

ASHE 2024 FAQs

- **Is this a compulsory survey?**

Yes, there is a statutory requirement for you to complete this survey, under Article 5 of The Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. The legislation is quoted on the front page of the form.

- **Why have we been selected for this survey?**

It is not the business that is selected, it is the employee.

- **Why has my employee been selected for this survey?**

Employees are selected because of certain digits occurring within their National Insurance Numbers. The sample represents approximately 1% of the Northern Ireland population across all industrial and occupational classifications.

- **What is this form about?**

It is a compulsory government survey to gather information on the earnings of employees in various statistical groups, such as occupation, industry, age group and work pattern. It is the only comprehensive source of earnings statistics in Northern Ireland.

- **Will people be able to see the information I provide?**

The information employers provide to us is treated in the strictest confidence and processed in accordance with Data Protection legislation. Published information will not enable any companies or individuals to be identified.

- **Who uses the information?**

Government – in planning policy
Low Pay Commission – in setting National Living and Minimum Wage levels
MPs and MLAs – in comparing regional wage differences
Employers and Trade Unions – when negotiating pay increases
Solicitors – in preparing compensation claims
Academics – for school or college projects
Employees – in determining if they are underpaid

- **What is the reference period for the survey?**

Information should be provided for the pay period that included 17th April 2024, except for Sections 6 and 8, which refer to the most recent tax year ending 5th April 2024.

- **When does the survey need to be returned by?**

The return date for the survey is 17th May 2024.

- **What if I am not able to submit my return before your survey deadline?**

We can still accept your survey return if it is received before the end of July. Failure to submit your return before then may incur a penalty. Informed estimates are acceptable.

- **What happens if I do not complete the survey?**

Failure to make a return can incur penalties under Article 8 of The Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. This could result in a fine of up to £2,500, however, if

you complete the ASHE questionnaire, this course of action will not be necessary. We will be happy to help you if you need further assistance.

- **Can I be excused from the survey?**

Unfortunately, we cannot undertake to remove individuals from surveys. Once a business has been registered with HMRC for VAT or PAYE, it is automatically included on the Government's Inter-Departmental Business Register, and then becomes eligible for selection for surveys carried out by NISRA's Economic & Labour Market Statistics Branch; its employees in turn become eligible for selection for ASHE.

- **Can the information not come from anywhere else?**

Unfortunately, there is no other provision currently available to obtain all of the information required, other than requesting it directly from you/your business via this survey.

- **What if the employee named on the form no longer works here?**

If the employee was working for your organisation on 17th April 2024, you are still required to complete the questionnaire. If the employee had left before 17th April 2024, then you only need to complete sections 1 and 9 for that employee.

- **I am inundated with forms across government departments**

We understand these forms can be a burden on businesses, however if you are registered for PAYE, you become eligible for this survey.

- **The government is doing nothing to help businesses, why should we help them?**

This is a compulsory survey and while we appreciate it is a burden or unwelcome, it is nevertheless a legal requirement. The information requested helps government assess the current state of the labour market, and determine where support may be needed.

- **I am a small business and don't have time to do this survey**

We understand that these forms can be a burden on businesses, however, if you have a VAT or PAYE reference, you become eligible for such surveys, and it is important that information relating to small businesses is incorporated within the survey results.

- **How can I contact you about this survey?**

The **ASHE helpdesk** can be reached by phone on **0300 200 7832** (select survey option 2), or by email to ashehelpline@finance-ni.gov.uk.

- **Can I have the survey in a different format?**

The survey can be emailed as a link to an online webform or posted as a paper questionnaire.

- **Do I have to provide the personal information requested about employees' earnings in light of the new GDPR?**

While the GDPR does create some new rights for individuals, these do not override the legal obligation to provide information requested under The Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. The information we collect ensures that we have an accurate picture of the economy across different sectors, enabling us to accurately analyse the economy, and gives policy makers the ability to identify which sectors may benefit from government assistance.