

# Northern Ireland Quarterly Construction Bulletin

## Quarter 2 2020 (April – June)

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020  
Area: Northern Ireland  
Theme: Business and Energy  
Frequency: Quarterly

### Introduction

This statistical bulletin provides users with the latest estimates of construction output carried out in Northern Ireland for Quarter 2 2020 (April – June). It excludes work carried out by Northern Ireland Construction firms in other parts of the UK or elsewhere. All figures included in the Quarterly Construction Enquiry (QCE) are adjusted for seasonality where appropriate, where the [seasonally adjusted series](#) started in 2000.

This release captures the direct effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and measures taken to reduce transmission of the virus. The most significant was the introduction of restrictions in movement, which began on 23 March 2020. Quarter 2 2020 is the first quarter that has been affected from start to finish.

### Key Points



The total volume of construction output in the second quarter of 2020 decreased by 30.0% compared with Q1 2020, was 30.0% lower than the same quarter in 2019 and 9.3% lower on a rolling four quarter basis.



Construction output has reached a series low in Q2 2020. Both the quarterly (-30.0%) and annual (-30.0%) decreases seen in Q2 2020 were the largest decreases on record.



The total volume of construction output has fallen since the most recent peak in Q4 2006. While the total volume of construction output in NI was on an upward trend between Q4 2013 and Q3 2018, recent quarters have shown a drop, with decreases in 4 of the last 5 quarters.



The decrease in overall output in Q2 2020 from the previous quarter was driven by a 32.9% decrease in New Work and a 16.7% decrease in Repair and Maintenance.



The output in Repair and Maintenance has shown annual decreases in 5 consecutive quarters since Q2 2019.



In Q2 2020, all 3 construction sub-sectors (Housing, Infrastructure, Other work) showed a decrease when compared with the previous quarter, where both Housing (-37.5%) and Other Work (-25.2%) have now reached series lows.

# Contents

1	Infographic	3
2	Introduction	4
3	Context	5
4	Construction Output Summary	7
5	Survey Response	17
6	Construction Output Tables	17
7	Further Information	18

## National Statistics

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics following a full [assessment](#) in March 2012. The [assessment](#) was undertaken in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).



It is NISRA'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.

Since the assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

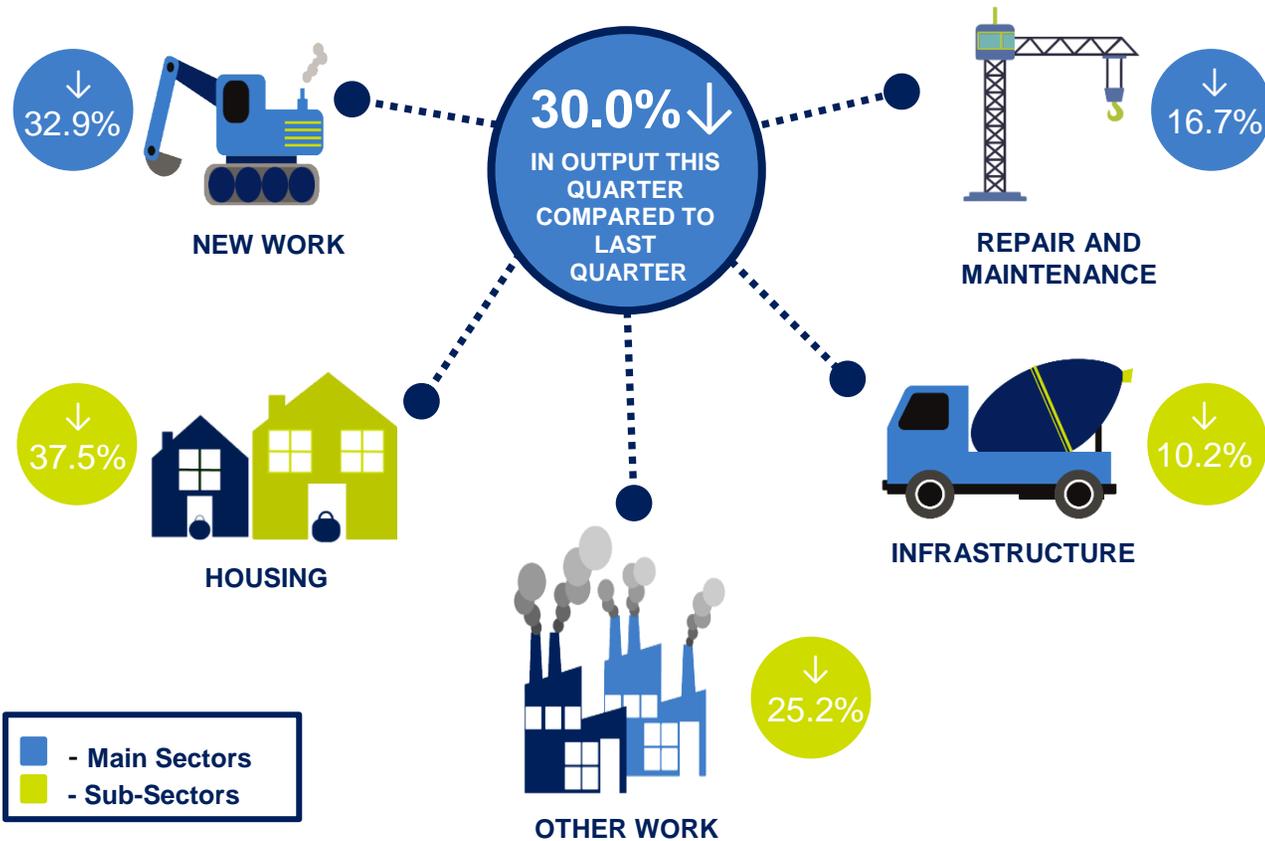
- Removed pre-release access to enhance trustworthiness, with the view to bring the publication date forward.
- Transferred data to an improved case management system (Integrated Business Survey System).
- Made improvements to the data collection process to standardise with other business surveys and ensure best practice is followed.
- Reduced business burden by offering the option of online data returns.

## Publication Schedule

Quarter	Publication Date
2020 Quarter 3	14 January 2021
2020 Quarter 4	8 April 2021
2021 Quarter 1	8 July 2021
2021 Quarter 2	30 September 2021

# Quarterly Construction Enquiry 2020 Quarter 2 Infographic

## 2020 Quarter 2 Compared with 2020 Quarter 1 – Variables



## Overall Construction



Quarterly Change

- 30.0%



Annual Change

- 30.0%



## 2 Introduction

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The Construction Output Statistics published in the Northern Ireland Construction Bulletin are intended to provide a general measure of quarterly and annual changes in the volume and value of construction output in Northern Ireland. These figures are produced from the Northern Ireland Quarterly Construction Enquiry (QCE) which is a statutory survey of construction firms operating in Northern Ireland, collected under the [Statistics of Trade and Employment \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1988](#). Each quarter, a sample of approximately 750 construction firms are asked to provide details of the value of construction activity they have undertaken in a specified period. The survey also covers public sector organisations (for example, the [DfI Roads](#)) undertaking their own construction activity.

The Construction Output estimates are published as [Chained Volume Measures](#). Chained Volume Measures show volume trends in construction output over time by removing inflationary price effects.

### Main uses of Construction Output Statistics

The Construction Output statistics are used by National Accounts in the calculation of the output measure of UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and also by the [Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index \(NICEI\)](#) in the calculation of the Economic Output of the Northern Ireland Economy. The results are used by Northern Ireland Government Departments, Economists, Construction Industry Analysts and Academics to understand the state of the construction sector and the broader economy in Northern Ireland. A [summary of the main usage](#) of Northern Ireland Construction Output Statistics is also available.

# 3 Context

The latest regional [Gross Value Added \(GVA\) data for Northern Ireland](#) indicates that the construction industry was estimated to account for 6.7% of regional GVA in 2018. Consequently, the construction industry is considered to be an important element of the Northern Ireland economy and this explains why there is so much interest in the construction output statistics.

## Other Key Economic Indicators and the Wider Economy

The Construction Output Statistics are one of a number of economic indicators which provide an overview of the Northern Ireland Economy. Information on other key Northern Ireland economic indicators can be found below. Together they provide users with a comprehensive account of how the Northern Ireland Economy is performing across a range of indicators. Figures on the [Northern Ireland Labour Market](#) are published monthly.

Other key economic indicators measuring the performance of the Northern Ireland economy exist for the Production and Service sectors. The [Index of Production \(IoP\)](#) and the [Index of Services \(IoS\)](#) are derived from separate surveys of businesses in the production and service sectors. The IoP and the IoS are published quarterly.

The [Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index \(NICEI\)](#) has been developed using data from existing quarterly indices of output from the Production, Services and Construction sectors. These sources have been combined (on the basis of industry share of GVA) with Agricultural output data and employee jobs data for the public sector to provide a seasonally adjusted and deflated measure of change in economic activity.

The Department for the Economy (DfE) also produces an [Economic Commentary](#) which provides an overview of the state of the Northern Ireland economy, setting it in context with the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The most up-to-date official statistics on the economy and labour market are available on the [Economic Overview section](#) of the [Economic and Labour Market Statistics \(ELMS\) section](#) of the NISRA website.

## Other Information

Additional information relating to the [construction sector in Northern Ireland](#) can be found online, this includes provision of information related to the following:

- Type of construction firms operating in Northern Ireland;
- Number of people employed in the construction industry in Northern Ireland;
- Average earnings in the construction industry in Northern Ireland; *and*
- Reported accidents in the construction industry in Northern Ireland.

Additional Background Notes for this publication, including definitions, the methodology used, revisions to previous published data and information on data quality, can be found within the [methodology section](#) online.

Similar statistics on [Construction Output for Great Britain](#) are published by the Office for National Statistics, noting that in 2019, the Great Britain Construction publication was [re-designated as National Statistics](#).

## Impacts due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

This release captures the direct effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and measures taken to reduce transmission of the virus. The most significant was the introduction of restrictions in movement, which began on 23 March 2020. Quarter 2 2020 is the first quarter that has been affected from start to finish.

COVID-19 impacted on the collection and validation of business data, which are collected on the Quarterly Business Survey. As a result, estimates for Quarter 2 2020 are likely to be subject to higher revisions than normal over the coming quarters. Comparisons of provisional June 2020 estimates at lower industry levels in particular should be treated with caution.

There are two schemes in place to support those working in the construction industry during COVID-19:

### 1. [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme \(CJRS\)](#)

- CJRS was introduced to support employers from 1st March 2020; commonly referred to as the furlough scheme. The CJRS worked by providing grants to employers of up to 80% of salary to a maximum value of £2,500 per employee per month, while covering some of the cost of employer pension and National Insurance Contributions.
- In NI up to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 24,100 construction employments have been supported through CJRS, equivalent to a 71% take-up rate. After the Accommodation and Food Services (81%) sector, the Construction sector had the second highest number of employments supported through CJRS in NI.

### 2. [Self-Employment Income Support Scheme \(SEISS\)](#)

- SEISS provides support for self-employed individuals whose business has been adversely affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19). From 13th May 2020, eligible self-employed individuals could claim a grant worth 80% of their average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering three months' worth of profits, and capped at £7,500 in total.
- In NI up to 30<sup>th</sup> June, the construction sector had made a total value of claims of £75 million (86% take-up rate) which accounted for 35% of the total value of claims made in NI (£216 million) through the SEISS.

Please note that the methodology that has been applied to produce these statistics is still under development and they should be considered 'Experimental' statistics.

# 4 Construction Output Summary

Quarter 2 (April to June) 2020

## Overall Output

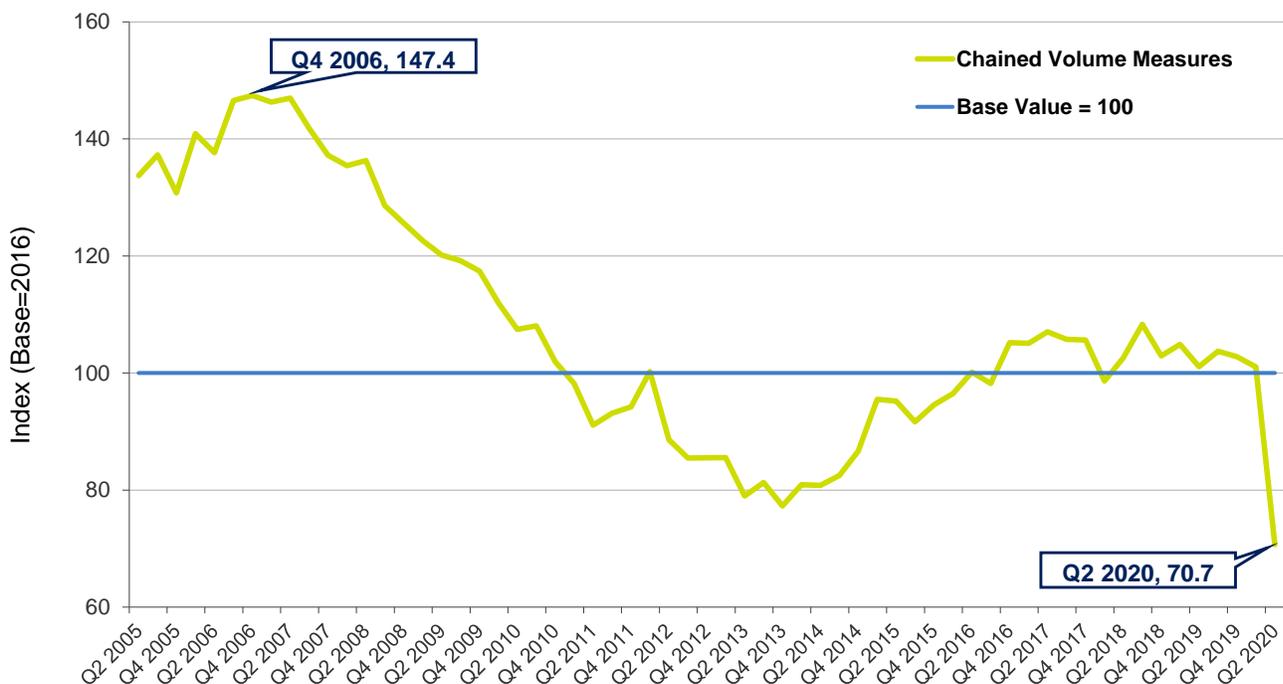
**Construction Output:** Construction activity measured by the QCE includes general construction and demolition work, construction and repair of buildings, civil engineering, installation of fixtures and fittings and any other building completion work.

The total volume of construction output in the second quarter of 2020 decreased by 30.0% compared with Q1 2020, was 30.0% lower than the same quarter in 2019 and 9.3% lower on a rolling four quarter basis (Figure 1).

The total volume of construction output in Northern Ireland has now reached a series low. Both the quarterly (-30.0%) and annual (-30.0%) decreases seen in Q2 2020 were the largest decreases on record.

The total volume of construction output has fallen since the most recent peak in Q4 2006. While the total volume of construction output in NI was on an upward trend between Q4 2013 and Q3 2018, recent quarters have shown a drop, with decreases in 4 of the last 5 quarters.

**Figure 1: Volume of Construction Output in NI**

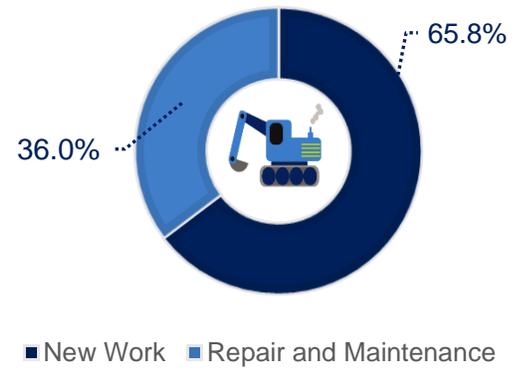


Quarter 2 (April to June) 2020 is the first quarter that has been affected from start to finish by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

## Construction Output - New Work and Repair and Maintenance

In Q2 2020, New Work accounted for around two thirds (65.8%) of all construction output, whilst Repair and Maintenance accounted for around one third (36.0%). New Work, historically in Northern Ireland, has been the largest sub-component of Overall Construction Output.

(Please note percentages do not always tally to 100 as each category is individually deflated and seasonally adjusted)



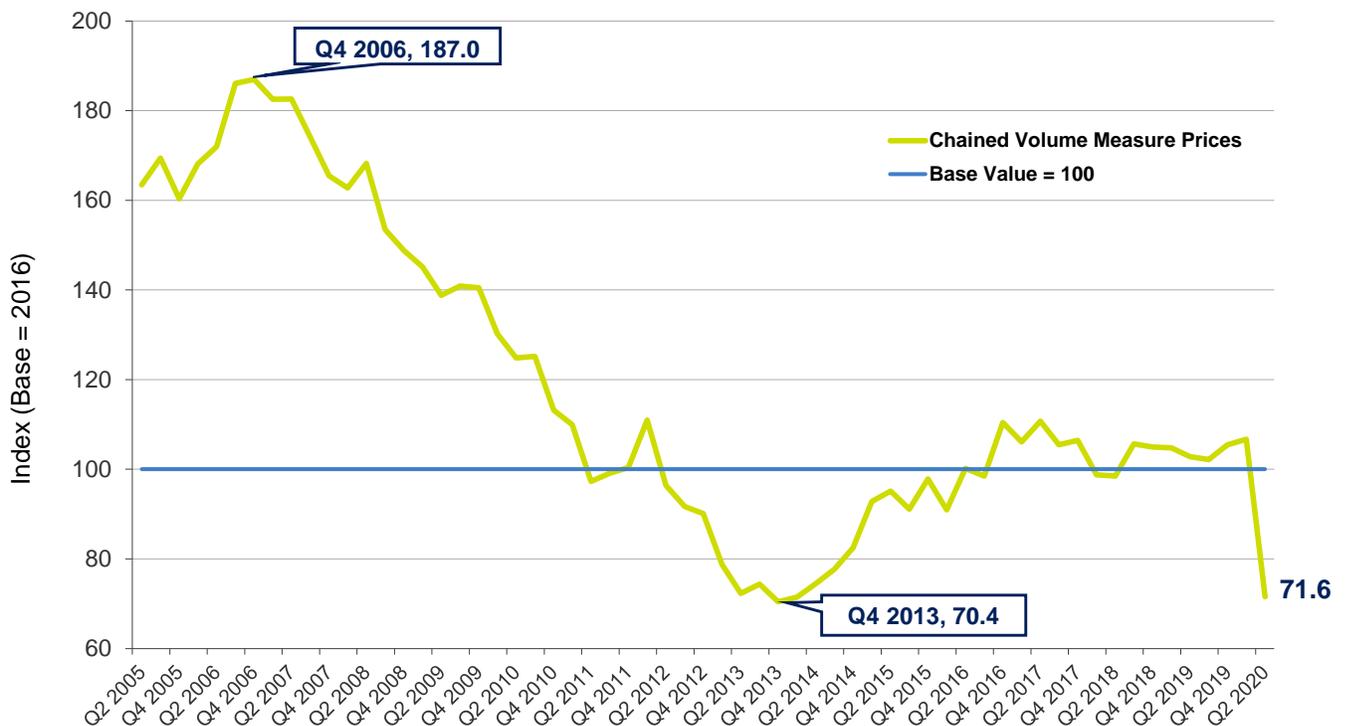
### New Work

**New Work:** is any new construction activity for example, factory and office extensions, major re-construction, major alterations, site preparation and demolition.

In the second quarter of 2020, the volume of New Work decreased by 32.9% compared with the previous quarter, representing the largest quarterly decrease on record. New Work decreased by 30.4% compared with the same quarter in 2019 and was 7.7% lower on a rolling four quarter basis.

Despite the decrease seen in Q2 2020, New Work is 1.6% above the series low seen in Q4 2013 (Figure 2). New work in Q2 2020 is 61.7% below the series high seen in Q4 2006.

**Figure 2: Volume of New Work Output in NI**



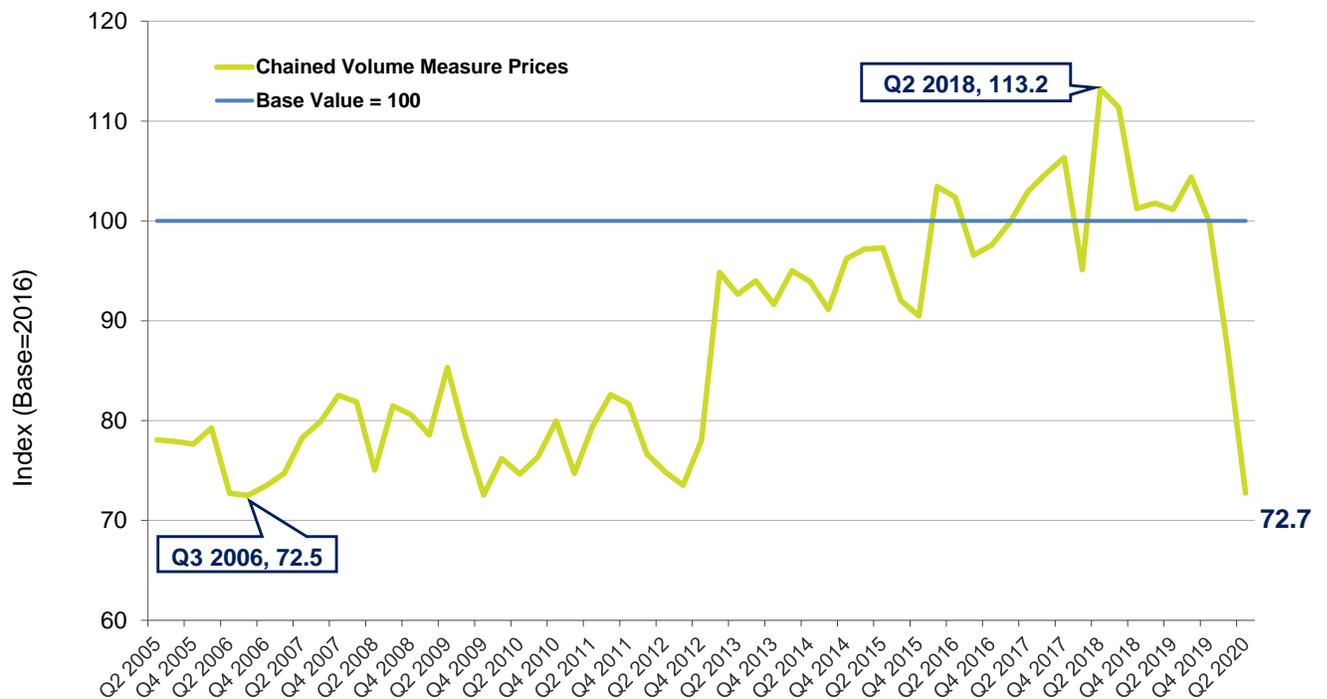
## Repair and Maintenance

**Repair and Maintenance:** is all on-site work not defined as new construction, for example, housing conversions, extensions and improvements.

In Q2 2020, Repair and Maintenance Output decreased by 16.7% compared with the previous quarter, was 28.1% lower than the same quarter in 2019 and was 12.3% lower on a rolling four quarter basis (Figure 3).

Repair and Maintenance output in Q2 2020 is 35.8% below the series high (Q2 2018) and levels are at the lowest since Q4 2009. Repair and Maintenance output has shown annual decreases in 5 consecutive quarters since Q2 2019.

**Figure 3: Volume of Repair and Maintenance Output in NI**

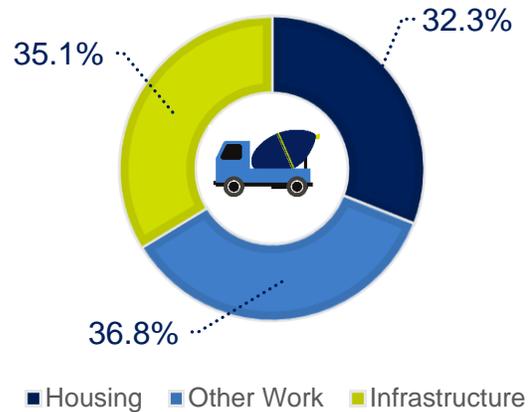


## Construction Output – Housing, Infrastructure and Other Work

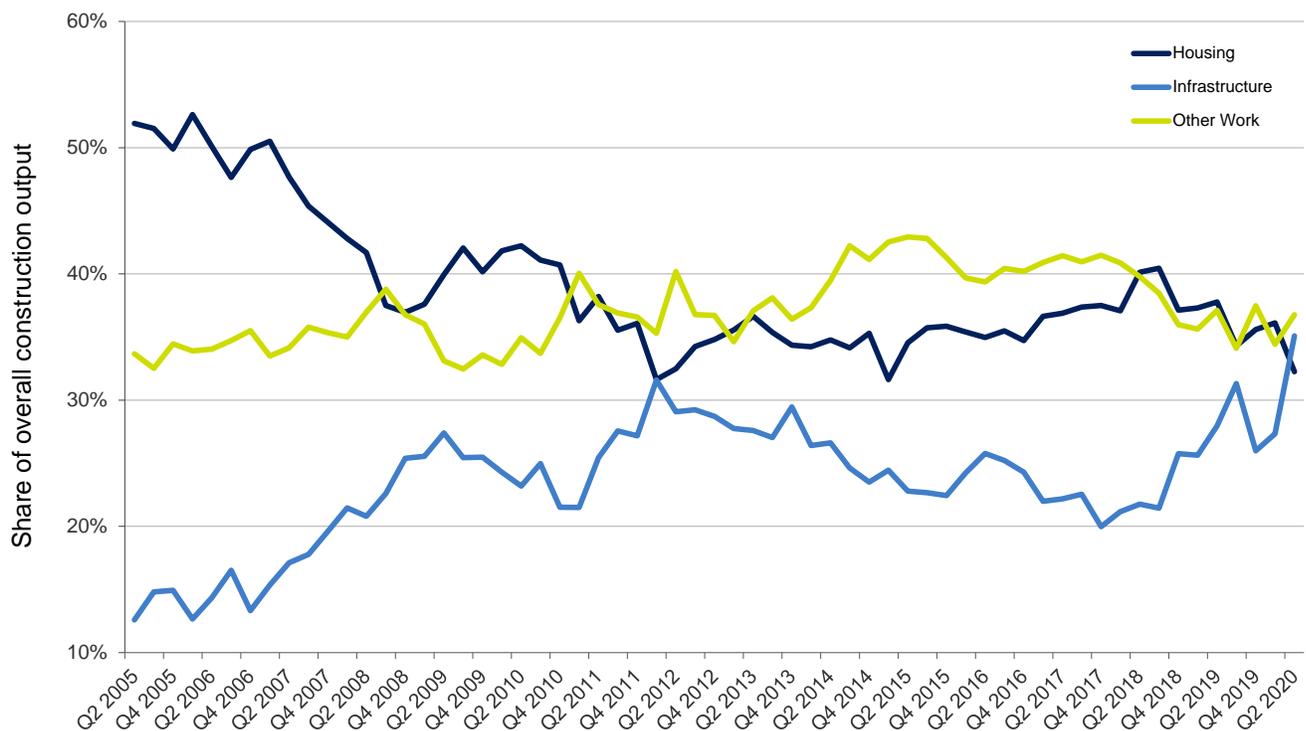
In Q2 2020, the largest sub-sector was Other Work which accounted for 36.8% of all construction output, followed by Infrastructure (35.1%) and then Housing (32.3%).

Figure 4 shows that Housing and Other Work have historically been the largest sub-sectors of Construction Output in Northern Ireland despite fluctuations in Q2 2020.

(Please note percentages do not always tally to 100 as each category is individually deflated and seasonally adjusted)



**Figure 4: Share of overall Construction<sup>1</sup> Output broken down into Housing, Infrastructure and Other Work**



<sup>1</sup> Percentages do not always tally to 100 as each category is individually deflated and seasonally adjusted

## Housing Output

**Housing Output:** is defined as all public and private sector construction activity (New Work and Repair & Maintenance) associated with Housing.

The volume of Housing Output in the second quarter of 2020 decreased by 37.5% compared with the previous quarter, was 40.3% lower than the same quarter in 2019 and 17.5% lower on a rolling four quarter basis (Figure 5).

Housing Output had been generally improving since the previous low point in Q4 2013, however due to the largest quarterly and annual decrease recorded in Q2 2020, it has now reached a series low. The volume of Housing Output has shown annual decreases each quarter since Q2 2019.

**Figure 5: Volume of Housing Output in NI**

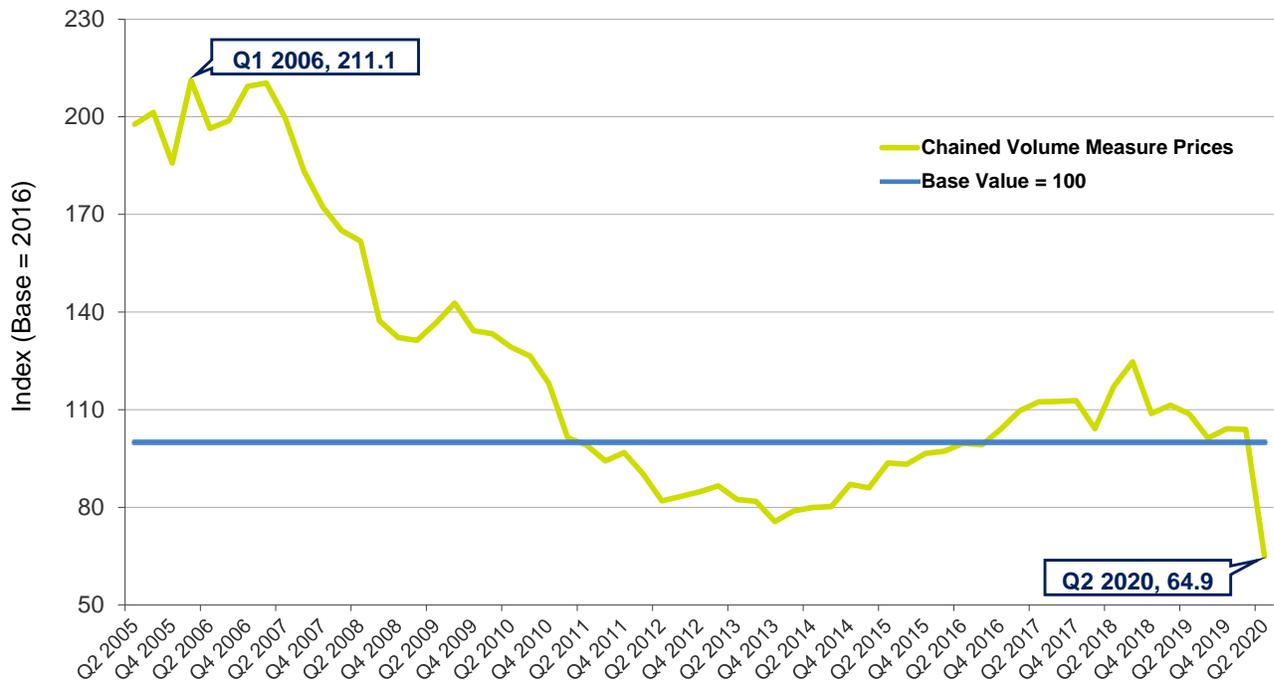
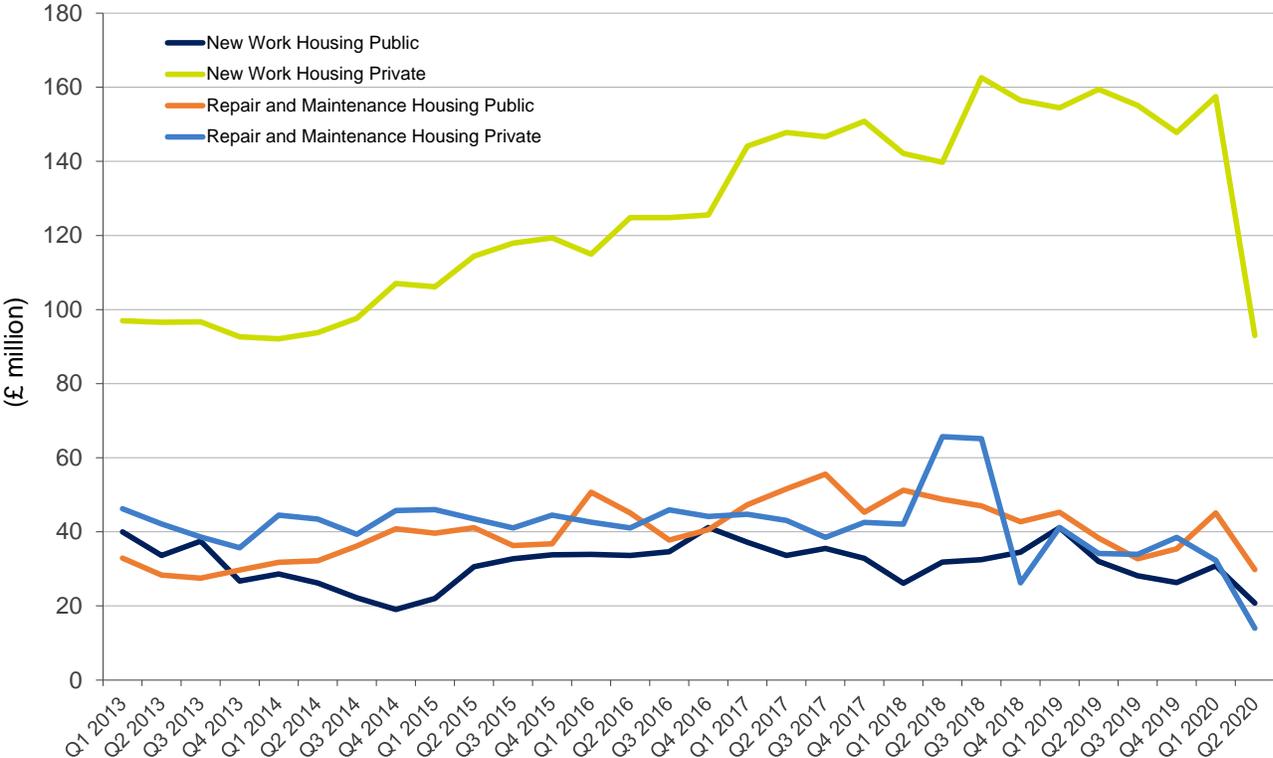


Figure 6 shows that in Q2 2020, there were decreases within all levels of Housing output compared with the previous quarter.

**Figure 6: Housing Output broken down by its sub-components**



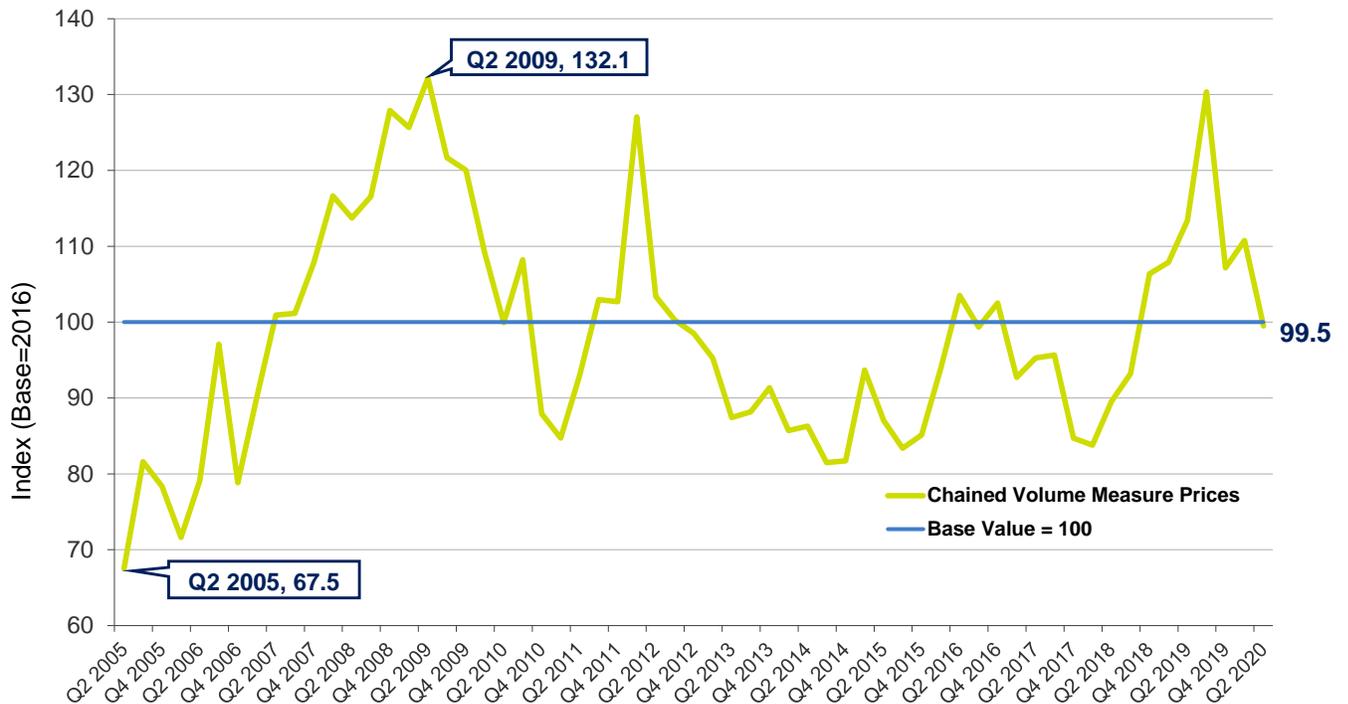
## Infrastructure Output

**Infrastructure Output:** is defined as all public and private sector construction activity (New Work and Repair & Maintenance) associated with roads, bridges, car parks, footpaths, water, sewage, electricity, gas, communications, air transport, railways, harbours and waterways.

The volume of Infrastructure work in the second quarter of 2020 decreased by 10.2% compared with the previous quarter, was 12.3% lower than the same quarter in 2019 but was 6.4% higher on a rolling four quarter basis (Figure 7).

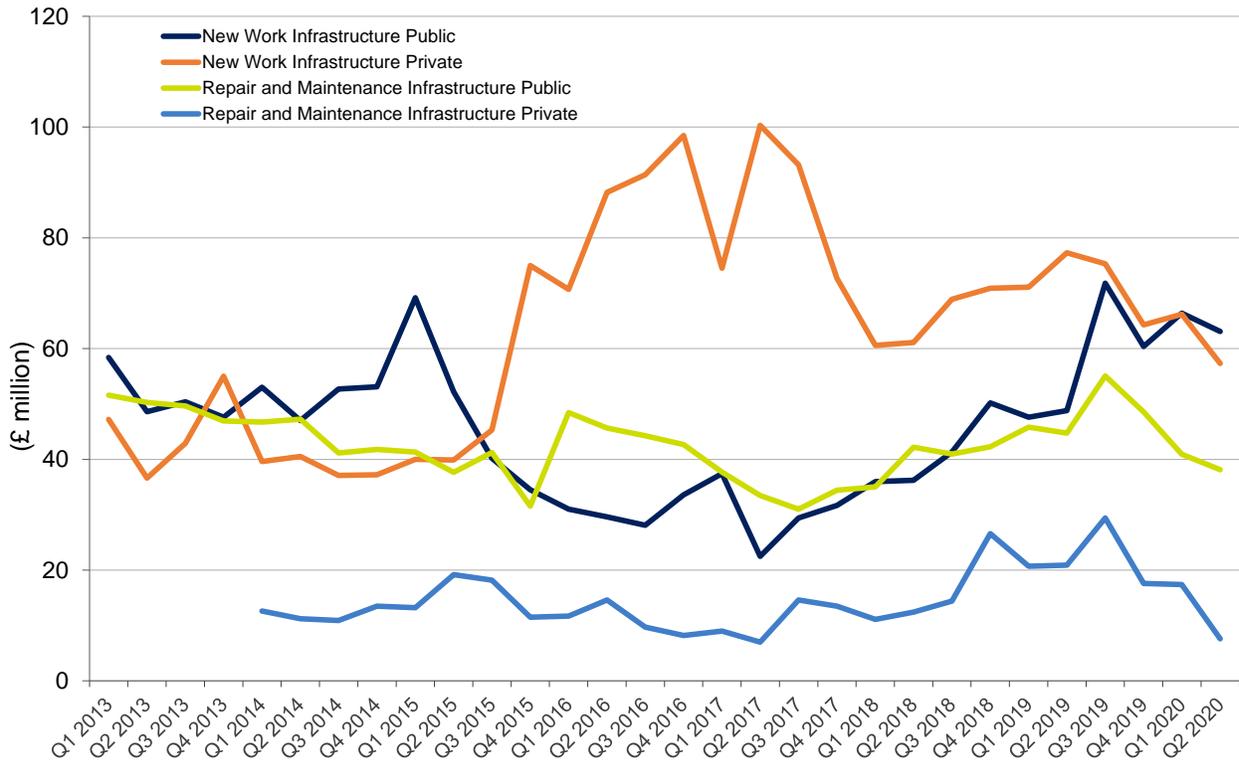
Infrastructure output has fallen over recent quarters and is now 23.6% below the recent peak in Q3 2019 and 47.3% above the 15 year low seen in Q2 2005. The annualised growth rate for Infrastructure has been slowing since the most recent peak in Q3 2019.

**Figure 7: Volume of Infrastructure Output in NI**



The decrease in Q2 2020 was due to decreases within all levels of Infrastructure. (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Infrastructure Output broken down by its sub-components**



<sup>1</sup>Please note before 2014 all Repair and Maintenance Infrastructure work was assumed to be public, this was reviewed when the survey changed in 2014.

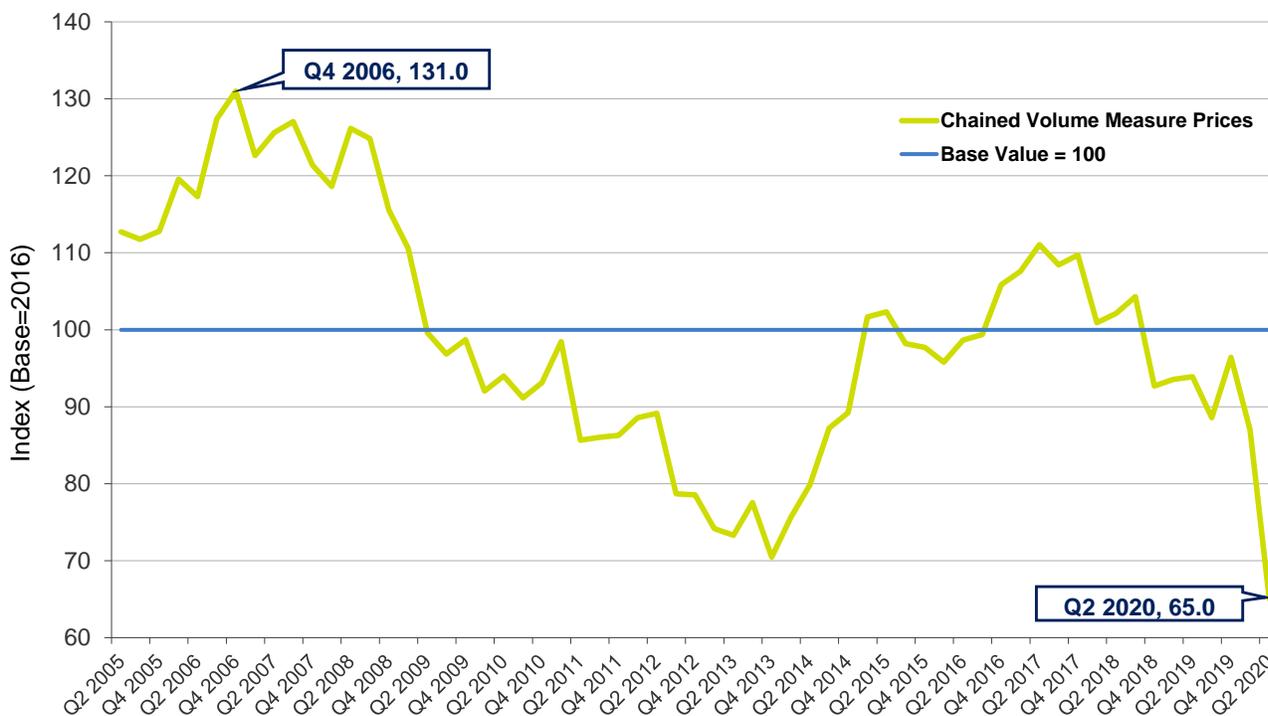
## Other Work Output

**Other Output:** is defined as all public and private sector construction activity (New Work and Repair & Maintenance) associated with the following; Industrial, for example, factories and warehouses or else Non-industrial, for example, schools, health centres and banks.

The volume of Other Work in Q2 2020 decreased by 25.2% compared with the previous quarter to a series low, the largest quarterly change on record. The volume of Other Work was 30.7% lower than the same quarter in 2019 and 12.3% lower on a rolling four quarter basis.

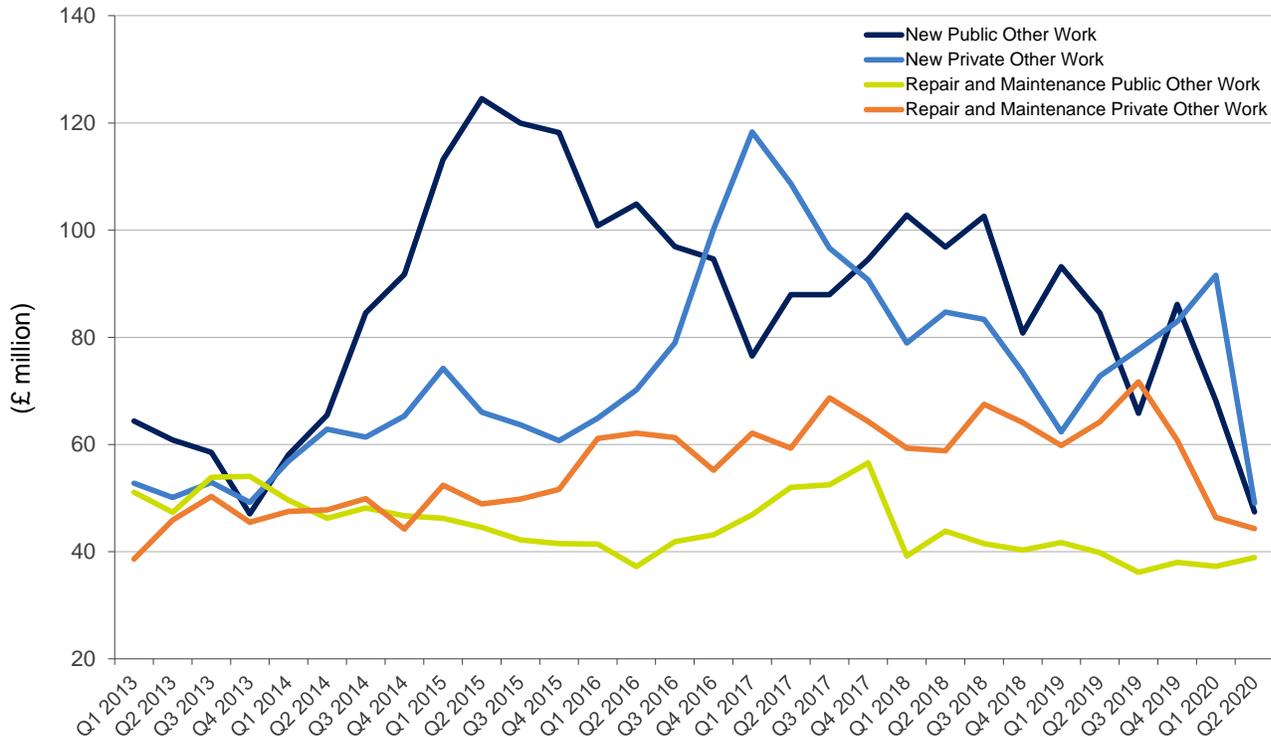
Despite fluctuations the volume of Other Work has been on a downward trend since Q4 2017, where the annualised growth rate has shown a decrease every quarter since Q2 2018 (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Volume of Other Work Output in NI**



The decrease in Other Work in Q2 2020 was accounted for by decreases in the levels of New Public Other Work, New Private Other Work and Repair and Maintenance Private Other Work. This decrease was slightly offset by an increase within Repair and Maintenance Public Other Work.

**Figure 10: Other Work Output broken down by its sub-components**



## 5 Survey Response

Response rates provide an indication of the accuracy of final estimates. A [breakdown of valid response by stratum](#) is available online. Non-response bias is a potential issue for all statistical surveys. Non-response bias occurs where the responses of respondents differ from potential responses of non-respondents. The risk of non-response bias on the Northern Ireland Quarterly Construction Enquiry is minimised by the ongoing efforts to maximise response rates across all strata. Users should also be aware that a Census is taken of large firms (Strata 5 and 6) and these firms collectively account for approximately three-fifths of total construction turnover based on the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR). More information on the [quality of the construction output](#) estimates can be found online.

### Impact of COVID-19 on data collection and estimates

COVID-19 impacted on the data collection and the validation of construction data, which are collected on the Quarterly Business Survey. COVID-19 has resulted in a decrease in response rates in Quarter 2 2020 when compared to 2019 figures, primarily due to the restrictions in place for businesses.

As a result, the estimates for Quarter 2 2020 are likely to be subject to higher revisions than normal over the coming quarters. These can be tracked through the [revisions triangle](#) which is published alongside the QCE publication. Comparisons of provisional Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2020 estimates at sub-sector levels in particular should be treated with caution.

## 6 Construction Output Tables

[Table 1.1 Output in Northern Ireland: Chained volume measure \(2016\) prices, \(seasonally adjusted\)](#)

[index numbers – Main Sectors](#)

[Table 1.2 Output in Northern Ireland: Chained volume measure \(2016\) prices, \(seasonally adjusted\)](#)

[index numbers – Sub-Sectors](#)

[Table 1.3 Value of Output<sup>1</sup> in Northern Ireland by Construction Sector - Current Prices \(£ million\)](#)

[Table 1.4 Volume of Output<sup>1</sup> in Northern Ireland by Construction Sector - Chained Volume Measure \(2016\) Prices and Seasonally Adjusted<sup>3</sup> \(£ million\)](#)

[Table 1.5 Value of Output<sup>1</sup> in Northern Ireland \(Private Contractors only\) by Stratum<sup>2</sup> of Firm](#)

[Table 1.6 Value of New Work Output<sup>1</sup> in Northern Ireland by Type of Work](#)

The [tables from the current publication](#), which include data back to 2000, are available in excel, csv and Open Document format.

# 7 Further Information

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## User Feedback

As a user of these statistics, we would welcome feedback on this release, in particular on the content, format and structure.

## Contacts

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