

Northern Ireland business; activity, size, location and ownership, 2022

Northern Ireland business profile by industry, size, legal status, location and foreign-ownership

A National Statistics Publication

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[TABLES AND CHARTS](#)

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1. Key Points

- The number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses operating in Northern Ireland in 2022 is estimated to have risen by 1,245 (1.6%) since 2021 to 78,885. This marked the eighth consecutive year of increase following a period of decline from 2008 to 2014.
- Construction businesses witnessed the largest increase from 2021, increasing by 365 businesses or 3.4%. It was also the largest number observed in this sector since 2011. The largest increase in percentage terms was in the Accommodation and food services sector, which saw an increase of 5.3% (225 businesses) on the previous year.
- Over the 10 years since 2012, the number of businesses in the Production sector has increased by 29% (1,235), whilst Retail saw a decrease of 6.2% (405) over the same period. Wholesale businesses saw a small decline of 0.3% (-10) over the 10 years whilst, overall, the Service sector saw an increase of 17% (6,335).
- The geographical spread of businesses across the 11 district council areas in Northern Ireland remained relatively unchanged, with Belfast having the highest number of businesses (11,405 or 14%) and, Antrim and Newtownabbey with the least number of businesses (4,315 or 5.5%). Antrim and Newtownabbey was also the only district council area where the number of businesses decreased over the year (45 businesses or 1.0%).
- Of those businesses operating in Northern Ireland, 2.5% (1,995) were owned by an enterprise registered outside of Northern Ireland. These businesses accounted for almost one-quarter of employees. The percentage of Northern Ireland owned businesses remains unchanged (97%) since March 2021.

2. NI Business Profile, 2022

- There were 78,885 businesses registered for VAT and/or PAYE in March 2022.
- Northern Ireland remained predominantly a micro-business economy, with almost 90% of businesses having less than 10 employees.
- Just over one-quarter of businesses in Northern Ireland had turnover of less than £50,000, whilst 70% had turnover that was less than £250,000.

Map 1: The highest number of businesses in Northern Ireland was in Belfast City Council area, with the smallest number in Antrim and Newtownabbey.

Number of businesses operating in Northern Ireland by District Council Area, 2022

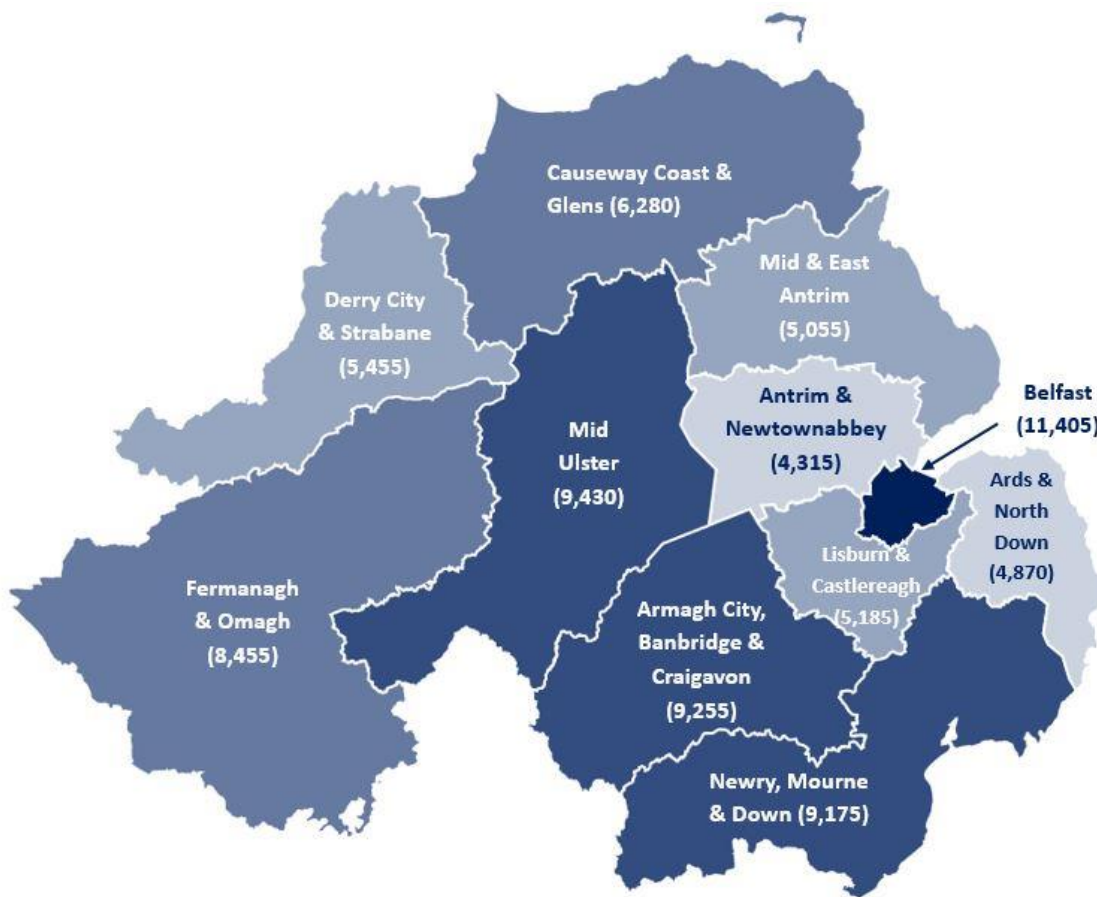


Figure 1: The majority of businesses (89%, 70,510) in Northern Ireland were micro-businesses (less than 10 employees). Just over 2% (1,640) of businesses had 50 or more employees.
 Percentage of businesses operating in Northern Ireland by employee size bands, 2022

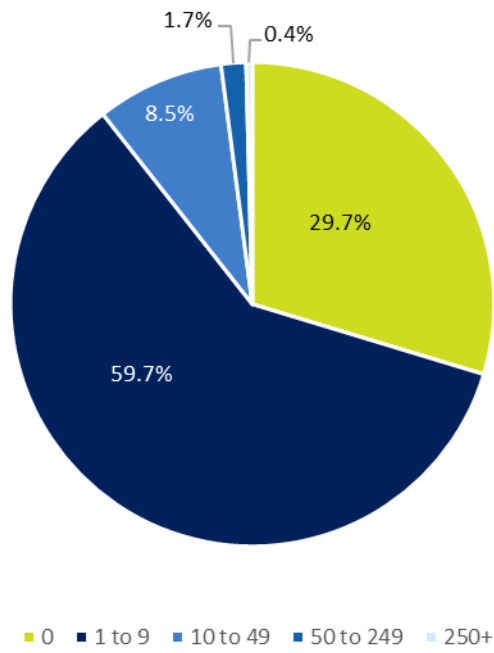
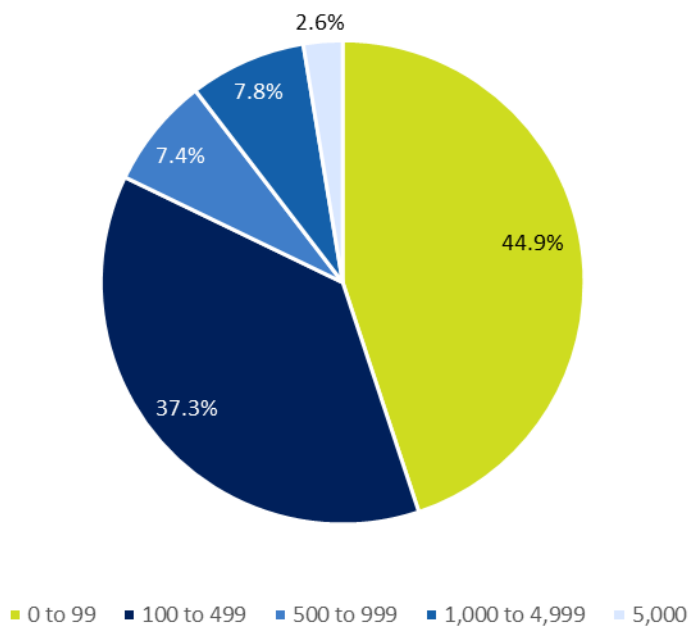


Figure 2: Almost half of businesses in Northern Ireland (45% or 35,415) had a turnover of less than £100,000, whilst 10% (8,220) had a turnover in excess of £1 million.
 Percentage of businesses operating in Northern Ireland by turnover size bands (£000), 2022



3. Change Over 1 Year

- There were 1,245 (1.6%) more businesses registered in March 2022 than in March 2021.
- All four headline industries experienced growth in the number of businesses over the year to March 2022. The Service sector, the largest in Northern Ireland (56% of all businesses), grew by 1.5% (655), whilst Construction saw the largest percentage growth at headline industry level over the year (3.4% or 365).
- The number of businesses increased in all but one district council area in Northern Ireland over the 12-month period. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council area saw the largest increase in the number of newly registered businesses (325 or 3.6%), whilst Antrim and Newtownabbey saw the only decrease (45 or 1.0%)

Figure 3: All four headline industries experienced growth in the number of businesses over the year to 2022.

Percentage change in the number of businesses operating in Northern Ireland by Headline Industry, 2021-22

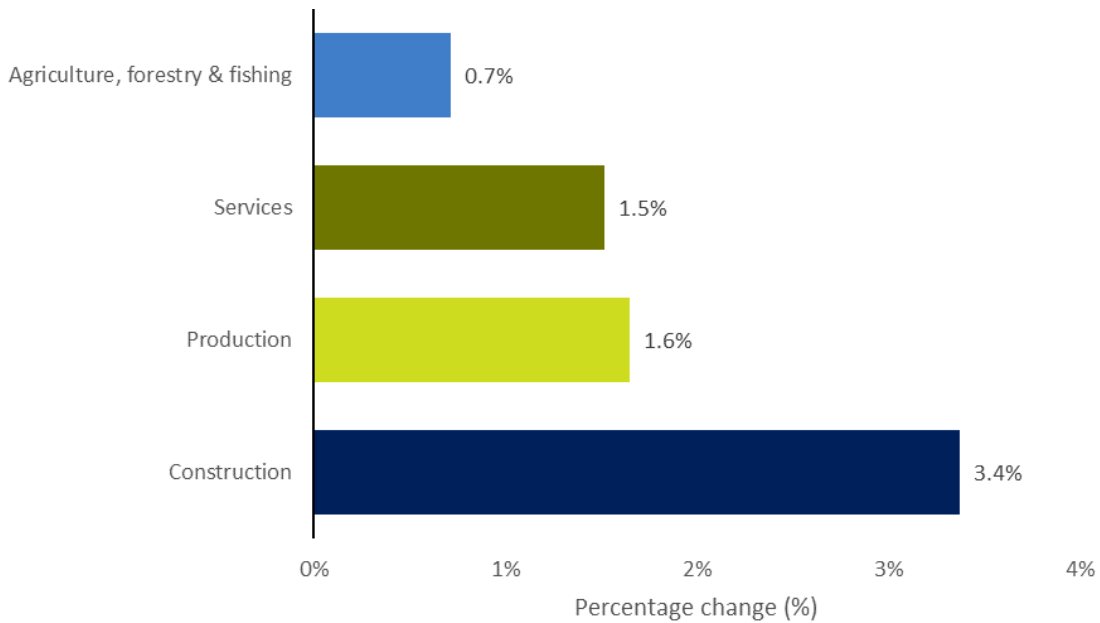
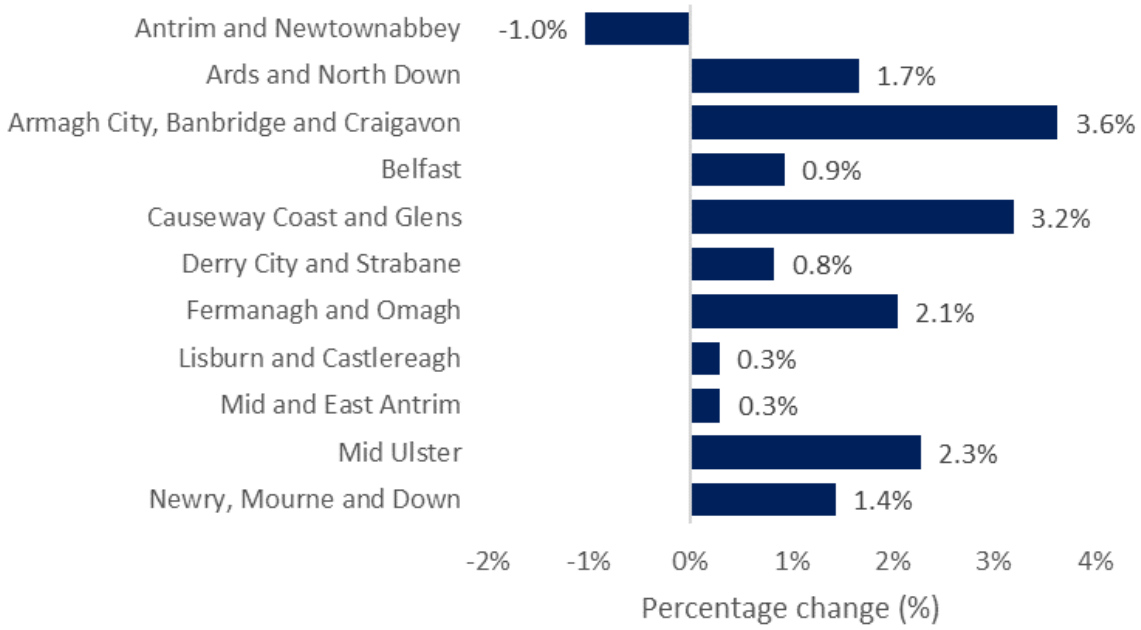


Figure 4: The number of businesses increased in all but one district council area in Northern Ireland over the year to 2022.

Percentage change in the number of businesses operating in Northern Ireland by District Council Area, 2021-22

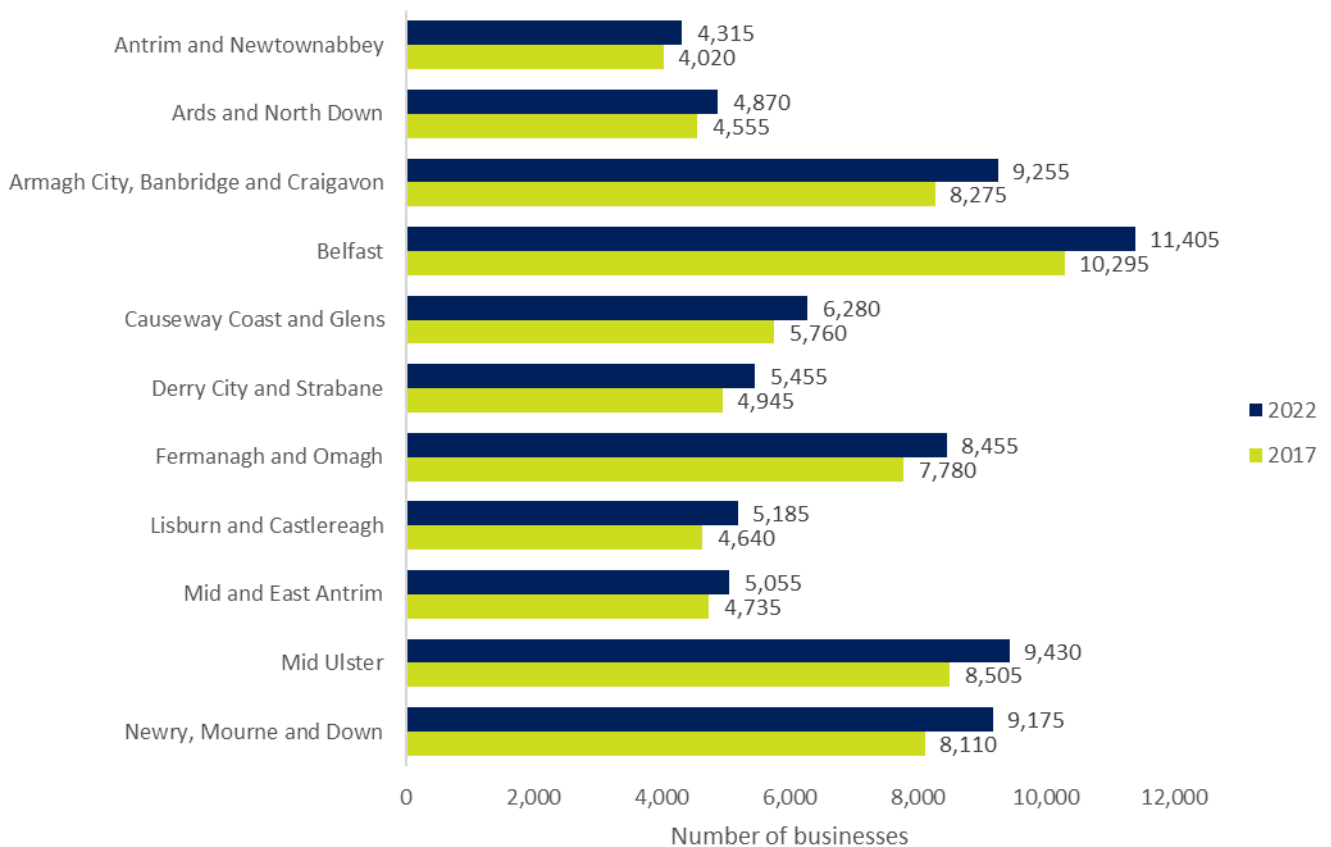


4. Change Over 5 Years

- There were 7,270 (10%) more businesses registered in March 2022 than in March 2017.
- There was an increase in the number of businesses across all 11 district council areas between 2017 and 2022, with the largest percentage growth observed in Newry, Mourne and Down (13%).

Figure 5: The number of businesses increased in all district council areas in Northern Ireland over the 5-year period, 2017 to 2022.

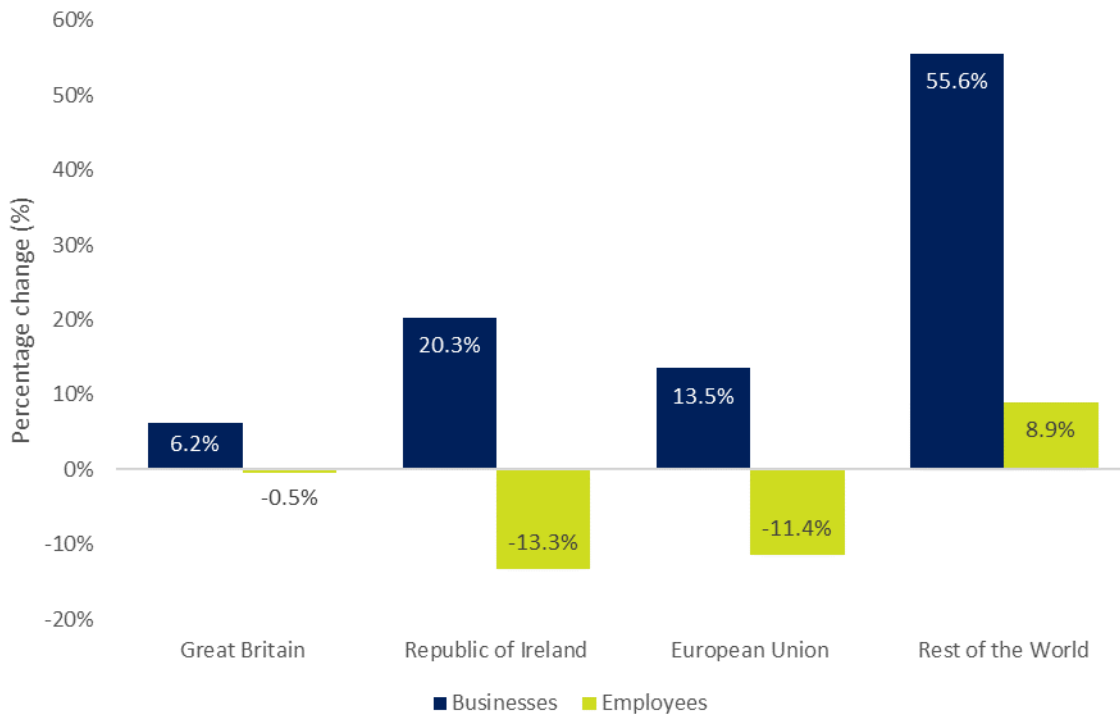
Number of businesses operating in Northern Ireland by District Council Area, 2017 and 2022



- The number of businesses operating in Northern Ireland owned by an enterprise registered outside of Northern Ireland increased by just over a fifth (22% or 360) over the five years to 2022.
- The total number of employees working within enterprises registered outside Northern Ireland increased slightly (0.4% or 740) during the same period, 2017 to 2022. However, only those businesses in the Rest of the World observed an increase (8.9% or 5,605). The equivalent figure for the turnover of these businesses is not available.

Figure 6: The number of locally based businesses owned by an enterprise registered outside of Northern Ireland increased for all four geographical areas: Great Britain, Republic of Ireland, European Union, and Rest of the World.

Percentage change in the number of non-Northern Ireland owned businesses and employees operating in Northern Ireland, 2017 to 2022



5. Change Over 10 Years

- There were 10,225 (15%) more businesses registered in March 2022 than March 2012.
- The industrial profile of businesses across Northern Ireland has changed very little over the 10 years since 2012, with Services still dominating (55% in 2012 and 56% in 2022).

Figure 7: The number of businesses in Northern Ireland has been increasing steadily since 2014.

Number of businesses operating in Northern Ireland, 2012 to 2022

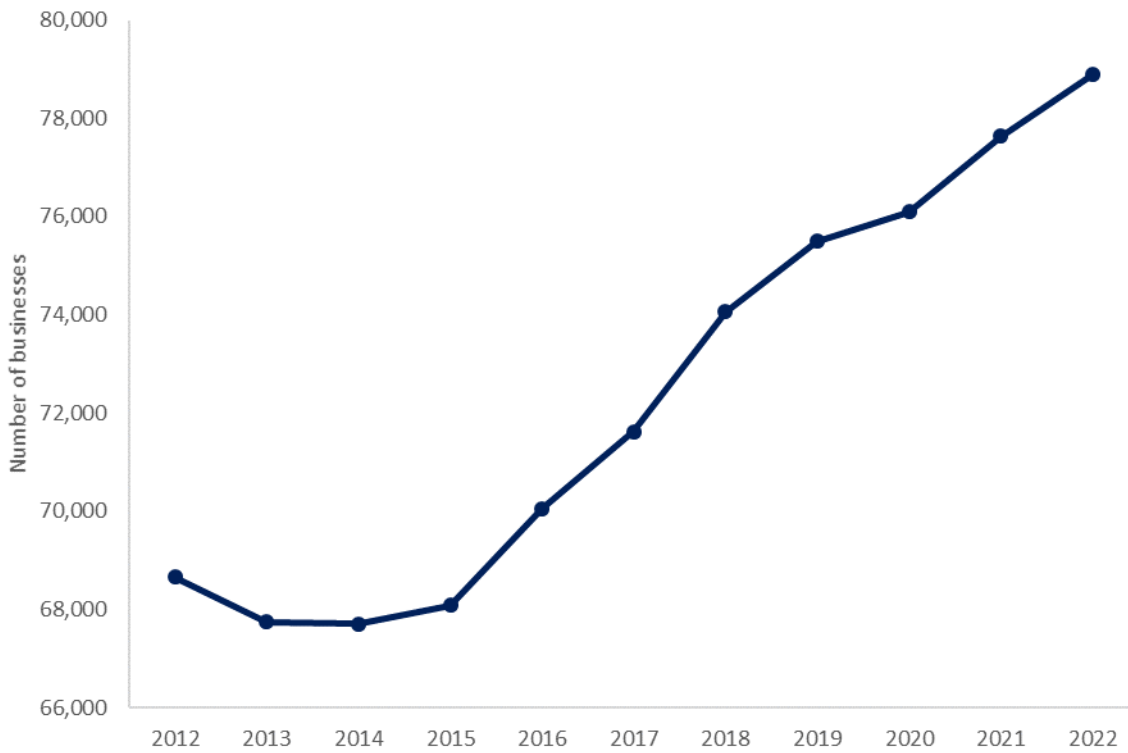


Figure 8: All four headline industries experienced growth in the number of businesses over the 10-year period, 2012 to 2022.

Percentage change in the number of businesses operating in Northern Ireland by Headline Industry, 2012-22

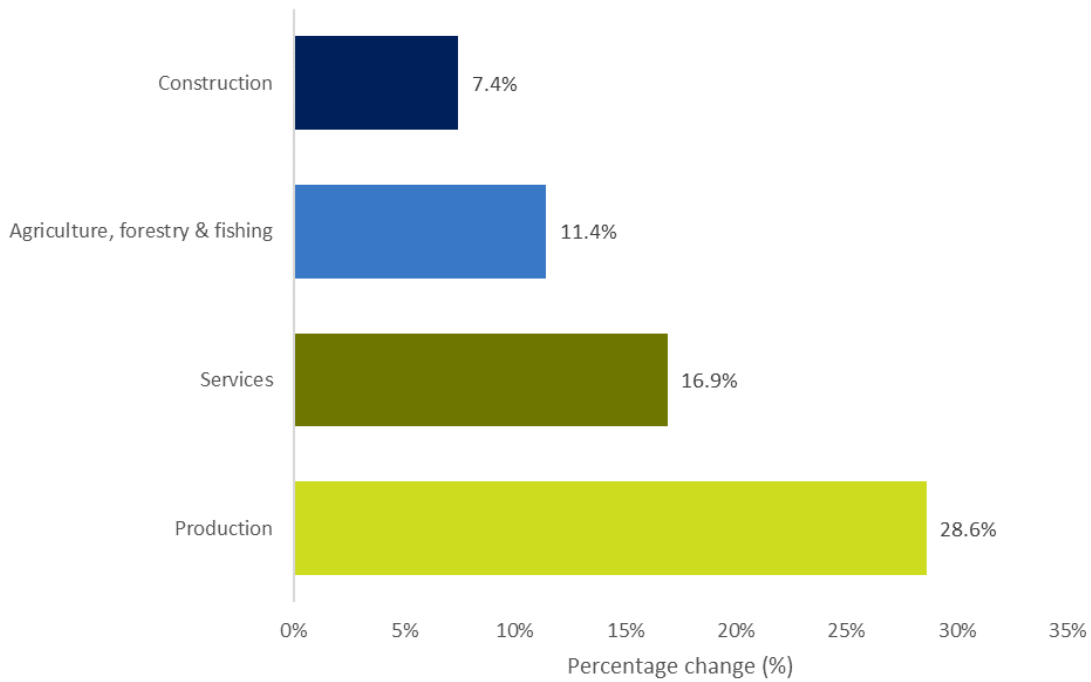
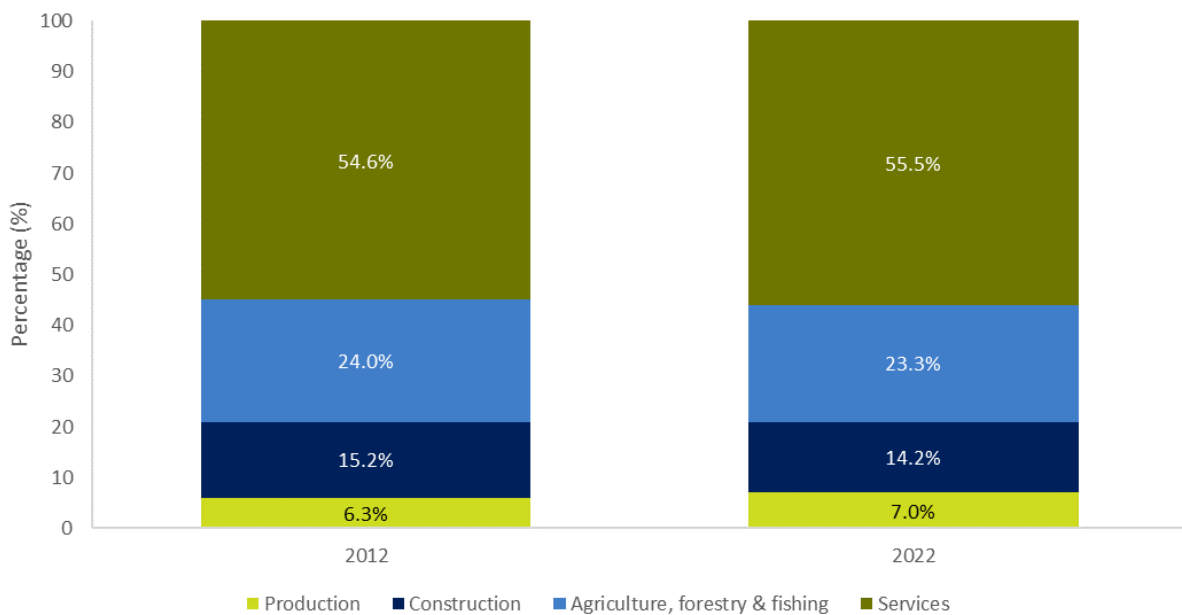


Figure 9: The industrial profile of businesses in Northern Ireland has changed very little in the 10 years since 2012.

Headline Industry as a percentage of all businesses operating in Northern Ireland, 2012 and 2022



6. Background Notes

[A series of data tables](#) accompany the release of this publication. Within these tables, a business is defined as one that is registered for VAT and/or PAYE with HMRC, and is operating in Northern Ireland.

The data presented are taken from a snapshot of the Northern Ireland element of the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), on 11 March 2022.

The IDBR covers most of the economy including the Agriculture, Production and Service sectors in Northern Ireland. The business activity, or industry, is recorded using Standard Industrial Classification (UK SIC 2007) codes.

Foreign Ownership – information on foreign-owned businesses operating in the United Kingdom is obtained on an annual basis by the ONS from the market information company, Dun and Bradstreet. It should be noted that the foreign ownership data provided by Dun and Bradstreet is not complete and data published from IDBR records may not be the most up-to-date information available at that time. NISRA carries out further disaggregation of the foreign ownership data to allow it to distinguish between Northern Ireland-owned businesses and those owned elsewhere in the UK.

NISRA also publishes [Business Demography](#) statistics annually. These statistics report on the births, deaths and survival of businesses across Northern Ireland. Whereas the [Northern Ireland business: activity, size, location and ownership](#) publication reports on all businesses operating in Northern Ireland, the Business Demography statistics only include businesses with a registered, or main, address in Northern Ireland. Business Demography statistics also exclude public sector organisations and the Agriculture sector.

Details of the methodology and definitions used in both publications, along with information on the coverage of the statistics, known quality issues, and disclosure control methods are included in the [Quality and Methodology Information](#) document on the NISRA website.

7. Related Links

- The Northern Ireland Business Demography 2020 publication can be accessed on the [NISRA website](#).
- The ONS UK business; activity, size and location 2021 can be accessed on the [ONS website](#).
- The ONS Business Demography 2020 publication can be accessed on the [ONS website](#).



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 signifies compliance with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).

Since 2012, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Released the [Northern Ireland business; activity, size, location and ownership](#) publication without the Business Demography element which has meant these data are now released six months earlier than previous.
- Transferred data to an improved case management system (Integrated Business Survey System).
- Provided businesses with the option of submitting their survey forms electronically, which has increased response rates, sped up the data collection process, and reduced the burden placed on businesses.
- Shared data with the Business Register and Employment Survey to maintain the accuracy of the IDBR, thus further reducing the burden on businesses to provide the necessary information.
- Improved accessibility by publishing the report and interactive charts in HTML and PDF, and accompanying data tables in Excel and ODS formats.

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[IDBR Tables - 2022 \(Microsoft Excel\)](#)



[IDBR Tables - 2022 \(Open Document Spreadsheet\)](#)