

COMING SOON

This article was originally posted on the [Retail Sales Index](#) section of the NISRA website on Friday 25th February

For a number of years now there has been demand from statistical users to produce a Retail Sales Index (RSI) for Northern Ireland. This data is already collected in the quarterly [Index of Services](#) and the retail sales sector refers to SIC 47 (Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles). Separate RSI already exist for [GB](#)([external link opens in a new window / tab](#)), [Scotland](#)([external link opens in a new window / tab](#)) and the [Republic of Ireland](#)([external link opens in a new window / tab](#)).

We have analysed data already collected for the Index of Services, consulted expert users and will publish Northern Ireland's [first ever RSI on Wednesday 16th March 2022](#)([external link opens in a new window / tab](#)). The release will cover the period from Quarter 1 (January to March) 2014 right up to Quarter 4 (October to December) 2021, with the intention that [new data will be released on a quarterly basis](#) alongside the Index of Services.

The Index of Services is a [National Statistic](#)([external link opens in a new window / tab](#)) (which meets meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value) and the RSI will be released initially as an experimental statistic. This doesn't mean that the quality of the RSI is any lower than the Index of Services, it simply means that we are still in a testing and development phase. As we are going to release data from 2014 we are limited in the changes we can make to historic data, but we will continue to review our methodology and may make changes to it in the future. ONS have produced a useful [guide on Experimental Statistics](#)([external link opens in a new window / tab](#)) which provides much more information on what they are and how they should be interpreted.

Some of the limitations and future developments we are considering for the NI RSI include:

- **online sales:** NISRA does not currently ask a question about the value of online sales so we cannot provide any analysis on this. This is something we hope to address in the future
- **sample:** We are also considering the composition of the sample and the number of businesses surveyed in the retail sector each quarter. An increase to the size of the sample would improve the accuracy of estimates and decrease variability between quarters. Increasing the sample size sufficiently would also provide the opportunity to produce specific retail sub-groupings, similar to the GB RSI.

We recognise that producing this first experimental RSI, and any future developments on new questions or increased sample, requires good engagement with the business community. The information we collect and use to derive the RSI (as well as the Index of Services, the [Index of Production](#), the [Quarterly Employment Survey](#), and the [Quarterly Construction Enquiry](#)) comes from the statutory Quarterly Business Survey. We want to work with businesses so they can complete our forms as quickly and easily as possible. We've recently moved to new online forms which offer a quick, safe and secure way for businesses to return their statutory survey. We are keen to engage further with businesses on future developments to meet their needs when completing the forms as well as when producing the final statistics.

We welcome feedback from all RSI data users. We want to hear what you like, what you don't like, and what else you want to see. We can't promise that we can incorporate every user request, but the more information we receive from users the more we can prioritise and tailor our improvements to better meet user needs.

If you have any comments or feedback please send them to qbshelp@finance-ni.gov.uk.