

Article

Foreign-owned businesses in the UK non-financial business economy: 2019

Annual estimates of the number of foreign-owned businesses, turnover and approximate gross value added (aGVA) in the UK non-financial business economy for 2019, and revised estimates for 2018, from the Annual Business Survey (ABS).

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1 . Main points

- In 2019, there were 2.5 million businesses operating in the UK non-financial business economy; only a small percentage of these (1.3%) were foreign owned, yet they contributed 28.5% of approximate gross value added (aGVA).
- The number of foreign-owned businesses increased by 2,930 in 2019 from 30,476 to 33,406 (9.6% increase); European-owned businesses had the largest business count increase of 1,382 from 17,087 to 18,469 (8.1% increase).
- The industry with the highest number of foreign-owned businesses (7,844) operated in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (2.0% of businesses in this section); these businesses generated £68.8 billion in aGVA.
- In 2019, the largest proportion of foreign-owned businesses (55.3%) were European owned.
- Between 2015 and 2019, the value of aGVA produced by foreign-owned businesses increased by £54.9 billion.

2 . Contribution of foreign-owned businesses between 2015 and 2019

Between 2015 and 2019, there was continued growth in foreign-owned businesses in the UK non-financial business economy as the number of foreign-owned businesses increased by 38.4% while the value of approximate gross value added (aGVA) increased by 17.2%. While both the number of foreign-owned businesses and value of aGVA increased, they still account for a similar share of UK businesses and aGVA.

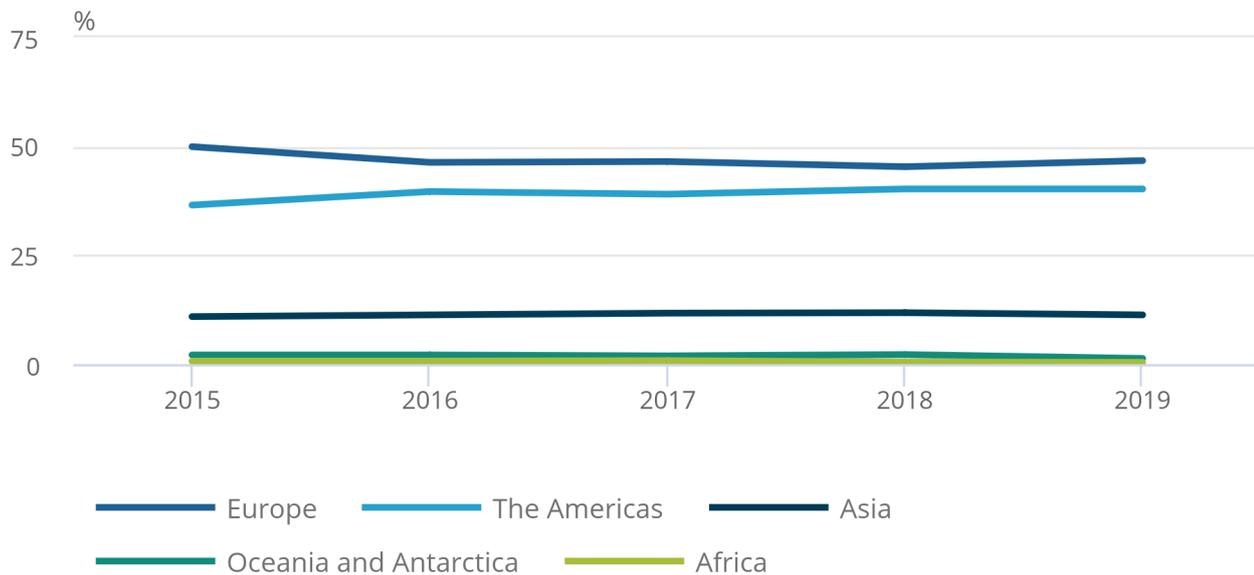
Over the five-year period, Europe continued to have the greatest share of foreign-owned UK businesses. In 2019, the European-owned businesses also continued to contribute the largest share of foreign-owned aGVA (46.7%). The Americas' contribution to foreign-owned aGVA was 40.2%, which is greater than their share of foreign-owned businesses (29.6%).

Figure 1: European-owned businesses contribute the largest share of foreign-owned aGVA

Percentage contribution to foreign-owned approximate gross value added (aGVA) by continent, 2015 to 2019

Figure 1: European-owned businesses contribute the largest share of foreign-owned aGVA

Percentage contribution to foreign-owned approximate gross value added (aGVA) by continent, 2015 to 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics – Annual Business Survey

3 . Foreign-owned businesses in the UK data

[Foreign-owned businesses in the UK: business count, turnover and aGVA, from the Annual Business Survey Dataset](#) | Released on 2 July 2021

Annual estimates of foreign-owned businesses in the UK non-financial business economy by industry group, section, employment and turnover group, and country breakdown, 2019.

4 . Data sources and quality

The Annual Business Survey (ABS) covers the non-financial business economy, which accounts for approximately two-thirds of the UK economy in terms of approximate gross value added (aGVA). These data are the main source for understanding the detailed structure, conduct and performance of businesses across the UK.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

In 2019, 53% of sampled businesses were included in the final ABS results. The average response rate in previous years was approximately 75%. The 2019 rate was lower than usual because the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic made it more difficult to contact respondents to process survey returns. This means that the estimates in this release are subject to more uncertainty than usual. [Quality measures](#) for the ABS survey results are available as part of this release.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has released a [public statement](#) on COVID-19 and the production of statistics. Specific queries must be directed to media.relations@ons.gov.uk.

Data sources and collection

The ABS is a sample survey of approximately 73,000 businesses across the UK. The ABS draws its sample from the [Inter-Departmental Business Register \(IDBR\)](#).

Quality and methodology

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the [Annual Business Survey QMI](#) and [Annual Business Survey technical report](#) published on the [ABS methodology page](#).

5 . Related links

[Non-financial business economy, UK and regional \(Annual Business Survey\): 2019 results](#)

Bulletin | Released 24 June 2021

Size and growth within the UK and regional non-financial sectors as measured by the Annual Business Survey.

[Non-financial business economy, UK and regional \(Annual Business Survey\): 2018 revised results](#)

Bulletin | Released 15 May 2020

Size and growth within the UK and regional non-financial sectors as measured by the Annual Business Survey.

[Non-financial business economy, UK and regional \(Annual Business Survey\): 2017 revised results](#)

Bulletin | Released 16 May 2019

Size and growth within the UK and regional non-financial sectors as measured by the Annual Business Survey.