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Summary of Key Findings

- In 2021/22, the estimated cost to businesses in Northern Ireland (NI) of complying with Government Statistical Surveys was £885,800. This represents an increase of 15% (£113,000) from 2020/21 but is lower than the estimated compliance cost in 2019/20, prior to the pandemic, which was £892,200.
- In total, 71% of the overall compliance burden (£624,900) can be attributed to surveys carried out by/on behalf of the Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch, in the Department of Finance, which also includes Office for National Statistics (ONS) surveys of businesses in Northern Ireland used to produce UK economic statistics.
- A total of 83% of the overall compliance burden was attributable to statutory surveys. These surveys accounted for 42% of the total number of surveys carried out.
- 59 of the 108 surveys (55%) were used to produce official statistics. These surveys accounted for 93% of the total compliance cost.
- In 2021/22, 63% of surveys used online/email as their primary data collection method, with over half (51%) being solely online/email and nearly three quarters of surveys (74%) offering an online or email option.

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Background

The [Code of Practice for Statistics](#)¹ has a statutory basis² and recognises the importance of monitoring and reducing respondent burden, balanced with the need to produce official statistics that are fundamental to good government and provide a good evidence base to inform public policy³.

V5.5 Statistics producers should be transparent in their approach to monitoring and reducing the burden on those providing their information, and on those involved in collecting, recording and supplying data. The burden imposed should be proportionate to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

The burden to businesses due to statutory Government Statistical Surveys is monitored by the [Statistics Advisory Committee](#)⁴. Under the [Statistics of Trade and Employment \(NI\) Order 1988](#)⁵, a Northern Ireland Department is required to consult this committee before carrying out any new statutory survey of businesses⁶.

Prior to 2021/22, an equivalent report was produced for surveys of Households and Individuals. Following an [online consultation](#)⁷ (from December 2022 to February 2023) and feedback from earlier user engagement, the decision was made to discontinue the 'Burden to Households & Individuals' report and streamline the 'Cost to Business' report to focus on analysis at the Northern Ireland level, with a single breakdown by Department. The downloadable data, published alongside the report, enables users to replicate the missing analyses.

The ONS no longer produces a report or data for England and Wales, although some Government Departments publish information for their own department.

¹ <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-code/>

² Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/18/contents>

³ Information on the purposes for which the data are used is available in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix C)

⁴ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/statistics-advisory-committee>

⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1988/595/data.pdf>

⁶ Under this Order, a business is defined as any person(s) carrying out an undertaking by way of trade or business, whether or not the trade or business is carried on for profit; and any other undertaking providing employment in respect of which Class 1 contributions are payable under the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975.

⁷ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/outcome-user-consultation-northern-ireland-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden>

Useful Links:

- [Previous publications in this series](#)
- [Code of Practice for Statistics](#)
- [Downloadable data](#)
- [User Consultation Outcome](#)
- [NISRA publications and datasets](#)

1. Introduction

This annual report details the cost to businesses of complying with statutory and voluntary government statistical surveys in Northern Ireland. It includes information on the number of surveys commissioned, or carried out, by Departments (including their Arm's Length Bodies) and the cost incurred by businesses in complying with regular and ad hoc government surveys, conducted in the financial year ending 31st March 2022. Department names have been abbreviated as shown in Appendix B.

The compliance cost of a survey is defined as the financial cost incurred by the business in responding to the survey. This is estimated using an agreed Government Statistical Service (GSS) methodology (see Appendix A) and includes factors such as the time taken to complete the survey, hourly pay rate⁸ of the person completing the survey and any external costs such as accountancy fees.

Businesses include commercial businesses (including self-employed persons surveyed in the context of their business), schools, universities, colleges, voluntary organisations, non-profit bodies, mutual associations etc. Surveys of local councils are included within surveys to businesses.

In this report, surveys that contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as 'official statistics' surveys, and surveys that do not contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as 'other statistics' surveys.

⁸ Hourly rates of pay are median hourly (£) UK rates of pay (excluding overtime), based on the provisional results of [ASHE 2021](#). This ensures direct comparability with compliance costs for 2021/22 published by other parts of the UK.

2. Compliance Cost to Business

In 2021/22, 108 surveys of businesses were issued by government departments. The total estimated cost to business was £885,800.

Compliance Cost by NI Department

Of the total compliance cost, 74% was attributable to DoF (£657,500) and 14% to DAERA (£125,000). DfE contributed 7% of the total cost (£59,900).

71% of the total compliance cost (£624,900) can be attributed to Economic and Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) branch⁹ within DoF, which includes surveys carried out by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) on behalf of ELMS. In addition, ELMS surveys accounted for 95% of the total compliance cost within DoF. Of the 43 DoF surveys, 37 were attributed to ELMS.

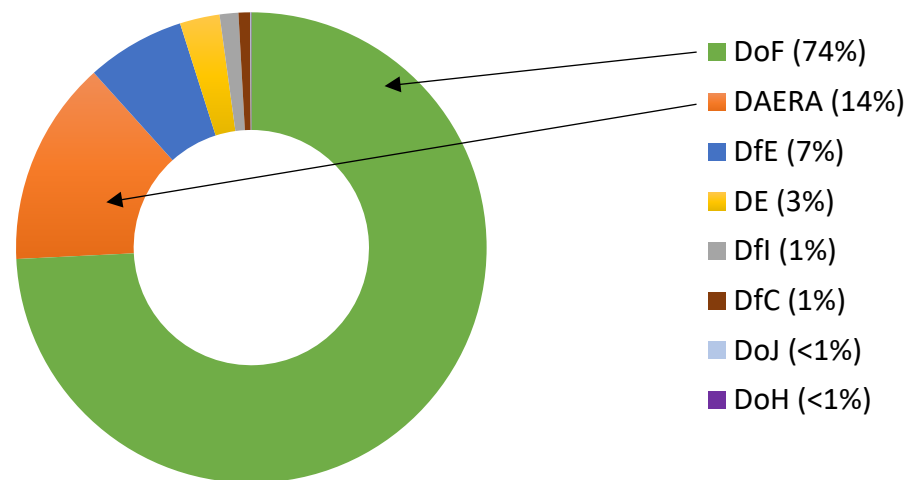
Surveys issued by DfI, DfC, DoJ and DoH contributed 1% or less of the total compliance burden.

TEO and PPS did not issue any surveys to businesses in 2021/22.

Table 1: Compliance cost by NI Department, 2021/22

Department	Number of Surveys	Compliance Cost (£000s)	Total Returns
DAERA	17	125.0	18,843
DE	18	24.3	5,035
DfC	9	7.0	14,512
DfE	15	59.9	8,289
DfI	3	11.4	3,297
DoF	43	657.5	88,382
DoH	2	0.3	93
DoJ	1	0.4	49
TEO	0	0	0
PPS	0	0	0
Total	108	885.8	138,500

Figure 1: Percentage of total compliance cost by NI Department, 2021/22



⁹ Information on the cost attributable to each area within DoF is available in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix C)

Statutory and Voluntary

In 2021/22, 45 of the surveys issued by government departments were statutory, while the other 63 were voluntary.

Statutory surveys accounted for £732,900 (83%) of the total compliance cost, while voluntary surveys accounted for £152,900 (17%).

Figure 2 shows that while 58% of the surveys were voluntary, these surveys contributed only 17% of the total compliance burden. Statutory surveys accounted for 83% of the compliance burden, but only 42% of the surveys.

Official Statistics and other statistics

The majority of compliance burden (93%; £821,300) was due to surveys that contribute to official statistics (Figure 2 & Table 3).

Of these surveys which contributed to official statistics, 89% (£732,500) of the overall burden was attributable to statutory surveys¹⁰.

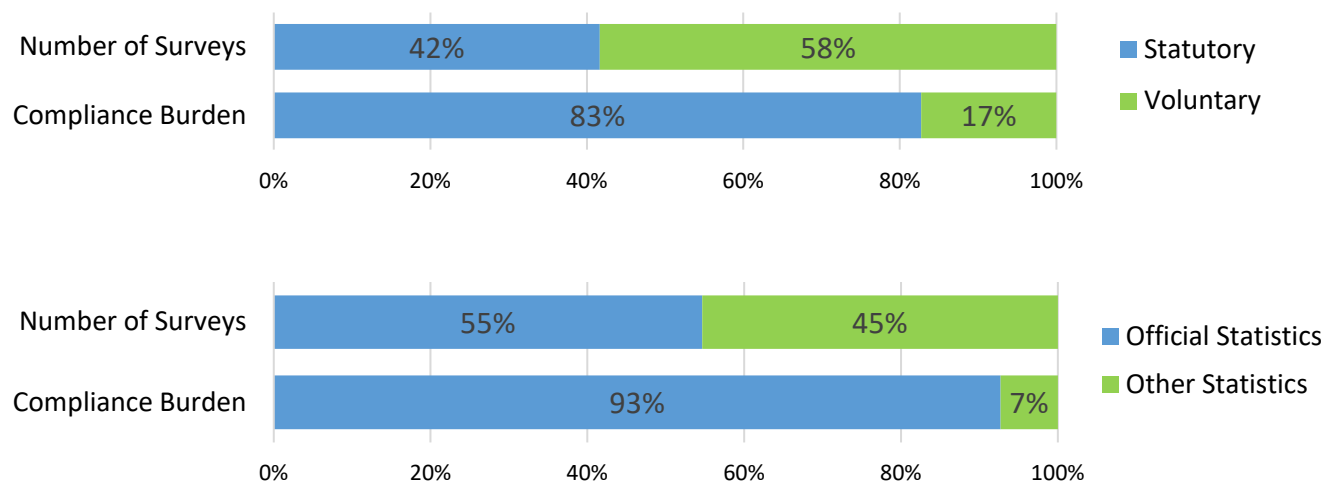
Table 2: Compliance cost for statutory and voluntary surveys, 2021/22

	Number of surveys	Compliance Cost (£000s)
Statutory	45	732.9
Voluntary	63	152.9
Total	108	885.8

Table 3: Compliance cost for surveys which do and do not contribute to Official Statistics, 2021/22

	Number of surveys	Compliance Cost (£000s)
Official Statistics	59	821.3
Other statistics	49	64.6
Total	108	885.8

Figure 2: Percentage compliance cost for surveys which are statutory or voluntary and which contribute to official statistics



¹⁰ Further information on individual surveys is available in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix C).

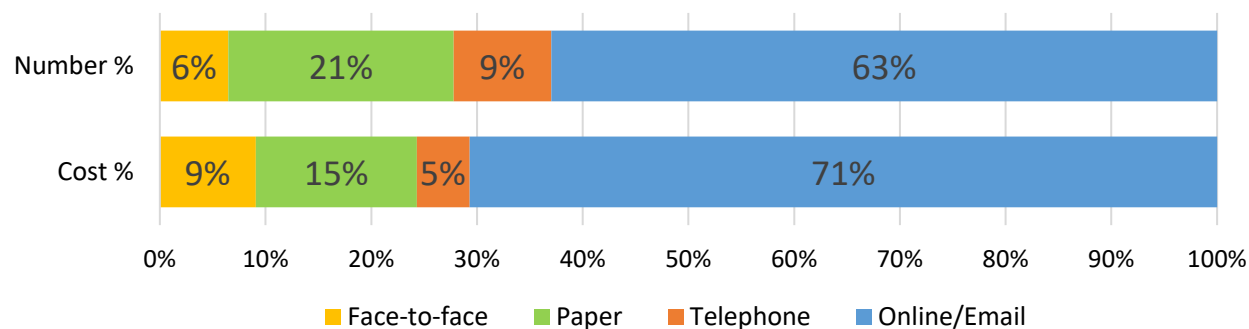
3. Data Collection Methods

The percentage of surveys and compliance cost by primary method of collection is shown in Figure 3.

In 2021/22, 63% of surveys used online/email as their primary method of data collection, with over half of surveys (51%) being solely online or email-based. Furthermore, there were 80 surveys (74%) which offered an online or email data collection option (Table 4).

Around one fifth (21%) of surveys in 2021/22 employed a paper questionnaire as their primary data collection method, with 15% of all surveys using a paper questionnaire on its own. The remaining surveys combined a paper questionnaire, as a primary method, with online/email data collection (5%), or with both online/email and telephone methods¹¹ (2%).

Figure 3: Number of surveys and compliance cost by collection method (*using primary method*)



Please note that any implied relationship between method of collection and compliance cost should be treated with caution, as no account has been taken of the complexity and length of the surveys.

Table 4: Number of surveys and compliance cost by collection method, 2021/22

	Face-to-face	Paper	Paper & Online/Email	Paper, Email & Telephone	Paper, Online & TDE	Telephone	Telephone & Online	DVR & Online
Number	7	16	5	1	1	5	2	1
Cost (£000s)	80.5	86.5	12.9	24.3	10.9	22.5	14.8	1.1

	TDE, Paper & Email	Online/Email	Online/Email & Paper	Online & Telephone	Online, Paper & Telephone	Online, Paper, Email & TDE	Total
Number	2	55	7	2	1	3	108
Cost (£000s)	6.0	141.3	244.7	22.2	0.3	217.8	885.8

¹¹ Telephone methods include interviews conducted by telephone as well as telephone data entry (TDE) and digital voice recognition (DVR). TDE is a data collection method where the requested data are entered using the telephone keypad.

Telephone methods (either a telephone interview, telephone data entry¹¹ or digital voice recognition) were used as the primary data collection method for 9% of all surveys, while 17% of surveys used these methods in some capacity. Just over one in fifteen surveys (6%) used face-to-face interviews as their primary collection data method; all of these surveys were exclusively face to face.

4. Change in data collection methods over time (2016/17 to 2021/22)

There has been a gradual change in the primary data collection methods used by government since 2016/17.

The number of surveys using online/email as their primary method of data collection increased between 2016/17 and 2020/21, from 33 (24%) in 2016/17 to 81 (66%) in 2020/21. Although the number (68) and proportion (63%) of surveys using online/email as their primary method decreased in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21, both the number and proportion remain higher than in 2019/20, and earlier years.

In contrast, the number of surveys using paper questionnaires as their primary method has decreased year-on-year, from 84 (61%) in 2016/17 to 23 (21%) in 2021/22. Similarly, surveys using face-to-face methods as their primary data collection method has decreased from 14 (10%) in 2016/17 to 7 (6%) in 2021/22. The use of telephone methods as a primary data collection method has remained relatively constant (between 7-9%) in recent years.

Figure 4: Number of surveys by primary method employed, 2016/17 to 2021/22

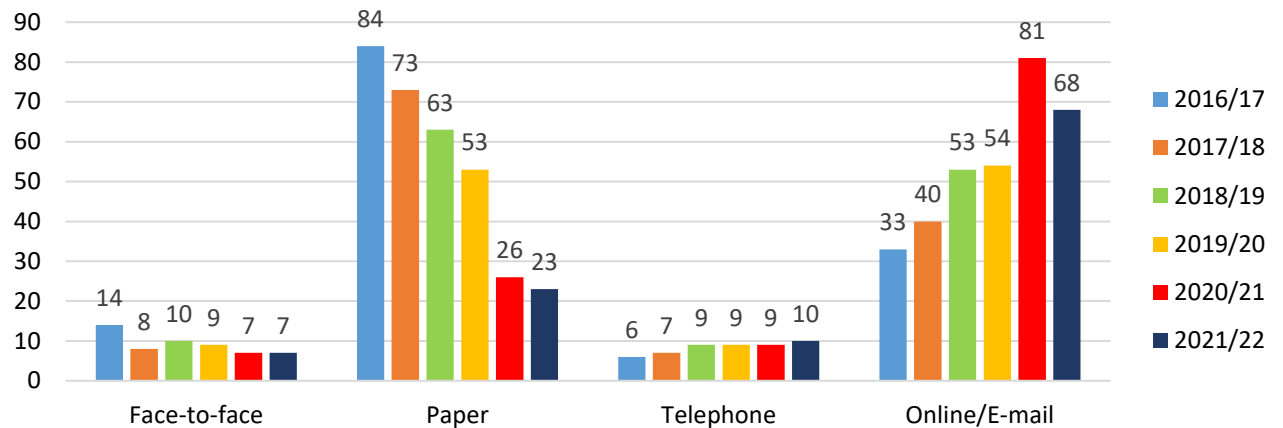
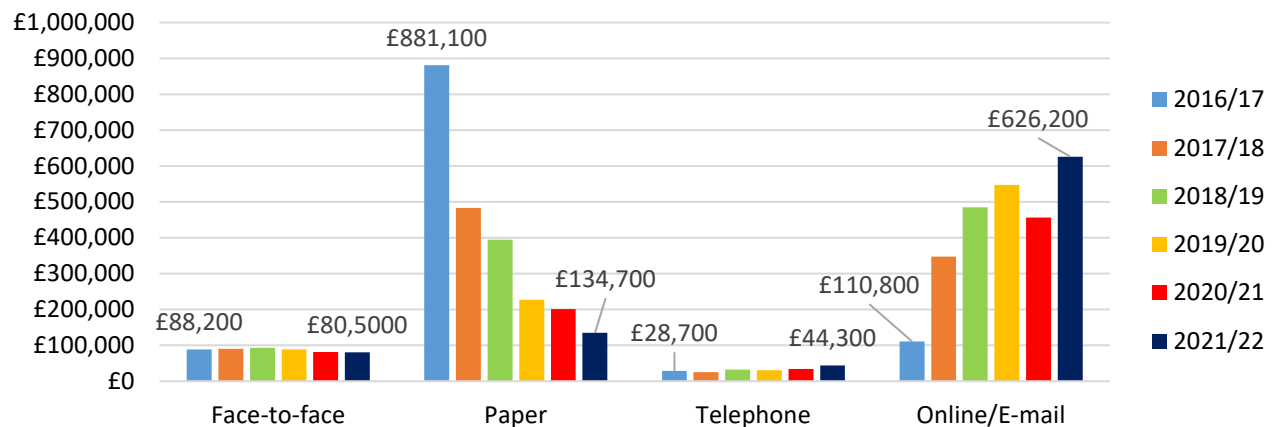


Figure 5: Compliance burden by primary method employed, 2016/17 to 2021/22¹²



A similar pattern is observed in the total compliance burden for each primary method¹². The overall burden for surveys using paper questionnaires as their primary method was highest in 2016/17, contributing 79% (£881,100) of the total compliance cost. This reduced to £483,000 (51%) in 2017/18, and has continued to decrease year-on-year, dropping to £134,700 in 2021/22, which accounts for 15% of the total compliance cost.

In contrast, the compliance burden contribution from surveys using online/email as the primary data collection method has consistently increased each year from 10% (£110,800) in 2016/17 to 61% (£547,000) in 2019/20, and accounts for £626,200 (71%) of the burden in 2021/22. There was however a decrease in 2020/21 to £456,500 (59%). This was driven mostly by lower response rates in 2020/21 as a result of disruption to surveys due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and also the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) which alternates between a larger and smaller sample (23,496 responses in 2019/20; 10,836 responses in 2020/21; 24,456 responses in 2021/22).

The compliance cost due to surveys using face-to-face and telephone interviews has remained relatively consistent since 2016/17.

Note: As the nature and complexity of the surveys carried out each year varies, with a large number of ad-hoc, multiennial and irregular surveys, it is not possible to establish a relationship between the change in the number of surveys and the change in compliance burden for each primary data collection method.

5. Examination of the Trend, 2012/13 to 2021/22

Figure 6 illustrates the change in the estimated cost to businesses of complying with government statistical surveys from 2012/13 to 2021/22¹³.

The solid blue line shows the cost in terms of raw or current prices; that is in terms of staff cost at the time of the survey, without allowing for the effects of changes to levels of pay. The dashed orange line shows the cost after wage growth has been taken into account. External costs incurred by businesses have not been adjusted. The base staff cost are the *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)* costs used for 2021/22.

¹² The figures used in Figure 5 do not take into account the change in rates of pay (staff costs) over time. However, the pattern is similar when compliance costs based on 2021/22 rates of pay are used (see downloadable tables and charts, details in Appendix C)

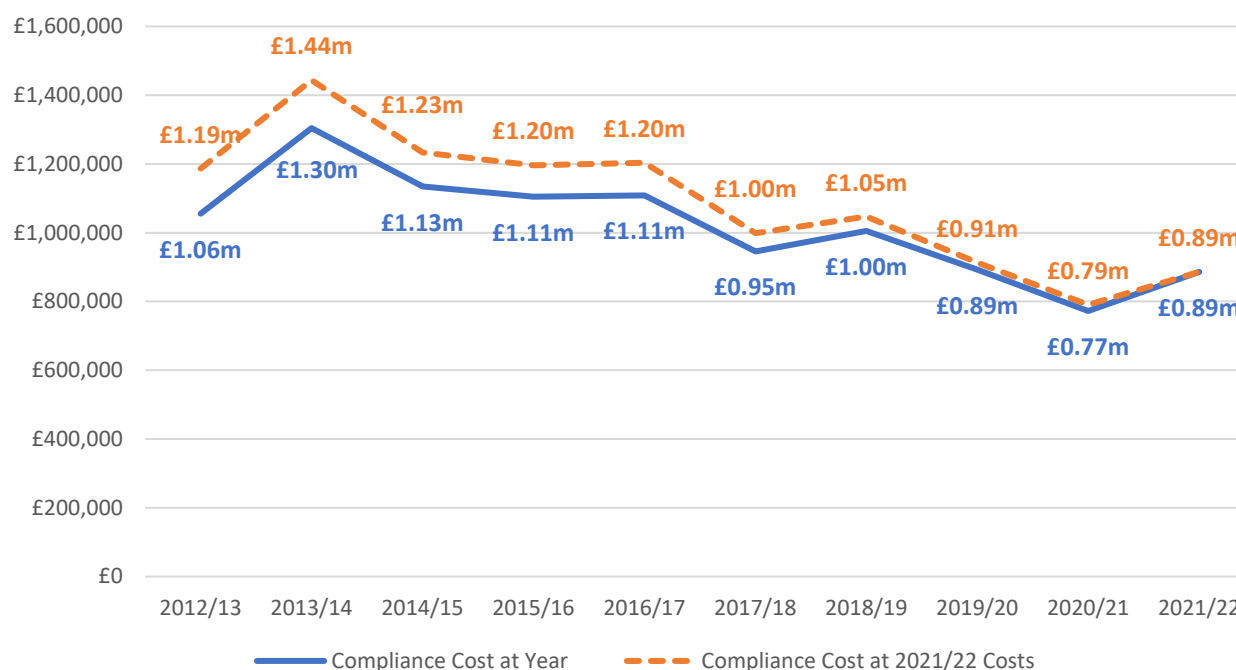
¹³ The figures in the time series have not been adjusted for the discontinuities introduced in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 due the inclusion of additional surveys (improved coverage) and ONS methodology changes. See notes 14 and 15 below (and Appendix A).

Prior to 2021/22, the estimated compliance cost to business based on staff costs at the time of the survey had gradually reduced¹⁴ from a peak of £1.30m in 2013/14 to a low of £0.77m in 2020/21 (apart from a slight increase between 2017/18 and 2018/19¹⁵). The estimated cost in 2020/21 was the lowest value recorded in the time series, 41% lower than the peak value seen in 2013/14 and 13% lower than 2019/20.

In 2021/22, the compliance cost increased to £0.89m, primarily due to surveys achieving greater response rates than in the previous year, where surveys had been disrupted by the pandemic. This is similar to the compliance cost in 2019/20 (£0.89m) prior to the pandemic.

The estimated compliance cost in 2021/22 is 15% higher than in 2020/21 but 1% (£6k) lower than in 2019/20, based on staff costs at the time of the survey.

Figure 6: NI compliance cost from 2012/13 to 2021/22



When the impact of changes in staff costs is removed (i.e. compliance costs are based on 2021/22 costs), the compliance burden in 2021/22 is 3% lower than in 2019/20 and 12% higher than in 2020/21. There is also a more pronounced downward trend between 2013/14 and 2020/21.

¹⁴ The absence of a decrease between 2015/16 and 2016/17 was due to the discontinuity in the time series (i.e. the inclusion of additional surveys, and increase in compliance costs for ONS surveys). There was also some over-estimation in the compliance costs for 2016/17 which was removed in 2017/18. Further details are provided in Appendix A.

¹⁵ Over a quarter (1.8%) of the (6.3%) increase between 2017/18 and 2018/19 was due to a change in the way compliance costs were estimated for surveys carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on behalf of ELMS.

6. Measures being taken to Reduce Compliance Cost

Those carrying out surveys of businesses and producing official statistics and other outputs are aware of the burden imposed on businesses, so take steps to reduce compliance costs. A few of the specific initiatives employed by departments in 2021/22 include:

Department	Survey	Steps taken to reduce compliance burden
DAERA	June Agricultural & Horticulture Census	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraged more people to use the online system. Use of administrative sources.
DAERA (DEFRA ¹⁶ /CEFAS ¹⁷)	UKMAP Data Collection Framework – Aquaculture Socio-Economic Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previously a paper questionnaire, now an emailed Excel template, with drop-down menus and auto-fill cells.
DE	School Census	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of centres now use the online app and are no longer using paper questionnaires. The app is being updated so that they are more functional and user-friendly.
DfC (NIHE) ¹⁸	UU/NIHE House Price Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in the research design have increased the automation of data provision, which significantly reduced the amount of time spent by individual estate agents completing their returns. Previously, qualitative interviews with approximately 200 estate agents per year took place. This has now been replaced with a short online survey.
Dfi	Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport, Northern Ireland (CSRGT NI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The survey has been moved to an online collection platform which should reduce burden for businesses going forward.
DoF (ELMS) ¹⁹	Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased usage of web-forms.
	Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry (NIABI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses encouraged to use web-forms instead of paper questionnaires.
	Quarterly Business Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses have been encouraged to use web-forms which have automated checks built in.
DoF (TSSSB) ²⁰	Northern Ireland Visitor Attraction Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now online having previously been a paper questionnaire.

¹⁶ DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)

¹⁷ CEFAS (Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science)

¹⁸ NIHE (Northern Ireland Housing Executive)

¹⁹ ELMS (Economic and Labour Market Statistics)

²⁰ TSSSB (Tourism Statistics and Staff Surveys Branch)

7. Uses of Surveys

The data collected through government surveys of Northern Ireland businesses are used for a range of purposes including the

- production and development of official statistics (see Figure 2 & Table 3);
- development, monitoring and evaluation of government policy;
- design, monitoring, refinement and evaluation of programmes;
- improvement and refinement of government services.

Some examples of how data from surveys to businesses which were carried out in 2021/22 have been used are provided below. Further information on the purpose of each survey is available in the downloadable data (see Appendix C).

- Analytical Services Division in DfE uses a wide range of ELMS official statistics publications, which are produced using business survey data, to provide briefing and analysis on the local economy to a wide range of stakeholders, including a monthly economic update and more detailed economic commentary published three times per year.
- In addition, analysis of business survey data collected by ELMS was used to support decision-making during the pandemic. Analytical Services Division in DfE used this analysis to establish the potential scope and characteristics of the impacts of COVID-19 regulations on businesses and business activity. Data from these surveys also informed the development, implementation and evaluation of a range of COVID-related business support schemes and the High Street Stimulus schemes.
- Analysis of the *Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry (NIABI)* data on energy purchases has led to the successful development of a monitoring metric for inclusion in the DfE Energy Strategy relating to energy purchases as a proportion of turnover. This metric will enable the monitoring of input pressures faced by businesses represented by their energy expenditure. Furthermore, data from the *NIABI* on business capital expenditure, business subsidies and business purchases is currently being used to support work related to profitability.
- Data relating to businesses purchases of specific types of energy, from the *NI Annual Business Inquiry*, were used by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), Department of Finance (DoF), DfE and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to inform the development of the [Energy Bill Relief Scheme](#)²¹.
- *NI Economic Trade Statistics* (formerly the *Broad Economy Sales and Export Statistics*) data have been used to support and inform decision-making around EU Exit (including ongoing discussions with the EU over the NI Protocol) and understand the impact of the Northern Ireland Protocol on the

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bill-relief-scheme-help-for-businesses-and-other-non-domestic-customers>

local economy. More recently HMRC have used NIETS data to inform developments around the Windsor Framework. HMRC required reliable NI trade data which they could use to support ongoing discussions with the EU over the Northern Ireland Protocol (NIP). These data were also required to formulate public lines and inform Parliament and business groups of the impact of any potential outcomes on the NIP and Windsor Framework.

- Data from *Quarterly Business Survey (QBS)* feeds into the Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index (NICEI), which is broadly equivalent to the output measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) produced by ONS and is used to measure the performance of the NI economy. The NICEI is used by a broad range of external users with an interest in assessing and reporting on the level of economic activity in Northern Ireland, and also to monitor progress on a number of key government strategies, such as the Industrial Strategy and the 10X Economic Vision.
- Information from the *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)* is used by the Low Pay Commission as part of its evidence base for recommending to the Government the level of the national minimum wage.
- Data from tourism surveys (the *Northern Ireland Visitor Attraction Survey*, *Northern Ireland Occupancy Survey* and *Northern Ireland Self Catering Occupancy Survey*) are used to influence decision making for the tourism policy team in DfE and are also used by new businesses considering options to open in an area. Tourism surveys also help inform the value of tourism to the economy, which is useful for the tourism sector.

More information on these examples and further examples of how data obtained from surveys to businesses have been used in the past and are currently used can be found in the [Uses of Business Surveys](#)²² document.

²² <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/use-of-business-surveys>

Appendix A: Methodology and Quality

Detailed information on the rationale for the publication, data collection methodology, quality and main uses of the statistics can be found in the [Supporting Information - Cost to Business of Completing Statistical Surveys issued by Northern Ireland Departments](#)²³ published alongside this report.

A1. Definitions and Methodology

Business

For Survey Control purposes, businesses include commercial businesses (including self-employed persons surveyed in the context of their business), schools, universities, colleges, voluntary organisations, non-profit bodies, mutual associations etc. Surveys of local councils are also included under surveys to businesses.

Statistical Survey

A statistical survey is any structured inquiry designed to obtain aggregated data (which may be qualitative or quantitative) where the individual or corporate identities of the respondents are in themselves of little significance.

This includes both regular and ad hoc surveys; both voluntary and statutory surveys that may be required to determine, evaluate or monitor policy and/or action, provide social or economic indicators or measure customer satisfaction. Surveys in scope are not limited to those conducted by statistics branches and include all modes of data collection: completion of a questionnaire; telephone data entry; face-to-face interview; online/email data collection etc. Surveys that contribute to official statistics and those that do not are both in the scope of survey control.

The following surveys are excluded from survey control:

- Surveys where there is no direct approach made and where respondents clearly select themselves (e.g. web sites, readership surveys, some types of consultation exercises where there is an invitation to comment);
- Where information is required as an integral part of the operational management of a public service. Such returns will often be regulated under specific departmental controls;
- Surveys relating to the contractual obligations of potential respondents to the department or agency concerned;
- Surveys to respondents in central government and its agencies.

Where part of a survey falls outside scope, the part of the survey within scope has been included where possible.

²³ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/supporting-information-ni-statistical-surveys-cost-burden-business>

Compliance Cost

Compliance costs are the estimated financial burden placed on businesses as a result of completing government statistical surveys. Where the actual or estimated completion time is not available for each business, an overall completion time for the survey is estimated using the median time to complete the survey. The median time to complete the survey is estimated based on: information from the survey, paradata, historical data (within the last five years), a pilot survey, reviews or survey manager expertise. Only those completing the survey are included; nonresponse is assumed to place no burden on respondents. Any time spent establishing eligibility for businesses that are subsequently deemed out of scope is included.

Where a business survey uses a number of different form types, or data collection methods e.g. electronic/postal, and these vary in terms of completion time then the calculations may be conducted separately for each form type/ data collection method and summed for an overall compliance cost. Similarly, if there are different types of businesses with different completion times then the calculations for each type of business may be carried out separately and summed.

Validation procedures may require a re-contact with the business. The burden due to re-contact is also calculated. If actual or estimated re-contact times are not available then the median time taken to complete the full questionnaire may be substituted on the assumption that a respondent may need to review the entire questionnaire.

Data suppliers are provided with a choice of five rates of pay taken from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)²⁴. Data suppliers must select the most appropriate rate of pay for the person most likely to have completed the survey. The rates of pay used in compliance cost calculations are the UK median hourly pay (excluding overtime)²⁵ for the following grades:

Grade	ASHE Code
Chief Executive and Senior Officials	1115
Managers and Senior Officials	1
Professional Occupations	2
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	3
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	4

Any external costs incurred by businesses (e.g. accountant's fees) when complying with government survey requests are also included in the calculation of compliance cost.

²⁴ The provisional 2020 ASHE results have been used for 2020/21. These figures have been used to ensure direct comparability with 2020/21 compliance costs published for other parts of the UK (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/regionbyoccupation4digitsoc2010ashtable15>).

²⁵ Table 15.6a: Earnings and hours worked, region by occupation by four-digit SOC: Hourly pay - Excluding overtime 2020

The Compliance Cost (£) is a simple **addition** of Response Cost (£), Re-contact Cost (£) and External Cost (£), which are calculated as:

Response Cost (£) = No. of responses x Median time (hrs) x Hourly rate (£/hr)

Re-contact Cost (£) = No. re-contacted x Median time (hrs) x Hourly rate (£/hr)

External Cost (£) = No. with external cost x Median external cost (£)

If a survey is carried out on behalf of a number of government departments, then each government department will only include the compliance costs for the questions/ modules commissioned by them²⁶.

Compliance costs at current year staff costs (constant prices)

The method used for calculating compliance costs at current year staff costs (or constant prices) is to use the rates of pay for the current, or base year, instead of the rates for previous years.

Statutory and Voluntary surveys

Where the status of a survey is statutory there is a legal obligation on the respondents to provide the information that will be collected, for example, under the Statistics of Trade and Employment (NI) Order 1988. The Code of Practice for Statistics encourages official statistics producers to seek voluntary participation in statistical data collection rather than using statutory powers, wherever possible.

Official Statistics and Other Statistics surveys

Surveys that contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as 'official statistics' surveys, and surveys that do not contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as 'other statistics' surveys.

A2. Coverage

All statistical surveys to businesses carried out by, or on behalf of, Northern Ireland Government Departments (including Arm's Length Bodies) are included, as well as statistical surveys carried out by NI Departments (or ALBs) on behalf of GB Government Departments (or ALBs) where the data are used directly by the NI Department (or ALB) or feed into UK Statistics.

²⁶ The number of forms however will be the same as for the complete survey, which means that the forms and surveys will be counted more than once in aggregated figures.

A3. Data quality

Information on the quality of the data used to produce these official statistics can be found in the [Supporting Information](#) and the [Background Quality Report – Cost to Business of Completing Statistical Surveys issued by Northern Ireland Departments](#)²⁷.

Discontinuity (affecting 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19)

The application of the survey control methodology was reviewed prior to the 2016/17 data collection and improved guidance was produced. This has resulted in a discontinuity in the time series as some surveys, and types of surveys, which were excluded prior to 2016/17 are now included.

The methodology used to calculate compliance costs for surveys carried out by ONS, on behalf of ELMS, was also revised in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19. This has resulted in a substantial increase in the estimated compliance costs for some surveys in 2016/17, a smaller decrease for 2017/18 offsetting some of the 2016/17 increase, and a relatively small increase for 2018/19.

Further information on the cause of these discontinuities and an assessment of the impact is included in the [Supporting Information](#). These discontinuities are noted when presenting the between year comparisons and examining the trend over time.

A4. User Engagement

User engagement is on-going between the publication of one report and the production of the next. Following the pre-2016/17 review of the guidance and methodology a specific programme of engagement was carried out. This resulted in some minor changes to the publication such as referencing the Statistics Advisory Committee and the Statistics of Trade and Employment (NI) Order 1988. The 'Uses of Surveys' section was also added to the publication as a result of user feedback, as were the case studies focusing on the use of surveys.

An [online consultation](#)²⁸ seeking users' views on proposals to reduce the content of the 'Cost to Business' report and discontinue the 'Burden on Households & Individuals' report was held between December 2022 and February 2023. The [responses from the consultation](#)²⁹ were supportive of the proposals, which is consistent with the feedback received from other user engagement. As a result the 'Burden on Households & Individuals' will no longer be produced and the 'Cost to Business' report has been reduced to only include analysis at the Northern Ireland level and a single breakdown by Department. The downloadable data will continue to be made available alongside the report, enabling users to replicate the missing analysis.

We would welcome your feedback, on what you use this report for, any tables/ charts or commentary you find particularly helpful and any additional analysis at the Northern Ireland level that you would like to see. Feedback can be provided by emailing Garbhan.McKevitt@nisra.gov.uk.

²⁷ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/background-quality-report-cost-business-completing-statistical-surveys-issued-by>

²⁸ <https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/dof/user-engagement-statistical-survey-burden-reports/>

²⁹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/outcome-user-consultation-northern-ireland-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden>

Appendix B: Departments and their abbreviations

Abbreviation	Department
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DE	Department of Education
DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for Enterprise
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
DoF	Department of Finance
DoH	Department of Health
DoJ	Department of Justice
TEO	The Executive Office
PPS	Public Prosecution Service

Appendix C: Further Information

Downloadable data

The data used in this report can be downloaded from the [NI Statistical Surveys - Assessment of Cost Burden to Business 2021-22 page](#)³⁰.

Information is provided for each individual survey, including the name, purpose of the survey, frequency, statutory/voluntary status, official statistics status, data collection methods (primary, secondary etc.), issued sample, achieved sample, median completion time, number of re-contacts, median re-contact time, compliance cost, Department and ALB/branch. The survey contact and a link to the published statistics (or survey) is also included. This allows more detailed analysis to be carried out for individual surveys and/or additional information sought.

Tables and charts

The tables and charts in this report, including the data used in the charts and some additional analysis, can be downloaded from the [NI Statistical Surveys - Assessment of Cost Burden to Business 2021-22 page](#).

Previous publications

Previous publications in this series, and the equivalent publications for the Burden on Households and Individuals can be accessed from the [Survey Burden page](#)³¹ on the NISRA website.

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³⁰ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/ni-statistical-surveys-assessment-cost-burden-business-202122>

³¹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/ni-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden>