

Business Surveys FAQs

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1. NISRA and statistics

Who are we and what do we do?

NISRA is an Agency of the [Department of Finance](#) – a government department in the Northern Ireland Executive. NISRA is the principal source of official statistics and social research on Northern Ireland. These statistics and research inform public policy and associated debate in the wider society.

How was I selected?

If a business or other organisation is on PAYE or the VAT registers, they can be selected. Businesses or other organisations are selected randomly, although some are selected more often due to either their size or the type of business they work in to reflect the importance and diversity of the NI economy.

Why was I selected?

Representative samples are selected from the directory of all businesses and other organisations to achieve results of suitable quality while minimising the burden on them. Where a survey is necessary, efficient sampling procedures are adopted and in practice, this means that a greater share of the burden tends to fall on larger firms. However, information provided by smaller businesses and other organisations is also necessary to provide a truly representative picture of the economy.

Is this survey compulsory?

Yes. You are legally required to complete this form under the [Statistics of Trade and Employment \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1988](#). We will accept estimated figures if it is not possible for you to provide actual figures. Participation in our surveys ensures that we have a robust measure of the economy, which will help inform government policies and support businesses. Failure to complete a statutory business survey could result in prosecution and a fine.

What happens to the information?

The results are widely used by government, the private sector and others to inform economic decision making and the information collected is invaluable in tracking the performance of the Northern Ireland economy.

Can I provide estimates?

We would like the form to be completed with the correct figures and returned when the figures are available. However, if that is not possible, careful estimates on the form are acceptable.

Why did I get a reminder after I completed the survey?

When returning a paper form, it may take a few days before we receive it. In that case, we may have sent a reminder. In this scenario, you can ignore the reminder. This is less likely for online returns, where email reminders are sent instantly based on the unreturned survey forms. It is possible though that you have completed the online survey, but not submitted the form. In that case, please log on to the [NISRA Business Survey Portal](#), select the survey that is “In Process” and submit.

2. Completing a paper form

Why did I receive a paper form?

The majority of our business surveys are submitted online (Webforms), selected businesses will have received an email with a link to the online survey response portal. For some businesses, we do not have their email address and therefore they are sent a paper version of the survey to their business postal address.

How can I change from paper to online form?

As we move our surveys towards an online first approach we would encourage those businesses who currently receive a paper form to register online to receive the survey electronically by visiting <https://businesssurveysregistration.nisra.gov.uk/>. You will require your eform registration code, which you can find on the front page of your paper form. Should you have any questions about this registration process, please contact us on 0300 200 7832 or e-mail economicstats@nisra.gov.uk

What is the return address?

If you are completing a paper form, please use the enclosed return envelope to send your completed survey to us. If the return envelope is missing, please send to:

*NISRA Department of Finance
Economic and Labour Market Statistics
PO Box 4971
LANCING BN99 8SL*

Alternatively use the appropriate email in the ‘contact us’ section above.

3. Electronic form queries

Is this a genuine survey?

Yes, we send all of our business surveys from the email address business.surveys@nisra.gov.uk. If you have any concerns, please contact us on 0300 200 8732 or email economicstats@nisra.gov.uk so that we can put your mind at ease.

Why do I need to re-register for online survey returns?

From 26th November 2024, our process for submitting a return online has changed. This was done to improve security and to make it easier to use. This registration process needs to be completed only once; for any future survey you will need to sign in with your email address and chosen password.

How do I register for online survey returns?

Using the email address that received a business survey invite, you can create an account with the following steps. There is also a [2-minute video](#) to explain this process.

1. Create an account on the [NISRA Business Survey Portal](#).
2. Select "Register as New User" and enter the business email address used for the survey, as well as a contact name and the Captcha registration check. An email will be sent to the selected address with a link to a temporary password.
3. Follow the link in the email to retrieve a temporary password.
4. Return to the NISRA Business Survey Portal and log on with the same email address and the retrieved temporary password. Once logged on, you will be prompted to change the temporary password.
5. Change the temporary password as an extra security measure and log on. You can now complete your outstanding survey.

This registration process needs to be completed only once; for any future survey you will need to sign in with your email address and chosen password. We hope this process is easy to understand, but if you have any questions, please contact us on 0300 200 8732 or email economicstats@nisra.gov.uk.

Why can I not see any surveys?

Once you register for online forms and log on to the system, you will see only those surveys associated with the email you used to log on. If you do not see any surveys, that means that none were sent out to that email account. It is possible that the initial email invite for a survey was sent to someone else in your organisation, who then forwarded to yourself and you have used your own email account to log on. Check if your email corresponds with that from the survey invite. If you need to change the named person on a survey, please contact us on 0300 200 8732 or email economicstats@nisra.gov.uk.

Why do I see multiple surveys?

The portal for online business survey returns has been updated in November 2024 to show all business surveys that have been sent to the email address used to log in. This will help users to view the responses given to previous surveys to aid completing current surveys. You may see multiple surveys that have not been completed yet. Whilst our priority will be on the completion of the survey most recently sent to you, we do value your input on other surveys.

Where can I find my document ID/reference number/survey?

From 26 November 2024 onwards, you no longer need a document ID or reference number to complete an online survey. Use the email address that received the survey invite to log on. This email address can be found in the email you will have received, which included the link to your survey site. The email will have been sent from business.surveys@nisra.gov.uk if that helps you find it in your inbox or spam/junk mail folder.

I have tried logging in and it wouldn't let me, now I am locked out

This is a security measure to ensure that nobody else could access your data. After three attempts, your account is locked for 20 minutes. If you need to reset your password, click on "Forgotten Your Password?". It will ask for your email address and if it corresponds to our record, you will be sent an email with a link to a temporary password. Use this temporary password to log on. You will be prompted to change the temporary password as an extra security measure and log on.

Can I make changes after a response is submitted?

It is possible that after you submit your response to a survey, you realise that you made a mistake or forgot to complete some of the questions in a survey. As a security measure, our survey portal won't accept another submission for the same survey within an hour. After this time, we can reissue your survey form for you to correct and resubmit. Please contact us on 0300 200 8732 or email economicstats@nisra.gov.uk.

My survey is flagged as "In Progress"

In the business survey portal, you will see all surveys that have been linked to your email address. When a survey is labelled as '*In Progress*', that means that a survey was started, but the response has not been submitted yet. By clicking on the survey name, you can complete this survey and in the last step select "submit" to ensure that your responses have been sent.

I have not received the forms

This can sometimes happen depending on the settings of your email account. Please check your spam or junk mail folder, where the survey should have been sent from business.surveys@nisra.gov.uk. If there are any issues, get in touch with us using the email address listed in the 'contact us' section above and we can send out a replacement form.

When I input financial data, it changes my answer to a £0/a different value

This is the webform trying to help you by rounding the value to the nearest £1,000 (thousand pound). This removes the need to round the values yourself and will be the case throughout our survey form for financial data.

It will not let me go to the next page

There may be errors on the form. Error messages would appear at the top of the page/window in a red box and would tell you exactly the reason why you would not be able to progress. Please amend your answer(s) to clear the error message(s). If you are still having difficulties, please contact us on 0300 200 8732 or email economicstats@nisra.gov.uk.

4. Data protection

Who will see the reports?

The data are collated and published as a National Statistic. This means that the collection, analysis and publication of the data are governed by a [Code of Practice](#). The publication is made available to all on the NISRA website. We operate under a very strict disclosure policy and no individual business will be identifiable from the published results.

Will people be able to see my financial figures?

No, all data is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This has been set out in our [confidentiality statement](#).

Will people be able to see my company's data?

No. The information you give us will be used to produce statistical analyses. Your personal details are not released and are held in in line with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We have a series of measures in place to ensure your business cannot be identified.

5. Complaints

Can I submit a complaint?

If you would like to make a complaint, you can email economicstats@nisra.gov.uk.