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Summary of Key Findings

- In 2018/19, the estimated cost to businesses in Northern Ireland (NI) of complying with Government Statistical Surveys was just over £1.00 million. This represents an increase of £59,300 (6%) from 2017/18¹.
- In total, 68% of the overall compliance burden (£681,200) can be attributed to surveys carried out by Economic and Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) Branch, in the Department of Finance, which also includes Office for National Statistics (ONS) surveys of businesses in Northern Ireland used to produce UK economic statistics.
- A total of 85% of the overall compliance burden was attributable to statutory surveys. These surveys accounted for 39% of the total number of surveys carried out.
- 66 of the 135 surveys (49%) were used to produce official statistics. These surveys accounted for 92% of the total compliance cost.
- Just under two fifths (39%) of surveys used online/email² as their primary method of data collection, with almost a third (30%) of all surveys being solely online/email, and over half (54%) of surveys offering an online or email option.
- The number of surveys using online/email as their primary method of data collection has increased from just under a quarter in 2016/17 (24%) to almost two fifths (39%) in 2018/19.

¹ Just under 2% (£16,700) was due to a change in the way compliance costs were estimated for surveys carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on behalf of ELMS.

² This includes surveys which used an online or electronic diary, as their primary method of data collection.

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Background

The [Code of Practice for Statistics](#)³ has a statutory basis⁴ and recognises the importance of monitoring and reducing respondent burden, balanced with the need to produce official statistics that are fundamental to good government and provide a good evidence base to inform public policy⁵.

V5.5 Statistics producers should be transparent in their approach to monitoring and reducing the burden on those providing their information, and on those involved in collecting, recording and supplying data. The burden imposed should be proportionate to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

The burden to businesses due to statutory Government Statistical Surveys is monitored by the [Statistics Advisory Committee](#)⁶. Under the [Statistics of Trade and Employment \(NI\) Order 1988](#)⁷, a Northern Ireland Department is required to consult this committee before carrying out any new statutory survey of businesses⁸.

1. Introduction

This 2018/19 report is the seventh in an annual series detailing the cost to businesses of complying with statutory and voluntary Government Statistical Surveys in Northern Ireland. The report includes information on the number of surveys commissioned, or carried out, by Departments (including their Arm's Length Bodies) and the cost incurred by businesses in complying with regular and ad hoc government surveys, conducted in the financial year ending 31st March 2019. Department names have been abbreviated as shown in Appendix C.

³ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>

⁴ Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/18/contents>

⁵ Information on the purposes for which the data are used is available in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix D)

⁶ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/statistics-advisory-committee>

⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1988/595/data.pdf>

⁸ Under this Order, a business is defined as any person(s) carrying out an undertaking by way of trade or business, whether or not the trade or business is carried on for profit; and any other undertaking providing employment in respect of which Class 1 contributions are payable under the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975.

Useful Links:

- [Previous publications in this series](#)
- [Burden on Households and Individuals](#)
- [Code of Practice for Statistics](#)
- [NISRA publications and datasets](#)

- [Downloadable data](#)

The compliance cost of a survey is defined as the financial cost incurred by the business in responding to the survey. This is estimated using an agreed Government Statistical Service methodology and includes factors such as the time taken to complete the survey, hourly pay rate⁹ of the person completing the survey and any external costs such as accountancy fees.

Businesses include commercial businesses (including self-employed persons surveyed in the context of their business), schools, universities, colleges, voluntary organisations, non-profit bodies, mutual associations etc. Surveys of local councils are also included within surveys to businesses.

The application of the survey control methodology was reviewed prior to the 2016/17 data collection and improved guidance was produced. This has resulted in a discontinuity in the time series as some surveys, and types of surveys, which were excluded prior to 2016/17 are now included; specifically surveys carried out by Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs), and some participant evaluation surveys, customer surveys and surveys which have a secondary operational purpose. Further details are provided in Appendix A3.

The methodology used to calculate compliance costs for surveys carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on behalf of Economic Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) was also revised in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19. This has resulted in a substantial increase in the estimated compliance costs for these surveys in 2016/17, a smaller decrease in 2017/18 - offsetting some of the 2016/17 increase - and a relatively small increase in 2018/19 (see Appendix A3).

In this report, surveys that contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as 'official statistics' surveys, and surveys that do not contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as 'other statistics' surveys.

The ONS no longer produces a report or data for England and Wales, although some Government Departments publish information for their own department.

⁹ Hourly rates of pay are median hourly (£) UK rates of pay (excluding overtime), based on the provisional results of ASHE 2018. This ensures direct comparability with compliance costs for 2018/19 published by other parts of the UK.

2. Compliance Cost to Business

In 2018/19, 135 surveys of businesses were issued by government departments, of which 52 were statutory and 83 were voluntary. The total cost to businesses was £1,004,800, of which £853,200 (85%) was incurred by statutory surveys, while voluntary surveys accounted for £151,600 (15%). Of the £1,004,800 total compliance cost, 71% was attributable to DoF and 16% to DAERA.

68% of the total compliance cost (£681,200) can be attributed to Economic and Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) branch¹⁰ within DoF, which includes surveys carried out by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on behalf of ELMS¹¹. In addition, ELMS surveys accounted for 95% of the total compliance cost within DoF.

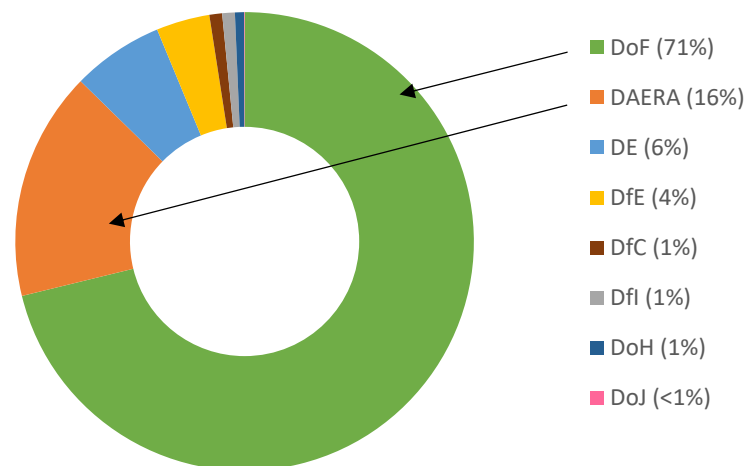
Of the £162,100 compliance cost attributable to DAERA, 88% was incurred as a result of the issue of statutory surveys to farms and businesses within the Northern Ireland. Similarly, 93% of the total burden attributable to DoF was incurred by statutory surveys.

Despite the large difference in compliance costs between statutory and voluntary surveys within

Table 1: Compliance cost by NI department, 2018/19¹⁰

Department	Number of Surveys	Compliance Cost (£000s)	Total Returns
DAERA	18	162.1	24,795
DE	24	64.9	6,893
DfC	17	9.0	8,992
DfE	26	37.8	8,260
DfI	1	8.9	1,562
DoF	46	715.2	77,360
DoH	2	6.4	1,872
DoJ	1	0.4	123
TEO	-	-	-
PPS	-	-	-
Total	135	1,004.8	129,857

Figure 1: Percentage of total compliance cost by NI Department, 2018/19



¹⁰ Information on the cost attributable to each area within DoF is available in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix D).

¹¹ It also includes three businesses surveyed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

DAERA, the department conducted the same number of statutory and voluntary surveys. DoF conducted more statutory than voluntary surveys (Table 2).

DfE conducted 25 voluntary surveys and only one statutory survey. The voluntary surveys run by DfE accounted for £37,400, which was 99% of DfE's compliance burden. Similarly, DE conducted one single statutory survey¹² which accounted for 50% of the total compliance burden attributed to DE.

DfC, DoH and DoJ only conducted voluntary surveys, whereas DfI only conducted a single statutory survey¹³.

In total, 61% of the surveys issued by NI government departments were voluntary. However voluntary surveys contributed only 15% of the total burden. Statutory surveys accounted for 85% of all compliance burden, but only 39% of the total number of surveys (Figure 2).

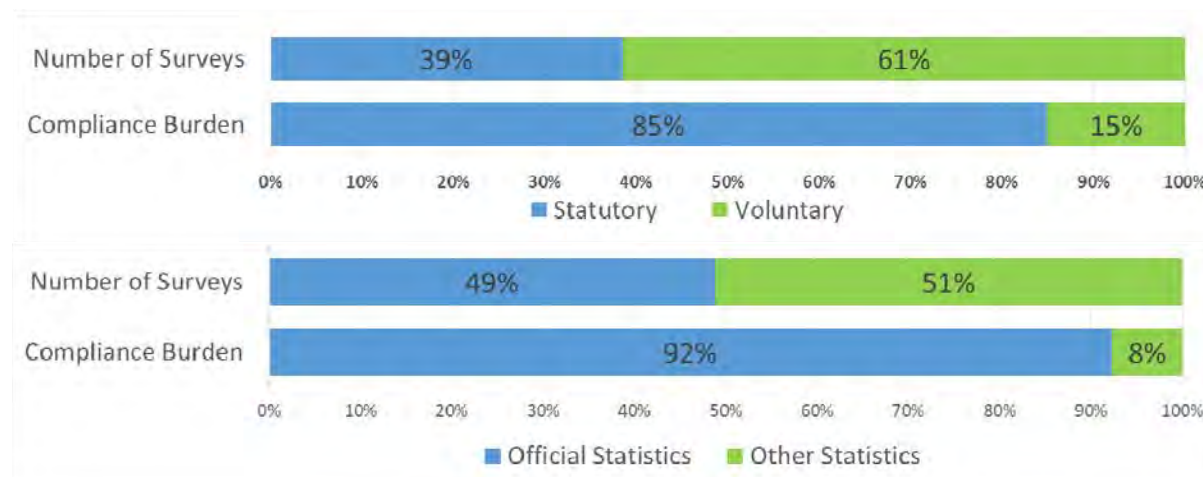
The vast majority of compliance burden (92%; £926,900) was due to surveys that contribute to official statistics (Figure 2 & Table 3).

Of these surveys which contributed to official statistics, 92% (£852,800) of the overall burden was attributable to statutory surveys¹⁴.

Table 2: Compliance cost for statutory and voluntary surveys by NI department, 2018/19

Department	Statutory		Voluntary	
	Number of Surveys	Compliance Cost (£000s)	Number of Surveys	Compliance Cost (£000s)
DAERA	9	142.8	9	19.4
DE	1	32.7	23	32.2
DfC	-	-	17	9.0
DfE	1	0.4	25	37.4
DfI	1	8.9	-	-
DoF	40	668.4	6	46.8
DoH	-	-	2	6.4
DoJ	-	-	1	0.4
TEO	-	-	-	-
PPS	-	-	-	-
Total	52	853.2	83	151.6

Figure 2: Percentage compliance cost for surveys which are statutory or voluntary and which contribute to official statistics



¹² This is the part of the School Census that is still collected by a paper return and covers voluntary/private pre-school and independent school returns. The rest of the School Census is collected via an electronic return, facilitated through computerised school records using a standard system.

¹³ This is the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport NI (CSRGT NI).

¹⁴ Further information on individual surveys is available in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix D).

Table 3 shows the compliance cost for surveys used to produce official statistics, and other surveys by government departments in 2018/19.

All 18 of the DAERA surveys, 45 of the 46 DoF surveys (including the 42 surveys carried out by or on behalf of ELMS¹⁵), 2 of the DE surveys and the single DfI survey contributed to official statistics. In contrast, none of the DfC surveys (17), DfE surveys (26), DoH surveys (2) or the DoJ (1) survey were used to produce official statistics.

Only 2 of the 24 surveys conducted by DE were used in the production of official statistics, however these two surveys accounted for 63% of the total DE burden.

Table 3: Compliance cost for surveys that contribute to official statistics and for surveys that do not contribute to official statistics by NI department, 2018/19

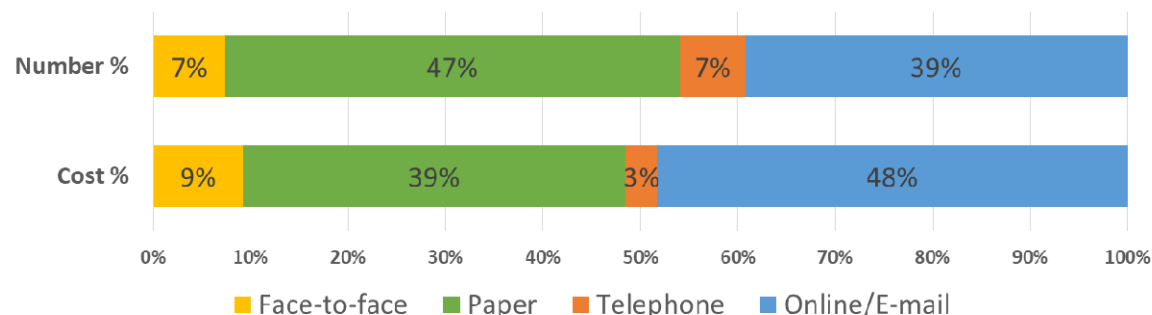
Department	Official Statistics		Other Statistics	
	Number of Surveys	Compliance Cost (£000s)	Number of Surveys	Compliance Cost (£000s)
DAERA	18	162.1	-	-
DE	2	40.8	22	24.1
DfC	-	-	17	9.0
DfE	-	-	26	37.8
DfI	1	8.9	-	-
DoF	45	715.0	1	0.1
DoH	-	-	2	6.4
DoJ	-	-	1	0.4
TEO	-	-	-	-
PPS	-	-	-	-
Total	66	926.9	69	77.9

3. Data Collection Methods

The percentage of surveys and compliance cost by primary method of collection is shown in Figure 3. Just under two fifths (39%) of surveys used online/email¹⁶ as their primary method of data collection, with 30% of all surveys being solely online/email. Furthermore, over half (54%) of all surveys offered an online/email data collection option (Table 4).

In 2018/19, 47% of surveys employed paper questionnaires as their primary data collection method (compared to 57% in 2017/18), with

Figure 3: Number of surveys and compliance cost by collection method (using primary method)



Please note that any implied relationship between method of collection and compliance cost should be treated with caution, as no account has been taken of the complexity and length of the surveys.

¹⁵ Surveys carried out by or on behalf of ELMS includes surveys carried out by ONS, BEIS and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on behalf of ELMS

¹⁶ This includes surveys which used an online or electronic diary, as their primary data collection method.

just under a third using a paper questionnaire on its own (31%). The remaining surveys combined a paper questionnaire, as a primary method, with online/email data collection (12%), telephone (0.7%), or both email data collection and telephone methods¹⁷ (3%).

7% of surveys carried out used face-to-face methods as their primary data collection method, with the vast majority of these surveys (9 out of 10) solely using face-to-face methods. Telephone was also used as the primary data collection methods for 7% of all surveys, with 16% of surveys using telephone methods (telephone interview or telephone data entry¹⁸) to collect data in some capacity.

Table 4: Number of surveys and compliance cost by collection method and department, 2018/19

Dept	Face-to-face		Face-to-face & Telephone		Paper		Paper & Telephone		Paper & Online/Email		Paper, Email & Telephone		Paper, Email & Telephone Data Entry ¹⁸		Telephone	
	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)
DAERA	6	89.3	1	1.9	1	13.2	-	-	7	56.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE	-	-	-	-	3	3.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DfC	-	-	-	-	14	1.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DfE	2	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	32.5
DfI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8.9	-	-	-	-	-	-
DoF	-	-	-	-	23	185.3	1	7.4	8	67.7	3	33.8	1	16.1	-	-
DoH	-	-	-	-	1	1.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DoJ	1	0.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TEO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PPS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	9	90.7	1	1.9	42	204.3	1	7.4	16	133.2	3	33.8	1	16.1	9	32.5

Dept	Online/ Email		Online/Email & Face-to face		Online/Email & Paper		Online & Telephone		Online, Face-to face & Telephone		Online, Paper & Telephone		Email, Paper & Telephone Data Entry		Total	
	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)	N	Cost (000s)
DAERA	3	1.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	162.1
DE	18	28.5	-	-	2	33.3	-	-	1	0.05	-	-	-	-	24	64.9
DfC	2	0.6	1	7.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	9.0
DfE	13	0.2	-	-	-	-	1	3.7	-	-	1	0.4	-	-	26	37.8
DfI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8.9
DoF	4	41.1	-	-	3	161.1	1	12.8	-	-	-	-	2	189.8	46	715.2
DoH	-	-	1	4.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	6.4
DoJ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.4
TEO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PPS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	40	71.7	2	12.0	5	194.4	2	16.5	1	0.05	1	0.4	2	189.8	135	1,004.8

¹⁷ Telephone methods include interviews conducted by telephone as well as telephone data entry (TDE).

¹⁸ Telephone Data Entry (TDE) is a data collection method where the requested data are entered using the telephone keypad.

By department, DoF had the most surveys offering an online/email option, with 22 in total, accounting for 48% of all surveys conducted by DoF. Similarly, DE offered an online/email option for 21 of its 24 surveys.

DfE ran a total of 26 surveys, 15 of which (58%) used an online/email data collection method. DAERA employed online/email data collection in some capacity in 10 surveys (56% of its total number of surveys). Elsewhere, DfC used online/email data collection in 3 of its 17 surveys, DoH used an online/electronic diary in one (of its two surveys) and DfI used online/email data collection in its one survey.

4. Change in data collection methods over time (2016/17 to 2018/19)

There has been a gradual change in the primary data collection methods used in government surveys of NI businesses in recent years. While the number of surveys employing face-to-face and telephone interviews has largely remained consistent over the three years, the number of surveys using online methods (including online/electronic diaries and e-mail data collection) has steadily increased since 2016/17. In contrast, the number of surveys employing paper questionnaires as their primary method has decreased year-on-year, however paper questionnaires were still the most commonly used primary method each year.

There has been a similar change observed in the compliance burden for each primary method in recent years. Corresponding with the number of surveys employing the primary method (Figure 4), the compliance burden for surveys which used telephone and face-to-face as their primary method has remained consistent over time. Compliance burden for surveys with paper questionnaires as their primary method was highest in 2016/17, contributing £881,000 (79%) of the total burden

Figure 4: Number of surveys by primary method employed, 2016/17 - 2018/19

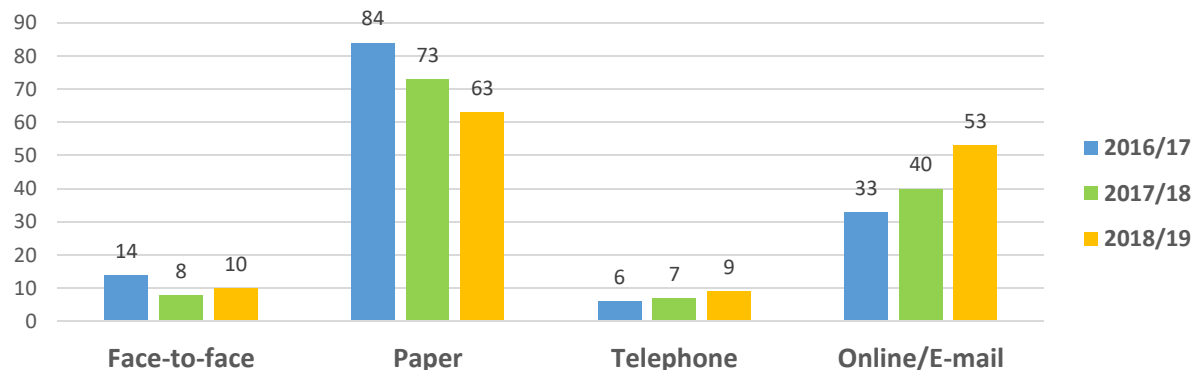
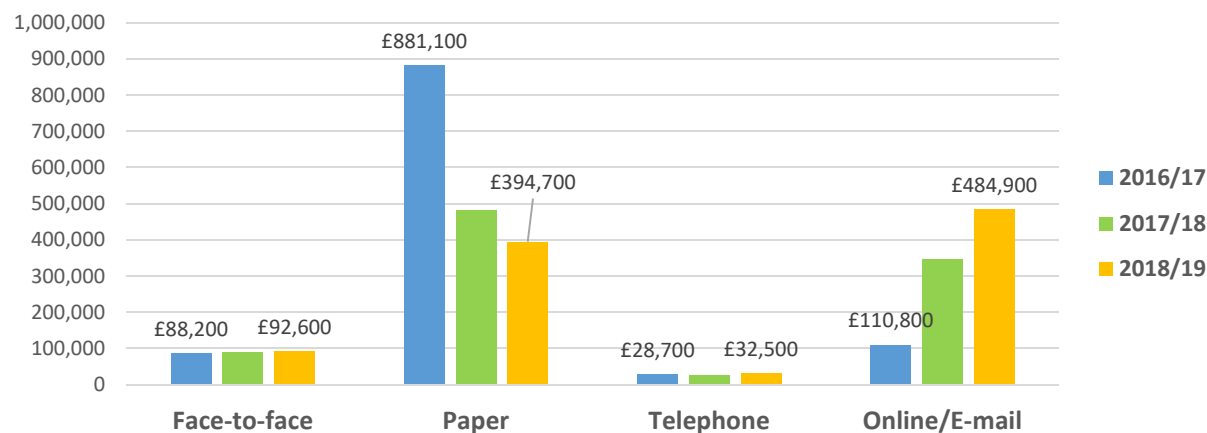


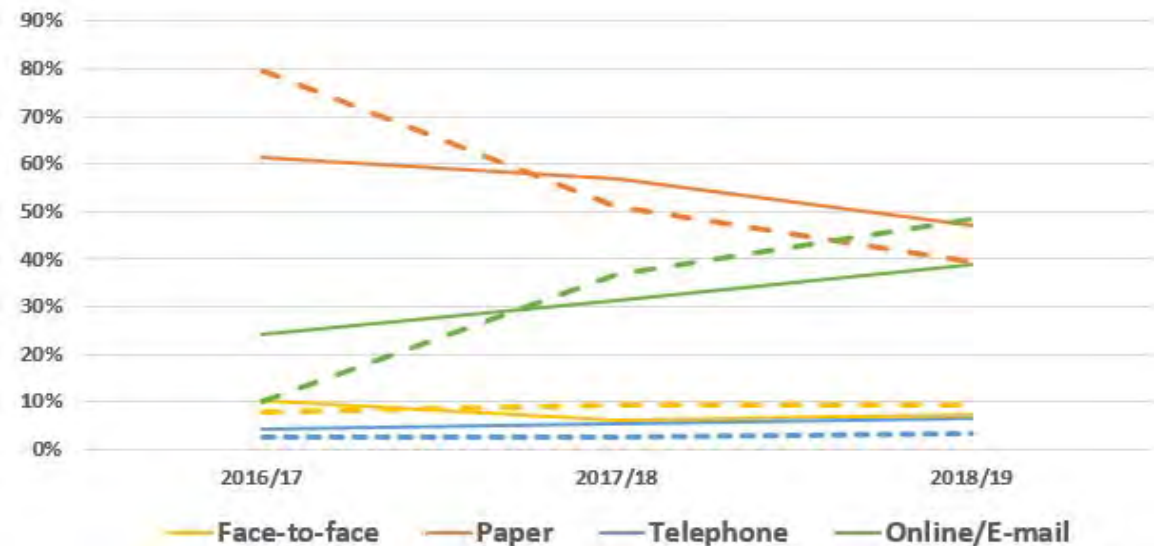
Figure 5: Compliance burden by primary method employed, 2016/17 - 2018/19



in 2016/17. This has reduced to £395,000 (39%) in 2018/19. In contrast, those surveys which used online/email as their primary method contributed £111,000 (10%) of the total burden in 2016/17, but there has been a large increase in the burden due to these surveys in the following years, reaching £485,000 (48%) in 2018/19.

Figure 6 shows the percentage of surveys by primary method (the solid lines) over time. This illustrates the increase in the proportion of surveys with an online primary method year on year, and also illustrates the decrease in the proportion of paper surveys over the three year period. This trend is observed again when looking at the compliance burden (dashed lines). The proportion of surveys using telephone methods (blue) and face-to-face interviews (yellow) as their primary method remains relatively consistent over time, as does the proportion of the compliance burden due to these surveys.

Figure 6: Percentage of surveys conducted by primary method (solid line) and percentage of compliance burden by primary method (dashed line), 2016/17 - 2018/19



As the nature and complexity of the surveys carried out each year varies, with a large number of ad-hoc, multiennial and irregular surveys, it is not possible to establish a relationship between the change in the number of surveys and the change in compliance burden for each primary data collection method.

5. Programme for Government (PfG) Outcomes

In 2016, the Northern Ireland Executive released a draft Programme for Government (PfG), which laid out the ambition the Executive had for society in Northern Ireland. The draft PfG was consulted on and refined during 2016/17, and forms the basis for the [2018/19 Outcomes Delivery Plan](#)¹⁹ published in June 2018. This comprises 12 strategic outcomes outlined by the Executive to represent the society we wish to have (see Appendix B). These 12 outcomes are supported by 49 indicators, which are accompanied by measures (derived from statistics) which show how the Northern Ireland Government and wider public sector are performing in relation to the outcomes, providing a basis to monitor progress and take appropriate action.

¹⁹ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/making-government-work/programme-government>

In 2018/19, for the first time, data suppliers were asked to identify to which PfG outcome each survey carried out by their Department or ALB contributed. Surveys which only contribute to UK statistics are excluded from the analysis shown in Figure 7, as are a small number of surveys where a linked PfG outcome could not be identified²⁰. Figure 7 shows that surveys of NI businesses carried out in 2018/19 contributed to all 12 of the PfG outcomes, with three surveys recorded as contributing to multiple outcomes²¹.

Figure 7: Programme for Government outcomes for surveys carried out by each NI department^{20, 21, 22}

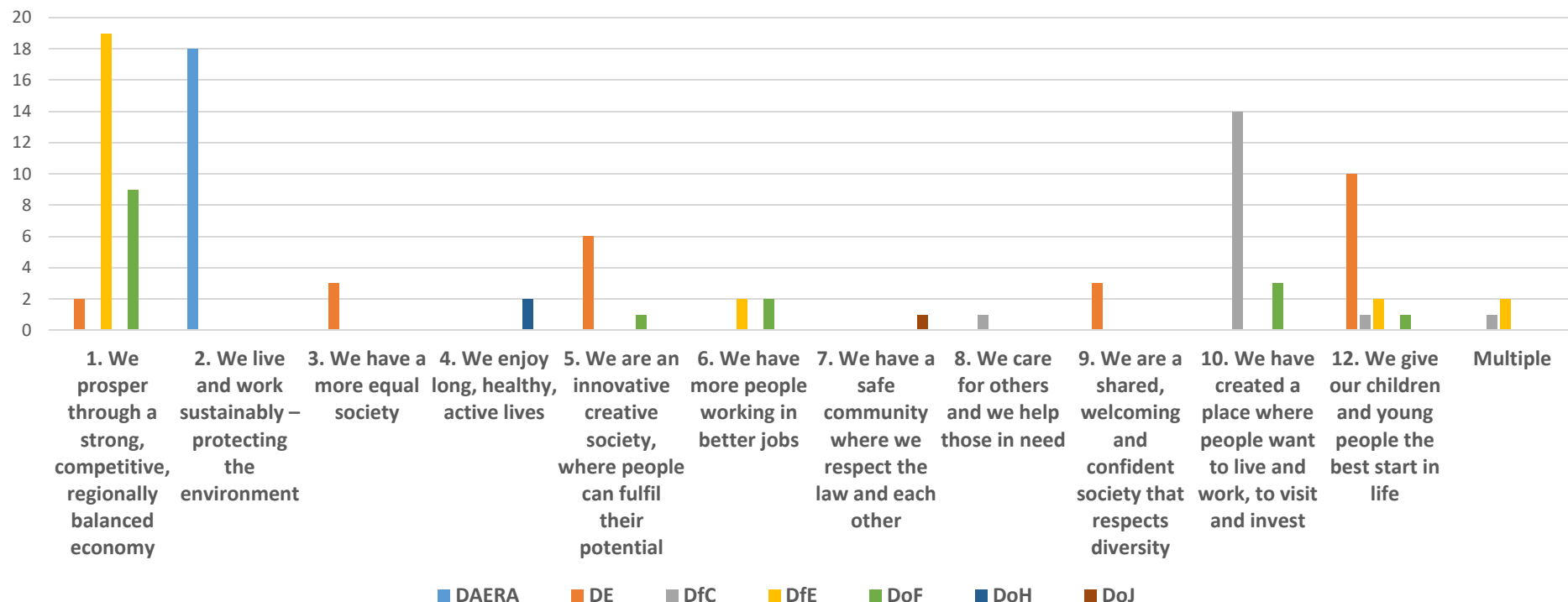


Figure 7 also shows that surveys of businesses carried out by certain departments often contribute to one specific outcome. For example, DAERA conducted 18 surveys all of which contributed to *Outcome 2: We live sustainably – protecting the environment*. Similarly, DfC conducted 17 surveys, 14 of which contributed to *Outcome 10: We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest*, and DfE conducted 19 surveys

²⁰ Information on individual surveys is available in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix D).

²¹ Two surveys carried out by DfE were recorded as contributing to Outcomes 1 & 2, and one survey carried out by DfC was recorded as contributing to Outcomes 1, 6 & 11.

²² The single survey carried out on behalf of DfI, the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport NI (CSRGT NI), only contributes to UK Statistics.

which contributed to *Outcome 1: We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy*, alongside four surveys which contributed to two other outcomes. In addition, two surveys conducted by DfE were recorded as contributing to more than one PfG outcome²¹.

In contrast to these departments, there was more variation in the outcomes to which DE surveys contributed, with the majority of DE surveys contributing to the *Outcome 12: We give our children and young people the best start in life*.

There were 32 surveys which did not contribute to any PfG outcome. 27 of these surveys were carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), two by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), one by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and one by the Department of Transport (DfT) on behalf of DfI. These are UK-wide surveys of businesses and the information collected is only used to produce UK Statistics, such as the [UK National Accounts and Balance of Payments](#)²³, [Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#)²⁴ and the [Producer Prices Index](#)²⁵. The remaining survey which did not contribute to any PfG outcome was carried out by the Insolvency Service (DfE).

6. Uses of Surveys

The data collected through government surveys of Northern Ireland businesses are used for a range of purposes including the

- production and development of official statistics (see Figure 2 & Table 3);
- development, monitoring and evaluation of government policy;
- design, monitoring, refinement and evaluation of programmes;
- improvement and refinement of government services.

For example, Analytical Services Division in DfE uses the wide range of [ELMS official statistics publications](#)²⁶ to provide briefing and analysis on the local economy to a wide range of stakeholders. This includes a [monthly economic update](#)²⁷ and a more detailed [economic commentary](#)²⁸ produced three times per year, which are published on the DfE website and disseminated to the Minister for the Economy and senior departmental officials as well as a wide range of interested parties. Figures from the [NI Composite Economic Index](#), [Labour Force Survey](#) (Household Survey), [Quarterly Employment Survey](#), [Index of Production](#), [Index of Services](#), [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#) and [NI Construction bulletin](#) are used to provide a regular overview of the local economy. Analytical Services Division also uses the findings from these surveys to brief the Minister and senior officials on the latest issues affecting the NI economy, providing them with the context required to put more informed policies in place.

²³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts>

²⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp>

²⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/producerpriceinflation/previousReleases>

²⁶ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/nisra-economic-and-labour-market-statistics-elms/economic-overview>

²⁷ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/monthly-economic-update>

²⁸ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/economic-commentary>

As well as published reports, Economic and Labour Market Statistics also supply bespoke analysis to DfE. One example is the evidence base provided on the Geoscience Industry in Northern Ireland (using data from the Annual Business Inquiry, Business Register and Employment Survey, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, Research and Development Survey, Broad Economy Sales and Exports Survey). The subsequent report '[Economic Impact of Geosciences 2018](#)'²⁹ highlighted the importance of the Geoscience sector in relation to other sectors and has been used to inform local councils as part of the local development plan process. This sets the economic context of the sector and informs both policy development regarding the use of our geological resources and the development of a Science Strategy for the Geological Survey of NI.

Information from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is used by the Low Pay Commission as part of its evidence base for recommending to Government the level of the national minimum wage.

Further information on the purpose of each survey is available in the [downloadable data](#) which accompany this bulletin.

7. Changes to the Surveys Issued by Departments: 2014/15 to 2018/19

Due to the biennial, triennial or quinquennial nature of several surveys, as well as the large number of ad-hoc and programme specific surveys, the number of surveys and resultant compliance burden fluctuates from one year to the next. Furthermore, due to the cyclical nature of some of the larger statutory surveys compliance costs can vary significantly year-on-year. An example of this is the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) carried out by DoF which alternates a larger and smaller sample year to year. In 2018/19, approximately 12,500 businesses were sampled (9,367 responses; £34,500 compliance costs), while in 2017/18 around 33,000 businesses were sampled (25,235 responses; £62,600 compliance costs).

Additionally, NISRA statisticians are continually working towards improving the efficiency of the statistical process and minimising the burden on survey respondents, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Details of steps taken to reduce respondent burden are provided in Section 9.

It should be noted that there is also a discontinuity in the series between 2015/16 and 2016/17. Prior to the 2016/17 data collection exercise, a review was conducted of the guidance provided to data suppliers to provide greater clarity around the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of surveys. As a result of this review, a number of additional surveys have been included in departmental returns from 2016/17, specifically surveys carried out by Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) and some surveys which were previously omitted due to being considered part of the operational management of a public service. Examples are participant evaluation surveys, customer surveys and surveys which have a secondary operational purpose. Further refinements were made to the surveys included in 2017/18, but the impact is much less and limited to DE and DfE (see Appendix A3).

²⁹ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/economic-impact-geosciences-ni-economy.PDF>

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) also carried out a review of its methodology in 2016/17, moving away from calculating stratified compliance costs based on business size; including an estimate of re-contact burden and reviewing median completion times in conjunction with survey managers. In 2017/18, ONS reviewed median completion times for another ten surveys and median re-contact times (which had been assumed to be equal to the median completion time) were revised. In 2018/19, estimated staff costs for respondents were revisited. These changes have resulted in a large increase in compliance costs for surveys carried out by ONS (on behalf of ELMS) in 2016/17, a smaller decrease in 2017/18 offsetting some of the increase, and a relatively small increase in 2018/19. This impacts the compliance costs for DoF but not the number of surveys or number of responses. Further details are provided in Appendix A3.

Table 5: Number of surveys, forms returned and compliance cost by NI department, 2014/15 to 2018/19³⁰

Dept	Number Surveys					Number Forms (000s)					Compliance Cost (£000s)				
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
DAERA	19	19	17	17	18	24.7	30.6	21.0	20.7	24.8	151.8	199.3	141.8	145.0	162.1
DE ³⁰	7	8	46	16	24	3.5	2.6	11.3	3.8	6.9	31.0	19.8	70.9	52.2	64.9
DfC ³⁰	22	17	16	22	17	1.1	0.7	8.4	10.3	9.0	6.3	4.0	12.5	10.1	9.0
DfE ³⁰	16	10	11	25	26	9.3	6.4	4.8	7.0	8.3	59.7	40.2	29.4	29.4	37.8
Dfi	1	3	1	1	1	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	8.2	9.7	8.2	8.6	8.9
DoF ³⁰	38	47	43	45	46	87.7	112.9	73.5	91.1	77.4	875.6	828.9	841.7	698.5	715.2
DoH	1	-	2	2	2	0.1	-	0.2	0.1	1.9	1.6	-	2.6	1.7	6.4
DOJ	-	1	1	-	1	-	0.2	0.3	-	0.1	-	3.1	1.7	-	0.4
TEO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PPS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total³⁰	104	105	137	128	135	127.8	154.8	120.9	134.5	129.9	1,134.2	1,105.1	1,108.8	945.4	1,004.8

The estimated compliance burden for NI businesses in 2018/19 was £1,004,800, representing an increase of £59,300 (6.3%) on the previous year. This increase can largely be attributed to increasing staff costs and an additional seven surveys carried out in 2018/19 compared to the previous year. Part of the increase, £16,700 (1.7%), can be attributed to the change in the estimation of staff costs for surveys carried out by the ONS on behalf of ELMS. The compliance burden for 2018/19 represents a decrease on years prior to 2017/18.

The drop in the overall number of forms between 2017/18 and 2018/19 was largely driven by the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), carried out by ELMS (DoF), which had a 'smaller sample' in 2018/19. Detailed information for each survey can be found in the [downloadable data](#) which accompany the Survey Burden reports.

³⁰ There is a discontinuity in the time series affecting 2016/17, 2017/18 and to a lesser extent 2018/19. This means that the Totals and figures for DoF, DE & DfE for 2016/17 and 2017/18 (and DfC for 2016/17) cannot be directly compared with each other, and with earlier years; figures for 2018/19 are comparable with 2017/18, apart from a small discontinuity for DoF. Further details are provided in Appendix A3.

DAERA

There was one additional survey carried out by DAERA in 2018/19, compared to the previous two years. The *Farm Safety Survey* is an ad-hoc survey, last conducted in 2014/15, which contributed 3,617 forms and a compliance burden of £13,200 and largely accounted for the increase in the number of forms and compliance burden for DAERA.

DE

DE carried out 24 surveys in 2018/19, compared to 16 in 2017/18. 11 of these surveys were one-off, ad-hoc surveys and accounted for 48% of the forms returned. DE consistently run a high proportion of one-off ad-hoc surveys (12 in 17/18) thus variation in the number of surveys, forms and compliance cost year-on-year is to be expected.

DE conducted three new surveys in 2018/19. Two of these surveys will be run on an annual basis (the *CCEA Curriculum Monitoring Programme* and the *PHA GCSE Survey, carried out by the Education Authority*), and the *CSSC Membership Survey* will be run on a triennial basis. These surveys contributed £4,200 towards the compliance burden.

In addition, there were two quadrennial surveys in 2018/19 – the *Principals' and Teachers' surveys within the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Survey (TIMSS)* and a triennial survey, the *Programme for International Student Assessment 2018*. These three surveys contributed £3,400 of the burden. Furthermore, the *School Omnibus 2018* (biennial) took place in 2018/19, which accounted for £4,200 (6.4%) of the total DE compliance burden.

The *School Meals Census* has seen a reduction of 10 minutes in its median completion time, now at 20 minutes, which resulted in a 34% reduction in compliance burden (from £12,300 to £8,100). As in 2016/17 and 2017/18, the *School Census* remains the largest contributor towards the compliance burden for DE, resulting in £32,700 which accounts for just over 50% of the DE compliance burden in 2018/19.

DfC

The number of surveys carried out by DfC in 2018/19 decreased, from 22 in the previous year, to 17. As in previous years, the majority of these surveys were one-off surveys of small businesses and are linked to revitalisation projects to 'gauge perception of an area'. These 14 one-off surveys (a drop of 6 on the previous year) contributed 12% of the compliance burden attributed to DfC.

The annual *UU/NIHE Quarterly House Price Index* (carried by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive) was the primary contributor to the compliance burden for DfC with an estimated burden of over £7,300 (81%), a slight decrease on the previous year (£240) as a result of (600) fewer respondents.

The two remaining surveys were both ad-hoc; the *Employability NI – Reimagining Employer Support Survey*, and the *Review of the Executive’s Child Poverty Strategy (for Non-Government respondents)*, conducted by the Poverty Policy Team. These two surveys contributed 7% of the DfC burden.

DfE

DfE conducted 26 surveys in 2018/19, compared to 25 surveys in 2017/18 and 11 surveys in surveys in 2016/17. The primary reason for the large increase in the number of surveys after 2016/17 is due to the inclusion of surveys conducted by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). In both 2018/19 and 2017/18, there were 13 surveys carried out by CITB. In 2018/19 there were 11 one-off surveys, predominantly *Apprenticeship Framework Reviews*, conducted by CITB. Despite the large number of this type of survey, they contributed only 117 responses and £200 in compliance burden, comprising 0.5% of the total compliance burden attributed to DfE. In 2018/19, CITB also conducted the *Skills Training Survey* (triennial) and the annual *Employer Tracking Survey*. These two surveys contributed £1,300 to the DfE compliance burden.

Invest NI conducted four surveys in 2018/19 which accounted for 63% of the DfE compliance burden and 47% of the responses attributed to DfE. In addition, Invest NI has altered the frequency of one of its regular surveys (the *Purchasing Manager’s Index (PMI)*) from quarterly to monthly, which has led to an increase in the compliance cost, rising to £12,400 in 2018/19³¹.

The *All Island Business Monitor*, conducted by InterTradeIreland saw a 49% decrease in its compliance burden, decreasing from £10,300 in 2017/18, to £5,300 in 2018/19. This was the result of excluding non-Northern Ireland based businesses from the estimate of compliance burden.

The *Industry Engagement Survey* and *Tourism Industry Barometer* surveys conducted by TourismNI contributed £5,700 (15%) of the DfE burden, while the *Farm Safety Advertising Evaluation* survey carried out by the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) contributed just £700 (0.2%).

Dfi

Dfi carried out one survey of businesses in 2018/19, the annual *Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport, Northern Ireland (CSRGT NI)*. The small increase in compliance cost is due to the updated staff costs used to calculate compliance burden and a slight increase in the number of forms returned.

DoF

DoF carried out one more survey in 2018/19 than in the previous year, and there has been a 2.4% increase in the observed compliance burden, despite a reduction of 13,700 forms returned (15%).

Economic Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) conducted the same seven surveys as in 2017/18, with most remaining consistent in terms of the number

³¹ The compliance burden for the *Purchasing Manager’s Index (PMI)* was estimated as £1,000 in 2016/17 and 2017/18, however this was an underestimate as it only included returns for one quarter.

of responses and resultant compliance burden. The *Business Register and Employment Survey* however, alternates between a larger and a smaller sample, employing a smaller sample in 2018/19. This resulted in a reduction of 15,868 respondents and a decrease in the compliance burden of £28,100. In addition, the *NI Annual Business Inquiry* (ELMS) has experienced falling response rates, with 182 fewer respondents in 2018/19 which led to a £4,900 reduction in compliance burden.

As of 2018/19, the *Quarterly Construction Enquiry* (QCE)³² has been incorporated within the *Quarterly Business Survey* (QBS), which explains the increase of 1,768 responses and £15,000 in the QBS compliance burden. However, as a result of amalgamating these surveys, there was a net reduction of £14,200 in the overall compliance burden compared to 2017/18, when the two surveys were carried out separately.

The biennial *UK Innovation Survey* was carried out by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)³³ in 2018/19. This included 614 responses from NI businesses with an associated compliance burden of £12,800. This represents a reduction (of 48%) in the burden compared to the previous run in 2016/17 due to a lower median completion time, which decreased by 10 minutes, as well as better estimation of the median re-contact time³⁴.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) also surveys NI businesses, on behalf of ELMS, as part of UK-wide surveys. These surveys are included under DoF, as are the two surveys carried out BEIS³⁵ and the two surveys carried out by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)³⁶.

There were 31 ONS surveys of NI businesses in 2018/19, one more than in 2017/18. While most of these surveys have remained consistent in terms of sample size, there has been an overall increase of £42,500 (20%) in compliance burden some of which (£16,700) is due to the revised calculation of staff costs (see Appendix A3) to take account of the different types of respondents. The new survey, the *Annual Survey of Goods and Services*, which ran for the first time in 2018/19, had 733 responses from NI businesses with a compliance burden of £19,400.

Increased sample sizes within the *Annual Survey of International Trade in Services*, *Monthly Survey for Index Numbers of Export Prices*, *Monthly Survey for Index Numbers of Import Prices* and the *Monthly Survey for Index Numbers of Producer Prices* resulted in 1,038 additional responses and an increase of £7,200 in the compliance burden. This was partly offset by decreases in sample sizes for other surveys, such as the *Low Carbon Survey*, which saw 436 fewer responses and a reduction of £1,600 in compliance burden.

The *Quarterly Inward Foreign Direct Investment Survey* and the *Quarterly Outward Foreign Direct Investment Survey* saw an increase of 38 respondents in both surveys. While this appears relatively minor, both surveys have lengthy median completion times of 135 and 140 minutes respectively, effecting a combined increase of £4,100 in compliance burden.

³² The *Quarterly Construction Enquiry* (QCE) was carried out by Central Survey Unit (CSU), DoF; the *Quarterly Business Survey* (QBS) is carried out by ELMS, DoF.

³³ BEIS surveys NI businesses, on ELMS behalf, as part of this survey.

³⁴ In 2016/17, the median re-contact time for the UK Innovation Survey was assumed to be equal to the median completion time.

³⁵ *Quarterly Survey into Electricity Generated* and *UK Innovation Survey*

³⁶ *Annual Survey of Brewers* and *Monthly Flour Millers' Survey*

There were three surveys of businesses carried out by Tourism Statistics and Staff Surveys Branch (TSSSB) in DoF. These three surveys: *Northern Ireland Hotel, Guest House and Bed & Breakfast Occupancy survey*; *Northern Ireland Self Catering Occupancy Survey* and *Northern Ireland Visitor Attraction Survey* contributed £33,800 (4.7%) to the overall burden assigned to DoF surveys.

DoH

Business Services Organisation (BSO) has carried out an ad-hoc survey each year, since 2016/17, alongside the annual *Pharmaceutical Margin Survey*. In 2018/19, BSO ran the *Needs Assessment Survey*, which was a much larger ad-hoc survey than in previous years. This survey contributed £4,700 of survey burden, which accounts for 74% of the total compliance burden due to DoH surveys.

DoJ

DoJ carries out very few and quite infrequent surveys of businesses. The *Court User Survey*, a one-off survey, conducted by the NI Courts and Tribunals Service, was the only business survey carried out by DoJ in 2018/19, with a small estimated compliance burden of £420.

TEO & PPS

Neither TEO nor PPS conducted any surveys of businesses during the period presented in Table 5.

8. Examination of the Trend, 2012/13 to 2018/19

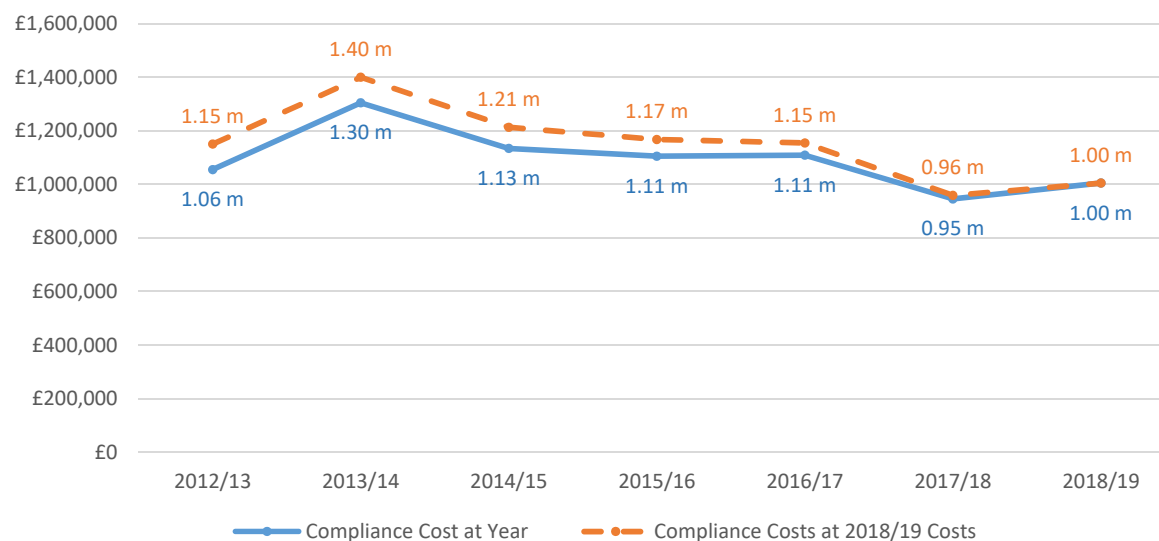
Figure 8 illustrates the change in the estimated cost to businesses of complying with Government Statistical Surveys from 2012/13 to 2018/19³⁷. The blue line shows the cost in terms of raw or current prices; that is, in terms of staff cost at the time of the survey without allowing for the effects of changes to levels of pay. The dashed orange line shows the cost after wage growth has been taken into account. External costs incurred by businesses have not been adjusted. The base staff cost are the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) costs used for 2018/19.

The estimated compliance cost to businesses based on staff costs at the time of the survey has gradually reduced from a peak of £1.30 million in 2013/14 to a low of £0.95 million in 2017/18 before increasing to 1.00 million in 2018/19.

The 2018/19 compliance cost represents an increase of 6.3% on 2017/18, but is 23% lower than the peak in 2013/14 and the second lowest cost in the time series.

The absence of a decrease between 2015/16 and 2016/17 was due to the discontinuity in the time series (i.e. the inclusion of additional surveys, and increase in compliance costs for ONS surveys).

Figure 8: NI compliance cost from 2012/13 to 2018/19³⁷



There was also some over-estimation in the compliance costs for 2016/17 which was removed in 2017/18. Further details are provided in Appendix A3

When the impact of changes in staff costs is removed (i.e. compliance costs are calculated based on 2018/19 costs), a more pronounced downward trend is observed between 2013/14 and 2017/18, with a 4.8% increase in compliance costs between 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Despite this increase, the estimated compliance cost of £1.00m for 2018/19 is lower than every other year between 2012/13 and 2016/17 (inclusive) and represents a reduction of 28% on the peak compliance burden in 2013/14 based on 2018/19 staff costs.

³⁷ The figures in the time series have not been adjusted for the discontinuity. See Appendix A3.

9. Measures being taken to Reduce Compliance Cost

A few of the specific initiatives employed by departments in trying to reduce respondent burden include:

Department	Name of Survey	Measures taken to reduce compliance burden
DAERA	December Agricultural and Horticulture Survey	Encouraged more people to use the online system. Use of administrative sources.
	June Agricultural and Horticultural Census	Redesign of online survey to reduce the length of the survey; encouraged more people to use the online system.
	Farm Business Survey	New IT system.
	Horticultural surveys	Redesign of online survey to reduce the length of the survey; encouraged more people to use the online system.
DoF (ELMS)³⁸	Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry	Increased use of e-forms and spreadsheet returns
	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings	Increased use of e-forms and spreadsheet returns
	Inter-Departmental Business Register	Use of e-forms where possible.
	Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)	Increased use of e-forms and spreadsheet returns
	Quarterly Business Survey	Increased usage of e-forms, continue to data share with BRES and have moved to coverage monitoring, rather than response rates, to reduce the number of follow-up calls made.
	Northern Ireland Research and Development Survey	Increased usage of e-forms; improved training in relation to validation completion to increase the effectiveness of completing validations in-house (where possible).
DE	ETI Post-inspection evaluation 2018/19	The questionnaire was reviewed and refined. Some questions were removed.
	School Meals Census 2018/19	New online application for data collection with enhanced data validation checks and guidance notes built in. Fewer schools need to be contacted for validation purposes.
	School Omnibus 2018	Restricted the topics covered in the survey to existing DE strategies and policies.

³⁸ ELMS (Economic Labour Market Statistics)

Department	Name of Survey	Measures taken to reduce compliance burden
DE (CCEA)³⁹	AS and A-Level Exams Consultation 2018	All questionnaires are designed and programmed by professional researchers to produce valid questions and minimise time to complete. Online surveys reduce time and burden, cost is minimal.
	CCEA Analytics 2019	
	CCEA Curriculum Monitoring Programme 2018-19	
	Compliance and Malpractice Survey	
	Cross Phase Cluster Groups/Cluster Groups 2018-19	
	Pre-School Transition Report Survey	
	Primary RE Questionnaire	

³⁹ CCEA (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment)

Appendix A: Methodology, Quality and Use of Publication

A1. Rationale for publication

The collection of data by government departments and their arm's length bodies (ALBs) causes a burden on data suppliers. It is important to keep this burden to a minimum and hence the practice of survey control has been developed and practiced within Northern Ireland since the 1980s.

The [Code of Practice for Statistics](#)⁴⁰ recognises the importance of monitoring and reducing respondent burden, balanced with the need to produce official statistics that are fundamental to good government and provide a good evidence base to inform public policy. It emphasises the importance of **transparency**, ensuring respondent **burden is proportionate to benefits** and making **use of existing data** before undertaking a new data collection:

V5.5 Statistics producers should be transparent in their approach to monitoring and reducing the burden on those providing their information, and on those involved in collecting, recording and supplying data. The burden imposed should be proportionate to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

V5.3 The suitability of existing data, including administrative, open and privately-held data, should be assessed before undertaking a new data collection.

V5.1 Opportunities for data sharing, data linkage, cross-analysis of sources, and the reuse of data should be taken wherever feasible. Recognised standards, classifications, definitions, and methods should be applied to data wherever possible.

V5.6 Statistics producers should analyse the impact of new data requirements or extending existing collections on those involved in the collection, recording and supply of data, against the potential value of the statistics in serving the public good.

V5.4 Voluntary participation in statistical data collection should be sought, rather than using statutory powers, wherever possible.

The burden to businesses due to statutory Government Statistical Surveys is also monitored by the [Statistics Advisory Committee](#)⁴¹ (SAC). Under the [Statistics of Trade and Employment \(NI\) Order 1988](#)⁴², a Northern Ireland Department is required to consult this committee before carrying out a statutory survey of businesses. This publication is provided to SAC annually and provides an overview of the overall cost to businesses due to NI Government Statistical Surveys⁴³.

⁴⁰ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/the-code/>

⁴¹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/statistics-advisory-committee>

⁴² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1988/595/data.pdf>

⁴³ Under this Order, a business is defined as any person(s) carrying out an undertaking by way of trade or business, whether or not the trade or business is carried on for profit; and any other undertaking providing employment in respect of which Class 1 contributions are payable under the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975.

A2. Methodology

Data collection

Data were requested from Survey Control Liaison Officers (SCLOs) in each of the Northern Ireland departments, as well as from officials in Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs). Respondents were provided with guidance notes and asked to provide details on the Government Statistical Surveys which their department/ organisation had commissioned or carried out in 2018/19. This information was returned to NISRA Survey Control Unit for quality assurance.

Coverage

All statistical surveys to businesses carried out by, or on behalf of, Northern Ireland Government Departments (including Arm's Length Bodies) are included, as well as statistical surveys carried out by NI Departments (or ALBs) on behalf of GB Government Departments (or ALBs) where the data are used directly by the NI Department (or ALB) or feed into UK Statistics.

A separate [publication](#)⁴⁴ is produced for surveys to households and individuals and is published alongside this publication. The scope of survey control was extended to households and individuals in 2014/15. For surveys of households and individuals, survey burden is calculated on the basis of the time taken to respond to the survey.

Definition of Business

For Survey Control purposes, businesses include commercial businesses (including self-employed persons surveyed in the context of their business), schools, universities, colleges, voluntary organisations, non-profit bodies, mutual associations etc. Surveys of local councils are also included under surveys to businesses.

Definition of Statistical Survey

A statistical survey is any structured inquiry designed to obtain aggregated data (which may be qualitative or quantitative) where the individual or corporate identities of the respondents are in themselves of little significance.

This includes both regular and ad hoc surveys; both voluntary and statutory surveys that may be required to determine, evaluate or monitor policy and/or action, provide social or economic indicators or measure customer satisfaction. Statistical surveys conducted by, or on behalf of, non-departmental public bodies are also covered. Arm's length bodies are included under their parent departments.

Statistical surveys in scope are not limited to those conducted by statistics branches and include all modes of data collection: completion of a questionnaire; telephone data entry; face-to-face interview; online etc.

⁴⁴ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/ni-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden>

Surveys that contribute to official statistics and those that do not are both in the scope of survey control.

The following are examples of statistical surveys **covered** by these controls:

- Surveys designed to obtain aggregated data;
- Surveys where responses are solicited by means of a direct approach to potential respondents;
- Surveys carried out for departmental sponsors by consultants or private organisations;
- Customer satisfaction surveys designed to identify overall success of a product or service.

The following are examples of surveys **excluded** from survey control:

- Surveys where there is no direct approach made and where respondents clearly select themselves (e.g. web sites, readership surveys, some types of consultation exercises where there is an invitation to comment);
- Where information is required as an integral part of the operational management of a public service. Such returns will often be regulated under specific departmental controls;
- Surveys relating to the contractual obligations of potential respondents to the department or agency concerned;
- Surveys to respondents in central government and its agencies.

Where part of a survey falls outside scope, the part of the survey within scope has been included where possible.

Compliance Cost

Compliance costs are the estimated financial burden placed on businesses as a result of completing government statistical surveys. Where the actual or estimated completion time is not available for each business, an overall completion time for the survey is estimated using the median time to complete the survey. The median time to complete the survey is estimated based on: information from the survey, paradata, historical data (within the last five years), a pilot survey, reviews or survey manager expertise. Only those completing the survey are included; nonresponse is assumed to place no burden on respondents. Any time spent establishing eligibility for businesses that are subsequently deemed out of scope is included.

Where a business survey uses a number of different form types, or data collection methods e.g. electronic/postal, and these vary in terms of completion time then the calculations may be conducted separately for each form type/ data collection method and summed for an overall compliance cost. Similarly, if there are different types of businesses with different completion times then the calculations for each type of business may be carried out separately and summed.

Validation procedures may require a re-contact with the business. The burden due to re-contact is also calculated. If actual or estimated re-contact times are not available then the median time taken to complete the full questionnaire may be substituted on the assumption that a respondent may need to review the entire questionnaire.

SCLOs are provided with a choice of five rates of pay taken from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)⁴⁵. SCLOs must select the most appropriate rate of pay for the person most likely to have completed the survey. The rates of pay used in compliance cost calculations are the UK median hourly pay (excluding overtime)⁴⁶ for the following grades:

Grade	ASHE Code
Chief Executive and Senior Officials	1115
Managers and Senior Officials	1
Professional Occupations	2
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	3
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	4

Any external costs incurred by businesses (e.g. accountant's fees) when complying with government survey requests are also included in the calculation of compliance cost.

The Compliance Cost (£) is a simple **addition** of Response Cost (£), Re-contact Cost (£) and External Cost (£), which are calculated as:

Response Cost (£) = No. of responses x Median time (hrs) x Hourly rate (£/hr)

Re-contact Cost (£) = No. re-contacted x Median time (hrs) x Hourly rate (£/hr)

External Cost (£) = No. with external cost x Median external cost (£)

If a survey is carried out on behalf of a number of government departments, then each government department will only include the compliance costs for the questions/ modules commissioned by them⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ The provisional 2018 ASHE results have been used for 2018/19. These figures have been used to ensure direct comparability with 2018/19 compliance costs published for other parts of the UK (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/regionbyoccupation4digitsoc2010ashtable15>).

⁴⁶ Table 15.6a: Earnings and hours worked, region by occupation by four-digit SOC: Hourly pay - Excluding overtime 2018

⁴⁷ The number of forms however will be the same as for the complete survey, which means that these forms and surveys will be counted more than once in aggregated figures.

Compliance costs at current year staff costs (constant prices)

The method used for calculating compliance costs at current year staff costs (or constant prices) is to use the rates of pay for the current, or base year, instead of the rates for previous years. This removes the effect of wage growth (changing staff costs) and adjusts the overall cost making it directly comparable to the current year. Any external costs incurred by businesses have not been adjusted as these represent a small proportion of the overall total.

Grade ⁴⁸	2012 (for 2012/13)	2013 (for 2013/14)	2014 (for 2014/15)	2015 (for 2015/16)	2016 (for 2016/17)	2017 (for 2017/18)	2018 (for 2018/19)
Chief Executives and Senior Officials (1115)	£42.50	£43.17	£41.35	£42.42	£43.82	£43.82	£46.00
Managers, directors and senior officials (1)	£18.57	£19.04	£19.25	£19.42	£19.71	£20.51	£20.60
Professional occupations (2)	£18.99	£19.23	£19.31	£19.45	£19.71	£20.00	£20.44
Associate professional and technical occupations (3)	£14.53	£14.74	£14.81	£15.00	£15.00	£15.33	£15.63
Administrative and secretarial occupations (4)	£9.92	£10.00	£10.12	£10.28	£10.51	£10.71	£11.07

Statutory and Voluntary surveys

Where the status of a survey is statutory there is a legal obligation on the respondents to provide the information that will be collected, for example, under the Statistics of Trade and Employment (NI) Order 1988. The Code of Practice for Statistics encourages official statistics producers to seek voluntary participation in statistical data collection rather than using statutory powers, wherever possible.

Official Statistics and Other Statistics surveys

Surveys that contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as 'official statistics' surveys, and surveys that do not contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as 'other statistics' surveys.

Data collection method

The data collection method is recorded for each survey. Prior to 2016/17 SCLOs were asked to write-in the data collection method(s) used for each survey. This meant that there was substantial variation in the descriptions used and it was not always easy to identify the primary data collection method. In 2016/17, this was replaced with a drop-down menu (Paper questionnaire; Paper diary⁴⁹; Telephone interview; Face-to-face interview; Email data collection; Online questionnaire/ data collection; Online/electronic diary⁴⁹; Telephone data entry; and Digital Voice Recognition Survey). SCLOs are asked to identify the primary, secondary, tertiary, etc. method of data collection. As a result, groupings and analysis from 2016/17 onwards will be more accurate than in previous years.

⁴⁸ Hourly rates of pay are (median) Hourly (£) UK rates of pay (excluding overtime)

⁴⁹ This option was first introduced in 2017/18. As paper diaries usually accompany face-to-face interviews, these have been grouped with face-to-face interviews in the analysis. This maintains consistency with what was done in 2016/17 and earlier years. Online/electronic diaries have been grouped with online questionnaire/data collection.

Rounding

In most tables the compliance costs have been rounded to the nearest hundred. Thus figures may not add exactly due to rounding.

A3. Discontinuity (affecting 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19)

The application of the survey control methodology was reviewed prior to the 2016/17 data collection and improved guidance was produced. This has resulted in a discontinuity in the time series as some surveys, and types of surveys, which were excluded prior to 2016/17 are now included.

The methodology used to calculate compliance costs for surveys carried out by ONS, on behalf of ELMS, was also revised in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19. This has resulted in a substantial increase in the estimated compliance costs for some surveys in 2016/17, a smaller decrease for 2017/18 offsetting some of the 2016/17 increase, and a relatively small increase for 2018/19.

This discontinuity is noted when presenting the between year comparisons and examining the trend over time.

Reason for Discontinuity – Improved Coverage

Prior to the 2016/17 data collection exercise, a review was conducted of the guidance provided to Survey Control Liaison Officers (SCLOs) to provide greater clarity around the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of surveys. As a result of this review, a number of surveys that were not included in previous years have been included from 2016/17, specifically surveys carried out by Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) and some surveys which were omitted due to being considered part of the operational management of a public service. These are primarily participant evaluation surveys, customer surveys and surveys which have a secondary operational purpose.

Due to these coverage changes, from 2016/17 there is an increase in the total number of surveys, forms and compliance costs. For DE and DfE, there is also an impact from 2017/18. For DE, the impact from 2017/18 is a decrease which offsets some of the increase in 2016/17.

Assessment of Impact of 2016/17 coverage changes

In 2016/17, including those surveys and types of surveys that were not previously included potentially increased the number of surveys by 46, the number of forms by around 17,000 and the overall compliance burden by around £61,000.

The impact was most notable for DE where this potentially increased the number of surveys by 41, the number of forms by around 8,000 and the compliance burden by around £47,000. DfC was the next most affected department overall, where including these surveys potentially increased the number of surveys by one, the number of returns by 6,300 and the compliance burden by almost £12,000. There was also an impact in DfE, increasing the number of surveys by three. However, these were very small surveys with few returns and low levels of compliance burden.

While these figures gives an indication of the potential size of the discontinuity, it is difficult to say with certainty what surveys would have been included had the guidance not been reviewed and additional training provided.

Assessment of Impact of 2017/18 coverage changes

In 2017/18, surveys of teachers which had been incorrectly included in the 2016/17 data for DE were removed⁵⁰. These surveys were mostly ad-hoc training or event evaluation surveys, carried out by CCEA (Council for Curriculum, Examinations & Assessments), and accounted for 18 of the additional 41 DE surveys in 2016/17, around 1300 of the additional forms and £2,100 of the increase in compliance costs⁵¹.

For DfE, surveys carried out by the Construction Industry Training Board NI (CITB NI) and Insolvency Service, were included for the first time in 2017/18. CITB NI conducted 13 surveys of businesses in 2017/18 which accounted for 235 forms and compliance costs of £1,600; the Insolvency Service conducted a single survey which had 5 responses with a compliance cost of less than £1.

Reason for Discontinuity – Change in Methodology used by ONS

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) also carried out a major review of its methodology in 2016/17, with further improvements in 2017/18 and 2018/19. This resulted in a large increase in compliance costs for ONS surveys in 2016/17, a smaller decrease in 2017/18 which offset some of the earlier increase, and a relatively small increase in 2018/19. This change in methodology impacts the compliance costs but not the number of surveys or number of responses.

In 2016/17, ONS moved away from calculating stratified compliance costs based on business size; included an estimate of re-contact burden and reviewed median completion times in conjunction with survey managers.

In 2017/18, median completion times were reviewed for a further ten surveys and median re-contact times (which had been assumed to be equal to median completion times) were revised. This assumption, while allowable under the survey control methodology (see Section A2), inflated the compliance cost estimates for these surveys in 2016/17.

In 2018/19, ONS revisited the staff costs used in calculating compliance burden and moved away from a single occupation code applied to all surveys (ASHE Code 1) to a weighted calculation based on the breakdown of the profession of respondents obtained from survey compliance reviews⁵²

⁵⁰ Surveys of teachers are excluded from survey control as the majority of teachers are employees of the Education Authority (EA) or the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) which are both ALBs of the Department of Education and surveys of government employees are excluded from survey control (see Section A2).

⁵¹ This has been estimated based on the information returned for CCEA (and other DE) surveys in 2016/17.

⁵² Compliance reviews of ONS surveys are carried out every three or five years (depending on the frequency of the survey). A subsample is sent a separate survey, asking questions to more accurately calculate respondent burden. Questions are also added to the end of a new surveys or survey with substantial changes to allow ONS to assess the impact.

Assessment of Impact of 2016/17 ONS methodology changes

The change to the methodology used by ONS in 2016/17 resulted in a large increase in the compliance costs for surveys carried out by ONS on behalf of ELMS. While the total number of responses remained approximately constant, at around 12,000, for the 27 surveys carried out by ONS that were common to both 2015/16 and 2016/17, the compliance costs increased by 61% (from £213,100 to £342,600). Salary costs based on ASHE Code 1 (used for ONS surveys) increased by 1.5% between 2015/16 and 2016/17. It is not possible to say what proportion of the change is due to what part of the change in methodology.

Assessment of Impact of 2017/18 ONS methodology changes

The impact of the change in the methodology used by ONS in 2017/18 has been assessed by applying the revised median completion times, and revised median re-contact times to the 2016/17 data and re-calculating the compliance costs for those surveys where comparable information is available for both years. Applying the revised median re-contact times to the 2016/17 data, reduces the compliance costs by £81,900; this equates to 62% of the increase observed between 2015/16 and 2016/17 for these 22 surveys. Although this does not cover all surveys, it provides an indication of how much of the change between 2015/16 and 2016/17 may have been due to the use of the median completion time as a proxy for the median re-contact time. This over-estimation is only present in the 2016/17 data. The review of median completion times affected ten surveys in 2017/18. Applying the revised medians to the 2016/17 data would have reduced the compliance costs by £57,500 and reduced the compliance costs in 2017/18 by £59,300.

Assessment of Impact of 2018/19 ONS methodology changes

The change in the methodology used by ONS to estimate staff costs has resulted in an increase of £16,700 in the estimated compliance costs for 2018/19. This has been assessed by comparing compliance costs for ONS surveys calculated using the revised approach (a weighted calculation based on all five ASHE Codes) with compliance costs calculated using the previous approach (a single ASHE Code 1).

A4. Main uses of these statistics

These statistics are used by business and industry, by the Statistics Advisory Committee (SAC), by Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), by the media and by the general public. Under the Statistics of Trade and Employment (NI) Order 1988, a Northern Ireland Department is required to consult SAC before carrying out a statutory survey of businesses⁵³. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) also consults SAC before carrying out voluntary surveys of businesses. This publication is provided to SAC annually and provides an overview of the overall cost to businesses of completing NI Government Statistical Surveys⁵⁴.

⁵³ Under this Order, a business is defined as any person(s) carrying out an undertaking by way of trade or business, whether or not the trade or business is carried on for profit; and any other undertaking providing employment in respect of which Class 1 contributions are payable under the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975.

⁵⁴ The most recent feedback from SAC indicates that the report meets their needs both in terms of coverage and content. In particular, the feedback from SAC identified that the breakdown of survey costs for statutory and voluntary surveys was particularly useful.

Information in this publication has previously been used to investigate the cost to Northern Ireland businesses in completing government surveys; to respond to MLA questions; and to provide briefing for the Minister of Finance. The information has also been used by NISRA branches to identify their contribution to the overall burden on businesses, and to assess the impact of alternative methods of data collection on the compliance burden resulting from their surveys.

A5. Data quality

Data are derived from returns provided by other government departments and ALBs. Although the compliance cost is an estimate, the quality of the underlying data has improved greatly since the pre-2016/17 review, and is now considered to be reasonable. These improvements include:

- Improved coverage of non-NISRA branches within Departments; and improved coverage of ALBs.
- Better application of the criteria to determine whether surveys should be included or excluded from the return.
- Better estimation of median completion times, re-contacts and median re-contact times.
- More use of separate calculations for different subgroups where the compliance costs vary across different modes of data collection and/or type of business.
- Improved quality assurance, with the introduction of local quality assurance by SCLOs.

There have also been improvements in the coherence and comparability of the returned data, both within and between departments, due to improved and expanded SCLO guidance, annual training for SCLOs and an improved data collection workbook, including standardised options for e.g. data collection methods; automatic calculation of compliance costs; built-in guidance and basic validation checks. These changes will result in improved comparability over time.

The data collection process means that individual SCLOs are the key decision makers in terms of including or excluding surveys from the returns. While there is communication between SCLOs and NISRA Survey Control Unit to clarify any queries, there is the potential for individual interpretations of the inclusion and exclusion criteria to lead to small inconsistencies in individual returns.

The quality assurance checks carried out by Survey Control Unit focus on ensuring that the data returned are complete and internally consistent for the current year, and also consistent with returns from previous years. Where data are missing or there are large changes or inconsistencies, explanations are sought from the data supplier, and if necessary the data are re-supplied.

Changes in the methodology used by ONS - as well as the data quality improvements outlined above - have resulted in discontinuities in the time series, which are discussed in section A3 above.

A6. User Engagement

User engagement is on-going between the publication of one report and the production of the next. Following the pre-2016/17 review of the guidance and methodology a specific programme of engagement was carried out. This has resulted in some minor changes to the publication e.g. referencing the Statistics Advisory Committee and Statistics of Trade and Employment (NI) Order 1988.

We would welcome your feedback, on what you use the report for, any tables/ charts or commentary you find particularly helpful and any additional analysis you would like to see. Feedback can be provided by emailing garbhan.mckevitt@nisra.gov.uk.

Appendix B: Programme for Government (PfG) Outcomes

The draft Programme for Government (PfG) and [2018/19 Outcomes Delivery Plan](#)⁵⁵ comprises 12 strategic outcomes outlined by the Executive to represent the society we wish to have. These 12 outcomes are supported by 49 population indicators, which are accompanied by measures (derived from statistics) which monitor performance in relation to the outcomes. The outcomes are listed below:

1. We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy
2. We live and work sustainably - protecting the environment
3. We have a more equal society
4. We enjoy long, healthy, active lives
5. We are an innovative, creative society where people can fulfil their potential
6. We have more people working in better jobs
7. We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other
8. We care for others and we help those in need
9. We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity
10. We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest
11. We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure
12. We give our children and young people the best start in life

Detailed descriptions of each of these strategic outcomes can be found in the [2018/19 Outcomes Delivery Plan](#), including why each of the outcomes matters; what the issues are and how these will be addressed; the relevant indicators for that outcome; and the proposed actions (for 2018/19) along with the rationale and associated benefits. An [Outcomes Viewer](#)⁵⁶ is also available which visually displays performance against each of the outcomes.

Details of the 49 population indicators and the measures (derived from the statistics) that are used to monitor performance against these indicators are available in the [Measurement Annexes](#)⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/making-government-work/programme-government>

⁵⁶ <https://infogram.com/1p2xqrzq6gjlwgc0nxnjyd3n1rtr1k3nre7>

⁵⁷ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/programme-government/programme-government-population-indicators>

Appendix C: Departments and their abbreviations

Abbreviation	Department
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DE	Department of Education
DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for Enterprise
Dfi	Department for Infrastructure
DoF	Department of Finance
DoH	Department of Health
DoJ	Department of Justice
TEO	The Executive Office
PPS	Public Prosecution Service

Appendix D: Further Information

Downloadable data

The data used in this report can be downloaded from the 'NI Statistical Surveys - Assessment of Cost Burden to Business 2018-19' page, which can be accessed from <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/ni-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden> .

Information is provided for each individual survey, including the name, purpose of the survey, frequency, statutory/voluntary status, official statistics status, data collection methods (primary, secondary etc.), issued sample, achieved sample, compliance cost, department and ALB/branch. The survey contact and a link to the published statistics (or survey) is also included. This allows more detailed analysis to be carried out for individual surveys and/or additional information sought.

Other linked publications

Previous publications in this series, and the equivalent publications for the Burden on Households and Individuals can be accessed at: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/ni-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden>

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