

1 Name of the survey or output being evaluated

Northern Ireland Manufacturing Sales and Exports Survey (MSES)

2 Date when review was begun

March 2012

3 Name of the person completing this

Recommended level is Grade 7 or experienced SEO

If filled in by other grade state name of person completing it and the grade 7 who signed it off

Robin Griffith (Assistant Statistician)
Deborah Lyness (Grade 7)

4 Which department/organisation do you work for?

Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) - Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) - Department of Economics and Labour Market Statistics (ELMS)

5 Your contact details

Email

Telephone

6 If this survey/output is produced jointly with another department or organisation please state which other department(s)/ organisation(s) this is

N/A

Key facts

7 When did the survey being reviewed commence?

The survey has been carried out since 1991/92. The Northern Ireland Economic Research Centre conducted the survey fieldwork each year prior to 2003 when it was passed to the Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch, DFP.

8 Is the survey statutory or voluntary?

Statutory (Please state under which law/ act the survey is statutory)
Voluntary

9 What is the periodicity of the survey?

Monthly
Quarterly
Annual
Ad hoc
Other (Please specify below)

10 Please give a summary of the information that the survey collects.

The annual Northern Ireland Manufacturing Sales and Exports Survey (MSES) provides estimates of the sales and exports generated by all businesses within the manufacturing industry in Northern Ireland. It provides information on total sales, external sales and exports by SIC 2007 division and destination of goods.

11 What is the target population of the survey?

The target population is all manufacturing businesses operating in Northern Ireland. However, due to the size of the manufacturing business population, the MSES sample is designed as a census of all manufacturing businesses with 6 or more employees. Following the development of a new Integrated Business Survey System (IBSS) businesses with fewer than 6 employees will be sampled for the 2011 MSES and going forward.

12 What is the sample size of the survey?

Approximately 3450 surveys were distributed for the 2010 survey. Following the development of the IBSS this is scheduled to increase to roughly 9,000 for the 2011 survey, approximately 3750 of these reflect the MSES style sample from previous years.

13 Which sampling frame is used for the survey?

- Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR)
- Pay As You Earn (PAYE)
- Postcode Address File
- Electoral Register
- Experian
- Reference list
- Another survey's sample (please specify)
- Other (please specify)

14 What are the anticipated and achieved response rates for the latest period for the survey?

Anticipated: 83%
Achieved: 78.5%

15 Who are the users of the survey?

There are a variety of users of the MSES data – Economists and policy colleagues (primarily within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and Invest NI), Office for National Statistics (ONS), academics and students, banking sector analysts, economic analysts and consultants as well as the general public.

16 What are the key publications that the survey contributes to?

Size and Performance of the Northern Ireland Food and Drinks Processing Sector - DARD
DETI Economic Commentary
Exporting Northern Ireland Services Study - DETI
NI Executive - Economic Strategy - Rebuilding and Rebalancing the Economy: An Evidence Base

17 What is the cost to business of the survey?

(This information is the same as question 57 in the Burden and Respondents section of this tab)

The estimated respondent burden for 2009 was £34,019.

18 What is the cost to government of the survey?

The process of producing the MSES is carried out in-house and costs approximately £70,000 per year to run. This is mostly staff costs but also includes the printing and postage of the survey forms.

Background and progress since the last review

This section gives some background to the survey and states the progress made in improving the survey since the last review.

19 Brief history of the survey

The annual Northern Ireland Manufacturing Sales and Exports Survey (MSES) has been carried out since 1991/92. The Northern Ireland Economic Research Centre conducted the survey fieldwork each year prior to 2003 when it was passed to Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch, DFP (formerly DETI).

The ONS in conjunction with various stakeholders has implemented major revisions to the UK Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (SIC). The UK is required by legislation to revise the SIC in parallel with the European industry classification system (NACE) so that both systems remain identical down to and including the 4 digit class level. These revisions are motivated by the need to adapt the classifications to changes in the world economy. The revised classifications reflect the growing importance of service activities in the economy over the last fifteen years, mainly due to developments in informationa and communication technologies (ICT).

As a result, the SIC 2003 categorisation of business activities has been replaced and updated by the new SIC 2007 activity codes within the MSES 2010/11. This has resulted in discontinuities between results presented on a SIC 2003 (2008/09 and earlier years) and SIC 2007 (2008/09 and subsequent years) basis.

20 What was the date of the last published survey review?

There have been no previous MSES reviews. However with the amalgamation of the ABI and MSES surveys please refer to the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) quinquennial review for information on recommendations from previous ABI reviews, some of which have now been incorporated into the MSES.

21 What were the recommendations from the last review?

N/A

22 Have all the recommendations been implemented?

Yes

No

(Please explain why & give details of progress made)

N/A

23

Have other changes been made to the methodology of the survey since the last review?

Yes (Please describe changes including the impact on respondent burden)
No

- We are now required, by both National Accounts requirements and the European SBS Regulation, to collect our data under the new Standard Industry Classification (SIC07). This is a change from collecting the data on the SIC03.
- We are currently investigating a rotation policy on the sample element of the survey. This will allow us to control the burden placed on business. For the ABI and the MSES 2011 there has been an integration of the sample. More details of this are available on the ABI and MSES webpage.
- MSES is also currently reviewing its validation processes. As a result of this project there are ongoing investigations into how the selective editing process can be improved. Implementation is expected in the near future.

24

Do National Statistical Institutes (NSIs), in other countries run a survey similar to this one?

Yes (Please give brief details below)
No (Please go to question 26)

While directly comparable UK data for the MSES do not exist, 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)'. The Scottish Executive publish a report entitled 'the Global Connections Survey' measuring Scotland's exports of goods and services.

25

How far does your survey adhere to the same broad principles and standards as the other NSIs' surveys?

Include any key differences.

Please note that although EU legislation exists governing the collection of trade and export data, this is collected by HMRC. The MSES operates as a standalone survey.

26

Are there any lessons that can be learnt from other countries?

Include any areas where further harmonisation would provide benefits.

One area that can be further developed is the use of administrative data within the inquiry. We know countries such as the Republic of Ireland are also running a project regarding the use of administrative data to supplement their data collection. At present there is a major initiative within the ONS to pursue the use of administrative data. Northern Ireland may have to address legislative constraints if it cannot also be passed e.g. HMRC data from ONS.

Users and uses

This section investigates the uses of the survey and user views.

27 What is the objective for the survey that justifies its existence?

Used to produce information needed for:

making key national or local government decisions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
monitoring national or local government issues	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
delivery of public services	<input type="checkbox"/>
satisfying EU regulations	<input type="checkbox"/>
European decision-making or monitoring requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
another purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please tick all that apply

(Please specify below)

28 Are you able to justify the periodicity of the survey?

Yes, we have confirmed recently that users/sponsors have a specific need for data at this periodicity

Not really, but the reasons we collect the data this frequently are given below (Please specify below)

No

Don't know

Information on Northern Ireland's manufacturing exports has been collected by the Northern Ireland Economic Research Council since 1991/92. Export data for the UK as a whole are gathered by HM Revenue & Customs. However, due to the limitations of this data at regional level, the Department of Economic Development and the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland jointly commissioned the Northern Ireland Economic Research Centre (NIERC) to undertake a bespoke annual survey of Northern Ireland sales and exports. DETI ELMS (now DFP ELMS) took over this in 2003 and continued to produce economic and labour market statistics in line with the Official Statistics code of Practice to monitor the performance of the NI economy and labour market. On an ongoing basis ELMS meet with their user group and there have been no concerns regarding the periodicity of the survey.

29 Are you able to justify the presence of every question asked?

Yes, users have a specific need for every question asked

Yes, but some data are needed purely to verify other data

Yes, but some questions are there only to improve questionnaire focus and flow

No, and have no current plans to address this

Don't know

No, but are aware some data may not be needed (Please specify below which questions are not required)

Justification for MSES questions is established at the ELMS user group meetings held roughly twice a year.

30 Where do you hold the information on justification for questions?

- In a database or registered file
- Somewhere other than a database or registered file
- Nowhere

Justification for MSES questions is established at the ELMS user group meetings held roughly twice a year. Minutes of these meetings can be found on the DETI website at:
<http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/stats-national-statistics/user-consultation-and-information.htm>

31 Have other existing sources of similar information, including administrative or management data, been examined to ensure that the survey is still required?

- Yes - in the last five years (Please give approximate date below)
- Yes, but not in the last five years (Please say below if you have any plans to do this)
- No
- Don't know

Although administrative data covering components of the MSES is collected by HMRC among others, this data is not freely and legally available for use in statistics. Furthermore, the data are not always sufficiently timely or may not include all the information required for statistical purposes.

32 If other sources have been considered what were they and why were they unsuitable?

There are both legal and technical barriers which prevent more widespread use of HMRC data for official statistics purposes. The ONS is currently investigating the potential to introduce legislation to improve this position, particularly with regard to accessing VAT expenditure data. It will likely be necessary to introduce equivalent legislation in Northern Ireland, subject to HMRC consent. NISRA will examine this option when the form of the UK legislation becomes clear.

33 What do each of the users of the survey need the data for?

Comment on all user groups

Government users

DETI: The data is used by DETI economists for a wide variety of analysis conducted on the Northern Irish economy and feeds into their regular Economic Commentary publication.

DARD: provides data for the publication 'Size and Performance of the Northern Ireland Food and Drinks Processing Sector'.

The results of the MSES allow the measurement of several of the goals established in the Programme for Government 2011-2015 and Northern Ireland Economic Strategy.

Non-government users

Ulster Bank: Used by Ulster bank economists for internal research and to inform their economic commentary.

ERINI: Data linking to create single time-series dataset containing variables from each of the survey data requested.

InterTradeIreland: Used to inform internal research

Agri-food and Biosciences Institute: development of Input-Output tables for the agri-food sectors.

34 How many users from each main user group did you approach for this review?

The survey was distributed to 44 users.

35 How many responses did you receive to the user questionnaire for this review?

The review was completed by 3 respondents

36 When invited to comment on the survey, what points did your users make?

User comments centred around increasing the level of reporting detail.

- More (published) detailed country breakdown, particularly emerging markets
- More detailed sectoral information
- Given the prominence of exports in the Economic Strategy, we will have a demand for analysis of export data and would recommend a repeat of the Barriers to Trade supplement - we have found this publication useful for the development of the Business Growth Action Plan, which will underpin the Economic Strategy and will include further actions relating to export performance.

37 Specifically, what were the users' main points on the acceptability of the survey's quality when considered against the European Statistical System (ESS) dimensions of output quality?

Accuracy: 4.3

Relevance: 4.0

Timeliness: 4.0

Coherence: 4.0

Comparability: 3.7

Accessibility: 4.3

38

What are the minimum acceptable coefficients of variation (CV's)?

If these vary by domains please state range

No coefficients of variation were calculated for the MSES survey.

39

Are the achieved CV's close to the minimum acceptable level specified?

Yes, for all or most domains

No, typically larger than required

No, typically smaller than required

None calculated

40

What steps could be taken outside of this review to improve understanding of users' needs or reduce burden on respondents by reducing requirements?

Currently outside of this quinquennial review we undertake a variety of steps to improve the understanding of user's needs. These include:

- To ensure the statistics produced meet the needs of data users and, where possible, to identify any gaps in data provision, DFP statisticians meet periodically with customers and data users. Details and minutes from the meetings can be found on the DETI website at the following address:
<http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/stats-national-statistics/user-consultation-and-information.htm>
- Cooperating with the Statistics Advisory Committee to ensure that any changes in the survey meet user needs.
- The objective of the new IBSS is to develop an IT system that can achieve a more flexible, timely, congruent means of obtaining business survey data, with reduced burden on business. This offers opportunities for change in capture, edit, validation procedures and ELMS branch organisational structure.
- Users are provided with relevant contact details so they can provide comments on the MSES at any time

41

What recommendations could be made based on the comments of users?

- Review the level at which we report to see if any more specific analysis can be carried out without reducing accuracy or disclosing individual company's results.
- It might also be worth considering reintroducing the NI MSES Supplement - Barriers to Trade.

Sample Design

This section investigates the sample design of the survey in more detail focusing on the impact of the design on respondents.

42

Please summarise the main characteristics of the sample design.

Historically the MSES issued to all businesses with 5 or more employees in the manufacturing sector and to a selection of additional companies to satisfy the requirements of our customer Invest NI. However the opportunity presented by the IBSS (<http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/stats-surveys/stats-manufacturing-sales-exports.htm>) allows sales and exports data to be collected within all sectors covered by the ABI.

This has meant that the sales and exports group within manufacturing remains as a sample within the ABI. The sample is designed as a census of all businesses within manufacturing with 6 or more employees, with a sample of businesses sized 0-5 employees. Businesses outside of manufacturing continue to be surveyed based on the requirements of our customer Invest NI, there is the potential for sales and exports information to be published outside of manufacturing.

43

Are you aware of errors in the sampling frame?

Please tick all that apply

- | | |
|--|---|
| Yes, in the coverage | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Yes, commonly occurring errors in unit details | <input type="checkbox"/> (Please specify below) |
| Yes, other errors | <input type="checkbox"/> (Please specify below) |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> (Please say below when you last examined this) |

The sample frame used is the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR). We are therefore reliant on the IDBR receiving regular updates and providing an accurate reflection of the business population of Northern Ireland. Businesses not registered for either Pay As You Earn or VAT are excluded from the frame.

44

What steps have you taken to minimise the burden on small businesses specifically ?

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Survey holidays applied to businesses in line with osmotherly rules | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reduced sampling fractions for small businesses | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Use of estimation in place of sampling | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Please specify) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| No feasible steps taken | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- Businesses with less than 5 employees have not traditionally been surveyed. However with the integration of the ABI/MSES the census element is now businesses with 6 or more employees. To reduce the burden on small businesses those employing 5 or fewer are sampled.

- Businesses within the sample frame will be rotated where possible, this means that companies shouldn't find themselves receiving the MSES form in perpetuity.

45

What steps have you taken to minimise the burden on individual respondents more generally while ensuring users' needs will be met?

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Clear quality requirements established up-front | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Appropriate use made of results | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Rotation of respondents | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Use of efficient sample design | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No feasible steps taken | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Continuing user needs are geared towards an increase in the range of statistics required and a more holistic picture of exports across the economy. More details of the implications of this are contained in the ABI quinquennial review. <http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/stats-surveys/stats-annual-business-inquiry.htm>

46 When did you last review the sample allocation?
Please give approximate date

March 2012

47 What recommendations could be made for changes to the sample design to improve quality or reduce burden on respondents?

The sample design has recently undergone a period of review and reform. This process included user consultation. The result of this has been an increase in the ABI sample from 5,000 to approximately 9,000, with the MSES component remaining relatively stable in size.

Data collection

This section investigates in more detail how the data is collected and validated on the survey

48 What is/are the mode(s) of data collection for the survey?

- Paper self-completion questionnaire
- Computer-assisted self-completion interviews
- Computer-assisted personal interviewing
- Paper-based personal interviewing
- Computer-assisted telephone interviewing
- Electronic collection (e.g. web,email or spreadsheet)
- Telephone Data Entry
- Other (Please specify below)

49 Has the questionnaire been reviewed by someone with specialist knowledge in questionnaire design in the last three years?

- Yes (Please give details below of the last expert review)
- No, but we review the questionnaire ourselves at least every five years
- Not to our knowledge

50 At which stage does validation of data items occur?

- At point of entry
- Within ten calendar days
- Longer than ten days
- No validation takes place (please give reasons why not)

51 What proportion of respondents are re-contacted to check data items?

- None
- Less than 5%
- Between 5% and 10%
- Between 11% and 20%
- Over 20%
- Comment if you wish

Estimated 80% re-contact rate

52 How do the systems you use minimise the burden on individual respondents due to validation of data?

- Use of checks to identify large changes (eg. validation gates)
- Automatic edits made for common adjustable errors
- Only re-contact on errors that have the largest impact on quality (selective editing)
- Imputation of missing or suspect data items
- Provided respondents with opportunity to explain unusual values during survey
- Use of a system to share information on changes to businesses
- Other (please specify)
- No feasible steps taken (please state why)

Please state how these systems have reduced burden

Cross branch data sharing - allows us to access financial data from other financial surveys in branch

53 What recommendations could be made for changes to the data collection and validation methods to improve quality or reduce burden on respondents?

NISRA is currently involved in developing a new Integrated Business Survey System. This is designed to improve the quality and timeliness of official economic statistics, while minimising the burden on businesses, where possible. NISRA is seeking to integrate surveys, reduce the number of contacts with businesses and offer the facility to make returns electronically. The new system will also be designed to utilise administrative sources, when these become available for statistical purposes.

Burden and respondents

This section investigates respondents' views and how the cost to respondents is justified by the needs of users.

54

What was the selected sample size for the respondent survey for this review?

Please also state what proportion of the main sample was selected for the respondent survey

Survey distributed to 314 contacts representing 18% of the total MSES sample.

55

What was the response rate for the respondent survey for this review?

Received 57 completed responses equating to a response rate of 18%.

56

When invited to comment on the survey, what points did your respondents make?

Respondent's concerns focused on the complexity and length of the survey

Responses:

- The terms used are difficult for an office administrator to grasp.
- 2 years ago it was too complicated. Last year it was slightly easier.
- As our sales are mostly via third parties, income from exports sales usually arrive months later, and it is an onerous task to extract relevant and accurate information, especially as a small company.
- Information requested was repetitive, information relating to sales from outside UK not easy to extract when dealing with different currencies.
- I feel it is unfair to send the questionnaire to us every year as we receive it at our busiest time of the year. We are a relatively small business and completing the survey takes up valuable time which could be used in other urgent tasks. Please give us a break for a few years.

57

Based on replies from respondents, what have you estimated the cost to respondents to be?

(This information is the same as question 17)

The estimated respondent burden for 2009 was £34,019.

58

Did you assume actual response when calculating respondents' costs?

- Yes, only actual respondents costs/time assumed
- No, assumed 100% response rate but with lower cost/time for non-respondents
- No, assumed 100% response rate with no differentiation between respondents' and non-respondents' cost/time

59 Which method did you use to calculate the cost to survey respondents?

Please also provide a breakdown of the calculation, to show how you arrived at the total cost.

Compliance costs are estimated in line with Office for National Statistics (ONS) practices. The calculation of costs is based on the length of time taken to complete a form which is recorded as part of the questionnaire response, the number of forms completed and average hourly rates for the relevant managerial level inter alia.

The method used is the same as that used to calculate compliance costings for the survey. This separates the questionnaires into four employment sizebands (0-24, 25-99, 100-249, 250+). To produce a cost per sizeband we calculate a median time based on sizeband and multiply that by the cost per hour for a senior manager (£47.38 calculated via the ASHE survey).

60 Did you find that the benefits justified the cost to respondents?

Yes (Please give an outline of the benefits justifying the cost, in the 'Yes' set of boxes below)
 No (Please explain, in the single 'No' box below, why you are going ahead with collecting the extra information)

Yes:

Type of user	Justification of the cost to respondents
Government users	Please see summary of government users of data above
Respondent users	We have a wide variety of users who access our data. These range from academics and researchers to businesses. We also analyse the data and provide extracts of data, which respondents specifically need and request in order to assist their work.
Other users - please specify here	

No:

61 Do you have a policy on the procedures for dealing with day-to-day complaints from both suppliers and users of information?

Please tick all that apply

Yes - for complaints from suppliers
 Yes - for complaints from users
 No

62 What are the main causes of complaints and what action have you taken to make improvements in response to these complaints?

Users - Inadequate level of detail - sub regional
 Suppliers - Complaints about having to complete the survey - respondent can be removed from the distribution list if it is deemed that they have been selected for too many surveys - also depends on whether they've responded to any of the surveys they have been selected for

63 What recommendations could be made based on the comments of respondents?

Recommendations would centre around the need to review the complexity of the survey. Respondent's are concerned that the survey is taking too much time to complete. The amalgamation of the MSES and the NIABI may help to reduce the overall burden on the business.

Recommendations

Each of the previous sections concluded with a description of potential improvements to the survey. This section draws together those potential changes to make recommendations arising from this review along with an action plan for implementing them. Those changes that are more ambitious or cannot be implemented at this time are also described.

64

Based on the information supplied above, list the recommendations for aspects of the survey that need further improvement or investigation and your action plan for doing this work prior to the next review.

Recommendations

Reduced burden on business:

While reducing the burden on business is a priority, the needs of users are also taken into consideration. Feedback from the quinquennial review questionnaires and the ELMS user group has revealed a desire for more detailed coverage of the export market, consequently it remains necessary to maintain the sample size and range of questions asked. To ensure the burden on small businesses is kept to a minimum, companies with 5 or less employees are sampled and if possible rotated of the survey.

More detailed analysis

Users are provided ad hoc information on request, however the Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 prevents statistics from revealing information which could lead to the disclosure of individual company's information. As the Northern Ireland export market population is relatively small it is not always possible to provide information at a very detailed level.

Broad range of industries covered

The development of the IBSS has led to the inclusion of sales and exports questions on forms sent to companies operating outside of the manufacturing sector. This allows for the collection and potential publication of export data from all of the industry sectors surveyed.

65

Please list any improvements to the survey that are not possible at this time including the barriers to implementation.

Although administrative data covering components of the MSES is collected by HMRC among others, this data is not freely and legally available for use in statistics. Furthermore, the data are not always sufficiently timely or may not include all the information required for statistical purposes.