

# VAT and PAYE Registered Businesses in Northern Ireland

## Facts and Figures from the Inter Departmental Business Register, 2016



Date: 25/01/2017

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland and United Kingdom

Theme: Business and Enterprise

Frequency: Annual

### Key Points

- The number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland in 2016 is estimated to have risen by 1,970 (2.9%) since 2015 to 70,055. This marks the second consecutive year of increase following a period of decline from 2008 to 2014. The increase in the number of businesses in Northern Ireland over the year was lower than that of the UK (4.3%).
- After having the lowest business growth rate of the UK regions in 2015, the Northern Ireland business growth rate in 2016 is higher than both Scotland (2.2%) and Wales (2.1%).
- The largest industry group in Northern Ireland remains Agriculture, forestry and fishing, accounting for over one quarter (25.2%) of all VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses.
- The largest increases in the number of businesses since 2015 were in Agriculture, forestry and fishing (+430) and Construction (+350); whilst the only decreases were in Retail (-70) and Public administration and defence (-15).
- Both Construction and Retail have experienced large declines since 2009. Construction has experienced the largest decrease of all industries since 2009 in terms of absolute number of businesses (-2,945). The Retail industry is now 11.0% (750 businesses) smaller than in 2009.
- The largest increases since 2009 have been in Agriculture, forestry and fishing (+1,320 businesses or 8.1%); Professional, scientific and technical (+595 businesses or 12.2%) and Information and Communication (+405 businesses or 30.5%).
- In 2015, Northern Ireland had the lowest birth rate (9.7%) and death rate (7.1%) of all UK regions. Northern Ireland saw the largest increase in its birth rate from 2014 (+1.0 percentage points), whilst Scotland and Wales saw their birth rates decrease. Northern Ireland also experienced the largest decrease in death rates since 2014 (-1.0 percentage points).
- Of the 70,055 businesses operating in Northern Ireland in March 2016, 2.3% were non-Northern Ireland owned. However, these businesses accounted for almost one quarter (24.4%) of Northern Ireland employees.

## **National Statistics**

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is a producer's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

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**This bulletin provides an overview of the number and characteristics of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland at March 2016 from the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) - a central register of all businesses in the UK.**

This bulletin has been designed to supplement a set of tables which provide a comprehensive breakdown of businesses by geographical and industrial detail. Three sets of Excel tables are available - 'VAT and/or PAYE tables', 'Business Demography tables' and 'Foreign Ownership tables'. These tables are available via the [IDBR webpage](#).

## **Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR)**

The IDBR contains information on all businesses in the United Kingdom which are either VAT registered or operating a PAYE scheme. The register is located in the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Newport but the Northern Ireland element of the register is updated and maintained by the Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch (ELMSB) within the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), an agency of the Department of Finance (DoF).

The IDBR covers most of the economy including the Agriculture, Production and Service sectors in Northern Ireland. It does not, however, include very small businesses which fall below the VAT threshold (£82,000 in 2015/2016) or do not operate a PAYE scheme.

The register holds information on the characteristics, structure and location of Northern Ireland businesses. This information includes, amongst other things, legal registration status, country of ownership, turnover, employment, employees and industrial classification (SIC 07).

The IDBR enables Government to conduct efficient and cost effective surveys/inquiries whilst minimising the burden on businesses. It is used for national accounts and labour market statistics, as well as providing basic information on the structure of the economy. It is used in four main ways:-

- to select businesses to be included in official statistics surveys/inquiries;
- to mail forms;
- to enable estimates to be made for businesses who do not respond or those not asked to participate in any particular inquiry; and
- to produce analyses of business activity.

Further information on the IDBR is included within the Background Notes of this publication (Section 6) and via the [IDBR webpage](#).

The definition of a 'Northern Ireland business' in this publication is an enterprise that operates in Northern Ireland: distinct from an enterprise that has its registered address in Northern Ireland. Please see Background Notes (Section 6) for further definitions.

## Northern Ireland Business Population versus the United Kingdom

- In March 2016 there were 70,055 businesses operating in Northern Ireland registered for VAT and/or PAYE, an increase of 1,970 businesses (2.9%) since 2015. This marks the second consecutive year of increase in the number of Northern Ireland businesses, following a period of decline from 2008-2014.
- As of March 2016, Northern Ireland accounted for 2.7% of total UK businesses. In the UK there were 2.55 million businesses registered for VAT and/or PAYE in March 2016, compared with 2.45 million in March 2015, a rise of around 105,095 (4.3%). All UK regions experienced increases since 2015, with Northern Ireland (which had the lowest business growth rate of the UK regions in 2015) having a 2016 growth rate higher than both Scotland (2.2%) and Wales (2.1%).

## Structure of Industry in Northern Ireland in 2016

- Agriculture, forestry and fishing is the largest single industry group in Northern Ireland representing over one quarter (25.2%) of all businesses operating in Northern Ireland that are registered for VAT and/or PAYE.
- The Construction sector remains the second largest industry group and accounts for 13.3% of businesses operating in Northern Ireland; whilst Retail is the third largest industry group, accounting for 8.7% of businesses.
- Together, these three industries represent nearly half (47.2%) of all VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland.

## Sectoral Change over the Year

- The largest increases since 2015 were in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing (+430 businesses), Construction (+350 businesses) and Professional, scientific and technical (+255 businesses) industry groups; whilst the only decreases since 2015 were in the Retail (-70 businesses) and Public administration and defence (-15 businesses) industry groups.

## Sectoral Change over the Past Five Years

- The industry composition of businesses operating in Northern Ireland has remained relatively unchanged since 2011 with almost half (47.2%) of all businesses falling into the three largest industry groups; Agriculture, forestry and fishing; Construction and Retail.
- However, both Construction and Retail have experienced large declines since 2011. Construction has experienced the largest decrease of all industries in terms of absolute numbers of businesses (-1,630) over the past five years. Retail is now 8.3% (550 businesses) smaller than at the start of the time period.

- The largest increases since 2011 have been in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing (+1,345 businesses or 8.2%); Professional, scientific and technical (+570 businesses or 11.6%) and Information and Communication (+410 businesses or 30.9%) industry groups.

### Businesses in Northern Ireland Local Government Districts

- Belfast Local Government District accounted for the largest proportion (14.4%) of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses operating in Northern Ireland in 2016 followed by Mid Ulster (11.8%). Antrim and Newtownabbey had the lowest proportion, accounting for 5.6% of all VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland.

### Business Demography

- In 2015 the business birth rate in Northern Ireland as a proportion of active enterprises was 9.7% (8.7% in 2014). This birth rate was lower than the rest of the UK which had an overall birth rate of 14.3% (13.7% in 2014). Northern Ireland saw the largest increase in its birth rate from 2014 (+1.0 percentage points), whilst Scotland and Wales saw their birth rates decrease (-0.1 and -0.2 percentage points respectively).
- The death rate in Northern Ireland was also the lowest in the UK, at 7.1% (9.4% for the UK). Northern Ireland experienced the largest decrease in death rates since 2014 (-1.0 percentage points).
- In Northern Ireland the net change between the number of births and deaths was growth of 1,455 businesses (5,440 births and 3,985 deaths).

### Foreign Ownership

- Only a small proportion (1,630 or 2.3%) of businesses operating in Northern Ireland had a non-Northern Ireland Country of Ownership. However, these businesses accounted for a considerable proportion (24.4%) of Northern Ireland employees.
- The majority of non-Northern Ireland owned firms had a Country of Ownership of Great Britain (45.1%) or the Republic of Ireland (18.7%). The United States of America accounted for 11.7%, whilst over 50 other countries accounted for the remaining 24.5%.

### Business Structure

- The majority of businesses in Northern Ireland in March 2016 were registered as Sole Proprietors (41.3% or 28,955) or Companies (36.1% or 25,255).
- Northern Ireland has seen an increase in incorporation in recent years. There are now 8,600 more companies than in 2006. This trend to incorporation has been at the cost of sole proprietors and partnerships; both of which have been on a steady decline since 2006. The proportions of non profit bodies and local authorities in Northern Ireland have remained relatively unchanged over recent years.

## Comparison with UK Regions

- Between 2015 and 2016, all regions in the UK saw an increase in the number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses. Northern Ireland, having experienced the smallest growth between 2014 and 2015, experienced larger growth than Scotland (2.2%) and Wales (2.1%) between 2015 and 2016. This compares to an increase of 4.3% (105,095 businesses) in the UK.
- London experienced the largest growth (7.2% or 32,010 businesses) between 2015 and 2016. The growth in the number of businesses in London accounts for 30.5% of the total growth in the UK between 2015 and 2016.
- Northern Ireland businesses account for 2.7% of the total businesses in the UK.

## Commentary

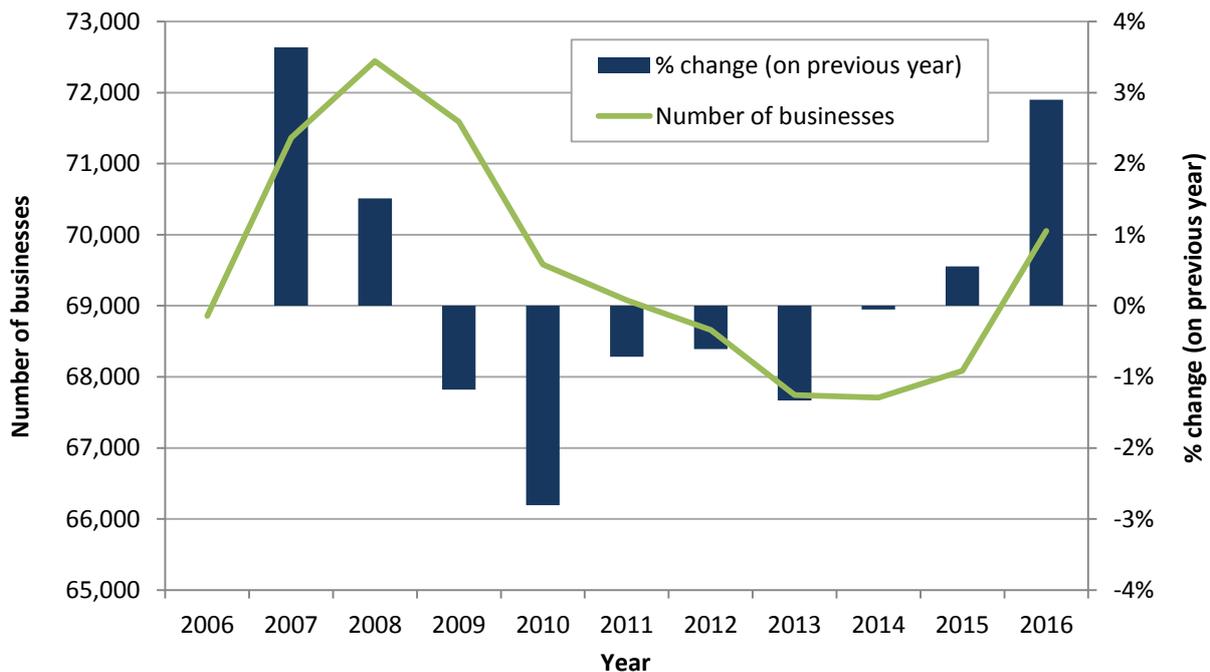
- The latest [NICEI](#) results show that NI economic activity was estimated to have increased by 0.9% in real terms between Quarter 4 (October – December) 2015 and Quarter 1 (January – March) 2016. The index also increased by 1.3% over the year (Quarter 1 2015 to Quarter 1 2016) in real terms.
- The NI Private Sector index was estimated to have grown by 0.8% over the quarter, by 1.9% over the year to Quarter 1 2016.
- The Public Sector jobs index decreased by 0.2% over the quarter, and is now at its lowest level since the series began in 2002. The NICEI has been impacted by the Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) implemented by the Northern Ireland Civil Service during 2015/16.
- [In March 2016 inflation rose to 0.5%](#), which was the highest level since December 2014, but it remained below the Bank of England's 2% target. Air fares increased considerably between February and March, which alongside a rise in clothing and footwear prices, was the main reason for March's increase. However, this was partially offset by a fall in food prices and a smaller rise in petrol prices compared with March 2015.
- Growth over the quarter and year has also been reported by other economic indicators such as the labour and housing markets. The July 2016 [NI Labour Market Report](#) showed that over the quarter from March to May 2016 and over the year to May 2016 the labour market continued to improve with a decrease in unemployment and a growing employment rate. However, over the quarter the economic inactivity rate increased by 0.2% despite being down 1.0% over the year.
- The [Quarterly Employment Survey](#) also shows that the number of jobs has increased over the first quarter of 2016 and over the last year. Coupled with the positive performance of the labour market the housing market continues to show signs of growth. The most recent NI Residential Property Price Index reports that in Quarter 1 2016 property prices in NI recorded growth over the year but a decrease over the most recent quarter. This is set against a backdrop of growing numbers of new builds commencing, increased lending and continued falling numbers of repossessions.

### VAT and/or PAYE Businesses in Northern Ireland

There were 70,055 businesses operating in Northern Ireland registered for VAT and/or PAYE in March 2016, compared with 68,085 in March 2015 which represents an increase of 2.9%. This marks the second consecutive year of increase in the number of Northern Ireland businesses, following a period of decline from 2008-2014.

- As shown in Figure 1, the number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland is estimated to have risen by 2.9% (1,970 businesses) between 2015 and 2016.

Figure 1: Number and Annual Percentage Change of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland, 2006 to 2016

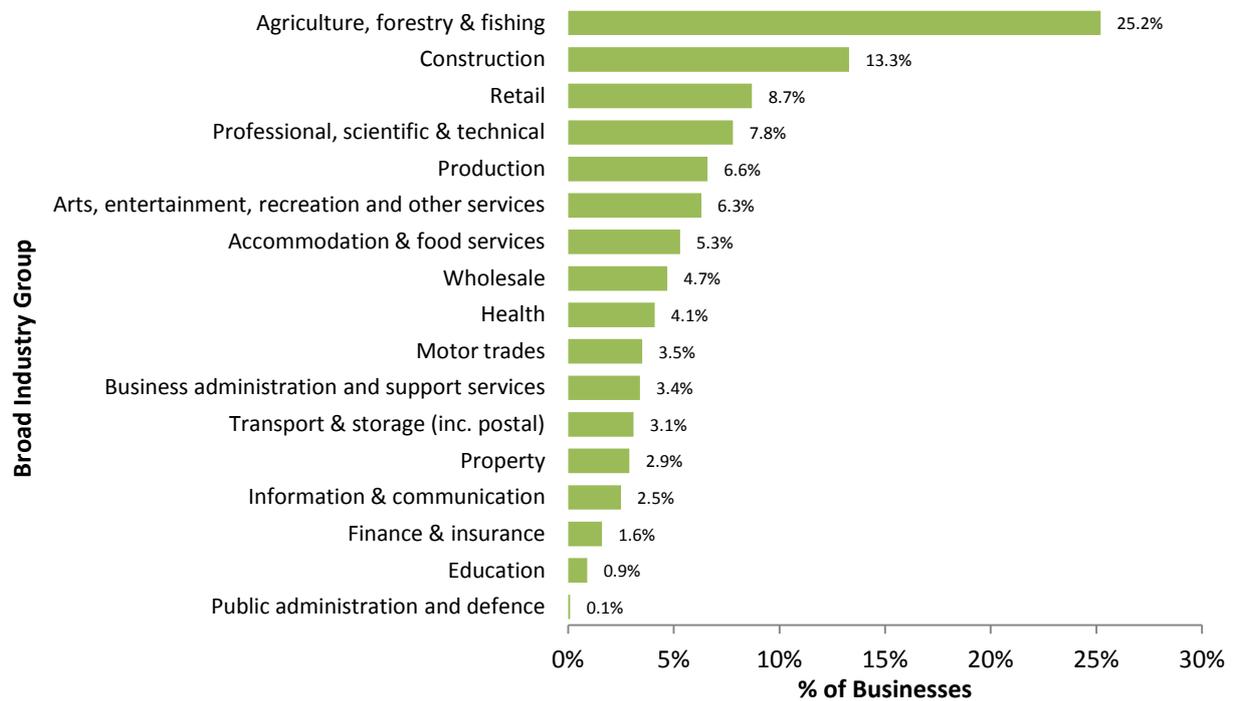


These figures cover businesses in most of the economy, including the agriculture, production, service and public sectors in Northern Ireland. However they do not include very small businesses that fall below the VAT and PAYE thresholds. Latest figures published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which include an estimate of the number of unregistered businesses in the private sector<sup>1</sup>, indicate that at the start of 2016 the number of unregistered businesses in Northern Ireland was 58,545 (53,445 in 2015). Further information on the characteristics of these businesses can be found on the BEIS website via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2016>

<sup>1</sup> In this publication the private sector includes a small number of public corporations and nationalised bodies. This is different from the definition used in the remainder of this publication. However, this figure still provides a good indication of the number of unregistered businesses.

## Businesses by Broad Industry Groups

**Figure 2: Percentage of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by Broad Industry Group, 2016**



- Figure 2 illustrates that the largest industry group in Northern Ireland is Agriculture, forestry and fishing, accounting for over one quarter (25.2%) of all VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland in 2016.
- The second largest industry group is Construction and the third largest is Retail; accounting for 13.3% and 8.7% of all businesses respectively.
- Together, these three industries represent nearly half (47.2%) of all VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland.
- The smallest industry groups in Northern Ireland are Education and Public administration and defence; representing only 0.9% and 0.1% of all businesses respectively.
- The largest increases since 2015 were in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing (+430 businesses); Construction (+350 businesses) and Professional, scientific and technical (+255) industry groups. The only industry groups to have declined in the number of businesses since 2015 were Retail (-70 businesses) and Public administration and defence (-15 businesses).

## Businesses by Local Government District<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 3: Number of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by Local Government District, 2016**



- Figure 3 illustrates that Belfast Local Government District accounts for the largest number of businesses (10,100 businesses or 14.4%) operating in Northern Ireland in 2016.
- The Mid Ulster Local Government District accounts for the second largest number of businesses operating in Northern Ireland (8,245 businesses or 11.8%).
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing was the largest industry group in all Local Government Districts in 2016 with the exception of Belfast, where Professional, scientific and technical was the largest industry group (17.5% of all businesses in Belfast).

<sup>1</sup>In previous editions of this publication the Local Government District (LGD) breakdowns included an 'unknown district' category as some businesses could not be assigned to an LGD due to missing or inaccurate postcode information. In 2016 an exercise was carried out to ensure all businesses were assigned to an LGD. This exercise will be carried out on 2015 data in due course and a 2015-2016 LGD comparison will be available on the IDBR webpage.

## Businesses by Legal Status

- Figure 4 shows that the majority of businesses in Northern Ireland in March 2016 were registered as Sole Proprietors (41.3% or 28,955) or Companies (36.1% or 25,255).
- Partnerships and Limited Partnerships account for 17.2% (12,075) of total businesses in Northern Ireland, and Non profit bodies account for 5.1% (3,545 businesses).
- Only 0.2% of total businesses were registered as Local Authorities; and only 0.1% as Central Government.

Figure 4: Percentage of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by Legal Status, 2016

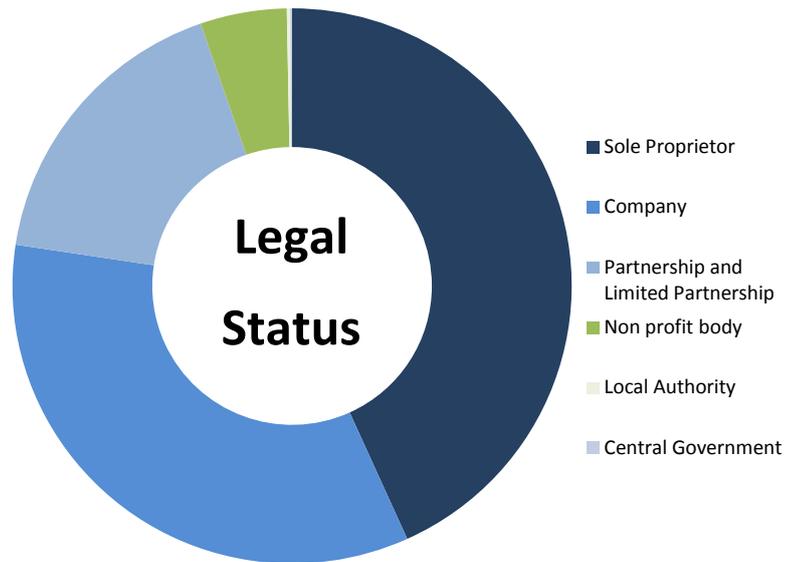
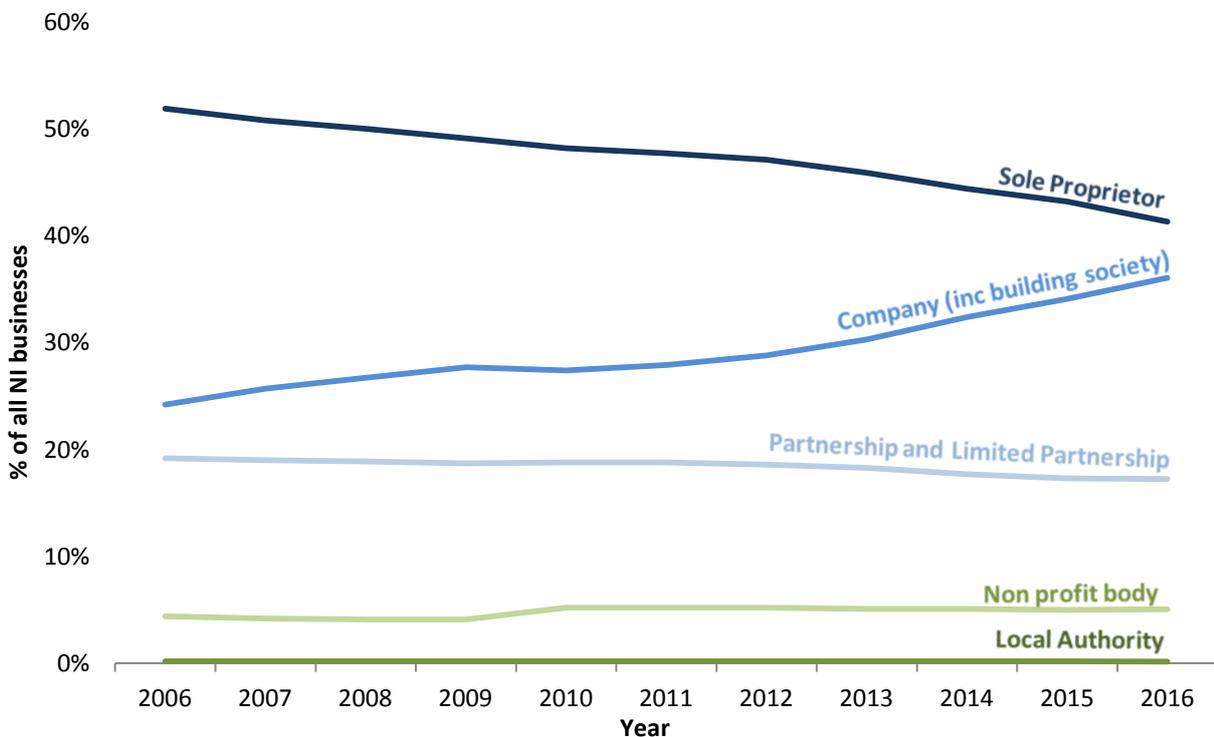


Figure 5: Percentage of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by Legal Status, 2006 - 2016

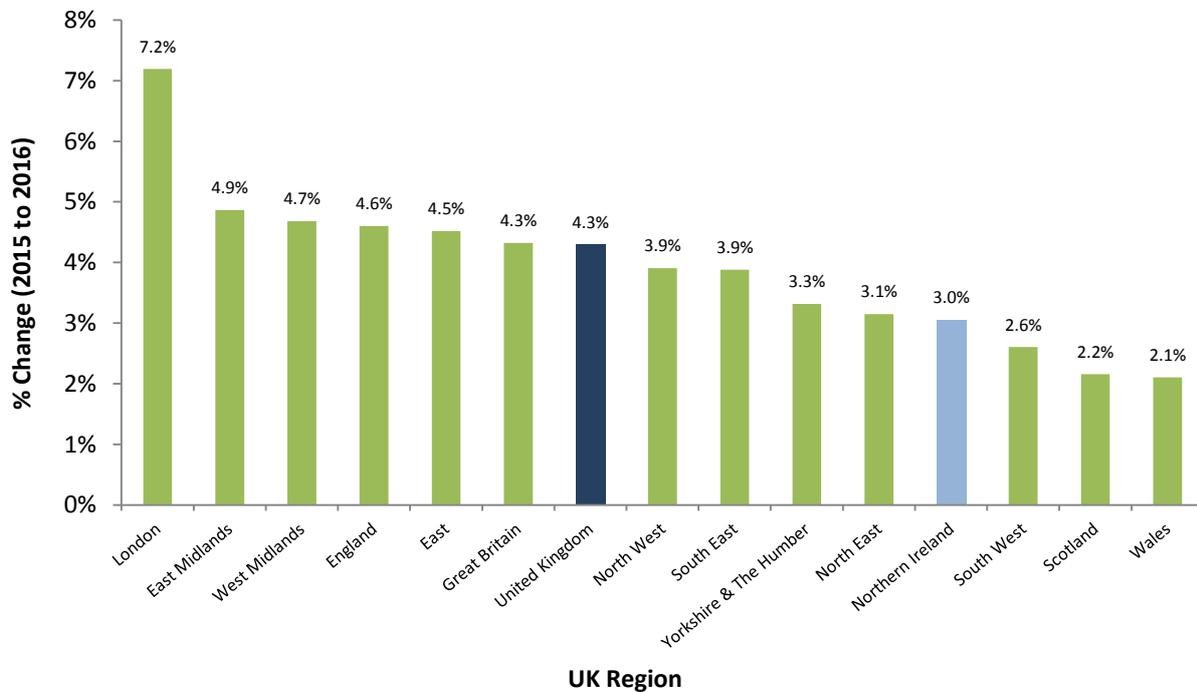


- Figure 5 illustrates the increase in incorporation and the decline in sole proprietors and partnerships in recent years. The proportions of non profit bodies and local authorities have remained relatively unchanged over recent years.

## Businesses by UK Regions

In these figures the standard Enterprise definition is used; businesses are only included in the Northern Ireland figures if their main (or registered) UK address is also in Northern Ireland.

Figure 6: Percentage Change of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses in UK Regions, 2015 to 2016



- Figure 6 illustrates that between 2015 and 2016, all regions in the UK saw an increase in the number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses. After having the lowest business growth rate of the UK regions in 2015, the Northern Ireland business growth rate in 2016 (3.0%) is higher than the South West (2.6%), Scotland (2.2%) and Wales (2.1%).
- London experienced the largest growth of 7.2% (32,010 businesses) between 2015 and 2016. The growth in the number of businesses in London accounts for 30.5% of the total growth in the UK between 2015 and 2016.
- Northern Ireland businesses account for 2.7% of the total number of businesses in the UK.

# 4

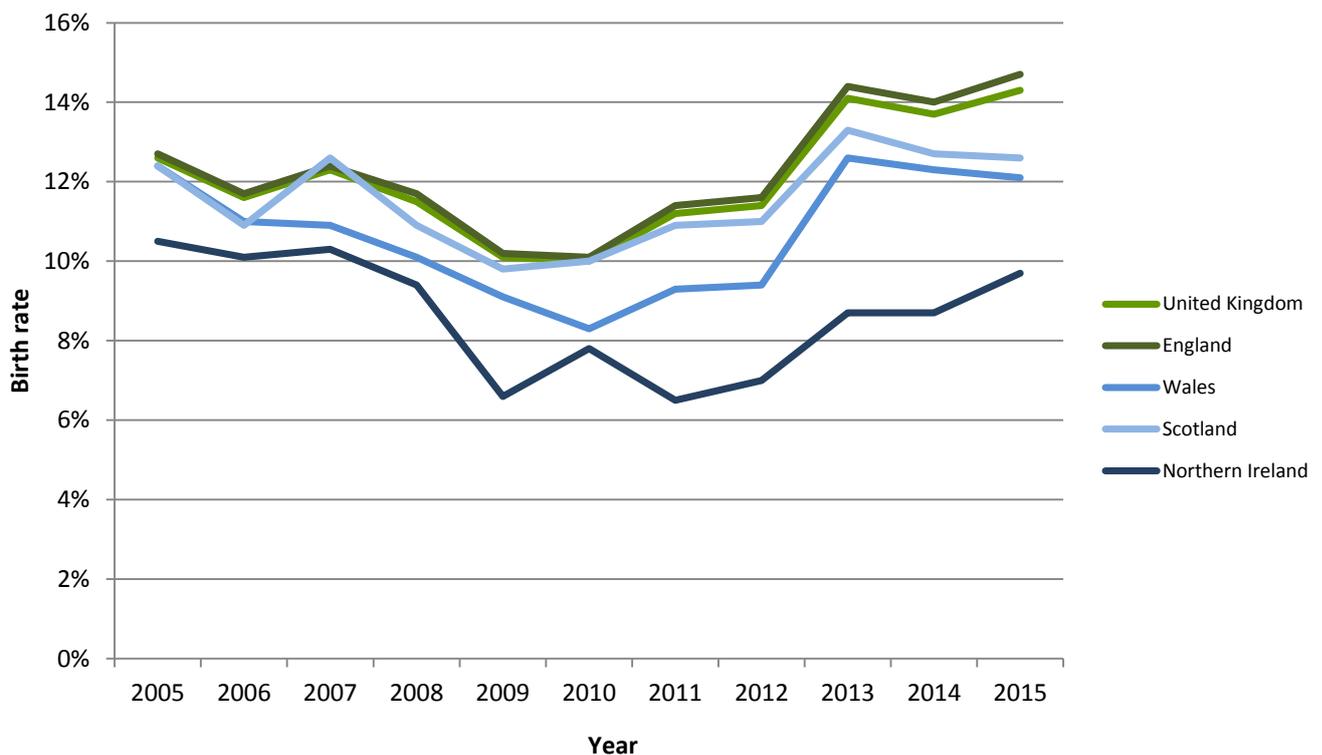
## Business Demography

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has responsibility for the publication of official business births, deaths and survival rates. In these figures the standard Enterprise definition is used; businesses are only included in the Northern Ireland figures if their main (or registered) UK address is also in Northern Ireland.

- In the 2015 calendar year, a total of 5,440 enterprises were born in Northern Ireland, an increase of 635 enterprises in comparison with 2014. In the same year, there were 3,985 deaths of enterprises, a decrease of 515 enterprises in comparison with 2014.

### Business Births

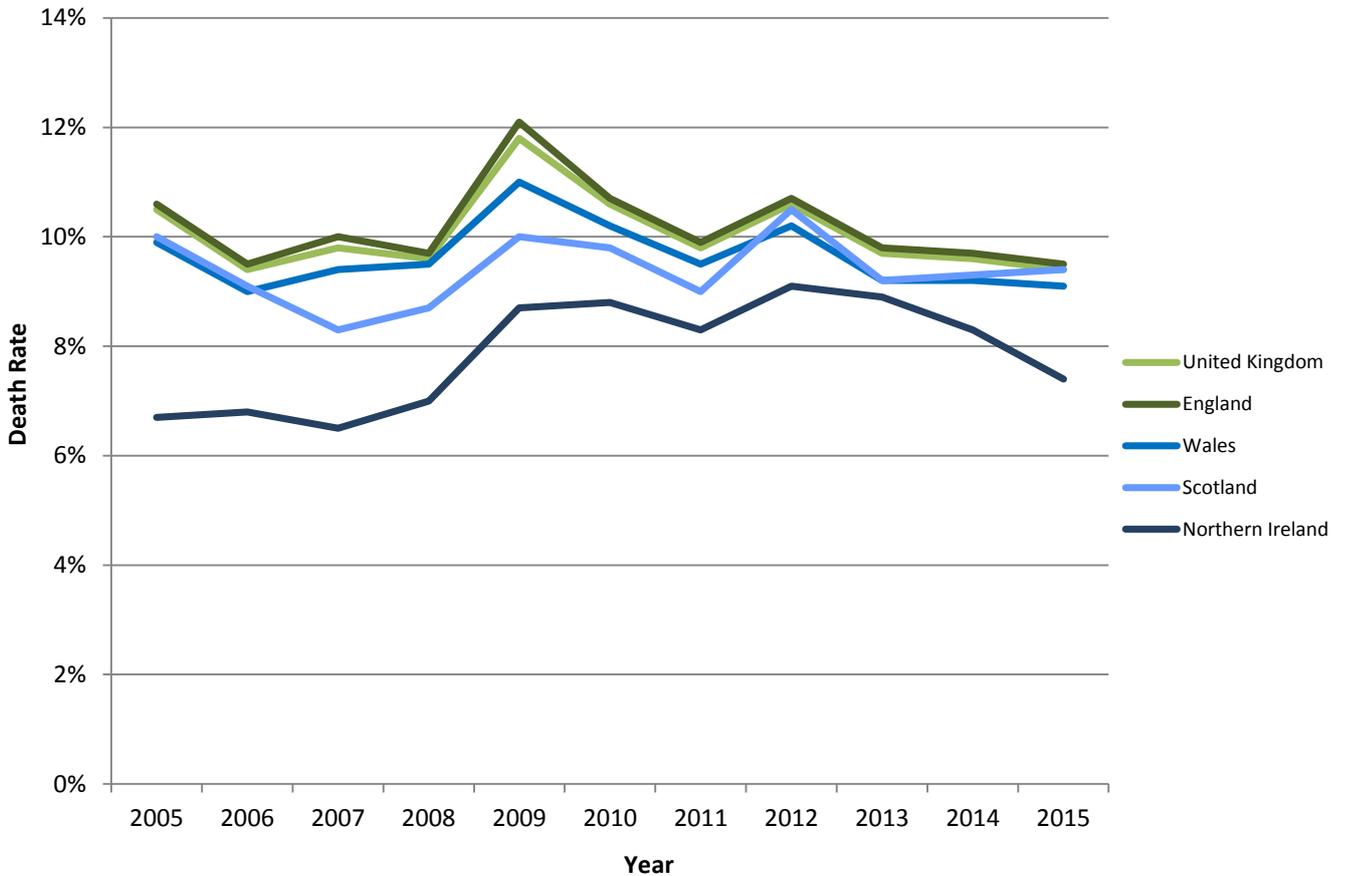
Figure 7: Birth Rate of Businesses Registered for VAT and/or PAYE in UK Regions, 2005 – 2015



- Figure 7 shows that the birth rate for businesses in Northern Ireland in 2015 (as a proportion of active enterprises) was 9.7%, which was the lowest of the UK regions. However, Northern Ireland saw the largest increase in its birth rate from 2014 (+1.0 percentage points). The business birth rate in England increased by 0.7 percentage points, whereas Scotland and Wales saw their birth rates decrease by 0.1 and 0.2 percentage points respectively. The overall birth rate for the UK in 2015 was 14.3% (13.7% in 2014).

## Business Deaths

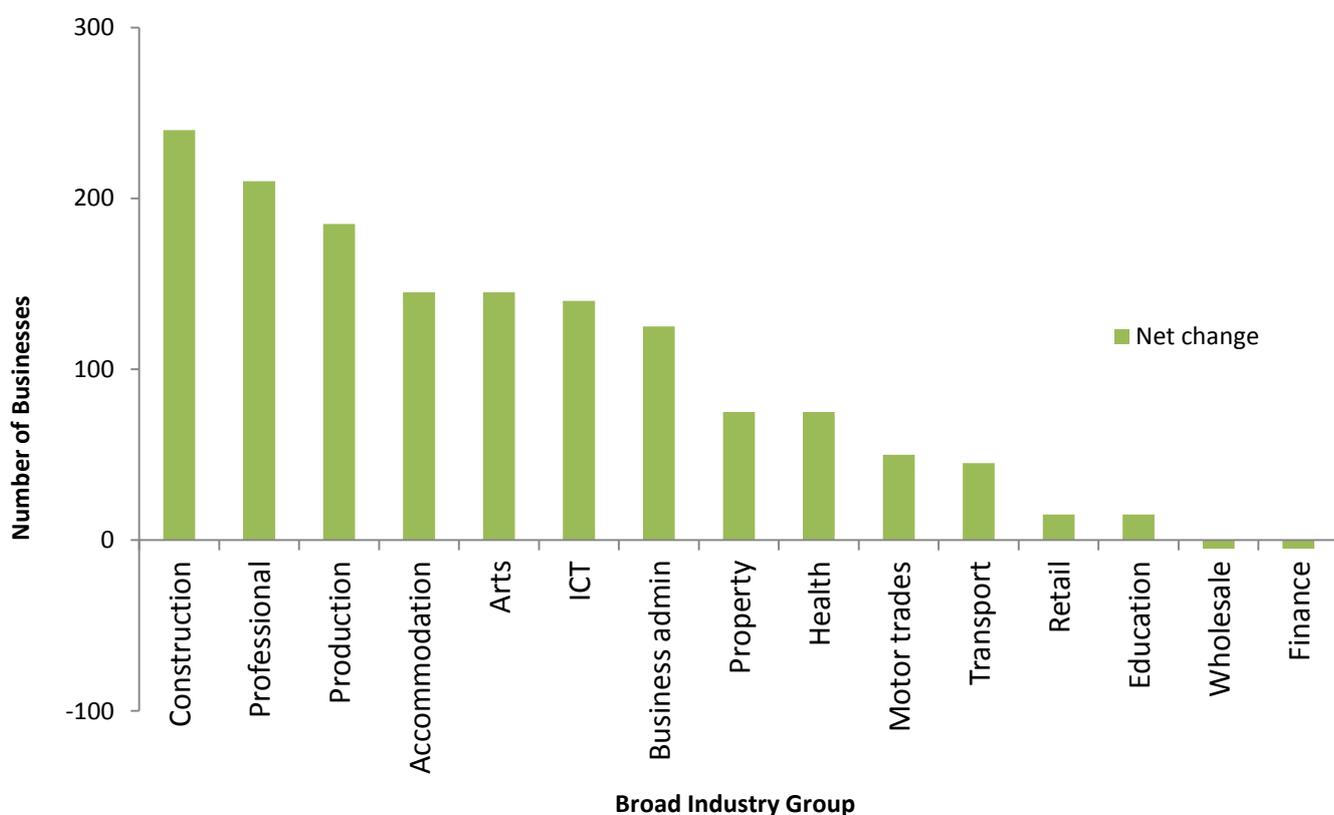
Figure 8: Death Rate of Businesses Registered for VAT and/or PAYE in UK Regions, 2005 – 2015



- Figure 8 illustrates that the Northern Ireland death rate was 7.1% in 2015; this was the lowest of the UK regions. For comparison, the death rate was 9.1% in Wales; 9.4% in Scotland and 9.5% in England (9.4% for the UK). Northern Ireland experienced the largest decrease in death rates in the UK since 2014 (-1.0 percentage points).
- The overall death rate for the UK decreased by 0.3 percentage points over the year.

## Net Change in Births and Deaths

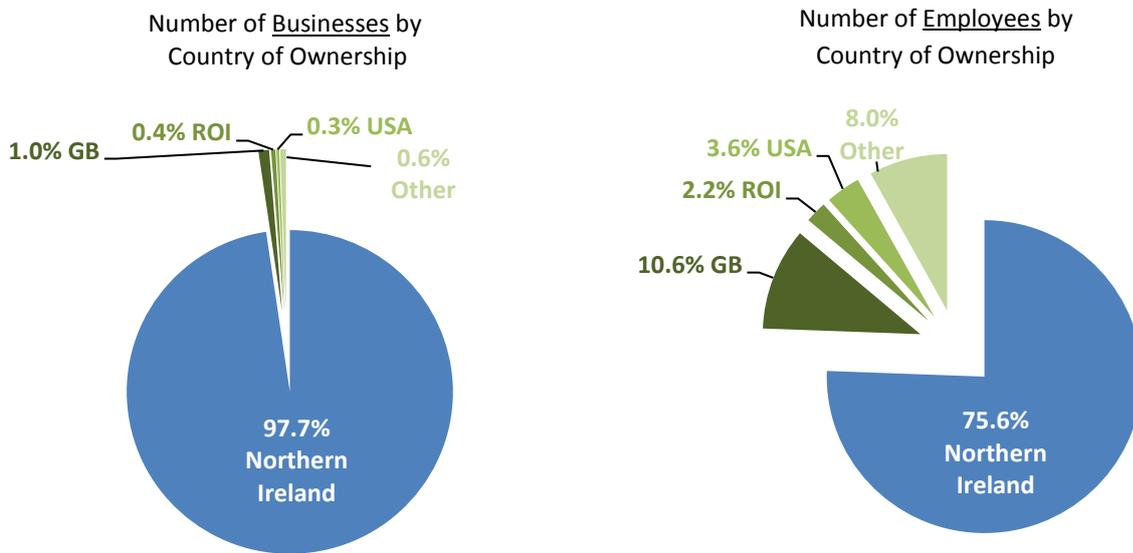
Figure 9: Net Business Births/Deaths of Northern Ireland Businesses Registered for VAT and/or PAYE by Broad Industry Group, 2015



- Figure 9 offers a comparison of business births and deaths by Broad Industry Group in Northern Ireland in 2015. The largest net increases were in the Construction (+240 businesses); Professional, scientific and technical (+210 businesses); and Accommodation and food services industry groups (+185 businesses).
- The only industry groups to have experienced a net loss in the number of businesses in 2015 were the Wholesale and Finance and insurance groups, with a net loss of 5 businesses each.
- In Northern Ireland the net change was growth of 1,455 businesses (5,440 births and 3,985 deaths).

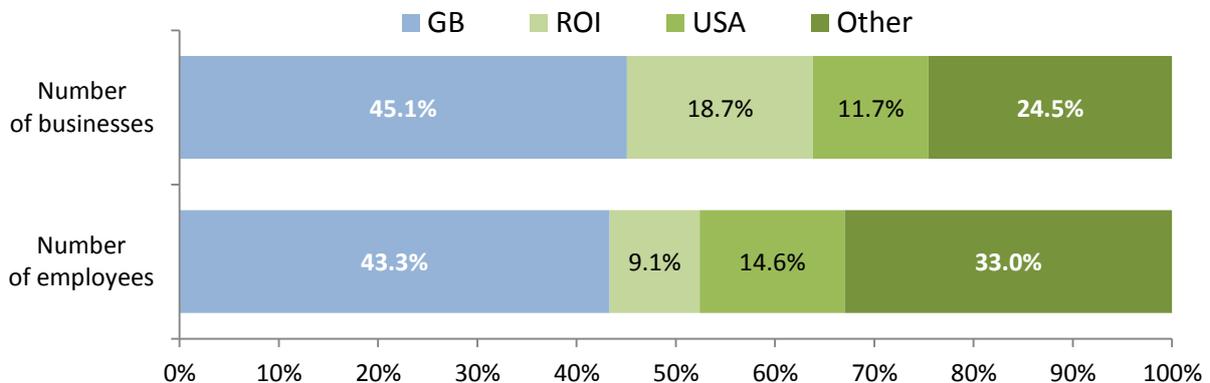
- Figure 10 shows that of the 70,055 businesses operating in Northern Ireland in March 2016, 1,630 (2.3%) were non-NI owned. This small proportion of businesses accounted for almost one quarter (24.4%) of Northern Ireland employees.

**Figure 10: Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland and Number of Employees by Country of Ownership, 2016**



- Figure 11 illustrates that of the 1,630 non-NI owned businesses, Great Britain accounts for 735 (45.1%) of these businesses. Republic of Ireland owned businesses account for 305 businesses (18.7%); while the USA accounts for over one tenth (190 businesses or 11.7%). In relation to the number of employees in non-NI owned business, broadly similar proportions can be seen (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Non-NI Owned Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland and Employees by Country of Ownership, 2016**



<sup>1</sup>The market information company Dun and Bradstreet, annually supply the Office for National Statistics (ONS) with information on foreign owned businesses operating in the United Kingdom. This information is then loaded onto the IDBR. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of foreign owned businesses in Northern Ireland, only those for which we have received information from the above sources. Information on the status of foreign owned businesses is continually updated on the IDBR and, as a result, variability in figures may reflect the availability of more up-to-date information rather than a change of ownership.

Details of the methodology and definitions used in each set of tables, along with information on the coverage of the statistics, known quality issues, disclosure control methods and any planned revisions to the figures are included in the 'Notes' sheet accompanying the tables.

### (i) Data sources and coverage

The majority of tables are based on a snapshot of the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) taken on 16 March 2016. This is the source used for the VAT and/or PAYE tables and the Foreign Ownership tables. The Business Demography tables discussed also draw their data from the IDBR, but they use information from throughout the calendar year. For example, the number of business births includes all births during the calendar year. These data are taken from the Business Demography 2015 publication. This is a UK-wide publication produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The UK Context figures in the VAT and/or PAYE tables are taken from UK Business: Activity, Size and Location 2016. This is a UK-wide publication produced by the Office for National Statistics.

Any businesses which are solely VAT based or solely PAYE based where the employment is estimated to be 20 or more have been excluded from this analysis as these businesses are thought to be duplicates of existing businesses (pending a return from the Business Register Inquiry or other information). The IDBR figures will inevitably also include some enterprises that were no longer VAT and/or PAYE registered or had actually ceased trading at the time the results were extracted. Similarly, some new business start-ups will be excluded because of the delays in notification.

For further information about the IDBR and its usage please follow the link below:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/node/1687>

Information produced by ONS regarding the UK IDBR is available via the following link:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/business-and-energy/business-population/further-information-about-idbr-sources.pdf>

### (ii) Definitions

A Northern Ireland business can either be defined as an ***enterprise which has its registered address in Northern Ireland*** or as an ***enterprise which operates in Northern Ireland***. The former definition assigns each business or enterprise to a single location within the UK. However, this definition excludes part of the Northern Ireland business population, namely those companies which have a presence in Northern Ireland but have their registered UK address (or head office) elsewhere in the UK. For this reason the alternative definition of enterprises operating in Northern Ireland definition has been used in all Northern Ireland and Local Government District tables. In the UK-wide tables produced by the Office for National Statistics and the UK comparison figures, the former definition is used. This is necessary so that each UK business or enterprise is assigned to a single location within the UK.

### **(iii) Revisions**

The VAT and/or PAYE tables and Foreign Ownership tables are produced from snapshots of the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) and are not subject to revision. In the Business Demography tables the latest two years' estimates on births, deaths and survivals are subject to revision. Revisions would normally be made in the following year's publication.

### **(iv) Historic data**

Previous editions of this publication are available from the Inter Departmental Business Register webpage:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/archive-publications-idbr>

The UK Context VAT and/or PAYE tables (Tables 1.1 to 1.9) are directly comparable with tables contained in previous editions back to December 2009. Prior to this edition the Enterprise based tables did not include PAYE operating businesses not registered for VAT. The NI and LGD VAT and/or PAYE tables (Tables 1.10 to 1.22) are not directly comparable with tables contained in previous editions prior to edition 17 (published 13 February 2015). This is due to the change from the standard Enterprise based definition (and the alternative Reporting Unit definition used in some tables) to an Enterprise operating in Northern Ireland definition. This publication also contains a number of new tables. In several tables a comparable time series covering earlier years is included.

The Foreign Ownership tables (Tables 3) are not directly comparable with the foreign ownership tables contained in previous editions prior to edition 17 (published 13 February 2015). This is due to the change from the Reporting Unit based definition, where every Reporting Unit is counted as a separate business to the Enterprise operating in Northern Ireland based definition, where multiple Reporting Units for the same enterprise are combined. All these tables include a comparable time series covering earlier years where this is available. The NI/non-NI split is not available prior to 2013.

### **(v) Comparability with other Northern Ireland Economic and Labour Market Statistics publications**

This publication provides information on the number, characteristics and geographical location of Northern Ireland businesses and local sites within Northern Ireland. The Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) is the preferred source for this information. Counts of businesses and local sites are available split by industrial classification, size based on employees, size based on employment, size based on turnover, country of ownership including both foreign (non-UK) owned and non-NI owned, private/public sector split and legal status.

The IDBR is not the preferred source for employment/employees estimates. For employee estimates, the [Census of Employment](#) or the [Business Register Employment Survey \(BRES\)](#) should be used. These surveys are carried out in alternate years and provide robust estimates of employee jobs in all industries except agriculture. The employee estimates from these surveys are broken down by industry, gender, working pattern, public/private sector split and job location. The [Quarterly Employment Survey \(QES\)](#) provides more timely (but less robust) estimates of employee jobs at the Northern Ireland level. Employment, Unemployment and Economic Inactivity estimates are available from the [Labour Force Survey](#). Although the IDBR is not the preferred source for employee/employment and turnover estimates, it is the only

source for Country of Ownership. As a result employee estimates by foreign (non-UK) ownership, non-NI ownership and country of ownership are produced from the IDBR.

For turnover estimates, the NI [Annual Business Inquiry \(ABI\)](#) is the preferred source. The ABI includes the Production, Construction, Distribution and Service industries in Northern Ireland but excludes the Public Sector. Information on turnover (along with a range of other financial information) is available by industry sector or geographical location based on both Reporting Units and Local Units.

#### **(vi) Users**

IDBR data is widely used by anyone who has an interest in the Northern Ireland economy. The figures are used by economists and economic commentators both within and outside Government in assessments of the state of the economy e.g. the Ulster Bank in their Economic Commentary. In addition, significant non-governmental users of the data include District Councils, consultants, research organisations, universities, academic researchers both home and abroad, the media and the general public, e.g. Ulster Bank and Oxford Economics. The data is used by policy staff and economists within the [Department for the Economy](#) to better inform their decision making. Staff from InvestNI use the data to guide decisions in identifying investment opportunities and to monitor the effect of those investments on the economy. The Private Office and the Press Office use the data for responding to media queries as well as input to Assembly Questions, speeches, Ministerial correspondence, etc.

This IDBR publication is generally used by academics, consultants, independent researchers and other government departments to provide information relating to NI and as a starting point for analysis. In some cases the figures are used directly to inform decision making. The figures are also used to provide input into Assembly Questions and answer queries from the public.

#### **(vii) Disclosure control**

Statistical disclosure control methodology is applied to IDBR data. In the tables produced by [Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch](#) business counts are rounded to the nearest five and counts below five are suppressed; thus figures in these tables may not sum to their totals. Employee estimates are also adjusted to ensure that small numbers and numbers dominated by a small number of businesses are suppressed; figures for less than five businesses have also been removed.

These controls ensure that information attributable to an individual or individual organisation is not identifiable in any published outputs. The [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#), and specifically the Principle on Confidentiality (P.C) set out practices for how NISRA protects data from being disclosed. The P.C includes the statement that outputs should 'ensure that official statistics do not reveal the identity of an individual or organisation, or any private information relating to them, taking into account other relevant sources of information'.

If you require further information about the figures contained in this publication or the accompanying tables; or you require an alternative classification or more detailed information, please contact the Inter Departmental Business Register Analysis section by: -

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Information regarding the IDBR is also available via the following link:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/inter-departmental-business-register>  
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