



NISRA

Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency
Gníomhalraocht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitistíca agus Talghde

NI Economy & Labour Market

A summary of key statistics

NISRA – Economic & Labour Market Statistics Branch

April 2024

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NISRA: Trusted statistics & research for a better society

As highlighted in its [2019-2024 corporate plan](#), the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), which incorporates the General Register Office (GRO), is an executive agency within the Department of Finance and was established on 1 April 1996.

NISRA is the principal source of Official Statistics and social research on Northern Ireland. These statistics and research not only inform public policy but also academic and private sector research, and contribute to debate in the wider community. NISRA's services are afforded to a wide range of Government Departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies to assist the policy process and delivery of their objectives and actions. NISRA is also responsible for conducting the decennial Census of Population.

This slide pack of key economic and labour market statistics has been sourced from the Agency's Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch (ELMS). The pack provides a high-level statistical summary of the Northern Ireland economy and labour market and should be considered in conjunction with the detailed supporting information and commentary that can be accessed via the various links and associated sources that have been highlighted.

The pack is available from the [NISRA website](#). In the interests of continuous improvement and adding value, NISRA is keen to hear your feedback and would appreciate any comments you may have (please e-mail comments to economicstats@nisra.gov.uk).

Special Thanks

NISRA would like to extend its thanks to all those businesses and members of the general public who have responded to the various surveys that the Agency conducts.

The provision of these key Economic and Labour Market indicators would simply not be possible without your continued support and co-operation, which is very much appreciated.

In a business context, the data you provide are the raw materials that we need to produce these statistics.

The information really is vital and is actively:

- Informing the development of Government policies; and
- Guiding decision making on 'real-life' issues.

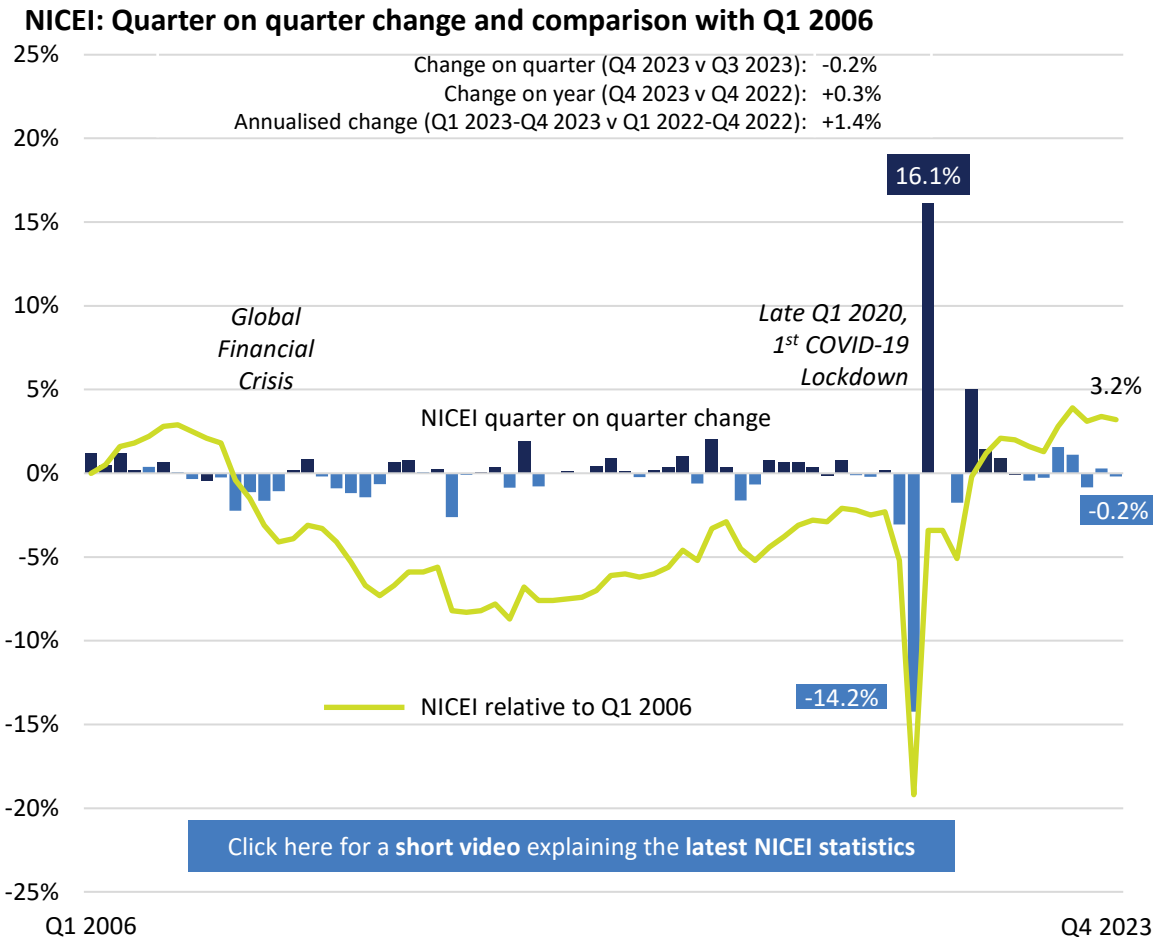
Economic Activity



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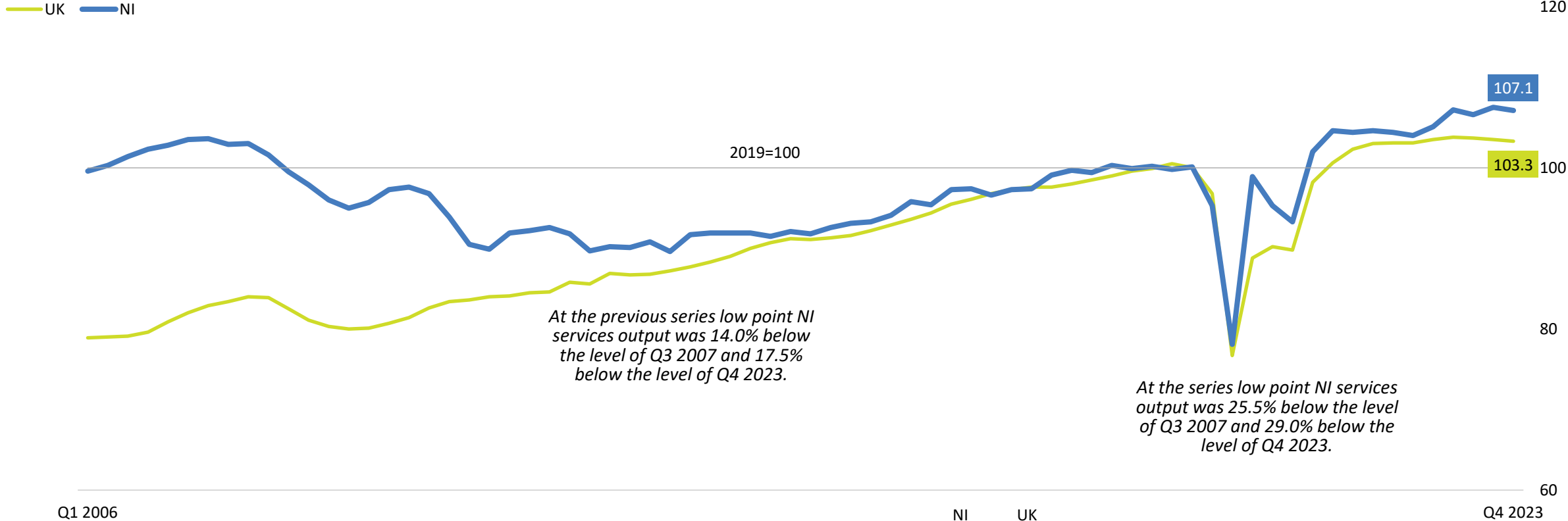
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Overall economic activity in Northern Ireland has recovered from the prominent reduction in output during Q2 2020 and is currently at a level not seen since mid-2008. The UK economy has rebound beyond its pre-pandemic level, while growth since 2006 far exceeds that in NI. Latest figures (to Q4 2023) show that Economic activity in NI has decreased by 0.2% over the quarter and increased by 0.3% over the year.



The service sector* accounts for just over half of economic activity in Northern Ireland. NI **services output** is up 1.9% over the year and down by 0.3% over the latest quarter.

Index of Services (2019=100)

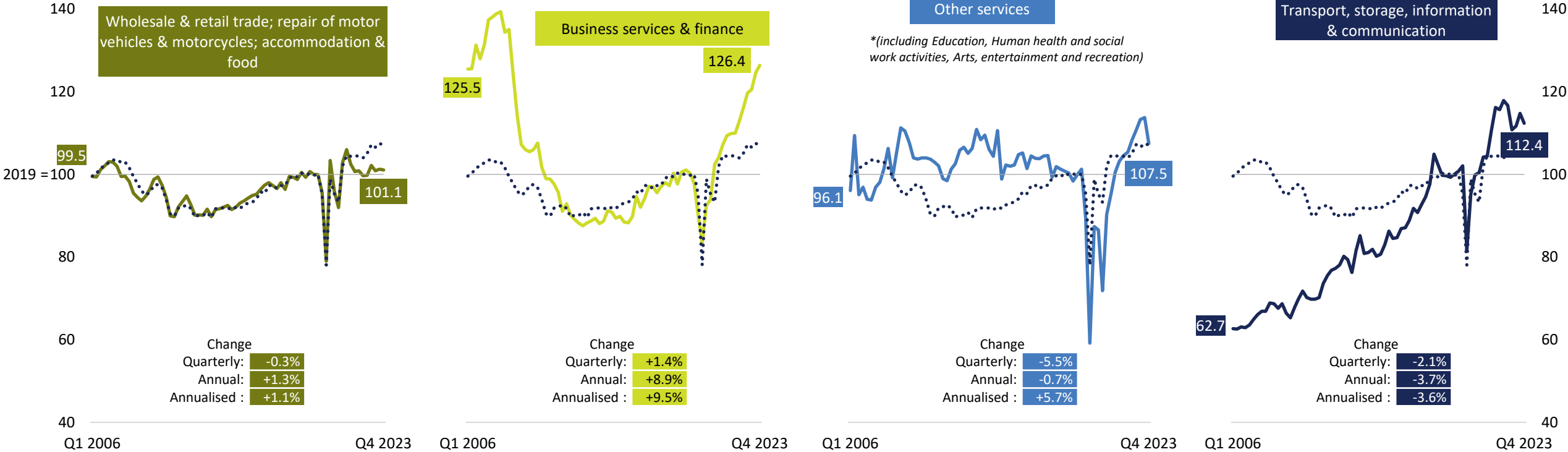


*Information refers to the private sector only.

Latest figures show that **services output** is up across two out of four of sectors over the year to Q4 2023. The ‘Business services & finance’ sub-sector, which accounts for 32.4% of the overall services sector has experienced the strongest annual growth and is currently 8.9% above the level seen in Q4 2022.

Index of Services: Sectoral comparison

..... Overall Index of Services (Q4 2023=107.1)



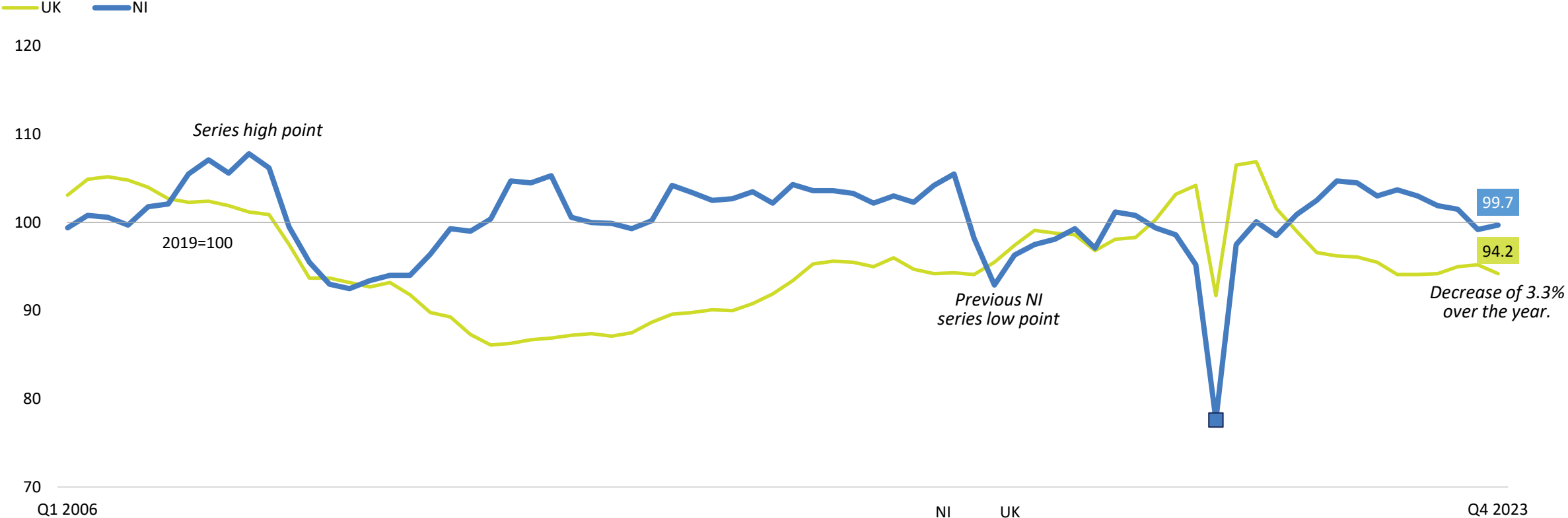
Index of Services Sector Split (based on 2019 GVA)



Source: [NISRA Index of Services](#)

Production accounts for around 16% of economic activity in Northern Ireland. Prior to COVID-19, production output had been noticeably impacted by the 2007/08 recession and substantially reduced output in the food, beverages & tobacco manufacturing sub-sector in 2017. **Production output** in NI decreased by 3.3% over the year.

Index of Production (2019=100)



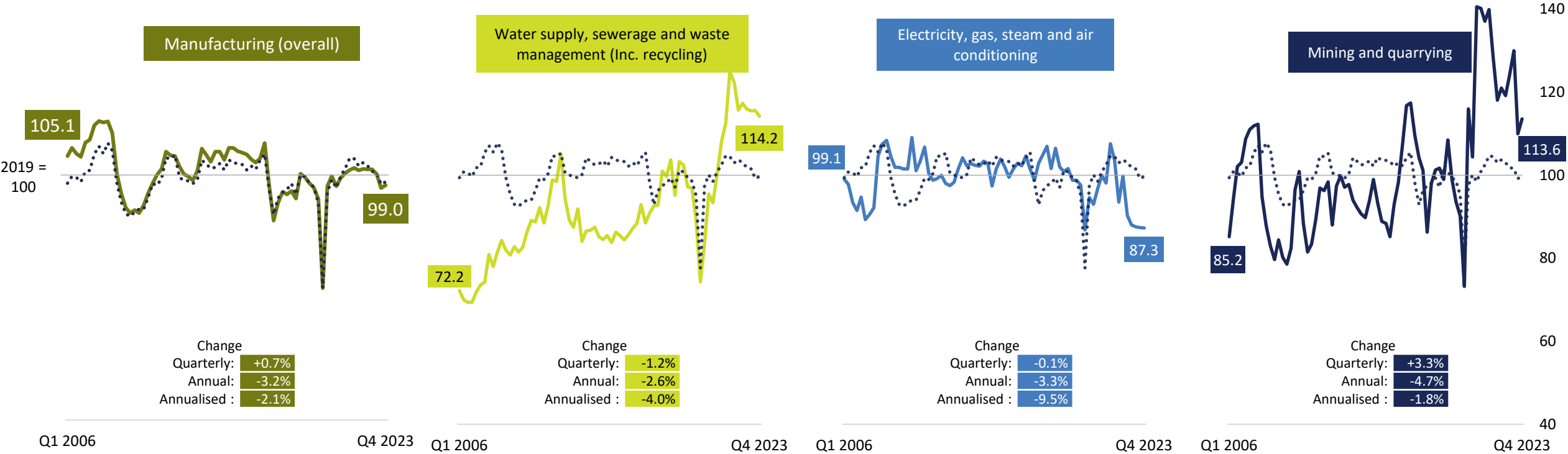
	NI	UK
Change on quarter (Q4 2023 v Q3 2023):	+0.4%	-1.1%
Change on year (Q4 2023 v Q4 2022):	-3.3%	+0.1%
Annualised change (Q1 2023-Q4 2023 v Q1 2022-Q4 2022):	-2.9%	-0.3%

Source: [NISRA Index of Production](#)

Latest figures for Q4 2023 show that Manufacturing, which accounts for the vast majority (80.7%) of production output, is just above the level in Q3 2022 (+0.7%).

Index of Production: Sectoral comparison

..... Overall Index of Production (Q4 2023=99.7)



Index of Production Sector Split (based on 2019 GVA)

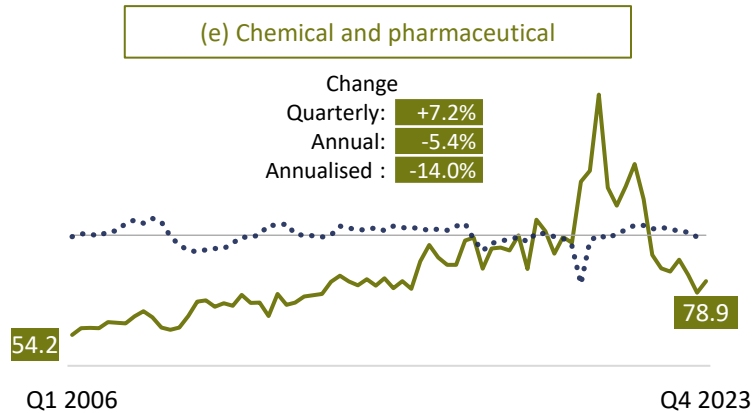
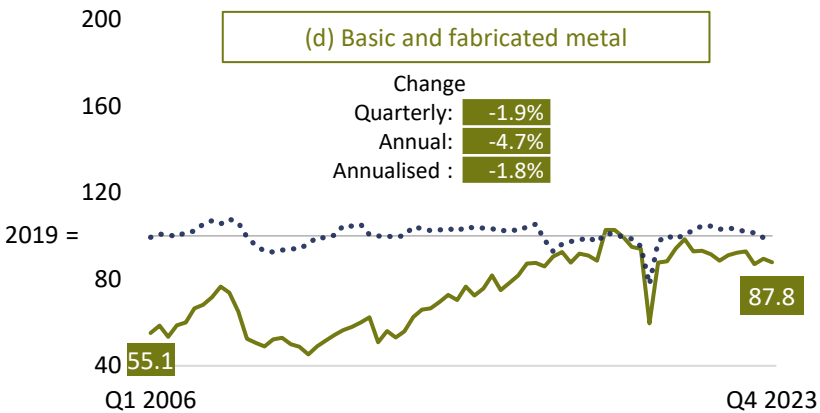
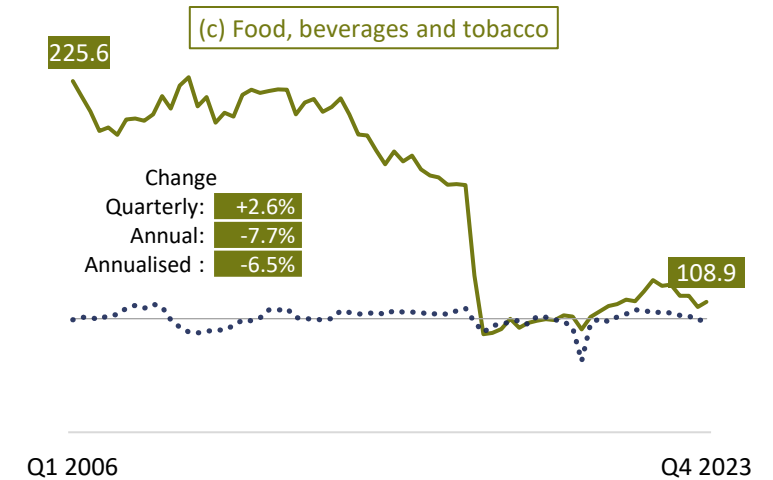
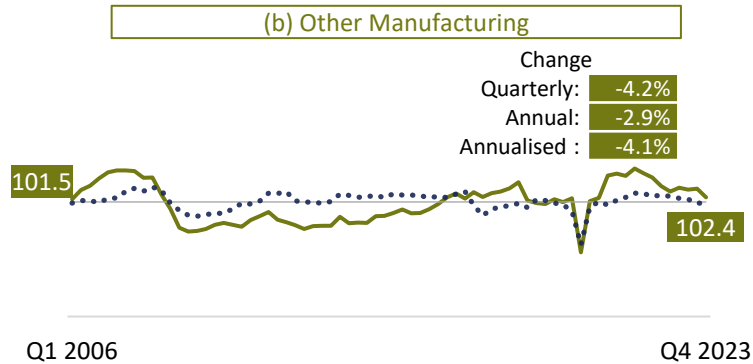
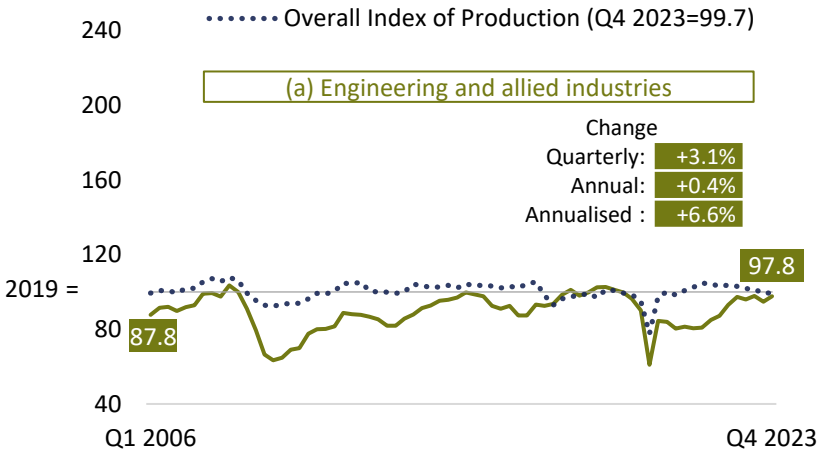


Source: [NISRA Index of Production](#)

*The information on this page refers to the private sector only.

Looking specifically at the **manufacturing subsectors**; over the quarter, output has increased in four of the six main sub-sectors (“Engineering and allied industries”, “Food products, beverages and tobacco products”, “Chemical and pharmaceutical products” and “Textiles, leather and related products”) and decreased in the remaining sub-sectors (“Total other manufacturing” and “Basic metals and fabricated metal products”).

Index of Production: Sectoral comparison



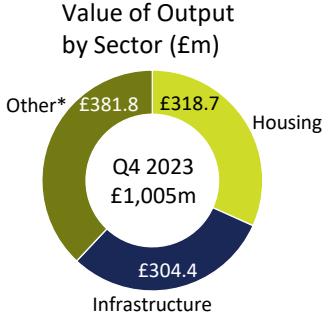
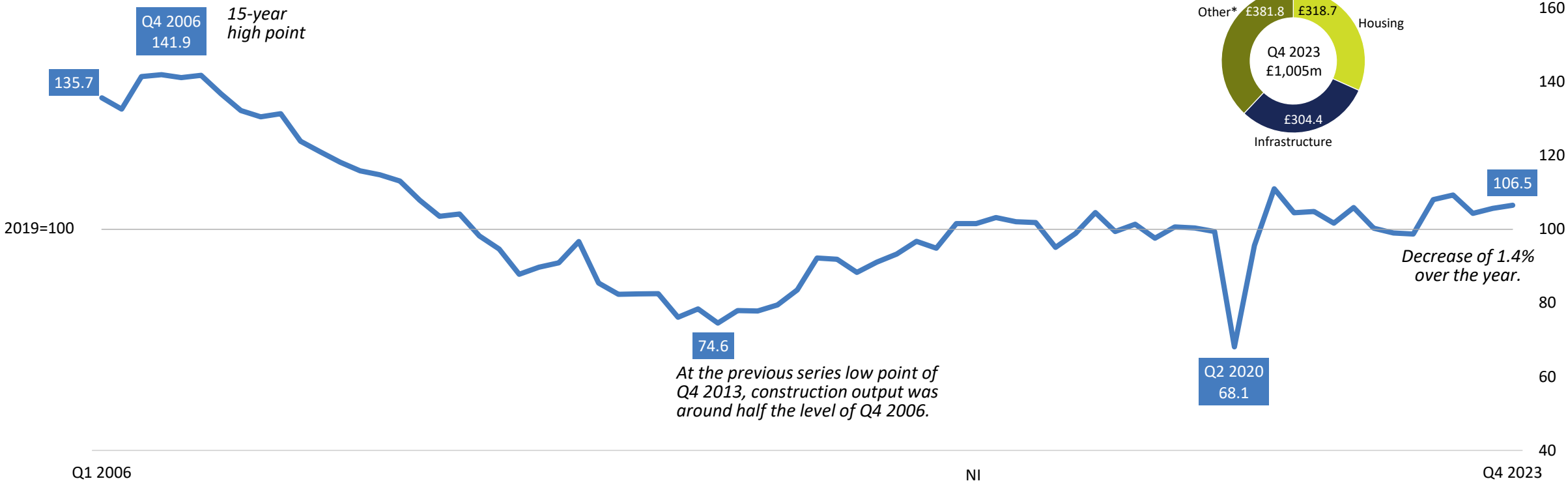
Manufacturing Sector Split (based on 2019 GVA)



*The information on this page refers to the private sector only.

Construction accounts for 7% of economic activity in NI. The fall in output has been severe since the 2007/08 recession and, despite a gradual recovery since 2014, output remains lower than the 15-year high in Q4 2006. Latest figures show that **construction output** has decreased by 1.4% over the year.

Volume of Construction Output in NI: Index (2019=100)



*Defined as all construction activity associated with the following: Industrial, for example, factories and warehouses or else Non-industrial, for example, schools, health centres and banks.

	NI
Change on quarter (Q4 2023 v Q3 2023):	+0.8%
Change on year (Q4 2023 v Q4 2022):	-1.4%
Annualised change (Q1 2023-Q4 2023 v Q1 2022-Q4 2022):	+4.9%

Source: [NISRA Quarterly Construction Bulletin](#)

Business Activity

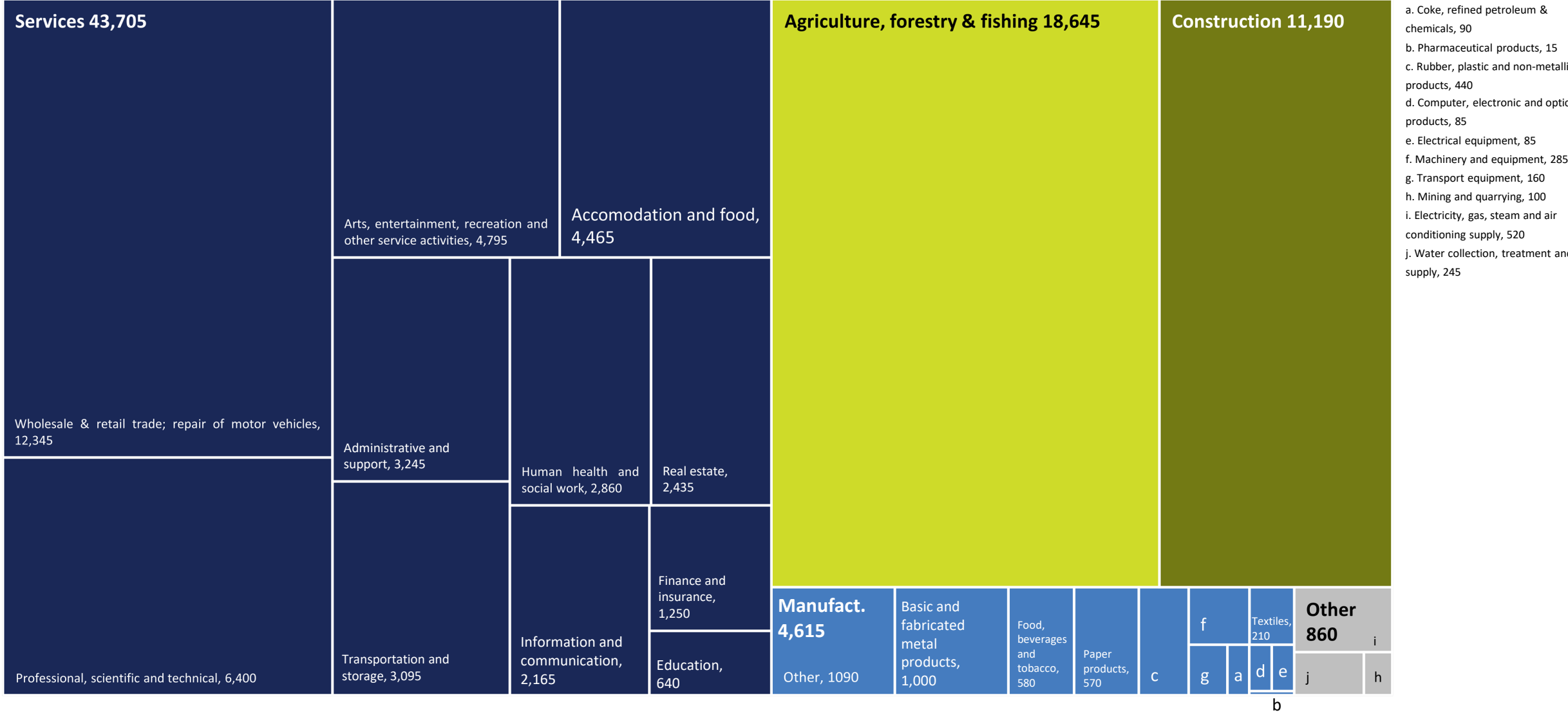


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There are 79,020 VAT and/or PAYE registered private sector businesses in NI and more than half of these are in the services sector.

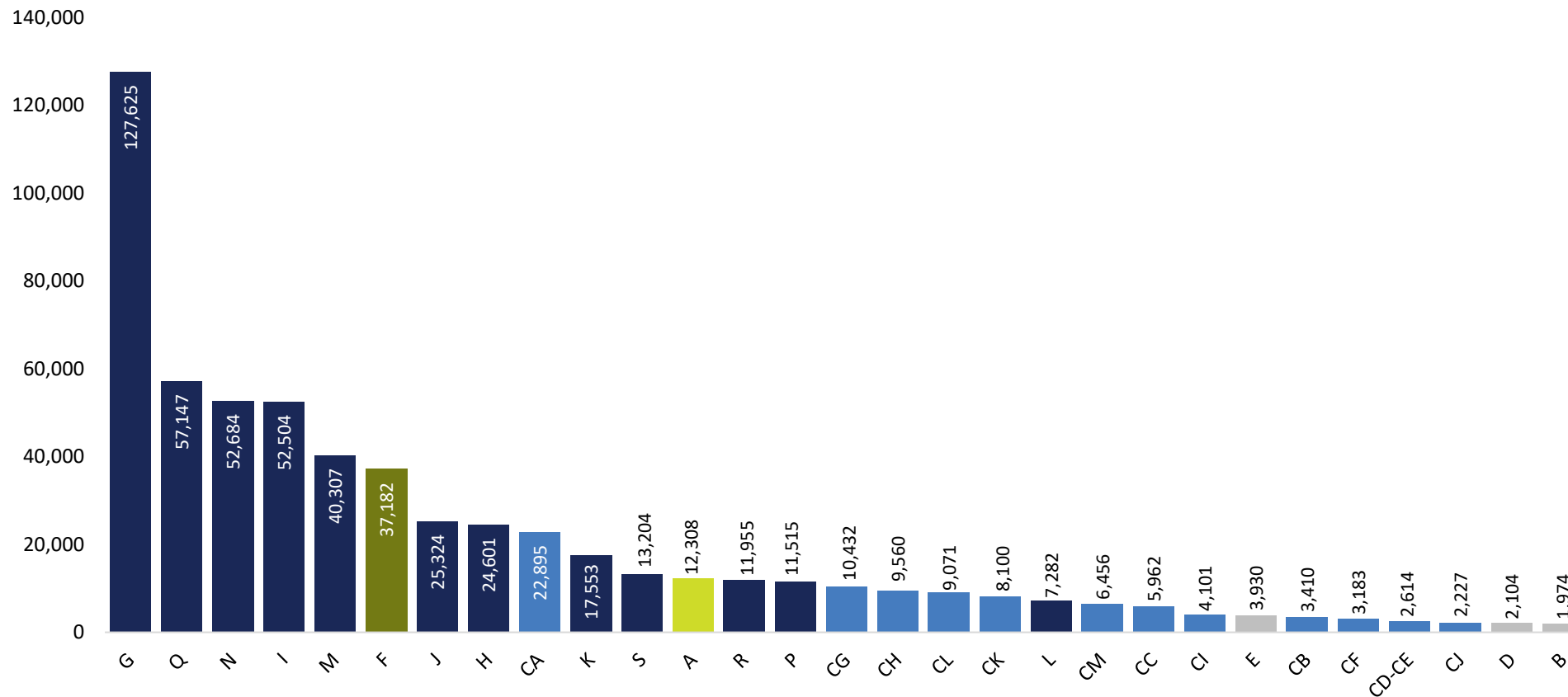
Number of NI Private Sector Businesses by Industry, March 2023



- a. Coke, refined petroleum & chemicals, 90
- b. Pharmaceutical products, 15
- c. Rubber, plastic and non-metallic products, 440
- d. Computer, electronic and optical products, 85
- e. Electrical equipment, 85
- f. Machinery and equipment, 285
- g. Transport equipment, 160
- h. Mining and quarrying, 100
- i. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply, 520
- j. Water collection, treatment and supply, 245

Private sector businesses provide around 587,210 **employee jobs***.
 More than one in five (22%) of these jobs are in the ‘wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles’ industry.

Private Sector Employee Jobs by Industry, 2022



- Services**
- G – Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles
- H – Transportation and storage
- I – Accommodation and food service activities
- J – Information and communication
- K – Financial and insurance activities
- L – Real estate activities
- M – Professional, scientific and technical activities
- N – Administrative and support service activities
- O – Public administration and defence
- P – Education
- Q – Human health and social work activities
- R – Arts, entertainment and recreation
- S – Other service activities

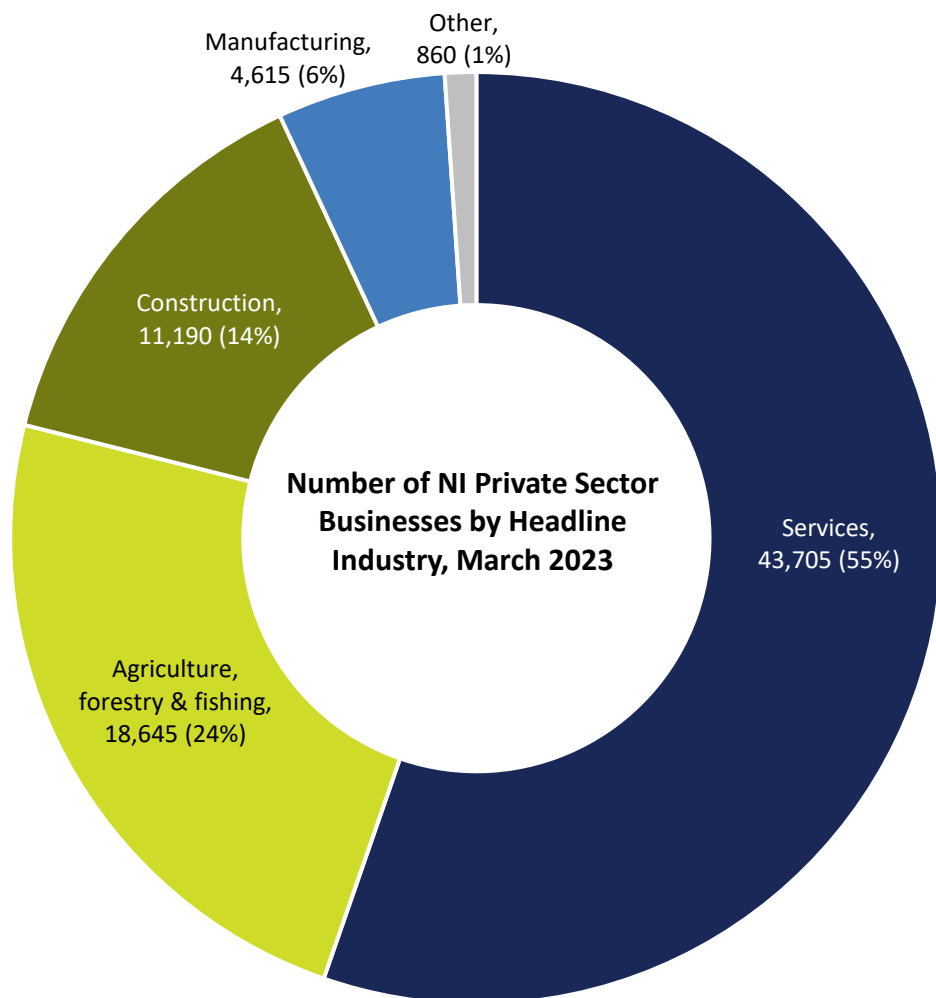
- Manufacturing subsections**
- CA – Manufacture of food, beverages and tobacco
- CB – Manufacture of textiles, wearing apparel and leather
- CC – Manufacture of wood and paper products and printing
- CD-CE – Manufacture of coke, refined petroleum and chemicals
- CF – Manufacture of pharmaceutical products
- CG – Manufacture of rubber, plastic and non-metallic minerals
- CH – Manufacture of basic and fabricated metal products
- CI – Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products
- CJ – Manufacture of electrical equipment
- CK – Manufacture of machinery and equipment
- CL – Manufacture of transport equipment
- CM – Other manufacturing, repair and installation

- Other**
- B – Mining and quarrying
- D – Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
- E – Water supply; sewerage and waste management

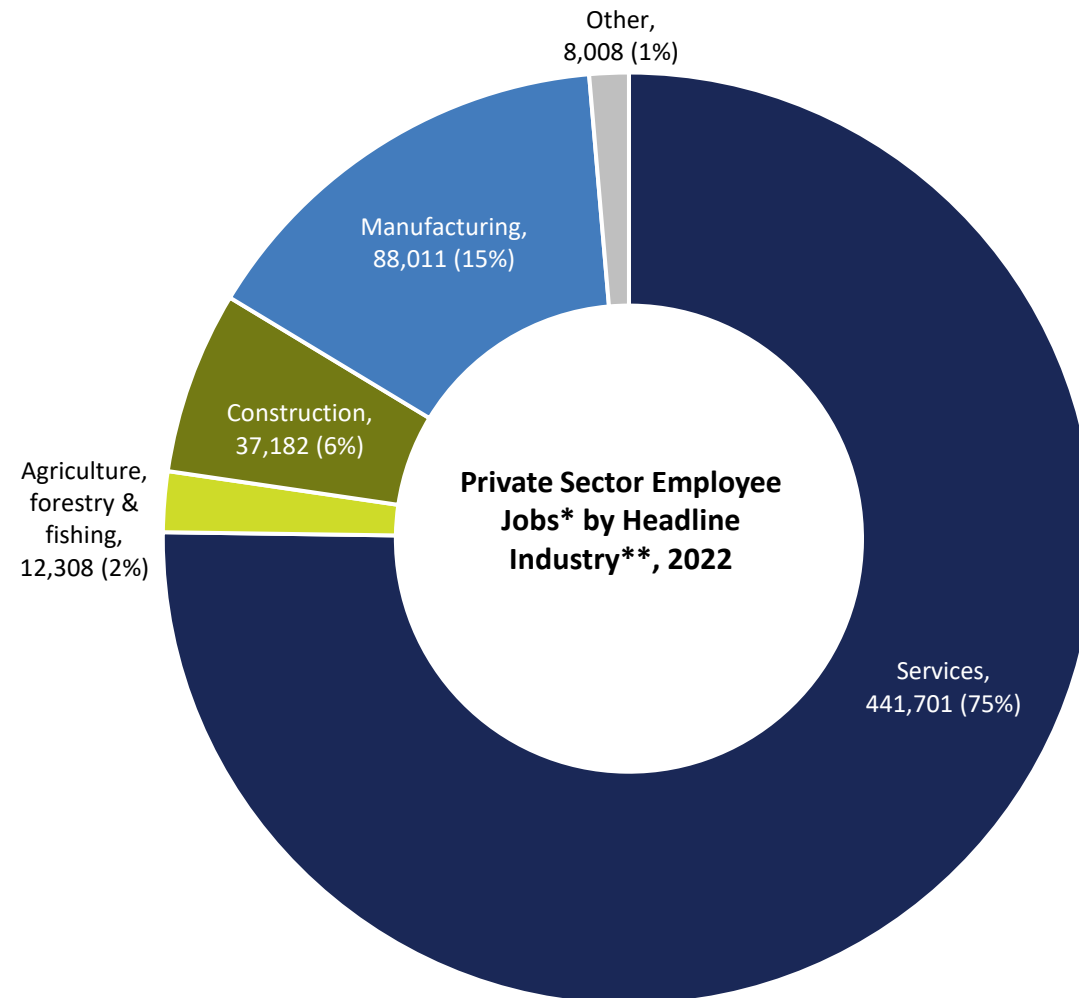
- Construction**
- F – Construction
- Agriculture**
- A – Agriculture, forestry and fishing

* Excludes working proprietors ** Includes data from farm census

More than half of all VAT and/or PAYE registered **private sector businesses** in NI are in the Services sector. In comparison, the Services sector provides three quarters of **private sector employee jobs**.



Source: [NISRA Inter Departmental Business Register](#)



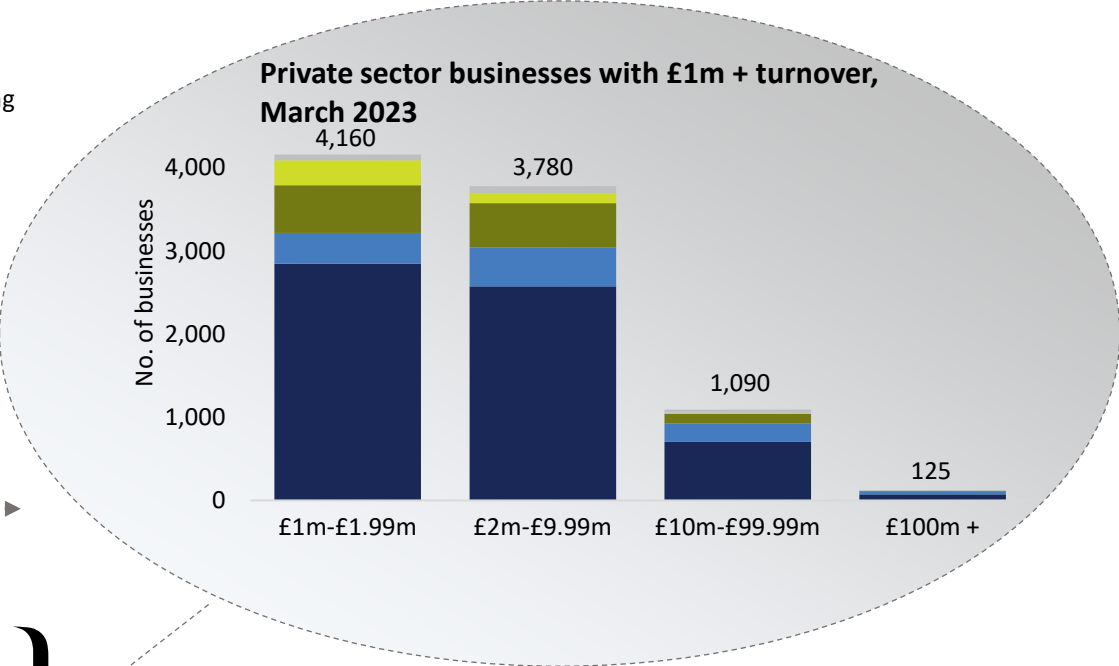
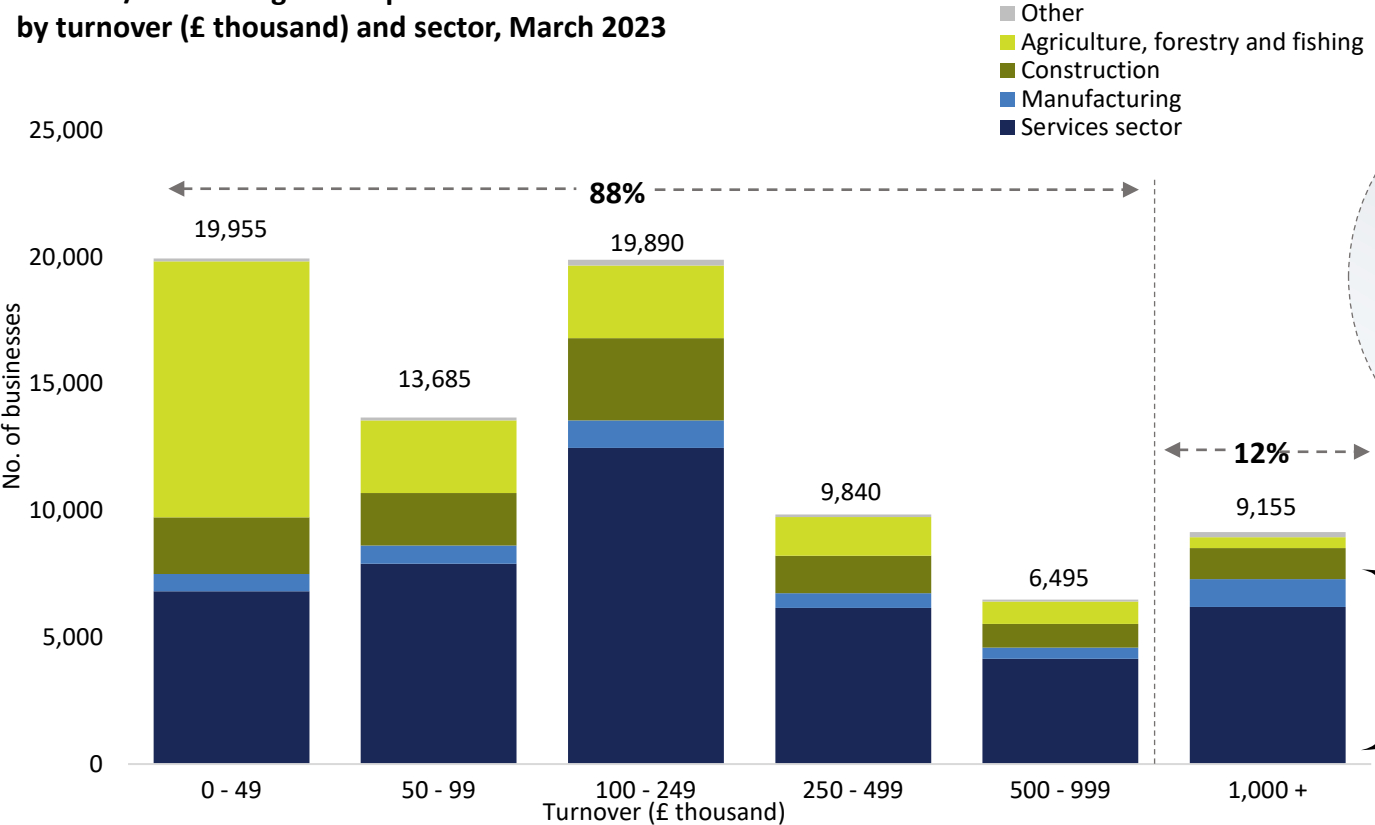
Source: [NISRA Business Register and Employment Survey](#)

*Excludes working proprietors. The majority of agricultural businesses will have working owners.

** Includes data from the DAERA Agriculture Census.

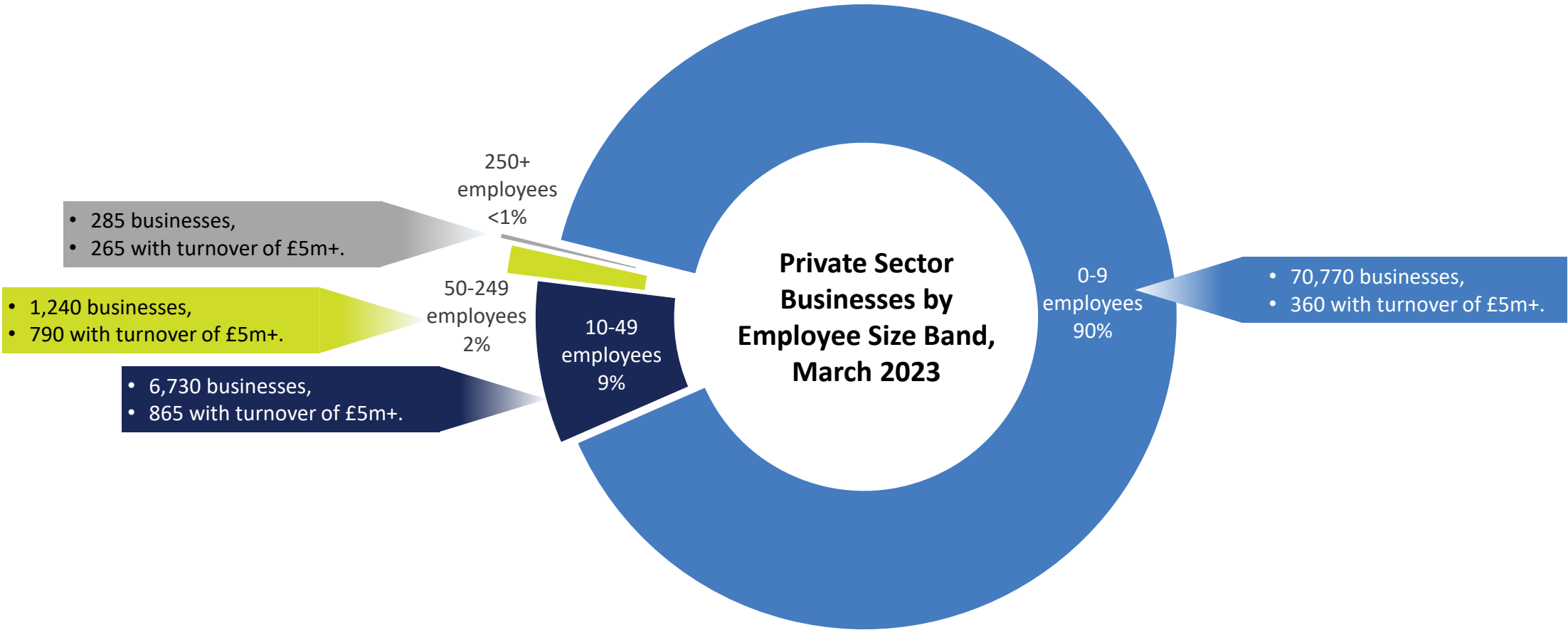
Just over 1 in 10 private sector businesses generated a **turnover** of £1 million or more and around two-thirds of these are in the service sector.

VAT and/or PAYE registered private sector businesses by turnover (£ thousand) and sector, March 2023



Source: [NISRA Inter Departmental Business Register](#)

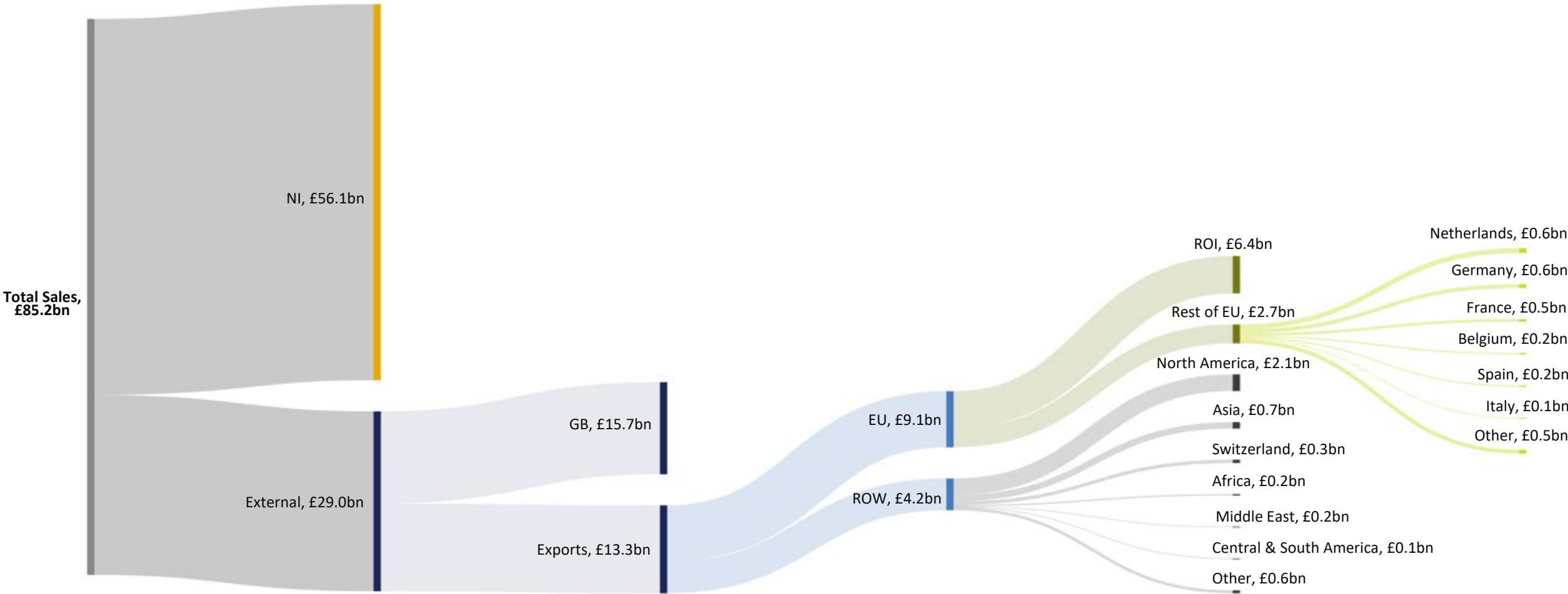
9 in 10 private sector businesses have fewer than 10 employees.
23% of businesses with 10 or more employees generated a turnover of £5m or more.



Source: [NISRA Inter Departmental Business Register](#)

Total **sales** by companies in NI were estimated to be worth £85.2 billion in 2022. Sales to customers outside Northern Ireland (External Sales) generated £29.0 billion, fairly evenly split between GB and **export** markets.

Sales by destination, 2022



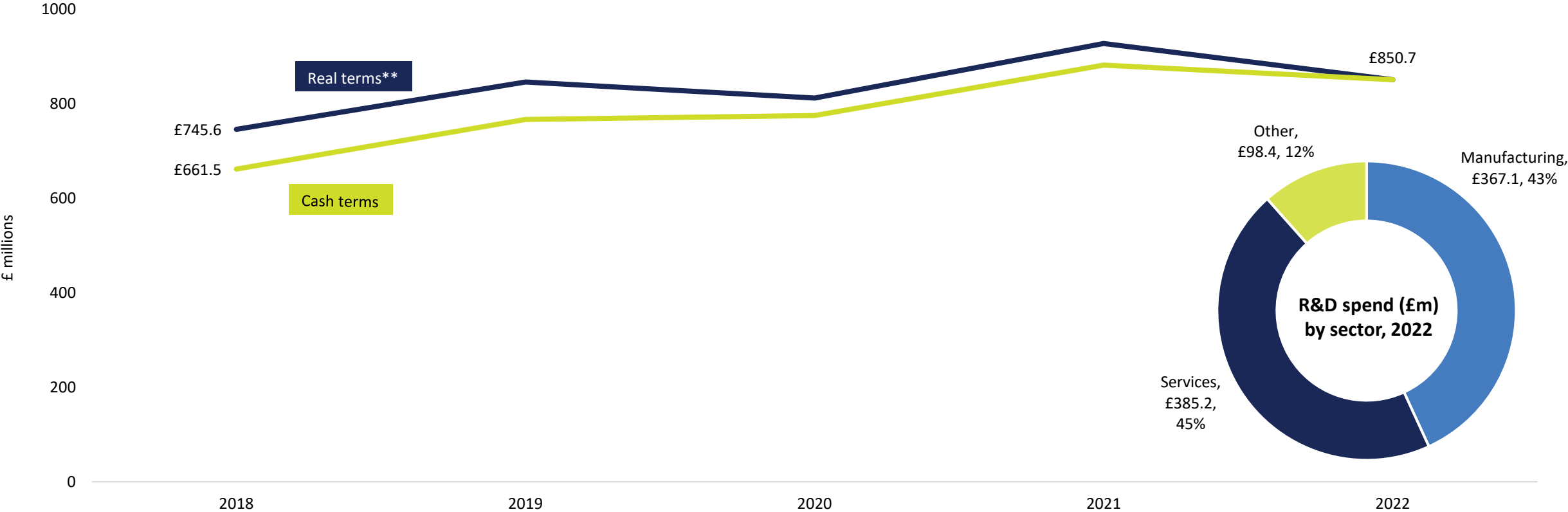
Total **purchases** by companies in NI were estimated to be worth £54.0 billion in 2022. Purchases from customers outside Northern Ireland (External purchases) were worth £22.9 billion, with three-fifths of this coming from GB.

Purchases and imports by destination, 2022



Research & Development spend is viewed as a key indicator of innovation. Business spend on R&D was £850.7m in 2022. Latest results from the UK Innovation Survey show that around 2 in 5 businesses in NI* are ‘innovation active’.

Research and Development spend in Northern Ireland, 2018-2022



* Businesses of 10 or more employees. **Adjusted using GDP deflator to remove effects of inflation.

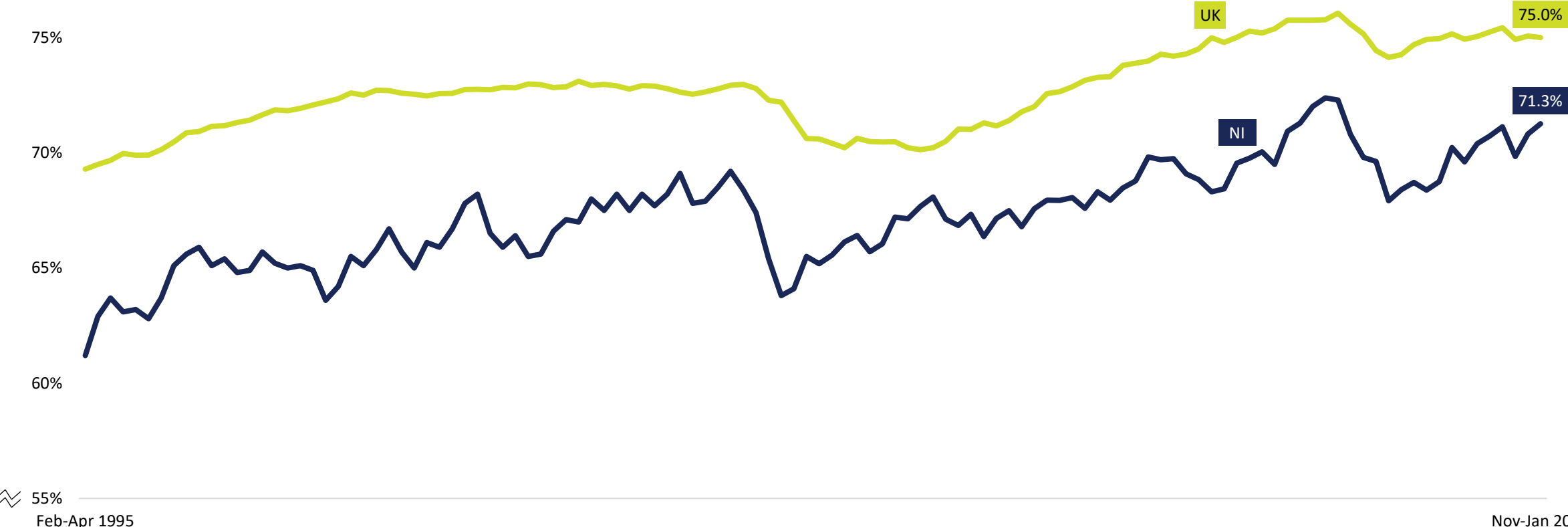
Source: [NISRA Research and Development Survey](#)

Labour Market



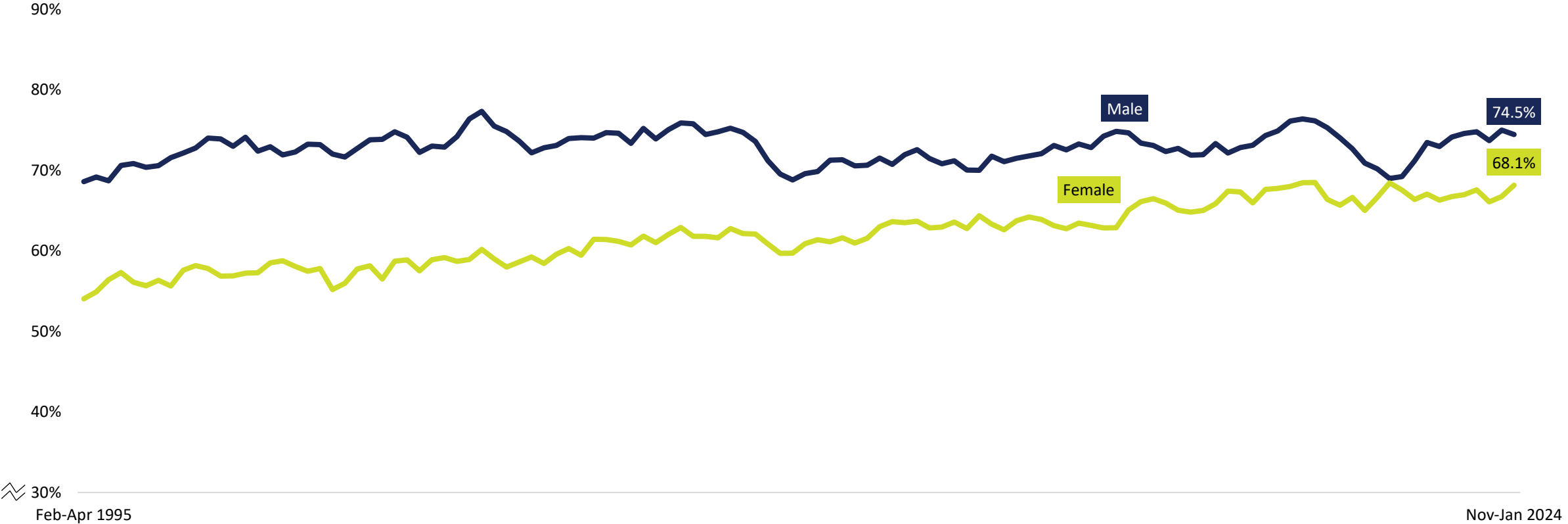
The **employment rate** has increased over the long-term, although the rate in NI is consistently below the rate in the UK overall. 12% of those in employment are self-employed (105,000).

Seasonally adjusted employment rate (16-64), Feb-Apr 1995 to Nov-Jan 2024



The long-term increase in the employment rate is more pronounced among females. The gap between male and female **employment rates** has narrowed in recent quarters and now stands at 6.3pps.

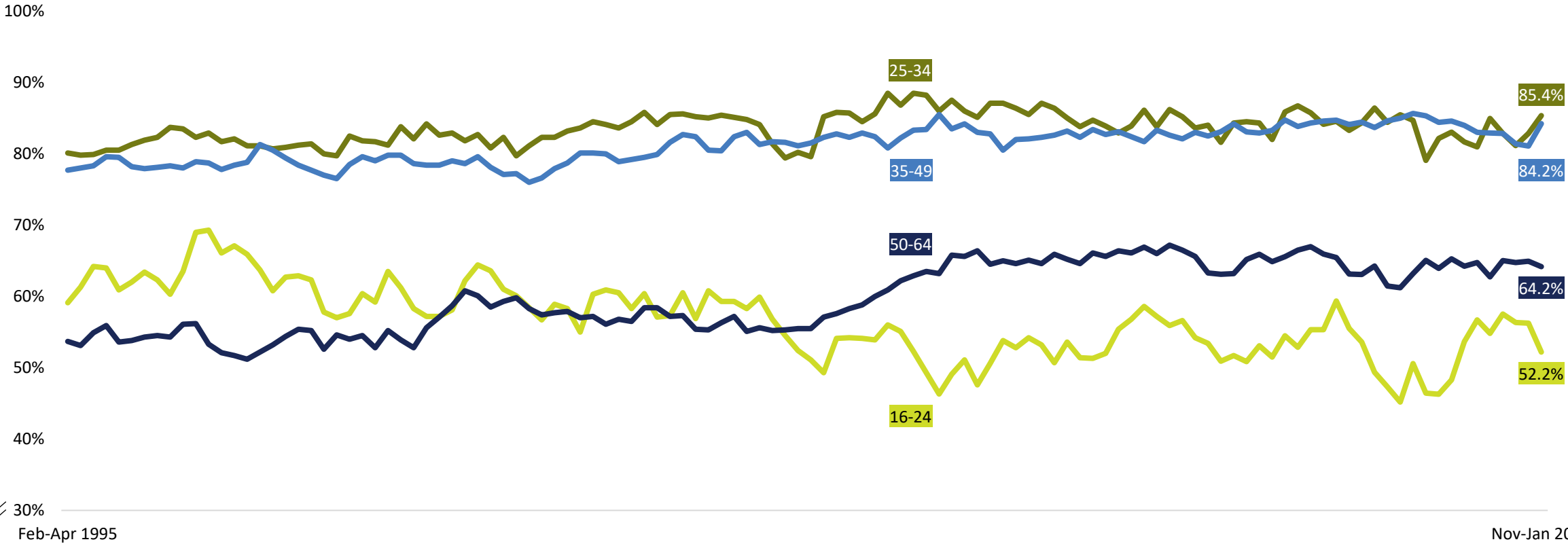
Seasonally adjusted employment rate (16-64) by gender, Feb-Apr 1995 to Nov-Jan 2024



Source: [NISRA Labour Market Report](#)

Economic activity among the youngest age-group (16-24) has dipped in the most recent quarter after previously bouncing back to pre-pandemic levels.

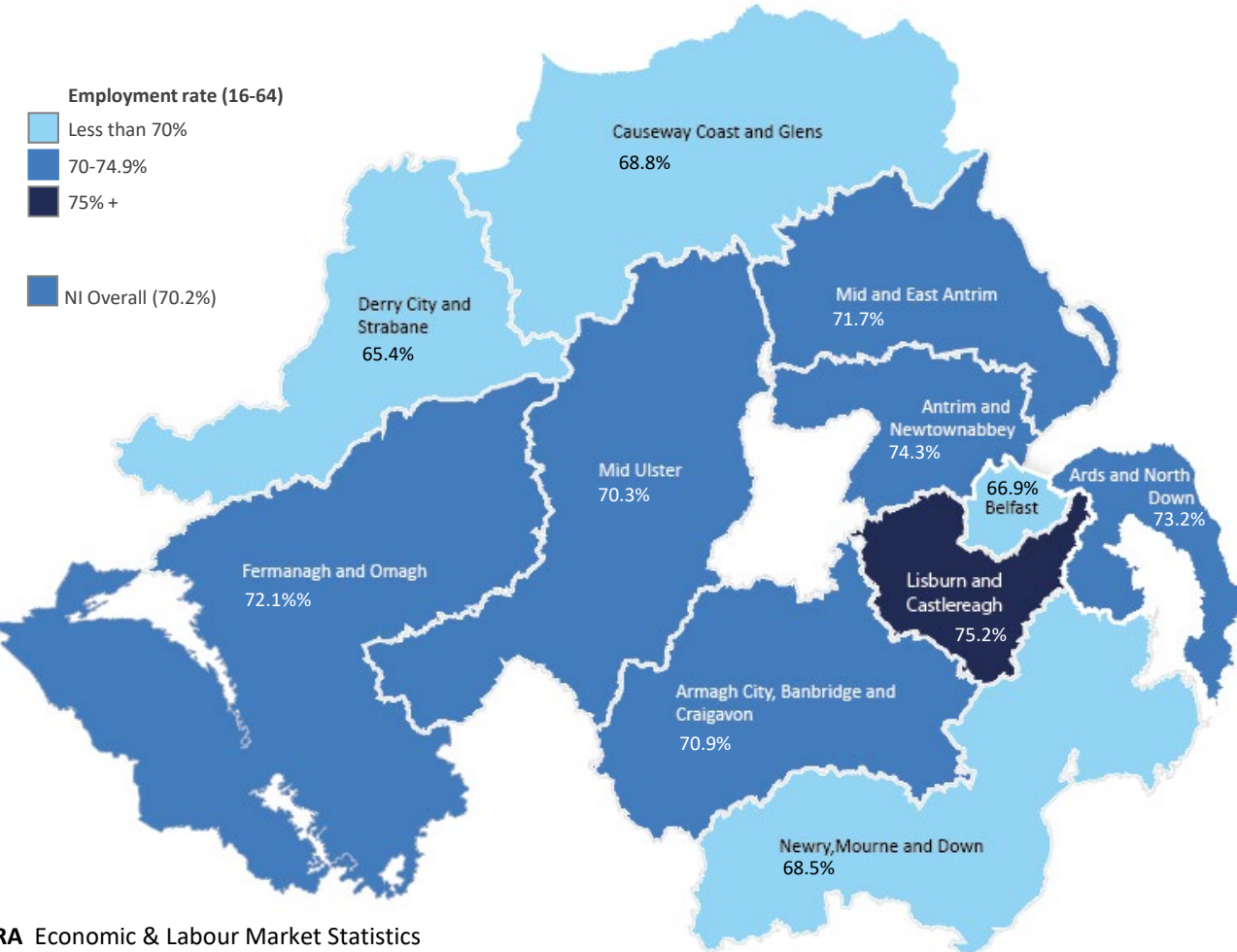
Economic activity rate (16-64) by age-group, Feb-Apr 1995 to Nov-Jan 2024



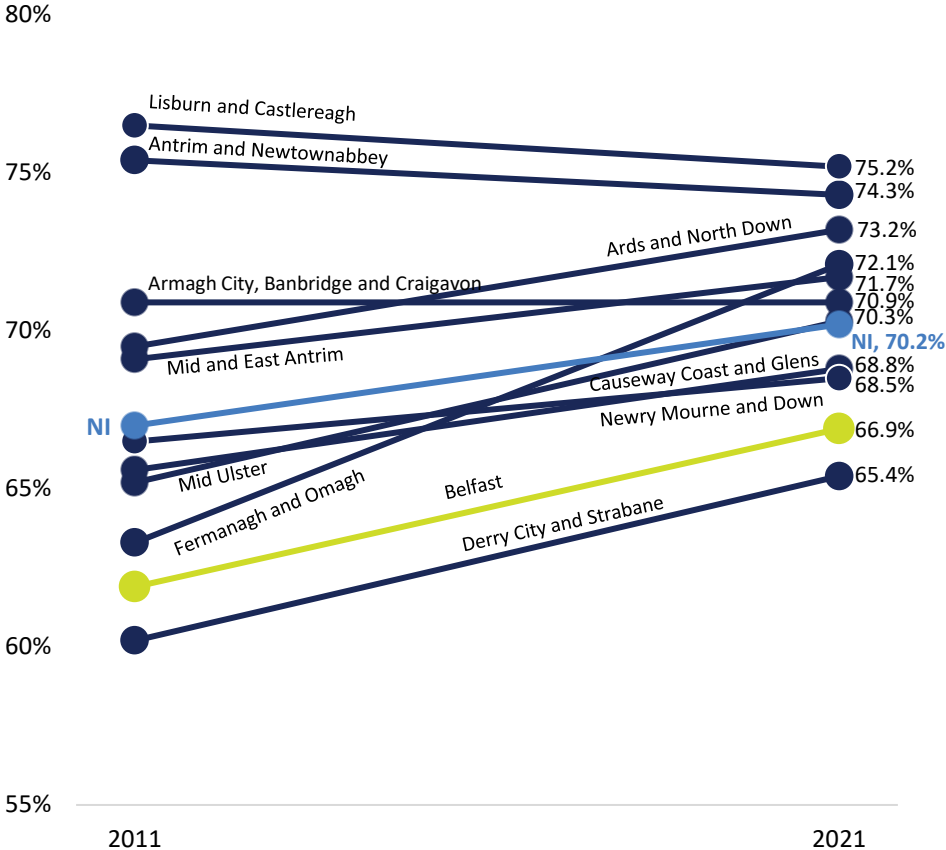
Source: [NISRA Labour Market Report](#)

Employment rates vary by Local Government District; they are lowest in Derry City & Strabane, and highest in Lisburn & Castlereagh.

Employment rate (16-64) by Local Government District, 2021

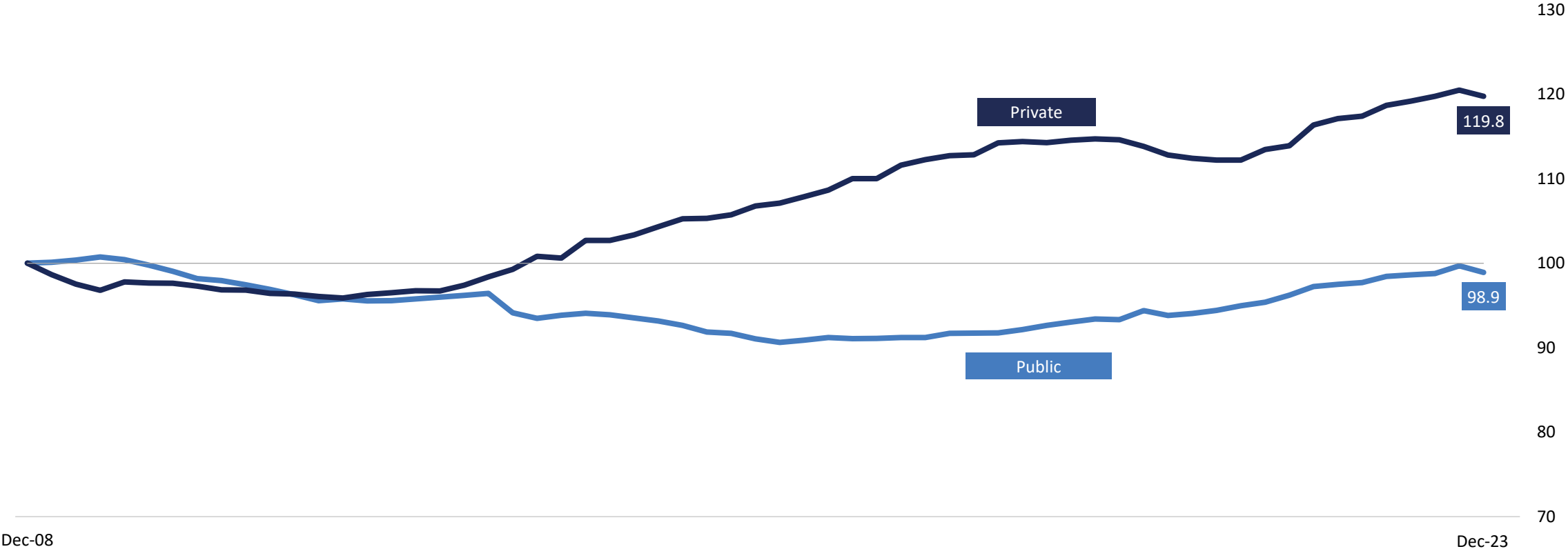


Employment rate (16-64) by Local Government District, 2011 and 2021



The private sector accounts for around three-quarters of jobs* in Northern Ireland. The number of **private sector jobs** is around 20% higher than the level in December 2008, whereas there remains a similar level of **public sector jobs**.

Index of Private and Public Sector Jobs*, Dec 2008 – Dec 2023



Public - Private sector split, Dec 2023 (seasonally adjusted)

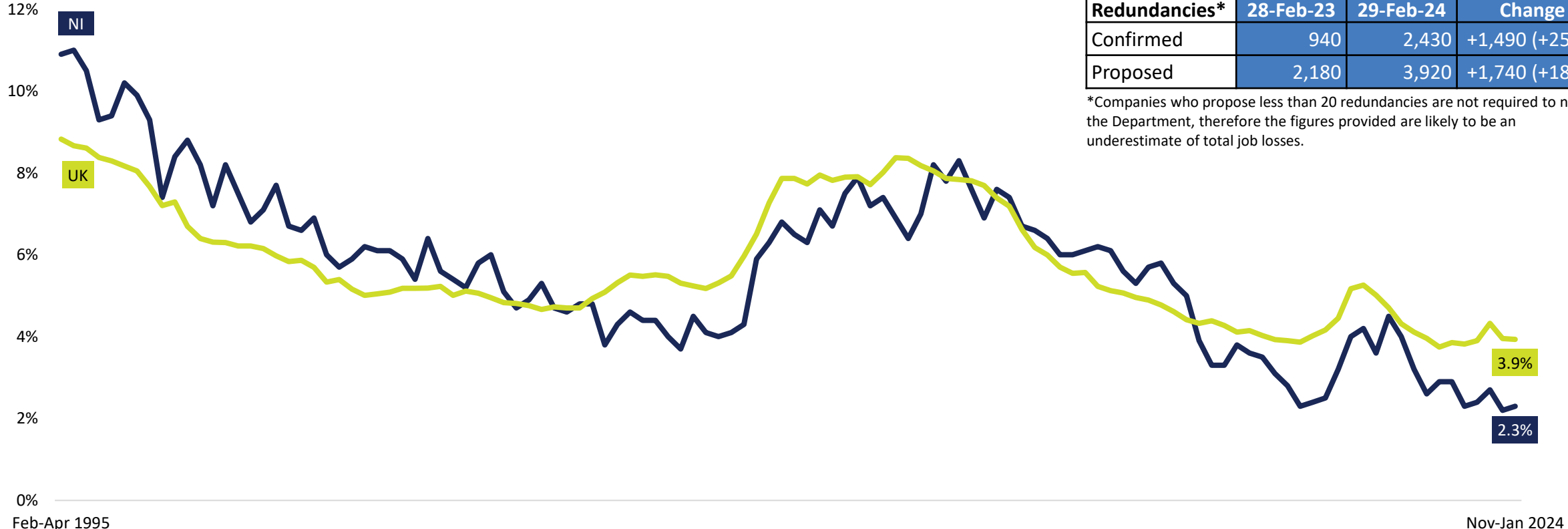
Private: 593,150 jobs (73%)	Public: 224,070 jobs (27%)
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Source: [NISRA Quarterly Employment Survey](#)

*Excludes self-employed

The **unemployment rate** in NI (2.3%) remains noticeably lower than the level following the post-2007/08 recession peak (8.3% in Nov-Jan 2013). The number of confirmed **redundancies*** in the year to 29th February 2024 is 259% higher than the number in the preceding 12 months.

Seasonally adjusted unemployment rate (16+), Feb-Apr 1995 to Nov-Jan 2024

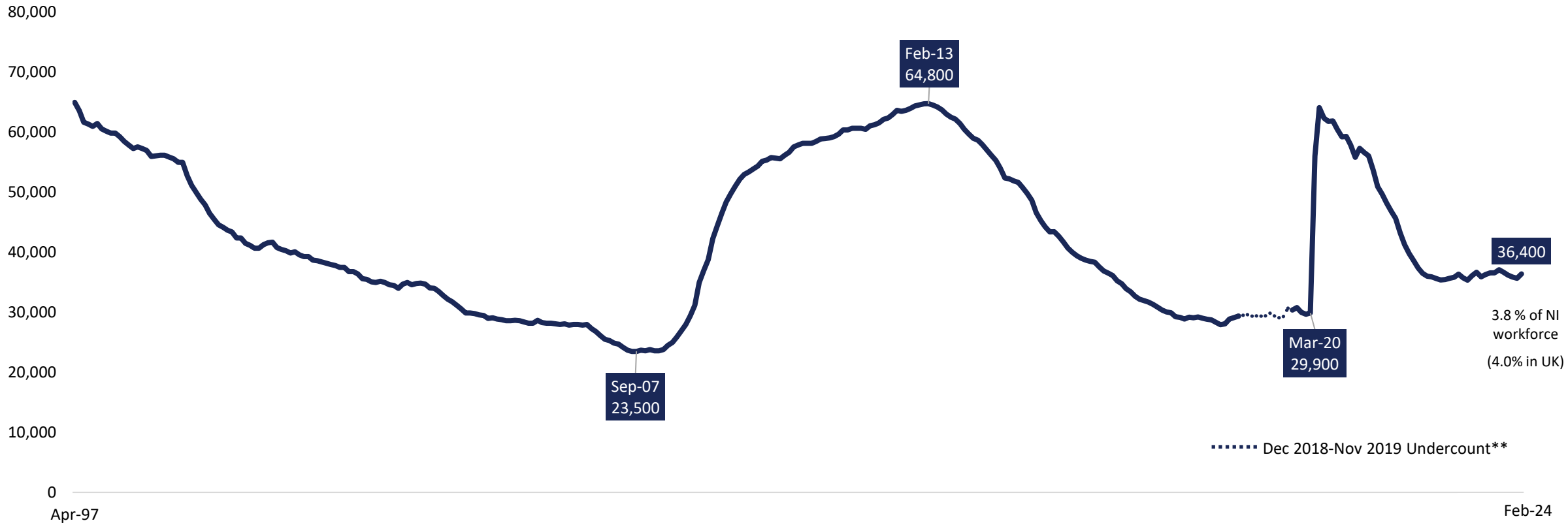


	1-Mar-22 to 28-Feb-23	1-Mar-23 to 29-Feb-24	Change
Confirmed	940	2,430	+1,490 (+259%)
Proposed	2,180	3,920	+1,740 (+180%)

*Companies who propose less than 20 redundancies are not required to notify the Department, therefore the figures provided are likely to be an underestimate of total job losses.

The **claimant count** consists of Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimants plus those Universal Credit (UC) claimants claiming for the reason of being unemployed*. The number of claimants more than doubled in the 2 months following the March 2020 lockdown. The total now stands at 36,400, just under 22% higher than in March 2020.

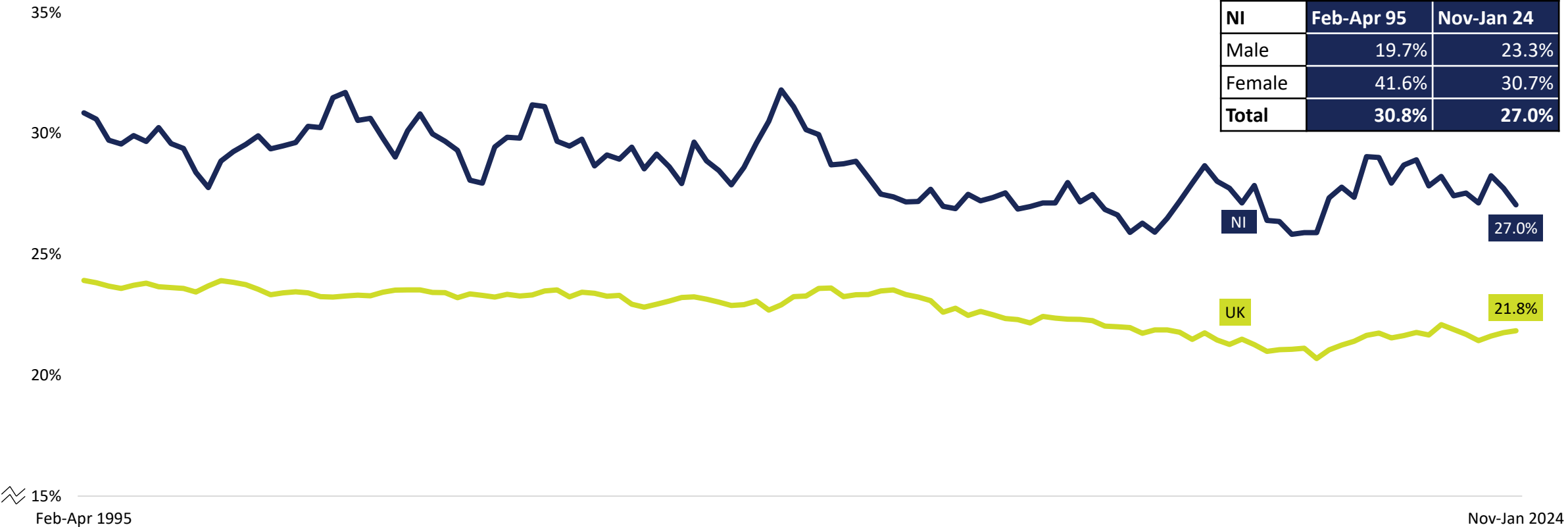
Seasonally adjusted claimant count (experimental), Apr 1997 – Feb 2024



*Some claimants are wholly unemployed and seeking work, while others may be employed but with low earnings that make them eligible for unemployment related benefit support.
 **A number of claims across the UK to the UC element of the Claimant Count were coded to incorrect locations for data relating to December 2018 to November 2019. This has been corrected for December 2019 onwards, but previous periods remain affected. The impact of the revision on NI for December 2019 was an increase of fewer than 1,000 cases.
 Source: [NISRA Labour Market Report](#)

The relatively high level of **economic inactivity** is a long-standing feature of the NI labour market. Although there has been some reduction over the long-term, the rate is still over 5 percentage points above that of the UK.

Seasonally adjusted economic inactivity rate (16-64), Feb-Apr 1995 to Nov-Jan 2024



By gender

NI	Feb-Apr 95	Nov-Jan 24
Male	19.7%	23.3%
Female	41.6%	30.7%
Total	30.8%	27.0%

15%
Feb-Apr 1995

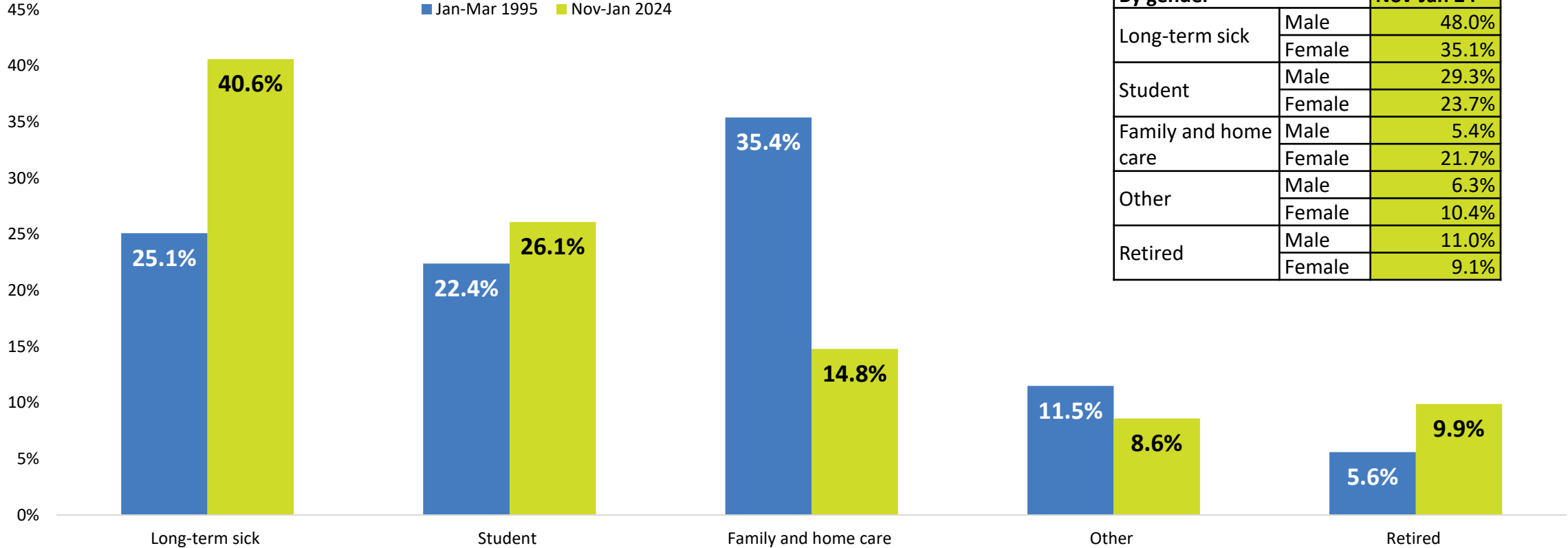
Nov-Jan 2024

Non-zero axis

Source: [NISRA Labour Market Report](#)

There has been a shift in the underlying reasons for **economic inactivity** over the past 25 years. The proportion inactive due to family and home care reasons has reduced substantially and long-term sickness is now the largest contributor to inactivity.

Reasons for economic inactivity (16-64), Jan-Mar 1995 compared with Nov-Jan 2024

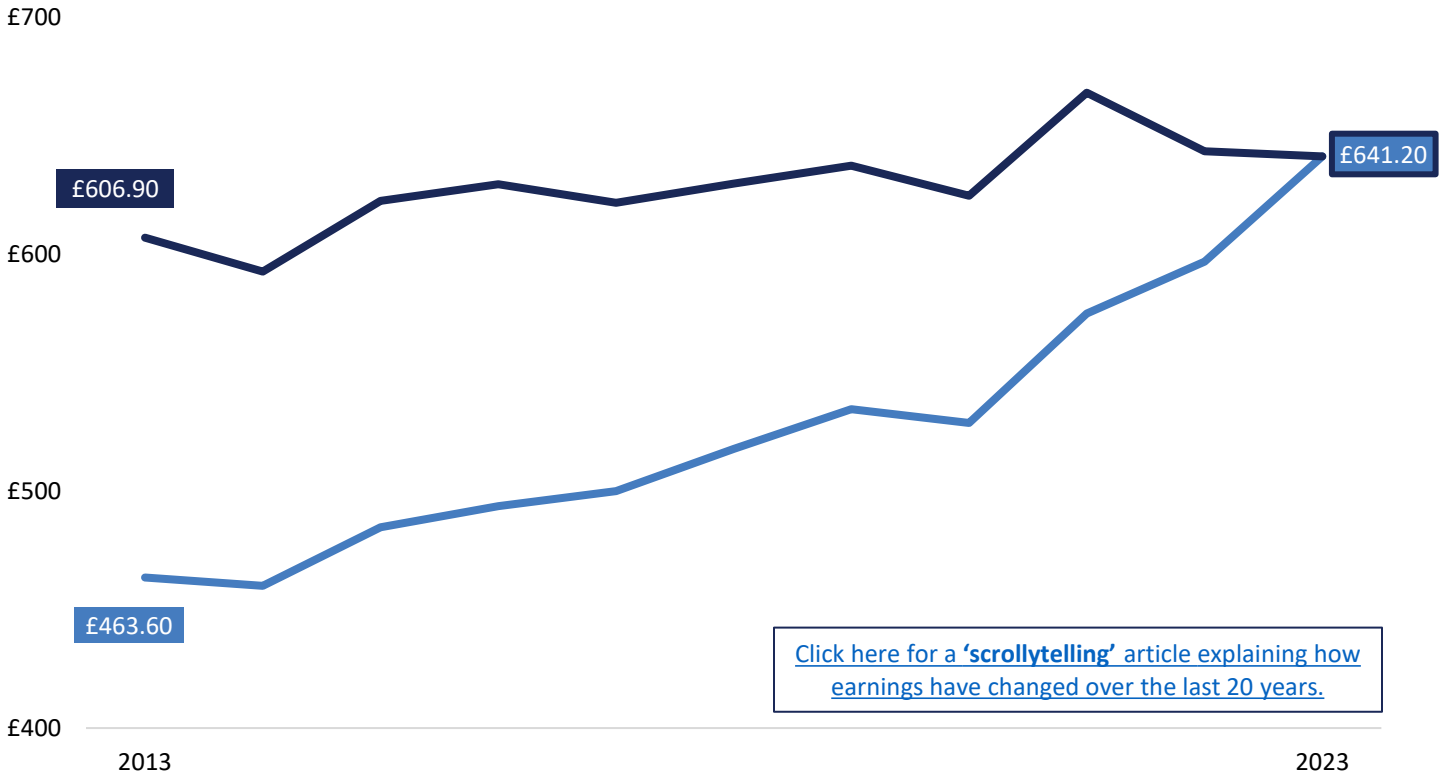


By gender		Nov-Jan 24
Long-term sick	Male	48.0%
	Female	35.1%
Student	Male	29.3%
	Female	23.7%
Family and home care	Male	5.4%
	Female	21.7%
Other	Male	6.3%
	Female	10.4%
Retired	Male	11.0%
	Female	9.1%

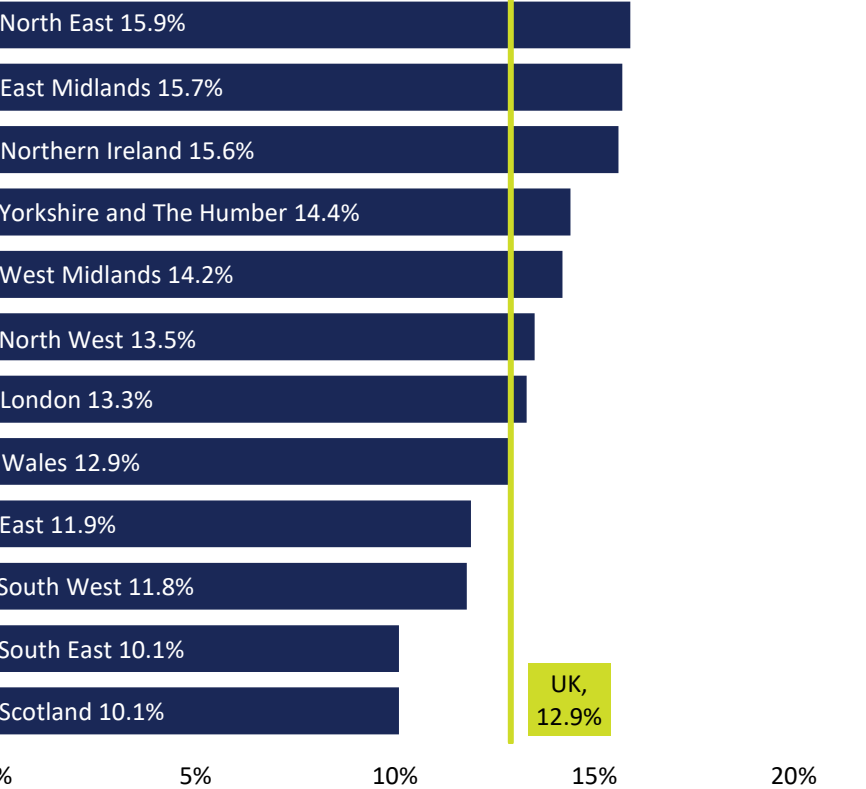
Source: [NISRA Labour Market Report](#)

Earnings decreased by 0.3% in real terms* over the year to April 2023. Just over one in six jobs in Northern Ireland pays an hourly rate below the real living wage.

Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in nominal and real terms, 2013 - 2023



Proportion of employee jobs with hourly earnings below the real living wage**, by UK region, April 2023



Source: [NISRA Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#)

*CPIH adjusted to remove effects of inflation.

**As determined by the Living Wage Foundation.
Real Living Wage = £12.00 (£13.15 in London).

To obtain more detailed information on the Northern Ireland economy, visit our website www.nisra.gov.uk



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