

29 May 2018

Northern Ireland Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics: Background Information

Experimental Status

The Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics (BESES) is an experimental annual measure of local businesses' sales to markets outside Northern Ireland (NI). The BESES was first published in 2015 (referring to survey years 2011 and 2012) to provide a more comprehensive measure of such sales than had previously been available. This publication includes estimates of the value of both goods and services sold by NI businesses in 2016, as well as their point of destination. The results provide further disaggregation of 2016 BESES estimates first published in December 2017.

Ongoing development of the methodology (as outlined in the associated published [methodology paper](#) (March 2015)) will be informed by user feedback, both in terms of the usefulness and reliability of the estimates and their comparability with other sources and the statistics will remain experimental until user feedback indicates that they are useful and credible. Any comments should be sent to economicstats@nisra.gov.uk

NISRA has engaged extensively throughout the evolution of this output with expert users of NI economic statistics whose views have already helped to inform the current approach. Users include DfE, DoF, and DAERA economists, the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre and a number of NI economic commentators and ONS methodologists. NISRA will continue to consult on any further methodological changes which may improve the quality and value of the statistics.

Background

The Northern Ireland Executive's Economic Strategy referred to the need to improve the measurement of Northern Ireland's exports beyond that of the manufacturing sector. NISRA subsequently published initial estimates of 'broad economy' sales and exports by industry sector in [March 2015](#).

This release provides a further breakdown of the revised estimates for the previous release and provisional estimates current year splitting the sales into its goods and services elements.

To support this release a set of reference tables with further sectoral breakdowns are available on the [NISRA website](#).

The contents of this report will be of interest to government policy makers, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), the business community, economic commentators, academics and members of the general public with an interest in the NI economy. Previous uses and users of the old [Manufacturing Sales and Exports Survey](#), which was superseded by the BESES, are documented separately.

The latest Department for the Economy [Economic Commentary](#) provides an overview of the state of the Northern Ireland economy, setting it in a global context.

Definitions

Broad Economy: The information needed to produce BESES is collected via the NI Annual Business Inquiry (NIABI). Like NIABI, the BESES results are classified according to the Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (SIC) system. The SIC 2007 sections covered by the NIABI defines the term 'Broad Economy' and are as follows:

- A. Agriculture (support activities), forestry and fishing
- B. Mining and quarrying
- C. Manufacturing
- D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
- E. Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities
- F. Construction
- G. Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles (Distribution industries)
- H. Transport and storage
- I. Accommodation and food service activities
- J. Information and communication
- L. Real estate activities
- M. Professional, scientific and technical activities
- N. Administrative and support service activities
- P. Education (excludes local authority and central government bodies)
- Q. Human health and social work activities (excludes local authority and central government, and medical and dental practice activities (group 86.2))
- R. Arts, entertainment and recreation
- S. Other service activities

Coverage: Following a decision in 2013 by the Office for National Statistics to discontinue the publication of figures covering Insurance & Re-insurance industries (within Sector K) due to ongoing volatility of the estimates, the NIABI and BESES publications also exclude estimates for this sector.

The other main areas that are excluded are: Public Administration and Defence (section O) while Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (section A) excludes farming (groups 01.1, 01.2, 01.3, 01.4 and 01.5). Local authority and central Government bodies in Education (section P) and Human Health and Social Work Activities (section Q) have also been excluded from this publication, as has 86.2 (Medical and Dental Practice Activities) within section Q.

Total sales are defined as the **sum of all sales** to Northern Ireland (NI), Great Britain (GB), the Republic of Ireland (ROI), the Rest of the European Union (REU) and the Rest of the World (ROW). Total sales include all taxes and duties on goods invoiced with the exception of VAT which is excluded from total sales.

External sales are comprised of those sales made **outside Northern Ireland**, that is, sales to Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland, the Rest of the European Union and the Rest of the World.

Exports consist of all sales made **outside the United Kingdom**.

All values are in **current** prices.

Total purchases are defined as the **sum of all purchase from** Northern Ireland (NI), Great Britain (GB), the Republic of Ireland (ROI), the Rest of the European Union (REU) and the Rest of the World (ROW). Total purchases include all non-deductible VAT. In the case of imports the cost includes import and excise duties.

Imports consist of all purchases made from **outside the United Kingdom**.

Other sources

The International Trade in Services (ITIS) survey is a UK wide survey which collects information on overseas transactions of consultants and companies offering business services. Information collected from the survey is fed into the UK balance of payments and published at the UK level. [The full bulletin can be accessed here.](#)

While directly comparable UK data for the BESES do not exist (the BESES covers goods and services produced in Northern Ireland), HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) are responsible for collecting the UK's international trade in goods data, which are published as two National Statistics series - the 'Overseas Trade Statistics (OTS) of the UK' and the 'UK Regional Trade Statistics (RTS)'. These UK regional statistics can be accessed at: <https://www.uktradeinfo.com/Statistics/RTS/Pages/default.aspx>.

A joint NISRA/HMRC statement referencing the differences between the methodologies and ongoing collaborative working is available in Appendix A. Users should also refer to Appendix C of the [2015 BESES publication](#) where the differences in estimates produced by NISRA and HMRC are further explored.

The Scottish Government also publish export statistics from the Exports Statistics Scotland series (formerly called the Global Connections Survey). These statistics can be accessed at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Economy/Exports/ESSPublication>.

The Government Statistical Service (GSS) has issued guidance on comparing official statistics produced by each nation of the UK. This guidance can be accessed here: <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Comparability-Report-Final.pdf>.

NISRA's exports statistics are considered as "Partially Comparable at Level D" with the ONS's statistics on importers and exporters in GB ([most recent publication](#)).

Level D comparability is described as:

"Figures which are produced from separate sources of data. Methods and standards are broadly comparable, but users should be made aware of the limitations."

Status of figures in current bulletin

The most recent figures relate to survey year. These figures are provisional and are subject to revision in the next reporting period.

It is normal practice to revise the data from the previous year based on ongoing data validation and clarification of responses from individual businesses. In line with this, previously published provisional BESES estimates for will be revised throughout this publication.

Sales and exports values are reported in £ million unless otherwise specified.

Percentage changes are reported to one decimal place.

The Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics series is classified as experimental (see above).