

Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency – Economic & Labour Market Statistics (NISRA ELMS) Confidentiality Statement

1. This Statement is issued in conformance with the requirements set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. It sets out the arrangements NISRA ELMS has put in place to:
 - Protect the security of its data holdings and uphold its guarantee that no statistics will be produced that are likely to identify an individual business unless specifically agreed with them; while at the same time
 - Obtain maximum value from these microdata, once obtained, by extending access to bona-fide and authorised third parties.

Arrangements for Maintaining the Confidentiality of Statistical Data

Physical Security

2. All staff working in the organisation and all visitors to Colby House require a pass to access the premises. There is no public access to any part of the building where individual business level data may be held.

Technical Security

3. No individual business level data are held on laptops or any other portable devices or kept on unprotected portable storage media. All individual business level paper documentation is stored securely. All transmission of microdata is conducted within the secure government information network.

Disclosure Security Relating to Published Statistics or Ad Hoc Queries

4. Statistics published by NISRA ELMS are aggregated to ensure that individual businesses cannot be identified. This also applies to ad hoc queries. A range of disclosure control methods are employed. Most of the data collected by NISRA ELMS are collected under the Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. This requires NISRA ELMS to maintain the confidentiality of the data that it collects. In particular, Section 7 Part 5 specifies a minimum disclosure level:

(5) The following provisions shall have effect with respect to any report, summary or other communication to the public of information obtained under the foregoing provisions of this Order or under the Statistics of Trade Act (Northern Ireland) 1949

(a) no such report, summary or communication shall disclose the number of returns received with respect to the production of any article if that number is less than five;

(b) subject to paragraph (6), any such report, summary or communication shall be so arranged as to prevent any particulars published therein from being identified as being particulars relating to any individual person or undertaking

except with the previous consent in writing of that person or the person carrying on that undertaking, as the case may be.

5. The following is a link to the legislation:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1988/595/contents>
6. NISRA ELMS surveys employ some or all of the following techniques to ensure no data are ever unintentionally disclosed:
 - Cell suppression:
 - Where the number of respondents in a cell is below a specified minimum the contents of that cell are suppressed
 - Secondary suppression of safe cells takes place in certain instances to avoid indirect disclosure by deduction from totals
 - In secondary suppression, it is normal practice to suppress the next available smallest cell so that the value of a primary disclosure cell cannot be calculated
 - Where a small number of the respondents exceed a specified % of the total, the contents are suppressed
 - Rounding
 - Cells are rounded to the nearest 5
 - Data are not rounded and published at the 2 digit SIC level so as not to identify individual businesses
 - Grossing
 - Estimates are quoted following the grossing of sample numbers to population levels
7. Generalised disclosure guidance is available to staff within the Departmental electronic records management system.

Providing Statistical Microdata to a Third Party

8. Individual level data (microdata) from statutory surveys may only be released according to the Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. This requires a Direction to be issued by the head of NISRA, acting on behalf of the Minister. All third party contractors sign a declaration to say that they meet the requirements of the DoF document *Access to DoF Business Survey Microdata Confidentiality Guidelines*.

Staff Training

9. The document *Access to DoF Business Survey Microdata Confidentiality Guidelines* details the procedures that must be followed by everyone handling business survey microdata. This covers all staff within ELMS branch as well as any third party contractors. The document is stored within the Departmental electronic records management system. It is updated to be in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics and current IT security best practice. All new staff are made aware of this document and it is reissued to all staff when it is updated.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

10. While requests under FOIA are treated on a case-by-case basis, the presumption is that requests for individual statistical records will be rejected. The legislation contains exemptions and processes that protect confidential information.

Guidance on the Freedom of Information Act can be found at:

Freedom of Information Act 2000 –

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents>

Data Protection Act

11. All data is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation. General guidance can be found at:

Data Protection Act 2018 –

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted>

General Data Protection Regulation 2018 –

<https://gdpr-info.eu/>