

19 June 2019

Northern Ireland Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics: Purchases and Imports Results 2017

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland

Theme: Economy

Frequency: Annual

NISRA published its Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics (BESES) results relating to local businesses' sales in 2017 to markets outside Northern Ireland (NI) in December 2018. This release provides information on the value of goods and services purchased by NI businesses in 2017. These releases remain designated as 'experimental' to reflect the fact that they are under development.

Key points

- Total purchases by companies in Northern Ireland (NI) were estimated to be worth £44.3 billion in 2017, an increase of 3.2% (£1.4 billion) over the year.
- Total purchases of goods were estimated to be worth £34.0 billion in 2017, a decrease of 0.2% (£0.1 billion) over the year.
- Total purchases of services represented 23.4% of total purchases in 2017 and were estimated to be worth £10.4 billion. Purchases of services increased by 16.3% over the year (£1.5 billion).
- Imports were estimated to be worth £7.1 billion in 2017, an increase of 8.3% (£0.5 billion) over the year.
- Imports of goods were estimated to be worth £6.2 billion in 2017, an increase of 6.2% (£0.4 billion). Imports of goods represented 87.7% of all imports.
- Imports of services represented 12.3% of total imports in 2017 and were estimated to be worth £0.9 billion. Imports of services increased by 26.3% (£0.2 billion) over the year.
- Imports from Ireland (IE) were estimated to be worth £2.6 billion in 2017, an increase of 14.6% (£0.3 billion) over the year.
- Imports from Rest of EU (REU) were estimated to be worth £2.2 billion in 2017, an increase of 5.2% (£0.1 billion) over the year.
- Imports from Rest of World (ROW) were estimated to be worth £2.3 billion in 2017, an increase of 5.0% (£0.1 billion) over the year.
- Purchases from Great Britain (GB) were estimated to be worth £13.3 billion in 2017, an increase of 6.1% (£0.8 billion) over the year. Purchases of goods represented 79.3% (£10.5 billion) of these purchases, with services representing 20.7% (£2.8 billion) of GB purchases.

2 Results Tables: 2017

Table 1: Purchases and Imports from Trade Partners Split by Goods and Services: 2017 (£ millions)

Trade Partner	Total Purchases	Total Purchases of Goods	Total Purchases of Services
Total Purchases	£44,302	£33,949	£10,353
NI Purchases	£23,887	£17,167	£6,720
GB Purchases	£13,302	£10,544	£2,758
IE Imports	£2,555	£2,259	£296
REU Imports	£2,211	£1,964	£246
ROW Imports	£2,347	£2,015	£333
Total Imports	£7,113	£6,238	£875

**Figures may not sum due to rounding.*

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Points to note:

The questionnaire used to collect this data captures the value of a transaction and the location (country) of the seller. In interpreting the results readers should be aware that BESES captures no information relating to:

- the business making the sale;
- the product or service purchased;
- whether any goods purchased are final products or are intermediate goods to be used in a further production process;
- transport/shipping routes; and
- the country of origin of any goods purchased. For example, a business might report that they have purchased goods from a business in GB and this is recorded as a GB purchase. However we do not know where the product was actually produced. Even if the GB seller originally bought the good from outside of the UK (IE, REU or ROW) BESES still captures this as a GB purchase. Therefore, goods purchased from GB could have been produced outside of the UK and so supply of certain goods purchased from GB could be impacted post-BREXIT – research is currently underway to gain a better understanding of the situation.

For example:

- NI business A purchases £50m of goods from company B in Germany - BESES data will show £50m purchases from REU (no matter the shipping route).
- NI business A purchases £100m of goods from company C in England who originally bought the goods from company B in Germany for £50m – BESES data will show £100m

purchases from GB (the £100m from transaction C-A is the only money flowing from the NI economy).

Reference Tables

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

3 Further Information

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 release provides information on the value of goods and services purchased by NI businesses in 2017.

Background Notes

Coverage: Following a decision in 2013 by the Office for National Statistics to discontinue the publication of figures covering Insurance & Re-insurance industries (within Sector K) due to ongoing volatility of the estimates, the NIABI and BESES publications also exclude estimates for this sector.

The other main areas that are excluded are: Public Administration and Defence (section O) while Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (section A) excludes farming (groups 01.1, 01.2, 01.3, 01.4 and 01.5). Local authority and central Government bodies in Education (section P) and Human Health and Social Work Activities (section Q) have also been excluded from this publication, as has 86.2 (Medical and Dental Practice Activities) within section Q.

Further information regarding survey methodology, coverage and definitions can be found on the [NISRA website](#).

Given the limitations in coverage, the BESES does not provide a complete picture of trade. However a more complete description of the sales and purchases of goods and services can be found in the [Supply and Use Tables \(SUTs\) for NI](#) for 2015.

Other Sources: While directly comparable UK data for the BESES do not exist (the BESES covers goods and services produced in NI), 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 at: <https://www.uktradeinfo.com/Statistics/RTS/Pages/default.aspx>.

HMRC's primary source data is collected from the EU-wide Intrastat survey and from Customs import and export entries, both administered by HMRC. The BESES is an experimental measure, based on an annual survey of local businesses' trade with markets outside Northern Ireland (NI). BESES data is gathered through the Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry and has been running since 2011.

A joint NISRA/HMRC statement referencing the differences between the methodologies and ongoing collaborative working is available on the [NISRA website](#).

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](#)

Further Information

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

Further analysis of Trade data (from various sources) can be found on the NISRA [EU-Exit web page](#).