

12 March 2020

Northern Ireland Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics: Goods and Services Results 2018

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland

Theme: Economy

Frequency: Annual

In December 2019 NISRA published its Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics (BESES) results relating to local businesses' sales in 2018 to markets outside Northern Ireland. The latest publication provides further disaggregation of these results into the value of goods and services sold.

Key points

- Total sales by companies in Northern Ireland (NI) were estimated to be worth £68.4 billion in 2018, an increase of 3.5% (£2.3 billion) over the year.
 - Total sales of goods were estimated to be worth £46.3 billion in 2018, an increase of 1.1% (£0.5 billion) over the year.
 - Sales of services represented 32.3% of total sales in 2018 and were estimated to be worth £22.1 billion. Sales of services increased by 8.7% over the year (£1.8 billion).
- External sales to markets outside of NI fell by £0.2 billion (1.1%) to £21.7 billion in 2018.
 - External sales of goods by NI companies were estimated to be worth £15.2 billion in 2018, 70.0% of all external sales. This represents a decrease of 6.6% over the year (£1.1 billion). This was driven by a continuing decline in the Food, Beverages and Tobacco sub sector.
 - External sales of services were estimated to be worth £6.5 billion or 30.0% of all external sales in 2018. This represents an increase of 14.7% (£0.8 billion) over the year.
- Exports (sales outside the UK) were estimated to be worth £11.2 billion in 2018, an increase of 8.1% (£0.8 billion) over the year.
 - Exports of goods were estimated to be worth £8.7 billion in 2018, an increase of 5.8% (£0.5 billion). Exports of goods represented 77.6% of all exports sales.
 - Exports of services represented 22.4% of total export sales in 2018 and were estimated to be worth £2.5 billion. Exports of services increased by 16.8% (£0.4 billion) over the year.

This Northern Ireland Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics: Goods and Services 2018 publication contains the following chapters:

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1 Introduction and Context

Experimental Status

The Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics (BESES) is an experimental annual measure of local businesses' sales to markets outside Northern Ireland (NI). The BESES was first published in 2015 (referring to survey years 2011 and 2012) to provide a more comprehensive measure of such sales than had previously been available. This publication includes estimates of the value of both goods and services sold by NI businesses in 2018, as well as their point of destination. The results provide a further disaggregation of 2018 BESES estimates first published in December 2019.

Ongoing development of the methodology (as outlined in the associated published [methodology paper](#) of March 2015) will be informed by user feedback. Any comments should be sent to economicstats@nisra.gov.uk.

NISRA has engaged extensively throughout the evolution of this output with expert users of NI economic statistics whose views have already helped to inform the current approach. Users include DfE, DoF, and DAERA economists, the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre and a number of NI economic commentators and methodologists from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). NISRA will continue to consult on any further methodological changes which may improve the quality and value of the statistics.

Further information can be found on page 19.

Background

The Northern Ireland Executive's Economic Strategy referred to the need to improve the measurement of Northern Ireland's exports beyond that of the manufacturing sector. NISRA subsequently published initial estimates of 'broad economy' sales and exports by industry sector in [March 2015](#).

This release provides a further breakdown of the revised estimates for 2017 and provisional estimates for 2018 first published in [December 2019](#) by splitting the sales into its goods and services elements.

The contents of this report will be of interest to government policy makers, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), the business community, economic commentators, academics and members of the general public with an interest in the NI economy.

The latest Department for the Economy [Economic Commentary](#) provides an overview of the state of the Northern Ireland economy, setting it in a global context.

Other sources

The International Trade in Services (ITIS) survey is a UK wide survey which collects information on overseas transactions of consultants and companies offering business services. Information collected from the survey is fed into the UK balance of payments and published at the UK level. The full bulletin can be accessed [here](#).

While directly comparable UK data for the BESES do not exist (the BESES covers goods and services produced in Northern Ireland), HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) are responsible for collecting the UK's international trade in goods data, which are published as two National Statistics series - the 'Overseas Trade Statistics (OTS) of the UK' and the 'UK Regional Trade Statistics (RTS)'. These UK regional statistics can be accessed [here](#).

The Scottish Government also publish export statistics from the Exports Statistics Scotland series (formerly called the Global Connections Survey). These statistics can be accessed [here](#).

The Government Statistical Service (GSS) has issued guidance on comparing official statistics produced by each nation of the UK. This guidance can be accessed [here](#).

NISRA's exports statistics are considered as "Partially Comparable at Level D" with the ONS's statistics on importers and exporters in GB ([most recent publication](#)).

Level D comparability is described as:

"Figures which are produced from separate sources of data. Methods and standards are broadly comparable, but users should be made aware of the limitations."

Interactive mapping tool

NISRA has developed an interactive trade in goods map to allow users to explore official trade in goods data by country and world region using data from HMRC's Regional Trade Statistics. The tool was developed by NISRA based on the existing [UN Comtrade](#) tool developed by [DIT \(Department for International Trade\)](#) and [BEIS \(Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy\)](#) and can be found below:

- [UK Regions Imports and Exports of Goods by Country and World Region](#)

Status of figures in current bulletin

The most recent figures relate to survey year 2018. These figures are provisional and are subject to revision in the next reporting period.

It is normal practice to revise the data from the previous year based on ongoing data validation and clarification of responses from individual businesses. In line with this, previously published provisional BESES estimates for 2017 have been revised throughout this publication.

Sales and exports values are reported in £ billion unless otherwise specified.

Percentages are reported to one decimal place.

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

All values are in **current** prices.

The Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics series is classified as experimental (see page 19).

Definitions used in this publication

Turnover (also referred to as **total sales**) is defined as total sales and work done. This is calculated by adding the value of sales of goods produced, goods purchased and resold without further processing, work done and industrial and non-industrial services rendered.

External Sales are comprised of those sales made outside Northern Ireland, that is, sales to Great Britain, Ireland, the Rest of the European Union and the Rest of the World.

Exports are defined as all sales outside the United Kingdom.

The **Rest of the EU (REU)** is composed of the following countries: Germany; France; Belgium; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Italy; Denmark; Portugal; Spain; Greece; Austria; Sweden; Finland, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Slovenia (Croatia joined the EU in July 2013 and is included in the 2014 reporting period).

The **Rest of the World (ROW)** refers to all other destinations outside the EU.

Goods refers to specific, tangible products.

Services refers to intangible products.

Broad Economy: The information needed to produce BESES is collected via the NI Annual Business Inquiry (NIABI). Like the NIABI, the BESES results are classified according to the Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (SIC) system. The SIC 2007 sections covered by the NIABI defines the term 'Broad Economy' and are as follows:

- A. Agriculture (support activities), forestry and fishing
- B. Mining and quarrying
- C. Manufacturing
- D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
- E. Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities
- F. Construction
- G. Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles (Distribution industries)
- H. Transport and storage
- I. Accommodation and food service activities
- J. Information and communication
- L. Real estate activities
- M. Professional, scientific and technical activities
- N. Administrative and support service activities
- P. Education (excludes local authority and central government bodies)
- Q. Human health and social work activities (excludes local authority and central government, and medical and dental practice activities (group 86.2))
- R. Arts, entertainment and recreation
- S. Other service activities

Users should refer to the document "[Background information - Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics](#)" for further detail on survey coverage and definitions.

Reference Tables

To support this release a set of reference tables with further sectoral and geographic breakdowns are available on the [NISRA website](#).

Further Information

Further information on the BESES can be accessed on the [NISRA website](#).

2 Summary and Commentary

2.1 Sales and Exports Performance

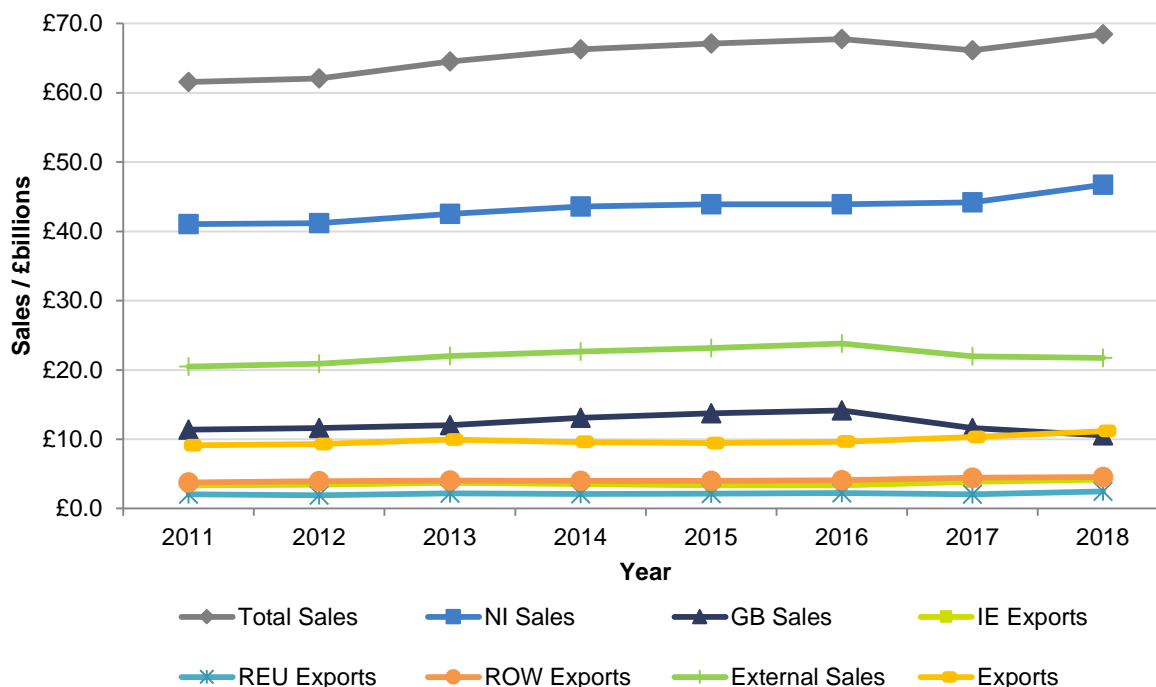
Total sales by companies in Northern Ireland (NI) were estimated to be worth £68.4 billion in 2018. This represents an increase of 3.5% (£2.3 billion) over the year and compares to a previous annual decrease of 2.3% in 2017.

In 2018, 31.7% of total sales were made to customers outside NI (external sales). This equated to £21.7 billion, representing a decrease of 1.1% (£0.2 billion) over the year. This figure has fallen below the previously recorded peak in 2016 (£23.8 billion), and this is the second consecutive year of falling external sales on survey record since recording began in 2011.

Sales outside the UK (exports) were estimated to be worth £11.2 billion in 2018. This represented an increase of 8.1% over the year, and follows an increase in the previous period (2016 – 2017) of 7.1%.

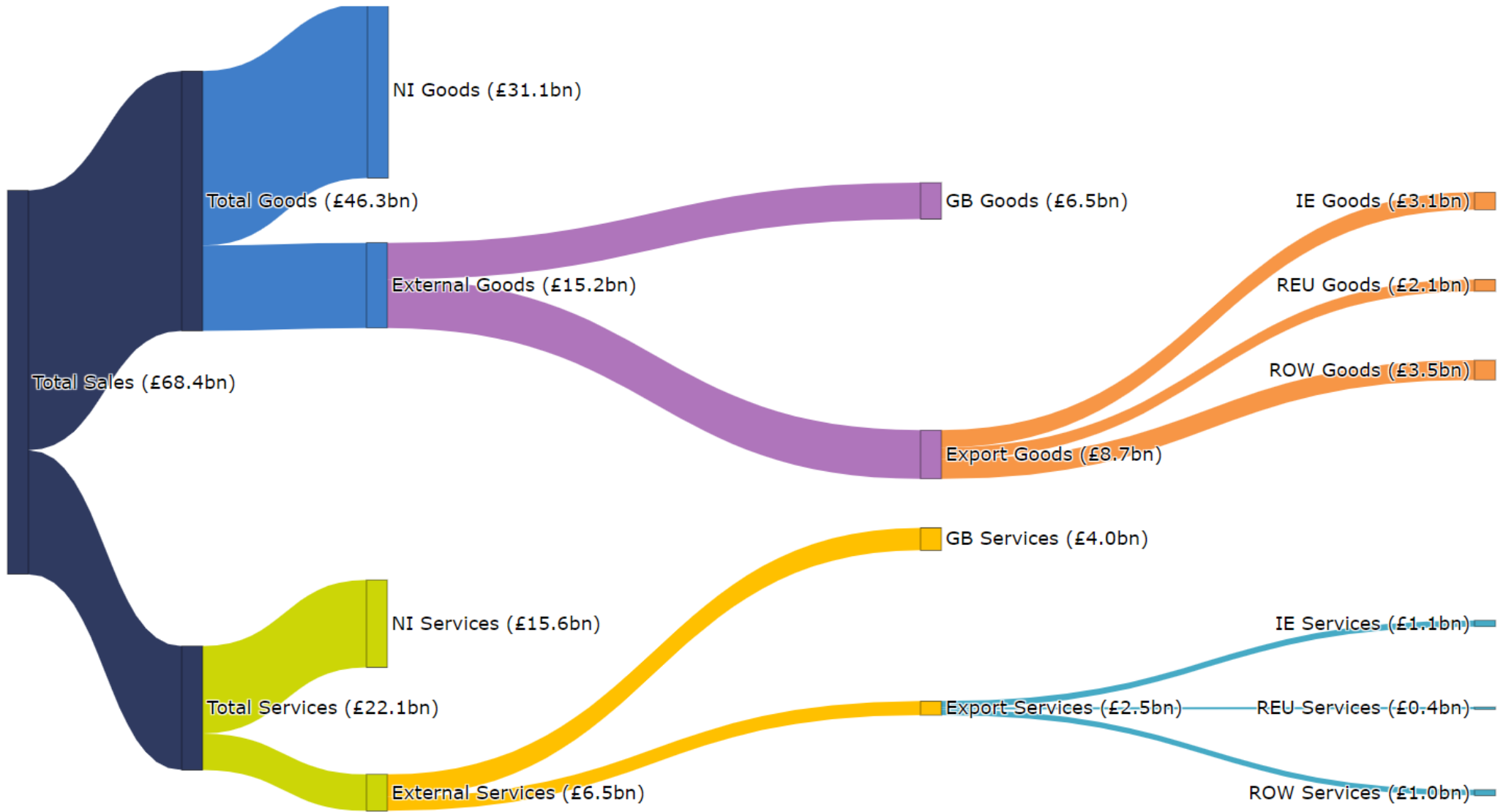
Figure 1 shows the values of total sales, and their broad destinations over the 8 year period (2011 to 2018). Over the period 2011 – 2018, sales to all broad destinations increased with the exception of sales to Great Britain (GB). Sales to GB have fallen for the second consecutive year and these falls continue to be driven by a substantial fall in turnover in the Manufacturing subsector of Food, Beverages and Tobacco.

Figure 1: Sales by broad destination, 2011 – 2018 (£ billions)



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Figure 2: Sales of Goods and Services by Broad Destination, 2018 (£ billions)



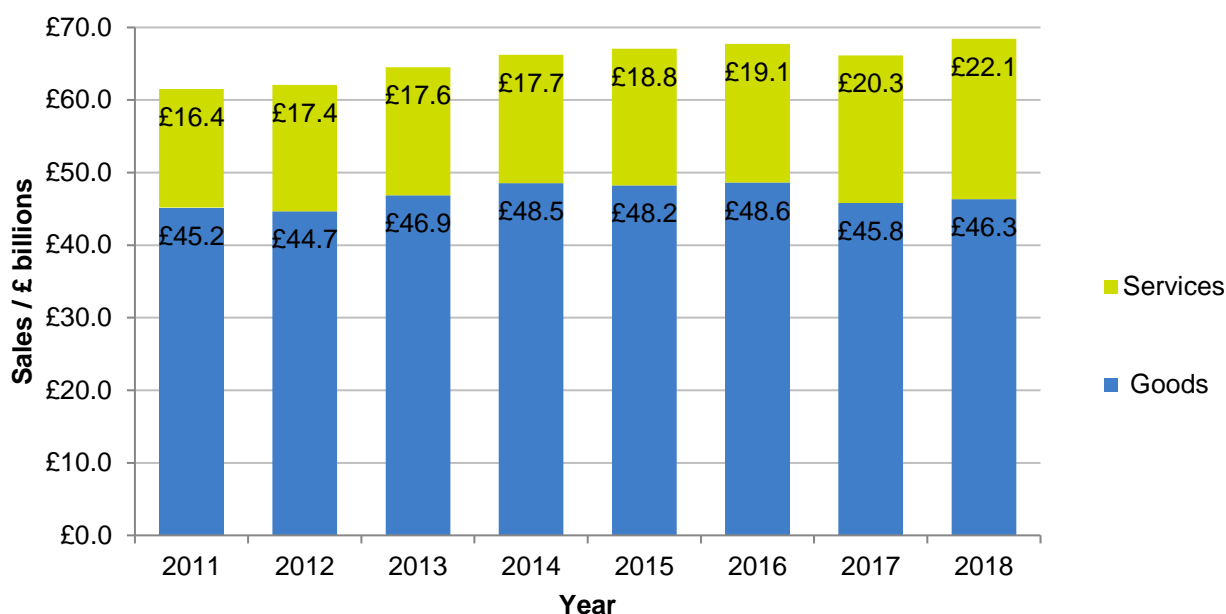
2.2 Sale of Goods and Services over Time

Total Sales

Total sales of goods were estimated to be worth £46.3 billion in 2018. Sales of goods increased by 1.1% over the year (£0.5 billion), compared to a decrease of 5.8% the previous year. Total sales of goods represented over two thirds (67.7%) of total sales in 2018.

Sales of services represented 32.3% of total sales in 2018 and were estimated to be worth £22.1 billion. Sales of services increased by 8.7% over the year (£1.8 billion), compared to an increase of 6.5% the previous year. Figures 3 – 5 show the values of total sales, external sales and export sales of goods and services over the 8 year period (2011 – 2018).

Figure 3: Total Sales of Goods and Services, 2011 – 2018 (£ billions)



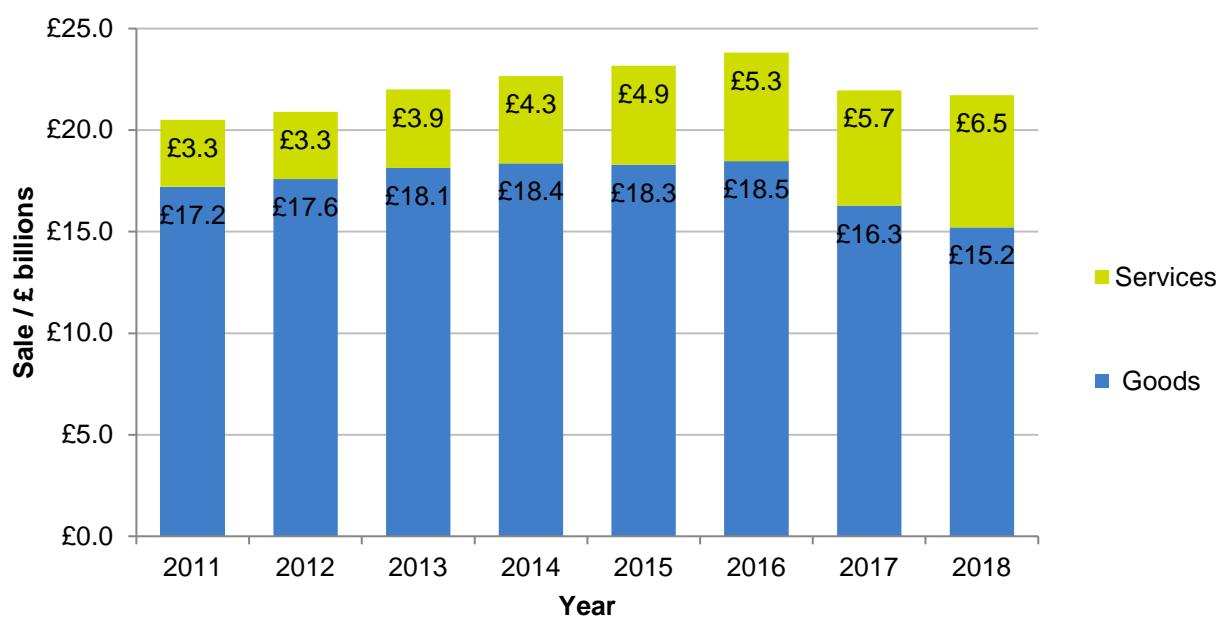
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External Sales

The total value of external sales of goods by Northern Ireland companies was estimated to be worth £15.2 billion in 2018. This represents a decrease of 6.6% over the year (£1.1 billion) compared to a decrease the previous year of 11.9%. External sales of goods represented 70.0% of all external sales in 2018.

External sales of services were estimated to be worth £6.5 billion in 2018. This represents an increase of 14.7% (£0.8 billion) over the year and compares to an increase of 6.3% in 2017. External sales of services represented 30.0% of all external sales over the year.

Figure 4: External Sales of Goods and Services, 2011 – 2018 (£ billions)



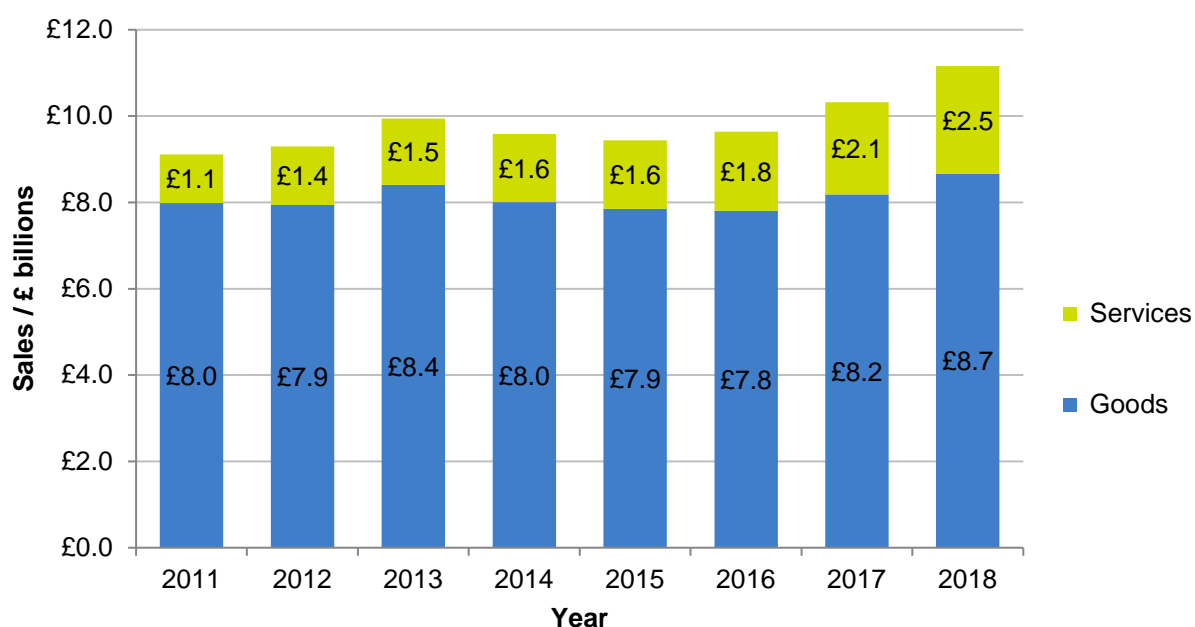
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Exports

Total exports of goods were estimated to be worth £8.7 billion in 2018. This represents an increase of 5.8% (£0.5 billion) over the year and compares to an increase of 4.8% in 2017. The export of goods represented 77.6% of all exports in 2018.

Exports of services represented 22.4% of total export sales in 2018 and were estimated to be worth £2.5 billion. Exports of services increased by 16.8% (£0.4 billion) over the year compared to an increase of 16.9% (£0.3 billion) the previous year.

Figure 5: Exports of Goods and Services, 2011 – 2018 (£ billions)



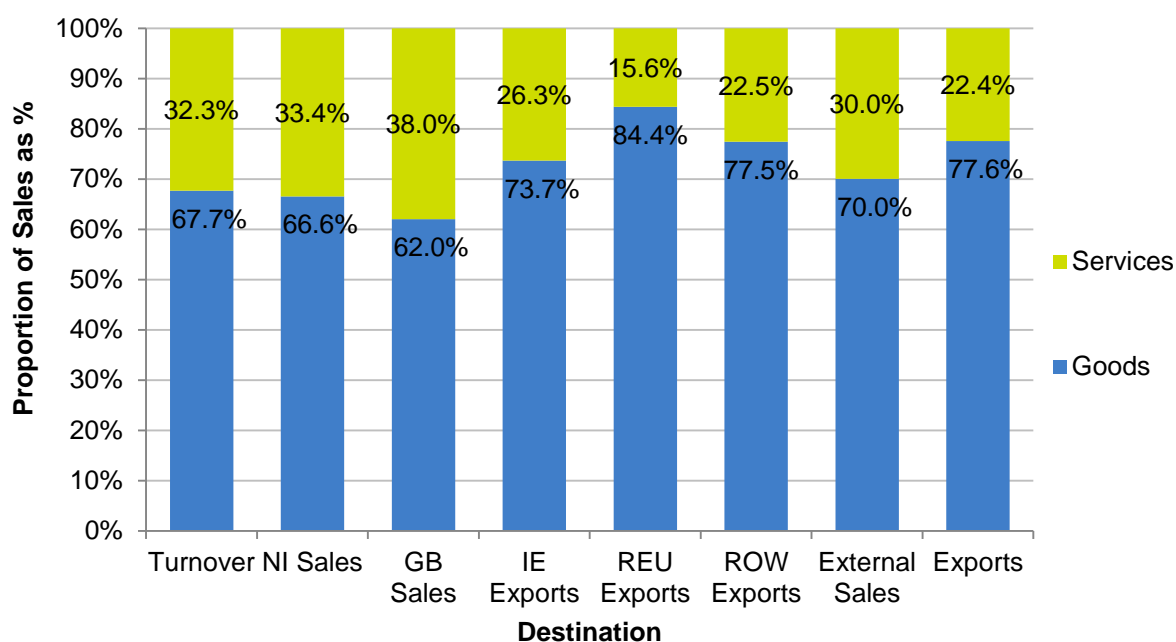
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2.3 Analysis by Destination

Figure 6 shows the proportion of broad destination sales accounted for by goods and services. Sales of goods account for the largest proportion of sales within each broad destination in 2018. Goods account for 66.6% of total Northern Ireland sales, compared to 62.0% of GB sales, 73.7% of Ireland sales, 84.4% of Rest of Europe sales and 77.5% of all Rest of World sales. Sales of goods account for 77.6% of all export sales and 70.0% of all external sales.

For sales of services it is apparent that the closer the market the greater the proportion of service sales occur, with services accounting for 33.4% of total sales in Northern Ireland, 38.0% of all Great Britain sales and 22.4% of all exports.

Figure 6: Goods and Services, as a proportion of sales, to each destination, 2018

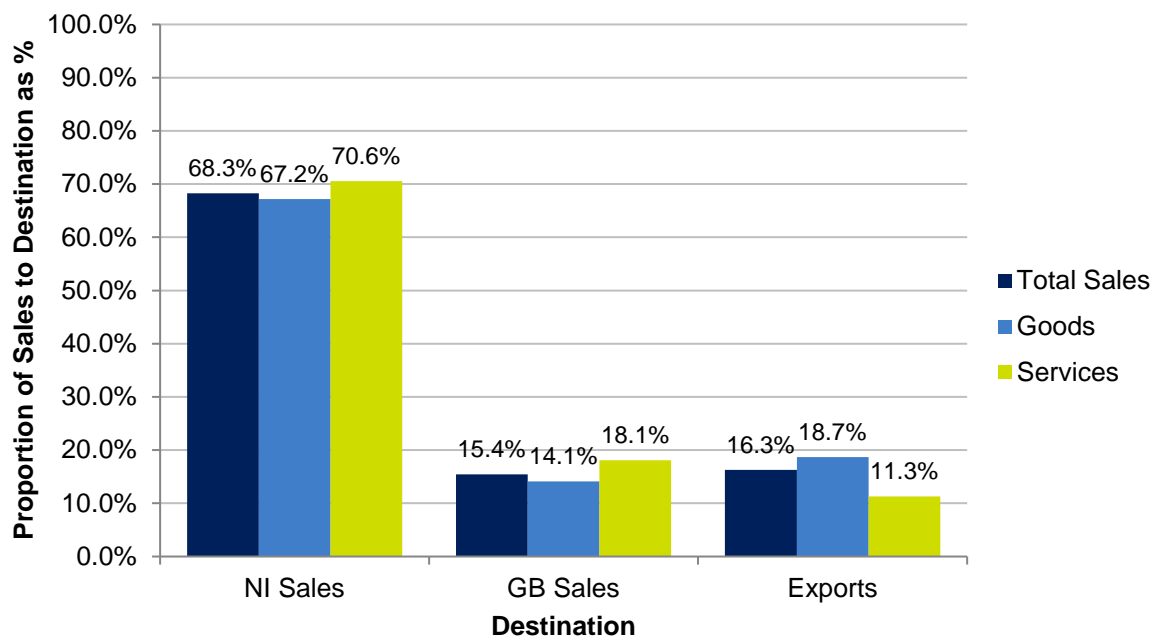


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Figure 7 shows the proportion of total sales, sales of goods and sales of services sold to Northern Ireland, Great Britain and those sold as exports. It is apparent that the highest proportion of service sales occurs internally, with 70.6% of all service sales made within Northern Ireland. The more distant the market, the smaller the proportion of sales of services becomes, with 18.1% of sales in GB and 11.3% of sales exported.

67.2% of all sales of goods occur within Northern Ireland. However the proportion increases with increasing market distance as the share of goods sold in Great Britain (14.1%) is less than those exported (18.7%).

Figure 7: Proportion of the sale of Goods and Services to each destination, 2018



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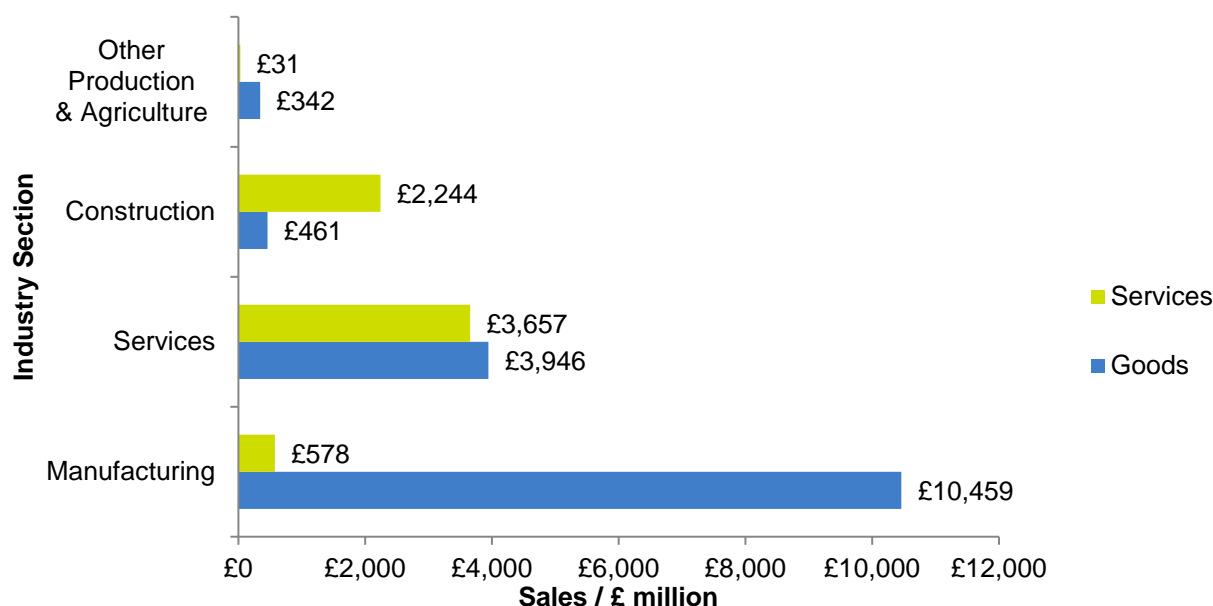
2.4 Analysis by Industry Section

External sales to markets outside Northern Ireland are comprised of sales to GB plus the value of exports combined. Figures 8 – 10 show the value, trends and proportion of external sales of goods and services over the year. In 2018, the largest proportion of external sales of goods was from the Manufacturing sector (Section C) which made up 68.8% (£10.5 billion) of all external sales of goods. External sales of goods by businesses in the Manufacturing sector decreased by £0.8 billion over the year.

The next largest sector for external sales of goods was the Services sector¹, with 25.9% (£3.9 billion) of external sales of goods. External sales of goods in this sector decreased by £0.3 billion (6.5%).

The Construction sector (Section F) saw the next largest proportion of external sales of goods (3.0% or £0.5 billion) while the Other Production & Agriculture² section represented just 2.2% (or £0.3 billion) of external sales of goods.

Figure 8: External sales of goods and services by industry section, 2018 (£ millions)



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The largest proportion of external sales of services was, not surprisingly, from the Services sector which made up 56.2% (£3.7 billion) of all external sales of services. Such activity saw an increase of £0.4 billion (13.0%) between 2017 and 2018.

The next largest sector for external sales of services was the Construction sector, with 34.5% (£2.2 billion) of external sales of services. The Construction sector also saw the second largest percentage increase in external sales of services over the year, increasing by £0.3 billion over the year (16.1%).

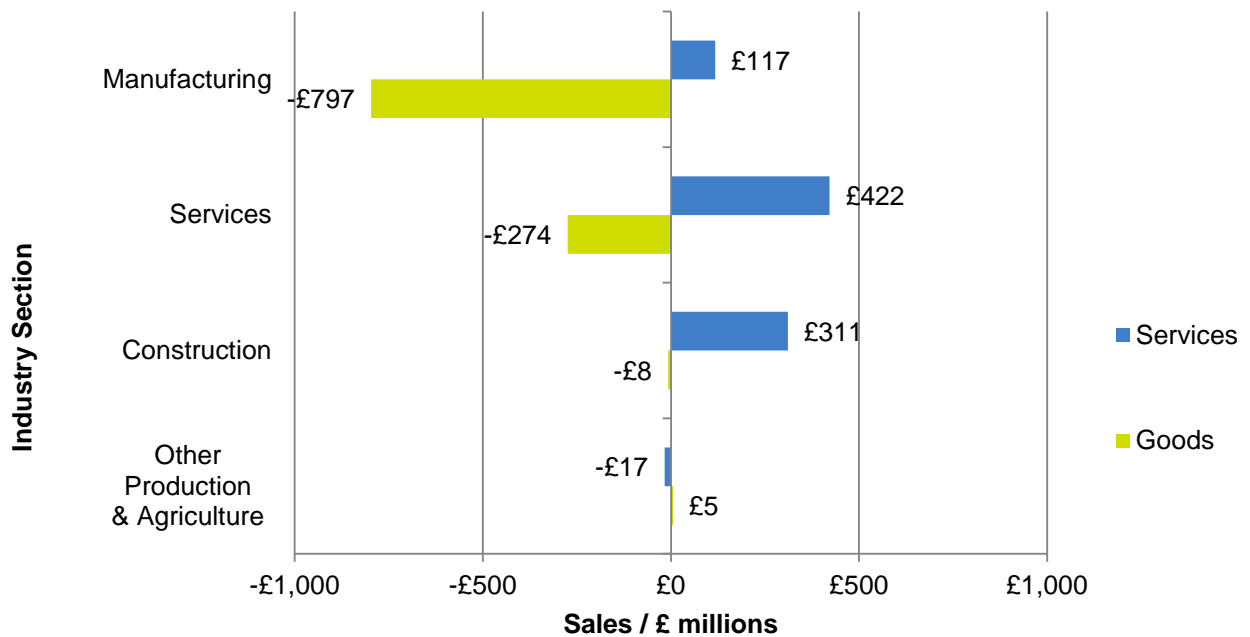
Manufacturing saw the next largest proportion of the external sale of services with 8.9% (£0.6 billion) of such sales in 2018. The Manufacturing sector increased in external sales of services over the year, by 25.5% (£0.1 billion). The Other Production & Agriculture section

¹ The Services section comprises sectors G – J, L – N and sectors P – S

² The Other Production & Agriculture section comprises sectors A, B, D & E

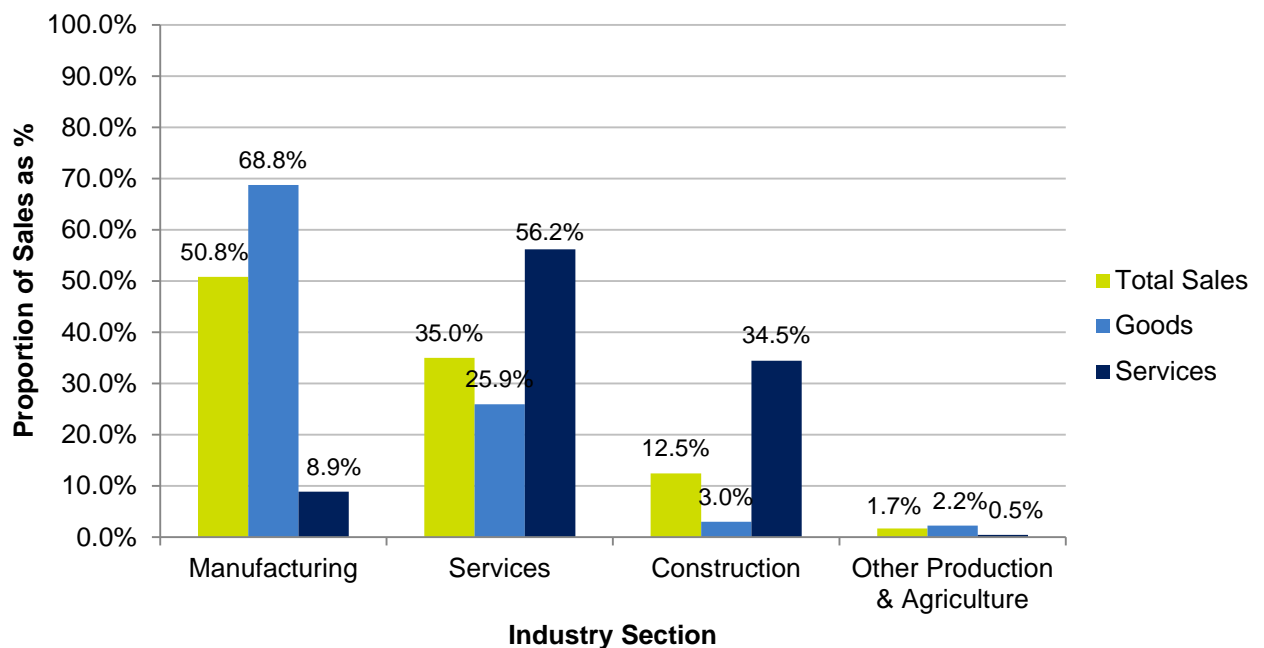
represented just 0.5% (£31 million) of external sales of services in 2018, and saw a decrease (£17 million or 35.1%) over the year. This is the only sector that showed an annual decrease in the sales of services, although this change is based on a relatively low level of sales.

Figure 9: Trends in external sales of goods and services: change by industry section, 2017 – 2018 (£ millions)



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Figure 10: Proportion of external sales of goods and services by industry section, 2018



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3 Results Tables: 2018

Table 1: Sales to Broad Destinations Split by Goods and Services: 2018 (£ millions)

Broad Destination	Total Sales	Total Sales of Goods	Total Sales of Services
Total Sales	£68,437	£46,315	£22,122
NI Sales	£46,721	£31,108	£15,613
GB Sales	£10,556	£6,549	£4,007
IE Exports	£4,169	£3,073	£1,097
REU Exports	£2,460	£2,076	£383
ROW Exports	£4,532	£3,510	£1,022
External Sales	£21,717	£15,208	£6,509
Exports	£11,160	£8,659	£2,502

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

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Table 2 – Total Goods and Services by Industry Section: 2018 (£ millions)

Standard Industrial Classification	Description	Total Sales	Total Sales of Goods	Total Sales of Services
A – S	Agriculture, fishing, production, construction, distribution and services	£68,437	£46,315	£22,122
A (part)	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	£173	£140	£34
B	Mining and quarrying	£425	£375	£51
C	Manufacturing	£15,469	£14,578	£891
D	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	£2,355	£1,903	£452
E	Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	£834	£417	£417
F	Construction	£7,655	£1,935	£5,720
G	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles	£25,415	£24,215	£1,201
H	Transport and storage	£3,203	£252	£2,951
I	Accommodation and food service activities	£1,891	£1,426	£465
J	Information and communication	£2,051	£168	£1,883
L	Real estate activities	£1,071	£69	£1,003
M	Professional, scientific and technical activities	£2,493	£251	£2,241
N	Administrative and support service activities	£2,727	£365	£2,362
P - S	Others	£2,675	£223	£2,452

** = Cells have been suppressed to protect confidentiality.
 Figures may not sum due to rounding.*

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Table 3 – Export of Goods and Services by Industry Section: 2018 (£ millions)

Standard Industrial Classification	Description	Total Exports	Export of Goods	Export of Services
A – S	Agriculture, fishing, production, construction, distribution and services	£11,160	£8,659	£2,502
A (part)	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	£38	*	*
B	Mining and quarrying	£41	£36	£4
C	Manufacturing	£6,456	£6,010	£445
D	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	*	*	*
E	Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	£130	£125	£5
F	Construction	£447	£72	£375
G	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles	£2,051	£2,022	£28
H	Transport and storage	£333	£12	£321
I	Accommodation and food service activities	*	*	*
J	Information and communication	£696	£29	£667
L	Real estate activities	£4	*	*
M	Professional, scientific and technical activities	£349	£49	£300
N	Administrative and support service activities	£546	£231	£316
P - S	Others	£34	£2	£32

* = Cells have been suppressed to protect confidentiality
 Figures may not sum due to rounding.

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Table 4 – External Sales of Goods and Services by Broad Industry Section: 2018 (£ millions)

Standard Industrial Classification	Description	Total External Sales	External Sale of Goods	External Sale of Services
A – S	Agriculture, fishing, production, construction, distribution and services	£21,717	£15,208	£6,509
C	Manufacturing	£11,037	£10,459	£578
F	Construction	£2,705	£461	£2,244
G – J, L – M, P – S	Services	£7,602	£3,946	£3,657
A, B, D & E	Other Production & Agriculture	£373	£342	£31

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

[Download in Excel](#)

4 Background Information

Experimental statistics

These statistics are experimental statistics which are still undergoing evaluation and are subject to revision.

It should be noted that plans are in place to have the statistics assessed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) in 2021 with a view to having them accredited as National Statistics.

Office for Statistics Regulation guidance

In August 2019 the OSR released [regulatory guidance](#) to inform the development of experimental statistics – official statistics in development.

The [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) encourages innovation and improvement and highlights the need for National Statistics and other official statistics to remain relevant for use, to provide a dynamic public service. Practices that are considered particularly relevant to producing experimental statistics are highlighted under the below themes.

- Sound methods;
- Relevance to users; and
- Innovation and improvement

We have highlighted below how the development of the BESES is aligned to these principles.

Sound methods

The statistics, data and metadata are compiled using recognised standards, classifications and definitions aligned to standard practice for producing business surveys.

They are harmonised to be consistent and coherent with related statistics and data where possible. For example the figures are collected via the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) which is a National Statistic. The turnover values reported in the BESES publications are consistent with the ABI as are the statistical methods used to produce the figures.

The guidance notes that users should be provided with reasons for deviations from existing figures or methods and so we have stated within this publication why there are differences between our trade figures and other figures published by HMRC. Essentially, differences arise because the BESES and HMRC Regional Trade Statistics (RTS) use different methodologies and are not directly comparable. HMRC estimates are based on customs declarations and cover the export of goods only. HMRC is also unable to allocate a significant amount of UK Trade to the countries and regions of the UK. BESES is a survey based measure and covers both goods and services.

Relevance to users

Statistics producers should maintain and refresh their understanding of the use and potential use of the statistics and data. They should consider the ways in which the statistics might be used and the nature of the decisions that are or could be informed by them.

Over the last three years we have worked closely with known users to ensure that the statistics are meeting their needs. The Department for Economy (DfE) along with other NI Departments and Departments in GB have been using the outputs from the BESES to inform the debate around EU Exit (see below).

Stakeholders

NISRA is making these experimental statistics available so that users and stakeholders can be involved in their development. NISRA has engaged extensively throughout the project with expert users of NI economic statistics whose views have helped shape the development of the BESES. Users include:

- Department for the Economy (DfE);
- Department of Finance (DoF);
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA);
- The Executive Office (TEO);
- NISRA Economic Accounts;
- InterTradeIreland (ITI);
- Economic and Social Research institute (ESRI);
- Office for National Statistics (ONS);
- HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC);
- Department for Exiting the EU (DExEU);
- HM Treasury (HMT);
- The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS);
- Cabinet Office;
- Home Office;
- Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA);
- Food Standards Agency (FSA);
- UK Trade Policy Observatory (UKTPO);
- The Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC);
- The Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence (ESCOE) in the University of Strathclyde; and
- NI economic commentators and private sector consultants.

Uses

BESES data has formed the input to numerous trade/EU Exit related reports and papers over recent years, a sample is highlighted below.

- HM Government: Northern Ireland and Ireland Position Paper (August 2017);
- HM Government: Additional Data Paper: Northern Ireland Trade Data and Statistics (August 2017);
- ESRI: Export Participation and Performance of Firms on the Island of Ireland (September 2018);
- DFE: The Annual Purchases Survey in Northern Ireland - Modelling the Origin of Products (November 2018);
- DFE: Northern Ireland International Trade in Services - New Perspectives (November 2018);
- DFE: Northern Ireland Retail Study: Value, Volume and Proportion of Goods Sourced from GB or transported via GB from other parts of the world (March 2019);
- ESRI: Shock absorption capacity of firms in Ireland and Northern Ireland;
- DFE: Irish land border - existing and potential customs facilitations in a no-deal scenario (June 2019);
- DfE: Northern Ireland Trade Data - an update (July 2019);
- DExEU: European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill Impact Assessment (October 2019);
- NISRA: EU Exit trade analysis; and
- NISRA: 2015 & 2016 Supply-Use Tables (December 2019).

Methodological improvements

The guidance states that statistics producers should keep up to date with developments that can improve statistics and data. They should also seek to collaborate with other producers, including within the UK and internationally, when developing their statistics, overcoming practical obstacles, and sharing best practice.

Over the three last years the BESES Team has held membership of a number of EU Exit related analytical groups that have had a focus on NI trade.

- DExEU Economic & Trade data through EU Exit;
- DExEU NI Trade data group;
- DExEU Alternative Arrangements Working Group;
- NI Trade Analysis Working Group (Cross-Whitehall);
- Department for International Trade (DIT) analysts roundtable;
- ONS Subnational Imports of Services Steering Group;
- ONS BREXIT Intelligence Group; and
- ONS Trade Survey of Hauliers Working Group.

Membership of these groups has allowed us to gain feedback from users as well as maintain an understanding of what our data is being used for whilst at the same time ensuring users are fully aware of the strengths and limitations of our data.

In addition, NISRA are currently engaged in a project with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Ireland whereby we are investigating reasons and possible solutions to trade asymmetries arising from the trade figures reported by NISRA and CSO.

We are also working with HMRC to support a range of internal HMRC projects aimed at improving the understanding of NI-GB trade to inform planning as part of the NI Protocol withdrawal

preparations. This is being facilitated through sharing of BESES data with HMRC and participating on working groups.

NISRA is keen to engage and receive informed feedback from users which will improve the quality and value of the statistics. If you wish to join our BESES mailing list to keep informed of developments or provide any feedback on these statistics please email economicstats@nisra.gov.uk.

Improved data presentation

The guidance also states that Producers should commit to improve data presentation, enhance insight, and better meet the needs of different types of users and potential users in the dissemination of their statistics and data.

A significant improvement with this release is the revised associated webpage which is published in HTML format facilitating more user friendly navigation of the results.

Furthermore, we have made even more detailed tables available to a number other Government Departments where legislation allows us to do so. This data has been used to inform EU Exit discussions over recent years.

In due course NISRA plans to have these statistics assessed against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics which is required to gain National Statistics status.

For Further Information

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