



# Summary of usage of the Annual Business Inquiry

## Statistics

The Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry (NIABI) is an integrated survey that provides information on the value of the economic activity that businesses generate and associated expenditure across the main industrial sectors in Northern Ireland. The NIABI provides a number of high level indicators of economic activity such as the total value of sales and work completed by businesses (Turnover) as well as the value of the purchase of goods, materials and services.

The NIABI survey collects a range of variables in addition to what is published in the main statistical bulletins which feed into a range of outputs by other Government departments as highlighted below.

### Office for National Statistics (ONS)

#### *UK Annual Business Survey (ABS)*

The UK Annual Business Survey (ABS) carried out by the office for National Statistics (ONS), collects similar data to the NIABI on GB economic activity. While the uses of the Annual Business Inquiry are diffuse, the central structure and periodicity of the ABI publication are driven by the legal requirement to provide data for the UK Annual Business Survey.

The most recent UK ABS regional results can be accessed via the link below:

[Non-financial business economy, UK and regional \(Annual Business Survey\) - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/economy/gross-value-added/non-financial-business-economy/uk-and-regional/annual-business-survey)

#### *UK National Accounts*

Data from the ABI feed into the UK ABS which is in turn the primary source of data used in the compilation of the [Blue Book](#) which is produced by National Accounts team within ONS.

A key output from the [UK National Accounts](#) is the production of [Supply-Use tables](#) (SUTs) which provide balances showing the relationship between components of value added, industry inputs and outputs, and product supply and demand. These tables are a source for the data underlying the annual estimates of UK Gross Domestic Product. The SUTs are also the foundation for a number of other outputs including the UK Input-output analytical tables.

#### *UK Regional Accounts*

The ONS produce annual estimates of economic activity by UK country, region and local area using gross domestic product (GDP). Estimates are available in current market prices and in chained volume measures and include a full industry breakdown of balanced regional gross value added (GVA(B)).

The NIABI (via the ABS) is an integral input dataset to producing these estimates. The most recent publication can be found here:

[Regional economic activity by gross domestic product, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/gross-domestic-product/articles/regional-economic-activity-by-gross-domestic-product-uk)

In addition, NISRA statisticians are part of the Regional Accounts peer review group and use the NIABI data to validate preliminary results relating to NI on behalf on the ONS, providing feedback prior to publication.

## **NISRA**

Within NISRA the data collected via NIABI survey forms the input to a number of statistical outputs, namely the NISRA [Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics](#) (BESES) and the [NI Economic Accounts](#).

### *BESES*

The NIABI collects data on trade by NI businesses which provides the input data for the NISRA [Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics](#) (BESES).

Over recent years the BESES data has formed an important input to numerous trade/EU Exit related reports and papers - it is the only source of official information relating to trade between NI and Great Britain.

Further information on the usage of the BESES statistics can be found on the BESES [usage, methods and quality and revisions policy webpage](#).

### *NI Economic Accounts*

Similar to the ONS National Accounts, the NIABI is a fundamental data source for the NI [Supply-Use tables](#) which provide a picture of the flows of products and services in the NI economy for a single year and are used to set the level of annual current price Gross Domestic Product (GDP). They show the composition of uses and resources across institutional sectors and the inter-dependence of industries in order to reconcile the production, income and expenditure approaches to the measurement of GDP.

The SUTs form the input to a number of economic modelling tools developed by the Department for the Economy (DFE) NI, namely a [Computable General Equilibrium \(CGE\)](#) model and a [Hypothetical Extraction Model \(HEM\)](#).

## **Department for the Economy (DFE) NI**

DFE economists and statisticians have access to NIABI micro-data via a data sharing agreement which allows them to undertake detailed analysis, economic research, appraisals and evaluations; providing Ministerial briefings and economic commentary as well as responding to assembly questions.

DFE produces a range of research Bulletins annually which are short analytical articles on topical economic and labour market issues. ABI data have formed the input to a number of these reports; variables such as turnover and employment have been combined with other variables collected via the ABI and published through the BESES including exports and imports variables to provide help improve the understanding of the NI economy.

One such report which provided intelligence to DFE to support the Department's no deal planning during EU Exit negotiations was titled "[Irish land border - existing and potential customs facilitations in a no-deal scenario \(June 2019\)](#)".

During 2019 the Department for the Economy commissioned research into customs facilitations that were available in a no-deal scenario as part of the Department's no deal planning. The aim of the research was to identify the facilitations available to businesses trading across the land border in a no deal context, and to identify whether there was any assistance the Department or its arms-length-bodies could offer businesses in a no-deal scenario.

ABI data such as business size bands along with the BESES data were a key data source in this research, and were used to set the context and provide detail on the profile of trade between NI and Ireland.

More recently, NISRA statisticians have been working with colleagues in DFE to determine how ABI data can be used to inform indicators for their new economic vision for the next 10 years "[10X Economy - an economic vision for a decade of innovation](#)" and associated [research programme](#).

### **University of Sussex**

The University of Sussex are currently undertaking a project with support from DFE investigating the impact of Brexit uncertainty and the Northern Ireland Protocol, looking at the consequences for Northern Ireland firms and their trade within the UK's Internal Market.

ABI and BESES microdata have been provided to the University via a Ministerial Direction<sup>1</sup> to facilitate longitudinal research into the impact of Brexit uncertainty on NI businesses, their sales to different destinations, and their productivity. The research will also look at the impact of changes in the composition of the work force for firm level productivity.

### **Ulster University Economic Policy Centre**

During 2018 the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) was commissioned by the Department for the Economy to "*research the economic value and impact of the geosciences sector to the NI economy and consider the potential of that sector to further benefit the NI economy*".

Bespoke ABI data tables, along with other economic data provided by NISRA, was used to undertake detailed analysis of the key economic metrics for the geoscience sector over the past decade, including employment, GVA, exports and R&D.

The full report can be found on the DFE website: [Economic Impact of Geoscience Industry on the Northern Ireland Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

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<sup>1</sup> The [Statistics of Trade and Employment Order \(NI\)](#) allows survey data collected from businesses to be shared with another government department (and some other bodies) under a Ministerial direction, for the purpose of the exercise by that department of its functions. This includes a consultant appointed by the department or body to advise, or report to, the department (or body) on a matter related to its functions.

## **Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)**

### *Northern Ireland Food and Drinks Processing report*

NISRA has a data sharing agreement with DAERA to provide an annual dataset from the ABI and the BESES to facilitate production of their annual [Northern Ireland Food and Drinks Processing report](#). The data are used to provide details of the total sales and imports and exports of food and drinks processing businesses, alongside other information from the ABI such as gross value added and employment.

## **Invest Northern Ireland (INI)**

NISRA has a data sharing agreement with INI to provide NIABI data to them annually to support the development and monitoring of their key performance indicators.

## **Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)**

During 2019 ABI and BESES microdata were provided to ESRI via a Ministerial Direction to produce a report titled "[Shock absorption capacity of firms in Ireland and Northern Ireland](#)".

This report formed part of a research programme being undertaken on behalf of InterTradeIreland by the ESRI on 'Enterprises and Cross-Border Trade'. This research used statistical data from the NISRA and the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The permission for controlled access to micro datasets was granted for research purposes under strict confidentiality agreements.

This report examined how the capacity of firms to absorb shocks can be assessed using detailed firm-level patterns of risk exposure across Ireland and Northern Ireland. A risk profile of firms based on profit margins and sales growth performance shows smaller firms tend to be more exposed to shocks.

During 2018 ABI and BESES microdata were provided to ESRI via a Ministerial Direction to produce a report titled "[Export Participation and Performance of Firms on the Island of Ireland \(September 2018\)](#)".

The report examined firm participation in exporting, export performance and determinants of export destinations for firms across the island of Ireland. Using detailed aggregate and firm-level data from both Northern Ireland and Ireland, the report sought to give as comprehensive a picture as possible about cross-border trade and the international activities of firms in both economies.

## **Department for Communities, Professional Services Unit**

The Town Centre Database is being developed by Professional Services Unit (PSU) within the Department for Communities. Statistics include business data, demography, crime and information relating to non-domestic properties

Bespoke ABI data tables of business turnover at town centre geographies and SIC section level have been used to populate this database.

Full information on the town centre database can be found on the DfC website: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/town-centre-database>

## User engagement

We welcome all communication from users including any feedback you might have in relation to our statistical outputs, and would be particularly interested in knowing how you make use of these data to inform your work. Please contact us at [economicstats@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:economicstats@nisra.gov.uk)