

Article

Foreign-owned businesses in the UK non-financial business economy: 2020

Annual estimates of the number of foreign-owned businesses, turnover and approximate gross value added (aGVA) in the UK non-financial economy for 2020 and revised estimates for 2019, from the Annual Business Survey (ABS)

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Correction

4 May 2023 12:11

An error was discovered in the number of UK-owned and foreign-owned businesses in Northern Ireland. Some foreign-owned businesses based in Northern Ireland were incorrectly classified as UK-owned, meaning the Northern Ireland data had to be resupplied. These data can be found in the "Regional 2020" and "Regional 2019" sheets in our Foreign-owned businesses in the UK: business count, turnover and aGVA, from the Annual Business Survey dataset. The corresponding turnover and aGVA for these businesses was also incorrectly classified. These data also contributed to the total UK-owned and foreign-owned figures. The values have now been corrected by our suppliers and quality assured by our teams. This release and all related data have been updated.

Table of contents

1. [Main Points](#)
2. [Contribution of foreignowned businesses between 2015 and 2020](#)
3. [Foreignowned businesses in the UK data](#)
4. [Data sources and quality](#)
5. [Related links](#)

1 . Main Points

- In 2020, 1.4% of the 2.5 million businesses operating in the UK non-financial business economy were foreign-owned (35,234 businesses); foreign-owned businesses contributed 28.4% of approximate gross value added (aGVA) in 2020.
- The number of foreign-owned businesses increased by 5.5% and the largest proportional increase was for African-owned businesses (13.9%).
- The industry with the highest number of foreign-owned businesses (8,144) operated in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (2.0% of businesses in this section); these businesses generated £62.9 billion in aGVA.
- The industry with the largest proportion of foreign-owned businesses was mining and quarrying, where 11.7% of businesses were foreign owned.
- In 2020, the largest proportion of foreign-owned businesses (55.2%) were European owned.
- The value of aGVA contribution of foreign-owned businesses fell by 9.0% in 2020 (£33.7 billion), while UK-owned business aGVA contribution also fell by 9.0%.
- The sector that experienced the largest fall in aGVA contribution by foreign-owned businesses was manufacturing (£10.7 billion).

2 . Contribution of foreignowned businesses between 2015 and 2020

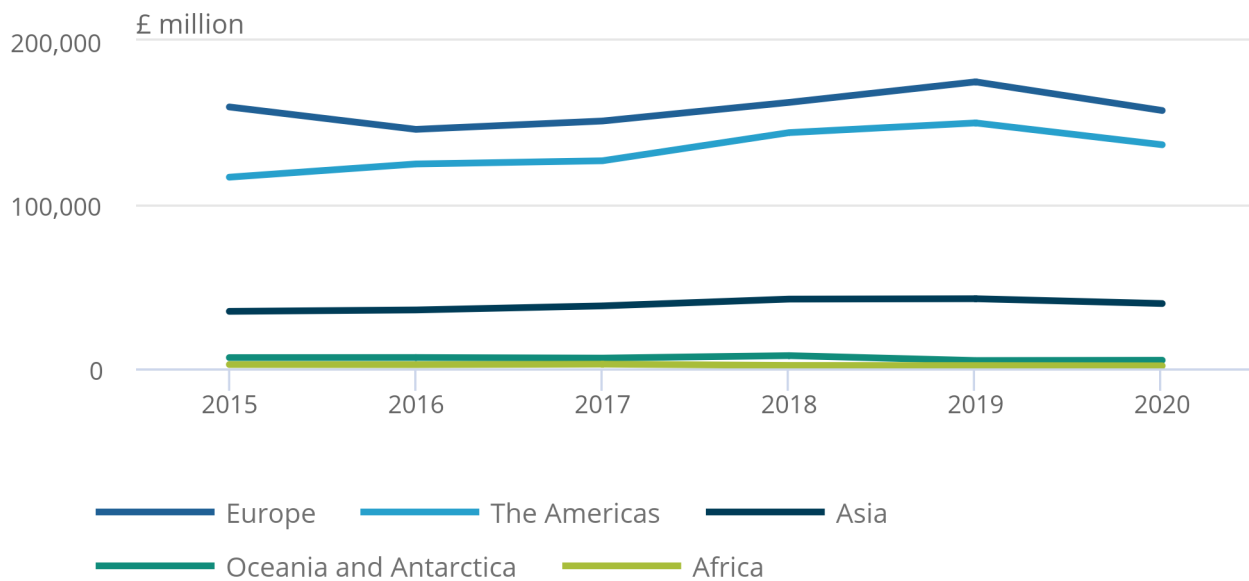
There was continued growth in the number of foreign-owned businesses in the UK non-financial business economy (46.0%) from 2015 to 2020, with a 5.5% single year increase in 2020. However, approximate gross value added (aGVA) from foreign-owned businesses fell by 9.0% in 2020, in line with the 9.0% fall in UK-owned aGVA. The largest fall occurred for European-owned businesses (10.0%). Europe continued to contribute the largest share of foreign-owned aGVA (46.3%) and had the highest proportion of foreign-owned businesses by count in the UK non-financial business economy (55.2%). Foreign owned businesses from all continents experienced a fall in aGVA in 2020, except Oceania and Antarctica, which saw aGVA grow by 3.7%.

Figure 1: Foreign owned businesses from all continents experienced a fall in aGVA in 2020 except Oceania and Antarctica

Approximate gross value added (aGVA) contribution by continent, 2015 to 2020

Figure 1: Foreign owned businesses from all continents experienced a fall in aGVA in 2020 except Oceania and Antarctica

Approximate gross value added (aGVA) contribution by continent, 2015 to 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual Business Survey

3 . Foreignowned businesses in the UK data

[Foreign-owned businesses in the UK: business count, turnover and aGVA, from the Annual Business Survey](#)

Dataset | Released 8 July 2022

Annual estimates of foreign-owned businesses in the UK non-financial business economy by industry group, section, employment and turnover group, and country breakdown, 2020.

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 2020, 59.3% of sampled businesses were included in the final Annual Business Survey (ABS) results. The average response rate in previous years was approximately 75%. The 2020 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. Our [Quality measures for the ABS](#) 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](#). You can email queries to the Media Relations office at 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 our [Annual Business Survey QMI](#) and [Annual Business Survey technical report](#) published on our [ABS methodology page](#).

5 . Related links

[Non-financial business economy, UK and regional \(Annual Business Survey\): 2020 results](#)

Bulletin | Released 16 June 2022

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 \(Annual Business Survey\): 2019 revised 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.