small number of public corporations and nationalised bodies. This is different from the definition used in the remainder of this publication. However, this figure still provides a good indication of the number of unregistered businesses.

## 2 Executive Summary

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### Northern Ireland Business Population versus the United Kingdom

- In March 2017, there were 71,615 businesses operating in Northern Ireland registered for VAT and/or PAYE, an increase of 1,560 businesses (2.2%) since 2016. This marks the third consecutive year of increase in the number of Northern Ireland businesses, following a period of decline from 2008-2014.
- In March 2017, Northern Ireland accounted for 2.6% of total UK businesses. In the UK there were 2.67 million businesses registered for VAT and/or PAYE in March 2017, compared with 2.55 million in March 2016, an increase of 114,300 (4.5%). All UK regions experienced increases since 2016, with Northern Ireland having a 2017 growth rate higher than Scotland (1.6%) but lower than England (4.8%) and Wales (2.7%).

### Structure of Industry in Northern Ireland in 2017

- Agriculture, forestry and fishing continued to be the largest single industry group in Northern Ireland in 2017, representing almost one quarter (24.9%) of all businesses operating in Northern Ireland.
- Construction was the second largest industry group, accounting for 13.5% of businesses operating in Northern Ireland; whilst Retail was the third largest industry group, accounting for 8.5% of businesses.
- Together, these three industries represented nearly half (46.9%) of all VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland in 2017.

### Sectoral Change over the Year

- The largest increases since 2016 were in the Construction (+355 businesses); Production (+260 businesses) and Professional, scientific and technical (+165) industry groups. Out of the seventeen industry groups, three experienced a decline in the number of businesses since 2016: Wholesale (-60 businesses), Retail (-10 businesses) and Health (-5 businesses).

### Sectoral Change over the Past Five Years

- The industry composition of businesses operating in Northern Ireland has remained relatively unchanged since 2012 with almost half (46.9%) of all businesses falling into the three largest industry groups; Agriculture, forestry and fishing; Construction and Retail.
- However, both Construction and Retail have experienced large declines since 2012. Construction experienced the largest decrease of all industries in terms of absolute numbers of businesses (-740) from 2012-2017. Retail is now 7.3% (475 businesses) smaller than at the start of the time period.
- The largest increases since 2012 were seen in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing (+1,380 businesses or 8.4%); Professional, scientific and technical (+705 businesses or 14.3%) and Production (+555 businesses or 12.9%) industry groups.

## Businesses in Northern Ireland Local Government Districts

- Belfast Local Government District accounted for the largest proportion (14.4%) of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses operating in Northern Ireland in 2017 followed by Mid Ulster (11.9%). Antrim and Newtownabbey had the lowest proportion, accounting for 5.6% of all VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland in 2017.

## Business Demography

- In 2016 (latest available business demography data) the business birth rate in Northern Ireland as a proportion of active enterprises was 10.2% (9.7% in 2015). This birth rate was lower than the rest of the UK which had an overall birth rate of 14.6% (14.3% in 2015). Northern Ireland has consistently had lower business birth rates than the UK and UK regions since 2006. However, Northern Ireland saw the largest increase in its birth rate from 2015 (+0.5 percentage points) in comparison with the UK regions. The business birth rates in England and Wales increased by 0.3 and 0.2 percentage points respectively, whereas the birth rate in Scotland decreased by 0.1 percentage points.
- The business death rate in Northern Ireland in 2016 was also the lowest in the UK, at 9.2% (11.6% for the UK). Northern Ireland has consistently had lower business death rates than the UK and UK regions since 2006. Northern Ireland experienced the largest increase in death rates since 2015 (+1.5 percentage points). This follows a period of declining death rates in Northern Ireland since 2012; however all UK regions saw an increase in death rates in 2016 in comparison with 2015.
- In Northern Ireland the net change between the number of business births and deaths was growth of 620 businesses (5,935 births and 5,315 deaths)<sup>1</sup>.

## Foreign Ownership

- Only a small proportion (2.3% or 1,635) of businesses operating in Northern Ireland in 2017 had a non-Northern Ireland country of ownership. However, these businesses accounted for a considerable proportion (23.6%) of Northern Ireland employees.
- The proportion of businesses operating in Northern Ireland with a non-Northern Ireland country of ownership has remained relatively unchanged over recent years, ranging between 2.3% and 2.4% of all businesses operating since 2013.
- The majority of non-Northern Ireland owned firms had a country of ownership of Great Britain (44.3%) or the Republic of Ireland (19.6%). The United States of America accounted for 11.3%, whilst 40 other countries accounted for the remaining 24.8%.

## Business Structure

- The majority of businesses in Northern Ireland in March 2017 were registered as Sole Proprietors (40.1% or 28,725) or Companies (37.8% or 27,100).
- Northern Ireland has seen an increase in incorporation in recent years. There were 8,780 more companies in 2017 than in 2007. This trend to incorporation has been at the cost of sole proprietors and partnerships; both of which have been on a steady decline since 2007. The proportions of non profit bodies and local authorities in Northern Ireland have remained relatively unchanged over recent years.

<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that counts of live businesses are different to business demography figures. This is because the definition of an active business for business demography is based upon activity at any time during the year, whereas business counts are based upon an annual snapshot at fixed point in time, that is, March of the reference year.

## Commentary

The number of businesses (71,615) in Northern Ireland increased by 2.2% (1,560 businesses) over the year to 2017. This marks the third consecutive year of growth following a period of decline from 2008 to 2014.

The increase over the year was largely driven by increases in the Construction (+355 businesses), Production (+260 businesses) and Professional, scientific and technical (+165 businesses) industry groups. Together, the increases in these three industry groups accounted for half of the total increase experienced over the year.

The number of businesses in 2017 was 5.8% (3,905 businesses) higher than the recent low experienced in 2014 (67,710 businesses). Similarly, this increase was largely driven by increases in Agriculture, forestry and fishing (+890 businesses), Professional, scientific and technical (+590 businesses) and Production (+560 businesses). Together, the increases in these three industry groups accounted for over half (52.2%) of the increase since 2014.

Despite the increases over the past three years, the number of businesses in 2017 remains 1.1% below the 2008 level (72,445 businesses).

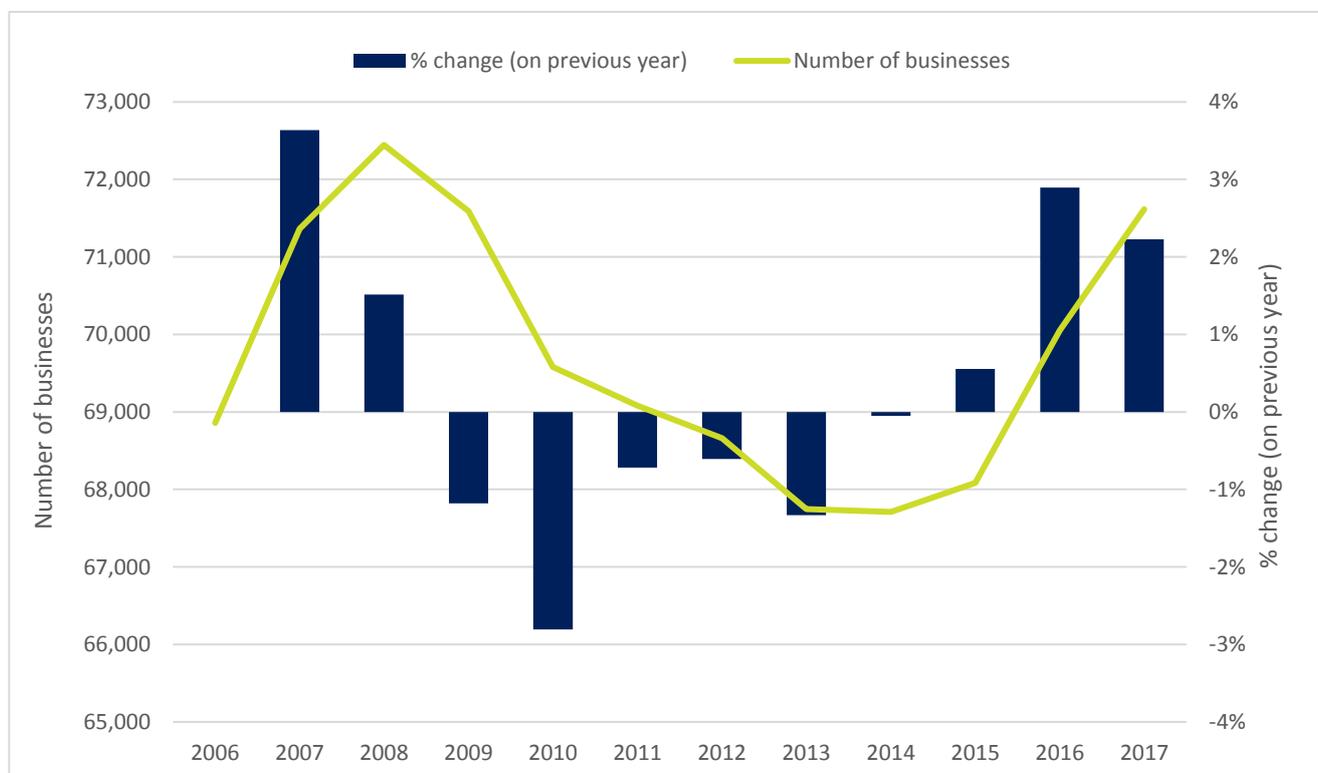
### 3 Business Population and Structure

#### VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland

There were 71,615 businesses operating in Northern Ireland registered for VAT and/or PAYE in March 2017, compared with 70,055 in March 2016 which represents an increase of 2%. This marks the third consecutive year of increase in the number of Northern Ireland businesses, following a period of decline from 2008-2014.

- As shown in Figure 1, the number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland is estimated to have risen by 2.2% (1,560 businesses) between 2016 and 2017, to 71,615 businesses.
- This marked the third consecutive year of increase, following a period of decline from 2008-2014.
- Despite the increases over the past three years, the number of businesses in 2017 remains 1.1% below the series high experienced in 2008 (72,445 businesses).
- The number of businesses in 2017 was 5.8% (3,905 businesses) higher than the series low experienced in 2014 (67,710 businesses).

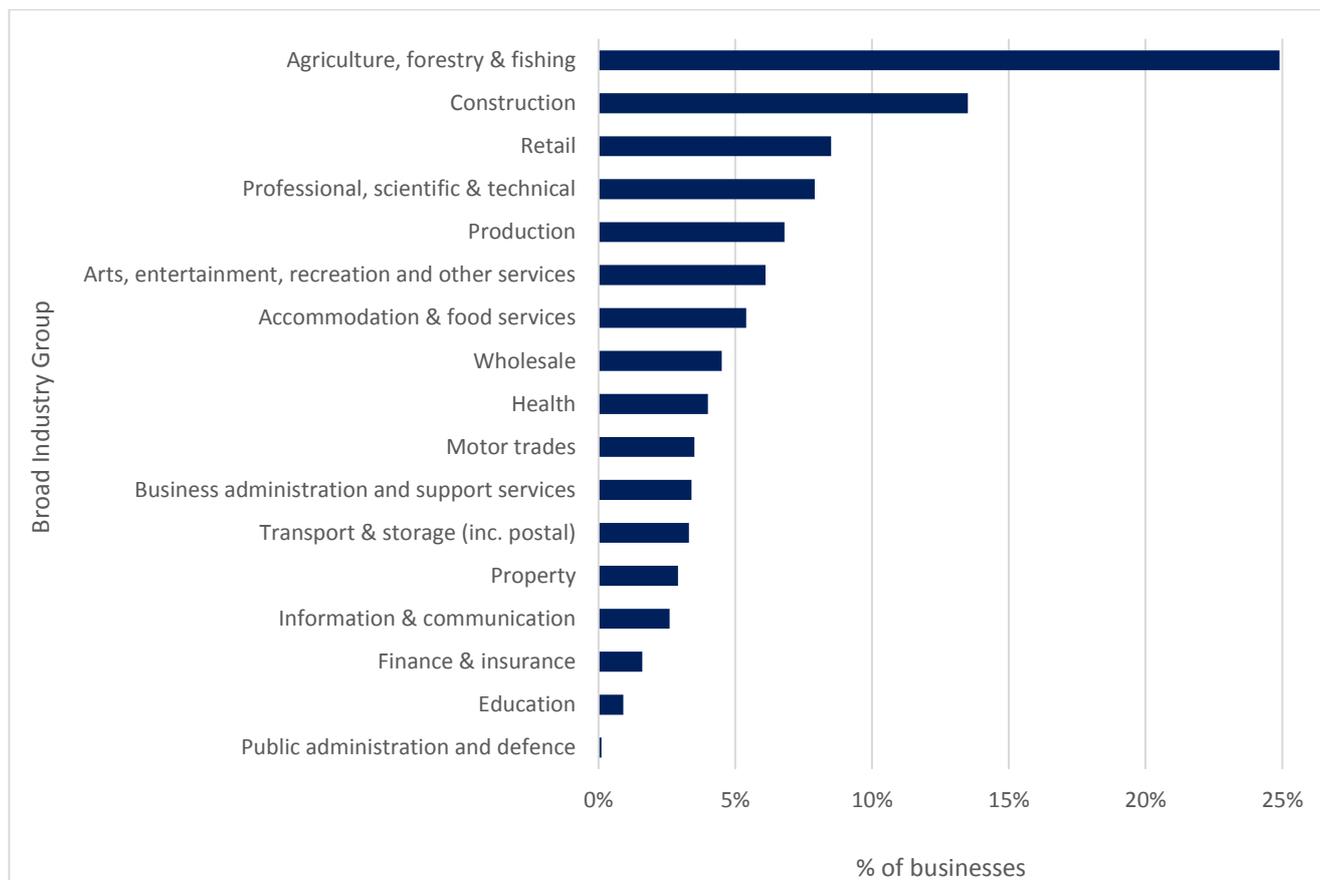
**Figure 1: Number and Annual Percentage Change of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland, 2006 to 2017**



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## Businesses by Broad Industry Groups

**Figure 2: Percentage of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by Broad Industry Group, 2017**

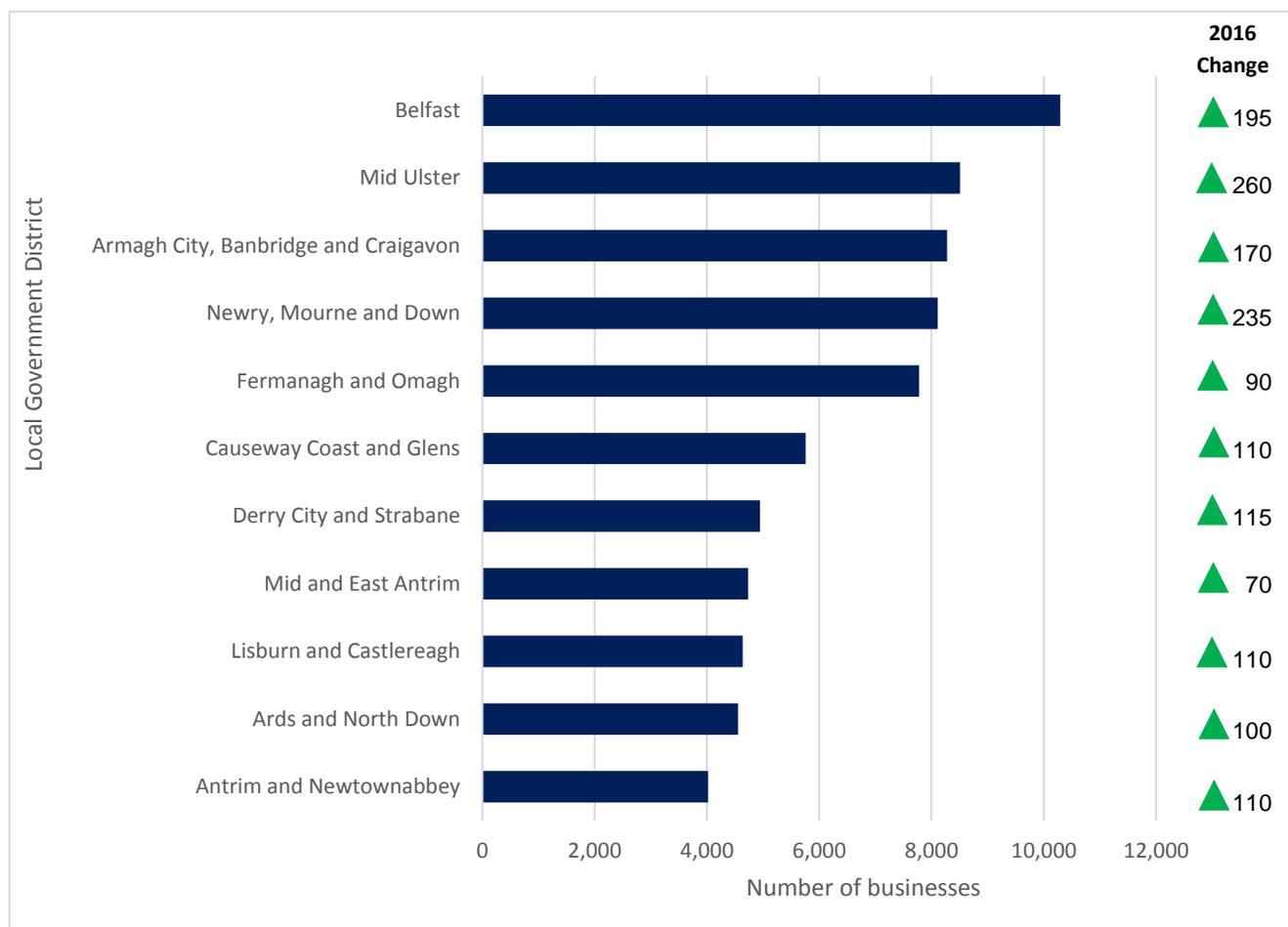


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- Figure 2 illustrates that the largest industry group in Northern Ireland in 2017 was Agriculture, forestry and fishing, accounting for almost one quarter (24.9%) of all VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland in 2017.
- The second largest industry group was Construction and the third largest was Retail; accounting for 13.5% and 8.5% of all businesses respectively.
- Together, these three industries represented nearly half (46.9%) of all VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland in 2017.
- The smallest industry groups in Northern Ireland were Public administration and defence and Education; representing only 0.1% and 0.9% of all businesses respectively.
- The largest increases since 2016 were in the Construction (+355 businesses); Production (+260 businesses) and Professional, scientific and technical (+165) industry groups. Out of the seventeen industry groups, three experienced a decline in the number of businesses since 2016: Wholesale (-60 businesses), Retail (-10 businesses) and Health (-5 businesses).

## Businesses by Local Government District

**Figure 3: Number of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by Local Government District, 2017**



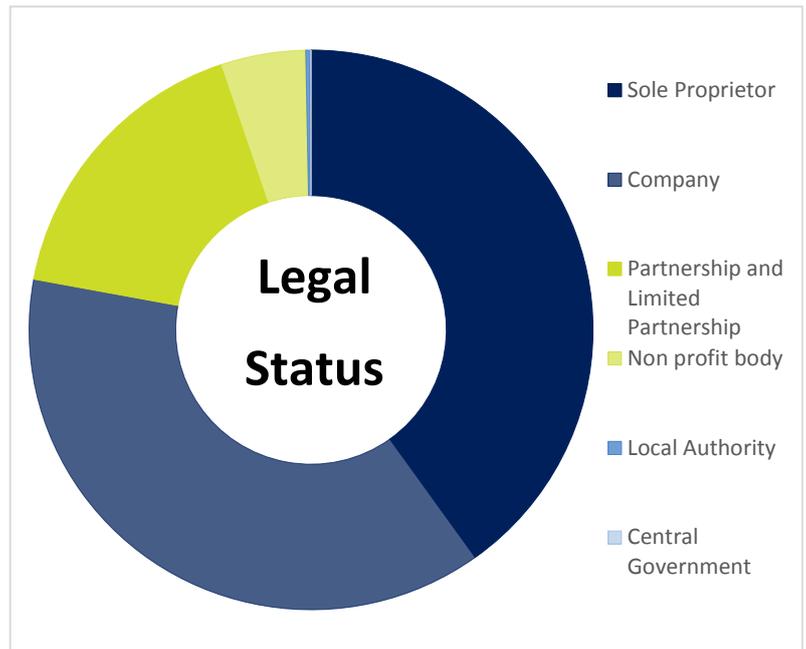
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- Figure 3 illustrates that Belfast Local Government District accounted for the largest number of businesses (10,295 businesses or 14.4%) operating in Northern Ireland in 2017; whilst Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Government District accounted for the smallest number of businesses (4,020 businesses or 5.6%).
- All Local Government Districts saw an increase in the number of businesses in 2017 when compared to 2016, with Mid Ulster and Newry, Mourne and Down experiencing the biggest increases (+260 and +235 businesses respectively).
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing was the largest industry group in all Local Government Districts in 2017 with the exception of Belfast, where Professional, scientific and technical was the largest industry group (17.2% of all businesses in Belfast), and Ards and North Down where Construction was of equal size to Agriculture, forestry and fishing (both accounting for 12.7% of businesses in Ards and North Down).

## Businesses by Legal Status

- Figure 4 shows that the majority of businesses in Northern Ireland in 2017 were registered as Sole Proprietors (40.1% or 28,725) or Companies (37.8% or 27,100).
- Partnerships and Limited Partnerships accounted for 16.9% (12,080) of total businesses in Northern Ireland in 2017, and Non profit bodies accounted for 4.9% (3,490 businesses).
- Only 0.2% of total businesses were registered as Local Authorities; and only 0.1% as Central Government.

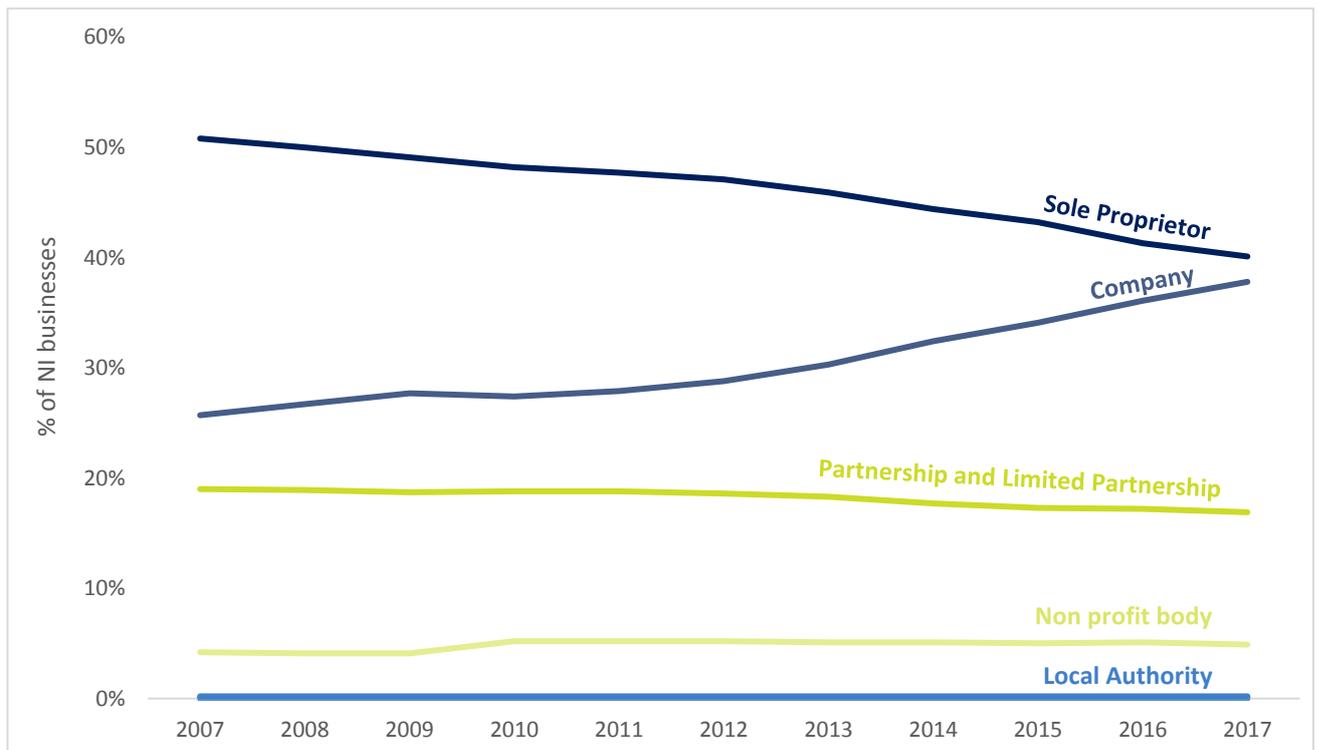
**Figure 4: Percentage of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses in Northern Ireland by Legal Status, 2017**



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**Figure 5: Percentage of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by Legal Status, 2007 - 2017**

- Figure 5 illustrates the increase in incorporation and the decline in sole proprietors and partnerships in recent years. The proportions of non profit bodies and local authorities have remained relatively unchanged over recent years.

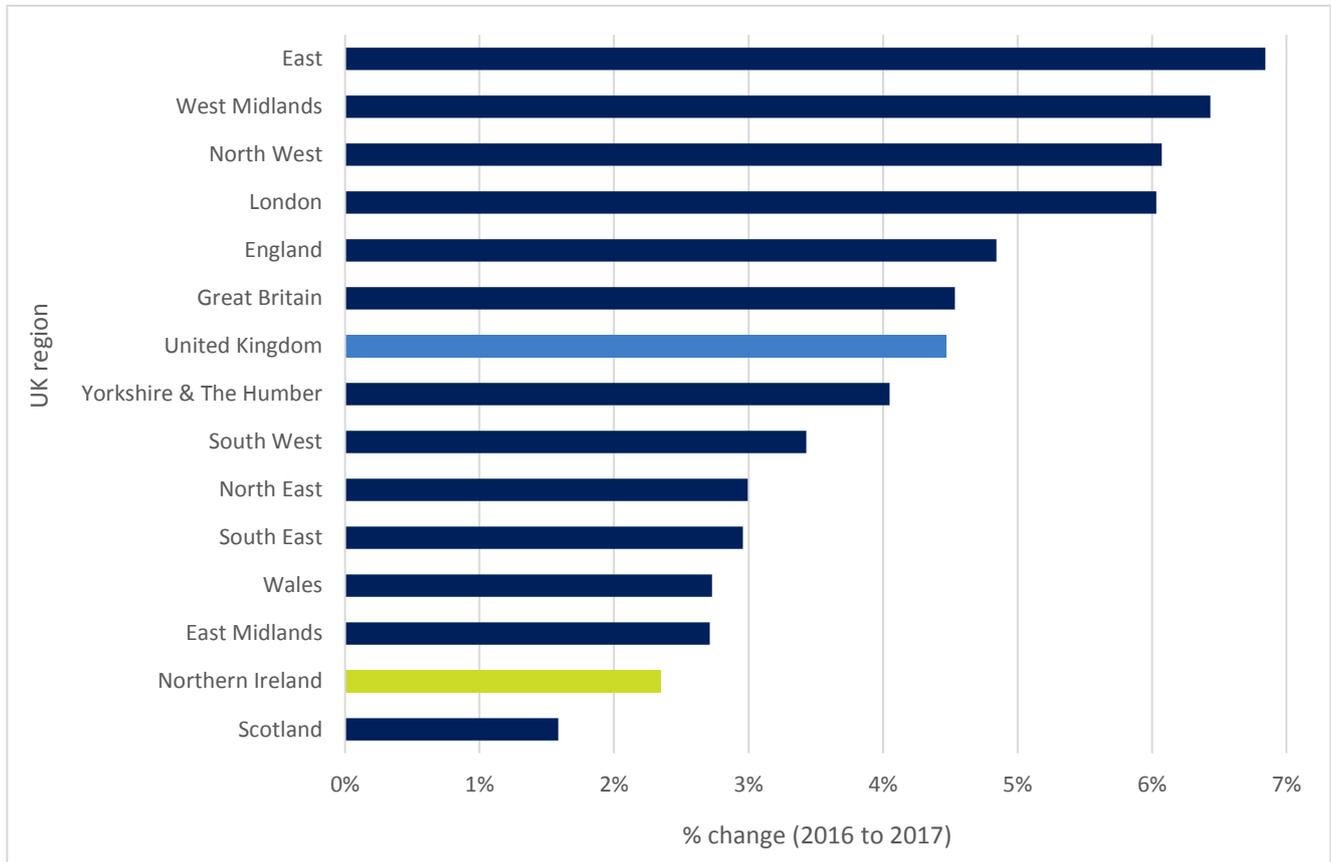


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## Businesses by UK Regions

In these figures the standard Enterprise definition is used; businesses are only included in the Northern Ireland figures if their main (or registered) UK address is also in Northern Ireland.

**Figure 6: Percentage Change of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses in UK Regions, 2016 to 2017**



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- Northern Ireland businesses accounted for 2.6% of the total number of businesses in the UK based on the standard Enterprise definition.
- Figure 6 illustrates that between 2016 and 2017, all regions in the UK saw an increase in the number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses. The Northern Ireland business growth rate in 2017 (2.3%) was higher than Scotland (1.6%) but lower than Wales (2.7%) and England (4.8%). The overall UK business growth rate over the year was 4.5%.
- East of England region experienced the largest proportionate growth of 6.8% (17,380 businesses) between 2016 and 2017, which accounted for 15.2% of the total growth of the UK. However the growth in the number of businesses in London (28,765 businesses) accounted for over a quarter (25.2%) of the total growth in the UK between 2016 and 2017.

## 4 Business Demography

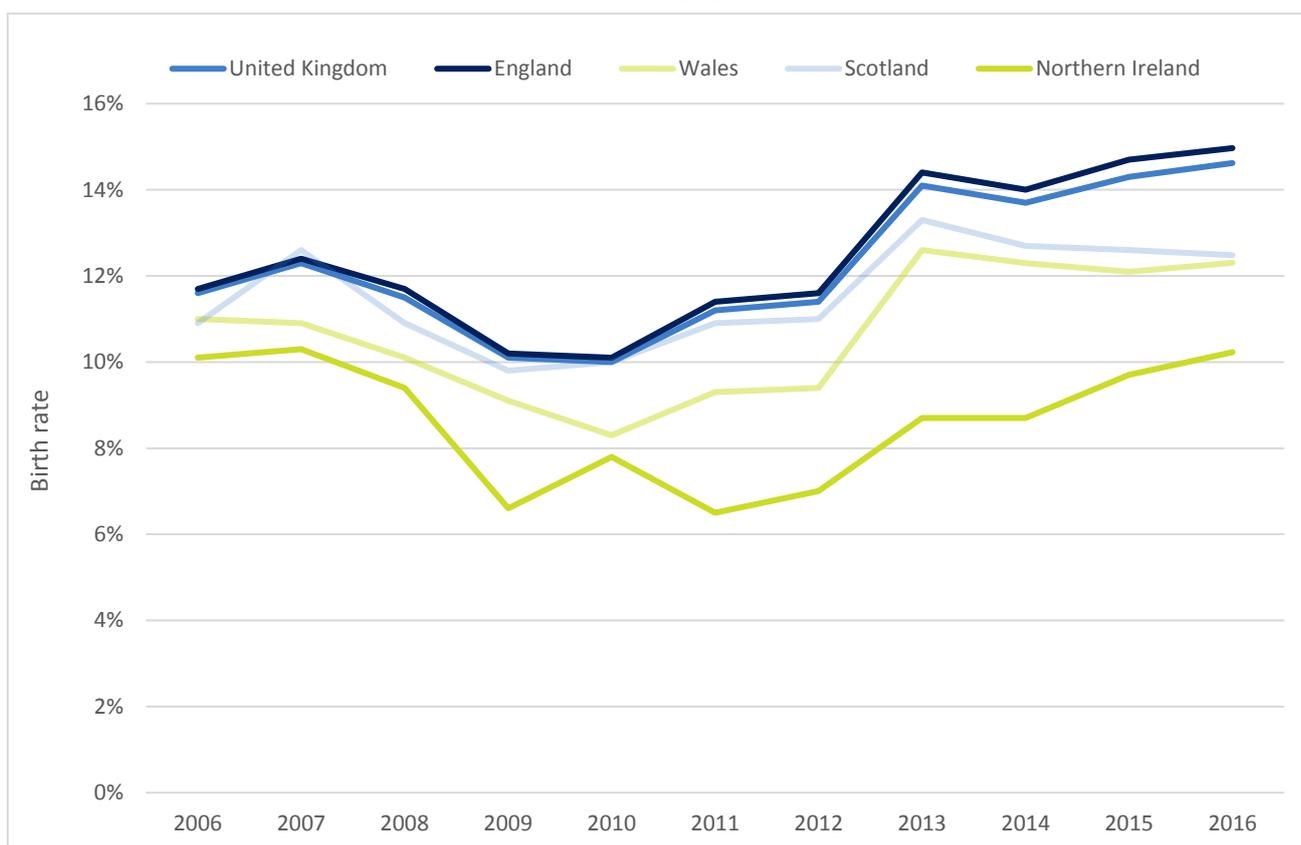
The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has responsibility for the publication of official business births, deaths and survival rates. In these figures the standard Enterprise definition is used; businesses are only included in the Northern Ireland figures if their main (or registered) UK address is also in Northern Ireland.

New businesses (identified through registration of VAT and/or PAYE) are referred to as **business births**. Businesses that have ceased to trade (identified through deregistration of VAT and PAYE) are referred to as **business deaths**.

- In 2016 (latest available business demography data), a total of 5,935 enterprises were born in Northern Ireland, an increase of 495 enterprises in comparison with 2015. In the same year, there were 5,315 deaths of enterprises, an increase of 1,025 in comparison with 2015.

### Business Births

**Figure 7: Birth Rate of Businesses Registered for VAT and/or PAYE in UK Regions, 2006 – 2016**

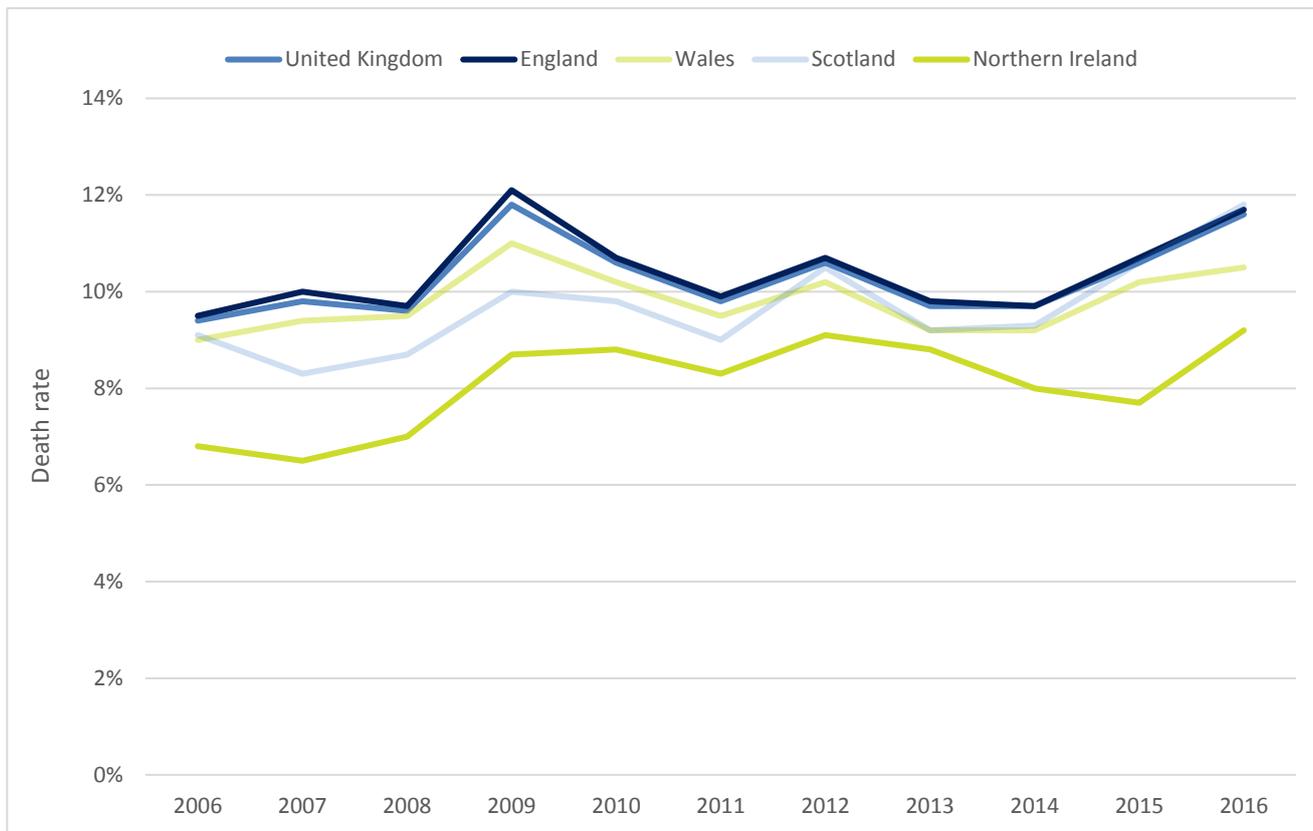


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- Figure 7 shows that the birth rate for businesses in Northern Ireland in 2016 (as a proportion of active enterprises) was 10.2%, which was the lowest of the UK regions. However, Northern Ireland saw the largest increase in its birth rate from 2015 (+0.5 percentage points). The business birth rates in England and Wales increased by 0.3 and 0.2 percentage points respectively, whereas the birth rate in Scotland decreased by 0.1 percentage points. The overall birth rate for the UK in 2016 was 14.6% (14.3% in 2015).

## Business Deaths

**Figure 8: Death Rate of Businesses Registered for VAT and/or PAYE in UK Regions, 2006 – 2016**

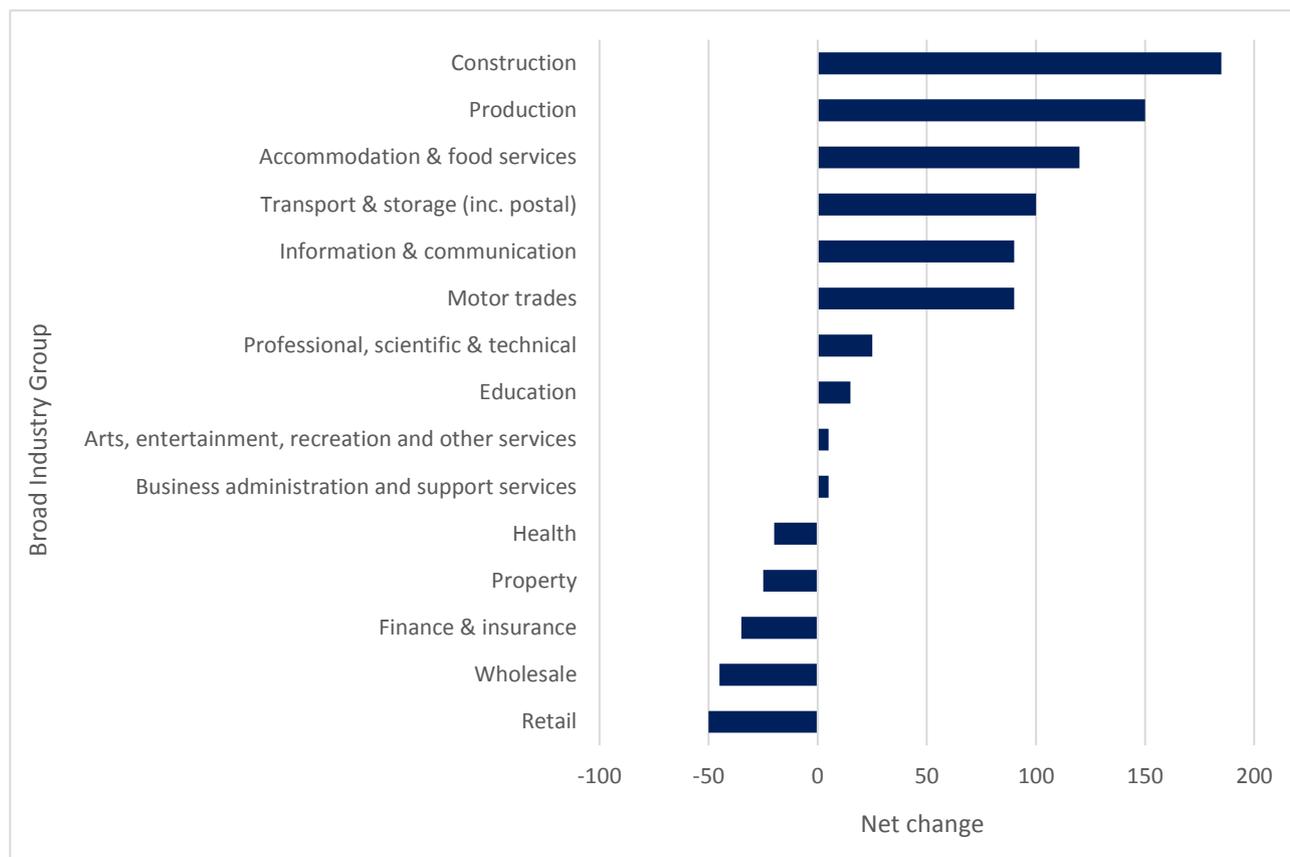


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- Figure 8 illustrates that the Northern Ireland death rate was 9.2% in 2016; this was the lowest of the UK regions. For comparison, the death rate was 10.5% in Wales; 11.8% in Scotland and 11.7% in England (11.6% for the UK).
- Northern Ireland experienced the largest increase in death rates since 2015 (+1.5 percentage points). This follows a period of declining death rates in Northern Ireland since 2012; however all UK regions saw an increase in death rates in 2016 in comparison with 2015.

## Net Change in Business Births and Deaths

**Figure 9: Net Births/Deaths of Northern Ireland Businesses Registered for VAT and/or PAYE by Broad Industry Group, 2016**



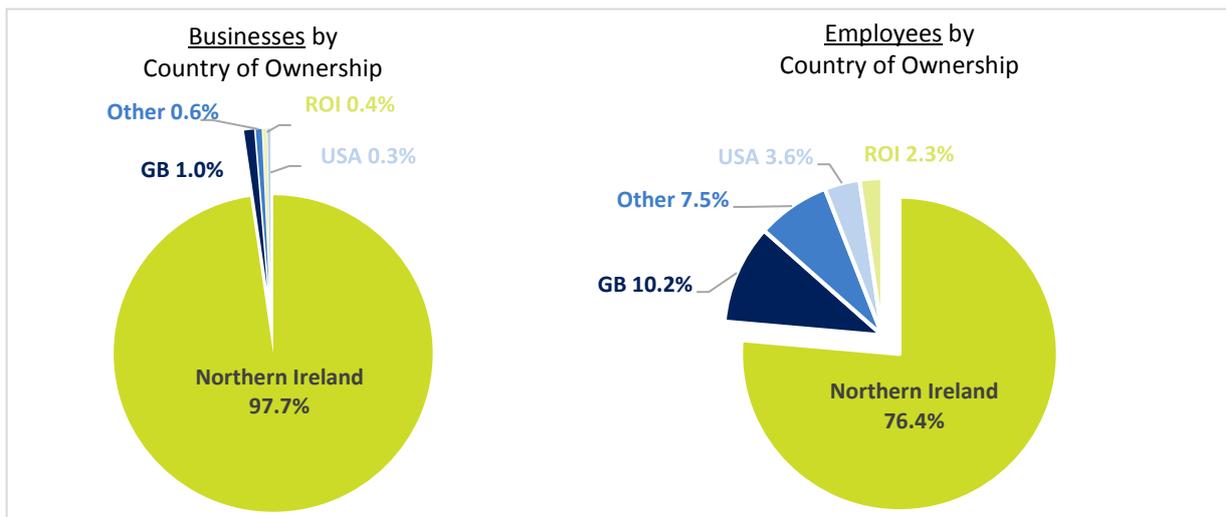
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- Figure 9 offers a comparison of business births and deaths by Broad Industry Group in Northern Ireland in 2016. The largest net increases were in the Construction (+185 businesses); Production (+150 businesses); and Accommodation and food services (+120 businesses) industry groups.
- The largest net decreases in 2016 were in the Retail (-50 businesses), Wholesale (-45 businesses) and Finance and insurance (-35 businesses) industry groups.
- In Northern Ireland the net change was growth of 620 businesses (5,935 births and 5,315 deaths).

# 5 Foreign Ownership<sup>1</sup>

- Figure 10 shows that of the 71,615 businesses operating in Northern Ireland in March 2017, 2.3% (1,635 businesses) were non-NI owned. This small proportion of businesses accounted for almost one quarter (23.6%) of Northern Ireland employees.

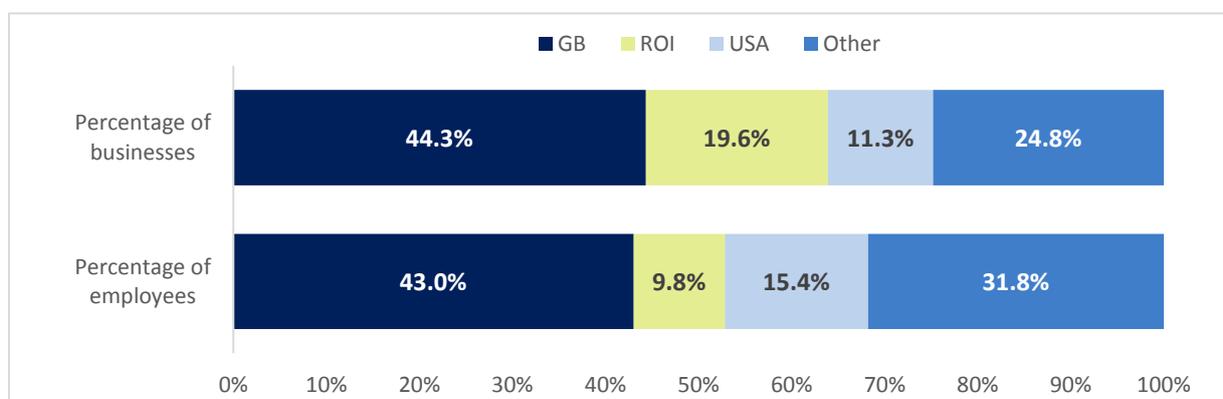
**Figure 10: Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland and Employees by Country of Ownership, 2017**



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- Figure 11 illustrates that of the 1,635 non-NI owned businesses in March 2017, Great Britain accounted for 725 (44.3%) of these businesses. Republic of Ireland owned businesses accounted for 320 businesses (19.6%); while the USA accounted for over one tenth (185 businesses or 11.3%). The remaining 24.8% of businesses were owned by 40 other countries. In relation to the number of employees in non-NI owned businesses, broadly similar proportions can be seen (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Non-NI Owned Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland and Employees by Country of Ownership, 2017**



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<sup>1</sup>The market information company Dun and Bradstreet annually supply the Office for National Statistics (ONS) with information on foreign owned businesses operating in the United Kingdom. This information is then loaded onto the IDBR. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of foreign owned businesses in Northern Ireland, only those for which we have received information from the above sources. Information on the status of foreign owned businesses is continually updated on the IDBR and, as a result, variability in figures may reflect the availability of more up-to-date information rather than a change of ownership.

## 6 Background Notes

Details of the methodology and definitions used in each set of tables, along with information on the coverage of the statistics, known quality issues, disclosure control methods and any planned revisions to the figures are included in the 'Notes' sheet accompanying the tables.

### (i) Data sources and coverage

The majority of tables are based on a snapshot of the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) taken on 17 March 2017. This is the source used for the VAT and/or PAYE tables and the Foreign Ownership tables. The Business Demography tables discussed also draw their data from the IDBR, but they use information from throughout the reference year. For example, the number of business births includes all births during the reference year. These data are taken from the Business Demography 2016 publication. This is a UK-wide publication produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The UK Context figures in the VAT and/or PAYE tables are taken from UK Business: Activity, Size and Location 2017. This is a UK-wide publication produced by the Office for National Statistics.

Any businesses which are solely VAT based or solely PAYE based where the employment is estimated to be 20 or more have been excluded from this analysis as these businesses are thought to be duplicates of existing businesses (pending a return from the Business Register Inquiry or other information). The IDBR figures will inevitably also include some enterprises that were no longer VAT and/or PAYE registered or had actually ceased trading at the time the results were extracted. Similarly, some new business start-ups will be excluded because of the delays in notification.

For further information about the IDBR and its usage please follow the link below:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/inter-departmental-business-register/idbr-background-information>

Information produced by ONS regarding the UK IDBR is available via the following link:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/business-and-energy/business-population/further-information-about-idbr-sources.pdf>

### (ii) Definitions

A Northern Ireland business can either be defined as an ***enterprise which has its registered address in Northern Ireland*** or as an ***enterprise which operates in Northern Ireland***. The former definition assigns each business or enterprise to a single location within the UK. However, this definition excludes part of the Northern Ireland business population, namely those companies which have a presence in Northern Ireland but have their registered UK address (or head office) elsewhere in the UK. For this reason the alternative definition of enterprises operating in Northern Ireland definition has been used in all Northern Ireland and Local Government District tables. In the UK-wide tables produced by the Office for National Statistics and the UK comparison figures, the former definition is used. This is necessary so that each UK business or enterprise is assigned to a single location within the UK.

### **(iii) Revisions**

The VAT and/or PAYE tables and Foreign Ownership tables are produced from snapshots of the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) and are not subject to revision. In the Business Demography tables the latest two years' estimates on births, deaths and survivals are subject to revision. Revisions would normally be made in the following year's publication.

### **(iv) Historic data**

Previous editions of this publication are available from the Inter Departmental Business Register webpage:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/archive-publications-idbr>

The UK Context VAT and/or PAYE tables (Tables 1.1 to 1.9) are directly comparable with tables contained in previous editions back to December 2009. Prior to this edition the Enterprise based tables did not include PAYE operating businesses not registered for VAT. The NI and LGD VAT and/or PAYE tables (Tables 1.10 to 1.22) are not directly comparable with tables contained in previous editions prior to edition 17 (published 13 February 2015). This is due to the change from the standard Enterprise based definition (and the alternative Reporting Unit definition used in some tables) to an Enterprise operating in Northern Ireland definition. A Reporting Unit includes all or part of an Enterprise. There will be (at least one) Northern Ireland Reporting Unit for any business operating in Northern Ireland. Usually all sites in Northern Ireland are included in a single Reporting Unit. A Northern Ireland Reporting Unit will not include any sites outside Northern Ireland.

This publication also contains a number of new tables. In several tables a comparable time series covering earlier years is included.

The Foreign Ownership tables (Tables 3) are not directly comparable with the foreign ownership tables contained in previous editions prior to edition 17 (published 13 February 2015). This is due to the change from the Reporting Unit based definition, where every Reporting Unit is counted as a separate business to the Enterprise operating in Northern Ireland based definition, where multiple Reporting Units for the same enterprise are combined. All these tables include a comparable time series covering earlier years where this is available. The NI/non-NI split is not available prior to 2013.

### **(v) Comparability with other Northern Ireland Economic and Labour Market Statistics publications**

This publication provides information on the number, characteristics and geographical location of Northern Ireland businesses and local sites within Northern Ireland. The Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) is the preferred source for this information. Counts of businesses and local sites are available split by industrial classification, size based on employees, size based on employment, size based on turnover, country of ownership including both foreign (non-UK) owned and non-NI owned, private/public sector split and legal status.

The IDBR is not the preferred source for employment/employees estimates. For employee estimates, the [Business Register Employment Survey \(BRES\)](#) should be used. This survey is carried out annually and provides robust estimates of employee jobs in all industries except agriculture. The employee estimates from this survey are broken down by industry, gender, working pattern, public/private sector split and job location. The [Quarterly Employment Survey \(QES\)](#) provides more timely (but less robust) estimates of employee jobs at the Northern Ireland

level. Employment, Unemployment and Economic Inactivity estimates are available from the [Labour Force Survey](#). Although the IDBR is not the preferred source for employee/employment and turnover estimates, it is the only source for Country of Ownership. As a result employee estimates by foreign (non-UK) ownership, non-NI ownership and country of ownership are produced from the IDBR.

For turnover estimates, the NI [Annual Business Inquiry \(ABI\)](#) is the preferred source. The ABI includes the Production, Construction, Distribution and Service industries in Northern Ireland but excludes the Public Sector. Information on turnover (along with a range of other financial information) is available by industry sector or geographical location based on both Reporting Units and Local Units (individual sites, for example a factory or shop).

#### **(vi) Users**

IDBR data is widely used by anyone who has an interest in the Northern Ireland economy. The figures are used by economists and economic commentators both within and outside Government in assessments of the state of the economy e.g. the Ulster Bank in their Economic Commentary. In addition, significant non-governmental users of the data include District Councils, consultants, research organisations, universities, academic researchers both home and abroad, the media and the general public, e.g. Ulster Bank and Oxford Economics. The data is used by policy staff and economists within the [Department for the Economy](#) to better inform their decision making. Staff from InvestNI use the data to guide decisions in identifying investment opportunities and to monitor the effect of those investments on the economy. The Private Office and the Press Office use the data for responding to media queries as well as input to Assembly Questions, speeches, Ministerial correspondence, etc.

This IDBR publication is generally used by academics, consultants, independent researchers and other government departments to provide information relating to NI and as a starting point for analysis. In some cases the figures are used directly to inform decision making. The figures are also used to provide input into Assembly Questions and answer queries from the public.

#### **(vii) Disclosure control**

Statistical disclosure control methodology is applied to IDBR data. In the tables produced by [Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch](#) business counts are rounded to the nearest five and counts below five are suppressed; thus figures in these tables may not sum to their totals. Employee estimates are also adjusted to ensure that totals dominated by a small number of businesses are suppressed.

These controls ensure that information attributable to an individual or individual organisation is not identifiable in any published outputs. The [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#), and specifically the Principle on Confidentiality (P.C) set out practices for how NISRA protects data from being disclosed. The P.C includes the statement that outputs should 'ensure that official statistics do not reveal the identity of an individual or organisation, or any private information relating to them, taking into account other relevant sources of information'.

## 7 Contact Information

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Feedback is welcomed on this release. To provide feedback or request further or more detailed information, please contact the Inter Departmental Business Register Analysis section by:

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Information regarding the IDBR is also available via the following link:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/inter-departmental-business-register/idbr-background-information>