

(Annual Business Inquiry)  
**NI Non-Financial Business Economy 2020  
Provisional Reporting Unit Results**

Date: 23 November 2021

Theme: Business and energy

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland

Frequency: Annual

## Key Points

- In 2020, the income generated by non-financial businesses in Northern Ireland (NI), less the cost of goods and services used to create this income, was estimated to be £25.7 billion. This amount represents the approximate Gross Value Added (aGVA) at basic prices of the NI non-financial business economy, excluding farming and financial services.
- aGVA at Basic prices represents the income generated by businesses, out of which is paid wages and salaries, the cost of capital investment and financial charges before arriving at a figure for profit.

## Change between 2019-20

- The NI non-financial business economy<sup>1</sup>, as measured by the Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry (NIABI), recorded an increase of £353 million (1.4%) in aGVA from 2019 to 2020.
- The key driver of aGVA growth was the NI Production sector (industry Sections B-E) which increased by £655 million (10.4%) between 2019 and 2020. The majority of aGVA growth in this sector is attributable to the Energy Generation and Supply section (Section D) which increased by £403 million (61.4%).
- Information and Communication services within the non-financial services sector (Section J) recorded aGVA growth of £291 million (24.1%). There was a decrease in the Construction sector (Section F) of £494 million (16.1%).
- The non-financial services sector (Sections H-S) showed an increase in aGVA of £147 million (1.5%) from £9.6 billion to £9.8 billion. Growth in section J, L, M and P-S was partially offset by a decline in Sections H, I and N.
- Turnover (i.e. the value of total sales and work done) in the NI non-financial business economy as a whole decreased by £4.3 billion (6.0%) over the year to £67.1 billion and purchases of goods, materials, energy, water and services decreased by £3.3 billion (7.0%) to £43.4 billion.

<sup>1</sup> Details of the industries covered by the NIABI are provided in section (iv) of the background notes

- A combination of falling turnover and falling purchases underlay the aGVA growth of 1.4% due to businesses recording a larger percentage decrease in their year on year purchases compared to their percentage decrease in year on year turnover. aGVA can be crudely considered to be total sales minus total purchases hence, in simplistic terms, even though business income is less than the previous year, the expenditure of businesses experienced a greater decrease and thus by proxy the businesses are adding more to the economy.

## **NATIONAL STATISTICS STATUS**

National Statistics status mean that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.



These statistics were designated as National Statistics in 2012 following a full [assessment](#) against the [Code of Practice](#).

Since the assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Provided information on the use of the ABI and comparability with other similar statistics
- Enhanced quality by providing information to users on quality assurance, methodology and explanations of statistical terms.
- Redesigned the Annual Business Inquiry report, improving explanatory material including charts, tables and data visualisations.

### **Provisional estimates**

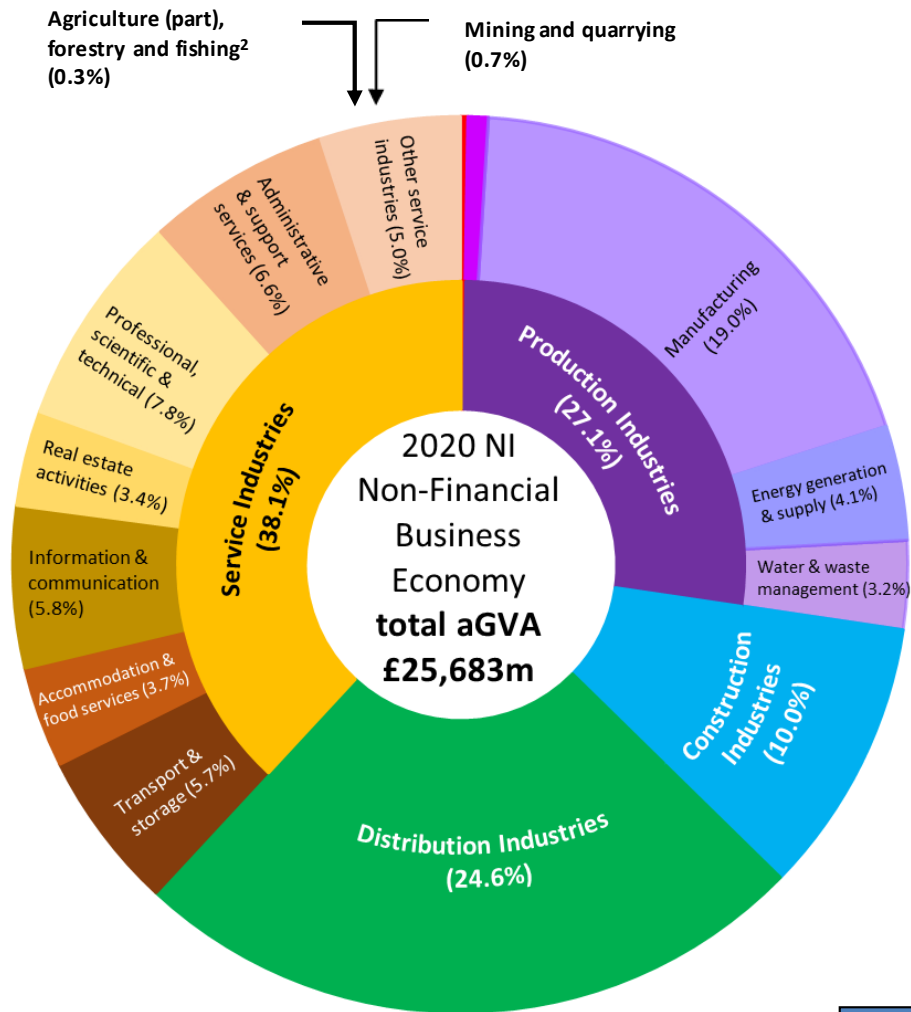
Figures published in the ABI are provisional and subject to revision, an inevitable consequence of the trade-off between timeliness and accuracy, though revisions are typically small.

The most common reason for revisions is late responses to the survey after the survey has closed for the current reporting period. These late response will be included in the following publication whereby estimates will be replaced by actual data.

Over time, as more information becomes available, estimates can be revised to improve quality and accuracy, which will provide a better picture of the parameter being measured. Users require good quality data that are timely and can be accessed as close to the event that the data measures as possible. A policy of accepting revisions enables statisticians to provide users with data close to the event, but also improve the accuracy of that data as other information becomes available. Revisions are therefore a standard practice when producing official statistics.

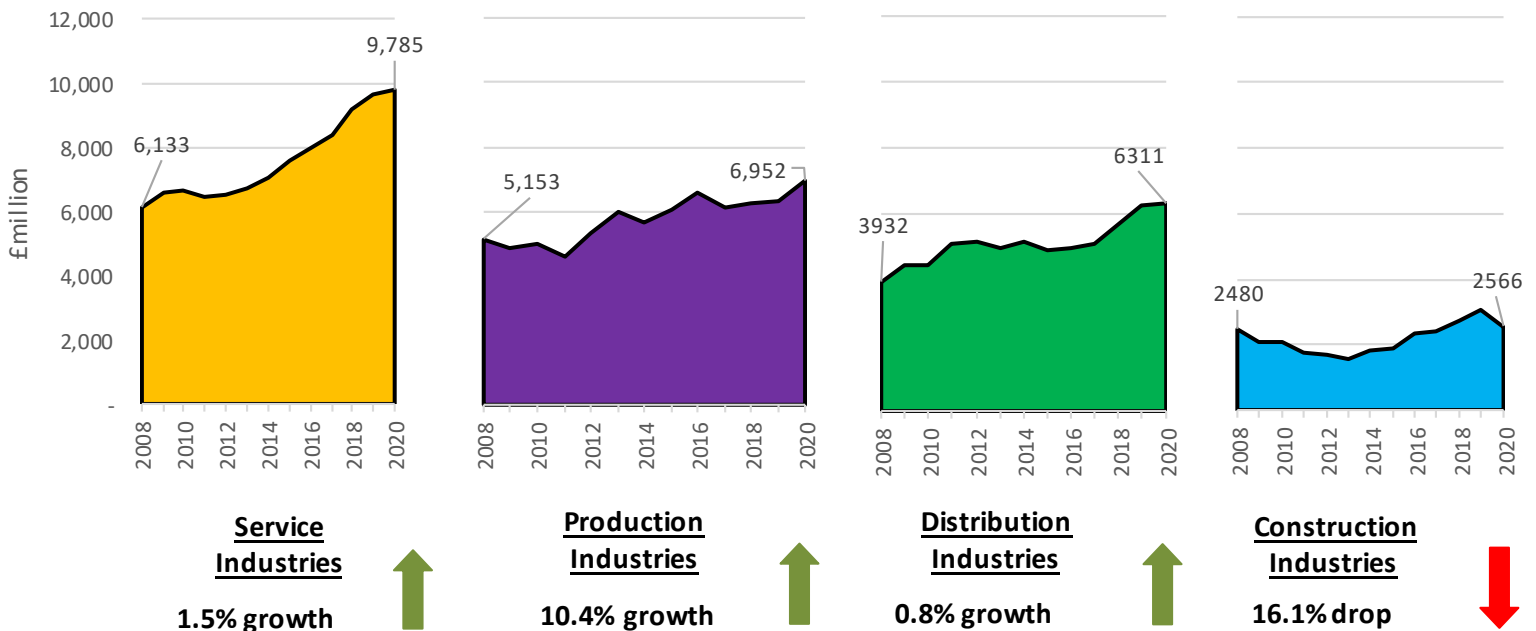
The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has impacted on the data collection and the validation of business data being collected throughout the ABI 2020 survey cycle. However, despite the difficult year experienced by businesses we still achieved a response rate of 58%. As a result estimates for 2020 contain a larger amount of imputations (estimates) than previous years and may be subject to higher revisions than normal next year. That said, we are confident in the results as our imputation methods are robust and the coefficient of variance for the final figures are 1% for Turnover, aGVA and Purchases indicating a strong level of precision for the estimate.

**Figure 1: aGVA 2020 and trends by Broad Industry 2008-2020 for NI Non-Financial Business Economy (NFBE)**



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**Growth by sector 2019-2020**



<sup>2</sup> Agriculture (part) covers only hunting, forestry, fishing and the support activities to agriculture and excludes crop and animal production.

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# 1 Introduction and Context

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This release contains 2020 provisional and 2019 revised reporting unit<sup>3</sup> results from the Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry (NIABI). The NIABI is a key resource for measuring the size, performance and structure of the Northern Ireland non-financial business economy. It is a survey of businesses covering the Production, Construction, Distribution and Service industries plus an element of Agriculture and covers roughly two thirds of the total NI economy. Public sector bodies are excluded from the survey. Further information on survey coverage is contained in the background notes.

## **Key Variables**

The published estimates include the total value of sales and work completed by businesses (turnover); the value of the purchase of goods, materials and services and approximate Gross Value Added (aGVA) at basic prices. These estimates are further disaggregated at industry level, providing users with an insight into the size and evolution of the overall non-financial business economy from 2008 to 2020 as well as a measure of the contribution made by different industry sectors. The financial estimates are collected and presented as monetary values. All financial data are reported at current prices (effect of price changes included).

## **Interpretation**

The non-financial business economy is constantly changing, as businesses merge, are taken over, or change the main focus of their activity. These changes can result in the industry classification of a business changing over time. In industries where movements are common, or where large businesses are involved, these changes can themselves cause large changes in the NIABI estimates. This should be taken into consideration when changes over time are being considered.

## **Quality Indicators**

When interpreting NIABI results, users are advised to refer to the coefficient of variation quality indicators provided with the estimates in the tables, details of which are provided in the accompanying data tables. These indicate that a small number of results have quite large margins of statistical error associated with them. Users should exercise caution when interpreting the annual changes associated with such results. Users should also be aware that methodological improvements governing the treatment of business closures were introduced for the 2011 report. These improvements have been implemented for 2010 to 2020 data. Consequently, although 2008 and 2009 figures are included in this report, users should exercise caution when making comparisons.

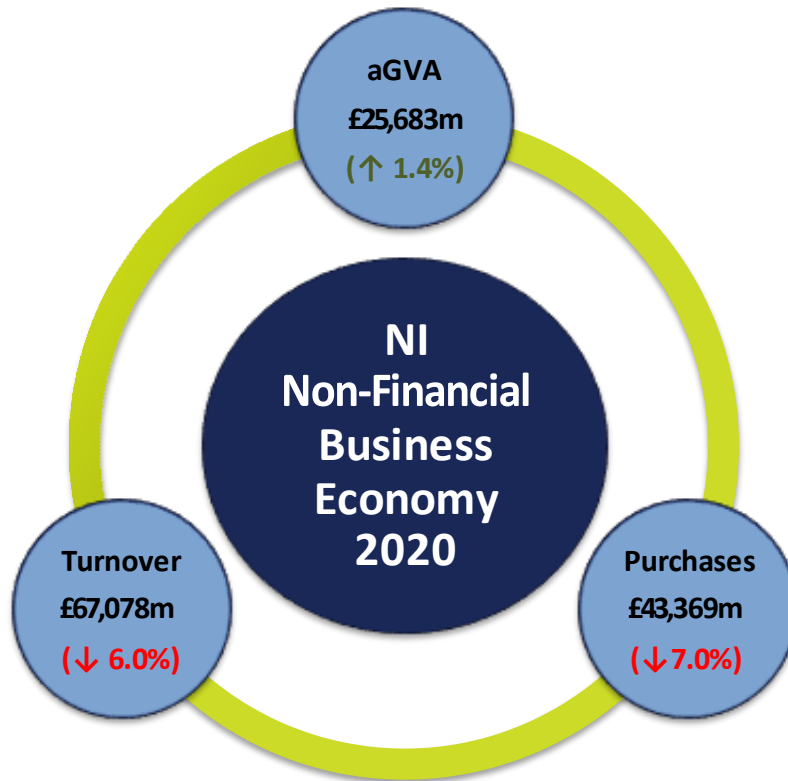
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<sup>3</sup> See section (vi) of background notes for definitions and further information.

## 2 Summary and Commentary

The diagrams below show how aGVA is calculated and provides a high level overview of the top line results with more detailed information presented in the subsequent sections.

Figure 2: aGVA, Purchases and Turnover 2020 (NI NFBE)



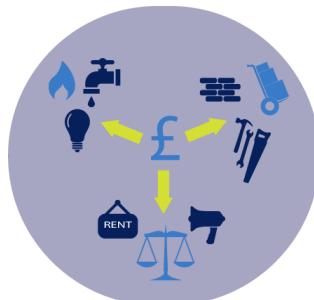
Income



Income includes turnover, insurance claims, work in progress, changes in stock and subsidies

minus

Expenditure



Expenditure includes purchases of goods, materials, energy, water and services and total taxes and levies paid

equals

aGVA



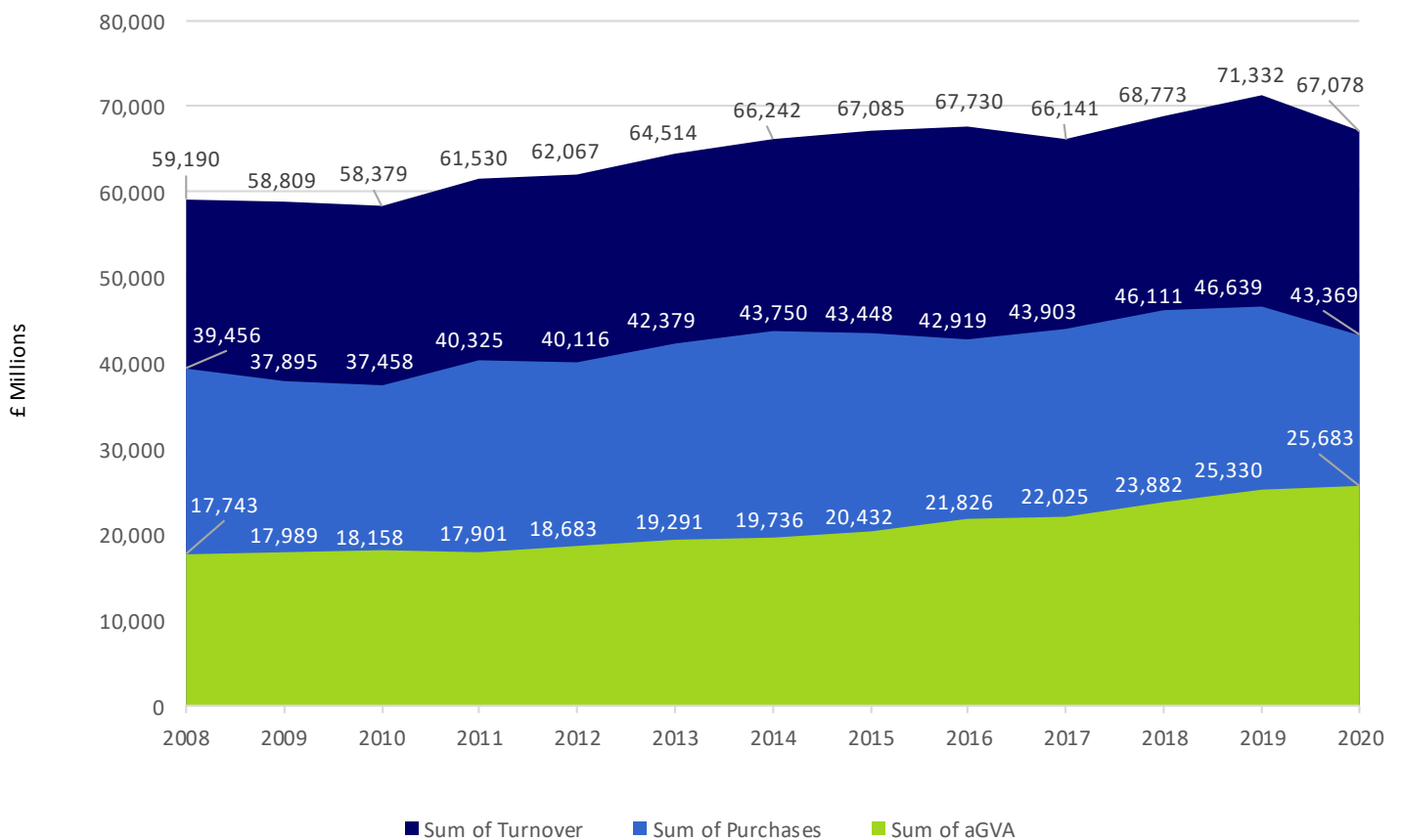
aGVA is a measure of the income generated by businesses less their expenditure

## Turnover, purchases and approximate Gross Value Added (aGVA)

The provisional results of the 2020 NIABI show that turnover in the NI non-financial business economy decreased by 6.0% to £67.1 billion in 2020. The value of purchases of goods, materials, energy, water and services fell by 7.0%, from £46.6 billion in 2019 to £43.4 billion 2020.

The provisional results of the 2020 NIABI and revised results from the 2019 NIABI show that the turnover generated by businesses in Northern Ireland (NI), less the cost of goods and services used to create this income, was estimated to be £25.7 billion in 2020. This is an increase of 1.4% from 2019 and represents the aGVA of the NI non-financial business economy (see section iv for full details of industry coverage).

**Figure 3: Trends in Turnover, Purchases and aGVA, 2008 – 2020 (NI NFBE)**



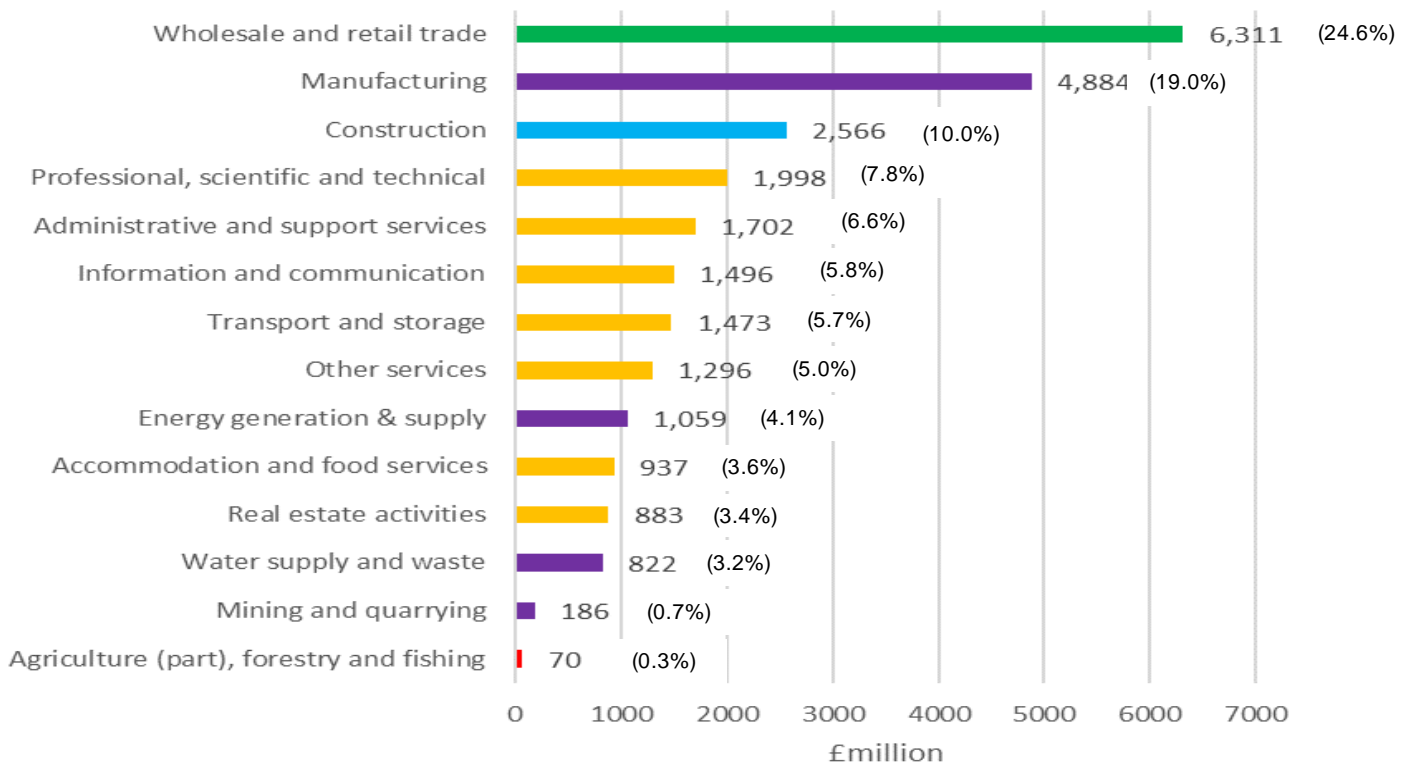
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It should be noted that as part of the validation of results received from businesses we would query any large increases or decreases with the respondent. In many cases, the rationale for the decrease in turnover and purchases reported by businesses was a result of the impact of COVID-19 on business operations.

## aGVA by Industrial Section

Looking at industrial section rather than broad industrial sector, Figure 4 below shows the aGVA for each Industrial Section in 2020. This should be considered in conjunction with Figure 5, which shows how the aGVA for each Industrial Section has changed between 2019 and 2020.

**Figure 4: aGVA by Industrial Section, 2020 (NI NFBE)**



Note – Percentages on graph indicate proportion of total aGVA accounted for by each section.



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It can be seen from Figure 4 that in terms of 2020 aGVA, Wholesale and retail trade is notably the largest industrial section, accounting for 24.6% (£6.3 billion) of total aGVA in the NI non-financial business economy. Figure 5 shows that this section was ranked sixth among those sections that experienced growth between 2019 and 2020 (0.8%; £53 million).

Manufacturing, the second largest industrial section, accounted for 19.0% (£4.9 billion) of total aGVA and was ranked third among those sections that experienced growth between 2019 and 2020 (5.6%; £259 million).

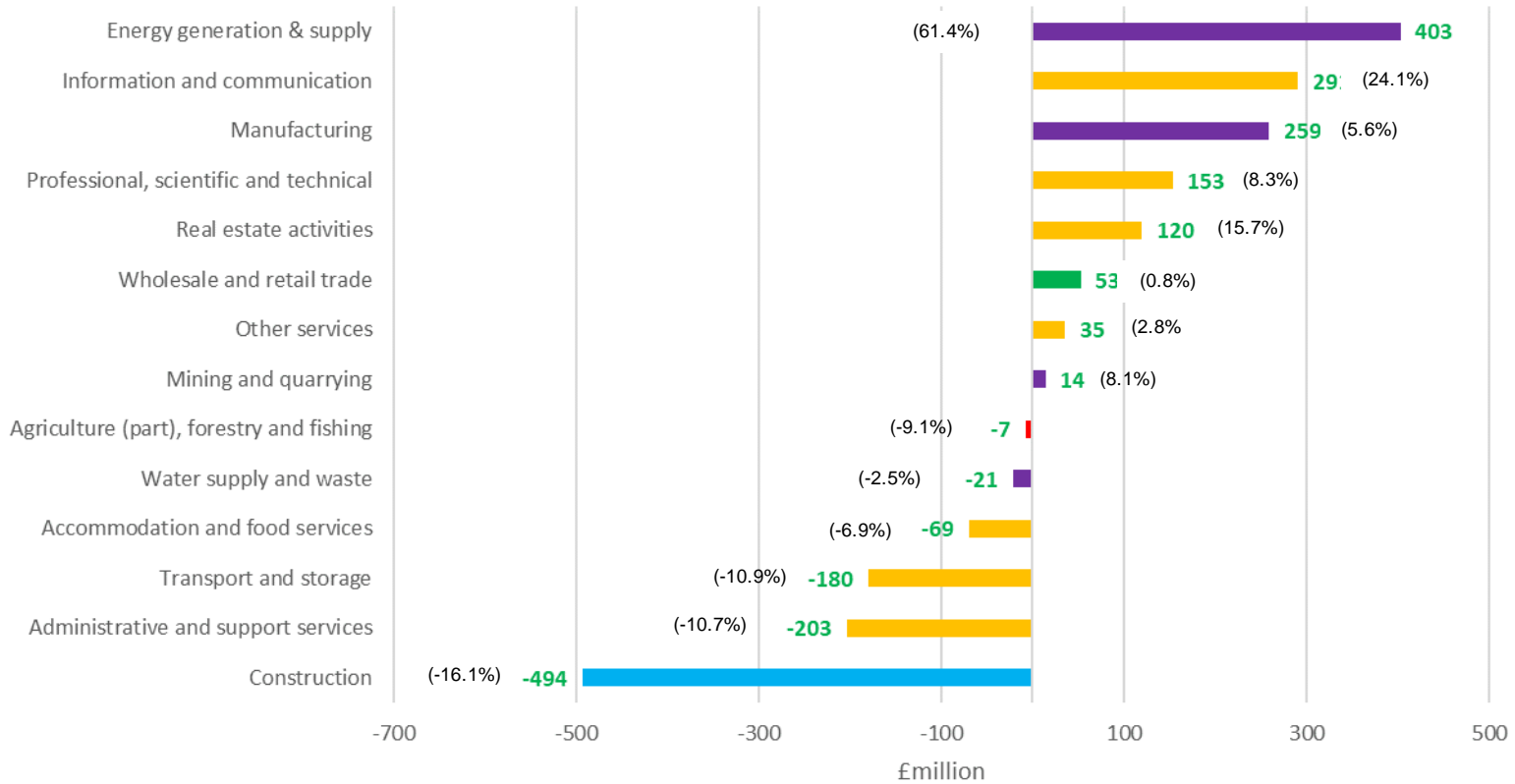
Construction was the third largest industrial section, accounting for 10.0% (£2.6 billion) of total aGVA. As illustrated in Figure 5, construction experienced a decrease in aGVA of 16.1% (£494 million) between 2019 and 2020.

The largest individual contributor to the overall growth in aGVA in the NI non-financial business economy over the period in question was however witnessed in Energy Generation and Supply



(Section D), increasing by £403 million (61.4%) Information and Communication services (Section J) also exhibited strong aGVA growth between 2019 and 2020, increasing by £291 million (24.1%). Manufacturing (Section C) was the third largest individual contributor to the overall growth of aGVA, experiencing an increase of £259 million (5.6%).

**Figure 5: Change in aGVA by industrial section, 2019 – 2020 (NI NFBE)<sup>4</sup>**



Note – Percentages of graph indicate the percentage increase/decrease in aGVA for each section.



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<sup>4</sup> Note that Other services relates to Sections P-S

## Employment (taken from [Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\), 2020](#))

The public/private sector jobs profile in Northern Ireland remains unchanged from 2019 with just over a quarter (27%) of jobs in the public sector. The number of private sector jobs in Northern Ireland was just over 566,000 in September 2020. This was a decrease of 1.9% over the year. The majority of private sector jobs are occupied by males (55%). Male full-time jobs accounted for 44% of all jobs in the private sector and 32% of all employee jobs in Northern Ireland in 2020.

Please note that BRES excludes the following: agriculture (but includes animal husbandry service activities and hunting; trapping and game propagation); the self-employed; HM Armed Forces; private domestic servants; homeworkers and trainees with a contract of employment (non-employed status).

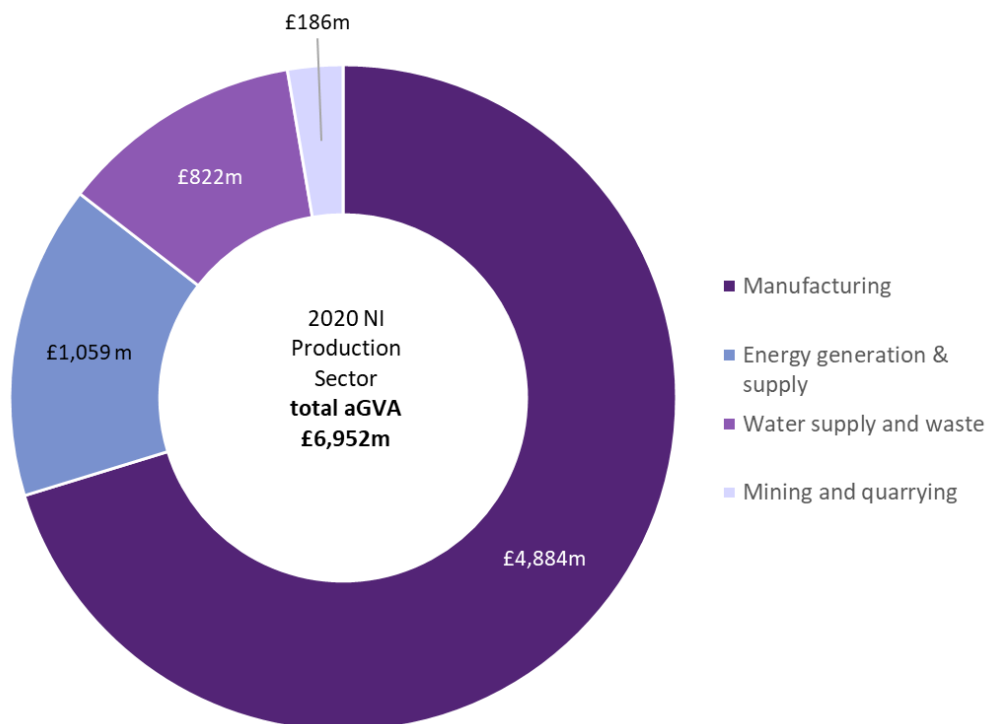
Detailed tables including employment by industry and District Council area can be found on the [BRES webpage](#).

## Production Industries (Sections B-E)<sup>5</sup>

Sections B through E have been grouped to reflect the structure of the Northern Ireland production industries. These include: Mining and quarrying (Section B); Manufacturing (Section C); Electricity, steam and air conditioning supply (Section D); Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (Section E).

The Production sector, which accounts for 27.1% of aGVA in the NI non-financial business economy (see Figure 1), recorded an increase of £655m (10.4%) between 2019 and 2020. Turnover (i.e. the value of total sales and work done) in the sector showed a decrease of £1.6 billion (7.8%) over the same period in question, while purchases also decreased by £1.8 billion (12.7%).

**Figure 6: NI Production Sector: aGVA by Industrial Section, 2020**

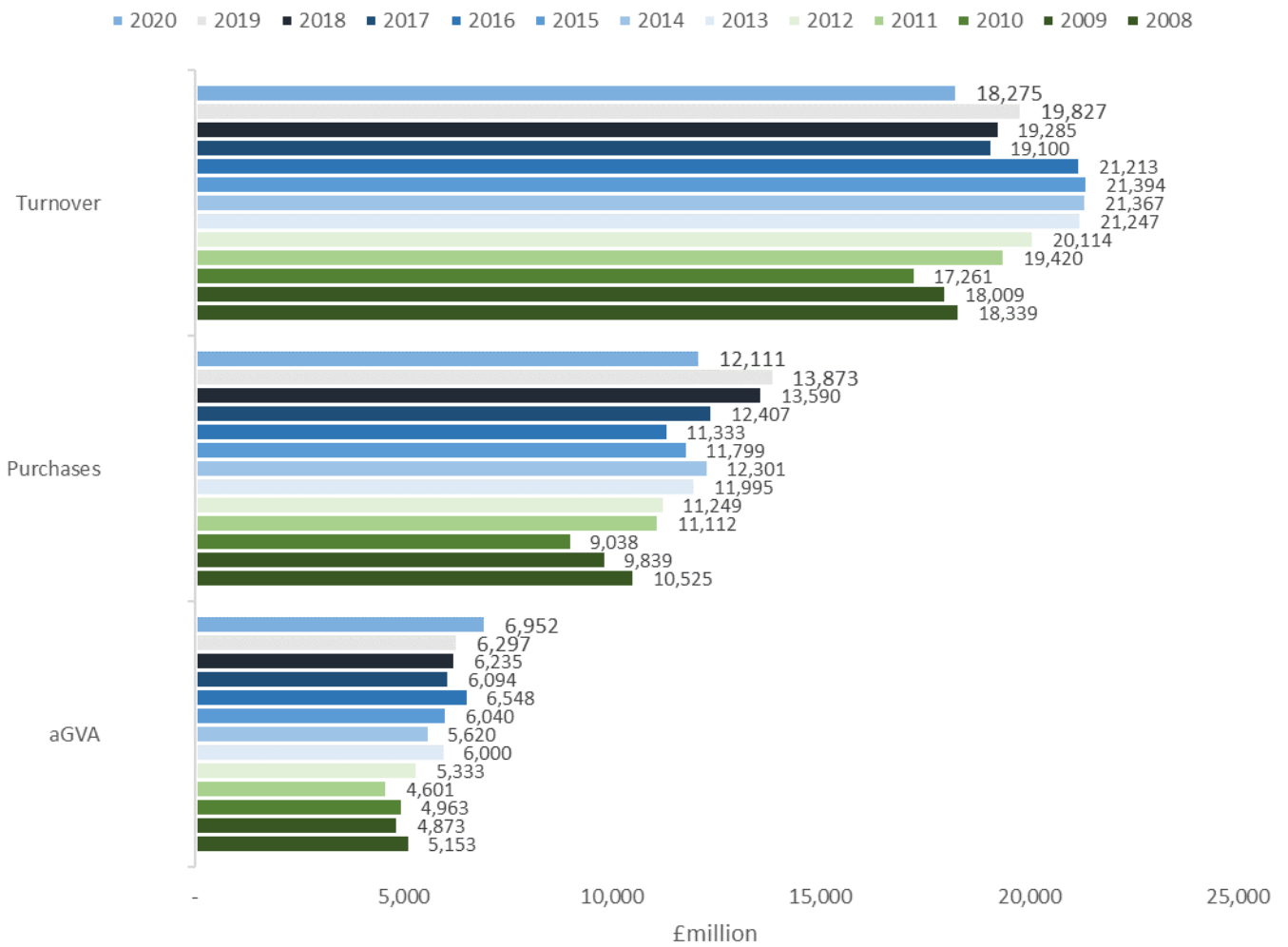


Between 2019 and 2020:

- Mining and quarrying (Section B) showed an increase in aGVA of £14 million (8.1%);
- Manufacturing (Section C), which accounts for over 70 percent of total aGVA in the Production Sector increased by £259 million (5.6%);
- At £403 million, Energy generation and supply (Section D) saw with the overall largest growth in aGVA (61.4%); and
- In contrast, Water supply and waste (Section E) experienced a decrease in aGVA (£21 million; 2.5%).

<sup>5</sup> Sections are based on SIC 2007 classifications - see part (iv) of background notes for further information

**Figure 7: Trends in the Production Sector: Turnover, Purchases and aGVA, 2008 – 2020**

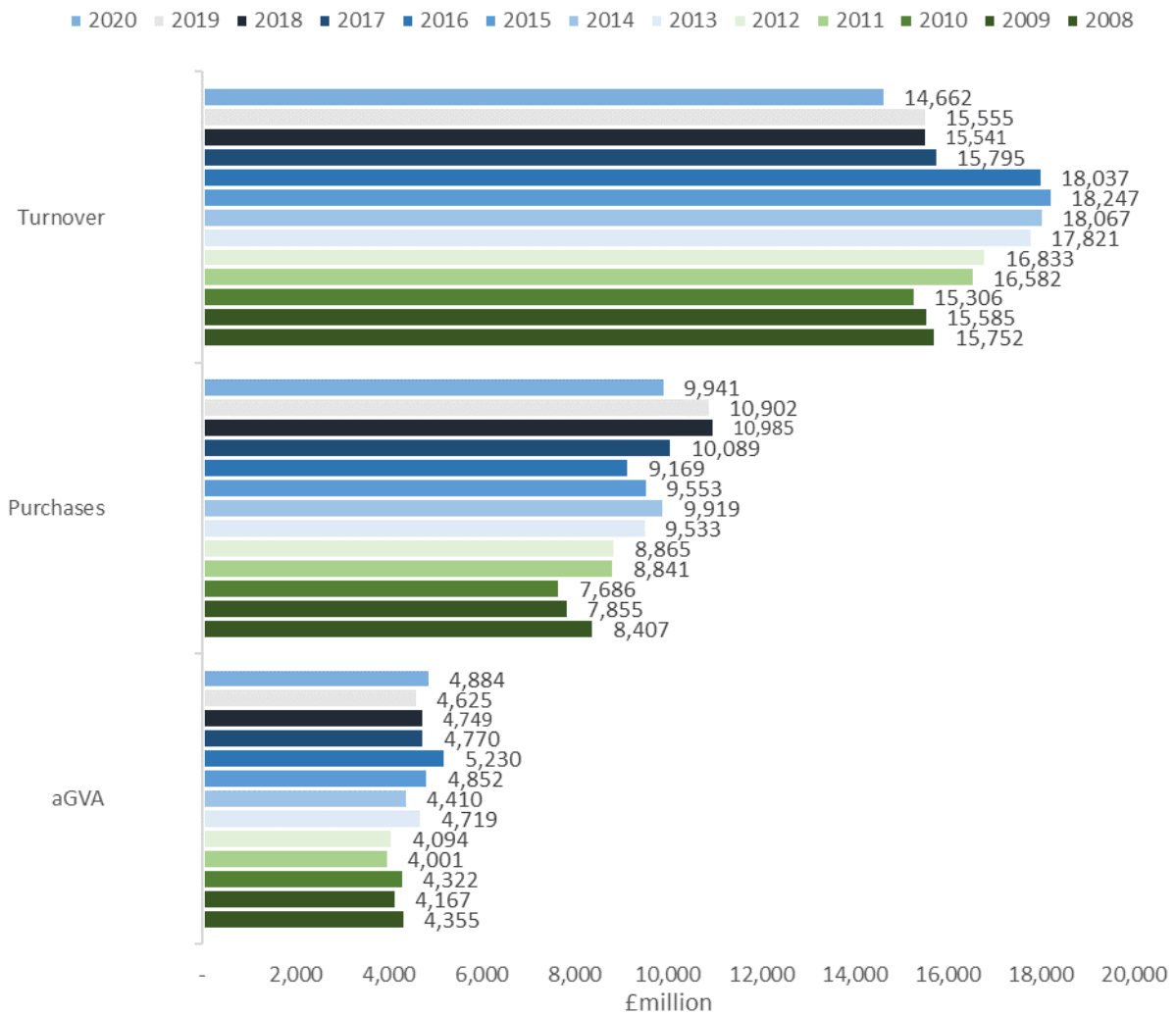


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## Manufacturing

Manufacturing (Section C) is the largest component industry in the Production sector, and accounts for 19.0% of total aGVA in the non-financial business economy. Between 2019 and 2020, aGVA in the Manufacturing section showed an increase of £259 million (5.6%).

**Figure 8: Trends in the Manufacturing Sector: Turnover, Purchases and aGVA, 2008 – 2020**



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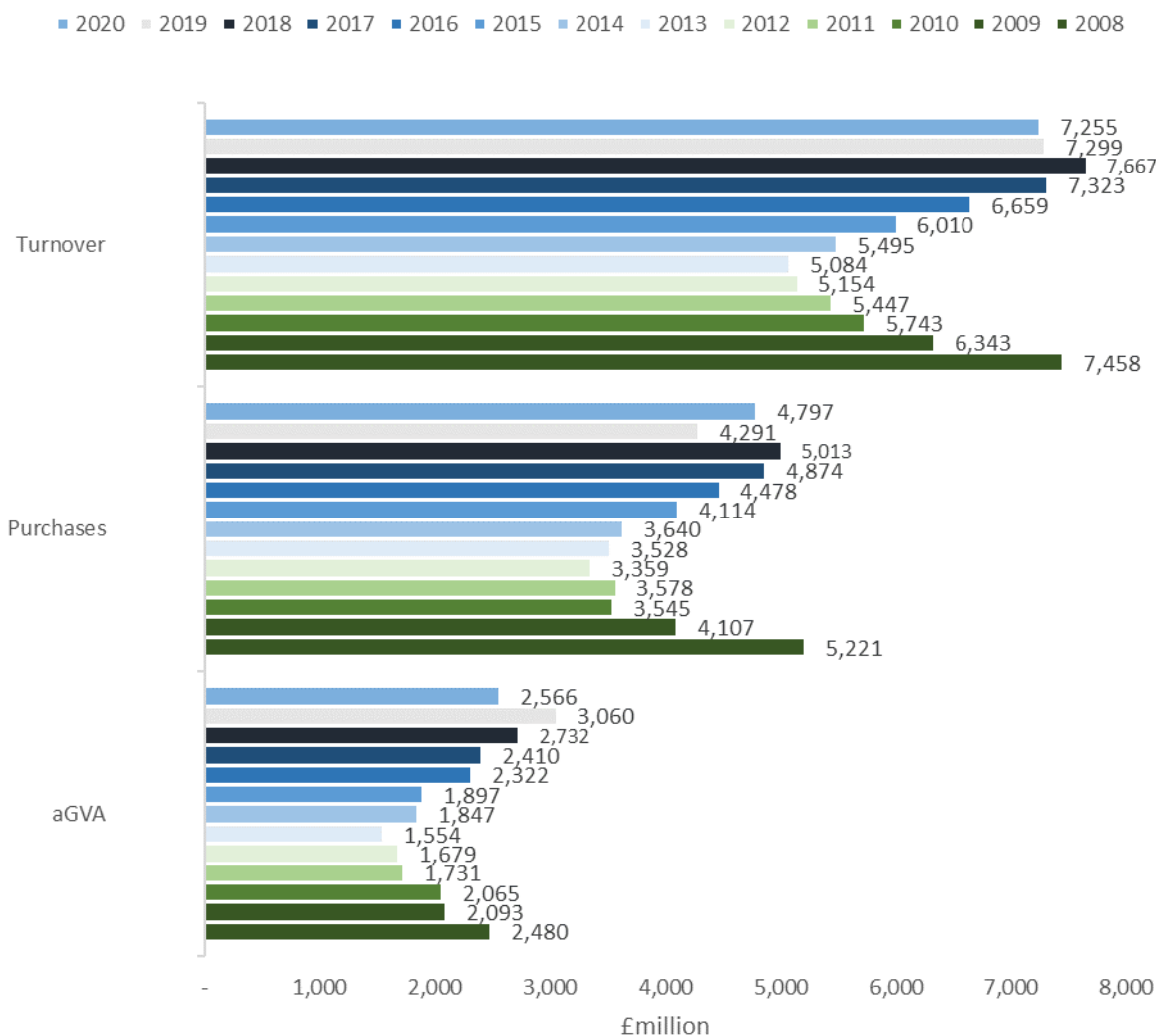
## Construction Industries (Section F)

The Construction industries cover the entire Northern Ireland construction sector, include construction of buildings, civil engineering, and specialised construction activities (e.g. demolition and site preparation, electrical, plumbing and other construction installation activities, etc).

Up until 2019, Construction (Section F) aGVA had grown for the last six consecutive years increasing from £1.8 billion in 2014 to £3.1 billion in 2019. However, between 2019 and 2020:

- Turnover decreased by 0.6% (£44 million) to £7.3 billion;
- Purchases increased by 11.8% from £4.3 billion to £4.8 billion; and
- aGVA decreased by 16.1% from £3.1 billion to £2.6 billion.

**Figure 9: Trends in the Construction Sector: Turnover, Purchases and aGVA, 2008 – 2020**



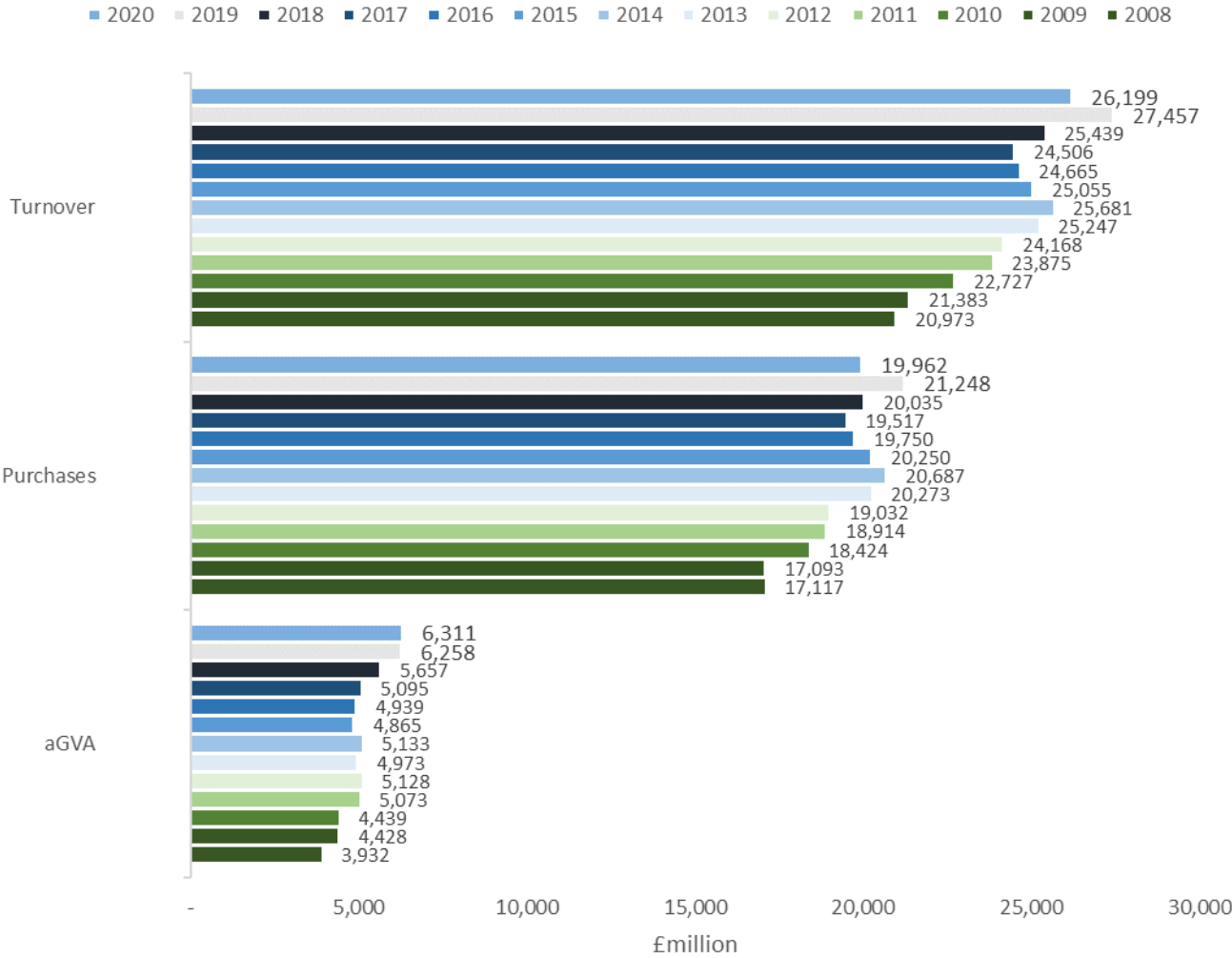
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# Distribution Industries (Section G)

The distribution industries consist of companies engaged in wholesale and retail trade and cover the entire Northern Ireland wholesale and retail sector.

Wholesale and retail trade (Section G) showed a fifth consecutive year of aGVA growth, increasing by £53 million (0.8%) from 2019 to 2020. Within this was a relatively large decrease in turnover of £1,258 million (4.6%) and decrease in purchases of £1,286 million (6.1%).

**Figure 10: Trends in the Distribution Sector: Turnover, Purchases and aGVA, 2008 – 2020**



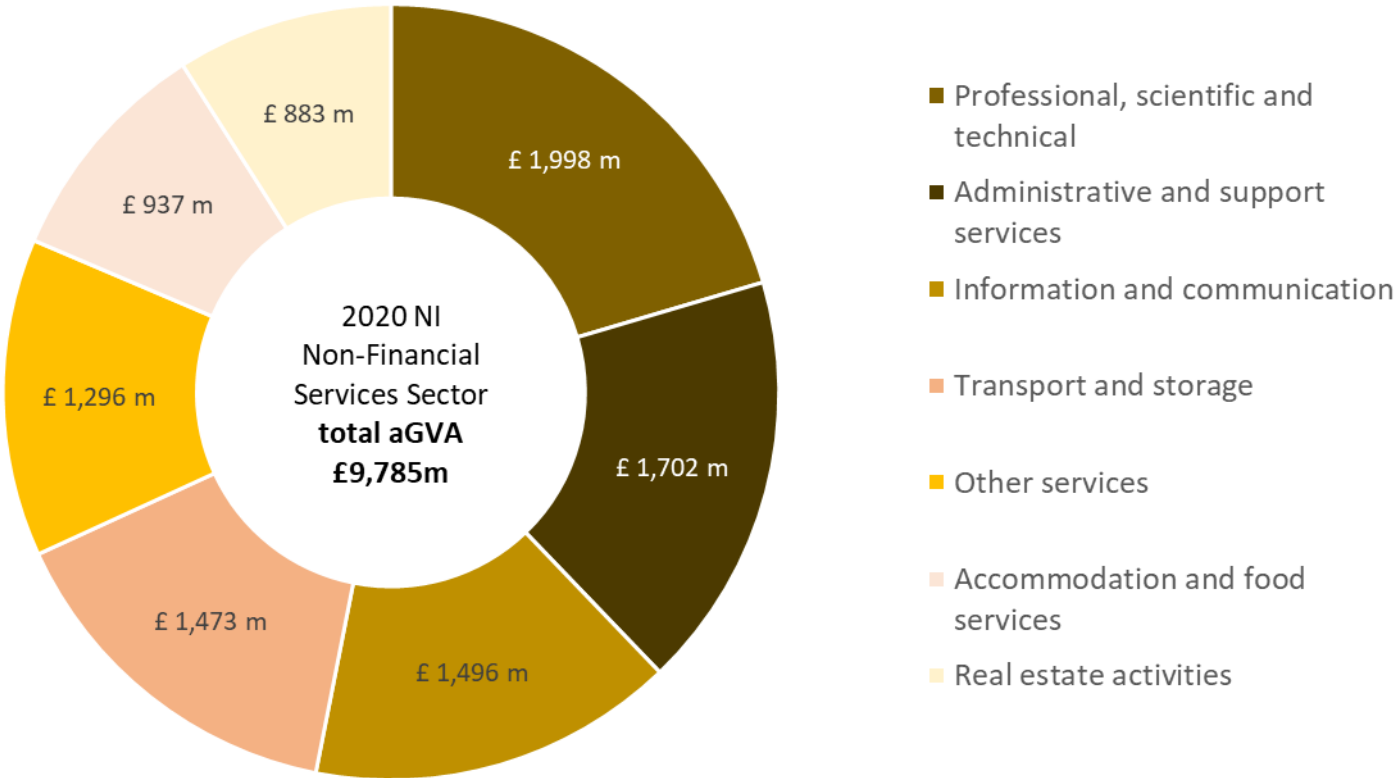
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# Services Industries (Section H–S) – Non-Financial

The non-financial services sector is composed of Transport and storage (Section H); Accommodation and food service activities (Section I); Information and communication (Section J); Real estate activities (Section L); Professional scientific and technical activities (Section M); Administrative and support service activities (Section N); and other service activities that are grouped to avoid disclosure of returns (Sections P-S). Note: Section K, Financial and insurance activities is excluded.

The Services sector represents almost two-fifths (38.1%) of aGVA in the NI non-financial business economy and, as such, even small movements in the services sector can have a pronounced effect on overall trends. For example, between 2019 and 2020 aGVA in the Services sector increased by 1.5% to £9.8 billion.

**Figure 11: NI Non-financial Services Industries aGVA, 2020**

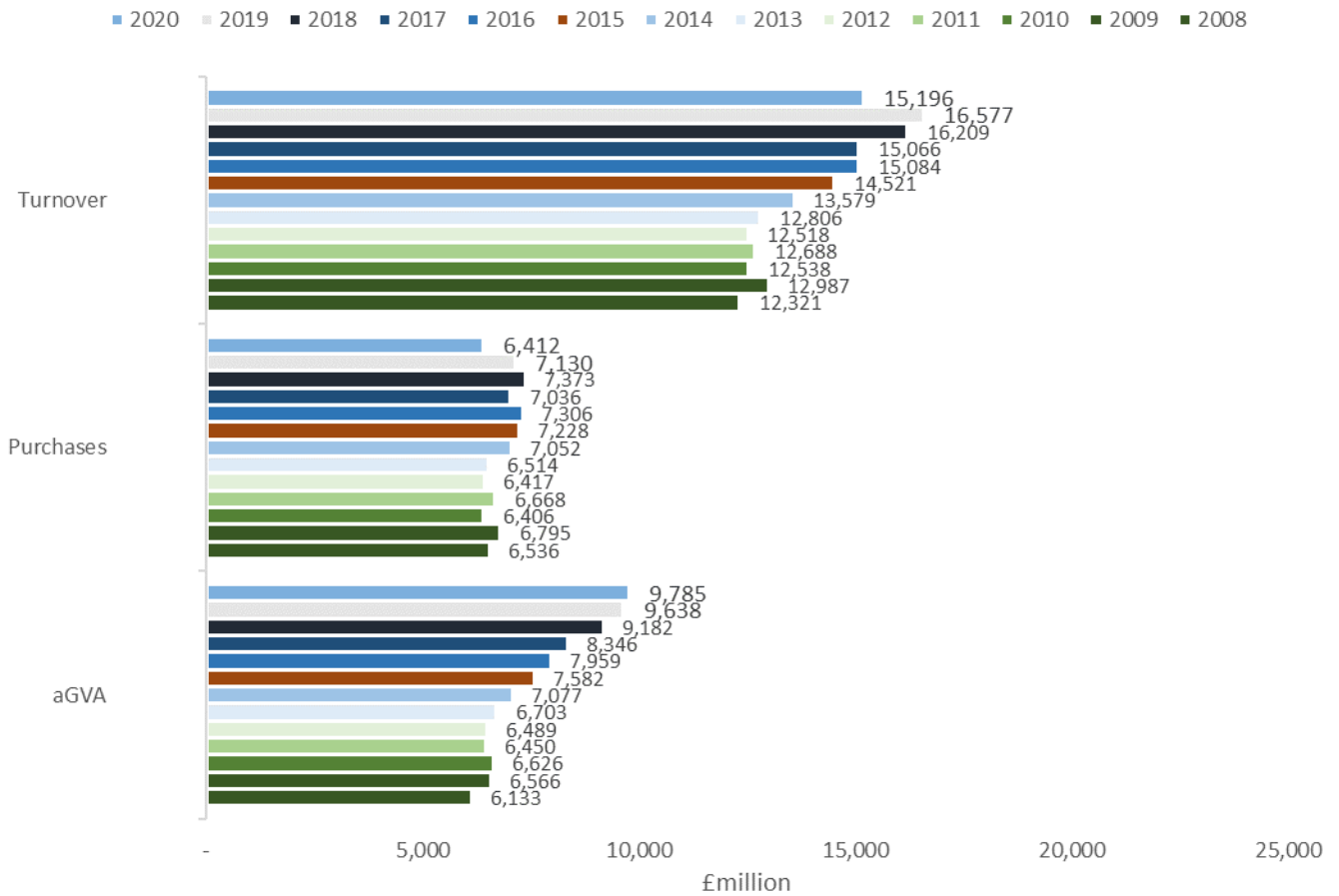


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Turnover in the services industries fell by 8.3% (£1.4 billion) in 2020 to £15.2 billion. Purchases of goods and services recorded a decrease of 10.1% (£718 million) to £6.4 billion.

**Figure 12: Trends in Services Industries: Turnover, Purchases and aGVA, 2008 – 2020**

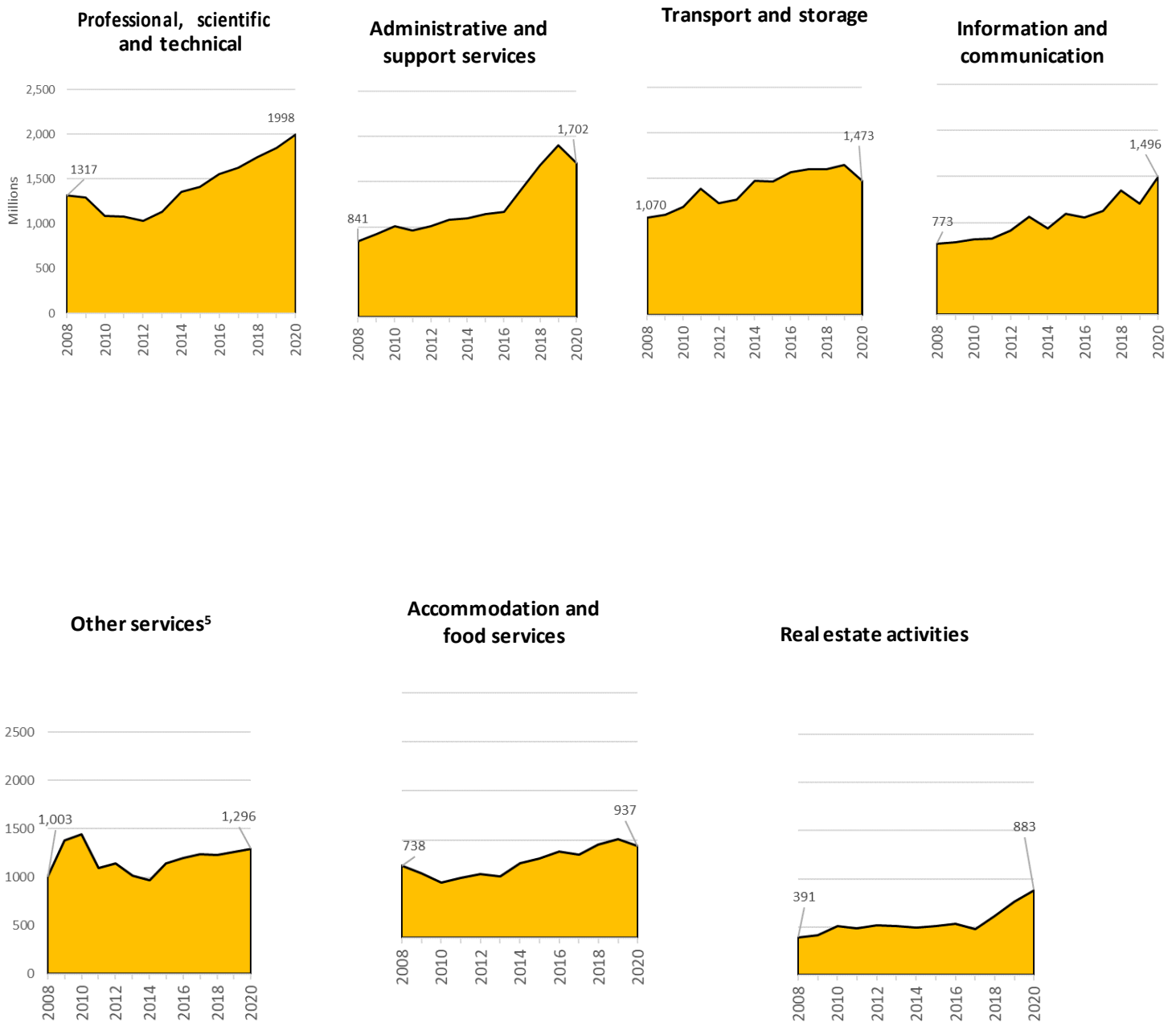


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Within the services sector, Professional, scientific and technical activities (Section M) and Administrative and Support services (Section N) are the largest component industries, respectively accounting for 20.4% and 17.4% of the total aGVA in the sector.

The largest contributor to the increase in the services industries' aGVA was Information and Communication services (Section H), which grew by £291 million (24.1%) from £1.2 billion in 2019 to £1.5 billion in 2020. Another major contributor to growth was the Professional, Scientific and Technical services (Section M) increasing by £153 million (8.3%) over the same period.

**Figure 13: Trends in the Service Industries: aGVA by sector, 2008 - 2020**



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<sup>5</sup> Other services includes: education (excluding public education); Human health and social work activities (excluding public health and social work); Arts, entertainment and recreation and other service activities. The Insurance & re-insurance industries were included for the 2009 and 2010 results; following a decision by the ONS, these have been excluded from the 2011 results onwards.

### 3 Results by Industry

	CV ≤ 5%
	5% < CV ≤ 10%
	10% < CV ≤ 20%
	CV > 20%

Table 1: NIABI results by industry, 2019 and 2020

	Standard Industrial Classification	Description	Turnover (£million)	Approximate Gross Value Added (aGVA) (£million)	Purchases (£million)
2019	A – S	Agriculture, fishing, production, construction, distribution and services	71,332	25,330	46,639
2020			67,078	25,683	43,369
%change			-6.0%	1.4%	-7.0%
2019	A (part)	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	173	77	98
2020			152	70	87
%change			-11.8%	-9.1%	-11.4%
2019	B – E	Production industries	19,827	6,297	13,873
2020			18,275	6,952	12,111
%change			-7.8%	10.4%	-12.7%
2019	B	Mining and quarrying	481	173	303
2020			460	186	270
%change			-4.2%	8.1%	-10.9%
2019	C	Manufacturing	15,555	4,625	10,902
2020			14,662	4,884	9,941
%change			-5.7%	5.6%	-8.8%
2019	D	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	2,814	656	2,207
2020			2,301	1,059	1,533
%change			-18.2%	61.4%	-30.5%
2019	E	Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	977	843	460
2020			852	822	367
%change			-12.8%	-2.5%	-20.2%
2019	F	Construction	7,299	3,060	4,291
2020			7,255	2,566	4,797
%change			-0.6%	-16.1%	11.8%

Table 1 (continued): NIABI results by industry, 2019 and 2020

	Standard Industrial Classification	Description	Turnover (£million)	Approximate Gross Value Added (aGVA) (£million)	Purchases (£million)
2019	G – S	Distribution and service industries	44,034	15,896	28,378
2020			41,395	16,096	26,374
%change			-6.0%	1.3%	-7.1%
2019	G	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles	27,457	6,258	21,248
2020			26,199	6,311	19,962
%change			-4.6%	0.8%	-6.1%
2019	H - S	Other service industries	16,577	9,638	7,130
2020			15,196	9,785	6,412
%change			-8.3%	1.5%	-10.1%
2019	H	Transport and storage	3,465	1,653	1,916
2020			3,090	1,473	2,107
%change			-10.8%	-10.9%	10.0%
2019	I	Accommodation and food service activities	1,956	1,006	950
2020			1,563	937	745
%change			-20.1%	-6.9%	-21.5%
2019	J	Information and communication	1,815	1,205	599
2020			2,007	1,496	525
%change			10.6%	24.1%	-12.4%
2019	L	Real estate activities	1,192	763	453
2020			1,163	883	338
%change			-2.4%	15.7%	-25.3%
2019	M	Professional, scientific and technical activities	2,707	1,845	933
2020			2,844	1,998	990
%change			5.0%	8.3%	6.1%

**Table 1 (continued): NIABI results by industry, 2019 and 2020**

	Standard Industrial Classification	Description	Turnover (£million)	Approximate Gross Value Added (aGVA) (£million)	Purchases (£million)
2019	N	Administrative and support service activities	2,865	1,905	960
2020			2,328	1,702	686
%change			-18.8%	-10.7%	-28.5%
2019	P - S	Others	2,576	1,261	1,321
2020			2,201	1,296	1,021
%change			-14.6%	2.8%	-22.7%

### Coefficient of Variation

The coefficient of variation (cv) measures the variability of the values in the table above by expressing the standard error as a percentage of the estimated value. Unlike confidence intervals, which measure variability by providing the range of values between which the mean value for a predetermined percentage of all possible samples would fall, the coefficient of variation expresses variability as an easily comparable percentage. As the coefficient of variation is not measured in any specific unit, it facilitates comparison between surveys measuring different underlying variables. A larger coefficient of variation implies a larger variability.

$$\text{Coefficient of Variation} = \frac{\text{Standard Error}}{|\text{Parameter Estimate}|}$$

**Standard Error:** In statistics, sample estimates such as means and medians deviate from the actual population mean and median; and this deviation is the standard error. Standard error is a statistical term that measures the accuracy with which a sample represents a population and is essentially an indicator of the reliability of the estimate.

**Parameter Estimate:** The parameter estimate refers to the individual value for each of the variables in the table above. For example, the 2020 parameter estimate for turnover in Section A is £152 million.

## 4 Background Notes

### (i) About the Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry

The Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry (NIABI) collects both financial and employment information from businesses and other establishments and covers approximately two thirds of the economy. This includes the production, construction, distribution and service industries in Northern Ireland but excludes public sector activity for the most part. The coverage of the survey is detailed at section (iv) below.

The 2020 NIABI sampled approximately 10,000 businesses in Northern Ireland from a population of approximately 56,000 businesses in the sample frame: the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR). The IDBR consists of companies, partnerships, sole proprietors, public authorities, central government departments, local authorities and non-profit making bodies in the UK. The NIABI is reliant on the IDBR receiving accurate and timely updates and providing a true reflection of the Northern Ireland business population. Businesses not registered for either Pay As You Earn (PAYE) or Value Added Tax (VAT) are excluded from the frame. Additional information about the IDBR and the characteristics of the businesses covered by the IDBR is available at the link:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/business-statistics/inter-departmental-business-register>

### (ii) Survey reference period

For survey reference period 2020, businesses were asked to make returns for the calendar year 2020. Where this was not possible, returns for business years ending between 6 April 2020 and 5 April 2021 were accepted. Similar procedures operated in previous years.

Returns covering fewer than twelve months were accepted for businesses that had started or ceased trading during the year. Estimates were made for those firms providing returns for more than six months whilst firms providing less than six months were treated as closures in the results process. These only accounted for a small proportion of all business returns in 2020 NIABI.

### (iii) NIABI sample

Following user feedback and consultation with the Statistics Advisory Committee and the NISRA official statistics user group, the NIABI sample size was boosted from approximately 5,000 in the 2010 survey reference year to approximately 9,000 in 2011. This has resulted in improvements to the precision of the estimates, as indicated by the quality indicators for 2020. This improvement should also be borne in mind when interpreting annual trends.

To maximise survey precision, the Neyman allocation approach to sampling was utilised. Neyman allocation is a sample allocation method that may be used with stratified samples. The purpose of the method is to maximize survey precision, given a fixed sample size. The survey universe was stratified by 2 digit SIC code and employee size band, and all businesses with 50+ employees, or 20+ employees and more than one local unit (see section (vi) for full definition) were fully enumerated. The current NIABI sample design includes all manufacturing businesses with 6 or more employees and those with a turnover of £10 million or larger. Businesses falling below the threshold of complete enumeration are selected on a stratified random basis. In addition, some companies of special interest to policymakers and government agencies (for example, certain Invest NI clients) are added to the sample.

#### (iv) Standard Industrial Classification and the coverage of the NIABI

NIABI results are classified according to the Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (SIC) system. The UK is required by European legislation to have a system of classification consistent with the European Union's industrial classification system. A review of the system was completed in 2007 and implemented in 2008. UK SIC 2007 is divided into 21 sections, each denoted by a single letter from A to U. Below this, further levels of detail are provided at division (denoted by 2 digits), groups (three digits), classes (four digits) and subclasses (five digits).

The SIC 2007 sections covered by the NIABI are as follows:

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

Following a decision by the Office for National Statistics to discontinue the publication of figures covering insurance & re-insurance industries due to ongoing volatility of the estimates, this NIABI publication also excludes estimates for this series.

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.

#### **(v) Data collection, validation and calculation of NIABI results**

Approximately 10,000 forms were issued from the NISRA Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch in March 2021 and the returned forms were subjected to a range of validation and congruency checks. The 2020 response rate was 58%.

Data validation was carried out on the returned forms ensuring internal consistency within the form, checking data fell within expected limits or by contacting the company for clarification where appropriate. For non-returns above a selected employment threshold, data were imputed using a methodology that takes account of previous returned data and the performance of other similar businesses. This information was then grossed up to the reporting unit population, to ensure that results are representative of the sampled population.

Please note that the information presented throughout this bulletin is based on reporting unit information, and is therefore not directly comparable with earlier NIABI bulletins which are based on local unit information. Reporting and local unit definitions can be found in part (vi) below.

In addition, to better meet user needs, and in consultation with ONS Methodology Consultancy Service, NISRA produced these results using Statistics Canada's Generalized Estimation System. This allows the production of estimates with an associated measure of their quality. For more detail of the estimation methodology, please consult:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/abi-quality-improvement-fund-project>

Users are advised to take into account the quality indicators associated with the estimates when considering the significance of annual changes. These indicate that some results have quite large margins of statistical error associated with them. Users should exercise caution when interpreting the annual changes associated with such results.

Ongoing development of the methodology will be informed by user feedback, both in terms of the usefulness and reliability of the estimates and their comparability with other sources. Any comments should be sent to [abihelpline@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:abihelpline@finance-ni.gov.uk)

#### **(vi) Definitions**

##### *Reporting and Local Units*

An enterprise *reporting unit* reports for all the *local units* within the enterprise (for example, the reporting unit for a large supermarket chain will respond with aggregate figures incorporating all its Northern Ireland shops). A *local unit* is an individual site (factory, shop, office, etc.) at which an enterprise conducts its business. For example, a supermarket chain may have shops in Newtownards, Bangor, Limavady, etc, these are local units.

*Approximate Gross Value Added at Basic prices* represents the income generated by businesses, out of which is paid wages and salaries, the cost of capital investment and financial charges before arriving at a figure for profit. It includes taxes on production (e.g. business rates), net of subsidies but excludes subsidies and taxes on products (e.g. VAT and excise duty). This is an output-based measure of aGVA. All published aGVA is given at basic prices. The calculations applied to derive aGVA are noted overleaf.



The calculations used in the NIABI are:

- aGVA AT MARKET PRICES: Total turnover + insurance claims + change in stocks + own account capital expenditure + Computer software programs and databases : developed by own staff for business use – total purchases
- aGVA AT FACTOR COST: aGVA at market prices + subsidies – total taxes + customs & excise drawback
- aGVA AT BASIC PRICES: aGVA at factor cost + business rates + vehicle excise duty

(Please note that aGVA at basic prices is the only published aGVA from the NIABI.)

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

*Purchases* represent the value of all goods, materials and services purchased during the year.

#### **(vii) NIABI “Approximate Gross Value Added” and “Regional Gross Value Added”**

The financial information from the NIABI provides a measure of approximate GVA, which is ultimately used to contribute to the picture of the whole economy to be built up for National Accounts purposes at the United Kingdom level. When regional economic accounts are subsequently derived, the resulting measure of Regional Gross Value Added (GVA) is a much broader based measure relating to the whole economy in a region, taking into account information from a series of economic and labour market surveys. The results of the NIABI only comprise one element of the regional economic account figures, and a number of adjustments are made in line with National Accounts methodologies before estimates of Regional GVA are produced. ONS’ most recent Regional GVA estimates for Northern Ireland at industry level relate to 2019 and were released in May 2021.

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

#### **(viii) Comparability with statistics from other sources**

The NIABI is conducted by the NISRA and while the survey process is similar to that for Great Britain, it is not identical. ONS receive data from NISRA in August and January of each survey year. These data are processed with the Great Britain data to produce UK-wide and regional estimates. NISRA separately process the Northern Ireland data to produce their own regional estimates. These differ from the ONS estimates for a number of reasons:

- Calculation of the weights used to estimate figures for the total population:
  - Calculation of the design or a-weights: The ONS National System computes the design weights for all UK data using the sample design of the GB sample. The NI sample design is quite different from that used by the ONS. The design weights calculated by the ONS system for NI units can therefore differ from those calculated by the NI system. The ONS adopted the use of NI design weights during 2020.
  - Calculation of the g-weights: The ONS National System computes two sets of g-weights: one based on IDBR turnover and another based on IDBR employment. The latter is used for employment costs, whereas the former is used for all the other variables. The Regional System computes g-weights based on local unit employment. In the NI methodology there is no distinction between national and regional weights: estimates at all levels are based on the same weights, with the g-weights computed with respect to local unit register employment but using a different calibration method to that used in the ONS regional system.

- Regional apportionment: ONS collects all ABS data at reporting unit (RU) level; the regional system apportions RU returns between local units using factors obtained from models. The NIABI no longer collects employment data at local unit level but uses local unit employment data from the Business Register Employment Survey; data of other variables are collected at RU level and then apportioned between the local units. When NI data are processed in the ONS system, new apportioned local unit values, based on the ONS methodology, are obtained and used to produce estimates.
- The NIABI does not collect data for all the variables in the GB questionnaire; in the ONS system, values are derived for the missing variables using a model, and these values contribute towards the estimation of some derived variables.

#### **(ix) Comparability with other NISRA ELMSB publications**

Within the relevant sectors the turnover figures provided by the NIABI are the most up to date available from ELMSB statistical publications, and ultimately contribute to updating the Inter - Departmental Business Register (IDBR). However, for a more comprehensive measure of turnover within the NI economy users are recommended to refer to the IDBR. The IDBR contains information on all businesses in the UK which are VAT registered or operate a PAYE scheme; consequently the IDBR provides a more complete picture of the Northern Ireland business population. IDBR statistics can be accessed through the NISRA website at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/inter-departmental-business-register/idbr-background-information>

#### **(x) Other sources of information**

The latest UK national estimates from the Annual Business Survey 2019 can be found at [Non-financial business economy, UK and regional \(Annual Business Survey\) - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/non-financial-business-economy/uk-and-regional/annual-business-survey) while ONS' regional estimates from the Annual Business Survey 2019 are available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/businessservices/datasets/uknonfinancialbusinesseseconomyannualbusinesssurveyregionalresultssectionsas>

The latest DfE Economic Commentary (Summer 2021) provides an overview of the state of the Northern Ireland economy, setting it in a global context. This can be found at

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/df-e-economic-commentary>

Estimates of the changes in employment and employee jobs are provided by the Labour Force Survey (LFS), Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) and Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). As dedicated employment surveys, the LFS, QES and BRES provide more frequent and accurate measures of the change in employment. By utilising internationally recognised definitions the LFS provides employment figures consistent with international standards. The LFS, QES and BRES can be found at the links below:

Labour Force Survey

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/labour-force-survey>

Quarterly Employment Survey

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/quarterly-employment-survey>

Business Register and Employment Survey

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/annual-employee-jobs-surveys>

Information relating to NI sales and exports is available from the Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics. This is an experimental annual measure of local businesses' sales to markets outside NI. These statistics can be accessed at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/business-statistics/broad-economy-sales-and-exports-statistics>

Further information on the output of manufacturing, along with electricity, gas, water and mining & quarrying industries is available from the Northern Ireland Index of Production (<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/economic-output-statistics/index-production>) while the Northern Ireland Index of Services (<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/economic-output-statistics/index-services>) provides a general measure of changes in the output of the private sector service industries in Northern Ireland.

The Construction Output Statistics published in the Northern Ireland Construction Bulletin are intended to provide a general measure of quarterly changes in the volume and value of construction output in Northern Ireland. These statistics can be accessed at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/economic-output-statistics/construction-output-statistics>

The Composite Economic Index provides a weighted measure of output by broad industry sector and employee jobs in the public sector to provide an overall measure of change in the Northern Ireland economic activity <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/economic-output-statistics/ni-composite-economic-index>

#### **(xi) Uses of the NIABI**

- The central structure and periodicity of the NIABI is driven by the legal requirements to provide data for the UK Annual Business Survey, UK National Accounts and European Structural Business Statistics (SBS)
- Additionally the NIABI is used by the Government as a means of monitoring the progress of economic policy and to help set and measure economic targets.
- Outside government the data is used by a variety of different private sector and academic analysts to assist with industrial and investment decisions.

For a more comprehensive explanation of customers' use of the NIABI please follow the link below:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/summary-of-usage-of-the-niabi.pdf>

#### **(xii) User feedback**

Development of the NIABI is designed to meet the needs of data users as identified during statistical user group meetings. Enhancements to the survey, including an increase in sample size, have been driven by feedback received through these consultations. Minutes of the meetings are available using the link below:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/nisra-economic-and-labour-market-statistics-elms/statistical-protocols-and-compliance>

#### **(xiii) Quality reporting**

A summary quality report for the NIABI can be found at:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/usage-methods-and-quality-and-revisions-policy-abi>

This report describes in detail the quality of the statistics presented in this publication (in terms of relevance, accuracy, timeliness and punctuality, accessibility and clarity, coherence and comparability, trade-offs between output quality components, assessment of user needs and

perceptions, performance, cost and respondent burden and confidentiality, transparency and security).

#### (xiv) Status of figures in current bulletin

It is normal practice to revise the data from the previous year based on ongoing data validation and clarification of responses from individual businesses. This bulletin contains detailed provisional reporting unit results for the Northern Ireland ABI industries (2020). These 2020 provisional figures will be subject to revision to take account of additional information.

The NIABI revisions policy can be accessed at

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/niabi-revisions-policy.pdf>

In line with this and with the NIABI revisions policy, provisional NIABI estimates for 2019 have been revised throughout this publication. The table below provides details of revisions to 2019 data.

**Table 2: Size of revisions to previously published 2019 data**

	Provisional 2019 (£million)	Revised 2019 (£million)	% change
Turnover	71,924	71,332	↓ 0.8%
Purchases	46,353	46,639	↑ 0.6%
aGVA	26,189	25,330	↓ 3.3%

Turnover, purchases and aGVA values are reported in £million unless otherwise specified.

NIABI reporting unit results are published in November, while local unit results are published the following summer. The Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch statistics publication schedule is available at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/nisra-economic-and-labour-market-statistics-elms/about-nisra-elms> The list of people given pre-release access to this publication is available at: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/nisra-economic-and-labour-market-statistics-elms/statistical-protocols-and-compliance>

#### (xv) Disclosure

The NIABI is conducted under the Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 and great care is taken to avoid disclosing information about individual enterprises (in line with the stipulations in Article 7 of the Order). Figures which would be likely to disclose particulars relating to an enterprise are not published (i.e. they are suppressed) unless prior written consent for their publication has been obtained directly from the business. The Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency - Economic & Labour Market Statistics confidentiality statement can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/dof-confidentiality-statement>

#### For further information

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